

CHURCH ORDER OF DORDRECHT

as revised by Synod 2003

of

THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

with the standing decisions made by their respective
synods up to and including Synod 2021

CONTENTS

Introduction
List of synods
List of abbreviations

CHURCH ORDER

Article 1 - Purpose and division

I OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

Article 2 - The offices
Article 3 - The calling to office
Article 4 - Bound to a church
Article 5 - Eligibility to the ministry
Article 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word
Article 7 - From one church to another
Article 8 - Exceptional gifts
Article 9 - Admission of ministers who have recently joined the church
Article 10 - Officiating in another church
Article 11 - Proper support
Article 12 - Call to an extraordinary task
Article 13 - Retirement of ministers
Article 14 - Dismissal
Article 15 - Bound for life
Article 16 - Task of ministers
Article 17 - Training to the ministry
Article 18 - Students of theology
Article 19 - Task of missionaries
Article 20 - Task of elders
Article 21 - Task of deacons
Article 22 - Equality of respective offices
Article 23 - Terms of office
Article 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff
Article 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons
Article 26 - False doctrine
Article 27 - Office-bearers and the government

II ASSEMBLIES

Article 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies
Article 29 - Proceedings
Article 30 - Authority of the assemblies
Article 31 - Appeals
Article 32 - Credentials and voting
Article 33 - Proposals
Article 34 - Chairman and clerk
Article 35 - Jurisdiction
Article 36 - Consistory
Article 37 - Consistory and the deacons
Article 38 - Constitution of a consistory
Article 39 - Places without a consistory
Article 40 - Meetings of deacons
Article 41 - Classis
Article 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis

- Article 43 - Counsellors
- Article 44 - Church visitors
- Article 45 - Synod
- Article 46 - Relationship with other churches
- Article 47 - Censure in classis and synod
- Article 48 - Deputies of major assemblies
- Article 49 - Archives
- Article 50 - Mission

III WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

- Article 51 - Administration of sacraments
- Article 52 - Baptism of infants
- Article 53 - Baptismal promise and education
- Article 54 - Public profession of faith
- Article 55 - Baptism of adults
- Article 56 - Lord's Supper
- Article 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper
- Article 58 - Church records
- Article 59 - Attestations for communicant members
- Article 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members
- Article 61 - Support after departure
- Article 62 - Church services
- Article 63 - Catechism preaching
- Article 64 - Psalms and hymns
- Article 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days
- Article 66 - Days of prayer
- Article 67 - Marriage
- Article 68 - Funerals

IV CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- Article 69 - Aim of discipline
- Article 70 - Mutual responsibility
- Article 71 - Consistory involvement
- Article 72 - Repentance
- Article 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members
- Article 74 - Announcements during the procedure
- Article 75 - Re-admission
- Article 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers
- Article 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers
- Article 78 - Christian censure
- Article 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

- Article 80 - No lording over others
- Article 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order.

APPENDICES

Appendix I:

Ecclesiastical Ordinances

- Form 1: Certificate of admission to the office of minister of the Word
- Form 2: Certificate of release of minister (by the church)
- Form 3: Certificate of release of minister (by classis)
- Form 4: Subscription form for ministers of the Word
- Form 5: Subscription form for elders and deacons
- Form 6: Form for emeritus declaration

Appendix II:

Regulations for the financial aid of students

Rules for the Fund for the support of needy students

Appendix III:

Guidelines for the church visitation in The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Appendix IV:

Rules for synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Appendix V:

Guidelines for synod treasury

Appendix VI:

Rules for the archivist

INDEX

SYNODS OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

1954 – Armadale
1956 – Armadale
1959 – Albany
1962 – Albany
1964 – Launceston
1966 – Armadale
1968 – Albany
1970 – Launceston
1972 – Armadale
1975 – Albany
1978 – Launceston
1980 – Armadale
1983 – Kelmscott
1985 – Launceston
1987 – Albany
1990 – Armadale
1992 – Bedfordale
1994 – Byford
1996 – Kelmscott
1998 – Launceston
2000 – West Albany
2003 – Rockingham
2006 – West Kelmscott
2009 – Legana
2012 – Armadale
2015 – Baldivis
2018 – Bunbury

ABBREVIATIONS

Art. =	Article
BC =	Belgic Confession of Faith
CO =	Church Order
CRC (or CanRC) =	Canadian Reformed Churches
CRC (or CRCNA) =	Christian Reformed Churches in North America
CRCA =	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (formerly: Reformed Churches of Australia)
DE =	Dynamic Equivalent
DGK =	De Gereformeerde Kerken
Dp BBK =	Deputies for correspondence with foreign churches appointed by the Dutch sister churches (GKN)
DRCSL =	Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka
EPCA =	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia
EPCI =	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland
ERCS =	Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FCS =	Free Church of Scotland
FRCA =	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCP =	Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines
FSNS =	Fund for support of needy students
GKN =	De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
GKN(s) =	Synodical churches in The Netherlands, calling themselves also De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
GGMM =	Gereja Gereja Mahesi Musyafir (Reformed Churches of Timor, Savu); the same as:
GMMT =	Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor
GGRI =	Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia
ICRC =	International Conference of Reformed Churches
KJV =	King James Version
NGK =	Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken
NIV =	New International Version
NKJV =	New King James Version
OPC =	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
PCEA =	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
PCK =	Presbyterian Church in Korea
PCU =	Presbyterian Church in Uganda
PRCA =	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
PRCNA=	Protestant Reformed Church in North America
RCA =	Reformed Churches of Australia
RCI =	Reformed Churches of Japan
RCN =	Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland)
RCNZ =	Reformed Churches in New Zealand
RCSTS=	Reformed Churches of Sumba-Timor-Savu
RCZ =	Reformed Churches of Zaire
REC =	Reformed Ecumenical Council
RES =	Reformed Ecumenical Synod
RPCI =	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland
RPCT =	Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan
RSV =	Revised Standard Version
TEC =	Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact
USA =	Unites States of America

INTRODUCTION

ARTICLE 1 – Purpose and division

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary to have:

- I offices and supervision of doctrine;**
- II assemblies;**
- III worship, sacraments and ceremonies;**
- IV discipline.**

Federation

Synod decides:

to establish a federation of churches, consisting of the churches at Albany, Armadale, and Launceston.

(Armadale 1954, Article 7)

Foundation

Synod decides:

The foundation of churches will be the Holy Scriptures as they are confessed in The Three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

(Armadale 1954, Article 8)

Synod decides:

1. to adopt the text of the Three Forms of Unity and of these Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted by the 1985 Synod (Acts Article 59 c 2);
2. to adopt the text of the Ecumenical Creeds with the exception of the word "Christian" in Article IX of the Apostles' Creed, in Lord's Day 7 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and wherever the text of the Creed is quoted in the Liturgical Forms and Prayers;
3. to reinsert the words "only-begotten Son" in the places mentioned sub Observation.2.c. (Article 18 BC., the prayer of thanksgiving, the Forms for Baptism, and the Canons of Dort I Article 2 and II Article 4; Ed.)

(Albany 1987, Article 100)

Synod decides:

- a. To maintain our present text of the Apostles' Creed (which is identical to the text of the Book of Praise except for the omission of the word 'Christian' in the ninth article).
- b. To accept the revised text of the Athanasian Creed.
- c. To retain our present text of the Nicene Creed for the present and appoint deputies to scrutinise the revisions which our Canadian sister churches will adopt at their next Synod and report back to synod with their recommendations.

(Byford 1994, Article 124:2)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 26)

Name

Synod decides:

The churches shall, by correspondence, adopt a name for the federation of churches, if possible within three months.

(Armada 1954, Article 11)

Synod decides:

not to change the name of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 81)

Synod decides:

Not to deal with the submission from the FRC Busselton which requests that synod appoints deputies to study the possible name change of our bond of churches.

(Armada 2012, Article 60)

Church Order

Synod decides:

to adopt the Church Order of Dordrecht.

(Armada 1954, Article 38)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 43).

Synod decides to:

Accept the Church Order as (deputy) has presented it (2.1 of deputy's report), and have it published as an Appendix to these Acts.

Appoint a deputy to have the Church Order published in booklet form to fit in the Book of Praise.

Accept the Ecclesiastical Documents as (deputy) had revised them (3.1 of deputy's report) and appoint a deputy to have copies of these Ecclesiastical Documents prepared for use by churches and classes.

Have the Rules for Synods as amended by (deputy) (3.3. of deputy's report) printed in these Acts.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 90)

OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE

ARTICLE 2 - The offices

The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.

See under Article 19 for decisions made by Synod Rockingham 2003.

ARTICLE 3: The calling to office

A. All office-bearers

No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto.

The calling to office shall take place by the consistory with the deacons, with the cooperation of the congregation, after prayer, and in accordance with the local regulations adopted for that purpose.

Prior to the ordination or installation, the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approval on at least two consecutive Sundays. If no lawful objection is brought forward the ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the adopted Form.

B. Elders and deacons

The consistory with the deacons shall give the congregation the opportunity to draw the attention of the consistory to brothers deemed suitable for the respective offices.

The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation at the most twice as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled. From this number the congregation shall choose as many office-bearers as are needed.

Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons.

If necessary, the consistory and the deacons may present to the congregation the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

C. Ministers

Before a vacant church extends a call the advice of the counsellor shall be sought.

The approval of classis shall be required for a repeated call to the same minister for the same vacancy.

Voting rights for women

Synod is of the opinion:

that the church in which this matter is an issue should table definitive proposals to Synod (*Armada 1972, Article 21*)

Synod decides:

not to adopt Launceston's proposal 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".

(*Launceston 1998, Article 99*)

Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons

Synod decides:

1. To add the words "Encourage the congregation to" so that the charge to the deacons reads: "Encourage the congregation to do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith".
2. To instruct Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to inform the Canadian sister churches of this decision.

(*Kelmscott 1996, Article 89*)

ARTICLE 4 - Bound to a church

No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church.

ARTICLE 5 - Eligibility for the ministry

A. ELIGIBILITY

Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who

- 1. have been declared eligible for call by the churches; or**
- 2. are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or**
- 3. have been declared eligible or are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship.**

The churches shall observe the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those ministers who have served in these sister-churches.

B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE

Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who

- 1. have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the necessary documents to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; or**
- 2. have satisfied the requirements of Article 8; or**
- 3. have satisfied the requirements of Article 9.**

Eligibility and examination of candidates

The following rules for the eligibility for call in our churches of Bachelors of Divinity are adopted:

I. Regarding Bachelors of Divinity who have been trained at the Theologische Hogeschool at Kampen or the Theological College at Hamilton, Canada, it is ruled that they will be preparatorily examined by an ecclesiastical meeting of our churches.

If there is a real possibility that the candidate concerned will be called by one of our churches this examination will have the standard and validity of the peremptory exam. In this case the preparatory exam will also include the subjects of the peremptory exam.

The examination will be conducted by the examiners in a meeting in which two churches are proportionally represented by at least four delegates, while the third Church Council, after having received a written report, has to give approval.

II. Regarding Bachelors of Divinity who have not studied at the Theological Colleges of our sister churches the following rules are adopted:

- a. the value of their theological education and scientific ability will be examined by the Senate of one of the colleges of the sister churches;
- b. the candidate shall contact the Council of the Church of which he is a member, which Council informs the deputies-examiners, who make the necessary arrangements with the said Senate in Canada or The Netherlands for the examination;
- c. after the examiners have favourably reported the candidate is made eligible for call in our churches in accordance with the above-mentioned rules.

III. As for Bachelors of Divinity who have been made eligible for call by this foreign sister churches after their preparatory examination, it is ruled that they, if called by one of our Australian churches, will as yet be peremptorily examined by our churches in an ecclesiastical meeting.

(Launceston 1970, Art 47)

Synod decides:

to re-affirm and re-state the decision of Synod 1970 Article 47, whereby 'Classis' is replaced by 'Synod' for preparatory and peremptory examinations and to amend the Rules for the examinations accordingly.

to supplement the decision of Synod 1970 as follows: At the peremptory examination the Deputies of Synod or some of them (Article 5 C.O.) shall act in that capacity.

(Launceston 1985, Art. 81)

Term Missionary

Synod decides:

1. To concur with the Church of Albany by deciding that as churches we do not recognize the position of "term missionary" as a 4th office among the churches.
2. To concur with the Church of Albany that someone may only become eligible for the ministry according the provisions of CO Article 5, but Synod decides to agree with Classis South's proposal that, as an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only. Part of Classis South's proposal is that this person should undergo an examination by classis as agreed upon in the Church Order.
3. When agreeing with Classis South to an exceptional ordination of a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only, this includes an exception to CO Article 15 by which ministers are normally bound for life.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 36)

ARTICLE 6 - Ordination and installation of ministers of the Word

A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed:

- 1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call.**

Classis shall approve the call

- a. upon satisfactory testimony concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, attested by the consistory of the church to which he belongs; and**
 - b. following a peremptory examination of the candidate with satisfactory results. This classis examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of synod.**
- 2. For the ordination they shall also show to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.**

B. Regarding those who are serving in the ministry the following shall be observed:

- 1. They shall be installed after classis has approved the call.**
- 2. For this approval as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only in case he remains within the same classis.**
- 3. For the approval of a call of those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia maintain a sister relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.**

C. The approval of a call shall require written certification by the calling church that the required announcements were made and that the congregation has approved the call.

Approval

Synod decides:

For the approval of a call the following documents are required:

- 1. the letter of call.**
- 2. the declaration of acceptance of the call.**
- 3. formal declaration of departure from the church which the called minister last served.**
- 4. formal declaration of departure from the classis in which the called minister last served.**
- 5. a declaration from the calling church, that the necessary public announcements have taken place.**

(Armada 1956, Art. 50)

ARTICLE 7 - From one church to another

A minister once lawfully called shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of his consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis. Likewise, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or from the church only if he remains within the same classis.

Approval

Synod decides:

For the approval of a call the following documents are required:

1. the letter of call.
2. the declaration of acceptance of the call.
3. a formal declaration of departure from the church which the called minister last served.
4. a formal declaration of departure from the classis in which the called minister last served.
5. a declaration from the calling church that the necessary public announcements have taken place.

(Armada 1956, Art. 50)

ARTICLE 8 - Exceptional gifts

Persons who have not pursued the regular course of theological study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is convincing evidence of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When any such person presents himself for the ministry, classis shall (with synod's prior approval) examine him, and upon a favourable outcome allow him, as candidate, to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis for a set period of time. Thereafter the classis shall further deal with him as it shall deem edifying, observing the ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.

Request in relation to Article 8 of the CO

Synod decides:

to deal with this matter in closed session as per Synod Rule 7.6.

to make an exception to the rule to allow foreign delegates and servicing office bearers to be present.

(Armada 2012, Art. 16)

ARTICLE 9 - Admission of ministers who have recently joined the church

A minister of the Word who has recently joined one of the churches and originates from a church with which the churches do not maintain a sister relationship shall only be admitted to the ministry with great caution. He shall not be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and carefully examined by the classis in whose area he lives. This classis examination shall be conducted with the cooperation of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 10 - Officiating in another church

No one shall preach the Word or administer the sacraments in another church without the permission of the consistory of that church.

Pulpit exchanges

Synod decides:

To appoint a church to coordinate and monitor the roster of pulpit exchanges and church visitation listed below.

(Bedforddale 1992, Art. 51)

Synod decides:

Costs for pulpit exchanges between the Metro area and Albany should be borne by the church of the travelling minister.

(Byford 1994, Art. 15)

Synod decides:

1. To appoint a church to coordinate and monitor the roster of pulpit exchange for the period 1996 – 1998.
2. To accept the following schedule of pulpit exchange:
Minister of: 1996 1997 1998
Albany Tasmania
Armadale Tasmania
Launceston Metro Albany/Metro
Legana Metro Albany/Metro
West Albany Tasmania

(Kelmscott 1996, Art 72)

Synod decides:

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 Treasure.

(Launceston 1998, Art. 36)

Declarations

Synod decides:

4. To instruct the deputies to stress and to clarify to the churches the requirement of declarations for visiting ministers.

(Albany 1987, Art. 49)

ARTICLE 11 - Proper support

The consistory, with the deacons, on behalf of the congregation that it represents in this matter, shall provide for the proper support of its minister(s).

ARTICLE 12 - Call to an extraordinary task

If a minister accepts a call or an appointment to an extraordinary task the nature of the relationship between him and the church to which he is bound must be arranged with the consent of the classis. Some ministers may be appointed for the training of students for the ministry; others may be called for mission work.

(See under Article 19 for decisions made by Synod Rockingham 2003.)

ARTICLE 13 - Retirement of ministers

If a minister of the Word retires by reason of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of sickness or otherwise, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last and this church shall provide honourably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans. The retirement of ministers shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of Synod.

(See Appendix I, Form 6)

Synod decides:

Decision 1

To amend Article 13 of the Church Order as follows:

If a minister of the Word retires by reason of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of sickness or otherwise, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last and this church shall provide honourably for his support.

The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and orphans.

Decision 2

To reject the addition of the words "The level of honourable support is the responsibility of the consistory" to Article 13 CO as proposed by Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura (FRCMN).

Decision 3

To accept the addition of the words "The retirement of ministers shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis" to Art 13 CO as proposed by FRCMN.

Decision 4

To add the words "and the deputies of Synod" to Article 13 CO, so that it reads, "The retirement of ministers shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and the deputies of Synod".

(Baldivis 2015, Article 103, 121)

ARTICLE 14 - Dismissal

The consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss a minister from his bond with the congregation without the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 15 - Bound for life

A minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life and therefore not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it is for exceptional and substantial reasons. The decision of his consistory to relieve him of his office in order to enter upon another vocation shall receive the approval of classis, with the concurring advice of deputies of synod.

ARTICLE 16 - Task of ministers

The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

ARTICLE 17 - Training for the ministry

The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend the sound doctrine against heresies and errors, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as they have been described above. The churches together are obliged to provide for the professors of theology and for their widows and orphans.

Synod decides:

1. Synod thanks the deputies for the work done.
2. Synod decides to assess the churches \$ 40.00 per communicant member per year, for the maintenance of the Theological College in Hamilton as of 1 July 2000.
3. Synod decides to discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for 'Hamilton' and forward them to the College;
 - b. continue correspondence with both 'Hamilton' and 'Kampen' in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - c. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - d. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 CO, and as agreed in Article 50 of Acts of Synod 1992;
 - e. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from 'Hamilton' once every four or five years;
 - f. to investigate the long-term possibility of setting up theological training in Australia, including the possibility of starting a theological library.

