

ACTS OF SYNOD SCHERERVILLE 2007
THE SIXTH SYNOD OF THE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA
 JULY 9-13, 2007

held at
 Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois
 convened by
 the Consistory
 of
 Community United Reformed Church
 Schererville, Indiana

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Tuesday, July 10, 2007
Morning Session

ARTICLE 1

The chairman *pro tem*, Martin Nuiver, chairman of the consistory of Community United Reformed Church, Schererville, IN, calls the assembly to order, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 278 and 393, reads Matthew 8:5-13, and offers prayer.

ARTICLE 2

The chairman *pro tem* reports that credentials have been received from all of the churches present at Synod 2007. He then conducts the roll call which indicates that the following delegates are present:

Abbotsford, BC	Immanuel Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. William Van der Woerd Rick Meyer
Alto, MI	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Peter Adams Bruce Reiffer
Anaheim, CA	Christ Reformed Church	Rev. Marcelo Souza Dr. Kim Riddlebarger
Apple Valley, CA	High Desert United Reformed Church	Rev. Tom Morrison Marty Martinez
Aylmer, ON	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Al Korvemaker Harry Van Gurp
Beecher, IL	Faith United Reformed Church	Rev. Todd Joling Dan Woldhuis

Belgrade, MT	Belgrade United Reformed Church	Rev. Mark Stromberg Leroy Tinklenberg
Bellingham, WA	Bellingham United Reformed Church	Rev. Kevin Efflandt Harry Efflandt
Boise, ID	Cloverdale United Reformed Church	Rev. J. Van Hoogen Rev. Ryan Kron
Brockville, ON	Ebenezer Orthodox Reformed Church	Rev. John Roke
Byron Center, MI	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Greg Lubbers Doug Heerema
Caledonia, MI	Trinity United Reformed Church	Doug Suwyn George Knevelbard
Calgary, AB	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Joel Vander Kooi Bill Oostenbrink
Cape Coral, FL	Trinity Reformed Church	Rev. Allen Vander Pol
Chino, CA	First United Reformed Church	Rev. Ronald Scheuers Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel
Clinton, ON	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Peter J. Vellenga Dave Vandersleen
Coopersville, MI	Eastmanville United Reformed Church	Rev. Steve Postma Henry Vander Wal
DeMotte, IN	Immanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. Thomas Wetselaar J. DeVries (Mon-Wed AM) H. Swart (Wed PM-Sat)
Doon, IA	Doon United Reformed Church	Rev. Larry Johnson Berwyn Van Otterloo
Dunnville, ON	Grace Reformed Church	Anthony Snippe Rick Schotsman
Dutton, MI	Dutton United Reformed Church	Rev. David Klompjen Richard Ryskamp
Edmonton, AB	Orthodox Reformed Church	Rev. Bill Pols

		Ed Spronk
Escondido, CA	Escondido United Reformed Church	Rev. Phil Vos Steve Howerzyl
Fresno, CA	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Gary Findley Rev. Paul Lindemulder
Grand Rapids, MI	Walker United Reformed Church	Rev. David Klumpenhower Jim Morren
Hamilton, ON	Rehoboth United Reformed Church	Rev. Henry Van Olst Tony De Weerd
Hills, MN	Hills United Reformed Church	Rev. Doug Barnes Rev. Spencer Aalsburg
Holland, MI	Faith United Reformed Church	Rev. Ed Marcusse Lynn A. Brouwer
Hudsonville, MI	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Rev. James Admiraal John Holmlund
Jenison, MI	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen Marv Vanden Berg
Jordan, ON	Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church	Rev. John Bouwers Pete Ton
Kalamazoo, MI	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Wybren Oord Henry Knibbe
Kansas City, MO	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Bill De Jong Wil Postma
Kennewick, WA	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Craig Davis Paul G. Scharold
Lansing, IL	Oak Glen United Reformed Church	Rev. John Vermeer Jim De Boer
Leduc, AB	Grace Reformed Church	Pete Van't Hoff Henry Klaas
Lemoore, CA	Emmanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. Jason Tuinstra Jim Gordon

Lethbridge, AB	Trinity Reformed Church	Rev. Eric Fennema Dick Vander Molen
Listowel, ON	Immanuel United Reformed Church	Rev. Fred Folkerts Gilbert Van Brenk
London, ON	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Rev. Dennis W. Royall Henry Nieboer
Loveland, CO	Calvary United Reformed Church	Rev. David Bosch
Lynden, WA	Lynden United Reformed Church	Rev. Christopher Gordon Art Tjoelker
Lynwood, IL	Lynwood United Reformed Church	Rev. Keith Davis Ed Vander Woude
Nampa, ID	Nampa United Reformed Church	Rev. Nick Smith George Vander Woude
Neerlandia, AB	Neerlandia United Reformed Church	Jake Strijdhorst
New Haven, VT	New Haven United Reformed Church	Rev. Jeremy Veldman Cornie Dykema
Newton, NJ	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Mark Stewart Roger Frey
Oceanside, CA	Oceanside United Reformed Church	Rev. Daniel R. Hyde David Francisco
Ontario, CA	Ontario United Reformed Church	Rev. Adam Kaloostian Gabe Martinez
Orange City, IA	Redeemer United Reformed Church	Rev. Ralph Pontier Harlyn Jacobsma
Oro-Medonte, ON	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Ancel Merwin Bob Span
Pantego, NC	Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Calvin J. Tuininga Bernard Van Essendelft
Pasadena, CA	Pasadena United Reformed Church	Rev. Movses Janbazian David Cronkhite

Pella, IA	Covenant Reformed Church	Ken Wielard John De Rooi
Phoenix, AZ	Phoenix United Reformed Church	Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer Bernard Kamerman
Pompton Plains, NJ	Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church	Rev. Dale Van Dyke Peter Moen, Sr.
Ponoka, AB	Parkland Reformed Church	John Lindemulder
Ripon, CA	Zion United Reformed Church	Rev. Michael Schout Gilbert Van Mourik
Rock Valley, IA	Rock Valley United Reformed Church	Rev. James Sinke Korrie Van Maanen
Salem, OR	Immanuel's Reformed Church	Rev. Eric Tuininga Andy DeJager
Sanborn, IA	Cornerstone United Reformed Church	Paul Anema Edwin Kreykes
Santee, CA	Christ United Reformed Church	Rev. Michael Brown Brett Watson
Schererville, IN	Community United Reformed Church	Rev. Paul R. Ipema Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman
Sheffield, ON	Zion United Reformed Church	Rev. Christo Heiberg Ed Gringhuis
Smithers, BC	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Lou Slagter
St. Catharines, ON	Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church	Rev. Al Bezuyen Chuck Dykstra
Strathroy, ON	Providence United Reformed Church	Rev. Harry Zekveld Richard Vander Deen
Surrey, BC	Surrey Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Dick Moes Lielke Van Huizen
Telkwa, BC	Faith Reformed Church	Rev. James Folkerts

Thunder Bay, ON	Thunder Bay United Reformed Church	Rev. Barry Beukema Jerry Breukelman
Toronto, ON	Covenant Reformed Church	Rev. Rand Lankheet Gerry Bontius
Torrence, CA	Grace Evangelical Church	Rev. Gregory Bero
Twin Falls, ID	New Covenant United Reformed Church	Rev. Christopher Folkerts Clint Krahn
Walnut Creek, CA	Trinity United Reformed Church	Rev. Joghinda Gangar Ron Myers
Warwick, NY	Hudson Valley United Reformed Church	Rev. Kevin Hossink
Waupun, WI	Grace United Reformed Church	Rev. Talman Wagenmaker Sid Soodsma
Wayne, NJ	Preakness Valley United Reformed Church	Rev. Norman Brower Peter Berkhout, Jr.
Wellandport, ON	Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church	Jake Veldman
West Sayville, NY	West Sayville Reformed Bible Church	Rev. Don Hoaglander Rev. Paul Murphy
Winnipeg, MB	Providence Reformed Church	Rev. Dan Donovan Sandy Siepman
Woodstock, ON	Bethel United Reformed Church	Rev. Greg Bylsma Tony DeWeerd
Wyoming, MI	Bethany United Reformed Church	Rev. Casey Freswick Larry Koetje
Wyoming, ON	Wyoming United Reformed Church	Rev. Richard Wynia James Korvemaker

ARTICLE 3

The delegates rise and give their verbal assent to the Form of Subscription, after which the chairman *pro tem* declares Synod 2007 to be constituted.

ARTICLE 4

Ratification of the provisional acceptance of churches established under Church Order Article 32:

- a. Living Water Reformed Church, Brantford, ON
 1. Motion made and supported to ratify the provisional acceptance of the Living Water Reformed Church of Brantford, ON. *Adopted*
 2. Mr. Roland Van Olst rises and verbally assents to the Form of Subscription.
- b. Redeemer United Reformed Church, Dyer, IN
 1. Motion made and supported to ratify the provisional acceptance of the Redeemer United Reformed Church of Dyer, IN. *Adopted*
 2. Rev. Jacques Roets and Dr. Cornelis Venema rise and verbally assent to the Form of Subscription.
- c. Covenant Reformed Church, Lancaster, PA
 1. Motion made and supported to ratify the provisional acceptance of the Covenant Reformed Church of Lancaster, PA. *Adopted*
 2. Rev. Steve Arrick rises and verbally assents to the Form of Subscription.
- d. Coram Deo Reformation Church, Littleton, CO
 1. Motion made and supported to ratify the provisional acceptance of the Coram Deo Reformation Church of Littleton, CO. *Adopted*
 2. Rev. Carl A. Heuss, Sr. and Mr. Ray Van Heukelem rise and verbally assent to the Form of Subscription.
- e. Hope Reformed Church, Woodbridge, ON
 1. Motion made and supported to ratify the provisional acceptance of the Hope Reformed Church of Woodbridge, ON. *Adopted*
 2. Rev. Rich Anjema and Mr. Bruce Vrieling rise and verbally assent to the Form of Subscription.

ARTICLE 5

The record shows that three churches are not represented at Synod 2007, namely, the United Reformed Church of Allendale, MI; the United Reformed Church of Wellsburg, IA; and Covenant United Reformed Church of Grande Prairie, AB.

ARTICLE 6

The chairman *pro tem* welcomes the following Fraternal Delegates and Observers.

Free Reformed Churches of North America
Reformed Church in the United States

Rev. Henk Bergsma
Rev. Herman Van Stedum

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated)
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches
United Reformed Churches in Myanmar
Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Canadian Reformed Churches

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
Presbyterian Church in America
Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Rev. Karlo Janssen
Rev. Kyle E. Sims
Rev. Martin Overgaauw
Rev. Moses Thang (did not attend)
Rev. Peter Kloosterman
Rev. Douwe Agema
Gerry Nordeman
Rev. Charles Brown
Rev. Dave Schutter
Rev. Jack J. Peterson
Rev. John R. Hilbelink

ARTICLE 7

Motion made and supported to adopt the recommendations of the convening consistory regarding the composition of and materials assigned to the advisory committees. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 8

Dr. Steve Timmermans, the president of Trinity Christian College, brings greetings and well wishes for our meeting and encourages us to avail ourselves of their hospitality. The chairman *pro tem* on behalf of the organizing committee expresses his gratitude for all the efforts of the college to meet our needs.

ARTICLE 9

Motion made and supported to adopt the following daily schedule:

7:00 – 8:00 AM, breakfast
8:00 AM – Noon (twenty-minute break at 10:00 AM), session
Noon – 1:00 PM, lunch
1:00 - 5:30 PM (twenty-minute break at 3:00 PM), session
5:30 – 6:30 PM, supper
7:00 -10:00 PM, session

Adopted

ARTICLE 10

Election of officers of Synod 2007:

- a. Rev. Ron Scheuers of First United Reformed Church, Chino, CA, is elected by ballot to serve as chairman of Synod 2007.
- b. Rev. Ralph Pontier of Redeemer United Reformed Church, Orange City, IA, is elected by ballot to serve as vice-chairman of Synod 2007.

- c. Dr. Edwin Kreykes of Cornerstone United Reformed Church, Sanborn, IA, is elected by ballot to serve as first clerk of Synod 2007.
- d. Rev. Doug Barnes of Hills United Reformed Church, Hills, MN, is elected by acclamation to serve as second clerk of Synod 2007.

ARTICLE 11

Motion made and supported to adopt the Guidelines for Synodical Procedure recommended by the *ad hoc* Synodical Rules Committee as a provisional guide for the organization and deliberations of Synod 2007. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 12

Privilege of the floor:

- a. Motion made and supported to grant the privilege of the floor to the stated clerk, Bill Konynenbelt. *Adopted*
- b. Motion made and supported to grant the privilege of the floor to the U.S. URCNA treasurer, Peter J. Moen. *Adopted*
- c. Motion made and supported to allow Rev. Mitchell Persaud, Rev. Bill Green, Rev. Steve Poelman, Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, and Rev. Eric Pennings to address the committees of pre-advice. *Adopted*
- d. Motion made and supported to allow Mr. Jay De Jong and Mr. Roger Vanoostveen the privilege of the floor when the Website Oversight Committee report is being discussed. *Adopted*
- e. Motion made and supported to permit any members of the CECCA to address the committee of pre-advice. *Defeated*

ARTICLE 13

The officers of Synod 2007 assume their duties at this time. Chairman Scheuers opens with prayer and addresses the body, thanking the delegates for their trust and confidence in his leadership and asking for patience and cooperation in the deliberations and a spirit of unity among the body. General instructions on the functioning of committees are given and the committees are dismissed to begin their work.

ARTICLE 14

The officers of synod assign the following (previously unassigned) delegates to committees of pre-advice:

Committee 3: Elder Gabe Martinez

Committee 5: Elder Jerry Breukelman
Committee 9: Elder Henry Knibbe

Tuesday, July 10, 2007
Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 15

- a. The chairman convenes the afternoon plenary session at 5:00 PM, making some housekeeping announcements and noting that some of the committees have completed their work and a number of reports are ready for distribution, which reports will be dealt with during the evening plenary session.
- b. A letter from Rev. Moses Thang of the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar is available for the delegates, since he is not able to be present as a fraternal delegate. This letter is received for information and referred to the CECCA for its response.
- c. Rev. Allen Vander Pol is granted permission to be absent from the evening session for personal reasons.
- d. Elder Sandy Siepman and Rev. Dan Donovan from Providence Reformed Church of Winnipeg, MB, are granted permission to leave the meeting Wednesday afternoon for personal reasons.

ARTICLE 16

Rev. Marcelo Souza of Christ Reformed Church, Anaheim, CA, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 261 and closes the session with prayer.

Tuesday, July 10, 2007
Evening Session

ARTICLE 17

Rev. Jason Tuinstra of Emmanuel URC, Lemoore, CA, opens the session with devotions by inviting the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 319 and 166, reading Micah 4:1-5, and leading in prayer.

ARTICLE 18

Motion made and supported to grant missionaries Rev. Bill Green, Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Rev. Eric Pennings, Rev. Mitch Persaud, Rev. Steve Poelman, and Rev. Phil Grotenhuis, each no more than five minutes to address the body. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 19

Advisory Committee 1

Materials: Credentials, Report of Convening Consistory (*Agenda*, pp. 3-16, 125)

Chairman: Rev. Eric Fennema

Reporter: Rev. Kevin Hossink

Committee: Gilbert Van Mourik, Jake Strijdhorst, Jim Morren, Ken Wielard, Rev. Ancel Merwin, Rev. James Folkerts

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 request the churches with an incomplete delegation to offer a brief explanation, according to the rules of procedure. *Adopted*

The delegates from these churches gave satisfactory reasons for their incomplete delegations.

2. That Synod 2007 strongly encourage the following procedure: each church should provide the stated clerk of its classis with information on calls accepted, granting emeritation, changes of ministerial status, depositions, leaves of absence, etc.; who should then pass along this information to the stated clerk of the federation in a timely manner. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 recommend the following communication protocol: that all matters relating to committee appointments, committee queries for information, and advice to committees be channeled first through the stated clerk of the federation who then should pass this information to the convening consistory. *Adopted*
4. That Synod 2007 request the stated clerk of each classis to assist the stated clerk of the federation to send directory information in a timely manner. *Adopted*
5. In response to the stated clerk's request concerning providing a printed booklet format of the current URCNA Church Order, the chair instructs the stated clerk to use his discretion in distributing this information in electronic format.
6. That Synod 2007 receive the seventh point of the stated clerk's report for information. *Adopted*
7. That Synod 2007 approve the work of the stated clerk. *Adopted*
8. That Synod 2007 either sustain or deny the appeal of interim committee Classis Southwest U.S. *Referred back to committee*
9. That Synod 2007 approve the work of the convening Consistory, with the exception of the matter involved in the appeal of the interim committee of Classis Southwest U.S. *Adopted*
10. That Synod 2007 gratefully accept the invitation of Cornerstone URC in London, ON to host the next meeting of synod. *Adopted*

11. Motion made and supported to ask the committee to clarify recommendation 4 above.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 73.)

ARTICLE 20

Advisory Committee 2

Materials: Financial Matters, Healthcare (*Agenda*, pp. 19-41, 338-340)

Chairman: Paul Anema

Reporter: Peter Moen, Sr.

Committee: Andy De Jager, Harlyn Jacobsma, Pete Ton, Rev. Jonathan Van Hoogen, Tony DeWeerd (Hamilton), Wil Postma, Bill Oostenbrink

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 accept the report of the U.S. Treasurer (*Agenda*, pp. 23-31) and of the Canadian Treasurer (*Agenda*, pp. 33-38). *Adopted*

2. That Synod 2007 request that the churches be given the same detail in the Canadian financial report as is found in the U.S. financial report, so that Synod and the churches can better evaluate what can be done. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 2 continued in Art. 95.)

ARTICLE 21

Advisory Committee 4

Materials: Overtures 10, 11, 12, 16 (*Agenda*, pp. 111-114, 119)

Chairman: Rev. Jason Tuinstra

Reporter: Rev. Doug Barnes

Committee: Anthony Snippe, Brett Watson, Dean Korhorn (substitute for B. Reiffer), Gerry Bontius, Henry Klaas, Jim DeBoer, John Lindemulder, Marv Vanden Berg, Peter Berkhout, Jr., Rev. Christopher Gordon, Rev. Dan Donovan, Rev. David Klumpenhower, Rev. Mark Stromberg

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 11 to change Church Order Article 48 as follows:

Current reading:

Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers, under the regulation of the

Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages in conflict with the Word of God.

Proposed reading:

Scripture teaches that marriage is designed to be a lifelong, monogamous covenantal union between one man and one woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages shall be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages that conflict with the Word of God.

Grounds:

- a. The inclusion of a biblical definition/description of marriage is Biblical and therefore permissible.
 - b. The inclusion of a biblical definition/description of marriage might help shield our ministers of the Word from unjust prosecution in the event that they are asked but refuse to solemnize a homosexual marriage. This may become a particular problem for URC ministers and churches in Canada since Canadian law currently permits homosexual “marriage.”
 - c. The inclusion of a biblical definition/description of marriage will also make our churches’ position clear to our own membership and others who might desire clarification regarding this matter.
 - d. Although not previously codified, the definition of marriage provided above represents the understanding and has governed the practice of the churches and ministers of the URCNA since its inception. *Adopted without dissent*
2. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by January 1, 2008. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 4 continued in Art. 35.)

ARTICLE 22

The second clerk reads a proposed press release (Number 1) concerning the work of Synod 2007 on Monday and Tuesday. Motion made and supported to approve this press release. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 23

Elder Gilbert Van Mourik of Zion URC, Ripon, CA, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 175 and closes the session with prayer.

Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Morning Session

ARTICLE 24

Rev. Eric Fennema of Trinity Reformed Church, Lethbridge, AB, opens the session with devotions by reading Psalm 46, inviting the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 13 and 312, and leading in prayer.

ARTICLE 25

The first clerk reads the concept minutes. Motion made and supported to adopt these minutes. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 26

The chairman invites the following individuals to address the assembly:

- a. Rev. Phil Grotenhuis speaks of his work in Springfield, MO.
- b. Rev. Allen Vander Pol speaks of his work with Miami International Seminary.

ARTICLE 27

Advisory Committee 7

Materials: Overtures 8, 9, 13, 14 (*Agenda*, pp. 109-110, 115-116)

Chairman: Rev. Al Bezuyen

Reporter: Rev. Bill Pols

Committee: David Cronkhite, David Francisco, Jim Gordon, Korrie Van Maanen, Marty Martinez, Rev. Eric Tuininga, Rev. John Roke, Rev. Mark Stewart, Rev. Tom Morrison, Roger Frey, Tom Kooienga

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 8 to appoint a committee to study the level of doctrinal commitment advisable for communicant membership in our churches.
 - a. Motion is made and supported to grant Rev. Bill Green and Rev. Steve Poelman the privilege of the floor to address this matter. *Adopted*
The main motion is adopted
2. That Synod 2007 appoint the following to this committee and request that this committee report to the next Synod: Rev. Tom Morrison (chairman), Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman (reporter), Rev. Daniel Hyde, Rev. Rich Kuiken, Elder Wil Postma, and Rev. Mitch Persaud. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 7 continued in Art. 32.)

ARTICLE 28

After having recessed for further committee work, the assembly reconvenes at 11:45 AM. Elder Doug Suwyn of Trinity URC, Caledonia, MI, reads from Psalm 15, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 361, and closes the session with prayer.

Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 29

Rev. Larry Johnson of Doon URC, Doon, IA, opens the session by inviting the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 368 and 14, reading from Isaiah 57:14-21, and leading in prayer.

ARTICLE 30

The chairman invites fraternal delegate Rev. Douwe Agema of the Canadian Reformed Churches to bring greetings. He touches on a great many issues concerning the ongoing process of working toward federative unity involving our federations, closing with the words of 2 Thessalonians 3:16.

Rev. John Bouwers of Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church, Jordan, ON, responds to Rev. Agema.

ARTICLE 31

Rev. Eric Pennings speaks to the assembly of his work with Miami International Seminary.

ARTICLE 32

Advisory Committee 7 (continued from Art. 27)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 9 to amend Appendix 2 of the Church Order “*Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam*” as follows:
 - a. In section 3.b. (Content), add this subsection: “(8) Church Polity: the history and principles of Reformed church polity, and the content of the Church Order.”
 - b. In section 3.b. (Content), in subsection 1 (Practica), delete “and church polity.”

Adopted by the required majority

- c. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by January 1, 2008. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 33

2. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 14 to form a new Pacific Northwest Classis, consisting of the following churches:

Bellingham United Reformed Church (Bellingham, WA)
United Reformed Church of Lynden (Lynden, WA)
Immanuel's Reformed Church (Salem, OR)
Cloverdale United Reformed Church (Boise, ID)
Grace United Reformed Church (Kennewick, WA)
United Reformed Church of Nampa (Nampa, ID)
United Reformed Church of the Magic Valley (Twin Falls, ID)
Belgrade United Reformed Church (Belgrade, MT)
Zion United Reformed Church (Ripon, CA)
Emmanuel United Reformed Church (Lemoore, CA)
Covenant United Reformed Church, (Fresno, CA)
Trinity United Reformed Church (Walnut Creek, CA)

Adopted

ARTICLE 34

Advisory Committee 12

Materials: CECCA (*Agenda*, pp. 264-306)

Chairman: Rev. Al Korvemaker

Reporter: Rev. Adam Kaloostian

Committee: Ed Spronk, Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, Henry Nieboer, Rev. Carl A Heuss, Sr., Rev. Christopher Folkerts, Rev. Jacques Roets, Rev. Lou Slagter, Rev. Paul Lindemulder, Rev. Ryan Kron, Rev. Todd Joling, Sandy Siepman

Recommendations:

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to CECCA chairman Rev. Dennis Royall and secretary Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema to answer Synod's questions regarding the CECCA report and the report of this committee. *Adopted*
2. That the URCNA enter into Phase One ecumenical contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN[v]). *Adopted*
3. That the URCNA enter into Phase One ecumenical contact with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. *Adopted*
4. Regarding the five recommendations of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) (*Agenda*, p. 268, item 4), the advisory committee recommends:

- a. That Synod 2007 approve the proposed change in the wording of Article IV.1.a. (Membership) of the ICRC Constitution and so inform ICRC Corresponding Secretary, Rev. C. Van Spronsen. *Adopted*
 - b. That Synod 2007 appoint a contact person to liaise with other member churches in their region, who will also report to Synod via the CECCA and will encourage URCNA congregations to participate in activities of the ICRC, such as the Regional and Mission Conferences, when such are scheduled in their area. *Adopted*
 - c. That Synod 2007 recognize that Rev. Ray Sikkema has been re-appointed by the ICRC to serve on its Missions Committee for another four-year term. *Adopted*
5. That Synod 2007 appoint Rev. Ray Sikkema as the contact person to the ICRC. *Adopted*
 6. That Synod 2007 appoint Rev. Ray Sikkema to serve as the primus delegate to the next meeting of the ICRC, and Rev. Dick Moes as the secundus delegate. *Adopted*
 7. That Synod 2007 welcome the Fraternal Delegates and Fraternal Observers present at Synod, extending to them the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of the sending church. *The chair so rules*
 8. That Synod 2007 inform the ICRC that the URCNA is willing to host, under the oversight of the CECCA, the 2013 meeting of the ICRC, and thereby also mandates CECCA to retain contact with the Interim Committee of the ICRC. *Adopted*
 9. That Synod 2007 instruct the stated clerk to send a copy of our proposed Synodical Rules, if and when such a document is adopted by Synod, to the Rev. Moses Thang of the United Reformed Churches of Myanmar. *Adopted*
 10. That Synod 2007 instruct the stated clerk, once he receives the ICRC *Mission Report*, to forward this document to all of our churches through electronic mail. *Adopted*
 11. That Synod 2007 appoint Rev. Dennis Royall to a third term on the CECCA. *Adopted*
 12. That Synod 2007 heartily thank the CECCA for their continuing work and for their report to Synod. *The chair so rules*

(Advisory Committee 12 continued in Art. 85.)

ARTICLE 35

Advisory Committee 4 (continued from Art. 21)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 not accede to Overture 12. *Defeated*

2. Motion made and supported that Synod 2007 accede to Overture 12 to change Church Order Article 44 as follows:

Current reading:

Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required. Their names shall be announced to the congregation two weeks prior to reception, in order that the congregation may have opportunity, if necessary, to bring lawful objections to the attention of the Consistory.

Proposed reading:

Persons coming from denominations other than those with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required. Their names shall be announced to the congregation two weeks prior to reception, in order that the congregation may have opportunity, if necessary, to bring lawful objections to the attention of the Consistory.

Adopted by the required majority

3. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by January 1, 2008. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 4 continued in Art. 41.)

ARTICLE 36

Elder Bernie Kamerman of Phoenix URC, Phoenix, AZ, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 328, reads portions of Psalm 136, and closes the session with prayer

**Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Evening Session**

ARTICLE 37

Rev. Paul Murphy of West Sayville Reformed Bible Church, West Sayville, NY, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 137 and 407, reads Psalm 57, and opens the evening session with prayer.

Elder Jake De Vries of the Immanuel URC, DeMotte, IN, has left and is replaced by Elder Howard Swart. Mr. Swart stands to give his assent to the Form of Subscription.

ARTICLE 38

Fraternal delegate Rev. Herman Van Stedum of the Reformed Church in the United States is invited to address the assembly. Rev. Van Stedum speaks of some of the issues dealt with at the recent RCUS Synod and gives words of encouragement to the URCNA to continue faithfully serving the Lord.

Rev. Bill De Jong of Covenant Reformed Church, Kansas City, MO, responds to Rev. Van Stedum.

ARTICLE 39

Fraternal observer Rev. Karlo Janssen of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKN[v]) is invited to address the assembly. He gives a short overview of the status of the various Reformed churches in the Netherlands along with current issues they are facing in the churches. He also speaks of the similar heritage and history of our federations.

Rev. Dick Moes of Surrey Covenant Reformed Church, Surrey, BC, responds to Rev. Janssen.

ARTICLE 40

The chairman invites Rev. Bill Green to speak about his work in Costa Rica.

ARTICLE 41

Advisory Committee 4 (continued from Art. 35)

Recommendation:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 16 to change Church Article 12 by replacing the word “council” with the word “Consistory” throughout. *Defeated*

(Advisory Committee 4 continued in Art. 66.)

ARTICLE 42

Advisory Committee 6

Materials: Overtures 5, 7 (*Agenda*, pp. 52-102, 105-108)

Chairman: Rev. Christo Heiberg

Reporter: Rev. Paul Ipema

Committee: Bernie Van Essendelft, Chuck Dykstra, Cornie Dykema, Dan Woldhuis, Dr. Cornelis Venema, Dr. Richard Ryskamp, Ed Vander Woude, Edwin Kreykes, Art Tjoelker, Rev. Bill De Jong, Rev. Ed Marcusse, Rev. Fred Folkerts, Rev. Harry Zekveld, Rev. Marcelo Souza, Rev. Peter Adams

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 7, namely: (1) to instruct the stated clerk to apply immediately, on behalf of the URCNA, for affiliate membership in the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRJC); and (2) to appoint the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to send two observers to each of the next three PRJC meetings, at URCNA expense, and request Faith URC to report their observations to the next synod meeting.

Grounds:

- a. Reformed ministry in the Armed Forces chaplaincy is an urgently needed, legitimate, and useful ministry of the Word, worthy of the support of our churches and the service of our ministers.
 - b. An ecclesiastical endorsement from a faithfully Reformed and active endorsing body is a necessary prerequisite for faithful chaplain ministry; however, the URCNA is unqualified to issue such an endorsement.
 - c. Seeking our own URCNA endorsing status is an unnecessary and perhaps wasteful endeavor, would be less helpful to our chaplains than joining the PRJC, and would fail to take advantage of a significant opportunity to cooperate with NAPARC churches.
 - d. The PRJC is a faithful, well-recognized, experienced, active, and resourceful endorsing agency governed by three NAPARC denominations.
 - e. Affiliate-membership seems more advantageous than full membership, promising: (a) quicker acceptance and more speedy endorsements; (b) an opportunity to send observers to the PRJC meetings and become better acquainted with this body; and (c) time to see whether we can justify a commitment to the responsibilities of full membership in the PRJC, depending on how many URCNA ministers actually enter the military chaplaincy.
 - f. Sending observers to the PRJC annual meetings would facilitate a deeper understanding of this organization, foster the URCNA's budding relationship to it, and serve to assess the wisdom of applying for full membership in the future. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 instruct the stated clerk to request the PRJC to add the Three Forms of Unity as an alternative to the Westminster Standards in its policy statements. *Adopted*
 3. That this matter be forwarded to Advisory Committee 2 for cost projections to be included in the next federation budget. *Adopted*
 4. That these decisions constitute the response of Synod 2007 to Overture 7. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 6 continued in Art. 67.)

ARTICLE 43

Advisory Committee 11

Materials: Synodical Rules (*Agenda*, pp. 321-337)

Chairman: Rev. Calvin J. Tuininga

Reporter: Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen

Committee: Bernard Kamerman, Berwyn Van Otterloo, John De Rooi, Rev. Casey Freswick, Rev. John Vermeer, Rev. Paul Murphy, Rev. Rich Anjema, Rev. Thomas Wetselaar, Richard Vander Deen, Rick Schotsman, Ron Myers

Recommendations:

1. That during the discussion of this report, the chairman and reporter of the *ad hoc* URCNA Synodical Rules Committee be granted the privilege of the floor. *The chair so rules*
2. That Synod 2007 provisionally adopt the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* presented by the *ad hoc* Synodical Rules Committee, which means that these regulations will function on a trial basis until either amended or adopted by the next Synod. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 allow responses from the churches and others regarding these regulations to be forwarded to this committee until May 1, 2008, for their consideration. *Adopted*
4. That Synod 2007 adopt the “Regulations for Synodical Procedure” with the following changes.

1.6 “The convening consistory shall call and conduct a prayer service to be held prior to the opening of Synod which shall include singing, appropriate prayer, and an exhortation from Scripture. Delegates of Synod are expected to attend this service, which shall also be open to the public.” *Adopted*

Rev. Daniel Hyde registers his contrary vote

The above proposed change and others as recorded in the report of Advisory Committee 11 will be referred to the *ad hoc* Synodical Rules Committee.

(Advisory Committee 11 continued in Art. 50.)

ARTICLE 44

The second clerk reads a proposed press release (Number 2) concerning the work of Synod 2007 on Wednesday. Motion made and supported to approve this press release. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 45

Elder Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel of First URC, Chino, CA, reads from Isaiah 55:6-13, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 228, and closes the session with prayer.

Thursday, July 12, 2007
Morning Session

ARTICLE 46

Elder Wil Postma of Covenant Reformed Church, Kansas City, MO, reads Joshua 1:1-9, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 74 and 479, and opens the session with prayer.

ARTICLE 47

The first clerk reads the concept minutes. Motion made and supported to adopt these minutes.

Adopted

ARTICLE 48

The chairman invites ecumenical observer Rev. Kyle Sims from the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church to bring greetings. He gives us a little background of the ARPC and speaks of some of the issues they are dealing with today.

Rev. Todd Joling of Faith URC, Beecher, IL, responds to Rev. Sims.

ARTICLE 49

Motion made and supported to convene the next Synod during the summer of 2009. *Defeated*

Motion made and supported to convene the next Synod during the summer of 2010 with the exact dates to be set by the officers of Synod 2007 in consultation with the convening consistory.

Adopted

ARTICLE 50

Advisory Committee 11 (continued from Art. 43)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 mandate the *ad hoc* Synodical Rules Committee to prepare and distribute to the churches at least four months before Synod a refined version of the Regulations for final approval by Synod 2010. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 assign to the respective corporation boards, assisted by the stated clerk, the task of formulating general policies which will implement the proposed regulations pertaining to:

- a. The establishment, regulation, and maintenance of an official archive of all synodical decisions, including those made in executive session.
 - b. The proportionate receipt and disbursing of funds designated for the expenses of synodically appointed committees and functionaries. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 reappoint the present *ad hoc* Synodical Rules Committee with its revised mandate. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 51

Advisory Committee 10

Materials: Website Oversight Committee, CERCU (*Agenda*, pp. 307-320, 244-263)

Chairman: Rev. Greg Lubbers

Reporter: Rev. Steve Arrick

Committee: Dave Vandersleen, Gilbert Van Brenk, Harry Efflandt, Paul G. Scharold, Ray Van Heukelem, Rev. David Bosch, Rev. Larry Johnson, Rev. Moses Janbazian, Rev. Norman Brower, Rev. Talman Wagenmaker

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 grant the privilege of the floor to the Website Oversight Committee chairman and members during the discussion of this report. *The chair so rules*
2. That Synod 2007 appoint the consistory of Grace URC of Waupun, WI, to be the oversight consistory for the Website Oversight Committee. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 determine that the URCNA website not include any e-commerce functions unless and until Synod is prepared to provide the financial and human resources to safeguard financial information that would be gathered, and to accept and protect against the liability attached to a breach of security in this regard. *Adopted*
4. That Synod 2007 determine, in response to committee recommendation 1, that the URCNA website shall not include items involving Executive Sessions in the documents posted from synodical and classical assemblies. The stated clerk will maintain hard copies of the unedited minutes for review by those authorized to do so. *Adopted*
5. That Synod 2007 determine, in response to committee recommendation 2, that the ability to view or place data on the website be tiered according to user login status (e.g., consistorial, classical, or synodical assembly or committee; as distinct from the general public) to be managed by the stated clerk and executed by the webmaster. *Adopted*
6. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendations 3 and 17, direct the Website Oversight Committee, with the approval of an appointed consistory, to commission, post, and update the following documents:
 - a. A brief "Introduction to the URCNA"
 - b. A "History of the URCNA" *Adopted*

7. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendations 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, direct the Website Oversight Committee, with the approval of an appointed consistory, to post the following documents after securing permission:
 - a. The 1996 Letter to the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches
 - b. The Ecumenical Creeds, with their introductions, as found in the 1976 version of the Psalter Hymnal
 - c. The Three Forms of Unity, with their introductions and footnotes, as found in the 1976 version of the Psalter Hymnal
 - d. The URCNA Church Order (able to be viewed and printed from the website)

Adopted
8. That Synod 2007 **not** adopt committee recommendation 12, since this request should come from a consistory.

Adopted
9. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendation 13, direct the Website Oversight Committee to post links to websites belonging to:
 - a. URCNA member churches as per the church's recommendation;
 - b. URCNA church plants being organized under CO Article 22;
 - c. Churches provisionally accepted into the URCNA under Church Order Article 32;
 - d. Denominations with which the URCNA has established ecumenical relations under Church Order Article 36;
 - e. Organizations of which the URCNA is a member (e.g. NAPARC); and
 - f. Websites controlled by the various classes of the URCNA.

Adopted
10. That Synod 2007 **not** adopt committee recommendations 14, 15, 16, 23, and 27.

Adopted
11. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendations 18 and 19, direct the Website Oversight Committee to make available online viewing and printing of the directory of churches of the URCNA.

Adopted
12. That Synod 2007 **not** adopt committee recommendation 20, since this is beyond the mandate of the Website Oversight Committee.

Adopted
13. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendation 21, direct the Website Oversight Committee to post a synodical page, including the most recent agenda and minutes, a link to archives of all previous agendas and minutes, and other official synodical documents (edited for public viewing).

Adopted
14. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendation 22, direct the Website Oversight Committee to make a classical page available for each classis.

Adopted
15. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendations 24, 25, and 26, direct the Website Oversight Committee to support synodical committees with appropriate websites.

Adopted

16. That Synod 2007 adopt committee recommendations 28-42, and declare this to be its answer to Overture 13. *Adopted*

17. That Synod 2007 note that the yearly cost of the website will be approximately \$500.00 (USD), and that the current reserves are sufficient to meet foreseeable expenses.

18. That Synod 2007 thank Mr. Gregory Rickmar for maintaining the original URCNA website, the Website Oversight Committee for their work, and the Covenant URC of Kalamazoo, MI, for their involvement with the website. *The chair so rules*

(Advisory Committee 10 continues in Art. 52.)

ARTICLE 52

Advisory Committee 10 (continued from Art. 51)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 grant the privilege of the floor to the chairman of the CERCU Theological Education Committee when committee matters are being considered. *The chair so rules*

2. That Synod 2007 take note of the loss of a committee member in the departure of Rev. John Barach from the URCNA. *The chair so notes*

3. That Synod 2007 appoint Rev. Joel Dykstra as a member of the Theological Education Committee. *Adopted*

4. That Synod 2007 affirm the following points of agreement between the two committees of the URCNA and the Canadian Reformed Churches, namely:

- It is the task of the churches to train ministers.
- Ministers of the churches must receive sound Reformed theological training.
- As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers.
- Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education.
- It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training.
- The churches (i.e., the URCNA and the Canadian Reformed Churches) should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches. *Adopted*

5. That Synod 2007 affirm the position of the URCNA Theological Education Committee, that a federationally-controlled seminary is not biblically mandated. *Adopted*

6. That the churches continue to follow Article 3 of the URCNA Church Order, which requires a man's consistory to assure that he receives a thoroughly Reformed theological education. *Adopted*

7. That Synod 2007 approve the work of the URCNA Theological Education Committee. *Adopted*
8. That Synod 2007 encourage the URCNA Theological Education Committee to continue its work with the Canadian Reformed Committee in order to draft “proposals for theological education to our respective Synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union.” *Adopted*

ARTICLE 53

The chairman invites Rev. Martin Overgaauw, fraternal observer of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, to bring greetings; he speaks of the history of our relationship as federations, noting some areas of differences but also possible areas of future collaboration.

Rev. Harry Zekveld of Providence URC, Strathroy, ON, responds to Rev. Overgaauw.

ARTICLE 54

Advisory Committee 5

Materials: Overtures 3, 15, CERCU (*Agenda*, pp. 45-51, 117-118, 126-159)

Chairman: George Knevelbaard

Reporter: Rev. Phil Vos

Committee: Bruce Vrieling, Ed Gringhuis, Henry Vander Wal, Rev. Greg Bylsma, Rev. James Admiraal, Rev. Joel Vander Kooi, Rev. Michael Schout, Rev. Peter J. Vellenga, Rev. Spencer Aalsburg, Roland Van Olst, Tony DeWeerd (Woodstock), Jerry Breukelman

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 appoint or reappoint three members at-large for CERCU from the following: Rev. Harry Zekveld (incumbent), Rev. Ralph Pontier (incumbent), Rev. Peter Vellenga and Rev. Bill Pols. *Adopted*
2. Motion made and supported to appoint Rev. Harry Zekveld, Rev. Peter Vellenga, and Rev. Bill Pols. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 remind the classes to appoint or reappoint classical representatives to CERCU for another three-year term. *Adopted*
4. That Synod 2007 ratify the 2005 decision of NAPARC to welcome the Free Reformed Churches into the membership of NAPARC. *Adopted*
5. That Synod 2007 ratify the 2006 decision of NAPARC to welcome the Heritage Reformed Congregations into the membership of NAPARC. *Adopted*
7. That Synod 2007 **not** endorse the NAPARC position on Women in the Military in combat positions.

Grounds:

- a. The URCNA has not, as a federation, studied the matter, nor has there been a request from the churches to take a federational position on the issue.
 - b. The fact that one NAPARC member (the OPC) has already refused to endorse the NAPARC statement precludes the possibility of NAPARC ever being able to make a statement for all its member churches.
 - c. We agree with the OPC that “it is not wise for NAPARC to embark upon a path of making pronouncements for its member churches.” *Adopted*
8. That Synod 2007 instruct the stated clerk to communicate these decisions to the NAPARC Secretary. *The chair so rules*
9. That Synod 2007 respond to the points and concerns raised by Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema in both the 2005 and 2006 reports of his attendance of the NAPARC Foreign Missions consultation by simply taking note of them.

Ground: Any concrete action responding to Rev. Sikkema’s concerns ought to come by way of overture.

Adopted

ARTICLE 55

1. That Synod 2007 establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Phase 2 with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and make arrangements for the ratification process according to Church Order Article 36.

Grounds:

- a. The URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report (*Acts of Synod 2001*, pp. 77-99) indicates substantial doctrinal agreement between the respective confessional standards of the URCNA and the OPC, including eight areas of apparent difficulty where the committee was able to resolve those difficulties within the bounds of the confessions. “We in the URC have so much in common with our full brothers and sisters in the OPC!” (*Acts of Synod 2001*, Committee Report, p. 77).
- b. Although the polity differences between the URCNA and the OPC are more substantial, they are not of such a nature that they should prevent recognizing one another as true churches of Christ, which is the essence of Phase 2, Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- c. The URCNA and OPC are together members of the ICRC and NAPARC.
- d. The OPC has invited us to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- e. We are commanded in Scripture to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3), to be “of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2), to “live in harmony with one another” and “so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:16, 18). Jesus prayed that there might be a unity between His followers, like the unity between Himself

and His Father, made visible to the world, so that the world will believe that the Father had sent the Son (John 17:21-23). Entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship will move us forward in striving to fulfill these ecumenical mandates of Scripture. It is noteworthy that the OPC shares with us a very strong commitment to seek the unity of the whole church. They have expressed this commitment to us in our discussions, and they have set forth their understanding in a paper they have published on their denominational website at <http://opc.org/relations/unity.html> called Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church.

Adopted without dissent

2. Motion made and supported that this action must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by May 1, 2008. *Adopted*
3. Rev. John Bouwers offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the action taken in regard to our relationship with the OPC.

ARTICLE 56

That Synod 2007 add the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC) and Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) to the churches in ecumenical dialogue.

Ground: These are the two churches in NAPARC that we have not yet included in ecumenical dialogue. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 57

That Synod 2007 approve the work of CERCU without adopting every formulation in its dialogue. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 58

The chair thanks Rev. Ralph Pontier and Rev. Dennis Royall for their years of service on the CERCU and the CECCA respectively.

(**Advisory Committee 5** continued in Art. 86.)

ARTICLE 59

Advisory Committee 9

Materials: Overture 4, 17, CERCU (songbook) (*Agenda*, pp. 120-123, 224-243)

Chairman: Rev. Daniel R. Hyde

Reporter: Rev. Richard Wynia

Committee: Clint Krahn, Doug Suwyn, Harry Van Gorp, Howard Swart, James Korvemaker, John Holmlund, Liekel Van Huizen, Rev. David Klompier, Rev. Gary Findley, Rev. Keith Davis, Rev. Kevin Efflandt, Henry Knibbe

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007, in response to committee recommendation 1, take note of the committee's work so far. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 adopt committee recommendation 2, to accept the resignations of Rev. Allen Vander Pol and Rev. Dennis Royall, and thank them for the contribution they made. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 9 continued in Art. 63.)

ARTICLE 60

Rev. Kevin Efflandt of the Bellingham URC, Bellingham, WA, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 111 and closes the morning session in prayer.

Thursday, July 12, 2007
Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 61

Elder Ed Vander Woude of Lynwood URC, Lynwood, IL, reads Psalm 67, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 121 and 298, and opens the session with prayer.

ARTICLE 62

The chairman invites Rev. Steve Poelman to inform the assembly of his work in India and to bring greetings from Rev. Moses Thang of the URC of Myanmar.

ARTICLE 63

Advisory Committee 9 (continued from Art. 59)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 adopt (songbook) committee recommendation 3, to add no new members to this committee at this time. *Adopted*
2. That the chair declare that the Regulations for Synodical Procedure (Section 5.4.2) renders committee recommendation 4 moot. *The chair so rules*
3. That Synod 2007 thank the Songbook Committee for its work. *The chair so rules*

4. That Synod 2007 not accede to Overture 4, to make Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the original 1999 mandate of the Psalter Hymnal Committee its restored mandate.

Grounds:

- a. Although it is true that the production of a common songbook is not mentioned under Phase 2, substantial work has been done by the committee, as mandated by Synod Escondido 2001, which we expect will be of benefit to the URCNA, regardless of whether we ever merge with the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- b. The members of the committee testify that thus far, cooperation with the Book of Praise Committee is not impeding progress toward a new book.

Motion is made and supported to temporarily postpone action on this in order to consider Advisory Committee 9 recommendation regarding Overture 17. *Adopted*

5. That Synod 2007 **not** accede to Overture 17, which overtures Synod 2007 to clarify the meaning of three phrases that appear in the supplement to the mandate for the Psalter Hymnal Committee adopted by Synod 2001, which reads:

“That the present ‘Psalter Hymnal Committee’ *work together with* the Canadian Reformed ‘Book of Praise Committee’ *to consider for inclusion* in *this song book* the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality” (emphasis added).

Phrases needing clarification are (1) “*work together with*” (to include both consultation with and careful consideration of views advanced by the Canadian Reformed ‘Book of Praise Committee’ but only insofar as such work does not hinder, delay, or divert the Psalter Hymnal Committee from fulfilling its purpose as originally adopted); (2) “*to consider for inclusion,*” which neither implies nor necessitates inclusion of any or all metrical psalmody; and (3) “*this song book,*” which refers to a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal that will serve the churches of our federation alone, whether or not we are in ecclesiastical fellowship with any number of denominations/federations.

Grounds:

- a. No further clarification is needed regarding the phrases “work together with” and “to consider for inclusion.” The Songbook Committee is already working with the explanation suggested by the overture.
- b. It is clear from the context out of which the decision of Synod 2001, and the revised mandate given to the Psalter Hymnal Committee, arose that “this songbook” means a common songbook produced in consultation with the “Book of Praise Committee” of the Canadian Reformed Churches. *Defeated*

6. Motion made and supported that Synod 2007 accede to Overture 17. *Adopted*

7. That Synod 2007 declare this action to be its response to Overture 4, affirming that in addition to reaffirming our original abiding purpose to publish a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal (Synod 1999) we remain committed to the supplemental decision of Synod 2001 to continue to dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches as a parallel track. *Adopted*
8. That Synod 2007 declare this action to be its response to the request of the Liturgical Forms Committee for clarification. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 9 continued in Art. 78.)

ARTICLE 64

The vice-chairman invites Rev. Peter Adams of Grace URC, Alto, MI, to introduce Rev. Peter Kloosterman as fraternal observer from the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. Rev. Kloosterman brings greetings from the RCNZ and gives a brief introduction and history of the RCNZ. He expresses thanks for the vote for ecumenical contact and encourages the URCNA to go forward with the process toward ecumenical fellowship. Though separated by thousands of miles, we are one in Christ Jesus.

Rev. Adams responds to Rev. Kloosterman.

ARTICLE 65

Advisory Committee 8

Materials: CERCUCO (Joint Church Order) (*Agenda*, pp. 160-223)

Chairman: Rev. Dennis Royall

Reporter: Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer

Committee: Dick Vander Molen, Jake Veldman, Lynn A. Brouwer, Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Rev. Dick Moes, Rev. Jeremy Veldman, Rev. Joghinda Gangar, Rev. Michael Brown, Rev. Nick Smith, Rev. William Van der Woerd, Richard Meyer, Sid Soodsma

Recommendations:

1. That all references to Proposed Church Order (PCO) be changed to Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO).

Ground: This will provide necessary clarity for present and future consideration of this document, recognizing that this is not a Church Order for the URCNA, but a Church Order for the federation made up of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches. *Adopted*

2. That Synod 2007 adopt committee recommendation 1 to receive the PJCO and the four-column comparison document. *Adopted*

3. That Synod 2007 receive the Minority Report of the Joint Church Order Committee (pp. 221-223) regarding Article 35. *Adopted*

4. That Synod 2007 adopt the recommendation of the Minority Report formulation of Article 35 for the PJCO:

“The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, *provided they are approved by the consistory in accord with a synodically adopted standard.*” (Refer to “Principles and Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church,” *Acts of Synod 2004*, pp. 102-104.) *Defeated*

5. Motion made and supported to present to the churches without prejudice both the majority and minority reports regarding Article 35 of the PJCO. *Defeated*

6. Motion made and supported that Synod 2007 express its strong preference for the minority report regarding Article 35 of the PJCO. *Adopted*

7. That Synod 2007 give the PJCO and the four-column comparison document to the churches for discussion. *Adopted*

8. That Synod 2007 adopt the following protocol provisions:
 - a. That the URNCA members of the JCO Committee be appointed as the PJCO Committee, mandated to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding the PJCO, and on that basis to recommend for consideration a revised PJCO to Synod 2010.
 - b. That official communications regarding the PJCO proceed from and through consistories to the PJCO Committee.
 - c. That the PJCO Committee compile a list of all official communications and individual communications processed through the consistories, which are to be received by March 1, 2009, together with a summary of the content of each communication and an explanation of committee action relating to the communication, all of which is to be sent to the consistories by June 1, 2009.
 - d. That Synod 2007 authorize the PJCO Committee to hold no more than eight (8) regional conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the Classes) throughout the federation.
 - e. That Synod 2007 mandate the PJCO Committee to prepare, circulate, and finalize for publication a number of expositions of various provisions of the PJCO, including their biblical principle(s), historical background, and practical considerations.
 - f. That Synod 2007 mandate the PJCO Committee to prepare a report for Synod 2010 and to recommend for consideration a revised PJCO for Synod 2010.
 - g. That Synod 2007 stipulate that a report of the PJCO Committee regarding all communications received from consistories, together with a summary of the content

of each communication and an explanation of committee action relating to the communication, be presented to Synod 2010.

- h. That Synod 2007 stipulate that a revised Proposed Joint Church Order be presented to Synod 2010 for consideration. *Adopted*

14. That Synod 2007 mandate its PJCO Committee to work closely with the Canadian Reformed members. *Adopted*

15. That Synod 2007 mandate its PJCO Committee to provide CERCU with its report in sufficient time for it to prepare its report for Synod 2010, by the deadline set by Synod for such reports. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 66

Advisory Committee 4 (continued from Art. 41)

Recommendation:

1. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 10, to change Church Order Article 11 as follows:

Current reading:

If, for reasons other than such as warrant ecclesiastical discipline, either a minister of the Word or the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution shall occur only upon mutually satisfactory conditions and only with the concurring advice of the classis. If the released minister desires to receive a call to serve another congregation, the council from whose service he is being released shall announce his eligibility for call, which eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably released from office. If the minister released from his congregation desires to leave his office in order to seek non-ministerial labor, he must receive the approval of the classis before doing so.

Proposed reading:

When for weighty reasons and in exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, and a minister of the Word or the council of the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution may occur only when all the following conditions have been met:

- a. this dissolution shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. this dissolution shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of both the church visitors and the classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;
- c. this dissolution shall occur only with the concurring advice of the classis;

- d. the council's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family shall require the concurring advice of the classis.

The council of the congregation with which the pastoral relationship is dissolved shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.

Adopted by the required majority

2. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by May 1, 2008. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 67

Advisory Committee 6 (continued from Art. 42)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 **not** accede to Overture 5, which overtures Synod 2007 to adopt the report of the Reformed Church of the United States regarding justification. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 reaffirm the statement of Synod 2004, "that the Scriptures and confessions (Heidelberg Q/A 59-62; Belgic Confession articles 20-23) teach the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, based upon the active and passive obedience of Christ alone" (*Acts of Synod 2004*, Article 66). *Adopted without dissent*
3. That Synod 2007 affirm that the Scriptures and confessions teach that faith is the sole instrument of our justification apart from all works (Heidelberg Catechism, Answer 61, "Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God, and I can receive the same and make it my own in no other way than by faith only." Cf. Belgic Confession Articles 22,24). *Adopted without dissent*
4. That Synod 2007 remind and encourage individuals and churches that, if there are office-bearers suspected of deviating from or obscuring the doctrine of salvation as summarized in our confessions, they are obligated to follow the procedure prescribed in the Church Order (Articles 29, 52, 55, 61, 62) for addressing theological error. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 6 continued in Art. 72.)

ARTICLE 68

Rev. Al Korvemaker of Bethel URC, Aylmer, ON, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 192 and closes the session with prayer.

Thursday, July 12, 2007
Evening Session

ARTICLE 69

Elder Dave Francisco of Oceanside URC, Oceanside, CA, reads from Romans 3:23-25, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 226 and 1, and opens the evening session with prayer.

ARTICLE 70

The chairman invites fraternal observer Rev. Henk Bergsma of the Free Reformed Churches of North America to address the assembly. Rev. Bergsma brings greetings and gives a short synopsis of some of the work our federations are doing together.

Rev. Peter Vellenga of Grace URC, Clinton, ON, responds to Rev. Bergsma.

ARTICLE 71

The chairman invites Rev. Mitchell Persaud to inform the assembly of his work in Toronto.

ARTICLE 72

Advisory Committee 6 (continued from Art. 67)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 present the following statement to the churches as pastoral advice:

Synod 2007 affirms that the Scriptures and confessions teach the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, and that nothing that is taught under the rubric of covenant theology in our churches may contradict this fundamental doctrine. Therefore Synod 2007 rejects the errors of those:

- a. who deny or modify the teaching that “God created man good and after His own image, that is, in true righteousness and holiness,” able to perform the “commandment of life” as the representative of mankind (HC Q&A 6, 9; BC 14);
- b. who, in any way and for any reason, confuse the “commandment of life” given before the fall with the gospel announced after the fall (BC 14, 17, 18; HC Q&A 19, 21, 56, 60);
- c. who confuse the ground and instrument of acceptance with God before the fall (obedience to the commandment of life) with the ground (Christ who kept the commandment of life) and instrument (faith in Christ) of acceptance with God after the fall;

- d. who deny that Christ earned acceptance with God and that all His merits have been imputed to believers (BC 19, 20, 22, 26; HC Q&A 11-19, 21, 36-37, 60, 84; CD I.7, RE I.3, RE II.1);
- e. who teach that a person can be historically, conditionally elect, regenerated, savingly united to Christ, justified, and adopted by virtue of participation in the outward administration of the covenant of grace but may lose these benefits through lack of covenantal faithfulness (CD, I, V);
- f. who teach that all baptized persons are in the covenant of grace in precisely the same way such that there is no distinction between those who have only an outward relation to the covenant of grace by baptism and those who are united to Christ by grace alone through faith alone (HC Q&A 21, 60; BC 29);
- g. who teach that Spirit-wrought sanctity, human works, or cooperation with grace is any part either of the ground of our righteousness before God or any part of faith, that is, the “instrument by which we embrace Christ, our righteousness” (BC 22-24; HC Q&A 21, 60, 86);
- h. who define faith, in the act of justification, as being anything more than “leaning and resting on the sole obedience of Christ crucified” or “a certain knowledge” of and “a hearty trust” in Christ and His obedience and death for the elect (BC 23; HC Q&A 21);
- i. who teach that there is a separate and final justification grounded partly upon righteousness or sanctity inherent in the Christian (HC Q&A 52; BC 37).

Adopted

2. That Synod 2007 appoint a study committee to examine by the Word of God and our Confessions the teachings of the so-called Federal Vision and other like teachings on the doctrine of justification; and present a clear statement on these matters to the next synod for the benefit of the churches and the consistories. *Adopted*

3. That Synod 2007 appoint the following men (two from each classis) to this committee:

Eastern US – Rev. Mark Stewart; Rev. Steve Arrick
 Southern Ontario – Rev. Dick Wynia; Rev. Christo Heiberg
 Michigan – Rev. Brian Vos (secretary); Rev. Rick Miller
 Classis Central US – Dr. Cornel Venema; Rev. Patrick Edouard (chair)
 Classis Pacific Northwest – Rev. Chris Gordon; Rev. Kevin Efflandt
 Classis Western Canada – Rev. Bill Pols; Rev. Eric Fennema
 Classis Southwest – Dr. Mike Horton; Rev. Marcelo Souza

Adopted

4. That Synod 2007 instruct this study committee to submit its report to the stated clerk by July 1, 2009. *Adopted*

5. That Synod 2007 declare this to be its answer to Overture 5. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 73

Advisory Committee 1 (continued from Art. 19)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 request that each church provide the necessary information to the stated clerk of each classis, who in turn supply said information to the stated clerk of the federation, for the URCNA directory information. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 establish the honorarium of \$4,000 (US) per year for the stated clerk. If the honorarium is to be paid in Canadian dollars, the currency exchange rate will be set at the rate posted by the federal reserve bank of New York on February 1 and August 1 of each year (www.newyorkfed.org/markets/fixrates/noon.cfm). The stated clerk shall be provided his honorarium monthly, effective August 1, 2007. *Adopted*
3. That Synod 2007 sustain the appeal of the interim committee of Classis Southwest US. *Defeated*
4. That Synod 2007 adopt the following guidelines concerning deposition from office:
 - a. The stated clerk of the federation shall send notices of deposition to all the churches.
 - b. Churches should use discretion in releasing this sensitive information. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art 74)

ARTICLE 74

Advisory Committee 1 (continued from Art. 73)

5. That Synod 2007 adopt the convening consistory recommendations 3.1-3.6 concerning the Joint Venture Agreement as follows:
 - 3.1 That Synod 2007 appoint members of the Boards of Directors of the two legal entities into which the United Reformed Churches in North America (hereinafter referred to as "URCNA") has legally organized itself in Canada and the United States, respectively, and charge these appointed members with executing all legal requirements and responsibilities associated with being members of the Boards including, but not limited to, organizing themselves and electing officers, holding at least the legally required minimum number of meetings of the Board each year, and filing the legally required annual information reports with the appropriate government agencies.

Ground: The current Boards of Directors are not functioning and are not meeting these minimum legal requirements.

- 3.2 That Synod 2007 place the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations, respectively, under the authority of the consistory appointed to convene the next synod.

Ground: During the period between synods, the Boards of Directors need a consistory in authority over them to ensure that the minimum legal requirements for meetings to be held, for filing reports, etc., are met and, if it becomes necessary from time to time, to direct the Boards of Directors to engage in other tasks and activities deemed to be in the best interests of the churches of the URCNA federation.

- 3.3 That the delegates to Synod 2007 bring to Synod 2007 comments, concerns, and the like regarding the draft Articles of Incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation which have been circulated to the churches in advance of the convening of Synod 2007 (see Appendix 2), so that any issues or concerns of the churches may be noted and so that the incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation may be accomplished as soon as possible after the conclusion of Synod 2007.

Ground: The delegates to Synods 1999, 2001, and 2004 each approved in concept the creation of a Joint Venture Corporation to facilitate the transfer of funds raised in Canada and the United States to the causes for which the funds were gathered. However, at no time in the past were the delegates to any synod presented with a draft of the Articles of Incorporation of this proposed Joint Venture Corporation so that they and the churches of the federation they represented could be aware of the details of this proposed corporation, or of the grant of authority that would be given to the Directors of this Joint Venture Corporation, etc.

- 3.4 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that since the delegates to earlier synods discussed and debated in detail the Articles of Incorporation of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations and made modifications to the drafts presented to them, the churches and the delegates to Synod 2007 should have the same opportunity to discuss and debate the Articles of Incorporation of the proposed Joint Venture Corporation (see Appendix 2).

Grounds:

- a. Rather than delay consideration of the Articles of Incorporation for the proposed Joint Venture Corporation until Synod 2010, a draft of the Articles has been presented to the churches and to the synodical delegates for consideration, discussion, and debate by Synod 2007.
 - b. Since the draft Articles of Incorporation have not been vetted by legal counsel in the United States as of the convening of Synod 2007, the draft Articles are presented for discussion and debate only.
- 3.5 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that the consistory appointed to convene the next synod be directed to coordinate and facilitate the Canadian and United States Boards of Directors of the URCNA corporations to engage legal counsel to review the draft Articles of Incorporation; to address and insofar as is possible incorporate into

the draft Articles responses to the points, issues, and concerns raised by the delegates to Synod 2007 regarding the draft Articles; to coordinate the review of the revised Articles of Incorporation by the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations; and to cause the Articles of Incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation to be filed with the appropriate authorities as soon as possible and no later than December 31, 2007.

Grounds:

- a. Since there is an immediate need for the creation of the Joint Venture Corporation and since the delegates to Synod 2007 will have had the opportunity to offer opinions, criticisms, edits, etc. regarding the proposed draft Articles of Incorporation, the creation of this corporation need not be delayed until the convening of the next synod.
- b. The consistory appointed to convene the next synod can oversee the progress of the work that is being done by the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States corporations and will have the mandate from the delegates to Synod 2007 to complete the task at hand by causing the Joint Venture Corporation to be established.

3.6 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that it instruct the consistory appointed to convene the next synod to appoint the members of the Board of Directors of the Joint Venture Corporation to serve in that capacity as soon as the Joint Venture Corporation is created. The members of this Board of Directors shall be placed under the authority of the consistory appointed to convene the next synod so that this consistory shall exercise authority over the Joint Venture Board of Directors to ensure that the Board fulfills all of the legal requirements of a corporation in the jurisdictions in which it is incorporated. *Adopted*

6. Motion made and supported to ask Advisory Committee 1 to bring names for the Board of directors to the body for action. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 75)

ARTICLE 75

Advisory Committee 1 (continued from Art. 74)

7. That Synod 2007 appoint Bill Konynenbelt of the Bethel URC, Calgary, AB, to serve as stated clerk from this Synod to the conclusion of the next synod, and appoint Rev. Dennis Royall of the Cornerstone URC, London, ON, as the alternate stated clerk (see *Acts of Synod 2004*, Art. 46). *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 87.)

ARTICLE 76

Advisory Committee 3

Materials: Overtures 1, 2, 6, Appeal 1 (*Agenda*, pp. 42-44, 103-104, 124)

Chairman: Rev. Barry Beukema

Reporter: Rev. Dale Van Dyke

Committee: Bob Span, Doug Heerema, Jan Harink, Leroy Tinklenberg, Pete Van't Hoff, Rev. Craig Davis, Rev. Don Hoaglander, Rev. Gregory Bero, Rev. Henry Van Olst, Rev. James Sinke, Gabe Martinez, Rev. Rand Lankheet, Rev. Steve Postma, Steve Howerzyl, George Vanderwoude

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 receive the following observations in connection with Appeal 1:
 - a. Standard parliamentary procedure (Robert's Rules) governs how a meeting is to be run, not how decisions regarding "constitutional" (Church Order) matters are to be *ratified*.
 - b. *All* consistories, not just those voting for or against the ratification of church union or changes to the Church Order, are affected by such changes.
 - c. To date, our federation has understood that "a majority of the Consistories" (Church Order, Article 36) means a majority of the consistories *in the federation*, and has acted accordingly.
 - d. Synod 2004 specifically ruled this way on the matter.

2. That Synod 2007 **not** sustain Appeal 1, on the basis of the following responses to each ground of Appeal 1 (formulated in accordance with the adopted Regulations for Synodical Procedure regarding Guidelines for Appeals [*Agenda*, p. 336]):
 - a. With respect to Ground 1: The Scripture passages and Foundational Principle 10, listed in Ground 1, encourage the expression of unity but not the method by which that unity is achieved. The Scripture passages listed do not speak specifically enough to the issue to give sufficient support for the appeal as opposed to the contrary position. Therefore, we find Ground 1 invalid.
 - b. With respect to Ground 2: Though we concur with the appellant that local churches should seek the broadest possible contacts, this does not necessarily mean that a non-voting consistory has broken spiritual unity. Therefore, we find Ground 2 invalid.
 - c. With respect to Ground 3: A ratification process requires a positive assent for there to be a positive action. This differs from a voting process (which does not count the lack of a vote as a negative vote). Therefore, consistories which do not register a positive assent, by that fact have registered a negative ballot to the ratification. Therefore, we find Ground 3 invalid.
 - d. With respect to Ground 4: Church Order Article 29 concerns appeals and not the ratification process. Thus, this Article is not germane to the matter before us. Therefore, we find Ground 4 invalid.
 - e. With respect to Ground 5: By the definition of a ratification process, every consistory is giving its counsel whether it votes or abstains. Therefore, we find Ground 5 invalid.

Adopted

3. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 6, to revise Church Order Article 36 as follows:

Current reading:

The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision must be ratified by a majority of the Consistories.

Proposed reading:

The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision with respect to ecclesiastical fellowship shall require ratification by a majority of the synodically-approved Consistories in the federation. Such a decision with respect to church union shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall require ratification by two-thirds of the synodically-approved Consistories in the federation.

Grounds:

- a. In the Report of the convening consistory of Bethel URC to Synod 2004, dated June 15, 2004, item 2, it was stated that advice was given to stated clerk Rev. Julien “on how to interpret the meaning of Article 36 of the Church Order regarding the ratification of entering a Phase 2 Ecumenical relationship with the Canadian Reformed Church.” This advice had to deal with the interpretation of this Church Order Article as to whether it meant a majority of “voting consistories” or a majority of the “total consistories” in the federation. It was the stated clerk, with the advice of the convening consistory, who ruled that our decision with respect to entering Phase 2 Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches had to be by a majority vote of the total consistories.
- b. At the Synod Calgary 2004, the CERCU committee in its report to Synod 2004 requested the following in their Committee Recommendations, item 3: “That when Art. 36 of the Church Order needs implementing in the establishing of an ecumenical relationship, synod declares that *ratified by a majority of the churches* is to be interpreted as meaning the majority of the churches that voted in the particular ratification process.” The committee was asking Synod 2004 to “determine the wording of Art. 36” to be different from what had previously been determined. Synod defeated this recommendation, pointing back to the precedent that Church Order Article 36 means “the majority of all the eligible consistories in the federation.”
- c. In the future, the interpretation of Church Order Article 36 concerning such an important decision as entering “ecumenical relations with other federations” should not be questioned by committees, determined by precedent, or subject to synodical decisions, but should be clearly stated in our Church Order. This modifying phrase mandates that the voice of all the consistories in the federation will be aggressively obtained in order to ratify these decisions. The 2005 vote by 79 of 81 consistories on the approval of entering into Phase 2 with the RCUS proved that this voting method can be prudently accomplished in a timely manner.
- d. The mandate for CERCU starts with these words: “With a view toward Church Unity. . . .” This would indicate not only a process of different phases, but also an increasing understanding of this unity and the need to grow in unity. This growth toward unity should also be exhibited in the voting and ratification process.

- e. Changes to the Church Order are judged to be significant enough to require a two-thirds vote of a synod and ratification by two-thirds of the consistories (Church Order, Art. 66), thus maintaining a unity in the federation. Likewise, matters of church union must express unity in the church; therefore, it would be wise to require a two-thirds vote of a synod and ratification by two-thirds of the consistories, as this would bring more honor to God and would better serve the churches of the federation.
- f. Changes to the Church Order and ecumenical relations are not necessarily bound to each other and are different in content and focus. Therefore, it would be in good order to address each matter individually, in their respective article of the Church Order.
- g. Church Order Article 36 as presently written could be interpreted to also require ratification by a majority of consistories for entering Phase One, Corresponding Relations, since that is also an element of ecumenical relations. Adopting the proposed changes, using the language of “The Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity,” would reduce any doubt in regard to procedure: decisions with respect to Phase One, a vote of a synod; Phase Two, a vote of a synod ratified by a majority of consistories; Phase Three, a two-thirds vote of a synod ratified by two-thirds of consistories.

Adopted by the required majority

- 4. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by May 1, 2008. *Adopted*
- 5. That Synod 2007 declare this action to be its response to Overtures 1 and 6. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 1 continued in Art. 77)

ARTICLE 77

Advisory Committee 1 (continued from Art. 76)

- 6. That Synod 2007 accede to Overture 2, to revise Church Order Article 66 as follows:

Current reading:

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they ought to be observed diligently. If it be found that God may be more honored and the churches better served by changing any article, this shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the Consistories prior to the next synodical meeting, after which meeting they shall take effect.

Proposed reading:

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they ought to be observed diligently. If it be found that God may be more honored and the churches better served by changing any article, this shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the

synodically-approved Consistories of the federation prior to the next synodical meeting, after which meeting they shall take effect.

Adopted by the required majority

7. Motion made and supported that this Church Order change must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by May 1, 2008. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 78

Advisory Committee 9 (continued from Art. 63)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 continue the Songbook Committee's mandate given by previous synods. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 state its commitment that the Common Song Book shall be the official Song Book of the United Federation and its use subject to the provisions of the Church Order which the merged churches would adopt.

Motion made and supported to postpone this indefinitely. *Adopted*

3. That Synod 2007 mandate the Liturgical Forms Committee to report its work to CERCU, as does the Songbook Committee. *Defeated*
4. Motion made and supported that the Liturgical Forms Committee, Songbook Committee, Joint Church Order Committee, and the Theological Education Committee report directly to the churches on an annual basis via the stated clerk. *Adopted*
5. That Synod 2007, noting that Synod Smithers of the Canadian Reformed Churches recently appointed a "Liturgical Forms Committee," mandate the Liturgical Forms Committee to work also in conjunction with that Committee. *Adopted*
6. That Synod 2007 appoint Dr. J. Mark Beach and Rev. Al Bezuyen to serve as members of the Liturgical Forms Committee, joining Drs. Kim Riddelbarger (chairman), Michael Horton, W. Robert Godfrey, and Nelson D. Kloosterman (alternate). *Adopted*
7. That Synod 2007 thank Rev. Stevens and Rev. Ipema for their contribution. *The chair so rules*
8. That Synod 2007 refer the proposed Liturgical Prayers and the proposed Shortened Lord's Supper Form (*Agenda*, pp. 235-243) to the churches for discussion, evaluation, and provisional use, with a view to inclusion in the new songbook by a future synod, and encourage the churches to communicate their questions and comments to the Liturgical Forms Committee. *Adopted*

9. That Synod 2007 clarify the mandate for the Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee (URCNA) in order for it to work together with “the sub committee to the [Canadian Reformed] SCBP for creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers,” by mandating the Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee to work also in conjunction with the recently appointed corresponding committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches. *Adopted*
10. That Synod 2007 maintain the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book, but establish that the production and use of a Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches. *Adopted*
11. That Synod 2007 provide direction to the committee, regarding whether the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms would be detrimental for the churches to accept the Common Song Book, by mandating the URCNA Songbook Committee to contact the churches of the URCNA for their input on this question. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 79

The second clerk reads a proposed press release (Number 3) concerning the work of Synod 2007 on Thursday. Motion made and supported to approve this press release. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 80

Rev. Movses Janbazian of Pasadena URC, Pasadena, CA, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 7 and closes the session with prayer.

Friday, July 13, 2007 Morning Session

ARTICLE 81

Rev. Harry Zekveld of Providence URC, Strathroy, ON, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 205 and 311, reads Psalm 103, and opens the session with prayer.

On behalf of the Synod 2007 Organizing Committee, Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman introduces and thanks the personnel from Trinity College. He then introduces and thanks the members of the Organizing Committee. Mr. Martin Nuiver expresses thanks to Dr. Kloosterman for his leadership to the committee. By its applause, Synod 2007 expresses its deep gratitude for all the work these people have done.

ARTICLE 82

The first clerk reads the concept minutes. Motion made and supported to adopt these minutes. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 83

The chairman invites Rev. Charles Brown, fraternal observer of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), to bring greetings.

Rev. Don Hoaglander of West Sayville Reformed Bible Church, West Sayville, NY, responds to Rev. Brown.

ARTICLE 84

The chairman invites Rev. David Schutter, fraternal observer from the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), to bring greetings. He speaks of the work of the PCA and the opportunities around the nation and the world.

Rev. Steve Arrick of Covenant Reformed Church, Lancaster, PA, responds to Rev. Schutter.

ARTICLE 85

Advisory Committee 12 (continued from Art. 34)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 clarify the meaning of the CECCA mandate edited by Synod Calgary (*Acts of Synod 2004*, p.22, Article 56.B.5.; p.32, Article 81.D.2.) by affirming that the CECCA be permitted to visit one of the assemblies per year of each of the churches abroad with whom CECCA is working toward, or with whom we are in, ecumenical contact. *Adopted*

Grounds:

- a. When Synod 2007 approved the report of the convening consistory (Community URC, Schererville, IN), it thereby also accepted the consistory's ruling / clarification of the CECCA mandate edited by Synod Calgary.
 - b. Although Synod 2007 has given clarification by approving the report of the convening consistory, by also adopting this recommendation Synod will establish a clear, direct policy to guide the CECCA.
2. That Synod 2007 recommend a budget of \$10,500 USD per year for the work of the CECCA, not to exceed \$31,500 for the three years 2008-2010 (up to \$7,000 USD per year for ecumenical travel; and up to \$3,500 USD per year for committee expenses, i.e., travel, teleconferencing, and postage). *Adopted*

Grounds:

- a. This proposed limit reflects an up to \$2,000 USD per year increase over the CECCA's budgeted expenditures for the years 2006 and 2007. This increase is necessary for at least three reasons: (1) a new classis has been added within our federation, and its delegate to CECCA will incur additional travel costs; (2) Synod 2007 has established two new ecumenical contacts, to whose assemblies a CECCA representative may travel; and (3)

this amount enables the CECCA to adequately investigate further ecumenical relations by responding to invitations from other churches/assemblies and/or by initiating such relations.

Note: Although it is the CECCA's responsibility to act on the URCNA's membership in and involvement with the ICRC, the expenses for such are not part of CECCA's annual budget. The only significant ICRC-related expense for the CECCA may be the cost of travel for the two URCNA delegates to the ICRC meetings once every four years.

- b. We joyfully remind the synodical delegates of the great importance of our young federation continuing to establish and maintain meaningful contact with like-minded churches abroad for mutual support, encouragement, and counsel. The amount of \$10,500 USD per year seems like money we should be readily willing to spend for this cause.
3. That Synod 2007 remind Classis Southwest US, since its now-previous CECCA representative, Rev. Gangar, has been moved into Classis Pacific Northwest US, to appoint a new representative to the CECCA; and that Synod 2007 remind Classis Pacific Northwest US to appoint a representative to the CECCA. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 86

Advisory Committee 5 (continued from Art. 58)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 appoint CERCU members Rev. John Bouwers as chairman and Rev. Harry Zekveld as reporter of CERCU. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 re-extend the invitation to the OCRC federation made by Synod Hudsonville 1999, namely:

To invite the OCRC federation officially 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 OCRC federation decide to accept this invitation, they will be received immediately into the federation, without conducting a colloquium doctum for their ministers (*Minutes, Synod Hudsonville, Art. 30*). *Adopted*

Grounds:

- a. 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.
- b. 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. Their recent battle with Federal Vision, and the solid stand taken on that issue by the remaining churches, confirm this soundness all the more.

- c. 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 Church Order Article 32 for individual churches joining, nor the procedure of Church Order Article 8 for individual ministers joining our federation.
- d. We face a unique opportunity. Our brothers in the OCRC have expressed deep struggles within their denomination. They have indicated a deep desire to belong to a larger federative body. They indicated what we ourselves have indicated for years: we are, as churches, very much the same both in terms of confessions, church order, church history, and even “pragmatic” items like songbooks and common practices in the churches. Having indicated so much, we have the opportunity to respond for the benefit of the church of Christ.
- e. An official invitation from Synod 2007 allows this federation (the OCRC) to be honored in our eyes. They need not experience further depletion of their churches through piecemeal movements from the OCRC to the URCNA. They can have something concrete before their synod that will allow them to come, should it be their desire, to the URCNA as a federation.
- f. This recommendation does not ask the URCNA to reconsider its position on creation, as adopted at Synod Escondido 2001.

Adopted

3. That Synod 2007 submit the previous decision to the consistories of the URCNA immediately (see *Minutes, Synod Hudsonville*, Art. 43). That Church Order Article 36 applies to the question of federative union with the OCRC federation 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 (see Article 43, Synod Hudsonville).

Grounds:

- a. This procedure helps ensure that this decision, made by Synod 2007, has the approval of the churches.
- b. Church Order Article 36 applies to the question of federational union with the OCRC federation, and therefore its provisions should be honored.

Adopted

4. Motion made and supported that this action must be ratified by the consistories of the URCNA by January 1, 2008.

Adopted

(Advisory Committee 5 continued in Art. 92.)

ARTICLE 87

Advisory Committee 1 (continued from Art. 75)

Recommendation:

1. That Synod 2007 appoint the following men to the United States Board of Directors of the URCNA and that the convening consistory for the next Synod consult with those who are aware of these appointments (*indicates nominees informed of their nomination):

*Dr. Lynn Brouwer, Faith URC, Holland, MI (reporter)
*Rev. Wybren Oord, Covenant URC, Kalamazoo, MI (chairman)
Henry Gysen, Trinity URC, Caledonia, MI
John Velthouse, Cornerstone URC, Hudsonville, MI
Glen Hop, Cornerstone URC, Hudsonville, MI

Adopted

2. Motion made and supported that Synod 2007 designate Rev. Wybren Oord as chairman and Dr. Lynn Brower as reporter of the United States Board of Directors of the URCNA, and also to designate the current chair and clerk of the Bethany URC consistory to serve as chair and reporter of the URCNA International board.
3. Motion made and supported that Synod 2007 appoint the consistory of Bethany URC, Wyoming, MI, to serve as the URCNA International board which implements the Joint Venture Agreement under the supervision of the convening consistory of the next synod.

Adopted

Adopted

ARTICLE 88

The chairman invites fraternal delegate Gerry Nordeman of the Canadian Reformed Churches to speak to the body prior to the delegation leaving the meeting.

ARTICLE 89

Elder Sid Soodsma of Grace URC, Waupun, WI, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 221 and closes the session with prayer

Friday, July 13, 2007 Afternoon Session

ARTICLE 90

Rev. James Sinke of Rock Valley URC, Rock Valley, IA, reads from Ephesians 2:1-10, invites the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 124 and 350, and opens the afternoon session with prayer.

ARTICLE 91

The chairman welcomes our fraternal delegates from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Rev. Jack Peterson and Rev. John Hilbelink, and invites Rev Peterson to bring greetings from the

OPC. He speaks of our relationship as church federations over the past years and notes the fact that Synod 2007 decided to enter Phase 2 of the ecumenical relationship with the OPC.

Rev. Casey Freswick of Bethany URC, Wyoming, MI, responds to Rev. Peterson.

ARTICLE 92

Advisory Committee 5 (continued from Art. 86)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007, in response to Overture 15, adopt the following revisions of our present Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity:

Legend:

~~Strikeout~~ means omitted

Bold means added to the original

Underlined means a transferred and reworded sentence

Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity United Reformed Churches in North America

Phase One - Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity 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~~ **federations'** lives:

- a. view and place of the Holy Scriptures
- b. creeds and confessions
- c. Form of Subscription to the confessions
- d. significant factors in the two federations' history, theology, and 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 ecumenicity 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, ~~in~~

~~preparation for and commitment to~~ **in acknowledgement of the desirability of** 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 with an advisory voice.

Entering this phase requires ratification by the consistories as required in Church Order Article 36.

Phase Three - Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity 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~~

This phase shall be accomplished in two steps:

Step A. – Develop the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

Having recognized and accepted each other as true and faithful churches, the federations shall make preparation for and a commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity. They shall construct a plan of ecclesiastical 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

Entering this **step of** phase **three** requires ratification by the consistories as required in Church Order Article 36.

Step B. – Implementation of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

This final phase shall only be ~~embarked upon~~ **taken** when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to a plan of **ecclesiastical** union.

Entering this step of phase three requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order Article 36.

Summary of Changes to Overture

Change 1: In Phase 1, change of the word “~~churches~~” to “*federations*”.

Grounds:

- a. The word “churches” does not make clear whether these churches are in different federations or if they are simply different local congregations.
- b. The word “federations” clarifies that a relationship is being entered into between two different federations or denominations.
- c. The word “federations” is consistent with the CERCU mandate which reads that they are to speak regarding ecumenicity with “those Reformed and Presbyterian *federations* selected by Synod...” and with the other language of the Guidelines which refers consistently to “federations” (see opening lines of both Phase 2 and 3).

Change 2: In Phase 2, replace “~~in preparation for and commitment to~~” with “*in acknowledgement of the desirability of . . .*”.

Grounds:

- a. Overtures 3 and 15 base their request for the removal of the phrase, “and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity,” on the fact that this phrase is what has allowed CERCU to “advance quickly with activities which properly belong to Phase Three” (p. 45). We have found that this assumption is a mistaken notion. The real reason for the appointment of these committees is addressed in the changes to Phase Three below.
- b. Removing this statement (“and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity”) from Phase 2, in which a true church is recognized, would cause us no longer to be in conformity with the constitution of NAPARC. The constitution reads that the fellowship created by NAPARC is “a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice” (Point II of the NAPARC Constitution). All the churches of NAPARC recognize that true churches of Christ are to have held out before them the need to desire organic union.
- c. The addition of the notion of desirability to this phase allows us to consider the biblical hope of unity as true churches, as well as to recognize that, due to sin both in ourselves and others, unity is not always attainable.

