

MINUTES  
of the Third Synod of the  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES in NORTH AMERICA  
held Tuesday, June 15 through Thursday, June 17, 1999  
at  
Cornerstone United Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

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Cornerstone United Reformed Church  
Hudsonville, Michigan

**ARTICLE 1**

The Chairman of the Council of the calling church, Cornerstone United Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan, Mr. Henry Nuiver, calls for the singing of Psalter Hymnal Numbers 13, 298, and 308 . The Rev. Timothy Perkins, minister from Cornerstone United Reformed, reads from God's Word and leads in opening prayer.

**ARTICLE 2**

**Roll call** reveals the following delegates:

Alto, MI	Grace United Reformed	Rev. Peter Adams Duane Sneller (6-15) Case Vierzen (6-16) Robert Tjapkes (6-17)
Anaheim, CA	Christ Reformed	Rev. Kim Riddlebarger Dr. Michael Horton
Aylmer, ON	Bethel United Reformed	Rev. Jerry Van Dyk Harry Van Gulp
Balmoral, ON	Covenant United Reformed	Rev. Al Bezuyen Al Bruining
Beecher, IL	Faith United Reformed	Rev. Todd Joling Dan Woldhuis
Boise, ID	Cloverdale United Reformed	Lee De Heer
Brockville/ Hulbert, ON	Ebenezer Orthodox Reformed	Rev John Roke
Caledonia, MI	Trinity United Reformed	Rev. Brian Vos Sid Vander Laan
Calgary, AB	Bethel United Reformed	Rev. Ed Marcusse Bill Konynenbelt
Cape Coral, FL	Trinity Reformed	Rev. Allen Vander Pol Rev. Richard Stevens (6-16,17)
Chino, CA	First United Reformed	Rev. Ronald Scheuers Henry Docter
Clinton, ON	Grace Orthodox Reformed	Rev. Peter Vellenga
Coopersville, MI	Eastmanville United Reformed	Rev. Stephen De Boer Bernie Groenink
DeMotte, IN	Immanuel United Reformed	Rev. Thomas Wetselaar John A. Dyke
Doon, IA	Doon United Reformed	Harold Hoekstra

Dunnville, ON	Grace Reformed	Rev. Richard Stienstra Peter Struyk
Edmonton, AB	Orthodox Reformed	Rev. William Pols Joe Van Doesberg
Escondido, CA	Escondido United Reformed	Rev. Andrew Cammenga Abe Marcus
Ferrisburg, VT	URC of Champlain Valley	Rev. Frederik Harms Harold Mishkit
Grand Rapids, MI	Walker United Reformed	Rev. Joel A. Vander Kooi Alvin D. Terpstra
Grande Prairie, AB	Covenant Reformed	Rev. William De Jong Menno Klunder
Guthrie, ON	Grace Orthodox Reformed	Rev. Brian Schouwstra Peter Geus
Hamilton, ON	Rehoboth United Reformed	Rev. Ray Sikkema Gary DeGroot
Highland, IN	Community Reformed Bible	Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra Daniel Zandstra
Hudsonville, MI	Cornerstone United Reformed	Rev. Timothy Perkins Henry Nuiver
Jenison, MI	Bethel United Reformed	Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen Bill Mulder
Jordan, ON	Immanuel Orthodox Reformed	Rev. John A. Bouwers John Veldhuizen
Kalamazoo, MI	Covenant United Reformed	Rev. Philip Vos Henry Visser
Kansas City, MO	Covenant Reformed	Rev. Stuart Pastine Michael Dykstra
Lansing, IL	Oak Glen United Reformed.	Rev. Paul Ipema Peter Smith(6-15) Tom Zandstra (6-16) Fred Colvin (6-17)
Leduc, AB	Grace Reformed	Rev. Tim Kolkman
Lethbridge, AB	Trinity Reformed	Rev. Jelle Tuininga Glenn Dykstra
London, ON	Cornerstone United Reformed	Rev. Dennis Royall W. Vander Velde
Loveland, CO	Calvary United Reformed	Rev. Dale Piers Greg Ball
Lynden, WA	Lynden United Reformed	Rev. Phil Grotenhuis Duane Scholten
Lynwood, IL	Lynwood United Reformed	James Clausing James Swets

Neerlandia, AB	Emmanuel Reformed	Rev. Theo Hoekstra Andy Vierson
Newton, NJ	Newton Covenant Reformed	Rev. Casey D. Freswick Raymond Vander Wey
Olive Center, MI	Faith United Reformed	Rev. Wybren Oord Neil Jacobsen
Orange City, IA	Redeemer United Reformed	Rev. Ralph Pontier Otto Huizenga
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix United Reformed	Rev. Bradd Nymeyer Bernard H. Kamerma
Pompton Plains, NJ	Pompton Plains Reformed Bible	Rev. Richard Kuiken Martin Leegwater
Ponoka, AB	Parkland Reformed	Jake Den Oudsten
Sanborn, IA	Cornerstone United Reformed	Rev. Harry Zekveld Grant Diekevers
Santa Ana, CA	Saigon Reformed Presbyterian	Rev. Bao Xuan Nguyen
Sheffield, ON	Zion United Reformed	Rev. Robert Heerema Tony Brouwer
Smithers, BC	Bethel United Reformed	Rev. Barrie Beukema Dick Adema
South Holland, IL	Bethany Covenant Reformed	Rev. Kevin Hossink Edward Kramer
St. Catharines, ON	Trinity Orthodox Reformed	Rev. C. J. Tuininga Chuck Dykstra
Telkwa, BC	Reformed Church	Rev. Jim Klazinga George Koopmans
Toronto, ON	Covenant Reformed	Rev. P. Edouard Henry Bonvanie
Walnut Creek, CA	Trinity United Reformed	Rev. Joghinda Gangar Jack Kamphuis
Wellandport, ON	Orthodox Reformed	Rev. Joel Dykstra William Douma
Winnipeg, MB	Providence Reformed	Rev. Fred Folkerts
Woodstock, ON	Bethel United Reformed	Rev. William Van Hal Ed Westerhof
Wyoming, MI	Beverly United Reformed	Rev. Arthur Besteman Ron Springvloed
Wyoming, ON	Covenant Christian	Rev. Richard Wynia Arend Korvemaker

NOTE: The following churches, members of the federation, do not have delegates present: Allendale, MI and Delavan, WI.

The following **Ecumenical Observers** are present:

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church	Rev. Ray Lanning
Canadian Reformed Churches	Prof. Dr. J. De Jong and Rev. W. den Hollander
Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches	Rev. Claude DePrine III
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	Rev. Alan D. Strange
Protestant Reformed Churches in North America	Rev. Ken Koole and Rev. Ron Van Overloop
Reformed Church in the United States	Rev. Maynard Koerner and Rev. Herman Van Stedum
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America	Rev. Barry York
Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Art. 31)	Rev. Aalzen deJager and Rev. Henk van Veen

The following churches have **Official Observers** present:

Ancaster, ON	Independent Christian Reformed	Bert Prinzen Henk van Veen
Dutton, MI	Independent Reformed	Rev. Paul Murphy Don Verduin
Grand Rapids, MI	Seventh Reformed	Dr. Gilbert Den Hartog Tom Post
Pella, IA	Covenant Reformed	Rev. Carl Heuss Greg Horstman
Wayland, MI	Covenant Ind. Ref.	Rev. Steve McGee

### ARTICLE 3

The **Credentials Committee** reports that the credentials are in order.

### ARTICLE 4

**Synod is declared constituted** after the delegates assent to the Form of Subscription.

### ARTICLE 5

The following **New Congregations** are ratified by motion and they assent to the Form of Subscription.

A. The churches received are:

Athens, ON	Hope United Reformed	Rev. H.J. Moes W. De Jong
Hills, MN	Hills United Reformed	Rev. Keith Davis (6-16,17) Gerald Haak
Ontario, CA	Ontario United Reformed	Rev. Randal Lankheet Case Reenders
Pantego, NC	Covenant United Reformed	Albert Pinkham Edward Boerema
Ripon, CA	Zion United Reformed	Rev. Alrick Headley Bert Piers

Salem, OR	Immanuel's Reformed	Rev. William Renkema John Hoekman
Strathroy, ON	Providence United Reformed	John Feddema Richard Vander Deen
Waupun, WI	Grace United Reformed	Sid Soodsma Larry Van Den Berg
Wayne, NJ	Preakness Valley United Reformed	Rev. Ed Korevaar David L. Boardman
West Sayville, NY	West Sayville Reformed Bible	Jacob D. Klaassen Dave Vander Klay

B. Motion is made that this be synod's answer to Overture 12 and the Communication from Classis Southwest U.S

*Adopted*

C. The stated clerk requests that direction be given concerning how congregations organized under Article 22 of the Church Order should be admitted to the federation. [See Article 48, B, 3, e]

### ARTICLE 6

The acting chairman extends a **welcome to the delegates**, ecumenical delegates, official observers, and the visitors.

### ARTICLE 7

The following **time schedule** is adopted:

Tuesday, 1:30 - 6:00, Evening Inspirational Meeting, 7:30 P.M.  
 Wednesday, 8:30 - Noon, 1:30 - 5:30, 7:00 - 9:00;  
 Thursday, 8:30 - Noon, 1:30 - 5:30, 7:00 - 9:00.  
 Fifteen minute breaks at 10 A.M. and 3 P.M.  
 Sessions may be extended by vote, if necessary.

### ARTICLE 8

**Election of officers** is held. The following are elected:

Chairman: Chuck Dykstra  
 Vice-Chairman: Rev. Arthur Besteman

The acting chairman turns the chair over to Chuck Dykstra.

### ARTICLE 9

**Report of the Calling Church:**

- A. Mr. Gary Essenburg presents the report of the committee.
- B. The calling church expresses thanks to the Stated Clerk, Rev. Jerome Julien, for the help he has given the Synodical Committee. Recommendation: That the yearly remuneration for the Stated Clerk position be \$1,500. *Adopted*
- C. Recommendation: The following eleven committees be adopted by synod.

#### Committee 1

Materials: Overtures 3, 15, 16

Rev. Peter Adams, Rev. Kuiken, Henry Visser, Harold Mishkit, Richard Stevens, W. De Jong, Rev. F. Folkerts, Bernie Groenink, Rev. Tim Kolkman, Case Reenders, Harold Hoekstra.

#### Committee 2

Materials: Overtures 4, 13

Rev. Brian Vos, Rev. Al Bezuyen, Dan Woldhuis, Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Lee De Heer, Rev. P. Edouard, Rev. Barrie Beukema, Ron Springvloed, Otto Huizenga, Tony Brouwer.

#### Committee 3

Materials: Overtures 5, 7

Rev. Ed Marcusse, Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, Menno Klunder, Arend Korvemaker, John Veldhuizen, Rev. Todd Joling, Sid Vander Laan, Edward Kramer, Joe Van Doesburg.

#### Committee 4

Materials: Overtures 6, 14, 18

Rev. Richard Wynia, Rev. C.D. Freswick, Bernard Kamerman, Greg Ball, Bill Konynenbelt, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Jake Den Oudsten, Rev. Theo Hoekstra, Rev. Jim Klazinga, Dick Adema, Rev. Robert Heerema

#### Committee 5

Materials: Overtures 9, 10, and Report Appendix 2.

Rev. R. Stienstra, Rev. Peter Vellenga, Peter Geus, Henry Bonvanie, W. Vander Velde, Rev. Joel Vander Kooi, Rev. Ralph A. Pontier, Jacob D. Klaassen, Dr. Michael Horton, Richard Vander Deen, Abe Marcus

#### Committee 6

Materials: Overture 17

Rev. Andrew Cammenga, Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer, Henry Docter, James Clausing, Rev. Joghinda Gangar, Rev. Randall Lankheet, Rev. Paul Ipema, Raymond Vander Wey, Martin Leegwater, Dan Zandstra, Rev. Harry Zekveld

#### Committee 7

Materials: Overtures 8, 11, 19 and Appeal Liturgical Forms

Rev. John A Bouwers, Rev. Stephen De Boer, Michael Dykstra, John Hoekman, Rev. Timothy Perkins, James Swets, Rev. C.J. Tuininga, George Koopmans, Jack Kamphuis, Rev. Kim Riddlebarger, Grant Diekevers

#### Committee 8

Materials: Committee Report Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, URCNA Orthodox Presbyterian Church Study Committee Report

Rev. William Pols, Rev. William De Jong, Rev. William Renkema, Rev. T. Wetselaar, Bill Mulder, Rev. H. J. Moes, Gerald Haak, Bert Piers, Rev. Kevin Hossink, Rev. Philip Vos, Rev. S. Pastine

#### Committee 9

Materials: Overture 2 and Psalter Hymnal Committee Report

Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, Rev. Jerry Van Dyk, Al Bruining, Albert Pinkham, Rev. Alrick Headley, John Feddema, Sid Soodsma, Rev. Ed Korevaar, Rev. Keith Davis

#### Committee 10

Materials: Federative Structure Committee

Rev. Arthur Besteman, Rev. William Jason Tuinstra, Rev. Brian Schouwstra, Duane Scholten, W. Vander Velde, Peter Smith, Rev. Frederik Harms, Rev. Joel Dykstra, John A. Dyke, Gary DeGroot, Rev. Jelle Tuininga

#### Committee 11

Materials: Overtures 1 and 20, Calling Church's Report, Stated Clerk's Report

Rev. Dale Piers, Rev. William Van Hal, Andrew Vierson, William Douma, Dave Vander Klay, Rev. John Roke, Henry Nuiver

*Adopted*

- D. A late overture was received from Classis Southwest U.S. regarding classical boundaries. Recommendation: That this overture be properly before us at synod. *Adopted*
- E. Recommendation: That synod declare that the current stated clerk's term be continued until the next meeting of synod, should synod not be scheduled until after the last year and a half of his term. *Adopted*
- F. Recommendation: That the matter of an alternate stated clerk be considered. Motion is made for the officers to refer this matter to an advisory committee. *Adopted*
- G. Motion is made to approve with gratitude the work of the Cornerstone United Reformed Church as the calling church of the 1999 Synod.. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 10

### Stated Clerk's Report:

- A. The Stated Clerk gives his report. He requests advice, reminds synod it is necessary to approve the Form of Subscription, and informs the delegates of the correspondence from the ICRC.
- B. The clerk reads a letter addressed to the synod from the Surrey Covenant Reformed Church, Surrey, BC, signed on behalf of the consistory by the Rev. A. Korvemakker.
- C. Motion is made to approve the work of the Stated Clerk. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 11

### Treasurers' Reports

- A. The Canadian and United States' Treasurers' reports were given. The Canadian account balance as of June 8, 1999 is \$4, 971.64CN. The U.S. account balance is \$11,211.56US.
- B. Motion is made to approve the work of the treasurers. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 12

The assembly recesses to meet as committees of pre-advice. The delegates meet for devotions led by the Rev. Arthur Besteman, prior to the dinner hour.

## ARTICLE 13

A public inspirational meeting is held at 7:30 P.M. in the Cornerstone United Reformed Church. The Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen speaks on the subject, "The Church: God's Garden."

Wednesday, October 22, 1997

## ARTICLE 14

Opening devotions are led by the Rev. William Pols. The assembly sings Trinity Hymnal Number 10 and Psalter Hymnal Number 199.

## ARTICLE 15

The following **delegates** are **seated**:



- A. Tom Zandstra replaces Peter Smith for Oak Glen, Lansing, IL.
- B. Case Vierzen replaces Duane Sneller for Grace, Alto, MI.
- C. Richard Stevens of Trinity, Cape Coral, FL.
- D. Rev. Keith Davis of Hills, MN.
- E. They stand to signify their agreement with the Form of Subscription.

#### **ARTICLE 16**

The **concept minutes** are read and approved.

#### **ARTICLE 17**

The following **Ecumenical Observers** bring greetings. The Chairman responds.

- A. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church - Rev. Ray Lanning
- B. Canadian and American Reformed Churches - Prof. J. De Jong
- C. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches - Rev. Claude DePrine III
- D. Orthodox Presbyterian Church - Rev. Alan D. Strange

#### **ARTICLE 18**

The assembly recesses for lunch. Rev. Andrew Cammenga leads in devotions.

#### **ARTICLE 19**

The afternoon meeting is opened by the Rev. Al Bezuyen who leads in devotions. The assembly sings from Psalter Hymnal Numbers 193 and 444.

#### **ARTICLE 20**

The **concept minutes** are read and approved.

#### **ARTICLE 21**

The following **Ecumenical Observers** bring greetings. The Chairman responds.

- A. Protestant Reformed Churches in America - Rev. Ron Van Overloop
- B. Reformed Church in the United States - Rev. Maynard Koerner
- C. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America - Rev. Barry York
- D. Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Art. 31) - Rev. Henk van Veen

#### **ARTICLE 22**

##### **Advisory Committee 1**

- A. Materials Overtures 3, 15, 16 [pages 87, 93-94]
- B. Recommendation: That we not accede to Overtures 3 and 15, but rather that we encourage our member churches to explore or research the availability of health insurance for their pastor(s) and possibly other full-time employees of their congregation on a local level, with leadership in this research being provided by the Council. Should lack of finances prove a hindrance for a local congregation in obtaining adequate

health coverage, such needs should be effectively communicated to that congregation's Classis.

Grounds:

1. Greater flexibility in "customizing" a health coverage plan for their pastor in his unique family situation most likely would be more cost effective for our churches.
2. This recommendation continues to honor the integrity of the URC's biblical emphasis on the authority of the local church without putting in place a potentially "hierarchical" health insurance structure. (Church Order Article 10 reads, "Each church is to provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and should contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. Those who have retired from the active ministry shall retain the title and dignity of the office of minister of the Word.")
3. This recommendation in no way prevents, but rather encourages our pastors to pursue membership in already existing group policies if such membership would better meet the health coverage needs of themselves and/or their family. (Note: such already existing group policies might include the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Health and Welfare Trust, Samaritan's Purse, Medi-Share, and others such as we can find advertised, for example, in World magazine).

*Tabled so that the overtures can be considered*

C. Overture 3 is before the assembly.

1. "That synod appoint an ad hoc committee to research the availability of Health Insurance for employees of URC churches, including both Canadian and U.S. ministers according to their various needs."
2. Motion to replace the words "an ad hoc committee" with the words "a church." *Adopted*
3. The recommendation now reads:  
"That synod appoint a church to research the availability of Health Insurance for employees of URC churches, including both Canadian and U.S. ministers according to their various needs." *Adopted*
4. Motion is made to refer the matter of a church to do the study to the committee. *Adopted*  
The Preakness Valley United Reformed Church will do the requested study.

D. Overture 15 is before the assembly.

1. "That synod establish a committee to explore the feasibility of establishing a voluntary hospitalization plan for the benefit of pastors and/or other full time employees of our local URCNA churches in the United States."
2. Recommendation: That synod declare the action on Overture 3 as our answer to Overture 15. *Adopted*

E. Overture 16 is before the assembly.

1. "That synod advise the hospitalization plan study committee to consider in its initial exploration the feasibility of establishing such a plan under the administration of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Health and Welfare Trust."
2. Recommendation: That synod declare the action on Overtures 3 and 15 as our answer to Overture 16. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 23

### Advisory Committee 2

A. Materials: Overtures 4 and 13 [pages 88, 93]

B. Recommendations

1. Appoint a committee with the specific mandate of investigating voluntary retirement pension plans for the benefit of pastors and full time employees of our local URCNA churches.

Grounds:

1. Article 10 of the Church Order
2. Group Plans may have distinct economic advantages because of its group involvement.

- a. Motion to amend as follows: "Request two churches" in place of "appoint a committee." *Adopted*
- b. The recommendation now reads:

- Request two churches with the specific mandate of investigating voluntary retirement pension plans for the benefit of pastors and full time employees of our local URCNA. churches *Adopted*
2. That the churches have the following mandate:
    - a. Investigate the benefits of group plans as opposed to individual plans.
    - b. Pay special attention to Canadian and American particulars.
    - c. Present various plans for the churches' perusal.
    - d. Bring its recommendation as a report to be sent to the churches as part of the Agenda for the next meeting of synod that the churches will have time to study the matter prior to Synod.  
NOTE: The committee will likely need to pay attention to articles of incorporation depending on synodical decision on that score. *Adopted*
  3. That the Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto and the Walker United Reformed Church of Grand Rapids be requested to do this work. *Adopted*  
NOTE: We think that the geographical distances should be overcome by e-mail, fax and conference call technology.
  4. That this be our answer to Overtures 4 and 13. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 24

### Advisory Committee 4

- A. Materials: Overtures 6,14, and 18 [pages 88-89, 93, 94-95]
- B. Recommendation

1. We recommend that Synod 1999 establish a committee which will study the implications for Canadian churches of having charitable status. This committee shall consist of ~~five members from Canadian URCNA churches~~ **two members from each Canadian classis and one member from the U.S. churches**, and that it be given the following mandate:
  - 1) Study the history of the charitable status of Canadian churches.
  - \*2) Examine the rules of Revenue Canada regarding churches with charitable status, especially those rules relating to the offerings collected by such churches.
  - 3) Determine whether or not there are any legal means by which churches with charitable status can give money to causes that are presently not charities registered with Revenue Canada.
  - 4) Determine what happens when Canadian churches with charitable status either willingly give up their charitable status or have this status removed by Revenue Canada.
  - 5) Evaluate the pros and cons of Canadian churches maintaining charitable status with Revenue Canada. Especially important would be evaluating these pros and cons in light of our biblical and confessional teachings regarding the church and its work.
  - 6) Make recommendations to those Canadian churches wishing to retain charitable status as to what they need to do to operate legally.
  - 7) Report their findings to the Canadian URCNA churches within a year after the 1999 URCNA synod.
  - 8) Offer a report with recommendations to the next URCNA synod.

**\*Note: The Canadian churches are encouraged to contact the Canadian Council of Christian Charities for questions regarding the rules of Revenue Canada.**

#### Grounds:

1. There is some confusion among our Canadian churches as to the implications of having charitable status. For example, some understand that churches with charitable status are not permitted to collect offerings for causes that are not registered as charities with Revenue Canada, while other churches believe that they may collect for such causes so long as they do not issue tax receipts for the money collected for such causes. A committee report could help clear up some of this confusion.
2. It is possible that some of our Canadian churches with charitable status are operating in a manner contrary to the law of the land with respect to the offerings they collect. It is also possible that

some of our churches risk having their charitable status taken away because they either knowingly or unknowingly operate in an illegal manner with respect to the rules of Revenue Canada governing charities. A report would help the churches fully understand what their legal responsibilities are when having charitable status.

3. It is questionable whether the church should willingly submit to the rule of the state with respect to deciding what causes she may or may not collect offerings for. Thus, the whole issue of whether or not churches should even maintain charitable status is open to question and should be studied.
  4. Some of the issues involved in this matter are complex and technical, and so rather than having each church study this issue on their own, the churches would be well served to have a committee consisting of members familiar with the relevant issues.
  5. There is some indication that Revenue Canada is beginning to crack down on charities with respect to a wide range of issues. (For illustration of this, see the article "Revenue Canada Takes Tougher Stance" in the Jan./Feb.'99 issue of Faith Today.) Thus, this is a matter which could directly affect our church in the very near future, and so it should be dealt with as soon as possible.
  6. This matter should be discussed at the level of synod, since synod is the only broader assembly in which all the Canadian URCNA churches participate together in the same organizational body.
- a. Motion to delete the inclusion of a member from the U.S. *Adopted*
  - b. Motion to amend "two members" to "two churches." *Adopted*
  - c. The recommendation now reads:

We recommend that Synod 1999 establish a committee which will study the implications for Canadian churches of having charitable status. This committee shall consist of two churches from each Canadian classis and that it be given the following mandate:

- \*1) Examine the rules of Revenue Canada regarding churches with charitable status, especially those rules relating to the offerings collected by such churches.
- 2) Determine whether or not there are any legal means by which churches with charitable status can give money to causes that are presently not charities registered with Revenue Canada.
- 3) Determine what happens when Canadian churches with charitable status either willingly give up their charitable status or have this status removed by Revenue Canada.
- 4) Evaluate the pros and cons of Canadian churches maintaining charitable status with Revenue Canada. Especially important would be evaluating these pros and cons in light of our biblical and confessional teachings regarding the church and its work.
- 5) Make recommendations to those Canadian churches wishing to retain charitable status as to what they need to do to operate legally.
- 6) Report their findings to the Canadian URCNA churches within a year after the 1999 URCNA synod.
- 7) Offer a report with recommendations to the next URCNA synod.

**\*Note: The Canadian churches are encouraged to contact the Canadian Council of Christian Charities for questions regarding the rules of Revenue Canada.**

*Adopted*

2. The assembly moves to the order of the day to consider the report of committee 10.  
[Advisory Committee 4 report continued in Article 29]

## ARTICLE 25

### Advisory Committee 10

- A. Materials: Federative Structure Committee [page 74-83]
- B. Recommendations:

1. Allow Mr. Doug Brackman, Rev. E. J. Knott and Mr. G. Rozema the floor during discussion of this overture. *Adopted*
2. Motion that the documents entitled “Articles of Incorporation of United Reformed Churches of North America” and “Proposed Canadian Version of Articles of Incorporation” [pages 74-83] are before the assembly. *Adopted*
3. To strike Article 2.5, page 75 and Article 3.I.(e), page 80. *Defeated*
4. Motion to amend Article VIII, page 81, to say “individual United Reformed Churches in North America in Canada” rather than “Independent Christian Reformed Churches in Canada.” *So ordered*
5. Motion to amend Article II, page 75, to add “as directed by the federation” to points 3 and 4. *Adopted*
6. Motion to amend the Canadian document page 80, Article 3.I.(c) and (d) by adding “as directed by the federation.” *Adopted*
7. Motion to add to the Canadian document as III.1.(f) on page 80, the wording of Article II,6, on page 75 of the U.S. document. *Adopted*
8. Replace the language in Article III.1.(d), page 80 which refers to the U.S. with language referring to Canadian law. *So ordered*
9. A correction is noted in the U.S. document, page 75, Article VI, line 5: replace “, and” with “any” before the word “political.” *So ordered*
10. Motion that we delete Article VI,c, in the Canadian document, page 81. *Defeated*
11. To adopt and implement the recommended federative structure, as amended. *Adopted*
12. That the Federative Structure Committee be thanked for their work and be disbanded. *Adopted*
13. That the following brothers be appointed to serve as directors of the Corporation for a term extending until the next meeting of the synod:
 

U. S. Mr. Gerald Rozema, convener Mr. John Dyke Mr. Henry Nuiver Rev. Arthur Besteman Mr. Tom Zandstra	Canada Rev. R. J. Sikkema, convener Rev. R. Stienstra Rev. J. Dykstra Mr. Gary De Groot Mr. Stan Anonides
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*Adopted***ARTICLE 26**

The assembly recesses for supper after Mr. Henry Docter leads in devotions.

**ARTICLE 27**

The Wednesday evening session is called to order with devotions led by the Rev. E. Marcusse, The assembly sings from Psalter Hymnal Number 14.

**ARTICLE 28**

**Concept minutes** are read and approved.

**ARTICLE 29**

**Advisory Committee 4**, continued from Article 24.

A. Overture 6 [pages 88-89]

Churches to conduct the study [See Article 24, B, 1, c]

Recommendation: That Cornerstone United Reformed Church, London, ON, and Zion United Reformed

Church, Sheffield, ON, be appointed from Classis Southern Ontario, and Emmanuel Reformed, Neerlandia, AB and Covenant Reformed, Grande Prairie, AB, be appointed from Classis Western Canada to study the implications for Canadian churches of having charitable status. Cornerstone, London, is to serve as convener. *Adopted*

B. Overtures 14 and 18 [pages 93, 94-95]

Recommendations:

1. That synod instruct the Stated Clerk on behalf of the U. S. churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America, to apply for "Recognition of Exemption" under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Grounds:

1. This is a needful service. There are counties where our churches must reapply annually for property tax exempt status, a form which requires the IRS exemption status. For the purposes of bulk mailings, W-2 forms, in relation to tax deductible giving to the church, and for welfare exemption an IRS Exemption is needed.
2. This is a helpful service. In terms of the stewardship of both money and time, as well as the ease of entry into the URC for new churches, this would be helpful. Estimates range up to \$500 to file this lengthy, detailed form. Churches, especially newly established churches, do not need additional legal matters to consume their time.
2. If this application should fail, we advise individual United Reformed Churches to make individual application to the Internal Revenue Service for "Recognition of Exemption."
3. That the Stated Clerk shall inform all U.S. councils regarding the result of the application on behalf of the URCNA.
4. We recommend that this constitute the answer to Overture 14 [pages 93] *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 30

### Advisory Committee 3

A. Materials: Overtures 5 and 7 [pages 88, 89]

B. Recommendation:

To invite the OCRC churches officially, by way of the URCNA Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee, to unite with the URCNA in federative union on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity. As part of this invitation we humbly but forthrightly ask them to unite with us on the basis of the URCNA church order. Should the churches of the OCRC federation decide to accept this invitation, they will be received immediately into the federation as equals, without conducting a colloquium doctum for their ministers.