(West Albany 2000, Article 25)

Synod decides:

1. to forward the money collected thus far to the library fund of the Hamilton Theological College (Appeal 2);
2. to recognise that establishing an own seminary is out of reach for both the present time and the foreseeable future (Ground 3.1);
3. to recognise that establishing a library should occur simultaneously with the establishing of a seminary (Ground 3.2).

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art 16)

Synod decides:

1. To continue to request three full collections from the churches for our own theological library.
2. Request the churches to contribute A\$50 per communicant member per annum for theological training. Any expenses for theological training here in Australia will be taken out of this amount. The remainder goes to Hamilton.
3. Set aside \$3,500 for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies for Training for the Ministry to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2007, combining it with a visit to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Church (this coordination means that this time a deputy for training for the ministry goes to Canada in both capacities and next time a deputy for sister churches attends in both capacities).
4. Discharge Deputies and appoint new deputies, including a Minister of the Word, with the mandate to:
 - a. collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. correspond with "Hamilton", "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea" in order to maintain contact and obtain information;
 - c. collect funds for our own theological library and theological training;
 - d. continue with our own theological library and start obtaining basic materials;
 - e. continue to investigate the possibility to start up our own theological training for the ministry, including the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT);

- f. ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
- g. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Article 18 CO, and as agreed in Article 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Article 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
- h. make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every three years;
- i. be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
- j. consider the practical implications of including the Australian churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and report to the Australian Churches.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art 17)

Synod decides:

- 13.1 Request the churches to contribute A\$65 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2009.
- 13.2 Set aside \$6,000 from general Synod funds for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from Hamilton or Kampen, together with his wife.
- 13.3 Set aside \$3,500 from general Synod funds for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors in September 2009 (40th Anniversary of College).
- 13.4 Adopt the Australian adaptation of the guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program prepared by Deputies.
- 13.5 Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. continue to collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. continue to correspond with "Hamilton", "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea" in order to maintain contact and obtain information, noting that the deputies' mandate to "maintain contact and obtain information" includes that information which may cause concern is reported to Synod; further, in view of the temporary appointment of a non-sister church lecturer, to remind the Canadian Churches that our support of the college is based on the fact that we agree with their foundation and by-laws so that their maintenance remains highly important to us.
 - c. continue to collect funds for theological training, but discontinue the collection of funds for our own theological library;
 - d. continue with our own theological library;
 - e. continue to ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - f. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
 - g. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every three years;
 - h. continue to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
 - i. monitor the practical implications of including the Australian Churches in the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College and collect and disburse funds for this purpose in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program;
 - j. investigate the feasibility of offering a basis year of theology to the churches in Australia, for the purpose of establishing a Theological University in the future.
 - k. investigate the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT).

(Legana 2009, Art. 17)

Synod decides:

- 1. Request the churches to contribute A\$65 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of Hamilton as from 1 January 2013.

2. Set aside \$7,000 per trip (currently \$6,000) from General Synod funds for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from Hamilton or Kampen, together with his wife. Also, it is recommended to invite a guest lecturer once every two years, rather than every three years. This would mean two visits between this Synod 2012 and Synod 2015, but then only one visit between Synod 2015 and Synod 2018.
3. Set aside \$4,000 (currently \$3,000) from General Synod funds for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of Deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors and the Convocation between Synod 2012 and Synod 2015.
4. Discharge Deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. continue to collect funds for "Hamilton" and forward them to the College;
 - b. continue to correspond with "Hamilton" in order to maintain contact and obtain information, and to send notification of new deputies for the purpose of communication with "South Africa", "Kampen" and "Korea";
 - c. continue to collect funds for theological training;
 - d. continue to oversee the Library Fund;
 - e. continue to ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
 - f. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
 - g. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from one of the theological seminaries of our sister churches once every two years;
 - h. continue to be as closely involved in the work of the Board of Governors of Hamilton as practically possible;
 - i. monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program of the Hamilton College within the Australian Churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
 - j. collect and disburse funds for the Pastoral Training Program in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program; and
 - k. continue to investigate the feasibility of offering the Freshman (ie First) Year of theological study to the churches in Australia.

(Armada 2012, Article 68)

Synod decides:

- 12.1
 - a. Request the churches to contribute AU\$82 per communicant member per annum for the maintenance of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary as from 1 January 2016.
 - b. Deputies be mandated to, within their report to Synod 2018, report on the amount of contribution paid by our Canadian sisters and propose a level of contribution that matches (as close as possible) such contribution.
- 12.2 In relation to the guest lecturer from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary:
 - a. Set aside \$7,500 per trip (currently \$7,000) from General Synod funds for the costs of a visit to Australia by a guest lecturer from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary;
 - b. To invite a guest lecturer once every three years, rather than every two years.
- 12.3 To set aside \$4,000 from General Synod funds for travelling and accommodation costs of a delegate of deputies to attend a meeting of Hamilton's Board of Governors and the Convocation between Synod 2015 and Synod 2018.
- 12.4 Discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Continue to collect funds for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and forward them to the Seminary;
 - b. Continue to correspond with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, in order to maintain contact and obtain information, and to send notification of new deputies for the purpose of communication with "South Africa", "the Netherlands" and "Korea";
 - c. Continue to collect funds for theological training;

- d. Continue to ensure that relevant information is published concerning the training for the ministry, so that the churches understand the need to support the colleges and the training of the students;
- e. Continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required, in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of Acts of Synod 1992 as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994;
- f. Continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary once every three years;
- g. Continue to be as closely involved, as practically as possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary;
- h. Monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program of the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
- i. Collect and disburse funds for the Pastoral Training Program in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program; and
- j. To investigate the feasibility of establishing an FRCA Theological Seminary, and report back to next Synod. Such a study should consider:
 - i. The desire of the churches for such a seminary;
 - ii. The potential student numbers that would attend such a seminary;
 - iii. The impact the establishment of such a seminary would have on the student numbers and viability of the CRTS; and
 - iv. The resources required for such a seminary, and the availability of such resources.

12.5 Continue to oversee the Library Fund.

12.6 To cease to investigate the feasibility of offering the freshman (i.e. first) year of theological studies to the churches in Australia and to cease to investigate possible distance education of theological studies to the churches in Australia.

Baldivis 2015, Article 93)

- 1) Not to pursue establishing an Australian theological seminary at this time.
- 2) To mandate the Deputies to:
 - a) develop and submit to the next synod a strategic long term plan for a future Australian theological seminary that will:
 - i) be an accredited seminary to train our men for serving as ministers and missionaries;
 - ii) have the potential to serve our sister churches and other churches in the wider Reformed community in the AsiaPacific region (eg. the Philippines, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa); and
 - iii) have the potential to serve the needs of the broader FRCA community including office bearer training, teacher training and enrichment courses for the members;
 - b) solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community;
 - c) continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by the churches as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time, as outlined in ground 1;
 - d) make use of the expertise of CRTS as necessary;
 - e) consult with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of an Australian theological seminary as described above;
 - f) consult with the CRTS for opportunities to cooperate in an Australian theological seminary; and
 - g) provide a recommendation regarding the execution of this strategic plan, and an associated implementation timeline. This should include the consideration of utilising existing infrastructure.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 80)

Synod decides:

1. To express appreciation for Dr J Smith's visit to the Australian churches.
2. To send a deputy as delegate to attend one convocation and Board of Governors meeting during the next three-year term.
3. To accept the explanation of CRTS regarding distance education for the FRCSA, and to express thankfulness for their current consideration of this possibility in relation to our churches.
4. To suggest to the churches that Canadian candidates called to serve among churches in Australia should undergo a peremptory examination before applying for immigration.
5. That TUK is not considered a suitable seminary for our prospective theological students.
6. To increase the current number of deputies (4) by one deputy.
7. To discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. continue to collect funds for the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary and forward them to the seminary;
 - b. request the churches to contribute \$90 per communicant member per annum for the support of CRTS, and to report on the amount of contribution paid by the Canadian churches and propose a matching level of contribution;
 - c. notify all our sister-church deputies and governors for theological training of new deputies in order to maintain contact and exchange information;
 - d. continue to correspond with CRTS;
 - e. continue to collect funds for the support of theological students;
 - f. review the current system of funding for students with respect to its effectiveness in supporting and encouraging students;
 - g. consider and implement new ways to promote the study for the ministry among young men, such as through the local John Calvin schools, local churches and the involvement of local pastors;
 - h. to meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to have good oversight over their education;
 - i. investigate and report on the applicability of a ministry internship model, taking into consideration models for theological training used by our sister churches (e.g., RCNZ);
 - j. continue to arrange the support of theological students whenever required, in accordance with Art 18 CO, and as agreed in Art 50 of the Acts of Synod 1992 (as amended by Art 56 of Acts of Synod 1994);
 - k. continue to make arrangements for a guest lecturer from CRTS once every three years;
 - l. continue to be as closely involved, as practically as possible, in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS;
 - m. thank CRTS for providing faithful, godly theological education for our young men;
 - n. monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
 - o. collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support;
 - p. continue to oversee the Library and Library Fund; and
 - q. accept the invitation from CRTS and participate in the work of the ad hoc committee that is investigating the possibility of pursuing distance education with CRTS.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 90)

GGRI – Theological Training

Synod Decides:

1. To mandate deputies to continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, to submit a budget, proposed

assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2021.

2. Not to provide funds for the building of a new campus for the STT-GGRI at this time but to mandate deputies to consider the best way to responsibly provide financial support for theological training for the GGRI.
3. To mandate deputies to find a local church to assume responsibility for the financial support of theological training for the GGRI following Synod 2021 and to ensure a smooth transition to this new arrangement.
4. To encourage the Board of Governors at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A VanDelden.
5. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, subject to available funding from our churches.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 96)

ARTICLE 18 - Students of theology

The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology, extending financial aid where necessary.

Financial aid

Synod decides:

2. to adopt the "Regulations for the financial aid of students (Article 19 CO)" and the "Rules for Students Support Fund" as prepared by deputies and amended by synod.

(Launceston 1987, Article 82)

Synod considers:

2. The FRCA support their students during the course of their study, stipulating that repayment of such cost is waived if students serve overseas sister-churches upon being ordained to the Ministry.

(Armada 1990, Article 86)

"Mother church"

Synod decides:

2. Deputies for Training for the Ministry be given a mandate to clarify which is the "mother church" in regard to a student who has been a member of more than one congregation.

(Byford 1994, Article 56)

Edifying word

Synod decides:

1. To grant permission to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches to theological students who satisfy the following set conditions:
 - a. the theological students shall present such a request to Classis,
 - b. they shall have completed at least two years of theological studies at one of the theological colleges of our sister churches (not including the introductory year, that is, they still complete three years of training at the theological college). The faculty of the theological college shall give a certificate that they have successfully completed two years of theology proper (or three years),
 - c. they shall present a good attestation from the church to which they belong,
 - d. they shall deliver a sermon at Classis and shall be examined on reformed doctrine, and,
 - e. if the result is satisfactory Classis shall grant permission to speak an edifying word (sometimes called preaching consent) for a period not more than twelve months.
2. To accept the decision of classes of sister churches to grant theological students the right to speak an edifying word/preaching consent in the churches here and to allow these students to deliver an edifying word in the churches. They must present a certificate from the Classis of the sister church.
3. The student shall submit his sermons to a minister appointed by Deputies for the Training to the Ministry who in turn will give a report to the Professor of Diaconology at the theological college.

(Kelmescott 1996, Article 27, amended after Synod West Albany 2000's decision form classes, Acts Article 43)

III. Decision:

Synod decides:

To adopt the proposal of Classis North, as amended, as the way to deal with requests for extending permission to speak an edifying word (sometimes called preaching consent) and consider it as an extension of Synod 1996 decision Acts Article 27 as amended by Synod 2000 Article 43

(Armada 2012, Article 103)

ARTICLE 19 - Task of Missionaries

When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall in the specific region assigned to them proclaim the Word of God, administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His church, and ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.

Indigenous Missionary Ministers of the Word

Synod decides:

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

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 55)

Term Missionary

Synod decides:

To make a new ruling in the line of Article 55 Synod 2000:

1. As an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only.
2. That this person should undergo an examination by classis as agreed upon in the Church Order.
3. That upon completion of this missionary task he will be released from office by the sending church and the classis, at which time he will lose his ministerial status.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 36)

Synod decides:

1. To concur with the Church of Albany by deciding that as churches we do not recognize the position of "term missionary" as a fourth office among the churches.
2. To concur with the Church of Albany that someone may only become eligible for the ministry according the provisions of CO Article 5, but Synod decides to agree with Classis South's proposal that, as an exception, a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) can be ordained for foreign mission work only. Part of Classis South's proposal is that this person should undergo an examination by classis as agreed upon in the Church Order.
3. When agreeing with Classis South to an exceptional ordination of a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only, this includes an exception to CO Article 15 by which ministers are normally bound for life.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 36)

ARTICLE 20 - Task of elders

The elders shall together with the ministers of the Word govern the congregation with pastoral care and discipline. For the building up of the congregation they shall make home-visits as often as is profitable but at least once a year. They shall watch that their fellow office-bearers are faithful in carrying out their duties and ensure that in the congregation everything is done decently and in good order.

Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons

See under Article 3 of the Church Order for the decision made by *Synod Kelmescott 1996*, Article 89.

ARTICLE 21 - Task of deacons

The deacons shall perform the ministry of mercy. They shall acquaint themselves with difficulties; visit, help and encourage where there is need, and urge church members to render assistance where necessary. They shall collect and manage the gifts of the congregation, and, after mutual consultation, distribute them where there is need. The deacons shall give account of their policies and management to the consistory.

Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons

See under Article 3 of the Church Order for the decision made by *Synod Kelmscott 1996*, Article 89.

ARTICLE 22 - Equality of respective duties

In the local congregation equality shall be maintained among the ministers, among the elders, and among the deacons, regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible.

ARTICLE 23 - Term of office

The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The places of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the well-being of the church render it advisable to call them into office again. In that case the rule of Article 3 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 24 - Subscription to the Confession by ministers and teaching staff

A minister of the Word and all teaching staff at the theological seminary shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia by signing the Form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

Subscription Form adopted by Synod Kelmscott 1983 (Article 48)

ARTICLE 25 - Subscription to the Confession by elders and deacons

Elders and deacons shall also subscribe to these Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form adopted for that purpose. Anyone being in office who refuses to do so shall because of that very fact be immediately suspended from office by the consistory. If he obstinately persists in his refusal he shall be deposed from office.

Subscription Form as adopted by Synod Kelmescott 1983 (Article 48)

ARTICLE 26 - False doctrine

To ward off false doctrines and errors the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.

ARTICLE 27 - Office-bearers and the government

The office-bearers shall impress upon the congregation its obligation to be obedient and show respect to the government, because God has instituted it. They must set a good example in this regard and by means of proper communication invoke the government to protect the ministry of the church.

Synod decides:

not to appoint new deputies for correspondence with the government. It considered that the local church is in a better position to correspond with the State Government, and that, if there is a need to correspond with the Federal Government, the approach should be made through the local member of Federal Parliament, who can take it up on behalf of the local church.

(Kelmscott 1983, Article 113)

II ASSEMBLIES

ARTICLE 28 - The ecclesiastical assemblies

Three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, and the synod.

ARTICLE 29 - Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 30 - Authority of the assemblies

These assemblies shall only deal with ecclesiastical matters and in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal only with matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter may be put on its agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

Synod decides:

to remind the churches that, in accordance with Article 30 CO, matters which pertain to the churches in general should not be added to the Agenda by instruction.

(Launceston 1978, Art. 22)

Synod decides:

While it may be true that the last sentence of Article 30 was inadvertently added to the Church Order without considering its impact, the way to remedy the situation is not to make a synod decision which overrides the Church Order.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 20)

Synod decides:

A decision made by one synod (concerning the PCEA) does not oblige a subsequent synod to follow the same path.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 22)

Synod decides:

Late submissions are declared inadmissible.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 80)

ARTICLE 31 - Appeals

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly he shall have the right of appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

Synod decides:

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.

(Launceston 1998, Art. 48, Ground 1)

Synod decides:

From the fact that the FRCs of Byford, Rockingham, Mount Nasura and Kelmscott appealed Synod 2000, Art. 93 decision (to declare RCNZ true churches) shows that appeals from individual churches direct to synod are considered admissible.

(Rockingham 2003, Art. 44, 48, 49, 53)

Synod decides:

Re: Regulations of Classis North

7. The church order states that only matters that cannot be completed in the minor assembly are to be dealt with at the major assembly. Thus an appeal to Classis should only be sent once the matter has been fully dealt with at the consistory level. Under the appeal regulations of Classis North (Art 6.1.2.3), the appellant may continue to interact with the consistory and vice versa after the matter has been appealed to the Classis. In this way there is also interaction regarding the appeal before Classis is convened.

(Rockingham 2003, Art. 125)

Synod decides:

Major assemblies may appoint advisory committees to hear appellants and those appealed against when there is a dispute.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 18, summary of grounds)

Synod decides:

A brother lodges an appeal re Classis Regulations. It is declared admissible on the basis that: The appellant feels aggrieved by the decisions of classis and therefore has the right to be heard by the major assembly.

(Rockingham 2003, Art. 121. See also Art. 122-126 and appeals by individuals and churches against a classis decision Art. 153-161)

Synod decides:

An appeal from FRC West Kelmscott is declared inadmissible. Ground: On the basis of Article 33 CO "Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds".

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 16)

Synod decides:

An appeal from FRC Mount Nasura re Art 14 Synod Rockingham 2003 is declared admissible. Ground: "This submission is from the churches and allowed by the Church Order."

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 18)

Synod decides:

Appeal of Br 'tHart against Classis South is declared admissible.

Not to acceded to the appeal." Grounds: 1. "Classis South was correct in deciding that Br. P. 'tHart was appealing a synodical decision and that therefore his appeal should have been directed to Synod. 2. The appellant must first show that Synod Rockingham erred for only if

Synod erred did consistory err in implementing Synod's decision. Therefore an appeal to Synod logically precedes an appeal to classis for implementing Synod's decisions."
(*West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 19*)

Synod decides:

A court of appeal (like an appeal church) which stands between classis and synod is not needed in our church federation.