Change 3: In Phase 3 (see text above for the substantial textual changes and additions), first, to divide this phase into two components: development of a plan (Step A) and implementation of the plan (Step B); second, to require ratification in *each* step.

Grounds:

- a. The division of Phase 3 into two parts is done in an effort to clarify confusion among the churches regarding exactly what the federation is seeking to do at every given stage in the pursuit of the unity of the church. Previously, Phase 3 could “only be embarked upon when the broadest assemblies of both federations [gave] their endorsement and approval to a plan of union...” (current Guidelines, Phase 3). This plan of union has been the basis for the work of the CERCU Unity Committees (the Church Order, Songbook, and Theological Education committees). The plan of union is being created by CERCU not as a step in Phase 3 union, but as a precondition to Phase 3 union (since entrance to Phase 3 requires a plan of union) and thus as part of “working out” Phase 2 commitments. Unfortunately, the placement of the phrase requiring a plan of union within the current Phase 3 portion of our Guidelines has created a significant misunderstanding among the churches. The sentiment on one hand is that the committees of Synod are acting like we are in Phase 3 with the Canadian Reformed Churches, even though that is not the case. The sentiment on the other hand is that these committees are doing the work necessary to prepare to enter Phase 3 with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The division of Phase 3 into two clearly defined steps will hopefully remedy this confusion.
 - b. The current change requires that both federations will need to give support in order for this Plan of Union to take place, thus ensuring (i) that the member churches realize what stage of unity they are entering and (ii) what entering that stage will mean for the federation.
 - c. This two-step process in Phase 3 better guards both the unity of our own federation (Phil. 3:16) and the actions (Phase 3, Step A.a.-f.) taken in moving towards unity with others, thus ensuring that these actions are being done by a federation that wholeheartedly supports the direction taken.
 - d. The inclusion of a second vote to implement the plan of union is good and necessary. The move to union is significant and many difficulties may come up in the pursuit of union that were not foreseen. This final vote, with its ratification by the Consistories, ensures that the local churches of our federation have opportunity to voice concerns raised in the process of seeking federative church unity. *Adopted*
2. That Synod 2007 declare this action to be its answer to Overtures 3 and 15. *Adopted*

(Advisory Committee 5 continued in Art.93.)

ARTICLE 93

Advisory Committee 5 (continued from Art. 92)

Recommendations:

1. That by way of exception to the adopted guidelines for Ecumenical and Church Unity, Synod 2007 allow the current unity committees of the URCNA (whose work properly belongs to phase 3A) to continue working with their corresponding Canadian Reformed committees while the two federations continue to function in Phase 2.

Grounds:

- a. This would be consistent with decisions already made by Synod 2007, in mandating the PJCO, the Liturgical Forms Committee, and the Theological Education Committee to continue their work with the Canadian Reformed committees.
- b. Whenever (at a future synod) a decision may be approved by the two federations to enter into Phase 3A, though the process of developing a plan of union has already begun, the plan will still need to “outline the timing, coordination and/or integration of the broader assemblies, the translation of the Bible and the confessions, and the missions abroad.”
- c. This would reinforce our commitment toward possible eventual integrated federative church unity in the midst of the clarifications Synod 2007 has made with regard to the understanding and implementation of the approved phases for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity.
- d. This would honor the commitments the URCNA made in 2001 to our Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters by virtue of beginning these committees.

Motion is made and supported to postpone this recommendation indefinitely. *Defeated*

The main motion is adopted

ARTICLE 94

The chairman grants the following delegates permission to leave the assembly:

Rev. Dennis Royall and Elder Henry Nieboer of Cornerstone URC, London, ON
Elder Roland Van Olst of Living Water Reformed Church, Brantford, ON
Elder Jim De Boer of Oak Glen URC, Lansing, IL
Elder Rick Schotsman and Elder Anthony Snippe of Grace Reformed Church, Dunnville, ON
Rev. Gary Findley and Rev. Paul Lindemulder of Covenant URC, Fresno, CA

ARTICLE 95

Advisory Committee 2 (continued from Art. 20)

Recommendations:

1. That Synod 2007 request that each classis continue to support the Website Fund, but at a reduced amount of \$200.00 annually per classis (currently \$500.00 annually), starting in 2008. *Adopted*

2. That Synod 2007 change the term used to designate need funds for federation expenses from “askings” to “dues,” and invite each church to determine how these funds are collected, not excluding special collections. *Defeated*

3. That Synod 2007 direct the treasurer to determine annually the amount of the askings, depending on the annual budget. *Adopted*

Note: Based on last years expenditure this will amount to \$6.00 (Canadian) and \$6.00 (USD) per family, which will satisfy the annual financial expenses of the federation.

4. That Synod 2007 recommend the early remittance of askings within the first three quarters. *Adopted*

5. That Synod 2007 instruct each classis to add this reminder to the Classical Credentials: “Reminder: Have you fulfilled your obligations to satisfy the expenses of the federation?” *Defeated*

6. That Synod 2007 require the use of a common expenditure form which shows an approved authorization for committee expenses. This authorization must be approved by the committee chairman and submitted to the treasurer(s). *Adopted*

7. That Synod 2007 establish the following proposed annual budget for its synodical committees for the three-year period 2008-2010 (in U.S. funds):

Proposed URCNA 2008-2010 Annual Synodical Budget

Item	Budget	Canadian ~35%	US ~65%	Percent of Total Budget
Bank Fee	\$25		\$25	0.08%
Clerk	\$4,000	\$1,400	\$2,600	12.79%
Directory				0.00%
Dues	\$2,200	\$770	\$1,430	7.02%
NAPARC				
ICRC				
Postage/Supplies	\$50		\$50	0.15%
Telephone/Internet	\$1,000	\$350	\$650	3.20%
CECCA	\$10,500	\$3,675	\$6,825	33.57%
CERCU	\$3,500	\$1,225	\$2,275	11.19%
Joint Church Order Committee	\$3,000	\$1,050	\$1,950	9.60%
Joint Song Book Committee	\$3,000	\$1,050	\$1,950	9.60%

Theological Education Committee	\$3,000	\$1,050	\$1,950	9.60%
PRJC (Chaplains)	\$1,000	\$350	\$650	3.20%
TOTALS	\$31,275	\$10,920	\$20,355	100.00%

Adopted

8. That Synod 2007 direct each synodically appointed committee to submit an annual budget covering the next three years in their synodical reports. *Adopted*
9. That Synod 2007 adopt the procedure of including a budget as part of appointing new committees. *Adopted*
10. That Synod 2007 direct the U.S. and Canadian treasurers to provide quarterly financial reports tracking the budget, and to send these reports to the URCNA stated clerk for distribution to the churches. *Adopted*
11. That Synod 2007 direct the convening consistory of the subsequent synod to approve any major changes to a particular budget item during the intervening period, in consultation with the URCNA treasurers. *Adopted*
12. That Synod 2007 direct the stated clerk to notify the U.S. and Canadian treasurers of any financial matter that might pertain to them by virtue of synodical decisions. *The chair so rules*
13. That Synod 2007 accept the conclusion of both the U.S. Health Care Committee (*Agenda*, p. 338) and the Canadian Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto (*Agenda*, p. 340) that a group health care plan is not feasible at this time. *Adopted*
14. That Synod 2007 request the consistory of the Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church (PPRBC) to continue to handle the U.S. treasurer's responsibilities, and request the Canadian Financial Committee to handle the Canadian treasurer's responsibilities. Those responsibilities will extend to the next synod. *Adopted*
15. That Synod 2007 notify the existing Canadian Corporation and the consistory of the Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church of this decision and express their thanks for the services to the federation. *Adopted*
16. That Synod 2007 request that the delegates to the next synod come prepared to submit the names of appropriate people who are capable and will agree to serve as treasurers and alternates according to the yet-to-be approved job description, and instruct the stated clerk to notify the consistories of this need as the next synod approaches. *Adopted*
17. That Synod 2007 suspend the proposed Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Section 4.6 (Treasurer's Job Description). These rules will be under consideration by the churches and

contain new provisions which may prove difficult to administer under the existing system (examples: the Canadian Corporation requirements, and placing the PPRBC consistory under authorization of the next convening church consistory). *Adopted*

18. That Synod 2007 thank U.S. Treasurer Peter J. Moen and the Canadian Treasurer Pam Hessels for their work. *The chair so rules*

ARTICLE 96

The first clerk reads the concept minutes. Motion made and supported to adopt these minutes. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 97

The second clerk reads a proposed press release (Number 4) concerning the work of Synod 2007 on Friday. Motion made and supported to approve this press release. *Adopted*

ARTICLE 98

The chairman closed the meeting with devotions, inviting the assembly to sing Psalter Hymnal 473, reading Colossians 2:5, and closing the session with prayer.

The chairman thanked those involved in any way with the functioning of Synod.

ARTICLE 99

Motion made and supported to adjourn. *Adopted*

Community United Reformed Church
Report of the Convening Consistory to Synod 2007
16 April 2007

Esteemed brothers,

Under the Lord's blessing we have enjoyed the privilege of preparing to host Synod 2007 on the campus of Trinity Christian College. In addition to planning for this important event, we have undertaken a small number of duties and implemented a small number of decisions, as documented below.

1. The work of the stated clerk

- 1.1 2005-November-9: By adopted motion the convening consistory approves the recommendation of the stated clerk that authorizes Rev Ray Sikkema to serve as liaison to the NAPARC World Missions Consultation on November 21-22, 2005, at Philadelphia, PA, at the federation's expense.
- 1.2 By adopted motion the convening consistory forwards to Synod 2007 the report of the stated clerk (see Appendix 1).

2. Interim correspondence

- 2.1 2004-October-28: In response to a request for advice concerning the replacement of a committee member who had resigned, the convening consistory advised the Psalter Hymnal Committee through Rev. Dick Wynia to recommend the name of a replacement member to the stated clerk and the convening consistory, for approval and endorsement by Synod 2007.
- 2.2 2005-May-25: In response to a request for advice from the stated clerk concerning guidance in responding to requests for the URCNA mailing lists, the convening consistory by adopted motion suggested that it would recommend to Synod 2007 that it authorize the stated clerk to provide names and addresses (not phone numbers) collected from membership directories supplied by the member churches of the URCNA. Additionally, the convening consistory by adopted motion asked the stated clerk to serve it by proposing for adoption and inclusion in the above-mentioned recommendation criteria for releasing this information to those organizations requesting membership information.
- 2.3 2005-November-9: By adopted motion the convening consistory approved the letter of response dated November 9, 2005, to CECCA regarding clarification of Acts of Synod Art.81.D.1 (see the report of the CECCA).

- 2.4 By adopted motion the convening consistory refers to Synod 2007 the letter of invitation from the London, Ontario, Cornerstone URC to host Synod 2010 (see the Agenda Under Communications).
- 2.5 Between Synod 2004 and Synod 2007, the convening consistory oversaw the sale and shipping of the Acts of Synod. The statistics are in the following table:

Inventory of Acts of Synod

Acts of Synod	Canada	US	Total
1996-1999	103	21	124
2001	48	22	70
2004	0	119	119

3. **Joint Venture Agreement**

3.0 Introduction:

Within the URCNA there are two committees (referred to as the URCNA (US) and the URCNA (Canada)) which have been incorporated (see Acts of Synod Hudsonville, pages 11-12, 80-90). These two Corporations work in their respective countries to satisfy the requirements of their governments and to represent the churches before those governments. One of the matters of great concern to our governments concerns the dispensing of funds raised by our churches. In a world where monies are raised for use by questionable organizations, our governments insist on greater accountability for how those funds are used. This Joint Venture Agreement seeks to satisfy the requirements of the Canadian government in the receiving and dispensing of funds by our churches, particularly as this relates to financial support for our sister churches in the United States of America.

According to the Government of Canada’s Income Tax Act a charitable organization must devote its resources to charitable purposes. According to paragraph 149.1(1) such charitable purposes “include the disbursement of funds to qualified donees”. In paragraphs 110.1(1)(a) and 110.1(1)(b) qualified donees are defined as “registered charities”, that is, charities registered with Industry Canada. In practical terms this means that Canadian churches can only support organizations registered in Canada as charitable organizations. Since none of our American churches is registered with Industry Canada, no Canadian church may receive funds for the purpose of distributing to our American churches or any of their ministries. Raising and dispersing funds for unqualified donees (in this case American churches, church plants, missionary works, etc.) is in violation of the Income Tax Act and could lead to a revoking of charitable status. This Joint Venture Agreement is intended to resolve this matter.

By creating a Joint Venture Agreement between the URCNA (Canada) and the URCNA (US) under Canadian law, a bridge is established between our two corporations which

satisfies the Canadian government. Under such an agreement a Canadian church could send money to the URCNA Canada, earmarked for a ministry represented by the URCNA (US). Since the URCNA (Canada) is a qualified donee, that church has satisfied the Income Tax Act. The URCNA (Canada) would receive those monies, deposit them in our bank account, and then write a cheque to the URCNA (International). Those monies would then be disseminated to the appropriate organization in the US. Having established a Joint Venture Agreement with the URCNA (US), the Canadian government would be satisfied as to the use of those monies (i.e., in accordance with the Joint Venture Agreement). In this way, the Joint Venture Agreement would safeguard the charitable status of Canadian churches and would provide our American churches with financial support.

Since this Joint Venture Agreement is intended to satisfy the Government of Canada (this document will not and cannot satisfy the IRS), the documentation for this Agreement was drafted by legal counsel for the URCNA (Canada) in accordance with Canadian law. Legal counsel for the URCNA (Canada) is the Van der Woerd and Faber law firm, 1025 Waterdown Rd., Burlington, Ontario, L7T 1N4. The document has been approved by the Board of Directors of the URCNA (Canada). In order for the document to be filed with Industry Canada, a member of the Board of Directors of the URCNA (US) with signing privileges must sign the document.

- 3.1 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that it appoint new members of the Boards of Directors of the two legal entities into which the United Reformed Churches in North America (hereinafter referred to as “URCNA”) has legally organized itself in Canada and the United States, respectively, and charge these appointed members with executing all legal requirements and responsibilities associated with being members of the Boards including, but not limited to, organizing themselves and electing officers, holding at least the legally required minimum number of meetings of the Board each year, and filing the legally required annual information reports with the appropriate government agencies.

Ground: The current Boards of Directors are not functioning and are not meeting these minimum legal requirements

- 3.2 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that it place the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations, respectively, under the authority of the consistory appointed to convene the next synod.

Ground: During the period between synods, the Boards of Directors need a consistory in authority over them to ensure that the minimum legal requirements for meetings to be held, for filing reports, etc., are met and, if it becomes necessary from time to time, to direct the Boards of Directors to engage in other tasks and activities deemed to be in the best interests of the churches of the URCNA federation.

- 3.3 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that the delegates to Synod 2007 bring to Synod 2007 comments, concerns, and the like regarding the draft Articles of

Incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation which have been circulated to the churches in advance of the convening of Synod 2007 (see Appendix 2), so that any issues or concerns of the churches may be noted and so that the incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation may be accomplished as soon as possible after the conclusion of Synod 2007.

Ground: The delegates to Synods 1999, 2001, and 2004 each approved in concept the creation of a Joint Venture Corporation to facilitate the transfer of funds raised in Canada and the United States to the causes for which the funds were gathered. However, at no time in the past were the delegates to any synod presented with a draft of the Articles of Incorporation of this proposed Joint Venture Corporation so that they and the churches of the federation they represented could be aware of the details of this proposed corporation, or of the grant of authority that would be given to the Directors of this Joint Venture Corporation, etc.

- 3.4 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that since the delegates to earlier synods discussed and debated in detail the Articles of Incorporation of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations and made modifications to the drafts presented to them, the churches and the delegates to Synod 2007 should have the same opportunity to do discuss and debate the Articles of Incorporation of the proposed Joint Venture Corporation (see Appendix 2).

Grounds:

- a. Rather than delay consideration of the Articles of Incorporation for the proposed Joint Venture Corporation until Synod 2010, a draft of the Articles has been presented to the churches and to the synodical delegates for consideration, discussion, and debate by Synod 2007.
 - b. Since the draft Articles of Incorporation have not been vetted by legal counsel in Canada and the United States as of the convening of Synod 2007, the draft Articles are presented for discussion and debate only.
- 3.5 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that the consistory appointed to convene the next synod be directed to coordinate and facilitate the Canadian and United States Boards of Directors of the URCNA corporations to engage legal counsel to review the draft Articles of Incorporation; to address and insofar as is possible incorporate into the draft Articles responses to the points, issues, and concerns raised by the delegates to Synod 2007 regarding the draft Articles; to coordinate the review of the revised Articles of Incorporation by the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States URCNA corporations; and to cause the Articles of Incorporation of the Joint Venture Corporation to be filed with the appropriate authorities as soon as possible and no later than December 31, 2007.

Grounds:

- a. Since there is an immediate need for the creation of the Joint Venture Corporation and since the delegates to Synod 2007 will have had the opportunity to offer opinions, criticisms, edits, etc. regarding the proposed draft Articles of Incorporation, the creation of this corporation need not be delayed until the convening of the next synod.
 - b. The consistory appointed to convene the next synod can oversee the progress of the work that is being done by the Boards of Directors of the Canadian and United States corporations and will have the mandate from the delegates to Synod 2007 to complete the task at hand by causing the Joint Venture Corporation to be established.
- 3.6 The convening consistory recommends to Synod 2007 that it instruct the consistory appointed to convene the next synod to appoint the members of the Board of Directors of the Joint Venture Corporation to serve in that capacity as soon as the Joint Venture Corporation is created. The members of this Board of Directors shall be placed under the authority of the consistory appointed to convene the next synod so that this consistory shall exercise authority over the Joint Venture Board of Directors to ensure that the Board fulfills all of the legal requirements of a corporation in the jurisdictions in which it is incorporated.

4. **Organizing Synod 2007**

4.1 By adopted motion, the convening consistory authorizes its Synod 2007 Organizing Committee to enter into all contracts and agreements necessary for hosting Synod 2007 at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, IL.

4.2 Regulations for Synodical Procedure: By adopted motion, the convening consistory authorizes its organizing committee to make preparations for Synod 2007 in terms of the proposed Regulations for Synodical Procedure, and recommends that Synod 2007 adopt these proposed Regulations for Synodical Procedure on a provisional basis for conducting the business of Synod 2007.

4.3 Institutional and ministry displays: By adopted motion the convening consistory approves institutional and ministry information displays, but disallows vendor displays.

Ground: This protocol is consistent with the nature of synod as a deliberative ecclesiastical assembly.

4.4 Providing information to outside organizations:

4.4.1 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod 2007 authorize the stated clerk to provide names and addresses (not phone numbers) collected from membership directories supplied by the member churches of URCNA.

4.4.2 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod 2007 instruct the stated clerk to compose and follow appropriate guidelines for releasing this information to those organizations requesting membership information.

4.5 Approve the work of the convening consistory:

- 4.5.1 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod 2007 permit the chairman and recording clerk of the consistory the privilege of the floor when this report is discussed.
- 4.5.2 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod 2007 approve its work as reported above.

Respectfully submitted,

The consistory
Community United Reformed Church
Martin Nuiver, chairman

APPENDIX 1

Interim Report of the Stated Clerk – Synod 2007

Esteemed Brothers;

I began my work soon after being appointed by Synod 2004 to fill the role vacated by Rev. Bill DeJong. Rev. DeJong provided me with the minutes of Synod 2004 and I combined these with the other information required to produce the Acts of Synod 2004. I also arranged for the publication of the document and distribution by one church in Canada and one in the United States to help reduce postage costs.

Synod 2004 stated that one of my roles was to be the point of contact for the federation, so I offered my services to the churches to act as the forwarder of all federation related communications utilizing e-mail. This proved to be an effective and less costly means of quickly sharing information.

Over the past three years I have also spent hundreds of hours collecting, compiling, nagging, editing, and producing the publisher ready copy of the annual URCNA directory. The lack of quality and consistency in the data that is given to me has been a major frustration. There are indications that this work may become easier as we move closer to establishing a new URCNA web-site.

The work of the URCNA web-committee also took up much of my time as I was elected to be chairman of the committee. Our enthusiasm and energy was soon spent as we found that many people who wanted to be involved were already over involved in other kingdom areas and our initial hopes to have a web-based directory in place were not realized. I also recognized that I was unable to devote the necessary time to the committee in the role of chairman, so Rev. Donovan took over those responsibilities.

I found that there is still a lack of clarity around the role of the Stated Clerk and the role of the convening consistory. Traditionally the Stated Clerk was the point of contact when committees needed new members, advice on issues, or had questions that needed answers. This protocol was inconsistently applied by some and I found that in some cases I had been bypassed and no information was provided to me.

It was my understanding that the Stated Clerk was free to act within bounds provided by clear precedent and outside of that was to request advice from the convening consistory who would then provide direction to be considered. This proved to be a somewhat contentious issue from time to time as requests for advice were not acted upon and deferred to Synod 2007.

I would be remiss if I did not state that I have registered my objection to the Schererville consistory about their adoption of the proposed Synodical regulations and my new job description prior to Synod 2007 having deliberated and adopting these proposals. I only recently learned of this when they provided me with their Convening Consistory Report.

Many of the issues regarding the effective Administration of the federation still exist today as they did in 2004. Although I had requested involvement in meeting with the Synodical Regulation committee to make them aware of these issues, I was not invited to provide my feedback, either in my capacity as the former chairman of the Synod 2004 organizing committee or as the Stated Clerk.

Recommendations:

1. Synod 2007 should put into place a requirement for each church to provide the Stated Clerk with information regarding a change in status of a church's minister. Information on accepted calls, granting of emeritus, changing of task to which the minister was called, deposition, leaves of absence should be provided to the Stated Clerk in a timely manner as he is supposed to be the keeper of this information.
2. Synod 2007 should provide guidelines on communications to all the churches regarding deposition from the office of minister of the Word.
3. Synod 2007 should provide guidelines on who provides governance over the work of the Boards of Directors, i.e. who checks to see if they are performing their fiduciary responsibilities.
4. Synod 2007 should establish a communication protocol for committees when they need to have new members appointed, questions answered, or advice given, i.e. do they channel this through the Stated Clerk of the convening consistory.
5. Synod 2007 should appoint Stated Clerks of each classis to assist in compiling URCNA directory information.
6. Synod 2007 should establish an honorarium based on the country in which the Stated Clerk resides and according to a schedule as determined by Synod 2007. Currently I have been paid from \$165 to \$225 per month based on the most cost effective rate of exchange over a 3-4 month period. Payments were made monthly, once every two months or once a quarter based on the availability of funds and the time availability of the treasurer.
7. Synod 2007 should also consider abolishing the office of Stated Clerk. If it is the wish of the federation to put all the responsibility for interim ecclesiastical governance in the hands of the convening consistory, then there is no requirement for a Stated Clerk to be involved. That function could be more expeditiously and directly handled by the convening consistory. The role I now fill should be more rightfully called Administrative Assistant of the Federation and need not be filled by someone who is or has been a pastor or elder. This could help to eliminate any role confusion and would more clearly describe what actually takes place. Ecclesiastical governance and administrative governance should be dealt with as separate issues requiring an ecclesiastical assembly to do the former and an administrator to perform the latter.

My final report to Synod 2007 will include late communications, required administrative information regarding churches that have not sent the prescribed number of delegates and information on new churches and pastors who have joined the federation since last Synod.

Bill Konyonenbelt

APPENDIX 2

DRAFT

URC OF NA (U.S.)-INTERNATIONAL JOINT MINISTRY AGREEMENT

This Agreement, made as of the day of , 200 .

B E T W E E N:

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA (USA)

A non-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Cyprus with its head office in Larnaca, Cyprus.

(hereinafter referred to as "URC OF NA (U.S.)")

- and -

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA (CANADA)

A non-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Canada with its head office in the City of Burlington.

(hereinafter referred to as "URC OF NA (CANADA)")

WHEREAS URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) share certain doctrinal distinctives and have similar objects and interests,

AND WHEREAS URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) have concluded that the ministry of each organization could best be carried on by pooling their resources used in their ministries and by carrying on such activities jointly.

AND WHEREAS URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) now desire to define in an agreement those activities which they intend to carry on jointly.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants hereinafter contained, the parties agree as follows:

**ARTICLE I
CONSTITUTION**

1.1 Form

The Parties hereby agree to conduct a joint ministry in the form of a joint venture pursuant to the laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

1.2 Name

The joint ministry shall be conducted under the name of "URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL" or as the parties may otherwise agree from time to time.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose for which URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL is organized is to carry on work of the venturers in common, in accordance with the objects, powers and authority of each of URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA).

1.4 Principal Office

The principal office of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be located at: _____ or such other place as the parties may from time to time designate.

**ARTICLE II
ORGANIZATION**

2.1 Management Committee

The ministry and property of URC OF NA (U.S.)-INTERNATIONAL shall be managed by a Management Committee composed of four persons. Two such persons shall be the President or Chief Executive Officer from time to time of each of URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA). Of the two additional persons URC OF NA (U.S.) shall appoint one person and URC OF NA (CANADA) one person. Where an additional party is added to this agreement pursuant to the provisions of Article VI, such party shall appoint two person(s) to the Management Committee and the number of members which may be appointed to the Management Committee by URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) may be increased to the extent necessary to reflect the relative resource input to URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL by such parties. The amount of such increase, if any, shall be determined by the Management Committee and shall with the prior written consent of all the parties hereto be effective on the day that an additional party is added to the agreement pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.

The appointment of each person shall be made annually by the parties hereto for a term to the next annual meeting of the Management Committee of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL at which the financial statements of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL are considered and approved for the immediately preceding fiscal period or until their successors are appointed in their stead.

The Management Committee shall meet annually or more frequently as the interests of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL require, at any place in the United States of America or Canada. A meeting of the members of the Management Committee may be convened by the Chairperson or by any two members at any time. The Secretary shall convene a meeting of the members of the Management Committee pursuant to a written request therefor from the Chairperson or any two members and a quorum at any meeting of the Management Committee shall be two members and where the majority of the members of the Management Committee represent or were appointed by one of the parties hereto a quorum shall include at least one person who represents or was appointed by such party and one person who represents or was appointed by the other party.

Notice of any meeting of the Management Committee shall be given by written notice stating the time, date and place, and mailed to each member at the last address thereof as shown on the records of URC OF NA (U.S.)-INTERNATIONAL. Postage shall be prepaid and the notice deposited in a post office or postbox at least 20 days (exclusive of the day of mailing and of the day of the meeting for which notice is given) before the day for which the meeting is called. Meetings of the Management Committee may be held at any time without formal notice if all the members are present or those members who are absent have waived notice and have signified in writing their consent to the meeting being held in their absence.

Where all the members have consented thereto, any member may participate in a meeting of the Management Committee by means of a conference telephone or other communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in such a meeting can hear each other, and a member participating in such a meeting by means of a conference telephone or other communicating equipment shall be deemed to be present in person at the meeting. Any consent given hereunder shall be effective whether given before or after the meeting to which it relates. Notice of any meeting or any irregularity in any meeting, or the notice thereof, may be waived by any member. Any resolution executed in writing by all the members of the Management Committee shall be as effective as if passed by the members of the Management Committee at a meeting duly called for that purpose.

2.2 Votes

At all meetings of the Management Committee, every question shall be decided by a majority of the votes cast. Each member shall have one vote on any question before the Management Committee. The Chairperson of the meeting shall not have a second or casting vote in the case of any equality of votes.

2.3 Powers and Duties

The Management Committee shall exercise all rights, powers and privileges of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. In addition, but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Management Committee may:

- (i) Pass such rules and regulations which are not inconsistent with the charter, by-laws and policies of URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI as it considers to be necessary or advisable for the general conduct and management of the ministry of URC OF NA - INTERNATIONAL;
- (ii) authorize and make expenditures on behalf of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL from time to time in furtherance of its ministry and any delegate by resolution to an officer or officers of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL the right to employ and pay salaries to employees;
- (iii) delegate by resolution to any committee such of its powers as it considers to be necessary to effectively carry out its ministry; and
- (iv) from time to time elect such officers of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL as are provided for herein.

2.4 Officers

- (a) Officers - The officers of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be: a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary, a Treasurer and such other officers as the Management Committee may by bylaw determine.
- (b) Term - The officers of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall hold office for a term of one year or until their successors are elected or appointed in their stead.
- (c) Vacancies - If the office of an officer of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL becomes vacant by reason of death, resignation, disqualification or otherwise, the Management Committee may elect an officer to fill such vacancy and such officer shall hold office for the duration of the term.
- (d) Removal of Officers - The Management Committee may, by resolution passed at a meeting of which notice specifying the intention to pass such resolutions has been given, relieve any officer of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL of his position before the expiration of his term of office.
- (e) Duties and Qualifications of Officers
 - (i) The Chairperson - shall be a member of the Management Committee and shall be the chief executive officer of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. He shall preside at all meetings of the Management Committee, have the general and active management of the ministry of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL; sign any contracts, documents, or instruments in writing which require his signature and shall have such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Management Committee or as are incident to his office.
 - (ii) The Vice-Chairperson - shall be a member of the Management Committee and shall be vested with all the duties of the Chairperson in his absence or his refusal to act. The Vice-Chairman shall sign any contracts, documents or instruments in writing which require his signature and shall have such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Management Committee. In the event of a vacancy occurring in the office of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall thereupon assume that office for the remainder of the unexpired term.
 - (iii) The Secretary - shall be a member of the Management Committee and shall, when present, act as secretary of Management Committee meetings, and shall have charge of the records of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. He shall record all votes and minutes of all proceedings in books kept by him for that purpose. He shall sign such contracts, documents, or instruments in writing as require his signature and shall have such other powers and duties as may from time to time be assigned to him by the Management Committee or as are incident to his office.
 - (iv) The Treasurer - need not be a member of the Management Committee. He shall have the custody of all the funds and the securities of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. He shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL and shall deposit all monies and other valuable effects in the name of and to the credit of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL in such bank or with such depository or depositaries as the Management Committee may direct. The treasurer shall have such other powers and duties as may be assigned to him from time to time by the Management Committee or as are incident to the office of the treasurer.
- (f) Remuneration

- (i) Management Committee Members and Officers - No member of the Management Committee or officer of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall receive any remuneration or emolument for acting in the capacity of his office. However, by resolution of the Management Committee, expenses incurred in attending meetings or fulfilling functions specifically assigned by the Management Committee may be paid out of the general funds of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL.
- (ii) Employees - URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL may from time to time employ persons in such capacities and at such remuneration and upon such terms as may be approved by the Management Committee.

ARTICLE III TERM AND TERMINATION

3.1 Term

URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall commence to carry on its ministry as of January 1, 2004 and shall continue until terminated by agreement between URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI. The joint ministry may be terminated by either party by giving written notice to the other party mailed to the last address of such party as shown on the records of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. The joint ministry shall terminate 90 days from the date of mailing such notice or such other time as the parties shall mutually agree.

3.2 Termination

Upon termination:

- (a) a complete accounting of the ministry and affairs of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be made to URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.
- (b) within thirty (30) days following the completion of such accounting, URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall distribute all of its property and assets to URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI in a manner which the parties hereto mutually agree to.
- (c) URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL and the joint venture constituted hereby shall cease to have the right to use and shall discontinue the use of names, marks, designs and logos which are the names of or similar to those owned or used by URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA), or any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.

ARTICLE IV MANAGEMENT

4.1 Compliance

URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be operated in accordance with policies established from time to time by URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI as stated in their respective bylaws, manuals, doctrinal and policy statements and any other governing documents.

4.2 Records of the Joint Ministry

The Secretary of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall maintain all records required by law and minutes of all meetings of the Management Committee.

Copies of all minutes and annual reports of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be promptly forwarded to each of URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.

4.3 Annual Reports

The Management Committee shall within sixty days after the end of each fiscal period submit an annual report of its ministry and operations during such fiscal year to URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI which annual report shall be acknowledged by the secretary of the governing body of each of URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.

**ARTICLE V
FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

5.1 Financial Support

Each of the parties hereto agree to provide funds to URC OF NA (U.S.)-INTERNATIONAL from time to time to enable it to carry on its ministry.

5.2 Financial Statements

The Management Committee shall furnish to URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI within sixty (60) days of the fiscal year-end of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL, statements of its financial condition at the close of such fiscal year. Such statements shall be signed by two members of the Management Committee on behalf of the committee and shall upon notice of either URC OF NA (U.S.) or URC OF NA (CANADA) delivered to URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL, prior to the end of the fiscal year, include an opinion on such statements from an independent auditor approved by the parties thereto.

5.3 Fiscal Policies

URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall establish and maintain fiscal policies, accounting systems and procedures compatible with the policies, accounting systems and procedures adopted by URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI.

5.4 Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall end on December 31st of each calendar year.

**ARTICLE VI
ADDITIONAL PARTIES**

6.1 Additional Participants to the Joint Ministry

Any corporation having the same or similar objectives as the parties hereto may with the prior written consent of all the parties hereto become a party to this Agreement and a participant in

URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL by the execution of this Agreement or a counterpart thereof and upon such execution such additional party shall be bound by all the provisions hereof from the date thereof.

ARTICLE VII MISCELLANEOUS

7.1 Scope of this Agreement

This agreement shall govern and define the respective rights, benefits, liabilities, obligations and powers of URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI with respect to the creation and operation of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL. Each of the parties hereto agree that all other ministries described in Schedule "A" to this agreement will be carried on jointly through URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL and any such ministry carried on by either party prior to the commencement of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL shall be discontinued and transferred to URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL on the date referred to herein for the commencement of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL.

7.2 Relationship of the Parties

Each of URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI acknowledge that their relationship in conducting the joint ministry through URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL is that of joint venturers in the ministry and operations of URC OF NA-INTERNATIONAL and expressly disclaim any intention to create a partnership. Nothing in this Agreement shall constitute URC OF NA (U.S.), URC OF NA (CANADA) and any party added pursuant to the provisions of Article VI partners, nor constitute either the agent or representative of the other, nor create any trust of one in favour of the other or render one liable for the debts or obligations of the other except as specifically provided for in this Agreement.

7.3 Amendment

This Agreement may not be modified or amended except with the written consent of each of its parties.

7.4 Assignment

Except as otherwise provided to the contrary, this Agreement shall be binding upon and enure to the benefit of the parties, their respective successors and permitted assigns. Neither party may assign its rights hereunder except with the written consent of the other party hereto.

7.5 Further Assurance

The parties hereto agree that they will, from time to time at the reasonable request of either of them, execute and deliver such instruments, conveyances and assignments and take further action as may be required pursuant to the terms hereof to accomplish the intent of this Agreement.

7.6 Time of the Essence

Time shall be deemed to be of the essence with respect to all time limits mentioned in this Agreement.

7.7 Entire Agreement

This Agreement constitutes the entire Agreement between URC OF NA (U.S.) and URC OF NA (CANADA) pertaining to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior and contemporaneous agreements, understandings, negotiations and discussions whether oral or written of the parties and there are no warranties, representations or other agreements between the parties in connection with the subject matter hereof except as specifically set forth herein.

7.8 Severable Covenants

If any covenant or obligation set forth in this Agreement or the application of it to either party or to particular circumstances shall, to any extent, be invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement or the application of such obligation to the parties or circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid or unenforceable shall be separately valid and enforceable to the fullest extent permitted by law.

7.9 Headings

All headings in this Agreement are inserted for convenience and reference only and are not to be considered in the construction or interpretation of any provisions of this Agreement.

7.10 Gender

Words used herein which refer to male persons shall include female persons.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties hereto have executed this Agreement this _____ day of December, 2003.

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA
(USA)**

Per: _____

Name: _____

I have the authority to bind the Corporation.

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA
(CANADA)**

Per: _____

Name: _____

I have the authority to bind the Corporation.

Community United Reformed Church
Supplemental Report of the Convening Consistory to Synod Schererville 2007
2 July 2007

Esteemed brothers,

With this Supplemental Report, the Consistory of Community United Reformed Church places before Synod Schererville 2007 various decisions and items of business that have occurred since 16 April 2007, when our report was submitted for inclusion in the agenda.

1. Costs for non-delegate committee functionaries:

2007-May-2: By adopted motion the convening consistory decided that anyone assigned to serve as a reporter for a synodically-appointed committee will receive food and lodging at the expense of the federation.

2. Late overture:

2007-June-20: By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends to Synod Schererville 2007 that the “Overture to Amend Church Order Article[s] 29 and 31” from Classis Southwest U.S. be disallowed for consideration by Synod.

Grounds:

1. The overture was submitted less than one month before the convening of synod, leaving consistories with insufficient time for reviewing the overture.
2. The overture requests amendment of the Church Order, which itself is a significant action deserving careful adherence to our agreed-upon procedure.
3. Resubmitting the overture to a subsequent synod would not cause harm or injury, since the overture is seeking clarity of arrangement rather than revision of substance.

3. Approve the work of the convening consistory:

- 3.1 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod Schererville 2007 permit the chairman and recording clerk of the consistory the privilege of the floor when this report is discussed.
- 3.2 By adopted motion the convening consistory recommends that Synod Schererville 2007 approve its work as reported above.

Respectfully submitted,

The consistory
Community United Reformed Church
Martin Nuiver, chairman

Stated Clerks Report – June 29, 2007

As indicated in my Interim report published with the Agenda for Synod, I am providing this update to you before Synod 2007 begins.

1. Attached to this report you will find Appendix 1 which lists all delegates as of this date. Please ensure to provide me with new names if any changes have been made before Synod 2007 convenes. (Delegates are listed in minutes)
2. I have received several written greetings from church federations/denominations that were unable to send a delegate. These are included.
3. I was requested by the secretary of CECCA to provide Rev. Moses Thang with a personalized letter to help him obtain a visa to the USA. The day before Rev. Thang left from Myanmar to Canada, he further requested a “strong” letter as his original visa application had been denied. I provided him with such a letter, but I have not received word yet whether he has been successful in getting a US visa.
4. Classis SouthWest US requested that I include a late overture with this report. I requested advice from the Schererville consistory and they ruled that this would not be permitted.

Bill Konynenbelt,

Stated Clerk, URCNA

THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

THE MOUND, EDINBURGH, EH1 2LS

TELEPHONE 0131-226-5286 FAX: 0131-220-0597



ASSEMBLY CLERKS' DEPARTMENT:

Principal Clerk:

Rev. James Maciver, M.A., B.D.,
Free Church Manse,
Garrabost,
Isle of Lewis,
HS2 0PW
Tel/Fax: 01851 870207
E-mail: principal.clerk@freechurch.org

Assistant Clerk:

Rev. Angus Howat, M.A.,
Free Church Manse,
Kilberry Road,
Tarbert, Argyll,
PA29 6XX
Tel. 01880 821140
E-mail: ajhowat@aol.com

Mr. Bill Konynenbelt,
Stated Clerk,
United Reformed Churches in North America

2nd May 2007

Dear Brother,

Thank you for inviting the Free Church of Scotland to appoint a delegate to your Synod meeting from 9th to 13th July 2007. Regretfully we are unable this year to send a delegate.

The Free Church of Scotland sends fraternal greetings to the United Reformed Churches in North America in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Free Church of Scotland values its relationship in the Lord with the URCNA and it is our earnest prayer that you may know the blessing of God as you meet in Synod and that he may continue to bless your witness as a Church as you serve him in the gospel.

With sincere greetings in Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Maciver".

James Maciver
Principal Clerk of Assembly
The Free Church of Scotland

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NORTH EAST INDIA

Peace Lane, Churachandpur, P.O.Box-4 Manipur, 795128, India

Phone No: 91-3874-23545. Mob.9862088231.

May 5, 2007

Dear Mr.Bill Kerynenbelt
Stated Clerk
United Reformed Churches in North America
Phone: (403) 286-0521
Fax : (403) 286-0759

Dear Mr.Bill;

Greetings to you in the most precious name of Jesus Christ. Thank you very much for the invitation you had sent to our Church to send a delegate to your Synod which is to be held at Palos Heights, near Chicago, Illinois from the 9th.July, 2007. I am sending you in the attachment my greeting and the greetings of our Church to all the members of your Synod Conference. Please convey to the Synod and to all the delegates our love and sincere greeting. We commit all of you unto the loving care of the Lord.

God bless you all.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

L.Kiemlo Pulamte.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NORTH EAST INDIA

Peace Lane, Churachandpur, P.O.Box-4 Manipur, 795128, India

Phone No: 91-3874-23545. Mob.9862088231.

May 5, 2007

To

All the members/delegates
The Synod of URCNA, 2007
Camp, Palos Heights
Near Chicago, Illenois
U. S. A.

Subject: Greetings from RPC, North East India.

Dear brethren in the Lord;

It is with great interest and joy we received and read your Invitation to send a delegate from our Church to attend your Synod Conference Scheduled to be held on July 9-13, 2007. I hope you have already received my e-mail by which I informed you that our church was unable to send a delegate this time. We hope there will be a time we can send delegates in future.

Ever since I met Rev. R.J.Sikkema of the Foreign Mission Department of your Church at Philadelphia during ICRC Assembly in 2001 there has been a desire in my mind to establish a sister Church relationship between both of our Church. We have discussed about this at the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee unanimously resolved to offer a sister Church relationship to your Church. But this could not be materialized not because you were not interested but because you could not visit us personally. We know you are interested in Missionary works. We are praying and still looking forward to our joining hands with you to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Church was founded on 8th.April, 1979. It grows slowly till 2000 but during the last six (6) years it grows so fast that the population still less than 5000 till the end of 1999 now has become more than 12000 covering five states of North East India. There are 97 local Churches. Our Mission work Operates in four Mission Fields such as (i) Manipur among Hindu people. (2) Karbi-Anglong, Assam (3) Myanmar (Burma) and (4) Tripura. Our missionary works among these four Fields was very encouraging that according to the recent report we received,we have got the following new converts and believers during 2006 till date.:

1. Manipur Field :

(i) Keibul village	116
(ii) Keirenphabi	30
(iii) Thanga	15

2. Assam :

(i) Santipur	26
(ii) Hamren	26
(iii) Diphu	75

3. Tripura: More than 1000 new converts.

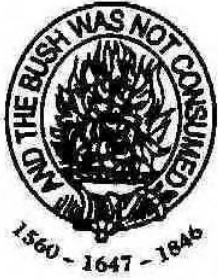
In Myanmar too our missionary work is very encouraging even though I could not give you the exact figure of new converts. At present we have 34 missionaries. To visit 97 local Churches and our Mission Fields it demands time, money and energy. Moreover Wherever we received new converts we need to help them establish a small Church plus supporting our missionaries.

If your Church is still interested in Missionary works, you are offered a sister Church relationship and we hope you will also extend such relationship to our church,so that we can work together in the Mission Fields. "The main purpose for the existence of a Church is to do Missionary work". *Rev. Dr. Oswald J. Smith.*

Lastly, I on behalf of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, North East India and in my behalf send you my sincere love and greetings to all of you as you are having Synod Conference. We assured you that we will remember you in our prayers. May the Lord bless and give you wisdom to have a good judgment in all your doing.

Yours Sincerely

L.Kiemlo Pulamte
General Secretary
Inter- Church Relations
Reformed Presbyterian Church NEI



Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Mail:
PO Box 579 Springwood
NSW AUSTRALIA 2777

Telephone: 02 4754 3833
Fax: 02 4754 3822
Email: clerk@pcea.asn.au

May 12, 2007

United Reformed Churches in North America
States Clerk
Mr Bill Konynenbelt

Email: urcna@shaw.ca

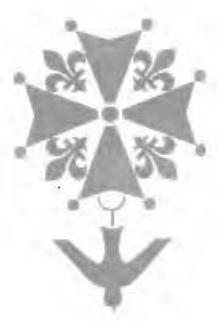
Mr Bill Konynenbelt,

Fraternal Greetings from the Synod of Eastern Australia

It is with great pleasure that I write on behalf of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to formally send the fraternal greetings of this church to the United Reformed Churches in North America. We wish you every blessing in the Lord as you continue to faithfully serve Him.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Rev Trevor Leggott
Clerk of Synod



**Église réformée de Québec
Interchurch Committee**

June 6, 2007

Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America
c/o Bill Konynenbelt
Stated Clerk, URCNA

Dear brothers,

In the name of Christ, our risen and victorious Lord and Savior, we extend to you greetings from your French-speaking brothers and sisters of the Église réformée du Québec (ERQ). We apologize for not being present in person to extend to you our greetings and to enjoy your Christian fellowship.

By way of brief introduction, the ERQ is composed of six local congregations throughout the province of Quebec, Canada, totaling about 300 communicant and non-communicant members. United by a common Reformed confession, namely the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism, we preach the gospel of peace to the French-speaking people of the province.

In recent years, the synod of the ERQ has made some significant decisions:

- In 2003, the ERQ applied for and was received as a full member of NAPARC.
- The ERQ has decided to apply for membership in the World Reformed Fellowship.
- Responding to the 1997 ERQ invitation, the 2007 synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches received the ERQ into ecclesiastical fellowship.
- The ERQ continues to pursue sister-church relations with the United Reformed Churches of North America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America. The PCA General Assembly will vote this year on a recommendation to receive the ERQ into fraternal relations.
- A liturgy for the public profession of faith was adopted in November 2006. An *ad hoc* committee of the synod is presently working on liturgies for baptism and ordination. The ecumenical committee of the URCNA will be consulted for commentary and recommendations.
- The Ministerial Committee of the ERQ has presented a report on the administration of the Lord's Supper, an issue of importance that causes some tensions between our brothers. We covet your prayers so that the Spirit may direct us by his Word.

- We rejoiced to begin a new church plant in 2003 in the city of Laval, just north of Montreal. On the other hand, last year, we sadly had to close a struggling church work in Trois Rivières after more than 20 years of ministry.
- The Lord encourages our hearts as he draws his own to himself. We witness new conversions as the Spirit blesses the preaching of the Word, convicts sinners of their sin, and extends to them the hope of salvation. We also rejoice to witness the work of the Spirit in the lives of our children and youth, as they receive a solid, Reformed education and profess their faith in Christ.

With respect to the URCNA, we wish to express our thanks for the prayer and financial support of a few local congregations. The ERQ is a small, struggling Reformed witness in a large, resistant mission field. We sincerely appreciate sister Reformed and Presbyterian churches that shoulder the burden with us.

In November 2007, the Interchurch Committee of the ERQ had the pleasure of meeting representatives of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity of the URCNA. Our discussion on three of the eight points for “Phase One - Corresponding Relations” has been informative and edifying. Lord willing, we shall complete the exploration of all eight points before your next synod.

May the Lord of all wisdom and grace direct your deliberations and decisions for the glory of his name and for the good of his people who assemble in the congregation of the URCNA.

Fraternally,

Ben Westerveld

Rev. Ben Westerveld
President, Interchurch Committee of the ERQ
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G1X 2X8
www.erq.qc.ca
Pasteur-Bernard@erq.qc.ca
(418) 659-7943

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

February, 2007

To: Pastors, Elders, and Deacons of URCNA member churches
From: US URCNA Treasurer

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year. At the bottom of this letter contains a series of action items for Synod 2007 to address.

OBSERVATIONS

1. Two years ago I reported that thirty-three out of forty-eight of the member churches provided "askings" during 2004 and that participation is down from 2003. Last year I reported that thirty out of fifty member churches provided "askings" during 2005. This year I must report that thirty-three out of fifty-five member churches provided "askings" during 2006. We continue our downward trend of supporting the URC.
2. Seven churches provided collections for the Psalter Hymnal fund in 2006.
3. We had a lot of travel from various committees.
4. All US classis sent in \$500 for the Web Site Fund.
5. Several churches are confusing their Classical Dues with the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to the Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.

ASKINGS

URCNA "Askings" equals "Suggested Donation". The Synodically approved formula for a suggested donation is \$3.00 per family. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the "Askings" from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. May I ask that last year's treasurer remind this year's treasure about "Askings".

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check to Peter J. Moen, 15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

PSALTER HYMNAL FUND

The first resolution from Report 3, from the Psalter Hymnal committee, that was adopted by Synod 2001 was **"That synod establish a fund to finance the cost of producing the new Psalter Hymnal."** The second resolution that was adopted from the Psalter Hymnal committee states **"That synod request churches to contribute to that fund by suggesting that free-will offerings be collected for this cause until the new Psalter Hymnal is completed."** The local churches are still not following through with the resolutions their Synod 2001 representatives approved.

Please make your check payable to URCNA Hymnal Fund and send the check to Peter J. Moen, 15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

WEB SITE FUND

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: "That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund." For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the \$500 check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Peter J. Moen, 15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

ENCLOSURES

A budget has been developed in order to provide information on the ongoing activities. A comparison between last year's budget and last year's actuals is also provided.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2006, a budget for 2007, and guidelines for reimbursement. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

INCOMING MAIL

All mail for the US Treasurer should be sent to the address at the bottom of the letter. This is the best method for a timely response.

CHECKS

Please make all "askings" checks payable to "URCNA".

Please make all Hymnal Fund checks payable to "URCNA – Hymnal Fund"

For Classis Treasurers, please make all Web Site Fund checks payable to "URCNA – Web Fund"

REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

1. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)
2. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
3. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
4. Mileage will be reimbursed at the government rate, which, for 2007, is currently **48.5** cents per mile.
5. Meals will be reimbursed.
6. It is not necessary to submit receipts for meals unless the total exceeds \$36.00 per day.
7. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
8. When meeting with members from Canada, support as much of their bill as possible, they have a poor exchange rate.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

The goal is to get a reimbursement check out as soon as possible, so if additional information is needed, it will be requested when the reimbursement check is sent. The process is working well and will continue to be modified, as needed.

SYNODICAL ACTION ITEMS

The following action items come from the US Treasurer, appointed by the deacons of the Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church. These action items were endorsed by the PPRBC council on February 13, 2007.

1. Askings

The URC made a conscious decision to avoid assessing quotas to member churches. Instead they came up with the term "Askings" and had a recommendation of \$3.00 per member family. Many churches have chosen to simply budget an amount or take a special offering instead of using the formula. Each year the US Treasurer needs to remind member churches about "Askings". As the table shows below, for the past two years, the bulk of the US financial obligations are met by special offerings and not the "Askings" formula. More importantly, if the finances strictly relied on "Askings", the US income would be (based on the 2006 yearbook) \$10,116 instead of \$12,250 and that would be if every US church participated.

Type	2005			2006		
	Number of Churches	Percent Participated	Percent Given	Number of Churches	Percent Participated	Percent Given
Nothing	20	38%	0%	22	40%	0%
Askings	10	19%	17%	14	25%	23%
Budget	10	19%	26%	8	15%	30%
Collection	12	23%	57%	11	20%	47%

Based upon financial observations over the past couple of years,

- a. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod change the name from "Askings" to "Dues"
- b. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod specify taking a special collection in lieu of a formula and that collection should take place within the first three quarters of the year.

2. Financial participation

The URC has a large percentage of US churches that do not financially participate in URCNA. The following table represents the percentage of US member churches who did not financially participate in this federation over the past five years. These figures do not represent simply a church forgetting one year. A full 20% of our US member churches have not provided any "Askings" in the past two years and 7% of our US member churches have not provided any "Askings" in the past three years. Over 56% of the churches missed either 2005 or 2006 in providing "Askings". Note that several churches that realized they missed a year and provided two-year's worth in one year were counted as giving both years.

In 2003, a "bill" was sent to each church. Only 20% of the churches indicated that they responded because they were billed, therefore that method was not tried again. Since giving was very low in 2006, in the third quarter of 2006, a letter was sent to each church that had not provided "Askings" for 2006. There was no indication that this letter helped because only 9% of the total "Askings" were received in the fourth quarter and the bulk of that was from churches that normally provide "Askings" during the fourth quarter.

Year	Church Non-Participation
2002	35%
2003	17%
2004	31%
2005	38%
2006	40%

Based upon financial observations over the past couple of years,

- a. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod challenge each church to participate.
- b. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod poll the churches to determine why they are not financially participating and take action based upon the findings.

3. Hymnal Fund

From its inception, the Hymnal Fund never had financial support among the US URCNA churches. Fewer than 13% of the US churches participated financially in this endeavor this past year. When it was established, the committee estimated that it would cost \$400,000 for this venture. The US bank account currently sits at slightly more than \$19,000. At the last Synod, it was presented that we would need another 75 years before reaching \$400,000. In three years, at our current rate of giving, we have slipped and would now need 85 years to reach the goal, and that does not account for inflation. Additionally, it has been the observation from the US Treasurer that churches have been satisfied with the 1976 Psalter Hymnal. Based upon financial observations over the past couple of years along with phone contact with several churches,

- a. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod poll the churches to determine why they are not financially participating and take action based upon the findings.
- b. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod reconsider whether the activities of the Hymnal Committee are still endorsed by the churches. If not, use the funds that have been raised to secure printing rights of the 1976 Psalter Hymnal.

4. Joint Venture

In 1996, Covenant Christian Church (Wyoming, ON) asked about setting up the legal means to have contributions cross the boarder between US and Canada. It was referred to the Committee on Structure. In Synod, 1997, the resolution was drawn up and then tabled for the next Synod. It had called for the directors to report back to the next Synod concerning the implementation of the Joint Venture Agreement. (All this is in the Federative Structure Committee Report).

Synod 1999 approved the report (and still has the directors entering into a Joint Venture Agreement) and reporting at the next Synod. At this point the Structure Committee is dismissed with thanks.

During 2006 the US Treasurer received several requests for needing that Joint Venture Agreement. It has been over ten years since that need was first identified. The US Treasurer is not an officer of the Federation and cannot sign a legal document for the URC. Only the board of directors can enter the URC into a legal agreement. Previous Synods have made it perfectly clear. The directors on both sides of the boarder were directed to do this task and it is not yet done.

A Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) is needed for Canadian Churches to support activities of US Churches. Since this activity goes in both directions, both the Canadian and US Boards must initiate JVA's. This need has been recognized by our earlier Synods and the lack of a JVA on both sides is keeping churches on both sides from supporting each other.

- a. The US Treasurer recommends that if a Joint Venture Agreement has not been initiated by the time Synod 2007 convenes, that Synod once again direct the board of directors to start the process to enter into such an agreement before January 2008.

5. Synodical Notifications

In order to ensure that the US and Canadian Treasurers are aware of all financial matters that are decided upon by Synod; official notification must be received from the Clerk.

- a. The US Treasurer recommends that Synod direct the Clerk to notify the US and Canadian Treasurers of any matters that might pertain to them due to approved Synodical Acts.

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together.

Peter J. Moen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA

15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey 07444-1840

Home: 973-831-7661, Fax: 973-284-3394, E-Mail: PJMgfile@OptOnline.net

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

2004 End Of Year Report (not audited)

General Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2003	20,973.92
INCOME	
Askings	14,472.82
Interest	122.55
TOTAL INCOME	14,595.37
EXPENSES	
CERCU Committee ¹	792.54
Church Order Committee ¹	2,581.51
Clerk ^{2, 3}	1,209.99
Dues (ICRC, NAPARC) ⁴	1,780.00
ECC Abroad Committee ¹	402.72
Hymnal Committee ¹	225.16
Postage	245.16
Stated Clerk Secretary ³	199.50
Supplies	98.38
Synod Materials ³	225.44
Synod Postage ³	176.15
Synod Travel ^{3, 4}	1,014.00
Telephone	20.68
Theological Education Committee ¹	2,518.42
TOTAL EXPENSES	11,489.65
NET TOTAL	3,105.72
BALANCE 12/31/2004	24,079.64 ⁵

NOTES:

1. Committee expenses and travel are now provided as directed by Synod 2004 instead of grouping this figure into travel and telephone.
2. Since we changed stated clerks at this past Synod, the previous stated clerk was paid for his time spent transitioning his work to the new stated clerk.
3. Since the new stated clerk lives in Canada, the Canadian Finance Committee is now responsible for providing the clerk his honorarium. To keep finances simpler this year, the US churches will pick up the entire ICRC/NAPARC dues and synodical expenses for this year and the Canadian churches will pick up the full ½ year honorarium of the clerk and any synodical expenses incurred on their side of the border.
4. The stated clerk was not a delegate from his church, so his travel expense to be at Synod was covered by URCNA.
5. This amount is split between a CD at \$10,324.57 and the checking account at \$13,755.07. The bulk of the interest earned is from the CD.

Hymnal Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2003	6,931.92
INCOME	
Collections	3,560.02
Interest	40.66
TOTAL INCOME	3,600.68
EXPENSES	
None	0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
NET TOTAL	3,600.68
BALANCE 12/31/2004	10,532.60

Web Fund¹

BALANCE 12/31/2003	0.00
INCOME	
Collections	2,000.00
Interest	0.64
TOTAL INCOME	2,000.64
EXPENSES	
None	0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
NET TOTAL	2,000.64
BALANCE 12/31/2004	2,000.64

NOTE 1: As established by Synod 2004, each Classis must provide the US Treasurer with \$500 each year in order to fund the cost of maintaining a Web Site for URCNA.

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

2004 Budget Comparison

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Bank Charges	\$ 25	\$ 0.00
Clerk	\$2,000	\$1,209.99
Dues	\$1,600	\$1,780.00
Internet	\$ 100	\$ 0.00
Postage	\$ 200	\$ 245.16
Supplies	\$ 200	\$ 98.38
Synod Materials	\$1,600	\$ 225.44
Synod Postage	\$1,800	\$ 176.15
Synod Support Personal	\$1,100	\$ 199.50
Synod Travel	\$ 800	\$1,014.00
Telephone	\$1,000	\$ 20.68
Travel	<u>\$8,000</u>	<u>\$6,520.35</u>
Total	\$18,425	\$11,489.65

2005 Budget

(For planning and comparison purposes only.)

Bank Fee	\$ 25
Clerk ¹	\$1,300
Dues	\$1,800
Postage	\$ 200
Supplies	\$ 200
Telephone	\$ 100
CERCU Committee ²	\$1,000
Church Order Committee ²	\$2,500
ECC Abroad Committee ²	\$1,000
Hymnal Committee ²	\$1,000
Theological Education Committee ²	\$2,500
Total	\$11,625

Note 1: Established by URCNA Synod. The US portion is 65% of \$2,000.

Note 2: Eventually each committee needs to determine its own budget and report it to the treasurer by January 31st of the year so that it can be included in the budget. For 2005, this is just an estimate based on previous years.

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

REVISED 2005 End-of-Year Report (not audited)

General Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2004	24,079.64
INCOME	
Askings	12,384.04
Interest	145.25
 TOTAL INCOME	 12,529.29
EXPENSES	
CECCA	1,810.92
CERCU	3,283.57
Church Order Committee	3,974.15
Clerk	1,300.00
Dues (ICRC, NAPARC)	1,580.00
Hymnal Committee	1,505.23
Postage	
Supplies	
Synod Materials	1,300.00
Telephone	
Theological Education Committee	1,924.11
 TOTAL EXPENSES	 16,677.98
 NET TOTAL	 (4,148.69)
 BALANCE 12/31/2005	 19,930.95

Hymnal Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2004	10,532.60
INCOME	
Collections	4,120.30
Interest	60.18
TOTAL INCOME	4,180.48
EXPENSES	
None	0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
NET TOTAL	4,180.48
BALANCE 12/31/2005	14,713.08

Web Fund¹

BALANCE 12/31/2004	2,000.64
INCOME	
Classis	1,500.00
Interest	10.76
TOTAL INCOME	1,510.76
EXPENSES	
Bank Charge ²	25.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	25.00
NET TOTAL	1,485.75
BALANCE 12/31/2005	3,486.40

NOTES

1: As established by Synod 2004, each Classis must provide the US Treasurer with \$500 each year in order to fund the cost of maintaining a Web Site for URCNA.

2: Check Collection Fee for depositing a Canadian Check

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

2005 Budget Comparison

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Bank Fee	\$ 25	
Clerk ¹	\$1,300	\$1,300.00
Dues	\$1,800	\$1,580.00
Postage	\$ 200	
Supplies	\$ 200	
Synod Materials	\$ 0	\$1,300.00
Telephone	\$ 100	
CECCA ³	\$1,000	\$1,810.92
CERCU ³	\$1,000	\$3,283.57
Church Order Committee	\$2,500	\$3,974.15
Hymnal Committee	\$1,000	\$1,505.23
Theological Education Committee	\$2,500	\$1,924.11
 Total	 \$11,625	 \$16,677.98

2006 Budget⁴

(For planning and comparison purposes only.)

Bank Fee	\$ 25
Clerk ¹	\$1,300
Dues	\$1,800
Postage	\$ 50
Supplies	\$ 50
Telephone	\$ 50
CECCA ^{2,3}	\$8,250
CERCU ^{2,3}	\$3,200
Church Order Committee ²	\$4,000
Hymnal Committee ²	\$1,500
Theological Education Committee ²	\$ 300
 Total	 \$20,525

Note 1: Established by URCNA Synod. The US portion is 65% of \$2,000.

Note 2: Each committee needs to determine its own budget and report it to the treasurer by January 31st of the year so that it can be included in the budget.

Note 3: CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Note 4: Budgets are based either on information provided by the committees or upon 2005 actuals.

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

2006 End-Of-Year Report (not audited)

General Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2005	19,930.95
INCOME	
Askings	12,250.45
Directory ¹	6,599.00
Interest	323.72
Other ²	172.00
 TOTAL INCOME	 19,345.17
EXPENSES	
CECCA ³	2,612.85
CERCU ⁴	3,719.05
Church Order Committee	2,998.14
Clerk	1,300.00
Directory ¹	4,525.07
Dues (ICRC, NAPARC) ⁶	2,136.98
Hymnal Committee	2,193.55
Postage	2.70
Supplies	
Telephone	
Theological Education Committee	91.39
 TOTAL EXPENSES	 19,579.73
 NET TOTAL	 (234.56)
 BALANCE 12/31/2006	 19,696.39 ⁵

NOTES

1. The URC Directory is being processed through this account
2. Church donated \$172.00 towards expenses on the Web Site
3. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
4. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
5. 2,073.93 is in reserve from income and expenses relative to the URCNA directory
6. US paid the full portion of the Dues for 2006. Canada was not billed because they were having financial issues. Canada's portion is normally 35% or \$747.94 for 2006.

Hymnal Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2005	14,713.08
INCOME	
Collections	4,505.66
Interest	84.06
TOTAL INCOME	4,589.72
EXPENSES	
None	0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
NET TOTAL	4,589.72
BALANCE 12/31/2006	19,302.80

Web Fund¹

BALANCE 12/31/2005	3,486.40
INCOME	
Classis	2,000.00
Interest	20.14
TOTAL INCOME	2,020.14
EXPENSES	
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
NET TOTAL	2,020.14
BALANCE 13/31/2006	5,506.54

NOTES

1. As established by Synod 2004, each Classis must provide the US Treasurer with \$500 each year in order to fund the cost of maintaining a Web Site for URCNA.

United Reformed Churches in North America

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

2006 Budget Comparison

<u>Line Item</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Bank Fee	\$ 25	
Clerk ¹	\$1,300	\$1,300.00
Directory ⁵	\$ 0	\$4,525.07
Dues	\$1,800	\$2,136.98
Postage	\$ 50	\$ 2.70
Supplies	\$ 50	
Synod Materials	\$ 0	
Telephone	\$ 50	
CECCA ³	\$8,250	\$2,612.85
CERCU ³	\$3,200	\$3,719.05
Church Order Committee	\$4,000	\$2,998.14
Hymnal Committee	\$1,500	\$2,193.55
Theological Education Committee	\$ 300	\$ 91.39
Total	\$20,525	\$19,579.73

2007 Budget⁴

(For planning and comparison purposes only.)

Bank Fee	\$ 25
Clerk ¹	\$1,300
Dues	\$2,300
Postage	\$ 50
Supplies	\$ 50
Synod Materials	\$4,000
Telephone	\$ 50
CECCA ^{2,3}	\$3,000
CERCU ^{2,3}	\$4,000
Church Order Committee ²	\$4,000
Hymnal Committee ²	\$2,000
Theological Education Committee ²	\$ 300
Total	\$21,075

Note 1: Established by URCNA Synod. The US portion is 65% of \$2,000.

Note 2: Each committee needs to determine its own budget and report it to the treasurer by January 31st of the year so that it can be included in the budget.

Note 3: CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Note 4: Budget items were based on last year. **No committee submitted a 2007 budget.**

Note 5: Directory is self-funded.

Report from the Corporation of the URCNA (Canada)

Brothers,

Since our last meeting in Calgary, the work of the Corporation of the URCNA (Canada) has been implementing the decisions of that Synod. In accordance with those decisions, the Corporation has established a finance committee. Appointed to that Committee are Pam Hessels (Wellandport ORC, Wellandport), Cliffe Hodgkinson (Rehoboth URC, Hamilton) and Stan Antonides (Member of the Board of the Directors). This committee took over the responsibility of receiving and disseminating funds for the federation within Canada. Attached to this report are the financial statements of the past three years. Based on the reports of the financial committee, the Corporation recommends that the Canadian churches of the URCNA realize the cost of the Federations expenses at \$10.00 per family. As well, the Corporation wishes to remind the churches to provide these funds in a timely and consistent manner.

The second significant issue for the Corporation is the matter of the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA). A JVA allows the movement of funds across national borders. Canadian law requires that charities transfer monies only to other qualified donees. Qualified donees are those recognized by Revenue Canada. Failure to comply with Revenue Canada can result in a church of the federation losing its charitable status with the government. A JVA between the two URCNA Corporations would effectively make the Corporation of the URCNA (USA) a qualified donee in the eyes of Revenue Canada. Such an arrangement would mean that churches in Canada who wish to support churches in the United States of America and the ministries of those churches, could send their monies to the Canadian Corporation, who in turn would send it to the American Corporation, who in turn would send it to the appropriate church. For this reason, the Corporation of the URCNA (Canada) had a JVA drafted by our legal counsel, in the hope that such a document will be satisfactory to the government of Canada. All that is required for this document to be enacted is the signature of a member of the Corporation of the URCNA (USA) with signing authority. Once this document is signed and accepted by the government of Canada, all monies received by Canadian churches for the support of American churches will need to be submitted to the Corporation (Canada) for the purpose of deposit, recording, and transferring them to the Corporation (USA).

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Joel Dykstra
Secretary for the Corporation of the URCNA (Canada)

United Reformed Churches in North America - Canada
Balance Sheet -2004

(Unaudited)

December 31 2004

Current	
Bank	5,036
Receivables	<u>245</u>
	5,281
Restricted	
Due from general fund	<u>764</u>
	<u>6,045</u>

Current	
Accounts payable	9,487
Due to Psalter Hymnal fund	<u>764</u>
	10,251
Unrestricted (general fund)	-4,970
Psalter Hymnal Fund	<u>764</u>
	<u>6,045</u>

United Reformed Churches in North America
Statement of Revenues and Expenses

(Unaudited)

For the four months ended December 31 2004

Revenues

Donations	5,352
Interest and other	<u>1</u>
	<u>5,353</u>

Expenses

Committee costs	
CERCU	224
Joint Church Order	<u>1,982</u>
	<u>2,206</u>
Office supplies	450
Professional fees	3,853
Publication costs	2,640
Stipend	<u>410</u>

Total expenses 9,559

Deficiency of revenues over expenses -4,206

United Reformed Churches in North America- Canada
Statement of Changes in Fund Balances - 2004

(Unaudited)

For the four months ended December 31, 2004

	General Unrestricted	Psalter Hymnal	2004
Balance, beginning of year			Nil
Deficiency of revenues over expenses	0		0
Interfund transfer	-764	764	0
Balance, end of year	-764	764	0

United Reformed Churches in North America
Statement of Cash Flows

(Unaudited)

For the four months ended December 31 2004

Increase in cash and cash equivalents:

Operating

Net receipts over disbursements	0
Change in non-cash operating working capital	
Receivables	-245
Accounts payable	9,487
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	9,242
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of the year	Nil
Cash and cash equivalents, end of the year	9,242

United Reformed Churches in North America - Canada Balance Sheet - 2005

(Unaudited)

December 31	2005	2004
Current		
Bank		5,036
Receivables	2,863	245
Prepays	1,817	
	<u>4,680</u>	<u>5,281</u>
Restricted		
Due from general fund	2,354	764
	<u>7,034</u>	<u>6,045</u>
Current		
Bank indebtedness	1,725	
Accounts payable	214	9,487
Due to Psalter Hymnal fu	1,734	764
Due to Web-site fund	620	
	<u>4,293</u>	<u>10,251</u>
Unrestricted (general fund)	387	-4,970
Psalter Hymnal Fund	1,734	764
Web-site Fund	620	
	<u>7,034</u>	<u>6,045</u>

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31	2005	2004
		(4 months)
Revenues		
Donations	13,964	5,352
Shared costs	5,758	
Interest and other	1	1
	<u>19,723</u>	<u>5,353</u>
Expenses		
Committee costs		
CECCA	4,996	
CERCU	994	224
Fraternal Delegates	118	
Joint Church Order	1,947	1,982
Psalter Hymnal	425	
Theological Education	968	
Web-Site	41	
	<u>9,489</u>	<u>2,206</u>
Office supplies	641	450
Professional fees		3,853
Publication costs	186	2,640
Stipend	2,460	410
	<u>12,776</u>	<u>9,559</u>
Total expenses		
	<u>12,776</u>	<u>9,559</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	<u>6,947</u>	<u>-4,206</u>

United Reformed Churches in North America - Canada
Statement of Changes in Fund Balances - 2005

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31, 2005

	General Unrestricted	Psalter Hymnal	Web-Site	2005	2004 (4 months)
Balance, beginning of year	-4,970	764		-4,206	Nil
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	0			0	-4,206
Interfund transfer	-1,590	970	620	0	0
Balance, end of year	-6,560	1,734	620	-4,206	-4,206

United Reformed Churches in North America
Statement of Cash Flows

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31 2005 2004
(4 months)

Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents:

Operating

Net receipts over disbursements	0	0
Change in non-cash operating working capital		
Receivables	-2,618	-245
Prepays	-1,817	
Accounts payable	-9,273	9,487
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	-13,708	9,242
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of the year	9,242	Nil
Cash and cash equivalents, end of the year	-4,466	9,242

United Reformed Churches in North America - Canada
Balance Sheet - 2006

(Unaudited)

December 31	2006	2005
Current		
Bank	5,246	
Receivables	850	2,863
Prepays		1,817
	6,096	4,680
Restricted		
Due from general fund	4,388	2,354
	10,484	7,034
Current		
Bank indebtedness		1,725
Accounts payable	652	214
Due to Psalter Hymnal fund	2,628	1,734
Due to Web-site fund	1,760	620
	5,040	4,293
Unrestricted (general fund)	1,056	387
Psalter Hymnal Fund	2,628	1,734
Web-site Fund	1,760	620
	10,484	7,034

United Reformed Churches in North America
Statement of Revenues and Expenses

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31

	Psalter Hymnal	Web-Site Fund	General Fund	2006	2005
Revenues					
Donations	894	1,140	10,527	12,561	13,964
Shared costs			2,115	2,115	5,758
Interest and other					1
	894	1,140	12,642	14,676	19,723
Expenses					
Committee costs					
CECCA			1,322	1,322	4,996
CERCU			2,530	2,530	994
Fraternal Delegates			2,081	2,081	118
Joint Church Order			2,631	2,631	1,947
Psalter Hymnal			651	651	425
Theological education					968
Web-site					41
			9,215	9,215	9,489
Office supplies			498	498	641
Publication costs					186
Stipend			2,260	2,260	2,460
Total expenses			11,973	11,973	12,776
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	894	1,140	669	2,703	6,947

United Reformed Churches in North America - Canada
Statement of Changes in Fund Balances - 2006

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31, 2006

	Psalter Hymnal	Web-Site	General Unrestricted	2006	2005
Balance, beginning of year	1,734	620	387	2,741	-4,206
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	0	0	0	0	6,947
Interfund transfer				0	0
Balance, end of year	<u>1,734</u>	<u>620</u>	<u>387</u>	<u>2,741</u>	<u>2,741</u>

United Reformed Churches in North America
Statement of Cash Flows

(Unaudited)

For the year ended December 31

2006 2005

Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents:

Operating

Net receipts over disbursements 0 0

Change in non-cash operating
working capital

Receivables	2,013	-2,618
Prepays	1,817	-1,817
Accounts payable	<u>438</u>	<u>-9,273</u>

Net increase (decrease) in cash

4,268 -13,708

and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents,

-8,672 5,036

beginning of the year

Cash and cash equivalents,

-4,404 -8,672

end of the year

REPORT TO SYNOD SCHERERVILLE 2007 BY COVENANT REFORMED CHURCH OF PELLA, IOWA, AS THE COMMITTEE TO GATHER INFORMATION ABOUT HOW MONIES ARE GATHERED AND SPENT IN THE URCNA

Your committee has contacted all of the synodically appointed committees, the U.S. Federation Treasurer, Peter Moen, the Canadian Treasurer, Pam Hessels, and has been in contact with the URCNA Federation Stated Clerk Bill Konynenbelt, and others.

The finds of your committee are set out as follows:

Looking at the three (3) Federation funds, that is, the Web Fund, the Hymnal Fund, and the General Fund, we find the following:

The information gathered shows certain types of concerns, which might be categorized as mechanical, contribution commitment, and then finally, possible courses of action to follow to help resolve some of the concerns.

GENERAL FUND CONCERNS

A. Mechanically, there may be a breakdown in communications. That is, in the larger churches the Deacons may operate separately, and may not include the Elders in on the quarterly reports that are received from the U.S. Treasurer. Therefore, the Elders do not act in concert with the Deacons or with the full Council to suggest that offerings be taken or causes be funded, even though it is the Elders who attend Synod, and who have established these funds. Perhaps part of the problem is that in smaller churches, mechanical breakdown could also occur with the changes in the Council, (and perhaps some of the larger churches have bookkeepers who don't bring these requests to the Council and/or Deacons). The charge of your committee was not to inquire of each Council as to whether they are receiving regular quarterly reports from each Federation Treasurer, or whether there was some other mechanical breakdown.

An additional mechanical concern is that expenses are not being submitted on a timely basis, that is, some committee members accumulate their expenses for the entire year and submit one bill in December or January, which causes cash flow problems.

Possible remedies for some of the mechanical concerns are:

1. Churches, which are able, should make their contributions early in the calendar year to maintain the positive cash flow, and churches that have not contributed for the past year or past few years should be urged to make that up in 2007, and be encouraged to contribute annually.
2. Some of the concerns with expenses being accumulated and submitted in one reimbursement request at the end of the year can probably be resolved by the fact that a uniform request for reimbursement can be printed,
 - a. which indicates for which committee the expenses were incurred.
 - b. The return address to which the reimbursement is to be sent.
 - c. whether the reimbursement is to be paid to that individual who incurred the expenses, or to the person's church.

- d. a statement that any expenses not submitted within three (3) months of the date incurred, should be declared to be not reimbursable.

B. Commitment Concerns; the lack of funds available for reimbursement, particularly in the Canadian Branch of the Federation may also be due to a lack of commitment. It may be that the smaller churches are simply unable to handle the extra expense. And it may also be that the larger churches lack a commitment to paying the Federation dues. It was not within the charge of the committee to write each one of the churches who didn't contribute, or who contributed less than the requested "askings" to determine what was the cause of their not sending the requested "askings."

WEB SITE COMMITTEE

The Website Committee currently conducts its business using an internet group provided free of charge by Yahoo, the web server, which to this point has been donated by a member of the Escondido URC.

Synod Calgary 2004 instructed each Classis to pay \$500 per year, which should have raised \$3,000 per year. From the reports attached it appears that has not occurred. Costs incurred are to be submitted to the Treasurer in the country in which the expense originated. Currently, there is no approval oversight, that is, when the expenses are submitted they are thought to be legitimate and are paid by the Treasurer.

Currently website efforts are centered around a small core of volunteers, and progress has been minimal because the volunteers are over-committed. Suggestions for possible remedies to get the website up and running are:

- A. Ask for free volunteers from all URCNA churches.
- B. If the response is inadequate, ask for cost proposals from interested URC members.
- C. If that response is inadequate, request proposals from the broader Christian community.
- D. If the foregoing responses are inadequate, hire a company to develop a site, all at unknown costs.

HYMNAL FUND

The Hymnal Fund was established several Synods ago, with an ultimate goal of \$400,000. At the present rate of contribution, the Federation will have celebrated its half-century mark before that goal is reached, even if material prices do not increase. The recommendation is that either the fund be renewed and revived, or that the Hymnal Fund be terminated.

GENERAL COMMENTS

From conversation and correspondence with different people, including the U.S. and Canadian Treasurers, it appears that the proposed expenditures, (in the Canadian Branch of the Federation) outstrip the funds available on hand, and/or anticipated.

From the financial reports of the U.S. branch of the URCNA, the U.S. branch appears to be functioning on the \$3.00 per family, and if all churches contributed "askings" as requested, the \$3.00 per family appears to currently be adequate for the U.S. budget. However, the Canadian

fund appears to be in dire straits. More than one of the respondents suggested that the Synod establish the "askings" in the Canadian currency rather than U.S. currency, and/or establish the "askings" separately in each currency and the reimbursements in each currency.

It appears that there was a request to the Convening Consistory for Synod Schererville 2007, which functions as a Synodical Interim Committee between Synods, to increase the "askings" from the Canadian churches for the Canadian budget. Synod needs to determine whether the Synodical Interim Committee can authorize an increase in the "askings" for the Canadian branch of the URCNA. Perhaps it would be possible for the Canadian branch to self-assess an additional amount per family to meet the anticipated expenses, or perhaps appeal to the churches of the Canadian Branch for additional funds.

The source of funds for all three funds is as follows:

- A. The General Fund gets its money from individual churches through "askings" as directed by Synod.
- B. The Hymnal Fund gets its money from individual churches through collections, as directed by Synod
- C. The Web Fund gets its money from the various Classis, as directed by Synod.

In regards to how committee expenses are authorized, a parenthetical question which was raised during the committee's conversations with various correspondents regards CECCA. The question is whether the CECCA could attend more than one foreign trip, (gathering) per year, or one foreign contact trip per prospective affiliate per year. This could mean the difference between one foreign trip or multiple foreign trips per year for the committee.

- A. Synod should define appropriate spending guidelines for the committees.
- B. Try to discover why churches are not contributing to the General Fund or to the Hymnal Fund
- C. Either determine the solution to the problem with the Hymnal Fund and/or the Website Fund, or terminate those two funds and place the current balances of the Hymnal Fund and the Website Fund in the General Fund.

OVERTURE # 1

Overture Change to C.O. Article 36

Classis Eastern US of the URCNA overtures Synod 2007 to make a clarification-change to Article 36 of the Church Order of the URCNA to add the underlined phrases and the underlined additional sentence to Art. 36 so that it reads:

“The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision must be ratified by a majority of the synodically approved Consistories in the Federation. However, if the federation is entering Phase 3 (merging) with another federation/denomination, such a decision must be ratified by three-fourths of the synodically approved Consistories in the Federation.”

Note: Synod 2004 used the word “eligible” rather than “synodically approved” Consistories; however, the above wording clearly indicates that ratification is approved only by the Consistories/churches approved by synod, thus excluding those that have been approved only by a particular classis.

This is a two-part overture to change C.O. Article 36:

1. The first change intends to stipulate that ratification in this article requires a majority vote among the total number of synodically-approved churches in the federation.
2. The second change would be an addition to institute a separate voting requirement for entering Phase 3 merger activities with another federation.

Part 1 Change to C.O. Article 36

Grounds:

1. In the Report of the convening Consistory of Bethel URC to Synod 2004, dated June 15, 2004, item 2, it was stated that advice was given to Stated Clerk Rev. Julien “on how to interpret the meaning of Article 36 of the Church Order regarding the ratification of entering a Phase 2 Ecumenical relationship with the Canadian Reformed Church.” This advice had to deal with the interpretation of this C.O. Article as to whether it meant a majority of “voting consistories” or a majority of the “total consistories” in the Federation. It was the Stated Clerk, with the advice of the convening consistory, that ruled that our decision with respect to entering Phase 2 Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Church had to be by a majority vote of the total Consistories.
2. At the Synod of Calgary 2004, the CERCU committee in its report to Synod requested the following in their Committee Recommendations, item 3: “That when Art.36 of the Church Order needs implementing in the establishing of an ecumenical relationship, synod declares that *ratified by a majority of the churches* is to be interpreted as meaning the majority of the churches that voted in the particular ratification process.” The committee was asking Synod 2004 to “determine the wording of Art. 36” to be different from what had previously been determined. Synod defeated this committee’s recommendation pointing back to the precedent that Art. 36 means “the majority of all the eligible consistories in the federation”.

3. In the future, the interpretation of C.O. Article 36 concerning such an important decision as entering “ecumenical relations with other federations” should not be questioned by committees, determined by precedent, or subject to synodical decisions but should be clearly stated in our Church Order. This modifying phrase mandates that the voice of all the consistories in the federation will be aggressively obtained in order to ratify these decisions. The 2005 vote by 79 of 81 consistories on the approval of entering into Phase 2 with the RCUS proved that this voting method can be prudently accomplished in a timely manner.

Part 2 Change to C.O. Article 36

Grounds

1. The ratification vote to enter Phase 3, merging two federations, is indeed a significant step of demonstrating unity in the life of a federation. It requires a significant agreement to a large number of doctrinal and operational issues in which each congregation of the new federation must participate. More than a simple majority of the churches should be required to ratify such a merger when true unity is the ultimate goal.
2. Voting on such things as changes to the church order according to Article 66 “... shall require a two thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the Consistories...”. Certainly such an important issue as federation mergers should require more than a simple majority since it will change much more than a church order.
3. In order to demonstrate the highest degree of unity within our federation, we should strive to be inclusive of as many of our churches as possible in a merger activity in order to avoid a fragmentation in the existing body. The requirement of a three-fourths ratification vote should guard against causing unnecessary disruption in our federation if there is a significant objection to the merger. With the proposed formula it would take 68 Consistories of a total of 90 to ratify a merger. A three fourths ratification demonstrates that there is much greater unity for merger than using the existing church order formula of a simple majority.

Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Clerk
Classis Eastern US

OVERTURE # 2

Overture Change to C.O. Article 66

Classis Eastern US of the URCNA overtures Synod 2007 to make a clarification-change to Article 66 of the Church Order of the URCNA by adding the underlined to the last sentence to Art. 66 so that it reads:

“If it be found that God may be more honored and the churches better served by changing any article, this shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the synodically approved Consistories of the Federation prior to the next synodical meeting, after which meeting they shall take effect”.

Background

This overture is a companion change to that being recommended by Classis Eastern US for C.O. Article 36 since the same situation can develop if voting results become very close in a two-thirds vote.

Grounds

In the future, the meaning of C.O. Article 66 concerning such an important decision as changing the Church Order should not be interpreted by the Stated Clerk, the convening consistory, or synod but should be clearly stated in our Church Order to avoid unnecessary problems.

Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Clerk
Classis Eastern US

OVERTURE # 3

Overture to Change the URCNA Guidelines for Ecumenical and Church Unity:

Classis Eastern US of the URCNA overtures Synod 2007 to make changes in the *Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity* which will define more specifically what the churches of our federation can expect to be accomplished in both Phase Two and Phase Three. Since a lack of definition has led to continuing confusion among our churches, these changes are needed for the churches within our federation and for those who are or will be in "fellowship" with us. This overture has two separate parts:

- A) Changes for Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship and
- B) Changes for Phase Three - Church Union

A. Changes for Phase Two:

Eliminate the following phrase from the definition of Phase Two:

" , and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity,"

Phase Two Background:

1. Synod Calgary 2004 had to make it clear that entering Phase Two with the RCUS would not be like entering Phase Two with the Canadian Reformed Church. Some confusion became apparent when twenty one of our churches voted against entering Phase Two with the RCUS. "Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship" should be the same with all Federations as defined in the *Guidelines for Ecumenicity*. It is very clear that the activities "a" through "f" will be started when both Federations approve the entering of Phase Two. Most churches understand that nothing else but these stated activities should be initiated according to the existing Guidelines.
2. At one of our Classis meetings in 2005, an RCUS delegated representative publicly acknowledged that the URCNA ecumenical Guidelines for Phase Two were problematic. The following sentence was cited: "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:" The delegate suggested that the underlined portion of the phrase above was a commitment that undermined the thrust of Phase Two. He publicly opined that this clause in our Guidelines made an undue emphasis on federative unity rather than concentrating on the defining part of Phase Two which says "this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus".

Grounds:

1. Phase Two has been cited by the CERCU committee as the basis of its mandate to advance quickly with activities which properly belong for Phase Three even though the churches have not approved entering Phase Three with any Federation. The second part of the committee's mandate states "The committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity." As long as the phrase in question remains in the *Guidelines* for Phase Two, the Committee and/or Synod will continue to engage in and "prepare for" Phase Three before the Consistories can weigh the merits and implications of such action.
2. The removal of the above phrase from the Guidelines will give the URC and other federations a chance to be in Ecclesiastical Fellowship without any binding vow of further commitment. It is at this stage of interaction that federations will have a chance to understand one another with the potential of advancing to Phase Three if the experiences of the involved churches warrant it. Phase Two may well be considered the fulfillment of

the biblical injunction to demonstrate unity in Christ since by it we “recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus....”

B. Changes for Phase Three:

Add the following after the second sentence in “Phase 3 - Church Union”:

Phase Three is a three-step process:

1. **Approving a Phase Three Feasibility Study/Plan of Union.** A proposal for a Feasibility Study must be presented to the URCNA Synod and be approved by the Consistories based on C.O. Article 36 before the study is started. The proposal to institute a feasibility study should include these activities:
 - a. Define the formation and mandates of appropriate committees;
 - b. Estimate the required funding to accomplish the study;
 - c. Propose a realistic time frame to accomplish the study task.

2. **A The Feasibility Study/Plan of Union.** This step accomplishes the task of defining the new federation in all its parts thus defining the character of the emerging federation. This includes, among other things, a suitable resolution of biblical and confessional differences and 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. **Approving the Merger.** The Consistories approve the merger as defined by the recommendations of the feasibility study/plan of union committee(s), and final approval will be accomplished according to C.O. Article 36.

Entering Step 1 and Completing Step 3 of this phase requires ratification by a majority three-quarters of the Consistories.

Phase Three Background:

Our churches have not yet voted to enter Phase Three with any federation. However, we have committees doing work such as revising our Church Order and forming a new hymnal with another federation. Before any of the activities cited for Phase Three are started, a vote should be taken by the Federation churches according to C.O. Article 36. This vote should be more than a simple majority, and it is equally important that a final vote is taken after the Federation churches understand all the implications of a full merger.

Grounds:

1. Our Federation's current quick movements into having four committees work on these Phase Three activities with the Canadian Reformed Church do not have full Federation support among the URCNA churches.
2. There has been no attempt among the churches to fund this activity properly, and support is lagging. The definition of Phase Three needs more detail so that the churches understand what needs to be done and participate more fully in it.
3. Unity among the URCNA churches must be maintained and must take priority over any ecumenical activities that are entered into on behalf of our churches.
4. Ecumenical and Church Unity activity is primarily the function of the local churches who may ask to have this furthered through the help of the entire Federation. C.O. Article 34 states: "Churches are encouraged to pursue relations with Reformed congregations outside the federation which manifest the marks of the true church...." It is clear that the initial contacts should start by the local churches, not the federation through a Synodical committee.
5. Our Synodical committees are forging ahead and fostering further ecumenical progress under the banner of unity before the churches have had a chance to initiate contacts at their level. This is a hierarchical approach to church unity that is not consistent with our Federations' approach to church government.

- C. **Attachment 1** is included to show the affects of the recommended changes in the *Guidelines*. A strikeout indicates which sections would be removed and the bold print indicates proposed additions to the Guidelines.

Allen Vander Pol, Clerk
Classis Eastern US-URCNA

GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH UNITY
United Reformed Churches in North America
(with Classis Eastern US Revisions, March 29, 2006)

Phase One - Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity 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 the two federations' history, theology, and 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 ecumenicity 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 with an advisory voice

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art.36.

Phase Three - Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity 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. **Phase Three is a three-step process:**

1. **Approving a Phase Three Feasibility Study/Plan of Union.** A proposal for a Feasibility Study must be presented to the URCNA Synod and be approved by the Consistories based on C.O. Article 36 before the study is started. The proposal to institute a feasibility study should include these activities:
 - a. Define the formation and mandates of appropriate committees;
 - b. Estimate the required funding to accomplish the study;
 - c. Propose a realistic time frame to accomplish the study task.

2. **The Feasibility Study/Plan of Union.** This step accomplishes the task of defining the new federation in all its parts thus defining the character of the emerging federation. This includes, among other things, a suitable resolution of biblical and confessional differences and 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. **Approving the Merger.** The Consistories approve the merger as defined by the recommendations of the feasibility study/plan of union committee(s), and final approval will be accomplished according to C.O. Article 36.

Entering **Step 1 and Completing Step 3** of this phase requires ratification by a ~~majority~~ **three-quarters** of the Consistories.

COMMITTEE MANDATE

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 synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda.

(Note from Classis Eastern US: A strikeout indicates the section to be removed and the **bold print** are those proposed additions to the Guidelines.)

OVERTURE # 4

Psalter Hymnal Mandate-Change Overture:

Classis Eastern US of the URCNA overtures Synod 2007 to make Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the original 1999 mandate of the Psalter Hymnal Committee it's restored mandate; this would direct the Committee to produce a new Psalter Hymnal (P.H.) exclusively for the URCNA independent of continuing ecumenical work being conducted among various churches.

The effect of the restored mandate is to allow the URCNA Psalter Hymnal committee to work separately from the ecumenical work being done by other URCNA committees. Since the URCNA has Phase 1 & 2 relationships with a variety of denominations, getting their approval etc. would negatively affect our P.H. Song Book Committee's progress if its work were subject to multiple, external, mandatory conditions. This does not preclude some consultation-only work that may be of benefit to the end product for the URCNA churches.

Funding would continue as already approved by URCNA Synod of 2001. Also, the non-musical sections of the new Psalter Hymnal would continue to be handled by a separate URCNA non-musical Psalter Hymnal committee as approved by URCNA Synod 2004.

Grounds:

1. Synod 1997 approved the Overture from Classis West to initiate the process of producing a Psalter Hymnal for the URCNA. The approved wording was: "That a committee be formed to explore what is required to produce, reproduce, or obtain a psalter hymnal." ACTS 1999 Page 33. At that time a motion to amend was defeated; the wording that was defeated read: "in consultation with churches who have indicated an interest in ecumenical relations with us." Thus the churches decided that this process was to be carried out by the URC churches for the URC churches. In the Psalter Hymnal Committee's reports and recommendations for Synods 1999 and 2001 there is no hint that this mandate has changed; suggestions to change the mandate appear only in the Recommendations and action under the ecumenical committee's CERCU report. In 1997 the original Overture 26, Ground 3 reasoned that "A common Psalter Hymnal would promote unity among the churches of our federation." The current direction which the song book committee is taking has never been clear to the churches nor is it being done with a view to unity among the churches of our federation. It could be argued that it might become more divisive with its changed mandate.
2. Consistories were not consulted when a significant change was made to the Psalter Hymnal Committee's mandate. The original committee mandate came from the churches but was changed at the recommendation of the Ecumenical committee and approved at the Synod 2001 Escondido to coordinate with the Canadian Reformed Church. The following was added to the original mandate (Acts of Synod 2001 Article 45 B. 3. Pg.24): "That the present 'Psalter Hymnal Committee' work together with the Canadian Reformed 'Book of Praise (B.O.P.) Committee' to consider for inclusion in this song book the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of

faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality.” Ground 2 of the present Overture expresses our concern that consistories were not consulted with this significant mandate change except through the votes of its delegates. It was not a clear agenda item for change but a conditional part of a seemingly unrelated Ecumenical Relations Committee’s (CERCU) Report to Synod. Neither the churches nor its synodical delegates had the time to consider the implications that this committee’s recommendation had on our prior-approved, URCNA Psalter Hymnal Committee’s, mandate. Neither standing Committees of Synod nor Synod should have the power to negate summarily a proposal that had originated with the churches, and had been approved by a Classis and Synod. This action should be foreign to our Federation that states as one of its biblically based Foundational Principles: “...Reformed church government is presbyterial, since the church is governed by elders, not by broader assemblies” (Principle #5).

3. There is no need to connect the creation/production of our new URCNA hymnal to a potential Phase 3 merger with the Canadian Reformed Church. There will be other federations with whom we may enter Phase 2/3 ecumenical relationships; these relationships cannot all determine how we produce our hymnbook. URCNA churches do not have their own hymnbook, but the Canadian Reformed Churches do have theirs. The production of a new Psalter Hymnal for the URCNA churches is now solely dependent upon a Phase 3 merger with the Canadian Reformed Church. If that entry into Phase 3 is delayed or not approved, the URCNA churches will continue to be without their own hymnal. Furthermore, in the definition of Phase Three - Church Unity, it says, “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: ...d. the song books for worship.” The production of a common song book is never mentioned under Phase 2, and is clearly indicated as an activity associated with the prior approval of Phase 3, as quoted above.
4. Our Classis senses a concern among the URC churches that the current combined hymnbook effort with the Canadian Reformed Church will neither satisfy the URCs nor the Canadian Reformed. The URCNA Synod 2004 requested that its churches familiarize themselves with the Book of Praise (B.O.P.). This request underscores the fact that the songs found in the B.O.P. are not what the URC membership expect to find in our new Psalter Hymnal. Furthermore, the advance requirement of the Canadian Reformed Synod is that the new hymnal must contain the B.O.P.’s 150 psalms in metric format. If the combined hymnal effort is not overwhelmingly supported by the URCNA churches, which it was not in 1997 (cited above), new and replacement hymnals will continue to be supplied by CRC Publications.
5. The URCNA’s need for a new Psalter Hymnal is urgent. There have been two reprintings of our old CRC Psalter Hymnal since our Federation was formed. However, we have not been able to make any changes to it to reflect who we are and how we identify our federation. CRC Publications will not provide us with other specialized hymnal options that are sorely needed such as loose-leaf copies for our organists/musicians and large print copies for the elderly.

Rev. Allen Vander Pol, Clerk
Classis Eastern US

OVERTURE # 5

An Overture On Justification

Background:

Because there appeared to be some unclear views and teachings concerning "justification by faith alone" circulating within the URCNA churches, Synod 2004 in Calgary made this brief but very important declaration:

"Synod affirms that the Scriptures and confessions (Heidelberg QIA 59-62; Belgic Confession articles 20-23) teach the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, based upon the active and passive obedience of Christ alone" (Acts of Synod 2004, Article 66, B, 1. p. 25).

Because there are still divergent views and unclear teachings concerning this most basic and important doctrine of "justification by faith alone", not only within our own United Reformed Churches of North America but also within the broader Reformed and Presbyterian church communities, we believe that it is imperative to more fully explain and define this doctrine so that our churches may be edified by clarity.

This report being proposed to our churches was produced by a special committee of the Reformed Church of the United States, and was adopted by their Synod in 2004. The URC Synod at Calgary (2004) adopted to move forward into Phase 2 ecumenical relations with this denomination (Acts of Synod 2004, Article 83, A. p. 33). As a result, the RCUS officially moved a step closer to the URCNA according to their ecumenical by-laws in 2006. As both the URCNA and RCUS now move along this ecumenical path together, it is important that we are in agreement over such basic beliefs as the doctrine of "justification by faith alone".

The RCUS report addresses in great detail the writings and teachings of Rev. Norman Shepherd; a retired minister in good standing in the Christian Reformed Church. While his name may be new to some, most who read this report will be well aware that Rev. Shepherd's writings began and continue to be at the heart of the current debate on justification that is disturbing the greater Reformed and Presbyterian communities, including our own United Reformed Churches of North America.

We recognize that the URCNA has no jurisdiction over Rev. Shepherd but his teachings can and should come under our analysis because they are having such an adverse affect among us. Rev. Shepherd continues to teach and write, and others now defend and propagate similar views in Reformed churches.

While Christ's Church does not need to address every error that comes down the road; neither may she remain silent until these errors take firm hold and upset the peace that the Lord has given her. The current controversy surrounding the doctrine of justification as taught by Norman Shepherd strikes at the heart of the Reformed Faith; and since Shepherd's influence has grown and the controversy surrounding his teaching shows no sign of abating, it is necessary to guard and defend the United Reformed churches from the errors that are associated with Shepherd's writings and teachings.

Again, we acknowledge that this paper is the work of our brothers in the RCUS but the analysis of the current controversy and the subsequent conclusions and resolutions contained in the document, are well supported, both Scripturally and confessionally. As the URC seeks closer relations with the RCUS, it is imperative that the two federations agree on all things essential.

We express our thanks to our brothers for giving us permission to work with their report, and we urge the URCNA to concur with the RCUS in this matter.

Overture

Classis Michigan overtures the 2007 URCNA Synod to adopt the REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY JUSTIFICATION IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT JUSTIFICATION CONTROVERSY presented to 258th Synod of the Reformed Church of the United States on May 10-13, 2004 as our own by adopting the following resolutions:**

Resolution 1: That we reaffirm the truth of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone, including the imputation of the active obedience of Christ as a necessary element in our righteousness before God, as it is expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, specifically in those passages highlighted in the RCUS report.

Resolution 2: That we find that Rev. Norman Shepherd for many years has taught a confused doctrine of justification, contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt as specified in the RCUS report.

Resolution 3: Therefore, we also resolve that the teachings of Norman Shepherd on justification by faith are another gospel.

Resolution 4: That the United Reformed Churches in North America recognize these Romish, Arminian, and Socinian errors for what they are and urge our brethren throughout the world to reject them and to refuse those who teach them.

Resolution 5: That the RCUS report, along with the supplementary material, be made available to the churches of the URCNA and to all denominations or federations in fraternal relations with us.

Resolution 6: That we express our thanks to the RCUS for their work on this matter and inform them of our agreement with them on our common confessional understanding of these matters.

**Note: Resolutions 1-5 accurately reflect the decisions and conclusions of the RCUS and have been modified only by changing RCUS to URC where necessary. Resolution 6 has been added as a matter of courtesy.

FOUNDATIONS

1. Synod Calgary (2004) made a clear statement about the "active obedience" of Christ (see "Background" above). This report on justification gives Scriptural and Confessional support for that statement.

2. The URC is seeking closer federative relations with the RCUS making it necessary that the two federations be in agreement on all things essential. The doctrine of justification is of the very essence of the Reformed Faith, therefore the URC and the RCUS cannot "Walk together unless they agree" on that doctrine (Amos 3:3).

3. Although prepared and adopted by a body outside of our federation, this document and its conclusions are biblically and confessionally correct and therefore we do not have to assign a committee of our own men to spend much time, money, and energy, only to arrive at the same conclusions. We can and may adopt this work as our own.

Signed: Rev. W. H. Oord, clerk of classis .

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO STUDY
JUSTIFICATION IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT
JUSTIFICATION CONTROVERSY[1]**

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NORMAN SHEPHERD'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

INTRODUCTION

In 1963 Norman Shepherd succeeded John Murray in the department of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). In 1975 controversy over Shepherd's teaching broke out both at the Seminary and in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), where Shepherd was serving as a pastor.^[2] O. Palmer Robertson notes the circumstances in which the controversy first began: "The 'justification issue' came to the attention of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary in 1975, when certain students were reported to have set forth a position that justification was by faith and works when being examined by various church bodies."^[3] This subsequently led to a seven year investigation into the teaching of Norman Shepherd, which eventually resulted in him being dismissed from his teaching post at Westminster as of January 1, 1982.^[4] In May 1982 charges were filed against Shepherd and presented before the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC, but Mr. Shepherd was transferred out of the Philadelphia Presbytery before charges filed against him could be heard. He was received into the Christian Reformed denomination "without notation that charges had been filed against him."^[5] He served pastorates in the CRC in Minnesota and Illinois before retiring in 1998.^[6]

Though our purpose is not to rehash all the historical details of the original controversy, it is worth noting that the Faculty at Westminster did not find it easy to resolve the controversy. According to Robertson's history of the controversy, the Faculty found it difficult "to determine whether actual error was being taught in Mr. Shepherd's formulations, or whether Mr. Shepherd's modes of expression simply were misleading because of their lack of clarity."^[7] It should also be mentioned that all during the controversy, Shepherd had both supporters and opponents.^[8]

His supporters think he was treated unfairly and should never have been questioned for his views on justification, let alone removed from the Faculty. His opponents think his supporters in both the Presbytery and the Seminary managed to short circuit the proceedings in both Presbytery and Seminary, which allowed him and his false teaching to escape clear condemnation.^[9]

Eighteen years after Shepherd's dismissal from Westminster Seminary, and with the publication of Shepherd's book titled *The Call of Grace*, subtitled *How the Covenant Illuminates Salvation and Evangelism*,^[10] the old debate concerning Shepherd's view on justification has resurfaced, and has created quite a stir in Reformed circles: "this study is highly controversial, not only in the seminary community in which Shepherd ministered for many years, but in the wider arena of contemporary evangelical and Reformed theology."^[11]

Though Shepherd's teaching on a number of related theological issues was called into question, the key point of debate was whether he held to the Reformation's doctrine of justification by faith alone, as expressed in the Westminster Standards, or had he, in one way or another, lapsed into teaching that justification was by faith and works together.^[12]

We will first look at Shepherd's views as the Westminster Faculty perceived them, and which eventually formed a part of the Faculty's own explanation for dismissing Shepherd. Next, we will see that Shepherd's teaching on justification expressed in *The Call of Grace* does not differ essentially from his teaching that resulted in his dismissal from Westminster in 1982. Then we will examine a recent article on justification that Shepherd wrote for the journal *Reformation and Revival*.^[13] Finally, we will consider an advancement of his position in two lectures that he gave on August 8-9, 2003, at a conference entitled "Contemporary Perspectives on Covenant Theology," sponsored by the Southern California Center for Christian Studies. This essay will soon reveal that Shepherd's doctrine of justification is contrary not only to classic reformed theology but also to the biblical gospel of *sola fide*.

I. Westminster Seminary's Perception of Shepherd's Teaching

A. The Early Stages of the Controversy

From the very beginning of the controversy, the Faculty at Westminster had to deal with Shepherd's idea that faith and works work together as an instrument of justification. According to the Seminary Board, "Shepherd questioned making justification by faith alone a touchstone of orthodoxy, since, as he argued, what can be said of faith can also be said of good works; neither can be the ground of justification, both can be instrument."^[14] Because this idea directly challenged the Westminster Confession of Faith's statement that "Faith is the alone instrument of justification," (11.2) the Faculty requested Shepherd to prepare a paper explaining his view of "faith alone" as expressed in the Westminster Standards. Shepherd's fifty-three page paper, dated October 1976, was titled "The Relation of Good Works to Justification in the Westminster Standards."^[15]

After reviewing Shepherd's paper, the Faculty, in its report to the February 10, 1977 meeting of the Board, singled out expressions that they found troubling. For example, "faith coupled with obedience to Christ is what is called for in order to salvation and therefore in order to justification. Thus, faith and new obedience are in order to justification and salvation."^[16] A fuller report to the faculty was made to the Board meeting of May 17, 1977.

The Faculty report specified four areas where modifications of the language and formulations of Mr. Shepherd were to be desired. These concerned his broad use of the term justification, his language of requirement for good works in relation to justification, his reluctance to make faith prior to justification even in a logical sense; and his strategy of explaining the "alone" function of faith as separating it from meritorious works rather than from other graces.^[17]

Although six members of the Faculty "believed that these criticisms were not severe enough," and "held Mr. Shepherd's views to be erroneous,"^[18] a majority of the Faculty concluded that although Mr. Shepherd's "structure of argumentation seems bound to create misunderstanding," his formulations fell within the toleration limits of the Westminster Standards (April 25, 1978, Report to the Board).^[19] For those of us on the outside looking in, we can sympathize with Robertson's observation that the implications of this conclusion are rather striking. Mr. Shepherd's formulations on the central doctrine of justification almost certainly will mislead the church into thinking that somehow works were the way of justification. Yet these formulations were not out of accord with the *Westminster Confession*.^[20]

B. Philip Hughes' Dissent

A dissent from the Faculty's majority decision was registered in writing by Philip E. Hughes, visiting Professor of New Testament at the Seminary, who began his dissent by expressing amazement that he actually found himself in disagreement with the Faculty of Westminster over the fundamental doctrine of justification.^[21] The value of Hughes' dissent is that, even though first written in the late 70's, it remains today an up-to-date critique of Shepherd's teaching on justification.

Hughes expressed concerns, which to him crystallized the issue facing the Seminary. Hughes' major concern was that the Faculty in its report on Shepherd spoke approvingly of the necessity of good works for salvation. No one denies that the root of faith produces good works, and that without personal subjective holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). "But the attempt is being made to connect these good works with faith in such a way that though defined as non-meritorious they are regarded as necessary to our future (or final or eschatological) justification: no good works, no Heaven!"^[22] Endorsement is given to the idea that justification is "a process in three stages: initial ('this initial entry into God's favor'), continuing ('the continued enjoyment of God's favor'), and consummating ('the consummation of God's favor at the Judgment')."^[23] The problem with this idea is that it "has the effect of calling in question the perfection and the once-for-all character of the initial, and I would insist, the *only* justification of the sinner who puts his trust in Christ and to whom the perfect righteousness of Christ is fully and indefectibly imputed."^[24] It also "implies that the sinner's justification is in some real sense dependent on what he does, on the nature of his works, following his 'initial' justification."^[25]

In response to the Faculty's concern that faith not be isolated from good works, Hughes remarks with emphasis, "*Where justification is concerned* (and this is the essential qualification) I do indeed isolate faith from good works and I do indeed regard good works as intrinsically in competition with the unique role of faith. I deprecate the extension of justification into the sphere of sanctification, for it is precisely this procedure that leads to the notion that the good works of the Christian have a necessary part to play in his justification. This is the whole point of the Biblical and Reformed emphasis on *faith alone* where our justification is concerned; for justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) means justification by faith in isolation, and particularly in isolation from works."^[26]

How can Shepherd argue that works are necessary for our justification when Paul clearly says "a man is not justified by the works of the law"? Hughes makes reference to Shepherd's contention that the "works of the law" that Paul excludes from justification are "something quite different from the works of the Christian." The works of the law "are the works of the unbeliever futilely trying to justify himself by works-righteousness," but the works of a Christian are "works that are pleasing and acceptable to God."^[27] Therefore, according to Shepherd, it is only legalistic works, not genuine good works, that are excluded from justification.

One of the most popular texts adduced in support of the contention that the good works of Christians are not excluded from justification is Romans 2:13, where Paul says, "the doers of the law will be justified." Hughes objects by arguing that "this text is not speaking of the works of the Christian, indeed, that it has nothing to do with justification by faith, or with faith that works and is active."^[28] This is proven from the fact that after Paul asserts that only the doers of the law will be justified, he "moves on to demonstrate the universality of human sinfulness, insisting that there is absolutely no one at all who does good, and therefore that all without exception are in need of divine grace and of the justification which comes by faith apart from works" [cf. Romans 3:9-12, 20, 23].^[29] Yes, the doers of the law will be justified, but the facts are that no one is good (Romans 3:9-12), and therefore "no human being will be justified in his sight by the works of the law" (Romans 3:20).

The phrase “the doers of the law will be justified,” according to Hughes, plainly indicates the Old Testament principle that “law is a principle of justification to the person who keeps it.” Hence the affirmations of the Old Testament that it is by the doing of the law that a man shall live (Leviticus 18:5; Nehemiah 9:29; Ezekiel 20:11,13).^[30] The same emphasis is evident in the New Testament. For example, in response to the lawyer's question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus first said, “What is written in the law?” Then He said, “Do this, and you will live” (Luke 10:25ff.). Likewise, Jesus told the rich young ruler, “If you would enter life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:16ff.). This is the principle to which Paul draws attention in Romans 10:5, where we read that “the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it.” So again, Paul asserts that “the law does not rest on faith, for He who does them shall live by them” (Galatians 3:12, quoting Leviticus 18:5). However, because of his sinfulness, Paul found that “the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me” (Romans 7:10). “But the fault is not the law; it is the sinner who is a law-breaker.”^[31]

Because they are law-breakers, sinners can never be justified by the law; they can only be condemned by it. A different principle of justification is needed if the sinner is to live before God. “Consequently, the Gospel principle for sinners is that they may live and be just before God only by faith-union with Christ, with whom alone as the sole law-keeper, God is well pleased.”^[32]

Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law on the sinner's behalf, and suffered the penalty of our law breaking. Accordingly, “As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). “As the sole 'doer of the law' the incarnate Son alone is just before God, and in him alone is the sinner's justification” (1 Corinthians 1:30).^[33]

Hughes continues, “Finally, I wish to maintain that the evangelical doctrine that ‘a man is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ’ applies not only to works done prior to regeneration but also to works done after regeneration. My argument is based on the Biblical teaching that the good works of the Christian believer are still works of the law. The promise of the new covenant includes the assurance: ‘I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts’ (Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Ezekiel 11:19ff.).”^[34]

It follows that the good works of the believer are the same as the good works enjoined by the law. But they are the good works of his sanctification, not of his justification. To speak of a necessity of these good works for our salvation “is to assign to them that very justifying status as works of the law which Paul has repudiated.”^[35]

In response to Hughes' concerns, Westminster Faculty member Dr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. defended Shepherd on the ground that Shepherd was simply trying to stress the Reformation emphasis that though faith alone justifies, the faith that justifies is never alone but is always accompanied by all other saving graces.^[36]

C. Charges filed against Shepherd

On May 27, 1977, charges were formally filed against Shepherd in the Philadelphia Presbytery of the OPC. Subsequent to the charges being made, Shepherd submitted to the Presbytery his “Thirty-Four Theses on Justification in Relation to Faith, Repentance, and Good Works.”^[37] As an alternative to

receiving the charges against Shepherd, the Presbytery chose to deliberate the *Thirty-Four Theses*. The most contested of these theses, according to Robertson, were the following:

“The Pauline affirmation in Romans 2:13, ‘The doers of the Law will be justified,’ is to be understood in the sense that faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ will be justified” (Thesis 20).^[38]

“The exclusive ground of the justification of the believer in the state of justification is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but his obedience is necessary to his continuing in a state of justification” (Thesis 21).

“The righteousness of Jesus Christ ever remains the exclusive ground of the believer's justification, but the personal godliness of the believer is also necessary for his justification in the judgment of the last day” (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Hebrews 12:14) (Thesis 22).

“[G]ood works though not the ground of [the believer's] justification, are nevertheless necessary for justification” (Thesis 23).^[39]

The Presbytery, after a year's deliberation, was evenly divided. It could not decide whether these formulations were in accord with Scripture and the *Confession*.^[40]

After the May 23, 1978 Board meeting, Shepherd was given a leave of absence in order to revise his position and then report back to the Board. On February 8, 1979, the Board received Shepherd's paper, “The Grace of Justification,”^[41] and discussed it, along with Shepherd's “Thirty-four Theses,” which currently was being evaluated by the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the OPC.

The Faculty concluded that Mr. Shepherd still held essentially to the substance of his formulations as developed in the October 1976 paper. The modification of certain phrases as requested by the Board had not changed the substance of his position. Good works were necessary as the way of justification, and not simply as its fruit. Walking in the way of justification was necessary to maintain justification. The sinner seeking justification might just as well be told to follow Jesus as to believe in Jesus.^[42]

D. Westminster Seminary's Reason for Dismissing Shepherd

To make a long story shorter, Westminster Seminary eventually dismissed Dr. Norman Shepherd. In order to defend its action in dismissing Shepherd, the Seminary Board wrote an eighteen page paper for the public titled “Reason and Specifications Supporting the Action of the Board of Trustees in Removing Professor Shepherd,” approved by the Executive Committee of the Board, February 26, 1982 (see again footnote 13). The first part of the paper reviews the history of the controversy (some parts of which have already been referenced in this essay), and the second part summarizes the theological reasons for the removal of Shepherd. According to its own testimony, “the Board did not remove Mr. Shepherd on the ground of demonstrated errors in his teaching,” but rather “because it has become convinced that Mr. Shepherd's teaching regarding justification, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, and related themes is not clearly in accord with the teaching of Scripture as it is summarized in the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Standards.”^[43] While the Board acknowledged that a comparison between Shepherd and the Westminster Standards on justification evinces significant doctrinal differences, they were not willing to charge Shepherd with doctrinal error. “While the Board has not judged that his views are in error, the Board has come to the conviction that his views are not clearly in accord with the

standards of the Seminary; for this reason it has acted within its authority to remove him from his office for the best interests of the Seminary.”^[44]

The Board's reasons for Shepherd's removal are contained in the section, “Problematics in Mr. Shepherd's Views.”^[45] The problems in Shepherd's teaching, according to the Board, are inherent in his view of the “covenant dynamic.” Although Mr. Shepherd appeals to the history of Reformed covenantal theology to support his position, the Board finds that Mr. Shepherd's construction is distinctive. It is in the distinctive elements and emphases of his theology of the covenant that the problem appears.^[46]

First of all, “In his 'covenant dynamic' Mr. Shepherd develops a formula that permits him to join good works to faith as the characteristic and qualifying response to grace. Obedience is the proper, full, and comprehensive term for all covenantal response, and specifically for our response in the covenant of grace.”^[47] In fact, “faith is itself a work, an act of obedience within the total response of obedience.”^[48] While Shepherd “is willing to affirm that good works are the *fruit* of faith, he prefers the language of accompaniment or of a 'working faith.' Both faith and good works are alike fruits of the Spirit, and are not to be thought of in sequence.”^[49]

According to Shepherd, the works to be distinguished from faith in the Pauline passages are not good works, but works of the flesh, works that are done to provide a meritorious ground of justification. Since faith, repentance, and good works are intertwined as covenantal response, and since good works are necessary to justification, the *ordo salutis* would better be: regeneration, faith/repentance/new obedience, justification.^[50]

The problem with Shepherd at this point is that the “confessional emphasis on faith as the alone instrument of justification is muted in the 'covenant dynamic' accent. The Westminster Standards emphasize faith alone, not merely in contrast to self-righteous works but in contrast to all that we might do.”^[51]

Secondly, Shepherd's “covenant dynamic” makes the function of our obedience in the covenant to be the same as the function of the obedience of Adam in the covenant before the fall. Adam's covenantal obedience in the garden did not merit any reward; neither does our covenantal obedience. But both are required by the covenant command. The threat for disobedience is eternal death. This threat is as real for us as it was for Adam in the garden. The warning of the New Covenant must not be blunted or made hypothetical in any way. God's threat to Adam or to Israel was not idle, and the same sanction of the covenant is directed against us in the New Covenant.^[52]

To be sure, says Shepherd, we have resources that Adam did not have. “We have forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ; we have the Spirit to move us to obey; but we also have the same covenant condition to meet, and the same threat for disobedience.”^[53] Shepherd insisted that the threat of eternal death applies to believers, and he “urged before the Board that just as Adam's posterity would not be 'off the hook' if Adam had obeyed, but would be bound to fulfill the condition of obedience, so the posterity of Christ are not 'off the hook'.”^[54]

The problem with Shepherd here “lies in failing to do justice to the history of redemption, to the distinctiveness of God's administration with Adam and to the distinctiveness of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ.”^[55] Shepherd fails to recognize, as has always been recognized in reformed theology, that if Adam had obeyed, his posterity would *not* have been in the same probationary position as Adam.

“Parallel to the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin runs the assumption of the imputation of Adam's righteousness to his descendants had he obediently fulfilled his probation (WCF VII:2).”^[56]

Furthermore, Shepherd omits any clear treatment of the teaching of the Westminster Confession that Christ, as the Second Adam, was our covenant keeper. “As the Westminster Standards teach, the covenant of grace is made with Christ and with the elect in him. He is the only Mediator of the New Covenant. He has borne the judgment, the wrath due to us, not simply as sinners, but as covenant-breakers.”^[57] “Christ's active obedience has fulfilled all righteousness for us.”^[58]

Shepherd's omission of any clear treatment of Christ as the covenant Head, of his active obedience, of the imputation of his righteousness in the fulfillment of the covenant command, of his probation in our place (this in a treatment of the covenant that professes to be distinctly Reformed, after years of discussion) evidences a lack of clarity that cannot but cause concern.^[59]

Shepherd has met such criticism in a way that adds to the confusion. He assumes that those who criticize his view are falling away into antinomianism; that to emphasize that Christ has fulfilled the covenant for us is to take us “off the hook.” Yet this is precisely the issue that the Westminster Standards so carefully define. They do it by showing how the law, revealing God's will and righteousness, remains the norm for our obedience even though believers are delivered from it as a covenant of works “so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned” (LC Q.97).^[60]

The Westminster teaches that the threats of the law are of use to the regenerate not as a threat of eternal death but rather “to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law” (WCF XIX:6).^[61] The special use of the law is to show believers “how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead, and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience” (LC Q.97).^[62]

Shepherd rejects the Westminster Confession's sharp contrast between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. According to the Westminster, the “covenant of works was conditioned upon perfect, personal obedience. The covenant of grace provides the obedience of Jesus Christ and therefore does not have our obedience as its *condition* but requires only faith in Christ to meet the demand of God's righteousness.”^[63] Shepherd does away with this distinction and makes faithful obedience the all-embracing condition of all covenants. The danger of Shepherd's uniform concept of covenant faithfulness “is that both the distinctiveness of the covenant of grace and of the new covenant fullness of the covenant of grace will be lost from view and that obedience as the way of salvation will swallow up the distinct and primary function of faith.”^[64]

Shepherd argues that making covenant obedience the central category for our response to God can be done without danger since this obedience is not meritorious and therefore cannot become the ground of our salvation. But the very simplicity of this solution creates its danger. There is a vast and crucial difference between fleeing to Christ for salvation and serving God acceptably in new obedience. Close as the relation must be between faith and works, *the distinction is central to the gospel* [emphasis mine].^[65]

II. The Call of Grace.

We come now to Shepherd's book *The Call of Grace*.^[66] In this book, Shepherd reiterates the same brand of covenant theology, which the Westminster Faculty in 1982 considered to be non-reformed and at the root of Shepherd's problematic teaching on justification. Since a full discussion of this book is beyond the scope of this essay we will restrict ourselves primarily to an examination of those parts of the book that bear directly on the relation of justification and good works. Our brief examination will demonstrate that Shepherd's covenant theology continues to permit him to view the good works of Christians as necessary for justification.

At the very outset of his book, Shepherd is unashamedly open about his belief that his brand of covenant theology is the solution to “the problem of faith and works,” or the problem of how to relate faith and works, a problem which Shepherd claims is one of the “unresolved questions” of the Protestant Reformation.^[67] In Shepherd's words, “We are profoundly grateful for the progress that was made by the Reformation. We were led into a more biblical understanding of the way of salvation. Nonetheless, unresolved issues remain.”^[68] The unresolved question, as Shepherd sees it, is that if you say as the reformers did that a person is saved by faith alone apart from works, then how can you say that “without suggesting that it makes no difference what your lifestyle is like? In other words, how do you preach grace without being antinomian? On the other hand, how do you preach *repentance* without calling into question salvation by grace apart from works? How do you insist on obedience without being legalistic?”^[69]

Remarkably, Shepherd claims that this question was not answered satisfactorily by the reformation, yet nowhere in his book does he interact with the reformation's most notable solution to “the problem of faith and works,” namely, the Heidelberg Catechism's paradigm of sin, salvation, and service. According to the Catechism, we are justified, redeemed, and saved through faith alone, apart from our works; and this doctrine does not make men antinomian, because the indwelling Holy Spirit guarantees that those implanted into Christ by true faith will bring forth fruits of thankfulness (see Question 64). In other words, true faith will invariably produce good works. Shepherd does not like to speak of good works as the inevitable fruit or evidence of faith, because in his mind this is tantamount to suggesting that good works are optional.

Shepherd writes, “When the call to faith is isolated from the call to obedience, as it frequently is, the effect is to make good works a supplement to salvation or *simply the evidence of salvation*. Some would even make them an optional supplement. According to the Great Commission, however, they belong to the *essence* of salvation, which is freedom from sin and not simply freedom from eternal condemnation as the consequence of sin” [emphasis mine].^[70]

Note again, according to Shepherd, to say that obedience is simply the evidence of salvation is to isolate the call to faith from the call to obedience, and thereby to slip into antinomianism. For this reason Shepherd refuses to say that a man is justified by faith alone *apart* from obedience. To do so, in his mind, is to *cut off* obedience from faith and make obedience optional for the Christian.

Shepherd's solution for antinomianism is to posit, as he always has, that faith and obedience in the covenant are *not* to be thought of in sequence, first faith for justification and then obedience for gratitude (*a la* Ursinus). Rather, faith and obedience are intertwined and thus both are a condition of obtaining justification, salvation, and eternal life. In classic covenant theology, faith and obedience do not function in the covenant of grace as conditions in the same sense or of the same thing. Faith is the *sole* condition of justification and eternal life. Obedience is a condition only in the sense that it is a *duty* of the covenant. It is necessary only in the sense that it is a necessary *fruit* of justification.

As Francis Turretin once elaborated, we must “bear in mind the different senses of a condition.” It may be taken either broadly and improperly or strictly and properly. If it is taken in the latter sense, faith is the sole condition of the covenant because under this condition alone pardon of sins and salvation as well as eternal life are promised (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:9). There is no other which could perform that office because there is no other which is receptive of Christ and capable of applying his righteousness. But if it is taken in the former sense, there is nothing to hinder repentance and the obedience of the new life from being called a condition because they are reckoned among the duties of the covenant (Jn. 13:17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:13).^[71]

Contrary to this, Shepherd does not distinguish different senses of a condition. For him faith and obedience function as conditions in the same way in that they both are equally necessary to obtain justification and eternal life.

Shepherd conceives of faith and obedience as equally necessary for justification because he sees no essential difference between faith and obedience.^[72] To believe is to obey. As proof, Shepherd cites 1 John 2:23: “And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.” See, says Shepherd, “Even faith itself is a matter of obedience to the command of our Lord.”^[73] Obedience “is the fullness of faith. Obedience is simply faithfulness to the Lord; it is the righteousness of faith.”^[74] Therefore, to tell sinners, “*Believe* in Jesus, and you will be saved,” is essentially the same as telling them, “*Obey* Jesus and you will be saved.” This aspect of Shepherd's teaching was recognized eighteen years earlier by the Westminster faculty, as we noted in the first section of our essay: “The sinner seeking justification might just as well be told to follow Jesus as to believe in Jesus” (see again footnote 41).

It is in connection with his treatment of the Abrahamic covenant that Shepherd outlines his teaching that faith and obedience have the same necessity as a condition for entering into eternal life. According to Shepherd's own emphasis, the “*faith that was credited to Abraham as righteousness was a living and obedient faith.*”^[75] By making this statement, Shepherd does not simply mean, what the reformers often said, that justification is by a faith that produces obedience (and a faith that fails to produce obedience is not true faith). What Shepherd wants to say is that Abraham's faith itself was active and living obedience to the Lord; therefore, it is erroneous to say that Abraham was justified apart from his obedience. As a proof text for his view, Shepherd cites James 2:21, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?” and James 2:24, “You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only.”

Traditionally, whenever commentators quote these statements of James in connection with a discussion on justification, they see the need to reconcile James with Paul's statement that Abraham was not justified by works (Romans 4:2). How can James say that Abraham was justified by works when Paul says that Abraham was *not* justified by works? The classic reformed answer to this question is that James did not

speak of justification in the same way as Paul did. Just as words often have more than one meaning in different contexts, so it is with the word “justification.” “To justify” can mean either “to declare righteous,” or “to demonstrate righteousness.” No one stated the classic view better than Calvin did: “If you would make James agree with the rest of Scripture and with himself, you must understand the word 'justify' in another sense than Paul takes it.”^[76] We “must take notice of the twofold meaning of the word *justified*. Paul means by it the gratuitous imputation of righteousness before the tribunal of God; and James, the manifestation of righteousness by the conduct, and that before men, as we may gather from the preceding words, 'Show to me thy faith,' &c.”^[77] “When Paul says that we are justified by faith, he means no other thing than that by faith we are counted righteous before God. But James has quite another thing in view, even to show that he who professes that he has faith, must prove the reality of his faith by his works.”^[78]

In contrast to Calvin, Shepherd (who doesn't even mention the traditional reconciliation between Paul and James) believes James speaks of justification in the same way that Paul does, and that on this account full credence must be given to James when he says that a man is justified by works. Shepherd counts James 2:24 among “passages of Scripture that speak of repentance and obedience as conditions for entering eternal life,”^[79] and argues that previous attempts to make such passages fit into a paradigm of salvation by grace are dubious. “Various exegetical and dogmatic devices of dubious validity are used to defuse and tame these texts [i.e. Galatians 5:6 and James 2:24] so that they do fit.”^[80] It is on the basis of his interpretation of James that Shepherd is unwilling to affirm the historic Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from obedience. For Shepherd, if obedience is of the essence of faith, and we are justified by faith, then our obedience cannot be excluded from the verdict of justification.

Shepherd believes that the Mosaic covenant, just like the Abrahamic covenant, subsumes faithfulness under faith. He writes, “The Mosaic covenant embodies promises, and promises can be received only by faith. For Israel, the promises came wrapped in the garments of the Mosaic law. That is why faith in these promises also entailed faithfulness with respect to the commandments. Obedience is simply an expression of faith in the promises of God, not an alternative to faith.”^[81]

Note carefully what Shepherd does here. He says that the promises can be received only by faith, but then he says that the faith that receives the promises also entails faithfulness. And by saying that obedience is an expression of, and not an alternative to, faith he means that faith and obedience are not alternative methods of obtaining eternal life. Rather, faith and obedience together constitute the same method.

Just like the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, the new covenant follows the same paradigm of promising eternal life on the condition of faithfulness. For Shepherd, salvation or eternal life or justification is *not*, as evangelicals have always thought, obtained and secured once and for all the moment a sinner truly believes, but only after a lifetime of faithfulness. Nowhere does Shepherd say that a sinner is justified and saved once and for all the instant he believes in Jesus. Whenever Shepherd speaks of salvation or eternal life or justification he speaks solely in eschatological terms as that which awaits the believer at the end of his journey. The gospel “promises eternal life *after* the final judgment” [emphasis mine].^[82] The gospel promises eternal life only to those who persevere in the faith.^[83] A person does not possess eternal life until he has lived a faithful life. Obedience is not a response of gratitude to a salvation already obtained by faith alone apart from obedience, but obedience itself is a necessary condition for salvation. The only way of obtaining eternal life, salvation, and justification, is “by way of a living, active, and obedient faith.”^[84] In the end, it matters little whether Shepherd views the verdict of justification as being pronounced once at a certain point in time, or often throughout the course of life, or only at the end of history. In any case

his antidote for antinomianism is to make a penitent and obedient faith the method of obtaining justification/salvation/eternal life.

The assertion that a man is justified by obedience clearly smacks of legalism and Roman Catholicism. In order to avoid the charge of legalism, Shepherd reassures us that he does not, as Rome does, view good works as the meritorious grounds of justification. In other words, good works do not merit eternal life.^[85] We are not saved *because of* our faith and good works. “Fulfilling the obligations of the Abrahamic covenant is never represented as meritorious achievement.”^[86] The inheritance of eternal life “does not come because of human achievement or merit.”^[87] We do not “obtain forgiveness on the basis of something we have done.”^[88] Rather, eternal life is ultimately obtained “only because of the redemptive work of the Messiah.”^[89] OT saints “could be saved, but ultimately only because of the Christ to come.”^[90]

Shepherd maintains the biblical distinction between the grounds of justification being the redemptive work of Christ and the means of justification being faith. What he adds, however, is the notion that obedience, being intertwined with faith, can also be part of the means of obtaining eternal life: “eternal life is a free gift, unearned and unmerited, but it must be received by a penitent and obedient faith.”^[91] Repentance and obedience, just like faith, are the necessary conditions of our acceptance with God, “but they are not the meritorious grounds of our acceptance with God.”^[92] What harm can there be, Shepherd asks, in making our good works, just like our faith, a non-meritorious means of justification? This question takes us back to the very beginning of the controversy, back to the original concern of the Westminster faculty, which is worth noting again: “Shepherd questioned making justification by faith alone a touchstone of orthodoxy, since, as he argued, what can be said of faith can also be said of good works; neither can be the ground of justification, both can be instrument” (see again footnote 13).

But what about all those passages like Romans 3:28 and Galatians 5:4 that clearly exclude works not only as grounds but also as the means of justification? Shepherd's familiar answer is that the works excluded from justification are not good works but legalistic works or works done to provide a meritorious ground of justification.

When God, therefore, calls for faith that is living and active, and for a blameless walk through life, he is not asking for what Abraham tried to accomplish with Hagar and Ishmael. The obedience that leads to the fulfillment of promise is totally different. It is the expression of faith and trust in the Lord, not the expression of confidence in human merit.^[93] “The obedience required of Israel is not the obedience of merit, but the obedience of faith.”^[94] Paul's statement in Galatians 5:4, “you who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ,” is directed against the person who “seeks to achieve his own salvation by what he does.”^[95]

Therefore, according to Shepherd, Rome's error is *not* the inclusion of good works in justification but rather it is in thinking that there is merit in works. It is only when men try to merit eternal life by their works that their works are excluded as a means of justification. But works done non-meritoriously as an expression of faith are not excluded as a means of justification. This is how Shepherd reconciles Paul and James on justification. *The difference between Paul and James is not how they use justification but how they understand works.* When Paul *excludes* works from justification he is excluding meritorious works. When James *includes* works in justification he is including non-meritorious works, that is, works done as an expression of faith and not in an effort to earn God's favor.

It is particularly Shepherd's rejection of the traditional reformed doctrine of the covenant of works that permits him to make obedience a means of justification.^[96] Shepherd does not believe that the relationship into which God entered with Adam should be described as a covenant of works.^[97] He specifically takes issue with Charles Hodge as a representative of the traditional reformed view.

Hodge says that Scripture knows only two methods of obtaining eternal life. One method demands perfect obedience and the other method demands faith. The original covenant with Adam is sometimes called a covenant of life because eternal life is promised as the reward for perfect obedience. It is frequently called a covenant of works because works are the condition on which the promise of life is suspended. Whether it is called a covenant of life or a covenant of works, the idea is the same. Life is promised on the condition of works. The new covenant, by way of contrast, promises life on the sole condition of faith. Eternal life is the gift of grace.^[98]

This quote provides the context in which to understand the exact nuance of Shepherd's statement, quoted earlier in connection with his treatment of the Mosaic covenant, that obedience is “not an alternative to faith.” Shepherd rejects the idea that perfect obedience and faith represent two alternatives or methods of obtaining eternal life. He believes that there always has been only one way of obtaining eternal life, namely, by means of a living and active and obedient faith.

What Shepherd particularly dislikes about the doctrine of the covenant of works is the reformed principle that Adam had to obey God perfectly in order to inherit or merit eternal life. He calls this principle, the “works/merit” principle.

The basic principle embodied in this conception of the covenant of works can be called the “works/merit” principle. In the covenant of works, God is a just judge, and his creatures will be dealt with in accordance with strict principles of justice. It is a matter of simple justice to reward perfect obedience with eternal life. At the same time, the slightest infraction of the rules will forfeit eternal life.^[99]

Though this formulation of the covenant of works is somewhat of a caricature,^[100] Shepherd's disapproval is clear enough. He disapproves of “the idea that perfect obedience merits the reward of eternal life as a matter of simple justice.”^[101] God “*never* did, relate to his people on the basis of a works/merit principle” [emphasis mine].^[102] In fact, “the very idea of merit is foreign to the way in which God our Father relates to his children.”^[103]

If it is true that God *never* has required perfect obedience as a condition of eternal life, then the reformers were incorrect to insist that the only obedience acceptable to God, if offered as a condition of justification, must be perfect obedience.^[104] Shepherd disagrees with the following summation of the reformed view, provided by his own pen. “Although the period of probation ended with Adam, the works/merit principle remains in force. If a person could present himself before God as free from sin, he would not be condemned. He would merit the reward of eternal life. However, no one will inherit eternal life in this way, because no one can present himself before the Lord as free from sin.”^[105]

Since the works/merit principle has never been in force, argues Shepherd, it was wrong for the reformers to insist that it remains in force after the fall. Whether before or after the fall, according to Shepherd, eternal life does not need to be merited by perfect obedience.

Shepherd especially takes issue with the reformed idea that the works/merit principle plays a key role in the Mosaic covenant. Once again, Shepherd provides a summary of the view he disagrees with: the law serves the purposes of grace by revealing the depth of our sin and misery as we compare our lives to its perfect standard. It thereby shows the impossibility of finding eternal life by way of perfect obedience. In this way, the law (and more broadly, the Mosaic covenant) drives us to Christ so that we can find salvation as a free gift of grace.^[106]

Clearly, Shepherd denies the reformed view that the way in which the Mosaic covenant drives us to Christ is by showing *both* the *necessity*, and *impossibility*, of obtaining eternal life by means of perfect obedience. According to reformed theology,^[107] the Mosaic covenant reminded Israel of the original condition of the covenant of works, namely, that God bound Adam's posterity to perfect obedience as a condition of eternal life; therefore, in order to obtain eternal life, man must satisfy this condition, either by himself or by another.

However, in Shepherd's covenant theology, Christ as the last Adam did not have to do what the first Adam failed to do. Christ did not have to merit eternal life for us by His perfect obedience, for perfect obedience never has been a condition of eternal life. Nowhere does Shepherd speak of Christ's perfect obedience being imputed to believers. Rather, he says Christ's obedience was imputed to Christ Himself! "His was a living, active, and obedient faith that took him all the way to the cross. This faith was credited to him as righteousness."^[108] The implication is that Christ's perfect obedience was necessary only to qualify Him to be our Redeemer and provide us an example of how to obtain the fulfillment of the promises by an obedient faith. "As the covenant is kept, according to the pattern of Jesus Christ, the promises of the covenant are fulfilled."^[109] Christ did not need to obey *for us*. He simply needed to take care of the problem of disobedience, which He did by His death on the cross where He paid the penalty for disobedience.^[110] God can forgive sinners the penalty for disobedience *only because* (here's the grounds) Christ paid the penalty for disobedience. God forgives all those who have faith in Jesus. True enough, but here is the stickler: Shepherd says that *the way in which* one receives forgiveness is by means of a living, active, and obedient faith. Jesus' death guaranteed the blessing of eternal life. But it is only *by* our faithfulness that we will inherit that blessing. "But just as Jesus was faithful in order to *guarantee* the blessing, so his followers must be faithful in order to *inherit* the blessing" [emphasis original].^[111] "He promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life, not as something to be earned, but as a gift to be received by a living and active faith."^[112]

Because Shepherd believes that perfect obedience is not necessary for a sinner to obtain the verdict of justification, he leaves the distinct impression that the Christian's imperfect obedience *in and of itself* is acceptable to God, and thus can be the means of obtaining the verdict, "You are righteous."

To sum up, Shepherd contends that in order to avoid the twin dangers of antinomianism and legalism the church must abandon the traditional works/merit principle and adopt what he calls the "grace/faith principle."

Salvation is both by *grace* and through *faith*. These are the two parts of the covenant: grace and faith, promise and obligation. Grace is not without conditions, and a living and active faith is not meritorious achievement. It is the biblical doctrine of the covenant that enables us to sail safely between the Scylla of legalism and the Charybdis of antinomianism.^[113]

Thus, by making a living and active faith the *condition* of salvation we avoid antinomianism, and by making a living and active faith a *non-meritorious* condition of salvation we avoid legalism.

III. Shepherd's article in Reformation and Revival^[114]

Shepherd's purpose in writing this article is to question whether we should continue to use the traditional Protestant formula, "justification by faith alone." His concern is that involved in this formula are certain ambiguities and liabilities, and he wants us to "understand and avoid the ambiguities and liabilities involved in it."^[115]

Shepherd begins with a brief description of how the formula of justification by faith alone has typically been employed by some Protestant preachers. "We are justified and saved by faith, not by works. There is nothing we can do or need to do to escape from sin and its consequences. Only Jesus can save us and he saves us when we put our faith in him. That is all it takes, a simple act of faith."^[116] Shepherd will go on to disagree with the notion that all it takes is a simple act of faith.

Shepherd makes the rather bold claim that the formula, "justification by faith alone" appears nowhere in the Westminster Standards, and that "By not using the formula, justification by faith alone, the Westminster Standards avoid a serious misunderstanding of the gospel."^[117] Shepherd believes the formula "justification by faith alone" has arisen on account of Luther's insertion of the word "alone" into his translation of Romans 3:28 to make it read "For we hold that one is justified by faith *alone* apart from works of the law." This is the origin of the dogmatic formula "justification by faith alone." However, his insertion actually distorts Paul's meaning.^[118]

Even though the Westminster Standards do say that, "Faith is the alone instrument of justification," (11.2) Shepherd claims it is not the same as saying justification is by faith alone. Though both the Larger and Shorter Catechisms clearly say that the righteousness imputed in justification is "received by faith alone" (Larger Catechism, Question.70; Shorter Catechism, Question 33); nevertheless, Shepherd argues, "They do not use the formula, 'justified by faith alone'."^[119] The reason for this, says Shepherd, is because the use of such a formula would have contradicted another statement in the Westminster, namely, that faith "is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love" (11.2). Shepherd believes that the precise formula 'justified by faith alone' was left out of the Confession in order to avoid giving the false impression that the faith that justifies is alone, that is, separated from all other saving graces, such as repentance and good works. "There is no such thing as faith alone in the sense of faith existing all by itself."^[120]

For instance, "Faith and repentance are inseparable twins."^[121] The Bible calls for both faith and repentance as a response to the preaching of the gospel (cf. Luke 13:3-5; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 20:21). Even the Westminster Confession says that repentance "is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it" (15.3). Hence, "It is not an adequate answer to say that justification is by faith alone, meaning faith without repentance, but that repentance will inevitably follow as the fruit and evidence of faith and justification."^[122] We must *not* "resort to the idea that repentance and obedience automatically follow upon justification as evidence of salvation that is granted by faith alone apart from repentance and obedience."^[123] Shepherd thinks the formula "saving faith is *followed* by good works" implies that faith can exist *without* good works. Therefore, he argues, though the Confession is certainly correct to say that good works are "the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith" (16.2), we must *not* understand this "as

though faith could exist *without* its fruits and evidences” [emphasis mine].^[124] Moreover, the very fact that regeneration is prior to faith, and, in addition to faith, gives birth to repentance and obedience, “explains why faith can never be alone.”^[125] “It is not surprising then, that the Westminster Confession does not use the formula, 'justification by faith alone.' There is no such thing as faith alone in the sense of faith existing all by itself.”^[126] “The Confession declares that justifying faith is never, ever alone.”^[127]

What then does the Westminster mean when it says that faith is the *alone* instrument of justification? If faith is never alone, then how can it be said that faith is the alone instrument of justification? Shepherd neglects to give the classic reformed answer to this question, which is simply that although faith is accompanied by all other saving graces, and cannot exist without them, none of the other saving graces is the means of justification.

Calvin explains, “When they [i.e. Papists] attempt to refute our doctrine, that we are justified by faith alone, they take this line of argument. If the faith which justifies us be that 'which worketh by love,' then faith alone does not justify. I answer, they do not comprehend their own silly talk; still less do they comprehend our statements. It is not our doctrine that the faith which justifies is alone; we maintain that it is invariably accompanied by good works; only we contend that faith alone is sufficient for justification.”^[128]

Notice how carefully and clearly Calvin distinguishes between saving faith's *accompaniments* and saving faith's proper *role* in obtaining justification. The Belgic Confession, which is based on Calvin's theology, states the matter just as clearly, “These works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace. Nevertheless they are of no account towards our justification, for it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even *before* we do good works” (Article 24; emphasis mine).

Francis Turretin's insightful remarks are also helpful in this connection: “The question is not whether solitary faith (i.e., separated from the other virtues) justifies (which we grant could not easily be the case, since it is not even true and living faith); but whether it 'alone' concurs to the act of justification (which we assert); as the eye alone sees, but not when torn out of the body. The coexistence of love in him who is justified is not denied; but its coefficient or cooperation in justification is denied.”^[129]

Turretin used an appropriate analogy from nature. “Natural potencies are connected as to existence, but disjoined as to operation. Light and heat in the sun are most closely connected together, but still the light alone illuminates, the heat alone warms.”^[130] Take Turretin's distinction between connection and operation, and then apply it to faith and repentance. Faith and repentance are most certainly *connected*, but they “just like light and heat” are disjoined as to *operation*. Faith alone operates in the act of justification. “Although remission of sins is promised to repentance, it does not follow that it can be said to justify with faith because it contributes nothing (neither meritoriously, nor *instrumentally*) to the act of justification” [emphasis mine].^[131]

In contrast to classic reformed theology, Shepherd's main argument is to establish that faith and repentance are not just *connected* but they both *cooperate* in the act of obtaining justification, and that this is the position of the Westminster Standards. Shepherd argues that since faith is never without repentance, it follows that repentance justifies right along with faith. “Repentance is like faith. It is neither the cause nor the ground of pardon. Yet it is absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sins.”^[132] And if it is necessary for forgiveness, then it is necessary for justification. “If justification includes forgiveness, and if

repentance is necessary for forgiveness, then repentance is necessary for justification.”^[133] Shepherd uses the same line of argument as Rome did in Calvin's day: If the faith that justifies is not alone, then faith alone does not justify.

Shepherd writes, “Now if we use the formula, justification by faith alone, do we mean faith *with* repentance or faith *without* repentance? If we mean faith with repentance, how can this faith be described as faith *alone*? But if we mean faith without repentance, how can such faith secure the pardon of sin for which repentance is necessary?” [emphasis original]^[134] Shepherd clearly does not want to say that justification is obtained by faith alone apart from repentance and obedience!

If it is the case for Shepherd that repentance and obedience justifies right along with faith, then how does Shepherd understand the Westminster Confession's statement that faith is the alone instrument of justification? Shepherd explains the alone function of faith *not* as separating it from all those graces that accompany saving faith but rather from all those things that do not belong to saving faith, and thus cannot be considered along with faith an instrument of justification. One example that Shepherd gives is the Roman Catholic idea that baptism is “the real instrument of justification.”^[135] “Over against this the Westminster teaches that faith is the *alone* instrument. The believer is justified by faith, not by faith plus baptism.” [emphasis original]^[136] Shepherd's line of reasoning is that since baptism does not belong to the essence of saving faith it cannot be considered along with saving faith an instrument of justification. Whatever does *not* belong to saving faith does *not* belong to the instrumentality of saving faith.

Self-righteous works is another example Shepherd gives of those things that do not belong to the essence of saving faith. When Paul excluded works from justification in Romans 3:28, he was excluding only those works that attempt to merit eternal life by clinging to the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. “To attempt justification in that way is to distance one's self from Christ and to make salvation a matter of human achievement.”^[137] Again, Shepherd's line of reasoning is that since meritorious works do not belong to the essence of saving faith, they do not participate along with faith in the act of justification. On the other hand, whatever belongs to saving faith (e.g. repentance and non-meritorious works) justifies right along with faith. This line of reasoning is the basic underpinning of Shepherd's interpretation of the Westminster Standards. “The Westminster Standards affirm that although faith is the alone instrument of justification, and although neither faith nor repentance is the meritorious ground of justification, there is no justification without a penitent faith.”^[138] Notice how faith and repentance become a penitent faith. This is because in Shepherd's theology repentance belongs to the essence of saving faith, and thus participates in the instrumentality of saving faith.

Therefore, according to Shepherd, the serious misunderstanding of the gospel, which the Westminster Standards avoid, is the idea that a simple act of faith is all a person needs to be justified. The perspective that all it takes is a simple act of faith “offers no way of accounting for the gospel demand for both faith and repentance as necessary for the forgiveness of sins and no way of accounting for obedience as necessary for entering eternal life.”^[139]

Does this mean we may no longer use the formula, “justification by faith alone”? Shepherd's answer is that we may “as long as we understand and avoid the ambiguities and liabilities involved in it.”^[140] We may *not* use “faith alone” if we mean that salvation is granted by faith alone apart from repentance and obedience. But we may say “by faith alone” as long as we mean “not by human achievement,”^[141] and “avoid any suggestion that justification and salvation are by the merit of good works.”^[142] “Use of that

particular formula, however, cannot be made a litmus test for orthodoxy. If it were, both Scripture and the Westminster Confession would fail the test.”^[143]

IV. Shepherd's Lectures at Conference on Covenant Theology

Last summer, in August of 2003, Shepherd gave two lectures at a conference entitled “Contemporary Perspectives on Covenant Theology,” sponsored by the Southern California Center for Christian Studies.^[144] The lectures were titled, “Justification by Faith in Pauline Theology,” and “Justification by works in Reformed Theology.” In these lectures Shepherd makes explicit what was implicit in the *Call of Grace*, namely, his rejection of the active obedience of Christ as a ground of justification. For Shepherd it is merely Christ's passive suffering on the cross that is the grounds for justification. Shepherd's assertion in *the Call of Grace* that perfect obedience has never been a condition of obtaining eternal life logically leads to a denial of our need for Christ's active obedience.^[145] If perfect obedience to God's law has never been necessary for justification, then Christ's perfect obedience to God's law was not necessary for our justification. It also follows that getting rid of the idea that perfect obedience is necessary for our justification makes room for the idea that imperfect obedience can be constitutive for our justification. Shepherd admits that if he grants that Christ's active law keeping is imputed to us in justification, then he cannot say that our sanctified law keeping is necessary for our justification. Therefore, his burden in the first lecture is to prove that a belief in Christ's active obedience is not in line with the Bible. The burden of his second lecture is to prove that early reformed theology (including Calvin and Ursinus) grounded justification not in the active obedience of Christ, as later reformed theologians did, but solely in His passive obedience. We will briefly consider both lectures one at a time.

A. “Justification by Faith in Pauline Theology”

Shepherd's first lecture is basically an exegesis-type-sermon on Romans 3:28, “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” It even has three points: (1) what is justification? (2) What is the faith by which we are justified? (3) What are the works excluded from justification? Shepherd's main thesis is that justification, which he defines solely as the forgiveness of sins, involves simply the imputation of Christ's passive suffering on the cross. Christ paid the penalty for our sins, and that alone is imputed to us in justification. In other words, the righteousness imputed to the believer in justification is the forgiveness of sin's penalty, not Christ's perfect obedience to God's law. “To justify,” according to Shepherd, simply means “to forgive the penalty of sin.” It does not mean to declare a person perfectly righteous, as if he has already perfectly kept all the righteous requirements of God's law. Justification says nothing about whether the believer has obeyed the law in Christ His representative; it simply says that the believer will not suffer the penalty for breaking the law since Christ has already paid the penalty. Imputation is not the positive reckoning of a perfect law keeping, but a negative non-reckoning of sin's penalty. To put it in its simplest terms, to tell a person he won't ever be punished for unfaithfulness is not the same thing as telling him that he is perfectly faithful. For Shepherd, justification is God's declaration that the believer will not be punished for unfaithfulness; it is not God's declaration that the believer is, in God's eyes, perfectly faithful.

To support his view of justification as simply the forgiveness of sins, Shepherd argues that all the passages in both the immediate and broader context of Romans 3:28, particularly Romans 3:24-25, 4:6-8,

4:25, 5:9, and even 5:18-19, uniformly relate justification to Christ's death, and not to His obedience to God's law. It is particularly Shepherd's interpretation of Romans 5:18-19 that interests us, for this is one of the traditional proof texts for the doctrine of Christ's active obedience. Shepherd argues that in v.18 we must understand Christ's "one act of righteousness" that obtains our justification as the same righteousness that Paul had already written about in Romans 3:24-25, namely, the passive death of Christ. In Romans 5:19, continues Shepherd, the one act of obedience is the same as the one act of righteousness mentioned in v.18, Christ's passive death on the cross. Nowhere, contends Shepherd, does the Bible ground justification in Christ's law keeping.

When it comes to the means by which a person is justified (forgiven), Shepherd continues to espouse his view that it is by a living, active, and obedient faith. Justifying faith is first and foremost a faith in Jesus, more specifically, faith in His blood (Romans 4:22, 25; 5:9). Because justification is the forgiveness of sins, justifying faith could not be other than faith in the shed blood of Jesus. Secondly, justifying faith is also a penitent faith. The penitent are those who turn away from sin. Repentance is more than a change of heart and mind; it is also a change of will and deed, as Paul says in Acts 26:20, "do works meet for repentance." Paul did not call for faith alone with the assumption that repentance would automatically flow from faith. He demanded both faith and repentance, even putting repentance in the first place. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). If we do not repent we will not be justified on Judgment Day (Acts 17:30). Thirdly, justifying faith is an obedient faith. As faith and repentance are inseparably joined, so also are repentance and obedience. Shepherd bases this assertion on the phrase, "obedience to the faith" (Romans 1:5). According to Galatians 5:6, a man is justified by a faith that works through love. Faith expressing itself through love is keeping God's commandments. Thus, a man is justified by an obedient faith.

What, then, are the works that Paul excludes from justification in Romans 3:28? You guessed it: only legalistic works. Shepherd rejects the classic reformed view that the "works of the law" refers to all works of any kind, whether good or bad, whether done in faith or unbelief. Shepherd says that the traditional reformed interpretation brings Paul into conflict with his assertion that we are justified by an obedient faith. As proof Shepherd appeals to Romans chapter two, where he thinks Paul contrasts those who seek justification by the works of the law, and thus do not really keep the law, and true believers who repent and seek to do what is good according to God's law. Those who believe in Jesus with this kind of faith will be justified on Judgment Day, according to verses 13 and 16. The Jews did not really obey the law. Such impenitent covenant-breakers cannot be justified or saved. In Isaiah 64:6, the prophet is not talking about the good works that are done from faith according to God's law, but the works of meritorious self-righteousness, which only serve to mask disobedience to other aspects of the law. The righteousness of those who truly obey the law is not the righteousness of meritorious achievement but the righteousness of faith. This was the kind of faith imputed to Abraham for righteousness, and has nothing to do with justification by works of the law. There is a vast difference between the works of the law, which Paul everywhere condemns, and the obedience of faith, which Paul everywhere commends.

To sum up, Shepherd teaches that we are justified, not by the works of the law (narrowly considered) done in unbelief, but by the works of God's law (broadly considered) done from faith in Jesus. Because the unbelieving Jews never really did keep God's law they could not be justified. Because believers really do keep God's law they can be justified.

"Justification by works in Reformed Theology"

The title of this second lecture reflects Shepherd's argument that later (not earlier) reformed theology illegitimately grounds justification in the merit of works (i.e. the "works/merit principle"), and thus is structurally the same as the Roman Catholic doctrine that justification is grounded in the merit of works. The only difference is that later reformed theologians say the works are done by Christ (in His active obedience), whereas Rome says the works are done by the Christian. In contrast, early reformed theology grounded justification not in the merit of Christ's active obedience but solely in His passive obedience. Shepherd boldly claims that one cannot find a belief in the active obedience of Christ in Calvin or Ursinus or the Heidelberg Catechism, because they did not find this doctrine in the Bible. The very few texts quoted by later reformed theologians in support of this doctrine are understood by earlier reformed theologians to refer to Christ's passive obedience. Even the Westminster Confession was written in such a way as to accommodate the views of three prominent members (Shepherd does not say who they were) who did not subscribe to the imputation of Christ's active obedience. Therefore, Shepherd concludes, to interpret the language of "satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ," in the Heidelberg Catechism, to refer to Christ's active obedience is to read back into early reformed theology the views that developed only at a later time. When exactly this shift in reformed theology took place does not concern Shepherd in this lecture.

To support his contention that "the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ," refers not to Christ's active law keeping but to His passive suffering on the cross, Shepherd turns to Ursinus' own commentary on Question 60, and specifically to Ursinus' distinction between legal righteousness and evangelical righteousness. "By *legal righteousness* we mean the fulfilling of the law by one, who is thereby declared righteous. This legal righteousness was the righteousness of Adam before the fall."^[146] "*Evangelical righteousness* is the fulfilling of the law, performed, not by us, but by another in our stead, and imputed unto us of God by faith."^[147] When Adam failed to give God legal righteousness, God promised to send Christ to perform this legal righteousness for mankind. How did Christ perform this legal righteousness for us, Shepherd asks? Did He do it by fulfilling the law during the whole course of his life, what theologians call His "active obedience?" Or did he do it by submitting to punishment prescribed in the law for transgressors of the law, what theologians refer to as His "passive obedience?"

Ursinus' answer, argues Shepherd, is that it has to be one or the other. It cannot be both. Whereas later reformed theology said that legal righteousness requires *both* obedience to the law *and* payment of the law's penalty, Ursinus, claims Shepherd, maintained it was one or the other but not both. Ursinus wrote, "*Legal righteousness* is performed, either by obedience to the law, or by punishment. The law requires one or the other."^[148] Here Shepherd understands Ursinus to mean that if one breaks the law, then the only thing necessary to satisfy the justice of God is to suffer the law's punishment for disobedience. Thus, according to Shepherd's interpretation of Ursinus, for Christ to fulfill the law for us simply meant to pay the law's penalty. Though Christ's perfect law keeping was necessary to qualify Christ to be a worthy sacrifice, it is not the righteousness that is imputed to us in justification. Nowhere, contends Shepherd, does Ursinus say that the righteousness imputed to us is the righteousness of Christ's law keeping. Rather, it is the righteousness of His suffering the penalty for our sins. Ursinus clearly stated that evangelical righteousness "is the imputation and application of that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us by his death upon the cross, and by his resurrection from the dead."^[149]

Notice, Shepherd emphasizes, Ursinus did not say that the righteousness that Christ wrought out for us was the fulfillment of the demands of the law during the whole course of His life. This is why Shepherd insists that one will not find in Ursinus' definition of justification a reference to Christ's perfect law

keeping. Rather, for Ursinus, justification is simply the forgiveness of sins, grounded in Christ's passive obedience. Ursinus said, "Justification and the forgiveness of sins are, therefore, the same."^[150]

V. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

If the reformed confessions are an accurate reflection of biblical truth, then it should not be difficult, and it should not have been difficult for Westminster Seminary, to conclude that Norman Shepherd's teaching on the relation of justification and works is a heresy and not merely unclear. Shepherd has made himself very clear. He has maintained from the very beginning that what can be said of faith can also be said of good works; neither can be the ground of justification, but both can be the instrument of justification. By getting rid of the whole idea of merit, especially the idea that perfect obedience is a necessary condition of eternal life, Shepherd is free to assert that the righteousness that can stand before the judgment seat of God can in fact be imperfect and defiled with sin, as long as sin is forgiven.

It is certainly true that we must always be willing to correct our traditional interpretations of Scripture if better exegesis shows them to be in error. The fact is, however, that Shepherd has not only failed to offer better exegesis, but the main tenets of his doctrine of justification are not new, and have already been refuted many times over in the history of the church. The very foundation of Shepherd's view of justification, namely, that eternal life does not need to be merited, has never been seriously entertained in the Church. As Charles Hodge said, "The Church in all ages has recognized this truth. They have ever regarded it as intuitively true that heaven must be merited. The only question was, whether that merit was in them or in Christ."^[151]

Shepherd's contention that the Westminster Standards do not espouse the classic reformed view of *sola fide*, and that later reformers opposed early reformers on the matter of Christ's active obedience, is just another form of the "Calvin against the Calvinists" approach, which scholars like Richard Muller have definitively disposed of.^[152] And if the early reformers were not as mature in their thinking concerning the doctrine of Christ's active obedience, then what Gerhardus Vos stated concerning the doctrine of the covenant of works can equally be said of the doctrine of Christ's active obedience. "But whoever has the historical sense to be able to separate the mature development of a thought from its original sprouting and does not insist that a doctrine be mature at birth, will have no difficulty in recognizing the covenant of works as an old Reformed doctrine."^[153]

Multiple passages from both Calvin and Ursinus could be adduced to prove that they both taught the necessity of perfect obedience as a condition of eternal life, and, on this account, the necessity of Christ's perfect obedience to be imputed to us in justification. First, Calvin: "The second requirement of our reconciliation with God was this: that man, who by his disobedience had become lost, should by way of remedy counter it with obedience, satisfy God's judgment, and pay the penalties for sin. Accordingly, our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgment, and, in the same flesh, to pay the penalty that we had deserved."^[154]

"How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us? To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this

for us by the whole course of his obedience. This is proved by Paul's testimony: 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience we are made righteous' [Rom. 5:19]. In another passage [Gal. 4:4-5] Paul extends the basis of pardon that frees us from the curse of the law to the whole life of Christ. Thus in his very baptism, also, he asserted that he fulfilled a part of righteousness in obediently carrying out his Father's commandment [Matt. 3:15]. In short, from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us."^[155]

Concerning Romans 5:19, Calvin wrote, "we are made righteous through the obedience of Christ, and we hence conclude that Christ, in satisfying the Father, has provided a righteousness for us. He at the same time shows what sort of righteousness it is, by calling it obedience. And here let us especially observe what we must bring into God's presence, if we seek to be justified by works, even obedience to the law, not to this or that part, but in every respect perfect; for when a just man falls, all his former righteousness will not be remembered. Away then with those who confidently claim to the righteousness of works, which cannot otherwise exist than when there is full and complete observance of the law; and it is certain that this is nowhere to be found."^[156]

Concerning Christ's subjection to the law in Galatians 4:4, Calvin writes, "Christ the Son of God, who might have claimed to be exempt from every kind of subjection, became subject to the law. Why? He did so in our room, that he might obtain freedom for us. So Christ chose to become liable to keep the law, that exemption from it [as a condition of eternal life] might be obtained for us; otherwise it would have been to no purpose that he should come under the yoke of the law, for it certainly was not on his own account that he did so."^[157]

Ursinus also taught the necessity of Christ's active obedience, though he did not use those exact words. Shepherd thinks he finds support in Ursinus' statement that "*Legal righteousness* is performed, either by obedience to the law, or by punishment. The law requires one or the other."^[158] Shepherd interprets Ursinus to mean that Christ did not have to perform legal righteousness for us by fulfilling the law during the whole course of his life. He only had to submit to the punishment prescribed in the law for transgressors of the law. Ursinus said it was either by obedience or by punishment, but not by both, so argues Shepherd.

It is not difficult to show that Shepherd is guilty of misunderstanding Ursinus. This "either obedience or punishment" paradigm does not indicate two alternatives that were facing Christ, but rather it indicates the nature of man's subjection to the law "*apart from Christ*." Apart from Christ, man has only two choices: obey the law perfectly, or suffer its eternal punishment. Ursinus explains: "The law binds all to obedience, and if this is not performed, to eternal punishment and condemnation. But no one renders this obedience. Therefore, the law binds all men to eternal condemnation."^[159]

Again, "The law binds either to obedience or punishment. But satisfaction cannot be made through obedience, because our past obedience is already impaired, and that which follows cannot make satisfaction for past offenses. We are bound to render exact obedience every moment to the law, as a present debt. Hence, obedience being once impaired, there is no other way of making satisfaction except by punishment."^[160]

Note again, it is man, not Christ, that has two mutually exclusive choices: either obedience or punishment. And since perfect obedience is not possible, man must be punished.

Since man himself has ruined the option of making satisfaction by perfect obedience, it does not follow that Christ did not have to make satisfaction for man by His perfect obedience, and that all He had to do was to make satisfaction by punishment. Quite the contrary, Ursinus says that Christ's perfect obedience was necessary to satisfy the law's requirement of perfect obedience. He wrote, "although we are not able to make satisfaction through obedience, we are, nevertheless, able to make it through the endurance of a sufficient punishment, not in ourselves, but in Christ, who has satisfied the law *both by obedience and punishment*" [emphasis mine].^[161] Shepherd gives the impression that, for Ursinus, Christ satisfied the law only by punishment, and yet Ursinus clearly said it was by *obedience* and punishment. For Ursinus, obedience, and not merely suffering punishment, is a necessary component of the fulfillment of the law for us. This is clear from his definition of righteousness as conformity with the law: "righteousness is the fulfillment of the law, and a conformity with the law is righteousness itself. This must be observed and held fast to, because *our justification can only be effected by fulfilling the law*. Evangelical righteousness is the fulfilling of the law, and does not conflict with it in the least. The gospel does not abolish the law, but establishes it" [emphasis mine].^[162]

Since "our justification can only be effected by fulfilling the law," only Christ's perfect obedience can effect our justification. Ursinus wrote, "The law promises life to those who are righteous in themselves, or on the condition of righteousness, and perfect obedience. 'He that doeth them, shall live in them.' 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' (Lev. 18:5. Matt. 19:17). The gospel, on the other hand, promises life by faith in Christ, or on the condition of the righteousness of Christ, applied unto us by faith. The law and gospel are, however, not opposed to each other in these respects; for *although the law requires us to keep the commandments if we would enter into life, yet it does not exclude us from life if another perform these things for us*" [emphasis mine].^[163] We have a right to life because Christ kept the commandments for us!

Though more quotes could be multiplied, one more will suffice. "The law promises eternal life and all good things upon the condition of our own and perfect righteousness, and of obedience in us: the gospel promises the same blessings upon the condition that we exercise faith in Christ, by which we embrace the obedience which another, even Christ, has performed in our behalf."^[164]

Even if it were granted that the early reformers did not explicitly teach the imputation of Christ's active obedience, it does not follow that they rejected it; and they most certainly did not on any basis make any room for repentance or sanctified obedience to figure in the verdict of justification! "All works are excluded from our justification, yea even faith itself in as far as it is a virtue, or work."^[165]

Shepherd is not the first to deny Christ's active obedience as grounds of justification. According to Anselm Christ's life of obedience had no redemptive significance, since He owed this to God for Himself. Only the sufferings of the Savior constituted a claim on God and were basic to the sinner's redemption. Thinking along somewhat similar lines Piscator,^[166] the seventeenth century Arminians, Richard Watson, R.N. Davies, and other Arminian scholars deny that the active obedience of Christ has the redemptive significance which we ascribe to it. Their denial rests especially on two considerations: (1) Christ needed His active obedience for Himself as man. Being under the law, He was in duty bound to keep it for Himself; (2) God demands, or can demand, only one of two things of the sinner: either obedience to the law, or subjection to the penalty, but not both. If the law is obeyed, the penalty cannot be inflicted; and if the penalty is borne, nothing further can be demanded.^[167]

Turretin makes reference to a certain Cargius who also restricted imputation to Christ's passive obedience, arguing that "since the law did not bind sinners to obedience, but only to punishment, Christ (substituted in our place) owed only punishment for us and not obedience."^[168] Evidently Shepherd is not the only one to misunderstand and misapply the principle "either obedience or punishment." As Berkhof noted, the principle applied to man and not to Christ.

