ACTS OF THE 2024 SYNOD

of the

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

DARLING DOWNS, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

17 – 26 June 2024

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Delegates to Synod Darling Downs 2024

Front Row: Elder P Kroeze, Elder R VanderLinde, Rev C Vermeulen, Elder W Spyker, Rev D Poppe, Rev S 't Hart, Elder R Dekker, Elder P Witten, Elder H Hamelink
Second Row: Rev A Hagg, Elder H Terpstra, Rev R Pot, Elder D van Duyn, Rev A Souman, Rev AC Pol, Elder W 't Hart, Rev A van Delden, Rev A Witten

Moderamen (from left to right)

Rev C Vermeulen (Second Clerk), Elder W Spyker (First Clerk),
Rev D Poppe (Chairman), Rev S 't Hart (Vice Chairman)

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

ARTS	Australian Reformed Theological Seminary
BC	Belgic Confession
BoP	Book of Praise
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
CO	Church Order
DGK	De Gereformeerde Kerken
EPC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
GGRC	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis
GGRI	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia
GGRI-T	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
KPCK	Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
SPC	Southern Presbyterian Church
URCNA	United Reformed Churches of North America

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EVENING SESSION
Monday, 17 June 2024

Article 1 - Opening of Synod by Convening Church of FRC Darling Downs

Synod is convened in the Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs building. On behalf of the convening church, the chairman of Consistory, Rev R den Boer, invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 149:1 and 2, followed by the profession of faith by singing Hymn 1. He then leads in opening prayer.

Rev den Boer then reads from Psalm 48 and delivers a meditation on this passage with the theme “God displays His greatness in the church” (refer Appendix 1a). He then invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 147:1, 4 and 6, and leads in prayer to God for His blessing over the synod.

Rev den Boer extends a word of welcome to the local and overseas delegates and gives his opening address (refer Appendix 1b). He then declares the 29th synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened. He invites all present to sing from Psalm 122:3, then invites the delegates to the synod table.

Article 2 - Examination of Credentials

The three classes had previously submitted the credentials of the delegates. Rev den Boer advises that the consistory of Darling Downs has already examined the credentials and are satisfied with them. It is noted that all primi delegates are present (with the exception of one alternate where shown) as follows:

Classis Central
Rev AC Pol
Rev D Poppe
Rev C Vermeulen
Elder R(oy) Dekker
Elder W ‘t Hart
Elder H Terpstra

Classis North
Rev A Souman
Rev S ‘t Hart
Rev A(nson) van Delden
Elder P Kroeze
Elder W Spyker
Elder R vanderLinde

Classis South West
Rev A Hagg
Rev R Pot
Rev A Witten
Elder H Hamelink
Elder D van Duyn (alternate)
Elder P Witten

Article 3 - Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman:	Rev D Poppe
Vice Chairman:	Rev S ‘t Hart
First Clerk:	Elder W Spyker
Second Clerk:	Rev C Vermeulen

Article 4 - Constitution of Synod

The chairman, Rev D Poppe, declares synod duly constituted.

Article 5 - Delegates’ Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

The chairman asks all delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

Article 6 - Adjournment

The chairman thanks the delegates for the trust they have placed in the moderamen, reads from Psalm 111, leads in closing prayer and adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Tuesday, 18 June 2024

Article 7 - Re-opening

Rev S 't Hart reads from Psalm 84 and presents a short meditation. He then invites all present to sing Psalm 84:1 and 5, and leads in prayer.

Article 8 - Welcome to Overseas Visitors

The following overseas visitors, each with written credentials, are welcomed and granted the following privileges:

Under Synod Rule 6.1 as sister churches:

Canadian Reformed Churches:
Rev SC Van Dam
Br H deBoer

Reformed Churches of New Zealand:
Rev P Archbald

Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea:
Rev Jin (Jethro) Heung Kim

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa:
Br G Hagg

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore:
Rev M Chen
Br J Yap

The chairman requests the above sister church delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

Under Synod Rule 6.3 as churches with whom we have official contact:

United Reformed Churches
in North America: Br G Swets

Article 9 - Late Agenda Items

The Final Draft Agenda as prepared by the convening church is tabled. A number of items not on the Draft Agenda are dealt with as follows:

1. To be added to the agenda, agreed by special resolution:
   a. Supplementary report from Deputies Training for the Ministry;
   b. Addition report from Deputies Art 48 CO re Classis Central of 23 February 2024; and
   c. Letter from Orthodox Presbyterian Church re unable to send fraternal delegate.
2. Not to be added to the agenda by reason of being late:
   a. Acts Synod 2003. Appendix 15 – Advice received from Dr M te Velde re Procedure for Appeals ad Art 31 CO.

ADOPTED

Article 10 - Adoption of Agenda

Synod's agenda is adopted as follows:

1. Opening by the Convening Church
2. Examination of Credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of Agenda
7. Adoption of Meeting Procedures
8. Incoming Correspondence
    a. Free Reformed Church of Busselton
        1. Letter Re: Deputies Report on the DGK and GKN
        2. Letter Re: Guidelines for Church Relations
    b. Free Reformed Church of Mt Nasura
        1. Letter Re: Deputies report for interchurch relations
        2. Letter Re: Deputies Report regarding the DGK and GKN
        3. Letter Re: Deputies report – Training for the Ministry
        4. Letter Re: Deputies Report regarding the EPC and SPC
    c. Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs
        1. Recommendation Sr K van Duyn as Administrative Assistant
        2. Recommendation FRC for Synod 2027 Convening Church
        3. Letter regarding ICRC
        4. Letter Re: Additional information regarding ICRC
        5. Letter Re: Proposal changes to the wording of Art 65 CO
    d. Free Reformed Church of Armadale
        1. Letter Re: Australian Reformed Theological Seminary

e. Free Reformed Church of Baldivis
   1. Letter Re: Deputies Training for the Ministry
   2. Letter Re: Ecclesiastical Contact
   3. Letter Re: ICRC
f. Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott
   1. Overture regarding article 101 of the Acts of Synod Albany 2021 (an Australian Theological Seminary)
   2. Letter regarding relations DGK and the GKN (Netherlands)
   3. Letter regarding ICRC
g. Free Reformed Church of Southern River
   1. Letter Re: Proposal re Ecclesiastical Contact/Synod Rules
   2. Letter Re: Deputies for Training for Ministry
   3. Letter Re: Recommendations regarding ICRC
h. Free Reformed Church of Launceston
   1. Letter regarding Deputies for Interchurch Relations Report
i. Free Reformed Church of Melville
   1. Letter Re: Deputies report of Guidelines for Church Relations
   2. Letter Re: Deputies Report Reformed churches of NZ
j. Free Reformed Church of Bunbury
   1. Letter Re: Covenant Grace Church of Penang
   2. Letter Re: Korean Presbyterian Church Oceania
   3. Letter Re: Feedback on Report Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia
   4. Letter Re: Re: Rules for Synods
   5. Letter Re: CRTS – Training for the Ministry
   6. Letter Re: Ecclesiastical Feast Days Art 65 of the CO

7. Letter Re: Needy Student Fund – Training for the Ministry
8. Letter Re: Safe Church Standing Committee

k. Br A Hordyk (member of FRC Mount Nasura)
1. Appeal against decision made by Classis North October 2022
2. Correction to reference Synod Acts 2021 Art 88/89

l. Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)
1. Request to enter into a sister church relationship

m. Rev A vanDelden (Pastor Emeritus of FRC Mundijong)
1. Letter regarding Board of Governors, Theological College, GGRI, Sumba (received for information only)

n. Deputies Art 48 CO
1. Additional Information – retirement of Rev J Kroeze

o. Committee for Ecumenical contact with Churches Abroad
1. Letter Re: Entering into an Ecumenical Contact with the URCNA

p. Free Reformed Church of Rockingham
1. Letter Re: Proposal for Safe Churches

q. Free Reformed Church of Cardup Brook
1. Letter Re: Guidelines for Church Relations

r. Free Reformed Church of Byford
1. Letter Re: Proposed changes to Art 65 of the CO
2. Letter Re: Guidelines for Church Relations

s. Free Reformed Church of West Albany
1. Letter Re: Guidelines for Church Relations

9. Instructions

10. Reports by Classes

a. Classis Central
1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod

b. Classis North
    1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod
    2. Proposal for Safe Church Standing Committee
    3. Proposal to change the wording of Church Order article 65
c. Classis South West
    1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod

11. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
    a. General Secretary's Report
    b. Deputies FRCA Website
    c. Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – outside Australia
        1. Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations – Report to Synod 2024
        2. De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)
        3. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
        4. Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
        5. First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)
        6. Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC)
        7. United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
        8. Orthodox Presbyterian Church
        9. Reformed Churches of New Zealand
        10. Report of Deputies for the Indonesian Churches
            I. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI)
            II. The Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC)
            III. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)
            IV. GGRI - Theological Training

d. Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise
e. Deputies – Training for the Ministry
    1. Supplementary report
    2. Letter from Board of Governors CRTS
    3. Discussion Paper: Australian Affiliate Campus
f. Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC
g. Report of Deputies Art. 48 CO
h. Report of Deputies for Church Order Article 66: Days of Prayer
i. Indexing Synod Decisions
j. Report on Archives and Library of Synod
k. Nominating Authorities: Marriage Act 1961
l. Inspection of Synod Archives
m. Deputies for Venue and Infrastructure

12. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
    a. FRC Byford - Synod Treasury Review Audit Report
13. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
    a. Synod Treasurer – Report Synod Darling Downs 2024
    b. Synod Treasurer – Budget and Actuals 2021-24
    c. Synod Treasurer – Draft Budget 2024-27 (Not received yet)
14. Appointment of Deputies
15. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of the next Synod
16. Personal Questions
17. Adoption of Acts
18. Approval of Press Release
19. Closing of Synod

Article 11 - Administrative Assistant

At the recommendation of the convening church, Synod decides to appoint Sr K van Duyn as administrative assistant to the First Clerk of Synod 2024.

ADOPTED

Article 12 - Time Schedules

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

Session 1		9.00am – 10.30am
	Break	
Session 2		10.45am – 12.15pm
	Lunch	
Session 3		1.45pm – 3.15pm
	Break	
Session 4		3.30pm – 5.00pm
	Dinner	
Session 5		7.00pm – 9.00pm

Article 13 - Live Streaming

I. Decision

Synod decides:

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.

Grounds

1. While synod wishes to be transparent it also wants to exercise discretion about what discussions are publicly accessible.

2. Synod wishes to allow members of FRCA and sister churches to observe the work of synod.
3. The Rules for Synod 7.4 give members of the FRCA the opportunity to observe sessions of synod.
4. The Rules for Synod 7.4 imply that since the right of admission to the audience of open sessions is for members of the FRCA and sister churches, synod meetings are, in principle, not open to just anyone.
5. To make a decision about live streaming all open sessions of synod at this time requires careful consideration of the implications for the work of synod, and should come from the churches (cf. Acts of Synod 2021, Art 13).

ADOPTED

Article 14 - Publishing of Acts

I. Decision

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.

ADOPTED

Article 15 - Financial Advisory Committee

Synod decides to appoint as Financial Advisory Committee, in accordance with the Rules for Synod 11.1, Br H Hamelink and Br R vanderLinde.

Article 16 - Advisory Committees of Synod

The following advisory committees are appointed:

Committee 1 – Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (including ICRC)
Rev A Witten (Convenor)
Rev R Pot
Br R vanderLinde
Br H Hamelink

Committee 2 – Interchurch Relations (outside Australia and EPC/SPC), Website, Book of Praise
Rev C Vermeulen (Convenor)
Rev A van Delden
Br P Kroeze
Br D van Duyn

Committee 3 – Training for the Ministry
Rev A Souman (Convenor)
Rev S ‘t Hart
Br W ‘t Hart
Br R Dekker

Committee 4 – Appeal, Proposals (Art 65 CO, Safe Church)
Rev AC Pol (Convenor)
Rev A Hagg
Br P Witten
Br H Terpstra

ADOPTED

Article 17 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committee to formulate proposed decisions:

- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation A): Committee 1
- Appeal – Classis North October 2022: Committee 4
- Training for the Ministry – ARTS: Committee 3
- Interchurch Relations (DGK / GKN): Committee 2

Article 18 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 18 June 2024

Article 19 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 133:2. For the benefit of the audience, he explains the agenda for the evening.

Article 20 - Address of the Canadian Reformed Churches

The chairman invites Rev SC Van Dam to present his address on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (refer Appendix 1c).

Rev A Souman then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister churches in Canada.

Article 21 - Address of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

The chairman invites Rev M Chen to present his address on behalf of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (refer Appendix 1d).

Br H Terpstra then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister church in Singapore.

Article 22 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees to formulate proposed decisions:

- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation B): Committee 1
- Training for the Ministry – Contact with CRTS: Committee 3

Article 23 - Adjournment

Rev A Souman reads Philippians 4:1-9, invites all present to sing Psalm 33:1, and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 19 June 2024

Article 24 - Reopening

Br P Witten reads Galatians 2:11-21 and speaks a few words. He leads in prayer, then invites all present to sing Psalm 143:5. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 25 - Welcome to Overseas Visitor

Under Synod Rule 6.3 as churches with whom we have official contact, the following overseas visitor is welcomed:

Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC):
Br S Dethan

Article 26 - Instructions

The chairman notes that there are no instructions from the churches.

Article 27 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees to formulate proposed decisions:

- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation B): Committee 1
- Training for the Ministry – full report: Committee 3

Article 28 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

Article 29 - Acts of Synod

Articles 1-18 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 30 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, including proposals brought by the advisory committees, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees:

- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation A): Committee 1
- Appeal – Classis North October 2022: Committee 4
- Interchurch Relations – RCNZ and KPCK: Committee 2
- Proposal for Safe Church Standing Committee: Committee 4

Article 31 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 19 June 2024

Article 32 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 16:5 and leads in prayer. For the benefit of the audience, he outlines the agenda for the evening.

Article 33 - Address of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The chairman invites Rev P Archbald to present his address on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (refer Appendix 1e).

Rev R Pot then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister churches in New Zealand.

Article 34 - Address of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

The chairman invites Rev JH Kim to present his address on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (refer Appendix 1f).

Rev S ‘t Hart then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister churches in Korea.

Article 35 - Address of the United Reformed Churches in North America

The chairman invites Br G Swets to present his address on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America (refer Appendix 1g).

Br P Witten then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the United Reformed Churches in North America.

Article 36 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation the following agenda item, which is then referred to the nominated advisory committee to formulate proposed decisions:

- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation C): Committee 1

Article 37 - Adjournment

Br W Spyker invites all present to sing Psalm 34:5, reads from Philippians 1:3-11 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Thursday, 20 June 2024

Article 38 - Reopening

Br W ‘t Hart reads 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 and speaks a few words. He invites all present to sing Hymn 67:7 then leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 39 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to proposals brought by the advisory committees, which are then referred back to the relevant committees:

- Training for the Ministry – ARTS: Committee 3
- Appeal – Classis North October 2022: Committee 4
- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation A): Committee 1

Article 40 - Acts of Synod

Articles 19-37 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 41 - Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK)

I. Material

Item 11.c.4 – Deputies' Report (pp 91-98).
Item 8.j.2 – FRC Bunbury states that the question about the relationship with Kosin Presbyterian Church Oceania (KPCO), raised in the deputies' report of Synod Bunbury 2018, remains unanswered and suggests that this be included in the next deputies' mandate.

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Continue sister-church relations with the KPCK according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
   b. send two delegates to the KPCK General Assembly in 2025, subject to available finances;

c. continue contact with the KPCK mission undertaken locally in Australia, offering support where feasible and appropriate;
d. submit a report six months prior to the next synod; and
e. investigate the KPCO and initiate formal contact with them.

Grounds

1. The KPCK shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions.
2. Personal contact and attending their General Assembly is very beneficial in mutually understanding, encouraging and supporting each other.
3. Contact with mission work of the KPCK in our locality is a meaningful way to mutually assist and encourage one another in keeping with the Rules for Exercising Sister Church Relations.
4. It is brotherly for sister-churches to inform us when they are doing mission work in our nation, also so we can support and encourage them prayerfully and perhaps otherwise.
5. The KPCO has a very close relationship with and finds its origin in the KPCK.
6. This investigation is justified because the KPCO is local (in our geographical area, with 3 congregations in Perth) and potential contact appears meaningful. Clarity about who they are will be helpful for consistories within our federation.

ADOPTED

Article 42 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)

I. Material

Item 11.c.9 – Deputies' Report (pp 127-134).

Item 8.i.2 – FRC Melville suggests that we learn more about the PCEA and PRCA since they have an ongoing sister relationship with RCNZ and because they are within Australia.

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ, under the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   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. foster opportunities for further interaction between the RCNZ and the FRCA, including pulpit exchanges, conference/workshop presentations, meeting with deputies, and mutual assistance with vacant churches;
   c. send two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances; and
   d. report to the next Synod with recommendations.

Grounds

1. The RCNZ show faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed confessions.
2. The value of our relationship with the RCNZ can be significantly enhanced if we seek to share the wisdom, expertise, and experience of ministers (both currently serving and retired) and other

gifted individuals from both church federations to provide instruction and assistance to each other in practical ways.

ADOPTED

Article 43 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred back to the relevant committees:

- Interchurch Relations – URCNA: Committee 2
- Interchurch Relations – Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations (ICRC): Committee 1

EVENING SESSION
Thursday, 20 June 2024

Article 44 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 98:1 and 2 and leads in prayer. For the benefit of the audience, he outlines what was discussed during the day and the agenda for the evening.

Article 45 - Address of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

The chairman invites Br G Hagg to present his address on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (refer Appendix 1h).

Br W Spyker then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for our sister churches in South Africa.

Article 46 - Address of the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC)

The chairman invites Br S Dethan to present his address on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (refer Appendix 1i).

Rev AC Pol then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches in Indonesia.

Article 47 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees:

- Interchurch Relations – FERC: Committee 2
- Proposal of Classis North re Article 65 CO: Committee 4

Article 48 - Adjournment

Br R Dekker invites those present to sing Psalm 138:1 and 2, reads from 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Friday, 21 June 2024

Article 49 - Reopening

Rev A van Delden reads 1 Thessalonians 2:1-16 and speaks a few words. He invites all present to sing Hymn 8 then leads in prayer. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 50 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

Article 51 - Appeal Against Decision Classis North Oct 2022 (Br A Hordyk)

I. Materials

Item 8.k.1 – Letter from Br. A. Hordyk appealing the decisions by Classis North October 2022 and the Church Council of FRC Mount Nasura, regarding Synod Albany 2021, Articles 81, 85, 89 and 112. Br. Hordyk contends that Synod Albany erred when it did not remove the privilege of discussion and voting from delegates who had prior involvement of those decisions. The appeal states that this neglect ignored the biblical principle of impartiality for decision-making and the instruction of Church Order Art 32.

II. Admissibility

The appeal is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Synod acknowledges the biblical norm of impartiality in decision-making.
2. The appeal against the decision of Classis North October 2022 is denied.

Grounds

1. Partiality may be defined as having one's judgment influenced by something other than the merits of the matter under consideration.

2. When Scripture maintains the norm of impartiality, as referenced by the appellant, it particularly addresses judging matters involving personal circumstances (cf. Jas 2:1-4) and personal disputes between individuals (cf. 1 Tim 5:19-21). The appellant has misapplied these biblical references to impartiality to the decision-making process of Synod Albany 2021, which involved matters of procedure.

3. Classis North (Oct. 28, 2022) did not err when they ruled: “The Mount Nasura Consistory did not err in adopting what they considered was ‘the more usual understanding of “directly involved”’ in Art. 32, FRCA Church Order, i.e. that a delegate to a major assembly is only ‘directly involved’ in an appeal matter if:
   a. the delegate himself is directly involved i.e. the delegate is the subject matter of the appeal or the appeal is an appeal by the delegate; or

   b. the delegate's church is directly involved i.e. that church is the subject matter of the appeal or the appeal is by that church.”
4. The appellant refers to the Acts of Synod Rockingham 2003, Art 115, Decision 3, which state that “only those who have not judged these matters previously make the final judgment on these appeals”. However, this article specifically dealt with a unique case which among other things involved persons as per CO Art 32.

ADOPTED

Eight (8) delegates abstained from voting.

Article 52 - General Secretary’s Report

I. Material

Item 11.a – Deputies’ Report (p 2).

II. Decision

Thank the deputy for his work, discharge him, and appoint a new deputy with the mandate to:

1. distribute any pertinent mail to the deputies, acknowledge correspondence not applicable to

deputies, and if necessary, pass it on to the churches; and

2. collate all Deputies' reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in an appropriate format. Deputies' reports are to be submitted 6 months prior to the next synod, so that they can be printed and distributed to the churches as per the Rules for Synods.

ADOPTED

Article 53 - Discussion Round

A round of discussion was held in relation to the following agenda item, which is then referred to the nominated advisory committee:

- FRCA Website: Committee 2

Article 54 - Deputies Article 48 Church Order

I. Material

Item 11.g – Deputies' Report (pp 234-235).
Item 8.n.1 – Additional Information – Retirement of Rev. J. Kroeze.

II. Decision

1. Receive the report, thank the deputies and discharge them.
2. Note with gratitude the assistance given to Classis Central (21 October 2022) in relation to the examination of Candidate Rodney den Boer, the assistance to Classis North (28 October 2022) in relation to the examination of Candidate Anson van Delden, the assistance to Classis North (20 Oct 2023) in relation to the examination of Candidate Tim Slaa, and the assistance to Classis Central (23 February 2024) in relation to the retirement of Rev. J. Kroeze.

3. Appoint new deputies to assist the classes according to Art 48 CO, with one deputy and one alternate from each classical region, according to the manner decided by Synod Armadale 2012, Decision 3 (Art 110, p 80-81).

ADOPTED

Article 55 - Days of Prayer – Article 66 Church Order

I. Material

Item 11.h – Deputies' Report (p 236).

II. Decision

1. To thank the deputies (FRC Launceston) for their work and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to carry out the requirements of Art 66 CO for the next inter-synodical period.

ADOPTED

Article 56 - Indexing Synod Decisions

I. Material

Item 11.i – Deputies' Report (pp 237-238).