(*West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 32*)

Synod decides:

Appeals are inadmissible if synod is not convinced that there are new grounds.

Appeals, whether from a church or an individual church member, are admissible if they deal with decisions of the previous synod.

(*West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 62*)

Synod decides:

Synod should judge certain appeals:

Decisions made by synod in response to appeals are not binding on the churches but concern only the people who appealed:

(*West Kelmscott 2006, Art 111*)

Synod decides:

not to sustain the appeal by FRC Kelmscott re Art 24, sub XI 3b of Acts of Synod Legana 2009, because no new grounds were provided.

(*Armada 2012, Art, 18*)

Appeal or Objection to a Retired Minister Delegated to Synod

Synod decides:

To deny the appeal.

(*Baldivis 2015, Art. 20*)

Appeal of FRC Busselton (Refer Art 109)

Synod decides:

Only those are allowed to vote on the appeal of Busselton who are not personally involved with this matter, which means the delegate from Busselton and the delegates from Classis South West who previously decided on this matter.

(*Baldivis 2015, Art. 106*)

Synod decided to declare three appeals inadmissible and gave the following grounds (directives) for interpreting the Church Order articles 30 and 31 and guiding future appeals from individual church members:

1. According to Church Order articles 30 and 31, individuals who wish to interact with decisions of Synod should begin by addressing their consistories. The local consistory, if they concur with the concerns, may direct an appeal to synod. If the local consistory does not take over the individual's appeal, he can appeal the local consistory's decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with article 31 of the Church Order. This procedure was not followed by the appellant.
2. Article 30 of the Church Order provides clarity on what defines an ecclesiastical matter and what should be dealt with at the broader assemblies. Article 31 of the Church Order deals exclusively with the appeal process. Article 31 states clearly, "if anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly." For the individual, his local consistory is the minor assembly. When the consistory accepts a decision of a synod, the individual's appeal is against the

consistory and, therefore, article 31 directs his subsequent appeal to the broader assembly of classis, and then synod.

3. The appellant makes reference to an apparent precedent set by Synod West Kelmscott 2006 in articles 19 and 62. Synod 2006 admitted as admissible some appeals from individuals about matters in common. However, Synod 2018 judges that admissibility must be governed by reference to the Church Order, not historical precedent.

(Bunbury 2018, Articles 76, 77, 78)

ARTICLE 32 - Credentials and voting

Delegates to a major assembly shall bring with them their credentials, signed by the minor assembly. They shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are directly involved.

Voting

Synod decides:

According to Article 32 CO delegates should refrain from voting if a matter concerns themselves personally or if it concerns a matter of their own local church.

(Albany 1987, Article 37)

ARTICLE 33 - Proposals

Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.

Synod decides:

It is the duty of the appellants to demonstrate that there are new grounds.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art 62, Proposal 5)

ARTICLE 34 - Chairman and clerk

In all assemblies there shall be a chairman and a clerk. The chairman's task is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with and ensure that everyone observes due order in speaking; he shall deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their emotions, and discipline those who refuse to listen. His task shall cease when the assembly ends. The clerk shall keep an accurate record of all things worthy of being recorded.

Synod decides:

A committee will be instructed to maintain indices of synod decisions.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 25)

ARTICLE 35 - Jurisdiction

The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the synod has over the classis.

ARTICLE 36 - Consistory

In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and as a rule be chaired by the minister. If a church is served by more than one minister they shall chair in turn. The consistory shall also meet regularly with the deacons to deal with those matters as described for that purpose by the Church Order, and further with all things which the consistory considers necessary for general management, including the material affairs of the church.

Synod decides:

To add the clause "as a rule" to art. 36 CO. The first two sentences will then read as follows:

"In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. It shall meet regularly and as a rule be chaired by the minister."

(Bunbury 2018, Article 100)

ARTICLE 37 - Consistory and the deacons

Where the number of elders and deacons is small the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement. This shall invariably be done where there are less than three elders and less than three deacons. In these circumstances matters pertaining to supervision and discipline shall be handled with the advice of the deacons and matters pertaining to the office of deacons with the advice of the elders.

ARTICLE 38 - Constitution of a consistory

If a consistory is to be instituted for the first time or anew, the advice of classis shall be sought.

ARTICLE 39 - Places without a consistory

Places where as yet no consistory can be instituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.

Work among the 'scattered'.

Synod decides:

1. to alter the decision of Synod 1954, Article 20 sub 2, regarding the official care for the scattered brothers and sisters;
2. and not to advise the consistories concerning the ecclesiastical position of the scattered.
(*Albany 1959, Article 27*).

ARTICLE 40 - Meetings of deacons

The deacons shall meet regularly to deal with the matters pertaining to their office. Their meetings shall begin and end with prayer.

ARTICLE 41 - Classis

Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating a minister and an elder, or if a church has no minister, two elders. Classis shall convene at least once every six months in person. The ministers shall be chairman in rotation, or one shall be chosen to be chairman; however, the same minister shall not be chairman twice in succession. The chairman shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. Every classis shall determine where and when the churches shall meet again. The last classis before synod shall choose delegates to that synod.

Classes

Synod decides:

2. To establish two classes instead of one.
3. To change Article 41 Church Order so that it reads "*Classis shall convene at least once every six months in person ...*"

(West Albany 2000, Article 43)

Synod decides:

Synod takes note of the submission of Classis South and decides to amend the Rules for Synod 2 as follows: in the event that three Classes will be instituted, the delegation to Synod for each Classis will be three ministers and three elders.

(Legana 2009, Article 18)

Needy churches

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 44)

Appeal regarding the "scope of classis"

Synod decides:

To deny the appeal of Busselton. to review Article 11 of Classis Southwest, October 2013 and rule that:

1. *A major assembly should never take over the task which a minor assembly should do. In this case a classis took over the task which the minor assembly, the consistory, should do, or in the case of the appellants, should be asked to complete. This is based on the church orderly rule that a major assembly should never assume tasks which can and should be completed by the minor assembly (cf. Art 30 CO).*
2. *This decision of Classis is in fact not a judgement on a consistory decision, but an ethical ruling; and*
3. *Classis may not lord it over the churches, and in this decision Classis oversteps the boundaries of its jurisdiction, by doing something it was not allowed to do; making a binding statement on an ethical issue none of the churches had asked for.*

(Baldivis 2015, Article 109)

ARTICLE 42 - Ministers who are not delegated to a classis
If two or more ministers are serving the same church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.

ARTICLE 43 - Counsellors

Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall sign the letter of call.

ARTICLE 44 - Church visitors

Each year classis shall authorise at least two of the more experienced and able ministers to visit the churches in that year. If necessary, the classis may authorise a capable elder to carry out this task together with a minister. It shall be the task of these visitors to inquire whether all things are regulated and done in full harmony with the Word of God, whether the office-bearers fulfil the duties of their office faithfully as they have promised, and whether the Church Order is being observed and maintained in every respect, in order that they may in good time fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in anything, and that by their good counsel and advice all things may be directed towards the edification and preservation of Christ's church. They shall submit written reports of their visits to classis.

ARTICLE 45 - Synod

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes, each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. In the event that there are three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time for extraordinary reasons at the request of two classes. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod.

(This article was revised by Synod Legana 2009 and Synod Baldivis 2015)

Delegates

Synod decides:

As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders.
(West Albany 2000, Article 41)

Executive Committee

Synod decides:

To continue with two clerks in the Executive Committee
(Rockingham 2003, Article 105)

Synod decides:

To appoint Br M.Pot as Website assistant under the General Secretary for Relations with Other Churches.
(Rockingham 2003, Article 108)

Synod decides:

Synod takes note of the submission of Classis South and decides to amend the Rules for Synod 2 as follows: in the event that three Classes will be instituted, the delegation to Synod for each Classis will be three ministers and three elders.
(Legana 2009, Article 18)

Consequent upon the decision to amend the Rules for Synods under Article 18 (Legana 2009) Synod decided to amend Article 45 Church Order as follows:

Synod decides:

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. In the event that there are three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders.
At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of a classis. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod.
(Legana 2009, Article 34)

Synod decides:

1. To thank the Deputies and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. provide and operate an audiovisual system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;
 - b. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which includes but is not limited to:
 - i. central data storage

- ii. convenient printing capability;
 - iii. secure internal email facilities;
 - iv. data backup;
 - c. liaise with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of the Synod venue preparations;
 - d. be present and able to assist at all Synod sessions;
 - e. provide full computer and sound support;
 - f. provide a general logistical support role during Synod for delegates.
3. To make allowance on the budget for one deputy to attend the next Synod.
(Legana 2009, Article 90)

Synod decides:

To change Article 45 Church Order to the following:

"The Synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. At the close of Synod the time and place for the next Synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A Synod shall be convened before the appointed time for extraordinary reasons at the request of two classes. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular Synod."

(Baldivis 2015, Article 130)

Synod decides:

1. To discharge the current General Secretary deputies, and reappoint one new deputy with the following mandate:
 - a. to maintain the central PO Box, distribute the mail to the deputies, and acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary, pass it on to the churches; and
 - b. to collate all deputies reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in an appropriate format. Deputies' reports are to be submitted, six months prior to the next synod, so that they can be printed and distributed to the churches as per the Rules of Synod.
2. To not support the requests from FRC Kelmscott.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 102)

Amendment to Article 45

Synod agrees to the following change to Article 45.

"A Synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of a classis. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod."

(Rockingham 2003, Article 32)

Article 45 CO as it was prior to revision in 2003:

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders.

At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time if according to the judgment of at least two classes this appears necessary. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod, subject to the approval of its classis.

Rules for Synods

Synod adopts "Rules for the Synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia".
(Armada 1956, Article 7)

Synod decides:

2. To request deputies for the revision of Synod Procedures and Rules to investigate more thoroughly this matter of receiving submissions from individual members (cf. 5.6 of Kelmscott's Draft Regulations for Conduct of Synod).

(Kelmscott 1996, Article 29)

Synod decides:

To amend Rule 1.6 of the Rules for Synods as follows:

Arrange meeting accommodation for synod and its committees; any necessary sound amplification; all administrative support facilities; and refreshments and meals. Also, recommend to Synod a qualified administrative assistant to the Clerk (see Rule 3.2).

(Rockingham 2003, Article 12)

Synod decides:

1. the following instruction be inserted between the Regulations 1.3 and 1.4 (with subsequent numbering altered):

1.4 As soon as classes have appointed delegates to Synod. Forward to each of the delegates and each of the alternates one unbound and unfolded copy of the Provisional Draft Agenda. As further material becomes available, forward one unbound and unfolded copy to each of the delegates and alternates.

2. Rule 1.5 (currently 1.4) be altered to read:

Confidential matters must be sent to delegates and alternates only.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 91)

Synod decides:

To continue with two clerks in the Executive committee.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 105)

Synod decides:

To adopt the proposal of West Albany "that the Rules for Synod be amended as suggested by the Deputies for Synod Treasury, by adopting the changes in the draft proposal for amendment found in Appendix 3o in the Acts of Synod 2009" (pp 186-196).

(Armadale 2012, Article 117)

Synod decides:

A. Not to make a general decision about live streaming all open sessions of synod at this time:

1. The Rules for Synods 7.4 imply that the right of admission to the audience of open sessions is for members of the FRCA and sister churches, so synod meetings are, in principle, not open to just anyone.
2. A change of this nature requires careful consideration of the implications for the work of synod, and should come from the churches.

B. For this synod:

1. Synod will only live stream the evening sessions.
2. The agenda is structured so that in the evening sessions synod listens to foreign delegates' addresses and any matters of interest as determined by the officers of synod.
3. The link for live stream will be sent to members of the FRCA and foreign delegates with the request that this not be publicised.

(Albany 2021, Article 13)

Non-delegated office-bearers

Synod decides:

Non-delegated office-bearers are urgently requested to attend the sessions of Synod as much as possible.

(Albany 1962, Article 42)

Acts of Synods

Synod decides:

The Acts of Synod should be printed within six weeks of closure.

(Launceston 1978, Article 12)

Synod decides:

To write Acts of Closed Sessions only for the purpose of recording confidential matters.

(Launceston 1998, Article 16)

Acts on Internet

Synod decides:

to place Acts of Synod on the internet, on the proviso that the matters of personal nature are excluded and that in matters relating to other churches discretion will be used.

(Armada 2012, Article 13)

Synod decides

1. To place the Acts of Synod on the internet after they are adopted, provided that matters of a personal nature will be excluded and, in matters relating to other churches, discretion will be used.

2. A daily agenda will also be published on the internet.

(Albany 2021, Article 14)

Synodical decisions

Synod decides:

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

(Armada 1990, Article 19)

Rules for Synod Treasury

Synod decides:

To adopt the proposed "Rules for Synod Treasury".

(Armada 1990, Article 48)

Synod decides to:

1. Accept the Synod Treasurer's Financial Report which comprises a Report, Statement of Receipts and Statement of Expenditure for 1 April 2009 to 30 April 2012.
2. That Deputies for Infrastructure/Venue may also place a claim for loss of wages.
3. Set the rate for reimbursement of motor vehicle travel at 45 cents per kilometre.
4. Set the rate for reimbursement of loss of income at \$210 per day.
5. Adopt the 2012-2015 Budget as amended by Synod.
6. Adopt the cost sharing arrangement for the churches as amended by Synod.
7. Thank the Treasurer for the work done and discharge him from his mandate.

(Armada 2012, Article 118)

Synod decides:

1. To thank the Deputy for his work and accept the Deputy's report.
2. To accept the proposed draft budget as presented by the Deputy and amended by the Financial Committee of Synod Bunbury 2018 to allow for those impacted by Synod decisions.
3. To appoint a new Treasurer Deputy, ensuring the requirements of the mandate are provided as per Synod Rule 11.2.
4. To estimate the costs for the next inter-synodical period of 2018 – 2021 to be \$50,000, and authorise the Treasurer to collect this amount from the churches, with the liberty to vary this amount if required.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 115)

Delegates from other churches

1. Synod adopts a fourfold distinction of delegates from other churches, namely,
 - a) Delegates from sister churches;
 - b) Delegates from churches with whom we have TEC (temporary ecclesiastical contact, Editor)
 - c) Delegates from churches with whom the FRCA have entered official contact;

- d) Delegates from churches which want to come into contact with the FRCA.
- 2. Synod specifies the privileges of these delegates as follows:
 - a. Delegates from sister churches:
 - They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our sister relations;
 - They will sit as advisory members of Synod. As such they will be permitted to give advice when they request or are requested to do so. This applies both to the floor of Synod and the advisory committees;
 - They will be offered normal Christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - b. Delegates from churches with whom we have TEC:
 - They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our TEC;
 - They will be permitted to speak when they request or are requested to do so, but only on matters specifically pertaining to the relations between the two bonds of churches. This applies both to the floor of Synod and the advisory committees.
 - They will be offered normal Christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - c. Delegates from churches with whom the FRCA have entered official contact:
 - They will be given the privilege to address Synod to pass on greetings and relevant information about our contacts;
 - They will be offered normal Christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.
 - d. Delegates from churches which want to come into contact with the FRCA:
 - They are invited to attend Synod, yet without any other privileges;
 - They will be offered normal Christian hospitality, i.e. lodging and meals.

(Bedforddale 1992, Article 19)

Technical equipment

Synod decides:

- 6. To appoint a 'sound-man' to care for the audio equipment of Synod.

(Kelmescott 1996, Article 107)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 98)

Synod decides:

- 1. To thank brothers E.'tHart and A.van der Wal for the construction of a special sound system and the computer infrastructure for the benefit of synod sessions, for storing and maintaining it and for operating it at this Synod.
- 2. To extend the mandate of the deputies to include the provision of a network and IT infrastructure for the next Synod.
- 3. To discharge the brothers and to appoint new deputies to take care of the technical equipment for Synod.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 104)

Infrastructure and Venue.

Synod decides:

- 1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
- 2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. provide and operate an audio-visual system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;
 - b. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which includes but is not limited to:
 - v. central data storage

- vi. convenient printing capability;
- vii. secure internal email facilities;
- viii. data backup;
- c. liaise with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of the Synod venue preparations;
- d. be present and able to assist at all Synod sessions;
- e. provide full computer and sound support;
- f. Provide a general logistical support role during Synod for delegates.

(Armadale 2012, Article 119)

Synod decides:

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. continue to maintain a Synod hosting handbook;
 - b. liaise with the next convening church regarding:
 - i. requirements for Synod venue;
 - ii. pass on handbook to next convening church when that consistory calls the "Synod Committee";
 - iii. maintain contact with Synod committee in their deliberations and preparations for Synod;
 - iv. be closely involved with the Venue SubCommittee;
 - v. request that Synod committee re-evaluates and updates the handbook if necessary and pass it back to the deputies; and
 - vi. arrange storage and setup of Synod table and associated hardware;
 - c. provide and operate an audio system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;
 - d. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which:
 - i. is easy to use;
 - ii. has central data storage;
 - iii. has convenient printing capability;
 - iv. has secure internal email facilities;
 - v. has data and email backup; and
 - vi. includes a data projector for the audience to follow the discussions and also project the Psalm or Hymn that will be sung;
 - e. work closely with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of the Synod venue preparations;
 - f. liaise with the convening church prior to Synod for a copy of all reports and agenda items so that the agenda can be setup with links to the relevant documents, and to make this available when delegates log on to the "Synod Server";
 - g. be available and able to assist at all Synod sessions;
 - h. provide full computer and sound support; and
 - i. report to the next Synod.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 104)

Internet

Synod decides:

The synod shall be held every three years. As long as there are two classes each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. In the event that there are three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. At the close of synod the time and place for the next synod shall be determined and a church shall be appointed to convene it. A synod shall be convened before the appointed time at the request of a classis. Its time and place shall be decided by the church appointed as convening church for the next regular synod.

(Legana 2009, Article 34)

Synod decides:

to place Acts of synod on the Internet on the proviso that the matters of personal nature are excluded and that in matters relating to other churches discretion will be used.

(Armadale 2012, Article 13)

ARTICLE 46 - Relationship with other churches

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

Sections:

- A. Deputies
- B. Recognition of other churches
- C. Sister churches
 - a. rules etc.
 - b. relations
- D. Contact churches
 - a. rules
 - b. general
 - c. contacts
- E. Discontinued relationships and contacts

A . DEPUTIES

Synod decides:

to change the name of deputies from 'Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister Churches' to 'Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad'.