There is some confusion here, however, which results in misunderstanding. Some believe that this "either/or" applied to the case of Adam before the fall, but ceased to apply the moment he sinned and thus entered the penal relationship of the law. That is not true. God continued to demand obedience of man, but in addition to that required of him that he pay the penalty for past transgression. Meeting this double requirement was the only way of life after sin entered the world.^[169]

It is not difficult to prove, as many able scholars have proven before, that Scripture grounds our justification before God in the imputation of Christ's active obedience. A good place to begin is with the baptism of Jesus, the purpose of which, according to Jesus Himself, was "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Christ submitted to John's baptism of repentance, certainly not for Himself, for He had no sin to repent of, which explains John's hesitation to baptize Jesus. Clearly, by obeying the command to be baptized, Jesus was showing at the very commencement of His public ministry that He was fulfilling all righteousness not for Himself but *for us!*

No passage is clearer than Romans 5:18-19 for establishing the biblical basis of the doctrine of Christ's active obedience. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." This parallel and analogy between the first and second Adams clearly entails that Christ had to obey to make up for Adam's disobedience. Nowhere does the text or context limit Christ's obedience to His death on the cross. "It necessarily includes his obedience in willingly undergoing death, but the text provides no reason for limiting it to that one act."^[170] The mistake of limiting Christ's one act of obedience to His death "is based on a failure to realize the full meaning of obedience. By nature, obedience is a continuous state, requiring a continuation of obedience, but even one act of disobedience makes a person disobedient. The obedience of Christ in Romans 5, in the context, can only mean his whole life in obedience to God."^[171]

Turretin states, "In those places in Scripture where our salvation is ascribed to the death of Christ, this is not done to the exclusion of the obedience of life because nowhere is such a restriction found. Rather it must be understood by a synecdoche by which what belongs to the whole is ascribed to the better part because it was the last degree of his humiliation, the crown and completion of his obedience."^[172]

The Scriptures everywhere portray the righteousness of Christ as a seamless garment, whereas Shepherd portrays it as excluding Christ's active obedience. Thus, Shepherd is guilty of dividing what should not be divided.^[173]

Furthermore, to limit the righteousness of Christ to His suffering the penalty of sin is to overlook the fact that righteousness is a positive concept and does not consist in suffering but in fulfilling the demands of the law: "righteousness is nothing else than conformity to the Law, while sin is any want of conformity to it."^[174] "And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deuteronomy 6:25). If righteousness is obeying the law, it follows

that imputed righteousness includes Christ's obedience to God's law. "For life is promised by the law, not to him who suffers, but to him who performs. 'Do this and live'."^[175] "Besides, sufferings do not yield obedience to those commands of the law to which the promise of life is annexed, but they only satisfy its sanctions. Hence they cannot be called righteousness."^[176]

Again, "punishments cannot be said to fulfill the law or its commands, but to satisfy the denunciations of the law. Who would say that a robber (capitally punished on account of his crimes) had obeyed the command or law of the king? Besides, since to act agreeably to law is a thing honest and praiseworthy, this cannot be asserted concerning the endurance of punishment, unless perchance one is to be praised because he is tormented in hell."^[177]

In other words, to suffer the law's penalty is not the same as to satisfy the law's demands. To go to jail for stealing is not the same thing as being a righteous man who doesn't steal. Even if someone else were to go to jail in my place (i.e. pay my penalty for stealing), that *in itself* does not constitute me a righteous man who doesn't steal. To say that I won't be punished for stealing is not the same as to say that I am not a thief but a hard-working man who gives to the poor!

When it is said that by the suffering of punishment, a sin of omission is expiated, it ought not to be understood in the sense that the sin had not been committed and that man had done whatever he was bound to do (which is repugnant to the truth). Rather inasmuch as by the penal endurance he is freed from the curse resting upon him on account of sin, the remission therefore granted him takes away indeed actual guilt, but does not on this account give him a right to life.^[178]

It follows that Christ, in order for us to be declared righteous in God's eyes, had to do more for us than simply suffer the law's penalty. He also had to satisfy the law's demands. If Christ merely suffered the law's penalty for me, that *in itself* would not constitute me a law-keeper. To say that I won't pay the penalty for breaking the law is not the same as to say that I am a law-keeper! For this reason the reformers insisted that justification is not simply pardon. "It includes pardon, but it also includes a declaration that the believer is just or righteous in the sight of the law. He has a righteousness which completely satisfies its demands."^[179] The Westminster Confession reflects the historic reformed position that God justifies His people *both* "by pardoning their sins, *and* by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous." And God accepts us as righteous "not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, *or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness*; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them" (11.1; emphasis mine). According to the classic reformed view, I am declared a law keeper not because I have kept the law, but because Christ has kept it for me!

If Shepherd wants to say that Christ merely suffered the law's penalty for us, and that justification is merely the forgiveness of sin's penalty, then how or on what basis can a person be accounted a law-keeper in God's eyes? If, as Shepherd argues, it is *not* on the basis of Christ's law keeping, then it can be only on the basis of one's own personal law keeping. Since Shepherd clearly does not want to say that we are accounted law-keepers on the basis of Christ's law-keeping, the only option left for him is to say that we are accounted law-keepers on the basis of our own personal sanctified law-keeping; and this is exactly what he says. In the *Call of Grace*, Shepherd states, just as Christ's living, active and obedient faith was credited to him as righteousness, so Abraham's living, active, obedient faith "was credited to Abraham as righteousness."^[180] God declared Abraham righteous because Abraham was in fact righteous. He had a living, active, obedient faith! Since Shepherd rejects perfect obedience as necessary for our persons to be

accounted righteous in God's eyes, he has no problem saying that a person can be accounted righteous in God's eyes on the basis of an imperfect righteousness.

The Bible, however, says that no one is justified by an imperfect righteousness. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). “So likewise, ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are *unprofitable* servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10). “Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the *whole law*” (Galatians 5:3). “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of *all*” (James 2:10). “Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for *in Your sight no one living is righteous*” (Psalm 143:2).

The Lord has always required perfect obedience from His creatures, and He did not lower His standard after Adam fell. Thus, “God cannot show favor to, nor justify anyone without a perfect righteousness. For since the judgment of God is according to truth, he cannot pronounce anyone just who is not really just.”^[181] “IN YOUR SIGHT NO ONE LIVING IS RIGHTEOUS” (Psalm 143:2)! Therefore the gospel teaches that he who is destitute of personal righteousness ought to have another's, by which to be justified. This righteousness is found nowhere else than in Christ, who “fully satisfied the justice of God by his perfect obedience and thus brought to us an everlasting righteousness by which alone we can be justified before God.”^[182]

In the final analysis, it is crucial to Shepherd's whole argument to show that not all works are excluded from justification. He is well aware of the fact that Scripture clearly excludes works of some kind from justification, “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” and even pronounces an anathema upon those who would involve law keeping in the verdict of justification (cf. Galatians 1:9; 2:16, 2:21; 5:4). Therefore, it is not surprising that Shepherd is very anxious to escape the anathema by attempting to prove that not every kind of law-keeping is excluded from the verdict of justification. He argues that the “deeds of the law” refer not to all works of any kind, whether done in unbelief or faith, but only to legalistic works done to merit eternal life.

It is not difficult to show, as most conservative interpreters have shown, that Scripture excludes all works without distinction from the verdict of justification. Long ago, Calvin responded to the argument of the Sophists that “deeds of the law” refer only to those works done apart from Christ's grace. His reply was: “all works are excluded, whatever title may grace them;”^[183] “not even spiritual works come into account when the power of justifying is ascribed to faith.”^[184] “Indeed, we confess with Paul that no other faith justifies 'but faith working through love' [Gal. 5:6]. But it does not take its power to justify from that working of love.”^[185] “We have not a single work going forth from the saints that if it be judged in itself deserves not shame as its just reward;”^[186] “no other righteousness than the complete observance of the law is allowed in heaven.”^[187]

The simple and clear fact is that, although the Bible certainly distinguishes bad works done in unbelief from good works done in faith, nevertheless, whenever the Bible specifically excludes works from justification it does not restrict its definition of works to merely evil works to the exclusion of good works. For instance, if Paul had *not* wanted us to think he was excluding all works without distinction from justification, then why didn't he put the matter this way: “we are not justified by the works of the law, but we are justified by the works of faith”? When he told us that Abraham was not justified by works, why didn't he tell us: “Of course, the works I am referring to are *not* all those wonderful works that

Abraham did as a believer”? When Paul pronounced an anathema against the idea that a man can be justified by the law, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law” (Galatians 5:4), why didn't he qualify his anathema so as to leave no doubt that he only meant to exclude legalistic law-keeping but not sanctified law-keeping? After all, it was a matter of heaven and hell!

Instead of saying, “in Jesus Christ availeth faith which worketh by love,” (Galatians 5:6), why didn't Paul say, “in justification availeth faith which worketh by love,” or, better yet, “a man is justified by love”? Why doesn't Paul ever say that we are justified by any of the fruits that faith produces? If Paul had not wished to exclude sanctified works from justification, then is it too much to ask for just one reference in any of his writings where he actually uses the words, “a man is justified by good works” or “a man is justified by repentance” or “a man is justified by regeneration” or “a man is justified by the obedience of faith”? Why is it always simply, “a man is justified by faith”? This is a crucial point: though the Bible most certainly says that no one will enter heaven without good works (without holiness no one will see the Lord), it never speaks of good works or holiness as a *means* of obtaining justification. When Jesus said that only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21), He did *not* say that *by means of* doing God's will we obtain justification!

The phrase in Romans 2:13, “the doers of the law shall be justified,” does not help Shepherd's case at all, as Andrew Sandlin once pointed out. “The employment of Romans 2:13 as such a dominant motif in his theory sharply contradicts Shepherd's distinction between the repugnant 'works of the law' and the desirable 'working of faith,' for there is no reason to assume Paul's usage of 'doers of the law' envisions anything but the 'works of the law.' A face-value reading of Romans 2 could render no other interpretation. The Jews possessed the inscripturated 'works of the law' and nonetheless violated them; the Gentiles 'show the work of the law written in their hearts' (v.15) and they also violate it. A 'working of faith' conception of v.13 cannot be in view. Hence, if the 'works of the law' are the repugnant attempt at merit which Shepherd depicts in Romans 2:13, they cannot serve as an instrument of justification as Shepherd asserts.”^[188] The truth once recognized by Sandlin is still recognized by most interpreters.

“Works of the law,” then, as most interpreters have recognized, refers simply to “things that are done in obedience to the law.” Paul uses the phrase “works of the law” instead of the simple “works” because he is particularly concerned in this context to deny to Jews an escape from the general sentence pronounced in v.19 [Romans 3:19]. But, since “works of the law” are simply what we might call “good works” defined in Jewish terms, the principle enunciated here has universal application; nothing a person does, whatever the object of obedience or the motivation of that obedience, can bring him or her into favor with God. It is just at this point that the significance of the meaning we have given “works of the law” emerges so clearly. Any restricted definition of “works of the law” *can* have the effect of opening the door to the possibility of justification by works; i.e. “good” deeds that are done in the right spirit, with God's enabling grace or something of the sort. This, we are convinced, would be to misunderstand Paul at a vital point.^[189]

Moo could not have summed it up better than when he said, “‘Works of the law' are inadequate, not because they are 'works of the law,' but, ultimately, because they are 'works'.”^[190] Turretin also sums up the whole matter rather nicely. “For it is gratuitously and most falsely supposed that only works antecedent to faith are excluded. But he excludes all works entirely without distinction and indeed the works of Abraham not only as an unbeliever, but also a believer (since this was said of him when he was already a believer and renewed). Again, he excludes all debt (v.4); therefore, he also excludes every work. Finally, if he had not wished to exclude works done from faith, he ought not to have opposed 'one

working' to 'one believing' simply, but one working without faith to one working from faith (which, however, he nowhere does).”^[191]

If the only passage that the opponents of *sole fide* have is James 2:24, “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” then they are in big trouble if they hope to escape Paul's anathema! For not even James says that “a man is justified *before God* by works.” “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but *not before God*” (Romans 4:2). “But how can a man be just *before God*?” (Job 9:2). “How then can man be justified *before God*? Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4). That is the question Paul answered, but that was *not* the question James answered. The reformers were right. James is not discussing forensic justification *before God* but rather justification *before men*. “James is describing how a man may 'show' his faith to be genuine (James 2:18), and how faith inevitably will 'come to fullness' or 'fruition' in good works (James 2:22).”^[192] Since it is not possible to show men our faith by a mere profession of faith, James says, “I will show thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

The whole crux of the matter is that Shepherd robs the gospel of good news. How can a man be justified before God? The good news is that Christ's righteousness, namely, His perfect obedience and sacrifice upon the cross for the sins of His people, is freely imputed by God to all who receive Christ by faith alone, trusting in his saving work on their behalf. By fulfilling the law and suffering its curse, Christ obtains righteousness and eternal life as a free gift for His people. Now, Mr. Shepherd, if Christ fully satisfied the justice of God and appeased God's wrath against my sin, then what act of obedience would you have me do, or what act of disobedience would you have me avoid, in order to escape God's wrath? The Bible says that the only means of escape is to reach out the empty hand of faith and receive the gracious gift. Yes, Mr. Shepherd, all it takes is a simple act of faith. “The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus forgiveness receives.” Yes, Mr. Shepherd, salvation and justification *do* in fact take place at a certain point in time, the moment a person believes! “Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me *hath everlasting life*, and *shall not come into condemnation*; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). “And the publican,...saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house *justified*” (Luke 18:13-14). “Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 9:13). Justification does not take place at any other time than the *first* appearance of genuine faith in the human heart.

But as justification cannot be conceived to have taken place from eternity before the ages, so neither ought it to be thrown forward to the consummation of the world as others hold, as if God only then exercises properly the act of a Judge, both in the pardon of believers and in the condemnation of the wicked. For thus the declaration of justification is falsely confounded with justification itself.^[193]

Therefore, the question is this: Is justification by faith alone apart from obedience the one true gospel or is it not? John Murray believed that “it makes void the gospel to introduce works in connection with justification.”^[194] For precisely this reason, Calvin (and Luther too!) called the doctrine of justification by faith alone “the main hinge on which religion turns.”^[195] Turretin termed it “the principal rampart of the Christian religion. This being adulterated or subverted, it is impossible to retain purity of doctrine in other places. Hence Satan in every way has endeavored to corrupt this doctrine in all ages, as has been done especially by the papacy.”^[196] Take note: deny justification by faith alone, and it is impossible to retain purity of doctrine in other places! It is a downward slide.

Does Shepherd really want to maintain that the fathers of the reformation, who together wrote the Protestant Creeds, along with all their spiritual sons, men like Turretin, Hodge, Berkhof, and John Murray, have all misread Scripture and have all misunderstood the doctrine of justification by faith alone?

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the following four resolutions and their respective grounds be adopted by synod:

Resolution 1.

That we reaffirm the truth of the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone including the imputation of the active obedience of Christ as a necessary element in our righteousness before God, as it is expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, specifically in those passages that follow: [Pertinent words are in bold print]

A. The Heidelberg Catechism

Question 1: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Answer 1: That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, **who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil;** and so preserves me that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live unto Him.

Q11: But is not God also merciful?

A11: God is indeed merciful, but **He is likewise just; His justice therefore requires that sin, which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be punished with extreme,** that is, with everlasting punishment both of body and soul.

Q18: But who now is that Mediator, who in one person is true God and also a true and righteous man?

A18: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given unto us for **complete redemption and righteousness.**

Q21: What is true faith?

A21: True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of **Christ's merits.**

Q30: Do those also believe in the only Savior Jesus, who seek their salvation and welfare from "saints," **themselves**, or anywhere else?

A30: No; although they make their boast of Him, yet in their deeds they deny the only Savior Jesus; for either Jesus is not a complete Savior, or they who by true faith receive this Savior, **must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.**

Q37: What do you understand by the word "suffered"?

A37: That **all the time He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, He bore, in body and soul, the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race;** in order that by His suffering, as the only atoning sacrifice, He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation, and obtain for us the grace of God, righteousness and eternal life.

Q52: What comfort is it to you that Christ "shall come to judge the living and the dead"?

A52: That in all my sorrows and persecutions, I, with uplifted head, look for the very One, who **offered Himself for me to the judgment of God, and removed all curse from me,** to come as Judge from heaven, who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall take me with all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.

Q56: What do you believe concerning the "forgiveness of sins"?

A56: That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, nor the sinful nature with which I have to struggle all my life long; but **graciously imputes to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may nevermore come into condemnation.**

Q60: How are you righteous before God?

A60: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ: that is, although my conscience accuses me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and am still prone always to all evil; yet God, **without any merit of mine,** of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the **perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ,** as if I had never committed nor had any sins, **and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me;** if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.

Q61: Why do you say that you are righteous by faith only?

A61: **Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God; and I can receive the same and make it my own in no other way than by faith only.**

Q62: But why cannot our good works be the whole **or part** of our righteousness before God?

A62: Because the righteousness which can stand before the judgment seat of God must be **perfect throughout and entirely conformable to the divine law**, but even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.

Q63: Do our good works merit nothing, even though it is God's will to reward them in this life and in that which is to come?

A63: **The reward comes not of merit, but of grace.**

Q64: But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

A64: **No, for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.**

Q86: Since, then, we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we do good works?

A86: Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life **we show ourselves thankful to God** for His blessing, and that **He be glorified through us**; then also, that **we ourselves may be assured of our faith** by the fruits thereof; and by our godly walk may **win others** also to Christ.

Q87: Can they, then, be saved who do not turn to God from their unthankful, impenitent life?

A87: By no means, for, as Scripture says, no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Q91: What are good works?

A91: **Those only which proceed from true faith, and are done according to the Law of God, unto His glory, and not such as rest on our own opinion or the commandments of men.**

Q114: Can those who are converted to God keep these Commandments perfectly?

A114: No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have **only a small beginning** of such obedience, yet so that with earnest purpose they begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the Commandments of God.

Q115: Why then does God so strictly enjoin the Ten Commandments upon us, since in this life no one can keep them?

A115: First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the **goal of perfection after this life.**

The Belgic Confession

Article XX: God Has Manifested His Justice and Mercy in Christ.

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which the disobedience was committed, **to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin** by His most bitter passion and death. **God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquities upon Him**, and poured forth His mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love, giving His Son unto death for us, and raising Him for our justification, that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

Article XXI: The Satisfaction of Christ, Our Only High Priest, for Us.

We believe that Jesus Christ is ordained with an oath to be an everlasting High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek; and that He has presented Himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease His wrath by **His full satisfaction**, by offering Himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and numbered with the transgressors; and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor, though he had first declared Him innocent. Therefore, He restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, as well in His body as in His soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited; insomuch that his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. He called out: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? and has suffered all this for the remission of our sins.

Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul that we know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and refuse for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation. **Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.** This is also the reason why He was called by the angel of God, JESUS, that is to say, SAVIOR, because He would save his people from their sins.

Article XXII: Our Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe that, to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts an **upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him, and seeks nothing more besides Him.** For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him. Therefore, **for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.**

Therefore we justly say with Paul, **that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works.** However, to speak more clearly, **we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits, and so many holy works which He has done for us and in our stead, is our righteousness. And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.**

Article XXIII: Wherein Our Justification Before God Consists

We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, **and that therein our righteousness before God is implied;** as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the And the same apostle says that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before Him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, **without presuming to trust in anything in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in Him. This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities,** and to give us confidence in approaching to God; freeing the conscience of fear, terror, and dread, without following the example of our first father, Adam, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig-leaves. And, verily, if we should appear before God, relying on ourselves or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should, alas! be consumed. And therefore every one must pray with David: O Jehovah, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living is righteous.

Article XXIV: Man's Sanctification and Good Works.

We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit, sanctifies [1] him and makes him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin. Therefore it is so far from being true that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life, that on the contrary without it they would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. **Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith which is called in Scripture a faith working through love, which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word.**

These works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace. **Nevertheless they are of no account towards our justification,** for it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works; otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good before the tree itself is good.

Therefore **we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?); nay, we are indebted to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He who worketh in us both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.** Let us therefore attend to what is written: When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do. In the meantime we do not deny that God rewards good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.

Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we can do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus, then, we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be continually vexed if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior.

C. The Canons of Dordt

Second Head of Doctrine

Article 1: God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Article 2: Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

Second Head of Doctrine: Rejection of Errors

Paragraph 3: **Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated;** but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions.

Paragraph 4: **Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace.**

For these contradict the Scriptures: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood (Rom. 3:24, 25). And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

Third and Fourth Head of Doctrine

Article 5: Neither can the Decalogue delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses, save men.[1] **For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet, as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from this**

misery, but, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

Fifth Head of Doctrine

Article 6: But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, **does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.**

Article 8: **Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy,** that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, **nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.**

Article 11: The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (I Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

Article 12: **This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works,** as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Resolution 2.

That we find that Rev. Norman Shepherd for many years has taught a confused doctrine of justification, contrary to the Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt. The specifics are as follows.

a. That in his failure to distinguish between faith and works he has undermined this essential doctrine of the Christian faith. It is false doctrine to say that works of love are another way of looking at faith, for true faith is occupied with the gospel and the fullness of Christ's redemption, while a work of love is occupied with the law and showing gratitude to God for this redemption. It is false to teach that

“believing” in Jesus is the same as “obeying” Jesus as it regards justification, for the two are occupied with different things.

b. In failing to distinguish between faith and works, he has mixed justification and sanctification, reviving the Romish doctrine of justification by infused righteousness, which is rightly rejected by all people of faith.

c. He compounds his error by teaching that when the beloved Apostle Paul speaks of the "works of the law" Paul means those works which are done for the purpose of meriting justification, and not works that are done in faith. In this also Shepherd shows confusion of mind, for if works done in faith are done with the idea that they are justifying, then those very works become "works of the law," even though Shepherd denies it. He may say that works as a Christian are not meritorious, but if he says that they are necessary for salvation and that one is cursed if he does not do them, then Shepherd has made them meritorious no matter how much he protests that he has not. To keep works in their proper place, no room must be given for works in the act of justification in any way, as the Apostle Paul and our creeds so clearly state.

d. Shepherd's error is grievous when he affirms that every covenant consists of promise and punishment, and that Christians are not “off the hook,” if they do not obey just as Israel was not “off the hook” when they disobeyed. This is contrary to the Gospel and to the creeds and confessions that teach that Christ was made a curse for us so that the blessings of Abraham could come upon us. We are therefore blessed of the Lord, although Gentile churches may be cut off if the reprobate in them corrupt their faith in the fullness of Christ's redemption and teach them to trust in their own righteousness.

e. He misinterprets Romans 2:6-13, in support of his error. We affirm that Paul does not teach here that one could be justified by works. Rather he is refuting the madness of those who boast in the law but do not do the law, and condemn others. Those who boast in the law must do the law if they trust in the law. To be justified by works, it is not enough for men to glory in them, they must actually perform all the law demands. Thus, no one can be justified by works, a conclusion that Paul makes in Romans 3.

f. He misinterprets the beloved apostle James in James 2. We reject a dialectical interpretation of Paul and James, which would require a synthesis of opposites. James is not speaking of forensic justification before God (as does Paul) but rather a demonstration of faith: in the words “Show me your faith”-- which can only be done by good works.

g. He errs in confusion again in affirming that the “idea of merit is foreign to the way in which God our Father relates to his children,” as if God has not required perfect obedience to His law as a condition for life. This would overthrow the perfect justice of God and corrupt the perfect obedience of Christ, both active and passive, which is the complete and perfect righteousness of the believer. God does not owe His creatures anything, but in conditioning Adam's life upon obedience God affirmed that life would be the reward of obedience and a curse would come for disobedience.

h. He errs in denying that the active obedience of Christ has any part in justification. The result is to revive the old Romish, Socinian, and Arminian error that justification is forgiveness only; and that future justification depends upon works done in faith.

i. His inclusion of works as necessary for some future justification is contrary to our confessions, which teach that faith is a gift of God which gives us access to the righteousness of God, even the perfect passive and active obedience of Christ which alone is all our righteousness, for we are complete in Him.

j. He slanderously reports that the Reformed teach that “faith can exist without its fruits and evidences.” This is Arminian, Socinian, and Romish doctrine that he falsely attributes to the Reformed, and then seeks to cure the disease that the Reformed do not have, by seeking to apply to it the Arminian, Socinian, and Romish cure: that works must be added to faith in order for the believer to be justified. The Reformed have always taught that faith without works is dead, being no faith at all and that true faith is alive and will inevitably bring forth the fruit of repentance and loving works.

k. He errs in teaching that Paul's phrase, “righteousness of faith” means the works that Christians perform by faith, rather than the perfect righteousness of Christ which is received by faith.

l. He errs in confusing the relationship between faith and works, affirming that both cooperate in justification and whatever goes with faith also cooperates in justification. This is contrary to the Scripture, the Creeds, and the Confession which teach that works are the fruit of faith, and inevitably appear, but have no part in justifying the sinner before God.

Resolution 3

Therefore, we also resolve that the teachings of Norman Shepherd on justification by faith are another gospel, and we admonish Reverend Shepherd and call on him to repent of his grievous errors.

Resolution 4

That the Reformed Church in the United States recognize these Romish, Arminian, and Socinian errors for what they are and urge our brethren throughout the world to reject them and to refuse those who teach them.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That this report, along with the supplementary material, be made available to the churches of the RCUS, to all denominations in fraternal relations, to the Christian Reformed Church of North America, and to member denominations of NAPARC and ICRC.

ENDNOTES

[1] *Abstract of the Minutes of the 257th Synod* (The Reformed Church in the United States: 2003), 75.

[2] For a history of the original controversy see O. Palmer Robertson's book *The Current Justification Controversy* (Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2003). Robertson informs us in the Forward that, except for minor alterations, the material in his book remains as it was twenty years ago when it was approved but then subsequently denied for publication in *Presbyterion*, the theological journal of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. 'The reason given for this reversal was that the material might prove offensive to another respected seminary of the Reformed and Presbyterian family in America' (9).

[3] Robertson, 14.

[4] *Ibid.*, 72.

[5] *Ibid.*, 84.

[6] David Vandrunen, 'Justification By Faith in the Theology of Norman Shepherd,' *Katekomen* 14:1 (Summer 2002), 23. *Katekomen* is a publication of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

[7] Robertson, 25.

[8] Among Shepherd's opponents cited in Robertson's book was Rev. Norman Hoeflinger. Richard Gaffin is listed among the supporters.

[9] *A Companion to the Current Justification Controversy*, edited by John W. Robbins (Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2003), 14.

[10] Norman Shepherd, *The Call of Grace* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2000).

[11] Mark W. Karlberg, *The Changing of the Guard: Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia* (Unicoi, Tennessee: The Trinity Foundation, 2001), 6.

[12] David Vandrunen, 23.

[13] Norman Shepherd, 'Justification By Faith Alone,' *Reformation and Revival* 11:2 (Spring 2002), 75-90.

[14] 'Reasons and Specifications Supporting the Action of the Board of Trustees in Removing Professor Shepherd,' in *A Companion to the Current Justification Controversy*, 135. The distinction between the ground of justification (that is, the *reason why* God justifies) and the instrument of justification (that is,

the means by which God justifies us) is crucial to understanding the biblical doctrine of justification. According to classic reformed theology, justification 'is an act of God's free grace, whereby He pardons our sins and accepts us as righteous, but does not change us inwardly' (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991 reprint], 512). The ground or reason why God accepts us as righteous is not because we are actually righteous inwardly, for justification does not change us inwardly, but it is only because Christ's perfect righteousness has been imputed or credited to us. How do I get Christ's perfect righteousness to be imputed to me? By simply accepting the free gift with a believing heart, which is to say, by faith only. As we will see, Shepherd denies that a simple act of faith is the only means of justification.

[15] Robertson, 19. Robertson critiqued this paper of Shepherd's with a paper of his own, titled, 'Nineteen Erroneous Or Misleading Statements in Norman Shepherd's October, 1976 paper, "The Relation of Good Works to justification in the Westminster Standards," reprinted in *The Counsel of Chalcedon* (July/August, 2002).

[16] Quoted from Reason and Specifications, 136.

[17] Reason and Specifications, 137.

[18] Reason and Specifications, 137.

[19] Robertson, 26.

[20] Ibid., 26.

[21] The full text of Hughes' dissent is available in Robbins' *Companion*, pp. 105-115.

[22] *Companion*, 106.

[23] Ibid., 106.

[24] Ibid., 106.

[25] Ibid., 106.

[26] Ibid., 107-108.

[27] Ibid., 109.

[28] *Companion*, 109-110.

[29] Ibid., 110.

[30] Ibid., 111.

[31] Ibid., 111.

[32] Ibid., 112.

[33] Ibid., 112.

[34] Ibid., 112-113.

[35] Ibid., 113-114.

[36] Robertson, 27-28.

[37] Available on the worldwide web.

[38] Thesis 20 in full states: 'The Pauline affirmation in Romans 2:13, 'the doers of the law will be justified,' is not to be understood hypothetically in the sense that there are no persons who fall into that class, but in the sense that faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ will be justified (Compare Luke 8:21; James 1:22-25).' This thesis is contrary to the classic reformed interpretation of Romans 2:13, which did in fact understand it hypothetically in the sense that there are no persons who fall into the class 'doers of the law.' Calvin well states the classic view: 'if they alone are justified by the law who fulfill the law, it follows that no one is justified; for no one can be found who can boast of having fulfilled the law' (*Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979], 19:96).

[39] Robertson, pp.34-35.

[40] Robertson, 35.

[41] This paper can be obtained from the web-site of Rev. Mark Horne, a Shepherd supporter, who has recently written a commentary on Mark published by Canon Press.

[42] Robertson, 30.

[43] Reason and Specifications, 132-133.

[44] Ibid., 161.

[45] Ibid., 148-161.

[46] Ibid., 148.

[47] Ibid., 149.

[48] Ibid., 149.

[49] Ibid., 150.

[50] Ibid., 150.

[51] Ibid., 151.

[52] Ibid., 151-152.

[53] Ibid., 153-154.

[54] Ibid., 155.

[55] Ibid., 152.

[56] Ibid., 152-153.

[57] Ibid., 153.

[58] Ibid., 153.

[59] Ibid., 154.

[60] Ibid., 154-155.

[61] Ibid., 155.

[62] Ibid., 155.

[63] Ibid., 156.

[64] Ibid., 156.

[65] Ibid., 161.

[66] Dr. Cornelis Venema, president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, reviews Shepherd's book in *Mid-America Journal of Theology* vol. 13 (2002): 232-248.

[67] *Call of Grace*, 4.

[68] Ibid., 5.

[69] Ibid., 8-9.

[70] Ibid., 104.

[71] Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., translated by George M. Giger, edited by James T. Dennison, Jr (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1992), 2:189.

[72] The Socinians shared Shepherd's desire to make saving faith itself an act of obedience along with all other acts of obedience. 'The Socinians, the more easily to overthrow the fiducial apprehension of Christ's

satisfaction (in which the orthodox constitute the essence of faith) and thus retain the righteousness of works (as so expressly distinguished from the righteousness of faith in Scripture), hold that faith is nothing else than obedience to God's commands. Thus good works are not so much the fruit of faith as its form' (Turretin, 2:581).

[73] *Ibid.*, 48.

[74] *Ibid.*, 39.

[75] *Ibid.*, 15.

[76] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, Library of Christian Classics. Vols. 20-21 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 3.17.12.

[77] *Calvin's Commentaries* [James], 22:314-315.

[78] *Ibid.*, 314. Dr. Venema has recently ably defended the reformed interpretation of James 2 in his extended series on the justification controversy in *Outlook Magazine* (see *Basket of Figs* web-site). See also Brian Schwertley, 'What About the Book of James,' 2 parts in *Reformed Herald* (October and November 2003).

[79] *Call of Grace*, 62.

[80] *Ibid.*, 62.

[81] *Ibid.*, 33.

[82] *Ibid.*, 45.

[83] *Ibid.*, 44.

[84] *Ibid.*, 51.

[85] Shepherd is careful to set his view over against that of Rome. 'Rome's doctrine of salvation requires that place be given to human merit'(60). 'By good works, this righteous person merits the reward of eternal life' (59).

[86] *Ibid.*, 20.

[87] *Ibid.*, 22.

[88] *Ibid.*, 35.

[89] *Ibid.*, 31.

[90] *Ibid.*, 55.

[91] Ibid., 50-51.

[92] Ibid., 51.

[93] Ibid., 21.

[94] Ibid., 39.

[95] Ibid., 56.

[96] Jeong Koo Jeon has shown how a denial of the covenant of works can lead and has led to a denial of justification by faith alone. See *Covenant Theology: John Murray's and Meredith G. Kline's Response to the Historic Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999). According to Jeon, the whole point of the covenant of works is to preserve the biblical truth that there is a big difference between man's pre-fall state and man's post-fall state. Prior to the fall, man, though created without sin, was in a probationary state, having not yet obtained eternal life. Eternal life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity, upon the condition of perfect obedience. If Adam had refused to eat from the forbidden tree, he would not have remained in his original state but he and in him his posterity would have advanced to eternal life. After the fall, man having made himself incapable of obtaining eternal life by obedience, God in His grace was pleased to offer eternal life to sinners, upon the sole condition of faith in Jesus Christ. The reformers employed the Law/Gospel hermeneutic to defend this discontinuity between the pre-fall and post-fall states of man. In other words, the Law promises eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience; the Gospel promises eternal life on the condition of faith in Christ. Contrary to this, opponents of the covenant of works, such as Daniel Fuller, reject the distinction between Law and Gospel, and argue that there is no essential difference between the pre-fall and post-fall states of man. Rather, there is 'a continuum of divine 'grace' throughout all God's dealings with man, pre-Fall as well as redemptive' (Jeon quoting from Meredith Kline, 'Covenant Theology Under Attack,' *New Horizons* 15/2 [1994]: 3). The implication of this continuum is that Adam did not need to do a work of obedience in order to obtain or merit eternal life. Adam was created already in possession of eternal life, he was already experiencing a gracious relationship with the Lord, and he simply needed to obey as a condition for maintaining his gracious gift of eternal life. After the fall, man did not need someone to merit eternal life for him by perfect obedience. He only needed to be forgiven for disobedience and enabled again to walk in the way of obedience. Redeemed man, having been forgiven and enabled to obey, is reinstated in Adam's original condition, still facing the necessity of obeying as a condition of eternal life. 'Fuller's systematic destruction of the discontinuity between Law and Gospel makes the path of obedience to the law the road to salvation and justification' (253, n.119). Jeon makes a point of emphasizing that though Calvin did not, and John Murray did not want to, designate man's pre-fall state as a covenant of works, nevertheless, both Calvin and Murray, along with classic reformed theology, recognized the principle inherent in the covenant of works, namely, 'that the means of eschatological justification and life in the prelapsarian state was perfect obedience to the law' (331).

[97] For a recent defense of the Westminster Confession's doctrine of the covenant of works see Cornelis Venema, 'Recent Criticisms of the 'Covenant of Works' in the Westminster Confession of Faith,' *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 9:2 (Fall 1993): 165-198. 'Even though some may choose not to speak of 'covenant' in the pre-fall state (for example, Murray), this does not alter the fact that a theology faithful to biblical teaching must reckon with the difference in man's standing before God in the pre- and post-fall

states. This the WCF does by means of its formulation of a covenant of works and a covenant of grace.' (p.188).

[98] *Call of Grace*, 25.

[99] *Ibid.*, 25-26.

[100] Venema wards off the caricature when he writes, '*At no point in God's dealings with man as covenant creature may we say that God, in the strict sense of justice, owes the creature anything. Everything God bestows upon the creature, whether in creation or redemption, is an undeserved favor or benefit of his goodness and kindness.*' However, the fact is that God has, by entering into covenant with man, *bound himself by the promises and as well the demands/obligations of that covenant.* This means that Adam's obedience to the probationary command, though it were an outworking and development within the covenant communion in which he was placed by God's prevenient favor, would nonetheless 'merit' or 'deserve' the reward of righteousness God himself had promised' (Venema, 195; emphasis original). Meredith Kline, on the other hand, feels no compulsion to qualify the conviction that the covenant of works was in fact a matter of simple justice: 'Adam would have fully deserved the blessings promised in the covenant, had he obediently performed the duty stipulated in the covenant. Great as the blessings were to which the good Lord committed himself, the granting of them would not have involved a gram of grace. Judged by the stipulated terms of the covenant, they would have been merited by simple justice.' 'Not grace but simple justice was the governing principle in the pre-Fall covenant; hence it is traditionally called the Covenant of Works. God is just and his justice is present in all he does. That is true of gospel administrations too, for the foundation of the gift of grace is Christ's satisfaction of divine justice. If you are looking for an element of continuity running through pre-Fall and redemptive covenants (without obliterating the contrast between them), there it is 'not grace, but justice' ('Covenant Theology Under Attack,' *New Horizons* [February 1994]).

[101] *Call of Grace*, 26.

[102] *Ibid.*, 60.

[103] *Ibid.*, 39. Shepherd believes the only way to refute Rome's idea of meriting eternal life by works is not by pointing to the perfect merits of Christ's obedience but by abandoning the whole idea of merit. In this way we can take passages like James 2:24 at face value without feeling threatened. 'If we do not reject the idea of merit, we are not able to challenge the Romanist doctrine of salvation at its very root' (61-62). 'The second consequence of not rejecting the idea of merit is that we feel threatened by passages of Scripture that speak of repentance and obedience as conditions for entering eternal life' (62).

[104] 'But why cannot our good works be the whole or part of our righteousness before God? Because the righteousness which can stand before the judgment seat of God, must be perfect throughout and entirely conformable to the divine law, but even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin' (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 62). According to the Westminster Confession, God bound not only Adam but also 'his *posterity* to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience' (19.1; emphasis mine).

[105] *Call of Grace*, 26.

[106] *Ibid.*, 26.

[107] See Mark Karlberg, 'Reformed Interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 43 (1980): 1-57. Karlberg demonstrates that the reformers understood the Mosaic covenant as a particular administration of the single covenant of grace, yet having the traits of a covenant of works.

[108] *Call of Grace*, 19.

[109] *Ibid.*, 75.

[110] Berkhof noted the implications of this idea that Christ merely paid sin's penalty. If Christ 'had merely paid the penalty, without meeting the original demands of the law, He would have left man in the position of Adam before the fall, still confronted with the task of obtaining eternal life in the way of obedience' (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939], 381). Shepherd clearly wants to leave man with the task of obtaining eternal life in the way of obedience.

[111] *Ibid.*, 19.

[112] *Ibid.*, 39.

[113] *Ibid.*, 63.

[114] 'Justification By Faith Alone,' *Reformation and Revival* 11:2 (Spring 2002), 75-90.

[115] *Ibid.*, 88.

[116] *Ibid.*, 75.

[117] *Ibid.*, 85. The serious misunderstanding, Shepherd alleges, is that all it takes is a simple act of faith.

[118] *Ibid.*, 87.

[119] *Ibid.*, 78.

[120] *Ibid.*, 83.

[121] *Ibid.*, 84.

[122] *Ibid.*, 85.

[123] *Ibid.*, 87.

[124] *Ibid.*, 82.

[125] *Ibid.*, 83.

[126] *Ibid.*, 83.

[127] *Ibid.*, 82.

[128] *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. W. Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 152. 'Now it ought to be a fact beyond controversy that repentance not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith' (*Institutes* 3.3.1). 'Yet, when we refer the origin of repentance to faith we do not imagine some space of time during which it brings it to birth; but we mean to show that a man cannot apply himself seriously to repentance without knowing himself to belong to God' (*Institutes*, 3.3.2).

[129] Turretin, 2:677.

[130] *Ibid.*, 2:680.

[131] *Ibid.*, 2:681.

[132] 'Justification By Faith Alone,' 84.

[133] *Ibid.*, 84-85.

[134] *Ibid.*, 85.

[135] *Ibid.*, 81.

[136] *Ibid.*, 78.

[137] *Ibid.*, 87.

[138] *Ibid.*, 85.

[139] *Ibid.*, 86.

[140] *Ibid.*, 88.

[141] *Ibid.*, 88.

[142] *Ibid.*, 86.

[143] *Ibid.*, 88.

[144] Tapes are available by calling SCCCS at (714) 572-8358.

[145] Long ago Wilhelmus Brakel argued that, 'whoever denies the existence of the covenant of works, ' will very readily deny that Christ by His active obedience has merited a right to eternal life for the elect.'

See *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, vol. 1, translated by Bartel Elshout (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), p. 355.

[146] Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, Translated by Rev. G.W. Williard (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company), 325.

[147] *Ibid.*, 325.

[148] *Ibid.*, 325.

[149] *Ibid.*, 326.

[150] *Ibid.*, 327.

[151] Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989 reprint), 3:129.

[152] See *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

[153] Geerhardus Vos, 'Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology,' in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 237.

[154] *Institutes* 2.12.3.

[155] *Ibid.*, 2.16.5.

[156] *Calvin's Commentaries* [Romans], 19:212-213.

[157] *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, 118-119.

[158] *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 325.

[159] *Ibid.*, 27.

[160] *Ibid.*, 82.

[161] *Ibid.*, 88.

[162] *Ibid.*, 325.

[163] *Ibid.*, 104.

[164] *Ibid.*, 497.

[165] *Ibid.*, 331.

[166] Johannes Piscator (1546-1625), a German Reformed theologian. See Anthony Hoekema, *Saved By Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 182. Piscator's arguments were condemned at the third National Synod of Rochelle: 'this Synod, in no wise approving the dividing of causes so nearly conjoined in this great effect of divine grace, and judging those arguments produced by him for the defense of his cause weak and invalid, doth order that all the pastors in the respective churches of this kingdom do wholly conform themselves in their teaching to that 'form of sound words' which hath been hitherto taught amongst us and is contained in the Holy Scriptures; to wit, that the *whole* obedience of Christ, both in His life and death, imputed to us, for the full remission of our sins, and acceptance unto eternal life: and, in short, that this being but one and the self-same obedience, is our entire and perfect justification' (Quoted in James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* [Edinburgh: Banner Of Truth, 1961 reprint; first published in 1867], 174-175; emphasis original).

[167] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 380-381.

[168] Turretin, 2:140.

[169] Berkhof, 381.

[170] Nicolaas H. Gootjes, 'Christ's Obedience and Covenant Obedience,' *Koinwnia* 19/2 (Fall, 2002), 16.

[171] *Ibid.*, 16.

[172] Turretin, 2:452.

[173] 'It is customary to distinguish between the active and passive obedience of Christ. But in discriminating between the two, it should be distinctly understood that they cannot be separated. The two accompany each other at every point in the Savior's life. There is a constant interpenetration of the two. It was part of Christ's active obedience, that He subjected Himself voluntarily to sufferings and death. He Himself says: 'No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself,' John 10:18. On the other hand it was also part of Christ's passive obedience, that He lived in subjection to the law. ' Christ's active and passive obedience should be regarded as complimentary parts of an organic whole' (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 379-380).

[174] Buchanan, 268.

[175] Turretin, 2:451.

[176] *Ibid.*, 2:454.

[177] *Ibid.*, 2:451.

[178] *Ibid.*, 2:141.

[179] Hodge, 3:119.

[180] *Call of Grace*, 15.

[181] Turretin, 2:647.

[182] Ibid., 2:647.

[183] *Institutes* 3.11.14.

[184] Ibid., 3.11.14.

[185] Ibid., 3.11.20.

[186] Ibid., 3.14.9.

[187] Ibid., 3.14.13.

[188] Andrew Sandlin, 'Deviations From Historic Solafideism in the Reformed Community,' *Chalcedon Report* (February 1995), 23.

[189] Douglas Moo, 'The Epistle to the Romans,' *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 209; quoted in James White, *The God Who Justifies* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2001), 179-180; emphasis original.

[190] *The Epistle to the Romans*, 217; quoted in Edward Donnelly, 'By Faith Alone,' *The Banner of Truth* (August/September 2003), 42. See also Douglas Moo, "Law," 'Works of Law,' And Legalism in Paul,' *WTJ*, Vol. 45:1 (Spring 1983), pp. 73-100.

[191] Turretin, 2:678.

[192] Robertson, *Justification Controversy*, 18-19.

[193] Turretin, 2:684.

[194] John Murray, *Collected Writings*, vol. 2 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 221.

[195] *Institutes*, 3.11.1.

[196] Turretin, 2:63

OVERTURE # 6

Adopted by Classis Central US

AN OVERTURE TO REVISE CHURCH ORDER ARTICLE 36

Background

In 1999, Synod Hudsonville adopted *The Guidelines For Ecumenicity and Church Unity*. The guidelines define various aspects of ecumenical relations, delineating them into three phases: Phase One – Corresponding Relations, Phase Two – Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Phase Three – Church Union (Minutes of Synod 1999, Art. 36. B. 1. b). According to these guidelines, entering Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship required ratification by the consistories.

In 2004, Synod Calgary amended these guidelines, adding that ratification by the consistories is also required for entering Phase Three – Church Union (Minutes of Synod 2004, Art.69. A).

Decisions regarding ecumenical relations are governed by Church Order Article 36:

The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision must be ratified by a majority of the Consistories.

Further, Synod 2004 said that Article 36 defines the matter of ecumenical relations as simple majority (Minutes of Synod 2004, Art.82. A. 1).

Overture

Therefore, Classis Central US respectfully overtures Synod 2007 that Church Order Article 36 be revised as follows:

*The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision **with respect to Ecclesiastical Fellowship** ~~must be ratified~~ **shall require ratification** by a majority of the Consistories **in the federation**. **Such a decision with respect to Church Union shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall require ratification by two-thirds of the Consistories in the federation.***

Grounds

1. The mandate for CERCU starts with these words — ‘*With a view toward Church Unity...*’ This would indicate not only a process of different phases, but also an increasing understanding of this unity and the need to grow in unity. This growth toward unity should also be exhibited in the voting and ratification process.
2. Changes to the Church Order are judged to be significant enough to require a two-thirds vote of a synod and ratification by two-thirds of the consistories (Church Order, Art. 66), thus maintaining a unity in the federation. Likewise, matters of church union must express unity in the church, therefore it would be wise to require a two-thirds vote of a synod and ratification by two-thirds of the consistories, as this would bring more honor to God and would better serve the churches of the federation.

3. Changes to the Church Order and ecumenical relations are not necessarily bound to each other and are different in content and focus. Therefore it would be in good order to address each matter individually, in their respective article of the Church Order.
4. Article 36 as presently written could be interpreted to also require ratification by a majority of consistories for entering Phase One – Corresponding Relations, since that is also an element of ecumenical relations. Adopting the proposed changes, using the language of *The Guidelines For Ecumenicity and Church Unity*, would reduce any doubt in regard to procedure: decisions with respect to Phase One, a vote of a synod; Phase Two, a vote of a synod ratified by a majority of consistories; Phase Three, a two-thirds vote of a synod ratified by two-thirds of consistories.

OVERTURE # 7

Adopted by Classis Central US

AN OVERTURE TO JOIN THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED JOINT COMMISSION ON CHAPLAINS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL

I. Background

Faith United Reformed Church of Beecher, Illinois, is blessed with a seminarian (graduation goal: May 2007) and army soldier who aspires to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. Army. However, according to government regulations, this service requires an ecclesiastical endorsement from “a qualified Religious Organization,” which presently, the URCNA is not, nor does it belong to such. However, joining the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission would facilitate chaplaincy endorsements for URC ministers seeking to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the U.S. Army.

The Urgent Opportunity of Army Chaplaincy

Chaplain service in the U.S. Army presents a vast array of opportunities for edifying the saints and evangelizing the lost. Conducting chapel services and Bible studies, ministering the Word through personal teaching and counsel, demonstrating in one’s life the power of a living hope — these are all marvelous means for furthering the kingdom of Christ among soldiers. The military environment, which often includes ungodly speech and life, the stress of battle, separation from church and family, among other factors, makes the spiritual needs of Christian servicemen all the more urgent. These factors may also be ones the Lord is well-pleased to use in humbling unbelievers and causing them to see their desperate need of the true gospel.

Our churches should take an enthusiastic interest in the opportunities of the military chaplaincy, not only because the opportunities and needs are extensive, but also because many forms of the false gospel are being peddled by various chaplains. What is needed everywhere else certainly is needed in the military environment — namely, the true, whole, biblical gospel of Jesus Christ. Why, when we have the real thing, should we permit the unfaithful to own the field? The answer cannot be that the U.S. Government prohibits the pure gospel, for it does not.

The Legitimacy of Army Chaplaincy

The U.S. Army does not generate religious ministry, but it is committed to providing for the spiritual needs of its servicemen. It seeks to do this by receiving ministers from the churches and religious bodies represented by their soldiers. These ministers, commissioned by the Army as chaplains, are not regulated in doctrinal commitment or religious practice by the Army, but instead are regulated by and responsible to their respective endorsing agencies and churches. This arrangement permits a faithful minister of the gospel to carry out the work of Christian ministry without compromising his biblical convictions.

The Department of Defense Directives (which govern all branches of the U.S. Military) and the more specific Army Regulations require chaplains to function in a way that is mindful of and helpful to the free exercise of religion of all military personnel, and to assist the commander in providing for the spiritual care of all unit members. For instance, the Department of Defense Instruction states that a chaplain’s ecclesiastical endorsement must verify that the chaplain (or Religious Military Professional) “is willing to function in a pluralistic environment as defined in this Instruction and to support directly and indirectly the free exercise of religion by all members of the Military Services ...” (DODI 1304.28 June 11, 2004: 6.1.3). Similarly, Army Regulations state that, “Commanders are responsible for the religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical well being of all personnel in their commands. ... The staff chaplain has the primary staff responsibility to assist the command in the planning, development, and implementation of these command responsibilities” (AR 165-20, chapt. 3).

But, while a military chaplain must serve all the soldiers in his assignment, he is not coerced to serve in a way that is inconsistent with his faith. For instance, the Army Regulations state: “Chaplains are authorized to conduct rites, sacraments, and services as required by their respective denomination. Chaplains will not be required to take part in worship when such participation is at variance with the tenets of their faith” (AR 165-1 para.4-4e). And similarly it says, “Military and patriotic ceremonies may require a chaplain to provide an invocation, reading, prayer, or benediction. Such occasions are not considered to be religious services. Chaplains will not be required to offer a prayer, if doing so would be in variance with the tenets or practices of their faith group” (AR 165-1 para.4-4h).

While Army Regulations state that, “[e]ach chaplain will minister to the personnel of the unit and facilitate the ‘free-exercise’ rights of all personnel, regardless of religious affiliation of either the chaplain or the unit member” (AR 164-1 para.4-4b); nonetheless, if a chaplain is unable in good conscience to perform a religious service, he may provide for the soldiers in his assignment in another way. The practice known as “accommodation” allows for one chaplain (i.e. a Protestant) to get a different chaplain (i.e. a Roman Catholic) to perform a service he is unable or unwilling to perform (i.e. the Roman Catholic Mass). Such scenarios clarify the requirement of the Department of Defense, that any religious organization that chooses to participate in the chaplaincies must “express willingness for their Religious Ministry Professionals (RMPs) to perform their religious duties as chaplains in cooperation with RMPs from other religious traditions” (DODD 1304.19 June 11,2004: 4.2).

Thus, according to military regulations, it appears that there is a way to fulfill the obligations of an Army chaplain while remaining faithful to the Reformed faith. While one may question whether the sacraments can be properly administered in the military context, it seems evident that the preached Word, at least, can be faithfully administered.

This assessment is confirmed by Reformed chaplains today and is consistent with the assessment made in our history. CRC Synod 1942 created a chaplain committee under Christian Reformed Home Missions, prompted by the fact that many Christian Reformed men were called into military service after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They wanted military personnel to receive the true gospel and did not want to leave this task to modernists (Tim Penning, “The Church Beyond the Pew: 50 Years of Chaplaincy,” *The Banner* [July 13, 1992]: 8-11).

Following the war, the CRC preserved its Chaplain Committee. This committee repeatedly urged the necessity of continuing the chaplain ministry in peacetime, insisting that, “the numerous military Forts, Camps, and Bases are all so many fields white unto the harvest where faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ are sent by the church to enter the door while it is still opened for them by the Department of National Defence of our country. As long as this freedom and opportunity continues, the chaplaincy must be recognized by the Christian church as a permanent field of operations for sowing and planting the seed of the Word and cultivating the ground.” (*Acts of Synod 1949 of the Christian Reformed Church*; p.331).

The Required Endorsement for Army Chaplaincy

The U.S. military is charged with defending the interests of the country, and not with doing ministry. Therefore, it does not provide chaplains through its own religious training or theological schools, but instead receives qualified ministers from religious bodies. In order to ensure that a chaplain is qualified, the Army (and the other military branches) require an ecclesiastical endorsement verifying this fact from “a qualified Religious Organization” (DODI 1304.28, June 11, 2004: 6.1).

This ecclesiastical endorsement is required by the military for entrance into and continued service in the chaplaincy. This endorsement also is important for the chaplain himself, since the doctrinal standards of this body (along with those of his own denomination, if a different body) are his justification and protection in his performance of ministry.

The URCNA does not have “qualified Religious Organization” status and therefore is unable to endorse any URC minister for chaplain service. If our churches desire to send ministers to serve as military chaplains, one of three routes must be taken: (1) each minister must *individually* solicit an endorsing body to endorse him; or (2) our federation must apply for its own endorsing status; or (3) our federation must seek to affiliate with a body that already possesses endorsing status.

(1) The first option is not always possible, since not every endorsing agency will endorse a minister outside their body. And where it is possible, it is not very desirable, since most endorsing bodies do not hold to the same confessions and particulars that we do. Thus, choosing this route would severely weaken our chaplains' representation, protection, and support.

(2) The second option is possible, but, because of the availability of the third option, is unnecessary, perhaps wasteful, and may result in less than desirable representation, protection, and support. While the URCNA could apply for its own endorsing rights, effective endorsing in the military involves more than just the necessary paperwork. Effective endorsing agencies send a representative to meetings in order to build rapport (i.e. with the Chiefs of Military Chaplains), present a defense for chaplains who are questioned for maintaining their convictions, labor to stay informed about changing policies, and assist their chaplains and churches in a variety of other ways. For this reason, endorsing bodies may feel compelled to devote a man to this work on a full-time basis. However, if only one or two URCNA ministers enter the chaplaincy, it seems unlikely that devoting such resources could be justified.

The PRJC and Army Chaplaincy

(3) The third option commends itself when we consider joining the endorsing agency known as the "Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel" (PRJC). This Commission began in 1978 and is governed by representatives from its three member denominations: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. (It is also the endorsing body for two denominations that are affiliated with it: the Korean-American Presbyterian Church and the Korean Presbyterian Church of America.)

The Commission consists of representatives from each of the member denominations. They meet face to face at least once a year and communicate by other means throughout the year. They oversee the work of the Executive Director, who is devoted to the work full-time. The current Executive Director is the well-recognized and credentialed (retired) Chaplain (Col.) David Peterson, a PCA minister with 30 years of experience as a military chaplain.

Chaplain (Col.) Peterson, who is assisted in his work by two other men, actively attends military meetings, visits each chaplain annually, conducts annual training for all chaplains and a special seminar for new chaplains (entitled, "Ministering in a Pluralistic Environment Without Compromise"), oversees a quarterly newsletter with reports from the chaplains, serves as a liaison in a variety of ways, and visits military installations when issues arise between a superior officer and one of the PRJC chaplains. Chaplain (Col.) Peterson believes that it is still possible to faithfully minister in the military's pluralistic environment without compromising one's faith, but he stresses that this is becoming increasingly complicated, and therefore necessitates an active endorsing agent along with a strong church.

Joining this PRJC would avail us of a respected endorsing agency with a strong voice and helpful resources. It also would present our chaplains with instructive experience and encouraging camaraderie by officially connecting them to some 160 other Reformed military chaplains. The PRJC also presents a significant opportunity for fostering our bond, demonstrating unity, and exercising cooperative service with some NAPARC churches.

Desire to join the PRJC is met with two membership options: full membership and affiliate membership. Already the PRJC has denominations in both categories, as detailed above. The Commission will perform the same endorsement and services for chaplains belonging to federations of either category. The main difference is that only full member denominations possess voting rights at the PRJC meetings. (Full member denominations are entitled to three voting representatives for the first fifty thousand denominational members or portion thereof. The Executive Director will always be a member of the PCA.)

Affiliate membership status can be acquired more quickly, since it requires approval from the Commission alone. Full membership status requires approval by the member denominations at their major assemblies. While affiliated denominations are invited to send observers to the annual Commission meetings in Atlanta, GA, full member denominations are expected to do so (although they might begin by sending only one representative).

The Commission requires dues from both member and affiliated denominations commensurate with the number of chaplains a denomination sends, currently set at the amount of \$250.00 per chaplain annually. Additionally, the chaplains themselves pay dues between \$15.00 and \$35.00 per month.

Applying for membership requires a letter of request from one's denomination along with its doctrinal statement.

Information about the PRJC can be found at the PCA's website (Go to www.pcanet.org and click *Mission to North America*, then click *Outreach Ministries*, then click *Chaplain Ministries*. The direct link is: www.pca-mna.org/chaplain%20ministries/chaplain.htm)

Finally, it should be noted that while this overture is concerned with endorsements for the Army Chaplaincy, the PRJC does endorse for all branches of the military, as well as V.A. and civilian hospitals, and state and federal prisons.

II. Overture

Faith United Reformed Church of Beecher, Illinois overtures Classis Central U.S. to overture Synod 2007 (1) to instruct the Stated Clerk to apply immediately, on behalf of the URCNA, for affiliate-membership in the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRJC); and (2) to appoint the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to send two observers to each of the next three PRJC meetings, at URCNA expense, and request Faith URC to report their observations to the next synod meeting.

III. Grounds

1. Reformed ministry in the Armed Forces chaplaincy is an urgently needed, legitimate, and useful ministry of the Word, worthy of the support of our churches and the service of our ministers.
2. An ecclesiastical endorsement from a faithfully Reformed and active endorsing body is a necessary prerequisite for faithful chaplain ministry; however, the URCNA is unqualified to issue such an endorsement.
3. Seeking our own URCNA endorsing status is an unnecessary and perhaps wasteful endeavor, would be less helpful to our chaplains than joining the PRJC, and would fail to take advantage of a significant opportunity to cooperate with NAPARC churches.
4. The PRJC is a faithful, well-recognized, experienced, active, and resourceful endorsing agency governed by three NAPARC denominations.
5. Affiliate-membership seems more advantageous than full membership, promising (a) quicker acceptance and more speedy endorsements; (b) an opportunity to send observers to the PRJC meetings and become better acquainted with this body; and (c) time to see whether we can justify a commitment to the responsibilities of full membership in the PRJC, depending on how many URCNA ministers actually enter the military chaplaincy.
6. Sending observers to the PRJC annual meetings would facilitate a deeper understanding of this organization, foster the URCNA's budding relationship to it, and serve to assess the wisdom of applying for full membership in the future.

Adopted by Classis Central US

**OVERTURE TO APPOINT STUDY COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINAL
COMMITMENT AND COMMUNICANT MEMBERSHIP**

Overture for Classis

The consistory of the Covenant Reformed Church in Kansas City, Missouri, overtures Classis Central US to overture Synod 2007 to appoint a committee to study the level of doctrinal commitment advisable for communicant membership in our churches.

Grounds:

1. The history of the Reformed Churches indicates diversity on this question, with many insisting on full agreement with the Three Forms of Unity (see *Acts of Synod 1959 [CRC]*, pp.21-22), and others permitting exceptions to certain formulations provided the membership candidate (a) promises to submit to further instruction, (b) promises not to propagate his deviation and, (c) understands his ineligibility for office in the church (see, *Acta Generale Synod GKN 's–Gravenhage 1914*, Art. 138 p.86; cf. The Regional Synod of Gouda 1620 for a similar judgment).
2. The history of the Reformed Churches indicates diverse understandings regarding the meaning of the third question in the Form for Public Profession of Faith with some insisting this refers to commitment to the Reformed Confessions and others insisting it does not (see N. H. Gootjes, “The Articles of the Christian Faith” *Clarion* 48:5 [1999] and “Once More: Articles and Confessions” *Clarion* 48:6 [1999]; cf. G. Van Rongen, *Our Reformed Church Service Book* [Neerlandia, Inheritance, 1995], pp. 188ff.).
3. The current practices among Reformed Churches with whom we presently enjoy formal relationships via the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) are diverse on this question, though most do not require full agreement with the doctrinal standards of their churches. The 34th General Assembly of the OPC (1967), for example, was of the opinion that “with regard to the admission to membership of those who cannot at that time in good conscience present their children for baptism, the session may judge in the special circumstances that such persons, having been informed of the position of the church, may be admitted if they are willing to answer sincerely and affirmatively the questions asked of those being admitted to communicant membership in the church (*Directory for Worship V:5*).” Quoted from *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth General Assembly of the OPC* [1967], p.136
4. Because of recent church plant initiatives and a renewed commitment to outreach, the churches of our federation receive requests for membership with increasing frequency from friendly evangelicals who do not fully agree with our doctrinal standards. It is the desire of leaders in these churches to shepherd these brothers and sisters in Christ without compromising the Reformed character of the church.
5. Such a synodically adopted study would serve the harmony and uniformity of practice among the churches of the federation (see art.25).

OVERTURE # 9

Adopted by Classis Central US **AN OVERTURE TO ADD A POLITY AREA TO CANDIDACY EXAM**

Overture

Classis Central U.S. overtures Synod 2007 of the URCNA to amend Appendix 2 of the Church Order “*Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam*” as follows:

- In section 3.b. (Content), **add** this subsection: “(8) Church Polity: the history and principles of Reformed church polity, and the content of the Church Order.”
- In section 3.b. (Content), in subsection 1 (Practica), **delete** “and church polity.”

Grounds

1. Currently a church polity section is to be found in the Ordination Exam and Colloquium Doctum but not in the Candidacy Exam. However, Classes are allowed to opt to waive the Ordination Exam if a candidate does well during the candidacy exam and is called to a congregation within that classis (Appendix 2, 2.d). This can lead to and has led to a man passing his exam and being ordained without having been approbated in the area of church polity.
2. Since the Federation sees the necessity of including a section on church polity in our other two examinations, it is obvious that our covenant together includes agreement that a knowledge of church polity is necessary for a man to serve the Lord well upon his call to a particular congregation.
3. Historically, church polity has been part of the examination for the ordained ministry¹.

¹Cf. Acts of Synod of the CRCNA, 1939, pp. 74,75

OVERTURE # 10

The council of the Bethel United Reformed Church of Aylmer humbly overtures Classis Southern Ontario to overture Synod 2007 to replace our current Church Order Article 11 with the following article developed from our current Article 11 and the correlating article developed by the Joint Church Order Committee:

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, and a minister of the Word or the consistory of the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution may occur only when all the following conditions have been met:

- a. this dissolution shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. this dissolution shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;
- c. this dissolution shall occur only with the concurring advice of the classis;
- d. this dissolution shall require concurring advice of the classis with respect to the consistory's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years or unless financial security is achieved prior to the end of the two years, with the agreement of the Church visitors and the concurrence of Classis.

The consistory of the congregation with which the pastoral relationship is dissolved shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.

Grounds:

1. The proposed article makes more clear than our current Article 11 that when a minister is lawfully called by a church and thus by the Lord, a strong and lasting bond of mutual obligation exists between the minister and the church he serves. Thus, the relationship should not be entered into or carried on with the possible use of Article 11's provisions in mind.
2. The proposed article makes explicit and thus more clear what is implicit or assumed in our current article, namely, that the dissolution of the pastoral relationship may be sought only for "weighty and exceptional circumstances" when it "has been irreconcilably broken."
3. Whereas our current Article 11 states that dissolution of pastoral relationship may be desired by the minister "or the congregation" he is serving, the proposed article states that either the minister or the "consistory of the congregation he is serving" must desire the dissolution of the relationship. It thereby makes explicit that the consistory has authority in such matters. It also suggests that the church and / or the consistory is not ruled (in such circumstances) by 'the will of the people.'
4. The proposed article makes clear the circumstances that warrant church discipline instead of a dissolution of the relationship, namely, "delinquency in doctrine or life."
5. Whereas our current Article 11 does not require classical involvement until its concurring advice is sought, the proposed article requires the involvement of the classis with the goal of reconciliation before a request for the implementation of its provisions is permitted. This proposed requirement
 - a) has in view the well being of the local congregation, consistory, and the minister involved.
 - b) acknowledges the interest of the federation in preserving the ministerial office as there is a sense in which the ministers of the federation serve the federation as well as a particular local congregation.

- c) is in keeping with the nature of our federative relationship.
6. By requiring the “concurring advice of the classis with respect to the consistory’s provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years” the proposed article
- a) involves an objective third party as it seeks to ensure the proper care of the minister and his family.
 - b) suggests that proper honour must be given the minister and his family for the sake of the high office he continues to hold while awaiting another call.
 - c) underscores the congregation’s obligation to provide for the minister for the duration of his time in its midst that it voluntarily assumed when it extended its call to him.

OVERTURE # 11

Classis Southern Ontario humbly overtures Synod 2007 to include a definition / description of marriage in Church Order Article 48.

Article 48 currently reads,

Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages in conflict with the Word of God.

While we believe this article to be quite adequate in and of itself, our concern is to include a clear legal basis that the courts will recognize upon which our ministers can refuse to perform same-sex unions or same-sex marriages. In Canada such a basis would have to be religious since

- 1) churches are religious organizations,
- 2) Scripture reveals marriage to be a divinely ordained institution, and
- 3) The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects freedom of religion.

Thus, we overture that Article 48 be amended to read,

Scripture reveals that marriage is to be a lifelong, monogamous covenantal union between one man and one woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages in conflict with the Word of God.

Grounds:

1. The inclusion of a Biblical definition / description of marriage is Biblical and therefore permissible.
2. The inclusion of a Biblical definition / description of marriage might help shield our Ministers of the Word from unjust prosecution in the event that they are asked but refuse to solemnize a same-sex union or same-sex marriage. This may become a particular problem for URC ministers and churches in Canada since Canadian Law currently permits same-sex 'marriage'.
3. The inclusion of a Biblical definition / description of marriage will also make our churches' position clear to our own membership and others who might desire clarification regarding this matter.

OVERTURE # 12

Overture Regarding Church Order Article 44

The Council of the Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church overtures Classis Southern Ontario to overture Synod of 2007 to alter Church Order Article 44 which presently states "Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required. Their names shall be announced to the congregation two weeks prior to reception, in order that the congregation may have opportunity, if necessary, to bring lawful objections to the attention of the Consistory." So that it states "Persons coming from denominations other than those with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership only after Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life"

Grounds

1. The Church Order was written before we had ecclesiastical fellowship with other churches, so this is just a house cleaning amendment. The URCNA adopted CERCU's suggestion that we do not delay accepting membership of persons coming from churches in which we have ecclesiastical fellowship.

OVERTURE # 13

Overture:

The Consistory of Faith Reformed Church of Telkwa overtures Classis Western Canada to overture Synod 2007 to instruct the Website Oversight Committee to update the URC Website to include sermons (both free text and Catechism) of current URC ministers.

Background:

Reading sermons are a necessity, for the times when our ministers are off the pulpit on vacation or ill, or for vacant Churches. Sermons by URC ministers would be preferable, but these are not readily accessible. If the Website Oversight Committee is mandated to update the URCNA Website in this way, they could accumulate quite a number of sermons and make them accessible to elders when the need arises.

Grounds:

1. The present sermons on the website are outdated in language, illustrations, and application.
2. It would be wise to tap into the rich resource of gifted preachers with which we are currently blessed in the URCNA.
3. Reading sermons ought to be contemporary if we expect them to be understood and hold the attention of the congregation.
4. Using sermons from present URC ministers would assist the elders in guarding the pulpit against error or inconsistent doctrine.
5. As a Federation we only allow Reformed preachers on our pulpits. We ought, then, to be consistent in the sermons read from our pulpits.

OVERTURE # 14

The Council of the Bellingham United Reformed Church, the Council of the Lynden United Reformed Church, and the Council of Immanuel's Reformed Church (Salem, OR) overtures Classis Western Canada (Winnipeg 2007) to overture Synod 2007 to form a new Pacific Northwest Classis, consisting of the following churches:

*Bellingham United Reformed Church (Bellingham, WA)
United Reformed Church of Lynden (Lynden, WA)
Immanuel's Reformed Church (Salem, OR)
Cloverdale United Reformed Church (Boise, ID)
Grace United Reformed Church (Kennewick, WA)
United Reformed Church of Nampa (Nampa, ID)
United Reformed Church of the Magic Valley (Twin Falls, ID)
Belgrade United Reformed Church (Belgrade, MT)
Zion United Reformed Church (Ripon, CA)
Emmanuel United Reformed Church (Lemoore, CA)
Covenant United Reformed Church, (Fresno, CA)
Trinity United Reformed Church (Walnut Creek, CA)*

Grounds:

- (1) The Bellingham, Lynden, and Salem URCs face many issues in the United States that the more established churches of Classis Western Canada do not face and it would be very beneficial for us to be able to speak more regularly and interact with the churches belonging to our region. Further, as a church plant and mission work in Bellingham, being part of classis with other church plants would allow us to interact on a more regular basis with them.
- (2) The cost for traveling to some of the classis meetings has grown to be quite extensive. Travel from Bellingham is not possible and travel from Abbotsford or Vancouver to such places as Thunder Bay and Winnipeg is expensive and the time involved is also quite substantial
- (3) The financial discussions of Classis Western Canada, understandably so, take place in Canadian dollars. One of the reasons that both the Abbotsford and Surrey URCs gave for not wanting to be in a new classis (Pacific Northwest) proposed Synod 2004, was the confusion that arises in financial discussions. This is something that we face now in a classis where only 3 of the 16 churches are in the U.S. Forming a new Classis Northwest would alleviate this problem.
 - a. The natural boundary line will present future hardships as stricter regulations are in the process of being ratified.
 - b. Presently, there are no other Classis' with churches from both countries.
- (4) Classis Southwest is currently quite large (over 21 churches) and forming a new classis would alleviate the heavy burden that Classis Southwest faces with so many churches.
- (5) There are enough churches in the Pacific Northwest to form a Classis.
- (6) The present zoning of the Classis Western Canada and Southwest US needs to be reconsidered. Churches from the same state and same region are traveling great distances, some to be a part of Classis Western Canada, and others to be a part of Classis Southwest.

Overture to URCNA Synod 2007

Classis Southwest US respectfully overtures Synod 2007: **That the Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity used by the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity be changed as follows:** (following background)

Background

Since the beginning of the federation of United Reformed Churches, there has been a commitment to recognize and develop ecumenical relationships with other like-minded reformed federations and denominations. This commitment was formalized with the establishment of an Inter-Church Relations Committee by Synod Lynwood, Illinois, (Minutes of Synod 1996, Art. 39). That committee was re-named the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity by Synod St. Catharines, Ontario (Minutes of Synod 1997, Art. 27. G. 1). Since then, this committee has been establishing contact with such federations and denominations.

One of the first tasks the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity was given, was to refine the mandate for their committee (Minutes of Synod 1997, Art. 27 .G. 1). At Synod Hudsonville, Michigan, that mandate was approved (Minutes of Synod 1999, Art. 36. B. 1. b). The mandate of the committee is,

With a view toward 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 synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda.

Briefly, the Guidelines For Ecumenicity And Church Unity contain three phases. Phase One (Corresponding Relations) is described as a phase of *exploration*, in order that the churches may develop mutual understanding and appreciation of each other. Phase Two (Ecclesiastical Fellowship) is described as a phase of *recognition* of one another as true churches as well as a *commitment* to eventual integrated federative church unity. Phase Three (Church Union) is the stage of *integration* and complete church unity, that is, ecclesiastical union.

As these Guidelines have been instituted and as our ecumenical relations have developed, it seems that the Guidelines For Ecumenicity And Church Unity have set out a pattern that moves too quickly from initial investigation of one another, to a commitment to eventual union. This rapid movement has caused some to reject moving to Phase Two with other federations and denominations that we would like to recognize as true churches without being committed to join with them. There should be some step between *recognizing* one another as true churches and making a *commitment* to eventual church unity. Such a step would allow us to recognize both our sameness with other federations, while at the same time recognizing our important distinctions, without the obligation to commit to eventual unity.

Grounds

1. This will give the federation more flexibility in our ecumenical relations by allowing us to recognize other true churches without at the same time committing ourselves to eventual integrated federative unity with them.
2. This will allow a more realistic application of Phase Two relations with other federations and denominations.

GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH UNITY

Phase One - Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity 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 federations' lives:

Deleted: churches'

- a. View and place of the Holy Scriptures
- b. Creeds and confessions
- c. Formula of subscription to the confessions
- d. Significant factors in the two federations' history, theology, and 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 ecumenicity 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, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

Deleted: and in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity,

- 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 with an advisory voice

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art.36.

Phase Three - Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity 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 phase shall be accomplished in two steps:

Step A. – Develop the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

Having recognized and accepted each other as true and faithful churches, the federations shall make preparation for and a commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity. They shall construct a plan of ecclesiastical union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

Deleted: 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

- 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

Entering this step of phase three requires ratification by a majority of consistories.

Step B. – Implementation of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union

This final step shall only be taken when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to the plan of ecclesiastical union.

Entering this step of phase three requires ratification by a majority of consistories.

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod 2007 (Schererville) to adopt the following changes to Church Order, article 12:

The ~~council~~ **consistory** shall present to the congregation nominations for the offices of elder and deacon. Only male confessing members who meet the biblical requirements for office and indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription shall be nominated by the ~~council~~ **consistory**. Prior to making nominations, the ~~council~~ **consistory** may give the congregation opportunity to direct attention to suitable men.

Grounds

1. “The Consistory is the only assembly in the church(es) whose decisions possess direct authority within the congregation, since the Consistory receives its authority directly from Christ, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ” (*Church Order*, art. 21)
2. Among the duties of the elders is to “insure that everything is done decently and in good order” (*Church Order*, art. 14).
3. The task of nominating those to fill the office of “ruling the church of Christ” (*Church Order*, art. 14) belongs properly to those already in that office, along with the ministers who are members of the consistory.
4. This change would be more harmonious with article 13 of the *Church Order*, which says that the terms of office are determined by the consistory. In fact, this is of less consequence than the initial nominations of officer-bearers.
5. The current article is susceptible of leading deacons, who belong to the office of mercy (*Church Order*, art. 15), to intrude “upon [the office] of another” (*Church Order*, art. 62), and cause serious problems within the church.

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod 2007 (Schererville) to clarify the meaning of three phrases that appear in the supplement to the mandate for the Psalter Hymnal Committee adopted at Synod 2001.

Background

Synod 1997 established a Psalter Hymnal Committee for the express purpose of producing for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal. Synod 1999 established the mandate for this committee. Synod 2001 reiterated four points of this mandate and appended one additional point. Since Synod 2001, the Psalter Hymnal Committee (aka Song Book Committee) has been diverted from their original and abiding purpose to pursue another: a common song book for the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches. We believe the committee has interpreted the appended portion of its mandate to be a new and/or additional purpose rather than simply a portion of its mandate for how to fulfill its original and abiding purpose. Therefore, we submit the following overture.

Overture

That Synod clarify the meaning of the supplement to the mandate for the Psalter Hymnal (aka Song Book) Committee adopted at Synod 2001:

“That the present “Psalter Hymnal Committee” *work together with* the Canadian Reformed “Book of Praise Committee” *to consider for inclusion* in *this song book* the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality.” [Emphasis added]

So that the committee might serve its original purpose of “producing for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal,” Synod should clarify these three phrases as follows:

- 1) “*work together with*” includes both consultation with and careful consideration of views advanced by the Canadian Reformed “Book of Praise Committee” but only insofar as such work does not hinder, delay, or divert the Psalter Hymnal Committee from fulfilling its purpose as originally adopted;
- 2) “*to consider for inclusion*” neither implies nor necessitates inclusion of any or all metrical psalmody;
- 3) “*this song book*” refers to a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal that will serve the churches of our federation alone, whether or not we are in ecclesiastical fellowship with any number of denominations / federations.

Grounds

1. The committee’s original purpose is clear and abiding: to produce for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal.
 - a. Synod 1997 (St. Catharines) established the Psalter Hymnal Committee in response to Overture 26 from Classis West that specifically sought the appointment of a committee for the production of “a Psalter Hymnal for the United Reformed Churches in North America”. (Acts of Synod 1997; p. 99)
 - b. Synod 1997 adopted the recommendation of Advisory Committee 5 “that a committee be formed to explore what is required to produce, reproduce, or obtain a Psalter Hymnal.” (Acts of Synod 1997, Article 62.C.3; pp. 33-34)

- c. Synod 1999 (Hudsonville) received the Psalter Hymnal Committee Report that reveals that they rightly understood their task to be that “of producing a new Psalter Hymnal for the URC”. (Acts of Synod 1999; pg. 92) They recommended, “That a committee be appointed to begin the work of producing, for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal”. (Acts of Synod 1999; pg. 93, Recommendation A)
 - d. Synod 1999 adopted the recommendation of Advisory Committee 9 “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.” (Acts of Synod 1999, Article 37.B.2.a.i.; pp. 18-19)
 - e. Synod 1999 adopted the recommendation of Advisory Committee 9 “that should Synod adopt Recommendation A, that the Psalter Hymnal Committee presently in place, be reappointed to begin the work of producing a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal. If necessary, additional members could be added to the committee.” This motion was amended only by adding the names of committee members prior to adoption. (Acts of Synod 1999, Article 41.b.; p. 19)
2. The mandate of the Psalter Hymnal Committee as established in 1999 and supplemented in 2001 was adopted in order to serve this clear and abiding purpose.
- a. The mandate was established by Acts of Synod 1999:
 - i. A recommendation of songs to be included in the new Psalter Hymnal. (Article 41.c.(a); p. 19)
 - ii. A recommendation of other materials (liturgical forms, the 3 forms of Unity, Creeds, Prayers, etc) to be included in the New Psalter Hymnal. (Article 41.c.(b); pp. 19-20)
 - iii. That all of the Committee recommendations be presented for approval at a future meeting of Synod. (Article 41.c.(c); p. 20)
 - iv. That the committee consults with those churches with whom we have entered corresponding relations. (Article 41.c.(d); p. 20)
 - v. That the Psalter Hymnal Committee report to the next meeting of synod with a proposal for funding a new songbook.” (Article 49.C; p. 27)
 - b. Four points of the mandate were reiterated by Act of Synod 2001:

That synod express its appreciation for the work of the Psalter Hymnal Committee and ask them to continue to carry out points 1 – 4 of its 1999 mandate and present the principles listed for the churches to study, and adoption by the next synod. (Article 35.D.4; p. 17)
 - c. The mandate was supplemented by Act of Synod 2001:

That the present “Psalter Hymnal Committee” *work together with* the Canadian Reformed “Book of Praise Committee” *to consider for inclusion in this song book* the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standards of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need

not be included in their totality. [Emphasis added] (Article 45.B.2.c; p. 24)

3. The Psalter Hymnal Committee has interpreted the supplement to the mandate at Synod 2001 to be a new and/or additional purpose: to put together a common song book for use in both the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches. This interpretation has diverted the committee from its original and abiding purpose.
 - a. Assertions made in committee reports to synod and to the churches reveal this interpretation.
 - i. “The Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches entered into “Phase Two” of ecumenical relations, effective January 1, 2002, with the goal of eventual federative unity. The synods of those two federations mandated their respective committees to labor together to recommend to the churches a common songbook, which would be faithful to our Reformed confessions.” (Acts of Synod 2004 / Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity Report / 14. Phase 2 Committee Report / B. Songbook (Psalter Hymnal) Committee Report / Principles and Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church, Introduction; p. 102)
 - ii. “It is part of the mandate given to our committee by Synod Escondido to work together with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise, of the Canadian Reformed Churches, in an effort to put together a common song book for our churches.” (Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity; United Reformed Churches in North America; CERCU Report to the Churches, May 2006 / Appendix 2: Report to the Churches of the Song Book Committee, Joint meetings)
 - b. These assertions, even though one is in a document approved by Synod, do not constitute acts of Synod and are not binding on the churches.
 - c. This interpretation of the acts of Synod must therefore be corrected by Synod.
 - d. To accomplish this correction most efficiently, Synod must clarify the meaning of three key phrases in the supplement to the mandate adopted by Synod 2001.
4. The URCNA needs a new Psalter Hymnal whether or not we pursue church union with the Canadian Reformed Church and/or the Reformed Church in the United States.
 - a. Even if we should accomplish church union with either or both of these denominations, a common song book is not required for church union.

“This final phase [*Phase Three – Church Union*] 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... d) the song books for worship.” [Emphasis added] (Acts of Synod 1999, Article

36.B.1; pp. 16-17); cf. p. 49-50 “Guidelines for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity”)

- b. Even if a common song book was required, the work of timing, coordinating, and/or integrating song books for worship properly belongs to *Phase Three – Church Union*, not *Phase Two – Ecclesiastical Fellowship*.
5. Synod 2007 marks ten years since Synod established this committee for the express purpose of producing a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal. By adopting this overture, Synod frees this committee to fulfill its original and abiding purpose in a speedier and more faithful manner.

APPEAL #1

March 29, 2007

Appeal to the URCNA Synod meeting (D.V.) in Schererville on July 9 – 14, March 21, 2007.

The undersigned respectfully request that the attached Appeal be put on the Agenda of the URCNA Synod meeting (D.V.) at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights on July 9 – 14, 2007. This Appeal was submitted to the Consistory of the Bethel URC of Aylmer and Classis Southern Ontario. At their meetings, the Aylmer Consistory, and Classis Southern Ontario, decided not to endorse my appeal, although there was respectable support.

Appeal: Elder Harry Van Gulp of the Bethel URC of Aylmer, Ontario, Canada appeals to the URCNA Synod meeting (D.V.) on July 9 – 14, 2007 to reverse the decision of Synod Calgary (as noted in the Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA June 15 – 18, 2004). That Synod defeated Recommendation B. of Advisory Committee 7, (cf. Article 82, page 33). I appeal to Synod 2007 to adopt Recommendation B. which says; “That Synod declare that when Art. 36 of the Church Order and the ‘Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity’ refer to ‘*of the Consistories*’ it shall mean *of the Consistories* **voting** in the ratification process”.

Background/Observations:

1. Our Church Order, besides Article 36, clearly takes steps to safeguard the prerogatives and responsibilities of the local church (consider, e.g. Articles 16, 25, 28, 29, 30, and 66). Also consider that in “Foundational Principle of Reformed Church Government #9”, we say, “Member churches meet together in consultation to guard against human imperfections and to benefit from the wisdom of a multitude of counselors in the broader assemblies. The decisions of such assemblies derive their authority from their conformity to the Word of God. (Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 13:9-10; 11 Timothy 3:16-17)”. As faithful Reformed Churches, who come together as a Synod to prayerfully deliberate and make decisions that are, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, in keeping with God’s Word, on the basis of substantial and credible grounds.

2. In the Jove paperback edition of Robert’s Rules of Order (Copyright 1967), on page 72, it says, “A majority vote ... is a majority of the votes cast, ignoring blanks ...” In the commentary on Robert’s Rules of Order, written by Rachel Vixman and in the same book, it says on page 145, “Some motions require a majority vote, a number greater than one half of the votes cast ...” Later, in a section giving definitions of parliamentary terms, it says, on page 153, “*Majority*, more than half of the votes cast”. In the same section, it says on page 154, “Voting, those actually casting a vote.” The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary gives the definition of majority. “The number by which, in voting, the votes cast on one side exceed those cast on the other side.” This is why, since time immemorial, the understanding has been that a party that did not exercise its responsibility to act on a matter was considered to acquiesce with the decision made on the matter. Failure to cast a (ratification) vote was understood either as a vote in support of the decision already made, or the party was considered derelict in its duty. Hence the saying: (Your) silence gives (Your) consent.