Grounds:

1. We hold to the same confessional standards and come from the same historical root. Our separate development as federations can be shown to be due to historical circumstances rather than doctrinal differentiation.
2. Our knowledge of these churches through previous contacts as well as our common history provides us with ample assurance of the soundness of these congregations and their ministers. For example, Classis Western Canada has been meeting with the brothers of the Western Classis of the OCRCs at our respective Classis meetings for 6 years. They have found a true unity of faith in every way and trust that this would also be the case with their Eastern Classis since they too strive to hold each other accountable. Also, Classis Western Canada has opened its pulpits to the ministers of the OCRC for the same length of time and know in truth that the same gospel is proclaimed.
3. In a recent meeting of our Classis Western Canada's Committee for Ecumenical contact with a number of Vancouver area OCRCs, it became apparent that there was a mutual desire to pursue such union. We believe that sending them this official invitation with the grounds attached may help to facilitate their own discussions later in the year on federative unity with us.

4. Not requiring a colloquium doctum in this situation recognizes the uniqueness of this federative body joining us as a whole and does not, therefore, set aside the procedure of C.O. Article 32 for individual churches joining, nor the procedure of C.O. Article 8 for individual ministers joining our federation.
  
1. Motion to amend the recommendation: “This shall take place at our next synod.” *Defeated*
2. Motion to amend ground 4 by changing line 2 after “Article 32 for” replace the rest of the ground with “other situations.” *Defeated*
3. Motion to amend by deleting the last sentence of the recommendation and all of ground 4. *Defeated*
4. Motion to delete “as equals” in line 5 of the recommendation. *Adopted*
5. Motion to recommit the report to the committee for refinement. *Defeated*
6. The recommendation now reads:  
To invite the OCRC churches officially, by way of the URCNA Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee, to unite with the URCNA in federative union on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order. As part of this invitation we humbly but forthrightly ask them to unite with us on the basis of the URCNA church order. Should the churches of the OCRC federation decide to accept this invitation, they will be received immediately into the federation, without conducting a colloquium doctum for their ministers. *Adopted*
7. Motion is made that the matter of whether Church Order Article 36 applies to this matter be sent back to the advisory committee for advice to be given later in the meetings of this synod. *Adopted*  
[Advisory Committee continued in Article 43]

#### **ARTICLE 31**

The evening session is closed with devotions led by the Rev. Stuart Pastine.

Thursday, June 17, 1999

#### **ARTICLE 32**

The morning session begins with devotions led by the Rev. John Bouwers. The assembly joins in singing from Psalter Hymnal Number 265.

#### **ARTICLE 33**

##### Seating of **Alternate Delegates**

- A. Fred Colvin replaces Tom Zandstra for Oak Glen, Lansing, IL.
- B. Robert Tjapkes replaces Case Vierzen for Grace, Alto, MI.
- C. They stand to assent the Form of Subscription.

#### **ARTICLE 34**

**Concept minutes** are read and approved.

#### **ARTICLE 35**

##### **Advisory Committee 7**

- A. Materials: Overtures 8, 11, 19, Appeal - Liturgical Forms [pages 89-90, 91-91, 95, 96-97]
- B. Recommendations:
  1. Re: Overture 8
    - a. Recommendation: That Synod not accede to the request of Overture 8.

Grounds:

1. When the need arises to exclude members by baptism, the form for excommunication may be used by replacing the word “excommunication” with the word “exclusion”.
2. Article 55 of the Church Order addresses the necessary steps of pastoral care and discipline of both baptized and professing members.

NOTE: Should the Lord grant repentance in such a situation, the returning member would be received by public profession of faith (Art. 60 C.O.) In addition to this, words on the order of the form for readmission may be used with appropriate substitutions as pastoral sensitivity would warrant.

- b. Since the overture differs from the Advisory Committee, the overture takes precedence.  
Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 1999 to appoint a committee to draft a formula for the exclusion of members by baptism for approval at a subsequent synod meeting.

Grounds:

1. Such a formulary would ensure that all churches exercise the discipline required by Article 59 of the church order in a decent, orderly and uniform manner.
2. Such a formula is being used with satisfaction in other Reformed federations, (The Canadian Reformed churches, for example, have a “form for the excommunication of non-communicant members”)

*Defeated*

- c. The Advisory Committee’s report is before us.
  1. Motion to Table the committee’s report. *Adopted*
  2. Motion to reconsider Overture 8. *Adopted*
- d. The overture is again before us. *Defeated*
- e. Motion that our previous action is our response to Overture 8. *Adopted*

2. Re: Overture 11

- a. Recommendation: That Synod adopt Overture 11 re: a Classical Diploma and a Certificate of Ordination, with the change to the I.D. card Certificate of Ordination.
  1. The Classical Diploma should be adopted as presented.
  2. That Synod adopt Overture 11 with the change to the I.D. card Certificate of Ordination:
    - a) The Classical Diploma should be adopted as presented.
    - b) The Certificate of Ordination be changed to read this way:

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
has been ordained to serve in the office of Minister  
of the Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed  
Churches in North America, being duly ordained as  
a Minister of the Word of God by his calling Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Location

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Ordination



Ground:

The committee believes this change to the I.D. Card is necessary as its reading in the Overture does not apply to many of our current ministers.

- b. The recommendation is referred back to the committee for clarification.
3. Re: Overture 19 and Appeal - Liturgical Forms.
- a. Recommendation: That synod not accede to Overture 19.
- Grounds:
1. Synod 1996 (Lynwood) adopted the use of the 1976 edition of liturgical forms. (Art. XXIV,L)
  2. Our present use of liturgical forms is not an impediment in seeking ecclesiastical fellowship and organic church unity.
  3. The various forms have been helpful in many of our Churches.
  4. There are no compelling grounds to change our current use of liturgical forms.
- b. The overture which reads as follows, takes precedence:  
The council of the Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton, ON, overtures the Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America as follows:  
To appoint a study committee, with the mandate of proposing to the next Synod a set of unified liturgical forms for the prescribed usage in the churches. The intent would be, to eliminate the present multiplicity of forms (Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults, Lord's Supper, Public Profession of Faith). In particular, this committee is to study and evaluate the forms found in the Book of Praise (Premier Printing, 1993), of the American and Canadian Reformed Churches for possible recommendation as the forms of usage of the United Reformed Churches in North America. The committee would also consult with other like-minded Reformed federations and report their research to the Synod.
- Grounds:
1. The churches need a unified liturgical practice within congregational worship. I Corinthians 14:40.
  2. Coordinating the work, with what other like-minded established Reformed federations are presently using, will assist us as churches in our calling of seeking ecclesiastical fellowship and organic church unity. John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:3.
  3. We need to be proactive also in coordinating and dovetailing our work with the possible publication of an updated amended Psalter Hymnal.
- Defeated*
- c. Motion that this is synod's answer to Overture 19 and the Appeal. *Adopted*  
[Advisory Committee continued in Article 44]

## ARTICLE 36

### Advisory Committee 8

- A. Materials: Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity; URCNA - OPC Study Committee Report; Correspondence from ICRC [pages 49-73, 84, 38-40]
- B. Recommendations re: Report of Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity.
1. The advisory committee recommends that synod approve the proposed mandate with its guidelines (see pages 50-51)
    - a. Motion to amend the mandate as follows: That in the title "Guidelines For Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity" the words "Ecumenical Relations" be replaced by "Ecumenicity." And that

the same substitution be made in the first sentence under each phase. Further, under Phase Two, a second sentence be added: "This requires ratification by a majority of the consistories, as required in our Church Order, Article 36."

*Adopted*

- b. The "Guidelines For Ecumenicity and Church Unity" as changed are adopted.
  - 2. The advisory committee recommends that synod:
    - a. approve the proposed three year term of office for committee members.
    - b. determine that no member serve more than two consecutive terms.
    - c. determine who should serve on the committee in the years before the next synod by:
      - i. selecting by means of a ballot three of the following six names: Rev. R. Stienstra, Elder B. Bruining, Rev. R. Pontier--all of whom are scheduled to retire In 1999, but may serve a second term--Rev. F. Folkerts, Dr. W.R. Godfrey, Elder C. Dykstra.
      - ii. selecting by means of a ballot two of the following four names: Elder R. Clausing, Rev. P. Vellenga--both of whom are scheduled to retire in 2000, but may serve a second term--Rev. R. Wynia, Elder. J. Dyke.
- The following are elected: Rev. R. Stienstra, Rev. R. Pontier, C. Dykstra, R. Clausing, Rev. P. Vellenga
- 3. The advisory committee recommends that synod:
    - a. appoint a second committee for ecumenical relations with churches abroad (beyond Canada and the U.S.) with the same mandate as the first committee.
    - b. appoint: Dr. M. Horton, Rev. J. Gangar, Rev. M. Vander Hart and Rev. R. Sikkema to this committee.
    - c. mandate this committee to draft the terms of office for membership for approval at the next synod meeting.
      - i. Motion to delete the name of Rev. M. Vander Hart. *Adopted*
      - ii. Motion to amend point 3.a. by adding after the last word: "with necessary adjustments." Point 3.a. now reads as follows: appoint a second committee for ecumenical relations with churches abroad (beyond Canada and the U.S.) with the same mandate as the first committee, with necessary adjustments. *Adopted*
      - iii. The name of Rev. Dennis Royall is nominated to replace the name of Rev. Vander Hart. *Adopted*
      - iv. The recommendation as amended is adopted.
  - 4. The advisory committee recommends that the federation officially enter into "Corresponding Relations" with the Canadian Reformed Churches. *Adopted*
  - 5. The advisory committee recommends that the federation officially enter into "Corresponding Relations" with the Free Reformed Churches. *Adopted*
  - 6. The advisory committee recommends that synod reaffirm last synod's decision to continue being "Corresponding Relations" with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. *Adopted*
  - 7. The advisory committee recommends that synod approve the work of the committee for ecumenical relations without adopting every formulation in its dialogue.
    - a. Motion to amend by changing "approve" to "receives." *Defeated*
    - b. The recommendation is adopted.
    - c. The assembly responds with singing Psalter Hymnal Number 278.

C. Recommendation: RE: URCNA - OPC Study Committee Report.

The advisory committee recommends that synod receive the URCNA OPC Study Committee report for information and encourage the churches to read, study and discuss the ecclesiastical documents mentioned in the committee's mandate. *Adopted*

D. Recommendation: RE: Correspondence from ICRC.

The advisory committee recommends that synod refer the correspondence from the ICRC to the (new)

committee for ecumenical relations with churches abroad.

*Adopted*

- E. Motion that we instruct the newly appointed committee that we agree with our brothers in the RCUS and the Canadian Reformed Churches on this matter and believe that our Synod, through them, communicates the same to the upcoming meeting of the ICRC. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 37

### Advisory Committee 9

A. Materials: Overture 2, Psalter Hymnal Report [page 87, 85-86]

B. Recommendations

1. Overture 2 - Reformed Youth Services

- a. The overture from Classis Michigan re. Reformed Youth Services asks Synod “to encourage our churches to join the ongoing ministry of Reformed Youth Services to the youth of our denomination.”

Grounds:

1. Reformed Youth Services has provided (at no cost to member churches) two books of distinctively Reformed study materials on a variety of subjects and books of the Bible - a total of 60 lessons, primarily prepared by URCNA pastors and youth directors.
2. Reformed Youth Services regularly sponsors events that prominently feature scripture and foster fellowship.
3. The need for a broader participation in the support of this great work is surely clear.

Our committee recommends that Synod Not accede to Overture 2. Though we heartily support the work and ministry of Reformed Youth Services, we believe that such encouragement and endorsement as Overture 2 calls for, ought to come not from Synod but from the churches or classis which have enjoyed the blessings of the ministry of Reformed Youth Services.

- b. Since the advisory committee recommendation is different from the overture, the Overture 2 is before the assembly.

Classis Michigan endorses Reformed Youth Services and overtures Synod to encourage our churches to join the ongoing ministry of Reformed Youth Services to the youth of our denomination. We are asking in a simple way for your consideration of this matter with the hope that this work can continue to expand with the same kind of blessing God has already given us.

Grounds:

1. Reformed Youth Services has provided [at no cost to member churches] two books of distinctively Reformed study materials on a variety of subjects and books of the Bible, a total of 60 lessons, primarily prepared by URCNA pastors and youth directors.
2. Reformed Youth Services regularly sponsors events that prominently feature Scripture and foster fellowship.
3. The need for a broader participation in the support of this great work is surely clear.

i. Mr. Dave Vander Meer is given the privilege of the floor to answer questions.

ii. The overture is defeated.

- c. Motion that this be our answer to the committee’s recommendation.

*Adopted*

2. Psalter Hymnal Committee Report

a. Recommendations

- i. Our committee recommends that Synod adopt Recommendation A of the Psalter Hymnal Committee - that a committee be appointed to begin the work of producing for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal.

- Rev. E. J. Knott is given the privilege of the floor.
- The recommendation is adopted.
- ii. We further recommend that Synod not accede to Recommendation B which asks Synod to approve a republication of the 1976 edition of the CRC Psalter Hymnal.
  - Since the advisory committee recommendation differs from the recommendation of the Psalter Hymnal Study Committee, their recommendation is before the assembly: That Synod approve a republication of the 1976 edition of the CRC Psalter Hymnal.

Grounds:

1. The work to publish a URCNA Psalter Hymnal will take several years, yet there is a pressing need among many of our churches to do something about the present psalter hymnals which are falling apart.
2. The cost of rebinding our existing hymnals is greater than the CRC Board of Publication's quote to republish.
3. The 1976 edition of The CRC Psalter Hymnal is known among us and satisfactory.

[Advisory Committee 9 continued in Article 41]

**ARTICLE 38**

Devotions are led by Rev. Dennis Royall and the assembly recesses for lunch. The assembly sings Psalter Hymnal Number 150.

**ARTICLE 39**

The afternoon session begins with devotions led by the Rev. Peter Adams. The assembly sings Psalter Hymnal Number 84.

**ARTICLE 40**

**Concept minutes** are read and approved.

**ARTICLE 41**

**Advisory Committee 9**, continued from Article 37.

Recommendations, continued

Psalter Hymnal Committee Report, continued

- a. Recommendation to approve a republication of the 1976 edition of the Psalter Hymnal *Adopted*
- b. Our committee recommends that should Synod adopt Recommendation A, that the Psalter Hymnal Committee presently in place, be reappointed to begin the work of producing for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal. If necessary, additional members could be added to the committee.
  - i. Motion made to amend by adding "Further, Synod instruct the committee to consult knowledgeable and qualified people from federations with which we are in ecumenical consultation." *Defeated*
  - ii. Motion made to amend by adding to the committee composed of Rev. E.J. Knott, Henry Nuiver, Rev. Dennis Royall, Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen, and Rev. Dick Wynia the names of Fred Kooi, Rev. Randal Lankheet, Dr. Michael Horton, Rev. Alan Vander Pol, and Rob Watson. *Adopted*
  - iii. The main motion is now adopted.
  - iv. The name of Glen De Jong is substituted for that of Rev. Alan Vander Pol.
- c. We recommend that the committee have as its mandate:
  - (a) A recommendation of songs to be included in the new Psalter Hymnal
  - (b) A recommendation of other materials (liturgical forms, the 3 forms of Unity, Creeds,

Prayers etc.) to be included in the new Psalter Hymnal.

- (c) That all of the Committee's recommendations be presented for approval at a future meeting of Synod.
  - i. Motion to amend the mandate with:
    - (d) That the committee consult with those churches with whom we have entered into corresponding relations. *Adopted*
  - ii. The mandate as amended is adopted.
- d. The chairman refers the matter of funding of this work to the advisory committee to report before synod adjourns.
 

[Advisory Committee 9 is continued in Article 49]

## ARTICLE 42

### Advisory Committee 6

A. Materials: Overture 17 [page 94]

B. Recommendation

Although your committee for pre-advice affirms the intent behind Overture 17, namely, that confessionally reformed denominations must express greater visible biblical unity, we make the following recommendations:

1. That synod not accede to Overture 17.

Grounds:

- a. It duplicates to some extent the ICRC and NAPARC as potential vehicles for a North American alignment of Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
  - b. It tends toward a merely formal ecumenism which would disregard or bypass important issues in denominational distinctives that need to be worked through carefully if we are seeking a strong and lasting organic union.
  - c. It could alienate some denominations with whom we have already made good progress through our Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee and who oppose this method of ecumenism.
2. That Synod overture the 2001 meeting of the ICRC to establish a North American chapter of the ICRC.
  3. That synod instruct the Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee to urge the North American denominations of the ICRC to support a North American chapter at their broadest assemblies.
  4. That Synod instruct the Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee to send observers to the 1999 meeting of NAPARC in Flat Rock, South Carolina.

C. Action

1. That synod not accede to Overture 17.

- a. Since the advisory committee's recommendation is different from the overture, the overture takes precedence.

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod to instruct its Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity to extend an invitation to other faithful Reformed Churches to begin with them serious discussions with a goal of joining each body into a General Synod (or Assembly) of a single new denomination, each body constituting a particular Synod.

A. Discussions could begin with the following basic topics:

1. Each body could maintain its own confessional standards, either the Three Forms of Unity, or the Westminster Standards,, or both.

2. Each body could maintain its own Church Order or Book of Governance.
3. Each body could maintain its own distinctive practices, song books, and structure.
4. Each body would agree to cooperate where possible in promoting God's kingdom, for example, to plan new mission works in cooperation with other bodies within the new denomination so that duplication in a particular area is avoided.
5. Each body would agree to receive the wisdom and admonition of the new denomination on matters of confessional faithfulness, thus maintaining a wholesome level of accountability within the denomination.
6. Each body would be free to leave the new denomination without consequence.

B. Discussions could begin with at least the following bodies:

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches
2. The Free Reformed Churches
3. The Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches
4. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
5. The Presbyterian Church in America
6. The Protestant Reformed Churches
7. The Reformed Church in the United States
8. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America

Grounds:

1. Such discussions could provide an avenue to better express visible Biblical unity among the Reformed and Presbyterian bodies.
2. Such discussions could provide greater accountability in maintaining Biblical faithfulness.
3. Such discussions could lead to greater cooperation in joint mission outreach, as well as avoid duplication of such outreach in a particular location.

*Overture defeated*

- b. This will be synod's answer to Overture 17.

*So ruled*

2. That Synod overture the 2001 meeting of the ICRC to establish a North American chapter of the ICRC.

*Ruled out of order*

3. That synod instruct the Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee to urge the North American denominations of the ICRC to support a North American chapter at their broadest assemblies.

*Ruled out of order*

4. That Synod instruct the Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Committee to send observers to the 1999 meeting of NAPARC in Flat Rock, South Carolina.

*Adopted*

### ARTICLE 43

**Advisory Committee 3**, continued from Article 30.

Advisory Committee 3 believes that Church Order Article 36 does apply to the question of federative union with the OCRCs because this should have been approved by the consistories before we began ecumenical relations with this body. We recommend that the synodical decision be submitted to the consistories of the URCNA immediately.

We ask each consistory to vote on this matter and to reply to our stated clerk concerning whether or not to ratify ecumenical relations with the OCRC by July 31.

And we ask the stated clerk to inform the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity with the results.

*Adopted*

### ARTICLE 44

**Advisory Committee 7**, continued from Article 35.

A. Materials: Overture 11 [pages 91-92]

B. Recommendations

1. Classical Diploma: That the revised working presented as follows be approved.

Having examined \_\_\_\_\_ in a meeting of Classis on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year of our Lord \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby certify that he has been found to be sound in the Christian faith and qualified for the work of the Ministry of the Word of God and Sacraments. He is therefore declared by his Consistory to be eligible for a call to the sacred ministry of the Word in the United Reformed Churches in North America.

In witness of this declaration we have caused this diploma to be signed by the Chairman and Clerk of this session of Classis on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year of our Lord \_\_\_\_\_

May the King of the Church cause him to be a blessing - that through his ministry the Church may be edified, sinners may be led to conversion, and the glory of the triune God may be promoted.

\_\_\_\_\_, Chairman \_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

*Adopted*

2. Certificate of Ordination: That the revised wording be approved.

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
has been ordained to serve in the office of Minister  
of the Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed  
Churches in North America.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Location

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Ordination

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stated Clerk  
United Reformed Churches in North America

*Adopted*

3. Advice re: Letter of Call, Ministerial Consistorial Credential, Classical Credential, Certificate of Membership, Certificate of Baptism. That the following be added:

a. To the Certificate of Membership add:

- date of birth
- date of baptism
- date of profession of faith
- date of marriage

b. To the Certificate of Baptism add:

- date of birth
- date of baptism

*Adopted*

**ARTICLE 45**

**Advisory Committee 5**

A. Materials: Overture 9 and 10 [pages 90-91]

B. Recommendations re: Overture 10

1. We recommend that Synod appoint a study committee to articulate a Biblical and Reformed view of missions. This committee is to report to the next synod. The committee's mandate should include the following:
  - a. An articulation of the Biblical and confessional necessity and urgency for missions and for our involvement as churches.
  - b. An articulation of the Biblical teaching concerning the church as the agent of missions, the centrality of preaching for the advancement of missions, as well as the responsibility of every member of the congregation towards missions in the office of believer.
  - c. An articulation of the proper relationship between "Word" and "deed" in the mission of the churches.
  - d. An articulation of a proper Biblical balance between the responsibility of the "autonomous" local church for the carrying out of missions, on the one hand, and our federational responsibility toward cooperation, coordination and mutual encouragement on the other.
  - e. In light of the above, make practical recommendations for possible implementation, in order to provide the churches with the most appropriate means of assistance and encouragement for the missionary task. In its recommendations the committee should give consideration to the stimulation of godly zeal for the cause of missions among the churches, including the recruitment of missionaries.

Grounds:

1. In His Great Commission, our Saviour has spoken of the urgency and necessity "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:47).
2. The greatness of our task and opportunities require that we seek to be diligent and effective in prayerful dependence upon the Lord of the harvest, for "the harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37).
3. For the glory of God and the effectiveness of our mission, there is a need for an organized and disciplined approach, that all things might be carried out "decently and in order" (I Cor: 14:40).
4. When our Confessions remind us that "that the promise <of the gospel> together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction" (Canons of Dort II.5), it is self-evident that our mandate requires a committed and self-conscious approach.
5. When our Church Order speaks of the church's missionary task it includes the need for the churches to "assist each other in the support of their missionaries" (CO article 47).
6. With some notable exceptions, the mission effort of the URC is erratic and uncoordinated.

*Adopted*

2. That the following be appointed:

Rev. Ray Sikkema, convener  
Rev. Neal Hegeman  
Rev. Ernest Langedoen  
Rev. Tony Zekveld  
Rev. Patrick Edouard

*Adopted*

3. That this be declared to be Synod's answer to Overture 10.

*Adopted*

C. Recommendations re: Overture 9

1. That Synod appoint a study committee to investigate the opportunity for missions in Mexico. This committee is to report to the next meeting of Synod. This study needs to include attention to the following:
  - (1) With which Mexican Federation(s) may we cooperate.
  - (2) Is it feasible to cooperate with other northern North American federations in identifying specific geographic locations for division of labour.



- (3) Visit(s?) to the field to place the matter in proper context. *Adopted*
2. That Synod authorize reimbursement of expenses relating to this committee's work. *Adopted*
3. That we appoint the following brothers to serve the federation on this committee:  
 Rev. Allen Vander Pol, convener  
 Rev. Ernest Langedoen  
 Abe Marcus  
 Rev. Richard Gainer  
 Rev. William Green III *Adopted*
4. That this be declared to be Synod's answer to Overture 9. *Adopted*
- D. The Rev. Ray Sikkema requests removal of his name from the Missions Mandate Committee.  
 Motion to replace Rev. Sikkema with the Rev. Peter Adams. *Adopted*

#### **ARTICLE 46**

The Rev. Casey Freswick speaks of his contact with the Rev. Irfon Hughes of the Presbyterian Church in America. Rev. Hughes expressed regret that he would not be able to represent the PCA at our synod.

#### **ARTICLE 47**

The Rev. Steve Poelman addresses the assembly regarding his mission work in India.

#### **ARTICLE 48**

##### **Advisory Committee 11**

- A. Materials: Overtures 1 and 20, Stated Clerk's Report [pages 87, 34, 30-41]  
 B. Recommendations  
 1. That synod accede to Overture 1.

Classis Michigan overtures the Synod of the URCNA to give permission to post a list of URC Churches, Synodical agendas and minutes, and similar documents on the web site of the Covenant URC of Kalamazoo.

Grounds:

1. Ecclesiastical assembly meeting agendas and minutes are ordinarily made available for public distribution. Publishing such documents on the World Wide Web lowers the cost of publishing and improves the speed of distribution of these agendas and minutes.
2. Classis Midwest gave its permission to publish its meeting agendas and minutes on the Web. This overture merely requests a continuation of a past practice of the former Classis Midwest.
3. Covenant URC has received a number of requests from independent groups expressing desires to affiliate with the URCNA after they visited Covenant URC's Web site, The comments that we have received from groups include expressions of admiration and respect for our form of church government. Posting synodical agendas and minutes on the Web allow those outside of our federation to see how we govern ourselves, can improve our public relations through showing openness and can serve to encourage those outside our federation to affiliate with the URCNA.
4. Covenant URC offers this service to Synod at no cost.

Grounds:

- a. We believe that the grounds substantiate the potential benefit that UR churches could receive by means of this web site--by making our churches better known in our efforts to advance the Reformed faith.
- b. Since the cost for this web site will be borne by the Covenant URC of Kalamazoo, there is no anticipated cost at all to our federation for this service.

*Adopted*

2. Overture 20

Classis Southwest U.S. has received the request of the Grace Community church, located in the Tri-Cities area of Washington, to affiliate with the United Reformed Churches in North America. According to the classical boundaries set at Synod 1997 this church “belongs” in Classis Western Canada. However, it desires to be part of Classis Southwest U.S. for geographical reasons, and has received permission from Classis Western Canada to petition us for membership. We believe that the Synod alone can determine classical boundaries, and that, since Synod is meeting in such a short time, Synod could best determine which classis should proceed to receive this church and examine its pastor before the process begins.

Overture:

That Synod determine the classis in which Grace Community Church should “reside.”

Recommendation:

That synod place this church in Classis Southwest U. S., in keeping with their request, and with the agreement of both Classis Western Canada and Classis Southwest U. S.

*Adopted*

3. Items from the Stated Clerk’s Report.

- a. The year of organization: Recommended that we consider 1995 to the year of organization of our federation — when the original congregations met and signed a statement of joining.

Grounds:

- 1. Our federation of churches existed prior to the meeting of the First Synod.
- 2. Synod did not cause the churches to come into existence, but the existing churches of the federation met together as a Synod in 1996.

*Adopted*

- b. Method of counting families

Your committee recommends and moves that we consider families to be covenant families. Therefore we propose the following amendments to the list in the Stated Clerk’s report, which reads as follows:

A **covenant** family is:

- a. made up of a husband and wife, both confessing members.
- b. made up of a husband or wife who by confession of faith belongs to the congregation and either the spouse is a member by baptism, or there are one or more minor baptized or communicant children.
- c. **a communicant adult single parent (including widows and widowers) with dependent children.**

Your committee thinks that the above changes would clarify various possibilities which occur in our congregations today. We are counting covenant families, families of the church, and therefore we think the word “covenant” should be added. The change to c. above would allow for widows, widowers, and single parents to be considered a family (who were never married or have become divorced) who have dependent children. If a teenage, minor girl becomes a single parent, she and her child would not be considered a family. Likewise, widows and widowers who no longer have dependent children would not be considered a family. An adult is one who is eighteen years or older.

*Adopted*

- c. Alternate Stated Clerk

- Recommended that we have the position of alternate stated clerk.
- The following nominees are placed before the assembly:  
Rev. Joghinda Gangar - Walnut Creek, CA

*Adopted*

d. Form of Subscription

Your committee desires to clarify the form and to make it more consistent, but not change its contents. We have been using a form which Synod has not approved. We move and recommend that we amend the form with five changes:

1. In paragraph one that we add the words “Belgic” before Confession and “Heidelberg” before Catechism.
2. In paragraph two that we add the word “teaching” so that it would read, “...by our public preaching, teaching, or writing.”
3. In paragraph three that we delete the word “teach” in line six and add the word “teaching” so that it would read, “either by preaching, teaching, or writing.”

This would close possible loopholes as regards teaching.

*Adopted*

- i. Motion to adopt the Form of Subscription as amended.
- ii. The amended Form of Subscription reads as follows:

*Adopted*

#### FORM OF SUBSCRIPTION

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons of the United Reformed congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-‘19, do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching, teaching, or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose or defend the same, either by preaching, teaching, or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory or the Classis; and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

e. Admission of churches to the federation

- i. The committee recommends the following: When a congregation is organized within the federation, this shall take place under the supervision of a neighboring Consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis, **without the need of ratification by synod.**

Grounds:

1. Church Order Articles 22 and 32 address different ways by which congregations may enter the federation. (Article 22 — from within the federation; Article 32 — from without the federation.)

- 2. There is enough accountability and supervision provided for in Article 22 for a church organized within the federation to be recognized as a member of the federation.

NOTE: Synod simply needs to be notified by the supervising consistory that this congregation has been admitted into the federation.

*Withdrawn*

- ii. Motion made that synod declare that churches admitted under Article 22 of the Church Order do not require synodical ratification. *Adopted*

Note: This is not to be considered a change in the Church Order, only an interpretation.

## ARTICLE 49

### Advisory Committee 9, continued from Article 41

- A Expenses incurred by committee members be forwarded to either the United States' or Canadian treasurer.