(Launceston 1985, Article 74 sub I)

Synod decides:

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 (for Sister Churches, Other Churches [Reformed], and Other Churches [Presbyterian] respectively, Ed.) 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 them to Synod.

The duties of the general secretary are:

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

(Launceston 1998, Articles 125, 6 and 6.3)

Synod decides:

that synod insert "at least once per year" in the general mandate for all deputies so that the third sentence reads: *All the deputyships will meet together at least once per year and as needed to inform and consult with each other regarding their work.*

(Rockingham 2003, Article 95)

Synod decides:

To adopt the proposed changes to the Guidelines for Support:

1. There shall be good consultation and as much cooperation as possible with churches in our own bond and sister churches who offer support to the same churches. Such consultation and cooperation should also extend to aid organisations (from within our churches/sister churches) who offer support to these churches. Care should be taken not to duplicate support that may already be given by other organizations.
2. Each request for support must as much as possible be channelled via the respective deputies of their churches. Support will be sent as much as possible via these deputies. Our deputies are responsible for proper distribution of funds.
3. Each project must build up the biblical, reformed character of church-life, or help overcome impediments in church-life.

4. Each request for support should be well documented and include:
 - i. What initiative and responsibility the requesting party takes;
 - ii. What purpose the project has;
 - iii. What length of time it will take;
 - iv. And the expected goal of the project.
5. Support given must keep in mind certain practical principles:
 - i. Support shall be directed as a matter of preference to the whole bond of churches rather than to specific churches or to individuals;
 - ii. Support should occur only if the supporting church(es) cannot reasonably be expected to do it, and if the support is essential or important for building up church-life;
 - iii. Support should respect and maintain the responsibility of the churches supported;
 - iv. Support should help to activate churches rather than make them inactive;
 - v. Support should aim to make itself superfluous, i.e. not become permanent;
 - vi. Support must not engender jealousies, i.e. it must be given evenly and consistent with that offered to other parties;
 - vii. Support should be aimed at the spiritual level of those supported;
 - viii. Support should be in agreement with the laws of the country, unless those laws conflict with the Word of God;
 - ix. And support should be supervised, and an accounting including an evaluation of its effectiveness should be given.
6. The deputies at home shall keep the churches, which offer this support informed so that support can also be accompanied with prayer for these churches. Such information should be offered at the start of a project, during the time a project is in progress and at its completion. At its completion an evaluation of the project can be given.
7. The deputies shall report to the next synod about any support given.
8. The deputies will have an independent, competent third party audit its books and this audit will be passed on to the churches.

(Rockingham 2003, Article 86)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 111)

B . RECOGNITION OF OTHER CHURCHES

Synod declares:

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

1. means that both our churches and that recognized church stand on the foundations as expressed in Article 27 to 32 of the Belgic Confession;
2. has a direct consequence that a sister church relationship can be established, without disregarding the fact that historical developments may well give cause to several stumbling blocks still lying in the road to a practical realization of unity;
3. and that our church members join that church, and vice versa, in the case that such church is their nearest church, in accordance with Article 28 of the Belgic Confession.

(Launceston 1985, Article 67)

Synod decides [in response to an appeal]:

The declaration regarding the meaning and implications of recognising a church as "true and faithful church" (Synod Launceston 1985, Article 67) is maintained.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 59)

C . SISTER CHURCHES

a . Rules etc .

Rules for sister relations

Synod decides:

1. to adopt the rules recommended by deputies (and amended) for sister relations as follows:

RULES FOR EXERCISING SISTER RELATIONS

1. Sister relations shall be used mutually to assist, encourage and exhort one another to live as churches of God in this world.
2. The churches shall mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.
3. The churches shall inform each other of the decisions taken by their broadest assemblies, if possible by sending each other their Acts or their Minutes and, otherwise, at least by sending the decisions relevant to the respective churches (if possible in translation).
4. The churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties.
5. The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations.
6. The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations. Also the churches agree in principle to the possibility of calling each other's ministers, while the churches reserve for themselves the right to maintain their own rules in connection with the extension and approval of calls.
7. In cases of substantial changes or additions to the confession, church order or liturgical forms this intention shall be brought to the special attention of the sister churches, so that as much consultation as possible can take place before a final decision is reached.
8. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible.

(Bedfordale 1992, Article 95 sub 3)

Double correspondence

Synod declares:

that it is desirable that foreign sister churches, when they enter into correspondence with other churches, urge the latter to try - as a consequence of this new correspondence - to contact those sister churches in the world that are living in a relation of correspondence with the first mentioned churches.

(Launceston 1970, Article 35)

Delegates to synods of sister churches

Synod decides:

to add an instruction in the mandate of the deputies to be appointed for the correspondence with foreign churches, wherein they, as soon as they receive an invitation or announcement of a coming synod in a foreign sister church, inform the churches so that they can determine whether one of the office-bearers can represent the churches.

(Armadale 1972, Article 18)

b. Relations

Sister churches

Synod decides:

to enter into the relationship of correspondence with the following foreign churches:
a. De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands).

- b. The Canadian Reformed Churches.
- c. Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (The Free Reformed Churches in South-Africa).
- d. De Gereformeerde Kerken in Indonesië (The Reformed Churches in Indonesia)

(Armada 1954, Article 14)

Synod decides:

- 1. to enter in principle into full correspondence with The Presbyterian Church of Korea as sister churches.

(Albany 1975, Article 82)

Canada

The Canadian Reformed Churches

Synod decides:

- 1. To continue sister relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches according to the established rules.
- 2. To monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to our rules.
- 3. To authorise deputies (in cooperation with the Deputies for Training for the Ministry) to send one delegate to the next General Synod (2007 in Smithers).

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 85)

Synod decides:

- 1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
- 2. Mandate Deputies to:
 - a) Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b) Stay informed on developments concerning the pending merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including the proposed revisions to the Church Order;
 - c) Seek clarification about and discuss the changing manner in which they deal with significant differences with other church federations in their unity discussions;
 - d) In the unity discussion between the CanRC and the URCNA, encourage the CanRC to maintain the principle that the churches maintain a theological college on the basis that we use their college for our Australian churches
 - e) Encourage the CanRC to continue supporting the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ
 - f) Invite the CanRC to combine a visit to Australia with their planned visit to New Zealand in September
 - g) Send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod 2010 pending finances.

(Legana 2009, Article 40)

Synod decides:

- 1. To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
- 2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b. stay informed on the developments concerning the potential merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including changes to the Church Order, Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayers Forms;
 - c. encourage the CanRC to support the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ;
 - d. stay informed of the sister-church developments in North America (URCNA, OPC, RCUS and ERQ); and
 - e. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Carman West during 2013, pending finances.

(Armada 2012, Article 49)

Synod decides:

1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
 - b. Stay informed on the developments concerning the potential merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including changes to the Church Order, Creeds, Confessions, Forms and Prayer Forms;
 - c. Stay informed of the sister-church developments in North America (URCNA, OPC, RCUS and ERQ);
 - d. Send two (2) delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled in Dunnville, Ontario during 2016, pending finances; and
 - e. To liaise with the Canadian deputies regarding their and our relationship with the RCN.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 96)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 47)

Indonesia

Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia

Synod decides:

A. Regarding GGRI:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To continue the financial support of the church at Kataka for the support of Rev. Pila Njuka and to reconsider this support after the theological seminary has been established;
5. To support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause;
6. To financially support evangelist Benyamin Rohi to come to Australia to study English and to familiarize himself with the Australian churches for three months subject to a financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches and if possible Rev. Yawan Bunda of the GGRC;
7. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
8. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully practise the unity they already recognize;
9. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 58)

Synod decides:

Regarding the GGRI:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules;
2. To continue to visit the synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches;
4. To support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. In light of the importance for the GGRI to maintain their own college to thoroughly train their ministers, deputies should encourage and work with the Dutch sister churches in this matter as much as possible. Also, to offer additional support of the FRCA deputies in the monumental task of upgrading both the educational level and the buildings of the theological college.
5. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches.
6. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues.
7. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to achieve federal unity with the GGRC.
8. To keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Canadian sister churches regarding the Indonesian churches.
9. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 4,5,6,7 above.

(Legana 2009, Article 57)

Synod decides:

1. To thankfully acknowledge the developments in the GGRI with respect to the establishment of a larger federation consisting of the three regional synods and to acknowledge the new federation as our sister in Christ and to carry out that relationship in accord with the established rules; to report to the churches with a clearer picture of the federation of churches in Papua and the federation of churches in Kalimantan Barat that have united and formed one federation with the GGRI-NTT in February 2012, confirming their Reformed character, and the implications of this union.
2. To visit the regional synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance when invited.
3. To support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
4. To continue to support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. In light of the importance for the GGRI to maintain their own college to thoroughly train their ministers, deputies should encourage and work with the Dutch and Canadian sister churches in this matter as much as possible. The deputies shall see to it that there are no conflicts of interests among those involved. The deputies should offer additional support of the FRCA deputies in the monumental task of upgrading both the educational level and the buildings of the theological college.
5. To encourage the GGRI (via their deputies and the Board of the Theological College) to seek the help of those involved in the establishment of the Indonesian Reformed Theological Seminary in Kupang (which is supported by the CanRC in Smithville).
6. To financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months subject to a financial arrangement with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches.
7. To see to it that effective communication with the people involved is possible and if necessary also to make limited financial support available.

8. To monitor and report developments on the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to bring this to the attention of the regional and general synods of the GGRI so that they are willing to actively seek this federal unity with the GGRC.
9. To keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Dutch and Canadian sister churches regarding the GGRI churches.
10. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the mandate of deputies detailed in points 2-8.

(Armada 2012, Article 86)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To continue to visit the national and regional Synods and conferences of the GGRI subject to available finance.
3. To support the GGRI with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches.
4. To continue to support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. To encourage the church at Mundijong to make their minister available for lectures at the seminary in Waimarangu, Sumba and to ask the other churches in our bond to assist the church of Mundijong in the pulpit supply during Rev A van Delden's absence. In light of the importance for the GGRI to maintain their own college, deputies should encourage and work with the Dutch and Canadian sister churches in this matter as much as possible. Given the fact that the Dutch churches are decreasing their financial contributions to the theological training in Sumba deputies receive the mandate to approach the Canadian churches for support.
5. To encourage the GGRI and their deputyship re the Theological Seminary to seek the expertise and help of the external adviser Rev Dr AJ Pol and – if necessary – to make some finances available for his task.
6. To contact the church of Smithville and the Canadian deputies re Indonesian churches to develop a common understanding regarding unity amongst the Indonesian churches and to continue to seek cooperation in the theological training of future ministers.
7. To support two students/ministers financially to come to Australia during the inter-Synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months subject to financial arrangements with the Dutch deputies and subject to available funding from the churches.
8. To see to it that effective communication with the people involved is possible and if necessary also to make limited financial support available.
9. To consult with the GGRI, the GGRC, and the Canadian Reformed Churches to determine the obstacles on the way to unity, and, to work together with all parties involved to remove or overcome those obstacles, and to encourage the national and regional Synod of both the GGRI and GGRI-NTT respectively to plan and progress towards federal unity between themselves and the GGRC, and if possible, the mission work of Smithville in Timor.
10. To keep in contact and share information with deputies of our Dutch and Canadian sister churches regarding the GGRI churches.
11. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies 1-10 above mentioned.
12. To as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI Papua and the GGRI Kalimantan Barat that have united and formed one federation with the GGRI NTT in February 2012, confirming their Reformed character and the implications of this union.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 118)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. send delegates to visit the national and regional synods of the GGRI subject to available finance;

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 105)

Korea

The Presbyterian Church in Korea

Synod decides:

To continue sister relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) according to the established rules.

(West Albany 2000, Article 32)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules and to publish the fruit of these relations for the churches.
2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in improved lines of communications as well as a visit from a delegation of our Korean sisters.
3. To accept the assessment of deputies that since there is agreement for better communications, there is also reason to be more optimistic about the viability of continued sister relations.
4. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to visit the PCK once in the next three years subject to available funds.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 40)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules and to publish the fruit of these relations for the churches.
2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in continued improved lines of communications.
3. To authorise deputies to send one delegate to visit the PCK once in the next three years subject to available funds.
4. To ask the deputies to stay informed about the IRCK + RCK + IRPK and to offer any help that is possible and practical through the sister relations with the PCK

(Legana 2009, Article 46)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister-church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin).
2. To encourage the PCK (Kosin) in their resolve to maintain the unity of the Church.
3. To make the Churches within our bond aware of the Presbyterian Church (Kosin) Australia.
4. To honour the agreement with the RCN and CanRC by sending them a copy of this report as well as our decision regarding the Korean Presbyterian Church.
5. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

- a. to maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
- b. to keep contact with Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) along with the RCN and the CanRC in the context of taking turns (once every three years) to send, upon available funds, one delegate to a General Assembly in 2013.

(Armadale 2012, Article 66)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister-church relations with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK) according to the established rules.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. send two delegates, including (if possible) one Korean speaking delegate, to the KPCK General Assembly in 2016;
 - c. further investigate the model and the mode of missionary work being undertaken by the KPCK in order to assist the local churches of the FRCA to determine whether and how they might cooperate together in their missionary calling.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 71)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2019, Article 49)

New Zealand

Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

Synod decides:

to instruct deputies to write to the next Synod of The Reformed Churches of New Zealand to point out to these churches that their sister church relationship with, for instance, The Reformed Churches of Australia, as well as their second level correspondence with the G.K.N.(Synodical) are impediments to continue the existing contact.

(Launceston 1985, Art.75)

Synod decides:

to convey its thanks to the R.C.N.Z. that it has terminated all ties with the G.K.N.(Syn.) and that it has decided to oppose very strongly the membership of the G.K.N.(Syn.) in the R.E.S. as well as to withdraw from the R.E.S. if the G.K.N.(Syn.) is not expelled.
to instruct deputies to continue the contact with the R.C.N.Z., and specifically to call their attention to relations with other churches with which we have broken all ties.

(Albany 1987, Art.105)

Synod decides:

2. to express its joy over the obedience granted to the RCNZ in withdrawing from the REC;
5. to maintain the contact at the present level, in order that the FRCA may be a hand and a foot in the struggle by the RCNZ to preserve the Reformed faith in their churches, to address the obstacles that kept us apart in the past and to continue the discussions about their relations with third parties with whom we do not have any official relations such as the RCA (The Reformed Churches of Australia, Ed.) and the CRCNA (The Christian Reformed

Churches of North America, Ed.) and the contacts with the NGK (The Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, Ed.), since if these contacts continue indefinitely they will be an impediment to continuing contacts between the FRCA and RCNZ;

6. to adopt deputies' recommendations regarding more direct contacts with the RCNZ, and to permit the deputies to visit the RCNZ in order to clearly address the impediments mentioned in Recommendation 5;

7. to consult with the Dutch deputies in order to coordinate our contacts.

(Armadale 1990, Art.53).

Synod decides:

2. to express its appreciation for the manner in which the RCNZ deputies have responded to the issues raised by our deputies and for the invitation to be represented in their forthcoming Synod.

3. to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

a. to maintain contact at the present level and to assess the RCNZ's commitment towards resolving the issues that have kept us apart (cf. Acts 1990, Article 53, Recommendation 5);

b. to liaise with the deputies of the RCNZ, especially with regards to third parties.

(Bedforddale 1992, Art.84)

Synod decides:

2. to continue contacts with the RCNZ at the present level.

3. to work towards a resolution about third parties, so that the way can be opened toward sister relations.

4. how the relation of the RCNZ with the RCA should impact our relation with the RCNZ.

(Byford 1994, Art. 78).

Synod decides:

1. Synod notes with thankfulness that the recent Synod of the RCNZ could acknowledge the FRCA as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Synod declares its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in the RCNZ.

3. Synod declares its appreciation for the principled approach which the RCNZ have shown in dealing with third parties by their encouragement and establishment of relations with faithful churches and by their admonition and if necessary breaking of ties with unfaithful churches.

4. To strive for a sister church relation with the RCNZ.

Synod mandates deputies to:

i. encourage the RCNZ to continue with their admonitions to the RCA, and to terminate relations with the RCA if these admonitions continue to go unheeded,

ii. clearly explain to the RCNZ the reasons for this Synod's decisions, taking into account comments in paragraph 5.3 of Deputies report and the decision of Synod Launceston 1985 (Article 67).

iii. investigate the developments leading to the formation of the Geneva Free Reformed Church of Auckland,

iv. attend the next Synod of the RCNZ if invited, and

v. invite delegates from the RCNZ to attend the next Synod of the FRCA as observers with the privileges mentioned in Acts Synod Bedforddale 1992, Article 19, Recommendation 2b.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art.53).

Synod decides:

1. To thank Deputies for the work they have done, and to discharge them.

2. To reaffirm its gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies have found in The Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

3. To mandate Deputies to strive for sister church relations with The Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:

(a) continuing dialogue with them in order to:

- 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.

- 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 DV 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 NZ deputies.

c) inviting delegates from 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 IV).

d) providing information to the membership of our churches about The Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

(Launceston 1998, Art.89).

Synod decides: (The following decision refers to a proposal of the church of West Albany "to recognise The Reformed Churches of New Zealand as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ", and "offer to enter into a fraternal relationship with the RCNZ" according to a number of rules, which proposal was defeated by Synod. Ed.)

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

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

(West Albany 2000, Art.93)

Synod decides:

1. Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations
2. To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ,
3. To ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relation with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy
4. To recognise that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA
5. To assess the situation with respect to this relation at an upcoming synod to see if this remains a difficulty to entering into full sister-church relations or not
6. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to convey these decisions to the RCNZ
 - b. to assess to what extent the triangular relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod
 - c. to intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows
 - d. to invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ

- e. to keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits

(Rockingham, 2003, Article 72)

Synod decides:

2. To renew the mandate of deputies to strive for relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand by:
 - a. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA, and to encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA where necessary.
 - b. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest.
 - c. Reassuring the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of a triangular relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.
 - d. Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our "Rules for Synods" (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).
 - e. Providing information to the membership of our churches about the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
3. To encourage consistories to take note, and act on, Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ in regard to practical support and interaction where these are not restricted to those between sister churches only, e.g. application of membership from former members of the RCNZ, matters pertaining to the mission field and theological and Christian education.
4. To convey Synod's decisions to RCNZ.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 102)

Synod decides:

2. To confirm what was said by Synod 2003, namely to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To note that no substantial progress has been made in the understanding between the FRCA and RCNZ on the matter of the importance of the impediment which prevents the FRCA from entering into a sister relationship with the RCNZ.
4. To affirm that Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ has consequences in practical support and interaction. e.g. working together on the PNG mission field and supporting the theological training at the Bible College in PNG.
5. To renew the mandate of deputies to strive for sister-relations with the RCNZ by:
 - a. Monitoring the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA;
 - b. Encouraging the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA and be consequential in this relationship.
 - c. To discuss with the RCNZ their decision made at Synod Hasting 2008, which says that the RCNZ "cannot accept that their sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting their offer of sister-church relations".
 - d. Authorising two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest.
 - e. Reassuring the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of their sister relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.
 - f. Inviting delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod as observers with the privileges mentioned in rules 6 of our "Rules for Synods" (Acts 1998, Appendix 12).
 - g. Providing information about the RCNZ to the membership of our churches.
6. To deny the overture of FRC Mt Nasura.
7. To decline the invitation of the RCNZ that we attend as observers at the meeting of the ICRC to be held DV in September 2009 in Christchurch.