Grounds:

1. It is not in keeping with Gods Word, as it does not promote the unity of the churches, John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6. (Also see our Church Order Appendix, “Foundational Principle of Reformed Church Government #10, “In order to manifest our spiritual unity, local churches should seek the broadest possible contacts with other like-minded churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world”).

2. According to the “Foundational Principle of Reformed Church Government #10 non-participating Consistories in the ratification process are not fulfilling their duty as spelled out in this foundational principle and its supporting Scripture references. It requires them to be active “..... seek the broadest possible contacts”

3. “Non-existent votes”, simply can not be considered as votes, and as such, actively, oppose the direction of God’s Word as noted in grounds # 1 + 2.

4. There is no meaningful way, that non-participating-Consistories in the ratification process can meet the requirements of Church Order article 29 which states, “.... unless it is proved that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.....”

5. Non-existent votes, from non-participating-Consistories, can not be advisers or counsellors to Synod, and do not meet the Biblical principle that “there is safety in the multitude of counsellors” Proverbs 11:14), and, that we are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:20).

**Respectfully submitted,
Elder, Harry Van Gulp.**

Communication #1

Cornerstone United Reformed Church

180 Waterloo St. London ON N6B 2M9

Tel: 519-432-0808

Rev. Dennis Royall, Pastor - pastor@cornerstoneurc.org

Eric Luth, Clerk - clerk@cornerstoneurc.org

Esteemed colleagues and brothers,

Cornerstone United Reformed Church in London, Ontario, humbly requests the privilege of hosting the next meeting of the Synod of our United Reformed Churches, tentatively expected to take place during the summer of 2010.

We may assure the delegates that we have sufficient facilities at our disposal for both housing and food for delegates and fraternal observers. The facilities are also ample for any meeting spaces required for committee work and plenary sessions of Synod. Furthermore, there are sufficient numbers of gifted, talented, and willing people among our membership who are able to provide for the needs of hosting such a Synod.

As for delegate travel, the London International Airport supports direct flights from a number of the major cities in Canada, including hourly flights from Toronto Ontario and flights every 2 hours from Detroit Michigan. Should delegates wish to drive, London is an easy 2½-hour drive from Detroit, an hour from Port Huron, Michigan or a 3-hour drive from Buffalo, New York. For the families of our delegates, there is much natural beauty surrounding us in Southwestern Ontario, providing almost unlimited sightseeing opportunities.

Thank-you for considering this request to host the first Synod in Classis Southern Ontario since 1997.

Sincerely, in Christ

Done in Council, January 3, 2007

Eric Luth

Clerk - Cornerstone United Reformed Church

Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Report to Synod

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

With gratitude to God for His covenant faithfulness the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity presents our synodical report to the churches. As a committee we count ourselves blessed for the privilege we have had in representing our churches and in interacting with and being encouraged by brethren of like, precious faith from the bodies that have been assigned to us for dialogue.

1. INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

With today's communication technology the vast majority of the committee's work is accomplished via email. Since the previous meeting of the churches in synod the committee has also been able to have two face-to-face meetings as a full committee. The first took place in Chicago in May 2005 and the second in Philadelphia in conjunction with extensive unity talks with the full Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC in March of 2006.

In the spring of each year we have sent a report of the committee's work for synod and the churches to all councils. We have included in these emailings the full annual reports of the four Phase 2 unity committees, as instructed by Synod Escondido. For your convenience we reproduce the synodically adopted mandate and guidelines under by which the churches have appointed our committee to carry out our work.

Mandate

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 synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda.

GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH UNITY

United Reformed Churches in North America

Phase One - Corresponding Relations

The first phase of ecumenicity 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 the two federations' history, theology, and 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 ecumenicity 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 with an advisory voice

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art.36.

Phase Three - Church Union

The third phase of ecumenicity 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

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories.

According to synodical decision, there are presently nine federations assigned to the committee for the pursuit of ecumenicity. For ease of visualization we present them here in the ecumenical relationship Synod Calgary 2004 determined for these bodies.

A. Churches in Ecumenical Dialogue

- 1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
- 2. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)

B. Churches in Phase 1 – Corresponding Relations

- 1. Free Reformed Churches (FRC)
- 2. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC)
- 3. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- 4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ)
- 5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

C. Churches in Phase 2 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship

- 1. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
- 2. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

As we report on our dialogue with these churches, following the sequence presented above, we note that we will also be bringing one new recommendation to Synod 2007: That synod enter into *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* (Phase 2) with the OPC.

2. COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

In fulfillment of the wishes of the churches in a decision of Synod Calgary 2004, CERCU is now functioning with a full contingent of six classical representatives and three members at-large. The arrangement has functioned well. The manner in which both concerns and expertise can now be brought to the committee from each of the various regions of the federation has demonstrated many times the wisdom of this synodical provision for classical representation. The representatives have also adopted a protocol for making regular progress reports to their respective classes, while thereby also making themselves available to receive regional input from the churches.

By decision of Synod Calgary the following men have been serving the committee as **members at-large**:

Chuck Dykstra, Trinity ORC, St. Catharines, ON
Rev. Ralph Pontier, Redeemer URC, Orange City, IA
Rev. Harry Zekveld, Providence URC, Strathroy, ON

By way of classical appointments, the following men have been serving the committee as **classical representatives**:

Central US	Rev. Todd Joling, Faith URC Beecher, IL
Eastern US	Rev. Don Hoaglander, RBC West Sayville, NY
Michigan	Rev. Casey Freswick, Bethany URC, Wyoming, MI
Southern Ontario	Rev. John Bouwers, Immanuel ORC Jordan, ON
Southwest US	Rev. Danny Hyde, URC Oceanside, CA
Western Canada	Rev. William Van der Woerd, Immanuel Covenant Ref. Ch., Abbotsford, BC

Mr. Bill Konynenbelt in his capacity as Stated Clerk of the federation also serves as an *ex officio* member of the committee, receiving all committee correspondence via email.

The committee has asked Rev. Ralph Pontier to function as chairman, Rev. John Bouwers as secretary, and when we meet as full committee, Rev. Casey Freswick functions as recording clerk.

Though they are not generally expected to participate in the dialogue, the classical alternates appointed in each classis also receive all committee correspondence; enabling them to keep abreast of the ecumenical activities of the committee should they in the providence of God be called into service. Rev. Gary Findley has represented Classis SWUS at our meeting with the OPC and Rev. Dick Wynia has attended the meetings of NAPARC in Montreal when at the last minute a death in the family did not allow member at-large Chuck Dykstra to attend.

At Synod Calgary 2004 the churches decided that each term of service should consist of three years, and that men may be reappointed for up to two additional terms for a total of three consecutive terms (Acts 2004, Article 68.B.3).

In keeping with these provisions, Synod will need to appoint or reappoint three members at-large. Rev. Harry Zekveld is eligible for reappointment for one more term of service and Rev. Ralph Pontier is eligible for two more. Mr. Chuck Dykstra will not be eligible for reappointment at this synod (Acts 2004, Article 97.C).

The committee also asks Synod to remind the classes to appoint or reappoint their classical representatives to CERCU at their next respective classes. As the provision for classical representation was a new development with Synod Calgary 2004, all of the classical representatives are eligible for reappointment for up to two more terms. While the committee believes the churches would be best served with a high degree of continuity with regard to classical representation, we also alert the churches to the potential for a large turnover of classical representatives in 2013 should the three-term limit be maintained.

3. NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL (NAPARC)

One of the more significant ecumenical developments for the United Reformed Churches since our last synod has been our reception into the membership of NAPARC. We count it a privilege to be part of this council of confessionally minded Presbyterian and Reformed Churches one of whose chief purposes, according to its constitution, is to “hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.”

Application for membership came by way of the decision of Synod Calgary 2004. In its original recommendation that led to this decision, CERCU had adduced the following grounds:

1. There is renewed interest and effort in NAPARC to work for organic union among churches of like faith and practice.
2. Although NAPARC itself may not be the vehicle to unite member churches, it provides an opportunity for meaningful communication. It holds before the members the need to work for unity and helps motivate member churches to engage in dialogue, one on one, with other denominations.
3. The URCNA can make a meaningful contribution to NAPARC discussion, better representing the continental Reformed traditions and distinctives than is presently done in a group that is predominantly Presbyterian.

At the annual meeting of NAPARC in Kansas City in November 2004 our application for membership was received and unanimously approved. There was among the member churches at that meeting a sense that the United Reformed Churches would fill a void that was left when the Christian Reformed Church had to be put out of the Council for its unscriptural views and practices. There was marked appreciation for our expressed desire to seek a greater expression of the visible unity of the church.

The constitution of NAPARC requires that a decision of the Council to receive churches into membership must subsequently be ratified by a 2/3 majority of the member churches at their respective Synods or General Assemblies. Since some bodies, such as the URCNA for instance, do not meet annually in synodical assembly, three years are allotted for the ratification process to be completed. In the case of our own application, ratification of this decision by the Synods and General Assemblies of the member churches of NAPARC was achieved already by the 2005 annual meeting, held in Flat Rock, North Carolina. With the completion of this membership procedure, our United Reformed Churches were received into full membership of NAPARC at that meeting. When the Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ) was also able to report on its ratification of the initial decision at the 2006 meeting of NAPARC in Montreal, the ratification of our membership in NAPARC also became unanimous.

While all of the Presbyterian bodies assigned to our committee have been longstanding members of NAPARC, it is also encouraging to see how some of the continental Reformed bodies have been taking steps toward membership. The Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA) were received into provisional membership status in 2005 and since a sufficient number of ratification votes were received by the 2006 meeting, these churches were received into membership at that meeting in Montreal. The application of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) was received and approved at the 2006 meeting and presently awaits ratification. The Canadian Reformed Churches will also be dealing with a recommendation to seek membership in NAPARC at their next General Synod scheduled for May of 2007.

Ratification of New Membership Applications to NAPARC

Synod will need to ratify the decisions taken at NAPARC regarding the reception of both the FRCNA and the HRCs into membership. Your committee recommends to the churches that both of these applications be ratified. Please refer to the section 4.b.2 of our report below for supporting information regarding the Free Reformed Churches. Their official website may also be consulted at <http://www.frcna.org/>. For further information regarding the Heritage Reformed Congregations please see the background information letter provided by these churches in support of their application for membership in NAPARC which is attached as appendix 1. Their denominational website may also be consulted: <http://heritagereformed.com>.

We note with gratitude that our mutual presence at NAPARC has provided something of an impetus for renewed and reinvigorated ecumenical dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches. It is also our understanding that from the perspective of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the vote of their General Assembly to ratify our reception into NAPARC simultaneously accords to our churches the status of *Fraternal Relations* with the PCA, their highest level of fellowship short of full union. The committee also brings to the churches attention that there are also two other bodies connected with NAPARC with which our committee has not been instructed to pursue discussions, namely the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC) and the Heritage Reformed Congregations. If the churches are of a mind that we as United Reformed Churches should also be dialoguing with and pursuing relations with these fellow NAPARC churches, we believe that is an initiative that would need to be assigned to the committee by a decision of synod in response to an overture that would have arrived on the synodical agenda in the church orderly manner prescribed in CO Article 25.

Foreign and Home Missions Consultations

CERCU was able to send representatives to each of the annual meetings of NAPARC, held in Kansas City, MO, Flat Rock, NC, and Montreal QC in 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively. In addition to the regular meetings of NAPARC there are two other annual meetings that member churches are encouraged to participate in. One is the annual Home Missions Consultation which typically takes place just prior to the annual meeting of NAPARC in the same venue as the meetings themselves. Since the United Reformed Churches do not have any federational Home Missions agency, our practice has been to have some of the men attending NAPARC on behalf of CERCU attend the Home Mission Consultation. At this meeting, member churches of NAPARC share information regarding their respective plans in the area of domestic missions. Until such time as our churches wish to be represented differently at these meetings, it is our recommendation that members of CERCU continue to represent our churches at these particular meetings as well.

The other NAPARC meeting that is held annually is a meeting of World Missions Executives. These meetings, unlike the Home Missions Consultations are held at a different time, in a different place than the annual meetings of NAPARC. For the past two years our churches have been represented at these meetings by Rev. Raymond Sikkema. CERCU has asked Rev. Sikkema to represent our churches at these meetings because of his involvement on the missions committee of the ICRC (International Council of Reformed Churches) as well as his membership on the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA). Rev. Sikkema has prepared full reports with regard to these meetings. We ask the churches to take note of the points and concerns he raises in his reports that we attach to our report in appendix 2

NAPARC Position on Women in the Military

There is one final item from NAPARC that requires the attention of our churches. Four member federations have adopted position reports condemning the use of women in military combat roles. The original 2003 report to NAPARC is included in appendix 3 to provide the background information. The Council has been encouraging the remaining federations to adopt similar statements so that a coordinated statement representing all the churches could be issued. The statement, which received the approval of the 2005 meeting of NAPARC reads: *“The Word of God gives no warrant expressed or implied that women are to be conscripted into or employed for military combat roles but rather they are to be defended by men and kept from harms way that they might fulfill their biblical callings and duties under God.”* This statement now requires the ratification of the synods and General Assemblies of the member federations.

As a point of interest, your committee alerts the churches to the fact that whereas the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at it's 68th General Assembly has itself made a “ministerial” declaration opposing the use of women in combat roles in the military, its has nevertheless as a body declined to ratify the NAPARC statement, stating as its grounds: *The basis of NAPARC is set forth in Article II of its Constitution: “full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts and to its teaching as set forth in [the Three Forms of Unity] and [the Westminster Standards]. The nature and extent of its authority is prescribed in Article IV of the Constitution: “It is understood that all actions and decisions taken are advisory in character and in no way curtail or restrict the autonomy of the member bodies.” We do not believe that it is wise for NAPARC to embark on a course of making pronouncements for its member churches.*

Your committee recommends that synod not endorse the NAPARC statement on women in the military because:

- a. The URCNA has not, as a federation, studied the matter, nor has there been a request from the churches to take federation position on the issue.
- b. The fact that one NAPARC member (the OPC) has already refused to endorse the NAPARC statement precludes the possibility of NAPARC ever being able to make a statement for all its member churches.
- c. We agree with the OPC that "it is not wise for NAPARC to embark upon a path of making pronouncements for its member churches."

4. REPORTING ON THE STATUS OF ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

It is important that as churches we have an appreciation both for how broad and for how narrow are our ecumenical commitments and obligations as United Reformed Churches. The broadness of our ecumenical mandate can be seen from how these bodies span both the Reformed and Presbyterian world throughout North America. The narrowness of our focus will be seen in that the bodies assigned were assigned because of being recognized for their serious

commitment to the Scriptures as summarized in the historic Reformed and Presbyterian confessional standards. The unity the Lord Jesus prays for and enjoins of his followers in John 17 is to be unity in the truth (John 17:19), a unity of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1).

Progress with the various groups assigned has not been uniform. Some bodies are confessionally and historically closer to us than others. In *principle*, in keeping with the Scriptural injunctions to unity, and in accord with the synodically assigned mandate, the CERCU Committee carries out its work with all of these bodies *with a view toward complete church unity*. In *practice* such unity takes much time to come to expression. With some of the bodies assigned it may never happen. Providential developments, historical distinctives and other factors may make full unity with some of the assigned bodies difficult if not, humanly speaking, impossible. Love for one another as Christian brothers, both within and without the federation, will require a sense of sanctified patience and wisdom in recognizing and dealing with such realities. It is conceivable that our relations with some bodies may remain at either Phase 1 or Phase 2 for a very long time. The highest form of unity possible, which must remain our goal Scripturally, must never be superficial or forced. This *practical realization* and the accompanying patient and wise dealings must not however detract from, but must rather serve, the ongoing, *principled commitment* to seeking and manifesting ecclesiastical unity as fully as possible.

There are two of the originally assigned ecclesiastical bodies that remain in the broad category of *Ecumenical dialogue*. With these two bodies the CERCU has yet to make significant enough progress to warrant a recommendation to the churches entering into Phase 1 *Corresponding Relations*.

a. Churches in Ecumenical Dialogue

1. The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP)

Our committee has only had one face-to-face meeting with representatives of the ARP, and that took place following the meetings of NAPARC in Pittsburgh, PA on November 12, 2003. The meeting was cordial and fraternal. From both sides there was a commitment to continue the dialogue as time and circumstances should allow. We have since maintained some general correspondence via email. Men from our federation have addressed their Synod on two occasions. In 2003, Dr. Michael Scott Horton delivered three of the sermons at the ARP synod and was given occasion to bring greetings from the URC. Rev. Calvin Tuininga, being the closest proximity to their 2005 Synod, held at Flat Rock, NC attended at CERCU's request. His greetings were read on his behalf since he was not able to be present for the time of fraternal greetings. It is expected that with our increased involvement in NAPARC further opportunities for dialogue and development with the ARP may present themselves.

The ARP Church began in 1782 when the Associate Presbytery and the Reformed Presbyterians joined together to found the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Both are of Scottish background. Some of the second group did not join, and are today's RPCNA. Although the ARP is mainly found in the southeastern USA, they have a Korean Presbytery in California and a few churches in Canada as well.

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Catechisms. In 1991 the ARP noted that the Three Forms of Unity are a good expression of the Reformed Faith. In 1996 the ARP commended the Three Forms of Unity with the following wording: "Therefore, be it resolved that the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church commends to the churches the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt as faithful and useful summaries of Biblical and Reformed doctrine." This was not seen as a new sentiment but also as an expression of solidarity with churches like those of the URC that were going through the painful process of separating from the CRC at that time.

2. The Presbyterian Church of America (PCA)

Other than through our growing awareness of one another through our newly developed contacts at NAPARC, the committee has had very little contact with representatives of the PCA.

Rev. Allen Vander Pol was, however able to represent our churches at the 2005 General Assembly held in Chattanooga TN. Rev. Vander Pol reports that this particular assembly, comprised of some nearly 1500 commissioners, was not faced with any particularly momentous decisions. Providentially, however this was the assembly that was to deal with the ratification of our reception into NAPARC.

Among his encouraging remarks to the assembly, Rev. Vander Pol said

Our name, "United Reformed," expresses our hope that the world of Reformed churches will not remain fractured. Therefore, much energy is presently being exerted to explore unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We have committees working with theirs seeking to formulate a united church order and a commonly used song book which will include hymns as well as all of the Psalms. Our Synod has approved pursuing church unity with the Reformed Church in the United States, and we hope eventually to reach that stage with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Also, we genuinely hope that the churches of NAPARC will approve our membership in that body. Beginning with denominations which seem closest to us, we are committed to working for genuine reformed ecumenicity.

Rev. Vander Pol was able to be present for their decision to approve our membership in NAPARC, which meant, coincidentally, that the PCA has also thereby received our United Reformed Churches into *Fraternal Relations*. The denomination has two categories of ecumenical relations, their Stated Clerk wrote, ***Fraternal Relations*** with other Presbyterian/Reformed denominations that are voting members of NAPARC and other churches with whom the General Assembly wishes to establish fraternal relations unilaterally, and ***Corresponding Relations*** with other evangelical churches in North America and other continents.

At the most recent meeting of NAPARC, Dr. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk of the PCA expressed the willingness of the PCA to continue to engage in dialogue with CERCU in order that our churches may also be able to seek to make progress together with the PCA according to our phases of unity.

b. Churches in Phase 1 – *Corresponding Relations*

Of the original churches assigned to the committee, with a goodly number our churches have presently progressed to the level of Phase 1, or *Corresponding Relations*. According to the URCNA Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity, this first phase of ecumenicity is *one of exploration, with the intent that by correspondence and dialogue, mutual understanding and appreciation may develop in ... the two churches' lives.*

1. *Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ)*

By a synodical decision of Synod Calgary (2004) our churches entered into Phase 1 *Corresponding Relations* with the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ). The Reformed Church of Quebec is a little band of fledgling faithful Reformed Churches seeking to maintain a witness for the gospel in the midst of a traditionally French Roman Catholic culture that has become severely secularized, post-modern and hedonistic.

Rev. John Bouwers was able to represent our churches at their November 2005 Synod hosted by the St. Jean congregation of Montreal. There we were able to report the decision of our Synod Calgary (2004) to begin a phase 1 – *Corresponding Relationship* with them and were also subsequently encouraged to hear of their desire to continue to pursue closer relations.

Following the November 2006 meeting of NAPARC in Montreal, CERCU representatives were further able to engage in a healthy discussion with men from the ERQ. Making use of a six-page document prepared by the Inter-church Committee of the ERQ we were able to cover together the first three elements our churches expect our committee to speak about in a phase 1 relationship; namely the view of Scripture, confession and subscription.

Rev. Dick Wynia, who was present at this meeting as an classical alternate, summarized the discussions as follows:

a. With respect to the view and place of the Scriptures in the ERQ, we were informed that the office bearers subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism and Westminster Confession. The ERQ use the original Westminster Confessions, and therefore, they make exceptions in the binding to a statement in the Confession on consanguinity, and on the requirement that the government call the council of the churches. On the confession about the inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures, they maintain a full Reformed commitment to the Scriptures and their place in the church's life. We invited them to review the statements of agreement that CERCU have arrived at in our discussions with the OPC.

b. As noted above, the ERQ have adopted the Heidelberg Catechism and Westminster Confession as their confessional standards. This reflects the background of their pastors, who have come out of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches. They also hold to the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creed. They also accept the

Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the LaRochelle/Gallican/French Confession. The LaRochelle Confession is not used extensively, though it is recognized as a standard. The ERQ is looking into adopting a Form of Subscription. There is an office bearer who holds to the Framework Hypothesis, but has signed that he adheres to the Confession of Faith, which maintains a six day creation. This has created some debate among them about how subscription to the Westminster Confession works, in this case. As far as teaching the confessions is concerned, the youth of the churches are taught by pastors or elders, using locally developed materials, and, Dr. J. Visscher's Heidelberg Catechism study guide, I Belong. We noted that one church was reported to be using the Alpha program. The brothers assured us that Arminian elements of the Alpha instruction, and the materials about the special gifts of the Spirit were not included in the instruction.

We continued to grow in mutual appreciation for one another and a good foundation was laid for further Phase 1 discussions.

One thing that was discussed in that meeting however was the fact that language may be a limitation in terms of meaningful dialogue and interchange. We take note of how the ERQ has been committed from its inception in the 1980's to remaining a federation in its own right, rather than forming a French language classis or presbytery of a larger Anglophone federation. As a federation of Francophone churches, all located in a French speaking province, the ERQ sees itself more or less as a "national" church. Meaningful interaction in the assemblies and the ecclesiastical life of the other churches in an Anglophone federation would be quite limited. Pulpit exchange, for example, would effectively be a one way street, and then only if the ERQ pastors were bilingual. Delegates to broader assemblies would be very restricted in their participation in the deliberations of broader assemblies.

We wonder whether the relations between the URCNA and the ERQ should in fact be dealt with through CERCU - whose mandate is to work for complete organic unity with other federations - or CECCA, whose mandate is to establish ecumenical contact and cooperation with foreign federations.

2. Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRC)

Our churches have been in Phase 1 relations with the Free Reformed since the decision of Synod Hudsonville (1999). Subsequently and correspondingly the Free Reformed Churches in their 2000 Synod have also recognized our churches at their level of *Limited Contact*, their first level of ecumenicity. Ecclesiastical relations at the official and synodical level have effectively been at a stand-still since that time, however. Face-to-face meetings with ecumenical representatives of the Free Reformed Churches, though once a regular and profitable occurrence, had not taken place for more than five years. Our last meeting together took place in October 2001. Whereas we had always sent representatives, either from CERCU or from a neighboring congregation to attend their annual synod meetings, for the Synod of 2006 we were informed that our status in *Limited Contact* would from now on only afford us a bi-annual invitation.

Though ongoing contacts with these brothers whose churches seek to maintain the spirit and piety of the *Afscheiding* (or Dutch Secession of 1834) have always been fraternal and cordial, their desire to maintain their distinctives has tempered somewhat their desire for ecumenical contact. While they wished to observe and evaluate our Phase 2 *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches from a bit more of a distance, providential circumstances simultaneously provided opportunity for the Free Reformed churches to focus more strenuously upon their growing relationship with the Heritage Reformed Congregations, with which churches they share a commitment to seminary education by the churches for the churches at the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids.

We are grateful to report, however, that two providential developments have led to the renewing of our ecumenical discussions. One was the recognition that unity discussions with the Canadian Reformed will take a considerable amount of time. The other was the reception of the Free Reformed Churches into NAPARC, and the mutual commitment of the churches there to seek greater unity amongst themselves.

Three representatives from CERCU were able to meet together with representatives of the FRC *External Relations Committee*¹ on February 7, 2007. We resumed our discussion on the matter of the appropriation of salvation, and as a

¹ The name of their committee has since been changed to "Interchurch Relations Committee"

result of the meeting were also able to make progress towards finalizing four statements of agreement, much of which were works in progress already more than five years ago. It needs to be appreciated that the discussion is ongoing. The committees are in the midst of a hearty discussion on the aspect of the “appropriation” of salvation, and we are planning to look together at the task of preaching where we expect that the varying emphases between our federations on the matters of experiential and discriminating preaching will come to the fore.

The following statements of agreement are descriptive of the discussions between our committees, seeking to give evidence that as a committee, we are in the midst of discussing the relevant topics. They are not to be considered “extra-creedal” statements, nor are they binding on either federation, or intended for adoption by either federation.

Free Reformed and United Reformed Churches Ecumenical Discussions
“Draft Statements of Agreement”
as currently under discussion
between the Ecumenical (sub) committees

1. History

We believe that the Secession of 1834 out of which our federations of churches grew, was an act of obedience to God's Word and our confessions, especially articles 28 and 29 BC. Although we may disagree whether the Union of 1892 was premature as important church-orderly and doctrinal differences were not resolved, we do agree that the subsequent development of some aspects of Kuyper 's teachings so continued to divide the newly formed Gereformeerde Kerken that the Synod of 1905 drafted a compromise statement, the "Conclusions of Utrecht," in which especially Kuyper's doctrine of presumptive regeneration was judged to be "less correct" than the view held by his opponents. As it turned out, however, this compromise, did not settle the matter, with the result that the new federation remained embroiled in doctrinal controversy for many years. Fearing just such developments, some of the 1834 Secession churches decided to continue the Secession tradition rather than go along with the merger. Because some of the controversial teachings of Abraham Kuyper had significant impact upon the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the Free Reformed immigrant fathers could not feel at home there, and, as a result the Free Reformed Churches were organized, standing in full correspondence relationship with the original Secession churches in the Netherlands, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken. To this day, the FRC believes the doctrine of presumed regeneration contradicts scripture, and is a dangerous error with far reaching consequences. Though both groups share common roots in the Great Reformation and in the Dutch Secession of 1834, the history of the United Reformed Churches as a federation is more recent. When in the early 1990s it became more and more clearly evident that the Christian Reformed Church was departing from its commitment to the authority of the Word of God many officebearers, congregations, and members saw their obligation before the Lord of the Church to separate from this sinful direction and return to the Word as summarized in the faith confessed by our fathers in the Three Forms of Unity. Since the United Reformed Churches federated in 1996 these churches have sought to uphold a high view of Scripture and a strong commitment to confessional integrity. In the gracious providence of God, we recognize as federations that our common heritage and common confessional commitments compel us to pursue ecumenical fellowship with one another today.

2. Doctrine of the Church

We believe that the Church is a community of believers and their children whom the Lord Jesus Christ, from the beginning to the end of time, calls out of the world by His Word and Spirit. The Church, therefore, belongs to Christ. Moreover, the Church is also the work of the Triune God (1 Peter 2:10; Ephesians 2: 22 and 4:12). The growth and edification of those who have come to a saving union with the Lord Jesus Christ takes place in the fellowship of the Church, through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments by the working of the Holy Spirit. We believe that neither individual believers nor congregations can grow in isolation but that each is dependent upon what is supplied by every part of the body when it works effectually. We believe that all this is implied in the prayer for the unity of the Church as expressed by the Lord Jesus (John 17). Within these parameters, we wish to be churches conforming to and organized by biblical principles, in which the redeemed members may thrive and flourish, rejoicing in what the Lord has done for them.

3. The Covenant

We believe that God's relation to man is always one of covenantal fellowship, unilateral in origin and bilateral in application. God's grace is shown to man who, having violated through disobedience the relationship God first established in Paradise (sometimes referred to as "the Covenant of Works" or "the Adamic Administration"), and having been placed under the Lord's covenantal judgment, is now set in a new covenant relation - the Covenant of Grace, of which, according to Hebrews 8:6, the Lord Jesus Christ is Mediator. We believe that this covenant is made with believers and all their children and that in this gracious arrangement that God establishes with them, He promises them salvation through the way of faith in Jesus Christ and requires of them a life of faith and obedience.

4. View of the Congregation

We believe that the congregation of Christ is the covenant people of God comprising believers and their children who are set apart from the world by holy baptism. To this congregation belongs the gracious promises of redemption through the blood of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the author of faith, as well as the obligation to embrace the promises of God in Christ through a lively faith and to manifest that faith with lives of gratitude in new obedience. With sadness we also recognise that there are *hypocrites mixed in the church with the good* [Belgic Confession 29] who do not respond to the promises of God in true faith.

3. Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC)

Since Synod Hudsonville 1999 invited the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches into organic union, dialogue with them has been minimal. The main reason for this is the small size of the OCRC resulting in fewer people to carry the workload of ecumenical relations. More recently the OCRC has been burdened by internal strife related to the Federal Vision, leading to the departure of 3 congregations from the federation. The Synod has adopted an official position on the Federal Vision which will be made available at <http://www.cambridgeocrc.org>. The OCRC now numbers 5 congregations, 2 in the West (Washington and British Columbia), and 3 in Ontario.

In 2001 the Synod of the OCRC appointed a consistory to continue ecumenical discussions with the URCNA. Although we have brought greetings at one another's broader assemblies along the way, it wasn't until September 2006 that we had our first meeting as committees. A productive follow-up meeting was held in February, 2007. At both meetings our committee was represented by members of our committee who are local to Ontario. From our side, Rev. Harry Zekveld had prepared three brief papers that formed the basis for our discussion on our churches history, significant factors in theology and on the doctrine of the church. It was agreed that, as was evidenced by the open invitation extended by Synod Hudsonville, we have much in common in confession, view of Scripture, history, liturgy, theology, and polity. Since this body is no doubt the closest to our own, historically it is not surprising that working through the required aspects of our Phase 1 – *Corresponding Relations* discussion was not that difficult. Differences could be noted in terms of the doctrine of creation, as the OCRC has taken a position requiring adherence to creation in 6 normal days.

While there is good reason to recommend moving to Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with the OCRC we sense that they are in a position of evaluating their own federative life. From our side we have had not much to report in the past. Thus it would be premature to recommend Phase 2.

As a committee it occurs to us that Church Order Article 35 may be a more practical route for ecumenical relations with the OCRC because of the geographical spread of their congregations. Since two churches are in the region of Class Western Canada and three in Southern Ontario, it may serve both federations well to relate with the OCRC on the classical level. Another meeting with the OCRC committee is planned following our respective synods. May the Lord grant His blessing to His congregations in this federation.

4. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

At Synod Calgary 2004 our churches voted to enter into *Corresponding Relations* with the RPCNA. Subsequently at their own 173rd Synod, meeting that same month at Taylor University in Upland, IN the RPCNA reciprocated with a parallel decision from their side to welcome the URCNA into their own category of *Corresponding Relations*. At their following 174th Synod held in June of 2005, the RPCNA took a decision to invite the URCNA into *Fraternal Relations* with them, a relationship similar to our Phase 2 - *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*.

Members of CERCU Bouwers, Dykstra, Pontier and Zekveld were able to meet with representatives of this body following the meetings of NAPARC in Flat Rock NC in November 2005. In our discussions together we were able to explain to them that while we are grateful for their brotherly invitation we did not see ourselves as being ready to accept the invitation since our synod requires more work to be done in Phase 1. We had an informative and brotherly discussion on matters a-c assigned for discussion under phase 1 – Scripture, confession and subscription and explained that we would also like to continue to work through the rest of the items listed under Phase I and then report our findings to the churches of our federation. We also made clear to them that as we progressed with them through these Phase 1 discussions it would also be good to write statements that mark our agreement, especially in areas where we have differences. We also noted that our progress in issues of church polity with the OPC will pave the way for closer relations with the RPCNA.

Their point-form response to our ecumenical discussion categories which provided the talking-points for our discussions are as follows:

Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America
Response to URCNA Ecumenical Guidelines, Phase I: a) – c)

a) View and Place of the Holy Scriptures:

- Inspired by God, authoritative, inerrant, infallible (WCF.I.1)
- All 66 books inspired, nothing added (WCF.I.2)
- These Scriptures are the Word of God (WCF I.4)
- They are applied by the Holy Spirit (WCF I.5)
- The Scriptures include the whole counsel of God (WCF I.6)
- The rule of Scriptures' interpretation is Scripture itself (WCF I.9)

b) Creeds and Confessions

- Westminster Confession of Faith
- Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (applies Scripture to contemporary situation – placed in a column parallel to the WCF)
- Westminster Larger Catechism
- Westminster Shorter Catechism
- Directory of Church Government
- Book of Discipline
- Directory of the Worship of God

c) Formula of Subscription to the Confessions

- For individual members in Covenant of Church Membership: Query 4
- For ordained offices
 - Ruling elders: examination as to soundness in faith and commitment to RPCNA Testimony (Directory of Church Government 3.I.E.1.c) D-
 - Teaching Elders: examination as to soundness in faith and commitment to RPCNA Testimony (Directory of Church Government 3.II.E.3.b.3) D-20
 - Deacons: examination as to soundness in faith and commitment to RPCNA Testimony (Directory of Church Government 3.III.E.1.3) D-26

In his report of the meeting, Rev. Zekveld summarizes as follows: *Considerable time was given to discussing RPCNA subscription. Subscription includes not only the Westminster Standards but also the RPCNA Testimony as equal in authority (see Chapter I, Article 12; the Testimony is available on the RPCNA website). The Testimony takes precedence over the Westminster Standards whenever there is a discrepancy between the two. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the Testimony for the URCNA to accept would be the teaching that Christ covenants with nations, and nations are obligated to covenant with Christ. Other areas of potential difficulty with the Testimony include statements about small group worship (21.10), deaconesses (25.8), and the use of alcohol and tobacco (26.5,6).*

Given this body's principled commitment to exclusive psalmody and the forbidding of musical accompaniment in worship, it is understood that unless the Lord intervenes and shows the way forward, the prospects of one day coming to full organic unity with this body are slight. Nevertheless, there exists in this body an exemplary commitment to unity as well as a warm cordiality that we ought to reciprocate. The RPCNA *Testimony* (25:4) states, "Divisions which separate believers into denominations mar the unity of the church and are due to error and sin. It is the duty of all denominations which are true churches of Christ to seek reconciliation and union. Such organizational unity, however, should be sought only on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order."

The committee plans to continue its phase 1 discussions with representatives of this body in the hopes that a recommendation to move to a Phase 2 relationship may be feasible by our next (2010) synod.

c. Recommendation for moving to Phase 2 – Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC

The next phase or level of relations is *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*. According to the URCNA Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity, this phase *is one of recognition... 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.*

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

Based on our findings in carrying out our mandate, our committee believes that there is more than sufficient evidence to formally recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) as true churches of Christ by entering into Phase 2, Ecclesiastical Fellowship with them. The OPC has extended an invitation to us to enter such a relationship and we recommend that we accept that invitation (see recommendations below).

History

Synod Lynwood, meeting in October 1996, authorized the appointment of an "Inter-Church Relations Committee for correspondence and contact with other churches" (Acts of Synod 1996, Art. 39, page 15). No formal correspondence between that committee and the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations took place, although other contacts did occur on the classical and presbytery level and representatives addressed each others broader assemblies.

In June 1997, the 64th General Assembly of the OPC extended an invitation to the URC to enter into Corresponding Relations with them. In that invitation, we were told that the OPC brethren felt something of a debt of history. In the mid 1930's when the OPC had their beginning, it was the Christian Reformed Church that came to their side. When commitment to Biblical and confessional orthodoxy began to erode in those churches and the formation of the United Reformed Churches became a necessity, the OPC desired to be quick to stand by our side. Synod St. Catharines, meeting in October 1997, accepted the OPC invitation and also appointed a committee to "study the Confessional Standards, Form of Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory of Public 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."

At the 65th General Assembly of the OPC, meeting in June 1998, the OPC extended an invitation to the URC to enter into their second phase of ecumenical relations, Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod Hudsonville, meeting in June 1999, reaffirmed its desire to remain in Corresponding Relations with the OPC (Art. 36.B.6, page 17). The synod took that action upon the recommendation of CERCUC which felt more time was needed before we move to the next phase of ecclesiastical relations in order to carry out the dialogue mandated by our guidelines for Corresponding Relations and to give the churches time to consider the study committee report which compared the OPC and URC confessional and government standards. That report was presented to Synod Escondido, meeting in 2001 after which CERCUC began formal meetings with the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR).

CEIR and CERCUC met in Philadelphia on April 4, 2002 to dialogue concerning our study committee report, Section I, *A Comparison of the Confessional Standards*. We further requested that the dialogue between us should generally follow the provisions and details of Phase One of the URC *Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity* which require discussions on eight subjects. In April 2003, representatives of both committees met in Ontario where the focus of discussion was Section II of our study committee report, *A Comparison of Polities*. In November 2003, the full committees met in Pittsburgh (in conjunction with NAPARC). The focus was again on church polity, where our

differences with the OPC remain most pronounced. The last meeting of the full committees was held in March 2006 in Philadelphia. Classis SWUS representative to CERCU Rev. Danny Hyde had prepared a paper from the URC side dealing with liturgy, preaching, sacraments, discipline and theological education in the URCNA. That together with a corresponding paper prepared by Rev. G.I. Williamson from the OPC side provided the basis for the dialogue that enabled us to complete our discussion on the eight topics required by our guidelines for Corresponding Relations.

The following statements represent the fruit of five years of meetings and correspondence between the two committees. They are called statements of agreement because both committees have agreed to them. They are not binding on either communion nor are they intended for adoption by either communion. They are descriptive of the discussions between our committees, evidence that we have discussed the required topics and evidence that, although there are differences between our communions, those differences are within the bounds of our confessions.

OPC - URCNA COMMITTEE STATEMENTS OF AGREEMENT

Drafted by the Church Relations Committees

1. *The Holy Scriptures*

The Bible is God's Word received by His people for the foundation, regulation, and confirmation of their faith. We agree that the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, that they are infallible and inerrant, and that no one may add to or detract from the Word of God. We further agree that in the Bible the LORD reveals the whole counsel of God for His glory, our salvation, and a life of service for believers that comprises both preservation and propagation of the truth.

2. *The Confessions*

The confessions and catechisms of the OPC and the URCNA are their approved and adopted formulations of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort) display a broad, reflective, and pastoral quality. The Westminster Standards (Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger Catechism, and Shorter Catechism) depict a careful and more detailed articulation of the same Reformed faith. We agree that while each confession reflects its own era, the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity both express a faithful summary of God's Word, and are compatible and in harmony with each other.

3. *Subscription to the Confessions*

In order to preserve their unity and purity both the OPC and the URCNA require their office bearers to record their vows of subscription to the confessional standards, and do not allow private exceptions by office bearers. Should these vows be breached, we agree that biblical discipline must be exercised.

4. *Church History*

God's gathering of His holy catholic Church from, and in the midst of a sinful humanity also entails reformations. We agree that the secessions of the 1930s and the 1990s in producing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the United Reformed Churches were reformations used by the Lord of the Church to retain for Himself a faithful people. We confess that while both secessions were imperfect and marred by sin, the resultant communions give evidence of being true and faithful to the Lord in striving for the pure preaching of His Word, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the faithful application of discipline.

5. *Church Designations and Distinctions*

Since God's Word employs the designation "church" in a variety of ways, the OPC and the URCNA agree that Scripture envisions local, regional, and universal manifestations with the same word "church." We further agree that it is mandatory for churches to heed the Lord's call to enter into mutual relationships such as denominations or federations. We also agree that the nature or structure of these relationships includes both Biblically prescribed and voluntary aspects. Both of these features are intended to serve the well-being of the local churches in their congregational life and broader ministry.

6. *Church Offices and Authority*

Both communions practice three ordinations, including three different sets of vows, for three distinct callings in Christ's church (ministers, ruling elders, and deacons). As Head of the Church, Christ confers His authority to shepherd and govern His flock on the body of presbyters (ministers and ruling elders), who

are mandated to exercise their office in His Name. We agree that Christ has appointed ministers whose primary task it is to preach and teach, as well ruling elders whose primary task it is to govern. We also agree that the exercise of such authority by presbyters (ministers and ruling elders) is not limited to the local congregation, but remains vested in officers or office bearers when they are delegated or commissioned to broader assemblies for the edification of the church. We further agree that decisions of such assemblies, when in agreement with God's Word and the confessional standards, have Christ's authority and are therefore to be received with reverence and submission. Both communions recognize the right of a dissenting minority to appeal to a broader assembly.

7. *Worship And Discipline*

Both communions are concerned to govern their worship by Scripture, to preach the whole counsel of God, to administer the sacraments according to the Lord's commands and to exercise Christian discipline faithfully. Both recognize the importance of singing the Psalms in worship, and endorse the practice of singing appropriate hymns. Both agree on the need for systematic doctrinal preaching based on the Word of God (which doctrine is summarized in the church's historic confessions). Both agree that paedocommunion should not be permitted. Rather only those who have made a credible profession of faith should be admitted to the sacrament and that unbelievers and the unrepentant should be kept from the table.

8. *Theological Education of Ministers*

Both communions are committed to a thorough, theological education for the gospel ministry and require rigorous exams by the appropriate assemblies for those on the path toward ordination to that office. Neither communion operates its own seminary.

Structure of Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The OPC defines Ecclesiastical Fellowship as follows:

Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church order and life though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time and there might be considerable need for mutual concern and admonition. It is to be implemented where possible and desirable by:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies
2. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option)
3. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other's members at the Lord's Supper but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership, as regulated by each session (consistory)
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
5. Consultation on issues of joint concern, particularly before instituting changes in polity, doctrine, or practice that might alter the basis of the fellowship
6. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting Christian unity
7. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another
8. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the major assemblies
9. Exchange of denominational church directories (yearbooks)
10. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards
11. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order
12. Exchange of the most recent denominationally published edition of hymnals or Psalters

The URC defines Ecclesiastical Fellowship as follows:

Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship

The second phase of ecumenicity 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 with an advisory voice

Entering this phase requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art.36.

As is evident, these definitions are very similar and compatible.

Note: We are not recommending any unity committees with the OPC for the following reasons:

- a. Although the recognition of one another as true churches of Christ obligates us to work for the greatest expression of unity that culture, language and geography allow, yet the polity differences between the Presbyterian and Reformed churches are so deeply entrenched that it is unlikely that they will be overcome in the foreseeable future. However, being in Phase 2 will allow us to continue to dialogue and strive together, as sister churches, toward the Scriptural goal of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of reconciliation.
- b. Unity committees are not a part of Phase 2, that is they are not listed under Phase 2 in our *Guidelines For Ecumenicity And Church Unity*. They are an extra step taken only when both communions want to prepare to move beyond Phase 2 and their respective synods or general assemblies vote to take that additional step toward organic union. While the Canadian Reformed Churches requested us to work toward agreement on songbook and church order during Phase 2, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has not done so. From a practical point of view, it is impossible to work on more than one plan of union at a time. Until such time as our efforts at achieving organic unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches have gone as far as we can humanly expect them to go, it would not be prudent to try to set up a parallel set of committees with another federation of churches.
- c. The implementation of provisions "a-f" of our definition of Phase 2, Ecclesiastical Fellowship, is fully adequate to fulfill our commitment to prepare for "eventual integrated federative church unity" until both communions express a desire to go further than those provisions (as was the case with the Canadian Reformed Churches). While the highest form of unity possible must always remain our goal in obedience to Scripture's ecumenical mandates, that goal must never be superficial or forced.

Recommendation

That synod accept the invitation of the 64th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. [Note: if this recommendation is approved by synod it must be ratified, according to CO Art. 36, by a majority of the consistories of the URCNA before the relationship is considered established.]

Grounds

- a. The URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report (Acts of Synod 2001, pages 77-99) indicates substantial doctrinal agreement between the respective confessional standards of the URC and the OPC including eight areas of apparent difficulty where the committee was able to resolve those difficulties within the bounds of the confessions. "We in the URC have so much in common with our full brothers and sisters in the OPC!" (Acts of Synod 2001, Committee Report, page 77).
- b. Although the polity differences between the URC and the OPC are more substantial, they are not of such a nature that they should prevent recognizing one another as true churches of Christ, which is the essence of Phase 2, Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- c. The URC and OPC are together members of the IRC and NAPARC.
- d. The OPC has invited us to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- e. We are commanded in Scripture to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), to be "of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." (Philippians 2:2), to "live in harmony with one another" and "so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:16,18). Jesus prayed that there might be a unity between His followers, like the unity between Himself and His Father, made visible to the world, so that the world

will believe that the Father had sent the Son (John 17:21-23). Entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship will move us forward in striving to fulfill these ecumenical mandates of Scripture. It is noteworthy that the OPC shares with us a very strong commitment to seek the unity of the whole church. They have expressed this commitment to us in our discussions, and they have set forth their understanding in a paper they have published on their denominational website at <http://opc.org/relations/unity.html> called Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church.

d. Churches (already) in Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

If the churches approve the recommendation to establish Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with the OPC, and if this matter is subsequently ratified by the consistories of the federation, this will bring to three the number of bodies in *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*. On several occasions the committee has been asked about the fact that whereas we are presently in a phase 2 relationship with both bodies, we appear to relate differently to the Canadian Reformed than we do to the Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS). In response, the committee believes that the particular way our churches will need to work out our commitment to the phrase in phase 2 – *in preparation for and commitment to eventual integrated federative church unity* – will necessarily differ from relationship to relationship. There needs to be from our side a certain accommodation to the desires and concerns of the ecclesiastical partner. The Canadian Reformed, with their strong distaste for denominationalism and “pluriformity” needed to have from us some sense that we were really, practically committed to working at unity with them, however long it may take. The RCUS on the other hand, with their own historical idiosyncrasies and bad ecumenical experiences with liberalism in their past, have been much more reticent about pursuing more integral union with vigor. We can be assured that the RCUS understands that ours remains a principled commitment to full unity and that they can also agree with that in principle, but no one is under any delusion as to think full unity with the RCUS will happen any time soon. Should the churches agree with the committee recommendation to synod with regard to Phase 2 with the OPC, our Phase 2 relationship with that church will be somewhat different again. The OPC shares with us a very strong commitment to full unity, but in the case of this Presbyterian body everyone understands that the polity differences will remain a very significant impediment to full unity in the foreseeable future. Providential circumstances make our relationship with one body different than with another.

1. *Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)*

While attending the 260th Synod of the RCUS during the week of May 16, 2006, CERCU Chairman Rev. Ralph Pontier was able to hear with gratitude that body’s decision to reciprocate our decision to enter into Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*. Our churches agreed to this level of fellowship by synodical decision in Calgary 2004, which decision was ratified by a majority of our consistories by May of 2005. By agreeing to enter into their own corresponding category of *Fraternal Relations* with the URCNA, the RCUS, together with the URCNA now recognize each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and agree to cooperate together in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed faith and search for ways to give expression to our oneness in Christ. The approval of the motion by the RCUS made our relationship reciprocal so that we are now sister churches. Rev. Pontier was then seated “within the bar” being recognized as a fraternal delegate who was given the privilege of the floor (with an advisory voice) in all matters.

In his report of the RCUS 260th Synod, Rev. Pontier also related some of the other decisions relevant to our ecumenical discussions with this body. After several years of developing procedures for the oversight, operation and financing of a denominational seminary, a decision was taken that would enable the RCUS to establish a seminary of its own.

Rev. Pontier also noted that work is ongoing on another RCUS position paper that will aim to address specifically the “Federal Vision movement.” The work was not completed at this synod and was recommitted to the committee for further refinement and more careful elaboration. Should this position paper also eventually be adopted it will be added to the list of positions currently maintained by the RCUS on subjects ranging from infant communion, the days of creation to women in the military. Since our last synodical report to Synod Calgary 2004, papers have been adopted by RCUS Synods on “the Current Justification Controversy” (dealing specifically with the teachings of Professor Norman Shepherd) as well as on “the New Perspective on Paul.” A full listing of RCUS position papers is maintained on their denominational website at http://rcus.org/main/pub_papers.asp.

Without entering into a discussion of the merits of the positions taken, we do recognize that the status of position papers in the RCUS is such that they will present difficulties for us in terms of our desire to make progress in our

ecumenical relationship. The papers certainly appear to take on extra-confessionally binding status amongst them. Among some of our churches that voted not to ratify the Synod 2004 decision to enter into Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with the RCUS concern was raised about such extra-confessional views which bind the conscience. The committee has also received correspondence from a local church outlining their concern about the view of the Sabbath in these churches.

We trust these matters will continue to surface as our discussions with this federation continue. The first provision of Phase 2 is *"The churches shall assist each other as much as possible in the maintenance, defense, and promotion of Reformed doctrine, liturgy, church polity, and discipline.* Both of our federations are committed in principle to working toward the highest level of organizational unity possible, namely organic union. But given the history and distinctives of our respective federations, we recognize this may take many years. We must continue to hold before one another the Scriptural goals of reconciliation and manifesting to the world our spiritual unity in Christ.

2. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRef)

As a federation, we have been working together with the Canadian Reformed Churches in Phase 2 – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* since the decision of Synod Escondido (2001) was ratified by the consistories of the federation in January 2002. It is encouraging that with time we may see the unity process working itself out practically at the local level, where true tangible unity must have its roots. While certain hesitations remain, particularly in Canada, pulpit exchanges between the churches of the two federations take place on a regular basis and are well-received. Vacant churches invite ministers from the other federation as guest preachers and even the possibility of calling each other's ministers has been pursued. Warm fraternal greetings are regularly brought at classical assemblies. In a few locales combined council and consistory meetings were held, local committees continue to meet, and combined office bearers conferences have also been profitable. It is encouraging to see how practical cooperation has begun in the areas of evangelism, urban mission (Streetlight Ministries in Hamilton), youth contacts, mission service projects and at a Summer Bible Camp (called Campfire!). All such progress is typically local to the churches in Canada, however.

The involvement of CERCU itself in this particular phase of relations with the Canadian Reformed has been quite minimal since Synod Escondido 2001. The work needs to progress on its own locally and the official discussions on matters of Church Order, a common Song Book and Theological Education were assigned by that same synod to additional "Unity Committees" working in conjunction with corresponding Canadian Reformed committees. As a committee CERCU was able, however to have one face-to-face meeting with the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) of the Canadian Reformed. The meeting was held at the Canadian Reformed Theological College in Hamilton on March 7, 2006 and we enjoyed a very amicable meeting with a good fraternal spirit. It was helpful for the committees to review together the progress being made in the pursuit of unity between our federations and we agreed together that, if possible, it would be helpful to meet together as broader committees (CERCU and CPEU) every two years.

We gave consideration together to how churches that live at some distance from the Canadian Reformed Churches might be encouraged to become involved in the unity process. The "twinning" of churches has proved helpful in some cases, and taking up the practice of sending and receiving fraternal delegates to the respective classis meetings even if these classes were at some distance from one another was also something to be encouraged among the local churches and classes.

We also discussed together means by which concerns being raised by the churches might be addressed. From the side of the URCNA, in August of 2005, CERCU received communications from a local church (Sanborn, IA), as well as from a classis (SWUS) with questions these bodies wished to have addressed by members of the Canadian Reformed unity committee. The questions focused on a variety of theological issues ranging from views of the covenant and regeneration to perspectives on Federal Vision, New Perspective on Paul, common grace, the well-meant offer of the gospel and matters of ecclesiology. These questions had been duly passed along by CERCU to the Canadian Reformed brethren, but we were informed by these men that they wished to wait until our face-to-face meeting so that we might speak together about the best way to address such questions. The Canadian Reformed brethren subsequently expressed to our committee that their difficulty in terms of responding to the questions put to them about the "Canadian Reformed view" or the view of "Canadian Reformed ministers" was that their committee was of the conviction that they had neither the mandate nor the ability to speak on behalf of either the federation or its ministers. We can well understand that the history of their own Liberation in the Netherlands in the 1940s has made these

brothers extremely hesitant for fear of making theological statements or declarations that might in any way have extra-confessionally binding status. Appreciating this concern, our committee nevertheless encouraged the brothers to find a way to enter into some kind of dialogue on these matters. Perhaps by more generally, and unofficially observing and describing the nature of the discussions in the context of the Canadian Reformed churches. They informed us that they would endeavor to do so.

In turn, the Canadian Reformed brethren from CPEU informed us that they had been instructed by a decision of their Synod Chatham 2004 “to commence discussion concerning the “Framework Hypothesis” and the support this theory has within the URCNA and serve the next synod with information concerning this matter.” We in turn responded by referring to the decision of Synod Escondido 2001 on the matter, and by expressing our opinion that a large majority in our churches hold to a 6 Day creation view. We also promised as a committee to respond further on this matter. We have, nevertheless run into similar difficulties with regard to such an answer, particularly as relates to who speaks for whom. At this point nothing further has been communicated to our Canadian Reformed brethren with regards to this matter.

Neither have our churches (Sanborn, IA and classis SWUS) received a response from Canadian Reformed Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity.

If our unity is to progress, and potential suspicions and concerns are to be dealt with and alleviated, it is clear that we will need to be able to say more to one another than simply “we believe the confessions.” We will need to find a way to be convinced together that potentially differing *theological emphases* that may be found in our respective federations are able to exist together under the umbrella of *confessional unity*. The challenge is that we must do this without succumbing to the danger of elevating theological distinctives above the confessions.

By whatever means, dialogue needs to take place. Consistory to consistory contact would seem to be the best place to begin. But if consistories are afraid of being called upon to speak, for fear that they do not speak for the federation, and if federations through their synods hesitate to speak for fear of making declarations that might bind the churches, perhaps we ought to let men speak for themselves. It might be helpful for ministers from both federations to express their own convictions in order that by that means we could come to know one another better. It may be that in that way we could be convinced, from both sides, of a unity within – and not beyond – the confessions. Such discussions, whether in person or through some other media, should take place along the order of the commitment we as officebearers make in the *Form of Subscription*, where for the sake of the preservation of the uniformity and purity of doctrine we are willing to expand and expound upon our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Three Forms of Unity. If that is a commitment that we are able to make in order to *preserve* unity *within* a federation of churches, surely it is one that we should be able to make to in the *pursuit* of unity *between* federations of churches. It is our hope that such dialogue, whatever the venue, would allow for us to find one another within the bounds of our Confessions.

At our meeting together as CPEU and CERCU we also discussed the possibility of reporting jointly to our respective synods. Though the original mandate of Synod Escondido 2001 (Acts, page 24) called for such joint reporting, it has not yet been done. Should the unity between our federations continue to progress, such joint reporting may become expedient, but for the present we have not found it to be feasible.

For the rest, a large amount of work with regard to our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches has been carried out by the Unity Committees whose reports follow the appendices of this CERCU report. We briefly introduce these reports in what follows:

5. UNITY COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Unity Committees originally appointed by Synod Escondido 2001 have continued to work together with their Canadian Reformed counterparts on the matters assigned to them. According to the arrangement adopted by Synod 2001 these committees continue to make their reports *through* but not *to* CERCU. At Synod Calgary 2004 the churches decided to divide the work of the Song Book Committee so that there is now a fourth, which designates itself the Liturgical Forms and Confessional Documents Committee. Progress reports from these committees have also been included in the spring of each year with the annual CERCU report to the churches.

Joint Church Order Committee

Our Church Order Committee has made much progress with their Canadian Reformed counterparts. With an excellent fraternal spirit the two committees have been functioning as one joint-committee and have submitted a common report to the synods of our respective federations. Together they could complete their work on a complete draft of a proposed Church Order for a united federation. Their joint report to the synods asks the churches to consider entering a time of discussion, review and evaluation in hopes that the churches of our respective federations may come to agreement on the Church Order to which we would be bound should the Lord grant that full unity may come about in the years to come.

Song Book Committee

Good progress has also been experienced with regard to work on the Song Book. Rev. Randal Lankheet of the URCs and Rev. George van Popta of the Canadian Reformed have collaborated to write a series of edifying and informative articles in both *Christian Renewal* and *Clarion* about the workings of their committee, principles of Reformed congregational singing and regarding hopes and plans for the future. In the reporting that follows, our songbook committee presents two reports, its own, as well as a joint-report together with the Canadian Reformed Book of Praise committee. This appears also to reflect an understanding from both sides of the need to continue working on the song books of our respective churches regardless of whether a union may fully materialize in the providence of God. There is a joint recommendation to the respective synods that the churches should maintain the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book but establish that the Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity.

Liturgical Forms and Confessional Documents Committee

This committee came into being as an offshoot of the Song Book committee, and was appointed by a decision of Synod Calgary 2004 with a mandate to evaluate and make recommendations regarding the non-musical portion of the Song Book. Though the Canadian Reformed had not similarly divided their own Standing Committee for the Book of Praise, they had indicated that members of this committee were willing and ready to be involved in these deliberations. Some of our commitments together in a Phase 2 relationship are 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; and e. the churches shall consult each other before major changes to the confessions, church government, or liturgy are adopted. Because of a lack of clarity in the mandate given to this committee by Synod Calgary 2004, such contact was not fully pursued. Presently the Canadian Reformed are proposing to their synod that an offshoot of their Book of Praise Committee be established to correspond with our committee. Our committee therefore also seeks the clarity of Synod Schererville with regard to the focus of its responsibilities.

In the meantime our committee was able to make significant progress in its work and presents fourteen completed *Christian prayers* for the churches' perusal. The report also contains a proposed form for the celebration of Holy Communion for those congregations celebrate communion frequently. The committee is recommending the approval of this form for use in the churches.

Theological Education Committee

Though the interim progress reports received from this committee have continued to indicate a good spirit of brotherly cooperation between the respective committees, their differing synodical mandates has resulted in an impasse at present. The Canadian Reformed have a mandate from their churches to maintain a federational theological school as a matter of principle. Our URC committee has been given no such mandate. In their reporting our committee explains that it is not willing to bind the churches to a principle it is not convinced arises clearly and necessarily from the Scriptures. Our Committee has asked to have the Canadian Reformed committee's position paper published in our agenda, as well as their own response thereto, and they seek a decision of the synod regarding the principle. May we together seek the Lord's wisdom and patience to see whether over time we may find ways to accommodate one another with regard to our own respective contextual concerns, without compromising on clear Biblical principle.

Each of these Unity Committee reports presents much for the churches' consideration. CERCU recommends that when matters from each of these reports are discussed, a member of that committee be given the privilege of the floor to respond.

6. COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(See the appropriate section of the above report for the rationale or grounds of the following recommendations).

1. That synod appoint or reappoint three members at-large. Revs Ralph Pontier and Harry Zekveld are eligible for reappointment.
2. That synod remind the classes to appoint or reappoint classical representatives to CERCU for another three year term.
3. That synod establish *Ecclesiastical Fellowship – Phase 2* – with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and make arrangements for the ratification process according to Article 36 of the Church Order.
4. Recommendations with regard to NAPARC:
 - a. That synod ratify the 2005 decision of NAPARC to welcome the Free Reformed Churches into the membership of NAPARC.
 - b. That synod ratify the 2006 decision of NAPARC to welcome the Heritage Reformed Congregations into the membership of NAPARC.
 - c. That synod not endorse the NAPARC position on Women in the Military.
 - d. That synod instruct the Stated Clerk to communicate these decisions to the NAPARC Secretary.
 - e. That synod take note of the points and concerns raised by Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema in both the 2005 and 2006 reports of his attendance at the NAPARC Foreign Missions consultation. These reports are appended to this report in Appendix 2.
5. That synod consider the Unity Committee reports and recommendations, and request those committees to provide representatives to answer questions.
6. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman and secretary when committee matters are being considered.
7. That synod approve the work of the committee without adopting every formulation in its dialogue.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Ralph A. Pontier, chairman

Rev. John A. Bouwers, secretary

Appendix 1: Application of the Heritage Reformed Congregations to become members of NAPARC

Appendix 2: Reports of Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema of 2005 and 2006 NAPARC Foreign Missions Consultation

Appendix 3: 2003 Report to NAPARC on Women in the Military

CERCU Report to Synod 2007 - Appendix 1

Application for Membership to NAPARC

THE HERITAGE REFORMED CONGREGATIONS

The Heritage Reformed Congregations came into existence in 1993. Currently we have eight congregations with two outreach posts. There are thirteen ministers who labor in the congregations or in foreign mission fields. As a Reformed congregation, our heritage arises from the Protestant Reformation. The Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC) began in the Netherlands in 1907 when two groups of churches, the "Churches under the Cross" and the "Ledeborian Churches," formally united together under the leadership of Rev. G. H. Kersten. They called themselves the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (Gereformeerde Gemeenten in the Netherlands). In regard to the question which was raised concerning the use of the word "congregation" rather than "church," some of the important Bible translators, like William Tyndale, translated *ekklesia* as congregations rather than churches in order to emphasize the local manifestation of Christ's body and to distinguish it from the hierarchical system of the Roman Catholic church. The Dutch tradition picked up on this; hence, the Statenbijbel doesn't use *kerken* (churches) at all, but always uses *gemeenten* (congregations).

In the United States, the origin of the small NRC denomination can be traced back to January 8, 1877, when two congregations from Grand Rapids, MI, and Lodi, NJ, established ties. In 1883 the Lodi church was replaced by a congregation at Passaic (now Clifton), NJ. The denomination grew to three when the True Dutch Reformed Church of South Holland, IL, separated itself from the Christian Reformed Church and joined the NRC. The NRC continued to grow to 26 churches with over 10,000 members, 16 of which participated local Christian schools. They presently have about 9 ministers, one of whom labors at a mission post in Bolivia, South America.

Several issues began to surface in the years prior to the split in the NRC in 1993. Although the issues really centered on doctrine and the emphasis in preaching, the leadership of the NRC sought ecclesiastical reasons to remove Rev. Joel Beeke from the ministry. This culminated in the NRC Synod of 1993 asking the Grand Rapids consistory if they would bow under whatever decision the Synod would shortly make concerning their minister, to depose or not to depose. The Grand Rapids consistory declared they would abide by any decision that was according to Scripture and the Church Order. In lieu of this, the Synod voted to depose the entire consistory. This was a smoke screen for the underlying doctrinal issues which were coming to the surface within the denomination. The NRC had slowly moved to the position of being almost exclusively hypercalvinistic in her preaching and Dr. Beeke, having come to see this tendency in the denomination, was seeking to bring her back to the Word of God. Though never officially stated, this was the underlying cause of the split which occurred in 1993.

Immediately following the Synod, a majority of the Grand Rapids congregation voted to retain their consistory and hence by default begin a new denomination. Several groups of individuals meet with Dr. Beeke and the Grand Rapids consistory to consider their options. Soon after, two additional congregations split and groups from each were added to the Grand Rapids congregation. In the same year the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregations were formed (now called the Heritage Reformed Congregations - HRC). Since that time we have grown to 8 churches comprising some 2,000 members. At present we have 13 ministers, two of whom labor in Africa - one in Zambia and the other in South Africa. The others are laboring in various congregations throughout the United States and Canada.

One of the areas in which we have been privileged to serve Christ's church is in training men for the ministry of the gospel. It was this in particular, along with the considerable amount of work that goes into starting a new denomination, which the Lord seemed to lay upon our hearts to pursue. Through our mission endeavors we sent one of our seminary graduates to Bali, Indonesia to teach at the John Calvin Seminary where there are approximately 60-70 students being trained in Reformed theology and doctrine and subsequently being sent out throughout Indonesia and beyond. Although this Seminary is no longer under our control, the effects of the labors we have expended there are, by the grace of God, still being witnessed. At present we have two missionaries in

Africa, one who teaches at Covenant College in Zambia and the other at Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa, both of whom are engaged in training others who are being sent into the harvest. Another pastor hopes to join the work in South Africa in the summer of 2007 after he finishes his doctorate degree in missiology. These men, as well as all those who are currently ministering in the HRC, are graduates of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) in Grand Rapids.

PRTS began in 1995 with four students and through the Lord's hand of blessing upon us we have continued to grow so that we presently have more than 30 full and part-time students, including men from various countries with new applications arriving regularly. Recently we received degree-granting status from the State of Michigan and are now housed in a new 20,000 sq. ft. building. The seminary is accredited by the Association of Reformed Theological Seminaries, and officially services both the HRC and the Free Reformed denomination, but also receives interdenominational students of various Reformed and Presbyterian persuasions. Presently, Dr. Joel Beeke (Ph.D., Westminster Philadelphia) and Dr. Jerry Bilkes (Ph.D. Princeton) serve as full-time faculty members, and the seminary is also served by 28 additional instructors who teach one or two modular courses each, such as Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, Dr. Richard Muller, and Dr. Derek Thomas.

As a new denomination, we did not start dialoging with others Reformed churches until four years ago, primarily because, as a new developing denomination, we had enough work in dealing with the requests of several other groups who desired to hear Reformed experiential preaching. In the beginning years we handled several requests from groups of people and churches who desired to affiliate with us. However, in the past four years the committee, which primarily dealt with requests from other churches to join our denomination, began to expand and realize our calling as a Church of Jesus Christ among so many other churches to seek after the unity for which Christ Himself has prayed. In light of this, the following mandate was given to our Church Correspondence Committee (CCC):

1. The scriptural mandate of the CCC is to be obedient to the Word of Jesus Christ the King of His Church. It is our duty to reach out those around us with the truth of the gospel and to labor with them in the kingdom of God. John 10:16, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." It also is Christ's prayer that those who profess His Name be one as He is one with His Father. John 17:21, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." We know this will be attained in heaven, but that does not relieve us of the duty to strive for it on earth to the utmost of our ability. (Jer. 32:39; Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 14:9; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 12:12, 25-27; Eph. 4:3-6). This shall also be a witness to the world, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn. 13:34-35).
2. To receive and respond to communications from denominations/congregations who seek correspondence with the HRC, speaking the truth in love.
3. To function within the framework of all three Levels of communication, especially level one.
4. To report to classis such correspondence and progression of meetings with those denominations/congregations seeking communication.

To date we have labored in this area extensively. Some of the denominations and groups we have sought to work with are:

- Herstelt Hervormde Kerk
- Puritan Evangelical Church of America (SanDiego)
- Rev. Ruben Quint of ERQ (email correspondence)

-FRC- who are presently at level 2

-Free Church of Scotland Cont.- who are presently at level 2

-Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands-Sister church to FRC)

-Dr. Flip Buys Reformed Church of South Africa and with Rietvallei Church RCSA, Pretoria

-Soyuthern Presbyterian Church Tasmania

Currently we have the following three levels of communication when we seek to enter into dialogue with other denominations and Churches:

1. Informal Contact: This informal level allows relationships to develop with like_minded churches or denominations without requiring a formal tie. This level includes only informal communication with various churches and denominations around us, both in our local community as well as beyond.
 - There is no obligation or commitment except for us to witness the Reformed Biblical truth to them.
 - Meetings with their representatives are to be held by the Church Correspondence Committee in order to determine if there is sufficient ground to bring a request before Classis that this denomination / congregation ought to be considered eligible to move to the second level of correspondence. Classis must approve of this request before any other level of correspondence can be carried out. These meetings would seek to determine the doctrinal position of the denomination / congregation and whether or not they uphold the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Standards.
2. Formal Correspondence: A church and/or denomination would need to direct its committee representatives to sign the Formula for Public Declaration of Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity and/or Westminster Standards on behalf their broadest assembly.
 - Copies of the official minutes, without confidential material, of the broadest assemblies are to be sent to each other. A copy of each issue of the official denominational publication is to be sent to one another's consistory members.
 - Representatives of both denominations would continue to meet to determine whether the next level of communication is attainable and desirable, and if so, the Church Correspondence Committee would forward this request on to classis for approval.
 - This is done with the understanding that this level of 'Formal Correspondence' must be in place for a minimum of two years before the next level of communication would be considered.
3. Limited Fellowship: At this level there is a formal acknowledgment that the gifts found in each other's churches can be employed in the churches/denominations for the spiritual building up of the kingdom of God. This level would include everything under "Formal Correspondence" and the following:
 - Each individual consistory of the HNRC would be free to invite any minister from those denomination(s)/congregation(s) [which have been given classis approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to preach in their pulpits.

- Each individual consistory of the HNRC would be free to allow any member from these denomination(s)/congregation(s) [which have been given classis approval to attain Level 3 correspondence] to attend the Lord's Supper.
- Mutual agreement is made with corresponding denomination/congregation, that delegates would be sent to one another's broadest assemblies as advisory members only.

This Level of Fellowship may be revoked at any time by classis.

As a denomination we believe and seek to teach the whole council of God which we believe is clearly reflected in several confessions. We subscribe to the three Forms of Unity: the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, as well as to the Apostle's, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. We currently have a study committee comparing the Three Forms and the Westminster Standards, to which we also agree. We hold to certain principles, the application of which set us apart, to varying degrees, from several other Reformed denominations. These include the following:

1. A Balanced View of the Covenant

We believe that the promises of the covenant of grace that are signified and sealed in holy baptism are well meant for every child who is baptized. These promises, however, must be appropriated in the way of faith and repentance. We are opposed to an overly optimistic view of the covenant that regards covenant children as in a state of grace unless the opposite proves true later in life. Covenant children must be born again.

2. A Balanced View of the Congregation

We believe that the congregation ought to be viewed as it is in reality, namely as a covenant congregation of the Lord which is a mixed congregation, consisting of both strong and weak believers, unbelievers and hypocrites, wheat and chaff.

3. A Balanced View of Preaching

We believe that the preaching should reflect this reality, meaning it should take into account the various spiritual conditions of the members of the congregation and address them appropriately. The preaching must constantly set before the members of the congregation the promises and demands of the Word, reminding them that they must, may and can be radically renewed in accordance with these promises and demands through the working of the Holy Spirit. To this end we also believe that the preaching should be "experiential", meaning it should give attention to the joys and struggles of the life of faith, explaining to the congregation how the Lord, through His Holy Spirit, makes room in the heart of a sinner to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and His saving benefits.

Our denomination has a Presbyterian form of church government in which each congregation is governed by a consistory consisting of the minister, the elders, and the deacons. Twice each year our churches meet together at our broadest assembly, the classis. At this meeting the churches' delegates discuss reports from various committees, consider and debate various points submitted by the churches, hear reports on the spiritual well being of each congregation, and provide mutual advice, support, and encouragement. Decisions made by Classis are considered binding unless they can be shown to be in conflict with the Word of God.

Our churches are bound to the Church Order of Dort (the redaction of 1914, a revision of the original Church Order of 1618-19).

Various other activities within the denomination include, but are not limited to:

1. Radio ministry
2. Local evangelism, neighborhood outreaches, vacation bible schools, and home missions
3. Prison ministries
4. Book and tape ministries – Because we consider reading of books from our Reformed heritage to be very important, many churches have their own “bookstores.” There is also an independent organization which is closely associated with HRC, Reformation Heritage Books (RHB) in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This is a book store as well as a publishing company through which many of Puritan and Reformed writings have been promulgated in North America and abroad.

In conclusion, there is much, as you all know, which describes the inner workings of a denomination, and we have tried to give you a better insight into who we are and why we desire to become a member of NAPARC. There is included with this introductory letter various attachments which provide further information about us. There is a Directory of the churches and schools of the denomination and their pastors and also a catalogue of the PRTS seminary. Also included are the latest copy of our denominational magazine, *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* and our Classis minutes. Additional information could be found at our denominational portal <http://heritagereformed.com> where there are links to various congregations' home pages.

We certainly desire and appreciate the opportunity to be considered a part of NAPARC and pray that we might join with you for mutual edification and in reaching out to our needy world with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In behalf of the Church Correspondence Committee of the HRC,

Pastor Mark Kelderman

Pastor David Lipsy

CERCU Report to Synod 2007 - **Appendix 2**

Two reports by Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema on his attendance at the NAPARC Foreign Missions Consultation at the request of CERCU.

We draw the attention of the churches to the concerns raised in both the 2005 and 2006 reports that follow:

2005 NAPARC World-Missions Executives Meeting
November 21-22, 2005
Report to CERCU
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema

Dear Brothers,

As per the mandate given to me, namely that I submit a report to you of the meeting of the NAPARC World-Missions Executive Meeting in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania which I was asked to attend, I submit the following account.

Because of the fact that a number of men (of member NAPARC churches) were unable to attend, the Monday evening meeting was limited to the four participants: Mr. Mark Bube (OPC), Rev. Dr. Jonathan Watt (RPCNA), Rev. Frank Van Dalen (ARP) and me, (Rev. Raymond Sikkema, URCNA) getting acquainted with each other – and with the churches we were representing at this meeting.

At the meeting the next morning, Rev. Van Dalen was asked to write the Minutes of the meeting. However, since this was not a “decision making” meeting, his “Minutes” are, in fact, a digest of the various matters that were reported on, discussed and prayed for by the participants. A copy thereof will be attached.

The other (three) members at the meeting, each of whom serves as the “Mission Executive” of his Federation, obviously understood what the gist of the Agenda of this meeting was, namely sharing with the others present the work, the challenges and the hardships of the work of missions in various parts of the world – as it is experienced by each of their missionaries on-field – and how best to respond to such. However, since no Agenda was made available prior to the date of meeting, (I had only been told that it would be a discussion meeting), I was not able to provide as much detailed information about the specifics of the mission work engaged in by URCNA churches as I could have done had I known what was expected. Nevertheless, this was a rewarding meeting. I raised questions, (some of which are referred to in the “Minutes” of Rev. Van Dalen), which occasioned good discussion and feedback.

Obviously, I was not present at this meeting as the “Mission Executive” of the URCNA. The questions I raised of the brothers were, therefore, born from that non-executive “position” which, I trust, faithfully reflected the thinking of the URCNA on the matters discussed. Though they, on occasion, expressed “respect” for the thinking of our churches, it also became very clear that they are committed to the thinking that a federation is severely hampered in doing the work of missions when there is not a mission team/board on the home front that works in support of the Mission and the Missionaries on field.

The questions which I raised of them, e.g. Could the missionaries not be overseen/supervised by a calling church? and Isn't it better/wiser to support a missionary than an administrator – since it seems that it would be easier to drum up support for the former than the latter? were answered by the brothers; see the “Minutes” of Van Dalen. Especially the answer to the latter question I found revealing and worthy of some contemplation on our part.

There are other matters, some of which are alluded to in the “Minutes” re the URCNA mission work that require our attention, I believe. Allow me to raise some of these matters – in no particular order of seriousness or concern.

1. Have we, the URCNA, given any thought to the importance and advisableness of having more than one missionary (family) on a field? The goal of the OPC, you will note, is “four ordained missionaries on the field” who then “form the local Mission which makes decisions”. Now to be sure, the latter part, forming “the local Mission which makes decisions” relates directly to the Presbyterian understanding of the church – which we may wish to ignore. However, there are good reasons – e.g. being able to support each other, being able to bounce strategies off each other, being able to critique and admonish each other – that would strongly recommend that we consider such an arrangement. Or is it not possible for us to consider this, (certainly not at the synodical level), because of our commitment to the local church/consistory being the responsible body for doing missions?
2. Related to the above: should we, can we give thought to the question: Is it wise, given the relatively small size of our federation, to spread our missionaries to various countries rather than concentrating them in one area or one country?
3. How are our (prospective) missionaries prepared for their ministry in a foreign field, a field often “foreign” to them in terms not only of the language and culture, but of life style, of (im)morality, of mores? Moreover, has anyone given thought to the importance of “missionary training” prior to sending a missionary to a/the field?
4. How qualified is the average consistory member to evaluate not only a missionary's preparedness for service on a foreign field, but also his actual work/accomplishments on field? Surely, it can be/is impressive to hear a missionary relate the trials and tribulations he experiences on field, but how are such to be weighed in light of the (lack of) work accomplished on field?
5. How much time is spent by our missionaries on non-mission work – that is, on work that in other federations is looked after by the Mission Board – such as travel arrangements, on-field health care, Visas, relations with the local and national governments, etc.? Think in this connection of the fact that the army requires 10 “support troops” for every soldier on the front line. If it is true that the missionary is the front line soldier, do we at all sense the need for “support troops”?
6. Is it possible that our churches are working “in the dark” when it comes to any number of on-field related problems? Is it perhaps so that any number of our churches are working to resolve issues without knowing that other churches have worked on, and perhaps resolved, the same or similar concerns?
7. Is there no reason why it might be advisable/helpful that a Mission Manual be written and that, at the very least, a Mission Committee be appointed which can offer advise to the calling church of a missionary – when requested to do so?

Brothers, it is not my intent to be negative about our missionary zeal or endeavors. However, I do believe there is good reason for us to (re)consider the question: Have we, in our concern not to get caught up in the “Boardism” of the CRC, over-reacted? Is it possible that the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme, namely each church seeking to do alone and in independence of

all others what may rightly be considered the task of the churches together, that is, of the federation of churches?

I was struck by the fact that the men with whom I met were aware of, and sought diligently to avoid, the evils of Boardism, as the “Minutes” will bear out. Nevertheless, there were any number of things (matters which I specifically raised – to which they gave carefully thought out responses!) with which we (the URCNA) have not really dealt, surely not as a federation of churches. It is my considered opinion that the URCNA would do well to study these matters – for the well being of our mission endeavors and indeed for the glory of the Lord.

I would like to prevail upon you to consider these matters at your next CERCU committee meeting and, should you agree that they warrant further thought/study by the URCNA, to address the next Synod concerning them.

I thank you most heartily for permitting me to represent you (and the URCNA) at the NAPARC World Missions Executives Meeting. Your confidence is much appreciated. I trust that this report will confirm that your decision was good. (In the event you should want someone to attend the next scheduled meeting – Nov. 20-21, 2006 – I would, DV, gladly fulfil the task.)

Humbly submitted,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema

2006 NAPARC World-Missions Executives Meeting
November 20 – 21, 2006
Report to CERCU
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema

Dear Brothers,

It was again my privilege to attend the annual NAPARC World Missions Executives meeting, this year held at the Hyatt Hotel located at the International Airport in Pittsburgh, Pa. This year’s meetings were hosted by the RPCNA under the chairmanship of Dr. Jonathan Watt the Executive Secretary of the RPCNA “Board of Foreign Missions”. This year there were again four churches present for this meeting, viz. the ARP, represented by Mr. John Hopkins; the OPC, represented by Mr. Mark Bube and Mr. Doug Clawson; the RPCNA, represented by the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Watt; and the URCNA, represented by me, Rev. RJS.

Our Monday evening meeting, though not officially opened until later in the evening, was begun with a working dinner at the Hyatt Hotel – “working” to be understood as an initial touching base with each other and relating what is happening in our federations on the mission front – which significantly enhances the flow of the meetings later on. When the meeting was opened, Mr. John Hopkins – who was present in the place of Rev. Van Dalen – was asked to serve as secretary responsible for the Minutes of our meetings. (Let me re-iterate what I stated also in my first report: since these are not “decision-making” meetings, the Minutes are, in fact, a digest of the various matters reported on, discussed and prayed for by the participants. A copy thereof will be attached to this report.)

As the Minutes of Mr. Hopkins will bear out, we spent considerable time discussing (and eventually remembering in prayer) the various mission ministries engaged in and supported by the NAPARC member churches present for these meetings. Since I now was aware of the format and “docket” items of the meetings, I had prepared a listing of the various “causes” and ministries supported by URCNA churches – as listed in our 2005 Yearbook, (attached). As I went through that (listing the ministries and causes supported – without the names of the churches involved in each case –) it struck me not only that there is, when all is said and done, no such thing as URCNA missions, but also that we, as URCNA, appear not to differentiate between (1) the support of missionaries called and placed by a URCNA congregation, (2) the support of missionaries not called and placed by a URCNA congregation, and (3) the support for ministries (missions) and causes neither controlled nor directed by a URCNA congregation. As a matter of fact, many of the causes listed as supported by our churches (though, no doubt, deserving of support) are not really mission causes.

To my mind, that presents some serious concerns. For example, what criteria are used to determine whether a cause supported is at all faithfully reformed in its ministry? Who supervises the personnel of such an organization/cause on-field? How is it determined that the cause(s) supported are fiscally responsible with the funds entrusted to it (them)?

Additionally, rather than repeating the issues/concerns I raised in my last report, I would simply request that you give some attention to the matters raised there, (see especially the points 1-7 on pages 2/3 of that report which, I trust, you will have on file). I do, however, wish to call your attention to some other matters, (all matters discussed in various contexts at our meeting) as follows:

1. The importance of setting goals for our mission endeavors. In the OPC, such goals are set by the Missions Committee in consultation with the on-field staff. It is then left to the leadership on-field to work out the goals as agreed upon. The leadership at home periodically meets with the leadership on-field to assess and evaluate the progress being made – and to propose alternative ways of achieving the goals set if indeed they are not being met. This means that there is no “lording over” on the part of the Mission Executive from the “home front” but that there is a “calling to account” of those sent out by the church. Moreover, the “calling to account” is done on the basis of an agreed upon set of goals, goals which are either to be accomplished or to be altered as the case may be.
2. The importance of keeping the membership of our churches informed both on the importance of missions and on the specific mission work(s) supported by our church(es). It has long been understood that interest in the work of missions is significantly enhanced through the publication of missionary magazines and/or via the publication of articles which focus on missions and missionaries. The monthly publication of the OPC (New Horizons in the OPC) regularly devotes two pages per issue to Foreign Missions and two pages to Home Missions. Once per year that is increased to six pages. Through that means, an active interest is stimulated in the work of missions and the members of the churches can pray for the work of missions and the missionaries with “understanding”.
3. The importance of Mission Conferences. Such Conferences not only seek to stimulate interest in the work of missions and promote the work of missions, they also focus on a specific theme relating to the work of missions. For example, this year the ARP churches sponsored a WORLD FOCUS 2006 conference with the theme: “His Glory Revealed, Our Vision Renewed”.
4. The importance of proper oversight of the missions and the missionaries supported. Brothers, I understand that (in light of our experience in the CRC where the Boards became the tail that wagged the dog) it is important that the local church/consistory exercise some manner of control/authority over the mission work it supports (I am referring now to those mission

ministries where a URC is the calling church), but is it not equally important that a church/consistory then ask itself whether it really has the expertise (in terms of “mission know how”, qualified office-bearers, awareness of on-field conditions, available time) to exercise such control/authority responsibly?