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. Appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. collate the decisions of Synod Darling Downs 2024 as they relate to articles of the Church Order and:
      i. publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA;

ii. place one bound paper copy in the archives after the decisions of Synod Darling Downs 2024 have been indexed;

b. ensure that all the published Acts of the FRCA synods continue to be available on the FRCA website (without password protection, in searchable pdf format);

c. ensure a copy of the Church Order is available on the FRCA website; and

d. continue to update and publish the ecclesiastical documents currently on the FRCA website (eg. Ecclesiastical Ordinances, Rules for Synods, Guidelines for Church Visits, Rules for Exercising Sister Church Relations).

Grounds

1. The churches are well served by the ongoing collation of synod decisions as they relate to the various articles of the Church Order.
2. The Acts of Synod are of widespread interest both within our churches as well as within our sister churches.
3. All information presented in the published Acts of Synod are generated in open session.

ADOPTED

Article 57 - Acts of Synod

Articles 38-48 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 58 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees:

- Venue and Infrastructure: Committee 2
- Interchurch Relations – SPC / EPC: Committee 2

Article 59 - Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

a. Material

Item 11.c.6 – Deputies' Report (pp 105-112).

b. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. Discharge deputies, thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
   b. monitor and report to the synod on developments within the CanRC on areas of discussion about church polity, liturgy, and other areas that deputies might identify;
   c. stay informed on the developments regarding the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; and
   d. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled for May 2025 in Aldergrove, CanRC.

Grounds

1. The CanRC show continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

2. Deputies have identified areas of ongoing discussion within the CanRC that relate to church polity and liturgy, and regulations for sister church relations require mutual care for each other in these areas.
3. We need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters our respective federations face, including their sister church relations in North America.
4. We value our bond with the CanRC and the personal contact at the synodical level, reinforcing our contact with them.

ADOPTED

Article 60 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda item, which is then referred to the nominated advisory committee:

- Interchurch Relations – OPC: Committee 2

Article 61 - Committee Work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Friday, 21 June 2024

Article 62 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 19:1. He leads in prayer and explains the agenda for the evening.

Article 63 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items and committee recommendations, which are then referred to the nominated advisory committees:

- Interchurch Relations – GGRI, GGRC and GGRI-T: Committee 4
- Interchurch Relations – GGRI – Theological College: Committee 4
- Interchurch Relations – URCNA: Committee 2
- Interchurch Relations – FRCSA: Committee 3

Article 64 - Adjournment

Rev A Hagg reads from Psalm 22:22-28 and speaks a few words. He then invites those present to sing from Psalm 22:9 and 10 and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Monday, 24 June 2024

Article 65 - Reopening

Rev A Witten reads Proverbs 18:1-4, 13 and speaks a few words. He leads in prayer, then invites all present to sing Psalm 111:1. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 66 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

Article 67 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following committee reports:

- Interchurch Relations: Multiple Churches in Geographic Proximity
- Proposal of Classis North re Article 65 CO
- Interchurch Relations: Ecclesiastical Contact

Article 68 - Acts of Synod

Articles 49-64 of the Acts are adopted.

EVENING SESSION
Monday, 24 June 2024

Article 69 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Hymn 52:1 and leads in prayer. For the benefit of the audience, he outlines what was discussed during the day and the agenda for the evening.

Article 70 - Australian Reformed Theological Seminary (ARTS)

I. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' Report (pp 174-228).

Item 11.e – Deputies' Report page 179: the deputies ask the question: Would the FRCA accept an 'Advisory Committee' form of governance? Under this form of governance, FRCA brothers would advise the Board of Governors (BoG) about the work at the affiliate, but the CRTS Board would retain final authority over all decisions.

Item 11.e – Supplementary Report, in which the deputies report that the Board of Governors of the CRTS

is not prepared to go to the Ontario Legislature to pursue amendments to the College Act 1981. Therefore, deputies recommend to rescind their earlier recommendation 4.1.1. and adjust 4.1.2. Appended to this are a Letter and a Discussion Paper of the Board of Governors CRTS about this matter.

Item 8.f.1 – FRC Kelmscott writes that in making the decision recorded in article 101 of the Acts, Synod 2021 erred in making the decisions 1, 2, and 3 and Kelmscott recommends to return to Synod Bunbury's decision not to establish an Australian seminary, and to mandate the deputies first to execute all that was decided in 5, 6, 7 of article 101 of Synod 2021 (Albany).

Item 8.b.3 – FRC Mt. Nasura writes that a desire for academic accreditation should not stand in the way of providing training and hence ministers for our churches.

Item 8.d.1 – FRC Armadale requests to include under recommendation 4.1.2 that a consultant also "advise on the development of an independently accredited ARTS "; to replace recommendation 4.1.6 with the recommendation "to investigate and prepare an adaptive plan and roadmap which progressively builds on the current CRTS program with the ultimate objective of an accredited ARTS"; to add to recommendation 4.5 "to investigate barriers which are preventing current ministers from commencing or continuing the additional studies".

Item 8.e.1 – FRC Baldivis asks Synod that the timeline for the establishment of a seminary be tied to the feasibility as recommended by the CRTS board of governors (i.e. when the student number at CRTS is around 50 and there are about 8 men qualified to serve the churches in Canada and Australia as professors).

Item 8.j.5 – FRC Bunbury opposes the recommendation 4.11 to "*request the CRTS Board of Governors to approach the Ontario government for an amendment to the private members bill*", since CRTS has expressed hesitancy about this, and we have not demonstrated

sufficient numbers for professors or students. (NB this recommendation is rescinded in the supplementary report from the deputies.) All the reasons our churches raised in 2018 about not to start a seminary at this time still apply.

Item 8.g.2 – FRC Southern River supports the engagement of a consultant, but recommends that we exercise caution in developing a CRTS affiliate campus in Australia, and recommends to delete any reference to implementation plan in recommendation 4.1.6 in the supplementary report. Also to expand recommendation 4.1.7.

II. Admissibility

All material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

Synod decide:

1. To mandate deputies to develop a strategic long term plan for a future Australian Reformed Theological Seminary that is feasible, affordable, and specific, with a vision toward 2040.
2. For the purpose of developing this plan the deputies are mandated:
    a. to further consult with churches in the Asia Pacific region with whom we have contact, regarding their interest in and the potential benefits of an accredited theological seminary which serves us and the Asia-Pacific region;
    b. to outline the steps to be taken, including an estimated timeframe, for establishing a seminary, either:
        i. as an affiliate of CRTS;
        ii. as a seminary accredited under the Australian College of Theology;
        iii. as an independently accredited ARTS;

iv. established in phases, as outlined in the proposal of FRC Armadale;

c. to estimate the costs to:
   i. establish a seminary; and
   ii. maintain a seminary consisting of twelve students and four professors;

d. to determine whether there is broad support from the churches for this plan as it develops; and

e. to identify and monitor the factors that are obstacles to accomplishing this vision.

3. Subject to need, deputies may engage a consultant to assist them in this task.

4. To mandate deputies to inform the CRTS Board of Governors that the FRCA would accept an advisory committee form of governance if this is offered.

5. To make use of funds previously levied from the churches if and when this is required, but not to impose any further levy for the next three years.

Grounds

1. While Art 17 of the CO allows us to fulfil our obligation by supporting the CanRC seminary (Acts of Synod 2018, Art 80, Ground 2, p48), working towards the establishment of an Australian Reformed Theological Seminary is in accordance with Church Order article 17 that “The churches shall support or, if possible, maintain an institution for the training for the ministry.” Therefore, it is good to investigate the possibility of a seminary for and by the FRCA.

2. CRTS provides high quality education for our students. To replace this by an ARTS, it is essential that we can offer an education that is also of high quality. Careful preparation and planning is necessary to achieve this goal.

3. Matters that need to be considered before a seminary can be established include the numbers of professors and students required at both CRTS and ARTS, the financial requirements; the resulting vacancies in the churches.
4. We ought to consider the CRTS BoG recommendation that an ARTS only begins once the CRTS approaches 50 students and there are at least eight brothers available for professor in the CanRC and FRCA.
5. Synod Bunbury 2018 mandated deputies to develop and submit a strategic long term plan for a future Australian theological seminary that is accredited and has the potential to serve our sister churches and other churches in the wider Reformed community in the Asia-Pacific region (see Acts Bunbury 2018, article 80 III.2.a). Consulting with churches in the Asia Pacific region was mandated by a previous synod, and deputies have not yet reported on this.
6. Students at CRTS benefit from academic instruction and exposure to diverse cultures and Reformed church environment. By welcoming students from the Asia-Pacific region there is the potential for similar benefits.
7. An ARTS as an affiliate of CRTS could be a realistic option and can help meet our requirements.
8. Strong support among the churches for an ARTS is critical for the implementation of an ARTS and the feedback of the churches to Synod 2018 and to deputies in the past inter-synodical period shows that in our present circumstances this high level of support is not yet evident.

ADOPTED

Article 71 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda item:

- Interchurch Relations: Guidelines for Church Relations (Recommendation E)

Article 72 - De Gereformeede Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

I. Material

Item 11.c.2 – Deputies' Report (pp 69-82).

Item 8.l.1 – GKN (Generale Synode Kampen 2023) have requested to enter into sister church relationship with FRCA.

Item 11.c.2 – Deputies' Supplementary Report – Deputies inform us by way of a letter from the DGK that the DGK and GKN are planning to merge into one federation in October, 2024.

Item 8.f.2 – FRC Kelmscott highlight that there are further developments in the RCN among those who have left the liberated churches. Further, they propose that the synod mandate the delegates to: monitor the situation of those who are still leaving the RCN, consult with sister churches about this situation, and report back to Synod 2027.

Item 8.a.1 – FRC Busselton suggest that Synod 2024 decide now to accept sister church relations when they unite.

Item 8.b.2 – FRC Mt Nasura query the lack of grounds with regard to the request that the DGK sever their relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA).

II. Decision

1. With respect to the DGK, to:
    a. express joy and thankfulness that:
        i. the DGK shows itself to be a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ; and
        ii. the DGK and the GKN deputies have formulated a common proposal to their forthcoming synods recommending the two church bonds unite into one federation;
    b. note that the DGK has decided to end its sister church relation to the LRCA;
    c. advise the DGK that we look forward to working towards sister relations with the united federation;
    d. thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
        i. advise DGK of synod's decision; and
        ii. maintain contact with the DGK and monitor the developments towards their planned union with the GKN.
2. With respect to the GKN, to:
    a. express joy and thankfulness that:
        i. the GKN shows itself to be a true and faithful church of Jesus Christ; and
        ii. the GKN and the DGK deputies have formulated a common proposal to their forthcoming synods recommending the two church bonds unite into one federation;
    b. advise the GKN that we look forward to working towards sister relations with the united federation;

c. thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   i. advise GKN of the Synod's decision; and
   ii. maintain contact with the GKN and monitor the developments towards their planned union with the DGK.

3. In light of the proposed union of the DGK with the GKN to take place, D.V. in October 2024, mandate the deputies to:
   a. initiate formal contact with the "newly formed deputies for foreign relations of DGK together with GKN" (Synod Dalfsen 2024, 8 June 2024, Art 4/5);
   b. send one or two delegates to the proposed joint Synod in October 2024, subject to an invitation and available finances;
   c. come with a proposal to Synod 2027 regarding sister church relations with the new federation;
   d. keep the FRCA churches informed of developments; and
   e. extend an invitation to the deputies of the new federation to attend our synod in 2027.

4. With respect to other reformed churches in the Netherlands, mandate the deputies to:
   a. monitor the developments in the Netherlands, especially concerning the churches that have left, or are still leaving, the former RCN, and report to Synod 2027; and
   b. work with deputies from sister churches who are pursuing relationships with churches in the Netherlands.

Grounds

1. Both the DGK and GKN show the marks of the true church. They are true to Scripture and are faithful in their adherence to the Three Forms of Unity and Church Order.
2. Both the DGK and GKN seek a sister church relationship with the FRCA.
3. Synod Albany 2021 mandated deputies to work towards entering a sister church relationship with both the DGK and GKN. Past FRCA synods have noted that both the DGK and GKN profess to be a faithful church in every aspect of Reformed doctrine (Synod Bunbury 2018 Article 75) and there is no evidence to the contrary. This is now confirmed. Furthermore members of both the DGK and GKN have remained faithful to the reformed faith by rejecting the unbiblical direction of the RCN.
4. DGK and GKN deputies formulated a common proposal to their synods recommending the two church federations merge. The two federations had a joint synod meeting on Saturday, March 16, 2024, where they confirmed their recognition of each other as churches of Jesus Christ. They are presently working on practically merging everything as much as possible, and are hoping to convene a joint synod of both federations in October 2024, where they plan to merge organisationally into one federation.
5. We have received offers in the past from both the DGK and the GKN for sister relations. It does not make practical sense to offer sister relations to each separately, due to the shortness of the time before their planned merger. We cannot offer sister relations to an as yet unformed federation. However, we do not want to wait till the next synod before we start on pursuing sister relations with the united federation. It is possible that the newly

formed federation will be in a position to offer sister relations, and then our deputies can respond to this in their preparations for the next synod.

6. Recently the DGK decided to end its sister church relationship with the LRCA (Synod Dalfsen 2024, Art 5).
7. It would be good to meet those deputies and have them present at Synod 2027.
8. The FRCSA are supporting a group called the “Kerngroep Bezinning” involving those churches and members disenchanted with the RCN, and looking to regroup as church federation.
9. The FRCA do not only have a responsibility towards the DGK and GKN, but to all those who have left or are considering leaving our former sister churches.

ADOPTED

Article 73 - Deputies for Venue and Infrastructure

I. Material

Item 11.m – Deputies’ Report (pp 247-250).

II. Decision

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. liaise with the next convening church in a timely fashion regarding:
      i. requirements for synod venue;
      ii. updating the synod hosting handbook, and pass on the handbook to the convening church when it is appointed;

iii. requesting that synod committees re-evaluate the handbook, and if necessary, pass any updates to deputies;
iv. maintaining contact with synod committees in their deliberations and preparations for synod;
v. being closely involved with the Venue Subcommittee and answering any logistical queries they may have;
vi. monitor the location and condition of synod table and associated hardware, and
    A. oversee replacement if required; and
    B. oversee setup of synod table at next synod venue;

b. provide and operate an audio system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;
c. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which:
    i. is easy to use with email and browsing capabilities;
    ii. has central data storage;
    iii. has convenient printing capability;
    iv. has secure internal email facilities;
    v. has data and email backup;
    vi. includes a data projector for the audience to follow the discussions and also project the Psalm or Hymn that will be sung if required; and
    vii. if feasible, make the system available remotely to delegates outside of the hours of synod;
d. investigate the development and implementation of a comprehensive program that facilitates efficient sharing and

collaborative working on documents for synod;

e. be prepared for the eventuality that synod may require the “live streaming” technology;
f. be prepared for the eventuality that synod may use “video call” meetings with overseas delegates not able to attend the next synod;
g. work closely with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of synod venue preparations;
h. liaise with the convening church prior to synod for an electronic copy – not scanned – 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”;
i. be available and able to assist at all synod sessions;
j. provide full computer and sound support; and
k. submit a report to the next synod 6 months in advance and a supplementary report during synod.

Grounds

1. Synod must be able to do its work smoothly through the provision of technical equipment that allows:
   a. delegates to clearly understand each other;
   b. the audience, local and remote, to follow the discussion;
   c. flexibility to expand and contract as the number of delegates changes; and
   d. the computer system to service synod with an enhanced method of distributing proposals and the like quickly and efficiently.

2. The role of the Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue has been of great benefit in enhancing the smooth preparation and operation of synod.

ADOPTED

Article 74 - Adjournment

Rev AC Pol read from Esther 4:6-14 and speaks a few words and leads in prayer. He then invites all present to sing Psalm 138:4. The chairman adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Tuesday, 25 June 2024

Article 75 - Reopening

Br P Kroeze reads Revelation 19:6-16 and speaks a few words. He leads in prayer, then invites all present to sing Hymn 3:1 and 3. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 76 - Safe Church Standing Committee

I. Materials

Item 10.b.2 – Proposal from Classis North that Synod appoint a standing committee to establish and maintain a Safe Church program in the FRCA for preventing and addressing child abuse.

Item 8.j.8 – FRC Bunbury opposes the proposal based on the instruction of CO Art 30, i.e. that major assemblies should only deal with matters which belong to its churches in common and that there are many other aspects of church life that all of our churches are engaged with that are not thereby matters for the churches in common as intended by CO Art 30. It suggests that this matter should remain the responsibility of the local church.

Item 8.p.1 – FRC Rockingham opposes the proposal based on the instruction of CO Art 30, indicating that this proposal is not an ecclesiastical matter and fails to be a matter for the churches in common. It also expresses concern that the formulated guidelines might become compulsory in the handling of discipline cases.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. To acknowledge the importance of handling child abuse situations in a faithful and godly way.
2. Not to accede to the proposal from Classis North.

Grounds

1. While it is commendable to have consistency in the manner in which local churches handle situations of abuse, the purpose of Art 30 of the church order is to have our broader assemblies only deal with ecclesiastical matters that concern the federation as a whole. A proposal to establish and maintain a Safe Church program is a matter common to the churches, but not an ecclesiastical matter which belongs to the churches in common (Art 30 CO).
2. It is possible for the churches to establish such a committee outside of a Synod decision.

ADOPTED

Article 77 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

Article 78 - Acts of Synod

Articles 65-74 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 79 - Greetings from overseas Churches

The chairman noted that letters of greeting were received from the following overseas Churches:

- Reformed Churches of Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-Timor) (refer Appendix 1j); and
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) (refer Appendix 1k).

Article 80 - FRCA Website

I. Material

Item 11.b – Deputies' Report (pp 3-7).

II. Decision

1. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them and appoint new deputies with a mandate to:
   a. maintain the FRCA website and the associated technical functions;
   b. monitor relevant developments in the FRCA and update website news and content accordingly;
   c. invite and encourage the churches and classes, through their official addresses, to send news items and press releases directly to the published committee email address for inclusion on the FRCA website; and
   d. submit a report of their activities, a financial statement, a proposed budget; and any recommendations regarding additional content or functionality 6 months prior to the next synod.
2. To approve the Website Committee budget of $1,200 for the period 2024-2027.

Grounds

1. The churches will be well-served by a regularly updated website.

2. A presence on the internet is valuable for the promotion of our churches in the local and wider community.
3. An email address for website news and content updates has been set up.
4. Not all churches are aware of the email address for website updates, and as a result not all relevant news and content has been published.

ADOPTED

Article 81 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

I. Material

Item 11.c.3 – Deputies' Report (pp 83-90).

II. Decision

1. To continue sister relations with the FRCSA according to the established rules.
2. To acknowledge the request of the FRCSA to be more flexible in the use of the financial support given by the FRCA, to enable them to direct this to the support of mission and not only for theological training.
3. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
   b. send two delegates to the next FRCSA synod when it is convened;
   c. coordinate responses to requests for support from FRCSA deputies regarding needs in areas such as mission, theological training or needy churches and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate; and

d. keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the FRCSA churches and their activities, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via Una Sancta.

Grounds

1. The FRCSA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Visits to South Africa and personal contacts with them are effective in terms of mutual support and encouragement in maintaining good sister church relations.
3. Our South African sister churches, in addition to their own contributions, request ongoing financial support. Such support should be co-ordinated, the churches kept informed, and financial accountability maintained.
4. The task of the deputies is not to get involved in this work but only to inform the FRCA of the request and coordinate the response of the churches to this request. This support is a voluntary contribution from the churches, not an assessment or a levy.
5. Synod Albany 2021 made a decision to give financial support for the FRCSA's theological training. Deputies now report how the financial needs of the FRCSA have changed, and there is a need to decide where best to channel FRCA support going forwards, "namely, towards theological training or towards mission."

ADOPTED

Article 82 - Training for the Ministry

I. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' Report (pp 174-228).

Item 11.e – Supplementary Report with suggested Recommendation 4.2.1 to replace the recommendation in the Deputies Report.

Item 8.e.1 – FRC Baldivis suggests winding up the library fund; renaming the Needy Student Fund "Theological Student Support"; to broaden the scope of the Needy Student Fund to include foreign students; to increase financial support for students undertaking the Pastoral Training Program to 12 weeks. Baldivis supports the Pastoral Training Program Guidelines and to proposal to increase the levy for support of CRTS to that of the CanRC. Baldivis asks that Synod affirm the CRTS BoG recommendation to tie the feasibility of an ARTS to there being 8 men qualified to be professors and the number of students at CRTS being around 50; and that deputies be mandated to foster the studying of advanced degrees among suitable ministers.

Item 8.j.7 – FRC Bunbury re: Use of Needy Student Fund – opposes the use of the Needy Student Fund to fund the Pastoral Training Program and Vicariate program in order to keep support for needy theology students according to Art 18 CO distinct from support for theology students engaged in the PTP and vicariate programs.

II. Admissibility

All of the items are declared admissible.

III. Decision – Contact with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

Synod decides to:

1. request the churches to contribute AU$110 per communicant member for 2025, for the maintenance of the CRTS, and for each

subsequent year to contribute at a level per communicant member that maintains parity with the contributions of the CanRC;

2. approve the proposed budget for the 2024-2027 period, namely $14,000, consisting of:
   - $7,500 for a guest lecturer from the CRTS;
   - $4,000 for a deputy to represent FRCA and attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next three-year term; and
   - $2,500 for the promotion of the ministry of the gospel amongst eligible men through means of a conference held during the inter-synodical period 2024-2027;
3. adopt the recommended changes to the Australian Guidelines for the Pastoral Training Program;
4. thank the deputies for their work, discharge them and appoint new deputies with a mandate to:
   a. oversee the Hamilton Theological Fund;
   b. arrange a guest lecturer from CRTS during the next inter-synodical period;
   c. arrange a deputy to attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next inter-synodical period;
   d. arrange the financial matters associated with hosting a conference every inter-synodical period;
   e. liaise periodically with both prospective and current theological students to provide encouragement and support and to have good oversight of their education;
   f. maintain communication with CRTS and express gratitude for the efforts undertaken by the CRTS across all fronts;
   g. stay as actively involved as possible in the work of the CRTS Board of Governors;

h. convey congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement on special occasions;
i. collect and disburse funds for the PTP;
j. oversee the Library and the Library Fund;
k. promote the CRTS within the FRCA;
l. promote the study for ministry among prospective men in whatever way possible; and
m. create a plan that details how current ministers or seminary students can be motivated and assisted in pursuing their studies to obtain a PhD. This plan should also highlight potential challenges and strategies to address these challenges.