(Legana 2009, Article 63)

Synod decides:

1. To confirm what was said by Synod 2000 (Acts Article 93), namely, to recognize that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to express our continued resolve to

work towards the goal of a sister church relationship, and thereby bring our unity in faith to practical and visible expression.

2. To continue to encourage our local churches to exercise practical support and interaction wherever possible in areas that are not reserved for relationships between sister churches.
3. To acknowledge that the RCNZ decided to change its relationship with the CRCA (Minutes of the Acts RCNZ Synod 2011, Art. 93 pp1-24) "... 3. To discontinue the sister church relationship with the CRCA and establish instead a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship."
4. Not to accept the deputies proposal to enter into fraternal relations with the RCNZ.
5. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. convey Synod's decisions to the RCNZ and provide to the RCNZ a copy of the Acts of Synod Armadale 2012;
 - b. observe and report on the continuing faithfulness of the RCNZ in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy;
 - c. determine how the nature and practical implications of the RCNZ's new relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCA differs from their previous sister church relationship and evaluate how this impacts on the impediment identified by previous Synods;
 - d. encourage the RCNZ to continue to be consequential in their relationship with the CRCA;
 - e. invite delegates of the RCNZ to our next Synod;
 - f. upon invitation attend the next Synod of the RCNZ with two deputies and endeavour to meet with the inter-church relations committee of the RCNZ at least twice within the inter-synodical period, in order to stay well-informed about the RCNZ (pending budget constraints);
 - g. provide information about the RCNZ to the membership of our churches and keep the churches informed about the decisions of the RCNZ and the work of the deputies.
6. That these decisions adequately address submissions from FRC Byford, FRC Darling Downs and FRC Mt Nasura.

(Southern River, 2012, Article 89)

Synod decides:

To accept Recommendations 1-5, together with the grounds, of the deputies report:

1. Express thankfulness for the faithfulness deputies have observed in the RCNZ and in their decision to discontinue a sister church relationship with the CRCA.
2. To offer sister church relationship to the RCNZ under the established rules, and to accept their offer of a sister church relationship.
3. To invite delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next Synod.
4. To authorise two delegates to visit (if invited) the next Synod of the RCNZ.
5. To discharge deputies and thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To convey Synod's decisions to the RCNZ and provide them with a copy of the Acts as well as the 'Rules for Sister Church Relations';
 - b. to continue to monitor the impact of the Ecumenical Fellowship relation of the RCNZ with the CRCA, and to encourage the RCNZ to be consequential in this relationship in light of the concerns expressed in the report to Synod 2015;
 - c. to promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the RCNZ and FRCA by way of exchange of speakers where opportunity arises as well as exchange of publication of articles;
 - d. monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established 'Rules for Sister Church Relations' and keep the churches informed;
 - e. to report to next Synod along with recommendations.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 38)

Synod decides:

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ, under the established rules;

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

(Synod 2018, Article 79)

Singapore

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)

Synod decides:

That Synod appoint deputies with a mandate to take up contact with the FERCS on behalf of the FRCA, and to make a careful investigation of this church according to BCF Art 29, exploring the feasibility of a sister church relationship, and presenting a detailed report and accompanying recommendations to Synod 2015.

(Armada 2012, Art. 22)

Synod decides:

1. Synod recognises the First Evangelical Reformed Church (FERC) of Singapore as a true and faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Synod extends an offer of a sister church relationship with the FERC of Singapore, according to the adopted rules of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).
3. Should the FERC of Singapore accept the offer of a sister church relationship, this relationship is to take effect from the date of such written acceptance by the FERC of Singapore.
4. The current deputies be discharged from their appointment, and that Synod appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Contact the FERC of Singapore with the decision of Synod Baldivis 2015.
 - b. Work through the practical issues that arise from having a sister church relationship with a single church, such as those arising from Rules c and h of our Rules for Exercising Sister Relations.
 - c. Visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next three years to learn more about them and strengthen our relationship.
 - d. Give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to members of the FRCA.
 - e. Offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible.

- f. Report to the next Synod the results of their work.
- g. Invite delegates from the FERC of Singapore to our next Synod.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 58)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 106)

South Africa

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Article 31).

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To instruct deputies to send one delegate to their next synod (2008).

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 97)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To instruct deputies to send one delegate to their next synod (2011).
3. To mandate deputies to coordinate responses to any requests received, and to involve the churches and/or other deputies as appropriate.
4. Synod mandates the Deputies for Relations with Sister Churches to coordinate the support for needy churches in South Africa, and give opportunity for the Australian churches to take

on particular “projects” in order to involve the congregations beyond simply finances in the support for our South African sisters. This could include continuing the support for the manse in Bethal, supporting a minister in Bethal, and/or supporting further needy church projects.

(Legana 2009, Article 45)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To appoint an auditor for the financial records of the support provided.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. coordinate responses to any requests for support received from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa, and to involve the Australian churches as appropriate;
 - b. keep the Australian churches informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via *Una Sancta*;
 - c. send two delegates to their next synod and, if possible, to visit the church(es) where support is provided.

(Armada 2012, Article 67)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister relations with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa according to the established rules.
2. To appoint the Deputies Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided and report to the next Synod.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
 - b. coordinate responses to any requests for support received from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa, and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate;
 - c. keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via *Una Sancta*;
 - d. send two delegates to the next FRCSA Synod in 2017.
4. Synod appreciates the clarification given by the delegates from the FRCSA and the DGK that the DGK did not require the FRCSA to sever the relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches as a precondition for closer relations.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 128)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 81)

D. CONTACT CHURCHES

Synod decides:

As there should be only one form of permanent ecclesiastical fellowship between sister churches, and this under the mutually accepted rules for correspondence, any rules for temporary ecclesiastical contact should make clear that the contact has as its ultimate aim the establishment of a sister-church relationship.

(Launceston 1985, Article 74 sub II)

Synod decides:

5. to discontinue offering "temporary ecclesiastical contact" and to ask deputies to work towards sister relations with those churches with whom we presently have temporary ecclesiastical contact.

(Bedforddale 1992, Article 95)

Synod decides:

To instruct deputies for correspondence with foreign sister churches:

6. to be diligent in seeking contact with those churches which are faithful to the Scriptures, and to see if we can enter into correspondence with them.

(Armadale 1972, Article 53)

Synod decides:

Closer contacts with geographically close churches will be developed wherever possible.

Sumba, Sri Lanka and Taiwan are mentioned in this context.

(Armadale 1980, Article 53)

Synod decides:

to instruct deputies to investigate those possibilities in close contact with deputies from our sister churches, especially with those of The Netherlands, and report to Synod.

(Kelmscott 1983, Article 77)

Synod decides:

1. that the decisions recorded in Articles 72 and 75 of the Acts of Synod 1983 were taken with undue haste and without due consideration.
2. that in the future suchlike decisions be not made on the basis of oral information supplied to Synod.
3. that the Deputies for Correspondence with Foreign Sister Churches appointed by Synod 1985 be instructed to thoroughly investigate the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and The Free Church of Scotland, and submit comprehensive reports to the churches and to the next Synod, paying particular attention to the marks of the true Church and the question of Church government.
4. Until the next Synod has dealt with the above-mentioned study, contact with these churches shall be maintained at the present level.

(Launceston 1985, Article 43)

Synod decides:

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

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

(Armadale 1990, Article 58)

Synod decides:

1. to acknowledge with past Synods that there have been inconsistencies and ambiguities in past decisions which have led to disquiet and division in the churches.

2. to express that future Synods should give mandates which are consistent with one another.
(*Armadale 1990, Article 59*)

Synod decides:

5. In meeting the member churches of the ICRC to maintain the decision of the 1990 Synod,
Article 58.
(*Byford 1994, Article 83*)

Presbyterian churches

Synod decides:

2. to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
2.1 to study/discuss the matter of contacts/relations with Presbyterian churches,
addressing the following questions:
a. what weight the FRCA should give to the areas of concern;
b. whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress
with contacts/relations;
c. how in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations
towards churches geographically/culturally far away;
2.2 to authorise deputies to organise a conference for the churches to discuss the contact
with Presbyterian churches as broadly as possible;
2.3 to report back to the churches when the mandate is finished;
2.4 to continue contact/relations with the PCEA, FCS, EPCI and RPCI at a low level
(passing on Acts and greetings, etc.), leaving the discussions in abeyance.
(*Byford 1994, Article 111*)

Synod decides:

1. To renew the same mandate as given by Synod 1994 and to encourage deputies to fulfil their
mandate for the next Synod.
2. To mandate the deputies to incorporate in their study the progress there has been in the
synod reports and decisions by our sister churches.
(*Kelmscott 1996, Article 96*)

Synod decides:

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 affect our relations/contacts with these
churches; (See for the text of Decision 1 under "Presbyterian Church of Eastern
Australia", Ed.).
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*).
(*Launceston 1998, Art.93*)

Synod decides:

To discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
1. To study/discuss the outstanding areas of concern with FCR, EPCI and RPCI, addressing
the following questions:
a. What weight the FRCA should give to the remaining areas of concern;
b. Whether or not all areas of concern must be cleared before the FRCA can progress
with contact/relations;
c. How in a manageable and responsible way the FRCA can fulfil their obligations towards
churches geographically/culturally far away; and

d. In what way the statements with respect to our contact with the PCEA as adopted by Synod 1998 will affect our approach towards the FCR, EPCI and RPCI.
(*West Albany 2000, Art.73*)

See under: Australia, Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Contacts

Australia

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Synod decides:

1. to instruct the deputies for contact with the P.C.E.A. to comply with the request for information from the E.P.C.A.
2. If the E.P.C.A. seeks membership in the I.C.R.C., Synod instructs these deputies to investigate the E.P.C.A. and provide the deputies responsible for the I.C.R.C. with information about these churches.

(*Albany 1987, Art.20*)

Synod decides:

3. If the E.P.C.A. seeks membership in the I.C.R.C., Synod instructs deputies to investigate the E.P.C.A.

(*Armadale 1990, Art.118*)

Synod decides

2. not to appoint new deputies but to leave contacts to the local churches.

(*Bedforddale 1992, Art.102*)

Synod decides:

That a deputyship be established to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and report back respecting the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

(*Bunbury 2018, Art. 37*)

Southern Presbyterian Church

Synod decides:

That a deputyship be established to investigate the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and report back respecting the feasibility of further ecumenical contact.

(*Bunbury 2018, Art. 37*)

See further under "Presbyterian Churches"

Brazil

Reformed Churches in Brazil (Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil – IRB)

Synod decides:

To accept the recommendation of West Albany to thank the deputies for their work and not renew the mandate, with the amended grounds.

(*Baldivis 2015, Article 129*)

Indonesia:

Reformed Movement in Indonesia

Synod decides:

to gather information about the progress of the reformed activities of the Lembaga Reformed Injili Indonesia (the Reformed Movement in Indonesia, Ed.)

(Armada 1990, Art.114; Bedfordale 1992, Art.59)

Synod decides:

to discharge current deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate:

d. to continue to gather information regarding the Reformed Movement in Indonesia.

(Byford 1994, Art.102)

Reformed Churches of Timor, Savu

Synod decides:

to seek contact with the Gereja Masehi Musyafir Church on Timor to see whether we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according to our confessions.

(Armada 1990, Art.114)

Synod decides

1. to approve deputies' action to invite student Johnson Dethan from the Musyafir Churches in Timor and Reverend Doko from the RCSTS to visit Australia for orientation and training;
3. to continue contact with the Musyafir churches by visit if possible;
4. to instruct deputies to continue their search for information regarding the Musyafir Churches in Timor to see whether we can recognise them as true and faithful churches according our confession.
6. to authorise deputies to give further support to student Johnson, enabling him to pursue his studies in Hamilton, provided deputies can recommend this after further investigation.

(Bedfordale 1992, Art.59)

Synod decides:

- a. to continue to support the theological training undertaken by Yonson Dethan;
- e. to maintain the contacts with the GMMT to assist them in their desire to remain reformed and to report on progress towards an eventual recommendation to recognise the GMMT as sister churches.

(Byford 1994, Art.102)

Synod decides:

1. To express thankfulness that a number of churches in the GGMM (Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir, Reformed Churches of Timor, Savu, Ed.) have decided to remain reformed in the face of hierarchy.
2. To assist the GGMM in their continuing desire to remain reformed.
3. To instruct deputies:
 - a. to visit the GGMM as need and opportunity arise,
 - b. to report on progress towards an eventual recommendation to recognize the GGMM as sister churches.
 - c. to continue to support the theological training undertaken by Yonson Dethan, and
 - d. to encourage the individual Free Reformed Churches and their members to provide the finance needed to support Decision 3c.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art.67).

Synod decides:

1. To continue to visit the synods of the GGMR subject to finance;
2. To support the GGMR in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches;
3. To monitor and report developments in the GGMR;
4. To provide limited support for Rev.Yonson Dethan to ensure continued effective communication with him;

5. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2 and 4 above.

(West Albany 2000, Art. 49)

GGRC

Synod decides:

B. Regarding GGRC:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC;
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance;
3. To support the GGRC in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the reformed character of these churches. This will include giving instructions through yearly seminars if finances are available;
4. To monitor and report on developments regarding the unity of GGRI with the GGRC. Where possible, to encourage these churches to fully put into practice the unity which they already recognise. This includes urging them to be united in theological training which also includes encouraging them to utilize the study Rev. Yonson Dethan completed at the Theological College in Hamilton;
5. To financially support Rev Yawan Bundi of GGRC to study English in Australia and familiarize himself with reformed church life for three months, but not in the same year as others students. This will be done according to the financial agreement with our Dutch sister churches and is subject to available funding from the churches;
6. To provide limited support to ensure that effective communication continues;
7. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 3, 5 and 6 above.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 58)

Synod decides:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC and assess whether the GGRC still desires and values continued contact with the FRCA, and whether there is still value for the FRCA to have contact with the GGRC.
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.
3. To encourage the GGRC to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, especially in view of the anticipated unification of the three federations of the GGRI. Also, to monitor and report on developments regarding developments in this area.
4. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the activities of deputies as mentioned in 2 above.

(Legana 2009, Article 57)

Synod decides:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the reformed character of these churches by advice or other means such as seminars.
2. To continue to visit the synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.
3. To encourage the GGRC to strongly work towards federal unity with the GGRI and thus a sister-church relationship with the FRC Australia.
4. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the mandate of deputies detailed in point 2.

(Armada 2012, Article 87)

Synod decides:

1. To continue contact with the GGRC, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the reformed character of these churches by advice or other means such as seminars.
2. To continue to visit the Synods of the GGRC subject to available finance.
3. To consult with the GGRI, the GGRC, and the Canadian Reformed Churches to determine the obstacles on the way to unity, and, to work together with all parties involved to remove or overcome those obstacles, and, to encourage the GGRC to plan and progress towards federal unity between themselves and the GGRI, and if possible, the mission work of Smithville in Timor.

4. To encourage the churches and their members to provide the means of support for the mandate of deputies detailed in point 1-3.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 118)

Ireland

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Synod decides:

1. to confirm that those churches are faithful churches of the Lord;
2. to instruct the deputies:
 - a. to inform those churches of this decision;
 - b. to intensify the correspondence with those churches with the aim to establish full sister relationship with them.

(Kelmscott 1983, Art. 78)

Synod decides:

1. Synod decides to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod that The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland are faithful churches of our Lord.
2. Synod decides to offer to The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland the relation of temporary contact with the following rules:
 - a. to invite delegates of each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly of synod but no vote.
 - b. to exchange Minutes and Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, and to solicit comments on these documents.
 - c. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact to the purpose of reaching full correspondence (cf. the 1986 Acts of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Art. 125).
3. Synod decides that this temporary relation will be reassessed at the 1989 Synod.
4. Synod decides to instruct the deputies to send two delegates to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland for a visit. This could be done in conjunction with the 1989 I.C.R.C.

(Albany 1987, Art. 79)

Synod decides:

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

(Armadale 1990, Art. 124)

Synod decides:

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

(Bedfordale 1992, Art. 138)

See under 'Presbyterian churches': Byford 1994, Art. 111; West Albany 2000, Art. 73.

See under 'Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia': Launceston 1998, Art. 93.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Synod decides:

2. that deputies be given a mandate to study all the material received and the reports from our sister churches in The Netherlands. If necessary to ask the RPCI for more information in order to commence investigation to see whether the RPCI may be recognised as a true and faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Armada 1990, Art. 124)

Synod decides:

2. to appoint new deputies with the mandate:

- a. to maintain contact with the RPCI at a low level until such time as we can conclude an investigation of the RPCA;
- b. to advise the RPCI of this decision;
- c. to study the matters of covenanting and purity of worship in line with Considerations 3, 4, and 5;
- d. for the sake of consistency, the items mentioned for discussion with the PCEA ought not to be overlooked in any contact with the RPCI.

(Bedfordale 1992, Art. 157)

See under 'Presbyterian Churches': Byford 1994, Art.111; West Albany 2000, Art.73.

See under 'Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia': Launceston 1998, Art.93.

Netherlands

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Restored) – De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGK)

Synod decides:

1. Not to accept the RCNr request to acknowledge them as sister churches.
2. To acknowledge the RCNr desire to remain reformed.
3. To beseech the Lord by His grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions between the RCN and RCNr.
4. To thank the deputies for their work and mandate new deputies to:
 - a. Remain informed about developments in the RCNr,
 - b. Continue contact and encourage the RCNr to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the RCN in humility and love.