As a sub-point, I call your attention to the following: It is, I believe important that we recognize that our pastors typically work at all time under the direct supervision of the consistory; however, our (foreign) missionaries typically work with no such direct supervision – so that, for all intents and purposes, they are (or become or are in danger of becoming) “a law unto themselves”. Without going into names and places, let me simply affirm that one of the men in attendance at our Pittsburgh meeting was much surprised at the work/activity of one of our missionaries; his query: Was he called to do that? Obviously, I could not answer; nor would I. The question was more rhetorical and the point was clear: It would not happen in his federation. The reason I raise the matter here is to provide some example of what may happen if the control/authority exercised by a consistory is wanting. After all, how many of the consistories that have called a missionary have elders “on board” who have the requisite insight to evaluate the on-field work being done?

5. The importance of proper funding of/for our missionaries. It was agreed that, when missionaries – called by a/the churches – are expected/required to raise part or all of their salaries, (then) the (calling) church is failing them, (then) they are asked to do what is neither their call(ing) nor their responsibility.

As you will see in the Minutes of our meeting, we also spent time discussing the issue of the safety of the foreign missionaries and contingency plans for removing them from the field in case of imminent danger. It is generally agreed that the final call for removal from the field should be left to the missionary; however, someone from the homefront should monitor the situation and be in contact with the missionary to help, where necessary, in coming to a responsible decision. One reason for such monitoring: a missionary is often troubled by feelings of guilt; is he not “guilty” of forsaking the ministry/flock entrusted to him?

Also discussed was the question of medical insurance, especially for short-term missionaries. The Minutes record the name of a provider of such insurance – and the importance of acquiring it.

Brothers, I want again to thank you for the opportunity to represent both you (CERCU) and our churches at this NAPARC meeting. It was good to hear of the concern of others that we be responsibly engaged in the Lord’s call to proclaim the good news to all nations – and to hear how the Lord is blessing those efforts. I do not know what plans you may have for next year vis a vis attendance at the NAPARC WME. Let me simply affirm that another meeting is scheduled for November 2007. In the event that you decide that someone should attend that meeting, may I encourage you to provide that person with your reaction(s) to this report, as well as any specific matters you might wish him to raise at that meeting on your behalf. Since the URCNA does not have a World Missions “Executive”, it is important that your representative, who speaks on your behalf at this meeting, can do so with some awareness of CERCU thinking on the issues discussed. The men with whom I met asked that I meet with them again; however, that is your call. I will simply say that, the Lord willing, I am prepared to make myself available for such an (eventual) assignment.

Humbly submitted,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema

NAPARC Coordination Committee on Women in the Military
Report to the 29th Meeting of NAPARC

Monday, October 20, 2003

Esteemed Brethren:

Your Committee herein reports on its labors to the 29th Meeting of NAPARC.

I. Committee History:

At the 25th Meeting of NAPARC in 1999 the following action was taken: *That NAPARC request the member churches studying the issue of women in the military to include in their study reports a series of propositions to be considered for presentation to, and adoption by, the NAPARC churches, and that NAPARC appoint a committee of two to coordinate and facilitate the interchange. (Messers Potter and Wisdom were appointed to this committee).*(Minutes XIX. B)

At the 26th Meeting of NAPARC in 2000 the following is recorded in the Minutes: *The RCUS has sent in a finished report. The OPC and the PCA General Assemblies took no action as yet on their reports. The committee of two, established last year; to coordinate and facilitate the interchange on this subject is continued.* (Minutes XVII.B)

At the 27th Meeting of NAPARC in 2001 the following is recorded in the Minutes: *Ronald Potter reported that this Committee has received resolutions on Women in the Military from only one denomination, and therefore had no report. It was suggested that the Committee contact each denomination to get this information.* (Minutes XIII.B)

At the 28th Meeting of NAPARC in 2002 the following is recorded in the Minutes: *That the Coordination Committee on Women in the Military be continued.* (XII. 1.)

II. Committee Report:

Your Committee in accordance with its mandate herein reports on the action taken by the RCUS, the RPCNA, the OPC and the PCA.

A. Reformed Church in the United States:

Adopted: 250th Session of Synod (1996), Minutes XIV. F. (Abstract of the Minutes, p.67-68)

- a. The 250th Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States, upon due examination of Holy Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments, finds no biblical warrant for women serving in enforced military service, but on the contrary, finds that women are to be protected from enforced military service that they might fulfil their callings and duties under God as set forth in the order of creation. Further, women are not to serve in combat roles.

- b. That member churches of the Reformed Church in the United States make this study available to its members as part of the teaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The full study on *Women in the Military* is published in the Abstract of the Minutes of the 250th Synod of the RCUS pp. 60-68.

B. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America.

The following resolution was passed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in its regular session on Thursday, June 10, 1998:

Therefore, be it now resolved:

1. That, while recognizing the right and duty that women have to self defense, which may involve physical violence (Judges 9:53), it is our conviction that Biblical teaching does not give a nation warrant to employ women for military combat.
2. That we direct all presbyteries and sessions to instruct their congregations in this regard.
3. That we urge any of our female members who are considering or presently engaged in military service to take counsel of their sessions as to the teaching of God's Word in this matter.
4. That the Clerk of Synod send a copy of this resolution to the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), and to our military chaplains.
5. That the Moderator of Synod be directed to assign a representative to present a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

C. Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Adopted: 68th General Assembly (2001) Minutes #144, #145, p.33

That the 68th GA declare that the use of women in military combat is both contrary to nature and inconsistent with the Word of God.

Grounds:

- (1) This is a ministerial declaration of what is revealed in Holy Scripture, cf. 1 Corinthians. 11:14; report I, Sections II-IV (see pp. 265-269).
- (2) This provides the Biblical counsel requested by the PRJC without making any further pronouncements that would, presumably cause the church to "intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth: in a matter that some would say is not yet an extraordinary case, cf. Westminster Confession of Faith 31.4

D. Presbyterian Church in America.

Adopted: 30th General Assembly (2002) Minutes p. 2302-2003

1. Acknowledging that the child in the womb is "a person covered by Divine protection" (*Statement on Abortion*, Sixth General Assembly); and that women of childbearing age often carry unborn children while remaining unaware of their child's existence; and that principles of just war require the minimization of the loss of life—particularly innocent civilians; the PCA declares that any policy which intentionally places in harms way as military combatants women who are, or might be, carrying a child in their womb, is a violation of God's Moral Law.

2. This Assembly declares it to be the biblical duty of man to defend woman and therefore condemns the use of women as military combatants, as well as any conscription of women into the Armed Services of the United States.

3. Therefore be it resolved that the Thirtieth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America adopts the above as pastoral counsel for the good of the members, the officers, and especially the military chaplains of the Presbyterian Church in America.

4. Be it further resolved that the Presbyterian Church in America supports the decision of any of its members to object to, as a matter of conscience, the conscription of women or the use of women as military combatants.

In fulfilment of its mandate: *That NAPARC request the member churches studying the issue of women in the military to include in their study reports a series of propositions to be considered for presentation to, and adoption by, the NAPARC churches . . .*, your Committee herein reports that the resolutions and statements adopted by the various Synods and Assemblies, as stated above, constitute the propositions sought by NAPARC. It is to be understood that these resolutions and adopted statements do not constitute all that the participating denominations have to say on the subject of Women in the Military but constitute the various Synod/Assembly responses to particular overtures before them. The full study papers of each denomination, which serve as the exegetical basis for these resolutions and adopted statements, ought to be considered by any NAPARC church considering this subject of Women in the Military.

III. Committee Observations:

In its perusal of the resolutions and adopted statements of the RCUS, the RPCNA, the OPC and the PCA, your committee makes the following summary observations:

- We observe that that the basis for these resolutions and adopted statements is the Word of God (RCUS, RPCNA, OPC, PCA).
- We observe that these resolutions and adopted statements, in sum, find no biblical warrant for women to serve as military combatants (RCUS, RPCNA, OPC, PCA).
- .We observe that these resolutions and adopted statements have the force of instruction, advice or counsel to be given to the members of the various churches as the situation warrants (RCUS, RPCNA, OPC, PCA) and to military Chaplains serving in those denominations (OPC, PCA)
- We observe that two denominations (RCUS, PCA) directly address the matter of enforced military service (conscription) and oppose it on biblical grounds.

IV. Committee Recommendations:

Your Committee unanimously proposes the following recommendation.

Recommendation #1: That those NAPARC churches who have not studied and adopted positions relative to Women in the Military, be encouraged to do so and to consider the work of the four NAPARC churches who have already adopted positions opposing women in military combat.

Your Committee also proposes the following though it is to be noted that while there is Committee agreement to submit this recommendation to NAPARC as it stands, Rev. Wisdom would have his "NO" vote entered on the record.

Recommendation #2: That NAPARC adopt the following statement: That it is the conviction of the member churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council that the Word of God gives no warrant expressed or implied that women are to be conscripted into or employed for military combat roles but rather they are to be defended by men and kept from harms way that they might fulfil their biblical callings and duties under God.

Respectfully,

Rev. Ron Potter (Chairman)

Rev. Chris Wisdom.

Joint Church Order Committee Report

Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity

Esteemed Brothers,

A. Some Introductory Comments

By way of introduction, we again make reference to the decision of Synod Escondido which requires that the URCNA CO committee report annually to CERCU, (cf. Minutes of the 4th Synod of the URCNA, p.24). We also repeat that “it is our understanding that you will forward this report as received” to Synod Schererville, scheduled to meet in July of 2007. We will begin with a brief recounting of the committee’s activities since our report to Synod Calgary.

The Joint Church Order committee (JCO) is composed of five members of the URCNA (Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, and Mr. Harry Van Gorp) and four members of the CanRC (Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John Van Woudenberg, and Dr. Art Witten).

The committee met seven times since our last report, as follows: August 3-5, 2004 in Burlington, Ontario; November 9-11, 2004 in Dutton, Michigan; March 15, 2005 in Dutton; August 8-10, 2005 in Chino, California; November 1-3, 2005 in Burlington; March 14-16, 2006 in Dutton; and August 22-24, 2006 in Dutton. Since our previous report covered the work done by the JCO in its first four meetings, the work of preparing the “Proposed Church Order” (PCO) was accomplished in 11 meetings of the committee.

B. Some Highlights of the Committee Meetings

At our August 3-5, 2004 meeting, we continued the practice of reviewing the items adopted – a practice we consistently followed at every subsequent meeting of the committee and found to be very beneficial. Since our mandate stipulates

- a. that the current Church Orders of the two federations be evaluated in the light of scriptural and confessional principles and patterns of church government of the Dort CO (and)
- b. that the CO committee work together with a Canadian Reformed CO committee to develop suitable and agreeable adaptations of the Church Order of Dort, maintaining its principles, structure and essential provisions,

the committee spent considerable time going over what we called our “gaps” report, a report that culled out the articles of the CO of Dort that had, as yet, not been dealt with by the committee. This proved to be a very helpful *modus operandi* for the committee, as was the printing of “a record of the work thus far accomplished on the new CO” document with the Minutes of each meeting of the committee.

We spent much time at the November 2004 meeting discussing the question of authority, that is, What is the authority exercised by the broader assemblies? Is it in principle different from the authority which a consistory exercises over a congregation? How was that question historically understood and answered by the churches of the Reformation? We consulted various “authorities” and eventually concluded that it is indeed proper to speak of the authority of broader ecclesiastical assemblies – an authority that is not dependent on the local churches *relinquishing* some of their authority to the broader assemblies, but an authority that properly belongs to them by virtue of the fact that they are assemblies of the church. At this meeting we also spent considerable time discussing various questions relating to preparation for the ministry and the examination of those seeking the ministry. In that context, we re-visited the issue of an article regarding men with “exceptional gifts” (Art. 8 of the Dort CO), an issue that occasioned a number of responses from the churches who objected to our reported proposal to drop such an article from the PCO. We crafted an article which will permit the churches to ordain such men “only under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible”.

The March 2005 meeting spent considerable time on the various Examination documents required by the churches of the federation, namely the Procedure and Content for the Licensure, the Candidacy, and the Ordination Examinations.

We also reaffirmed the protocol for handling correspondence received – agreeing that, though all communications be shared for information purposes, each “side” would be responsible to respond to communications received from the churches of their federation.

Additionally, we discussed at length the matter of ecumenical relations, recognizing the importance of distinguishing clearly between the purpose, the exercise, and the levels of ecumenicity, as well as underscoring the importance of recognizing that ecumenical activities include “the preaching of the Word by ministers of other churches and participating at the Lord’s table – both of which require the approbation of classis”.

In seeking to faithfully fulfill our Mandate, we reviewed Articles 32-50 of the CO of Dort. The articles 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 43, and 46 of the CO of Dort will be found under the various sections of Article 21 “Ecclesiastical Assemblies” of the PCO; while articles 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 47, 49, and 50 of the CO of Dort will be found under the appropriate heading of the matter dealt with in each article. Articles 42 and 48 of the CO of Dort were deemed not necessary. At later meetings, we decided that articles 18, 26, 45, 57, 66, and 82 of the Dort CO also are not necessary.

For its August 2005 meeting, the JCO committee decided to meet in Chino, California. This venue would provide an opportunity for the churches on the West coast to meet and interact with the brothers of the CanRC – and visa versa – as well as give these brothers an opportunity to preach the Word and/or bring greetings from the CanRC to various congregations in California. It proved to be a successful venture, much appreciated by the participants.

At this meeting the question of authority was once again on the table – resulting in a re-write of Foundational Principles 6 and 10 as well as the addition of a paragraph to the Ecclesiastical Assemblies article, (PCO article 21), as follows: “All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order”. In that context, articles regarding the equality of office-bearers and no “lording over others” were also adopted, as were articles re subscription and the protection of doctrinal purity.

Several articles re the worship services – the role of the consistory, the principles of biblical worship, the place of the Word and the Catechism – as well as the calling of special worship services, and the manner of celebrating the sacraments were adopted. It was decided that a separate article re Prayer Services (Dort CO article 66 is not needed; instead this matter is included in the article on worship services.

The November 2005 meeting of the JCO committee focussed much of its attention on the matter of discipline. We adopted an article which defines both the nature and the purpose of ecclesiastical discipline. Additionally, we wrote articles dealing with consistory involvement, the reconciliation of a member, the discipline of a communicant and non-communicant member, and the re-admission of an excommunicated member.

In this context, we also discussed the suspension and deposition of office-bearers, as well the “the sins requiring suspension from office”. Appropriate articles re these matters were adopted for the PCO. The article dealing with Psalms and Hymns received considerable attention at this meeting. After extensive discussion of the principles of singing only synodically approved songs in the worship services, we decided to let the matter rest until the next meeting of the JCO committee.

The March 2006 meeting of the JCO committee spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and “honing” the product of our labors. We began to sense that we were approaching the end of our labors of producing a new CO – for the churches of the two federations to put to the test. Various (minor) changes were incorporated in both the wording of the Foundational Principles and in the articles of the PCO itself. The article regarding admission to the pulpit again received a lot of attention before being finalized, as was the article dealing with property. The latter was submitted to a legal expert for review.

We agreed that elders and deacons who have served in office before must be ordained (rather than installed) when re-elected to office, since it is to be understood that “the responsibility and authority of office do not extend beyond a term of ordination”.

The CO article re marriage received careful attention – especially in view of the fact of the increasing influence of the homosexuality lobby. It is of utmost importance that our churches clearly state that marriage can only be between a man and a woman, and can only be monogamous. We agreed that the JCO should use the word “parity” rather than the word “equality” when speaking of the relationship between office-bearers. (The term “equality” has to do with “sameness of status before a third party” while the term “parity” has to do with equal ranking of function.) Articles 16 and 52 of the PCO reflect the thinking of the committee re this matter.

The last meeting of the JCO was held in August of 2006. At this meeting we finalized our labors of producing what we now present to the churches as the Proposed Church Order. At this meeting we again spent time reviewing the work we had accomplished to date – which resulted in a number of changes being incorporated into our document, as well as the addition of some explanatory notes, e.g. re the use of the term “council”. Since there is the tendency to think of the council as another ecclesiastical assembly, we decided that the article re the consistory should include wording explaining that the term “council” does *not* designate *an assembly* of the church, but is a meeting of the elders and minister(s) at which the deacons are present.

Similarly, the terminology regarding withdrawing and resigning (of members) was re-written. The article, PCO article 56, has four parts, to wit: the Reception of Members, the Departure of Members, the Withdrawal of members, and (the) Letter of Testimony.

We discussed at length (once again) articles regarding admission to the Lord’s Table, regarding appeals and appeal procedures, and regarding missions and evangelism. On all those matters we came to unanimous agreement.

It was the question of Psalms and Hymns, however, on which we could not come to unanimous consent – though we tried diligently to do just that. It was the last clause: “provided they are approved by general synod” that proved to be the stumbling block. A minority report on that issue is attached.

One of the last things we did as committee was to review all of the articles, agree on their placement in the CO, and decide on an appropriate heading for each article.

C. Some Concluding Remarks

We want to express our gratitude to the Lord for the wonderful working relationship with our co-laborers from the CanRC. Though we had intense debate on occasion, we experienced mutual respect and appreciation for the integrity of all the participants as we sought to do the will of the Lord. It is our prayer that the Lord richly bless our efforts in coming to a uniting of our two federations. To Him be the glory.

It is with a sense of humble gratitude to the Lord for blessing our efforts, therefore, that we present to Synod Schererville

1. A Proposed Church Order. In addition to the proposed Church Order articles, this PCO includes an Introduction (biblical basis and historical background), Foundational Principles, and Examination Appendices.
2. A four-column document for comparing the PCO with the CO of Dort (English translations 1914/1920), the CO of the CanRC, and the 2004 CO of the URCNA.
3. A Protocol document which sets forth a proposal to Synod as to the way the churches (should be asked to) interact with the PCO.

D. Recommendations

We, the CO committee of the URCNA, recommend that Synod Schererville 2007

1. Receive the PCO and the four-column comparison document;
2. Give the PCO and the four-column comparison document to the churches for discussion and evaluation, with a view to final adoption by Synod 2010;
3. Adopt the recommendations proposed in the Protocol document, namely

- a. that the (URCNA members of the) JCO Committee be appointed as the PCO Committee, mandated to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding the PCO, and on that basis to recommend a revised Proposed Church Order to Synod 2010,
 - b. that official communications regarding the PCO proceed only from consistories to the PCO committee,
 - c. that by June 1, 2009 the PCO Committee compile a list of all communications which are to be received by March 1, 2009 from consistories, and from individual communications processed through their consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication,
 - d. that the PCO Committee be authorized to hold no more than eight (8) regional conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the classes) throughout the federation.
Additionally, (for the time between Synod 2007 and Synod 2010)
 - e. that Synod mandate several committee members to prepare, circulate, and finalize for publication a number of expositions of various provisions of the PCO, including their biblical principle(s), historical background, and practical considerations,
 - f. that Synod mandate teams of committee members to prepare and provide regional seminar conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the classes) to present and discuss various provisions of the PCO,
 - g. that Synod mandate the PCO Committee to prepare a report for Synod 2010, and to recommend a revised PCO for adoption by Synod 2010.
And, finally, (regarding the Synod scheduled to meet in AD 2010)
 - h. that Synod stipulate that a report of the PCO Committee regarding all communications received from consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication, is to be presented to Synod 2010, and
 - i. that Synod stipulate that a revised Proposed Church Order be presented to Synod 2010 for adoption.
4. that Synod mandate its CO committee to work closely with the CanRC committee members;
 5. that Synod mandate its CO committee to provide CERCU with its report in sufficient time for it to prepare its report for Synod 2010 by the deadline set by Synod for such reports.

Humbly submitted,
 Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Chairman
 Rev. William Pols, Recorder of the CO articles
 Rev. Ronald Scheuers
 Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, Correspondence Secretary
 Mr. Harry Van Gorp

E. Attachments

Attached to this report, are the following documents:

1. the Proposed Church Order;
2. the Four-column Document mapping out (a) the PCO, (b) the CO of Dort, (c) the current CO of the CanRC, and (d) the current CO of the URCNA;
3. the Protocol Document;
4. a Minority Report on Article 35.

The Proposed Church Order

(August 2006)

Introduction

Biblical and Confessional Basis

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we fully agree with these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, and order in the churches. The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order. Congregations manifest this unity when their delegates meet together in the broader assemblies.

Historical Background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571). For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and The Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

Foundational Principles

The following list of foundational principles, though not exhaustive, provides a clear biblical basis for and source of our Church Order.

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.
Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27
2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.

Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18

3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by biblical teaching.
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18; II Timothy 3:16-17
4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. In its subjection to its heavenly Head, the universal church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of His Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church.
Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22-23; Acts 14:23; 20:28-32
6. The offices of minister, elder, and deacon are local in authority and function. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national, or regional offices to His church by which the churches are to be governed. Therefore, no office-bearer may lord it over another office-bearer.
Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5
7. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation.
Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; I Corinthians 16:1-3;
Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 4:9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
10. Member churches meet together in broader assemblies to manifest ecclesiastical unity, to guard against human imperfections, and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors. The decisions of such assemblies are settled and binding among the churches unless they are contrary to Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the adopted Church Order.
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to

the ends of the earth and by administering the sacraments in the congregation.

Matthew 26:26-30; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:38-39;

I Corinthians 11:17-34; II Corinthians 5:18-21

12. Christ cares for and governs His church through the office-bearers, namely, ministers, elders, and deacons, whom He chooses through the congregation.

Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; I Timothy 3:1, 8; 5:17

13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders, and deacons be properly qualified for the suitable discharge of their respective offices.

I Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; II Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5

14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the consistory, is called to worship Him in reverence and awe according to the scriptural principles governing worship.

Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1-2, 6; Psalm 100:4;

John 4:24; Hebrews 12:28-29; I Peter 2:9

15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.

Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17

16. The church's evangelistic and missionary calling consists of preaching and teaching the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing new churches or expanding existing churches. This calling is fulfilled by ministers of the Word ordained to be missionaries, and by equipping the congregation to be the light of the world

Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-13; Philippians 2:14-16

I Peter 2:9-12; I Peter 3:15-16

17. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name.

I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11

18. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church, to whom the keys of the kingdom are entrusted, becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the consistory of the church.

Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13;

I Peter 5:1-3

Article 1. The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order

For maintaining proper ecclesiastical order (I Corinthians 14:40), the Church Order must regulate the offices; the assemblies; the supervision of doctrine, worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and the discipline. Therefore we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities

under the following divisions:

- I. Offices (Articles 2-19)
- II. Assemblies (Articles 20-32)
- III. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies (Articles 33-46)
- IV. Discipline (Articles 47-58)

I. OFFICES

Article 2. The Three Offices

Christ has instituted three distinct offices in the church: the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it with the cooperation of the congregation.

Article 3. The Duties of the Minister

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, watching over his fellow office-bearer, and finally, together with the elders shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

Article 4. Preparation for the Ministry

- a. Theological Education: Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church shall see to it that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.
- b. Licensure: A man aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exhort in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained a licensure examination conducted by his classis as required in Appendix 1. Classis shall give license only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for the duration of his theological training. All the work of the licentiate shall be conducted under consistorial supervision.
- c. Candidacy: At the conclusion of his training a student shall ask his consistory to request classis to conduct a candidacy examination, as required in Appendix 2. Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall declare him eligible for call among the churches of the federation.
- d. Exceptional Circumstances: Only under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible, may a consistory request that an exceptionally gifted brother be presented to classis for a suitable candidacy examination (see Appendix 2). In such a situation, his consistory and the classis should also have assurance of his godliness, humility, modesty, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and public speaking ability.

Article 5. Calling a Candidate

The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of:

First, the election by the council of a man who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed in Appendix 2, after having prayed and having received the advice of the congregation and of the counselor appointed by classis.

Second, the examination necessary for ordination, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the classis to which the calling church belongs, in accordance with the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 3.

Third, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with proper instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the congregation, with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 6. Calling an Ordained Minister Within the Federation

A minister already ordained within the federation who is called to another congregation shall be called in the lawful manner by the council. The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process, including the issuance of written ecclesiastical testimonies of his doctrine and life, of his ministerial service, and of his honorable release from the church and classis he last served.

Upon receipt of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.

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

Article 7. An Ordained Minister without a Congregation Entering the Federation

A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after sustaining an examination conducted to the satisfaction of classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 4, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.

Article 8. Bound to a Particular Church

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task. All ministers shall remain subject to the Church Order.

Article 9. Bound for Life

A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his council and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.

Article 10. Support and Emeritation of Ministers

Each church shall provide honorably for the minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support.

The emeritation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the council, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.

Article 11. Temporary Release

If because of illness or other substantial reasons, a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the council. If the duration of the release is greater than four months, the council shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.

Article 12. Exceptional Release of a Minister

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, a council may release its minister from his call only under all of the following conditions:

- a. This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. This release shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;
- c. This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod;
- d. This release shall require the approval by classis of the council's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years.

The council from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.

Article 13. Nomination and Election of Elders and Deacons

The council shall provide adequate preparation of elders and deacons by means of instruction and training regarding the duties of each office. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following:

First, the council shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the council may invite the congregation to direct attention to suitable men. Ordinarily, the number of nominees shall be twice the number of vacancies.

Second, after public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the regulations adopted for that purpose.

Third, the council shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation two weeks prior to entering office, in order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory.

Article 14. The Term and Ordination of Elders and Deacons

Before entering upon their work, elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a term specified by the consistory, and having been appointed by the council, shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, and shall be ordained with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 15. Subscription to the Confessions

Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and if he persists in his refusal, shall be deposed from office.

Article 16. Parity Among Office-bearers

Among the office-bearers, parity shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their respective offices and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.

Article 17. The Duties of Elders

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of shepherding and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall ensure that their fellow-elders, the minister(s), and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, persist in praying for the congregation, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote confessionally Reformed schooling at all levels. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to need, engage in family visiting, preserve and promote concord and unity among the members and between the congregation and its office-bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.

Article 18. Protecting Doctrinal Purity

To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.

Article 19. The Duties of Deacons

The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered.

The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a monthly account of their work to the consistory. The deacons may invite

the minister to visit their meetings in order to acquaint him with their work and request his advice.

Article 20. The Civil Authorities

As the task of civil government includes protecting the freedom of the Christian church, so it is the responsibility of the church to respect the government as instituted by God. In order that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, and that the witness of the gospel may be protected and advanced, the office-bearers must lead the congregation by their admonition and example. They shall ensure that prayers for the government are regularly offered and that members render due honor and lawful obedience to the civil authorities, thereby living as good citizens under Christ and promoting the true welfare of the land in which they live.

II. ASSEMBLIES

Article 21. Ecclesiastical Assemblies

- a. Identification: Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.
- b. Convening: Regulations for broader assemblies shall delineate the function of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the convening churches.
- c. Delegation: Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body as required in Appendix X, thereby receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them. These assemblies shall require each delegate to indicate his agreement with the Form of Subscription. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church is particularly involved.
- d. Jurisdiction: In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All such matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod.
- e. Decisions: All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.
- f. Proceedings: The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes proper order and decorum.

- g. Records: In every assembly a clerk shall keep and distribute an accurate record of the proceedings. In all broader assemblies these functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.
- h. Censure: At the close of broader assemblies, admonition shall be given to those who demonstrated unworthy behavior, either during the meeting or regarding a decision of a narrower assembly.
- i. Archives: Each ecclesiastical assembly shall ensure the proper preservation of its archives.
- j. Press Release: Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

Article 22. The Consistory

In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises direct authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ. The term council designates not an assembly of the church, but a meeting of the elders and minister(s) with the deacons under the authority of the consistory, at which matters are dealt with as stipulated by the Church Order or as assigned by the consistory.

Article 23. Small Number of Office-Bearers

Where the number of elders is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the deacons. This shall invariably be done where the number of elders is fewer than three. Where the number of deacons is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the elders. This shall invariably be done where the number of deacons is fewer than three.

Article 24. Organizing a New Congregation

A congregation shall be organized under its first consistory only under the supervision of the neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.

Article 25. The Classis

- a. Composition: A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.
- b. Frequency: A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.
- c. Convening: The churches shall take turns convening classis and providing a chairman from their delegation. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession. Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.
- d. Mutual Oversight: The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistory, council, and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and confessionally Reformed schooling is wholeheartedly promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the

proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

- e. Delegation to Regional and General Synod: The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod. If the regional synod consists of three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.
- f. Classis Contracta: A minimum of three churches may convene as a *classis contracta* exclusively to approbate a call, or to release a minister who has accepted a call, and to appoint a counselor for the ministerial vacancy.

Article 26. Church Visitors

Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its more experienced and competent ministers or elders to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.

These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfill their offices faithfully, that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things unto the peace, edification, and profit of the churches. Upon the request of a consistory, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.

Article 27. Counselors

The consistory of a church with a ministerial vacancy shall request classis to appoint the minister it specifies to serve as counselor. His task is to help the consistory follow the provisions of the Church Order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the council members, he also shall sign the letter of call.

Article 28. The Regional Synod

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

The regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes, with lawful appeals of classical decisions, and with the reports of its deputies. It shall also determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

Article 29. The Deputies of Regional Synod

Each regional synod shall appoint two deputies and an alternate for each classis, who shall assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order. Upon the request of a classis, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

In cases of disagreement between the deputies, the decision of classis shall stand. In cases where the deputies cannot give concurring advice, the classis may request the deputies to report the matter to regional synod for decision.

The regional deputies shall keep a proper record of their actions. They shall submit a written report of their actions to the regional synod and, if so required, they shall further explain those actions. The deputies shall serve until they are discharged from their duties by their regional synod.

Article 30. The General Synod

A general synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the classes, shall meet at least once every three years. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.

The general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and the regional synods, with lawful appeals, and with reports which were mandated by the previous synod. It shall also determine the time and place for the next general synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

Article 31. Ecumenical Relations

The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and faithfully demonstrate allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church shall give account to classis of its ecumenical activities with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. A church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.

The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad shall not be rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.

Article 32. Admitting a Church

A church shall be admitted into the federation by the nearest classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, only upon recommendation from a consistory, and provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with the Church Order. If one of these office-bearers is a minister, he shall be examined according to Appendix 4.

III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES

Article 33. The Regular Worship Services

The consistory shall call the congregation together for public worship twice each Lord's Day.

The consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word, namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place,

confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.

At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

Article 34. Special Worship Services

In the manner decided by the consistory, special worship services may be called in observance of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Special worship services may be called also in connection with prayer for crops and labor, Thanksgiving Day, the turning of the new year, and times of great distress or blessing.

Article 35. Psalms and Hymns

The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.

Article 36. Admission to the Pulpit

Consistories shall permit men to administer the Word and sacraments only according to the following stipulations:

- a. The consistory must give its consent before any minister may preach the Word or administer the sacraments in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to ministers of churches within the federation and to ministers of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- b. The consistory must give its consent before any licentiate or candidate may exhort in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to licentiates and candidates within the federation and to licentiates and candidates of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.
- c. Any exception to either of these requirements shall be granted only occasionally, only to ministers, licentiates, and candidates who faithfully subscribe to the Reformed Confessions, and only with prior approbation of classis.

Article 37. The Administration of the Sacraments

The sacraments shall be administered under the authority of the consistory in a public worship service by an ordained minister of the Word with the use of the synodically adopted liturgical forms.

Article 38. The Baptism of Covenant Children

The consistory shall ensure that God's covenant is signified and sealed by holy baptism to the children of communicant members in good standing. Parents shall present their children for baptism as soon as feasible.

Article 39. The Baptism of Adults

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

Article 40. Administration of the Lord's Supper

At least once every three months the Lord's Supper shall be administered in a service of public worship, under the supervision of the consistory, according to the teaching of God's Word, and in a manner most conducive to the edification of the congregation.

Article 41. Admission to the Lord's Supper

The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that, as much as possible, the consistory has secured confirmation of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk of life.

Article 42. The Church's Mission Calling

Each church shall fulfill its mission calling, which is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing churches. This shall be carried out by missionaries who are ministers of the Word set apart for this labor by being called, supported, and supervised by their consistories for this task. Such missionaries shall proclaim the Word of God, and administer the sacraments to those who have come to the faith. They shall also institute church offices according to the provisions of the Church Order. The consistory shall promote the involvement of church members in labor and service that assist fulfilling this mission calling. If necessary, a calling church shall invite churches within its classis or regional synod to cooperate by agreement regarding the field, support, and oversight of the mission work.

Article 43. The Church's Evangelism Calling

Each church shall fulfill its evangelism calling according to the Word of God and relying on the Holy Spirit, which is to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those within its area of life and influence. It shall seek to persuade those who do not know God or are estranged from God and His service to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily includes affiliating with His church through profession of faith.

Article 44. Marriage

Scripture teaches that marriage is to be a lifelong monogamous union between a man and a woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry only in the Lord. The minister, as authorized by the consistory, shall solemnize only marriages that accord with Scripture, using the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage adopted by general synod.

Article 45. Funerals

A funeral is a family matter and shall not be conducted as a worship service.

Article 46. The Church Records

The consistory shall maintain accurate records which include the names of the members of the congregation and the dates of their births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages,

receptions into and departures from the church, and deaths.

IV. DISCIPLINE

Article 47. The Nature and Purpose of Discipline

Ecclesiastical discipline, one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities. The purpose of ecclesiastical discipline is that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church, and one's neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.

Article 48. Consistory Involvement

When a member's sin in doctrine or life is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed. A private sin from which the sinner repents after having been admonished by one person alone, or subsequently in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be brought to the consistory.

When a member does not repent after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.

Article 49. The Reconciliation of a Member

The reconciliation of a member, whose sin is public or has become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. The consistory shall determine whether, for the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.

Article 50. The Discipline of a Member

A communicant member, or a mature non-communicant member, whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages:

- a. Silent Discipline: a member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory.
- b. Public Discipline: if the silent discipline and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
 1. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared.

2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation.
 3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date.
- c. Excommunication: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, using the synodically approved liturgical form.

Article 51. The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicate member, shall be readmitted only upon the public profession of faith.

Article 52. No Lording it Over

No church shall lord it over other churches, and no office-bearer shall lord it over other office-bearers.

Article 53. Mutual Censure

The minister(s), elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in a loving and edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices.

Article 54. The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer

When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be temporarily suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.

Included among the sins requiring suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; in short, all sins which would warrant the discipline of any other member.

Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required.

Suspension or deposition in itself does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.

A man once deposed may be reconsidered for office only after a sufficient period of time, only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and only through the regular procedure for entering office.

Article 55. Appeals and Procedure

When all avenues for settling a dispute at the consistory level have been exhausted, and a member is convinced that an injustice has been done to him by a decision of his consistory, he

may appeal the decision to classis for its judgment. The judgment of the broader assembly shall be reached by majority vote, received with respect, and considered settled and binding unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.

Any appeal to a broader assembly must provide written grounds, and the broader assembly shall provide adequate grounds for its decision to sustain or not sustain an appeal. If an assembly does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal the decision of the narrower assembly to the next broader assembly. If a general synod does not sustain that appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and that to the next general synod.

A member who desires to object to a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, shall bring the matter to his consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.

A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a broader assembly conflicts with the Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the broader assembly next in order as soon as feasible.

Article 56. The Reception, Departure, and Withdrawal of Members

- a. The Reception of Members: Members from churches within the federation or churches with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall be received under the spiritual care of the consistory upon receipt of a testimony regarding their doctrine and life. Others shall be admitted only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. In such cases the consistory shall determine whether a public profession of faith shall be required.
- b. The Departure of Members: Members departing to a church within the federation or a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall submit a written request to the consistory, which shall send a letter concerning their doctrine and life to such church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care.
- c. The Withdrawal of Members: The withdrawal of a member shall be appropriately announced.
- d. Letter of testimony: If a letter of testimony concerning doctrine and life is requested by a member, the consistory shall furnish such a letter.

Article 57. Property

All property, whether real or personal, held by a local church for the benefit of that local church, shall remain the property of that local church in accordance with its own by-laws or regulations and the governing laws of the jurisdiction in which the church is located.

All property, whether real or personal, held for the benefit of the federation by a local church, a classis or synod or a committee, trustee or trustees thereof, or otherwise, shall be held in trust as property in common of all of the churches within the federation, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by classes or synods of the federation. In the event a local church withdraws from the federation, unless the rules and regulations of the federation provide otherwise, the withdrawing church shall cease to have any benefit in such property.

Notwithstanding the laws of the jurisdiction in which a local church is located, the final authority for any acquisition or disposition of property by a local church, whether real or personal, shall be the council of that church in accordance with the church's own by-laws or regulations, regardless of how the property is held.

Any appeals to broader assemblies with respect to property shall be governed by this article.

Article 58. The Observance and Revision of the Church Order

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, having been drafted in accord with the Foundational Principles and adopted by common consent, shall be observed diligently. Only when the good order and welfare of the churches make it necessary, shall this Church Order be revised. Any proposed revision of the Church Order shall be adopted only by a majority vote of a general synod.

APPENDIX 1

The Licensure Examination

(cf. Article 4)

A theological student who is a member of a church within the federation and is preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments must undergo the licensure examination in order to be authorized to exhort in the churches.

A. Required Documents:

1. Proof of successful completion of at least one year of training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. A letter from the student's consistory which
 - a. in consultation with the faculty of his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. A brief statement from the student regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The student's consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the student a sermon text.
4. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the student's written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
5. The student shall deliver the sermon at classis.
6. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is sufficiently competent in the following areas:
 - a. knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity (20-30 minutes);
 - b. understanding of public worship (15-25 minutes);
 - c. exegesis and homiletics (15-25 minutes).Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the student to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain a student so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.
7. If classis judges the student's performance to be acceptable, and he promises to teach in accordance with the Three Forms of Unity, classis shall issue him a license to exhort in the churches as long as he continues preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments, subject to annual review by the licensing classis.

APPENDIX 2

The Candidacy Examination

(cf. Articles 4 and 5)

A man aspiring to the office of minister who is a member of a church within the federation and has graduated from an approved seminary must undergo the candidacy examination in order to become eligible for call within the federation.

A. Required Documents:

1. Proof of successful completion of required training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. Written recommendations from one or more consistories and ministers of the federation under whom the prospective candidate has labored in ministerial training for a minimum equivalent of nine months of full-time work.
3. A letter from the prospective candidate's consistory which:
 - a. In consultation with his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life,
 - b. Recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
4. A medical certificate of good health.
5. A brief statement from the prospective candidate regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the prospective candidate's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his

understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).

- b. Knowledge of Scripture: the prospective candidate's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
- c. Biblical Exegesis: the prospective candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the prospective candidate's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the applicant to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain an applicant so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.

8. Classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
9. If after two years the candidate has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his consistory, request an extension of his candidacy for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

APPENDIX 3

The Ordination Examination

(cf. Article 5)

A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination to become eligible for ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the churches.

A. Required Documents:

1. A letter of call.
2. A letter of acceptance of the call.
3. A written declaration of candidacy.
4. A letter from the candidate's consistory which:
 - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceeds with the examination.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the candidate a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the candidate's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Biblical Exegesis: the candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the candidate's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
 - d. Reformed doctrine: the candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the

Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination, and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon ordination.
9. A candidate who does not sustain his examination may undergo the ordination examination again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

APPENDIX 4

The Examination for Ordained Ministers

(cf. Articles 7 and 32)

Requirement for Ecclesiastical Examinations of Ordained Ministers: Ordained ministers who seek admission to the ministry within the federation who come from churches with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship or who come from churches with whom we do not maintain such fellowship, are required to undergo an ecclesiastical examination to become eligible for a call from the churches of the federation. One of the following three examinations shall be conducted as applicable.

I. A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship:

A. Documents:

1. a letter of call
2. a letter of acceptance

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).

- d. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his ordination examination, and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon ordination.
9. An applicant who does not sustain his examination may undergo the above examination again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

Appendix 4 (part 2)

II. A minister of a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and who is seeking eligibility for call to a church of the federation:

A. Documents:

1. A letter from the minister requesting the examination for ordained ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory which:
 - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
 - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he last served regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The sponsoring consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).

- e. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- f. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- g. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- h. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- i. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the candidacy examination.

8. Classis shall decide whether the applicant:
 - a. has sustained the examination and need not undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
 - b. has sustained the examination and yet needs to undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
 - c. has not sustained the examination.
9. If classis decides that the applicant need not undergo a period of testing before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
 - a. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - b. the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
10. If Classis judges that the applicant should undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry by the sponsoring consistory before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then Classis shall determine how long this period of testing should be, Classis shall issue the applicant a license to preach in the churches in the federation for that time period upon the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity. The sponsoring consistory, after the prescribed period of testing and upon approval of his performance, shall recommend to a subsequent classis to declare the applicant eligible for call to the churches in the federation. This subsequent classis shall issue the applicant a written declaration, valid for two years, that

the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:

- a. the affirmative vote of the classis,
- b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
- c. the applicant's whole-hearted promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.

11. If after two years the applicant has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his sponsoring consistory, request an extension of his eligibility for a call for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

Appendix 4 (part 3)

III. A minister of a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship, and who, together with his congregation, is seeking entrance into the federation:

A. Documents:

1. A letter from his congregation requesting the examination for ordained ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the congregation, the pastoral record of the minister, and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory recommending that classis proceed with the examination,
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he served prior to his present congregation regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The ministers's consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
 - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
 - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
 - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
 - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
 - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
 - c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to

- exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
 - e. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
 - f. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
 - g. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
 - h. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the above examination.

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the examination for ordained ministers, and is therefore eligible to be admitted to the ministry as minister of his congregation in the federation, upon:
 - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
 - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
 - c. the applicant's promise to sign the Form of Subscription.

<p>Article 1. The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order</p> <p>For maintaining proper ecclesiastical order (I Corinthians 14:40), the Church Order must regulate the offices; the assemblies; the supervision of doctrine, worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and the discipline. Therefore we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Offices (Articles 2-19) II. Assemblies (Articles 20-32) III. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies (Articles 33-46) IV. Discipline (Articles 47-58) 	<p>Article 1.</p> <p>For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.</p>	<p>I. INTRODUCTION</p> <p>ARTICLE 1. Purpose and Division</p> <p>For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there be offices and supervision of doctrine; assemblies; worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and discipline.</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>We as a federation of churches declare complete submission and obedience to the Word of God delivered to us in the inspired, infallible and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. We believe and are fully persuaded that the Reformed Creeds do fully agree with this Word of God and therefore do subscribe to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. We acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the Church. This headship is exercised in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the God-ordained offices, for the sake of the purity of doctrine and the holiness of life. The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order. This is expressed as they cooperate and exercise mutual concern for one another. Since we desire to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things are to be done decently and in good order (1 Cor. 14:40), we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities in the following articles covered under the following divisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Ecclesiastical Offices (Articles 1-15) II. Ecclesiastical Assemblies (Articles 16-36) III. Ecclesiastical Functions and tasks (Articles 37-50) IV. Ecclesiastical Discipline (Articles 51-66)
<p>I. OFFICES</p> <p>Article 2. The Three Offices</p> <p>Christ has instituted three distinct offices in the church: the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it with the cooperation of the congregation.</p>	<p>Article 2.</p> <p>The offices are of four kinds: of the Ministers of the Word, of the Professors of Theology, of the Elders, and of the Deacons.</p> <p>Article 3.</p> <p>No one, though he be a Professor of Theology, Elder or Deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the Ministry of the Word and the Sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the Classis shall judge whether he is to be declared schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.</p>	<p>II. OFFICES AND SUPERVISION OF DOCTRINE</p> <p>ARTICLE 2. The Offices</p> <p>The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder, and of the deacon.</p>	<p>I. Ecclesiastical Offices</p> <p>Article 1</p> <p>Christ has instituted three offices in the church: minister of the Word, elder and deacon.</p>

<p>Article 3. The Duties of the Minister The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, watching over his fellow office-bearer, and finally, together with the elders shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>	<p>Article 16. The office of the Minister is to continue in prayer and in the Ministry of the Word, to dispense the Sacraments, to watch over his brethren, the Elders and Deacons, as well as the Congregation, and finally, with the Elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 16. The Office of Ministers of the Word The specific duties of the office of minister of the Word are thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, to administer the sacraments, and publicly to call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the church in the doctrine of salvation, to visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and to comfort the sick with the Word of God; and further, with the elders, to keep the church of God in good order, to exercise discipline, and to govern it in such a manner as the Lord has ordained.</p>	<p>Article 2 The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, and assisting the elders in the shepherding and discipline of the congregation.</p>
<p>Article 4. Preparation for the Ministry a. <u>Theological Education:</u> Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church shall see to it that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.</p>	<p>Article 19. The Churches shall exert themselves, as far as necessary, that there may be students supported by them to be trained for the Ministry of the Word.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 19. Training for the Ministry The churches shall maintain an institution for the training for the ministry. The task of the professors of theology is to instruct the students of theology in those disciplines which have been entrusted to them, so that the churches may be provided with ministers of the Word who are able to fulfil the duties of their office as these have been described above.</p>	<p>Article 3 Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence genuine godliness to his Consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training, including his licensure to exhort, and assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church should help him ensure that his financial needs are met. (See <u>Appendix 1</u>.)</p>
<p>b. <u>Licensure:</u> A man aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exhort in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained a licensure examination conducted by his classis as required in Appendix 1. Classis shall give license only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for the duration of his theological training. All the work of the licentiate shall be conducted under consistorial supervision. c. <u>Candidacy:</u> At the conclusion of his training a student shall ask his consistory to request classis to conduct a candidacy examination, as required in Appendix 2. Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall</p>	<p>Article 20. Students who have received permission according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have according to Article 8 been judged competent to be prepared for the Ministry of the Word, shall, for their own training, and for the sake of becoming known to the Congregations, be allowed to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 20. Students of Theology The churches shall endeavour that there be students of theology, extending financial aid to those who are in need of it.</p> <p>ARTICLE 21. An Edifying Word Besides those who have been permitted, according to Article 8, to speak an edifying word, others may be given such consent in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations, for their own training and in order that they may become known to the congregations.</p>	<p>Article 4 At the conclusion of such training, a student must approach his Consistory to become a candidate for the ministry of the Word, which shall arrange for his examination at a meeting of the classis of which his Consistory is a participant. No one shall be declared a candidate for the ministry until he has sustained an examination at a</p>

<p>declare him eligible for call among the churches of the federation.</p> <p>d. <u>Exceptional Circumstances:</u> Only under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible, may a consistory request that an exceptionally gifted brother be appointed to classis for a suitable candidacy examination (see Appendix 2). In such a situation, his consistory and the classis should also have assurance of his godliness, humility, modesty, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and public speaking ability.</p>	<p>Article 8. Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study in preparation for the Ministry of the Word, and have therefore not been declared eligible according to Article 4, shall not be admitted to the Ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion, as also gifts of public address. When such persons present themselves for the Ministry, the Classis (if the [particular] Synod approve) shall first examine them, and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches.</p> <p>Article 4. The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists: First, in the ELECTION by the Consistory and Deacons, after preceding prayers, with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose, and of the ecclesiastical ordinance, that only those can for the first time be called to the Ministry of the Word who have been declared eligible by the churches, according to the rule in this matter; and furthermore with the advice of Classis or of the counselor appointed for this purpose by the Classis; Secondly, in the EXAMINATION both of doctrine and life which shall be conducted by the Classis, to which the call must be submitted for approval, and which shall take place in the presence of three Delegates of Synod from the nearest Classes; Thirdly, in the APPROBATION by the members of the calling church, when, the name of the ministers having been announced for two successive Sundays, no lawful objections arises; which approbation, however, is not required in the case the election takes place with the co-operation of the congregation by choosing out of a nomination previously made. Finally, in the public ORDINATION in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate stipulations and interrogations, admonitions and prayers and imposition of hands by the officiating minister</p>	<p>ARTICLE 8. Exceptional Gifts Persons who have not pursued the regular course of study shall not be admitted to the ministry unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts of godliness, humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion, as well as the gift of public speech. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, classis, after the approval of regional synod, shall examine them in a preparatory examination and allow them to speak an edifying word in the churches of the classis; and further deal with them as it shall deem edifying, with observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for this purpose.</p> <p>ARTICLE 3. The Calling to Office No one shall take any office upon himself without having been lawfully called thereto. Only male members who have made profession of faith and may be considered to meet the conditions as set forth in Holy Scripture (e.g., in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) shall be eligible for office. The election to any office shall take place with the cooperation of the congregation, after preceding prayers, and according to the regulations adopted for that purpose by the consistory with the deacons. The consistory with the deacons shall be free to give the congregation the opportunity beforehand to draw the attention of the respective offices. The consistory with the deacons shall present to the congregation either as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or at the most twice as many, from which number the congregation shall choose as many as are needed. Those elected shall be appointed by the consistory with the deacons in accordance with the adopted regulations. Prior to the ordination or installation the names of the appointed brothers shall be publicly announced to the congregation for its approbation on at least two consecutive Sundays. The ordination or installation shall take place with the use of the relevant forms.</p>	<p>meeting of this classis, in the presence of his Consistory, of his Christian faith and experience, of his call to the ministry, of his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, both in the original languages and in English translations, of the Three Forms of Unity, of Christian doctrine, Christian ethics and church history; of the Church Order, and of his knowledge and aptitude with regard to the particular duties and responsibilities of the minister of the Word, especially the preparation and preaching of sermons. Upon sustaining this exam in the presence of his Consistory and with the concurring advice of the delegates to this meeting of classis, his Consistory shall declare him a candidate for the office of minister of the Word. (See Appendix 2.)</p> <p>Article 6 The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office consists of: First, the election by the council of one who has been declared a candidate according to the regulations prescribed herein, after having prayed and received the advice of the congregation; Second, the examination of both doctrine and life, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the delegates to the classis of which the calling church is a participant, according to the regulations adopted by the federation (see Appendix 3); Finally, the public ordination before the congregation, which shall take place with appropriate instructions, admonitions, prayers and subscription to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, followed with the laying on of hands by the ministers who are present and by the elders of the congregation, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p>
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<p>Article 6. Calling an Ordained Minister Within the Federation A minister already ordained within the federation who is called to another congregation shall be called in the lawful manner by the council. The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process, including the issuance of written ecclesiastical testimonies of his doctrine and life, of his ministerial service, and of his honorable release from the church and classis he last served. Upon receipt of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.</p>	<p>(and by the other ministers who are present) agreeable to the Form for that purpose. Article 5. Ministers already in the Ministry of the Word, who are called to another congregation, shall likewise be called in the aforesaid manner by the Consistory and the Deacons, with observance of the regulations made for the purpose by the Consistory and of the general ecclesiastical ordinances for the eligibility of those who have served outside of the Christian Reformed Church and for the repeated calling of the same Minister during the same vacancy; further, with the advice of the Classis or of the counsellor, appointed by the Classis, and with approval of the Classis, or of the Delegates appointed by the Classis, to whom the ministers called shall show good ecclesiastical testimonials of doctrine and life, with the approval of the members of the calling congregation, as stated in Article 4; whereupon the minister called shall be installed with appropriate stipulations and prayers agreeable to the Form for this purpose.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 4. Eligibility for the Ministry A. ELIGIBILITY Only those shall be called to the office of minister of the Word who 1. have been declared eligible for call by the churches; 2. are already serving in that capacity in one of the churches; or 3. have been declared eligible in, or are serving in, one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship. B. DECLARED ELIGIBLE Only those shall be declared eligible for call within the churches who 1. have passed a preparatory examination by the classis in which they live, which examination shall not take place unless those presenting themselves for it submit the documents necessary to prove that they are members in good standing of one of the churches and have successfully completed a course of study as required by the churches; 2. have served in churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches do not maintain a sister-church relationship, and have been examined by the classis in which they live, with due observance of the general ecclesiastical regulations adopted for that purpose; or 3. have been examined according to the rule described in Article 8. C. CALLING TWICE The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy. D. COUNSELLOR When a vacant church extends a call, the advice of the counsellor shall be sought. ARTICLE 5. Ordination and Installation of Ministers of the Word A. Regarding those who have not served in the ministry before, the following shall be observed: 1. They shall be ordained only after classis has approved the call. Classis shall approve the call a. upon satisfactory testimony</p>	<p>Article 7 Those who are already ordained ministers within the federation may be called to another congregation in a manner consistent with the above rules, without the examination or the laying on of hands. Any minister receiving a call shall consult with his current council regarding that call. He may accept the call only with their consent. Upon receipt of proper credentials from the church he last served, he shall be installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form and shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.</p>
<p>Article 7. An Ordained Minister without a Congregation Entering the Federation A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after sustaining an examination conducted to the satisfaction of classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation as set forth in Appendix 4, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.</p>	<p>Article 9. Preachers without fixed charge, or others who have left some sect, shall not be admitted to the Ministry in the Church until they have been declared eligible, after careful examination, by the Classis, with approval of Synod.</p>	<p>Article 8 A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall not be admitted to serve in a church within the federation without an examination conducted to the satisfaction of the classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation, whereupon he may be declared by classis eligible for call by his sponsoring Consistory. (See Appendix 4.)</p>	<p>Article 8 A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall not be admitted to serve in a church within the federation without an examination conducted to the satisfaction of the classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation, whereupon he may be declared by classis eligible for call by his sponsoring Consistory. (See Appendix 4.)</p>

concerning the soundness of doctrine and conduct of the candidate, signed by the consistory of the church to which he belongs;

b. upon a peremptory examination of the candidate by classis with satisfactory results. This examination shall take place with the cooperation and concurring advice of deputies of the regional synod.

2. For the ordination they shall show also to the consistory good testimonials concerning their doctrine and conduct from the church(es) to which they have belonged since their preparatory examination.

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

1. They shall be installed after classis has approved the call. For this approbation as well as for the installation the minister shall show good testimonials concerning his doctrine and conduct, together with a declaration from the consistory with the deacons and from classis that he has been honourably discharged from his service in that church and classis, or from the church only, in case he remains within the same classis.

2. For the approbation by classis of a call to those who are serving in one of the churches with which the Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a sister-church relationship a colloquium shall be required which will deal especially with the doctrine and polity of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

C. Further, for the approbation by classis of a call, the calling church shall submit a declaration that the proper announcements have been made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call.

ARTICLE 7. Recent Converts

No one who has recently come to the confession of the Reformed Religion shall be declared eligible for call within the churches unless he has been well tested for a reasonable period of time and has been carefully examined by classis with the cooperation of the deputies of the regional synod.

Article 5

A man who is not a member of a church of the federation who seeks candidacy shall place himself under the supervision of a Consistory which shall make provision for his candidacy examination. (See Appendix 2.)

<p>Article 8. Bound to a Particular Church No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task. All ministers shall remain subject to the Church Order.</p>	<p>Article 6. No Minister shall be at liberty to serve in an institution of mercy or otherwise, unless he be previously admitted in accordance with the preceding articles, and he shall, no less than others, be subject to the Church Order.</p> <p>Article 7. No one shall be called to the Ministry of the Word, without his being stationed in a particular place, except he be sent to do church extension work.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 6. Bound to a Church No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church, either to be stationed in a certain place, or to be sent out for the gathering of the church from among the heathen or from among those who have become estranged from the gospel, or to be charged with some other special ministerial task.</p> <p>ARTICLE 9. From One Church to Another A minister, once lawfully called, shall not leave the church to which he is bound to take up the ministry elsewhere without the consent of the consistory with the deacons and the approval of classis.</p> <p>On the other hand, no church shall receive him unless he has presented a proper certificate of release from the church and the classis where he served, or of the church only, if he remains within the same classis.</p>	<p>Article 9 A minister of the Word is bound to the service of the churches for life and may change the nature of his labor only for weighty reasons, upon approval by his supervising council with the concurring advice of classis.</p>
<p>Article 9. Bound for Life A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his council and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.</p>	<p>Article 10. A Minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the Consistory with the Deacons, and knowledge on the part of the Classis; likewise no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismission from the church and the Classis where he served.</p> <p>Article 12. Inasmuch as a Minister of the Word, once lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the Church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the Classis.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 12. Bound for Life Inasmuch as a minister of the Word, once lawfully called, is bound to the service of the church for life, he is not allowed to enter upon another vocation unless it be for exceptional and substantial reasons, of which the consistory with the deacons shall judge, and which shall receive the approval of classis with the concurring advice of deputies of regional synod.</p>	<p>Article 10 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.</p>
<p>Article 10. Support and Emeritation of Ministers Each church shall provide honorably for the minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children. A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or</p>	<p>Article 11. On the other hand the Consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide for the proper support of its Ministers, and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the Classis and of the Delegates of the (particular) Synod.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 10. Proper Support The consistory with the deacons, as representing the congregation, shall be bound to provide for the proper support of its minister(s).</p> <p>ARTICLE 13. Retirement of Ministers If a minister of the Word retires because of age, or because he is rendered incapable of performing the duties of his office on account of illness or physical or mental disability, he shall retain the honour and title of minister of</p>	<p>Article 10 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.</p>

other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support.

The emertitation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the council, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.

Article 11. Temporary Release

If because of illness or other substantial reasons, a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the council. If the duration of the release is greater than four months, the council shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.

Article 12. Exceptional Release of a Minister

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, a council may release its minister from his call only under all of the following conditions:

- a. This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. This release shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;
- c. This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod;
- d. This release shall require the approval by classis of the council's provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years.

The council from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office.

the Word. He shall also retain his official bond with the church which he served last, and this church shall provide honorably for his support. The same obligation exists towards a minister's widow and/or dependants. Retirement of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and with the concurring advice of classis and of deputies of regional synod.

ARTICLE 14. Temporary Release

If a minister, because of illness or for other substantial reasons, requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he can receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons and shall at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

ARTICLE 11. Dismissal

If a minister of the Word is judged unfit and incapable of serving the congregation fruitfully and to its edification, without there being any reason for church discipline, the consistory with the deacons shall not dismiss him from his service within the congregation without the approbation of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, and not without proper arrangements regarding the support of the minister and his family for a reasonable period of time.

If no call is forthcoming in three years, he shall be declared released from his ministerial status by the classis in which he served last.

Article 11

If, for reasons other than such as warrant ecclesiastical discipline, either a minister of the Word or the congregation he is serving desires to dissolve their pastoral relationship, that dissolution shall occur only upon mutually satisfactory conditions and only with the concurring advice of the classis. If the released minister desires to receive a call to serve another congregation, the council from whose service he is being released shall announce his eligibility for call, which eligibility shall be valid for no more than two years, whereafter he shall be honorably released from office. If the minister released from his congregation desires to leave his office in order to seek non-ministerial labor, he must receive the approval of the classis before doing so.

<p>Article 13. Nomination and Election of Elders and Deacons The council shall provide adequate preparation of elders and deacons by means of instruction and training regarding the duties of each office. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following: First, the council shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the council may invite the congregation to direct attention to suitable men. Ordinarily, the number of nominees shall be twice the number of vacancies. Second, after public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the regulations adopted for that purpose. Third, the council shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation two weeks prior to entering office, in order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory.</p>	<p>Article 15. No one shall be permitted, neglecting the Ministry of his Church or being without a fixed charge, to preach indiscriminately without the consent and authority of Synod or Classis. Likewise, no one shall be permitted to preach or administer the Sacraments in another Church without the consent of the Consistory of that Church.</p> <p>Article 22. The Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the Consistory and the Deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the Consistory. In pursuance of these regulations, every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to give the members an opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons, in order that the consistory may thereupon either present to the congregation for election as many elders as are needed, that they may, after they are approved by it, unless any obstacles arise, be installed with public prayers and stipulations; or present a double number to the congregation and thereupon install the one half chosen by it, in the aforesaid manner, agreeable to the Form for this purpose.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 15. Preaching in Other Places No one shall be permitted to preach the Word or to administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church.</p> <p>See CanRC Art. 3</p>	<p>Article 12 The council shall present to the congregation nominations for the offices of elder and deacon. Only male confessing members who meet the biblical requirements for office and indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription shall be nominated by the council. Prior to making nominations, the council may give the congregation opportunity to direct attention to suitable men.</p>
<p>Article 14. The Term and Ordination of Elders and Deacons Before entering upon their work, elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a term specified by the consistory, and having been appointed by the council, shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, and shall be ordained liturgical form.</p>	<p>Article 27. The Elders and Deacons shall serve two or more years according to the local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The retiring officers shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the profit of any church, in the execution of Art. 22 and 24, render a re-election advisable.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 24. Term of Office The elders and deacons shall serve two or more years, according to local regulations, and a proportionate number shall retire each year. The place of the retiring office-bearers shall be taken by others, unless the consistory with the deacons judges that the circumstances and the benefit of the church render it advisable to have them serve another term, or to extend their term, or to declare them immediately eligible for re-election.</p>	<p>Article 13 Elders and deacons shall be elected to a term specified by the Consistory, and upon subscribing to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription, shall be ordained or installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form before entering upon their work.</p>

<p>Article 15. Subscription to the Confessions Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory, and if he persists in his refusal, shall be deposed from office.</p>	<p>Art. 53 The Ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors of Theology (which also behoves the other Professors and School Teachers) shall subscribe to the Three Formulas of Unity, namely: - the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, and the Ministers of the Word who refuse to do so shall de facto be suspended from their office by the Consistory or Classis until they shall have given a full statement, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be deposed from their office.</p> <p>Art 54 Likewise the Elders and Deacons shall subscribe to the aforesaid Formulas of Unity.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 26. Subscription to the Confession All ministers of the Word, elders, deacons, and professors of theology shall subscribe to the confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches by signing the form(s) adopted for that purpose. Anyone refusing to subscribe in that manner shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone who, being in office, refuses to do so shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from office by the consistory with the deacons, and classis shall not receive him. If he obstinately persists in his refusal, he shall be deposed from office.</p>	<p>See URCNA 7</p>
<p>Article 16. Parity Among Office-bearers Among the office-bearers, parity shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their respective offices and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.</p>	<p>Article 17. Among the Ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and also in other matters as far as possible according to the judgment of the Consistory, and if necessary, of the Classis; which equality shall also be maintained in the case of the Elders and the Deacons.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 17. Equality among the Ministers of the Word Among the ministers of the Word equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.</p> <p>ARTICLE 25. Equality to be Maintained Among the elders as well as among the deacons equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office, and also, as far as possible, in other matters, of which the consistory shall judge.</p>	
<p>Article 17. The Duties of Elders The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of shepherding and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall ensure that their fellow-elders, the minister(s), and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, persist in praying for the congregation, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote confessionally Reformed schooling at all levels. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to need, engage in family visiting, preserve and promote concord and unity among the</p>	<p>Article 23. The office of the Elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the Minister of the Word, is to take heed that the Ministers, together with their fellow-Elders and the Deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord's Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches to visit the families of the Congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian Religion.</p> <p>Article 21. The Consistory shall see to it that there are good Christian Schools where the parents</p>	<p>ARTICLE 22. The Office of Elder The specific duties of the office of elder are, together with the ministers of the Word, to have supervision over Christ's church, that every member may conduct himself properly in doctrine and life according to the gospel; and faithfully to visit the members of the congregation in their homes to comfort, instruct, and admonish them with the Word of God, reproving those who behave improperly. They shall exercise Christian discipline according to the command of Christ against those who show themselves unbelieving and ungodly and refuse to repent and shall watch that the sacraments are not profaned. Being stewards of the house of God, they are further to take care that in the congregation all things are done decently and in good order, and to</p>	<p>Article 14 The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in prayer and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centered schooling, visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, exercise discipline in the congregation, actively promote the work of evangelism and missions, and insure that everything is done decently and in good order.</p>

<p>members and between the congregation and its office-bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.</p> <p>Article 18. Protecting Doctrinal Purity To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.</p>	<p>have their children instructed according to the demands of the Covenant.</p> <p>Article 18. The office of the Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.</p> <p>Art 55 Warding off false doctrine To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the Ministers and Elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation, or warning, and of admonition, as well in the Ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.</p>	<p>tend the flock of Christ which is in their charge. Finally, it is the duty of elders to assist the ministers of the Word with good counsel and advice and to supervise their doctrine and conduct.</p> <p>ARTICLE 58. Schools The consistory shall ensure that the parents, to the best of their ability, have their children attend a school where the instruction given is in harmony with the Word of God as the church has summarized it in her confessions.</p> <p>ARTICLE 27. False Doctrine To ward off false doctrines and errors which could enter the congregation and constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct, the ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, in the ministry of the Word as well as in Christian teaching and family visiting.</p>	<p>Article 15 The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of continuing in prayer and supervising the works of Christian mercy among the congregation; acquainting themselves with congregational needs; exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy; gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, and distributing these offerings according to need; and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered as resources permit. The deacons shall ordinarily meet every month to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render an account of their work to the Consistory.</p>
<p>Article 19. The Duties of Deacons The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered. The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a monthly account of their work to the consistory. The deacons may invite the minister to visit their meetings in order to acquaint him with their work and request his advice.</p>	<p>Article 24. The Deacons shall be chosen, approved and installed in the same manner as was stated concerning the Elders.</p> <p>Article 25. The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently to distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may seem fit.</p> <p>Article 26. In places where others are devoting themselves to the care of the poor, the Deacons shall seek a mutual understanding with them to the end that the alms may all the better be distributed among those who have greatest need. Moreover, they shall make it possible for the poor to make use of</p>	<p>ARTICLE 23. The Office of Deacon The specific duties of the office of deacon are to see to the good progress of the service of charity in the congregation; to acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy; and further, to gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's Name according to need. They shall encourage and comfort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love, and promote with word and deed the unity and fellowship in the Holy Spirit which the congregation enjoys at the table of the Lord.</p>	<p>Article 15 The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of continuing in prayer and supervising the works of Christian mercy among the congregation; acquainting themselves with congregational needs; exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy; gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, and distributing these offerings according to need; and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered as resources permit. The deacons shall ordinarily meet every month to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render an account of their work to the Consistory.</p>

<p>Article 20. The Civil Authorities</p> <p>As the task of civil government includes protecting the freedom of the Christian church, so it is the responsibility of the church to respect the government as instituted by God. In order that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, and that the witness of the gospel may be protected and advanced, the office-bearers must lead the congregation by their admonition and example. They shall ensure that prayers for the government are regularly offered and that members render due honor and lawful obedience to the civil authorities, thereby living as good citizens under Christ and promoting the true welfare of the land in which they live.</p>	<p>institutions of mercy, and to that end they shall request the Board of Directors of such institutions to keep in close touch with them. It is also desirable that the Deacons assist and consult one another, especially in caring for the poor in such institutions.</p> <p>Article 40 - The Meeting of the Deacons Likewise the Deacons shall meet every week to transact the business pertaining to their office, calling upon the Name of God; whereunto the Ministers shall take good heed and if necessary they shall be present.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 42. Meetings of Deacons When the deacons meet separately, as a rule once a month, to deal with the matters pertaining to their office, they shall do so with calling up the Name of God. They shall give account of their labours to the consistory. The ministers shall acquaint themselves with the work of the ministry of mercy and, if need be, may visit these meetings.</p>	
<p>Article 21. Ecclesiastical Assemblies</p> <p>a. <u>Identification:</u> Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.</p> <p>b. <u>Convening:</u> Regulations for broader assemblies shall delineate the function of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the</p>	<p>Article 28. The Consistory shall take care, that the churches for the possession of their property, and the peace and order of their meetings can claim the protection of the Authorities; it should be well understood, however, that for the sake of peace and material possession they may never suffer the royal government of Christ over His Church to be in the least infringed upon.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 28. Civil Authorities As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all office-bearers are in duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter, and endeavour by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.</p>	
<p>II. ASSEMBLIES</p>	<p>The Ecclesiastical Assemblies</p> <p>Article 29 Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the Consistory, the Classical Meetings, the Particular Synod, and the General or National Synod.</p>	<p>The Ecclesiastical Assemblies</p> <p>ARTICLE 29. The Ecclesiastical Assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod.</p>	<p>Ecclesiastical Assemblies</p> <p>Article 16 Among churches belonging to the federation, three assemblies shall be recognized: the Consistory, the classis and the synod. Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the Consistory is a continuing body.</p> <p>Article 17 In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, only in an ecclesiastical manner.</p>

<p>c. <u>Delegation:</u> Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body as required in Appendix X, thereby receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them. These assemblies shall require each delegate to indicate his agreement with the Form of Subscription. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church is particularly involved.</p>	<p>Article 33 - The Credentials Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they only shall have a vote.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 32. Credentials Delegates to the major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by those sending them, they shall have a vote in all matters except those in which either they themselves or their churches are particularly involved.</p>	<p>Article 25 Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be seated only with properly signed credentials, and each delegate shall have only one vote. In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered. All such matters shall originate with a Consistory and be considered by classis before being considered by synod. No broader assembly shall have the power to depose an office-bearer or otherwise exercise church discipline, since these powers belong to the Consistory.</p>
<p>d. <u>Jurisdiction:</u> In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All such matters must originate with a consistory and must first be considered by a classis and a regional synod before they may be considered by a general synod.</p>	<p>Article 46 - Instructions for the Major Assemblies Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of the previous Synod have been read, in order that what was once decided be not again proposed unless a revision be deemed necessary.</p> <p>Article 30 - The Authority of the Ecclesiastical Assemblies In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.</p> <p>Article 36 - The Authority of the Major Assemblies Over the Minor Ones The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.</p> <p>Article 32 - The Opening and Closing of Ecclesiastical Assemblies The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.</p> <p>Article 35 - The Office of the President The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in speaking; and properly</p>	<p>ARTICLE 30. Ecclesiastical Matters These assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.</p> <p>ARTICLE 33. Proposals Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.</p> <p>ARTICLE 37. Jurisdiction The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the regional synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the regional synod.</p> <p>ARTICLE 34. Proceedings The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the Name of the Lord. At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies. Furthermore, each classis, regional synod, or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, region; at synod, or</p>	<p>Article 24 Although congregations are distinct and equal and do not have dominion over each other, they ought to preserve fellowship with each other because they are all united with Christ, the spiritual and governing Head of the church. Congregations manifest this unity when they meet together in the broader assemblies.</p>
<p>e. <u>Decisions:</u> All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.</p> <p>f. <u>Proceedings:</u> The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes proper order and decorum.</p> <p>g. <u>Records:</u> In every assembly a clerk shall keep and distribute an accurate</p>	<p>Article 30 - The Authority of the Ecclesiastical Assemblies In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.</p> <p>Article 36 - The Authority of the Major Assemblies Over the Minor Ones The Classis has the same jurisdiction over the Consistory as the Particular Synod has over the Classis and the General Synod over the Particular.</p> <p>Article 32 - The Opening and Closing of Ecclesiastical Assemblies The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin by calling upon the Name of God and be closed with thanksgiving.</p> <p>Article 35 - The Office of the President The office of the president is to state and explain the business to be transacted, to see to it that everyone observe due order in speaking, to silence the captious and those who are vehement in speaking; and properly</p>	<p>ARTICLE 30. Ecclesiastical Matters These assemblies shall deal with no other than ecclesiastical matters and that in an ecclesiastical manner. A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in common. A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.</p> <p>ARTICLE 33. Proposals Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.</p> <p>ARTICLE 37. Jurisdiction The classis has the same jurisdiction over the consistory as the regional synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the regional synod.</p> <p>ARTICLE 34. Proceedings The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with calling upon the Name of the Lord. At the close of major assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who in the meeting have done something worthy of reproof, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies. Furthermore, each classis, regional synod, or general synod shall determine the time and place of the next classis, region; at synod, or</p>	<p>Article 24 Although congregations are distinct and equal and do not have dominion over each other, they ought to preserve fellowship with each other because they are all united with Christ, the spiritual and governing Head of the church. Congregations manifest this unity when they meet together in the broader assemblies.</p>

<p>record of the proceedings. In all broader assemblies these functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.</p> <p><u>Censure</u>: At the close of broader assemblies, admonition shall be given to those who demonstrated unworthy behavior, either during the meeting or regarding a decision of a narrower assembly.</p> <p><u>Archives</u>: Each ecclesiastical assembly shall ensure the proper preservation of its archives.</p> <p><u>Press Release</u>: Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.</p>	<p>to discipline them if they refuse to listen. Furthermore his office shall cease when the assembly arises.</p> <p>Article 34 - The Officers, and Task of the Clerk In all assemblies there shall be not only a president, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of that which deserves to be recorded.</p> <p>Article 43 - The Censure in Major Assemblies At the close of the Classical and other major Assemblies, censure shall be exercised over those who have done something worthy of punishment in the meeting, or who have scorned the admonition of the minor assemblies.</p> <p>Article 45 - Taking Care of Written Records It shall be the duty of the church in which the Classis, and likewise the Particular or General Synod meets, to furnish the following meeting with the minutes of the preceding.</p>	<p>general synod respectively and appoint the convening church for that meeting.</p> <p>ARTICLE 35. President In all assemblies there shall be a president whose task it is to present and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with, to ensure that every one observe due order in speaking, to deny the floor to those who argue about minor things or who let themselves be carried away and cannot control their strong emotions, and to discipline those who refuse to listen. In major assemblies the office of the president shall cease when the assembly has ended.</p> <p>ARTICLE 36. Clerk A clerk shall be appointed whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of all things worthy to be recorded.</p> <p>ARTICLE 43. Archives The consistories and the major assemblies shall ensure that proper care is taken of the archives.</p>	<p>Article 19 In every assembly there shall be a chairman, assisted by a vice-chairman. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the matters to be dealt with, and to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed and that every delegate observes due order and decorum in speaking. In all delegated assemblies the above named functions shall cease when the assembly adjourns.</p> <p>Article 20 In every assembly there shall be a clerk whose task it shall be to keep an accurate record of the proceedings. In the broader assemblies the clerk shall serve for a term to be specified by the body. Between broader assembly meetings, the clerk shall perform his duties under the supervision of the next convening Consistory.</p>
<p>Article 22. The Consistory In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises direct authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ. The term council designates not an assembly of the church, but a meeting of the elders and minister(s) with the deacons under the authority of the consistory, at which matters are dealt with as stipulated by the Church Order or as assigned by the consistory.</p> <p>Article 23. Small Number of Office-Bearers Where the number of elders is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the deacons. This shall invariably be done where the number of elders is fewer than three. Where the number of deacons is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the elders. This shall invariably be done where the number of deacons is fewer than three.</p>	<p>Article 37 - About the Consistory In all churches there shall be a Consistory composed of the Ministers of the Word and the Elders, who shall meet at least once a week. The Minister of the Word, or the Ministers, if there be more than one, in turn, shall preside and regulate the proceedings.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 38. Consistory In all churches there shall be a consistory composed of the ministers of the Word and the elders who, as a rule, shall meet at least once a month. As a rule the ministers of the Word shall preside. If a church is served by more than one minister, they shall preside in turn.</p> <p>ARTICLE 39. Consistory and the Deacons Where the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local arrangement; this shall invariably be done where the number of elders or the number of deacons is less than three.</p>	<p>Article 21 In each congregation there shall be a Consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The Consistory is the only assembly in the church(es) whose decisions possess direct authority within the congregation, since the Consistory receives its authority directly from Christ, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ.</p> <p>Article 23 When the deacons meet together with the Consistory, the body is referred to as the council. The council shall exercise such duties described in the Church Order or such duties delegated to it by the Consistory. The council shall operate under the authority of the Consistory.</p>

<p>Article 24. Organizing a New Congregation A congregation shall be organized under its first consistory only under the supervision of the neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.</p>	<p>Article 38 - Of Constituting a New and Of Small Consistories In places where the Consistory is to be constituted for the first time this shall not take place except with the advice of the Classis. And whenever the number of Elders is very small, the Deacons may be added to the Consistory.</p> <p>Article 39 - Where There is Not Yet a Consistory In places where as yet there is no Consistory, the Classis shall in the meantime take care of the work which would otherwise be performed by the Consistory in accordance with this Church Order.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 40. Constitution of a Consistory In places where a consistory is to be constituted for the first time or anew, this shall be done only with the advice of classis.</p> <p>ARTICLE 41. Places without a Consistory Places where as yet no consistory can be constituted shall be assigned by classis to the care of a neighbouring consistory.</p>	<p>Article 22 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.</p>
<p>Article 25. The Classis a. <u>Composition:</u> A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.</p> <p>b. <u>Frequency:</u> A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.</p> <p>c. <u>Convening:</u> The churches shall take turns convening classis and providing a chairman from their delegation. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession. Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.</p> <p>d. <u>Mutual Oversight:</u> The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistory, council, and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and confessionally</p>	<p>Article 41 - The Meetings of Classis The Classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a Minister and an Elder, to meet at such a time and place as was determined by the previous Classical meeting, with the understanding that this be within the next three months. In these meetings the Ministers shall preside in rotation or the assembly shall choose one to preside; however, the same Minister shall not be chosen twice in succession. Furthermore, the president shall, among other things, ask each of them if Consistory meetings are held in their churches; if church discipline is exercised; if the poor and the schools are cared for; lastly, if they need the judgment and help of the Classis for the proper government of their Church. The Minister designated by the previous Classis shall preach a brief sermon from the Word of God, of which the others shall judge and point out if anything be lacking in it. Finally, at the last meeting before the Particular Synod delegates shall be chosen to attend said Synod.</p> <p>Article 42 - Concerning Two or More Ministers Representing One Church in the Classis When there are more Ministers than one in a church, all of them may attend the Classis and have a vote, except in matters which particularly concern their persons or churches.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 44. Classis Neighbouring churches shall come together in a classis by delegating, with proper credentials, a minister and an elder, or, if a church has no minister, two elders. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighbouring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches which would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall, however, not be permitted to occur twice in succession. In these meetings the ministers shall preside in rotation, or one shall be chosen to preside; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession. The president shall ask whether the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued, whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured, and whether there is any matter in which the consistories need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their church. The last classis before regional synod shall choose the delegates to that synod.</p> <p>if two or more ministers are serving a church, those who have not been delegated shall have the right to attend classis in an advisory capacity.</p>	<p>Article 26 A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose Consistories delegate two of their members with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis meeting, within the next twelve months. If three Consistories in the classis deem it necessary that a classis meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur. The churches shall take turns providing a chairman and acting as the convening church. Furthermore, the classis shall inquire of each Consistory whether Consistory and deacons' meetings are held, the Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments are faithfully administered, church discipline is exercised, the poor are cared for, and God-centered schooling is promoted; and whether the Consistory needs the advice and help of the classis for the proper government of the church. Each classis shall inform the other classes regarding matters of mutual concern by forwarding its minutes to them in a timely manner.</p>

Reformed schooling is wholeheartedly promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

- e. Delegation to Regional and General Synod: The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod. If the regional synod consists of three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.
- f. Classis Contracta: A minimum of three churches may convene as a classis contracta exclusively to approbate a call, or to release a minister who has accepted a call, and to appoint a counselor for the ministerial vacancy.

Article 26. Church Visitors

Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its more experienced and competent ministers or elders to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.

These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfill their offices faithfully, that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things unto the peace, edification, and profit of the churches. Upon the request of a consistory, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.

Article 44 - The Church Visitation

The Classis shall authorize a number of its Ministers, at least two of the oldest, most experienced and competent ones, to visit all the Churches once a year in cities as well as in rural districts, and to take heed whether the Ministers, Consistories, and School-teachers faithfully perform the duties of their office, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the Congregation including the youth, to the end that they may in time fraternally admonish those who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto peace, upbuilding, and greatest profit of the Churches and Schools. And each Classis may continue these Visitors in service as long it sees fit, except where the visitors themselves request to be released for reasons of which the Classis shall judge.

ARTICLE 46. Church Visitors

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

Article 27

Each Consistory of the classis shall invite two experienced office-bearers appointed by classis, either two ministers or a minister and an elder, to visit the council once every two years, who shall give account of their visit to the classis. These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the congregation, including the youth, to the end that these visitors may fraternally admonish those office-bearers who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, edification and greatest profit of the churches.