*Ruled by the chairman*

- B. Expenses related to reproducing the 1976 edition of the Psalter Hymnal:

We recommend that synod request that the Bethel United Reformed Church of Jenison, MI would co-ordinate the ordering of the newly reproduced and republished 1976 Psalter Hymnals. All churches desiring to order copies should inform the Bethel church by September 30, 1999. The Bethel church will notify the churches of the cost and co-ordinate the receipt of payment prior to placing the order *Adopted*

- C. Recommendation that the Psalter Hymnal Committee report to the next meeting of synod a proposal for funding the new song book. *Adopted*

## ARTICLE 50

### Closing Matters

- A. **Calling Church** and the **next meeting** of Synod.

- 1. The Escondido United Reformed Church invites synod to meet there next time. Motion to accept this invitation. *Adopted*

- 2. Motion to set the date for mid-June 2001. *Adopted*

- B. **Concept minutes** are read and approved.

- C. The chairman requests the Revs. Jelle Tuininga, Richard Stienstra, and Arthur Besteman, soon to retire, to come forward. He expresses gratitude to God for their years of service during which they faithfully served their God. He expresses the hope that they will continue to contribute leadership within the federation in the years to come.

- D. Expression of Thanks

- 1. The chairman, Chuck Dykstra, expresses thanks to the Council of Cornerstone United Reformed Church for their hospitality, to the committee of Henry Nuiver and Gary Essenburg for all their work in preparation for synod, to the ladies of Cornerstone and the surrounding churches for seeing that the delegates would have the necessary food, to Reita Julien who led the assembly in song at the organ, to the clerk and secretaries, to the Rev. D. Vander Meulen for his address on Tuesday evening, and to the delegates for their help in the meetings. He encourages the elders to do their work in the years ahead. Otherwise, the ministers will need to step in.

- 2. The vice-chairman, Rev. Arthur Besteman, thanks, on behalf of the delegates, the chairman, Chuck Dykstra, for his fair, genial, and sensitive leadership.

E. Synod 1999 is declared adjourned. The Rev. R. Sikkema leads in devotions. The delegates join in singing Psalter Hymnal Numbers 186 and 209.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Jerome Julien, clerk

*Report of the Consistory of Cornerstone URC of Hudsonville Mi., to the Synod of the URCNA*

Dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

As the calling church of the 1999 URCNA Synod we submit the report:

1. The work of the Stated Clerk, Rev. J. Julien, of the United Reformed Churches in North America, was under the supervision of the Consistory of the Cornerstone United Reformed in Hudsonville Mi. Rev. Julien was given the advice of what literature and materials could be on display at the 1999 Synod of the United Reformed Church in North America. We also have granted free meals to those who are fraternal delegates.
2. We have asked the Rev. Derrick J. Vander Meulen to present a message this evening at 7:30 p.m. as part of an inspirational service.
3. We want to thank our stated Clerk, Rev. Jerome Julien, for the help he has given the Cornerstone URC Synodical Committee. His willingness to help and give advice has been invaluable. Mr. Chairman we recommend that the yearly remuneration for the stated clerk position be \$1,500.
4. The signs given to the delegates are to be used when seeking recognition from the chair when a delegate from that church would like the floor.
5. As a committee, we have appointed delegates to eleven different committees for pre-advice on the overtures before synod. We believe that such committees will be beneficial. Mr. Chairman, we recommend these committees should be adopted by Synod.
6. A late overture (#20) from Classis Southwest U.S. has come to us. Mr. Chairman we recommend that this overture be admitted, passed on to pre-advice committee number eleven, and ruled on at this Synod. This overture has been attached to this report.
7. Mr. Chairman we would recommend that a procedure be put in place for the election of the stated clerk. At the present time, Rev. Julien has one and one half years remaining in his term. If synod does not meet for two years or more his term will have expired and we would not have a stated clerk. Mr. Chairman we recommend that the stated clerks term continue until the next Synod meeting. Also, is it necessary to have an alternate stated clerk, for health reasons?
8. Cornerstone United Reformed Church, the calling Church of the 1999 Synod of the URCNA, asks for your approval of our work and to be adopted by Synod.

On behalf of the Consistory,

Mr. Henry Nuiver  
Chairman of Consistory, Cornerstone URC  
Member of the 1999 Synodical Committee

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

**Stated Clerk  
Preliminary Report**

Esteemed Brethren:

Since the last synod meeting the following new congregations have joined us through our various classes. According to the Church Order they must be ratified for membership in the federation.

Athens, ON	Hope United Reformed Church	Classis Southern Ontario
Hills, MN	Hills United Reformed Church	Classis Central U. S.
Ontario, CA	Ontario United Reformed Church	Classis Southwest U.S.
Pantego, NC	Covenant United Reformed Church of North Carolina	Classis Eastern U. S.
Ripon, CA	Zion United Reformed Church	Classis Southwest U. S.
Salem, OR	Immanuel's Reformed Church	Classis Western Canada
Strathroy, ON	Providence United Reformed Church	Classis Southern Ontario
Waupun, WI	Grace United Reformed Church	Classis Central U. S.
Wayne, NJ	Preakness Valley United Reformed Church	Classis Eastern U. S.
West Sayville, NY	West Sayville Reformed Bible	Church Classis Eastern U. S.

A question has been raised concerning whether churches organized according to Church Order Article 22 must be ratified in the same way as those entering our federation by way of Article 32. I await advice on this matter.

Action to be taken:

1. That the ten congregations listed, having been received by the classes, be ratified as members of the United Reformed Churches in North America.
2. That this be synod's answer to Overture 12 and the Communication from Classis Southwest U. S.
3. That direction be given concerning how congregations organized under Article 22 of the Church Order be admitted to the federation.

Respectfully, submitted,

Rev. Jerome Julien  
Stated Clerk

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**  
**Report of the Stated Clerk**

INTRODUCTION

It has been a year and a half since the Second Synod of the United Reformed Churches was held--the Synod of St. Catharines. During this time, the normal duties of the Stated Clerk were fulfilled. However, it is apparent that our federation is growing and maturing. The needs have changed. Since we now have a procedure in place in our Church Order for receiving congregations into our fellowship, the classes have been more involved, and the clerk less. Yet, the normal duties have been fulfilled. Correspondence was answered or forwarded to the proper committee, classical minutes were received and filed, and information was sent to those requesting it.

Another Directory was printed. If do not have a copy, you may get one through Reformed Believers United, 16424 Cottage Grove Ave., South Holland, IL 60473. It is to be regretted that some material was omitted inadvertently this time. It will appear, D.V., in the next edition. Several questions arise in relation to the Directory.

1. What is the year of organization for our federation? Is it 1995, when the original congregations met and signed a statement of joining? Or is it 1996, when our first synod was held?
2. How do we count families? Is the following definition of a family acceptable, or is there another way to count. Uniformity would be helpful.

A family is:

- a. made up of a husband and wife, both confessing members.
- b. made up of a husband or wife who by confession of faith belongs to the congregation and the spouse is a member by baptism, or there are one or more baptized or communicant children.
- c. a unit in which a widow is the acting head.

As your representative, I have brought greetings from the United Reformed Churches to the 1998 General Assemblies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America. This summer I have brought greetings to the 1999 General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and in a few weeks I will meet with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America as they hold their yearly meeting. The report of last year's visits appear in the report of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. This year's visit to the Orthodox Presbyterian Assembly, again meeting in Grand Rapids, was short but very enjoyable. The brothers there anxiously await our committee's report on the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity so that further action can be taken on ecumenical relations. Last year, at the request of the Terra Ceia Christian Reformed Church I met with the congregation prior to the secession there.

ITEMS REGARDING SYNOD

1. Synod should know that preparation for these meetings takes a lot of time and planning. Every time we have met, the Calling Church has put much labor into the preparations. This year it has not been different. The committee has worked diligently for these days. Should there be any needs, you may make them known at the Information Table in the narthex.
2. Several requests for displays were received throughout the time since our last meeting. The Calling Church was asked for help in answering these requests and they laid down some guidelines. They will give you the principles they sought to follow.
3. Many questions raised through the year for which there is no answer have been brought to us in the form of overtures.
4. One late overture was received from Classis Southwest U. S. It concerns the matter of classical boundaries and the placement of a new congregation, the Grace Community Church of Tri-Cities, Washington. A copy is appended to this report. Will Synod accede to this request for an additional overture?
5. Word has been received that our Allendale, MI, and Delavan, WI, councils will not have representation at our 1999 Synod meeting.
6. Although you received a Supplementary Report from the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, you will receive a corrected copy at this meeting. Please destroy the first copy you received.
7. The following Churches have indicated a desire to have Fraternal Observers at our meetings:

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Canadian Reformed Churches  
Free Reformed Churches  
Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico  
Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches  
Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
Presbyterian Church in America  
Protestant Reformed Churches in North America



Reformed Church in the United States  
Reformed Church in the Netherlands (Art. 31)  
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

The Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar would like to have had representation, but due to the expense they could not come. The Presbyterian Church in America has sent a letter indicating that, due to their meetings coinciding with ours, they will not have representation. The letter of greetings is appended to this report.

It should be noted that correspondence has been received indicating that the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico has approved establishing fraternal relations with our churches, among others. This was done in a recent meeting of their synod.

### INFORMATION FOR THE CHURCHES

1. You will notice that there are some new names on our rolls. I am not referring to those congregations which we ratified for membership earlier. Rather, I am referring to the fact that several congregations have changed their names by changing their location. Notable among these are the congregations at Anaheim, CA, and Olive Center, MI. Formerly they were listed as being in Placentia, CA, and Holland, MI, respectively.

2. It is with sadness that we note that two of our congregations have had to disband since we last met for synod. In May of 1998, the Evergreen Covenant Church of Agassiz, BC, disbanded. Last Sunday, June 13, the last services of the Zion United Reformed Church of Grand Rapids were held. While we receive new congregations with joy, we are sad when some of our number no longer meet with us.

3. The following ministers were received into our fellowship by means of a Colloquium Doctum: Dr. R. Scott Clark (Classis Southwestern U. S.), Rev. Fritz Harms (Classis Eastern U. S.), Rev. William Kosten (Classis Eastern U. S.), Rev. Randal S. Lankheet (Classis Southwestern U. S.), Rev. William Renkema, (Classis Western Canada), Rev. H. J. Moes (Classis Southern Ontario), and Rev. John Roke (Classis Southern Ontario). Should any be missed, please inform me during the sessions of synod.

4. The following ministers have been ordained since our last meeting of synod: the Revs. Keith Davis, Joel Dykstra, Patrick Edouard, Alrick Headley, Kevin Hossink, Todd Joling, Timothy Kolkman, Adrian Korevaar, and Jason Tuinstra. Should there be an omission, please notify me during the sessions of synod.

5. The following men have been licensed to exhort in our churches since our last synod (this list may be incomplete): Daniel Chinn (Escondido URC), Stephen Donovan (Escondido URC), Tim Gallant (Orthodox Reformed, Edmonton), Daniel Hyde (Escondido URC), Larry Johnson (Community Reformed Bible, Highland), David Klompier (Ontario, CA), Brian Lee (Trinity URC, Caledonia), Paul Lindemulder (Preakness Valley URC), Gary Matlack (Christ Reformed, Anaheim), Harold Miller (Eastmanville, URC), Martin Overgaauw (Covenant Christian, Wyoming, ON), Christopher Post (Walker URC, Grand Rapids), Mitchell Ramkissoon (Covenant Reformed, Toronto), Ken Samples (Christ Reformed, Anaheim), Dale Van Dyke (Cornerstone URC, Hudsonville--Available for call).

6. The following are either stated clerks or churches of contact for the classes:

Classis Central U. S.	Rev. Ralph Pontier
Classis Eastern U. S.	Rev. Robert DeVries
Classis Michigan	Rev. Wybren Oord
Classis Southern Ontario	Wellandport, ON, ORC
Classis Southwest U. S.	Rev. Bradd Nymeyer
Classis Western Canada	Bethel URC, Calgary, AB

### CORRESPONDENCE

1. Correspondence has been received from the Maranatha congregation of the Reformed Church in Africa. They indicate that they, along with two other congregations, no longer are at home in the Reformed Church in Africa due to departures from the faith. They subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity, and are delighted with our Church Order. They asked about the possibility of affiliating with us, and about the possibility of an African classis. I forwarded the matter to Classis Eastern U. S. since they are geographically closer.

2. An offer for group health insurance came from Michael S. Welger of the Select Financial Group of New York City. The letter is appended to this report. We have overtures regarding this matter before us.

3. Westminster Theological Seminary of Philadelphia informs us that they have a scholarship program that can be used by URC students. See the attached letter.

4. Classis Western Canada informs Synod 1999 that they have entered into official ecumenical relations with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. This notification comes in keeping with Article 35 of our Church Order.

5. A communication from the ICRC was received, announcing the meeting to be held in 2001. The host church will be the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Proposals from the member churches were included. This correspondence is appended to the report.

### OLD BUSINESS

Last time we met, a proposed Form of Subscription was before us. It was the responsibility of the Stated Clerk to bring the proposed form. For some reason no action was taken on the Form even though it was used for the delegates in the 1997 meeting. Some action should be taken regarding this document this year.

### ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. What is considered the year of our organization?
2. How is a family defined?
3. Will Synod accept the late overture from Classis Southwest U. S.?
4. Approve the Form of Subscription.

# **Classis Southwest U.S.**

**Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America**

**Rev. Bradd L Nymeyer, Clerk  
2418 N. 127th Lane  
Avondale, Arizona 85323-6575  
(623) 935-2200  
BLNymeyer@aol.com**

May 26, 1999

Dear Rev. Julien,

Greetings in the name of our risen and ascended Savior! We are anxiously anticipating the upcoming synod meeting. Would you please include the following late overture from Classis Southwest U.S., on the agenda? Thank you.

In His Service,

Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer, clerk  
Classis Southwest U.S.

## **Overture regarding placement of Grace Community Church, Tri-Cities, Washington area.**

### Background:

This overture is late for the Agenda for Synod because we did not receive this request until April 26, 1999. We humbly request that Synod consider this matter at its June 1999 meeting.

Classis Southwest U.S. has received the request of the Grace Community Church, located in the Tri-Cities area of Washington, to affiliate with the United Reformed Churches in North America. According to the classical boundaries set at Synod 1997 this church "belongs" in Classis Western Canada. However, it desires to be part of Classis Southwest U.S. for geographical reasons, and has received permission from Classis Western Canada to petition us for membership. We believe that the Synod alone can determine classical boundaries, and that, since Synod is meeting in such a short time, Synod could best determine which classis should proceed to receive this church and examine its pastor before the process begins.

### Overture:

That Synod determine the classis in which Grace Community Church should "reside".

# *Presbyterian Church in America*

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Office of the Stated Clerk-  
Administrative Committee  
1852 Century Place, Suite 190  
Atlanta, GA 30345-4305  
Phone: 404-320-3366  
Fax: 404-329-1275  
Email ac@pcanet.org

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Dr. L. Roy Taylor  
**Business Administrator**  
The Reverend John W. Robertson  
**Assistant to the Stated Clerk**  
The Reverend J. Robert Fiol

May 14, 1999

United Reformed Churches in North America  
The Rev. Mr. Jerome Julien, Stated Clerk  
3646 193<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Lansing, IL 60438

Dear Fathers and Brothers in the Lord,

Greetings in the name of the sovereign, triune God.

We rejoice to hear of your progress as a Synod of Reformed Churches, ministering in North America. We regret that we are unable to send a fraternal delegate to your General Synod meeting due to the simultaneous meetings of our respective highest judicatories. We are desirous of maintaining and developing cordial relations with the United Reformed Churches of North America.

By way of report of the LORD's blessing upon our branch of the Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, the LORD has increased our number in 1998 to 1,387 congregations and 289,448 souls. Most of the growth of congregations came by means of church planting. Our General Assembly currently has two ad interim committees studying two issues, namely Women in Combat, and the Days of Creation. These are the special issue we are address' at this time. We are seeking to be true to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed Faith, and obedient to the Great Commission.

One of our Presbyteries has submitted an Overture to the General Assembly "to explore the possibility of a general assembly or general national synod that could meet with the NAPARC denominations and/or other churches committed to the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity every third, fourth, or even fifth year as a step in the direction of a living testimony to the unity of the true church of our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking the truth in love." This is in response to an article written by Dr. Robert Godfrey, "A Reformed Dream," September, 1997, in "The Outlook." Our Interchurch Relations Committee is recommending to the General Assembly that the overture be answered in the affirmative.

We appreciate your prayers for us as we endeavor to advance the purity, peace and progress of the Church. We pray for you that the LORD will bless your ministries as churches and as a Church as we labor together in the cause of the Gospel and the Reformed Faith.

Sincerely,

L. Roy Taylor  
Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church in America

CC: Rev. R. Irfon Hughes, chairman PCA Interchurch Relations Committee

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*True to the Scriptures, to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission*



April 1, 1998

Reverend Jerome Jullian  
United Reform Church of North America  
3646 193<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Lansing, IL 60438

Dear Reverend.

I apologize for the extended delay in getting back to you. To remind you, we spoke several months ago due to a referral by one of your members, Pastor Graveling of the Pompton Plains church of Pompton Plains, N.J..

We spoke about the possibility of offering members of your organization a host of benefits that could be available to them. Benefits such as group hospital/ medical, life, disability income, dental, pension and many other ancillary lines of coverage.

After researching the market, I have found several insurance carriers who have expressed an interest in offering coverage. One of the selling points was by my offering the services of my administration company to act as third party administrator. My function is to act as a central billing location, where I would collect premiums from multiple locations and forward one payment to the carriers. Rates would be structured on a composite basis computed by the nature of the census ( i.e. Location of member, sex type, etc.)

My other functions, which are as important as the billing, are to act as intermediary resolving claim issues, pre-certify hospital stays, help with billing issues by providers, submit claims on behalf of members if desired. Another major feature of our services is to explain in simple terms, the nature of the coverage's as well as how to receive the maximum benefit available.

In order to proceed on an informal basis, I will need a census of your current membership. This should include the following:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- location of member
- type of coverage (i.e. Single, member + spouse, member + children only, family)

As this is still on an exploratory basis, there is no obligation on your group's part for any of the expenses which may be incurred.

I look forward to hearing back from you. Any questions please don't hesitate to give me call. My toll free number is 800-340-9899, extension 226.

Michael S Welger, CFP

Rev. Jerome Julien  
Stated Clerk  
United Reformed Churches in North America  
3646 - 193rd Pl.  
Lansing, IL 60438

Dear Rev. Julian:

I am writing in behalf of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia to inform you that the seminary policy with regard to scholarships has been extended to those coming from the URC as well. More specifically, our policy states that "we shall immediately guarantee up to 40% tuition scholarship (depending on need) for all M.Div. students who come to us under care of, or licensed by, a church body which shares the seminary's theological and spiritual commitments."

This policy further enhances our efforts to serve those Presbyterian and Reformed churches who, with us, take seriously their charge to train men for the gospel ministry.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could communicate this policy to the relevant church bodies.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely in Christ,

Scott Oliphint  
Associate Professor of Apologetics

*K. Scott Oliphint - Vice President for Student Affairs - Associate Professor of Apologetics  
Post Office Box 27009 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19118  
215-887-5511 - 800-373-0119 - Fax: 215-887-5404 - Email: soliphint@wts.edu*

Secretary:

Rev. M. van Beveren  
13904 - 86 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
Canada T5E 3C1

Tel./Fax: (780) 478-5852  
E-mail: vanbever@compusmart.ab.ca

TO THE CHURCHES IN MEMBERSHIP OF THE ICRC

April 30, 1999

Esteemed Brethren,

With a view to the meeting of the ICRC scheduled for the year 2001, I am hereby sending you copies of mail that should have the attention of the Conference, as follows:

1. General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, *Inter Alia* dated May 19, 1998;
2. Reformed Church in the United States, dated April 9, 1999, proposal to amend Article IV,2. of the *ICRC Constitution*;
3. Reformed Church in the United States, dated April 9, 1999, proposal to amend Article IV,1.a. of the *ICRC Constitution*;
4. Canadian Reformed Churches, dated April 26, 1999, proposal to amend Article IV,1.a. of the *ICRC Constitution*.

The Churches are reminded that proposed amendments of the *Constitution* should be sent to the Corresponding secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference; proposed amendments to the *ICRC Regulations* are to be mailed one year before the meeting.

We are not yet able to mention particulars of the 2001 Conference. As soon as the host church, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, will have made a decision on dates and venue, the Churches will be informed. Similarly, the complete list of speakers with their topics can be established only when the time of the Conference will be known.

Meanwhile, the *ICRC Missions Committee* is trying to organize Regional mission Conferences. The convener, the Rev. John Goris, is counting on the cooperation of the several mission committees.

Yours in Christ's service,  
M. van Beveren

P.S. Please, note new area code (780) in above Tel./Fax number.

ICRC - RECEIVED June 3, '98

At Edinburgh and within the Free Assembly Hall there on Tuesday  
19 May 1998 which day the General Assembly of the Free Church  
of Scotland being met and constituted

*Inter Alia:*

The General Assembly called for the Report of the Committee on Assembly Arrangements and Ecumenical Relations (B) Ecumenical Relations.

It was moved, seconded and agreed that:

3. The General Assembly express their continuing support for the International Conference of Reformed Churches and instruct the Committee to ensure that the Free Church of Scotland plays as full a role as possible in that organisation.

Extracted from the Records of the  
General Assembly by  
John L. Mackery  
Clerk of Assembly

REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

*Office of the Stated Clerk*

5601 Spring Blossom St. ✉ Bakersfield, CA 9331 3-6041 ✉ Ph. (805) 827-9885

Email [fhw@iname.com](mailto:fhw@iname.com)

April 9, 1999

Rev. M. Van Beveren (Secretary)  
International Conference of Reformed Churches 13904 - 86 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5E 3C1  
CANADA

Dear Rev. Van Beveren:

The 252nd Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States hereby overtures the ICRC to amend Article IV.2 of its Constitution by requiring a positive reaffirmation of membership every second meeting after initial approval of a church. Affirmation would be by the same process as original membership qualification, namely, recommendation by two member churches and acceptance by a two-thirds majority of the conference at which the vote is taken. Failure to receive affirmation will result in suspension for four years, at the end of which affirmation will be required for continued membership.

In behalf of the 252nd Synod  
of the Reformed Church in the U.S.

Rev. Frank H. Walker, Th.M.

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## **The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of The Canadian Reformed Churches**

Secretary:

Rev. E. Kampen  
7949-202A St. Langley, B.C.  
Canada V2Y 1W8  
Tel: (604) 888-1087  
Fax:(604) 888-9687  
E-mail:  
[Eric\\_Kampen@bc.sympatico.ca](mailto:Eric_Kampen@bc.sympatico.ca)

April 26, 1999

International Conference of Reformed Churches  
c/o Rev. M. van Beveren  
13904 - 86 Street  
Edmonton, AB  
Canada T5E 3C1

Esteemed br. van Beveren:

Synod Fergus of the Canadian Reformed Churches, held in May of 1998, mandated us to "convey to the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution Article IV. I -a. and to recommend that this Article be changed in such a way that the concerns of the CanRC are addressed." (Acts Synod Fergus 1998, Article 52, Recommendation E. p. 48).



The concern expressed by the Synod was as follows: "The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question "What is the Reformed faiths, " The concept of "the Reformed Faith" could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for a confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting." (Acts Synod Fergus 1998, Article 52, Consideration D. p. 47)

We hereby pass this on to you as Secretary so that it can be put on the agenda of the next meeting of the ICRC so that the concerns as expressed by the Synod can be addressed.

Fraternally

E. Kampen

---

## REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

### *Office of the Stated Clerk*

5601 Spring Blossom St. ✉ Bakersfield, CA 9331 3-6041 ✉ Ph. (805) 827-9885

Email [fhw@iname.com](mailto:fhw@iname.com)

April 9, 1999

Rev. M. Van Beveren (Secretary)

International Conference of Reformed Churches  
13904 - 86 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta T5E 3C1  
CANADA

Dear Rev. Van Beveren:

The 252nd Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States considered the changes that the 1997 session of the ICRC made to the standards for its membership. We would address these changes as follows.

We are concerned that the changes made to Article IV.1.a. weaken the confessional integrity of the requirements for membership by churches in that the "Reformed faith" can be variously defined, while the confessions speak concretely of teachings and thus constitute a precise standard of Reformed doctrine.

Therefore the Synod of the RCUS concurs with the criticism stated by the General Synod (Fergus) of the Canadian Reformed Churches 1998, which states, "The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question 'What is the Reformed faith?' The concept of the Reformed faith could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for a confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting."

The Synod of the RCUS therefore overtures the ICRC at its next meeting to maintain its confessional integrity as stated in the Basis by requiring a specific confessional basis to be held by each member church.

We believe, moreover, that adding other Reformed confessions to the Basis safeguards confessional integrity far better than loosening the connection between the confessions and ICRC membership.

In behalf of the 252nd Synod  
of the Reformed Church in the U.S.

Rev. Frank H. Walker, Th.M.

## FORM OF SUBSCRIPTION

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons of the United Reformed congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose teach or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory or the Classis; and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

Canadian Finance Committee of the United Reformed Churches in North America

Date	Transactions	Cheque number	C/D	Asking Receipts	Other Receipts	Expenses	Other Expenses	Bank charges	Bank shares	Balance
12/02/96	Covenant Reformed Church of Balmoral - Balmoral ON		C	200.36						200.36
	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton - Clinton ON		C	110.73						311.09
	Cornerstone United Reformed Church - London ON		C	150.00						461.09
	Transfer To Share Dividends		D						50.00	411.09
12/03/96	Trinity Reformed Church - Lethbridge AB		C	700.00						1111.09
	Emmanual Reformed Church - Neerlandia AB		C	784.29						1895.38
	Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church - Jordan ON		C	348.15						2243.53
	Bethel Reformed Church - Smithers BC		C	90.00						2333.53
12/11/96	Reformed Church of Telkwa - Telkwa BC		C	72.00						2405.53
	Covenant Christian Church - Wyoming ON		C	150.00						2555.53
12/12/96	Cheques & Cheque book cover		D				50.66			2504.87
12/24/96	Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church - St. Catharines ON		C	719.65						3224.52
12/31/96	Service Charge		D					1.10		3223.42
	Enclosure Charge		D					0.10		3223.32
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3222.57
01/06/97	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church (Simcoe County) - Guthrie ON		C	66.00						3288.57
	Parkland Reformed Church of Ponoka - Ponoka AB		C	120.00						3408.57
01/14/97	Bethel United Reformed Church - Calgary AB		C	284.00						3692.57
	Grace Reformed Church - Dunville ON		C	249.50						3942.07
01/31/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3941.32
02/10/97	Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church - Wellandport ON		C	400.00						4341.32
02/24/97	Evergreen Covenant Reformed Church - Agassiz BC		C	78.40						4419.72
02/28/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4418.97
03/20/97	Rehoboth United Reformed Church of Hamilton - Hamilton ON		C	276.00						4694.97
03/31/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4694.22
04/30/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4693.47
05/12/97	Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield - Sheffield ON		C	392.00						5085.47
05/31/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		5084.72
06/30/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		5083.97
07/31/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		5083.22
08/11/97	J. Wynia (re: Beauty)		D				6.08			5077.14
08/08/97	Trinity ORC Banquet Committee - synod		D			1500.00				3577.14
08/15/97	W. Kamminga (re: stamps)		D				12.59			3564.55
08/19/97	Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church - Wellandport ON		C	400.00						3964.55
08/31/97	Enclosure Charge		D					0.30		3964.25
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3963.50
09/29/97	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton - Clinton ON		C	47.98						4011.48
09/30/97	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4010.73
10/17/97	Rev Gangar Trip to Seoul South Korea (ICRC)		D			1457.32				2553.41
10/20/97	Trinity ORC Banquet Committee - synod		D			1000.00				1553.41
10/22/97	Covenant Reformed Church of Balmoral - Balmoral ON		C	162.89						1716.30

Date	Transactions	Cheque number	C/D	Asking Receipts	Other Receipts	Expenses	Other Expenses	Bank charges	Bank shares	Balance
10/24/97	Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church - St. Catharines ON		C		100.00					1816.30
	Rev Julien	7	D			700.00				1116.30
10/29/97	Calvary Baptist Church (re:gym rental) - synod	6	D			200.00		2.20		916.30
10/31/97	Service Charge		D					0.40		914.10
	Enclosure Charge		D					0.40		913.70
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		912.95
11/07/97	Synod - Meal Tickets Collected - Can		C		3610.00					4522.95
	Synod - Meal Tickets Collected - US\$2930.00		C		4065.64					8588.59
11/10/97	Trinity ORC Banquet Committee - synod	10	D			6500.00				2088.59
11/13/97	B. Gitter (re: Office Place) - synod	8	D			153.60				1934.99
11/17/97	P. VanVliet (re: synod expenses) - synod	11	D			70.81				1864.18
11/30/97	Service Charge		D					1.65		1862.53
	Enclosure Charge		D					0.30		1862.23
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		1861.48
12/01/97	C. Huizinga (re: clerical) - synod	13	D			200.00				1661.48
12/03/97	Bethel United Reformed Church - Aylmer ON		C	90.00						1751.48
	Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church - St. Catharines ON		C	450.00						2201.48
12/05/97	T. Hunse / Repographics (re: photocopy) - Synod	9	D			80.50				2120.98
12/09/97	A. VanVliet (re: clerical) - synod	14	D			120.00				2000.98
12/10/97	P. Hoogendam (re: driving expense) - synod	12	D			186.00				1814.98
01/05/98	Trinity ORC (re: photocopier support) - synod	16	D			193.14				1621.84
12/30/97	Trinity ORC (re: telephone expenses) - synod	15	D			67.09				1554.75
12/31/97	Enclosure Charge		D					0.50		1554.25
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		1553.50
01/22/98	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church - Guthrie ON		C	100.00						1653.50
	Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg - Winnipeg MB		C	150.00						1803.50
01/31/98	Enclosure Charge		D					0.10		1803.40
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		1802.65
02/03/98	Trinity Reformed Church - Lethbridge AB		C	1488.50						3291.15
02/23/98	Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church - St. Catharines ON		C	1000.00						4291.15
02/28/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4290.40
03/04/98	Van der Woerd & Faber (re: federation legal expenses)	17	D			3285.43				1004.97
03/30/98	Emmanual Reformed Church - Neerlandia AB		C	150.00				0.10		1154.97
03/31/98	Enclosure Charge		D					0.75		1154.87
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		1154.12
04/13/98	Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church - Wellandport ON		C	352.00						1506.12
04/21/98	Bethel United Reformed Church - Woodstock ON		C	84.00						1590.12
04/30/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		1589.37
05/04/98	Athens Independent Reformed Church - Athens ON		C	60.00						1649.37
	Bethel United Reformed Church - Aylmer ON		C	100.00						1749.37
	Bethel United Reformed Church - Calgary AB		C	272.00						2021.37