(Legana 2009, Article 75)

Synod decides:

VII. Decision

1. To beseech the Lord by His grace and blessings to grant true ecclesiastical unity based on His Word and as maintained in the confessions among the various Reformed churches and groups in the Netherlands.
2. To acknowledge that the RCNr's relationship with the Liberated Church of Abbotsford may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to keep contact with the RCNr and be receptive to contact from other churches (like the Voorlopig Kerkverband) who have split off from the RCN and the RCNr, and report on further developments in this regard; and
 - b. to work in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments.

(Armada 2012, Article 99)

Synod decides:

- a. Not to act on the proposals of FRC Byford and FRC Mundijong at this time and await further developments.

- b. To maintain contact with both the DGK and GKN and to be receptive to future contact with those who have already, or who do withdraw from the RCN and report on further developments in this regard.
- c. To await recommendations from among the churches on how to proceed with these contacts.
- d. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and GKN;
 - to work in close contact with the CanRC deputies regarding these developments;
 - to exhort all those who have left the RCN to reach out to others who love the Word and the Reformed faith;
 - to maintain contact; and
 - to report back to the next Synod.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 115)

Synod decides:

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

Bunbury 2018, Article 75

Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

Synod decides:

1. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to continue to monitor developments in both the DGK (De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) and GKN (Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland);
 - b. to encourage the DGK and GKN to work towards unity with each other;
 - c. to maintain contact; and
 - d. to report back to the next Synod.
2. To await recommendations from the churches on how to proceed with these relations.

Bunbury 2018, Article 75

North America

Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford

Synod decides:

Not to agree to the request of the FRC Armadale, FRC Kelmscott or FRC Mt Nasura to investigate the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford and to accept the deputies' grounds.

Armadale 2012, Article 59)

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Synod decides:

1. To accede to the proposal of Classis North.
2. To mandate deputies for relations with churches abroad to:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 83)

United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

Synod decides:

Synod mandates deputies for relations with churches abroad to provide the URCNA with information about our churches in response to their letter to us, to take up contact with them, and to report to the next Synod with:

- a. information about these churches;
- b. a recommendation about how to proceed.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 39)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2019, Article 63)

See under 'Presbyterian Churches': Byford 1994, Art.111; West Albany 2000, Art.73.

See under 'Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia': Launceston 1998, Art.93.

Singapore

The Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

Synod decides:

2. to instruct the deputies to investigate thoroughly this church to discern whether or not this church is a true church according to Art.29 of the Belgic Confession. Special attention is to be given to the distinctiveness of Protestant Reformed doctrines (viz. covenant and free offer of the gospel) and to report to next Synod.
3. to investigate and evaluate the influence of the Protestant Reformed Church in the E.R.C.S.
4. to inform the church membership about this congregation in Singapore.
5. to authorize the deputies to send delegates to visit these churches en route to the E.P.C.I. and the F.C.S.

(Albany 1987, Art.106)

Synod decides:

2. to renew the mandate that deputies investigate thoroughly this church to ascertain whether it is a true and faithful church, according to our confessions.
3. to continue to discuss with them their sister relations with the PRCA, and any other relations/contacts with other third parties.
4. to prepare with the ERCS a paper on how we see the "covenant and election" together with the offer to discuss this with them.

5. to be prepared to develop the contacts by visits, and whatever other help requested so that the ERCS is encouraged to be and to remain reformed.
6. to discuss with the ERCS their views on coming to sister relations, or possibly, a type of working-relation (cf. Consideration 7).
7. to ask the deputies to issue periodic updates about the ERCS.

(Armadale 1990, Art.107)

Synod decides:

2. to express apologies via letter from the FRCA to the ERCS for permitting the printing of a report which contained information not edifying to the ERCS.
3. to appoint deputies who shall:
 - a. further discuss the letter in a face to face meeting if the ERCS consider such a meeting desirable;
 - b. continue the contact so that the FRCA and the ERCS can come to know each other better.

(Bedforddale 1992, Art.98)

Synod decides:

to discharge deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to continue the contacts with ERCS so that the FRCA and the ERCS can come to know each other better.

(Byford 1994, Art.117)

Synod decides:

1. To discontinue the contacts with the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore.
2. With regret to inform the ERCS that the contacts have not made progress towards mutual recognition and official relations.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art.61).

Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB)

Synod decides:

1. to ensure that a deputyship be mandated to take up contact with these churches "to investigate whether meaningful sister church relations are possible".
2. to respond to the RCB in writing, informing them of our decision.

(Legana 2009, Article 21)

Synod decides:

to re-appoint as part of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad, deputies specifically for the Reformed Churches in Brazil with the mandate to approach the Reformed Churches of Brazil again in order to ascertain if a meaningful sister church relationship can be established.

(Armadale 2012, Article 48)

E . DISCONTINUED RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTACTS

Australia

Australian Council of Reformed Churches

Synod decides:

The text of our reply to the letter from the "Australian Council of Reformed Churches" - compare Article 15 of these Acts - is determined. This reply will be added to these Acts as Appendix 2.

(Editor's note: This letter ends as follows: "Considering these matters, we must conclude that your council in its composition and course does not offer sufficient guarantee for a co-operation, which must be based on the truth of God and in obedience to the Word of God. If your council bypasses these serious objections and prohibitive facts, and leaves them for what they are, we must conclude that it cannot commence its primary task, namely the seeking of the true unity of faithful believers in Christ, but that the council itself forms an obstacle to unity. Synod brings these

matters to your attention, because on the one hand she rejects an aspiration towards an unholy and self-willed isolation, but on the other hand she rejects a co-operation which indeed suggests a unity but without sufficient guarantees of its Scriptural truth. Synod expresses the hope that you will consider these matters seriously and wishes you God's blessing in this.")

(Albany 1968, Art.66)

(Christian) Reformed Churches of Australia

Synod decides:

A response will be sent to the deputies appointed by Synod Dandenong of The Reformed Churches of Australia. Synod decides to insert this letter as an Appendix into the Acts.

(Albany 1959, Art.44)

Synod decides:

to include only the latest correspondence with The Reformed Churches of Australia in the Acts. (Editor's note: The letter sent to the RCA by Synod 1966 ends with the following sentence: "As long as you continue to sidestep a serious answer to these things we must remain in concluding that your desire for unity is not Scriptural and true and that therefore you are guilty of blocking the way which can lead to the Scriptural unity".)

(Armadale 1966, Art.58)

Synod decides:

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

Considerations:

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

4. The agenda for such dialogue should be pre-set in accordance with past decisions of the FRCA Synods. The impediments toward unity between the FRCA and the RCA have been clearly spelled out by past Synods (cf. the 1959 and 1962 Synods which approved letters to the RCA, letters which are appended to the Acts of those Synods). The 1962 RCA Synod authorised its deputies to answer the correspondence. In the latter they themselves spell out the FRCA's conditions 'sine qua non' for reunion:

- a. "the recognition from our side (RCA) of the Liberation as an unmistakable work of God;" and
- b. "the breaking of all correspondence (i.e. sister-relations) with the GKN(S)" (quoted from the 1964 Acts, p.23; translation is ours).

5. The present generation ought to be made aware of past (sinful) decisions taken by their Synods. It is a scriptural principle that "the LORD visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" and that as much as possible the past should be undone by not maintaining the past wrongs and by steering a new course in their relations.

(Armadale 1990, Art.102)

Synod decides

1. To thank deputies for the immense amount of work done in making available in the English language the documents relevant to the Liberation of 1944 and the contacts between the FRCA and the RCA.
3. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to observe what the next Synod of the RCA will do with the report which their deputies for dialogue with the FRCA will submit, and to report to the next Synod of the FRCA with their recommendations as to whether and how to proceed.

(Bedfordale 1992, Art.78)

Synod decides:

1. Not to accept the request of the RCA to send an official observer to the forthcoming synod of the RCA.
2. Deputies are given the mandate to inform the RCA of synod's decision incorporating as reason: Recommendation 3 of Article 38, Synod Armadale 1990, but noting also the developments signalled in Article 102. Deputies are free to request attendance at the RCA Synod on an individual title.

(Byford 1994, Art. 118)

Synod decides:

1. To accept the decision of the 1994 RCA Synod that their sister relations with the GKN(S) seen in the historical light of the doctrinal and church-political controversies and the subsequent Liberation of 1944, were unjust, inconsequential and the express cause for lack of unity; this ends the discussion concerning the events of the fifties and sixties.
2. Not to enter official contact (which has sister relations or union as its aim) with the RCA at this time.
3. To authorise deputies to send a letter of appeal to the 1997 RCA Synod and to all their sessions, appealing to them to return to a distinctively reformed direction so that future contact may become possible and can be meaningful.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art. 71)

Synod decides:

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.

(Launceston 1998, Art. 78)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Art. 72)

Japan

Reformed Church of Japan

Synod decides:

to investigate whether The Reformed Church of Japan and The Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka can be recognized as true and faithful churches.

(Kelmscott 1983, Art. 76)

Synod decides:

- (a) to investigate whether or not The Reformed Church of Japan and The Presbyterian Church in Uganda can be recognized as true and faithful churches according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession with a view to the possible establishment of sister church relations;
- (b) to urge The Reformed Church of Japan to break its ties with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (R.E.S.).

(Launceston 1985, Art. 76)

Synod decides:

3. to renew the mandate (...) with respect to the R.C.J. and the P.C.U.
(*Albany 1987, Art.92*).

Synod decides:

1. to cease further contacts with the RCJ.
2. to inform the PCK of this decision.
(*Armada 1990, Art. 121*)

Netherlands

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)

Synod decides:

1. To continue sister-relations with The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations;
2. To discharge deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;
 - b. According to the rules, discuss with the RCN deputies some concerns as to the developments within the RCN;
 - c. Authorise deputies to attend the next general Synod of the RCN;
 - d. Report to next Synod;
3. To expand the deputyship by one additional minister.
(*West Albany 2000, Article 87*)

Synod decides:

I. Fourth Commandment and Sunday

2. To acknowledge with thanks that the mandates to stay informed about developments and decisions in the RCN about the Sabbath/Sunday issue and to continue the discussions with the RCN on this matter have been amply fulfilled.
3. To accept Amersfoort's decision as largely allaying our concerns.
4. To have deputies monitor the application of this decision, seeing there are still concerns about its application and clarity of *Sunday, Lordly Day. A Pastoral Guideline*.

II. Divorce and Remarriage

1. To express thankfulness that our Dutch sister churches could take a strong Scriptural stance regarding God's teachings against divorce and remarriage.
2. To express regret that, while the issue regarding the approval of divorces for reasons beyond the Scriptural reasons of adultery and wilful desertion was not endorsed by synod and thus implicitly excluded, synod did not explicitly state this.

III. Liturgy and Hymns

1. To express appreciation for not developing a separate order of worship on the basis of the *Ordinarium* texts.
2. To express appreciation for not releasing for use in the churches the order of worship for the "leerdienst" (teaching-service) as presented by the deputies.
3. To express concerns about the continuing proliferation and the contents of the hymns from the "liedboek voor de kerken", and to continue to suggest more time be spent on the Psalms and on songs based directly on Scripture.
4. To keep monitoring RCN's decisions in accordance with our Rule b (to mutually care for each other that they do not depart from the reformed faith in liturgy) and to become more acquainted, in a selective manner, with the hymns that are approved and are being approved.

IV. Sacraments in Military Situations

To express our concerns to the Dutch sister churches that GS Amersfoort's decision regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel goes beyond the common consent of the Church Order and leads to the danger of interdenominational (against Article 28, B.C.) administration of sacraments.

V. Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK) and Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) (Refer to Article 66)

Regarding CGK:

1. To encourage our sister-churches in their pursuit of unity with the CGK to do so on the proven basis of God's Word as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity and as practiced by the Church Order of Dort.
2. To monitor further developments and to report to the next synod.

Regarding RCN:

1. To encourage the RCN in their contacts with the NGK to continue to insist on the need within the NGK for binding to God's Word as confessed in The Three Forms of Unity, and also to insist on the proper place of the Church Order to counteract independentism.
2. To express thanks that the RCN carefully assessed the request to reconsider the decisions of GS Amersfoort-West (1967) and Hoogetveen (1969/70).
3. To encourage the RCN to pursue the recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
4. To keep in close contact with the Dutch Deputies and to report to the next synod.

VI. Overall

1. To continue sister-relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands according to the adopted Rules for Sister-Relations.
2. To express our thankfulness to the RCN churches regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
3. To urge the RCN to engage in meaningful dialogue with the RCN(R) churches, having a greater understanding of their concerns and grievances, and Scripturally and confessionally to address these concerns in humility and love.
4. To express our concerns regarding the directions being taken, particularly in regard to the manner in which Scripture and the commandments are interpreted and applied to today's circumstances, taking into account decisions made by our synods.
5. To discharge Deputies and to appoint new Deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. exercise sister-relations with the RCN according to the adopted rules;
 - b. discuss with the RCN the nature and cause underlying the directions being taken by their churches as expressed above;
 - c. discuss with the RCN Deputies the concerns as to the developments within the RCN, including:
 - i. those that deputies have already been busy with, and the decisions already made by Synod West Kelmescott 2006, so that this work does not need to be done all over again;
 - ii. the RCN dealings with views on hermeneutics, work of the Holy Spirit and the application of church discipline;
 - iii. the influence of the charismatic movement on the RCN;
 - d. implement decision 3;
 - e. report to next Synod;
 - f. send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN.

(West Kelmescott 2006, Art. 94)

Synod decides:

1. To take a comprehensive approach with regards to this Synod's decision about the sister church relationship with the RCN, instead of dealing separately and in detail with every agenda item relating to this sister church relationship.
2. Continue the sister church relations with the RCN under the adopted rules.
3. Express our thankfulness to the RCN regarding the openness and frankness in which their deputies and ours could be engaged in concerns and discussions.
4. Exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern 'spirit of the age' (Ground 3). As specific examples, we mention the following:

- a. Our ongoing concerns about the position of our Dutch sister Churches on connecting the fourth commandment to the Lord's Day as a day of rest, as we confess in Q/A 103 of the HC.
- b. Our concerns that the public comments of Dr. Harinck have not been retracted, even though he remains a professor in Kampen.
- c. Our ongoing concerns regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel (refer art. 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott).
5. Express and discuss our concerns regarding trends towards unfaithfulness to Scripture, Confessions and Church Order mentioned in Grounds 3-5.
6. To discharge deputies and thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to use the adopted *Rules for Sister Church Relations* to discuss with the RCN deputies BBK:
 - a. Matters raised in Decisions 4, 5 and 7,
 - b. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev M Nap of which Synod has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study,
 - c. The way deputies *Male/Female in the church* formulate and discuss within the RCN the framework in which men and serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks,
 - d. Our ongoing concerns regarding the RCN decisions on Divorce and Remarriage (refer Art 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006),
 - e. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns,
 - f. The view of the RCN towards recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity,
 - g. The need for the RCN to uphold the plain meaning of Scripture regarding Genesis 1-11,
 - h. The concern regarding the signs of independentism as mentioned in Ground 4.
7. To share with the RCN the observation that their current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship.
8. Call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers in view of the continuing tensions within the RCN and between the RCN and the FRCA.
9. To beseech the Lord by his grace and blessings to heal the ecclesiastical divisions between the RCN and RCNr.
10. Send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN and provide a synopsis of synod decisions for the benefit of our Australian churches.

(Legana 2009, Article 71)

Synod decides:

I. Decision

1. To present to the RCN an official admonition stating our concerns.
This admonition will be a statement of weighty objections with respect to the doctrine and practice of the RCN in line with the rules for sister church relations.
2. To appoint an advisory committee consisting of brothers chosen by synod to formulate the admonition paying special attention to items that have had deputies' special attention such as:
 - a. Hermeneutics
 - b. Ethics
 - c. Sacraments
 - d. Ecclesiology
 - e. Church government
 - f. Liturgy

The committee is to take into account the responses already received from the RCN. This is to be done in consultation with the Canadian Reformed Church deputies CRCA

according to Article 86, Synod Burlington 2010 and the DRCA of the FRCSA according to Article 19.4 of Synod Pretoria 2011.

3. The advisory committee is to report to synod delegates by 1 March 2013.
4. Synod is to reconvene on 22 April 2013 so that this official admonition can be tabled for adoption and so that synod can formulate its decision on how to proceed with our relationship with the RCN.

II. Decision

To only publish the headings in Item 2 in the Acts. Details under the headings to be forwarded to the Advisory Committee.

(Armada 2012, Article 116)

I. Final Decision: [re Letter of Admonition to Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN) (Refer Articles 29, 40, 43, 57, 76, 94, 114, 116, 141, 142)]

1. To present to the RCN an official admonition stating our concerns.
This admonition will be a statement of weighty objections with respect to the doctrine and practice of the RCN in line with the rules for sister church relations.
 - a. Deputies to arrange for a clear and accurate Dutch translation of the letter of admonition to the RCN to accompany the official English letter of admonition.
 - b. To include with the letter of admonition to the RCN all the material referred to in the footnotes, either in hard copy or soft copy.
2. To express our deep sadness at the lack of progress to resolve our concerns to date so that our relationship is strained.
3. To advise the consistories of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to exercise due care with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN.
4. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing struggle for the truth within these churches.
5. To continue sister church relations with the RCN according to the established rules.
6. To discharge deputies, to thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to interact with the deputies BBK;
 - b. to report to the next synod;
 - c. to discuss with the deputies BBK the matters contained in the Letter of Admonition as well as:
 - i. concerns regarding independentism;
 - ii. the formulation of the new church order;
 - d. to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCN; and
 - e. to instruct deputies, or two people delegated by them, to attend the conference on hermeneutics to be held in Hamilton Canada 2014.
7. The overtures from FRC Armadale, FRC Mt Nasura, FRC West Albany and FRC Darling Downs have been answered by these decisions.

(Armada 2012, Second Session, Article 142)

Synod decides:

1. To suspend our relationship with the RCN. This suspension applies to the rules of our sister church relationship agreement:
 - a. "Rule e) The churches shall accept one another's attestations, which also means admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments upon presentation of these attestations." To accept attestations only from those members of the RCN whom the consistory is convinced are faithful in doctrine and conduct, and to issue attestations to the RCN with due care.
 - b. "Rule f) The churches shall in principle open their pulpits to each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted by the respective church federations." To deny ministers

from the RCN the privilege of preaching in our federation, or to be called to serve in the FRCA unless the call is approved by Classis.