Grounds

1. CRTS reviews and adjusts this levy annually. To maintain regular parity, the FRCA should follow this pattern of annual review (see Acts Synod 2015, article 93 section VIII 12.1.b and Acts Synod 2018, article 90.II.7.b and ground 6). Setting the levy for a 3-year period has incurred a shortfall from the FRCA contributions for CRTS for the past three-year period. This allows the FRCA deputies to consider variations that may occur in currency exchange rates.
2. The churches need ministers, as well as professors to train future ministers.
3. Supporting students in the course of their training and study is an important part of them completing the journey.
4. Items 4.a-l are part of the continuing functions of Deputies for the Training for the Ministry.
5. A library is an integral component of a theological seminary. Should the churches approve any plans for the establishment of a theological seminary, the current collection and the funds that

have been saved would provide a substantial contribution towards the establishment of a library.

IV. Decision – Needy Student Fund

Synod decides to:

5. Mandate deputies to continue to assess the churches and oversee the Needy Student Fund for the support of theological students.

Grounds

1. This is in accordance with article 18 of the Church Order.
2. The Needy Student Fund is a significant way of supporting students while studying for the ministry.

V. Decision – Pastoral Training Program (PTP)

Synod decides to:

6. Mandate the deputies to:
   a. support students who fulfil the PTP Internship in Australia for up to 12 weeks; and
   b. assess the churches for the costs of the PTP.
7. Adopt the updated PTP guidelines (refer Appendix 2).

Grounds

1. The Pastoral Training Program is up to 12 weeks. It can be beneficial for a student if he uses the full 12 weeks, and the finances should not be an impediment for that.
2. Students who fulfil their internship in Canada are financially supported by the Canadian Churches through their PTP fund. It is fair that the FRCA do the same for students who fulfil their internship as part of the PTP in Australia.

3. This financial support should not come from the Needy Student Fund because the churches contributed for the purpose of supporting Needy Students and not for the purpose of the PTP.
4. As much as possible we should maintain equity with what the Canadian PTP fund does.

VI. Decision – Vicariate Model

Synod decides to:

8. Adopt the proposed Vicariate Guidelines for implementation beginning in 2025 (refer Appendix 3).
9. Mandate the deputies to manage the vicariate in accordance with the adopted guidelines.

Grounds

1. Previous Synods have expressed a desire for a voluntary Vicariate Program.
2. The guidelines provide a structure for such a program to be commenced in the FRCA.
3. The financial support for the Vicariate Program should not come from the Needy Student Fund because the churches contributed for the purpose of supporting Needy Students and not for the purpose of the Vicariate Program.

VII. Decision – Number of Deputies

Synod decides to:

10. Appoint seven deputies and three alternates in one deputyship for the training for the ministry.
11. This Deputyship can organise itself, if it sees fit to do so, in separate sections under the conditions:
    a. that the entire deputyship remains ultimately responsible for the functioning of the sections;
    b. every section reports on its activities to the entire deputyship at least once a year; and

c. the entire deputyship meets at least once a year, to exchange information between the sections and supervise the work of each section.

Grounds

1. This is in line with what Synod Bunbury 2018 decided about the deputyship for interchurch relations outside Australia.
2. It may be practical to divide the work and the deputies in sections, while at the same time it is important for deputies to remain informed about each other's work.
3. If the entire deputyship functions as a supervisor over the sections, the deputies can be held to account regarding the fulfilment of their mandate.

ADOPTED

Article 83 - Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI)

I. Material

Item 11.c.10.i – Deputies' Report (pp 135-146).

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
   b. send delegates to each of the next GGRI National and Provincial Synods subject to available finance and manpower;
   c. continue to offer assistance in improving the Reformed character of the GGRI Churches and addressing existing concerns by the

current means of theological training support and seminars, subject to available resources; and

d. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor.

Grounds

1. The GGRI churches give evidence of continual striving for faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other so that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy. Troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI have been identified and discussed with the leaders in the GGRI. The deputies indicate that there is a desire to address these concerns and it is important that we continue to encourage them in these matters and offer them help wherever possible.
3. The seminars as organised over the past few years in cooperation with the deputies of the GGRI have been well received and are a valuable means which deputies can offer to assist the GGRI in improving the reformed character of these churches.
4. The Indonesian churches request ongoing financial support for their theological college as they continue on a road to self-sustainability. Until such time that this support is no longer required, such support should be coordinated, the churches kept informed, and financial accountability maintained.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 25 June 2024

Article 84 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 119:34 and Rev S ‘t Hart leads in prayer. The chairman then explains the agenda for the evening.

Article 85 - Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC)

I. Material

Item 11.c.10.ii – Deputies’ Report (pp 147-150).

II. Decision

1. Synod decides that as part of the mandate to deputies regarding the GGRI (see the decision about the GGRI), the deputies:
   a. continue contact with the GGRC and help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
   b. maintain and establish this contact via the normal means of communication and when meeting delegates from the GGRC at GGRI synods; and
   c. recommend to the next synod whether to continue contact, move to a Sister Church relationship or relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact, or terminate formal contact with the GGRC, using the guidelines for interchurch relations considered by Synod 2024.

Grounds

1. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI, GGRC, and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the

GGRI also to maintain contacts with this other church federation in Indonesia.

2. Synod has made some decisions about relationships and contact with other churches which should help deputies come with a recommendation.

ADOPTED

Article 86 - Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)

I. Material

Item 11.c.10.iii – Deputies' Report (pp 151-153).

II. Decision

1. Synod decides that as part of the mandate to deputies regarding the GGRI (see the decision about the GGRI), the deputies:
   a. continue contact with the GGRI-T, send delegates to their synod if an invitation is received and help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
   b. maintain and establish this contact via the normal means of communication and when meeting delegates from the GGRI-T at GGRI synods; and
   c. recommend to the next synod whether to continue contact, move to a Sister Church relationship or relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact, or terminate formal contact with the GGRI-T, using the guidelines for interchurch relations considered by Synod 2024.

Grounds

1. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI and GGRI-T, it serves the best interests of our

ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with this other church federation in Indonesia.

2. Synod has made some decisions about relationships and contact with other churches which should help deputies come with a recommendation.
3. We have not sent delegates to a synod of the GGRI-T before. This is an important element of coming to a recommendation about ecclesiastical contact or sister church relationship.

ADOPTED

Article 87 - GGRI – Theological Training

I. Material

Item 11.c.10.iv – Deputies' Report (pp 154-167).

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Thank Rev Arthur van Delden for his work as external advisor to the seminary of the GGRI in Waimarang.
2. Mandate deputies to:
   a. continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2024;
   b. provide funds as needed for the proposed renovation and upgrade, including new buildings, of the seminary in Waimarang;
   c. appoint or reappoint capable members in the Sumba Seminary Support Committee,

which functions under the responsibility of the deputies, to manage the matters regarding the seminary of the GGRI in Waimarang; and

d. encourage the deputies for the training for the ministry at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to continue to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev Arthur van Delden.

Grounds

1. The financial support for this theological training ought to be managed with detailed attention to reporting and accountability, as well as due consideration for best practices related to avoiding long-term dependency.
2. The upgrading of existing, as well as the construction of new buildings in Waimarang is required to bring the seminary in agreement with government requirements for a possible future registration. Some of the funds needed have previously been collected and are reserved for this cause. Further funds may be required, and the Deputies may request the FRCA to voluntarily respond to such requests in the next inter-synodical period.
3. The Sumba Seminary Support Committee is mandated to exercise proper oversight over the seminary, which makes it possible for the deputies to focus on their main task to maintain the sister church relationships.
4. The GGRI have benefited from the help of Rev van Delden as an external advisor and can be encouraged to continue to do so. This has also proven to be beneficial for the deputies to maintain

good contact with the seminary and the churches in Sumba.

ADOPTED

Article 88 - Ecclesiastical Feast Days / Art 65 CO

I. Material

Item 10.b.3 – Proposal from Classis North to change the wording of Church Order Article 65 from this wording:

> *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.*

to this wording:

> *Days of Commemoration: Each year the churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as his outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

Classis North presents three grounds for this proposal:

1. Scripture does not require that our churches gather for worship on these specific days and thus we ought not to bind one another (cf. BC 32).
2. When Christmas (December 25) falls on a Saturday or a Monday, an awkward situation happens where churches may feel compelled to give even more attention to Christ's birth on the Lord's Day, in addition to the attention already given on December 25. It should be possible to observe Christ's incarnation on the Sunday alone, if December 25 falls on a Saturday or a Monday.
3. Efforts are being made to reach out to other churches in our nation to share the Reformed faith with them. In the future, we may encounter

churches who wish to join our federation but stumble over this point (as some Reformed and Presbyterian believers do). We should allow for the possibility that the events of redemptive history could be adequately commemorated with the regular preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Item 8.c.5. – FRC Darling Downs interacts with the proposal from Classis North, suggesting the changed wording is not necessary or helpful, and questions how this change will serve the wellbeing of the churches.

Item 8.j.6 – FRC Bunbury expresses their opposition the proposal from Classis North, noting that the FRCA made conscious decisions in 1992 and 1994 to follow wording different than the Canadian Reformed Church order on this point. Further, the need for a Scriptural requirement for CO 65 is deemed to be unnecessary, since this reasoning of Classis North misunderstands the nature of the church order, which includes many other aspects that are not directly Scriptural requirements but are adopted practices we have mutually agreed to because they are considered to promote unity and are edifying. They also provide reasons to oppose Grounds 2 and 3 offered by Classis North.

Item 8.r.1 – FRC Byford indicates their disagreement with the proposal from Classis North. It challenges the grounds of the proposal, e.g. questions the ‘awkward situation’ suggestion, and highlights the edification received by reason of the current CO 65 reading.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Not to adopt the proposed change to the Church Order.

Ground
Art 81 of the CO states that the CO should be changed if the interest of the churches demands such. In its current form, the proposal from Classis North does not adequately demonstrate the need for such change.

ADOPTED

Article 89 - Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise

I. Material
Item 11.d – Deputies' Report (pp 168-173).

II. Decision
Synod decides to:
1. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. Appoint new deputies as members of the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise with the mandate to:
   a. receive feedback from the churches regarding the contents and appearance of the Australian Book of Praise;
   b. record corrections and possible improvements for reprints and revisions;
   c. maintain good contact with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
   d. monitor quantities available for distribution and authorise new print runs when necessary, engaging the services of Pro Ecclesia;
   e. maintain contact with Pro Ecclesia Bookshop regarding the distribution and sales of the electronic versions; and

f. assess the churches as necessary to arrange financing for future print runs at the appropriate time, should such financing be necessary.

Grounds

1. It is appropriate that the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise oversees copyright, printing, distribution and financing for the *Australian Book of Praise*.
2. The Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise is responsible for communicating with FRCA churches, the Standing Committee in Canada and those who contribute.
3. Deputies are responsible for publishing the *Australian Book of Praise* and they may need to assess the churches for funds to finance it.

ADOPTED

Article 90 - First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)

I. Material

Item 11.c.5 – Deputies' Report (pp 99-104).

Item 8.j.1 – FRC Bunbury suggest that in light of their request for assistance in preaching and pastoring, and in light of their origin with our sister church FERC, the matter of a relationship with the Covenant Grace Church in Penang (CGC Penang) is a matter that should be addressed at a synodical level (CO Art 46).

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

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

2. Continue to accept the agreement made which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function:
   a. it is not always feasible, nor is it always necessary to attend each other's meetings;
   b. when the FERC is deliberating important matters such as (1) external relationships with other churches, (2) doctrinal and (3) liturgical issues, the FERC will inform the FRCA;
   c. the FERC will send a copy of its annual reports;
   d. the FERC will update the FRCA on any important issues every 6 months if needed;
   e. the FERC will invite delegates when there is a special event in the Church; and
   f. review the current agreement made which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function, presenting proposed changes (if any) to the next Synod.
3. Discharge deputies, thank them for their work and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. visit the FERC two times in the next three years to continue to strengthen our relationship;
   b. review the agreement made with the FERC regarding how our sister relationship with them functions, presenting proposed changes (if any) to the next Synod;
   c. give timely reports concerning the FERC to members of the FRCA;
   d. promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange speakers where the opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that

might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in;

e. offer assistance to the FERC where requested and feasible; and

f. invite delegates of the FERC to our next Synod.

Grounds

1. The FERC gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God.
2. Although the agreed-upon ways to maintain our relationship with the FERC are working sufficiently well, it would be good to review this with the FERC for their benefit and ours.
3. There is value for both Singapore and Australia to cultivate our relationship further. Visits to Singapore and their visits to us have proven beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
4. The letter from CGC of Penang requesting assistance in preaching and pastoring does not necessitate the deputies investigating a relationship.

ADOPTED

Article 91 - Adjournment

The chairman reads from Revelation 1:9-20 and speaks a few words. He then leads in prayer and adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 26 June 2024

Article 92 - Reopening

Rev C Vermeulen reads Acts 4:23-31 and speaks a few words. He leads in prayer, then invites all present to sing Psalm 2:1 and 4. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 93 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following committee report:

- Interchurch Relations: ICRC

Article 94 - Acts of Synod

Articles 75-91 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 95 - Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations

Recommendation A: Criteria for Church Relations

I. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations – Recommendation A: Criteria for Church Relations (pp 12-68).

Item 8.a.2 – FRC Busselton endorses this recommendation.

Item 8.b.1 – FRC Mt. Nasura supports this recommendation but only if the word “Sister” is added, i.e “Criteria for Sister Church Relations”.

Item 8.h.1 – FRC Launceston supports the proposed guidelines for church relations.

Item 8.i.1 – FRC Melville appreciates the helpfulness of the categories “meaningful, faithful and manageable”.

Item 8.j.3 – FRC Bunbury supports the overall recommendation and direction of deputies, but not at the expense of the local ministry of the church. Bunbury cautions against using a disproportionate amount of energy in investigating new relationships at the expense of having relationships function in a meaningful way.
Item 8.q.1 – FRC Cardup Brook suggests it may be helpful to apply the term "ecclesiastical fellowship" rather than "sister churches", since this is the practice of several other church federations, and to distinguish more clearly from the proposed category of "ecclesiastical contact".
Item 8.r.2 – FRC Byford questions whether there is a Biblical warrant to pursue new relationships.
Item 8.s.1 – FRC West Albany request the addition of BCF Art 30-32 to the deputies' recommendation A 1a), since Synod 1985 referred to Art 27-32 when giving the meaning of a true and faithful church, which has not been appealed, and because Art 30-32 include church governance and polity as key points for faithfulness.

II. Decision

1. In our contact with another church, each of the three following criteria must be met to determine whether or not to proceed to a sister church relationship:
   a) **Faithful.** The church must be a true church faithful to Scriptures and bearing the marks of the church (BC Art 29):

      "*The true church is to be recognized by the following marks: It practises the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things*

contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head."

This criterion is mandatory for all church relationships.

b) **Meaningful.** A church relationship must have a purpose and substance to it. The following identifies such purposes:

i. Catholic. The first purpose is, of course, to maintain the unity of faith and recognise the catholicity of the church. It is an expression of putting into practice Christ's high priestly prayer of John 17, Eph 4:4 and Art 27 BC.

ii. Historical. Historical church relations involve those that we have recognised from across the world with whom we share a common history or with whom we have had relations over a considerably long period of time. We have come to know these brothers and sisters and share in the struggle of faith to live before the Lord, show thankfulness for the grace and unity in Christ, and together fight the secularity in the world around us. As we have grown over many years and decades in getting to know and interact with our historic sister churches, we build up a responsibility and obligation to these brothers and sisters in mutual assistance in the struggle of faith. These are not contacts that are broken off lightly or easily.

iii. Need for mutual assistance. There may be requests for assistance from other churches or we may require

assistance from other churches. These are opportunities that need to be examined to decide if a church relationship provides an appropriate foundation to respond to and assist in such requests. Kamphuis (p. 204) comments that churches need to bear each other's burdens and assist each other, not just when asked to help.

iv. Ability to communicate. Being able to communicate, and that on a regular basis, is important to be engage with each other and be mutually active in maintaining the rules for relations. Such interaction should preferably be face to face and include visits, meetings, sharing information with each other and informing our own churches. Are we able to maintain a reasonable level of communication? If there are differences in language and culture, is it possible to translate written material and have effective communication in meetings to engage and understand each other?

v. Level of interaction. What is the current level of interaction of our churches and members with these churches? Is there regular contact between individual churches in either bond? Are there activities happening between the churches at the local level? Are there interactions among individual members including visiting, attending worship services, and sharing in common struggles and challenges of faith? Even if only one or a few local churches or a few

individuals are engaged, this small level of interaction may be a reason to have a church relationship that is maintained by the FRCA bond.

vi. Cooperation in mission. There may be churches with whom we may come into contact via mission work, conduct mission work in regions near our own mission fields, or are the result of mission work that we have been involved with in the past. Church relations with them may be beneficial in order to work together with them on the mission fields and/or help each other for mutual encouragement and exhortation.

vii. Church polity. Although different churches have different histories that have led to differences in church polity and practice, the need to mutually struggle to maintain our reformed heritage and build on how the Lord has guided and led His church through church history is important. We need to stand on Scripture and what our church fathers have fought for to maintain a true and faithful church of Christ. Differences in church policy such as reformed and Presbyterian as long as they are based on the foundation of Scripture and reformed confessions, need not be an obstacle to unity. There may need to be patience and encouragement to acknowledge that there are differences in history and practice and we need to learn from each other and grow. With churches of similar polity

and worship to our own, our relationship with them may be deeper and more meaningful as a result.

viii. Worldwide. It is worthwhile to have sister-churches in various regions e.g., Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, to better understand the needs of each part of the world, support missions and have a faithful church through whom aid can be sent in the event of a crisis. This criterion would be particularly used for churches in regions where we have no existing church relationships.

c) **Manageable.** When moving forward in a church relation, we must be able to manage the relationship and do justice to the rules for maintaining the relationship. This may involve the following aspects:

i. Geographical proximity. It is important to maintain a good and appropriate level of contact in a church relationship and this involves interaction and visits on a regular basis. Although there are very good virtual and online means for communicating, there is no substitute or better interaction than through direct face to face communication. Churches closer together geographically or in the same country are better able to manage contacts and communications than churches more distant or dispersed geographically. For example, note that our FRCA bond of churches is geographically located in one country, Australia, albeit some 1000s of

kilometres apart from west to east. As another example, note how the contact of FRCA with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Tasmania lies essentially with the churches in Tasmania and not via the other churches located elsewhere in Australia. Our focus should start locally in our own country, before going further abroad in the Asia/Pacific region, and then in the rest of the world.

ii. Language and culture. Where there are differences in language and/or culture, there may be much work required in translating materials and speeches or researching history and culture to understand, be informed and build a better appreciation and awareness of each other within a church relationship. Are we able to put in sufficient time and effort with appropriate tools and persons to manage this relation?

iii. Ability to resource. Are we able, as a relatively small bond of churches, able to resource the time and effort needed to maintain our church relationships and even increase the number of church relations? We must be mindful that our ministers and elders need to, in the first place, spend sufficient time and energy in their own congregations and in our own bond of churches. Many relations mean many trips, visits, meetings, readings and writings for which we must ensure we have sufficient attention, time and energy in

order to do justice to our relationship according to the rules.

Grounds

1. Well-developed and articulated criteria are important for the process of seeking and establishing a sister church relationship.
2. The three categories encapsulate all of the various criteria identified by the churches or used in past synods.
3. Maintaining the terminology “sister church” rather than “ecclesiastical fellowship” (as suggested by FRC Cardup Brook) is consistent with our church order (CO Art 46).
4. When BC Art 29 in Decision 1a above confesses that a true church governs itself according to the pure Word of God, this includes the doctrines confessed in BC Art 27-32 (as suggested by FRC West Albany).

Recommendation B: Ecclesiastical Contact

III. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations – Recommendation B: Ecclesiastical Contact (pp 12-68).

Item 8.a.2 – FRC Busselton supports this recommendation.

Item 8.b.1 – FRC Mt Nasura does not support this recommendation, on the grounds that the “substantially less interaction’ required for churches in “Ecclesiastical Contact” would make it very difficult to monitor whether they remain true and faithful; they aren’t convinced of the need for this category of relationship; and the potential “proliferation of relationships” could lead to an unmanageable situation.

Item 8.e.2 – FRC Baldivis supports the recommendation to adopt a contact relationship called “Ecclesiastical

Contact", and recommends that Synod include the URCNA and OPC in this category.

Item 8.g.1 – FRC Southern River supports the recommendation for adopting a contact relationship called "Ecclesiastical Contact", and gives examples of situations where this would be helpful.

Item 8.h.1 – FRC Launceston expresses the hope that the FRCA may enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact with the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Item 8.i.1 – FRC Melville supports having a new relationship of ecclesiastical contact, but suggests that since this involves the careful work of judging a church as true and faithful, it should have more usefulness than what is proposed by the deputies. They propose modifying Rule 4 to allow pulpit exchanges, without the requirement of "exceptional circumstances" and without the requirement for classis involvement.

Item 8.j.3 – FRC Bunbury supports the establishment another tier of relationship, Ecclesiastical Contact. Bunbury recommends that the term "as much as possible" (first paragraph of 4.7 in Deputies Report p.28) not be used in relation to the new category of "ecclesiastical contact" lest its introduction lead to an accumulation of less meaningful and manageable relationships.

Item 8.q.1 – FRC Cardup Brook supports the recommendation to adopt a relationship called "Ecclesiastical Contact", and believes the rule requiring concurring advice from classis before a minister from a church in Ecclesiastical Contact can preach on an FRCA should be removed.

Item 8.r.2 – FRC Byford does not support the recommendation to adopt a category of relationship called Ecclesiastical Contact, expressing concern about it creating more work, causing more scope for division and disagreement, and cautions against relying on the judgments of our sister churches on 'third parties'. Byford strongly opposes proposed rule 4, that such a

relationship include the privilege of admission to the pulpit, since it would blur church boundaries.