<p>Article 27. Counselors The consistory of a church with a ministerial vacancy shall request classis to appoint the minister it specifies to serve as counselor. His task is to help the consistory follow the provisions of the Church Order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the council members, he also shall sign the letter of call.</p> <p>Article 28. The Regional Synod A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis. The regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes, with lawful appeals of classical decisions, and with the reports of its deputies. It shall also determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church. The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.</p> <p>Article 29. The Deputies of Regional Synod Each regional synod shall appoint two deputies and an alternate for each classis, who shall assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order. Upon the request of a classis, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty. In cases of disagreement between the deputies, the decision of classis shall stand. In cases where the deputies cannot give concurring advice, the classis may request the deputies to report the matter to regional synod for decision. The regional deputies shall keep a proper record of their actions. They shall submit a written report of their actions to the regional synod and, if so required, they shall further explain those actions. The deputies shall serve until they are discharged from their duties by their regional synod.</p> <p>Article 30. The General Synod A general synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the classes, shall meet</p>	<p>Article 47 - The Particular Synod Every year, or if need be oftener, four or five or more neighboring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Classis shall delegate two Ministers and two Elders. At the close of both, the Particular and the General Synod, some church shall be empowered to determine with the advice of the Classis the time and place of the next Synod.</p> <p>Article 49 - The Deputies of the Particular Synod Each Synod shall delegate some to execute everything ordained by Synod both as to what pertains to the High Authorities and to the respective Classes resorting under it; and likewise to supervise together or in smaller number all examinations of future Ministers. And furthermore, in all other eventual difficulties they shall extend help to the Classes in order that proper unity, order, and soundness of doctrine may be maintained and established. They shall also keep proper record of all their actions to report thereof to synod, and if it be demanded, give reasons. They shall also not be discharged from their service before and until Synod itself discharges them.)</p> <p>Article 50 - The National Synod The National Synod shall ordinarily be held every three years, unless an urgent need</p>	<p>ARTICLE 45. Counsellors Each vacant church shall request classis to appoint as counsellor the minister it desires as such, to the end that he may assist the consistory in maintaining good order and especially may lend his aid in the matter of the calling of a minister; he shall also sign the letter of call.</p> <p>ARTICLE 47. Regional Synod Each year some neighbouring classes shall send delegates to meet in a regional synod. If there are two classes, each classis shall delegate four ministers and four elders. If there are three classes, the number shall be three ministers and three elders. If there are four or more classes, the number shall be two ministers and two elders. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of classis. The last regional synod before the general synod shall choose delegates to that general synod.</p> <p>48. Deputies of Regional Synod Each regional synod shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order, and, upon the request of the classes, in cases of special difficulties. These deputies shall keep proper record of their actions and submit a written report to regional synod, and, if so required, they shall give account of their actions. They shall not be discharged from their task before and until regional synod itself discharges them.</p> <p>ARTICLE 49. General Synod The general synod shall be held once every three years. Each regional synod shall</p>	<p>Article 28 The churches shall meet as a synod at least once every three years. Each Consistory shall</p>
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<p>at least once every three years. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.</p> <p>The general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches via the classes and the regional synods, with lawful appeals, and with reports which were mandated by the previous synod. It shall also determine the time and place for the next general synod, and designate a convening church.</p> <p>The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.</p> <p>Article 31. Ecumenical Relations</p> <p>The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and faithfully demonstrate allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church shall give account to classis of its ecumenical activities with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. A church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad shall not be rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.</p> <p>Article 32. Admitting a Church</p> <p>A church shall be admitted into the federation by the nearest classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, only upon recommendation from a consistory, and provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with the Church Order. If</p>	<p>arises to make it a shorter period.</p> <p>Article 48 - The Correspondence</p> <p>Each Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods, in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.</p> <p>Article 52</p> <p>Inasmuch as different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies, and in the publication of recommendations, instructions and decisions.</p>	<p>delegate to this synod four ministers and four elders.</p> <p>If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of regional synod.</p>	<p>delegate two of its members to this meeting. Each synod shall determine a time and place for the subsequent synod and shall authorize a Consistory to convene that synod. If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.</p>
<p>Article 34</p> <p>Churches are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with Reformed congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and demonstrate faithful allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church is to give an account of its ecumenical activities to classis. Fraternal activities between congregations which need not be reported to classis may include occasional pulpit exchanges, table fellowship, as well as other means of manifesting unity.</p> <p>Article 35</p> <p>The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery.</p> <p>The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond.</p> <p>Article 36</p> <p>The federation may enter into ecumenical relations with other federations by synodical decision. Such a decision must be ratified by a majority of the Consistories.</p> <p>Article 32</p> <p>Any church may be admitted into the federation provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with this Church Order, and its minister sustains an examination by the nearest classis, according to the regulations adopted by the federation. Any such church shall be provisionally accepted into</p>	<p>ARTICLE 50. Churches Abroad</p> <p>The relation with churches abroad shall be regulated by general synod. With foreign churches of Reformed confession a sister-church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. On minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice churches abroad shall not be rejected.</p> <p>Art.85</p> <p>Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.</p>	<p>delegate to this synod four ministers and four elders.</p> <p>If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of regional synod.</p>	<p>delegate two of its members to this meeting. Each synod shall determine a time and place for the subsequent synod and shall authorize a Consistory to convene that synod. If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.</p>
<p>Article 31. Ecumenical Relations</p> <p>The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and faithfully demonstrate allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. Each church shall give account to classis of its ecumenical activities with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. A church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad shall not be rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.</p> <p>Article 32. Admitting a Church</p> <p>A church shall be admitted into the federation by the nearest classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, only upon recommendation from a consistory, and provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree with the Church Order. If</p>	<p>arises to make it a shorter period.</p> <p>Article 48 - The Correspondence</p> <p>Each Synod shall be at liberty to solicit and hold correspondence with its neighboring Synod or Synods, in such manner as they shall judge most conducive to general edification.</p> <p>Article 52</p> <p>Inasmuch as different languages are spoken in the churches, the necessary translations shall be made in the ecclesiastical assemblies, and in the publication of recommendations, instructions and decisions.</p>	<p>delegate to this synod four ministers and four elders.</p> <p>If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of regional synod.</p>	<p>delegate two of its members to this meeting. Each synod shall determine a time and place for the subsequent synod and shall authorize a Consistory to convene that synod. If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the Consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.</p>

<p>one of these office-bearers is a minister, he shall be examined according to Appendix 4.</p> <p>III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES</p> <p>Article 33. The Regular Worship Services The consistory shall call the congregation together for public worship twice each Lord's Day. The consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word, namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.</p>	<p>Of Doctrines, Sacraments and Other Ceremonies</p> <p>Art 68 Catechism Preaching The Ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose.</p>	<p>Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies</p> <p>Art 52. Worship Services The consistory shall call the congregation together for worship twice on the Lord's Day. The consistory shall ensure that, as a rule, once every Sunday the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism is proclaimed.</p>	<p>membership in the federation by the classis, pending ratification by the following synod.</p> <p>Ecclesiastical Functions and Tasks</p> <p>Article 37. The Consistory shall call the congregation together for corporate worship twice on each Lord's Day. Special services may be called in observance of Christmas Day, Good Friday, Ascension Day, a day of prayer, the national Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, as well as in times of great distress or blessing. Attention should also be given to Easter and Pentecost on their respective Lord's Days.</p> <p>Art. 38 The Consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word: namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, that confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.</p> <p>Art 40. At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence.</p>
<p>Article 34. Special Worship Services In the manner decided by the consistory, special worship services may be called in observance of Christ's birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Special worship services may be called also in connection with prayer for crops and labor, Thanksgiving Day, the turning of the new year, and times of great distress or blessing.</p> <p>Article 35. Psalms and Hymns The 150 Psalms shall have the</p>	<p>Art 66 Prayer Services In time of war, pestilence, national calamities, and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the Churches, it is fitting that the Classes proclaim Days of Prayer. Art 67 Days of Commemoration The Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Year's Day.</p> <p>Art 69 Psalms and Hymns In the Churches only the 150 Psalms of</p>	<p>Prayer Services Art 54. Days of Prayer. In time of war, general calamities, and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches, a day of prayer may be proclaimed by the churches appointed for that purpose by general synod. Art 53. Days of Commemoration. Each year the churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as His outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Art 55. Psalms and Hymns The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod</p>	<p>Art 39. The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in</p>

<p>principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.</p> <p>Article 36. Admission to the Pulpit Consistories shall permit men to administer the Word and sacraments only according to the following stipulations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The consistory must give its consent before any minister may preach the Word or administer the sacraments in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to ministers of churches within the federation and to ministers of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. b. The consistory must give its consent before any licentiate or candidate may exhort in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to licentiates and candidates within the federation and to licentiates and candidates of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. c. Any exception to either of these requirements shall be granted only occasionally, only to ministers, licentiates, and candidates who faithfully subscribe to the Reformed Confessions, and only with prior approbation of classis. <p>Article 37. The Administration of the Sacraments The sacraments shall be administered under the authority of the consistory in a public worship service by an ordained minister of the Word with the use of the synodically adopted liturgical forms.</p> <p>Article 38. The Baptism of Covenant Children The consistory shall ensure that God's covenant is signified and sealed by holy baptism to the children of communicant members in good standing. Parents shall present their children for baptism as soon as feasible.</p>	<p>David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Twelve Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon, the Morning and Evening Hymns, and the Hymn of Prayer before the sermon shall be sung.</p> <p>Art 56 Infant Baptism The Covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians by Baptism, as soon as the administration thereof is feasible, in the public assembly when the Word of God is preached.</p> <p>Art 57</p>	<p>as well as the Hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services.</p> <p>Art 56. Administration of Sacraments. The sacraments shall be administered only under the authority of the consistory, in a public worship service, by a minister of the Word with the use of the adopted Forms</p> <p>Art 57. Infant Baptism The consistory shall ensure that the covenant of God is sealed by baptism to the children of believers as soon as feasible.</p>	<p>the singing of the churches. Hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity may be sung, provided they are approved by the Consistory.</p> <p>Art 41. The covenant of God shall be signified and sealed to the children of confessing members in good standing through holy baptism administered by the minister of the Word in a service of corporate worship, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. The Consistory shall properly supervise the administration of the</p>
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<p>Article 39. The Baptism of Adults Adults who have not been previously baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.</p> <p>Article 40. Administration of the Lord's Supper At least once every three months the Lord's Supper shall be administered in a service of public worship, under the supervision of the consistory, according to the teaching of God's Word, and in a manner most conducive to the edification of the congregation.</p> <p>Article 41. Admission to the Lord's Supper The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that, as much as possible, the consistory has secured confirmation of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk of life.</p>	<p>The ministers shall do their utmost to the end that the father present his child for Baptism</p> <p>Art 58 In the ceremony of Baptism, both of children and of adults, the Ministers shall use the respective forms drawn up for the administration of this Sacrament.</p> <p>Art 59 Adults are through Baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, and are accepted as members of the Church, and are therefore obliged also to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.</p> <p>Art 62 Administration of LS Every Church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification; provided, however, that the outward ceremonies as prescribed in God's Word be not changed and all superstition be avoided, and that at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer for that purpose, shall be read.</p> <p>Art 63 The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months.</p> <p>Art 64 The administration of the Lord's Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of Elders, according to ecclesiastical order and in a public gathering of the Congregation.</p> <p>Art 61 Admission to the LS None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who according to the usage of the Church with which they unite themselves have made a confession of the Reformed Religion, besides being reputed to be of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other Churches shall not be admitted.</p>	<p>Art 59. Baptism of Adults. Adults who have not been baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.</p> <p>Art 60. Lord's Supper The Lord's supper shall be celebrated at least once every three months.</p> <p>Art 61. Admission to the Lord's Supper. The consistory shall admit to the Lord's supper only those who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. Members of sister-churches shall be admitted on the ground of a good attestation concerning their doctrine and conduct.</p>	<p>sacrament, which shall be administered as soon as feasible.</p> <p>Art 42. Adults who have not been baptized shall receive holy baptism upon public profession of faith, with the use of the appropriate liturgical forms, and be thus accepted as members. They shall be obliged to persevere in the fellowship of the church, not only in hearing God's Word, but also in partaking of the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>Art 46. Administration of LS The Consistory shall ordinarily administer the Lord's Supper at least every three months in a service of corporate worship, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. This administration shall conform to the teaching of God's Word and the regulations of ecclesiastical order, in such a manner as is most conducive to the edification of the congregation.</p> <p>Art 45. The Consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Table. No member shall be admitted to the Lord's Table who has not first made public profession of faith and is not living a godly life. Visitors may be admitted provided that, as much as possible, the Consistory is assured of their biblical church membership, of their proper profession of faith, and of their godly walk.</p> <p>Art. 43 Baptized members who have been instructed in</p>
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<p>Article 42. The Church's Mission Calling Each church shall fulfill its mission calling, which is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing churches. This shall be carried out by missionaries who are ministers of the Word set apart for this labor by being called, supported, and supervised by their consistories for this task. Such missionaries shall proclaim the Word of God, and administer the sacraments to those who have come to the faith. They shall also institute church offices according to the provisions of the Church Order. The consistory shall promote the involvement of church members in labor and service that assist fulfilling this mission calling. If necessary, a calling church shall invite churches within its classis or regional synod to cooperate by agreement regarding the field, support, and oversight of the mission work.</p> <p>Article 43. The Church's Evangelism Calling Each church shall fulfill its evangelism calling according to the Word of God and relying on the Holy Spirit, which is to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those within its area of life and influence. It shall seek to persuade those who do not know God or are estranged from God and His service to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily includes affiliating with His church through profession of faith.</p> <p>Article 44. Marriage Scripture teaches that marriage is to</p>	<p>Article 51 The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 51. Mission The churches shall endeavour to fulfil their missionary task. When churches cooperate in this matter, they shall, as much as possible, observe the division into classes and regional synods.</p> <p>ARTICLE 18. Missionaries When ministers of the Word are sent out as missionaries, they shall be and remain subject to the Church Order. They shall report and give account of their labours to the church which sent them and shall at all times remain subject to its calling. It shall be their task, in the specific region assigned to them or chosen by them in consultation with the church that sent them, to proclaim the Word of God, to administer the sacraments to those who have come to the profession of their faith, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded His church, and to ordain elders and deacons when this appears feasible, according to the rules given in the Word of God.</p>	<p>the faith and who have come to the years of understanding shall be encouraged to make public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who wish to profess their faith shall be interviewed to the satisfaction of the Consistory concerning doctrine and life, and their public confession of faith shall occur in a public worship service after adequate announcements to the congregation and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Thereby baptized members are accepted into full communion in the congregation and shall be obliged to persevere in the fellowship of the church, not only in hearing God's Word, but also partaking in the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>Article 47 The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries.</p>
<p>Article 70 Marriage Since it is proper that the matrimonial state</p>	<p>Art 63. Marriage The consistory shall ensure that the members</p>	<p>Art. 48. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those</p>	<p>Art. 48. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those</p>

<p>be a lifelong monogamous union between a man and a woman. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry only in the Lord. The minister, as authorized by the consistory, shall solemnize only marriages that accord with Scripture, using the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage adopted by general synod.</p> <p>Article 45. Funerals A funeral is a family matter and shall not be conducted as a worship service.</p> <p>Article 46. The Church Records The consistory shall maintain accurate records which include the names of the members of the congregation and the dates of their births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, receptions into and departures from the church, and deaths.</p>	<p>be confirmed in the presence of Christ's Church, according to the Form for that purpose, the Consistories shall attend to it.</p> <p>Art 65 Funerals Funeral sermons or funeral services shall not be introduced.</p> <p>Art 60 Church Records The names of those baptized, together with those of the parents, and likewise the date of birth and baptism, shall be recorded</p> <p>Of Censure and Ecclesiastical Admonition.</p> <p>Art.71 As Christian Discipline is of a spiritual nature, and exempts no one from Civil trial or punishment by the Authorities, so also besides Civil punishment there is need of Ecclesiastical Censures, to reconcile the sinner with the Church and his neighbor and to remove the offense out of the Church of Christ.</p> <p>Art. 72 In case any one errs in doctrine or offends in conduct as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matth.18 shall be followed.</p> <p>Art. 73 Secret sins of which the sinner repents, after</p>	<p>of the congregation marry only in the Lord, and that the ministers - as authorized by the consistory - solemnize only such marriages as are in accordance with the Word of God. The solemnization of a marriage may take place either in a private ceremony or in a public worship service. The adopted Form for the Solemnization of Marriage shall be used.</p> <p>Art 65 Funerals are not ecclesiastical but family affairs, and should be conducted accordingly.</p> <p>Art 64. Church Records The consistory shall maintain church records in which the names of the members and the dates of their birth, baptism, public profession of faith, marriage, and departure or death are properly recorded.</p> <p>Christian Discipline</p> <p>Art. 66 Nature and Purpose Since church discipline is of a spiritual nature and, as one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, has been given to the church to shut and to open that kingdom, the consistory shall ensure that it is used to punish sins against both the purity of doctrine and the piety of conduct, in order to reconcile the sinner with the church and with his neighbor, and to remove all offense out of the church of Christ -which can be done only when the rule given by our Lord in Matthew 18: 15-17 is followed in obedience.</p> <p>Art.67 Consistory Involvement The Consistory shall not deal with any matter pertaining to purity of doctrine or piety of life that is reported to it unless it has first ascertained that both private admonitions and admonitions in the presence of one or two witnesses have remained fruitless, or that the sin committed is of a public character.</p>	<p>under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord. Christian marriages should be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages which would conflict with the Word of God.</p> <p>Art 49 A Christian funeral is neither a service of corporate worship nor subject to ecclesiastical government, but is a family matter, and should be conducted accordingly.</p> <p>Art 50 The Consistory shall maintain accurate membership records which include names and dates of baptisms, professions of faith, marriages and deaths of members of the congregation.</p> <p>Ecclesiastical Discipline</p> <p>Art. 51 Since Christian discipline is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities, so also besides civil punishment there is need of ecclesiastical censure, that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church and his neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.</p> <p>Art. 52 In case anyone errs in doctrine or offends in conduct, as long as the sin is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed.</p> <p>Art. 53 Secret sins from which the sinner repents after</p>
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<p>When a member does not repent after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.</p>	<p>being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be made known to the Consistory.</p> <p>Art.74 In any one, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons, does not give heed, or otherwise has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the Consistory.</p>	<p>Art.69. Repentance When someone repents of a public sin or of a sin which had to be reported to the consistory, the latter shall not accept his confession of sin unless he has shown real amendment. The consistory shall determine whether the benefit of the congregation requires that this confession of sin shall be made publicly and, in case it is made before the consistory or before two or three office-bearers, whether the congregation shall be informed afterwards.</p>	<p>Art.57 The restoration of a sinner whose sins are public, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place upon sufficient evidence of repentance, in such manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of the church. Whether in particular cases this should take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it within the Consistory, be decided with the advice of two neighboring churches of the Classis.</p>
<p>Article 49. The Reconciliation of a Member The reconciliation of a member, whose sin is public or has become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. The consistory shall determine whether, for the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.</p>	<p>Art.75 The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of the Church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each Church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public, shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it in the Consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring Churches or of the Classis.</p>	<p>Art.68. Excommunication Anyone who obstinately rejects the admonition by the consistory or who has committed a public sin shall be suspended from the Lord's supper. If he continues to harden himself in sin, the consistory shall so inform the congregation by means of public announcements, in order that the congregation may be engaged in prayer and admonition, and the excommunication may not take place without its cooperation. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned. In the third public announcement a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place. In case a non-communicant member hardens himself in sin, the consistory shall in the same manner inform the congregation by means of public announcements. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned. In the second public announcement, which shall be made only after the advice of classis</p>	<p>Art.55 Anyone whose sin is properly made known to the Consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the Scriptural admonitions of the Consistory, shall be suspended from all privileges of church membership, including the use of the sacraments. After such suspension and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the impenitence of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him and repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to him and pray for him. This shall be done in three steps. In the first, the name of the sinner need not be mentioned, that he be somewhat spared. In the second, the Consistory shall seek the advice of Classis before proceeding, whereupon his name shall be mentioned. In the third, the congregation shall be informed that, unless he repents, he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, if he remains impenitent, may take place with the full knowledge of the church. The interval between the steps shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>
<p>Article 50. The Discipline of a Member A communicant member, or a mature non-communicant member, whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages: a. <u>Silent Discipline:</u> a member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory. b. <u>Public Discipline:</u> if the silent discipline and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be</p>	<p>Art. 76 Such as obstinately reject the admonition of the Consistory, and likewise those who have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from the Lord's Supper. And if he, having been suspended, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance, the Consistory shall at last proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, agreeably to the form adopted for that purpose according to the Word of God. But no one shall be excommunicated except with consent of the Classis.</p> <p>Art.77 After the suspension from the Lord's Table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name</p>	<p>Art.57 The restoration of a sinner whose sins are public, or have become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place upon sufficient evidence of repentance, in such manner as the Consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of the church. Whether in particular cases this should take place in public shall, when there is a difference of opinion about it within the Consistory, be decided with the advice of two neighboring churches of the Classis.</p>	<p>Art.55 Anyone whose sin is properly made known to the Consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the Scriptural admonitions of the Consistory, shall be suspended from all privileges of church membership, including the use of the sacraments. After such suspension and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the impenitence of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him and repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to him and pray for him. This shall be done in three steps. In the first, the name of the sinner need not be mentioned, that he be somewhat spared. In the second, the Consistory shall seek the advice of Classis before proceeding, whereupon his name shall be mentioned. In the third, the congregation shall be informed that, unless he repents, he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, if he remains impenitent, may take place with the full knowledge of the church. The interval between the steps shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>

<p>done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared. 2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation. 3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date. <p>c. Excommunication: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, using the synodically approved liturgical form.</p>	<p>of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the consent of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the Church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory.</p>	<p>has been obtained, the name and address of the sinner shall be mentioned and a date shall be set at which the excommunication of the sinner shall take place. The time between the various announcements shall be determined by the consistory.</p>	<p>Art.56 If these steps of discipline, having been carried out in a loving manner, do not bring about repentance, but rather harden the sinner in his ways, the Consistory shall proceed to the extreme remedy, namely, excommunication, in agreement with the Word of God and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p> <p>Art.59 Mature members by baptism who are delinquent in doctrine or life shall be admonished and, if they persist, shall be excluded from the church of Christ. The advice of classis must be sought before proceeding to such exclusion.</p>
<p>Article 51. The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicate member, shall be readmitted only upon the public profession of faith.</p> <p>Article 52. No Lording it Over No church shall lord it over other churches, and no office-bearer shall lord it over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Article 53. Mutual Censure The minister(s), elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in a loving and edifying manner regarding the</p>	<p>Art. 78 Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the Church in the way of penitence, it shall be announced to the Congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the Form for that purpose.</p> <p>Art.84 No Church shall in any way lord it over other Churches, no Minister over other Ministers, no Elder or Deacon over other Elders or Deacons.</p> <p>Art.81 The Ministers of the Word, Elders and Deacons, shall before the celebration of the Lord's Supper exercise Christian censure among themselves and in a friendly spirit</p>	<p>Art.70. Readmission When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be again received into the communion of the church, the congregation shall be informed of his desire in order to see whether there are any lawful objections. The time between the public announcement and the readmission of the sinner shall be not less than one month. If no lawful objection is raised, the readmission shall take place with the use of the Form for that purpose.</p> <p>Art.74. No Lording it over Others No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Art.73. Christian Censure The ministers, elders, and deacons shall mutually exercise Christian censure and shall exhort and kindly admonish one another with regard to the execution of their office.</p>	<p>Art.58 Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church by way of penitence, it shall be announced to the congregation in order that, insofar as no one can allege anything against him to the contrary, he may, with profession of his repentance, be publicly reinstated with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.</p> <p>Art.60 Members by baptism who have been excluded from the church and who later repent of their sin shall be received again into the church only upon public profession of faith.</p> <p>Art.65 No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, and no office-bearers shall lord it over other office-bearers.</p> <p>Art.63 The ministers, elders and deacons shall exercise mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in an edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices.</p>

<p>discharge of their offices.</p> <p>Article 54. The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer</p> <p>When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be temporarily suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.</p> <p>Included among the sins requiring suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; in short, all sins which would warrant the discipline of any other member.</p> <p>Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required.</p> <p>Suspension or deposition in itself does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.</p> <p>A man once deposed may be reconsidered for office only after a sufficient period of time, only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and only through the regular procedure for entering office.</p>	<p>admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.</p> <p>Art.79</p> <p>When Ministers of the Divine Word, Elders or Deacons, have committed any public, gross sin, which is a disgrace to the Church, or worthy of punishment by the Authorities, the Elders and Deacons shall immediately by preceding sentence of the Consistory thereof and of the nearest Church, be suspended or expelled from their office, but the Ministers shall only be suspended. Whether these shall be entirely deposed from office, shall be subject to the judgment of the Classis, with the advice of the Delegates of the (Particular) Synod mentioned in Article 11.</p> <p>Art.80</p> <p>Furthermore among the gross sins, which are worthy of being punished with suspension or deposition from office, these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft; acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre; in short, all sins and gross offenses, as under the perpetrators infamous before the world, and which in any private member of the Church would be considered worthy of excommunication.</p>	<p>Art.71. Suspension and Deposition of Office-bearers</p> <p>When ministers, elders, or deacons have committed a public or otherwise gross sin, or refuse to heed the admonitions by the consistory with the deacons, they shall be suspended from office by the judgment of their own consistory with the deacons and of the neighbouring church. When they harden themselves in their sin or when the sin committed is of such a nature that they cannot continue in office, elders or deacons shall be deposed by the judgment of the above mentioned consistories with the deacons. Classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall judge whether the ministers are to be deposed.</p> <p>Art.72. Serious and Gross Sins on the Part of Office-bearers</p> <p>As serious and gross sins which deposition of office-bearers the are grounds for the suspension or following are to be mentioned particularly: false doctrine or heresy, public schisms, blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself, and, further, all sins and serious misdemeanours that rate as ground for excommunication with respect to other members of the church.</p>	<p>Art.61</p> <p>When a minister, elder or deacon has committed a public or gross sin, or refuses to heed the admonitions of the Consistory, he shall be suspended from his office by his own Consistory with the concurring advice of the Consistories of two neighboring churches. Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot continue in office, he shall be deposed by his Consistory with the concurring advice of Classis.</p> <p>Art.62</p> <p>Included among the gross sins, but not to the exclusion of all others, which are worthy of suspension or deposition from office, are these: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre, in short, all sins and gross offenses which render the perpetrators infamous before the world and which in any other member of the church would occasion excommunication.</p>
<p>Article 55. Appeals and Procedure</p> <p>When all avenues for settling a dispute at the consistory level have been exhausted, and a member is convinced that an injustice has been done to him by a decision of his consistory, he may appeal the decision to classis for its judgment. The judgment of the broader assembly shall be reached by majority vote, received with respect, and considered settled and binding unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order.</p>	<p>Article 31 - The Right of Appeal</p> <p>If anyone complain that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Articles formulated in this General Synod, as long as they are not changed by another General Synod.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 31. Appeals</p> <p>If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly; and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.</p>	<p>Article 29</p> <p>If any assembly complains of having been wronged by the decision of another assembly, it shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual's appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. All decisions of a broader assembly are to be received with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order. Consistories who are convinced that they cannot comply with a decision of a broader</p>

<p>Any appeal to a broader assembly must provide written grounds, and the broader assembly shall provide adequate grounds for its decision to sustain or not sustain an appeal. If an assembly does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal the decision of the narrower assembly to the next broader assembly. If a general synod does not sustain that appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and that to the next general synod.</p> <p>A member who desires to object to a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, shall bring the matter to his consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.</p> <p>A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a broader assembly conflicts with the Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the broader assembly next in order as soon as feasible.</p> <p>Article 56. The Reception, Departure, and Withdrawal of Members</p> <p>a. <u>The Reception of Members:</u> Members from churches within the federation or ecclesiastical fellowship shall be received under the spiritual care of the consistory upon receipt of a testimony regarding their doctrine and life. Others shall be admitted only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. In such cases the consistory shall determine whether a public profession of faith shall be required.</p> <p>b. <u>The Departure of Members:</u> Members departing to a church within the federation or a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall submit a written request to the consistory, which shall send a letter concerning their doctrine and life to such church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care.</p> <p>c. <u>The Withdrawal of Members:</u> The withdrawal of a member shall be appropriately announced.</p> <p>d. <u>Letter of testimony:</u> If a letter of testimony concerning doctrine and life</p>	<p>assembly because it does not agree with the Word of God cannot be compelled to do so, provided that they state to the classis the points at which the decision of the assembly disagrees with the Word of God. If a Consistory refuses to comply with the final decision of the synod and a subsequent synod rules by majority vote that submission in the matter is essential for the unity of the churches, the congregation is no longer eligible for membership in the federation.</p> <p>Article 30 Having availed herself of the avenues for appeal, a church through its Consistory may withdraw from the federation at any time by submitting a written statement to the classis to which the church belongs.</p> <p>Article 31 If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.</p> <p>Art. 44 Persons coming from other denominations shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required. Their names shall be announced to the congregation two weeks prior to reception, in order that the congregation may have opportunity, if necessary, to bring lawful objections to the attention of the Consistory.</p> <p>Art. 64 Those who seek membership in another congregation shall request in writing that their current Consistory send to the receiving Consistory an official letter including pertinent membership information and testimony concerning doctrine and life.</p>	<p>Art. 62. Attestations Communicant members who move to a sister-church shall be given, after previous announcements to the congregation, an attestation regarding their doctrine and conduct, signed on behalf of the consistory by two of its members. In the case of a non-communicant member such an attestation shall be sent directly to the consistory of the church concerned.</p>	<p>Art. 82 To those who remove from the Congregation a letter or testimony concerning their profession and conduct shall be given by the Consistory, signed by two; or in the case of the letters, which are given under the seal of the Church, signed by one.</p> <p>Art. 83 Furthermore, to the poor, removing for sufficient reasons, so much money for traveling shall be given by the Deacons, as they deem adequate. The Consistory and the Deacons shall, however, see to it that they be</p>
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<p>is requested by a member, the consistory shall furnish such a letter.</p> <p>Article 57. Property All property, whether real or personal, held by a local church for the benefit of that local church, shall remain the property of that local church in accordance with its own by-laws or regulations and the governing laws of the jurisdiction in which the church is located.</p> <p>All property, whether real or personal, held for the benefit of the federation by a local church, a classis or synod or a committee, trustee or trustees thereof, or otherwise, shall be held in trust as property in common of all of the churches within the federation, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by classes or synods of the federation. In the event a local church withdraws from the federation, unless the rules and regulations of the federation provide otherwise, the withdrawing church shall cease to have any benefit in such property.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the laws of the jurisdiction in which a local church is located, the final authority for any acquisition or disposition of property by a local church, whether real or personal, shall be the council of that church in accordance with the church's own by-laws or regulations, regardless of how the property is held.</p> <p>Any appeals to broader assemblies with respect to property shall be governed by this article.</p>	<p>not too much inclined to relieve their Churches of the poor, with whom they would without necessity burden other Churches.</p>	<p>Art.75. Property of the Churches All property, both real and personal, which belongs to the churches comprised respectively in classes, regional synods, and general synods in common, shall be held in trust for such churches in equal shares by deputies or trustees appointed for that purpose from time to time by the appropriate classis, regional synod, or general synod, and such deputies or trustees shall be bound by the terms of their appointment and instruction and are subject to being discharged by a subsequent classis, regional synod, or general synod.</p>	<p>Article 33 Whereas it is the sole right of a congregation to hold title to its property, the ownership of all property, real and personal, held by a congregation of this federation is vested exclusively in that congregation, and title shall be taken in its name alone. Each congregation shall have exclusive control over all of its temporalities, nor shall the exercise of its property rights, through the decisions of its Consistory, be subject to the supervision of the broader assemblies, nor shall the broader assemblies have the right to revise those decisions. The broader assemblies of the federation shall not attempt to secure possession of the property of any congregation, whether or not such congregation remains within, chooses to withdraw from, or is removed from the federation.</p>
<p>Article 58. The Observance and Revision of the Church Order These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, having been drafted in accord with the Foundational Principles and adopted by common consent, shall be observed diligently. Only when the good order and welfare of the churches make it necessary, shall this Church Order be revised. Any proposed revision of the Church Order shall be adopted only by a majority vote of a general synod.</p>	<p>86 These Articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they (if the profit of the Church demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished. However, no particular Congregation, Classis (or Synod) shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod.</p>	<p>Art.76. Observance and Revision of the Church Order These articles, which regard the lawful order of the church, have been adopted with common accord. If the interest of the churches demand such, they may and ought to be changed, augmented, or diminished. However, no consistory, classis, or regional synod shall be permitted to do so, but they shall endeavour diligently to observe the articles of this Church Order as long as they have not been changed by a general synod.</p>	<p>Art.66 These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they ought to be observed diligently. If it be found that God may be more honored and the churches better served by changing any article, this shall require a two-thirds vote of a synod and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the Consistories prior to the next synodical meeting, after which meeting they shall take effect.</p>

Protocol Proposal:

1 Synod 2007

- 1.1 Report of JCO Committee, with submission of a Proposed Church Order (PCO), and the recommendation that Synod 2007 present the PCO to the churches for discussion and evaluation, with a view to final adoption by Synod 2010.
- 1.2 Recommend that the JCO Committee be appointed as the PCO Committee, mandated to receive, collate, and evaluate all official communications regarding the PCO, and on that basis to recommend a revised Proposed Church Order to Synod 2010.
- 1.3 Recommend that official communications regarding the PCO proceed only from consistories to the PCO Committee.
- 1.4 Recommend that by June 1, 2009, the PCO Committee compile a list of all communications, which are to be received by March 1, 2009 from consistories, and from individual communications processed through their consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication.
- 1.5 Recommend that the PCO Committee be authorized to hold no more than eight (8) regional conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the classes) throughout the federation (Ontario, Alberta, California, eastern US, Michigan, central US).

2 Between Synod 2007 and Synod 2010

- 2.1 Mandate several committee members to prepare, circulate, and finalize for publication a number of expositions of various provisions of the PCO, including their biblical principle(s), historical background, and practical considerations.
- 2.2 Mandate teams of committee members to prepare and provide regional seminar conferences (perhaps in connection with scheduled meetings of the classes) to present and discuss various provisions of the PCO.
- 2.3 Mandate the PCO Committee to prepare a report for Synod 2010, and to recommend a revised PCO for adoption by Synod 2010.

3 Synod 2010

- 3.1 Report of PCO Committee regarding all communications received from consistories, together with a summary of the content of each communication and a statement of committee action relating to the communication.
- 3.2 Recommend a revised Proposed Church Order for adoption by Synod 2010.

Minority Report of the Joint Church Order Committee

Background

It has been a privilege for us to serve our federation by functioning on the Joint Church Order Committee with brothers from both the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Our presentation of this minority report in no way indicates any personal differences with these brothers. It does indicate a difference of perspective on a very specific matter. We support the vast majority of the Proposed Church Order which is a thoughtful, careful, and hopefully helpful work which will assist in bringing our two federations together.

Objection

Our objection is centered on Article 35: **Psalms and Hymns**. It says, “The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.” We agree with this article with the exception of the last phrase, “by the general synod.” Our present church order (Article 39, *Church Order of the URCNA*) indicates that the congregation may sing “hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity..., provided they are approved *by the consistory*.” We believe that the “150 Psalms should have the principal place in the singing of the churches.” There is adequate Biblical principle and precedent to use the Psalms prominently in the churches. We fully agree that any hymns sung in the worship of the churches must “faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity.” This is in keeping with the Biblical principle that our singing in worship must truly conform to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. We do, however, disagree that the *general synod* needs to approve all music sung in the churches. Rather, we are convinced that our singing ought to contribute to the unity of the newly formed federation by the use of a synodically approved set of standards for music which shall be applied on the local level by the wise decision of the consistory of each church.

Reasons for the Objection

There are several reasons for our objection.

1. We have not been persuaded that there is sufficient Scriptural precept, principle, or precedent which requires that the general synod, rather than the local consistory, must approve all music used in the local churches.

2. Mandating the general synod to approve all music used in the local churches places an impractical restriction on the local church which wishes to reach other cultures with the gospel. A number of our churches are located in areas where people do not all speak English, or who communicate better in another language. To mandate that the local church cannot use any other songs than those approved in the English language hymnal,

effectively and sadly conveys an attitude that we are not interested in having any other than English speaking Reformed Christians as part of our federation. To suggest that the federation will produce a hymnal in various languages is impractical and costly. It is much more practical to permit each local consistory, which is sensitive to the local needs of other cultures, to approve of songs appropriate for these congregations.

3. To mandate the general synod, rather than the local consistory, to approve of all music used in the worship of the churches is rather inconsistent with what we expect of our consistories. In Article 33: **The Regular Worship Services**, the Proposed Church Order states that the “consistory shall regulate the worship services,” one item of which is the singing of the congregation. Our synod does not require the churches to use a specific Bible translation. We expect our local consistory to choose a reliable and faithful translation of the Bible, something very crucial for the life and instruction of the churches. We have entrusted to the local consistory this important responsibility. Yet, by suggesting that the local consistory cannot and should not make evaluated and wise decisions about appropriate music in the churches is inconsistent with what we expect of them. At each service we expect the elders to determine whether the sermon preached was in accord with Scripture and the Reformed Confessions. If not, the consistory is expected to deal appropriately with the concern. Yet, removing the task of approving music from the consistory’s responsibility, as is indicated in the Proposed Church Order, conveys the idea that the local consistory cannot and should not be entrusted with this responsibility.

4. To remove from the local consistory the responsibility of approving the churches’ music, and to place this in the hands of the general synod, effectively denies the churches any opportunity to use any other music than that which is contained in the current song book of the federation. This means that no church in the future may use any old music now contained in the 1976 Blue *Psalter Hymnal* which did not make it into the new federation hymnal. This means that no church may use any music which meets the criterion for entry into a new federation hymnal, but for reasons of space did not make it into the new hymnal. This means that any Psalm tune now contained in the *Book of Praise* but which will not make it into the new federation hymnal may not be sung in the future. The long standing practice of a church singing the “Hallelujah Chorus” on Resurrection morning would have to cease, because this chorus likely would not be included in the federation hymnal. If a church uses any other music than that contained in the new song book, that church will be out of compliance with the Church Order.

Furthermore, to mandate that only the general synod may approve of music used in the worship of the churches effectively puts an end to the use of any *new* Biblically, Reformed, well-written, beautiful music. The last time any changes were made to the music in the *Songs of Praise* hymnal was in 1983. The URCNA currently uses the 1976 edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*. Such books cannot be frequently updated. It is too costly and time consuming. Nor would we expect the federation to do so. Under our present Church Order, the churches could purchase the *Trinity Hymnal*, for example. If this article of the Proposed Church Order is adopted, however, this fine hymnal may not be used.

5. Both the principle and the practice of singing in public worship only those songs approved by synod have a deep and broad history among Reformed churches. Usually this principle and practice are defended with an appeal to preserving unity among the churches.

Nevertheless, given the current circumstances that exist among the churches we seek to serve with this Proposed Church Order, one very foreseeable and probable consequence of codifying this requirement in the current Church Order will be the fracturing of the unity already being enjoyed among the congregations. This fracturing of unity would arise from restricting what many have come to believe is the liberty, given by God through Scripture to the consistory, to determine, in accordance with Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity, which songs may be used in the congregation's public worship.

This liberty is in principle related to the liberty which a consistory exercises regarding the choices (1) of Bible version for public worship, (2) of catechism and Sunday School materials for youth nurture, (3) of vacation Bible school materials, and (4) of Bible study materials for use by groups sponsored by the consistory. The proposed Church Order fully recognizes the consistory's prerogative in all of these latter areas. To refuse the exercise of this same prerogative with regard to songs sung in public worship seems inconsistent and harmful.

Recommendation

In view of these objections, we wish to recommend to the synod the following wording of the Proposed Church Order Article 35:

“The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful musical renderings of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by the consistory in accord with a synodically adopted standard.”

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman

Rev. Ronald L. Scheuers

February 2007

Report of the Songbook Committee to the Churches

This report comes in addition to the joint report which we have prepared together with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise. By God's grace, 2006 was once again a year of increased activity and accomplishment for our committee. We met twice with our Canadian Reformed counterparts in this past year, in April in Ancaster, Ontario, and in November in Jenison, Michigan, and, we continue to meet monthly "on-line" as a URCNA committee.

Joint meetings:

Our mandate, as given to our committee by the churches at Synod Escondido, directs us to work together with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise, of the Canadian Reformed Churches, in an effort to put together a common song book for our churches. Our committees continue to enjoy a cooperative and productive relationship.

Hymns

Just as in the previous year, the bulk of our time as a URCNA committee, and as combined committees, is taken up with applying the principles and guidelines to hymns found in various songbooks currently in use among Reformed and Presbyterian churches. In the combined committee, our review of the hymns in the Psalter Hymnal 1957, in the Book of Praise, and in the proposed augment for the Book of Praise, has been completed. We are now working our way through hymns from the Trinity Hymnal 1990.

In our meetings as a URCNA committee, we have completed our review of the hymns submitted by the churches for possible inclusion in the new songbook (any psalm renditions will be considered when we take up our work on that section of the book). Each committee has been assigned to review a section of the hymns in the Psalter Hymnal 1987, for possible inclusion in the gross list, which will in turn be reviewed by the combined committee. The Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise is reviewing #151-395; the URCNA Songbook Committee is reviewing #396-641.

We continue to experience that although we come to the hymns from our individual perspectives as individual committee members, and to some extent, as committees, we are usually able to arrive unanimous decisions.

Psalms

We are still doing preparatory work for our discussion of the psalms. We have held a discussion about the matter of including all 150 Genevan psalms in the proposed common songbook. The Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise is asking Synod 2007 of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches for further instruction in this matter, in view of the evident difficulties that it presents for church union.

We have asked for advice from Dr. C. Van Dam and Rev. M. VanderHart, as professors of Old Testament, as to how we should handle the covenant Name of the Lord, Yahweh, in the psalms. Formerly, the Hebrew consonants were pronounced with the vowels that actually belong to the Name, Adonai, yielding, Jehovah. This was done to avoid pronouncing the "Tetragrammeton" - the four letter Name YHWH, which was considered by the Jews to be too

holy to be pronounced. This way of pronouncing the Name (Jehovah) is now considered inappropriate, given the reason for it.

We have spoken with Dr. Dale Grotenhuis about his possible assistance in harmonizing the psalms, and he has graciously offered to help us with that.

We hope to be addressed at our next combined committee meeting in Ancaster by Dr. William Helder, who is a major contributor to the texts of psalms and hymns that appear in the Book of Praise. Dr. Helder will speak to us about the process that leads “From Bible text to sung song,”, identifying issues that we face when we translate Biblical text for the purpose of congregational singing.

Technical matters

At our combined meeting in Jenison in November 2006, we received an informative presentation by Joyce Borger and Lynn Setsma, who are employees of CRC Publications, familiarizing us with some of the questions involved in the process of obtaining copyright permission to publish songs in our proposed songbook. While we have made no commitments for any future publisher of our songbook, since CRC Publications has expertise in this area, and were located near the location of our meeting, we decided to learn from them.

On-line meetings:

Our committee continues to meet “on-line”, in a chat room hosted by the Cornerstone URC. The format seems to work reasonably well for the task of discussing hymns. Distances and schedules prevent us from meeting more frequently face to face. We generally use the occasions of the combined meetings in April and November to schedule face to face meetings for our committee.

Membership

We regret to report to the churches that it became necessary for two of our members to resign from the Songbook Committee. After a short period of time, having been appointed by Synod Calgary in 2004, Rev. Allen VanderPol submitted his resignation, due to a change in his pastoral situation. As Rev. VanderPol has been called to work with the Miami International Theological Seminary, he is unable to serve as a member of the committee. We appreciated Rev. VanderPol’s interest, abilities and contributions to our work, and we have communicated to him our regret, and our thanks.

Rev. Dennis Royall has been a member of our committee from its inception, in 1997, when its mandate was “to explore what is required to produce, reproduce, or obtain a Psalter Hymnal”. He has continued to serve faithfully as a member of the committee, but, this fall, he found he was not able to continue, and he submitted his resignation. We have also appreciated the contribution that Rev. Royall was able, and willing to make to our work, drawing on his background and knowledge, and always participating actively in the discussions and debates that took place. We have also written to Rev. Royall, expressing our regret at his resignation, and our appreciation for his years of service.

Recommendations

We have made several recommendations as part of the Joint Report presented by our two committees to our respective synods. While we are not yet at a point to actually recommend a collection of psalms or hymns, we do ask synod to approve the following additional

recommendations:

1. That synod take note of the work of the committee to date.
2. That synod accept the resignations of Rev. Allen VanderPol, and Rev. Dennis Royall, and express the churches' appreciation for their service on the committee.
3. That synod leave the membership of the committee as it is at this time, for the sake of continuity.
4. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Songbook Committee when this report is being discussed.

Conclusion

We feel privileged to serve the churches, and the Lord, in the work entrusted to us as the Songbook Committee. We pray for His continued blessing on our work, and that ultimately, our work will prove to be useful and fruitful in the worship of God's people, for His glory, and their edification.

Mrs. Daphne Jasperse
Rev. Ed Knott, chairman
Rev. Rand Lankheet
Rev. Derrick VanderMeulen
Rev. Dick Wynia, secretary

Report to the Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity (CPEU) and the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) by the Joint Committee for a Common Song Book (Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise (SCBP) of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and the Psalter-Hymnal Committee of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

1 CanRC Mandate (Reference: Acts General Synod Chatham: Article 77 para. 5.2)

1.1 To continue working closely with the committee re: song book appointed by the URCNA synod (ref 5.2.1);

1.2 To continue to produce a song book that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter and other suitable metrical versions of the Psalms, including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and Reformed confessions (ref 5.2.2);

1.3 To keep the CPEU updated on the progress (ref 5.2.3);

1.4 To provide the CPEU with a report in sufficient time for it to produce the comprehensive report for Synod in a timely fashion (ref 5.2.4)

2 URCNA Mandate (Reference: Minutes Synod Escondido).

2.1 "That the present 'Psalter Hymnal Committee' work together with the Canadian Reformed 'Book of Praise Committee' to consider for inclusion in this song book the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confession. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality." (Minutes, Article XLV, B, 2, c).

2.2 "To report annually to the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity, which, in turn will make full annual reports to the churches concerning this work." (Minutes, Article XLV, B, 4).

3 Joint Committee

3.1 Meetings

The Joint Committee meets two times per year. Since the last Synod the Joint Committee met four times with one more meeting scheduled for late October 2006. Detailed minutes are taken for internal use. For each of the meetings extensive Press Releases were issued. The individual committees meet regularly, CanRC usually face to face and URCNA usually on-line.

The Joint Committee met:

March 2004 in Jenison MI

April 2005 in Ancaster ON

November 2005 in Jenison MI

April 2006 in Ancaster ON

The topics discussed and accomplishments made to date are recorded in the paragraphs following.

3.2 Benefit of Joint Meetings

The original meeting schedule was to meet once per year. This has now been doubled to twice

per year. With each successive meeting mutual trust and understanding is strengthened. This was particularly obvious when selecting hymns according to the adopted Principles and Guidelines. As a result, the Joint Committee could work in harmony and with frankness toward each other. Although complete agreement was not always achieved, the discussions were always brotherly. Efforts are being made to publicize awareness of the work done, particularly on the Principles and Guidelines, with a series of articles in Christian Renewal and Clarion.

4 Principles and Guidelines

The Principles and Guidelines presented to Synod Chatham (CanRC) and Synod Calgary (URCNA) were (unintentionally) slightly different. An addition to Guideline 7 was picked up in the report to Synod Calgary, but not in the report to Synod Chatham. Synod Calgary felt it necessary to additionally amend Guideline 9. The Joint Committee adopted these changes which are as follows:

4.1 Guideline 7 now reads (italics constitutes the change) “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, *and individualism.*”

4.2 Guideline 9 originally read as follows: “The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Where possible, use is to be made of music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage (e.g., the Genevan psalm tunes and the Scottish Psalter).”

Synod Calgary changed the wording to: “*The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.*”

5 Joint Committee Future Plans

The Joint Committee intends, D.V., to:

- 5.1 Continue to meet at least two times per year.
- 5.2 Continue to foster public awareness of the activities relating to the Common Song Book by way of articles and press releases of joint meetings.
- 5.3 Continue to search for suitable Psalms (See also Section 7).
- 5.4 Continue to evaluate hymns (See also Section 7).
- 5.5 Resolve copyright issues relating to using material not in the public domain
- 5.6 Deal with issues involving rhyming and change of text of songs made necessary due to questionable doctrine, antiquated language, questionable expressions and the like.

6 Creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers

6.1 Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)

Synod Calgary created a new committee with the mandate of dealing with the nonmusical portion of the Song Book. The original committee’s remaining mandate is to deal only with the musical section.

When the change was made by Synod Calgary, there appeared to be no clear mandate instructing the new committee to work together with the SCBP; hence the Joint Committee expressed concern that combined work on the creeds, confessions, etc. could not begin. Contact was taken up with the new committee with the aid of CPEU and CERCU. The result was a communication from Dr. K. Riddlebarger, chairman of the new committee who, in March 2006, wrote in part: “ ... that our current operating assumptions ---1). That our committee is distinct

from the committee working on the musical portion of the Psalter, 2). That we are working on prayers, liturgical forms, and confessional documents for a new URCNA hymnal, and 3). That we are to report our work to the churches through the CERCU committee – do need to include consultation with the CanRC. ... Before we begin our work on the forms (we should start in May) we'll figure out what is meant by 'in conjunction with' and then go from there.”

6.2 Joint Committee's intent to make a recommendation

In a united federation a common set of creeds, confessions, liturgical forms and prayers will be required at some time. Since under the current condition no meaningful work could be started on this non-musical part of the Common Song Book, the Joint Committee will make the appropriate recommendations to correct this situation at the conclusion of this report.

7 Song Book Activity

7.1 Hymns

7.1.1 Gross List of Potential Hymns

The joint committee has reviewed the hymns as found in the Centennial Edition of the Psalter-Hymnal, some of the hymns of the Book of Praise, the proposed hymns for the Book of Praise Augmentation and hymns of the New Trinity Hymnal (the review of the latter is still in progress). The adopted Principles and Guidelines were applied to each hymn reviewed. On the basis of the review the hymn was placed on the gross list or rejected. This gross list will be used to make final selections for the Common Song Book proposal to arrive at a well-balanced hymnary.

7.1.2 Structure of the hymnary

Initial work has been done on the structure. There is complete agreement that the basic structure will follow the division of the Apostolic Creed. The tentative structure is as follows:

1. The Apostles Creed
2. The Holy Trinity
3. God the Father and our Creation
Including: Thanksgiving for Harvest and Labour
4. God the Son and our Redemption
5. God the Holy Spirit and our Sanctification
6. The Church
Including: Holy Baptism
The Lord's Supper
Ordination
7. The Forgiveness of Sins
8. The Resurrection of the Body and the Return of Christ
9. Eternal Life on the New Earth

7.2 Psalms

7.2.1 Agreement

The Joint Committee has found agreement in many areas.

7.2.1.1 The Joint Committee has agreed that at least one of each Psalm rendition must be a complete Psalm. Additional selections of the same Psalm may be partial.

7.2.1.2 Whether complete or partial, the renditions ought to be accurate translations or paraphrases of the Hebrew text of the Psalms.

7.2.1.3 The Joint Committee has agreed that all 150 Psalms are to be represented in the Psalter section.

7.2.1.4 The tunes should support the words;

7.2.1.5 The Psalter should be expressive of the Reformed tradition.

7.2.1.6 The Psalms will have the principal place in the singing of the congregation, and therefore, in the churches' Song Book.

7.2.1.7 In principle there is agreement to publish in 4-part harmony.

7.2.2 Understanding each other's positions where there is no complete agreement

In order to better understand our mutual positions, with respect to whether or not to include the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter in the Common Song Book, the individual committees prepared position papers. These also generated an open and frank discussion to try to come to a mutual understanding.

7.2.2.1 The CanRC paper outlined the history and background of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. As a collection, it is a significant and unique contribution to North American Psalmody, containing all 150 Psalms and that the choice was made to compile a non-eclectic Psalter. Of great importance is that the words are true to the actual biblical text and that each and every Psalm is 100% complete. The CanRC continue to be deeply grateful for the existence of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter.

7.2.2.2 The URCNA paper explains that there are arguments against incorporating an all Genevan Psalter. Generally there is a negative reaction against the Genevan Psalter among the URCNA churches. This is for a large part due to the fact that although in URCNA congregations there are some second-generation Dutch immigrants who might be somewhat familiar with the Genevan tunes, there is increasingly greater cultural diversity. There is the danger of presenting a narrow cultural profile that is completely foreign to URCNA communities. The paper contains many questions touching on the reality as it is in the URCNA, some of which include the following:

Can we argue for Genevan tunes on the basis of Scripture or confessions? Are there no other tunes that could support the text equally well?

These questions are intended to convey the reluctance of many URCNA church members to accept a common Song Book that contains all the Genevan Psalms. The result could well be that, instead of fostering increased Psalm singing, it may actually lead to less Psalm singing or even non-use of the Song Book. This would certainly be counter productive to the cause of unity even if federative unity will be achieved.

7.2.3 Discussion of papers

In the discussion based on these papers it became clear that it was not that far-fetched that this issue could become an obstacle to real unity. We make the following observations: The CanRC will need to revisit the General Synod decision that all 150 Genevan Psalms are to be included. It should be considered whether we may allow the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms to become the main divisive issue preventing full unity. Although we recognize the tremendous commitment and effort that led to the development and production of the Anglo-Genevan Psalter, can it be defended that all 150 Genevan tunes are to be included?

In addition, in order to serve the unity sought, the URCNA will need to study seriously the Genevan Psalms in order to become thoroughly informed about them. Such efforts will help to discover the beauty of the melodies that have withstood the test of time, and will develop a greater understanding of why the CanRC churches sing and love the Genevan Psalms. Disassembling the Anglo-Genevan Psalter will be difficult for the CanRC to accept without the assurance that this is done for a good reason: For the sake of unity, and the expectation that the new book will be the official Song Book, to the exclusion of other books and collections. If everyone keeps the unity of the federation-to-be fully in view, considerations for a compromise that is God pleasing must be made possible.

7.2.4 How do we go from here to a Common Song Book

The joint committee recommend that the Common Song Book ought not to be a condition for federative unity for the following reasons:

7.2.4.1 Currently the Song Book appears to be a condition for federative unity (see art. 73. 4.7 Neerlandia). However, the committee understands that there is a huge emotional element present. This was also obvious in our working together as committees. (A flavour of this “tension” can be seen in paragraph 7.2.2.2 above).

7.2.4.2 To truly serve unity, it may be better to first learn to fully trust and appreciate each other as fellow members of Christ before adopting the Common Song Book.

7.2.4.3 To produce the complete Song Book is a tremendously labour intensive task that will take many years.

It would therefore be best that the Common Song Book be not a part of the merger vote. After merger the committee can continue its work. Then a synod of the new federation can adopt the Common Song Book when it is completed.

8 Contact with CPEU/CERCU

8.1 The contact with these committees was accomplished by interim reports, and Press Releases of the Joint Meetings. Advice was also sought with respect to the “Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)”

8.2 This report will be the final report under the current synodical mandates.

9 Recommendations

Recommendations to Synod Smithers (a)

Recommendations to Synod Schererville (b)

9.1 (a) Synod decide to continue the SCBP mandate as given by Synod Chatham Article 77 para. 5 except modified as listed under 9.4

(b) Synod decide to continue the committee’s mandate given by previous Synods.

9.2 (a) Synod appoint a (new) sub committee to the SCBP to work together with URCNA “Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)” to come to a unified text for creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers

(b) Synod clarify the mandate for the “Liturgical forms and confessions committee (URCNA)” in order for it to work together with the sub committee to the SCBP for Creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers to come to a unified text for creeds, confessions and liturgical forms and prayers

9.3(a) Synod maintain the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book but establish

that the Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity (see concerns para. 7.2.4)

(b) Synod maintain the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book but establish that the Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity (see concerns para. 7.2.4)

9.4 (a) Synod reconsider the decision recorded in Art. 77 para. 5.2.2 of Synod Chatham: “To continue to produce a song book that contains the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter” and allow the SCBP to delete some Genevan Psalms provided suitable complete replacements can be found. (Refer to para. 1.2 above)

(b) Synod provide direction to the committee if the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms would be detrimental for the churches to accept the Common Song Book.

9.5 (a) Synod approve the changes to Guidelines 7 and 9 (Refer to para. 4.1 and 4. above)

(b) No action required as Synod Calgary already approved the Principles and Guidelines in their present form.

9.6 (a) Synod state its commitment that the Common Song Book shall be the exclusively used Song Book in the worship services of the united federation.

(b) Synod state its commitment that the Common Song Book shall be the exclusively used Song Book in the worship services of the united federation.

Respectfully submitted,

(in alphabetical order)

D.G.J. Agema (CanRC) R. Lankheet (URCNA) A. VanderPol (URCNA)

N.H. Gootjes (CanRC) C.J. Nobels (CanRC) C. VanHalen-Faber (CanRC)

D. Jasperse (URCNA) D. Royall (URCNA) G.Ph. van Popta (CanRC)

E. Knott (URCNA) D. Vander Meulen (URCNA) D. Wynia (URCNA)

Report of the Liturgical Forms and Confessional Documents Committee (Non-Musical Section) to Synod 2007

Background:

In September of 2004 our committee began deliberations and made the following determinations before undertaking our work:

1. The committee determined to conduct the bulk of our work electronically and by conference call as needed.
2. The committee determined to begin with the “Christian Prayers” section of the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*. That work has now been completed
 - A. The committee determined to produce shorter prayers in modern English in order to encourage greater usage of these prayers in our churches.
 - B. The Rev. Dr. Michael S. Horton agreed to compose the first draft of these prayers which were then submitted to the committee for editing and final approval.
 - C. Fourteen prayers (as found in the 1976 *Psalter*) and four seasonal collects (Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost) have been approved (see Appendix One).
3. The committee determined not to undertake new translations of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort.

Rationale for our decision not to undertake new translation of our confessions:

- A. The committee determined that new idiosyncratic translations unique to the URCNA would not be helpful to our churches and might become an obstacle to on-going efforts toward ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed churches.
 - B. The committee determined to evaluate and recommend adoption of existing English translations of the Three Forms of Unity. Those under consideration include the current versions in the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*, as well as translations prepared and adopted by the RCUS and Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC). Others may be considered as well.
 - C. The committee determined that new critical introductions and additional Scripture references would be useful and will be included in our final recommendation.
4. The committee determined to undertake the revision/translation of current liturgical forms once the prayers have been completed. This work is now in its initial phases.
 - A. The need of the churches is the primary consideration.
 - B. Continuity with current forms is very important, although shortening and modernization of language may be in order in certain cases.
 - C. The translation for the biblical citations in the revised forms and confessions remains

to be determined.

D. New forms are needed for:

- 1). Reception of families via profession of faith along with the baptism of their children (in process).
- 2). A form for those congregations which practice frequent communion. This form has been completed (see attached)
- 3). A form for exclusion of baptized members.

E. Correspondence has been received regarding concerns from various URCNA members about the current form for infant baptism. These will be duly considered when the committee edits this form.

F. Correspondence was received in April 2006 from The *Book of Praise* Committee of the CanRC regarding English translations of the ecumenical creeds. The committee responded with an update as to our progress.

Current Status:

The committee had anticipated that the following will be completed by Synod 2007:

- A. The “Christian Prayers” section of the Hymnal
- B. A number of liturgical forms
- C. Preliminary recommendations about which translations of the Three Forms of Unity ought to be considered

While much of this work has been done, the committee has encountered the following difficulties impeding our progress:

- A. The mandate from Synod Calgary 2003 is not clear in regard to the following matters:
 1. Are we preparing liturgical forms and confessional documents for a URCNA hymnal, or for a joint URCNA-CanRC hymnal?
 2. Does our committee report its work directly to the stated clerk of the URCNA, or to CERCU?
 3. There is no corresponding “liturgical forms” committee in the CanRC
- B. In light of these difficulties, and after consultation with both CERCU and the chair of the CanRC *Book of Praise* Committee (Rev. George van Popta), the committee determined to scale back work on revising current liturgical forms until clarification of the matters spelled out in point C (below).

C. The Committee makes the following requests of Synod 2007 in regards to the clarification of our mandate and the on-going work of our committee:

1. That synod clarify our mandate as in point A.1 above. This will be especially important in light of a number of overtures coming before synod.
2. That synod clarify our mandate in regards to phase 2 or phase 3 relations with the CanRC.
3. That synod clarify our mandate in light of CanRC efforts to create its own committee to revise liturgical forms and confessions, independent of the musical section of their *Book of Praise* Committee.
4. That synod appoint a minimum of two new members to our committee, especially in light of the potential necessity of travel (should our future work require meetings with an equivalent CanRC committee), and light of the resignation of two of our current members (Revs. Stevens and Ipema) and possibly a third (Dr. Riddlebarger).

Future Work:

The next phase of the committee's work is to complete our revision of the various liturgical forms found in the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*. This work should be completed by the next synod.

The committee also expects to bring recommendations regarding English translations of our confessional documents to the next synod.

However, the creation of new critical introductions for our confession documents and a thorough review and evaluation of the Scripture proofs which underlie them will take additional time.

Sincerely in Christ and respectfully submitted on behalf of our committee (Dr. Michael S. Horton, Rev. Paul Ipema, Rev. Richard Stevens and Dr. W. Robert Godfrey),

Dr. Kim Riddlebarger
Senior Pastor, Christ Reformed Church

Appendix One: Completed Prayers

Prayer 1—General Confession of Sins (approved 9/13/05; modified November 20, 2006)

Dearly loved brothers and sisters, we are called to examine ourselves in the light of God's Law. Let us go to God in confession:

Our Father, we are sinful and you are holy. We recognize that we have heard in your Law difficult words, knowing how often we have offended you in thought, word and deed, not only by obvious violations, but by failing to conform to its perfect commands, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. There is nothing in us that gives us reason for hope, for where we thought we were well, we are sick in soul.

Where we thought we were holy, we are in truth unholy and ungrateful. Our hearts are filled with the love of the world; our minds are dark and are assailed by doubts; our wills are too often given to selfishness and our bodies to laziness and unrighteousness. By sinning against our neighbors, we have also sinned against you, in whose image they were created. In this time of confession we bring you our particular sins.

Our Father, although you are a holy God who cannot look upon sin, look upon Christ our Savior and forgive us for his sake. You have promised us that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. For if we do sin, we have an Advocate before your throne, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Give us your pardon by your mercies, dear Father, for you have clothed us in Christ's righteousness. We ask also that you would give us an increase of the grace of your Holy Spirit, so that we may learn the wisdom of your ways and walk in your holy paths, for your glory and the good of our neighbor. Amen

Prayer 2–The Pastoral Prayer (Approved 9/30/05)

Almighty and merciful God, we realize and confess before you that if you should regard our merits, we would be unworthy to lift our eyes toward heaven and present our prayers before you. Our consciences accuse us, and our sins testify against us. And yet in your fatherly goodness you have adopted us in Christ and delight to hear our prayers which we offer through his mediation. Therefore we look to no other King and seek no other Advocate for the help that we need in this world and in the world to come. You call us to seek not only our own salvation and good, but that of your whole church and the world, and so we do so now.

We pray first for your benediction on your holy Gospel, that it may be faithfully proclaimed and the world filled with the knowledge of your truth. To that end, please send workers into your field to plant, water, and harvest a people for your name. But frustrate the work of those who would sow weeds of heresy and discord. Pull down all of the strongholds of Satan in this world and establish your kingdom throughout the earth. Please give fatherly attention to your servants who suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel and strengthen them in mind and body by your Spirit through the means of grace. [Specific prayers added for the peace, purity, and progress of the Gospel throughout the world.]

We pray also for those who serve our common welfare in temporal affairs, especially those who govern us, that they may do so with wisdom, integrity, and the knowledge that their councils stand under your final judgment. Dear Father, who sends rain upon the just and the unjust alike, give to us also, we pray, such humility of conduct and faithfulness in our worldly callings, that we may contribute to the good of our neighbors. We ask that you would restrain wickedness and vice in society, promote justice and the common good, and cause us to be salt and light in this evil age. [Specific prayers added for civil authorities.]

We remember also all who suffer from physical dangers, temptation, doubts, illness of mind or body, financial distress and especially those who are near death. May the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ your Son refresh them in their trials and give them the grace to bear the difficulties you send them for their good. Give also to us the grace to share in their suffering and provide for their needs as we are able.

Comfort, we pray, all widows and orphans and be to them a father. Show your mercy to prisoners, to those in the military or whose business takes them great distances. Guard their families and bring them back safely, we pray. [Specific prayers added for members of the congregation.]

Bless the land with fruitful harvest, and give us wisdom and patience to be good stewards of it and of the resources and of the resources you graciously give us for our callings. Keep us from exploiting your good gifts for our own selfish accumulation and grant that we may be ever mindful of our duties to each other and your creation. Order our priorities and interests, so that our callings in life will promote rather than hinder our love for you and our neighbor. We ask that you would deepen the bonds between us as spouses, parents and children and resolve conflict and strife according to your wisdom and grace. Give to those among us who are single gifts for building up the communion of saints as well as faithfulness in the face of temptation, and grant that your people may build them up in the most holy faith. Strengthen us through your means of grace that we may worship you not only with our words but with our lives, and so build us up into one body, a city in the world whose light cannot be hidden. Make each of us, we pray, a living sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving pleasing to you. For this is our reasonable service in view of that sacrifice which alone has reconciled us finally and forever with you. We bring to your throne these intercessions on behalf of each other through that intercession of our Elder Brother at your right hand, even Jesus Christ your eternal Son. Amen.

Prayer 3–Prayer Before Sermon (approved 9/30/05)

Eternal Father, who has spoken in various times and in various ways to your people in the past, but in these last days in your Son, the incarnate Word, we pray that you will open the mouth of your servant to proclaim that Word in the power of the Spirit. And we pray that this same Spirit will open the hearts of its hearers here assembled to receive your holy Gospel and write on their hearts your holy law, even as you have promised. All of this, gracious Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying: “Our Father....”

Prayer Four: Prayer After the Sermon (approved 9/30/05):

Our merciful God, who is pleased to condescend to speak to us through your Word, grant us all grace that we may not be mere hearers of your Word, but doers also. Give us the grace of your Holy Spirit that we may believe what has been promised to us. May we bring glory and honor to your name in all that we do, as you conform us to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. All of this, gracious Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying: “Our Father....”

Prayer 5: Prayer Before the Explanation of the Catechism (approved 10/23/2005)

Almighty and everlasting God, our heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we are sinners, conceived and born in sin, unable of ourselves to do any good. But we do repent of our sins, and seek Your grace to help us in our remaining infirmities. Through the teaching of your Word, satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst with Your refreshing truth, that we, with all our hearts, may love and serve You, together with our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, one only true God, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Prayer 6: Prayer After the Explanation of the Catechism (approved 10/30/05)

Gracious and merciful Father, we give you thanks for having established your covenant with believers and

their children. This promise you have not only signified and sealed by holy baptism, but daily prove it by perfecting your praise through the mouths of children. You also continue to establish your saints in this faith throughout their lives. “For,” as you have told us, “the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” So give us, we pray, the grace to inwardly digest the food you have given us and to bring forth works of service and gratitude in this world. All of this we ask in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying: Our Father...

Prayer 7: Before Meals (approved 12/15/05)

The eyes of all wait for you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. You attend to our every need through the creatures you have made, especially our neighbors whose vocations serve to bring these provisions to our table and we ask a special blessing for those who have prepared it for us. If not even a sparrow can fall from the sky or a hair fall from our head apart from your fatherly care and wisdom, we cannot fail to look to you alone for security in this life as also in the life to come. So give us grateful hearts as we pray, saying, “Our Father...”

Prayer 8: After Meals (approved 12/15/05)

We praise you, Lord, for our creation, our preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all else we praise you for your greatest gift: Your Son Jesus Christ, who was born, lived, died, and rose again from the dead for us and for our salvation. As he intercedes for us at your right hand even now, we enter your sanctuary boldly to intercede on behalf of [specific requests]. Praise the LORD! O give thanks to his name, for he is good; for his loving kindness lasts forever. Amen.

Prayer 9: Prayer for the Sick/Spiritually Distressed (approved 1/30/06)

Eternal God, the only Creator, Preserver, Judge and Savior of the world, you alone hold the powers of life and death. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he had conquered death and hell, announced, “I was dead, but I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades in my hand.” Yet often our circumstances seem to us to testify against your promise. What we see does not appear to agree with what we have heard. Yet, even at the Cross, where you seemed so absent and your Son so cruelly and unjustly abandoned by you, we have been taught that he was thereby fulfilling your purposes to redeem us from the power of darkness. We confess that our hearts are so bound to the realities that we see with our eyes in the moment that we easily forget the greater realities that we hear with our ears through your Word.

Teach us through these trials to number our days, recognizing that we are but fading flowers in this age, but flourishing oaks in the age to come. We know that these struggles are not tokens of your wrath, but are part of your plan to save us, sanctify us, and glorify yourself. While we may fear the circumstances, we no longer fear the condemnation of the law, the sting of death, or the sharp arrows of Satan. For we know that your Son gained victory for us by his cross and resurrection]. We ask that you would, even through these tests, deepen our confidence to appear before you clothed not in the filthy rags of our own works, but in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Savior. Continue to look upon us in him, for we pray in his name, who taught us to pray, “Our Father...”

Prayer 10: Morning Prayer (approved 1/30/06)

Merciful God, thank you for keeping watch over us last night. As we face a new day, we ask that you

would fix our eyes on Christ as our only hope and your glory as our only aim. You alone are worthy of this glory because you are the very author of our life, the creator and sustainer of all that exists. The heavens declare your wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness to all you have made. Yet our highest praise is reserved for the great deeds of redemption that you have worked for us poor sinners. Bound in our sin, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, by nature children of wrath even as the rest, we have nevertheless heard the good news that you have delivered us from slavery, freed us from the condemnation of your just law, and brought us new life from above. Even as we face our ordinary tasks this day, recall to our hearts the extraordinary comfort of your promise. Grant also, we pray, the strength of your Spirit to live out the callings you have given us and to all people as creatures made in your image. Make us fit vessels for your work in this world this day—a sacrifice of thanksgiving well-pleasing in your sight and a light that shines before our neighbors. All of this we ask in the name of your Son, who taught us to pray, “Our Father...”

Prayer 11: Evening Prayer (approved 1/30/06)

Merciful God, we come to you now at the end of this day in the name of our Savior, that Light shining in the darkness, dispelling the night of our sins and the blindness of our hearts. Lord of our labor, now be Lord of our rest. Free us of doubts, anxieties, and temptations and continue to work your sanctifying grace in us even as we sleep. Remembering that we are not only frail but sinful, we ask you to defend us from all dangers, but especially from the assaults of the world and the devil as also from the disease of our own hearts. We confess that we have not spent this day without grievously sinning against you, to whom all hearts are open and no wickedness is hidden. Yet, clothed in the righteousness of your dear Son, we invoke your name and claim your salvation. Give us repentant and believing hearts that delight in following your ways. We ask also that you would be with those who are afflicted with grief, pain, temptation, and doubts, and especially for [specific requests]. Together with them preserve us all in one communion and body until we enter at last your everlasting rest. In the name of Christ our Savior, Amen.

Prayer 12: Opening Prayer for Ecclesiastical Assemblies (approved 2/14/06)

Heavenly Father, eternal and merciful God, it has pleased you according to your infinite wisdom to gather a Church to yourself out of the nations of all the earth, and to govern it through weak servants. Called by you to watch over your flock purchased by your Son’s precious blood, we invoke your name now for this solemn assembly, gathered here according to the example of the apostolic churches. Faced with many weighty issues concerning the care of your people, we ask that you would make us truly mindful of your purposes for your church. Draw our minds and hearts away from vanity and pride, discord and pettiness, and do not let these sins which still cling to us distract us from advancing your great cause in this world. Renew us, we pray, in the joyful commission of bringing your good news to the ends of the earth, making us more faithful stewards of the mysteries and ambassadors of reconciliation. We ask that your Spirit would be present among us to guide us into all truth, bringing us to agreement on the matters before us. May Scripture reign in our hearts, just as the Living Word reigns over your church, for we acknowledge only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. All of this we ask because Christ is our Mediator and Advocate, who with you and the Holy Spirit, the only God, deserves eternal praise and glory. Amen.

Prayer 13: Closing Prayer for Ecclesiastical Assemblies (approved 3/1/06)

Lord God, we give you heartfelt thanks for gathering a Church in our land and for making us ambassadors and guardians of such a kingdom. As those who are receiving rather than building your kingdom, make us ever mindful that it is not our labors but your electing, redeeming, justifying and sanctifying grace alone that renders your Church indestructible and victorious against all adversaries. We give you praise for your

providence in preserving liberty in this land for the free proclamation of the gospel and ask that you would, by your Holy Spirit, fill us with joy to make diligent use of such opportunity. Your Spirit, who leads your Church into all truth, has been present in our assembly, giving us wisdom in our deliberations. We pray that he would also give us the strength to bless the efforts that we purpose to put forth and finish the work that he has begun. Continue to draw the remnant of the nations to your heavenly Jerusalem that is coming down out of heaven and maintain the peace and purity of your Church, we ask. Strengthen us with a mighty zeal for the ministry of word and sacrament, as well as for the care of your flock in body and soul. As you hold Christ Jesus ever above and before us as the Mediator for sinners, may our Churches faithfully proclaim this good news to those who have never heard it. Give strength, humility, and boldness to your under-shepherds, we pray: to ministers, elders, and deacons. We also ask that you would give prudence to our civil rulers, so that they may act with justice and wise restraint. As you have promised to be present with us even to the end of the age, we ask you to enlighten, guide, awaken, convict and console us by your Word and Spirit. Hear us, dear Father, through your Son, who with you and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, is worthy of eternal praise and glory. Amen.

Prayer 14: Opening Prayer for the Meetings of Deacons (approved 3/01/06)

Merciful God and Father, you have not only declared that we will always have the poor with us, but have also commanded us to bear their burdens with them. For this reason, you have established the office of deacon. We ask that you would give us wisdom to faithfully discharge the duties of our office in this place. We acknowledge that in your kingdom each member supplies what is lacking in the other, so that your name may be exalted and your people drawn together with ever-stronger cords of love and affection. And since we do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from your mouth, help us to assist our brothers and sisters in such a way that they may look to these offerings and services as tokens of your covenant faithfulness. May they together with us render you everlasting thanks in this age until that age when our trials will yield to that everlasting rest you have prepared for us from the foundation of the world. In the name of Christ our Savior we ask this. Amen.

Seasonal prayers (or collects)

Christmas

Merciful Father, you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son. He who was rich for ourselves became poor, the eternal Word made flesh, a great Light shining in the darkness. Only because of your Word and Spirit have we seen that Light and been drawn into its brightness. Give us the grace humbly and joyfully to receive your Son even as the shepherds and princes who welcomed him, and to look no further for our redemption than to this child lying in a manger. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Easter

Holy Father, giver of all perfect gifts, we join the heavenly choir to herald the news that you have defeated the powers of sin, death, and condemnation by the victory of Jesus Christ your Son over the grave. We confess that the circumstances of this present age often rise up to testify against the promise that you have declared in your Word. Nevertheless, we bring the experience of our hearts under your judgment: You have raised Jesus Christ from the dead as the first fruits of the whole harvest at the last day. As in his resurrection you have brought the new creation into this passing evil age, raise us up and seat us with Christ—in this life, through faith, and in the next, beholding with our own eyes the resurrection of our

bodies in life everlasting. All of this we pray, with joy and thanksgiving, in Christ's name. Amen.

Ascension

Almighty God, although we could not ascend to your holy place, you have descended to save us and after your Son won our redemption he ascended to the seat of all authority and dominion. Even now, he intercedes for us at your right hand, ruling over all of his enemies, and ours, for our salvation and the glory of your holy name. Help us to receive and to make known throughout the world this good news that Christ Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords. And fill our hearts with longing expectation for his return in power and glory to restore all things. In the name of Christ our King. Amen.

Pentecost

Father in Heaven, we give you thanks especially on this day for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Just as you sent your Son to redeem us, you sent your Spirit to renew us after his image, and to begin even now the new creation that awaits us fully and finally at the last day. Forgive us for grieving the Spirit, forgetting the great work that he performed at Pentecost and continues to perform as he makes your Word effectual for the justification and sanctification of sinners. We give you praise for sending your Spirit of adoption into our hearts, so that we may call you "Father"; for his ministry of testifying to Christ, convicting the world of sin and judgment, and opening our hearts to receive the gospel of your Son. Even now, through the gospel, he is gathering from all nations a church to declare your goodness. May we be filled again with marvelous wonder at this saving operation of the Holy Spirit, who, together with you and the Son, is worshiped and glorified, one God, world without end. Amen.

Appendix Two: Liturgical Forms

Form for the Frequent Celebration of the Lord's Supper (approved 2/15/07)

Rationale:

Many churches in our federation celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently. The current form (form 1) is not suitable for frequent celebrations of the Supper.

In light of this practice and need, the committee recommends that synod approve this proposed form, and also advise churches that where communion is administered frequently that at least quarterly the longer form for communion be used. The committee believes that there is much valuable instruction in that form that it would be good for congregations to hear from time to time.

In developing the proposed form, the committee determined that the current form (form 1) for the celebration of the Lord's Supper has seven main elements

- 1). Scripture reading
- 2). Instruction on self-examination, warning the unrepentant and encouraging the weak on the meaning of the communion
- 3). Prayer: for right use of supper and growth in grace in Christ and Lord's Prayer
- 4). Confession of Faith (Apostles Creed)

- 5). Sursum Corda
- 6). Distribution and Communion
- 7). Thanksgiving psalm and prayer

The proposed form for the frequent celebration of the Supper follows this basic order, thereby keeping the essence of the original form intact, while shortening it considerably.

The Form for Communion (for those congregations who celebrate the Supper frequently)

Preparation:

To all of you who have confessed your sins and affirmed your faith in Christ, the promise of Jesus is sure: "Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life and will not come into condemnation." For on the night in which our Lord was betrayed, he took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "Take eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." After the same manner also he took the cup, saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." While remaining bread and wine, these sacred elements nevertheless become so united to the reality they signify that we do not doubt but joyfully believe that we receive in this meal nothing less than the crucified body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all who live in rebellion against God and unbelief, this holy food and drink will bring you only further condemnation. If you do not yet confess Jesus Christ and seek to live under his gracious reign, we ask you to abstain. But all who repent and believe are invited to this sacred meal not because you are worthy in yourself, but because you are clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness. Do not allow the weakness of your faith or your failures in the Christian life to keep you from this table. For it is given to us because of our weakness and because of our failures, in order to increase our faith by feeding us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ. As the Word has promised us God's favor, so also our Heavenly Father has added this confirmation of his unchangeable promise. So come, believing sinners, for the table is ready. "Taste and see that the Lord is good."

The Consecration:

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, who by the blood of your only begotten Son has secured for us a new and living way into the Holy of Holies, cleanse our minds and hearts by your Word and Spirit that we, your redeemed people, drawing close to you through this holy sacrament, may enjoy fellowship with the Holy Trinity through the body and blood of Christ our Savior. We know that our Ascended Savior does not live in temples made by hands, but is in heaven where he continues to intercede on our behalf. Through this sacrament, by Your own Word and Spirit, may these common elements be now set apart from ordinary use and through them may we be nourished with the body and blood of Christ.

Apostles Creed (optional):

Sursum Corda:

Let us now go to our Heavenly Table and receive the gift of God for our souls. By the promise of God this bread and wine are for us the body and blood of Christ.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord.

Communion: (The elements are distributed, and the minister may use the formula):

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for a complete remission of all our sins.

The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink all of it, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for a complete remission of all our sins.

Thanksgiving prayer:

Our Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessing of this holy feast. Although we are unworthy to share this meal with you, it is by your invitation and dressed in Christ's righteousness that we have come boldly into the Holy of Holies. Instead of wrath, we have received your pardon; in the place of fear we have been given hope. Our High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant has reconciled us to you and even now intercedes for us at your right hand. Please strengthen us by these gifts so that, relying only on your promise to save sinners who call on Jesus' name, we may, by your Spirit, honor you with our souls and bodies, to the honor and glory of your holy name. Amen.

URCNA Theological Education Committee

Report to CERCU

March 27, 2007

Dear members of the CERCU,

At the request of the Rev. John Bouwers, our committee is sending to you a progress report on our work as the URCNA's committee dealing with theological education as mandated by the URCNA's Synod that met in Escondido, California, in June 2001.

The last formal meeting of our committee was held in November 2005, when our committee met with members of the Canadian Reformed Theological Education Committee. Since that meeting Rev. John Barach, committee chairman, left the URCNA federation and therefore stepped down as chairman. Since then Rev. Bradd Nymeyer has served as the committee's chairman.

Our discussions with the Canadian Reformed committee are at an impasse. Their committee entered into the discussions with a mandate of the Canadian Reformed synod, namely, that there shall be at least one federationally-controlled seminary. The URCNA did not enter the discussion with such a mandate. To be sure, there were points of agreement between the two committees, namely, those articulated at the January 13, 2004, meeting. These points were the following:

1. It is the task of the churches to train ministers.
2. Ministers of the churches must receive sound reformed theological training.
3. As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers.
4. Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education.
5. It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training; and
6. The churches, i.e., the URCNA and the CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

Both committees produced papers articulating their respective positions and responding to the position of the other committee. We have included these papers with our report to enable the churches in the URCNA to understand our discussions and the issues with which we have dealt. In the end, however, at the November 2005 meeting it was clear that the Canadian Reformed committee would not yield on the position that the Bible *mandates* that there must be at least one federationally-controlled seminary in a uniting federation.

The URCNA committee was unanimous in its response. The URCNA committee passed the following motion on November 8, 2005: "We as a committee are not prepared to entertain any proposal for theological education that mandates at least one federational seminary."

Grounds

1. We are not convinced that this is biblically mandated.
2. We do not believe that this will serve the churches well.

At that point, the impasse became clear to all at the November, 2005, meeting.

Recommendations to synod

1. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman when committee matters are being considered.
2. That Synod 2007 take note of the loss of a committee member in the departure of the Rev. John Barach from the URCNA federation.
3. That Synod 2007 affirm the position of our committee, that contrary to the position paper of the Canadian Reformed Churches, a federationally-controlled seminary is not Biblically mandated.
4. That the churches continue to follow Article 3 of the Church Order, which requires a man's *consistory* to assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education.
5. That Synod 2007 endorse the work of the URCNA Theological Education Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Mark Vander Hart, secretary
Theological Education Committee
United Reformed Churches in North America

WHY DO THE CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES HAVE THEIR OWN SEMINARY?

In answering this question, the following will be considered.

- A. Exegetical Arguments for the Church's Responsibility to Train their Ministers
 1. "Entrust to Reliable Men who will also be Qualified to Teach Others"
 2. The Church is "the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth"
 3. The Task of the Church is to Preach the Gospel
 4. Conclusions

- B. Historical Notes on the Role of the Church in the Training for the Ministry
 1. The Medieval and Reformation Eras
 2. Nineteenth Century Holland
 3. North American Developments
 4. Conclusions

A. Exegetical Arguments for the Church's Responsibility to Train their Ministers

Whose responsibility is the training for ministers of the Word? The church's or an organization which is independent of the church it seeks to serve and over which the church has no direct supervision or responsibility?

In examining what the Bible has to say on the topic, we will need to start with 2 Timothy 2:2. In the history of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands, this has been a key passage for arguing that it is the church's task to take care of the training of ministers. This is also the only Scripture that is specifically mentioned in the official account of the discussions that led to the decision of the 1891 Synod of the churches of the Secession to maintain the principle that the church is called to maintain their own training for the ministry of the Word.¹

¹ *Handelingen van de Synoden der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederlands in de 19 Zittingen door haar gehouden te Leeuwarden, van 18-29 Augustus 1891* (Leiden: Donner, 1891) Art 172.