- c. "Rule h) The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as advisers, as much as possible." Delegates from the RCN will be invited to attend our next Synod and be accorded the privileges as per rules for Synod 6.2.
2. To send to the next RCN Synod a second letter:
 - a. to express our deep sadness at the response of Synod Ede to our letter of admonition sent by Synod Armadale and advise of the suspension of our sister church relationship;
 - b. to declare that the FRCA's sister relationship with the RCN will become untenable if the next Synod of the RCN in 2017 does not express and demonstrate evidence of repentance from the deviations mentioned in the letter of the Synod of Armadale 2012 to the Synod of Ede 2014.
 3. To encourage the FRCA congregations to pray that the Lord grant the RCN to uprightly uphold and defend the Scriptural truth as maintained in the three forms of unity.
 4. To discharge deputies, to thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate:
 - a. to interact with the deputies BBK;
 - b. to monitor and analyse responses by the RCN;
 - c. to interact with the request of Synod Ede for advice with respect to the role of men and women in the church, and present the clear biblical teaching on this matter;
 - d. to send to the consistories of the RCN, a copy of the first and second letter sent to the next Synod of the RCN in 2017;
 - e. to send two delegates to the next Synod of the RCN;
 - f. to report to the next Synod.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 75)

Termination of sister relations with RCN

Synod decides:

With sadness to terminate the sister relationship with the RCN.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 45)

Communicating decision to terminate relations with RCN (refer Synod Art 45)

Synod decides:

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

(Bunbury 2018, Article 107)

New Zealand

Geneva Free Reformed Church

See under Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Kelmscott 1996, Art.53 Decision 5c and Ground 6.

Synod decides:

1. 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.

(Launceston 1998, Art.81)

Philippines

Free Reformed Churches of The Philippines

Synod decides:

1. to instruct the deputies to return the greetings to the (...) FRCP, and to explain to them that in light of the considerations stated above we cannot accede to their request of establishing relations with them at this time.
2. to instruct new deputies to translate information about the (...) FRCP and send it to the churches a half year before next Synod.

(Bedfordale 1992, Art.144)

Synod decides:

to instruct the deputies to continue to gather information regarding the FRCP e.g. received via Acts of Synod of our sister churches or correspondence received, with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them.

(Byford 1994, Art.123)

Synod decides:

To instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding the FRCP e.g. received via Acts of Synod of our sister churches or via correspondence, with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art.68).

Synod decides:

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.

(Launceston 1998, Art.94).

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Art.62)

Regarding Reformed Free Churches of the Philippines and the Free Reformed Churches of the Philippines:

Synod decides:

1. To discontinue attempts to contact both Reformed Churches of the Philippines.
2. To maintain deputies as an address so that if these churches are still interested in contact they can contact deputies.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 58)

Scotland

Free Church of Scotland

Synod decides:

1. to confirm that those churches are faithful churches of the Lord;
2. to instruct the deputies:
 - a. to inform those churches of this decision;

- b. to intensify the correspondence with those churches with the aim to establish full sister relationship with them.

(Kelmscott 1983, Art.78).

Synod decides:

2. Synod reaffirms the statement made by the 1983 Synod that the Free Church of Scotland is a faithful church of the Lord (Art.75).
3. Synod instructs Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to move in the direction of becoming sister churches with the F.C.S.
4. Synod instructs its deputies not to implement sister church relations until mutually acceptable rules can be agreed upon;
5. In the meantime, Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact is to be established with the F.C.S., with the following rules:
 - a. to invite delegates to each other's General Assemblies/Synods and to accord such delegates privileges of the floor in the assembly or synod but no vote.
 - b. to exchange Minutes or Acts of each other's broadest assemblies as well as communications on major issues of mutual concern, specifically, the problem about the adherents, and to solicit comments on these documents.
 - c. to be diligent by means of discussions to use the contact for the purpose of reaching a relation as sister churches, specifically, to work out a set of mutually acceptable rules for relations as sister churches.
6. Synod authorises the deputies to send delegates to visit the F.C.S. to help implement the above-mentioned decisions.

(Albany 1987, Art.82)

Synod decides:

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

(Armadale 1990, Art.139)

Synod decides:

2. to express our thanks for the receipt of the Acts of the 1990 and 1991 General Assemblies of the FCS but to express keen disappointment about the lack of communication from the FCS concerning the letter of our deputies (mentioned in Synod's Considerations, Ed.)
3. to charge new deputies with the instruction:
 - a. to ascertain whether or not the FCS has indeed accepted our offer of TEC (Temporary Ecclesiastical Contact, Ed.);
 - b. to use the rules for TEC to improve our contacts, especially in the discussions about mutual areas of major concern and our concerns with the FCS (pulpit exchanges and certain views of the FCS regarding the ICRC), so that we can expect eventual sister relations to be fruitful. (Synod's decision then repeats the
 - c. rules for TEC as formulated by Synod Albany 1987, Art.82, overlooking the amendment made by Synod Armadale 1990, Art.139, Ed.)
 - d. if and when the above has been finished, to discuss with the FCS our decision to phase out TEC and to move in the direction of one relation between churches, i.e. sister relations on the basis of our (revised and amended) rules.

(Bedfordale 1992, Art.150)

Sri Lanka

The Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka

Synod decides to instruct deputies:

to investigate whether The Reformed Church of Japan and The Dutch Reformed Church of Sri Lanka can be recognized as true and faithful churches.

(*Kelmscott 1983, Art.76 and 112*)

Synod decides:

2. to cease attempts to initiate contact with the D.R.C.S.L.

(*Albany 1987, Art.92*)

(See further under Japan, Ed.)

Lanka Reformed Church

Synod decides:

- a. It is not possible to enter into a sister church relationship with the Lanka Reformed Church since they are not a church according to Articles 1 and 36 CO.
- b. Since this matter is one of mission work FRC Byford is at liberty to continue and expand the work there if it so desires.

(*West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 34*)

Taiwan

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan

Synod decides:

to recognize the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan as a true and faithful church.

(*Kelmscott 1983, Art. 72*)

Synod decides:

to make every effort to intensify the contacts with this church which does not yet belong to sister churches in order to come to full correspondence.

(*Kelmscott 1983, Art. 112 e*)

Synod decides:

2. not to be able at this time to accede to the proposal of the deputies to reconfirm the decision of the 1983 Synod, Art. 72, and to offer sister churches relations.

3. to instruct deputies:

- a. to carry out a more detailed investigation of the R.P.C.T. with regard to the marks of the true church and church polity.
- b. to establish a good base for correspondence in English with the R.P.C.T. and so improve the contacts with them.
- c. to investigate and evaluate the division in the presbyteries there.

(*Albany 1987, Art.91*)

Synod decides:

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

(*Armada 1990, Art. 135*)

(Editor's note: The Acts of Synods 1992 and 1994 do not contain any decisions regarding 'Taiwan')

Uganda

The Presbyterian Church in Uganda

Synod decides:

that deputies be instructed:

(a) to investigate whether or not The Reformed Church of Japan and The Presbyterian Church in Uganda can be recognized as true and faithful churches according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession with a view to the possible establishment of sister church relations.

(Launceston 1985, Art.76)

Synod decides:

to renew the mandate (...) with respect to the R.C.J. and the P.C.U.

(Albany 1987, Art.92)

(See further under Japan, Ed.)

Synod decides:

to cease further contact with the PCU.

(Armadale 1990, Art.120)

World

International Conference of reformed churches (ICRC)

Synod decides:

1. To terminate our membership of the ICRC.

3. To immediately inform all member churches of the ICRC of this decision, indicating our withdrawal of the proposed constitutional amendment and apologise for any inconvenience caused.

4. Not to appoint new deputies for the ICRC.

(Kelmescott 1996, Art.95).

Synod decides:

1. To thank and discharge deputies.

2. To note the Report of Deputies for ICRC.

3. Not to accede to the request of the church of Albany concerning the organisation of regional conferences of the ICRC.

(Kelmescott 1996, Art.106)

Synod decides:

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."

(Launceston 1998, Art.48)

Zaire

The Reformed Church of Zaire

Synod decides:

1. to instruct the deputies to return the greetings of the RCZ (...) and to explain to them that in light of the considerations stated above we cannot accede to their request of establishing relations with them at this time.

(Bedforddale 1992, Art.144)

(Editor's note: for these considerations see under 'Philippines')

Synod decides:

To discharge deputies and thank them for their work.
(*Byford 1994, Art. 119*)

ARTICLE 47 - Censure in classis and synod

At the close of the major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof.

ARTICLE 48 - Deputies of major assemblies

Each synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all matters provided for in the Church Order. A classis may request these deputies to assist in cases of special difficulties. Each synod shall also appoint deputies to carry out its own decisions. Different deputies shall be appointed as much as possible for separate matters. All deputies shall keep proper record of their work and submit a written report.

Synod decides:

The terms of deputies who are reappointed will, as a rule, be limited to a maximum of 9 years unless Synod decides that there are good reasons to reappoint (e.g. to maintain continuity, expertise, etc.).

(Legana 2009, Article 21)

Synod decides to:

3. Release deputies from their task and appoint new deputies in the following manner:
 - a. appoint one deputy and one alternate from each classical region; and
 - b. decide that when a classic region requires the advice of deputies article 48, it request one deputy from each of the other classical regions (thus, when Classis Central request these deputies, the deputy of Classis South West and the deputy of Classis North attend. When Classis South West requires these deputies then those of Classis Central and Classis North attend and if Classis North require them then a deputy of Classis Central and Classis South West attend).

(Armada 2012, Article 110)

Synod decides:

1. That:
 - a. consistories be advised to visually examine declarations as confirmation of their ministerial status and faithfulness when inviting ministers from sister churches to their pulpits;
 - b. advising consistories, upon request, to grant ministers of the Word a declaration as confirmation of their ministerial status and faithfulness when intending to serve on the pulpits of sister churches.
2. That the treasurer be instructed to, as yet, pay the \$1,500.00 expense for the trip to Synod Ede in May 2014.
3. That from now on deputies continue to use the allocation of its funds as a guideline, but be permitted to use its overall budgeted funds as they see fit within possible changing circumstances.

(Baldivis 2015, Article 40)

ARTICLE 49 - Archives

The assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.

Instructions for the archivist

Synod decides:

1. The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.
2. The church council will appoint an archivist.
3. The archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; and who has received or seen items and the items involved.
4. The church council reports to Synod.
5. The archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in the filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.
6. Access to items in the general archives requires permission of the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission of two churches, or of Synod.
7. Original documents shall not be lent out, but the archivist shall supply photo copies instead. The name of the inquirer the title of the document and the date shall be recorded.

(Albany 1975, Art.53; re-stated Kelmscott 1983, Artt.114 and 112; amended Bedfordale 1992, Art.52).

Acts of Synods

Synod decides:

that the Acts of the Synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are to be kept in the Archives of Synod.

(Armada 1980, Art.26)

Documents regarding Closed Sessions

See the Instructions for the archivist, sub 6.

Synod decides:

All matters pertaining to the secret sessions shall be segregated from the general archives and be placed in a separate section of the archives.

(Kelmscott 1983, Art.106 sub 2)

See below: Archives and Library, Launceston 1985, Art.33

Deputies documents

Synod decides:

3. to urge the respective synodical deputies, after they have obtained their discharge from Synod, to hand over to the Archives of Synod any documents that are in their keeping, as far as their contents have been dealt with.

(Armada 1956, Art.48b sub 3)

Una Sancta

Synod decides:

The Church of Armadale is authorized to take a subscription to 'Una Sancta' for the Archives because of the articles of church historical significance it contains.

(Albany 1959, Art.24).

Synod decides:

The president announces that the copies of 'Una Sancta' which are in the Archives, will be transferred to a Library in which also the Acts of The Christian Reformed Church will be kept.
(Albany 1975, Art.56)

Library

(See above, Albany 1975, Art.56)

Synod decides:

that reports and books from abroad will be kept by the librarian and that the transfer will take place immediately after the next Synod from date of receipt.

(Armada 1980, Art.27)

Synod decides:

1. that the Library will be transferred to the care of Kelmscott, which will appoint a librarian in the same manner as for the Archives of Synod.

(See above, Albany 1975, Art.53, Ed.)

Replace the word "Archives" with "Library".

2. that the Library will be housed in the church building of Kelmscott together with the Archives.

3. that a suitable cupboard be purchased.

4. that the church of Kelmscott, on behalf of the bond of churches, purchases relevant materials to bring and keep the Library up to date and functional.

5. that relevant materials such as out of date books are discarded when new ones arrive.

(Kelmscott 1983, Art. 114)

Archives and Library

Synod decides:

a) to give a guideline to the consistory of Kelmscott regarding what belongs to the Closed Sessions;

b) to give permission to the consistory of Kelmscott to obtain another metal cupboard for storing material of the Closed Sessions;

c) to decide what belongs to the Archives and what belongs to the Library;

d) to compile a general list of the contents of both the Archives and the Library which is to include all relevant and separate items;

e) to appoint deputies who will also check the Library;

f) to do everything possible to recover the missing minutes of the Closed Sessions;

g) to express its appreciation for the manner in which the consistory of Kelmscott has reorganised the Archives and also its appreciation for the way in which they manage them.

(Launceston 1985, Art.33)

Synod decides:

b. to instruct the deputies appointed for the inspection of the Archives and Library of Synods to insert the Archives' documents in large, appropriate labeled envelopes and to seal them after having inspected the Archives;

c. to instruct deputies appointed for the care of the Archives and Library of Synods:

1. to investigate the cost of putting the Archives' documents on to microfilm and of buying a microfilm projector;

2. to compile a subject/keyword index of the Archives' contents.

(Armada 1990, Art. 126)

Synod decides:

to instruct deputies appointed for the care of the Archives and Library of Synod to:

a. preserve all faint and flimsy documents by photocopying;

b. make and maintain a microfilm record of the Archives;

c. acquire all the correspondence and other relevant material from past deputies, and

d. ensure that borrowers of documents are given photocopies, so that the originals remain in the Archives.

(Bedforddale 1992, Art.52)

Synod decides:

2. to thank the church of Bedforddale for the care of the Archives and Library and to discharge them.
3. to renew the mandate given by Synod Bedforddale 1992 (Acts Article 52) to deputies appointed with the proviso to make a microfilm record of the Archives on a selective basis in accordance with the recommendations of the report of the church in charge of synod Archives.

(Byford 1994, Art.34)

Synod decides:

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 of synods.
2. To thank the church of Bedforddale for the care of the archives and library and to discharge them.
3. To accept deputies' reasons for:
 - a. not photocopying flimsy documents, and
 - b. not microfilming documents.
4. To urge the respective Synod deputies to forward copies of the Acts of synods of sister churches to the Archivist.
5. To appoint new deputies to care for the archives and library of synods according to the current instructions for the Archivist (Appendix K, Acts Synod 1992), with the added instruction to endeavour to acquire the minutes of closed sessions of Synods 1990 and 1994.

(Kelmescott 1996, Art.26)

Synod decides:

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 Mt 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;
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 Church 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;
10. To re-appoint the church at Mt Nasura as Archivist, and the church of Byford for the inspection of Archives and Library.

(Launceston 1998, Art.115)

Synod decides:

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

(West Albany 2000, Art.23)

Synod decides:

1. To accept the report of the deputies and thank them for their work.
 2. That in the next edition of the Synod rules, the rules of the archivist will be appended.
- (Armadale 2012, Article 100)*

ARTICLE 50 - Mission

The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. In doing so they shall observe the provisions of this Church Order. When churches cooperate in mission work they shall as much as possible observe the division into classes.

Papua New Guinea

Synod decides:

to advise the churches to fully support the work in Papua New Guinea, organised by the cooperating churches.

(Launceston 1985, Art.60)

See under Article 19

III WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

ARTICLE 51 - Administration of sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered only in a church service by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms, and under the supervision of the elders.

ARTICLE 52 - Baptism of infants

The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.

Adopted children

Synod decides:

that children, adopted by believing parents, on the ground of Genesis 17, should be baptized.
(Albany 1975, Art.92)

ARTICLE 53 - Baptismal promise and education

The consistory shall make sure that the parents honour their vows to instruct their children, to the utmost of their power, in the doctrine of the Scriptures as summarised in the confession, and to have them instructed in the same by the instruction provided by the consistory.

In accordance with the same vow, the consistory shall see to it that the parents, to the best of their ability, and with the cooperation of the communion of saints, give their children education (as stipulated by the civil government) which is based on Scripture and Confession.

ARTICLE 54 - Public profession of faith

Those who desire to publicly profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory on their motivation and knowledge of the doctrine of God's Word. The public profession shall take place in a church service, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 55 - Baptism of adults

Adults who have not been baptised shall be grafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

ARTICLE 56 - Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.

ARTICLE 57 - Admission to the Lord's Supper

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.

ARTICLE 58 - Church records

The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.

ARTICLE 59 - Attestations for communicant members

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 attestation shall also record their children who have not yet made public profession of faith. The consistory of the congregation concerned shall be notified in due time.

Travel attestations

Synod decides:

that the so-called travel attestations shall not be valid for longer than six months.

(Armada 1972, Art.20)

ARTICLE 60 - Attestations for non-communicant members.
An attestation for a non-communicant member shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned with the request to take the member under its supervision and discipline.

ARTICLE 61 - Support after departure

When members depart to another congregation where they will be cared for in institutions, aged persons homes or nursing homes, they shall in respect of deacon support remain under the care of the church they are leaving. If this is not possible support will be arranged by consultation between the consistories and deacons concerned.

Support

(Re.a proposal to read: "they will be under the care of the receiving church in all respects. If this places too heavy a burden on a congregation the bond of churches can be approached", Ed.)

Synod decides:

not to adopt the changes proposed for Article 61 of the Church Order but to maintain the article in its present form.

(Launceston 1985, Art.28)

ARTICLE 62 - Church services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for church services twice on the Lord's Day.

Liturgy

Synod decides:

for the time being not to recommend an order for the church services.

(Albany 1959, Art.26)

Bible version

Synod decides:

to appoint deputies who will be charged to investigate which English version of the Bible is most preferable for the use in our church services.

Thereby they have to inform themselves about the results that have been gained by the churches in Canada, in order that in this respect there may be as much uniformity as possible in the churches in the English-speaking countries.