IV. Decision

1. Adopt a contact relationship called “Ecclesiastical Contact” which:
   a. Is extended to a church whom the FRCA have recognised as true and faithful but for whom the relationship, although meaningful, is deemed not sufficiently manageable to establish a sister church relationship at this point of time.
   b. Is maintained on an ongoing basis by the FRCA by having some contact directly with the church, meeting them at synods or meetings of our churches or sister churches, or using other opportunities for contact that are available to us. This level of interaction would be substantially less than that for churches who are in a sister church relationship with us.
   c. Can be changed to a sister church relationship should the FRCA deem that the relationship is sufficiently meaningful and manageable.
2. Adopt the following Rules for Exercising Ecclesiastical Contact:

   Rules for Exercising Ecclesiastical Contact

   1. Ecclesiastical contact shall be used, as much as opportunity for contact arises, to be informed about one another and grow in the understanding of each other, assisting, encouraging and exhorting one another to live as churches of God in this world.

2. 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 their respective churches (if possible in translation).
3. The churches shall acknowledge one another's attestations and additionally interview these members in their doctrine and conduct (CO Art 57); this also applies to admitting the members of the respective churches to the sacraments.
4. The churches shall ordinarily not open their pulpits to ministers with whom we have Ecclesiastical Contact, unless due diligence is undertaken by consistory, and where it is only for one or two Sundays. Where it is for a more extended or recurring period of time (e.g. several weeks or months), concurring advice be requested and received from classis.
5. The churches shall receive each other's delegates at their broadest assemblies and invite them to sit as observers according to the Rules for Synods.

3. Mandate deputies to report to next Synod any further reflections and recommendations regarding the workability of the category of Ecclesiastical Contact and suggested Guidelines for Church Relations (Guidelines) connected with it.

Grounds

1. Although the relationship may not be manageable at this time, Ecclesiastical Contact is a means to maintain a meaningful church relationship with a recognised true and faithful church.
2. The workload of maintaining such a relationship is less intensive than that for a sister church relation.
3. The relationship could be developed into a sister church relation if and when manageable.
4. The rules for exercising Ecclesiastical Contact are sufficiently distinct from that for Sister Church relations and outline the additional due care necessary for admission to the Lord's table and to the pulpit given the lower level of interaction in maintaining this contact.
5. Although ultimately the responsibility of consistory (CO Art 10), in our church order we have agreed that within our federation admission to the ministry of word and sacraments also involves the federation (e.g. via examination of classis, CO Art 5,6,7,8,9).
6. As the new category of Ecclesiastical Contact and the suggested Guidelines begin to be implemented, some aspects may need to be reviewed.

Recommendation C: Multiple Churches in Geographic Proximity

V. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations – Recommendation C: Multiple Churches in Geographic Proximity (pp 12-68).

Item 8.a.2 – FRC Busselton supports this recommendation.

Item 8.b.1 – FRC Mt Nasura supports this recommendation, but with the inclusion of an additional clause: "This rule must be applied to all new sister

church relationships. With regards to pre-existing relationships, further work and encouragement will be required to help these church federations seek federational unity within their own country."

Item 8.j.3 – FRC Bunbury supports the recommendation of the deputies about multiple churches in the same region. One faithful church in one country is ideal, but there may be legitimate reasons for federative unity to be unrealistic. Maintaining a sister church relationship with one church and not another simply because one relationship was established first has the potential to be partial. Bunbury cautions that the term "unity" needs to be clearly defined.

Item 8.q.1 – FRC Cardup Brook while agreeing with the general principle are not convinced that this concrete ruling does justice to specific circumstances, and is potentially too rigid, particularly as the term "geographic proximity" is not clearly defined.

VI. Decision

The FRCA may consider and pursue a relationship with a church in geographic proximity of a recognized true and faithful church, unless it is unwilling or shows no evidence of seeking and expressing unity with that church.

Grounds

i. Because Christ's church gathering work is dynamic and a work in progress, there may be instances where two churches in geographic proximity are not expressing federative unity because of such differences as cultural, historical or practical, without taking away from the unity of faith.

ii. The faithfulness of a church includes the way in which it practices unity and relations with churches in geographic proximity, as required by

Scripture as we confess in BC Art 27 & 28 (cf John 17, Eph 4:4).

iii. The FRCA has never made an explicit decision that forbids pursuing a relationship with two different churches in geographic proximity.

Recommendation D: ICRC

VII. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations – Recommendation D: ICRC Membership (pp 12-68).

The report recommends four (A,B,C,D) options:

- Option A – FRCA does not join the ICRC (primarily because there is a perceived contradiction between the stated purpose of the ICRC 'to express and promote the unity of faith that the members churches have in Christ', and it is contended these churches do not necessarily have true unity of faith);
- Option B - FRCA applies to join the ICRC as a member;
- Option C - FRCA does not join the ICRC (primarily because it would not promote harmony and unity within the FRCA); and
- Option D - FRCA sends observers to the ICRC.

Item 8.a.2 – FRC Busselton supports Option D, noting that the ICRC is not an ecclesiastical body but a conference and a resource-efficient opportunity to engage and interact with other reformed churches.

Item 8.b.1 – FRC Mt. Nasura highlights several concerns with Options B, C, and D, and supports Option A, requesting synod to provide further clarification of the reasons for and/or scriptural basis for the disharmony and disunity that prompted termination of membership by Synod 1996. They state we have a duty to make sure member churches are true and faithful, and contend that

we cannot express unity of faith with member churches in our own country (CRCA & PCEA); they also contend attending as observers is a foot in the door towards membership.

Item 8.c.3 – FRC Darling Downs opposes options B and D. They have members in their congregation with strong principle objections to joining the ICRC. They expect that this would re-ignite the disunity that was present when the FRCA withdrew membership.

Item 8.c.4 – FRC Darling Downs asks Synod to consider whether procedurally, appeals to Synod Kelmscott 1996 by FRC Byford and FRC Bedfordale (Article 95) need to be addressed before considering ICRC membership.

Item 8.e.3 – FRC Baldivis supports options B or D, noting that it is not a divisive issue for them and that sister churches have asked us to rejoin this conference.

Item 8.f.3 – FRC Kelmscott supports Option D, in order to investigate whether there is indeed a Scriptural and confessional unity of faith between the member churches, to engage with the member churches of the ICRC in our own country (the CRCA and PCEA) to see whether there is sufficient ground to seek Scriptural unity with them, given the lengthy time since we have had contact with them; with the ultimate goal of making a decision about joining ICRC.

Item 8.g.3. – FRC Southern River supports Option D, urging prudence and caution to avoid causing disunity within the FRCA.

Item 8.h.1 – FRC Launceston supports Option D, noting that past controversy is not a reason not to be observers today; that attending as observers can help make a decision about membership; and can help maintain existing contacts and explore new ones.

Item 8.i.1. – FRC Melville supports Option D, in part due to encouragement by sister churches, suggesting if participation in the ICRC proves beneficial, hindrances to seeking full membership ought to be addressed.

Item 8.j.3 – FRC Bunbury does not support Option B, and that there was no consensus in regards to support for the other options.
Item 8.q.1 – FRC Cardup Brook supports Option D, for the next two ICRC conferences, on the grounds that the prolonged absence of the FRCA should be mediated by a period of observation.
Item 8.r.2 – FRC Byford supports option A, without agreeing with the precise formulation of the grounds. They deny the validity of grounds for options B and D, making particular mention of discontinued contact with the CRCA in 2003. They do not believe that the interests of the FRCA would be served by joining a conference.

VIII. Decision

Synod decides to mandate Deputies for Interchurch Relations to:

1. select two deputies, preferably one elder and one minister, to attend the next two ICRC plenary conferences as observers in 2026 and 2030;
2. investigate with member churches of the ICRC what is meant by expressing and promoting “the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ” (ICRC Constitution, Purpose 1);
3. evaluate whether the ICRC member churches’ understanding of the phrase “unity of faith” conflicts with Scripture, and can rightly be applied to all ICRC member churches, giving particular attention to those in our geographic area;
4. provide examples, if possible, of influence and direction given by the ICRC for reformed churches worldwide;
5. investigate the financial and workload requirements of ICRC membership and recommend whether membership is good stewardship of resources; and

6. make a recommendation about membership after the next two ICRC conferences.

Grounds

1. There are benefits to ICRC membership for the FRCA that have been identified by the deputies, FRCA and sister churches:
   a. the ICRC is a conference that provides a forum for Reformed churches to encourage one another in our service to the LORD, also in shaping and correcting each other. The FRCA would benefit from the insight and experiences of other churches (Prov. 11:14; 18:1);
   b. the FRCA could be a blessing to other Reformed churches with the insights God has given us;
   c. the FRCA would have a voice to influence the discussions and direction of reformed churches worldwide;
   d. the ICRC has provided an opportunity for developing collaboration in the area of mission;
   e. the FRCA would be able to stand together with our sister churches in the ICRC. They have encouraged the FRCA to participate in the ICRC; and
   f. attending the conference is a resource efficient way to maintain and develop our relationships with Ecclesiastical Contacts and Sister Churches.

   Many of these benefits also apply when attending the ICRC as observers.

2. There may be harms to ICRC membership for the FRCA that have been identified by the deputies and FRCA:
   a. the FRCA could be exposed to beliefs and practices that are a biblical concern for the FRCA; and
   b. membership in the ICRC may give rise to unrest within the FRCA.
3. The FRCA has not been involved with the ICRC for 28 years, so sending observers will enable a more current assessment of the functioning of the ICRC and its member churches, and how its purposes are understood.
4. The ICRC Constitution on its own has been insufficient to resolve the question of how its purpose is to be understood. The first purpose of ICRC "to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ" has been interpreted in different ways, such as:
   a. This unity of faith need not apply to all of the churches who are members of the ICRC. For the FRCA to have "unity of faith" even with only two of the current members of ICRC is all that is required for this statement to be true.
   b. This unity of faith must mean that the FRCA considers all member churches of ICRC to be true and faithful churches. However, the true unity of faith of Scripture and confessions (e.g. Eph 4:1-6, BC Art 29) does not necessarily exist among all ICRC member churches.
   c. This unity of faith, understood in context of the ICRC constitution, refers only to the fact that member churches profess to be faithful churches in Reformed doctrine (they adhere to the Three Forms of Unity or the

Westminster Standards), and that there has been no evidence to the contrary.

Sending observers would enable us to receive clarity on how the member churches of the ICRC understand this “unity of faith” before making a decision (Prov 18:17).

5. The second purpose of the ICRC “To encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among Member churches” has been understood in different ways by FRCA, such as:
   a. this purpose implies that the FRCA should be seeking sister relations with all ICRC member churches. However seeking sister church relations is a decision that the FRCA must make and should not be directed by the ICRC or be an obligation stemming from ICRC membership; and
   b. this purpose of the ICRC echoes the call to unity of faith of John 17 and Eph 4. It does not obligate the FRCA to seek relations with all ICRC member churches. Instead the FRCA have a process adopted by synod for establishing church relations.

   Sending observers would enable us to receive clarity on how the member churches of the ICRC understand this purpose of encouraging the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship, before making a decision.
6. Procedurally, Synod Darling Downs is not obligated to first address appeals submitted by FRC Byford and FRC Bedfordale to Synod Kelmscott 1996 about the question of ICRC membership. These churches had opportunity to give input to deputies, and to bring forward any Scriptural concerns that constituted the substance of previous appeals to this Synod.
7. There are two churches in our geographic region that are members of the ICRC, the CRCA and

PCEA. Although the FRCA has not had official contact with the CRCA since 2003 (Synod 2003, Art 96) there are legitimate reasons for concern, such as their practice of allowing women deacons, which was a reason the RCNZ discontinued their sister church relationship with the CRCA. The FRCA will need to investigate whether the doctrine and practice of these churches agrees with the basis of the ICRC.

8. The financial and workload cost and benefits to ICRC membership need to be determined. The FRCA must consider if this is good stewardship of resources.
9. Synod 1996 (Art 95) decided to terminate membership in the ICRC on the grounds that "membership in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches" and because synod was not able "to reach a consensus on whether or not Scripture forbids participation in the ICRC." Careful investigation is necessary before making a decision about ICRC membership, and attending as observers can provide the information needed for making a responsible decision.
10. Attending two plenary conferences will allow proper consideration given to joining the ICRC but does not of itself justify continuous attending. Attending as observers must have a clear purpose, namely making a final decision about membership.

Recommendation E: Guidelines for Church Relations

IX. Materials

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations – Recommendation E: Guidelines for Church Relations (pp 12-68).

Item 8.j.3 – FRC Bunbury supports the proposed flowchart and guidelines recommended by the deputies. They note that changes may need to be made as we work with this new approach.
Item 8.r.2 – FRC Byford opposes the guidelines, as they believe the current organic process of evaluating relationships is serving the churches well. There is meaningful work currently being done and this is no need to adopt a bureaucratic model.
Item 8.b.1 – FRC Mt Nasura does not support the guidelines for church relations, as they do not support the adoption of the Ecclesiastical Contact category.

X. Decision

Synod decides:

1. Not to formally adopt the proposed flowchart and Guidelines for Church Relations (Guidelines) at this time but to allow deputies for Interchurch Relations to utilise these as a working document.
2. To mandate deputies to:
    a. report to next Synod any further reflections and recommendations regarding the workability of the category of Ecclesiastical Contact and suggested Guidelines connected with it; and
    b. accept further feedback from the churches on the Guidelines during the next inter-synodical period, also taking into account the feedback already received on these Guidelines from the churches via letters to Synod 2024.

Grounds

1. It may be helpful for churches to provide further assistance to the deputies in their review of the Guidelines.
2. As the new category of Ecclesiastical Contact and the suggested Guidelines begin to be

implemented, some aspects may need to be reviewed.

ADOPTED

Article 96 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

I. Material

Item 11.c.8 – Deputies' Report (pp 118-126).
Item 8.e.2 – FRC Baldivis suggests adding the OPC to the potentially formalised Ecclesiastical Contact category.
Item 8.r.2 – FRC Byford sees no value in maintaining contact with the OPC.
(Late) Letter from OPC informing us that they are unable to send delegates.

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Express thanks to God for the Reformed witness evident in the OPC throughout its history, its constant repudiation of theological liberalism, its commitment to being confessionally Reformed, and its commitment to the authority and truth of the holy Scriptures.
2. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work, and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. maintain contact with the OPC via its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR);
    b. give direction to Synod 2027 regarding this relationship, including consideration of a Sister Church relationship or a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact, using the suggested Guidelines for Church Relations given by Synod Darling Downs 2024;
    c. prepare an evaluation of the significance of the differences in church polity and practice

of the OPC as highlighted in recent deputies' reports;

d. send one delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC during the inter-synodical period; and

e. extend an invitation to the OPC to send an observer to the next FRCA Synod in 2027.

Grounds

1. The OPC is an English-speaking confessionally Reformed federation that lives up to its commitment to the Reformed faith and has a history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of God's Word, as evidenced by its stance concerning the RCN.
2. Meaningful contact already exists such as:
   a. the OPC enjoys long-standing sister-church relations with several of our sister churches, including the CanRC, the RCNZ and the KPCK;
   b. Australian students at CRTS benefit from OPC internships;
   c. the OPC has been active in Asia missions; and
   d. we take turns with the OPC and CanRC to visit the General Assemblies of the KPCK, and keep each other informed.
3. The OPC has already shown evidence of a desire to establish contact with the FRCA by authorising the invitation of an FRCA observer to a future General Assembly and by a video address presented by Br M Bube on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Inviting observers to our next synod confirms our desire for contact and allows the OPC to become better acquainted with the FRCA.
4. Synod 2024's decisions about guidelines for interchurch relationships address the

considerations that deputies should use when coming with a recommendation about a relationship with the OPC (c.f. Acts of Synod 2021, Art 67, Ground 3).

5. A future synod requires an evaluation of the differences in church polity and practice to make an informed decision about furthering the relationship with the OPC.

ADOPTED

Article 97 - United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

I. Material

Item 11.c.7 – Deputies' Report (pp 113-117).
Item 8.o.1 – URCNA informs us that, at their Synod Niagara 2022, they decided to enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the FRCA.
Item 8.e.2 - FRC Baldivis recommends that, were Synod to adopt a new category of contact called Ecclesiastical Contact, to include the URCNA in this category.
Item 8.r.2 - FRC Byford suggests that there is no benefit in sending a delegate to their synod in 2026.

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Receive with thankfulness the letter from the URCNA advising us of their decision to enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the FRCA, and assist them in implementing this step, where possible and desirable, by:
    a. exchange of official observers at major assemblies;
    b. consult on issues of joint concern, including:
        i. authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
        ii. creeds and confessions;

iii. formula of subscription to the confessions;
iv. significant factors in the two federations' history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues;
v. church order and polity;
vi. liturgy and liturgical forms;
vii. preaching, sacraments and discipline;
viii. theological education for ministers;
ix. exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies.
x. exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks);
xi. exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
xii. exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order;
xiii. exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals; and
xiv. exchange of information regarding current ecumenical relations.

2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. communicate this decision to the URCNA;
   b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA with a view to establishing a sister church relationship or a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact, using the guidelines for interchurch relations considered by Synod 2024, and make a recommendation about this;
   c. stay informed and monitor the relationship between the CanRC and the URCNA;

d. send one delegate to the URCNA Synod in the inter-synodical period subject to finances; and
e. extend an invitation to the URCNA to send an observer to the next FRCA Synod in 2027.

Grounds

1. The URCNA shows itself to be a faithful church.
2. Although official unity talks have stalled between the CanRC and URCNA, they remain sister churches.
3. Synod Baldivis 2015, Article 39 gave grounds for establishing contact with the URCNA, and Synod Albany 2021 maintained these grounds.
4. URCNA's Synod Niagara 2022 entered into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the FRCA. While the FRCA does not have an equivalent category of relationship, the above decision indicates our desire to have mutual contact, and facilitates this.
5. Synod 2024's decisions about guidelines for interchurch relationships address the considerations that deputies should use when coming with a recommendation about a relationship with the URCNA (c.f. Acts of Synod 2021, Art 67, Ground 3).
6. Personal contact at a synodical level will enable the deputies to fulfil their mandate better and help the URCNA be better informed about the FRCA.

ADOPTED

Article 98 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) and Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC)

I. Material

Item 11.f – Deputies' Report (pp 229-233).

Item 8.b.4 – Mt Nasura agrees to continue discussions with the SPC and pausing discussions with the EPC. Mt Nasura also believes that Synod 1985 article 67 has a bearing on the establishment of sister church relationships with the EPC or SPC.

II. Decision

Synod decides**:**

1. To place a pause in this next inter-synodical period on ecumenical discussions with the EPC.
2. Not to offer an Ecclesiastical Contact relationship to the SPC at this time.
3. The "Investigation of Guidelines for Church Relations – Report to Synod 2024" (sec. 6.3, p40) adequately addresses concerns raised by deputies and in Acts of Synod Albany 2021 (art 102) with respect to the decision of Synod 1985 (art 67).
4. To discharge deputies, thank them for their work and appoint new deputies, as part of the deputyship for Interchurch Relations, with the mandate to:
    a. continue discussions with the SPC regarding the feasibility of a formal relationship;
    b. make a recommendation about a formal relationship of Sister Church or Ecclesiastical Contact with the SPC, using the suggested Guidelines for Church Relations given by Synod 2024;
    c. maintain contact with both the EPC and the SPC;

d. monitor developments within the EPC and report back to the next Synod on the viability of resuming ecumenical discussions; and
e. with regard to the SPC, evaluate the significant differences in church polity and process, as outlined in deputies' report to synod 2021 and 2024, and to report to the next synod.

Grounds

1. The EPC is not currently in a position to engage with us further in a meaningful way.
2. In our relationship with the SPC we have to follow the procedure as has been adopted at this synod (the three criteria faithful, meaningful, manageable).
3. Placing the deputies for EPC and SPC in a larger deputyship will enable deputies to better support one another in the execution of their mandates.

ADOPTED

Article 99 - Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia

I. **Material**

Item 11.c – Deputies' Report (pp 8-11).

II. **Decision**

Synod decides to:

1. Note that the Deputies for Interchurch Relations is no longer limited to "Outside Australia".
2. Maintain the number of deputies at thirteen.
3. Thank Deputies for their work on "Investigation of guidelines for church relations/ICRC" as mandated by Synod Albany 2021 art. 48.

4. Instruct deputies to ensure that all relevant documents are submitted to the Synod archivist as per the decision of Synod Albany 2021 art. 48.

Grounds

1. With the inclusion of the EPC and SPC under "Interchurch Relations" it would be appropriate to maintain the number of deputies at thirteen rather than reduce it to twelve as per the deputies' recommendation.
2. The FRCA and Synod were well served by the report Deputies for Interchurch Relations presented as per their mandate of Synod Albany.
3. Synod acknowledges the reasons for the deputies being unable to submit material for the Synod archives but require this to be done as a matter of priority.

ADOPTED

Article 100 - Deputies for Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities

I. Material

Item 11.k – Deputies' Report (pp 244-245).

II. Decision

1. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. Appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

ADOPTED

Article 101 - Appointment of Convening Church for the next Synod

I. Material

Item 8.c.2 –FRC Darling Downs recommends FRC Mundijong as the next convening church for synod.

II. Decision

1. That Synod 2027 be convened by FRC Mundijong.
2. Take note that the convening church is to liaise with the Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue regarding various practical matters.

Grounds

1. FRC Mundijong has not yet held a synod.
2. The brothers of FRC Mundijong have been contacted and agree to this proposal.

ADOPTED

Article 102 - Rules for Synod

I. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Report of Deputies for Interchurch Relations (p 44).

Item 8.j.4 – FRC Bunbury observes that Rule 6.2 gives provision for privileges to delegates from churches with whom we have “temporary ecclesiastical contact”, and observes that this rule is obsolete since this category was discontinued by Synod 1992 (Art 95). They propose that this synod rule be removed, or in the event that synod adopts the new relationship of “Ecclesiastical Contact”, that this synod rule be amended to give this privilege to churches in that category, as suggested by deputies.