Date	Transactions	Cheque number	C/D	Asking Receipts	Other Receipts	Expenses	Other Expenses	Bank charges	Bank shares	Balance
	Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church - Grande Prairie AB		C	45.00						2066.37
	Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield - Sheffield ON		C	353.00						2419.37
	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church - Guthrie ON		C	72.00						2491.37
	Covenant Christian Church - Wyoming ON		C	135.00						2626.37
05/19/98	Orthodox Reformed Church of Edmonton - Edmonton AB		C	300.00						2926.37
	Grace Reformed Church - Leduc AB		C	90.00						3016.37
	Cornerstone United Reformed Church - London ON		C	250.00						3266.37
	Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg - Winnipeg MB		C	150.00						3416.37
05/25/98	Parkland Reformed Church of Ponoka - Ponoka AB		C	120.00						3536.37
05/31/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3535.62
06/02/98	Bethel Reformed Church - Smithers BC		C	100.00						3635.62
06/30/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3634.87
07/31/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		3634.12
08/04/98	Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church - Jordan ON		C	180.00						3814.12
	Covenant Reformed Church of Balmoral - Balmoral ON		C	87.00						3901.12
	Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto - Rexdale ON		C	165.00						4066.12
08/31/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4065.37
09/30/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4064.62
10/31/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4063.87
11/27/98	Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton - Clinton ON		C	119.04						4182.91
11/30/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4182.16
12/31/98	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4181.41
Jan-31-1999	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4180.66
Feb-27-199	Grace Reformed Church - Dunnville ON		C	475.00						4655.66
Feb-28-199	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4654.91
03/13/99	F. Wassenaar (re: photocopy and stamps)		D				18.92			4635.99
Mar.-31-199	Enclosure Charge		D					0.10		4635.89
	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4635.14
04/01/99	Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield - Sheffield ON		C	228.00						4863.14
04/30/99	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4862.39
05/31/99	Monthly Fee		D					0.75		4861.64
06/08/99	Grace Reformed Church - Leduc AB		C	110.00						4971.64

*United Reformed Churches in North America*

Peter J. Moen, US URCNA Treasurer  
15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444-1840

**1997 End of Year Report  
01/14/97 Through 12/31/97**

BALANCE 01/01/1997 0.00

**INCOME**

Askings 781.00  
Uncategorized Income 3,892.07

TOTAL INCOME 4,673.07

**EXPENSES**

Bank Charge 16.16  
Misc 121.25  
Office 792.00  
Organist 100.00  
Synod Materials 222.73  
Telephone 1,429.30

TOTAL EXPENSES 2,681.44

**NET TOTAL 1,991.63**

BALANCE 12/31/1997 1,991.63

*United Reformed Churches in North America*

Peter J. Moen, US URCNA Treasurer  
15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444-1840

**1998 End of Year Report  
01/01/98 Through 12/31/98**

BALANCE 12/31/1997 1,991.63

**INCOME**

Askings 7,739.15  
Int Inc 96.74  
Uncategorized Income 6,000.00

TOTAL INCOME 13,835.89

**EXPENSES**

Dues 1,086.00  
Office:  
Directory 50.00  
  
TOTAL Office 50.00  
Postage 786.28  
Telephone 966.19

TOTAL EXPENSES 2,888.47

**NET TOTAL 10,947.42**

BALANCE 12/31/1998 12,939.05

*United Reformed Churches in North America*

Peter J. Moen, US URCNA Treasurer  
15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444-1840

**1999 End of Year Report  
01/01/99 Through 12/31/99  
(Audited)**

BALANCE 12/31/1998 12,939.05

**INCOME**

Askings 4,529.73  
Int Inc 142.58  
Reimbursements 1,000.00

TOTAL INCOME 5,672.31

**EXPENSES**

Clerk 2,500.00  
Dues 1,505.00  
Office:  
Directory 55.00

TOTAL Office 55.00  
Postage 946.68  
Synod Secretary 2,677.38  
Telephone 830.19  
Travel 1,141.17

TOTAL EXPENSES 9,655.42

**NET TOTAL -3,983.11**

BALANCE 12/31/1999 8,955.94



Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity  
Synod 1999

Esteemed brothers,

**1. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

The committee as appointed by synod is composed of eight members, with Rev. Julien the federation's stated clerk, serving as an ex officio member. Synod 1997 of St. Catharines mandated the committee "to arrange for rotation so all the members will not be replaced at the same time," and further decided that "synod appoint the committee members to a three year term at which time they become eligible to be reappointed by synod," Art.27,G,4.

We list all the members with the recommended year of the end of their term. The committee recommends that synod make provision for the replacement of those retiring members whose term ends in a year synod does not convene. We also humbly recommend that synod decide that no committee member will be allowed to serve more than two consecutive terms of office.

Rev. P. Vellenga, chairman (Clinton, ON)	2000
Rev. R. Stienstra, secretary (Dunnville, ON)	1999
Rev. J. Bouwers (Jordan, ON)	2001
Elder B. Bruining (Balmoral, ON)	1999
Elder R. Clausing (Lynwood, IL)	2000
Rev. J. Julien (Lynwood, IL)	--
Rev. R. Pontier (Orange City, IA)	1999
Rev. H. Zekveld (Sanborn, IA)	2001

The committee carried out its work mainly by mail, telephone, and fax. The geographic distances and regional representation may need some attention in the future, but at present the distances do not impede our labours. The committee met in Lynwood, Illinois, in June 1998, and is scheduled to meet in the Grand Rapids area in April 1999. We are grateful the King of the Church for this opportunity to serve Him in the pursuit of the unity of His Church.

**2. MANDATE**

Synod 1997 decided to "refer the request for refining the mandate of the committee back to the committee, instructing them to do this by contacting other Reformed and Presbyterian federations which share like precious faith. Also that it recommends the refined mandate to our next synod," Art. 27,G,2. The committee met delegations from seven federations between the sessions of the 1997 Synod of St. Catharines and conveyed the request for information concerning their mandates. We did receive some material that was helpful in designing the proposed mandate we recommend to synod for adoption.

Synod's instruction to the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity is to pursue ecumenical relations with the twelve selected Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Most of these churches are located North America, while a few are situated in a foreign country, speaking a different native language. The committee respectfully alerts synod to the fact that full church union appears to us impossible with foreign churches, and that a division of the task of the pursuit of ecumenicity may be desirable. Thus we humbly recommend that our committee be given the mandate to pursue ecumenical relations and church unity in continental North America, with another committee assigned the task to pursue ecumenical

relations with churches abroad, receiving their own mandate from synod. We also wish synod to be aware that our committee's workload is substantial.

Underlying the proposed mandate and guidelines for ecumenical relations and church unity is the Scriptural injunction that Christ's Church should be one, because in Him and in essence she is one. Jesus' high priestly prayer of John 17 articulates that truth and command eloquently and clearly. Paul's doctrinal teaching to the Church of Ephesus stresses that fundamental unity as well in chapter four. The Reformed Confessions focus sharply and beautifully on that unity in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21 and in the Belgic Confession, Articles 27 through 32.

## **MANDATE**

### **Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity**

With a view toward complete church unity, the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian federations selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order.

The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following by synod's Guidelines for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its report to synod in the agenda.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICAL RELATIONS AND CHURCH UNITY**

### **Phase One - Corresponding Relations**

The first phase of ecumenical relations is one of exploration, with the intent that by correspondence and dialogue, mutual understanding and appreciation may develop in the following areas of the two churches' lives:

- a. view and place of the Holy Scriptures
- b. creeds and confessions
- c. formula of subscription to the confessions
- d. significant factors in federations' history, theology, ecclesiology
- e. church order and polity
- f. liturgy and liturgical forms
- g. preaching, sacraments, and discipline
- h. theological education for ministers

Ecumenical observers are to be invited to all broader assemblies with a regular exchange of the minutes of these assemblies and of other publications that may facilitate ecumenical relations.

### **Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship**

The second phase of ecumenical relations is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in preparation for and commitment to

eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

- a. the churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defense, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity, and discipline
- b. the churches shall consult each other when entering into ecumenical relations with other federations
- c. the churches shall accept each other's certificates of membership, admitting such members to the Lord's Table
- d. the churches shall open the pulpits to each other's ministers, observing the rules of the respective churches
- e. the churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted
- f. the churches shall invite and receive each other's ecclesiastical delegates who shall participate in the broader assemblies as much as regulations permit

### **Phase Three - Church Union**

The third phase of ecumenical relations is one of integration with the intent that the two federations, being "united in true faith," and where contiguous geography permits, shall proceed to complete church unity, that is, ecclesiastical union. This final phase shall only be embarked upon when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to a plan of union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

- a. the broader assemblies
- b. the liturgies and liturgical forms
- c. the translations of the Bible and the confessions
- d. the song books for worship
- e. the church polity and order
- f. the missions abroad

### **3. ECUMENICAL RELATIONS**

The committee discovered that seeking to pursue ecumenical relations with twelve diverse federations requires considerable effort. It was not possible to carry on such pursuit with all the federations with equal intensity. With some not much progress has been made to date, but the committee expects to continue the assignment with vigour and we trust with the Lord's blessing. For unless the Lord build the house of church unity our efforts will not prosper. We are truly grateful to Him for the progress that is being made with some federations. The committee's report follows, listing the churches in alphabetical order.

#### **A. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church**

An initial letter was sent by the committee conveying synod's desire to seek ecumenical relations with this federation. We have written Professor W.B. Evans, the contact person, that we seek to establish a meaningful correspondence and after that in the Lord's blessing face to face conferences could be pursued. Our letter outlined our secession from the Christian Reformed Church, our obedience to the Scriptures and our adherence to the Three Forms of Unity. The committee further spoke of the URC Church Order being an adaptation from the Order of Dort.

We solicited more information about the federation's history and confessions, and sent them the committee's six-page abstract of the URC historical background. Our letter also referred to the stated clerk's pending invitation to attend the 1999 synod. We are awaiting a response.

## **B. Canadian and American Reformed Churches**

The Lord has prospered the committee in its pursuit of ecumenical relations with this federation. The committee's three ministerial members from Ontario have been able to meet six times with their three regional committee members since Synod 1997. The meetings generally have been preceded by written position papers or statements. These papers will be available from the committee's secretary to the churches who request them. After our committee finalized its own mandate for this synod, we secured agreement on the part of the Canadian Reformed committee to use our proposed guidelines to pursue further dialogue.

The two committees concurred that under PHASE ONE the items a) the view and place of the Holy Scriptures; b), the creeds and confessions; and c) formula of subscription to the confessions, are established sufficiently as requiring no further dialogue. Agreement was reached by the committees that we recommend to synod that officially synod establish CORRESPONDING RELATIONS with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

A vast amount of time and effort was invested by both committees in discussing and coming to agreement concerning all three subjects under item d. Starting with the first subject, each committee prepared a paper on what the guidelines call "significant factors in the federations' history." These statements on our churches' journey through history were discussed and agreed upon, and the following brief resume was accepted by both committees.

### **CHURCH HISTORY**

We acknowledge from both sides that with sin and shortcoming, both the most recent secessions in our history - the liberation of 1944 and the 1990s secessions - were acts of obedience, required and obligated, in keeping with the will of God, as confessed in the articles 28 and 29 of the Belgic Confession.

Under the heading "theology" the committees agreed to focus on the doctrine of the covenant, with each committee preparing a document outlining the unofficial and generally accepted understanding of this significant doctrine in our federations. After considerable dialogue the following summary statement was accepted by both committees.

### **GOD'S COVENANT**

We agree that the covenant is a relationship between God and man, established by God at the time of His creation of Adam and Eve. It is one sided in origin, two sided in existence. God established it to live in fellowship with man and show him His love and favour, and to receive from man love, obedience, trust, and honour. When man broke this covenant of favour by his rebellion and fall into sin, God in His grace maintained this relationship, and promised to redeem man by the sacrifice of His Son, the seed of the woman. This covenant of grace God the LORD makes with the believers and their offspring.

The promises of the covenant together with the demand to repent from sin and to believe the promises must be proclaimed throughout the world. All who repent and believe and receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour are grafted into the covenant and share in all its promises and blessings. The death of Christ on the cross represents the fulfilment of the terms of the old covenant. Therefore, in the new dispensation of the covenant of grace in Jesus Christ, believers and their seed are called by the power of God to live in true thankfulness and love according to all the commandments of God.

In an obedient response to the covenant obligations, the believers are called to gather together in unity with Christ the Mediator of the covenant, and in unity of faith with the Church of all ages. These gatherings can be found there where the proclamation of God's Word is practised faithfully, where the administration of the sacraments is maintained purely, and where church discipline is exercised for the correcting and punishing of sins. All people belonging to this covenant of grace are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the church.

The fullness of the covenant takes place at the consummation of all things, when the one triune God will live with His chosen people in perfect love and eternal fellowship through all eternity.

The third and last subject of this item of our proposed guidelines is designated "ecclesiology." Each federation's committee produced a position paper outlining the unofficial and generally accepted view of the doctrine of the church. After hours of discussion agreement was reached and the following short summary statement was drawn up and agreed to by both parties.

#### DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

We acknowledge that due to the many limitations and shortcomings of human understanding, there is a brokenness of the church both in local situations and in broader federations. This implies that there can be more than one true church in a particular place at any given time. We need to reject a broad denominationalism on the one hand, as well as a narrow sectarianism on the other. Churches of various backgrounds but of one confession have the duty to pursue the highest form of ecclesiastical fellowship possible in their context, in order to promote the unity of the church locally as well as in the federation of churches.

The committee is engaging the Canadian Reformed committee in discussion of the remaining subjects in PHASE ONE. The two committees project and have agreed that should the United Reformed Synod and the Canadian Reformed Synod be so disposed, that at the next synods, perhaps in the year 2001, each synod would consider the committees' recommendation that the two federations invite each other to enter into PHASE TWO - ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP. This prospective action would be taken with the understanding that at the following synod each federation would consider entering into PHASE THREE - CHURCH UNION, and a plan for such a union would be devised. Surely only the Lord knows the future.

We should also report that representatives of our committee attended an all-day Classis of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and were warmly received as well as given the opportunity to bring greetings from the United Reformed Churches. The committee was invited to have observers at their 1998 Synod. A profitable day was spent in Fergus, Ontario, learning from their thorough treatment of each subject and overture. Our spokesman was given opportunity to address Synod, bringing the customary greetings and well wishes. We select one sentence from the prepared text of the address. "Although weakness and sin continue to be evident in our churches, and hypocrites are mixed in with the good, yet without hesitation we consider ourselves to be the true church of Christ." We look forward to the Lord's continuing blessing on our dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

#### **C. Christian Reformed Church in Myanmar**

Correspondence with this Church was initiated in the early months of 1997 when the Rev. C. Aung Lai, a student at Mid America Reformed Seminary, contacted the committee. He provided us with translations of his church's constitution and Church Order, as well as a short history of the church in Myanmar. Subsequent communication took place with the General Secretary of the Christian Reformed Church in

Myanmar, Rev. Chan Thleng.

Our committee has assured the General Secretary of these rather young churches that the United Reformed Churches are very much interested in pursuing ecumenical relations with them. We wrote them that “we are also thankful that your Church has adopted, besides the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.” These churches use a Church Order patterned after the Order of Dort. Rev. Chan Thleng plans to be an Observer at the 1999 Synod.

#### **D. Free Reformed Churches of North America**

The three Ontario ministers of the committee met three times with the regional committee members of the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches since the 1997 Synod. Both sides have agreed to follow our committee's proposed guidelines in the dialogue. Based on a mutual agreement, the two committees will recommend to their respective synods that both federations enter into Corresponding Relations with each other, although the Free Reformed Churches employ a slightly different formulation for this level of relations.

The committee was invited by the Free Reformed Churches to attend their annual Synod in June 1998, as observers. Three Ontario committee members represented the URC, and one was asked to address their Synod, bringing our federation's greetings. We felt honoured since this practice had not been undertaken in the past. Among other things we said, “Preaching is of paramount importance in the United Reformed Churches. The proclamation of Christ and Him crucified is in regular worship directed to covenant church members in order that all may repent and believe. We contend that covenantal and experiential preaching when properly understood may not be pitted against each other.” We appreciated the Free Reformed hospitality and fellowship.

Thus the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity recommends to Synod that Synod enter into PHASE ONE - CORRESPONDING RELATIONS with the Free Reformed Churches of North America on the basis that this federation holds to the same view of the Holy Scriptures, confesses identical creeds and confessions, and uses the same formula of subscription to the confessions as the United Reformed Churches in North America.

We have presented to the Free Reformed Committee our papers on the URC church history, the doctrine of the covenant, and the doctrine of the church. We have received their paper on God's covenant, and the two committees have begun to discuss the URC position paper on the covenant. In due time, during PHASE ONE, the committees will address several articles on “The ‘Appropriation of Salvation’ in the Creeds - An Overview,” by the Rev. A. Baars from the Netherlands. We trust that our Lord will bless the ongoing dialogue for the purpose of obtaining greater church unity.

#### **E. Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico**

In light of the overture that was being studied by the churches of Classis Southern Ontario, and now appears in the agenda of Synod, the committee decided that we would not pursue overt ecumenical relations with the IPC until after synod has dealt with the overture.

#### **F. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches**

This small number of churches that began to leave the Christian Reformed Church in 1980 invited the committee to send observers to their Classis East meeting on April 30, 1998. Our delegation spent a

profitable and enjoyable day in Bowmanville, Ontario, and brought greetings from the United Reformed Churches. In turn Classis Southern Ontario has invited these churches to attend their meetings as observers.

Early in 1999 our committee was invited to address an elders' conference of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches in Ontario to explain various facets of our churches, such as "Why was your church started. How was your church started. What distinguishes your denomination from others. Some principles that you feel are important, i.e. Bible version, hymn book, Sunday School material, catechism, headship." In preparation for this meeting the committee sent the organizing church our position papers on the historical background of our federation and the papers on the covenant and the church.

The committee wrote these churches, "The United Reformed Churches are eager to pursue further ecumenical relations with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches in Ontario, as is taking place in the Canadian West." Our committee is watching with interest the overtures that are being prepared for the synods of both federations to more actively pursue church unity. We heartily encourage the appropriate avenues sought in these pursuits. May our faithful God bless these efforts for the unity of His Church.

#### **G. Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

All written communication up to this point has been between the stated clerk of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Rev. J. Julien the URC stated clerk. We expect that Rev. Julien will report to synod concerning that communication.

Our committee did receive a verbal invitation from the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations to schedule a meeting with them. The committee seriously considered that invitation but decided that for the sake of good order it would be better not to grant the request, since the URC synod of 1997 appointed a study committee to consider the differences and similarities between the two federations in terms of their confessions and church orders. We decided not to meet with the OPC committee until after the study committee has reported to synod.

We conveyed the decision to the Rev. G. I. Williamson of the OPC committee, and explained the reason for it. We also expressed our gratitude for sending us a copy of the Minutes of the 1998 General Assembly containing the OPC Yearbook. The committee wrote, "It was with genuine pleasure and surprise that our committee learned that your Sixty Fifth General Assembly graciously decided to 'invite the United Reformed Churches in North America to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC.' We want to thank you for the honour granted to our young federation so soon after its very beginning."

Respectfully the committee recommends to synod to reaffirm the 1997 decision to enter into Corresponding Relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, rather than to grant the 1998 invitation to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC. Should synod adopt the proposed Guidelines for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, it would be evident that much dialogue is needed in almost all instances in order to proceed to PHASE TWO - ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP. In that stage of church unity privileges and freedoms are granted that require much preparation, and a commitment to consider full church union.

Our committee requested Rev. R. Pontier to represent the federation at the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC on March 24, 1998. He reported to the committee that he experienced a good day of fellowship. On May 27 to June 3, 1998, Rev. J. Julien represented the United Reformed Churches in North America

at the Orthodox Presbyterian General Assembly. He will report to synod as the stated clerk.

The committee trusts that the Head of the Church will bless and prosper the unfolding ecumenical relations with the OPC, and will be pleased to make use of our feeble efforts for His glory and the upbuilding of His Church.

#### **H. Presbyterian Church in America**

In July 1998, Rev. J. Julien attended the Twenty-Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, representing the United Reformed Churches in America. He will report to synod directly. He also attended a meeting of the Interchurch Committee of the PCA, which decided the following. "That the IRC be authorized to continue discussions with the United Reformed Churches in North America leading to a possible ecclesiastical relationship and that the communication to the URCNA be approved."

Rev. Julien also reported to us that the Interchurch Committee of the PCA decided to send the URC a letter of intention and invitation. The letter was never sent due to an oversight. Our committee wishes to pass on this paragraph. "As you take your place among Reformed churches of North America and, indeed the world, we welcome you and extend to you a right hand and a warm heart of fellowship. We anticipate with you in the Lord's vineyard, should our Lord tarry. To that end we invite you to take whatever steps are requisite to develop closer relations between the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Presbyterian Church in America. Details at this end would be refined by our Interchurch Committee and approved by the PCA General Assembly, all in appropriate with your appropriate committee."

The committee has not yet responded nor pursued any further ecumenical relation with the PCA but expects to do so as opportunity avails itself. We trust that the King of the Church will bless our relations with the Presbyterian Church in America.

#### **I. Protestant Reformed Churches in America**

In July 1998, the Committee for Contact with Other Churches of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America wrote the committee that the PRC synod wished to reach out to the URC. Their synod decided, "To instruct the Contact Committee to send a letter to the United Reformed Churches expressing our desire to hold a conference to determine and discuss the issues that separate us. These issues would include, but not be limited to, common grace and the doctrine of the covenant." Their committee added, "Let me assure you that we of the PRC are vitally interested in conferring with your churches regarding these matters. The ecclesiastical roots of both your and our churches are precisely the same."

After a number of letters were exchanged, the time, place, conditions, and agenda were agreed to by both committees. On April 27, 1999, an all day meeting between the two committees is scheduled in Grandville, Michigan. The agenda focuses on the doctrine of common grace, the prevailing view and binding nature in the URC, and the PRC understanding of and the URC response to each point of common grace. The PRC committee's graciously provided our committee with ample reading material in preparation for the meeting. Synod agenda deadline restrictions preclude us from reporting further at this time.

In carrying out the committee's mandate to pursue ecumenical relations with the Protestant Reformed Churches, it is our prayer and confidence that the all wise God will bless us and provide in all our needs.

#### **J. Reformed Church of Quebec / L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec**

In February 1998, two committee representatives met with two delegates from the ERQ to consider



furthering ecumenical relations. This small federation of six churches comprising some 400 members seeks for our fellowship and support. They strongly wish to retain their own cultural and ecclesiastical identity, and believe their mission in the French speaking province of Quebec would be hindered if these were not maintained.

The committee has not pursued our relations with the ERQ after the face to face meeting. We expect to have further opportunity to relate to this federation.

**K. Reformed Church in the United States**

The Interchurch Relations Committee of the RCUS invited the committee to send observers to their 252nd synod in May 1998. Rev. R. Pontier and Rev. H. Zekveld were delegated to attend. They reported favourably on their experience at the RCUS synod. Rev. Pontier addressed synod and conveyed our synod's desire to pursue ecumenical relations with their federation, explaining that we want to look beyond ecumenical relations toward organic unity. He said, "Our spiritual unity already exists. We are called to make every effort to keep and express that unity." Rev. Pontier took note of their committee's evaluation of the URC in that it "tends to be somewhat congregationalistic." He drew the synod's attention to Art.29 of the Church Order which counters such tendencies.

The committee received an invitation to send an observer to the August 1998 Classis South Central of the RCUS where a difficulty with one of their ministers was to be considered. Due to geographic proximity the committee requested Rev. D. Piers from the Loveland URC to attend. The committee has Rev. Piers' report on file.

A representative of RCUS Interchurch Relations Committee met with the committee in Lynwood, Illinois, during our June 1998 meeting. Rev. M. Koerner explained his denomination's understanding of church unity. They consider complete church unity is not necessary to fulfil the mandate for unity. Rev. Koerner considers that our Church Order gives broader assemblies less authority than desirable. The RCUS considers the synod to be composed of delegates who exercise the authority of their offices, rather than merely being delegates. The RCUS representative foresaw no difficulty in forging closer ties between the two churches.

The committee plans to pursue further relations with the RCUS, and expect that God will bless those labours.

**L. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America**

The committee has not carried out its mandate with respect to these churches, but will attempt to so in due time.

**4. NAPARC REPORT**

The North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council graciously invited observers from the URC to attend their meeting on November 17 and 18, 1998 in Sioux Falls, SD. The committee decided to delegate Rev. R. Pontier and Rev. H. Zekveld. They have reported to the committee that they enjoyed the warm fellowship of the members. Rev. Pontier received opportunity to address the delegates, and brought our churches' greetings. In his address he "expressed our conviction that Christ's call to church unity entails fraternal relations with a view toward organic union." The time has not yet come, they report to us, for the United Reformed Churches in North America to participate as a member church. Our delegates recommend that we continue "with NAPARC as official observers to see what progress is made in clarifying and function and in handling the CRCNA."

**5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That synod approve the proposed mandate with its guidelines.
2. That synod approve the proposed terms of office for the members and replace those who retire this year and make provision for the years before the next synod, and determine that no member serve more than two consecutive terms.
3. That synod consider appointing a separate committee for the churches abroad, provide a mandate and appoint committee members for it.
4. That synod officially enter into “Corresponding Relations” with the Canadian Reformed Churches.
5. That synod officially enter into “Corresponding Relations” with the Free Reformed Churches.
6. That synod reaffirm last synod's decision to continue being in “Corresponding Relations” with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
7. That synod approve the work of the committee.

Humbly submitted,

P. Vellenga, chairman  
R. Stienstra, secretary

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**APPENDIX 1**

The Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity appends here the addresses to the synods of the Canadian Reformed Churches and to the Free Reformed Churches. Both were delivered by Rev. R. Stienstra. In addition we reproduce here the reports of the committee's representation by Rev. J. Julien at the General Assemblies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and of the Presbyterian Church in America. Finally, the reports by Rev. H. Zekveld of the committee's delegation as Observers the Reformed Church in the United States and to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council.

**1. ADDRESS TO THE 1998 SYNOD OF THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES**

Esteemed Brothers,

As spokesman of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America I first of all want to thank you for extending the invitation to us to be present as observers at your General Synod in 1998. For us this is a historic occasion. Whereas we have had a number of times during the past years when we became acquainted with your deputies at our assemblies, today constitutes a special event for us, and we treasure it.

On behalf of the committee I bring you fraternal greetings from our federation. The 70 churches consisting of some 16,000 souls wish you God's richest blessing as you strive to be faithful and true to the high calling of being His people in the midst of a sinful world. May the Lord Who gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself a church chosen unto everlasting life, continue to use and bless your federation in the North American setting as He has done so evidently in the past fifty years.

Your deputies for the promotion of ecclesiastical unity have responded to the correspondence from the URC committee for ecumenical relations and church unity in a positive way. After a year or two of such correspondence, and with the input of the URC Synod of St. Catharines in 1997, our committee considered the time had come to propose that the progress made in previous correspondence be advanced by face to face meetings. With the willingness of your deputies two of such meetings have taken place in 1998 with a third

one scheduled in September.

From our side we are pleased that your deputies were agreeable that our mutual objective should be integrated federative unity. The two sides could not (yet) agree on the most suitable pathway or strategy toward that unity. In general both parties agreed to follow the Dutch model of *verkenning*, *herkenning*, and *erkenning*. The deputies proposed “recognition, acceptance, and union.” The committee suggested, “exploration, recognition, and integration.” A suitable resolution is being worked out.

I expect that your deputies have reported these matters to the Synod. In any case a report will in due time appear in the church papers. I wish to add some comments, however, in conveying the greetings of the United Reformed Churches.

Our two federations have much in common, such as the Three Forms of Unity and an identical Form of Subscription; not to mention the same ecclesiastical forms, as well as the Church Order of Dort as basis for our respective orders. But there are some distinctives. We share a similar history, yet one which has its distinctives as well. One such distinctive, I continue to use the word here, is the fact that the URC finds its beginning in the secessions during the present decade from the Christian Reformed Church.