(Armada 1954, Art. 16)

Synod decides:

2. to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:

b. use as criteria:

1. faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

2. readability and suitability for worship services for instruction and for memorization.

3. consistency in maintaining the unity of the Scriptures.

(Albany 1987, Art. 109)

Synod decides:

3. as regards the underlying text, to accept the premise that there is room for a careful eclectic method;

5. to express caution over the DE (dynamic equivalent, Ed.) approach to translation.

(Armada 1990, Art. 138)

Synod decides:

3. to endorse the NKJV as a faithful and reliable translation for use in the churches, as well as for study, instruction and family purposes.

4. to allow the NIV to be used in the church service, and for study, instruction and family purposes.

5. to allow a period of transition for the churches to move away from the RSV in two years.

6. to appoint new deputies with the following instruction:

a. to inform the CanRC of this decision and remain in touch with the Canadian deputies about developments there;

b. to inform the churches of developments in the CanRC;

c. to monitor developments with respect to the NKJV and the NIV;

d. to solicit from the churches comments on possible improvements on these translations for a possible reprint and to send these comments to the respective publishers.

(Byford 1994, Art.55)

Synod decides:

3. To aim for one Bible translation in the Australian churches.

4. To recommend the NKJV as the translation for use in the churches.

5. To recognise the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation which may be used by churches which prefer this translation.
6. To alert the churches to the uncertain future of the NIV, as regards an updated text to be some time after the turn of the century.
7. To instruct deputies for contact with sister churches to inform the Canadian sister churches of this decision, together with the grounds.

(Kelmscott 1996, Art.59)

Synod decides:

VII. Decision:

1. Synod appoint deputies to monitor developments with respect to the NKJV and the NIV.
2.
 - a. Synod decide, in the interim, that specifically the NIV 2011 edition be disallowed for use in the church services.
 - b. Synod charge the deputies with an evaluation of the NIV 2011 edition, with particular focus on its feminist leanings so that synod 2015 can come with a definitive decision.
3. Synod charge deputies to evaluate the ESV with a view to allowing the ESV to be used in the church services.

(Armada 2012, Article 91)

Church Service Book

Synod declares that:

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia adopt the liturgical writings of The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands as their own.

These writings are: Christian prayers, forms for infant baptism, for the baptism of adults, for the public profession of faith, for the Lord's Supper, for excommunication, for re-admission, for the ordination of ministers of the Word, for the ordination of elders and deacons, and for the confirmation of marriages.

(Albany 1959, Art. 18)

Synod decides:

to adopt the following Liturgical Forms for use by the churches:

- (a) for Baptism of Infants;
- (b) for Baptism of Adults;
- (c) for the Public Profession of Faith;
- (d) for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper;
- (e) for the Excommunication of Communicant Members;
- (f) for the Readmission into the Church of Christ;
- (g) for the Ordination of Ministers of the Word;
- (h) for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons;
- (i) for the Solemnization of Marriage.

to provisionally adopt the following Liturgical Forms for use by the churches:

- (j) for the Excommunication of Non-Communicant Members;
- (k) for the Ordination of Missionaries;
- (l) Abbreviated Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

(Launceston 1985, Art.59)

Synod decides:

to adopt the text of the Three Forms of Unity and of those Liturgical Forms which were provisionally adopted by the 1985 Synod (Acts Art.59c 2).

(Albany 1987, Art.110)

Synod decides:

To adopt the same translation of the Nicene Creed as adopted by our Canadian sister churches and found in the *Book of Praise*.
(*West Albany 2000, Art.26*)

ARTICLE 63 - Catechism preaching

The consistory shall ensure that as a rule every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed, preferably in the afternoon service.

ARTICLE 64 - Psalms and Hymns

In the church services only the psalms and hymns approved by synod shall be sung.

Deputies

Synod decides:

to appoint deputies, and to charge them to investigate if and to what extent the existing metrical versions in English of the Psalms and the existing English translation of The Three Forms of Unity can be used in our church services.

Thereby they have to inform themselves about the results which have been gained by the churches in Canada, in order that in this respect there may be as much uniformity as possible in the churches in the English-speaking countries.

(Armada 1954, Art. 17)

Synod decides:

a. again to appoint deputies for the compiling of or advising regarding a collection of Psalms and other songs from Scripture in the English language, according to the directives and conclusions of the deputies concerned appointed by Synod 1960.

b. to instruct these deputies:

1. to contact the deputies concerned appointed by Synod Homewood-Carman 1958 of The Canadian Reformed Churches.

2. if a responsible song book cannot be obtained in another way, to look out for persons who would be able and willing to take part in the work that has been started within The Canadian Reformed Churches.

3. to examine the results of this work as soon as possible and to pass on to the churches what could be used by our congregations in their church services in the English language.

c. to advise the churches to maintain today's situation for the time being by using the Psalm-versions from Psalter Hymnal of The Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A. which are based on the Genevan tunes, and to add to them or to replace them by the versions mentioned under b 3, unless a responsible song book can be obtained in a different way.

(Armada 1959, Art. 36)

Book of Praise

Synod decides:

2. to express its gladness since the work for an English Psalter has made such a good progress that the publication of a provisional edition may be expected in the near future.

3. to advise the churches to replace by this provisional edition the metrical Psalm-versions from the Psalter-Hymnal of The Christian Reformed Church in the U.S.A. which are based on the Genevan tunes, as mentioned in the advice concerned given by Synod 1959, Acts Art. 36.

6. to urge the churches to test the provisional edition with the help of the directives mentioned in the report of deputies appointed by Synod 1956, which was tabled at Synod 1959; and to pass on any possible results thereof to the deputies mentioned under 5.

7. to declare, as also Synod 1959 has done, that it is our intention to limit the song book for the time being to a book containing a metrical version of 'the Book of Psalms' and of other songs from the Bible in the English language.

(Albany 1962, Art. 40)

Synod decides:

d. Deputies request Synod to declare again that in the preparation of a church book for the church services in the English language care must be taken not to move in a direction which may lead to a 'hymn-book' in the spirit of the 'Psalter-Hymnal' of The Christian Reformed Church of the U.S.A. The requested declaration is made.

f. Synod supports deputies in their disapproval of the inclusion in the Book of Praise of alternative melodies besides the Genevan melodies.

(*Armadale 1966, Art.46*)

Synod decides:

to accept the proposal of the committee "to advise the churches to put the Psalm section of the newly published Book of Praise into use as a proof-collection".

(*Armadale 1972, Art.22*)

Synod decides:

to advise the churches regarding the use of the hymn section of the Book of Praise to limit themselves to the hymns named under 6 and to regard these also as a proof-collection.

(*Armadale 1972, Art.46*)

Synod decides:

e. to request the churches to examine and try out the six Bible Songs which have been published by the deputies in 'Una Sancta' Vol.XXII, 11-12.

(*Albany 1975, Art.44*)

Synod decides:

to adopt the recommendation of the deputies pertaining to the acceptable list of hymns to be sung in the church services.

(*Kelmscott 1983, Art.31*)

(Editor's note: Deputies recommended the use of a selection from the 1979 edition of the Book of Praise.)

Synod decides:

to add Hymn 10 to the list of hymns acceptable for use in the church services.

(*Kelmscott 1983, Art.32*)

Synod decides:

to adopt the revisions to the Psalms and Prayer sections and the approved Hymns.

(*Launceston 1985, Art.59 sub A1*)

Synod decides:

to accept the complete hymn section of the Book of Praise for use in the worship services, so that in accordance with the decision of Synod Armadale 1954 there should be as much uniformity as possible amongst the sister-churches of the English-speaking world concerning the matter of a church book (Acts, Article 17).

(*Armadale 1990, Art.65 sub 2*)

Synod decides:

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

(*West Albany 2000, Art.54*)

Synod decides:

1. to acknowledge the Churches' desire to publish an Australian Book of Praise;
2. to appoint deputies to come with more detailed recommendations on how to proceed with an Australian Book of Praise;
3. to present a report on the issues to the churches at least six months before Synod 2009 is due to start;
4. to appoint new deputies with the task to:

- a. investigate if copyright holders can commit to long-term permission of copyright material also in the event that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decide to publish their own version of the Book of Praise;
- b. ascertain an up-to-date costing of printing an Australian Book of Praise, incorporating copyright and printing costs;
- c. report to Synod 2009 with a more detailed plan/proposal incorporating the wishes of the churches;
- d. stay informed about the developments with the Canadian Book of Praise and indicate how the Canadian work may be shared and impact on producing our Australian Book of Praise.

(West Kelmscott 2006, Art. 98)

Synod decides:

- 2. That although there is a desire for an Australian Book of Praise, at present the Canadian Book of Praise sufficiently meets our needs.
- 3. To appoint deputies with the mandate to
 - a. Monitor developments with the Canadian Book of Praise.
 - b. Resume investigations regarding copyright, printing costs and feasibility of producing an Australian Book of Praise only if the Canadian Book of Praise is substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable for use by the Australian churches.
 - c. Keep the churches informed of, and elicit responses from the churches regarding developments with the Canadian Book of Praise.
- 4. To permit the 2008 interim Book of Praise with NIV prose section for use in the churches.

(Legana 2009, Article 25)

Synod decides:

- 1. To invite the churches to scrutinize and test that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010 outside the church services so that a following synod can determine whether to adopt them.
- 2. To extend the mandate of the Deputies for the Book of Praise to include the following:
 - a. To scrutinise the revised sections of the Book of Praise, especially the completely revised Psalter, and that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - b. To invite comments from the churches on these revisions.
 - c. To receive and assess comments from the churches about that portion of the 28 additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - d. To pass on the findings to the Standing Committee of Book of Praise so that the Standing Committee of Book of Praise can use them.
 - e. To report to our next synod so that it can decide on the above matters.
 - f. To give account to synod of the principles and guidelines used to scrutinize these hymns.

(Legana 2009, Article 42)

Synod decides:

- 1. To discharge the deputies and thank them for their work.
- 2. To adopt provisionally the 150 Psalms as revised in the Provisional Book of Praise (2010) for use in the churches.
- 3. To adopt provisionally the 65 Hymns which we have in the current Book of Praise (2004 edition) with the changes made in the Provisional Book of Praise (2010) for use in the churches.
- 4. Not to adopt the 19 additional Hymns as provisionally adopted by Synod Burlington 2010.
- 5. To inform the churches that the 19 additional Hymns may not be used in the worship services.
- 6. That it is not desirable, nor in line with the Church Order (Article 30) to be tied to the new hymns being adopted or considered by the CanRC, in accordance with the overtures of Byford, Darling Downs, Kelmscott and West Albany.

7. To endorse the guidelines listed under Appendix 1 as a starting point in the evaluation of proposed hymns.
8. To appoint deputies with the mandate to:
 - a. Monitor developments with the Canadian Book of Praise.
 - b. Interact with the Canadian SCBP to ensure that Australian input is taken into consideration.
 - c. Keep the churches informed of developments with the Canadian Book of Praise.
 - d. To submit relevant material already received from the churches to the Canadian SCBP for consideration.
 - e. To study the use of capitalization for personal pronouns referring to God.
 - f. To invite input from the churches regarding the desirability of having an Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise.
 - g. Recommence investigations regarding copyright, printing costs and feasibility of producing an Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise, in the event that a future Synod will decide to go that way, which would include:
 - i. 150 psalms as printed in the Canadian Provisional Book of Praise 2010.
 - ii. The 65 hymns as found in the current Book of Praise (edition 2004) with the changes made in the Provisional Book of Praise 2010.
 - iii. The Ecumenical Creeds as printed in the Provisional Book of Praise with the deletion of the word “Christian” from the Apostles Creed.
 - iv. The Three Forms of Unity as printed in the Provisional Book of Praise with the changes authorized by FRCA Synods over the years.
 - v. Orders of Worship as printed in the Provisional Book of Praise.
 - vi. Liturgical Forms as printed in the Provisional Book of Praise with the changes authorized by FRCA Synods over the years.
 - vii. The Church Order as adopted by the Australian Churches.

(Armadale 2012, Article 106)

Synod decides:

1. To adopt and produce an Australian version of the Canadian Book of Praise that:
 - a. includes the Psalms and Hymns of the 2014 Canadian Book of Praise, including the 19 additional hymns;
 - b. includes creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms as found in the 2014 Canadian Book of Praise, with adopted changes made by the FRCA, as well as the Australian Church Order. This includes the changes identified by Deputies in 1.2.4 and 1.2.5 of the Report, as well as the changes decided by Synod Albany 1987 Art 100;
 - c. makes use of the ESV translation of the Bible; and
 - d. does not capitalise the personal pronouns for God.
2. To call this song book “Australian Book of Praise: Anglo-Genevan Psalter”, subject to approval from the Standing Committee of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches, with Deputies for the Book of Praise being granted the liberty to select an appropriate title in the event that the SCBP of the CanRC declines to grant such approval.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 60)

Synod decides:

1. To thank the Deputies and discharge them from their duties.
2. To appoint a Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise (SCABP) consisting of 4 members to:
 - a. act as the legal entity within the FRCA to deal with copyright matters, as required;
 - b. produce in a timely manner a version of the Australian Book of Praise as authorised by Synod 2018, and as described in Article 60 of these Acts, and make such a version also available in a digital format suitable for use on mobile devices;
 - c. request Premier Printing to act as the publisher for the Australian Book of Praise and request Pro Ecclesia to become the Australian distributors;
 - d. maintain good contact with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
 - e. receive, scrutinise and evaluate correspondence from the churches, provide advice where required, and to make recommendations to the next synod as to the validity of

any suggestions made. Concurrent with the committee's work, proposals from the churches would follow the ecclesiastical route (Art 30 CO); and

- f. report to the next synod in accordance with Rules for Synods regarding Deputies.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 88)

ARTICLE 65 - Ecclesiastical feast days

On Christmas Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day, and at Pentecost the consistory shall call the congregation together for church services. The sacred events which the congregation commemorates in particular on these days shall therein be proclaimed.

Prayer and Thanksgiving

Synod decides:

to advise the churches to arrange an annual service for prayer and thanksgiving for harvest and labour on the third Sunday of the month of February.

(Armada 1956, Art.20)

ARTICLE 66 - Days of prayer

In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the church appointed for that purpose by synod.

Synod decides:

To thank the Church at Launceston for their work as deputies for 'Days of Prayer' and accept their report as the completion of the mandate, and to discharge deputies.

(Legana 2009, Article 77)

Synod decides:

1. To accept the Deputies' report.
2. To discharge the Deputies with gratitude for their work over the past three years.
3. To appoint FRC Launceston as Deputies CO 66 for the next three year period.
4. Given that a day of prayer traditionally involves repentance and fasting, deputies should consider whether a day other than the Lord's Day (a day of rejoicing and remembering the resurrection) may be appropriate.

(Bunbury 2018, Article 108)

ARTICLE 67 - Marriage

The consistory shall ensure that the members of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorised by the consistory - solemnise only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnisation of a marriage shall take place in a private ceremony, with the use of the adopted Form.

Civil Registration

Synod decides:

To thank the deputies that they have completed their mandate in that The Free Reformed Church (sic) of Australia have now been registered as a recognised denomination for the purpose of the Marriage Acts 1961.

To discharge the deputies.

To appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* with the following mandate:

To carry out all the duties of *nominating authorities* as required under the Marriage Acts 1961,

To see to a correction of the registered church name from *Free Reformed Church of Australia* to *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*.

(West Albany 2000, Art. 102)

Synod decides:

To appoint new deputies officially designated as the Nominating Authorities to discharge duties under the Marriage Act 1961

(Armada 2012, Art. 74)

ARTICLE 68 - Funerals

Church services shall not be conducted for funerals.

IV CHURCH DISCIPLINE

ARTICLE 69 - Aim of discipline

Church discipline shall be exercised in accordance with the Word of God and to His honour. Its aim is to reconcile the sinner with God and the neighbour, and to remove the offence from the church of Christ.

ARTICLE 70 - Mutual responsibility

If anyone departs from the pure doctrine or is delinquent in conduct and this is a secret matter which does not give rise to public offence, the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be observed.

ARTICLE 71 - Consistory involvement

The consistory shall not deal with any report of sin unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or the sin committed is of a public character.

ARTICLE 72 - Repentance

When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless the member concerned shows real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.

ARTICLE 73 - Discipline in respect of communicant members

A communicant member who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public or some other serious sin shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall publicly announce this to the congregation so that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation.

ARTICLE 74 - Announcements during the procedure

In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place in accordance with the adopted Form. The time interval between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.

ARTICLE 75 - Re-admission

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of this desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the re-admission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised the re-admission shall take place, with the use of the adopted Form.

ARTICLE 76 - Suspension and deposition of office-bearers

If a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions by the consistory, he shall be suspended from office by the judgment of his own consistory and of the consistory of a neighbouring congregation. In the case of a minister this neighbouring congregation shall be appointed by the classis. If he hardens himself in the sin, or if the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot continue in office, an elder or a deacon shall be deposed by the judgment of the above-mentioned consistories. Classis, with the advice of the deputies of synod, shall judge whether a minister is to be deposed.

ARTICLE 77 - Serious and gross sins on the part of office-bearers

As serious and gross sins which are grounds for the suspension or deposition of office-bearers the following are to be mentioned particularly: False doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; and further all such sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.

ARTICLE 78 - Christian censure

The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.

ARTICLE 79 - Discipline in respect of non-communicant members
A baptised member shall be admonished by the consistory when he as an adult fails to make public profession of faith or where in other respects he is not loyal to the calling to new obedience in God's covenant. If he obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory and thereby clearly demonstrates that he is indifferent and averse to the covenant or is even hostile to the service of the Lord, the matter shall be made known to the congregation without mentioning the name of the sinner; and the congregation shall be urged to pray for him. If the member continues in sin and is unwilling to listen to the admonitions, then with the advice of the classis the consistory shall make a second public announcement, mentioning the name of the sinner and the term after which the excommunication shall take place. If he does not in the said term show any real repentance, the consistory shall in a church service exclude him from the communion of the church, using the adopted Form. If he, after this excommunication, comes to repentance and desires to rejoin the communion of the church, he shall be admitted by way of his public profession of faith after the consistory has made his repentance known to the congregation.

CONCLUDING ARTICLES

ARTICLE 80 - No lording over others

No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.

ARTICLE 81 - Observance and revision of the Church Order

These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demands such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented or diminished. However, no consistory or classis shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the provisions of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by synod.