8.g.1 – FRC Southern River argues that Rule 6.2 is not obsolete on the grounds that in certain instances past

synods have continued to give visitor privileges to delegates from some non-sister churches.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Replace the current Rule for Synod 6.2 with the following wording suggested by deputies on p.44 (cf pages 67-68) of their report:

> "*Delegates from churches with whom we have Ecclesiastical Contact will be allowed to: address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning their churches and the Ecclesiastical Contact relationship, speak in synod's open session when they request or are requested to do so on matters specifically pertaining to the ecclesiastical contact and to sit as advisory members in the advisory committee(s) that deal with the Ecclesiastical Contact, where they may give advice when they request or are requested to do so*."

Grounds

1. Rule 6.2 is obsolete in its present formulation, and the fact that delegates from non-sister churches were in some instances given privileges under this rule does not mean that this practice was correct.
2. Deputies observe that this rule would be appropriate for churches in the new category of Ecclesiastical Contact, but note that such a change has to come from the churches, as required by the Rules for Synod.
3. This change to the Rules for Synod has been proposed by one of the churches.
4. The mention of "observers" in the initially proposed wording implies that an "observer" is a special category, which is a term that appears

nowhere else in the Rules for Synod. Further, this term can also cause potential confusion with the privileges given under Rule 6.3 to delegates from churches with whom we have official contact, and where this term is not found. Removing this term makes the language consistent with the language of 6.1 and 6.3.

ADOPTED

Article 103 - Archives and Library of Synod

I. Material

Item 11.j – Deputies' Report (pp 239-243).
Item 11.l – Inspection of Synod Archives (p 246).

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Accept the Report on the Archives and Library of Synod and to thank the archivist, Br P. Van Den Dolder for diligently maintaining the records of synod.
2. Request all deputies to forward any available material relevant to the archives, including those not previously submitted.
3. Thank the deputies for completing the inspection of the Archives and Library of Synod and accept their report on the matter, and to discharge the deputies.
4. Mandate the archivist to follow up with the various deputyships about missing material that is relevant for future reference, and include reference to this in his report to the church council of the church keeping the Archives.

Grounds

1. Rule 10 of the Rules for Synod of the FRCA requires deputies to submit to the Archives all

materials that are deemed relevant for future reference.

2. Synod 2021 Art 115 (p 9) Point 3 Mandate 3 "Request all deputies to forward any available material relevant to the archives, not previously submitted, and by 31 Dec 2021". The Deputies for Interchurch Relations indicate in their report (p 9) that they have not yet completed this. There is no record that any of the other deputyships have done this either.

ADOPTED

Article 104 - Treasury and Audit Report

I. Material

Item 13.a – Synod Treasurer – Report Synod 2024.
Item 13.b – Synod Treasurer – Budget and Actuals 2021-24.
Item 12.a – FRC Byford – Synod Treasury Review Report.
Item 13.c – Synod Treasurer – (Draft) Budget 2024-27.

II. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. Accept the Synod Treasurer's Report, being the Report Synod 2024 and Budget and Actuals 2021-24 (refer Appendix 4a).
2. Thank the Synod Treasurer for the work done and discharge him.
3. Appoint a new Synod Treasurer, with a mandate in accordance with Rule 11.2 of the Rules for Synods.
4. In response to the requests for advice, the Synod Treasurer to receive:
    a. Point 1 – This matter has been dealt with by a previous Synod as follows: Synod Baldivis 2015, Acts Article 40 regarding Deputies for

Sister Church Relations, decided at V Proposal point 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.”

b. Point 2 – The Finance Committee appointed by Synod have noted this and will clarify budget decisions as and when required.

c. Point 3 – Deputies and Delegates are reminded that Synod Treasury funds are to be treated with prudence, respecting the corporate financial responsibility of the churches.

5. Approve the rate of $286 per day as the rate of reimbursement for claims of loss of income by Deputies and Delegates.
6. Approve the rate of 85 cents per kilometre as the rate for reimbursement of vehicle travel costs.
7. Accept the Synod Treasury Review Report.
8. Thank Deputies Audit for Synod Treasurer for their work, noting that the audit report did not come on the FRC Byford letterhead.
9. Appoint new Deputies Audit for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the Synod Treasurer and report to the next Synod no later than three weeks before that Synod.
10. Note that the Audit report for deputies for FRCSA for 2018 to 2021 and 2021 to 2024 was not done and as yet to request this to be done.
11. Mandate the Deputies Audit for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided to the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa and GGRI for the years 2024 to 2027 and report to the next Synod no later than three weeks before that Synod.
12. Approve the Final Budget 2024-27 and acknowledge that it accurately represents the

financial decisions made by this Synod (refer Appendix 4b).

13. Authorise the Synod Treasurer to collect from the churches the amount of $7 per communicant member per year for the next inter-synodical period of 2024 to 2027, with the liberty to vary this amount if required.
14. Approve the payment to the Administrative Assistant of the following amounts:
    a. the equivalent of two days loss of income for the assistance provided to the General Secretary for the preparation and typesetting of the Deputies Reports prior to Synod; and
    b. the equivalent of ten days loss of income for the assistance provided during Synod, with the number of days to be increased by the number of days that Synod would sit for longer than two weeks.

Grounds

1. The remuneration for the Administrative Assistant should be set by reference to some criteria, and the number of days of loss of income represents a reasonable amount of leave from daily work that the Administrative Assistant would need to set aside for the task.

ADOPTED

Article 105 - Deputy Appointments

In closed session, Synod made the following deputy appointments:

General Secretary

Br. Jan de Mooij

Alternate: Br. Bryant de Vos

Website Committee	Year appointed
Br. Len Vermeulen (Convenor)	2018
Sr. Bronya Mulder	2018
Br. Winston 't Hart (Website administrator)	2021
Rev. Wes Bredenhof	2021
Alternate: Br. Steven Swarts	

Deputies for Interchurch Relations (including EPC/SPC)	
Br. Bert Veenendaal (Convenor)	2018
Br. Colin Mulder (Tasmania)	2018
Rev. Anthon Souman	2018
Br. John Bruning (snr)	2021
Br. Sam Groenewold	2021
Br. Geoff Numan	2021
Rev. Abel Pol	2021
Rev. Wes Bredenhof (Tasmania)	2024
Br. Phil de Ruiter (Tasmania)	2024
Rev. Dirk Poppe	2024
Rev. Arthur vanDelden (Snr)	2024
Br. Willem vanderVen	2024
Rev. Arend Witten	2024
Alternates (WA): Br. Wilfred 't Hart; Br. Brent Schoof	
Alternates (Tasmania): Br. Gerrit Brouwer; Br. Wayne Griffioen	

Standing Committee for the Book of Praise	
Rev. Rodney den Boer (convenor)	2024
Br. Rob Eikelboom	2018
Sr. Geraldine Plug	2018
Br. Harm Van Dijk	2021
Rev. Kelvin Dekker	2024
Alternate: Br. Ed Visser	

Training for the Ministry

Rev. Carl Vermeulen (Convenor)	2024
Br. Bruce Huizinga	2015
Br. Alwyn Terpstra	2018
Br. Rob Eikelboom	2021
Br. Warnar Spyker	2021
Br. Pete Witten	2021
Rev. Stephen 't Hart	2024

Alternates: Rev. Axel Hagg; Br. Travis Dykstra; Br. Robert Dekker

Church Order Art. 48

Classis Central

Rev. R. Dean Anderson

Alternate: Rev. Dirk Poppe

Classis Southwest

Rev. Axel Hagg

Alternate: Rev. Arend Witten

Classis North

Rev. A Souman

Alternate: Rev. Stephen 't Hart

Days of Prayer

FRC Launceston

Indexing of Synod Decisions

Br. Jelte Numan

Br. Wilfred ‘t Hart

Synod Archive

FRC Mt Nasura

Marriage Act Deputies

Br. Henry Hamelink

Br. Warnar Spyker

Synod Venue and Infrastructure
Br. Eric 't Hart
Br. Alan VanderWal
Alternates: Br. Darren Brouwer; Br. Adrian VanderWal

Synod Treasurer
Br. Robert Dekker 2018
Alternate: Br. Ashley Bonker

Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry
FRC Southern River

Inspection of Archives
FRC Darling Downs

Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury
FRC Byford

Article 106 - Acts of Synod

Articles 92-104 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 107 - Adoption of the Press Release

The press release is adopted (refer Appendix 5).

Article 108 - Censure according to Article 47 Church Order

The chairman states that there is no need for censure in this sitting of Synod.

Article 109 - Question Period

The delegates are given the opportunity for general questions. No questions are asked.

Article 110 - Closing address

The chairman delivers his closing address (refer Appendix 1l).

Article 111 - Closing

The vice chairman expresses his thanks on behalf of the delegates for the work that the chairman has done during this period and the way in which he was able to run the synod. He invites all present to sing Hymn 31:1 and 2, and leads in prayer. The chairman then declares Synod Darling Downs 2024 closed.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1a: Meditation by Rev R den Boer, Chairman of the convening church of Darling Downs

Psalm 48 meditation

Dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

The work of our ascended Lord Jesus Christ in gathering a church is awesome. God is great, and that reality is displayed in his church gathering work. We get a taste of that great work as we are gathered here tonight, with representatives across our federation of churches, with representatives from churches around the globe.

Yet, the reality is that we don't always see the greatness of God in the church. Weekly church life can seem dull, we can be dismayed by sin in the church done by God's people, at times we see the ugly fruits of disunity and frayed relationships. Perhaps you're here at this synod feeling somewhat overwhelmed at the amount of work to be done, perhaps you wonder why it seems such a big deal.

I thought it would be good for all of us to consider what God teaches us about the church. Psalm 48 teaches us that God showcases his greatness in the church. God is great, and that is displayed in the church. John Calvin wrote that God's wisdom, righteousness, and goodness can be seen in every corner of this world, and yet it is his will that these are manifested chiefly and in a particular manner in the church. I'd like to step through four aspects of the psalm as it displays God's greatness in the church.

First, the psalm celebrates God's *presence* in the church (v1-3). What makes the church special is that God dwells there. The psalm is a song about Zion, the city of God, which is another name for Jerusalem. In the old covenant, Mt Zion was the site God chose for his king. King David built a house there for himself, the king ruled under God from Zion. And the

temple in Jerusalem symbolised the holy presence of God with his people. That's what made Zion so special, it was not only the city of David, it was the city of our God (v1), the city of the great King (v2), God is in her palaces, (v3).

That is awesome. Because God is great, and greatly to be praised. Therefore, his presence in Jerusalem made it a special place. There's a house in the city of Bonn, Germany, which has been turned into a museum. It's the house where the great composer Beethoven lived. What makes that house special? Beethoven lived there. In a similar way, it is the presence of God that made Jerusalem a special city: it was a great city because the great King had chosen to dwell there.

Today, God dwells in the church of Jesus Christ by his Spirit, and that is what makes the church great. Paul speaks about the church as the Jerusalem above, and so Psalm 48 is fulfilled in the church. In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul speaks about the church as the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, and in him the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord. The church is the NT temple. We are being built in Christ to be a dwelling place of God in his Spirit! That is what makes the church great, God lives among us. The Almighty King has chosen to display his glory by communing with us, and by building us into a temple so that he can live with us forever. That is why our weekly gatherings for worship are so significant, we gather as the household of God in his presence! Church is great because our great God is with us!

Dear brothers and sisters, that makes work in the church a great honour and privilege. We are working with something holy. It is a great joy and honour to serve the King and to be building his dwelling place by his Spirit. Let's remember how special that is, also in the work that is done this week. First, God displays his glory by his presence in the church.

Second, the psalm celebrates God's *protection* of the church (v4-8). God protects his people forever against all his and our enemies. The psalm in v4-7 speaks about a gathering of kings, coming up against Mt Zion, but when they saw the city they were full of fear, a similar fear to the breaking up of ships. Imagine being on the Titanic when the ship started sinking, imagine the fear in your heart as you desperately look for a lifeboat and see the ice-bergs on the horizon and see the panic all around you, that's the fear of these enemies who attack God's city. God is known as her refuge; he protects his city.

As one example of that protection, you can think of Sennacherib with his mighty Assyrian army. His top general told Hezekiah and his men that they were foolish to trust in God, he could not help them. How wrong they were. God sent an angel to devastate the Assyrian army and the rest of them fled in terror overnight. God protected his city.

And as the psalmists heard about God's protection, so they had experienced it (v8), and they knew that God would establish his city forever. That is echoed by Jesus in the NT, when he said that he would build his church, and the gates of Hades, all the forces of evil and Satan, would not prevail against it. Jesus Christ protects his church.

The fact that we can be gathered here tonight, more than 2000 years after Christ's death, with representatives from the church around this world, is evidence of that fact. Isn't it a great encouragement for us? As we have heard of God's protection throughout the history of this world, through persecution and war and heresy, so we have seen in our own day. We can see evidence of it tonight, simply that we are able to gather like this.

And we can be sure that God will continue to protect his church. I expect that during this synod we'll be hearing about the challenges faced by our sister churches, like what we

experience here in FRCA: the constant challenge to remain faithful, the challenge to stand firm on God's truth, the challenge to effectively engage the world in which we live. The church is in a battle zone. Just as Jerusalem was battered through many wars, the church continues to face the fury of the devil as we live in a hostile world. But beloved, the Lord will establish his church forever. The church will continue to be great, because God protects her. As we have heard, so have we seen, and so we can be confident: God will establish us forever.

The psalm celebrates God's presence, God's protection, and third, the psalm celebrates God's *perfections* within the church (v9-11). And here the psalm mentions God's temple, the place of worship within Zion. Here, when God's people meet with him, they ponder his lovingkindness, his *hesed*, his steadfast love, and v10 mentions his righteousness, and v11 his judgements. The Great King is worthy of all praise.

And while the psalm celebrates God's perfections within the temple, we have a hint that this praise will extend to the ends of the earth. It is not only Mt Zion that will rejoice, it is also the daughters of Judah, the towns and villages around Jerusalem. God's name, his character, is shown throughout the world, and his praise will one day extend to the ends of the earth. The praise of God in the temple resounds throughout the world.

And this is true in the church, the temple of God built by his Spirit. Within the church we contemplate the grace and truth which is fully revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. His praise is extending to the ends of the earth. That's a reality in which we can rejoice and be glad. That also helps to frame the work of synod, also in this work, we look towards a day when the whole earth is full of the glory of the Lord, when the knowledge of God fills the earth as the waters fill the sea. Let's not lose sight of God's perfections over the next few days. Let's not

forget the great reality that his perfections will be praised throughout this world.

And fourth, the psalm describes a *procession of praise* (v12-14). The security and beauty of Zion is to be noticed and admired. There is a call to walk around the city, to notice the strong defences, the towers and bulwarks and palaces, to consider and admire them, and to tell the coming generations. This was not to admire the buildings of Zion themselves, but to be amazed at the God of Zion. The final verse makes this clear: “for this is God, our God forever and ever.” The fortifications of the city are displays of God’s great protection.

Such a procession of praise can be seen in Nehemiah 12, when the people finished rebuilding the walls of the city and they dedicated the wall: Nehemiah organised two great thanksgiving choirs to walk around the wall, and one choir went one way and the other went the other way. They noticed and admired God’s work in the city.

During this assembly, we’ll have opportunity to notice and celebrate God’s work in building his holy city. As we hear from our sister churches, we’ll be able to go all about Zion and count her towers. As we mingle informally, we’ll have opportunity to mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces, as we hear about God’s work throughout our federation. May it be the case that we notice and admire the security and glory of God’s church, that we see the stories with eyes of faith, that we hear with hearts of joy. This is God, our God forever and ever. God is great, and he showcases his greatness in his church.

And God will preserve his people until the perfect fulfilment of this psalm. We will one day see God’s glory and greatness even more fully in the New Jerusalem, when the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, the holy city will come down from heaven having the glory of God. And the enemies of the church will be thrown

into the lake of fire, we will have experienced God's protection fully. Then we will celebrate his perfections, knowing him more even more fully, and marvelling in a procession of praise. God is great and greatly to be praised.

Dear people of God, this is the awesome reality of the work God is doing in his church. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised among his people.

Appendix 1b: Opening address by the Chairman of the convening church of Darling Downs

Delegates to synod, overseas delegates and visitors, dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the convening church of Darling Downs it is my privilege to welcome you all at the beginning of Synod Darling Downs 2024. This is the first time we have hosted a synod here in Darling Downs, and it has been wonderful to see the willingness of various members who have helped out, from the many meals which have been and will be made, to the electronic organisation of the synod material, to the setting up of furniture and AV equipment. There is a lot that's happened behind the scenes, and it is our privilege to serve the churches in this way, and ultimately, to serve our Lord.

We welcome eighteen delegates from the three classes. Since the last synod, there have been two new churches instituted, bringing the total number of instituted churches in our federation to eighteen. That means that two of our classes have welcomed another church. This is growth for which we can thank the Lord.

We warmly welcome each of the delegates, including those who are local and those who have come from Tasmania, Albany, Busselton, and Bunbury. May the Lord bless your time

among us. As you do the work for the synod, it is our prayer as the hosting church that you'll have everything you need to be able to focus on your task, and that these next few days will be good days, rejoicing in the work of the Lord. We also hope you'll enjoy our hospitality and that times of fellowship can be facilitated by good food. For those who aren't aware, the organising committee has also arranged for some optional, fun activities on Saturday, where the delegates, together with the organising committee, can let down their hair, switch out their suit for a pair of boardies, and enjoy some time together. These activities include a boat cruise, which may or may not involve seeing dolphins, and a braai dinner. We have a decent South African representation within our church family, so braai, or BBQ, is quite appropriate. We do pray that the Lord will bless these activities too, and that you as delegates will have all that you need over these next few days.

We also welcome various visitors and delegates from overseas.

- From the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, Pastor Marc Chen and Br. Jonathan Yap.

- From the GGRC in Indonesia, br. Soleman Dethan.

- From the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Rev. Paul Archbald.

- From the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, Dr. Gerard Hagg.

- From the Canadian Reformed Churches, Rev. Carl Van Dam and Br. Harry de Boer.

- From the United Reformed Churches of North America, Br. Gerry Swets.

- From our sister churches in Korea, Rev. Jin Heung Kim.

May the Lord bless your time among us, dear brothers, and your wives and families if they are with us too, may you be blessed through our fellowship as we extend the love of Christ to you and as you learn more about us, and may you also be an encouragement to us as you share some things from your own churches.

That's all I have to say, so, on behalf of the Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs I declare the 29th synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened. May the Lord's greatness be exalted in this assembly!

Appendix 1c: Address by Rev SC van Dam on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a real honour and privilege for us, as Canadian delegates, to bring you greetings on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. I'm here with my fellow delegate, Harry de Boer, who, I'm delighted to say, is also my father-in-law. For both of us it is the first time that we are visiting Australia. Even though we have travelled so far from home and have never been here before, yet we have encountered so many very familiar faces already and above all experience the closest bond of a shared faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. We are most grateful for your generous hospitality. We are enjoying seeing some of the sights of this beautiful country, so different from Canada, yet all part of our Father's world. How amazing it is to see God's creativity on display in, for us, fresh and new ways.

We are truly thankful for the very close bond we may have as Canadian and Australian churches already for many years. Many of your ministers have served in the ministry in Canada as well. Many of them have been trained at the Canadian

Reformed Theological Seminary. Already for many decades there has been extensive travel and movement of members of all walks of life between our two countries and church federations.

It has now been six years since we, as representatives of the Canadian Reformed Churches have been able to visit your Synod in person. In 2021 greetings were given by Rev. Arend Witten via a video recording. Much has happened in the intervening years. The impact of COVID upon church life in Canada was significant. Different provinces implemented different variations of regulations, sometimes resulting in livestream only services or very limited attendance for months at a time. Not everyone in the churches agreed on how to respond. At times there were significant disagreements and tensions arose. We came to know one another in ways that had not happened before. Yet, we can be thankful that through it all the Lord preserved his church and for the vast majority of members, life has returned to normal. There was some sifting and falling away but the predominant impact has been renewed appreciation for corporate worship and for the Lord's goodness and faithfulness in preserving his church in the midst of the difficulties and challenges.

Another important aspect of the preservation and increase of the church is training men to preach the gospel and to labour among God's people as ministers of the Word. We are very grateful for your ongoing financial and prayerful support of the seminary in Hamilton. This connection with Australia was again strengthened when we were privileged to be able to appoint Dr. Reuben Bredenhof as Professor of Ministry and Mission, who had been serving as minister in the church of Mount Nasura. We are very thankful for the work which Dr. Bredenhof is doing at the seminary and pray for the Lord's continued blessing upon him and the other professors and staff. It is our prayer that we will continue to cooperate closely as federations of churches in assisting one another in the training of men for the ministry. We sincerely hope that all

future plans, such as are also being discussed at this Synod, will contribute to the well-being of the furtherance of Christ's kingdom in both of our countries so that we would not be hindered in any way but go from strength to strength under the Lord's blessing in accordance with his leading.

We would also like to express our thankfulness for your ongoing support and involvement with us in the various ecclesiastical relationships which we share in common. Like you, we are monitoring the situation in the Netherlands with much interest. We have been encouraged to learn that the DGK and GKN have decided to unite into one federation of churches. It is the plan that this union will take place in October of this year, followed by the first Synod of the merged federation in October 2025. We hope and pray that more of those who are concerned within our former Dutch sister churches will then also see their way clear to leave that federation and join the new merged federation. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken are also experiencing increased division, with some desiring to pursue a path similar to our former sister churches. Many observers expect that this federation may dissolve into 3 or 4 different groups with one of those groups joining the new federation. All of this may well result in a coming together of those who desire to be faithful to Scripture and the Reformed confessions. It is our prayer that those who belong together will indeed come together and manifest the unity of faith in a concrete way.

Together with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, you have participated with us in taking turns in visiting the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea during their General Assembly in alternate years. We are thankful to report that the ties between Korea and Canada have intensified in recent years. As a matter of fact, the Canadian Reformed Churches now have 3 ministers who are of Korean ethnicity: Rev. Daniel Shin of Spring Creek, Ontario, Rev. Han Gil Lee of Houston, BC and most recently, Rev. Kwangyoung Park of Toronto. Rev. Park is engaged in local mission work, especially among the

Koreans in Toronto. There has been increased immigration to Canada from South Korea, from among members of the KPCK, and they are looking for a new church home in Canada. We look forward to seeing how these developments will unfold in the coming years.