Most of our members were born and raised in the CRC, and most of the churches of our federation are in the United States and do not trace their history directly via the Doleantie of 1886, nor the Union of 1892, nor the Liberation of 1944, but go directly back to the Secession of 1834. Their forefathers immigrated during the 1850s and founded the CRC in 1857. Of course, our 29 Canadian churches consist mainly of members who share your origins in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland, but who did not join the Liberated churches in 1944.

In some sense the United Reformed Churches are the legitimate continuation of the Christian Reformed Church. We seek to be faithful to the Confessions and true to the Scriptures. This brings me to the matter of recognition and the true church of Christ in terms of the Belgic Confession, Articles 27-29.

We confess as you do that we are “a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood and sealed by the Holy Spirit.” As such we are part of the one catholic or universal Church. The United Reformed Churches consider themselves to be the true church of Christ. With dedication and faithfulness the office-bearers see to it that the pure preaching of the gospel is proclaimed. The churches maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. The elders seek to exercise church discipline for the correcting and punishing of sins.

Although weakness and sin continue to be evident in our churches, and hypocrites are mixed in with the good, yet without hesitation we consider ourselves the true church of Christ. It is out of this conviction that our committee is persuaded that mutual recognition of each other as faithful and true churches of the Lord needs to take place sometime on the road to integrated ecclesiastical unity between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. I stress sometime during the process rather than at its conclusion.

But then, mutual recognition is not an empty, vague gesture nor an expression of the concept of church pluriformity. We view the teaching of church pluriformity unscriptural and non-conforming to the Reformed confessions. Our committee is convinced that mutual recognition has serious consequences for both church bodies. We propose that after adequate dialogue between us has taken place, some ecclesiastical fellowship be entered upon which contains the ingredients that in principle pulpit exchange and table fellowship be

allowed to be a stimulant in the movement toward full integration.

Let me expand a little. To our committee it is inconceivable that the Scriptures teach, or that the Reformed Confessions propound that when two churches are in agreement that both demonstrate and practice faithfully the three marks of the true church as confessed in the Belgic Confession, Article 27, there should not be some form of Biblical fellowship between them beyond the perfunctory.

I conclude with this final notation. The URC committee on which I serve has written to your deputies that we “consider the secession of 1944, or the Liberation, to be God’s way and work to bring His people back to Himself from deviant teachings and practices.” We also wrote to you that “we believe that the CRC should have established relations with the liberated churches in the Netherlands and discontinued them with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.”

Brothers, may the King of the Church prosper and bless you in your labours as General Synod these days, and may He also bless and prosper our mutual efforts toward ecclesiastical unity. To Him alone be the glory!

## **2. ADDRESS TO THE 1998 SYNOD OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES**

Esteemed Brothers,

As spokesman of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the United Reformed Churches in North America I first of all want to thank you for extending the invitation to us to be present as observers at your Synod of 1998. For us this is a historic occasion. Whereas we have had a number of times during the past years when we became acquainted with your observers at our assemblies, today constitutes a special event for us, and we treasure it.

On behalf of the committee I bring you fraternal greetings from our federation. The 70 churches consisting of some 16,000 souls wish you God’s richest blessing as you strive to be faithful and true to the high calling of being His people in the midst of a sinful world and corrupt culture. May the Lord Who gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself a church chosen unto everlasting life, continue to use and bless your federation in the North American setting as He has done so graciously during the past five decades.

Our churches are very grateful that you through the good offices of the Rev. C. Pronk have been willing to assist those ministers of the United Reformed Churches in Canada who need help from an established denomination to obtain a certificate to solemnize marriages. Again, thank you. Our federation of churches is also grateful for your Synod of 1997 for sponsoring the URC in its application for membership in the ICRC at its meeting in Seoul, South Korea. Our committee wishes to convey the gratitude of our churches to this 1998 Synod of the Free Reformed Churches.

Your External Relations Committee members have responded to the correspondence from the URC Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity in a positive way. We were pleased to exchange Yearbooks and materials from our respective synods. Our committee was impressed with your study paper on “Foundational Teachings Relating to Church Unity and Fellowship” and have benefitted from its thoughtful approach to church unity. After a year or more of correspondence, your committee suggested a face to face dialogue, and our committee gladly agreed. The first such meeting took place in the Spring of 1998, with a second one to follow this Fall, when the agenda calls for a discussion of the article by Rev. A. Baars, “The Appropriation of Salvation in the Creeds, an Overview.”

I recognize and convey to you that no substantive discussions have taken place between the two committees involving the ultimate objective of our dialogue, nor a suitable pathway or strategy to follow in moving toward it. From our side the committee hopes that the King of the Church will bless the work of the two committees so that the Scriptural injunction of unity between our federations based on being “united in true faith” (LD21) may at His time become a reality. Our committee hopes that we will be able to follow the Dutch model of *verkenning*, *herkenning*, and *erkenning* in the pursuit of church unity with the Free Reformed Churches. We consider the translation “exploration, recognition, and integration” of the three phases not inappropriate.

Our two federations have much in common, such as the Three Forms of Unity and an identical Form of Subscription; not to mention the same ecclesiastical forms, as well as the Church Order of Dort as basis for our respective orders. But there are some differences as well. We share a similar history, yet one which has its distinctive features. One such obvious difference is the fact that the URC finds its beginning in the secessions of the present decade from the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Most of our members were born and raised in the CRC, and most of the churches of our federation are in the United States and do not trace their history directly via the Doleantie of 1886, nor the Union of 1892, nor the Liberation of 1944, but go directly back to the Secession of 1834. Their forefathers immigrated during the 1850s and founded the CRC in 1857. Of course, our 29 Canadian churches consist mainly of members who share your origins in the Netherlands, but in the Gereformeerde Kerken and not in the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken.

In some sense the United Reformed Churches are the legitimate continuation of the Christian Reformed Church. We seek to be faithful to the Confessions and true to the Scriptures, following the principles and practices of the great Reformation.

We confess as you do that we are “a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood and sealed by the Holy Spirit,” (Belg. Conf. Art. 27). As such we are part of the one catholic or universal Church. With dedication and faithfulness the office-bearers see to it that the pure preaching of the gospel is proclaimed. The churches maintain the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. The elders seek to exercise church discipline for the correcting and punishing of sins, maintaining “the marks by which the true Church is known,” (Belg. Conf. Art. 29).

Although weakness and sin continue to be evident in our churches, and hypocrites are mixed in with the good, yet without hesitation, in the preaching “we must regard the congregation as it is in reality, namely, as covenant congregation of the Lord,” as you so pertinently phrase it in your attractive booklet “Introducing the Free Reformed Churches of North America.”

Preaching is of paramount importance in the United Reformed Churches. The proclamation of Christ and Him crucified is in regular worship directed to covenant church members in order that all may repent and believe. We contend that covenantal and experiential preaching when properly understood may not be pitted against each other. In this respect we find God’s Word of Romans 10 helpfully directive, both in the summary of verse 17, and the essence of it in verse 10. The former reads, “So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” while the latter states, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Brothers, may the King of the Church prosper and bless you in your labours as Synod these days, and may He also bless and prosper our mutual efforts toward ecclesiastical unity. To Him alone be the glory!

### **3. REPORT OF THE 1998 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

January 27, 1999

Brothers:

It was my happy task to serve as fraternal representative of the United Reformed Churches in North America at both the Sixty-fifth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. Both my wife and I were warmly welcomed at these assemblies. The Assembly of the PCA was significant in that the delegates were celebrating twenty-five years of God's blessing upon them. Nightly there were meetings of praise and spiritual instruction. We heard both Dr. James Boice and Dr. Morton Smith. The celebration brought out a great excitement among the delegates. The Orthodox Presbyterian Assembly, though much more low-keyed, was a joy to attend, as well. At both meetings significant decisions were made concerning our federation of churches.

When the Orthodox Presbyterian Church met at Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 27-June 2, the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations recommended:

That the Orthodox Presbyterian Church invite the United Reformed Churches in North America to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC.

Grounds:

- a. Their confessional standards are the Three Forms of unity.
- b. They seek to maintain a vigorous faithfulness to their standards in their church life.
- c. They are members of the ICRC with us,
- d. Their Synod has expressed the desire to work more closely with us (See URCNA 1997 Synod Acts, Article XXVII, b).

There was little discussion and this recommendation was passed without dissent.

Several things should be understood in relation to this decision.

First, this decision was preceded by a discussion concerning the suspension of the Christian Reformed Church from NAPARC. A day later the body approved the suspension. In personal discussion with the delegates it became apparent that they were very sad over this turn of events in the Christian Reformed Church. It brought great pain since the CRC had befriended them in their infancy. But they expressed a deep desire to have closer relations with us.

Second, the category in which the OPC has placed us, Ecclesiastical Fellowship, is the closest relationship short of union that the OPC recognizes. It includes exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies, the possibility of pulpit exchanges, intercommunion (to be regulated by the session/consistory), exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies, yearbooks, etc.

I addressed the assembly at the appointed time and experienced good fellowship with the brothers.

### **4. REPORT OF THE 1998 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN**

## AMERICA

Later, in early July, I attended the Twenty-sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America which had convened in St. Louis, Missouri. To attend this assembly was a very new experience. Whereas our synods and the OPC General Assemblies are small, the PCA General Assemblies are very large—almost 1300 delegates! This naturally determined that the mode of operation was very different. I did bring greetings to the large group gathered there. My wife and I participated in a luncheon at the invitation of the Interchurch committee.

The following was adopted:

That the IRC be authorized to continue discussions with the United Reformed Churches in North America leading to a possible ecclesiastical relationship and that the communication to the URCNA be approved.

The letter to be sent appeared in the appendix to the minutes as follows:

Dear Fathers and Brethren:

Warmest greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. With joy we have learned of your fidelity to “the faith once delivered to the saints,” and your willing endurance of the sacrifices necessary to maintain and promote that faith.

As you take your place among Reformed churches of North America and, indeed, the world, we welcome you and extend to you a right hand and a warm heart of fellowship. We anticipate co-laboring with you in the Lord’s vineyard, should our Lord tarry. To that end we invite you to take whatever steps are requisite to develop closer relations between the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Presbyterian Church in America. Details at this end would be refined by our Interchurch Relations Committee and approved by the PCA General Assembly, all in consultation with your appropriate committee.

We pledge ourselves to pray for you that “Your faith [may] grow exceedingly and the love of everyone of you all abound” to all the brethren in Christ. (I Thessalonians 1:3)

To my knowledge this letter was never sent. Perhaps this was due to a changeover in the Office of Stated Clerk, or perhaps since it was printed in the Minutes they believed that would be sufficient.

Respectfully submitted,

J. M. Julien

## 5. REPORT OF THE 252<sup>nd</sup> SYNOD OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES

June 18, 1998

Dear Brothers,

The 252<sup>nd</sup> Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States met in Garner, IA at the Peace RCUS from

May 18-21. As members of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) Revs. Ralph Pontier and Harry Zekveld represented the United Reformed Churches in North America as fraternal observers. We arrived shortly before noon on Tuesday, May 19, and departed after supper on Wednesday, May 20. We were well received, and enjoyed the good hospitality the RCUS brothers and sisters offered us. It was a joy to spend time in a church assembly that is vigorously concerned about Reformed orthodoxy.

The RCUS finds its roots in the German Reformed Church in the United States (later called Reformed Church in the United States) that merged with the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1914, in what was known as the Evangelical & Reformed merger. One classis, the Eureka Classis, declined to participate in the merger with its confessional compromise, and continues to this day as the Reformed Church in the United States. Her doctrinal standards are the Three Forms of Unity. She numbers approximately 4500 members in 42 congregations across the United States.

According to the Report of the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee to the 252nd Synod, the RCUS is presently in fraternal relations with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico, the Reformed Confessing Church of the Congo, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). The RCUS was having formal discussion with the OPC regarding organic union, but this was discontinued by the RCUS at their previous Synod in 1997 due to the lack of resolution of “essential theological differences that exist between the RCUS and the OPC” namely, the issues of creation, of women voting in congregational meetings and of the authority of position papers (*Report*, p. 1).

Also noted in the Report is the decision of the RCUS Synod (1997) to propose fraternal relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the CanRC recommended ecclesiastical fellowship to its 1998 Synod at Fergus. ON (*Report*, p. 4). However, according to the report of the RCUS observer to the 1999 Synod of the CanRC, that Synod voted not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS at this time largely due to differing standards of table fellowship between the two denominations.\*

In addition to the URCNA observers, fraternal delegates and observers were present from the GKN(Liberated), OPC, RPCNA, ARP, and FORC (Federation of Reformed Churches).

Rev. Ralph Pontier extended greetings to the delegates of the Synod, noting that it was the desire of the most recent URCNA Synod to pursue ecumenical relations with the RCUS. He called attention to our committee name, explaining that we want to look beyond ecumenical relations toward organic unity. “Our spiritual unity already exists. We are called to make every effort to keep and express that unity,” he said.

Rev. Pontier highlighted two statements from the observer’s report of Rev. Maynard Koerner to the RCUS Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee regarding the URCNA (see Appendix #4 in file Report of the Permanent Relations Committee to the 252nd Synod of the RCUS). The first is that the URCNA “tends to be somewhat congregationalistic.” Rev. Pontier responded that he was not sure that he could endorse that statement. “That is certainly not our stated goal, although some of the congregations who helped establish the URC have been independent for four or five years.” The revision of Article 29 of the URCNA Church Order at its last Synod certainly minimizes whatever congregationalistic tendencies may exist among us.

Rev. Pontier also commented on Rev. Koerner’s statement that “Just how [the URCNA] will end up on all the issues facing the reformed community is yet to be seen.” He urged the RCUS to walk alongside us now, not keeping us at arm’s length to see where we will come out on certain doctrinal positions.

He concluded his presentation by giving two copies of the minutes of the 1997 Synod of the URCNA and several copies of the revised edition of the URCNA Church Order to the Synod’s President, Rev. Vernon Pollema.



We noted from the discussions on the floor of Synod that the RCUS ardently defends the creation of the universe in “six real days” and is opposed to the so-called Framework Hypothesis on the days of creation. Their conviction on the doctrine of creation, as well as their conviction that women should not vote at congregational meetings are official positions of the RCUS. We might call these issues RCUS distinctives that will enter, we expect, the foreground at some point in any ecumenical dialogue.

The matter of a change in the ICRC constitution at the 1997 meeting of the ICRC was dealt with in committee and later acted upon by the Synod. The ICRC changed Article IV.1 (a) which read “Those churches shall be admitted which *faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith.*” The new language posits a distinction between the Reformed Faith and the various Reformed confessions, and then suggests that this Reformed Faith can be discovered in the confessional statements. This allows for a loose confessional subscription. The Synod chose to address this matter by concurring with the criticism stated by the General Synod (Fergus) of the Canadian Reformed Churches (1998) which states,

“The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question, “What is the Reformed Faith?” The concept of the Reformed Faith could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for a confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting.” As an alternative to this revision, the RCUS overtured the ICRC to add to the basis the names of the confessions of those churches which the ICRC would like to receive into fellowship but hold to a confession that is not presently included in the Basis.\*\*

In another move to safeguard the confessional integrity, of the ICRC, the Synod overtured the ICRC to require of all of its member churches a “positive reaffirmation of membership every second meeting after initial approval of a church. Affirmation would be by the same process as original membership qualification, namely, recommendation by two member churches and acceptance by a two-thirds majority of the conference at which the vote is taken. Failure to receive affirmation will result in suspension for four years at the end of which affirmation will be required for continued membership.” The grounds state the concern that because denominations in ecumenical organizations drift, there should be a positive requirement for such a denomination to prove its confessional integrity on a regular basis.

A RCUS committee report entitled “Biblical Principles On Church Unity” was reviewed and sent back to committee for more work. Rev. Pontier addressed the Synod concerning Principle #2: In pursuing the unity of the visible Church it must be remembered by all faithful denominations that within the multiformity of the visible Church there is a true uniformity, and that multiformity does not obscure the unity of Christ’s Church. Therefore, it is not necessary to reduce the visible Church on earth into a single church government by merging all faithful denominations into an organic union. His concern was the view of church unity expressed by the word “reduce” in the last sentence. Doesn’t this display a negative view of Reformed ecumenicity? Doesn’t it undermine the call of the apostle to “make every effort to express the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?” Is not the desired result of confessional unity an official forum in which Churches of like precious faith can gather together judicially to face the foe and declare the Truth? We hope the committee will rethink this statement on pursuing the unity of the visible Church.

We conclude with the reminder of our joy at the RCUS vigorous concern for confessional Reformed orthodoxy. The concerns raised here do not in any way negate our fundamental unity with them in the Reformed Confessions. As we strive to maintain the faith of our fathers in a secession context, we would do well to consider carefully our RCUS brothers who have demonstrated confessional integrity as they arose out of the secession of 1934.

We are grateful for the opportunity we had to be in contact with the Reformed Church in the United States. We hope that this will be used by the Lord to bring us to closer ecumenical ties with them.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Harry Zekveld

\*In an informal discussion held with Rev. de Jager, the ecumenical delegate of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), at his request, Rev. de Jager noted that his denomination does not practice such restrictive standards when entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with churches of like faith. Instead, as part of the ground rules for sister-church relations, the RCN (Liberated) asks that members of sister churches comply with their [the RCN'S] standards if such members should seek to partake of the Lord's Supper in a congregation of the GKN. From our discussion with Rev. de Jager, it appeared to us that there is good potential for full ecumenical ties between URCNA and the RCN (Liberated).

\*\*We agree with our brothers in the RCUS and the CanRCs on this matter and believe that our Synod should communicate the same to the upcoming meeting of the ICRC.

## **6. REPORT OF THE 1998 MEETING OF THE NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED CHURCHES**

December 8, 1998

Dear Brothers,

On November 17-18, 1998. Revs. Ralph Pontier and Harry Zekveld attended the annual meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Churches as official observers. The meeting was held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota at the Ramkota Inn, with Rev. Ron Potter (RCUS) presiding.

Delegated churches were Associate Reformed Presbyterian (ARPC), Christian Reformed (CRCNA) - under suspension, Orthodox Presbyterian (OPC), Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). Reformed Presbyterian Reformed Church of North America (RPCNA), and Korean American Presbyterian (KAPC). Observer delegates represented the Free Reformed (FRCNA). Presbyterian Reformed (PRC). and United Reformed (URCNA) federations.

The Protestant Reformed Churches were not represented this year. For several years they sent observers, but since they could not foresee agreement with NAPARC in their doctrinal distinctives the PRC Synod decided that continued participation in NAPARC was misleading.

The main item on the agenda this year was for NAPARC to acknowledge the suspended membership of the CRCNA. NAPARC's constitution requires that a decision to suspend a denomination must be approved by 2/3 of the member churches' broadest assemblies. Since 5 out of 7 assemblies approved this decision, suspension was essentially a done deal as the meeting was opened. The two church assemblies which did not vote in favor of suspension were the CRC which voted against suspension, and the Korean Presbyterian Church which had not yet voted on the matter.

The meeting's opening was obviously awkward for all the delegates. It seemed to us that the non-CRC delegates did not expect CRC delegates to be present. When they actually arrived the rest were uncertain which procedure to follow. NAPARC decided to allow the CRC delegates to participate in the discussion, but not in the voting. The delegates also decided to remove suspended churches from the annual membership fee obligation of \$300.

Following this portion of the meeting a delegate from each federation reported on the state of his own federation. After each report the chairman requested a delegate from another federation to offer prayer for those churches. We were favorably impressed by this format. It allowed for meaningful exercise of brotherhood in Christ by sharing one another's joys and burdens.

Rev. Pontier reported on the state of the URCNA. Included in his report he expressed our conviction that Christ's call to church unity entails fraternal relations with a view toward organic union. The chairman asked Rev. Jim Sawtelle (RCUS) to pray for us.

On Tuesday evening NAPARC held its annual banquet for all the member and observer delegates. Rev. Paul Treick (RCUS) spoke on the theme "The Reformed Church in a Modern World". Treick reminded us that in order to meet the world, the Church must be able to assess the world rightly. Rather than buy the world's subjective starting point, the self, the Church must present to the world through preaching the only objective starting point, the truth as it is in the Christ of the Scriptures. This understanding of the Church's mission requires a return to the biblical understanding of covenant. The claims of Jesus Christ are fully authoritative and nonnegotiable. Those who receive His Word in faith will receive its blessing. The unfaithful will receive its curse.

Beyond the CRC suspension, the various denominational reports, and Rev. Treick's address, nothing else of significance was accomplished. As we privately wondered about the purpose of NAPARC, one of the delegates asked for a discussion on the purpose of NAPARC and whether it was being met. Other delegates echoed similar concerns. It appears that NAPARC, having expended much energy on matters concerning the CRCNA, now needs to refocus on establishing and meeting positive ecumenical goals among the Reformed churches in North America. This will be the main subject of next year's meeting.

The 1999 meeting of NAPARC is scheduled for November 16 & 17 in Flat Rock, North Carolina, hosted by the ARPC.

We conclude with two observations about NAPARC. First, the CRC's continued presence causes us some hesitation. We are persuaded that she is departing from the Reformed faith. Should we refrain from any closer alliance with NAPARC as long as the CRC remains an active player? Or does the decision to suspend the CRC open up a good opportunity to pursue full membership and participate in NAPARC's ecumenical role on this continent? In a discussion with the delegates of the FRC. They urged us to consider the latter direction. They argued that NAPARC's suspension of the CRC opens up for the URCNA a legitimate place at the table.

Secondly, although NAPARC appears uncertain of its task and purpose. it seems to us that it could function in a significant way alongside the ICRC. Presently, all its members with the exception of the CRC belong to the ICRC (though not all the North American members of the ICRC belong to NAPARC). Furthermore, the ICRC convenes several "continental" meetings of its member churches around the world. An annual meeting of the ICRC churches of North America in the NAPARC forum may have a very important place in the future of Reformed ecumenical relations.

For these reasons we recommend continuing with NAPARC as official observers to see what progress is made in clarifying its purpose and function and in handling the CRCNA.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Harry Zekveld



## APPENDIX 2

An Appeal to Faithful Reformed & Presbyterian Churches:

### A Vision for Mexico

To the Faithful Reformed & Presbyterian Churches in North America:<sup>1</sup>

The Alliance / Independent Reformed Churches (*ABC-IRC*), the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (*AP.PC*), the Canadian Reformed Church (*CRC*), the Christian Presbyterian Church (*CPC-Korean*), the Free Reformed Church (*FRC*), the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (*OCRC*), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (*OPC*), the Reformed Church in the US (*RCUS*), and the United Reformed Churches in NA (*URC*),

Concerning the Faithful Reformed/Presbyterian Churches in Mexico:

Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada en Mexico (*ARPC*)  
Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente en Mexico (*IPC*)  
Iglesia Presbiteriana Biblica Mexicana (*MBPC*)  
Iglesia Reformada en Mexico (*RCM*)

Grace, mercy and peace to your respective assemblies, inter-ecclesiastical committees, church leaders and consistories.

#### *I. A Godly Challenge: Towards the Birth of a New, Missionary Vision for Mexico*

The Lord Jesus, at the time of his return to glory, gave his marching orders to the apostles:

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

Nor did this dismay them. Earlier He had promised the gift of the Spirit. He also added that He would abide with them even to the end of the age.

These orders, since the apostles would not permanently continue on earth until the Savior-King’s return, now devolve upon those who are his faithful followers.

With that we make bold for the sake of Christ's cause to address the church federations above listed, believing that these are all committed to the infallible Scriptures as set forth in the officially adopted Reformed and Presbyterian confessions.

And since there are faithful churches of that kind in Mexico, unable because of their small size and strength to carry out the call to bring the Gospel in its purest and fullest form to vast portions of their nation, we present this Vision first to them for their prayerful review, evaluation and approval, and then to all those comprising the ICRC. Aside from one small denomination,<sup>2</sup> the faithful Reformed-Presbyterian churches in Mexico are presently without any official assistance from the far stronger and more numerous congregations north of Mexico’s borders. Should any or all of the last named seek to implement this Vision, careful Agreements should be drawn up and then faithfully pursued by the cooperating bodies involved.

All your church, indeed, have and are still engaged in bringing the precious Gospel to foreign lands.

But aware of this we dare to approach you leaders and people with this Appeal. Mexico for several reasons should rank high in your interest and concern:

- *It is a populous nation drifting confusedly in several directions.*
- *It has been ecclesiastically as well as spiritually abused for more than four centuries.*
- *It is a Spanish-speaking and growing nation, provides an open door to nearly all of Latin America.*
- *It already has a small but growing number of Reformed-Presbyterian congregations, church leaders, church-related institutions and programs which, however, are sorely in need of cooperation in the form of several kinds of assistance.*

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<sup>1</sup> This appeal is directed primarily to the NA member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), as well as to those seeking membership in or sympathetic with the stated goals of the ICRC.

<sup>2</sup> The *Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada* (the Mexican ARPC)

Brethren, our appeal is to you as churches in Canada and the United States which have, by God's grace, received already a rich spiritual heritage for years in your confessions and catechisms —together with an articulated Calvinistic life-and world-view still able, with divine blessing, to meet what Mexico so sorely needs in these times of its testing. Without this or a similar panoramic missionary perspective forged from our common heritage and blessing, vast portions of Mexico may not be reached with a transforming vision of God's sovereignty, made real in Christ's Lordship, for many generations. The appeal is thus as evident, as it is urgent.

## 2. *History: A Brief Summary*

Today Mexico is a country of 790,000 square miles with a population exceeding 93,000,000.

For three centuries after Cortez came with his small army, the land suffered under the iron-fist of Spain. Spanish soldiers and *grandeos* soon subjugated millions of Indians, condensing them to till the land, build the cities, and toil until an early death in the mines.

*Roman Catholicism.* With the conquerors came the Roman Catholic Church. At every point the priests and monks compromised the Gospel by combining Christian beliefs with Indian religious superstitions and practices. The converts were far too often compelled to labor hard and long on churches and cathedrals raised upon Indian temples without any appropriate reward. During this long period Protestants who happened to reach its shores were exiled, imprisoned and at times executed. Soon after the mid 18th century a new ferment, in the form of revolutionary ideas, was introduced among the educated who succumbed to secularism and agnosticism while often remaining nominal members of the church.

With Spain's control rapidly eroding, the struggle for independence began in 1810. Slowly but surely after decades the doors were open also for evangelical missionaries from the United States. Among the leaders were Presbyterians from various church federations. Not only were churches planted; schools and some medical facilities were also allowed. But with the second revolution beginning 'in 1910 the missionaries were compelled to leave because of threatening dangers. By 1927 the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) took power to somewhat stabilize the country. It still holds most of the political power today. In the late 1920s and early 1930s persecution broke out against the Roman Catholic clergy and monastic orders, as well as against evangelicals in places.

*Iglesia Presbiteriana Nacional* The National Presbyterian Church (NPC) of Mexico antedates this second revolution. It still claims a large number of Protestants. But many of the missionaries from the United States who returned shortly after 1930 were no longer solidly evangelical. Increasingly those who engaged in teaching at the seminaries, especially the NPC Seminary in Mexico City, were committed to forms of higher criticism neo-orthodoxy and, more recently, to liberation theology.<sup>3</sup> Today and thus we record with sorrow, the CRC, PCA and PC-USA work almost exclusively with the large National Presbyterian Church which, while having a sizable number of broadly evangelical pastors, has never purged itself of the teachings alien to Scripture and the historic creeds already noted. The greatest portion of Mexico, therefore, especially to the north of the nation, remains outside of a truly reformatory influence.

## 3. *Present Situation: Stalemate on the Front Lines*

The NPC remains the largest body of Presbyterians by far, with its five synods, its five seminaries and its many congregations. The others to whom also this Vision is directed are, by comparison, almost infinitesimally small. At an incremental rate of growth, then, there is no hope of their providing for a biblical reformation in the nation, even in two or three generations - that is, without the jump start this Vision seeks under the blessing of God:

*Iglesia Presbiteriana Asociada Reformada.* We begin with the oldest the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) in Mexico. Its work, strongly supported by the ARPC in the United States, is concentrated for more than a century along the Gulf coast, principally around Tampico and in the state of San Luis Potosi. It numbers about 7,000 members, and now has a recent and fast developing seminary, Ebenezer, in Tampico. A large group of volunteers from the ARPC churches in Columbia, SC, is engaged in erecting a commodious three-story building with all the amenities. The Mexican ARPC churches, while retaining independence, sustain close fraternal relations with the IPC of Mexico and especially with Seminario Juan Calvino in Mexico City: where the Rector of Eben-ezer is presently engaged in a doctoral program.

*Iglesia Presbiteriana Independiente.* The Independent Presbyterian Church in Mexico (IPC) owes its inception to Dr. Felipe Delgado, who, after seeking reform within the increasingly liberal NPC, left in 1948 with his congregation and a few like-minded pastors on primarily doctrinal grounds. This church leader has made himself exceptionally serviceable to the Reformed faith in Latin America by his translations of several works, especially the Systematic Theology of Prof. Louis Berkhof — a work

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<sup>3</sup> In some measure the work among the Associated Reformed Presbyterians of Mexico was not affected by such departures, that church maintaining its separation from the National Presbyterian Church. This trend may be soon reversed, with pastors of the ARPC in Mexico increasingly training at the NPC seminary in Mexico City.

which has become widely known throughout the Spanish-speaking world. It was he who invited the CRC to enter upon work in Mexico, in cooperation with the IPC, in 1961. For some fifteen years this went well. But because the Board of the CRC more than once broke the Articles of Agreement the synod of the IPC, after repeatedly seeking redress, broke off the relationship and determined to go on with the work.<sup>4</sup>

The IPC today has presently some 55 congregations, many of these with outposts. These are grouped in three presbyteries (the Southeast, River Region and Central presbyteries), each with its own Bible School to prepare lay evangelists and those trained to teach children and young people in the churches. At times these schools serve to lay foundations for training in the Seminary for those aspiring to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The total membership approaches 10,000.