We also share a common interest in developments in Indonesia. Being much closer by, you are well positioned to give assistance and advice where possible. As Canadian churches, we also have long standing ties to Indonesia since some of their leaders studied at the seminary in Hamilton in the past. The church at Smithville is supporting Rev. Edwer Dethan in the mission work on the island of Timor. Dr. Andrew Pol, emeritus minister of Carman West in Manitoba, has also given instruction in Indonesia for many years and continues to be involved when possible. It is our prayer that together we will be able to continue to cooperate in facilitating closer understanding and unity between the various Reformed federations in the Indonesian archipelago. At times this has been challenging, highlighting the need for humility, caution and wisdom. May we be of support to one another as we seek to be of assistance to our Indonesian brothers and sisters.

Coming to North America, we continue to be very thankful for the ecclesiastical fellowship we may enjoy with a number of federations, in particular, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church of the United States, and the United Reformed Churches of North America. Especially in Canada, the fellowship with the URC is very close, so that functionally we are as one federation, with local members often attending the same schools, intermarrying and becoming members of each other's churches. It appears that one major practical factor preventing further talks toward actual federative union is that many of the American URCs do not really know us and therefore are not enthusiastic about closer union.

In this connection, it is worth sharing that two federations which were North American wide have split on national lines

or will do so soon. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America have separated into an American church and a Canadian church. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada was formed on May 12, 2023. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church is proposing to form a Canadian ARP in September 2025. In both cases, various practical matters relating to the border between the US and Canada have led to this development. We believe that this could lead to closer ties with these churches being formed more easily than would otherwise have been the case. In the case of both newly (or to be) formed Canadian federations, previous hindrances (such as women deacons) to closer ties are removed.

As you know, both of our ecumenical relations committees have been working on developing new guidelines for how to conduct our ecumenical relations. We have felt the need to update this in order to reflect the reality of some ecumenical relationships being closer and more meaningful than others. With some churches we have full ecclesiastical fellowship and have strong historical ties and therefore have a very meaningful relationship, such as with yourselves. In other cases, we recognize a church federation as faithful and true but have limited contact for a wide variety of reasons, and therefore a less intense relationship is a natural result. In still other cases, it can happen that a few local churches have a close relationship with another faithful local church. We desire to make it possible for those relationships to blossom in a fruitful and mutually beneficial way. Our report is still in the process of being formed and feedback has been solicited from our sister churches. Earlier this month we have received feedback from your committee and we are working with it and hope to come to a more finalized version in the coming weeks. We certainly appreciate receiving your feedback and we look forward to having more meaningful discussions about the details of these proposals during our visit.

When we consider the matter of ecumenical relations, then we could not help but notice the fact that the International Conference of Reformed Churches and participation therein is a source of disagreement among you. As brothers in Christ, we wish to encourage you to participate in this conference once again. We encourage you in this in all love and sincerity. You are missed there. We value your input and your participation would fill us with joy. We also believe that participation in the ICRC will be a valuable experience to get to know many other faithful Reformed churches across the world, in many different contexts and situations. There is so much that we can learn from one another. After you have spoken to brothers from India and Africa and Europe and elsewhere, your perspective on the Lord's worldwide work of gathering his catholic church is widened and deepened. In our day and age of global contacts and connections, it is not good to isolate oneself. And travel is becoming easier and easier. Participating in the ICRC will also help you to welcome and interact with visitors to Australia who will come from ICRC member churches. We hope that you will take our earnest and heartfelt call to rejoin the ICRC to heart. You are our dearest brothers. We miss you and we would love to see you there again!

At this time, in accordance with our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship, we like to take the opportunity to ask you whether there are specific occasions where you believe we have failed to live up to our commitments to you or have caused you grief? Furthermore, speaking the truth in love, where do you perceive our testimony or practice to be weak? We look forward to engaging with you on these questions so that we might be encouraged in our task and be of mutual assistance to one another.

In both Canada and Australia, we are witnessing a culture that is rapidly decaying and losing its Christian heritage, and even becoming anti-Christian. Basic norms of morality and sexuality and identity are being undermined by evil

foolishness and rebellion against God's good creation. And good intentions to combat bad behaviour are sought in strange places. For example, it was reported at the end of May that the premier of the State of Victoria has introduced a new Parliamentary Secretary position, whose sole responsibility will be to change men's behaviour to combat domestic violence. The notion that a junior parliamentary official would be able to achieve such a goal is rather improbable to say the least. Our children are growing up in such a world. We can become fearful of the future.

But let us take heart! We never need to be fearful because the Lord God is faithful and he is always with us. He never forsakes his children. He is sovereign and directs all things for the furtherance of his kingdom. When darkness increases in the world, the light of the gospel increases and new opportunities arise for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. He alone provides the solution to all of our problems since he has defeated sin and death and the evil one with his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead. Through his Holy Spirit, we are transformed more and more so that we are renewed in accordance with God's image in true righteousness and holiness. That is the true source of real changed behaviour.

In view of all that has been said, I would like to read this prayer of the apostle Paul to the saints in Ephesus in Ephesians 3 and pray it with you and for you, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. [20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,

according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

May the Lord bless your deliberations at this Synod and may the decisions that are made be to the glory of God and for the edification of the churches.

Rev. Carl Van Dam and br. Harry de Boer

Appendix 1d: Address by Pastor M Chen on behalf of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

Dear Brothers in the Lord in the Free Reformed Church of Australia,

On behalf of First Evangelical Reformed Church, I would like to extend our warm greetings and Christian love to you at Synod Darling Downs 2024. We are finally able to meet in person since the last pre-COVID synod in 2018. Despite that, since the travel restrictions have lifted, we have already enjoyed the fruit of our sisterly relationship. This has expressed itself especially in two ways.

> *Mutual Support* - There was a ministerial exchange in 2023, when Pastor Kelvin Dekker ministered in our midst and Pastor Chong Nam Tuck ministered in Albany and the Kelmscott Mandarin outreach. There were also 2 special talks by Pastor Mark Chen on the Reformation and Christian Zionism. Pastors Stephen 't Hart and Wes Bredenhof accepted our invitation to speak at our annual church retreat in 2022 and 2024 respectively. We are also grateful to the FRCA in supplying Pastors Stephen 't Hart and Dirk Poppe to help us examine

Jonathan Yap, now licentiate, upon his return from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

Missions - Through the FRCA, we have made and maintained contact with the Philippines churches. This year, we sent our licentiate to Leyte Island to minister in the church camp of a nascent Reformed mission connected to Grace Reformed Church. Besides ministering to them, he was to explore how our church could help in such a mission field. We look forward to further collaboration in the mission field.

Besides the FRCA, FERC has sought to make and maintain relations with other Reformed denominations. In 2021, we had commenced proceedings to explore corresponding relations with the Heritage Reformed Congregations and the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar. We have just formalized those relations this month. By God's providence and appointment, we have extended diaconate aid to the Ukraine Evangelical Reformed Church. We also continue to support Covenant Grace Church, our sister church in Penang, Malaysia, through a monthly pulpit ministry and renew their invitation to your ministers to help them with pulpit supply.

The Reformed faith is taking root more in Singapore. FERC, as a sole congregation, does her part to promote Reformed confessionalism. We do this through a biennial Reformed conference. In 2019 and 2023, we invited Dr Joel Beeke of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary to speak on a number of topics. Next year, Ligonier Ministries will be organizing their first Singapore conference with our input. We invite you to take time off to be refreshed through such conferences.

With a growing congregation nearing 500 members, 2 ministers, with a third to be ordained this year, and an ministry intern; the church is praying about planting another congregation. With costs in Singapore, we need to explore

renting premises or having multiple services in our building. We hope such planting will lead eventually to a classis and federation. Do pray for us in this endeavor.

Fraternally in the Lord's Service,

Pastor Mark Chen
On behalf of the Session of the First Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore

Appendix 1e: Address by Rev P Archbald on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Esteemed Brothers and Sisters of the FRCA – synod delegates and members observing,

In bringing you greetings from the RCNZ, I would like to echo the words of the apostle Paul in his greetings to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1): where Paul acknowledges that thanks *ought* to be given to God for the church at Thessalonica. For he could see that they were growing in faith, love and perseverance. Thanksgiving was rendered to the Lord for this, since it was His doing. That thanks is something that *ought* to be rendered, as with all the work of the Lord.

This grace is evident in your churches. We have always been impressed by the fact that you take your sister-church relationships so seriously. Your relationship with us is not a mere formality. You continue to make the effort to draw closer to us, to help us and to see if there are things you can learn from the way we do things – just as we want to learn from you.

On that basis, you have talked with us in the past about the vicariate system and our ecumenical fellowship category. You have raised the possibility that a seminary in Australia might

benefit both our federations. These are matters that are being considered in this synod as well.

Similarly, our two federations continue to work together in PNG. Though the Vaatstras have come to the end of their service there, we hope that our involvement will not end, whether in short-term assistance or by sending another full-time lecturer.

Members from your churches continued to visit New Zealand and join us for public worship – as some of our members visit your churches here. Some have joined our churches as members, at least for a time.

There is opportunity for our respective ministers to help in vacant churches. I know our retired ministers are willing to do so, and I am sure that yours are too, according to their circumstances.

We continue to attend each other's synods and to meet as inter-church committee and deputies. That gives opportunity to question each other's decisions and practices, even to participate at times in the decision-making process. For example, your churches have sought our feedback on the structure of ecclesiastical relationships and vicariates.

Most of these things are not new. But there is one, new development that demonstrates a strengthening of the relationship between us. Recently, the Reformed Church of Bishopdale ordained a second minister, Rev. Matthias Schat, originally from your churches. Two of our congregations are currently looking at the possibility of calling other graduates of CRTS, at least one of these also from the FRCA. Yet another man from the Canadian Reformed Churches has been doing a vicariate and another FRCA student from CRTS is engaged in an internship in New Zealand.

A few years ago, I would not have expected such a development. Now I hear some of our ministers saying that we need to look more to CRTS graduates as we look to fill our vacant pulpits. What a positive development in our sister-church relationships with the FRCA, as well as the Canadian Reformed Churches!

In these developments we have some answer to the question, “Is this relationship proving useful?” The tangible evidence of that is seen in the various matters I have just outlined. The relationship is useful and, to borrow a term from your report on ecumenical contact, “meaningful.”

Just a little up-date on our churches. Our membership, as counted last year, was around 3,500, distributed in 22 churches and 3 “preaching posts.” At present, I believe we have 7 vacancies.

Our other inter-church relationships remain much the same as in the previous inter-synodical period, with one exception: our former sister-church, the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia has disbanded, though there are still a few congregations on the East Coast.

Our next synod is to take place this September. Please pray for us in that, and other matters.

To conclude, our prayer for you mirrors the blessing the apostle Paul pronounces at the end of 2 Thessalonians:

“May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!”

Appendix 1f: Address by Rev JH Kim on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Churches of Korea

Dear Brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Let me say, first of all, 'Thank you' for your hospitality and warm welcome. It's my first time here in Perth, and from the first day, I felt your sincere Christian love and kindness to me as a deputy of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea.

It is honor to read the Greeting Letter of the Moderator of the Kosin Presbyterian Church to the

General Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

To: The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Warmest greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

It is with great joy and heartfelt gratitude that we write to you on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK).

In 1962, two elders of de Gereformeerde Kerken in de Nederland (vrijgemaakt) came to an Korean pastor, Keun Sam Lee, who studied at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University). He later founded the Kosin University in Busan, and it is the first 'Christian' university in Korea. The reason why the two elders visited him was that they realized the Kosin Presbyterian Church had almost the same experience just like them during the Second World War under Japanese persecution. They were both confessional Christians, resisting any kind of threats to destroy the true and living confession of the faith. And that meeting was the beginning of the contact between GKV and Kosin Church, which developed into a sister church relationship for more than 50 years.

And since 1978, Kosin Presbyterian Church got fresh air from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, mainly through the late pastor, dr. and professor Soon Gil Hur. He wrote many articles on the theological, pastoral and everyday lives of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia that he had experienced and practiced here in Perth. The articles gave us very precious opportunities to think over what are the Reformed Faith and Life in our Korean Presbyterian context. Thanks to Soon Gil Hur, we began to read and study seriously the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed

Churches, in addition to our Presbyterian Confession and Catechisms (The Westminster Standards).

And as a result, we came to realize more deeply the beauty, integrity, and riches of the Reformed

Tradition. Soon Gil Hur also contributed to the Kosin Church by his service at the Korea Theological Seminary as Dean and professor, lecturing practical theology and symbolic in terms of the consistent Reformed perspective.

And 1980, two Dutch Reformed professors came to us from the Netherlands, Jim Bateau and Nicolaas H. Gootjes, to teach the Reformed theology to the students of the Korea Theological Seminary in Busan. Their influences were considerable for the pastors and church members as well as many students of the Seminary. And many of them decided to go to the Netherlands (Kampen), South Africa (Pochefstroom), and also to the United States (Grand Rapids) in order to study and learn more about the Reformed tradition.

Now the Kosin Presbyterian Church has grown, by the grace of our Lord, up to 2,200 congregations in 35 regional synods, with 3,674 pastors caring for almost 400,000 church members. There are Christian university with a general hospital, theological seminry, Mission Training Centre of the 60th Anniversary this year, and Institution for Church Teachers

and Education in our Kosin Church. That was huge blessing of our Heavenly Father to the Kosin Presbyterian Church! However, we still appreciate the invaluable contribution of the Reformed theology and piety, not only to our Kosin Presbyterian Churches in Korea but also all the sincere Chrisitan Churches around the world. Because we have experienced lots of trials and errors during the period of the growth, striving to exist IN THE WORLD but NOT OF THE WORLD! We tried to remain to be faithful to the four fundamental natures of Christian Church, that is, One Holy Catholic and Apostolic, and we also tried to hold fast to the Three Distinguishing Marks of the True church. Yes, the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea is not perfect church! We have still much to learn from the BIBLE and from the Reformed Tradition.

Therefore, we hope that the fellowship between FRCA and KPCK would become more and more productive and reciprocally beneficial. And we hope that FRCA could do such supportive and inspiring role also in the ICRC. The KPCK has always valued and maintained sister relationships and exchanges with foreign churches that align with our faith and practice. In this spirit, we are very pleased to foster goodwill and strengthen our relationship with your esteemed denomination, The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

We are honored to extend a respectful invitation to your denomination to send a delegation to our 74th General Assembly. This significant event will be held from September 10 to 13, 2024, at Korea Theological Seminary in Cheonan, Korea. Just as your denomination graciously welcomed the delegation sent by our KPCK, we hope to have the opportunity to warmly welcome and host the delegation from The Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

We anticipate that the upcoming General Assembly will be a time of meaningful decision-making and spiritual enrichment. We pray for a deepening and broadening of the relationship

between our denominations, and we especially hope for active exchanges of personnel, theology, and holistic interaction.

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Yours in Christ,

Hong-seok Kim
Moderator of the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea

Appendix 1g: Address by Br G Swets on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America

Greetings in the name of our risen and glorified Lord, Jesus Christ. It is through the Spirit, who has led us build His Church and led us into ecclesiastical fellowship with one another. Thus, it is good to be in your midst once again as a fraternal delegate to your synod and as a brother of the same household of faith.

Since 1996, the Lord has tremendously blessed the URCNA. We are a federation of 140 congregations spread throughout the United States and Canada with around 2/3 in the US. Our average church size is 181 souls, yet 44% of our congregations have less than 100 members. We consist of just over 25,000 souls. We have several church plants across North America that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. Outside of North America, we have foreign works in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Philippines, Italy, and Romania. Many of our churches also engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level.

We have a 2 phase policy on Churches Abroad. Our initial, Phase 1 is Ecumenical Contact where we study matters of mutual concern and exchange information and publications. We are in Phase 1 with 6 churches. Phase 2 is Ecumenical Fellowship, where we focus on our oneness despite geographical boundaries. I would be happy to share the guidelines we use, and what is included in each of the Phases. We have 9 churches that we have moved to Phase 2, the Indonesian churches GGRC-NTT and GGRI-National, Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, The Free Church of Scotland Continuing, The Reformed Churches in New Zealand, the Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the United Reformed Churches in Congo.

In Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess that we believe that, First as believers, all and everyone as members of Christ have communion with him and share in all his treasures and gifts, 2nd that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understand our Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship relationship with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ through faith vertically, we are also united to each other through faith horizontally. And we desire to come along side other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith together to the new heaven and new earth.

I would also like to congratulate you on producing the Australian Book of Praise, which was an issue that was discussed at Synod Bunbury; where I attended in 2018. I was not able to attend in 2021 because of covid. Covid had a huge effect on our churches. It forced us to provide live feed for Sunday worship. We are still dealing with the affects of that, people not showing up for worship and viewing the live

stream. Evil is all around us, the devil is working to destroy the church.

Our synod is also convening this week in Escondido California. At our last synod in Buffalo, New York, we formed a committee to deal with the question of virtual church and the increasing popularity of people attending church via a live stream and wrongly forgoing live attendance at worship services. Technology, as with most things, tends to bring both blessings and curses, but it also offers an opportunity to clarify our thinking on pressing issues. In other issues, will be hearing a committee report on Human sexuality, establishing guidelines regarding calling of candidates for ministry, and also continue to develop policies for foreign and home missions. With a view to clarify the “how and where” of planting and supporting new churches and missions. It also gives our US pastors an opportunity to know more about the Canadian Reformed church and meet some of the brothers. I am hoping it will strengthen our relationship and commitment to each other. We heard yesterday how many Reformed churches there are worldwide. It is astonishing to me as we look at our sphere of influence, it is miniscule. I would challenge you that we expand our view of the reformed churches worldwide. What is our mandate given in Acts 1:8 and Mark 16:15, Go into the world and preach the gospel. With partners and sister churches we can accomplish much, much more.

I also encourage you to be diligent, to hold fast to His Word. That you minister to those around you. Minister in love, the love we experience by the Holy Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Your challenges may be significantly different than ours, but we still struggle every day, each of us. We ask that you pray for us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to preaching the Christ-centered gospel, to administering the sacraments and conducting church discipline when necessary; to catechizing our youth and to educating our laity. We will pray for you as you do likewise.

I want to conclude by thanking you for your hospitality and for the opportunity to address you as a fellow-laborer in the cause of our Savior and King. I hope this brief address gives you a little glimpse into who we are as the United Reformed Churches of North America. My prayer is, and has been, that on this building block, the Lord might establish a lasting, enduring relationship that will support the advancement of His Church and His kingdom.

Your Brother in Christ,

Gerry Swets
CECCA of URCNA

Appendix 1h: Address by Br G Hagg on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Esteemed brothers delegates of Synod, assembled guests, brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Let me start with expressing my personal gratitude to be here at your synod, and meeting so many brothers, and some sisters, in the Lord. Already after a few days I am most thankful for the deliberations about issues in your church and sister-churches. The Lord gives us here a small picture of the greatness of His church world-wide. Thank you for the opportunity to learn so much from you and to share some of our experiences in South Africa.

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa I bring you heartfelt greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. While geographically thousands of kilometres apart, in Christ we are one, and nearby. What a comfort to know that He unifies us through His Holy Spirit. We praise Him for such grace.

This unity has grown much deeper over the last number of years and we are most thankful that we can learn so much from your experiences and initiatives, through deputies as well as the magazine *Una Sancta*, and especially through our presence at your synods. Thank you for the thorough deliberations in your synod reports on issues that we share with you, such as theological training, mission work and ecumenical relationships.

Your Deputies for Interchurch Relations submitted a comprehensive report to this synod, including the FRCSA. They also published an informative article on our bond of churches in the 1 June issue of *Una Sancta*. I will therefore try not to repeat too much of the content of the report and the article. I would like to make a few remarks on theological training, mission work, your financial support to our churches, ecumenical relations and the ICRC, and the FRCSA's relationship to the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Theological Training

To begin with, theological training, a matter close to our hearts that we have been thinking and praying about much in the last few years. As a small bond of churches we have always looked for the best ways to equip our students for the ministry, while we do not have the capacity to offer such training ourselves. What kept us on track is the strong belief that the Lord blesses his children when they seek the very best for his honour and the well-being of his church, and that we do everything while asking for His blessing. Without Him we are nothing.

As you know, the CRTS has become the preferred institution for MDiv studies, similar to yours. Before the MDiv study, we require our aspiring brothers to complete a BA degree with ancient languages, which can be done locally. In the past we used the two colleges Mukhanyo Theological College and George Whitfield to ensure that even members from the

mission field could be trained for the ministry. We are most thankful that we need not use these two colleges anymore for the undergraduate studies. All our students are now studying for the BA degree at an accredited university. Only in cases where students have not received proper school education, we send them for one year to the college as an introduction to prepare them for the university. This approach to a common BA degree ensures that students achieve the right standards, and unity between them is strengthened. We are most thankful to the Lord that He has given us two brothers who recently completed their MDiv studies at CRTS, and seven who are at various stages of the study trajectory.

These developments in the FRCSA would not be possible without your prayers for us and your funding support of our theological training. Thank you for your abundant love in Christ, and the trust you show to us with your substantial financial support. We trust that our report back shows our commitment to a sound management of your donations.

Mission Work

The work of training ministers is so vital because the African continent and South Africa are ripe for the gospel. In our country with its extremely high unemployment rate (more than 36%), and rampant poverty, people are broken and poor and in need of the hope of the gospel.

We thank the Lord for the number of missionaries and the many brothers and sisters involved in mission work. We are most grateful for the recent institution of two mission congregations in Pretoria. In Cape Town last month candidate Jaco de Beer accepted a call from Wesbank congregation, where a significant amount of church up-building still has to take place. A new preaching point has been started in Robertson, about 100 km north of Cape Town, where Rev Cornelis Klein is helping out for the next 3 months.

Together with these blessings, the Lord tests our faith and wisdom through various challenges such as the need for members of mission churches to grow in the Lord. Furthermore, we are faced with a decrease in funding for mission work. As was reported at your previous synod, the Dutch churches, who previously covered up to 95% of the finances of our mission work, have decided to cut their funding in half by 2025. In addition, we will not seek support of new mission projects from the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands.