East of Monterrey (by some 35 miles and south of Cadareyta) is the Mexican Maranatha Mission. In recent years it has entered into ecclesiastical affiliation with the IPC. This work was begun independently by the Rev. and Mrs. John Tucker, both graduates of RBC in Grand Rapids, MI, and brought up in the CRC. They had years earlier developed the Mexican Boat Mission, reaching out along the Panuco River (west of Tampico, to an area which be entered only by motor launch). When the CRC agreed to work with the IPC, they were promised that their work, which had within a few years led to the establishing of five congregations, would be faithfully continued. But the Board within a year broke that promise. The Tuckers, after seeking help in the States, then began their present work in 1969 in the Monterrey area. Here Bible training has been faithfully given to children and young people in a systematic way. Also three congregations nearby have been established, now as part of a hoped-for northern (Maranatha) Presbytery of the IPC.

West of Mexico City, in the state of Guerrero (close to Acapulco), a large group of Calvinist pentecostals (!), under the direction of a medical physician/pastor who is training at the Juan Calvino Seminary, is presently also seeking affiliation in what may become a western Presbytery of the IPC.

*Seminario Teologico Juan Calvino.* Until the devaluation of the peso in late 1995 the IPC maintained itself, although support of the Seminary and the Bible schools had to suffer. The congregations, many of them in remote rural areas, had all they could do to support their local pastors and programs. But the professors at Seminario Juan Calvino carried on valiantly; not only teaching for little more than a pittance but also pastoring small local congregations. Today the students, also because of the financial crisis, must work at a variety of jobs to maintain themselves and pay some tuition. One professor with two sons at university and in high school has by necessity been compelled to take on night work in a local bakery for the sake of his family. Yet despite these disruptions the Seminary training is continued with high standards.

Without doubt the Seminary has served well in several capacities. Even now it serves in three primary ways. First of all, a large group of young men are enrolled in the theological program preparing them for the ministry (a five-year Licentiate -“BD”- degree). In addition, the Seminary has a graduate program, offering either a three-year Masters degree (for those with a prior Licentiate) or five-year Doctors degree (for those with a prior Masters) to those who qualify. The graduate program enrolls approximately 25. Besides the Bible school under the supervision of the Central Presbytery, the Seminary sponsors an unusual, one-of-a-kind program in key cities by way of lectures and discussion for as many as 60 to 70 “licensed professionals” (physicians, lawyers, school teachers and superintendents, professors at other institutions, as well as business men) deeply concerned about finding biblical directives for their personal and professional lives. Here the Calvinistic life-and-world-view is presented vigorously, out of which a few Christian schools have emerged in recent years (the Seminary, wishing to guard the academic day-school structure of these schools in Ciudad Victoria, Queretaro and Mexico City, is concerned to turn over as quickly as possible this work to the Worldwide Christian Schools, Ancaster, ON). This Seminary program serves as an antidote to the secularism which is rampant in the schools, universities and civic life in Mexico. The professors, each of them in turn, also carry on a program of studies-by-extension in four other areas of Mexico, visiting these personally. What amazes us constantly is not only how much work they carry on diligently, but also how they are carrying on under a heavy load and many difficulties, and how many blessings we could provide for them with just a little encouragement, instruction in key areas and the materials they are sorely in need of.

*Iglesia Presbiteriana Biblica Mexicana.* The Mexican Bible Presbyterian Church (MBPC) has had an on again, off again relationship to the Bible Presbyterian Church in the US. Its primary mover, the Rev. Jorge Catalán,<sup>5</sup> is carrying-on a valiant effort in the area of southern Vera Cruz, with a dozen or more congregations and mission outposts and one incipient Bible School (do to a lack of funds, the Bible school is currently suspended). With little or no help from the BPC in the US, this small denomination is providing a conservative Presbyterian alternative in a difficult and strategic area of Mexico. Working in cooperation with the IPC, a number of its leaders have trained at the Juan Calvino Seminary.

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<sup>4</sup> The CRC still works, although in a diminishing way, with the break-away group from the IPC, which took on the name of “Iglesia Presbiteriana Reformada.” Because of its exclusive ties to the Mission of the CRC, the latter is not included in the mission strategy herein elaborated.

<sup>5</sup> No relation to Prof Jorge Ramirez Catalán of the IPC.

*Iglesia Reformada en Mexico.* The Reformed Church in Mexico (RCM) is a new and very small group, but with cordial relationship to the IPC. Its leaders have all trained in graduate programs of the Juan Calvino Seminary. It has a vibrant and growing congregation meeting near the Seminary, pastored by the Rev. Jorge Alvarez, with two small branch groups, one in Queretero and the other in Jalapa. They aspire to be a very strictly Calvinist church

In the light of the above we can now present our Vision.

4. *A New Strategy for Areas Unreached by the Reformed Faith: Our Vision for Mexico*

By this time we hope you have become aware of the deep spiritual need, as well as of the boundless opportunities which Mexico offers for missions. And the vision we have comprises a long-range program, possibly looking even twenty five years ahead into the next century.

We follow the pattern set forth by Voetius, the renown 16th century Reformed canonist, who in his *Disputationes* and his *Politica Ecclesiastica* addressed mission principles, methods and goals repeatedly over many decades as professor.

In his work we find echoes of the Great Commission.

Always the aim is to be threefold:

- (1) summoning all within reach of the Gospel unto repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus;
- (2) gathering such as believe with their children into congregations organized according to the Word;
- (3) instructing these in season and out of season by the Word to live in obedience to Christ as Savior and Lord in every relationship of life, to the glory of God.

Such will indeed meet opposition in Mexico.

The late Rev. Larry Roberts, veteran CRC missionary there for many years, spoke of the enemies of the cross in Mexico as the three C's: *Catholicism, Communism* and the *Cults*.

-The first binds people to a work-righteousness program in obedience to the church's rituals (in Mexico mixed with superstition).

-The second, in its socialistic form, binds people to the state with promises of bread for the day.

-The third comes with man-made religious notions which cater to earthly security and gain. Add to this "witch's brew" the rampant secularism which pervades especially the educated in cities and towns and you will realize why only the Reformed faith, consistently taught also as a life-and world-view, offers any sure and satisfying direction.

That there are a large and growing number of evangelicals is somewhat heartening. But among the Pentecostals the stress seems laid on cultivating an emotional high as fruit of the Spirit in which life's disappointments and distresses can be too forgotten. More sober evangelicals stress little beyond "getting saved for heaven," which alone seems to count while looking eagerly for Christ's imminent return. Such truncated presentations of the Gospel disregard the claims of the Savior as Lord of all in our lives and in the world today, and provide no clear direction for personal, family, professional, educational, political and social life according to the Word.

How much richer and more soul-satisfying is the Reformed faith in our sovereign God, and his grace in Christ which enables believers to live each day to His praise as Citizens of the Kingdom of God.

All of Mexico needs and should hear this full-orbed Gospel. In this conviction we propose the following:

5. *Recommendation:*

*Concentrating on Traditionally Non-Reformed /Presbyterian Areas of Mexico*

(1) that each North American church, in consultation with the appropriate church federation(s) in Mexico, receive and adopt its own field — one, two or more Mexican states according to its ability, as will produce a viable Presbytery. (See Appendix "A" for a possible division of labor). Where there is no Reformed/Presbyterian work, the Presbytery will hopefully become part of the IPC. Where work overlaps with the other smaller Reformed/ Presbyterian denominations, the missionary outreach will be divided according to the regional abilities of the smaller Mexican denomination to viably incorporate adjacent work.

This will require:

- settling on proper "Articles for Cooperation"
- determining how much can and will be spent annually,
- sending volunteers from time to time to visit, assist with repairing or erecting new buildings, etc. (See Appendix "C" for volunteer / language orientation).
- sending at least one ordained man, competent also in Spanish, to lead the Bible school programs and help the



national workers to expand the Gospel's outreach.

NOTE: Every effort should be maintained, by the NA missionary churches being invited to join this new effort, at not simply starting at some point a new denomination in Mexico. Since only faithful North American (ICRC) and Mexican Reformed-Presbyterian churches are participating, there is no excuse for further divisions.<sup>6</sup>

(2) the Mexican pastors and elders are to challenge the members of their congregations to catch this vision for their local area and involve them in outreach, also by helping to open up work in neighboring towns and villages:

-street preaching with singing and other music, wherever allowed, can with tract distribution and personal contacts, open up new fields

--training young people (together with congregational prayer meetings) before entering a new village, etc., is essential.

(3) already there are four or five Bible schools with whom the Canadian-US churches can work. These need strengthening, perhaps even a new and more vibrant vision. Here cooperation between the two ecclesiastical bodies (NA-Mexican) can prove exceptionally fruitful:

-such schools should be training for three kinds of work:

- field;
- (a) colporteurs who with tracts, Bible portions and personal contacts often can, open up a new
  - (b) Bible women to teach children and young people and especially women in need of counsel and help;
  - (c) lay evangelists who after two years of such training can begin with church planting and development until such time when the new group is sufficiently strong and stable enough to receive and support an ordained minister.

(4) the work of preparing and translating suitable Reformed materials is becoming ever more urgent. Much has been done on this level, but often this is addressed to students and pastors. Needed are materials for the common folk especially adults (on their level), as well as study guides (such as the Bible book-by-book), discussion materials, devotional materials for old and young (those available are often superficial and misleading). And this takes time and money for publishing. But such "sowing of the bread upon the waters" has the promise of rich rewards in the spiritual growth of the people.

(5) Since the ARPC seminary in Tampico is still in its initial stages of development, the "flagship" for spreading the Reformed faith throughout Mexico is at present the Seminary of the IPC in Mexico City, *Juan Calvino Theological Seminary*:

- it has been in existence, first as an Institute, since 1948
- it has a competent and committed faculty, with years of experience in teaching, assisted by several younger men
- it has gained an enviable reputation for its work, also by leaders outside of the Presbyterian fold
- it has a program aimed at reaching elders and church members, as well as students preparing for the ministry
- it has a respectable library of both Spanish and English books necessary to carry on its work
- it is centrally located in Mexico (in Coyoacan, a suburb of the capital next to the International Airport), and easily accessible from all parts of the nation, as from Canada and the United States.

But its needs, at present, are several and quite desperate if it is to be used as effectively as possible. This institution is supervised by its Board of Governors chosen by the general synod of the IPC. Since these needs are great, we are outlining them in **Appendix B** for your consideration.

V. *Our request:*

In summary we now respectfully ask that you as leaders in your respective congregations and church federations prayerfully consider the spiritual needs of Mexico as your next door neighbor by doing the following:

- (1) Reading and re-reading with discussion this material in your official gatherings, perhaps providing each member with a copy.
- (2) Acquainting yourself in some depth with Mexico's turbulent history as well as its opportunities.
- (3) Should you desire more information before coming to any tentative decision to enter the field, you may correspond with

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<sup>6</sup> The temptation - missionary experience shows - will be to start, at some low point in the labors of a missionary, a new Mexican church which "reflects our own denomination better" (translation: "I'm having problems with the nationals"! ). But this is completely counter to the spirit of the vision we offer, and if given in to by the sending churches in NA it is bound to cause spiritual grief and weakening in Mexico. It is unjust to use the good-faith invitation of a national church and its nationally trained pastors and workers to build "our own thing."

us or with the Seminary faculty.<sup>7</sup>

- (4) One of the best ways to become acquainted with Mexico and its missionary possibilities is to have two or three of your representatives visit the Seminary or some part of the land.
- (5) Let your congregation know of your interest, urge them to pray for Mexico. feed them the information they need, if you are minded to help realize this Vision.
- (6) After such preliminaries your body can be ready to enter into negotiations with the officers of that (those) church body (bodies) on the field where you desire to bring through your chosen missionaries the glorious Gospel of God's sovereign grace in Christ Jesus.

May the Holy Spirit lead you, dear brothers, in all your deliberations on Mexico and bless you in all the work which you have undertaken in your congregation(s) and elsewhere for the glory of our God. His peace be with you always.

Respectfully submitted.

Dr. Peter Y. DeJong,<sup>8</sup>  
*Phone (Illinois):*  
**(708) 946-9042**  
*Address (Illinois) April - November:*  
**86 Robin Road**  
**Beecher, IL**  
**60905**

Dr. John P. Roberts<sup>9</sup>  
*Phone Fax (U.S.):*  
**(210) 702-3659**  
*Address (U.S.):*  
**407 Rhett Drive**  
**Pharr, TX 78577**

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*Note: The writers are available to speak to any Church group, committee or assembly wishing to explore missionary work in Mexico.*  
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<sup>7</sup>Seminary Phone (525) 554-4901. Fax: (210) 554-4662. Prof. Jose M. Velaquez speaks English. and is additionally a member of the Inter-Ecclesiastical Committee of the IPC. Prof. Jorge Ramirez is an official English/Spanish translator.

<sup>8</sup>Dr. DeJong, an early missionary to India, is an experienced pastor in a long line of ministers and teachers. A former professor at Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI) and one of the founders of Mid-America Seminary, he is currently a long-term Visiting Professor at the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in Mexico City.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Roberts is a second generation missionary. His parents, pioneer missionaries in the early 40's to the Mayo of Navajoa, Mexico, began teaching in the 60's at the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary in Mexico City. Appointed in 1980 to the same institution Dr. Roberts also works and lives with the Mazahua of Michoacan.

*Division of the Labors in Mexico*

If the large country of Mexico is to be reached in our life-time with the Gospel as we cherish it, a clear plan is in order. This will require, should a number of Canadian and United States congregations and/or church federations agree to cooperate with confessionally Reformed and Presbyterian churches there, some mutually agreeable allocation of territories.

In this way, by common consent, each cooperating group would be free on the basis of "Articles of Cooperation," to carry out its own work without interference or competition from another as each reaches its own evangelism (formation of a presbytery/classis) and educational (formation of a Bible School) goals.

All we attempt here is by way of "bare bones" suggestions. Any change, of course, is negotiable with the IPC and others committed to carrying out the Vision. But in making our suggestions we have taken into consideration the size of the ecclesiastical bodies addressed. The estimates of size available to us are as follows:

- The Alliance / Independent Reformed and CR churches (unaffiliated) - 5,000
- The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church - 30,000 to 35,000
- The Canadian Reformed Church - 14,000 (churches in US known as "American Reformed")
- The Free Reformed Churches - 4,500 to 5,000
- The Christian Presbyterian (*formerly: Korean*) Church - 7,000 to 8,000
- The Orthodox Presbyterian Church - 23,000 members
- The Orthodox Christian Reformed Church - 1,800
- The Reformed Church in the United States - 4,100
- The United Reformed Churches in NA - 9,200

And now for your careful consideration suggestions on areas to be considered. Some, a few, have several and even strong IPC or ARPC congregations with established Bible institutes; most of the others are "virgin" territory with possibly only a few Presbyterian or kindred evangelical groups. Hence the patterns for working will in the nature of the case have to be somewhat different.

In all cases, however, we do suggest that the goals shall be to call people to Christ and to establish viable congregations, according to the New Testament pattern each developing into **self-governing, self-supporting** and **self-propagating** churches under the Spirit's empowerment. Thus the "Anglo" missionaries, both ordained and unordained should be ready to "work themselves out of their jobs" as soon as possible, and move on to new areas. Also, as soon as possible, presbyteries ("classes" in Reformed terminology) are to be organized, as well as a Bible school or each new presbytery.

Since already there is a growing number of well-trained Mexicans who can serve as pastors, assistants, teachers, etc., the cost for each mission enterprise need not be exorbitant, especially when two or three local congregations undertake specific assignments. Whenever possible, if volunteers can accomplish the work, they should be given priority.<sup>1</sup> The effect and impact of volunteers can be seen in many instances (see especially the work of the **De Bruins** (Bert & Armie), a retired couple from the OCRC who have volunteered and traveled all Mexico for many years). How much financial assistance will be given to national workers may well be left to the supporting churches. While Gospel workers, indeed, are worthy of support, we would caution against the folly of some mission Boards and agencies who win favor by sending large sums and so produce many "rice Christians."

And now for a possible apportionment of the wide and needy fields in Mexico (geographically, from north to south):

***Christian Presbyterian Church (Korean) -- the northwest***

*States:* Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonoma and Sinaloa

*Chief cities:* Tijuana, Ensenada, La Paz, Hermosillo, Culiacan

*Goal:* establish a "Northwest Presbytery"

*Develop:* "Northwest Presbytery Bible School"

***Free Reformed Church - north central***

*States:* Chihuahua, Durango

*Chief cities:* the same names

*Goal:* establish a "North Central Presbytery"

*Develop:* "North Central Presbytery Bible School"

***Orthodox Christian Reformed Church --far northeast, Tamaulipas Border***

*States:* From Nuevo Laredo and Reynosa to Matamoros

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix "C" for details on volunteer missionary orientation and Spanish language instruction.

*Goal:* establish a "Northeast Presbytery"  
*Develop:* "Northeast Presbytery Bible School"  
*(NOTE):* There are here a few National Presbyterian churches without care (on both sides of the border)

***United Reformed Churches in NA -- northeast***

*States:* Nuevo Leon, Coahuila, San Luis Potosi (west), Zacateras  
*Chief cities:* Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosi, Zacateas  
*Goal:* establish "Maranatha Presbytery"  
*Consolidate:* "Maranatha Presbytery Bible School"  
*(Note):* This is the location and work of the Mexican Maranatha Mission, with Bible school and a few emerging churches

***Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church - along east coast***

*States:* Tamaulipas (south of Matamoros), Vera Cruz, San Luis Potosi (east), with Tlaxcala and Puebla if possible  
*Chief cities:* Ciudad Victoria, Tampico, Xalapa, Puebla, Vera Cruz.  
*Goal:* Consolidate Mexican ARPC and Eben-ezer Seminary  
*Develop:* New Bible Schools  
*(Note):* Here are many congregations, several presbyteries, Bible schools (?) and a Seminary already with ARPC workers from the States

***Orthodox Presbyterian Church -central Mexico***

*States:* DF, Mexico, Hidalgo, Queretero, Guanajuato, Morelos and Michioacan  
*Chief cities:* Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Pachuca, Queretaro, Toluca and Morelia  
*Consolidate:* existent Central Presbytery & Westminster Bible School  
*Goal:* establish a "Mazahua Presbytery" among the Mazahua  
*Develop:* "Mazahua Presbytery Bible School" (Rancho Viejo or Miahuatlan)  
*Stimulate:* Adjacent "Iglesia Reformada en Mexico"  
*(Note):* The most populous area - here is a well-organized IPC presbytery, Bible school, Seminary

***Alliance & Independent Reformed churches - west central coast***

*States:* Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima and Aguascalientes  
*Chief cities:* Tepic, Guadalajara, Aguascalientes, Colima  
*Goal:* establish a "West Central-Coast Presbytery"  
*Develop:* "West Central Presbytery Bible School"  
*(Note):* In this area is an older work among the Tarascans carried on at one time by a Presbyterian under Wycliffe, Dr. Max Lathrop. But the work is not now well organized, and the congregations without care are being misled by Pentecostals and Baptists.

***Reformed Church in the United States - south central***

*States:* Guerrero, Oaxaca, with possibly Puebla  
*Chief cities:* Acapulco, Chilpancingo, Oaxaca City  
*Goal:* establish a "South Central Presbytery"  
*Develop:* "South Central Bible School"  
*(Note):* Largely virgin territory for Presbyterians but with great possibilities; will guide a dozen or more existent Pentecostal churches, near Acapulco, into Reformed faith.

***XXX ??? -- the River Region***

*States:* Tabasco, Southern Vera Cruz, parts of Chiapas  
*Chief cities:* Villahermosa, El Triunfo, Coatzacoalcos, Palenque, Yahlon  
*Consolidate:* existent River Region Presbytery & Bible School  
*Stimulate:* Adjacent Iglesia Biblica Presbiteriana  
*Goal:* establish a "Ch'ol Presbytery" among Ch'ol people  
*Develop:* "Ch'ol Bible School"

***Canadian Reformed Church - the large southeast Peninsula***

*States:* Campeche, Yucatan, Quintana Roo  
*Chief cities:* Campeche, Merida, Can Cun  
*Consolidate:* Southeast Presbytery, Campeche Bible School as BD-granting Seminary  
*Goal:* establish a "Maya Presbytery" among Maya of Quintana Roo  
*Develop:* "Can-Cun Bible School"  
*(Note):* Here is the largest presbytery, with many congregations, largely rural; many pastors, Bible school, wishes to be doctrinally Calvinist

All missionaries, ordained and unordained, should have the full confidence of their sending churches, preferably even with some pastoral or mission experience. If they have families they should be prepared to make sacrifices. For the fruitful expansion of the Gospel work, we would warn against having missionaries from the north settling down together in some large metropolis. Experience shows that this keeps them as a small group separate from the work and the people. Often in such groups tensions also arise. Each worker from the north should be willing and able to work well with one or two well-trained nationals who know the nuances of Mexican social customs. In addition, if several churches from the north take on work, they would do well to agree among each to what extent they will subsidize national workers in any new field, lest the one pay far more than the other. An ideal beginning missionary team might consist of:

1 ordained pastor  
1 or 2 lay workers  
several volunteers  
1 national pastor, several trained national lay leaders

Buildings may also have to be purchased or erected. All this can be done best by close consultation with the appropriate Mexican church bodies and their leaders. The same holds true for properties to be rented. There are strict Mexican laws to be observed, lest disappointment and distress be experienced. In the large cities, especially Mexico City, the cost may easily prove to be exorbitant and wasteful.

## Appendix "B"

### *Unique Place and Task of the Juan Calvino Theological Seminary*

With this we call attention to the great needs of Juan Calvino Theological Seminary. Our concern is for both the professors with their assistants and the structure itself.

(1) Already we called attention to the unbearable load which all the professors are carrying. Also the needs of the students.

- the professors, all experienced and well-educated, should be subsidized, so they can be released from heavy pastoral labors and working in labors which take them away from their calling. They should be able to spend their time on the high calling for which they are well qualified.
- volunteer pastors and professors from the NA churches should give willingly of their time to give lectures and conferences at the Theological Seminary in Mexico City in their areas of expertise, relieving the pressure on the few national professors.
- the library contains many fine works. But this needs cataloguing as well as additions, for which no moneys have been available. Perhaps a few competent volunteers could, within two or three months, render valuable help, as some already have.
- rooms are available for student lodging at the Seminary, but need re-doing. Also the Seminary funds do not permit paying for food, bedding, etc. But having 12 to 16 students living on the place is advantageous for their studies as well as for safeguarding property. And the cost need not be out of reach. These men could and would clean, cook, do minor repairs, etc., for what they receive as help.
- besides additional translations, the professors should be enabled to publish again at regular intervals the "*Revista Teológica*," their theological journal.

(2) Of somewhat secondary but urgent need is the complete refurbishing of the Seminary building. It is 60 or more years old, and was not originally designed as a Seminary building. On behalf of the IPC the CRC Board purchased it for the churches in the 1960s, and turned it over completely to the IPC when the national church became fully synodically organized in 1979. Ever since, and especially in the last 10 years, little or no money has been available for even modest repairs.

A great deal can be done by small groups of *volunteers*. Presently the Yskes (Arnold & Henny), a volunteer CRC couple from the Okanagan Valley, BC, have been doing much appreciated work. But there are many more basic and expensive repairs which also need to be done:

- the most necessary and expensive is a complete overhaul or replacement of the plumbing system with access to the city water;
- next comes immediate careful review and repair of the electrical system;
- then all the bathrooms with showers need attention;
- every room and hall needs painting sorely;
- the roof needs close attention;
- the entrance room with secretary's desk needs new furnishings; the present one is a disgrace to God's Kingdom
- the library needs careful attention; also if possible some study carrels for students
- not to be forgotten is the kitchen
- a new refrigerator and also some additional dishes, utensils and painting with window cleaning;
- and now the Seminary Chapel, intended as a memorial to the late Rev. Larry Roberts - some carpet, pews, etc., for services and especially student preaching exercises, with a few storage areas and closets.

Hardly can all this be done at once. But the treasurer in charge of the building has drawn up tentative plans, including nearly all the above. Also no one church federation should be asked to engage in this project alone; the cost is high. But together with a spirit of loving cooperation Juan Calvino Theological Seminary would begin to look also visibly as it should. We should not fail to mention that some of the ruinous effects of the 1985 earthquake are still present although the building itself is structurally sound.

Again we are in this Vision for Mexico presenting you with much, perhaps too much. But all need not be done, even here, within in a single year or two. What is important is that we start, before a unique Calvinist outpost in Latin America succumbs to the grinding economy Mexico is presently experiencing.

Finally, it should be noted that nothing, of all of the above arises from petitions from the Mexican believers and churches. While they are as we know at first hand in need of your prayers, encouragement and even financial assistance, they would not and are not asking with hands outstretched. *The appeal comes from the two of us and other concerned brethren, who are pleading with you in the name of your brothers and sisters in Christ in Mexico.*

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*For tax-exempt purposes in Canada, funds designated for all of the above activities can be made available to the Seminary by making out your cheque to Worldwide Christian Schools.*

*Send the same to:*

Worldwide Christian Schools  
(Mexico Project)  
P.O. Box 81129  
RPO Fiddlers Green  
Ancaster, ON L9G 4X1

## SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

### Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity for the Synod of Hudsonville, 1999

Since two noteworthy meetings have taken place since submitting our report to Synod, it seems desirable to acquaint the delegates with their substance in this manner.

#### 1. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches

On March 27, 1999 the committee's secretary attended the consistorial conference in Bowmanville, Ontario where their four churches met as councils and interested church members, almost filling the church auditorium. Three presentations were made outlining the reasons for the existence, the distinctives, the Bible versions, Sunday School and catechism material, and song books of the OCRC, the Canadian Reformed Churches, and the United Reformed Churches.

After lunch an extended question period took place, with many questions directed toward our federation. While considerable interest was shown in becoming part of the United Reformed Churches some day, a measure of hesitation was clearly evident. More time and exchanges need to take place before all of these four churches are prepared to move forward in church unity. The committee intends to continue its involvement with the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches as the Lord leads us and the opportunity exists.

#### 2. Protestant Reformed Churches

Preparations for the all-day conference with the Protestant Reformed Committee for Contact with Other Churches were extensive. In addition to reading the wealth of material graciously provided to our committee by the Reformed Churches on the subject of common grace, papers were prepared detailing our position in an unofficial manner, since the United Reformed Churches have not addressed this doctrine.

On April 26, 1999 the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity met in Grandville to discuss preparations for the next day's meeting with the Protestant Reformed committee, and also agreed to arrange for a meeting with all Ecumenical Observers from the various federations on the second day of Synod. Rev. R. Pontier was given the assignment to produce a Press Release of the conference with the Protestant Reformed committee, which when approved by the two committees will be available to the church press and to the churches.

Our committee produced two papers for the conference, and both were received with appreciation and considerable agreement. The first paper of five pages is entitled, "God's Grace: Common or Covenantal?" We wrote, "It is equally clear that the 1924 (CRC) declaration concerning common grace as well as the subsequent blatantly hierarchical actions in deposing faithful consistories and ministers, and whatever other church order or doctrinal pronouncements there may have been, have no official place nor standing in the United Reformed Churches." We noted that ". . . grace and covenant are both factors in the Creator's work at the beginning of time, and were not merely added in human history for the sake of God's salvation in Christ of the elect." The committee concluded in its paper that, "God's grace is always covenantal or given to those in covenant with God."

The second paper consists of eight pages divided into three sections, each dealing with one of the Three Points of Common Grace as formulated by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. The document is entitled "Unofficial Response of the United Reformed Churches to the PRC Clarifications on the 'Three Points of Common Grace.'" The committee writes on the First Point about God's favourable attitude toward mankind in General, "want to begin by saying that we deeply regret the 1924 CRC decision on 'common grace' because it is poor theology, not well grounded in the Scripture or confessions and it was and continues to be destructive of the unity of the church."

We also note that "grace" in the Scriptures is always in the context of redemption in Christ, stating that "the grace we read about in Scripture is saving grace . . . Neither Scripture nor the Confessions use the word 'grace' to describe God's dealings with the reprobate. Neither should we."

In its writing about the First point, the committee stated that "we find the arguments of Synod for a 'common grace' per se unconvincing, (but) we are constrained by a straightforward reading of the texts marshaled to confess that God loves His creation," and shows His goodness and benevolence to all creation. The paper notes that "God always accomplishes what He has decreed according to His good pleasure, whether it be the temporal welfare of His creature, the display of His own character, the salvation of the elect, or the greater condemnation of the reprobate."

With respect to the "general offer of the gospel" we have written, "While we are not necessarily convinced by the logic that says that an offer presupposes the ability to comply, we nevertheless reject any interpretation of Scripture or the Confessions which depicts God as having unfulfilled or frustrated desires or which depicts God as having contradictory wills within Himself. The Lord's intentions are never thwarted."