However, this development has also come as a blessing, as the churches locally have taken greater responsibility for the mission work, and we have had to deepen our reliance on our Heavenly Father, trusting that He will provide. Does not the whole world and all its fulness belong to Him, as Psalm 24 teaches us? It has also been a blessing in that it has forced us to think about how we can do sustainable mission work in South Africa outside the traditional funding model, where the sending church pays for all costs. We ask you to pray for us that the Lord gives us wisdom and persistence to sow the seed of the Word.

Within the context of mission work, we are most thankful to the Lord that He gave us the Reformational Study Centre, which is reaching out in Africa and parts of Asia through the internet library and study material. The Centre provides Reformed study material to over ten thousand preachers, students, elders and church members in more than 70 countries, who want to remain true to Scripture. You are encouraged to visit the Centre's website and make use of this network (www. https://www.refstudycentre.com).

Use of your funding support in the FRCSA

At Synod Belhar 2021, our Mission Deputies requested to investigate the possibility of an increase in funding of theological training by our Canadian sister churches, which

would possibly allow the use of Australian funding for the mission work in South Africa. This so-called 'swop' was discussed with the CRTS, but an increase from their side could not be realised. However, we would like to ask your approval for a more flexible allocation of your funding, which would enable us to share your funds for theological training with both our Mission Deputies and Deputies Needy Churches, when and where the need may be highest. Theological training, mission work and needy churches are strongly interdependent in South Africa and a balanced approach appears to be required.

Relations with Churches Abroad

We share a common heritage with the Netherlands. We thank the Lord that we could support each other to send a united message to the RCNL when they moved away from Reformed theology. Although our joint admonishments were not accepted, the process strengthened your and our will to remain steadfast in obedience to the Lord. Let us keep praying for the brothers and sisters in the Netherlands who want to remain steadfast in their faith, so that they can be re-united in a new bond of churches that will – God willing - result from the planned unification of De Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland later this year.

The report of your Deputies Interchurch Relations on ecumenical contacts is of much value for our own reflection on our ecumenical relationships. Our mutual sister churches in Canada are similarly studying this matter and we should look for opportunities to harmonize our approach and terminology on these matters.

Membership of the ICRC

The FRCSA is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). We have experienced that this membership provides us with an opportunity to see how the

Lord calls his children in many countries world-wide, in line with the calling of John 17 and Ephesians 4. We learn from the experiences of the ICRC member churches in an increasingly secularised world. This was, for example, shown in the ICRC's unanimous decision to terminate the RCNL's membership in 2022. Membership allows us not only to receive benefits. It is a platform where we can give to other churches that want to remain true and faithful. The Lord has made us rich in knowledge and understanding of His Word. He expects us to share that wealth with others. The ICRC enables us to remain in contact with reformed churches across Africa, one of the fastest growing continents when it comes to Christianity. In October of this year our churches will DV host a Regional Conference of African ICRC member churches in Cape Town, which will, amongst others, deal with mission and diaconal work in Africa.

We pray for wisdom for your Synod to carefully consider and evaluate the options for a possible renewed relationship with the ICRC. We would very much appreciate your support and inputs into the deliberations at the ICRC General Conferences and in the various Working Groups. This will surely strengthen the reformed course of the organization, as well as our mutual intensity of cooperation as sister churches. Taking your reservation into account, we suggest that you will at least send observers to the next ICRC general meeting, so that you can assess the conference first-hand.

Contacts with Reformed Churches in South Africa

Within South Africa, the FRCSA has increased its contacts the Reformed Churches of South Africa (the RCSA), who are also member of the ICRC. We are thankful that on a local basis there have been pulpit exchanges and mutual acknowledgement of attestations. Contact at a national level is still strenuous after more than three decades. The RCSA are wrestling with a call for "women in office" from an increasing number of congregations, pastors and professors.

There is also a slack attitude among members towards maintaining the sabbath day and reformed school education. This year the RCSA have cut their ties with the public North West University, where their theological training was located, and have established a new “Gereformeerde Teologiese Akademie” (GTA). The younger generation of ministers see this development as an important instrument for reformation in the church. However, the new seminary experiences significant challenges from inside the RCSA. We pray that the Lord will guide the seminary’s future development.

Closing

I would like to end with the words from the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4, which has been quoted a few times during your synod: “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”. May the Lord give your 2024 Synod the wisdom and faith to remain in this unity. To him be all the glory for ever and ever.

Thank you.

Gerard Hagg
On behalf of Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the FRCSA

Appendix 1i: Address by Br S Dethan on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC)

Esteemed Brothers,

Through this golden opportunity, on behalf of our federation, I would like to glorify our Triune God, for His love and protection that I may be here in your midst.

It is a great joy for me to address you at this Synod on behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC).

It's good to be in your midst again. I have fond memories of my previous visit to you. During that time, I had the privilege to worship together in this church I am very impressed by your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your fellowship in the Spirit, and your love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to pass on Christian greetings from all the brothers and sisters in our federation (GGRC) Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia, to you all here.

Secondly, I would like to thank you for your invitation for our federation in order to come to this pivotal synod of yours. We were so glad to hear and happy to come here to sit together with you as brothers in the Lord and experience the Christian atmosphere of this Synod.

Thirdly, we would like to thank you all for our relationship as Contact churches, start from 1991 up too now, our relationship is almost 14 years. We thank the Lord for Rev. Anton Souman and Rev. Abel Cornelis Pol for coming to our recent synod in Kupang (GRC.Ebenhaezer) in which we had such a great time together as brothers in the Lord. We all were so happy to see them and enjoyed our fellowship together.

We were also so glad and thank you deeply that every time we have synod in our country you always came to our synod. You seem to never miss to come to our synod. That's show how you were always faithfully attending at our Synod. We noticed that your delegates were not only attending at our synod but you also helped and supported us so much. We praise the Lord and thank Him for your wisdom, help and support and even advice.

We praise the Lord for our relationship with you that through this relation with you, we as federation have grown more and more in reformed teaching and tradition. It was via you here that Rev. Yonson Dethan may be prepared to be one of the future leaders in our federation., it show to you and us, that history of our federation to become reformed are actually from FRCA, via Rev. Yonson, he came to Australia first then to Canada, he graduated from the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Church in Hamilton 1997. We thank that via your help Rev. Yonson could go to Canada and studied there. Through that contact and relationship, we have learn a lot in order to grow in reformed characters.

We thank the Lord for his talents and love and reformed teaching and leadership through seminars, preaching, bible study and running reformed schools as well as theological high school, and now University. Thus we praise the Lord for this blessings and thank you for this effort. May the Lord bless our relation for the sake of his name and his kingdom.

Please pray for us brothers as we love to grow more and more in reformed teaching. Together, before we have done some lecture, seminars and teaching. I could mention Rev. Carl Vermeulen, Rev. Emeritus. Wilco Van Der Jagt, and then Rev. Emeritus. Arthur Van Delden. We hope this program can running again. We are so happy to learn from you. We could also do it not just to our congregation, minister and elders but we could do in schools or University.

In August 2025, we hope to hold our Synod where our local Church ICHTHUS Church will be the calling church for our Synod. Through this golden opportunity we would like to invite you to please send your delegates to come to our Synod in Kupang. We would be so happy to have your delegates with us at our coming Synod.

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, with 282 million people. Even though we are so small, we still like to reach out to our country as much as possible. We believe that nothing is impossible with God.

Now besides doing mission work on the island of Timor, Sabu and Rote, we are also doing some mission outreach on the island of Java, Madura and Celebes.

The island of Java has a very high Muslim population. Java island is known as the largest Muslim populated island in the world. There are close to 150 million people living in this island. 90% of this population are Muslim. Thank the Lord that since the year 2022, our federation was able to reach a new mission church on this island in Madura, East Java. Madura is known as an isolated island. 99% of its population are Muslims, both moderate as well as radical ones. Thank the Lord we were able to have some connection with some of the highest leaders there and that we could show the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our federation is far smaller compared to yours, but we don't see the size, we realize that the task of mission outreach is a very important calling of each of our local churches. We thank God for giving us the spirit and eagerness to keep reaching out to Muslims and other unbelievers in Indonesia.

Thank you for your wonderful welcome and hospitality. Thank you and be assured that we will continue to pray for you. May God richly bless you and the churches you serve. May He grant you all wisdom and strength in this pivotal and esteemed

Synod. May the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ continue to lead and guide you in your discussions and decision-making. May he also lead and guide you as churches as he makes you receptive to the voice of your heavenly Father, open to his provision, and available to his leading.

May He also bless our relationship and contact and use it for His name's sake. To Him be the glory forever and ever.

Romans 11: 36. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever! Amen.

Dank U Well and Toot Ziens…..

Humbly submitted

Soleman Dethan
On behalf of the Deputy for Relations with Churches Abroad of Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC).

Appendix 1j: Letter of greeting from the Reformed Churches of Indonesia - Timor (GGRI-T)

Esteemed Brothers,

On behalf of the Gereja – Gereja Reformed Indonesia Timor (GGRI – T), we are privileged to greet you in the name of our Triune God. We thank you very much for your invitation to your synod.

We apologize that we can't come to your synod; and are so late in sending this letter to you. This was simply because the Lord has been working in Indonesia – Timor tremendously; currently, through a friend in the provincial government we can have some dialogue with a group of the Islamic Student Association of NTT province; the government has entrusted

us to teach English to these students – this allows open dialogue with the Bible as one of our resources, so far they are very receptive and the Provincial Government is very appreciative. Most of the participants have already graduated with a bachelor's degree. Please pray for this effort; this is a huge undertaking for us as a young federation in this mission.

We rejoice over the ecclesiastical contact we share with you, as we are engaged in our common mission of making disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We truly appreciate your cooperation with us. We thank you for visiting us, we fondly remember the meeting with your deputies namely Rev. Souman and Rev. Abel Pol. We hope and pray that delegates will be able to attend our next synod.

Recently, we had a visit from Litindo, which opened up ideas and the possibility for working together. Many of your members also support the work of New Hope. We praise the Lord for your generosity in giving and supporting this important work of in your prayers.

The work of STAKRI continues to flourish. Many of our graduates are working in the schools and Reformed churches across Indonesia. Recently a STAKRI graduate, Rev. Stefanus was installed as a minister in GGRI-Waimarang, near the GGRI seminary. We are thankful to see that STAKRI can be a great help for the Churches and Christian schools in Indonesia.

STAKRI continues to receive students from the Gereja – Gereja Bebas Sumba Timur; Some of STAKRI's graduates work as ministers and evangelists in Gereja – Gereja Bebas. It is our sincere hope and prayer that this will be fruitful for the working together of GGRIT and GGBST.

Dear brothers, as you know our federation is rather small and young. Our federation currently consists of 9 instituted churches; and one mission post, soon to be instituted. Yet,

even though we are small; we continue to strive to maintain our identity as Reformed Churches both in the Confessions and church life.

As for this year; we have 4 mission groups; two are established in areas with a dense Muslim population. We are thankful for this development and we ask you to continue to pray for us as we struggle with the teachings of Islam and Roman Catholicism in our areas.

A huge struggle also is the rapidly growing pluralism theology. Many Christian leaders, even those who call themselves Reformed continue to work closely together with Roman Catholics, thus showing a bad example to the young people. We ask you to please continue to pray for us in this.

Dear brothers, once again, please receive our apology; and may the Lord continue to bless you richly.

In Christ's service,

The deputies of GGRIT
Chris Nguru

Appendix 1k: Letter of greeting from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to Him. Thank you for your kind invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia in Darling Downs, WA, beginning on June 17, 2024. We regret that we are unable to

send a fraternal delegate to your Synod this year, as your Synod meeting dates overlap with those of our General Assembly (June 19–25), but we want you to know that you are in our hearts and prayers.

We praise our Lord for His grace which is manifest in your church and in your continuing faithfulness to Him. We are particular thankful for the new arrangement we entered into with our corresponding committees/deputies in the Canadian Reformed Churches and you this past year to establish a three-year rotation for sending fraternal delegates to the annual general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin)—and pray this may be a first step in drawing our churches together more closely. Thank you, and may our gracious Lord richly bless your deliberations and use your labors for His own glory and the increase of His kingdom.

Yours in Christ's service,

Mark T. Bube
For the Committee of Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations

Appendix 1I: Closing address by the Chairman, Rev D Poppe

Dear brothers and sisters, dearly loved by our Lord Jesus Christ,

By God's grace we are nearing the end of another synod. I'd like to reflect with you on the developments over the past days and thank God for his kindness towards us. Rev. R. den Boer began our synod with a beautiful meditation on Psalm 48 in which he reminded us that the LORD our God is great and is greatly to be praised. And since our great God is within his church, that means his church is also great. What a gift to

serve our great God and his Son Jesus Christ by participating in this meeting of his churches.

I'd like to thank the brothers and sisters in Darling Downs for their excellent care. It's a fair bit of work for the organising committee, getting the paperwork ready, billeting the delegates, figuring out who is going to help out during the synod and actually making everything happen. What a beautiful gift you have given your Lord in doing this for us. We are also very thankful for your love and care. Thanks for the dolphin cruise and the braai. Thanks especially to the women who provided us with meals, snacks, coffee, fresh lime juice, lemon squares (my favourite) and an unending supply of droppies. My boys were saying that going to synod might not be such a bad gig after all if you have an unending supply of droppies and chocolate bars.

Dear brothers, I would like to thank you for your help in reaching decisions. I was struck how some brothers were more vocal in some discussions and other brothers in other discussions. Beautiful how God gives us all different gifts, interests and abilities and how we can use those to serve him. Thanks for your patience with me as chairman and for your assistance in trying to find each other and in making decisions together. The LORD blessed us with a humble spirit where we were able to listen to one another, consider other viewpoints and come to one mind on many matters. What a kindness of our Lord. That's also very good for his churches. If we can come together on things, that often also helps our churches to come together and to live in peace and unity. This is our Father's great joy.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the deputies of the various committees for their work. There was a stack of good work that happened in the past three years. In the first place, the Deputies for Interchurch relations did a stunning job in helping us think through how we wish to engage in inter-church relations in the coming years. We have so much

opportunity these days with the ease of travel and communication. How do we manage it well? Good to consider the whether the relationships that are faithful, manageable and meaningful. It will probably be quite tricky knowing how to best apply that. We already felt a bit of that at this synod as we decided how to manage our relationships with the churches in Indonesia. Future synods will also have to decide how to apply these ideas in the best ways. Thanks also for your well considered recommendations about whether we should have relationships with multiple churches in one country, whether we should pursue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact and whether or not we should join or send observers to the ICRC. Thank you deputies also for your work in pursuing the relationships we are involved in. We were able to confirm sister church relations with CanRC, FRCSA, RCNZ, KPCK, FERC Singapore and the GGRI. We also thought about how to best develop in a relationship with the EPC/SPC, OPC, URCNA, DKG, GKN, KPCO, GGRC and GGRI-T. Maybe one thing to mention in this regard. Back in 2021 we ended our sister church relationship with RCN. Now we are grateful that the LORD has led to DGK and GKN to the point that they are planning to merge into one federation. May God bless them as they come together in October 2024, DV. We look forward to moving into a sister church relationship with them at some point in the future. May God also bless our relationships with these churches who fear him and walk in his ways so that we might assist each other to know and love him.

Thanks also to all the other deputies for all their work. The one I will single out at this time are the Deputies for Training for the Ministry, which was also a fairly major part of our agenda. I must say that's beautiful work. Praying regularly for God to raise up men. Encouraging and providing guidance for those who are considering the ministry. Working together with the Board of Governors of the CRTS in providing education for the young men. And planning for a future seminary. I would ask all of you to please continue to pray for God's blessings that he raise up men to serve in ministry and as professors, and

that if it is his will that one day we are able to offer faithful, Reformed education following best practice to our men and others in our region. Please also pray for a blessing over the vicariate program that we have adopted. May God use it to help many young men get established in ministry.

Alongside of all this, we also had to decide on an appeal, a proposal on whether to change Article 65 of the church order and whether we wish to set up a standing committee of synod assisting consistories in fulfilling their legal and pastoral responsibilities in cases of sexual abuse. Synod carefully considered these, acknowledging that those who proposed these matters were raising legitimate concerns. And yet at the same time, we decided to deny this appeal and these proposals.

I would like to thank our IT team, br. Alan van der Wal and br Eric ‘t Hart, together with their helpers, br. Adrian van der Wal and br. Darren Brouwer. Thanks, brothers, for your faithful work in setting everything up, in providing a good platform, sound and live streaming our evening sessions. Lots of behind the scenes work. Much appreciated.

Special thanks also to our administrative assistant, sister Kina van Duyn. Pure gold. Everything flows. No hiccups. We have all the paperwork we need. The Acts are written. The screens are current for our audience. The people know what’s happening. Thank you.

I also thank God for my fellow officers. It was about a month ago that Rev. ‘t Hart approached me and asked if I had given any thought to becoming the chairman of this synod. I said: no. Not a single thought. He suggested that I start doing that. Since both he and Rev. Souman were on the Deputies for Interchurch relations it probably wouldn’t be best for them to chair. So maybe the brothers would pick me. So I started thinking about that a lot in the past few weeks. Thanks for the heads up. Thanks also for your faithful work in assisting me

here. I don't really know what I'm doing. It was good to have you next to me to remind me of the rules, the procedures of debate, to ask for a seconder and to think through the agenda with me. Thanks also for all your work in the background. Thanks also to br. Spyker for your help. I have served for many years in consistory with br. Spyker as the general secretary. He gets things done. And it's done right. I just don't have to worry about anything that goes in his direction. And brother, thanks for your help also in thinking things through. Thanks also to Rev. Vermeulen. You've been in committee and so we haven't had as much contact. Thanks for your support. Wishing you God's blessing as you have to write lots and lots of letters. It's beautiful that God gives us different gifts and we could use those in assisting each other.

I'd like to thank the members of the audience for their attendance. It was also nice to have the students from the John Calvin School in Kelmscott drop by and share our work with them. I loved having some of the children in attendance in the evenings. Sometimes you need a lot of patience. Someone said that the sessions near the end where we are cleaning up the decisions it a bit like watching paint dry on a wall. Nice to have those of you who stuck it out.

Brothers, our time has come to an end. It was good to work together. I love the fact that we are a deliberative body. That was very evident among us. Thanks also for the many conversations we could also have over lunch and at coffee. It's great to learn from each other. When our individual gifts and talents are combined with a spirit of service and humility it's powerful evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts. Our God is great and is greatly to be praised. We praise him for everything we have been allowed to do for him. We also praise him that he loves his church and that he is present among us. May our decisions serve the well being of his people and lead to his glory.

Appendix 2: Pastoral Training Program Guidelines (Updated)

Updated Guidelines

Pastoral Training Program Guidelines for FRCA

1. Compensation for students in the Pastoral Training Program

a. Deputies Training for the Ministry (Deputies) will liaise with the Canadian Pastoral Training Program Funding Committee in Guelph (appointed to oversee payment of students in Canada in the PTP) to determine the rate of pay for students undertaking the PTP. The students taking the PTP in Australia will be reimbursed at a level to match the Canadian churches' level of support. Their Canadian Committee decided to pay the student interns the rate of pay that the Government of Canada would pay a student employed in a Masters level program the previous year. The Deputies will pay each of the Churches employing a student the equivalent amount (taking into account the foreign exchange rate) in a manner ensuring that the student can be paid on time. The deputies will assess the churches and pay the funds out of a separate fund for the PTP program and give an accounting of this work to synod.

b. To encourage participation of the Churches in Australia in the Pastoral Training Program, the travel expenses to and from Australia will be paid by the FRCA Deputies to the local hosting church, which reimburses the student.

c. Deputies Training for the Ministry will pay for the travel costs for the student and his family. If necessary Deputies can consider assisting a church employing a student to pay for a student's housing and vehicle costs.

d. In the situation where a student participates in a PTP internship with an experienced minister, the Deputies will fund the PTP for up to twelve weeks.

2. Assessment

Deputies Training for the Ministry will consider requests and provide funding for churches participating in the PTP in a timely manner.

3. Foreign Students

It remains the responsibility of the student to apply for and fund the necessary work permit where applicable.

4. Employment and taxes

Churches employing students will be responsible to determine the issues regarding employment of students and payroll deductions for taxes, unemployment insurance, etc.

Appendix 3: FRCA Vicariate Guidelines

The vicariate is considered a useful (albeit voluntary) part of our theological training. At this time, our students study at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). Upon completion of the Master of Divinity program at CRTS, students originating from the FRCA will be offered the opportunity to further their training with a vicariate.

All correspondence concerning the vicariate shall in the first place be addressed to the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the FRCA (DTM).

Definitions

Vicar – a man who has completed his seminary training, is not yet ordained, and who is taken on by a church for a period of further practical ministry training and development.

Vicariate – a supervised program of practical ministry training and development.

A. **Form of Subscription**

Vicars are required to sign the Form of Subscription prior to the commencement of their duties. This shall be done at the consistory of the church providing the vicariate training.

B. **Duration of Vicariate**

The vicariate training shall take place over a period of up to twelve months.

C. **Deputies**

The DTM shall have the right to approach a church which they believe could provide suitable vicariate training.

D. **Guidelines for Vicariate Training**

1. **Principles Regarding Vicariates**

a. Each year, the DTM shall offer fourth year students originating from the FRCA the opportunity to return to Australia to receive the vicariate training. All the churches shall then be informed of potential candidates for vicariates. The churches shall be invited to submit applications.

b. The purpose of a vicariate is to provide training for a vicar. Except in exceptional circumstances vicars should not be placed in vacant congregations or in isolated settings where they cannot be properly supervised and trained.

c. A vicariate can be an important part of preparation for the ministry. A local church may benefit greatly from a vicar's work, but this should be seen as a 'fringe benefit' to the vicariate; the main purpose is to train the vicar.

d. This training ought to be provided by experienced and able ministers. Some ministers have more experience and/or ability to train a vicar than others. The DTM ought to consider the suitability of the supervising minister in the placement of vicars and the DTM may approach churches and ministers with a

request to take a vicar. Supervising ministers ought to be aware that training a vicar will take a significant amount of time; time saved in a reduced preaching load will need to be spent in evaluating the vicar's sermons and supervising other areas of his ministry.

e. A vicar will need adequate time to prepare for his candidacy (preparatory) exam. Consistories should discuss this with the vicar so that he has time during his vicariate and as his exam approaches. The exam should ordinarily take place towards the end of the vicariate period.

f. The Supervising Minister

1) The minister may expect to spend between two to four hours per week with the vicar, excluding consistory meetings, joint visits, etc. This time would be spent in sermon evaluation, planning and reporting on pastoral visitation, advice and guidance on the work of the ministry, e.g. devotions and prayer, church polity and the functioning of the consistory and classis, time management, general organisation, the spiritual growth and development of the vicar, etc.