On the Second Point the committee wrote that we have no difficulty with the wording of the Synod concerning the restraint of sin in individuals and the community, but object to the setting of common grace. In our paper we stated that "however the Lord's sovereign purpose of restraint is carried out, it is not such that the Holy Spirit works with the 'capital' of man's remaining natural goodness. There is no such thing . . . The restraining work of the Holy Spirit, in whatever form it should come, is never such that it is agreeable to the natural state of carnal man. That would indeed be to deny the Biblical doctrine of total depravity."

On the Third Point concerning civil righteousness by the unregenerate we wrote that Scripture demonstrates that the wicked outwardly do deeds that conform to God's law and "may have a good effect by the overruling of God's providence, nevertheless it must be maintained that the deeds themselves are sinful and bring displeasure to God." In opposing common grace and advancing the doctrine of providence in this setting, the committee paraphrased the Canons III/IV,4. "Man remains man. We can thank God that by His providence we can still live in a world where even totally depraved sinners know something of outward moral behavior. Because of these vestiges of natural light we can still enjoy something of the beauty of God's creation, even for example in the artistic works of those who do not know Him."

The consensus of both parties at the conference was that continued dialogue between the two federations should be sought in due time.

### **3. Concluding Comments**

It has become evident to the committee that in carrying out Synod's mandate to pursue ecumenical relations a certain measure of doctrinal study and articulation is unavoidable. Our report of the meeting with the Protestant Reformed Committee of Contact is rather extensive and somewhat explicit in order also to demonstrate that reality. When the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity recommends to Synod that the committee's work be **approved**, we do not request that our formulation in the dialogue with various churches to be adopted, but that Synod expresses its approval of the manner in which the committee carries out its work. We humbly suggest that if Synod merely were to receive the committee's report, we and the churches we are mandated to work with would not be clear whether our pursuit has Synod's approbation. Our papers are available to the churches from the secretary.

Humbly submitted,

P. Vellenga, chairman   R. Stienstra, secretary



**FEDERATIVE STRUCTURE COMMITTEE (UNITED STATES AND CANADA)**

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

**RESOLUTION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE REGARDING  
FEDERATIVE STRUCTURE**

WHEREAS it is essential to distinguish between the ecclesiastical and corporal functions of the Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America;

AND WHEREAS it is appropriate to allow the assemblies of the churches that unrestricted authority for ecclesiastical matters; (Article 16, C.O.);

AND WHEREAS it is appropriate to adequately safeguard assets, right (including intellectual property), and common undertakings of the churches in common, as distinguished from the property of individual congregations (Article 32 C.O.);

THEREFORE, it is resolve as follows:

8. The Federation shall cause the incorporation of a U.S. and Canadian corporation, which shall be not-for-profit and shall have as its members and directors, the individuals appointed by the Federation at its regular meeting of Synod.
9. These corporations shall have only restricted powers as granted to them by the Federation, and shall at all times be deemed to be subservient to the Federation, and remain accountable to the Federation, at its regular meetings in Synod.
10. The corporations shall have the constitution and bylaws as set out in Appendix "A" and "B" attached, subject only to change in form (but not substance) to allow for compliance with the applicable U.S. and Canadian laws.
11. The corporations shall be conjoined by way of a Joint Venture Agreement to meet the requirements respecting the international use of charitable funds and property.
12. Any further change to the constitution and bylaws shall only occur after such proposed change is approved by Synod.

EACH AND EVERY of the foregoing resolutions are hereby passed by the members of the joint committee this 01 day of October, 1997.

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

OF

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA

Pursuant to the provisions of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporations Act, Act 162, Public Acts of 1982 (the "Act"), as amended, the corporation executes the following articles:

ARTICLE 1

The name of the corporation is: United Reformed Churches in North America.

ARTICLE 2

The corporation is a nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. The purposes of the corporation are the following:

1. To administer the property, assets, rights, and undertakings of the Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America (the Federation) as directed by the Federation;
2. To carry out such activities for the promotion of the well being of the Federation and its member churches as such churches through their Synod may direct from time to time;
3. To enter into contracts, negotiate agreements and manage moneys of the Federation;
4. To receive funds directly and/or through offerings in the churches for the support of the activities, committees, functions, and programs of the corporation and/or for the purpose of supporting religious, charitable and educational organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended;
5. To conduct a literature ministry for the production and distribution of Christian periodicals and writings, and other publications needed to carry out the religious and charitable objectives and purposes of the corporation, as directed by the Federation.
6. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the formation of this corporation does not establish a presbyterial synodical structure for purposes of property ownership. All congregations affiliating with this corporation do so under a congregational synodical structure.

ARTICLE 3

The corporation is organized upon a nonstock, membership basis. The corporation possesses no real or personal property. The corporation is to be financed from contributions for its members.

ARTICLE 4

The street address and mailing address of the initial registered office is 2019 Porter, S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49509. The name of the initial resident agent at the registered office is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ARTICLE 5

The name and address of the incorporators are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ARTICLE 6

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall enure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, directors, officers, or other private persons. However, the corporation shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article II. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of the propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. The corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing and distribution of statements), and political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (1) by a corporation exempt from federal income tax under IRC 501 (c) (3) or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code of (2) by a corporation whose contributions are deductible under section IRC 170 (e) (92) or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

ARTICLE 7

On dissolution of the corporation, after paying or providing for the payment of all of the liabilities of the corporation, the corporation's assets shall be distributed (1) for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of IRC 501 (c) (3), or the corresponding section of any future tax code or (2) to the federal government, or to a state local government, for a public purpose. Any assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the circuit court of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is them located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations that the court shall determine and that are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

ARTICLE 8

No member of the board of directors of the corporation who is a volunteer director, as that term is defined int he Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act (the "Act"), shall be personally liable to this corporation or its members for monetary damages for a breach of the director's fiduciary duty; provided, however, that this provision shall not eliminate or limit the liability of a director for any other following:

1. a breach of the director's duty of loyalty to the corporation or its members;
2. acts or omissions not in good faith or that involve intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
3. a violation of section 551 (1) of the Act;
4. a transaction from which the director derived an improper personal benefit;
5. an act or omission occurring before the filing of these articles or incorporation; or
6. an act or omission that is grossly negligent.

The corporation assumes all liability to any person, other than the corporation or its members, for all acts or omissions of a director who is a volunteer, as defined in the Act, incurred int he good faith performance of the director's duties. However, the corporation shall not be considered to have assumed any liability to the extent that such assumption is inconsistent with the status of the corporation as an organization described in IRC 501 (c) (3) or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

If the Act is amended after the filing of these articles of incorporation to authorize the further elimination of limitation of the liability of directors of nonprofit corporations, then the liability of members of the board of directors, in addition to that described in this Article VII, shall be assumed by the corporation or eliminated or limited to the fullest extent permitted by the Act as so amended. Such an elimination, limitation, or assumption of liability is not effective tot he extent that it is inconsistent with the status of the corporation as an organization described in IRC 501 (c) (3) or corresponding section of any future federal tax code. No amendment or repeal of this Article VIII shall apply to or have to or have any effect of the liability or alleged liability of any member of the board of directors of this corporation for or with respect to any acts or omissions occurring before the effective date of any such amendment or repeal.

ARTICLE 9

The corporation assumes liability for all acts or omissions of a volunteer if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The volunteer was acting or reasonably believed he or she was acting within the scope of his or her authority.
2. The volunteer was acting in food faith.
3. The volunteer's conduct did not amount to gross negligence or willful and wanton misconduct.
4. The volunteer's conduct was not an intentional tort.
5. The volunteer's conduct was not a tort arising out of the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle for which tort liability may be imposed as provided in section 3135 of the Insurance Code of 1956, Act No. 218 of the Public Acts of 1956, being section 500.3135 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

These Articles of Incorporation are signed by the incorporators on \_\_\_\_\_, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Return this Document to:

Document Prepared by:

BYLAWS  
OF  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

**PREAMBLE**

Believing that all things should be done decently and in order, we hereby adopt the following Bylaw for the regulation, management, and government of this corporation.

**ARTICLE 1 - Objectives and Purposes of Corporation**

The corporation is organized and operated exclusively for religious and charitable objectives and purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended. The general religious and charitable objectives and purposes of the corporation shall be those stated in Article II of the corporation's Articles of Incorporation.

**ARTICLE 2 - The Basis**

The basis of this corporation is the Holy Bible which we believe, confess, and declare to be the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God, and our only rule for faith and practice.

**ARTICLE 3 - Forms of Unity**

The corporation believes and is fully persuaded that the Reformed Creeds do fully agree with the Word of God and therefore do subscribe to the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

**ARTICLE 4 - Church Government**

The corporation shall be subject to the policies, directives, instructions, mandates and/or guidance of the Federation as expressed by its Synod from time to time. All procedural matters shall, as much as possible, be dealt with by analogy to the church order of the United Reformed Churches in North America.

**ARTICLE 5 - Membership**

The members of the corporation are communicant members of the United Reformed Churches in North America, duly elected from time to time at the Synod of the churches pursuant to the Church Order.

**ARTICLE 6 - Meeting of Members**

The members of the corporation shall meet at least once every year or as required by the Federation.

**ARTICLE 7 - Notice of Meetings**

Notice of the corporation meetings and assemblies shall be given in writing, 14 days prior to the meeting and shall include an agenda.

**ARTICLE 8 - Amendments to Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws**

The members of the corporation may alter, amend, or repeal the Articles of Incorporation and/or the Bylaws, by majority vote in the manner provided by law, however no alternatives, amendment or repeal shall take effect unless approved by the Synod of the United Reformed Church in North America.

**ARTICLE 9 - Indemnification**

9.01 Nonderivative Actions. Subject to all of the other provisions of this article, the corporation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding. This includes any civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative proceeding, whether formal or informal (other than an action by or in the right of the corporation). Such indemnification shall apply only to a person who was or is a director or officer of the corporation, or who was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic

corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust or other enterprise, whether for profit or not for profit. The person shall be indemnified and held harmless against expenses (including attorney fees), judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with such action, suit or proceeding, if the person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation or its members. With respect to any criminal action or proceeding, the person must have had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not by itself create a presumption that (a) the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that the person reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation or its members or (b) with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, the person had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

9.02 Derivative Actions. Subject to all of the provisions of this article, the corporation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party to, or is threatened to be made a party to, any threatened, pending, or completed action or suit by or in the right of the corporation to procure a judgment in its favor because (a) the person was or is a director or officer of the corporation or (b) the person was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, whether or not for profit. The person shall be indemnified and held harmless against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorney fees) and amounts paid in settlement incurred by the person in connection with such action or suit if the person acted in good faith and in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the corporation or its members. However, indemnification shall not be made for any claim, issue, or matter in which such person has been found liable to the corporation unless and only to the extent that the court in which such action or suit was brought has determined on application that, despite the adjudication of liability but in view of all circumstances of the case, such person is fairly and reasonably entitled to indemnification for the expenses which the court considers proper.

9.03 Expenses of Successful Defense. To the extent that a person has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in sections 9.01 or 9.02 of this article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in the action, suit, or proceeding, the person shall be indemnified against expenses (including actual and reasonable attorney fees) incurred in connection with the action and in any proceeding brought to enforce the mandatory indemnification provided by this article.

9.04 Contract Right. Limitation on Indemnity. The right to indemnification conferred in this article shall be a contract right and shall apply to services of a director or officer as an employee or agent of the corporation as well as in such person's capacity as a director or officer. Except as provided in section 9.03 of this article, the corporation shall have no obligations under this article to indemnify any person in connection with any proceeding, or part thereof, initiated by such person without authorization by the board.

9.05 Determination That Indemnification Is Proper. Any indemnification under sections 9.01 or 9.02 of this article (unless ordered by a court) shall be made by the corporation only as authorized in the specific case. The corporation must determine that indemnification of the person is proper in the circumstances because the person has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in sections 9.01 or 9.02, whichever is applicable. Such determination shall be made in any of the following ways:

- (a) By a majority vote of a quorum of the board consisting of directors who were not parties to such action, suit, or proceeding.
- (b) If the quorum described in clause (a) above is not obtainable, then by a committee of directors who are not parties to the action. The committee shall consist of not less than two disinterested directors.
- (c) By independent legal counsel in a written opinion.
- (d) By the members.

9.06 Proportionate Indemnity. If a person is entitled to indemnification under sections 9.01 or 9.02 of this article for a portion of expenses, including attorney fees, judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement, but not for the total amount, the corporation shall indemnify the person for the portion of the expenses, judgments, penalties, fines, or amounts paid in settlement for which the person is entitled to be indemnified.

9.07 Expense Advance. Expenses incurred in defending a civil or criminal action, suit, or proceeding described in sections 9.01 or 9.02 of this article may be paid by the corporation in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the person involved to repay the expenses, if it is ultimately determined that the person is not entitled to be indemnified by the corporation. The undertaking shall be an unlimited general obligation of the person on whose behalf advances are made but need not be secured.

9.08 Nonexclusivity of Rights. The indemnification or advancement of expenses provided under this article is not exclusive of other rights to which a person seeking indemnification or advancement of expenses may be entitled

under a contractual arrangement with the corporation. However, the total amount of expenses advanced or indemnified from all sources combined shall not exceed the amount of actual expenses incurred by the person seeking indemnification or advancement of expenses.

9.09 Indemnification of Employees and Agents of the Corporation. The corporation may, to the extent authorized from time to time by the board, grant rights to indemnification and to the advancement of expenses to any employee or agent of the corporation to the fullest extent of the provisions of this article with respect to the indemnification and advancement of expenses of directors and officers of the corporation.

9.10 Former Directors and Officers. The indemnification provided in this article continues for a person who has ceased to be a director or officer and shall inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

9.11 Insurance. The corporation may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who (a) was or is a director, officer, employee, or agent of the corporation or (b) was or is serving at the request of the corporation as a director, officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise. Such insurance may protect against any liability asserted against the person and incurred by him or her in any such capacity or arising out of his or her status as such, whether or not the corporation would have power to indemnify against such liability under this article or the laws of the state of Michigan.

9.12 Changes in Michigan Law. If there are any changes in the Michigan statutory provisions applicable to the corporation and relating to the subject matter of this article, then the indemnification to which any person shall be entitled shall be determined by such changed provisions, but only to the extent that any such change permits the corporation to provide broader indemnification rights than such provisions permitted the corporation to provide before any such change.

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#### **ARTICLE 10 - Fiscal Year**

This fiscal year of the corporation shall end on

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_, 1999

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Secretary

## **SCHEDULE "B"**

### **TO THE RESOLUTION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

### **PROPOSED CANADIAN VERSION OF ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION**

### **AND BYLAWS**

To the Minister of Industry.

1

The undersigned hereby apply to the Minister of Industry for the grant of a charter by letters patent under the provisions of Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act* constituting the undersigned, and such other persons as may become members of the Corporation thereby created, a body corporate and politic under the name of

### **UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

The undersigned have satisfied themselves and are assured that the proposed name under which incorporation is sought is not the same or similar to the name under which any other company, society, association or firm, in existence is carrying on business in Canada or is incorporated under the laws of Canada or any province

thereof or so nearly resembles the same as to be calculated to deceive and that it is not a name which is otherwise on public grounds objectionable.

2

The applicants are individuals of the full age of eighteen years with power under law to contract. The name, the address and the occupation of each of the applicants are as follows:

**NAME OF APPLICANT**

address of applicant - profession of applicant

**NAME OF APPLICANT**

address of applicant - profession of applicant

**NAME OF APPLICANT**

address of applicant - profession of applicant

**NAME OF APPLICANT**

address of applicant - profession of applicant

**NAME OF APPLICANT**

address of applicant - profession of applicant

The said (names of applicants) will be the first directors of the Corporation.

3

The objects of the Corporation are:

1. To administer and carry out the common objectives of the Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America ("the Federation") as follows:
  - (a) To administer the property, assets, rights, and undertakings of the Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America (the Federation) as directed by the Federation;
  - (b) To carry out such activities for the promotion of the well being of the Federation at its member churches as such churches through their Synod may direct from time to time;
  - (c) To enter into contracts, negotiate agreements and manage moneys of the Federation;
  - (d) To receive funds directly and/or through offerings in the churches for the support of the activities, committees, functions, and programs of the corporation and/or for the purpose of supporting religious, charitable and educational organizations exempt from taxation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended;
  - (e) To conduct a literature ministry for the production and distribution of Christian periodicals and writings, and other publications needed to carry out the religious and charitable objectives and purposes of the corporation, as directed by the Federation.
2. Provided that the objects shall include only those which are, at law, exclusively charitable and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, for the attainment of the above objects and as incidental and ancillary thereto, to exercise any of the powers as prescribed by the Canada Corporations Act or any other statutes or laws from time to time applicable, except where such power is contrary to the statutes or common law applicable to charities and in particular without limiting the generality of the foregoing:
  - (a) to solicit, receive, hold, invest and administer funds hereafter given to it exclusively for such charitable purposes as above set forth, without being limited to investments authorized by law for trustees, and to that end, to take and receive, by bequest, devise, legacies, gift, grant, donation or benefit of trust, and enter into agreement, contracts and undertakings incidental thereto;
  - (b) to use, apply, give, devote, accumulate or distribute from time to time any part of the fund or funds of the Corporation and/or the income therefore for the above charitable purposes by such means as may from time to time seem expedient to its directors;

- (c) to solicit, accept receive acquire by purchase, lease, agreement, grant, donation, legacy, gift, bequest or otherwise, any kind of real or personal property, and to enter into and carry out agreements, undertakings, and conditions in connection therewith;
- (d) to acquire rights, privileges, licences, permits and concessions necessary or desirable; and
- (e) to acquire by purchase, lease, devise, gift, or otherwise, any kind of real or personal property, and to hold, such real property or interest there in as is determined by the directors of the Corporation to be reasonably necessary for the actual use and occupation of the Corporation, or for carrying on its charitable undertaking, and to sell, dispose of , and convey the same or any part thereof.

4

The operations of the Corporation may be carried on throughout Canada and elsewhere.

5

The place within Canada where the head office of the Corporation is to be situated is the City of \_\_\_\_\_, in the province of Ontario.

6

In accordance with section 65 of The Canada Corporation Act, it is provided that, when authorized by by-law, duly passed by the directors and sanctioned by at least two-thirds of the votes cast at a special general meeting of the members duly called for considering the by-law, the directors of the corporation may from time to time

- a) borrow money upon the credit of the corporation;
- b) limit or increase the amount to be borrowed;
- c) issue debentures or other securities of the corporation;
- d) pledge or sell such debentures or other securities of such sums and at such prices as may be deemed expedient;
- e) secure any such debentures, or other securities, or any other present or future borrowing or liability of the corporation, by mortgage, hypothec, charge or pledge of all or any currently owned or subsequently acquired real and personal, movable and immovable, property of the Corporation and the undertaking and rights of the corporation.

Any such by-law may provide for the delegation of such powers by the directors to such officers or directors of the corporation to such extent and in such manner as may be set out in the by-law.

Nothing herein limits or restricts the borrowing of money by the corporation on bills of exchange or promissory notes made, drawn, accepted or endorsed by and on behalf of the corporation.

8

It is specifically provided that in the event of dissolution or winding-up of the corporation, all its remaining assets after payment of its liabilities shall be distributed equally among the Independent Christian Reformed Churches in Canada, provided such are charities registered with Revenue Canada Taxation for the purposes of the Income Tax Act of Canada, failing which, to one or more charities registered with Revenue Canada Taxation for the purposes of the Income Tax Act of Canada which adhere to the Statement of Faith contained herein.

9

The Corporation is to carry on its operations without pecuniary gain to its members, and any profits of other accretions to the corporation are to be used in promoting its objects.

DATED at the City of \_\_\_\_\_, in the Province of Ontario, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1997.



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(name of applicant)

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(name of applicant)

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(name of applicant)

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(name of applicant)

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(name of applicant)

BYLAWS  
OF  
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

**PREAMBLE**

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Dated \_\_\_\_\_, 1997

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

RESOLUTION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE REGARDING FEDERATIVE STRUCTURE

WHEREAS the Federation of United Reformed Churches in North America has approved the organization of common property by way of a U.S. and Canadian non-profit corporation;

AND WHEREAS it is appropriate to implement the aforesaid decision;

THEREFORE, it is resolved as follows:

1. That the incorporation of these US and Canadian Corporations proceed forthwith.
2. That the following members be elected to act as incorporators and first directors:

(a) for the US corporation:

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(b) for the Canadian corporation:

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3. That the corporations be authorized to enter into a Joint Venture Agreement;
4. That the directors report to the next Synod of the Federation with respect to the implementation of this resolution.

## URCNA-OPC, Study Committee Report

1999 Synod

Esteemed brothers,

In response to Overture 77 from Classis -Midwest, the Second Synod of the United Reformed Churches decided to appoint a study committee to serve the churches with analysis and recommendations. The mandate of this committee is “to study the Confessional Standards Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory of Worship of the OPC with regard to the similarities and differences between them and the Confessional Standards and Church Order of the URCNA in order to work toward ecclesiastical unity with the OPC” (Minutes of the Second Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America, Art. XXVII, C.2., pp. 10-11). The members of the committee are Mr. Robert Clausing, Rev. Joghinda Gangar, Rev. Paul Ipema, Dr. Nelson Kloosterman, Mr. Dave Perron, with Dr. W. Robert Godfrey as advisor.

In addition to reading and studying the documents identified in the mandate the committee members have received for review and analysis two additional documents, “Three Forms of Unity / Westminster Standards Study Committee Report” (proposed for adoption to the former Alliance of Reformed Churches), and “Recent Criticisms of the Westminster Confession of Faith,” by Rowland S. Ward, an essay included in Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

The committee members have not yet met in person to prepare a document for the churches to review. We would hope to have such meetings, if possible, during the summer and fall of 1999.

To prepare for the committee's report and recommendations about ecclesiastical unity with the OPC, the councils and churches are encouraged to read, study, and discuss the ecclesiastical documents mentioned above in our committee mandate.

Respectfully submitted.

For the committee,

Rev. Paul Ipema, secretary

**PSALTER HYMNAL COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**Synod 1999**

1. MANDATE

Our committee was mandated by Synod 1997 “to explore what is required to produce, reproduce, or obtain a Psalter Hymnal.” The grounds for this mandate were

- A. A Common psalter hymnal would promote unity among the churches of our federation;
  - B. The *Psalter Hymnal* presently used in the Majority of our churches is presently out of print,
  - C. The process of producing a psalter hymnal is lengthy it would be wise to begin the process as soon as possible.
- (Minutes of Synod, October 1997, Article LXII, C. [pp.33-34])

2 PRODUCING A PSALTER HYMNAL

The task of producing a new Psalter Hymnal for the URC will include:

- 1) determining what songs will be included
- 2) obtaining copyrights for all songs not in public domain,
- 3) determining other material to be included (Liturgical forms, 3 Forms of Unity, Creeds, Prayers, etc.) and formatting the book accordingly,
- 4) typesetting every page,
- 5) publishing & binding.

The first four steps above will undoubtedly take a considerable amount of time and effort. It is impossible for our committee to estimate the cost of such a production without knowing specifics, such as: how many copyrights must be acquired? How many books will we initially produce? How much of this work will be done by a URC committee, hired help, or a publisher?

However, we did receive quotes from the *Cushing-Malloy, Inc.* of Ann Arbor and *Dekker Bookbinding* of Grand Rapids for the publishing and binding of a 600 page songbook. The quote below, which includes both publishing and binding, assumes the publisher receives the information as printable copy, and camera ready.

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>*Price Per Book</u>
5,000	\$4.51 (U.S.)
10,000	\$3.85
15,000	\$3.64
20,000	\$3.55

3. REPRODUCING A PSALTER HYMNAL

We understand “reproducing” to mean republishing an already existing psalter hymnal that is out of print. The CRC Publications provided us with the following quote for republishing the 1976 edition of the Psalter Hymnal (as is):

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>*Price Per Book</u>
3,000	\$7.60 (U.S.)
5,000	\$6.17
7,000	\$5.70

(Any revisions will add to the cost. The 1959 edition will cost more to republish.)

4. OBTAINING A PSALTER HYMNAL

After contacting several sources we received the following quotes:

- A. The Canadian Reformed Churches’ Book of Praise (Quoted by Premier Printing LTD)

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>*Price for entire book</u>	<u>Psalms.&amp; Hymns only</u>
5,000	\$8.50 (Canadian)	\$7.00
10,000	\$8.00	\$6.70
15,000	\$7.75	\$6.55
20,000	\$7.70	\$6.50

- B. The Psalter recently published by I.D.E.A. Ministries:

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>*Price per book</u>
1,000-5,000	\$8.50 (U.S.)
5,000-10,000	\$7.75
10,000-15,000	\$7.00

- C. The Psalter, published by Eerdmans and used by the Netherlands Reformed Churches, Free Reformed Churches, and several independent churches.

<u>*Price Per Book</u>
\$8.00 - 9.00 (U.S.)

- D. The Trinity Hymnal, published by Great Commission Publications. The following quote is of a “special edition” which could

be either the original 1961 edition (blue) or the revised 1990 edition (red) and include the 3 Forms of Unity and liturgical forms.

\*Price Per Book  
\$9.00 - 12.00 (U.S.)

\*Consider all the above quotes as guidelines only. The quoted prices may change by the time of Synod and do not include shipping and handling.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our committee was not mandated by Synod '99, to bring recommendations. However, we offer the following in order to help focus synod's deliberations.

- A. That a committee be appointed to begin the work of producing, for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal.  
Grounds:
1. The grounds of the mandate given by Synod 97 to this committee seem to indicate a desire to move in this direction (see mandate above, specifically grounds A and C).
  2. Although the CRC psalter hymnal is satisfactory, it can be improved,
  3. Other songbooks are not well known among our congregations.
- B. That Synod approve a republication of the 1976 edition of the CRC Psalter Hymnal.  
Grounds:
1. The work to publish a URCNA Psalter Hymnal will take several years, yet there is a pressing need among many of our churches to do something about the present psalter hymnals which are falling apart.
  2. The cost of rebinding our existing hymnals is greater than the CRC Board of Publication's quote to republish.
  3. The 1976 edition of The CRC Psalter Hymnal is known among us and satisfactory.

Funding; Synod '99 must decide how we will fund whatever course of action is taken.

IMPORTANT: Although we do not know what decisions Synod will make on these matters, We would request that the delegates from each church come to Synod '99 with an estimated number of books their church would need in case a new songbook is purchased. This, would save time for these involved in the acquisition of the book.

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Ed Knott, chairman  
Elder Henry Nuiver  
Rev. Dennis Royall  
Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen  
Rev. Dick Wynia

## OVERTURES

### Overture 1

Classis Michigan overtures the Synod of the URCNA to give permission to post a list of URC Churches, Synodical agendas and minutes, and similar documents on the web site of the Covenant URC of Kalamazoo.

Grounds:

1. Ecclesiastical assembly meeting agendas and minutes are ordinarily made available for public distribution. Publishing such documents on the World Wide Web lowers the cost of publishing and improves the speed of distribution of these agendas and minutes.
2. Classis Midwest gave its permission to publish its meeting agendas and minutes on the Web. This overture merely requests a continuation of a past practice of the former Classis Midwest.
3. Covenant URC has received a number of requests from independent groups expressing desires to affiliate with the URCNA after they visited Covenant URC's Web site, The comments that we have received from groups include expressions of admiration and respect for our form of church government. Posting synodical agendas and minutes on the Web allow those outside of our federation to see how we govern ourselves, can improve our public relations through showing openness and can serve to encourage those outside our federation to affiliate with the URCNA.
4. Covenant URC offers this service to Synod at no cost.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. W. H. Oord, clerk

### Overture 2

Classis Michigan endorses Reformed Youth Services and overtures Synod to encourage our churches to join the ongoing ministry of Reformed Youth Services to the youth of our denomination. We are asking in a simple way for your consideration of this matter with the hope that this work can continue to expand with the same kind of blessing God has already given us.

Grounds:

1. Reformed Youth Services has provided [at no cost to member churches] two books of distinctively Reformed study materials on a variety of subjects and books of the Bible, a total of 60 lessons, primarily prepared by URCNA pastors and youth directors.
2. Reformed Youth Services regularly sponsors events that prominently feature Scripture and foster fellowship.
3. The need for a broader participation in the support of this great work is surely clear.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. W. H. Oord, clerk

### Overture 3

Classis Michigan overtures Synod 1999 to appoint an ad hoc committee to research the availability of Health Insurance for employees of URC churches, including both Canadian and U.S. ministers according to their various needs.

Grounds:

1. Article 10 of the Church Order.
2. Requests for such coverage have been frequent.
3. The economic advantage of having group coverage for those who need and desire such insurance is clear.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. W. H. Oord, clerk

#### **Overture 4**

Classis Michigan overtures Synod 1999 to appoint a committee with the specific mandate of investigating the possibility of Retirement plans for ordained ministers in Canada and the United States.

Grounds:

1. Article 10 of the Church Order.
2. The need is obvious, especially for out younger ministers.
3. Such an optional plan would have distinct economic advantages because of its group involvement.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. W. H. Oord

#### **Overture 5**

In keeping with the intent of articles 34-36 of the C.O., Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 1999 to invite officially the OCRCs to unite with us in federative union. As part of this invitation we humbly but forthrightly ask them to unite with us on the basis of the URCNA church order. The invitation is to be sent to each OCRC consistory with a request that, should they favor such union, they forward it for consideration to their next Classis and Synod.