2) Vicars need to be encouraged in a regular program of reading and study. The supervising minister and vicar should agree on a program, perhaps in an area of interest or weakness.

3) The vicar's work should be closely supervised, especially in the early part of the vicariate. As time goes on he should be given increasing freedom to work on his own and be given more responsibility in certain areas.

g. The Supervising Consistory

1) It may be helpful to have the vicar meet regularly (perhaps once a month) with an experienced and able elder who can give him some advice and input.

2) The consistory should also evaluate the vicar's sermons and development in the ministry. Both the minister and the consistory should make a careful evaluation of the vicar's progress. Honest advice, encouragement, and criticism ought to be given in a sensitive manner. Time should be set aside for this at a consistory meeting not less than once every three months.

3) The consistory should take account of helpful feedback from the congregation and may seek this using sermon evaluation forms.

2. **Elements of Vicariate Training**

a. Preaching

This is obviously a crucial area of his training and much time needs to be spent here. A vicar will be expected to preach once per Sunday through his vicariate and twice per Sunday towards the end of it. The supervising minister should

ensure that he has experience in preaching Catechism sermons, as well as sermons based on a single Bible text. Vicars may find it helpful to follow the discipline of preaching through a book of the Bible. It would be good experience for the vicar to preach in some of the other churches of the classical region and to have experience at preaching on special occasions where possible, e.g. a funeral, wedding, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Sermons and their supporting exegesis are to be closely evaluated primarily by the minister, but also by the consistory, with input from members of the congregation via evaluation forms. Vicars may find it helpful to have a sermon workshop with other ministers (and vicars) of the classical region.

Sermon content is to be evaluated on the basis of the following:

- Is the exegesis accurate?
- Is the sermon well-structured and easy to follow for listeners?
- Is the theme drawn from the text and developed in a coherent and logical manner?
- Is the context (including the place of the passage in redemptive history) taken into account?
- Does the sermon preach Jesus Christ and the good news of salvation in him?
- Is the sermon doctrinally sound?
- Is the application in the sermon drawn from the text?

The delivery of the sermon is to be evaluated for evidence of gifts of communication and contribution to edifying worship.

b. Pastoral Work

1) Visitation with the minister: In the early part of the vicariate a vicar will find it helpful to visit members of the congregation with the minister. As time goes on, however, the vicar will be able to visit on his own.

2) Visitation with elders: A vicar will gain much experience by participating in home visits with the elders, especially if he can visit with a number of elders and be exposed to various styles and approaches.

3) Counselling: Training and practice at counselling will be valuable for a vicar. Much can be learned from watching and listening to an experienced minister helping people through their problems and struggles (if a congregational member is agreeable to the vicar listening in). Depending on their experience and maturity, vicars may be asked to counsel members on their own.

c. Consistory and Classis

Vicars are expected to attend all consistory and classis meetings. They should be prepared to take assigned responsibilities as deemed helpful (chairman, clerk, etc.). It would also be profitable for vicars to attend deacons meetings.

3. **Wife and Family**

Where a vicar is married it would be helpful for the vicar and his wife to meet with the supervising minister and his wife on a regular basis for encouragement, fellowship, and advice. It would also be helpful for the vicar's wife to meet with the wives of elders (Titus 2:3-5). She should be encouraged to take an active part in the life of the congregation, as family responsibilities permit.

4. **Other Activities**

a. Catechism: Part of the training will involve teaching at least one weekly catechism class; this is to be evaluated by the minister or the elder supervising the catechism classes.

b. Bible studies: Bible study groups are an important part of congregational life and the vicar ought to attend these groups on a regular basis and take a turn at leading them.

c. Evangelism: The vicar will find it helpful to learn from the insights of the supervising minister regarding the work of evangelism and to participate in such work as he has opportunity. He may be able to train a group in evangelism.

d. Youth work: The minister and consistory may want to encourage the vicar to attend or be involved in the youth work of the congregation as part of his training.

e. Other activities outside of the church may include a ministerial and useful conferences.

E. The Financial Support of Vicars

1. Support

A vicar is to receive the equivalent of what a student receives for the PTP.

2. Travel and Accommodation

Travel Expenses and accommodation are the responsibility of the church concerned.

3. Federational support

a. If required, the DTM will assess the churches for the vicariate program through a separate levy.

b. If needed churches can apply for support from the Deputies for Training of the Ministry.

4. **Relocation**

If a vicar wishes to relocate to where he came from, the DTM will provide him with sufficient funds to do so after the completion of his vicariate.

Appendix 4a

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY BUDGET & ACTUALS
FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2021 TO 31 MARCH 2024

	BUDGET 2021-24		ACTUALS 2021-24	
INCOME				
GST Rounding		0		-3.46
Contributions from Churches		54000		59508.00
Minus - Contributions in Credit		0		-1968.00
Interest - Savings		20		733.67
Interest - Working Account		0		0.00
TOTAL INCOME		**54020**		**58270.21**
EXPENDITURE				
Deputy Expenses:				
- Canadian Ref Churches (x2)	6000		5045.06	
- Kosin Presb Church Korea (x2)	3000		1872.74	
- United Ref Churches North America (x1)	3000		3753.30	
- Ref Churches New Zealand (x2)	5000		2594.59	
- Free Ref Churches South Africa (x2)	4000		0.00	
- Orthodox Presb Church (x1)	3000		3560.28	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia	5000		6814.57	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore	3000		3000.00	
- RCN/DGK/GKN	4500		2693.33	
- Loss of Income - Overseas Delegate	0		738.00	
- Deputies Article 48	1000		0.00	
- Standing C'tee Aust Book of Praise	15000		15000.00	
- Training for Ministry - Promotion of the Ministry	2500		361.81	
- Training for Ministry - Loss of Income	1180		1180.00	
- Training for Ministry - Guest Lecturer	7500		8476.95	
- Training for Ministry - Deputy to CRTS (x1)	4000		4186.47	
		67680		59277.10
Web Hosting		1200		584.58
Synod Albany Costs:				
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	3000		3600.00	
- Loss of Income - Delegates	2500		0.00	
- Infrastructure/Catering etc - Albany	3500		3643.13	
- Infrastructure & Venue	8650		7020.92	
- Travel Reimbursement	3000		1881.77	
- Postage	500		57.41	
- Printing (net of reimbursement)	4000		4094.56	
		25150		20297.79
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**94030**		**80159.47**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT		**-40010**		**-21889.26**
CASH AT BANK RECONCILIATION				
Opening Balances 1 April 2021		68153		68152.82
Surplus/Deficit as above		-40010		-21889.26
Closing Balances 31 March 2024		28143		**46263.56**
REPRESENTED BY:				
GST Refund Owing				5.00
Church Contributions in Credit				-1968.00
Westpac Community Solutions One Account				17796.56
Westpac Business Cash Reserve Account				30430.00
CASH AT BANK 31-03-2024				**46263.56**

Appendix 4b

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
SYNOD TREASURY BUDGET
FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2024 TO 31 MARCH 2027

	ACTUALS 2021-24		BUDGET 2024-27	
INCOME				
GST Rounding	-3.46		0.00	
Contributions from Churches	59508.00		67200.00	
Minus - Contributions in Credit	-1968.00		0.00	
Interest - Savings	733.67		500.00	
Interest - Working Account	0.00		0.00	
TOTAL INCOME	**58270.21**		**67700.00**	
EXPENDITURE				
Deputy Expenses:				
- Canadian Ref Churches (Synod x2)	5045.06		6000.00	
- Kosin Presb Church Korea (General Assembly x2)	1872.74		3000.00	
- United Ref Churches North America (x1)	3753.30		4000.00	
- Ref Churches New Zealand (Synod x2)	2594.59		4000.00	
- Free Ref Churches South Africa (Synod x2)	0.00		5500.00	
- Orthodox Presb Church (x1)	3560.28		4000.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia - GGRI - (National x2)	6814.57		5000.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia - GGRI - (Regional x3)	0.00		7000.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia - GGRC	0.00		0.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia - GGRI-T (Synod x1)	0.00		2500.00	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore	3000.00		4000.00	
- DGK/GKN (x2)	2693.33		5500.00	
- General Travel domestically	0.00		1000.00	
- Loss of Income - Overseas Delegate	738.00		0.00	
- ICRC - Plenary Conference (x2)	0.00		3000.00	
- ICRC - Regional Conference	0.00		0.00	
SUB-TOTAL Deputies Interchurch Relations	30071.87		54500.00	
- Deputies Article 48	0.00		0.00	
- Standing C'tee Aust Book of Praise (2021 allocation)	15000.00		0.00	
- Training for Ministry - Timothy Conference	361.81		2500.00	
- Training for Ministry - Loss of Income	1180.00		0.00	
- Training for Ministry - Guest Lecturer	8476.95		7500.00	
- Training for Ministry - Deputy to CRTS (x1)	4186.47		4000.00	
		59277.10		68500.00
Web Hosting		584.58		1200.00
Synod Albany Costs:				
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	3600.00			
- Loss of Income - Delegates	0.00			
- Infrastructure/Catering etc - Albany	3643.13			
- Infrastructure & Venue (Deputies)	7020.92			
- Travel Reimbursement	1881.77			
- Postage	57.41			
- Printing (net of reimbursement)	4094.56			
		20297.79		
Synod Darling Downs Costs:				
- Printing & Publishing			5000.00	
- Admin/Clerk Assistant			3432.00	
- Infrastructure & Venue - Deputies			10500.00	
- Infrastructure/Catering etc - Darling Downs			4000.00	
- Loss of Income			2860.00	
- Travel			2500.00	
				28292.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**80159.47**		**97992.00**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT		**-21889.26**		**-30292.00**
CASH AT BANK RECONCILIATION				
Opening Balances 1 April 2024				46263.56
Surplus/Deficit as above				-30292.00
Closing Balances 31 March 2027				**15971.56**

Appendix 5: Press Release of Synod Darling Downs 2024

June 17 - 26, 2024

Opening of Synod

Although it was their first time ever, the Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs did a stellar job of hosting the 29th synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. For Darling Downs, the preparations began well before the day of Synod arrived as they made arrangements for the necessary infrastructure, arranged billeting for delegates, organised meals and other catering, planned some special outings for a bit of relaxation on the Saturday, put together the Synod agenda, and a host of other things besides. A special touch was the gift of a lovely pen for each of the delegates, with the logo of Darling Downs' church and "Synod 2024" printed on it.

Synod was opened by Rev. R. den Boer, who gave a meditation on Psalm 48 in which he spoke about God’s greatness in the Church. Then, after calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer, Rev. den Boer and elder E. Heerema invited the Synod delegates to take their seat at the table.

Delegates and Officers

Rev. den Boer confirmed that the church of Darling Downs had examined the previously submitted credentials and that they were found to be in good order. All the primary delegates bar one from the three classes were present:

Classis Central	*Classis North*	*Classis South West*
Rev. AC Pol	Rev. A Souman	Rev. A Hagg
Rev. D Poppe	Rev. S 't Hart	Rev. R Pot
Rev. C Vermeulen	Rev. Anson van Delden	Rev. A Witten
Elder Roy Dekker	Elder P Kroeze	Elder P Witten
Elder W 't Hart	Elder W Spyker	Elder H Hamelink
Elder H Terpstra	Elder R vanderLinde	Elder D van Duyn (alternate)

The convening church then conducted a series of votes to select the moderamen, or officers, of synod. Rev. D Poppe was elected as chairman, Rev. S. 't Hart as vice-chairman, Elder W. Spyker as first clerk, and Rev. C. Vermeulen as second clerk. Sr. Kina vanDuyn, who perhaps has attended more synods than any of the delegates, was appointed as administrative assistant. Her work as well as the work of brs. Eric 't Hart & Alan van der Wal (deputies for Infrastructure) was greatly appreciated and aided the smooth running of Synod.

The chairman declared synod to be duly constituted and then asked the delegates to rise to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Synod was then adjourned to the following day, when work began in earnest.

Foreign Churches

A highlight of every Synod is the presence and greetings of foreign delegates who come as representatives of churches with whom the FRCA has contact. This time we welcomed delegates from the Canadian Reformed Churches, First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore, Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea, and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. In addition we had representatives from two churches with whom we have official contact, the GGRC and United Reformed Churches of North America. Each of these brothers gave greetings from their churches. These greetings were responded to by an Australian Synod delegate and their churches brought before the Lord in prayer.

Sister Churches

i. Canadian Reformed Churches

The Canadian Reformed Churches were represented by Rev. C. van Dam and br. H. de Boer. A fun fact is that Rev. van Dam graduated from the CRTS in the same year (1997) as Rev. Poppe, Rev. Pot and Rev. ‘t Hart. In his official greetings, Rev. van Dam

reflected on the close bond between our respective churches and members. Thanks were mentioned with respect to our support for the CRTS and for the fact that Rev. R. Bredenhof, a minister from the FRCA, could be appointed as professor. Mention was also made of the CanRC's various interchurch relationships, and special mention was made of their growing relationship with the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea. In obedience to instructions that came from his own Synod, Rev. van Dam expressed the strong desire that we might join them at the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Synod reflected on the strong relationship we have with our Canadian brethren, gave thanks for it, and agreed to continue our sister relationship.

ii. First Evangelical Reformed Church - Singapore

The FERC of Singapore was represented by Rev. Mark Chen & Br. Jonathan Yap. In his greetings to us Rev. Chen reflected on the fruitfulness of our sister relationship. Four ministers of the FRCA have served in various capacities in the FERC over the past few years, and their two ministers have both ministered in the FRCA. Collaboration with respect to mission is also happening. With respect to interchurch relations, in 2021 the FERC commenced exploring corresponding relations with the Heritage Reformed Congregations (North America) and the United Reformed Churches of Myanmar. These relations were formalised in June 2024.

Since the FERC is a single congregation, our rules for sister churches don't quite match their situation, and we've previously reached an agreement with them on how our relationship can be maintained. Synod decided to get the deputies to review that agreement with the FERC to ensure that it continues to meet their needs, desires and expectations.

iii. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

The FRCSA was represented by Br. G. Hagg who gave us warm greetings from the South African churches. Appreciation was expressed for the ongoing support our churches provide to South Africa, where our blessings can be used to supply their needs. Along with the CanRC, as well as the KPCK, the FRCSA encouraged us to re-engage with the ICRC.

Synod agreed to continue our relationship with the FRCSA, and that the FRCA deputies would coordinate gifts from the churches to support the various needs currently experienced by our South African brethren.

iv. Indonesian Churches

The FRCA has sister relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) and formal contact with the Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC) as well as the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T). Br. Solomon Dethan gave greetings on behalf of the GGRC and reflected on the fact that we've had a relationship with them since 1991. A letter of greeting was received from the GGRI-Timor.

Synod decided to continue our sister relationship with the GGRI. Synod was thankful to hear of developments with respect to their seminary in Waimarang and agreed to support their seminary's new building plans. Appreciation was also expressed for the work of Rev. Arthur van Delden who has been working with the seminary.

Sister relations will continue with the GGRI. With respect to the GGRC and GGRI-T, deputies are tasked with coming with recommendations to our next Synod as to what our relationship should be with these churches into the future.

v. Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Rev. Dr. Paul Archbald is no stranger to our synods and he was warmly welcomed as the RCNZ's representative. Rev. Archbald reflected on our growing ties, evident in things such as church members moving back and forth, retired ministers serving in each other's countries, and cooperation in mission in PNG. Almost a third of the RCNZ's churches are vacant and so they were thankful to recently receive a minister who had originated from the FRCA and recently graduated from the CRTS.

It was decided to continue our relationship with the RCNZ and to mandate deputies to foster opportunities for further interaction between the RCNZ and the FRCA, including pulpit exchanges, conference/workshop presentations, meeting with deputies, and mutual assistance with vacant churches.

vi. Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea.

Synod was honoured with the presence of Rev. Dr. JH Kim of the KPCK who gave greetings to us on behalf of the current Moderator of our Korean sister church. He told us that the late Dr. Soon Gil Hur had written numerous articles of his experiences in the FRC Kelmscott, writing about the theological, pastoral, and everyday lives of people in our churches. These articles were encouraging to them as they considered their own reformed faith and life in their Korean context. The hope was expressed that our relationship with them might grow for the edification of both church federations.

Synod was well served by a detailed deputies' report on the KPCK, giving Synod confidence to acknowledge their faithfulness and to maintain our sister relationship. In response to a letter from one of the churches, Synod agreed to mandate deputies to investigate the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Oceania (KPCO), a daughter church of the KPCK that has many churches in Australia and the surrounding region. It was observed that the KPCO has 3 congregations in Perth, and that potential contact appears meaningful.

Contact Churches

i. DGK & GKN

Contact continues with two churches in the Netherlands, De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN). The GKN expressed their regret for being unable to attend our Synod. Both the GKN and the DGK have indicated their desire to enter into sister relations with the FRCA. It was exciting to hear that these churches are in the process of merging into one federation and we are hopeful to be able to enter a sister relationship with this merged church sometime in the future.

ii. EPC & SPC

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Southern Presbyterian church are two small federations based in Tasmania. Contact has been established with both, but sadly the EPC is going through some internal challenges right now. It was decided to pause formal contact with the EPC for now and to continue contact with the SPC. We pray that these contacts might continue to strengthen.

iii. OPC

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church sent us greetings by way of a letter. They expressed their regrets for being unable to attend our Synod on account of the timing of their General Assembly overlapping our Synod. The OPC were thankful to be joining us and the CanRC in visiting the KPCK once every three years on a rotating basis.

Synod decided to maintain contact with the OPC and to mandate deputies to use the suggested Guidelines for Church Relations given by Synod Darling Downs 2024 to give direction to Synod 2027 regarding this relationship.

iv. URCNA

Br. G. Swets gave greetings on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America. He told us that the URCNA is a federation of about 25,000 members and 140 churches spread throughout Canada and the United States. With respect to their interchurch relations, they have a two-phase approach towards establishing relationships with other churches. The focus of Phase 1 is to study matters of mutual concern and to exchange information and publications, and this is how they are approaching the FRCA at this point of time. Synod responded to this warmly, giving a mandate to deputies that effectively matched the intentions of the URCNA's Phase 1 contact.

Interchurch Relationships

Synod Albany 2021 art. 48 mandated deputies to develop and propose to synod guidelines with whom, how, and when to establish sister church relationships. As part of this mandate, deputies were to investigate whether it can ever be legitimate or beneficial to have two sister churches in one country including cases when those two churches are unable to find unity, and to consider the merits of an alternate form of ecclesiastical contact with churches of Reformed confession with whom a sister church relationship is not immediately feasible. Synod Darling Downs agreed with the recommendations of deputies and decided to adopt a new category of relationship, that of Ecclesiastical Contact, designed for churches whom the FRCA have recognised as true and faithful but for whom the relationship, although meaningful, is deemed not sufficiently manageable to establish a sister church relationship at this point of time. On account of the dynamic nature of Christ's church gathering work, it was also seen legitimate to pursue a relationship with a church in geographic proximity of a recognized true and faithful church, unless it is unwilling or shows no evidence of seeking and expressing unity with that church.

After due consideration Synod also decided to send observers to the next two ICRC meetings.

Training for the Ministry

The FRCA has been richly blessed by our partnership with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS), and this was emphasised in various ways on the floor of Synod. At the same time, we are looking forward towards to having our own seminary in the future, should that prove to be feasible. Synod decided to keep working towards an Australian Reformed Theological Seminary (ARTS), with a long-term goal in mind. Deputies were mandated to keep working on this and to further engage our churches in Australia as well as churches in the Asia Pacific Region about this.

Support for the CRTS is continuing, with our financial commitments matching that of the CanRC. Synod modified rules surrounding the Pastoral Training Program and adopted new guidelines for a vicariate program. This Vicariate program is open to all Australian students going to CRTS, offering them a 12 month internship following their seminary studies.

Appeal

Synod dealt with an appeal concerning various decisions of Synod Albany 2021 regarding an alleged partiality of some of those voting. It was alleged that Synod Albany erred when it did not remove the privilege of discussion and voting from delegates who had prior involvement in those decisions. Although the appeal was denied it was helpful for Synod to carefully reflect on the biblical norm of impartiality in decision making.

Proposals from the churches

i. Safe Church Standing Committee. On account of the growing awareness in our churches for the need to be pro-active when it comes to preventing and addressing child abuse, a proposal came via Classis North for Synod to appoint a standing committee to establish and maintain a Safe Church program in the FRCA. Most, if not all, of our churches do have policies regarding this but it was

felt that a consistent federation-wide abuse policy which complies with both the legal requirements and our spiritual needs was warranted. Synod recognised the value of this but ultimately decided not to adopt the proposal. This decision would not prevent churches from collaborating on safe church policies etc outside of a synod mandate.

ii. Ecclesiastical feast days. The FRCA Church Order stipulates that church services be held on days other than Sunday on Christmas Day, Good Friday and Ascension Day. It was proposed that this Church Order article 65 be re-worded to say that the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit be commemorated "in the manner decided upon by the consistory". Synod discussed this at length but decided not to adopt the changed wording to the C.O as the proposal did not adequately demonstrate the need for such change (cf. C.O art 81).

Closing of Synod

Synod Darling Downs' agenda had a number of weighty and significant matters to be discussed, and each delegate came with his own convictions and context. At times these discussions were difficult as strongly held views were expressed, but a brotherly spirit prevailed. In his concluding remarks Rev. Poppe expressed his thankfulness for the manner in which Synod could be conducted with the prayer that the decisions made might be found to be pleasing to our Lord and for the wellbeing of His Church.

Rev. Stephen 't Hart
(Vice-chairman during Synod Darling Downs 2024)