Grounds:

1. We hold to the same confessional standards and come from the same historical root. Our separate development as federations can be shown to be due to historical circumstances rather than doctrinal differentiation.
2. We have been meeting with the brothers of the Western Classis of the OCRCs at our respective Classis meetings (at our Western Fellowship meetings before we federated) for 6 years. We have found a true unity of faith in every way and trust that this would also be the case with their Eastern Classis since they too strive to hold each other accountable.
3. We have opened our pulpits to each other's ministers for the same length of time and know in truth that the same gospel is proclaimed.
4. In a recent meeting of our Classis Western Canada's committee for ecumenical contact with a number of Vancouver area OCRCs, it became apparent that there was a mutual desire to pursue such union. We believe that sending them this official invitation unilaterally with the grounds attached may help to facilitate their own discussions later in the year on federative unity with us.

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. William De Jong, clerk

#### **Overture 6**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 1999 to establish a committee which will study the implications for Canadian churches of having charitable status. We recommend that this committee consists of five members from Canadian URCNA churches, and that it be given the following mandate:

- 1) Study the history of the charitable status of Canadian churches.
- 2) Examine the rules of Revenue Canada regarding churches with charitable status, especially those rules relating to the offerings collected by such churches.
- 3) Determine whether or not there are any legal means by which churches with charitable status can give money to causes that are presently not charities registered with Revenue Canada.
- 4) Determine what happens when Canadian churches with charitable status either willingly give up their charitable status or have this status removed by Revenue Canada.
- 5) Evaluate the pros and cons of Canadian churches maintaining charitable status with Revenue Canada. Especially important would be evaluating these pros and cons in light of our biblical and confessional teachings regarding the church and its work.



- 6) Make recommendations to those Canadian churches wishing to retain charitable status as to what they need to do to operate legally.
- 7) Report their findings to the Canadian URCNA churches within a year after the 1999 URCNA synod meeting.
- 8) Offer a report with recommendations to the next URCNA synod meeting.

Grounds:

1. There is some confusion among our Canadian churches as to the implications of having charitable status. For example, some understand that churches with charitable status are not permitted to collect offerings for causes that are not registered as charities with Revenue Canada, while other churches believe that they may collect for such causes so long as they do not issue tax receipts for the money collected for such causes. A committee report could help clear up some of this confusion.
2. It is possible that some of our Canadian churches with charitable status are operating in a manner contrary to the law of the land with respect to the offerings they collect. It is also possible that some of our churches risk having their charitable status taken away because they either knowingly or unknowingly operate in an illegal manner with respect to the rules of Revenue Canada governing charities. A report would help the churches fully understand what their legal responsibilities are when having charitable status.
3. It is questionable whether the church should willingly submit to the rule of the state with respect to deciding what causes she may or may not collect offerings for. Thus, the whole issue of whether or not churches should even maintain charitable status is open to question and should be studied.
4. Some of the issues involved in this matter are complex and technical, and so rather than having each church study this issue on their own, the churches would be well served to have a committee consisting of members familiar with the relevant issues.
5. There is some indication that Revenue Canada is beginning to crack down on charities with respect to a wide range of issues. (For illustration of this, see the article "Revenue Canada Takes Tougher Stance" in the Jan./Feb. '99 issue of *Faith Today*.) Thus, this is a matter which could directly affect our church in the very near future, and so it should be dealt with as soon as possible.
6. This matter should be discussed at the level of synod, since synod is the only broader assembly in which all the Canadian URCNA churches participate together in the same organizational body.

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. William DeJong, clerk

**Overture 7**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 1999 to rule that, should The Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches seek to unite with the URCNA, they will be received immediately into the federation as equals, without conducting colloquium doctum, for their ministers.

Grounds:

1. We hold to the same confessional standards and come from the same historical root.
2. Our knowledge of these churches through previous contacts as well as our common history provides us with ample assurance of the soundness of these congregations and their ministers.
3. By adopting this position, we may encourage these churches to unite with us *en masse* without a long or complicated process.

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. William DeJong, clerk

**Overture 8**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 1999 to appoint a committee to draft a formula for the exclusion of members by baptism for approval at a subsequent synod meeting.

Grounds:

1. Such a formulary would ensure that all churches exercise the discipline required by Article 59 of the church

order in a decent, orderly and uniform manner.

2. Such a formula is being used with satisfaction in other Reformed federations, (The Canadian Reformed churches, for example, have a “form for the excommunication of non-communicant members”)

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. William DeJong, clerk

## Overture 9

Classis Southern Ontario overtures Synod at its June 1999 meeting:

- 1) That we would, following the general scope and plan for the “Vision for Missions to Mexico,” seek a cooperative agreement with the Mexican denomination(s) working in the area to which we believe we are led. (NB: this, we, believe must necessarily entail receiving an “invitation” to “come over and help <them>” in this missionary Gospel outreach from one of the Mexican Biblically Reformed denominations with which we can work).  
\* It is probably most propitious for us to work cooperatively with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico and/or others of the (smaller) denominations with which it is in ecclesiastical relationship as well as the faculty of Seminario Juan Calvino.
- 2) That we would commit to prayerfully seek to identify, provide for support, train (if necessary), send and continue to support with prayer and finances missionaries (or missionary couples) for this work in Mexico. That all of this work would be performed under the direct management of personnel and resources by the missionary's calling Church - with denominational contributions sought and encouraged through that Church to the field.
- 3) That we would, in the process, seek the advice, cooperation and participation (where helpful and prudent for the advance of this Missionary Gospel ministry) of missionaries with whom we are already familiar on the field.
- 4) That in order to implement this missionary enterprise to Mexico on behalf of our Churches, Synod appoint a COMMISSION consisting of an equal number of representatives from each Classis of the URC (where possible of those having missionary experience of expertise) charged with the responsibility of implementing this work.

On behalf of Classis Southern Ontario and its meeting on September 23, 1999

Rev. R. Stienstra, Chairman

Mr. H. Bonvanie, Clerk

## Overture 10

### Background

In the context of our recent secessions, we as churches have been caused to reexamine our commitment, understanding and approach to mission. During the past several years, having been set free from burgeoning hierarchy, many of our churches have taken a renewed interest in the task, having, in many cases, to go from scratch. Along the way we have gained a revitalized appreciation for both the challenges and the blessing that come from the local church recognizing its Biblical responsibility. For this we thank God. However, examination of the current state of affairs also indicated cause for concern. With the healthy growth of our federation it appears that the principles and practice of missions amongst us have not developed apace. The current situation could perhaps best be described as erratic, undisciplined and uncoordinated. With the prayer that among the churches of the federation we might see more godly zeal and effectiveness in missions, both at home and abroad, we present the following overture.

### Overture

Classis Southern Ontario overtures synod 1999 of the United Reformed Churches in North America to appoint a committee of men able and experienced in the theology of missions and administration to:

1. Articulate a Biblical and Reformed philosophy of missions for the federation for the consideration and possible adoption at the next meeting of Synod.

The committee's mandate should include the following:

- a. An articulation of the Biblical necessity and urgency for missions and for our involvement in such as churches. This could be stimulated by an investigation of the status of the "mission-mindedness" present among the churches of the federation, as well as by a general evaluation of the level of consistency in approach in terms of our creedal commitments and subscription.
  - b. An articulation of the Biblical teaching concerning the church as the agent of missions, the centrality of preaching for the advancement of missions, as well as the responsibility of every member of the congregation towards missions in the office of believer.
  - c. An articulation of the proper relationship between "Word" and "deed" in the mission of the churches.
  - d. An articulation of a proper Biblical balance between the responsibility of the "autonomous" local church for the carrying out of missions, on the one hand, and our federal responsibility toward cooperation, coordination and mutual encouragement on the other.
2. In light of the finished principled articulation, and in keeping with its findings, make practical recommendation for the same Synod's possible implementation, in order to provide the churches with the most appropriate means of assistance and encouragement for the missionary task. In its recommendations the committee should give consideration to the following areas:
- a. Stimulation of godly zeal for the cause of missions among the churches, including the cultivation of a crop of labourers.
  - b. Investigation of causes, fields "white unto harvest" and personnel suited to the task of missions. (cf. CO - Article 47).
  - c. Coordination of works and fields currently underway as well as those being considered. Included should also be the coordination of the oversight of the local calling churches, as well as the coordination of prospective workers with the necessary oversight of a local calling church.

Grounds:

1. In His Great Commission, our Saviour has spoken of the urgency and necessity "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:47).
2. The greatness of our task and opportunities require that we seek to be diligent and effective in prayerful dependence upon the Lord of the harvest, for "the harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37).
3. For the glory of God and the effectiveness of our mission, there is a need for an organized and disciplined approach, that all things might be carried out "decently and in order" (I Cor: 14:40).
4. When our Confessions remind us that "that the promise <of the gospel> together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction" (Canons of Dort II.5), it is self-evident that our mandate requires a committed and self-conscious approach.
5. When our Church Order speaks of the church's missionary task it includes the need for the churches to "assist each other in the support of their missionaries" (CO article 47).

On behalf of Classis Southern Ontario in its meeting on September 23, 1998

Rev. R. Stienstra, Chairman

Mr. H. Bonvanie, Clerk

## Overture 11

Classis Southern Ontario overtures Synod as follows:

That Synod adopt for the use of the Classes of the United Reformed Churches in North America the enclosed "Classical Diplomas (with appropriate changes in name of Classis)." The Diploma which indicates the recipient is "eligible for a call" to be presented following successful completion of the Classical "Candidacy Examination (C.O. Article 6, Appendix 3)" or following successful completion of the "Colloquium Doctum (C.O. Article 8, Appendix 4)." As well that Synod adopt for the use of Classes of the United Reformed Churches the enclosed Identification Card to be distributed to duly ordained Ministers of the Word in the United Reformed Churches in North America.

Grounds:

1. Such a testament to successful completion of the examinations as part of the “Credentials” of a Minister of the Word is helpful to those seeking a call or entering into a call to the Ministry in our churches.
2. Differing Diplomas are already in use in our Federation, adoption of a common form will serve to avoid confusion and to provide for a unified testament of these matters within our Federation.
3. An Identification Card has been found to be helpful in many situations for our Ministers. Our Ministers may find such identification helpful in crossing the border between Canada and the United States on Church business, and in other areas where such identification is needed.

Classis Southern Ontario  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, clerk

“I.D Card,  
(Actual size - on “card stock” able to be folded)

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA  
**CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION**

This is to certify that

---

has been examined by Classis

---

of the United Reformed Churches in North America

He is therefore declared qualified to enter upon the office of  
Minister of the Word of God and was duly ordained as a Minister of  
the Word of God by his calling church,

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Location

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Date of Ordination

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Stated clerk

United Reformed Churches in North America

## **Overture 12**

Classis Southern Ontario requests that Synod ratify the decision of Classis Southern Ontario to accept the United Reformed Church of Strathroy, Ontario into full membership in the federation.

Classis Southern Ontario  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, clerk

## **Overture 13**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures the 1999 Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America to explore the feasibility of establishing a voluntary pension plan for the benefit of pastors and/or other full time employees of our local URCNA churches.

Grounds:

1. To provide a uniform means for member churches to provide adequate retirement benefits (per Church Order, Article 10) and to free pastors from concern over management of retirement funds.
2. A denominational plan can provide adequate investment diversification, facilitate portability of coverage, and result in increased income to retired ministers.
3. Some pastors who have left the CRC have had retirement funds frozen or lost. A plan for the URCNA would supplement or replace benefits programs from the CRC.
4. The programs can be offered on a voluntary participation basis.
5. Uniformity will aid the calling process.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Robert DeVries, clerk

## **Overture 14**

Classis Eastern US overtures the 1999 Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America to advise all Member United States congregations to consider making application to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for recognition of tax exempt status (IRS Form 1023).

Grounds:

1. As per IRS regulations, while receipt of such a determination letter is not necessary for churches, they may wish to file “to obtain certain incidental benefits such as public recognition of their tax exempt status; advance assurance to donors of deductibility of contributions, exemption from certain Federal excise taxes; non-profit mailing privileges; etc.”
2. The previous group exemption held by the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA) is no longer applicable to the URCNA member churches, and the URCNA lacks sufficient government hierarchical structure to qualify for obtaining group exemption on its own.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Robert DeVries, clerk

## **Overture 15**

Classis Eastern US overtures the 1999 Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America to establish a committee to explore the feasibility of establishing a voluntary hospitalization plan for the benefit of pastors and/or other full time employees of our local URCNA churches In the United States.

Grounds:

1. To establish a means of assisting member US congregations to provide adequate health coverage (per Church Order, Article 10) at a reasonable cost.
2. The cost of establishing adequate health programs is becoming prohibitive, especially for small and developing churches.
3. Savings offered by a group plan would be made available for more stewardly use by the churches.
4. To provide portability of coverage for participants who move to other areas of the US.

5. Uniformity will aid the calling process.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Robert DeVries, clerk

#### **Overture 16**

Classis Eastern US overtures the 1999 Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America to advise the hospitalization plan study committee to consider in its initial exploration the feasibility of establishing such a plan under the administration of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Health and Welfare Trust.

Ground:

The OPC is a denomination with which we have ecumenical relations and has an established hospitalization plan which could provide administrative functions and/or experienced consultation.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Robert DeVries, clerk

#### **Overture 17**

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod to instruct its Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity to extend an invitation to other faithful Reformed Churches to begin with them serious discussions with a goal of joining each body into a General Synod (or Assembly) of a single new denomination, each body constituting a particular Synod.

A. Discussions could begin with the following basic topics:

1. Each body could maintain its own confessional standards, either the Three Forms of Unity, or the Westminster Standards,, or both.
2. Each body could maintain its own Church Order or Book of Governance.
3. Each body could maintain its own distinctive practices, song books, and structure.
4. Each body would agree to cooperate where possible in promoting God's kingdom, for example, to plan new mission works in cooperation with other bodies within the new denomination so that duplication in a particular area is avoided.
5. Each body would agree to receive the wisdom and admonition of the new denomination on matters of confessional faithfulness, thus maintaining a wholesome level of accountability within the denomination.
6. Each body would be free to leave the new denomination without consequence.

B. Discussions could begin with at least the following bodies:

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches
2. The Free Reformed Churches
3. The Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches
4. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
5. The Presbyterian Church in America
6. The Protestant Reformed Churches
7. The Reformed Church in the United States
8. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America

Grounds:

1. Such discussions could provide an avenue to better express visible Biblical unity among the Reformed and Presbyterian bodies.
2. Such discussions could provide greater accountability in maintaining Biblical faithfulness.
3. Such discussions could lead to greater cooperation in joint mission outreach, as well as avoid duplication of such outreach in a particular location.

Classis Southwest U.S.  
Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer, clerk

#### **Overture 18**

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures synod to instruct the Stated Clerk on behalf of the churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America, to apply for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and, if there is such, its Canadian equivalent.

Grounds:

1. This is a needful service. There are counties where our churches must reapply annually for property tax exempt status, a form which requires the IRS exemption status. For the purposes of bulk mailings, W-2 forms, in relation to tax deductible giving to the church, and for welfare exemption an IRS Exemption is needed.
2. This is a helpful service. In terms of the stewardship of both money and time, as well as the ease of entry into the URC for new churches, this would be helpful. Estimates range up to \$500 to file this lengthy, detailed form. Churches, especially newly established churches, do not need additional legal matters to consume their time.

Classis Southwest U.S.  
Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer, clerk

### **Overture 19**

The council of the Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton, ON, overtures the Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America as follows:

To appoint a study committee, with the mandate of proposing to the next Synod a set of unified liturgical forms for the prescribed usage in the churches. The intent would be, to eliminate the present multiplicity of forms (Forms for the Baptism of Infants and Adults, Lord's Supper, Public Profession of Faith). In particular, this committee is to study and evaluate the forms found in the *Book of Praise* (Premier Printing, 1993), of the American and Canadian Reformed Churches for possible recommendation as the forms of usage of the United Reformed Churches in North America. The committee would also consult with other like-minded Reformed federations and report their research to the Synod.

1. The churches need a unified liturgical practice within congregational worship. I Corinthians 14:40.
2. Coordinating the work, with what other like-minded established Reformed federations are presently using, will assist us as churches in our calling of seeking ecclesiastical fellowship and organic church unity. John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:3.
3. We need to be proactive also in coordinating and dovetailing our work with the possible publication of an updated amended Psalter Hymnal.

Done in Council - January 12, 1999.

Clerk-Elder Andrew Hiemstra

The above overture was originally submitted to Classis Southern Ontario but not adopted. At the Council meeting of March 31, 1999 the council of the Grace Orthodox Reformed Church decided to send this overture (deleting one of the original grounds) to Synod.

## APPEAL

The Council of the Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton wishes to exercise its right of appeal regarding a matter presented at the previous meeting of Synod as follows:

- I. Presentation of the matter for appeal: the defeat at Synod of an overture presented by the Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg which called for the adoption of and use of only the first form of the various liturgical forms found in the back of the Hymnal. A copy of the overture, with its grounds is attached.
- II. Quotation of official decision: Synod chose not to adopt the overture in question.
- III. Grounds for appeal:
  1. Synod failed to properly test this overture by Biblical grounds, appealing instead to previous CRC synodical decisions our roots and heritage.
  2. Synod failed to consider seriously and failed to discuss thoroughly the recommendations of the advisory committee which had been appointed to examine this issue.
- IV. Petition:

That Synod acknowledge this appeal and rescind its defeat of the Winnipeg overture referred to above.

Cone in Council - March 31, 1999  
Clerk A. Hiemstra

Note: This overture was submitted to Classis Southern Ontario but was not adopted.

The consistory of the Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg, having duly presented the following overture to Classis West, though it was defeated at that body, after reconsideration now overtures the Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America that we adopt and use only the first form for each of the following liturgical forms in the back of the blue Psalter Hymnal now in use:

1. Baptism of Infants - Form Number 1
2. Public Profession of Faith - Form Number 1
3. Baptism of Adults - Form Number 1
4. Celebration of the Lord's Supper - Form Number 1

Grounds:

We, as a consistory, feel that we ought as United Reformed churches, use the above forms for the following reasons:

1. These first forms were developed out of a rich heritage, at a time when the church was extremely vibrant and alive. These liturgical forms were based on forms developed by John Calvin and adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-19.
2. The second and third forms for the Baptism of Infants, second form for the Profession of Faith and the second form for Adult baptism were added in 1976. The second and third forms for the Lord's Supper were added in 1958. These forms were not added for any Biblical need, whereas the original forms were created to fill a very specific need, to unify the Church's instruction and liturgical practise within congregational worship. I Corinthians 14:40.
3. From past experience, using these later forms has created disunity and friction in both consistory and congregation and we believe, will not promote greater unity within our new Federation.
4. The later forms, in varying degrees, show definite signs of weakness in Reformed theology, in Biblical content and language. Hence they give evidence of de-emphasis in doctrine and a de-emphasis in the need to hold sound doctrine.

Note the following examples to support the above grounds:

1. Baptism of Infants Form #2 is entitled "Baptism of Children." It is not necessary to have a separate form for children as they are included in the form for the "Baptism of Infants."



2. Baptism of Infants - Form #3.
  - i. Along with the title, missing is Biblical language and content, teaching that we are “children of wrath; the impurity of our souls; that we are to loath ourselves before God, etc.” The severity of our human depravity and need is much lacking.
  - ii. Also missing is the warning to the parents, to have their children baptized, not out of custom or superstition.
  - iii. The address to the congregation, “to care for and instruct the baptized child” is inappropriate, unnecessary and misses the point of the sacrament completely. Parents bring their children before the Lord and they make serious covenant promises, not the congregation.
3. Public Profession of Faith - Form #2
  - i. The theological content is watered down significantly. In the second question, the language of “abhorring and humbling yourself before God because of your sins” is missing. Further, the promise to lead a godly life for the most is absent in Question #3.
  - ii. Commitment to the doctrines of Scripture and our Reformed Confessions, as taught in this Christian church, is so much more clearly, richly spelled out in Form #1.
  - iii. The reference in question #4, to submitting to the government of the church and its admonition and discipline, in times of delinquency is very weak and ambiguous.
4. Baptism of Adults - Form #2
  - i. The content of the vows to be made are greatly reduced; missing are the following elements:
    - a. Confession of the Triune God,
    - b. Confession of Depravity,
    - c. Affirmation of the Doctrines in our Confessions,
    - d. Clear promise to live a godly life, and
    - e. Promise to partake of the Lord’s Supper faithfully.
  - ii. Also, the person being baptized makes the promises before the instruction is given. This is placed in the form in reverse order.
5. Celebration of the Lord’s Supper
  - i. Form #2 allows for the list of gross sins the option of being read or not at the discretion of the minister or consistory. This has been a cause for friction and disunity in the congregation.
  - ii. Form #3 The list of gross sins has been totally omitted. This form has been rearranged for no apparent reason.
5. The original forms have stood the test of time, having served the church well and we maintain that there are no Biblical/Confessional reasons warranting for the use of these additional forms.

Done in Consistory: July 8, 1997

Bernie Bakker, corresponding clerk

NOTE: This overture was submitted to Classis West but was not adopted.

## ECUMENICAL OBSERVERS' PRESENTATIONS

**From the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church:**

June 16, 1999

To the Third Synod of the United Reformed Churches Cornerstone URC, Hudsonville, MI

Fathers and Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I am happy to have the two-fold privilege of bringing you greetings from the Independent Reformed Church of Cutlerville and from the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Many of you know me from our long years of striving together for the reformation of the Christian Reformed Church, and so I need say very little about myself.

On the other hand, the Associate Reformed Presbyterian church may be a new and unfamiliar name to many of you, and so I will tell you a little about the ARP Church in the hope of whetting your appetite for further contact and closer ties with us.

The ARP Church is one of the oldest members of the Presbyterian and Reformed family of churches in North America. She has a goodly heritage. As a Presbyterian Church, she is the fruit of the reformation work of John Calvin in Geneva brought home to Scotland by John Knox. Her faith is that of the Westminster Divines, embodied in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

Other spiritual fathers include the Covenanters, or Reformed Presbyterians; the Marrow Men, noted for their defence of the free offer of the Gospel; and the Seceders, or Associate Presbyterians, who withdrew from a corrupt and oppressive national church in order to be true to the doctrines, worship, and church order of Scripture and the Reformation.

The ARP Church was born in 1782 in the city of Philadelphia. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> Century numbers of Reformed Presbyterians and Associate Presbyterians had left Scotland to settle in British North America. In the wake of the success of the American Revolution, leaders from both groups sought each other out, and united as the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

In 1803 ARP presbyteries in the southern states were organized into a particular synod, know as the Synod of the Carolinas. In 1822, due to the difficulties of travel and communication, and in the wake of problems which resulted in the collapse of the then-existing General Synod, the Synod of the Carolinas was separated from her northern and western sisters, and has remained so down to the present time.

The subsequent history of the ARPC has been on the one hand a story of faith, sacrifice and endurance, and on the other, a story of periods of discouragement, decay, and defection. At times the burden of upholding unpopular standards of faith and worship became too much. Ministers, churches and whole presbyteries forsook the ARPC for greener pastures in larger denominations.

Twenty years ago the ARPC was at an all-time low. Burdened with a generation of leaders who had lost confidence in her historic testimony, the denomination was stagnant, dying, and riddled with strife. The infusion of large numbers of young ministers trained at Reformed Seminary and elsewhere led to a profound stirring of new life and a turning of the tide.

With the blessing and help of God, the ARP Church has been revived. Today she is one of the most vibrant,

hopeful, and fruitful branches of Christ's Church on this continent. New churches are being planted, existing churches from other denominations are transferring in at a steady rate, and older churches are being renewed. New presbyteries have been erected in Northeastern US and Canada and along the Pacific coast. Once a Scottish/Scottish-Irish enclave, the ARPC now has a Korean presbytery, as well as Persian, Pakistani, and Spanish ministries in various places.

Today's ARPC has more than 34,000 members gathered into more than 242 churches and missions. A fund of \$3.2 million dollars has been set aside to plant new churches and erect church buildings.

For many years the ARPC carried on mission work in Mexico and Pakistan. This work gave birth to our sister churches, the ARPC of Mexico and the ARP Synod of Pakistan. Much work is still done in order to support and strengthen these bodies. New fields are being opened in Germany, Russia, and Turkey. This year's World Witness budget will rise to \$3 million.

We publish a monthly magazine, *The ARP*, and an outstanding series of Sabbath School lessons known as *The Adult Quarterly*. Historically a Psalm singing church, the ARPC publishes a songbook known as *Bible Songs*, described as "a selection of Psalms set to music, for use in the Church and in the Home." To judge from our synod meeting last week, Psalm singing is very much alive in today's ARP Church. Synod has given its Worship Committee permission to study the feasibility of publishing a new Psalter Hymnal.

The ARP Church has always put a premium on higher education for her children and her ministers. Erskine College and Seminary in Due West, SC, date from 1836. Last year the college was placed in the hands of a new president, Dr. John L. Carson. As a minister, Dr. Carson was in the forefront of the effort to recapture the denomination for the Reformed faith. One of his first acts was to choose a new dean for the seminary, Major R. J. Gore, formerly an Army chaplain and holder of one of Westminster Seminary's highly regarded doctorates. It was a powerful sign of new life earlier this year, when Erskine Seminary invited Rev. Norman Shepherd to deliver the annual Robinson lectures, and Dr. Jay Adams to preach for the Whitesides Preachers' Institute.

It is evident from the depth and scope of the work of revival that God's hand is at work in the ARP Church today. One of the greatest of His blessings is the abundant peace and unity that exists throughout the denomination. God's Word prevails and His Spirit is being poured out. The Gospel is being preached, and the Name of the Lord is being glorified.

This is not to suggest that the ARP Church is without mixture or error. There are still lingering effects and problems from the years of decay and stagnation. There is much work to do, much ignorance to be overcome, much corruption to be rooted out. Nonetheless, the work has begun, and in that we can rejoice.

It is my conviction that the URC's, as the newest Reformed denomination on our continent, have much to learn and much to gain from contact with the ARP Church. Two hundred years ago, the infant ARP Church had close and fruitful ties with the "Protestant Reformed Dutch Church," as the RCA was then called, when that denomination was already an old and well-established body on these shores. May history, as it does so often, repeat itself, and bind us together for our mutual good and greater well being of Christ's Church in North America.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Ray B. Lanning

**From the Canadian Reformed Churches:  
Fraternal Greetings<sup>1</sup>**

Esteemed brothers and fellow workers!

It's an honour and a pleasure to be in your midst once again at this your third general synod to represent together with my fellow delegate Rev. W. Den Hollander, the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, and to pass on to you our greetings and best wishes on their behalf. Like the neighbour or close friend down the road, we have followed your development from the formation of your federation to this very day, and have witnessed the increased growth and consolidation of your fellowship. We are thankful that you are striving to maintain the true doctrine of the Word of God, the riches of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the bond of peace.

I stand here as member of the Committee for Ecclesiastical Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and from the perspective of that position I only underscore that this is what we are about. We seek to be confessional churches, faithful to the Reformed standards we have inherited from our forebearers. But we also feel called to pursue a true and integral unity with all those who want to live in fellowship with the same gospel we confess, according to the same order that God has allowed us to maintain through the generations, as embodied in the church order of Dort, 1618 - 1619. We believe that continued reformation means not only going forward according to God's norms, but also continually returning to our birthright and heritage as God in his mercy has allowed us to share it.

We are then eager to pursue integral church unity. It all goes back to our perspective, as voiced in my remarks at your 1996 synod, that our day and age is not really helped with the formation of an ever greater number of Reformed denominations. We need to work for one strong and united Reformed church comprising all those who truly want to maintain the doctrinal standards of our heritage along with its accompanying order.

We believe you're the closest to us with regard to these primary and essential goals. We have spent many hours working with the eastern section of your Ecumenical Relations committee, and from our side, I can report that our sentiment is that these meetings proceeded very well and went a long way in helping to understand each other and in forming a clearer picture of each other's doctrinal perspective and concerns. Some proposals with regard to the progress of church union have come out of these meetings and your Ecumenical Relations Committee will introduce those proposals to you. We hope that you can give your committee the support that is needed to keep these moving in a positive direction.

We have agreed to work along with the *Guidelines* adopted for ecumenical relations by the URCNA, but only with what we see as a necessary qualification, and that is that we can enter Phase 2 of the guidelines only after both parties have agreed upon an established time frame to full and integrated union. We can agree with the sentiment expressed by your fraternal delegate at our recent synod held in Fergus (1998) that "mutual recognition of each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord needs to take place on the road to full ecclesiastical unity between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches," that is "during the process rather than at its conclusion." Yet when it comes to the specific application of this recognition in pulpit exchanges or table fellowship, our conviction has been that we are ready to do this only if and when a specific time frame towards full and integrated unions has been adopted by both parties at their broadest assemblies and supported by their respective churches.

We're also here to answer any questions you may have about us and to share with you concerning the important work of gathering of Christ's church! We are confident that true believers will not simply splinter and live in separate communions, but wherever possible will gather together as one body with the strength he supplies. The church is one! Jesus calls us to be one! He prayed that we all be one! We so hope and pray that this spirit of ecumenicity in its biblical sense, may fill your hearts as you carry on your church business at this meeting, also as you deal with your relations with other churches. May God guide you with his Spirit in all your deliberations!

(Dr.) J. De Jong

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<sup>1</sup>Text of the fraternal greetings passed on to the Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America held in Hudsonville, Mi, June 15 to 17, 1999. Slightly revised.