As a historical note, it should also be mentioned that the Rev. J. Kok discussed many biblical passages on the topic at hand in his notable address delivered on a special day held for the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen, The Netherlands, on July 4, 1909. This speech was subsequently published in expanded form as *De Opleiding tot den dienst des Woords: “voor de kerk, door de kerk”* (*The Training for the Ministry of the Word: “By the Church and for the Church”*)²

For the present purpose, let us consider 2 Timothy 2:2 and 1 Timothy 3:15, followed by a brief look at the task of the church. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn.

1. “Entrust to Reliable Men who will also be Qualified to Teach Others”

2 Timothy 2:2

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. (NIV)

The apostle Paul is addressing Timothy as his own spiritual son. Paul also called Timothy “my fellow worker” (Rom 16:21), “God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ” (1 Thess 3:2), and “servant (*diakonos*) of Jesus Christ” (1 Tim 4:6). Timothy had received the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Tim 4:14) and was exhorted to preach the Word (1 Tim 4:11-13). He did the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5). Clearly he had an important position of leadership in the church at Ephesus.³ To him the apostle, for example, gave instructions about the office of elder (1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-19) and entrusted the general care of the congregation (cf. e.g., 1 Tim 4:11-14; 2 Tim 2:14-19).

A key concern for the apostle, who was facing certain death (2 Tim 4:6, 18), was that the gospel be safeguarded (2 Tim 1:13-14; cf. 3:14-17) and proclaimed in truth (2 Tim 4:1-5). In this general context, he mandates Timothy as a close associate of the apostle (“my son” - 2 Tim 2:1), to entrust to reliable men the gospel he has heard so that they may be qualified to teach others

²Published by J. H. Kok in Kampen in 1906.

³When he received the two letters addressed to him, he was labouring in the church at Ephesus. For 1 Timothy, see 1 Tim 1:3; for 2 Timothy the evidence is more indirect. When Paul suggests that Timothy come to him (2 Tim 4:9), he mentions that he is sending Tychius to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12), presumably as Timothy's replacement. Also, he notes that Timothy will know the services rendered in Ephesus by Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:18). See further, G. W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 10.

also (2 Tim 2:2).

It is notable when one considers 2 Timothy 2:2 that the apostle specifies that what needs to be entrusted to others is that which Timothy heard from Paul “in the presence of many witnesses.” Although the witnesses may refer to those present at Timothy’s ordination when the apostle exhorted Timothy to bring sound teaching (1 Tim 1:14), the reference to witnesses probably goes beyond that. It includes all those who have witnessed the public preaching and teaching ministry of the apostle Paul.⁴ The phrase “in the presence of many witnesses” thus emphasizes that what is to be handed down is not secret or esoteric but can be testified as the gospel by the many who have heard the apostle preach and teach. The full gospel is to be passed on.

It is also to be noted that the task of entrusting the gospel to others is given to a man like Timothy who had received the laying on of hands and held office in the church. The principle appears to be that those holding office in the church must train office bearers for the church. Office bearers ordained by the church work on behalf of the church.⁵

Here we have a key apostolic mandate for the transmitting of the gospel from one generation to the other with the express purpose that the teaching of this gospel be continued in the future. Those who preach the Word must train others to do the same. “This, then, may be considered as the earliest trace of the formation of *a theological school*, - a school which has for its object not merely the instruction of the ignorant, but the protection and maintenance of a definite body of doctrine.”⁶

As further background to the above, it one can note that behind the relationship that the apostle Paul had with Timothy, there was ultimately the teaching relationship that the Lord Jesus had with his disciples. In the gospels, the Lord is often addressed as teacher (e.g. Matt 8:19; 12:38; 22:16, 24, 36) and he refers to himself as the one Teacher, (“you have one Teacher, the Christ” Matt 23:10). The response to one significant teaching event was that “the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt 7:28-29). His teaching relationship with his disciples also meant that they were

⁴So, e.g., Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 390; W. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (NTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 246-247.

⁵See J. Van Andel, *Paulus' beide brieven aan Timotheus toegelicht* (Leiden: Donner, 1904), 148-149.

⁶Alfred Plummer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (The Expositor’s Bible; 2nd ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889) 336 (emphasis is Plummer’s). More recently, Knight, e.g., concurs with Plummer’s observation. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

always “with him” (Mk 3:14; Acts 1:21). It is also apparent that this teaching process did not stop with the ascension of our Lord; rather among the commands given to the disciples was that they, in turn, would need to teach those whom they discipled and baptized (Matthew 28:20 “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”).

The apostle Paul took along on his missionary journeys several young men whom he left behind to work in congregations. This happened to Timothy who was with Paul (1 Thess 1:1; Rom 16:21) but who also stayed behind in Ephesus to give further instruction for congregational life (1 Tim 1:4, 18), Titus (Titus 1:5) and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25). This was an early form of theological education, from minister to minister.

2. The Church is “the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth”

1 Timothy 3:15

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Tim 3:14-15 NIV)

It is important to notice that the church is called “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” The immediate context of qualifications for overseers and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13), as well as behaving properly in God’s household, the church (1 Tim 3:14) suggests that certain kinds of behaviour can be expected by virtue of the fact that the church is “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” Those who are members are to live up to the ideals of what the church stands for. They must live according to the truth of the gospel.⁷

However, the fact that the church is here called “the pillar and foundation of the truth” carries a major implication for our topic as well. While the precise meaning of the Greek terms translated by “the pillar and foundation of the truth” can be debated,⁸ it is clear that this characterization indicates that central to the task of the church is to uphold, maintain and support

⁷See, e.g., the discussion in I. Howard Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 510-511.

⁸The phrase has also been rendered, e.g., “support and foundation of the truth” (F. W. Danker, rev. and ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature* [3rd ed., based on the 6th ed. of W. Bauer’s *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 949) and “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (RSV).

the truth which is the gospel (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; John 17:17).⁹ “The church is fundamental to the gospel ministry.”¹⁰ To the church the gospel has been entrusted (John 17:8, 14). Calvin put it thus: “By these words [of 1 Tim 3:15], Paul means that the church is the faithful keeper of God’s truth in order that it may not perish in the world. For by its ministry and labour God willed to have the preaching of his Word kept pure and to show himself the Father of a family while he feeds us with spiritual food and provides everything that makes for our salvation.”¹¹ When Calvin comments on the meaning of the church as pillar of truth in his commentary, he notes “In consequence, this commendation applies to the ministry of the Word; for if it is removed, God’s truth will fall.”¹² If the above is the case, then training pastors and teachers belongs to the task of the church as the pillar and foundation of the truth and it is not properly the responsibility of an organization independent of the church.

3. The Task of the Church is to Preach the Gospel

Christ to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Matt 28:18) gives offices to his church (Eph 4:11-13) and through his Spirit calls and equips them to serve (cf. Acts 20:28). The office of minister is therefore a gift of Christ to his church. Thus when a minister is ordained according to the classical Reformed ordination form, he needs to answer positively the question: “Do you feel in your heart that God himself, through his congregation, has called you to this holy ministry?”

There are two basic elements that need to be noticed here. First, the Lord calls to office and therefore determines how that service is to be executed. Second, the office is given to the church and functions within the context of the church.

The proclamation of the gospel belongs to the very heart and kernel of being church (cf. Matt 28:19-20; Rom 10:14). If the church has the task to proclaim the gospel through the office of preacher given to her (Eph 4:11), then it follows that the church has the first responsibility to

⁹See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 181; C. Bouma, *De Brieven van den Apostel Paulus aan Timotheus en Titus* (Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament XI; Amsterdam: Bottenburg, 1942), 145-146.

¹⁰Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 512.

¹¹Calvin, *Institutes* IV.i.10 (Battle’s edition).

¹²Calvin on 1 Tim 3:15 in D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, eds., *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (T. A. Smail, trans.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 232.

see to it that the gospel can continue to be proclaimed by training future ministers of the Word. This is not a duty that can be readily given to another organization. The proclamation of the gospel belongs to the very reason why the church exists. Without preaching there is no church!

How can the church pray for more labourers in the harvest (cf. Matt 9:37-38) without at the same time taking responsibility that good labourers are available, in so far as she is able? To ask the question is to answer it. As we see in 2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”

4. Conclusions

On the basis of the above, three (somewhat overlapping) conclusions can be drawn.

1. The apostolic injunction to Timothy, “*the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*” (2 Tim 2:2), indicates that those ordained by the church should work to supply the church with future preachers. They will have to ensure that these ministers are able to preach and teach.
2. The church as “*the pillar and foundation of the truth*”(1 Tim 3:15) indicates that to her the gospel has been entrusted and therefore to her falls the responsibility to proclaim and maintain that gospel, also by training faithful pastors and teachers.
3. Since the office of preacher has been given to the church, it is the task of the church to preach the gospel. This responsibility also means that the church has to see to it that this proclamation can continue. Besides praying for future labourers, the church must therefore also provide training so that such labourers can be properly prepared and sent out.

B. Historical Notes on the Role of the Church in the Training for the Ministry.

In order to put the whole issue of responsibility for theological education into our present

day perspective, it may be useful to have a brief historical overview.¹³

1. The Medieval and Reformation Eras

The specific form which the training for the ministry assumed often depended to a great extent on the historical circumstances. At some time during the patristic period, local overseers became regional bishops. This led to these bishops establishing schools where future ministers could be educated. To give an example, the Council of Orange 529 determined that bishops and presbyters had to open their houses for young men to train them as fathers, to instruct them in the Holy Scriptures and to educate them so they could assume their office. According to this church decision, theological training of future ministers was entrusted to ministers with regional or local authority. Such seminaries were founded in several places in Italy, in England, Gaul and Spain.¹⁴

During the later Middle Ages, universities came into existence and this changed the manner of education. Originally the universities consisted of groups of people devoted to study who were more or less self-sufficient. These students selected and supported teachers of their choice. Gradually, however, the universities organized themselves into formal schools, governed and funded by the cities. Rather than being supported by their students, the professors were in the employ of the city and paid by them. At the same time, these professors were subject to the jurisdiction of the church.¹⁵

When the Reformation of the church took place during the sixteenth century, the training for the ministry had to be reestablished. In agreement with the custom of that time when the government determined the public religion of their nations, this was done by the government. Calvin urged the city council of Geneva to establish a seminary, as it was the right of the church to have an institute for theological training. Similarly, in the Palatinate it was the Elector Frederick who had changed the *Collegium Sapientiae* into a theological school, and had placed it under the supervision of the church council. The city of Leiden in the Netherlands, as a reward for their faithfulness, received a university from Prince William of Orange, which was first of all

¹³There has always been a general acceptance of the fact that future ministers need to be trained and educated before they can be ordained. To be sure, some sixteenth century spiritualist groups were of the opinion that leaders of the congregation did not need any education, but this approach was an exception.

¹⁴ H. Bavinck, *Het doctorenambt* (Kampen: Zalsman, 1899), 20-21, 24-25.

¹⁵ H. Bavinck, *Het doctorenambt*, 27-34.

intended for establishing a training for the ministry.¹⁶

From the major ecclesiastical assemblies held in seventeenth century Holland, it is clear that the churches always insisted that the professors of theology be subject to the teaching of the church, even though they were appointed by the government to the universities. The Synod of Dordrecht of 1618-1619 determined that from now on “the theological professors must appear at synod and there give an account of their teaching and submit themselves to the judgment of synod.”¹⁷

These examples date from times different from our own. Then the established church was closely connected with the state and lived under its patronage. As a result, theological education was also seen as being the responsibility of the government. However, the church did what it could to exercise their responsibility over those who taught future ministers.

Two changes took place in the nineteenth century. We will focus on what happened in The Netherlands.

2. Nineteenth Century Holland

The first change concerned the public universities. The Dutch Parliament adopted a law in 1876 which transformed the university departments of theology into those of religion, a shift in emphasis from revelation to piety. The theological professors were appointed by the university. However, the national church, the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk received the right to appoint one professor at each of the universities who would teach the doctrine of the church as an addition to the scholarly training given at the universities.¹⁸ However, since that time, theological education in the Netherlands takes place in the context of the separation of church and state. As a result, many parts of theology were taught from a (usually liberal) scholarly perspective, without consideration of the life of the church.

The second change which impacted on theological education was the establishing of theological seminaries outside of the control of the government. The Secession, a reformation

¹⁶ H. H. Kuyper, *De opleiding tot den dienst des woords bij de gereformeerden* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891), 156, 431-432; E. K. Sturm, *Der junge Zacharias Ursinus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche, 33; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1972), 237-238.

¹⁷ See the decision of Dordrecht in F. L. Bos, *De Orde der Kerk* ('s-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Guido de Bres, 1950) 79. See also the decision of Gorinchem 1622 on the same page.

¹⁸ D. Nauta, “Opleiding van predikanten”, in F. W. Grosheide and G. P. van Itterzon, *Christelijke Encyclopedie* (6 vols, 2nd ed.; Kampen: Kok, 1956-1961) 1.318.

movement beginning in 1834 within the tolerant national church, prompted a basic reconsideration of the way in which the training for the ministry should be organized. There was a desperate shortage of ministers within these churches, for during the early years, there were only seven ministers working within the seceded churches. However, within a year after the Secession had begun, the number of congregations grew to about seventy. The few ministers did what they could, by, for instance, preaching three to four times on the Sundays. Worship services were also organized during the week, so that some ministers preached anywhere between 15 and 20 times in a week.¹⁹ It was obvious to all that something needed to be done about the lack of ministers.

The churches decided that they should organize the training for the ministry. The provincial Synod of Groningen of 1839 appointed Hendrik De Cock to teach men who were suitable and willing to become ministers. In the province of Friesland, Rev. T.F. De Haan was appointed for the same task. When De Cock had passed away, De Haan accepted the request to teach the students from both provinces. The churches determined who would teach, and through these ministers they took care of the theological training, however primitive this may have been during those early years.²⁰

It was soon felt that this way of training future ministers was insufficient, and that there should be one theological school for the whole church. Rev. De Haan was charged to draw up a proposal for a theological school for all Secession churches. His proposal of appointing two ministers as full time teachers was bettered by the decision of Synod 1849 to appoint three ministers.²¹ When the seminary was officially opened in 1854, four ministers were charged to be “teachers of the theological school.”²² The seminary of the Secession churches can be characterized as a church school, for ministers appointed by the general synod of these churches took charge of the theological training of its ministers.

Within the State Church, another reformation movement, called *Doleantie*, took place in 1886. Prior to that, in 1880, Dr. A. Kuyper, one of the leaders of the *Doleantie*, had already

¹⁹ W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding* (Kampen: Kok, 1955) 5-6; H. Bouma, ‘De voorgeschiedenis der opleiding’, in *Tot de prediking van het woord des geloofs* (Kampen: Comité van Uitgave, 1953), 15.

²⁰ H. Bouma, ‘De voorgeschiedenis’, 21-26.

²¹ W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 15-18.

²² H. Veltman, ‘Zo God voor ons is’, *Tot de prediking van het Woord des geloofs: Opstellen ter gelegenheid van de herdenking van de oprichting der Theologische School A.D. 1854 te Kampen* (Kampen: Comité van Uitgave, [1953]), 68; W. de Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 35-41.

established a university.²³ This university began with three departments, including a department of theology. When the churches from the Secession and from the Doleantie discussed unification, theological education was a major point of discussion.

The churches of the Secession emphasized that the churches themselves should maintain a Theological School for the training of future ministers. In 1891, one year before the union, the Synod of the Secession churches adopted the proposal of Friesland by which the Synod maintained the principle that the church is called to have its own institution for the education of its ministers, at least as far as their theological training is concerned.²⁴

The General Synod of the Doleantie churches of 1891 was satisfied with the statement made by the Synod of the Secession churches concerning the training for the ministry. However, it decided to qualify it by declaring that the purpose of this statement is not: 1. to destroy the traditional reformed principle of free study; nor 2. to change the Reformed manner of ecclesiastical examination of future ministers; nor 3. to take anything away from the demand for scholarly study which had always been demanded by the Reformed churches; nor 4. to deny that the united churches at a later date have to judge the regulation of this issue.²⁵ In this decision, both the need for an church seminary and the need for scholarly study were emphasized within the Reformed churches in which Secession and Doleantie came together.

It took a while before the relationship between the united churches and the theological department at the Free University was official. A. Kuyper posited that a fundamental difference existed between a seminary and the theological department of a university. Even as late as 1912 he maintained a fundamental distinction between a seminary and a university. In his opinion, a seminary trains future ministers for the churches, but the Theological Department of the Free University should not demean itself to become a training institution for future ministers. It has to do that, too, but its first task is to present theology in a scholarly way.²⁶

Nevertheless, the Reformed Churches did supervise the theological teaching at the Free University. The deputies appointed to maintain the contact between the Reformed Churches and

²³ F. Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper* (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia, 1978), 97-99.

²⁴ *Handelingen van de Synode der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland in de 19 Zittingen door haar gehouden te Leeuwarden, van 18-29 Augustus 1891* (Leiden: Donner, 1891), Art. 172 (pp. 95-96); see also W. De Graaf, *Een monument der afscheiding*, 175.

²⁵ W. De Graaf, *Een monument der Afscheiding*, 177-178.

²⁶ J.C. Rullmann, *De Vrije Universiteit: Haar ontstaan en haar bestaan*, (Amsterdam: De Standaard, 1930) 110-111.

the Theological Department of the Free University stated that it was their mandate to evaluate:

- the appropriateness of the education as training for the ministry
- to be on guard against deviation from the Reformed Confession
- to evaluate whether there were weaknesses in the education
- to provide the faculty with an evaluation concerning an upcoming appointments
- to make known to the faculty comments or wishes concerning the theological students

and their conduct

- to make sure that no one receives a doctor's degree in theology without having subscribed to the Form agreed to for that purpose.²⁷

In conclusion, the following can be noted. When the Reformed Church became independent from the state, it maintained the rule that the church itself should take care of the theological training of its ministers. When the churches of the Secession and the Doleantie came together, they acknowledged, in word and deed, the principle of the churches maintaining a theological training for preparing ministers of the Word. Kampen was maintained. Also, the important place of the churches in theological education was acknowledged by granting the Reformed Churches the authority to supervise the theological training at the Free University.

3. North American Developments

The two related principles that ministers teach ministers, and that the church takes care of this training were applied by the Reformed churches on this continent. To limit ourselves to the sister church of the Secession churches, the Christian Reformed Church maintained from the beginning the principle that the church is responsible for teaching its future ministers. At the February Classis of 1861, the question was discussed whether the churches should not open the way to training of young men to the ministry. The July Classis of 1863 entrusted that task to Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen. Later, another minister, D. J. Van der Werp, trained students in addition to the work in his congregation. The first minister who was set aside for the training of the ministry was Rev. G. Boer, who was appointed in 1886 to teach students for the ministry.²⁸

When after World War II, the Canadian Reformed Churches were established, the matter

²⁷ *Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Utrecht van 22 Augustus tot 7 September 1905*, (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.) 191.

²⁸H. Beets, *De Chr. Geref. Kerk in N.A.: Zestig jaren van strijd en zegen* (Grand Rapids MI: Grand Rapids Printing Company, 1918) 147-151; see for further history of the training for the ministry, 206-212; 293-300.

of the training for the ministry was on the agenda of the very first General Synod of Homewood-Carman (1954) which appointed deputies “to be diligent concerning the whole matter of the training” (Art 88). Every subsequent general synod dealt with this matter. General Synod Orangeville (1968) established the Theological College and appointed the first professors. Synod also decided that:

to be admitted to the ecclesiastical examinations candidates shall submit proof that they have completed their studies at our own Theological College. Candidates who took their theological training at other institutions shall present a Certificate issued by the Staff of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches stating that they have followed and/or complemented a course of studies conforming with the training provided by the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. (Art 171)

It can be noted that although Synod clearly expected future ministers to be trained at the school of the churches, it nevertheless left the door open for the possibility that a student study elsewhere. In that case, it was up to the College to evaluate such education and possibly request additional training at the Theological College. In practice this has meant an extra year of study at the Theological College prior to being admitted to the Classical examination..

4. Conclusions

On the basis of the above, the following can be concluded:

1. From the earliest records available, it is evident that the training of future ministers had an official ecclesiastical character. However, historical circumstances did not always allow the churches to assume their responsibility for this training since the civil government at times considered this training to be their task.

2. The churches of the Secession considered that the churches had the biblical duty to train future ministers themselves. This could not be left up to the civil authorities. This conviction led to the eventual establishment of the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen. Even with the Union of 1892, the principle that the churches were responsible was maintained. Not only was the Theologische Hogeschool in Kampen maintained, but theological professors who were involved in training students for the ministry at the Free University were placed under the supervision of the Reformed Churches.

3. This heritage has had consequences for North America. It led to the establishing of Calvin

Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids in the nineteenth century and the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in the twentieth century.

*The Theological Education Committee of the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity
of the Canadian Reformed Churches*

April 2003

Theological Education in the United Reformed Churches in North America

The Synod of Escondido (2001) voted to enter into Phase 2 Ecumenical Relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches. The synod then struck three committees to facilitate the movement from Phase 2 to Phase 3. The Theological Education for Ministers Committee was given the following mandate,

“That this committee work together with the Canadian Reformed Committee to draft proposals for theological education to our respective synods in preparation for an eventual plan of union.”

From the time that committee began meeting, and certainly in the meetings with the Theological Education Committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the focus has been primarily on place of theological seminaries in the education of our ministers. However, it might be more profitable to take a step back and review what the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America says about theological education. Accordingly, this paper will focus on three areas related to theological education. First, to whom does the responsibility fall to ensure that the ministers are thoroughly trained. Second, of what is the content of the theological education to consist. And finally, what is the proper method by which to carry out such training.

We will conclude with a few brief comments about the various histories of theological education and some pragmatic considerations regarding the establishment of a new seminary.

The Responsibility for Theological Education

Article 3 of the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America says,

“Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence genuine godliness to his Consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training, including his licensure to exhort, and assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. The council of his church should ensure that his financial needs are met.”

Article 4 says,

At the conclusion of such training, a student must approach his Consistory to become a candidate for the ministry of the Word, which shall arrange for his examination at a meeting of the classis of which his Consistory is a participant. No one shall be declared a candidate for the ministry until he has sustained an examination at a meeting of this classis, in the presence of his Consistory... Upon sustaining this exam in the presence of his Consistory and with the concurring advice of the delegates of this meeting of classis, his Consistory shall declare him a candidate for the office of minister of the Word.

Article 5,

“A man who is not a member of the church of the federation who seeks candidacy shall place himself under the supervision of a Consistory which shall make provision for his candidacy examination.”

In all three articles, the responsibility for the oversight of the potential candidate is placed squarely on the Consistory. This is in part because “the consistory is the only assembly in the churches whose decisions possess direct authority with the congregation, since the Consistory receives its

authority directly from Christ, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ.” (C.O. Art. 21) This principle of direct Consistory oversight is foundational to our understanding of ministerial training in the churches. It is also consistent with “Statements of Agreement” of the Theological Education Committees of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches established at a joint meeting held on January 13, 2004,

3. It is the task of the churches to train ministers;
7. It is acknowledged that active involvement of the churches is required for the training of ministers and to protect the confessional integrity of such training;
8. The churches, i.e., the URCNA and the CanRC, should work towards theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.

We believe that the Consistory’s direct involvement and accountability for the oversight of the student’s training, would certainly fulfill the requirement that the education is properly accountable to the churches.

The Content of Theological Education

Recognizing that the responsibility of ministerial training lies with the Consistory, the next question to deal with is this: what is the content of that ministerial training? The Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government in the United Reformed Churches in North America lists the following:

13. The Scriptures encourage a thorough theological training for the ministers of the Word. (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5).

This is consistent with the language of Church Order Art 3, “assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education.” It is also consistent with the “Statements of Agreement,”

2. Ministers of the churches must receive sound reformed theological training

We note that the content of the training is to be thoroughly reformed as well as theological. The exact contours of that training will need to be spelled out elsewhere. However, in addition to the general requirements listed, we believe that the training of men for the ministry should also include sufficient field education, by which to determine a man’s ability to put his reformed theology into practice. Ideally, this will be done in conjunction with his theological training.

The Method of Theological Education

We believe that we are of one mind with the Theological Education Committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches up to this point. The responsibility of ministerial training belongs to the churches and is under the oversight of the local Consistory.

The content of that training is to be thoroughly reformed and theological. The final question to be dealt with is the question of method and contains two components – by whom, and in what context is this training to be carried out?

We heartily concur with the “Statement of Agreement” which says,

4. As a principle, the training of ministers should be done by ministers;

In the Position Paper, “Why Do the Canadian Reformed Churches Have Their Own Seminary?” the following is written, with respect to 2 Timothy 2:2,
“The principle appears to be that those holding office in the church must train office bearers for the church. Office bearers ordained by the church work on behalf of the church.” (p. 3)

We certainly believe that it is proper for office bearers in the church to train other office bearers. Minister should train other ministers. The Position Paper says,

“The apostle Paul took along on his missionary journeys several young men whom he left behind to work in congregations... This was an early form of theological education, from minister to minister. (p. 4)

Since it seems clear that ministerial training is to be conducted by ministers, we move to the second question of method—what then is the proper context in which that training takes place? The “Statements of Agreement” say,

4. Such training is best accomplished in the context of institutional theological education.

We understand this to mean that the training will take place in theological seminaries. The requirement for a seminary education is spelled out in Appendix 2 of the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America. Under the required credentials for a potential candidate it lists “a diploma certifying reception of a Master of Divinity degree or an equivalent academic degree; a transcript of all seminary grades.”

However, we do not believe that this method of institutional instruction is what Paul is referring to in 2 Timothy 2:2, contrary to Plummer who calls Paul’s instruction to Timothy “the earliest trace of the formation of a theological school” (Position Paper, p. 3). While one might broadly construe it as such, it is certainly not institutionalized in terms of its method.

This point is made even more clearly in the training which Paul did on his missionary journeys. This is certainly not the picture of institutional theological education as we know it today. This demonstrates that while the principle that theological education is to be done by ministers of the word is affirmed, that instruction may be done in a variety of ways.

We believe that theological education may be done in a variety of ways. The one which the Church Order binds us to is the theological seminary method. However, we believe that this is a methodological issue, not a responsibility issue. As such, we agree with the Canadian Reformed Position Paper when it says, “training pastors and teachers belongs to the task of the church as the pillar and foundation of the truth and it is not properly the responsibility of an organization independent of the church” (p. 5). While it is not the responsibility of the seminary to train ministers for the churches (that responsibility remains with the Consistory), seminaries may be used as a method for executing the task which is their responsibility. Since the seminary is only one (of perhaps several) methods, there is no requirement that the seminary be under direct control of the churches in general (a federational seminary). We do believe that even though a seminary as an institution may not be under direct control of the churches in general, the ministers doing the training are certainly under the oversight of their own Consistories (once again upholding the principle that the responsibility for the education is overseen by the local Consistory).

There is an analogy with other forms of education. The Bible says next to nothing about schools. The responsibility for educating children is on the shoulders of parents primarily. But the parents may use a variety of methods to have their children taught. Some may choose to teach their

children themselves, but others will delegate that teaching to people who are better trained than they are themselves. Such teachers do not then become the ones with the primary responsibility of educating the children. That responsibility still lies with the parents. But the schools are a method the parents use to carry out that responsibility, and the parents are responsible to make sure their children receive a proper education from the schools to which they send their children.

If one wished to join the responsibility of the consistory in the training of the men to the method of that training, we might consider establishing a seminary which in under the control of one particular consistory of the federation. We would then require all the board members, professors and students to be members of that local congregation. However, this is, again, one approach among many which might be used in the training of men for the ministry.

If we were to follow the reasoning of the Canadian Reformed committee's paper, though, it would appear to lead, not to a federational seminary, but to a seminary overseen by a local church's consistory. After all, a federation cannot exercise consistent and constant oversight of anything. The delegates of the churches meet on occasion as a synod, but the synod is not a continuing body. A synod ceases to exist as soon as it adjourns and therefore cannot give oversight to a seminary. The subsequent synod can receive reports about the seminary's functioning in the period between synods and may address problems which arose or appoint new men to serve, but doing those things is not the same thing as exercising consistent and constant supervision.

If the scriptural requirement is that a church oversees the training of ministers and if that requirement then implies that the church must operate the seminary where those ministers are trained, only the local church fits the bill. Only the local consistory is a continuing body, able to oversee a seminary, addressing problems as they arise, evaluating the work of the seminary regularly, and so forth. The best that a federation can do in terms of oversight of a seminary, therefore, is appoint a committee to oversee the seminary and report to the synods.

But a seminary overseen by a committee which reports to the federation's synods is several steps removed from a seminary overseen directly by the church.

The Canadian Reformed paper, therefore, if pressed, says too much. It not only militates against the practice of board-operated seminaries with students and professors under the direct oversight of their local consistories; it also militates against seminaries operated by boards which are answerable to synods – the Canadian Reformed Churches' own practice.

We do not believe, however, that Scripture requires churches to have direct oversight over seminaries. That is one method of providing theological education, and is carried out in some circles. But we do not believe that Scripture rules out other methods whereby local consistories seek to provide sound reformed theological training.

Therefore, we do not find that a federational seminary is the only method mandated by Scripture for ministerial training.

We continue to hold the final authority of the church (exercised through the consistory) as the one responsible for ministerial training. The content of the training should be thoroughly reformed and theological. The training should be conducted by ministers. However, the method of that instruction is left to the discretion of the local Consistory. The Church Order prescribes that it be done in a seminary context. Therefore the choice of seminary should be left to the local Consistory as an exercise of their oversight and supervision of those aspiring to the ministry of the Word.

Some Historical and Pragmatic considerations regarding Theological Education

As an addendum, we make a brief comment about the historical argument presented in the Canadian Reformed Churches Position Paper.

While it is true that a number of Dutch Reformed denominations chose to establish theological seminaries very early in their existence, it is also true that there are other faithful reformed denominations that chose not to establish such seminaries.

We take note of the history of the Reformed Church in the United States. In their early history, they established several denominational seminaries. After the liberalizing tendencies in the churches and in their seminary caused a division in that denomination in 1934, the continuing churches (Eureka Classis) didn't rush to form a new seminary. Rather, they made use of existing seminaries for the theological training of their ministers. Even to this day, over 70 years later, they still do not have a denominational seminary. Yet they have managed to remain united as a denomination and staunchly faithful to the reformed confessions. Other historical examples could be given which demonstrate the corollary to this principle—that denominational control is no guarantee that a seminary will remain solidly reformed.

This leads to a few final comments regarding some pragmatic, yet significant reasons for not establishing a new federational seminary.

First, we note that there are several good reformed seminaries currently in existence. We believe that it is prudent for consistories to use these as a method to accomplish the task of training men for the ministry. It is a good use of a church's limited resources to support the reformed seminaries already in existence, rather than seeking to develop one of our own.

Second, since these seminaries are confessionally based, we see the additional benefit of allowing a diversity of instruction to take place which is within the bounds of the confessions. Also, these seminaries allow the possibility for contact with men in other liked-minded reformed denominations, something which is valuable in solidifying their own federational distinctives, while appreciating the distinctives of others.

A third consideration and reason for not establishing one or more federational seminaries is that it puts all non-federational seminaries at a disadvantage in terms of student recruitment and donor funding. Since a federationally controlled seminary is no guarantee of orthodoxy, we believe it would be unwise to establish and support one or more federational seminaries, while marginalizing the value and support of others.

Finally, we have seen in our own history that when a denominational seminary is established, it will tend to diminish the responsibility of the local church and the local classis. The development of a "rubber stamp" mentality may develop, since the man has already been approved by the seminary. The expectation arises that if a man is recommended to the churches by the seminary, he already has the blessing of the federation. With that expectation and blessing in place, the local church and classis find it very difficult to reject a man who has the seminary's approval.

We believe that these historical and pragmatic observations further support our position that a federational seminary is not required and would not be in the best interest of the federation of United Reformed Churches at this time.

Theological Education Committee of the United Reformed Churches

CECCA Report to Synod Schererville, July 2007

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is again our privilege, as the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), to report to you on the activities of your committee since our report to Synod Calgary, 2004.

Since that report, CECCA has met four times by way of conference-call, and twice in a face-to-face meeting, for a total of six meetings. What follows is a brief recounting of the decisions/actions of those meetings and of the matters requiring synodical action.

The April 2005 Conference-Call meeting

The bulk of this meeting focused on various items of correspondence received, including:

1. A letter from the Rev. Cornelius Van Spronson, the Secretary of the ICRC, informing us that the theme of the ICRC meeting, scheduled for October 12-19, 2005 would be: “The Lordship of Christ” which would be “unfolded” in three presentations, as follows:
 - a. “In the Life of the Believer” – by Dr. A. J. DeVisser of the CanRC;
 - b. “In the Church” – by Dr. J. W. Maris of the CGKN;
 - c. “Proclaimed in the World” – by Rev. D. A. Robertson of the FCS and Rev. Y. Dethan of the GGRC.It should be noted that these Papers are published in full in the “Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches” – copies of which are available from the publisher: Inheritance Publications; Neerlandia, Alberta and Pella, Iowa.
2. A letter from the Rev. Dr. Michael A. Flinn of the RCNZ inviting the URCNA to send a delegation to its Synod scheduled for September 3-9, 2005. We decided (with reference to Art. 80 B of the Acts of Synod Calgary) to ask the Rev. Peter Kloosterman, who was considering a call to Masterton at the time, to “represent” the URCNA, should he accept the call. He did accept the call, did “represent” us, and did submit a report of his work done on our behalf; (Cf. Appendices #1 and #2).
3. A letter from the Rev. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen of the GKN(v) inquiring whether the URCNA was intending to send a delegate to its Synod, scheduled to meet in May of 2005. We decided [with reference to Art. 80 A of the Acts of Synod Calgary “that Synod look into entering Step 1 with the GKN(v)”] that the Rev. F. Harms be sent as our observer to that Synod. His address to the Synod of the GKN(v) and his report on that meeting are attached; (Cf. Appendices #3 and #4).
4. A letter from the Rev. L. Kiembo Pulamte, the General Secretary Inter-Church Relations of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India Synod. He asked several questions re the URCNA’s ecumenical outreach. We mandated the Rev. Gangar, a member of CECCA, to do some follow up contact with the brother and to request that some information re the recent history and the CO of the RPC North East India Synod be sent to us. To date, we have had no response.

At this meeting, we also decided that we would have to give some careful thought to our relationship with the GKSA at our next meeting. To that end, the members of CECCA were “assigned” the responsibility to read the documents and reports re the GKSA as they were available.

Additionally, it was noted that, other than a meeting which the Rev. Harms had with a delegate of the NKST in the Netherlands – while attending the GKN(v) – we have had no further contact with the NKST.

The August 18 and 19 2005 Face-to-Face meeting

At this face-to-face meeting of the committee, we spent considerable time going over the Agenda of the ICRC meeting which the Reverends Sikkema and Royall were delegated to attend. Among other things, we discussed the role of a delegate to such meetings as the ICRC, specifically the question: Can a delegate speak for the URCNA on agenda matters which the URCNA has not itself addressed at a meeting of Synod? The committee, recognizing that it belongs to the essence of being a delegate that one speak for the sending body, answered that question in the affirmative. The committee also decided, however, to discuss the matters appearing on the ICRC Agenda (in order to enable the delegates to speak with a measure of confidence re “URCNA thinking” on those matters) and to recommend positions on specific matters – which the delegates should duly defend at the ICRC meeting, though not “binding” them to such positions. To that end, we discussed the application for membership of each of the seven churches which sought to be admitted to ICRC membership as well as the “Proposals from Member Churches” on

the ICRC Agenda. Since these matters, and the actions taken, are included in the report submitted on the meetings of the ICRC (Cf. Appendix #5), they will not be detailed further in this report.

The committee also discussed the question: How is the decision of Synod Calgary (2004) which speaks of limiting the CECCA committee to “one visit per year” (with churches with whom we have – or are seeking to establish – ecumenical relations) to be interpreted? The secretary was instructed to request the convening church for Synod 2007 to answer the question: Does the decision of Synod mean one visit per church per year, or does it mean one visit to only one of the churches with whom we have or are seeking a relationship in any given year? The Schererville consistory responded in due time – leaning toward the former alternative – one visit per church per year; (Cf. Appendices #6 and #7). Our committee, though much appreciating that understanding of the 2004 synodical decision, and firmly believing that such should be the position of the URCNA as it pursues ecumenical relations with churches abroad, has to date not acted on it. We request that Synod express itself further on that matter at this meeting.

Rev. F. Harms, who while meeting with the GKN(v) Synod had met with a representative of the NKST, was asked to seek further contact with the brother; to date we have received no response to the letter sent.

The December 15 2005 Conference-Call Meeting

At this meeting, the secretary gave a detailed report on the proceedings of the ICRC meeting which he and the Rev. Dennis Royall had attended in Pretoria, SA; (Cf. Appendix #5). We also responded to the “Letter of Invitation” which we had received from the GKSA requesting that an Observer be sent to their Sinode which was scheduled to meet in January of 2006. Rev. Sikkema was assigned this task; he reported that he had begun writing a critique of the Women in Office report that had been submitted by a GKSA Study Committee for that Synod’s action.

We adopted the “proposed budget” for the year 2006 as per the request of Mr. Cliffe Hodgkinson for the Finance Committee of the URCNA Canada. The \$8,400.00 USD budget, prepared by Rev. Royall, breaks down as follows: \$5,000.00 USD for ecumenical relations travel; \$3,000.00 USD for committee travel, including meal expenses; \$300.00 USD for conference-call meetings; and \$150.00 for postage and miscellaneous expenses.

From time to time we receive correspondence from churches/pastors requesting assistance – usually financial support for ministries and projects they are engaged in. Our modus operandi is such that we seek information/confirmation from federations which may have knowledge of that church or pastor before we commit ourselves to anything concrete. In some cases we will forward information re an agency that is qualified to provide the assistance sought, e.g. re Christian schools and/or Christian education.

The March 27 2006 Conference-Call Meeting

The secretary, Rev. Sikkema, who had attended the meetings of the GKSA Sinode in January, submitted a copy of the address which he had given at that meeting (Cf. Appendix #8) as well as his report on that meeting (Cf. Appendix #9). We discussed at some length the recommendation that “the URCNA propose to the GKSA that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship relationship with each other”. The committee mandated Rev. Sikkema to write up “grounds” in support of that recommendation – for review and action at its next face-to-face meeting.

In that context, we also discussed the critique written by our Observer at the GKSA Sinode of a document referred to as a Verklaring – a writing signed by 36 GKSA men who protested against the decision of the Sinode rescinding the 2003 decision re Women in the Office of Deacon. We decided to send that critique of the Verklaring to the members of the Ecumenical affairs Committee of the GKSA – thus conveying to them our concern re this development and encouraging them to deal forthrightly with the signers of that document.

The report of the Rev. Peter Kloosterman, who had read our letter at the RCNZ Synod and related his personal desire that a “relationship be developed between the URCNA and the RCNZ” (Cf. Appendices #1 and #2), led to a discussion of our present relationship with the RCNZ – a matter that was (to be) finalized at our next face-to-face meeting, (see below).

Also at this meeting there were letters requesting the support of the URCNA (including a letter from the Rev. Moses Thang of the URCM) sent to us via Mr. Bill Konynenbelt re the ministry of Rev. Poelman in Myanmar. We agreed that the ministry of Rev. Poelman in Myanmar for the URCM is not the business of CECCA but of his calling church, the Cornerstone URC of Hudsonville, Mich. Additionally, Rev. Thang informed us that he is looking forward to receiving a copy of our Synodical Rules document – once it is approved by Synod – so that he may use it in preparing a similar document for the URCM.

We responded to an invitation – sent by the Free Church of Scotland inviting the URCNA to send an Observer to attend the meeting of its General Assembly – by instructing the secretary to write a letter to the FCS thanking them

for the invitation, informing them that, due to limited resources, we could not accept that invitation to this meeting of the General Assembly and conveying to them our prayers for the Lord's blessing on the meetings of the Assembly; (Cf. Appendix #10).

The October 26 and 27 2006 Face-to-Face Meeting

Two of the committee members were absent from this meeting – the Rev. Jogi Gangar was unable to attend because of the illness of his wife (whom we remembered in our prayers), and the Rev. Fritz Harms, having resigned from the committee, did not attend; someone to replace him had not as yet been appointed by his Classis. (NB. on January 17, 2007 Classis Eastern US elected the Rev. Mark Stewart to replace him.)

In addition to dealing with many items of correspondence, this meeting focused specifically on our relationship with the GKSA, the GKN(v), and the RCNZ.

1. In June of 2006, the Chairman and the Secretary of CECCA met with Dr. Douw Breed and Dr. Dries du Plooy of the GKSA. We discussed their verbal report on that visit as well as the decisions of the ICRC relating to the admission of the GKSA to membership in the ICRC; thereupon the committee adopted the following motion: "It is recommended that the URCNA propose to the GKSA that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship (Ecumenical Unity) relationship with each other." CECCA places this recommendation before Synod – with the following grounds:

- a. The CECCA committee, having met with delegates of the GKSA – both in SA and in NA – and having looked into recent decisions of the GKSA Synod, is persuaded that the GKSA is committed to be faithful to the Scriptures and to the Three Forms of Unity. (Cf. the January 2006 Report of the Delegated Observer to the GKSA Synod; Appendix #8).
 - b. The ICRC, after full discussion of "issues of concern" – (issues which were subsequently favorably reflected in the decisions taken by the Synod of the GKSA in January 2006) – received the GKSA into full membership. Additionally,
 - c. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to engage more effectively in "the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity" with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, c.)
 - d. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to engage more effectively in "joint actions in areas of joint responsibility" with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, e.)
 - e. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to warn more effectively against the adoption of "fundamental changes in polity, doctrine or practice" by the GKSA – since the adoption of "fundamental changes" in such matters "may jeopardize the (proposed) established ecumenical relationship" with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, f.)
2. Having reviewed some of our previous actions vis a vis the GKN(v) and the report submitted by the Rev. F. Harms re his visit with the GKN(v) Synod in 2005 (Cf. Appendices #3 and #4), we recommend that the URCNA propose to the GKN(v) that we enter a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with each other – on the following grounds:
- a. The GKN(v) Synod Amersfoort (2005) declared "sister church" relations with the URCNA.
 - b. Entering into a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the GKN(v) is an appropriate reciprocal action at this time.
 - c. Establishing a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the GKN(v) is in keeping with the purpose of such a relationship, namely that we "focus on studying matters of general concern" – with a view to the establishment of a full, Ecumenical Fellowship, relationship with the GKN(v).
3. After a brief discussion on the current status of our relationship with the RCNZ (Cf. Appendices #1 and #2), we agreed to recommend that the URCNA propose to the RCNZ that we enter a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with each other – on the following grounds:
- a. The RCNZ has moved to establish ecumenical relations with the URCNA.
 - b. Entering into a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the RCNZ is an appropriate reciprocal action at this time.
 - c. Establishing a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the RCNZ is in keeping with the purpose of such a relationship, namely that we "focus on studying matters of general concern" – with a view to the establishment of a full, Ecumenical Fellowship, relationship with the RCNZ.
4. The secretary was instructed to send a letter to each of the above churches – informing each church of the recommendation concerning it which CECCA will place before Synod. (Cf. Appendices # 11, #12 and #13).

At this meeting, CECCA also acted on the recommendations appearing at the end of the “Report of the ICRC meeting, Pretoria, SA.” These recommendations are herewith placed before Synod for its decision/action. The Recommendations are as follows:

1. That Synod express its approval of the proposed change in the wording of Article IV, 1.a. (Membership) of the ICRC Constitution and so inform the Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. C. Van Spronsen.
2. That Synod confirm our wholehearted support of the work of the ICRC by (a) appointing a contact person “to liaise with other member churches in their region”, and (b) encouraging the congregations to participate in such activities of the ICRC as the Regional and Mission Conferences when such are scheduled in their area.
3. That Synod mandate its Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) to retain contact with the Interim Committee of the ICRC so that proper preparations may be made by and for the URCNA for the next meeting of the ICRC.
4. That Synod, upon the recommendation of CECCA, appoint delegates to the next meeting of the ICRC.
5. That Synod recognize that the Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema has been re-appointed by the ICRC to serve on its Missions Committee for another four-year term.

In reference to recommendation 4 (above), CECCA recommends that Synod again appoint Rev. Sikkema to serve as the Primus Delegate to the next meeting of the ICRC, scheduled to meet in New Zealand in 2009, DV, (so as to provide some continuity) and that Synod appoint the Secundus Delegate as selected by the CECCA committee. Additionally, CECCA proposes to Synod that the URCNA host the 2013 meetings of the ICRC.

After discussing the matter of serving on the CECCA committee, we decided to propose/request that the members of CECCA be asked to serve from Synod to Synod (assuming that the Synods meet at three year intervals) – with the understanding that they be reappointment at the pleasure of their respective Classes. We also wish to convey to Synod our understanding that though it is the Synod(s) that oversee the work of CECCA, it is the Classes who appoint the membership of the CECCA committee.

The CECCA committee budget was briefly discussed. We have again requested that \$8,450.00 (USD) be budgeted for CECCA expenses by the Finance Committee of the URCNA per annum, (\$5,000.00 USD for “ecumenical relations” travel, [note, this figure may have to be raised – depending on the action taken by Synod on point 6 (below) re the interpretation of the “one visit per year” issue]; \$3,000.00 USD for committee travel – including meal/lodging expense; \$300.00 USD for conference-call meetings; and \$150.00 USD for postage and miscellaneous expense.)

The question: Which Synod(s) do we plan to attend in the coming year was also discussed. It was noted

- (1) that the churches with whom we have ecumenical relations of one type or another typically hold their Synod meetings once every three years – as does the URCNA – and that some of those dates fall in the same year the URCNA Synod meets; and
- (2) that we do not presently have any requests to send (fraternal) Delegates to any church with which we have ecumenical relations. In that context we decided to request the Stated Clerk to send invitations to the RCNZ, the GKN(v), the GKSA and the FCS encouraging them to send (fraternal) Delegates to our Synod (the secretary provided the prototype; Cf. Appendix #14); and to request that the Stated Clerk send letters of invitation to the following ICRC member churches inviting them to send (fraternal) Observers to our Synod: the CGKN, the ERCC, the EPCEW, the EPCI, the FCCI, the FCSA, the VGKSA, the PCEA, the PCK(K), the NTT, the IRE, the GGRC, the RPCI, the RPCNEI, and the URCM (the secretary provided the prototype; Cf. Appendix #15).

The January 9 2007 Conference-Call Meeting

Our final meeting was a conference call meeting which, in addition to attending to some housekeeping matters, focussed on adopting our report to Synod and on the matters which we as committee place before Synod for approval/adoption. Those matters are listed below.

Concluding Remarks

Brothers, it is with gratitude to the Lord that we present this report of our activities to Synod. The Lord has richly blessed our deliberations as we sought to do our task – on behalf of our churches – to enhance the unity of the church of Jesus Christ worldwide. It is our prayer that the Lord continue to bless these efforts – for the glory of His name and the well being of the church of Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, now and forever. PTL.

Matters requiring Synod's attention/action

1. That Synod adopt the CECCA committee recommendation that the URCNA propose to the GKSA that we enter into the Phase Two, Ecumenical Fellowship (Ecumenical Unity), relationship with each other.
2. That Synod adopt the CECCA committee recommendation that the URCNA propose to the GKN(v) that we enter a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with each other.
3. That Synod adopt the CECCA committee recommendation that the URCNA propose to the RCNZ that we enter a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with each other.
4. That Synod adopt the five recommendations appearing at the end of the "Report on the ICRC meeting, Pretoria, SA, to wit:
 - a. That Synod express its approval of the proposed change in the wording of Article IV, 1.a. (Membership) of the ICRC Constitution and so inform the Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. C. Van Spronsen.
 - b. That Synod confirm our wholehearted support of the work of the ICRC by (a) appointing a contact person "to liaise with other member churches in their region", and (b) encouraging the congregations to participate in such activities of the ICRC as the Regional and Mission Conferences when such are scheduled in their area.
 - c. That Synod mandate its Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) to retain contact with the Interim Committee of the ICRC so that proper preparations may be made by and for the URCNA for the next meeting of the ICRC.
 - d. That Synod, upon the recommendation of CECCA, appoint delegates to the next meeting of the ICRC.
 - e. That Synod recognize that the Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema has been re-appointed by the ICRC to serve on its Missions Committee for another four-year term.
5. That Synod welcome the fraternal Delegates present at Synod, extending to them the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of the sending church; and that Synod welcome the fraternal Observers who may be present, extending to them the opportunity to greet Synod on behalf of the sending church.
6. That Synod clarify the decision of Synod Calgary re limiting the CECCA committee to "one visit per year" (Cf. Acts of the Fifth Synod, Art. 56, B, 5 and Art. 81, D, 1 and 2) considering also the Schererville consistory's explanation thereof.
7. That Synod appoint Rev. Sikkema to serve as the Primus Delegate to the next meeting of the ICRC (so as to provide some continuity) and that Synod appoint as the Secundus Delegate the man selected by the CECCA committee, the Rev. Dick Moes. (Cf. 4,d above.)
8. That Synod inform the ICRC that the URCNA is willing to host the 2013 meeting of the ICRC.
9. That Synod agree that the members of the CECCA committee serve from Synod to Synod – understanding that they are (re)appointed by their respective Classes.
10. That Synod instruct the Stated Clerk to send a copy of our Synodical Rules document – once such a document is adopted by Synod – to the Rev. Moses Thang of the URCM.
11. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following members of CECCA to answer Synod's questions re the report: Rev. Dennis Royall, chairman and Rev. Raymond Sikkema, secretary.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Peter Adams, member
Rev. A. William De Jong, member
Rev. Joghinda S. Gangar, member
Rev. Dick Moes, member
Rev. Dennis W. Royall, chairman and
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, secretary of CECCA

Appendix # 1

The Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Inter-church Relations Committee
Rev. Dr. M.A.Flinn, Secretary

August 19, 2005

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord,

It is our joy and privilege to greet you in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, the sovereign king of the church whom we seek to serve in humble obedience to His Word of Truth. As you will, DV, be reading this letter of greeting at your forthcoming synodical meeting, we wish to express the prayer that you may seek, and indeed experience in rich measure, the guidance of the Holy Spirit through whose infallible leading the Church will be led to discern the truth as it deliberates the issues on its Agenda - that so the church may be the Light that shines clearly in a sin-darkened world.

Brothers, we want to express to you our grateful appreciation for the visit of the Rev. Jim Klazinga at our 2004 Synod Calgary. Our "Minutes of the Fifth Synod" not only record the speeches of the various Fraternal Delegates and Observers who addressed Synod, they also record that "Rev. Klazinga expresses interest on the part of the RCNZ in forming closer ecumenical ties with the URCNA and passionately insists that 'ecumenical' and 'frugal' are not mutually exclusive terms."

Synod heartily agreed with both sentiments as is evidenced by its subsequent decisions. You see, not only did we adopt a recommendation "that Synod look into entering step 1 (Ecumenical Contact) with the RCNZ", we also decided that the matter of "frugality" could not and should not impinge on our ecumenical relationship. Our desire to be frugal with a limited amount of assets has led us to decide that, rather than send a delegate to attend your Synod this year, we would seek to utilize the services of the Rev. Peter Kloosterman, the pastor elect of the Masterton congregation, for one last time. We have asked him not only to read this letter, but also to speak words of greeting and well-wishes on our behalf - if he could be in attendance at your Synod in September. It is our understanding that he is scheduled to arrive in New Zealand, DV, on the 30th of August; we will, therefore, be requesting of him that he address you on our behalf.

We note with gratitude recommendations 27 and 28 in your "Report of the Interchurch Relations Committee". It is the understanding of our committee (CECCA) that our Synod is both willing and ready to enter into - what we call - the first (of two) steps in an ecclesiastical relationship with the RCNZ, namely "Ecumenical Contact". If our reading of your recommendations 27 and 28 is correct, such a relationship is also the desire of the RCNZ. If

that is indeed the case, and you so inform us, we will convey that to the next meeting of our Synod with the recommendation that Synod enter into the step 1: "Ecumenical Contact" relationship with the RCNZ. It is our prayer that the Lord richly bless such a relationship between our federations.

We want also to assure you that it is our desire (which we will diligently pursue) to move to what we call the 2nd step: "Ecumenical Fellowship" as soon as feasible thereafter. It is our conviction that close ecumenical relations are of the essence for supporting and promoting the work of the Lord's Church and Kingdom worldwide - the more so as the world is becoming increasingly not only secularized but also de-christianized. We want to pledge to you our readiness to assist you, in as much as we are able, in fulfilling your task, and humbly request that you do the same for us.

We close with the prayer that the Lord and King of the Church, our Savior, Jesus Christ, rich bless you not only in your deliberations and decision making at this meeting of your Synod, but especially thereafter as you enter again upon the awesome task of being the Church in a sin-darkened world unto His praise and glory. Soli Deo Gloria.

In His Service,
For the CECCA,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, Secretary

Appendix #2

URCNA
CECCA Committee

Dear Brothers in the Lord:

Here is my report regarding the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. If you have further questions please do not hesitate to inquire.

In September 2005, I was privileged to attend the 25th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as an observer for the URCNA. My function at this meeting was not only as a representative of the URCNA, but also as one who had accepted a call to serve in the RCNZ.

The meeting was well ordered and a blessing to attend. Interestingly, this seemingly remote Pacific island was an attraction for observers from around the world. There were observers and delegates from North America, Europe, Africa, and Australia. Almost every day a fraternal relative addressed the Synod. It was an expression of the splendor of the catholic church and an encouragement for the delegates from the RCNZ of the worldwide concern and support for the denomination.

On Thursday 8 September, I was granted the privilege of the floor to address the Synod on behalf of the URCNA. I reported of the decision of the last Synod to pursue ecumenical relations with the RCNZ. I read the letter that I had been given by the CECCA and related my personal desire that a relationship be developed between the URCNA and the RCNZ. That I recognize that while we are separated by many miles we are very close in doctrine and circumstances. There was a familiarity that I sensed in my interaction with the delegates even though I had arrived in the country only a week earlier. Rev. Jim Klazinga responded to my address. He said the delegates shared our commitment to the truth and were eager to see a fraternal relationship developed.

I was not able to attend Synod for the whole week, but I was there for a majority of the time. I was again blessed to see the Spirit's work among the churches of our Lord in this deliberative body. There were two important issues that appeared to be divisive for the congregations. They were resolved in an amicable and faithful way. Synod closed on a note of joy and the assembly, by God's grace, had served to foster a sense of unity among the congregations in New Zealand. It is hoped this note of unity will resound throughout the world through the reports of the observers and delegates who attended this Synod.

In Christ's service,
Rev. Peter Kloosterman

Appendix #3

Synod GKN(v) Amersfoort, the Netherlands (May 2005)

Fraternal Greetings from the United Reformed Churches in North America
By: Rev. Frederik A.V. Harms

Mr. Chairman and delegates of the Synod, brothers and sisters attending this Synod,

It is an honor for me to briefly address your synod and communicate to your assembly 'fraternal greetings' from your brothers and sisters in the USA and CANADA.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you – and in particular Rev. Knigge and his wife – for the fabulous way in which we have been taken care of at *Kontakt der Kontinenten*. Thank you for your warm welcome and hospitality. The fellowship with brothers from around the world was sweet, and heartening to me personally.

Last year we welcomed Rev. Karlo Janssen at our Synod who spoke to us on your behalf. We are reciprocating by attending your 2005 Synod in the hope that there may be official relations between our two church federations. We come here with the clear message that we seek to join hands with you in the GKN(v) here in the Netherlands.

I looked up our Synod 2004's decision, which states that the advisory committee recommended "that Synod look into entering step 1 with the GKN(v)". Our synodical committee, the Committee for Ecumenical Contacts with Churches Abroad (CECCA), interprets this as saying that the URCNA is committed to entering into a relationship with your churches.

Perhaps it will be helpful for you to understand that in *our* "process" there are two steps (or two levels) as follows: Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship. Allow me to quickly read to you from our ACTS of Synod 2004 detailing these two steps and what they mean in practical terms.

"The first step, Ecumenical Contact, will focus on studying matters of general concern between the URCNA and the 'foreign' federation. This step will be implemented, where possible and desirable, by:

- a. Exchange of official observers at major assemblies.
- b. Consultation on issues of joint concern, including:
 1. The authority and sufficiency of Scripture
 2. Creeds and confessions
 3. Formula of subscription to the confessions;
 4. Significant factors in the two federation's history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues.
 5. Church order and polity;
 6. Liturgy and liturgical forms;

- 7. Preaching, sacraments and discipline;
- 8. Theological education for ministers.
- c. Exchange of Minutes (ACTS) of the broadest assemblies.
- d. Exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks).
- e. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards.
- f. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order.
- g. Exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals.
- h. Exchange of information regarding current ecumenical relations.

The second step, Ecumenical Fellowship, will focus on the oneness of the URCNA with the 'foreign' federation, even though we are separated by geographical boundaries. This step will be implemented according to Church Order article 36 (in addition to the points listed under step one above) by:

- a. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option).
- b. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other's members at the Lord's Supper – but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership as regulated by each consistory (session).
- c. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
- d. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- e. Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- f. Agreement that, as changes in polity, doctrine, or practice are instituted, the churches will inform each other, understanding that the adoption of substantial changes may jeopardize the established ecumenical relationship.”

I mention all this simply to make you realize that *from our side* there is due process that has barely begun, whereas *from your side* the BBK is already prepared to recommend to your synod that a full sister-church relationship be established. I am not entirely sure that our two paths run parallel. You appear to have more trust in us than we have in you at this time. However, I commend your committee for putting together the booklet entitled *Not Beyond What Is Written*. That title is very well chosen. I hope you will act accordingly.

Who are the URCNA?

We are a group of about 90 churches – with approximately 20,000 members and growing. We have 133 ordained pastors, and 942 office-bearers. We engage in church planting in NYC, Toronto, several places in California, and in Idaho. Our missionaries are called and sent out under the auspices of their local church. There does not exist a denominational Home or Foreign Missions Board. Additionally, a number of our men are involved in leadership training in India, Honduras and Costa Rica and indeed in the entire North, Central and South American region.

You may be aware of the fact that our federation began in 1995 when it was formally organized; in 1996 we held our first synod. The majority of our 20,000+ members were at one time members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. For decades there was a debate in the CRC on various issues – which had the same polarizing effect in the CRC that we see today in Reformed and Presbyterian churches around the world.

God has graciously allowed us to minister His Gospel since our departure from the CRC. We gather together on Sundays to worship the Lord. We rejoice in the simplicity of worship, which communicates to our visitors who and what we are about. Word and Sacrament call attention to the mighty acts of God and His redeeming grace in Christ Jesus. Through the simplicity of worship, the worshipper is given a place that is indeed foreign (increasingly so) to the day-to-day experience of living in a secular, post-modern world.

At recent synods our churches were asked by several Classes to make formal statements with regard to such issues as the doctrine of creation and homosexuality. The majority saw the wisdom of refraining from making such statements. Synodical statements have a way of living a virtual ‘life of their own’. We decided that our confessions are sufficiently clear to enable the consistories to make good and sound judgments and inferences that honor the sufficiency of Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. And this is what I would encourage you to do here in Holland too. Keep the table of your Synods as empty as possible.

As a young denomination (federation) we do not want to live in isolation from other church communities, which is evident from the advanced relationships that have been and are being established between us and the Canadian Reformed Churches as well as the Reformed Churches in the U.S. We have also become members of the ICRC. There remain huge challenges ahead for us as well, but we trust the Lord to add His blessing to the labors we engage in for His glory and for the up-building of His church.

Brothers, I am here to offer you encouragement. That has been the spirit also of the delegation from my brothers in Australia whose hearts seem heavy with concern for the *direction* you might be taking here in the Netherlands. I stand to be corrected, but I observe that you are a ‘church in motion’ (in beweging). This need not be a negative thing. If there were no "beweging" or development and transformation then you would be in a state of spiritual decline ending in death.

What concerns me personally, however, (and I know our churches in North America also) is *the rate* at which you seem to make changes. I advise you as a brother in the Lord to move ahead, but at a less aggressive pace. Churches on the local level need time to adjust themselves to change in Sunday worship, or rethinking traditional views of marriage and divorce. I pray and hope that you allow Scripture to speak; that on important matters as Marriage and Divorce, Sunday observance and Liturgics you regain the kind of stability necessary to be a witness of Christ.

We share with you this rich heritage of the Reformed faith. You show an impressive record of biblical faithfulness in an ever-changing culture. You have had the vision to confess that Christ is Lord in all spheres of life. You have built schools and supported higher education. You have engaged in missions and evangelism and diaconal outreach. Lux Mundi informs us of how you take the confessional call to be UNA SANCTA seriously. You have been faithful in all of these matters.

In closing I want to challenge you to remain faithful. Knowing my own churches, and given the painful history of secession that led to the birth of the URCNA, I plead with you to take a new and fresh look at the old paths which our parents and those before them set before us. Brothers, our forefathers in the Reformed faith not only confessed but *applied* the nature and authority as well as the sufficiency of Scripture to the matters before them. Let us continue to base our thinking and actions and Christian life in general on the basis of tried and true concepts like ‘Law and Gospel’, and a theme such as ‘Theology of the Cross’.

Listen to the pain of the brothers and sisters who departed from you. In the CRC there arose a spirit of near arrogance toward those of us who could not see things ‘their way’. I exhort you not to say to those who left you: ‘O well, those old fashioned people. Let them go if they can’t stay’. Therefore, listen to the people. As ministers and elders, provide clear biblical rationale for the reasons you make the decisions you think are necessary, or better yet, are mandated by Scripture. When Scripture is (thought to be) not clear, move with caution in matters that have a profound impact on the life of the church and its witness. Also, resist the temptation to make Scripture fit what suits our desires or opinions.

It is most difficult to be an open letter of Christ in an environment that is hostile to the Christian witness. But neither the Church, nor the world we seek to reach for Christ, is served when the Church keeps forever accommodating just because the world changes continuously.

Brothers and sisters, if you have a spirit that is willing to be taught (a la Calvin) by Scripture, then God will continue to build His church in our world also through you. Allow us to walk side by side with you, so that together we may be able to walk the journey – offering mutual encouragement and support in our time of need. I leave you with these words of encouragement from what Paul writes to the church in Philippi as recorded in chapter 3:12-4:1 – (quoted).

May God’s blessing remain on you and your churches.

Appendix #4

Visit to Synod Amersfoort 2005 of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt, art.31).

June 14, 2005

Dear members of CECCA,

Hereby I present to you my report upon attending the GKN(v) Synod in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, from May 24-28, 2005.

Let me say first what a blessing it was for me personally to attend this synod of the so-called 'Vrijgemaakte Kerken in the Netherlands. The welcome was warm, the accommodations at the former cloister were splendid, and the opportunity to witness close-up how the Dutch reformed delegates discussed their Agenda items was educational. Additionally, it was wonderful to become somewhat acquainted also with brothers representing the churches in Venezuela, Nigeria, Congo, Curacao, Ireland, England, Scotland and Russia. I sensed an immediate fraternity in Christ with those brothers when we shared our meals. I also knew that we held a common agreement that God's Word alone is the answer to many of the same struggles Reformed and Presbyterian churches face worldwide. Specifically, I mention the delegate from Nigeria, the Rev. Dr. M.K. Antiev, General Secretary of the NKST (the *Church of Christ in the Sudan among the Tiv*) who expressed a clear interest in seeking relations with the URCNA.

The central purpose for attending this synod was to represent the federation of United Reformed Churches in North America and in particular to bring them our fraternal greetings. This visit was our response to their official invitation (given to us last year at Synod Calgary) to come and attend their Synod this year in Amersfoort.

The most important message I bring back from this Synod is that this broadest assembly of the GKN(v) formally welcomes us into a sister church relationship with them.

* * *

Reflections and Observations:

I attended this Synod in order to convey our churches' desire and intent to establish formal ecclesiastical ties with the GKN(v). I explained the two-step process from our Acts of Synod 2004 to highlight the fact that we are at *different* stages in the ecumenical process. Specifically, the URCNA *may* begin step one (of two) – should our Synod 2007 adopt a recommendation from CECCA to do so; however, the Synod of the GKN(v) has *already* declared full sister church relations with us.

The two members of the BBK [the GKN(v)'s version of our CECCA] with whom I met privately earlier that week (Rev. Ruud ter Beek and Mr. Klaas Weseman) explained that their rationale for making this (surprisingly quick) recommendation to their Synod was based on the advanced progress made toward unity between their own sister-church, the CanRC, and the URCNA. Simply put: the BBK trusts the CanRC to recognize the URCNA as a true church

Midweek I attended a number of meetings that had been organized for the foreign delegates. One of these included a joint meeting between the RCUS delegate and myself with the BBK deputees. I made clear that given the current internal turmoil within the GKN(v) churches, I needed firm reassurances from their side that particularly the issue of *women in office* would not become the next 'issue' on their church's synodical agenda. I was satisfied with the two brothers' firm denial. They explained to me that this issue is being discussed due to the church contacts individual churches in the GKN(v) have with churches belonging to the *Netherlands Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK). The NGK is in the process of recommending that all offices in the church be opened to women who qualify.

Based on the *concerns* expressed toward members of the BBK by the GKN(v)'s own sister churches in Australia and Canada, there is a *caveat* behind this positive decision by the GKN(v) to have a full sister-church relation with us in the URCNA. Though the *GKN(v)* feels it has become a full 'sister' with us, *we* are still at a stage in which we need to learn a few important aspects of her current identity. I expressed the importance of beginning a formal relation with them and from that position to posit questions to them of whatever concerns we might have.

The *caveat* has to do with the question of how reliable this new 'partner' is when we compare the profile of the URCNA with that of the GKN(v).

The concerns expressed by those other foreign delegates (to which I referred a moment ago) seem to concentrate on the GKN(v)'s commitment to Scripture – relative to specific issues concentrating around Marriage & Divorce, and the Fourth Commandment. (Critics also raise liturgical matters such as psalm singing). The question in my mind is: How did the authority and sufficiency of Scripture *function* in the report of the Deputies for Marriage and Re-marriage when, for example, they offer their study results in their report along with their recommendations? Their biblical defense on why the church ought to expand possibilities for remarriage – beyond the traditional two grounds – seems (to me at least) somewhat weak.

Clearly, however, the men of the GKN(v) are not of the same spirit as those in the GKN (now merged into PKN). They very much desire to be faithful to Scripture – while at the same time coming to an agreement on how the churches as a whole can deal with the real problem of marriages ending in divorce, and to grant the church's blessing again to those who seek to be re-married.

Conclusions:

Throughout, it was evident that the brothers in the GKN(v) wish to be a Reformed church, a church that is faithful to the Word of God. That they are struggling with how to achieve this within their own secular Dutch culture is obvious.

Based on the discussions I witnessed – and those I held with the BBK committee members – I am persuaded that we can well recommend to Synod 2007 (URCNA) that we reciprocate the decision made by Synod Amersfoort (GKN(v)) and initiate step one ‘Ecumenical Contact’ in our relation with the GKN(v).

In light of the concerns mentioned earlier, I feel that our own federation’s guidelines for establishing contact with other churches abroad provides sufficient opportunity to investigate whatever concerns we might wish to have clarified to us.

The final basis or ground for such a move forward is to honor the integrity of the GKN(v) as a body of churches – based on their faithful ministry and witness since 1944.

It was an honor to represent the URCNA at this Synod in Amersfoort, and I trust this report will aid in our efforts to give greater visibility to the unity of Christ’s body in our world.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Frederik A.V. Harms

Appendix # 5

Report of the ICRC meeting, Pretoria, SA

12 October, 2005 - 19 October, 2005

Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema

On Wednesday evening, October 12, 2005, the delegates to the Sixth Meeting of the ICRC (including Rev. Royall and Rev. Sikkema), along with the observers and visitors came together for a Prayer Service in the sanctuary of Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk of Pretoria. The Rev. Tebogo Mogale, a delegate of the VGKSA, led the service and the Rev. Cees Kleijn, the Pastor of the Pretoria congregation, preached a stimulating sermon on Acts 15:1-21. Both pastors led in prayer, imploring the Lord for His grace and Spirit upon the meetings of the Conference.

The Thursday morning roll-call revealed that, in addition to the delegates of the 22 member churches, observers were present from five Federations, to wit: the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCS(C)), the Reformed Church in Congo (ERCC), the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), the Reformed Churches of Spain (IRES) and the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar (URCM) - all of whom had applications for membership before this meeting of the ICRC. Also present were visitors from nine Federations - some of whom were also looking forward to (eventually) joining the ICRC.

Since Rev. Peterson (OPC), who had served as chairman of the ICRC from 1997 (Seoul) to 2005 (Pretoria), had resigned from that position, the Rev. B. De Graaf (CGKN) was elected to replace him. Rev. De Graaf effectively, with humor and wit, chaired the meetings. The corresponding secretary, Rev. Van Beveren (CanRC), resigned from his position soon after the 2001 meetings of the ICRC (Philadelphia). His position was filled by his alternate, Rev. C. Van Spronson, also from the CanRC, who had already been functioning in that capacity. Completing the Executive Committee were/are the following brothers: Vice-chairman, Rev. Bruce Hoyt (RCNZ), Recording Secretary, Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor (EPCEW), and Treasurer, Mr. Henk Berends, CanRC.

The overall theme of the conference this year was "The Lordship Of Christ", a theme chosen with a view to showing "the relevance of reformed theology in the churches in their different cultural settings". Four papers were presented: Prof. A.J.deVisser (CanRC) presented a paper on "The Lordship of Christ in the Life of the Believer"; Prof. J.W.Maris (CGKN) presented a paper on "The Lordship of Christ in the Church"; and the Reverends D.A.Robertson (FCS) and Y.Dethan (GGRC-NTT) each presented a paper on "The Lordship of Christ Proclaimed in the World". Rev. Robertson's paper was subtitled "Postmodern Apologetics and Evangelism"; Rev. Dethan focused on the challenge of missions in

Indonesia where both tribal religions and the religion of Islam are strong.

After each presentation the delegates, as indeed the observers and visitors, were given opportunity to raise question and offer comments. Also, workshops were organized where the ICRC participants could raise further questions and engage the presenters in friendly debate. Both the question periods and the workshops were much appreciated. All were agreed that the men charged with presenting papers on "The Lordship of Christ" had done outstanding work. Their papers will be published in the "Proceedings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, 2005" which should be available early in the new year - a worthwhile addition to anyone's library!

Throughout the various sessions, the churches that were applying for membership, as well as a number of visitors were given opportunity to introduce both themselves and their churches. This proved to be very helpful, especially when the matter of membership applications was discussed. Each of the Introductions to the Churches will also be published in the "Proceedings" record of the Conference - which, we trust, will be read with care by the member churches.

Eleven Advisory Committees were appointed to facilitate the work of the business sessions of the ICRC. Rev. Royall served as the reporter of Committee 2: Membership of the GKSA, an issue that required a lot of time and occasioned some spirited debate. In the end, after it had become clear that both a motion to delay the GKSA application to the 2009 meeting of the ICRC, as well as amendments exhorting the GKSA that "in its discussions about women in office and relationships with the CRCNA to settle these matters in a Biblical and harmonious way" had failed, the GKSA's application for membership was accepted with a vote of 21 to 1. The chairman rightly referred to this as "an important moment". He read Psalm 133 and heartily welcomed the brothers of the GKSA to take their seats as members of the ICRC.

(It should be noted that the above referred to amendments failed - not because those sentiments were not genuinely shared by all - they failed because not all were agreed that such sentiments could rightly be used as arguments against acceptance of the GKSA's application for membership at this time. The fact is, it is not known at this time what action, if any, the GKSA Synod will take on the Report re Women in Ecclesiastical Office that will be tabled in January, 2006. It was, however, noted that the way out of the ICRC is as plainly spelled out in the Constitution as the way into the ICRC. The GKSA was encouraged to take careful note thereof.)

Rev. Sikkema was asked to serve as the convenor of Committee 1: Membership of the IRES (Spain) and of the ERCC (Congo). The Reformed church of Spain is a small federation of seven congregations which faces some difficult struggles in a land that

is predominantly Roman Catholic. The Reformed Church in Congo, on the other hand, is a robustly growing federation of churches. Born of the radio broadcast of the Back to God Hour, (Rev. Kayayan), the ERCC was organized in 1984. It has since grown to 250 congregations with 22 ordained men and 9 candidates ready for examination/ordination. Both of these federations were joyfully received into the fellowship of the ICRC, and their delegates also were seated and invited to participate in the deliberations of the meetings. A very joyful moment!

The membership applications of the other two federations did not fare so well. The United Reformed Church of Myanmar (URCM), though indeed having acquired two sponsoring churches, was not admitted to ICRC membership at this time - even though the Advisory Committee, be it somewhat reluctantly, had recommended that it be admitted. Apparently, the fact that this church had failed to engage the two churches which it had first approached to be its Sponsoring Churches (the RCNZ and the URCNA) in some dialogue re their hesitation to be sponsoring churches - opting instead to ask two other churches - as well as the fact that the Reformed churches in Myanmar, though often small, easily divide led the delegates to decide that the time was not right for the URCM to be admitted to ICRC membership.

The same decision prevailed in response to the application of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), (the FCS(C) or FCC). Already the 2001 Conference had taken note, with sadness, of "the fracture that has taken place in Scotland". Since that "fracture" subsequently led to court action on the part of the FCS(C) against the FCS, the membership application of that body was declined. The decision reads as follows: "The ICRC declare that no church may be accepted as a member of the ICRC whilst it is engaged in taking a member church to a civil court. Grounds: 1. It is contrary to the Reformed foundations of the ICRC, because it contradicts the teaching of Scripture to which we are bound, (citing I Cor.6:6,7). And 2. It is contrary to the stated purpose of the ICRC, namely a) To express and promote the unity of the faith that the member churches have in Christ. b) To encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches. c) To encourage cooperation among the member churches in fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates. d) To present a reformed testimony to the world.

Needless to say, the men from the FCS(C) were not well pleased with the decision. Prayer was offered for the healing which only the Lord can give; and the brothers were encouraged to resolve their differences in accordance with the Biblical directives.

One other church, the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv, (the NKST), was not granted membership. Here, however, the problem centered on a misunderstanding. The NKST had also had observers present at Philadelphia (as indeed at two earlier meetings of the ICRC) where its desire for membership in the ICRC had been expressed - neglecting, however, to find two sponsoring

churches. The meeting expressed genuine interest in and concern for the situation of the NKST - especially the fact that it finds itself "in an isolated position in Nigeria as faithful reformed churches". It was therefore recommended (1.) that this conference strongly encourages them to set the process in motion so that an application, meeting all the agreed upon requirements, can be submitted in due time for the Conference of 2009 in order that membership can be granted; and (2.) that they be assured that in the meantime they may enjoy the full support and fellowship of the member churches, being one in the reformed faith.

Advisory Committee 7, Constitution and Regulations, recommended two additional guidelines under Article IV of the Regulations for Committees of the ICRC, as follows:

3. The Committee members may also invite other people to address the committee in areas of their knowledge or competence. Each advisor must be invited by a vote of the committee before being extended an invitation. A person so invited shall limit his participation to the time of his presentation and related discussion, unless otherwise permitted by the committee.

4. Recommendations should be considered and voted on during the meeting of the committee. Any draft of a report not adopted in the meeting which is left to be drawn up by the secretary or other member(s) must be distributed to all the members for their vote and response. Any part of the report not agreed to by a majority of the members of the committee shall be excluded, unless there is a minority report.

Both of the recommendations were adopted.

Committee 7 recommended also that the wording of Article IV, 1, a. of the Constitution be changed to read: "1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which a. adhere and are faithful to one or more of the confessional standards stated in the Basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards, OR, adhere and are faithful to Reformed Confessions which are equivalent in content to the Confessions listed in the Basis (Art.2), and which confession or (confessions) shall be proposed to be added to Article II of the Constitution". Note, what follows after the OR is the addition that was proposed. This recommendation was adopted. It should be noted however that, since this is an amendment to the Constitution, it must be ratified "by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches".

Advisory Committee 8 focused on the issue of Regional and Mission Conferences. The following recommendations were adopted:

1. That Regional and Mission Conferences should be combined in order to maximize the use of resources.
2. That the ICRC should send a letter to all member churches requesting them each to appoint a contact person to liaise with other member churches in their region. When a member church sees a need or opportunity

for such a conference, it should seek to realize it through its contact person.

3. That the financing of such conferences should be done within the region, and not through ICRC assessment. Should the cost be prohibitive in a certain region, we recommend that churches seek sponsorship from larger and/or wealthier churches.

Note, also this matter requires Synodical action.

The issue of Theological Education, placed on the Agenda by the GKN(V), was resolved with the adoption of a recommendation proposed by Advisory Committee 9, as follows: That the Conference assemble and distribute information on existing theological education programs and institutions of all member churches, and information on needs in this area; and give this task to a commissioner for compilation and distribution through the "Semi-annual Newsletter" and the ICRC website database.

Advisory Committee 10, the committee that was asked to look ahead to the next gathering of the ICRC, recommended among other things that the next meeting of the Conference be held in New Zealand and that the Interim Committee be authorized to select another Host Church in the event the RCNZ is unable to serve in that capacity. It also recommended that the Interim Committee "draw up a simple set of procedures to facilitate discussion, debate and decision making". It had become very clear that the member churches work with a great variety of "Rules of Procedure" which at times caused more than a little confusion. All of the above recommendations were adopted - as were recommendations regulating membership on the Advisory Committees and the Interim Committee.

Advisory Committee 11 was charged with the responsibility of dealing with what it spoke of as "the stimulating report" of the Mission Committee of the ICRC. The MC had spent many hours discussing its Mandate and had placed before this meeting of the Conference a radically revised proposed new Mandate (a Mandate both "workable and to be worked") - which was adopted with some editorial changes as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

Also adopted by the Conference were the following:

1. That the ICRC Mission Committee make contact with the WRF to investigate the desirability and possibility of co-operating in Missions.
2. That, wherever possible, Regional and Mission Conferences be combined; see re Advisory Committee 8, above.
3. That the Mission Committee be instructed to look into ways of promoting and coordinating "the exchange of volunteers for diaconal and missionary projects between the member churches" especially in major disaster areas where there are ICRC churches.
4. That the Committee membership be subject to some specific guidelines, including a) that a person once

appointed retain membership on the MC - even when he moves to another area, or to another member federation; b) that membership of the committee include at least one person from each of the following areas: Australasia, Africa, Europe and the Americas and that there should be members from each of the Reformed traditions - Reformed and Presbyterian; c. that the committee members be appointed at the ICRC; d. that no more than 12 and no less than 8 members be appointed; and e. that any member is eligible for reappointment no more than twice (thus being able to serve a maximum of 12 years). Note, Rev. Sikkema was re-appointed to a four-year term on the MC which he gratefully accepted.

5. That one speaker/session at each ICRC be proposed by the Missions Committee.
6. That the whole Mission Report be sent to each of the ICRC member churches since it is important "that each member of the ICRC ... reflect on the changing situation in the world and the issues raised by this report".
7. That the proposed budget of \$40,000.00 - \$10,000.00 per annum - for the MC be adopted.
8. (Let me add in brackets at this point that in lieu of submitting a separate report on the activities of the ICRC MC - of which I am a member - I encourage the churches to be sure to read the Mission Report referred to in point 6 above.)

The report of Mr. H.A.Berends, the ICRC treasurer, was reviewed by the Advisory Committee 5. His "Job Description" includes the following:

1. To assess the membership annually according to the established method, namely "to request each member Church to submit to the treasurer the number of its baptized members as well as the estimated per capita income of its members".
2. To collect the funds in equal installments.
3. To re-imburse all costs incurred by the Conference.
4. To provide the Missions Committee with the budgeted amount as required.
5. To submit a financial report to the Next Conference.
6. To draw up a budget with the assistance of the Interim Committee for the following Conference.

The budget adopted, to be collected over the next four years, is \$135,000.00, up by \$15,000.00 from the \$120,000.00 adopted by the Philadelphia Conference in 2001. It should be noted that the cost of membership for the URCNA amounts to \$1591.78 per year or 0.079 cents per baptized member per year, roughly 1/14th of a cup of Tim Horton coffee. There is no better *financial* deal available!

The Press Release, prepared by Mr. Mark Bube and the Rev. John Goris, Committee 6, was adopted and has been sent, among others, to Christian Renewal for publication.

In addition to the activities described above, we were not only privileged to meet many of the delegates attending from the member churches, we were also able discuss with some of them the importance of establishing viable and vibrant ecumenical relations. Among the latter, we spoke with the Reverends Smit, and Fourie, about our continuing relationship with the GKSA. Specifically, we expressed our concern about the Women in Office report that is on the 2006 Agenda of the GKSA. Though these brothers, obviously, could not assure us that this Report would be rejected, they were clear in their own rejection of the Report.

We had significant contact with Rev. Yonson Dethan and Mr. Yahya Teti of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (East Timor) and Rev. Pila Njuka of the Reformed Pilgrim Churches of Indonesia (Sumba). Both of these federations are facing serious battles - especially against Islam. They eagerly anticipate closer relations with the URCNA.

We spoke at great length with the Reverends Moses Thang and San He Luai of the URCM. They sought to impress upon us the importance of our support for the URCM application for ICRC membership. When we failed to offer that support, especially Br. Thang was much disturbed. At a subsequent meeting, it was explained in detail why we could not, at this time, give the support he/they sought. We also encouraged the brothers to give careful heed to the "admonitions" of the ICRC and that we would be open to further contact.

We spoke with the Visitor from the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv (the NKST) of Nigeria, the Rev. Dr. M.K. Antiev. He expressed great interest in establishing formal relations with us - especially now that the CRCNA is more and more turning its back on the NKST because of its refusal to follow on the course set by the CRCNA. We assured the brother that we are ready and willing to pursue ecumenical relations. We expect to hear from Br. Antiev as we move forward in establishing relations with the NKST.

The brothers from the GKN(V), Prof. G. Kwakkel and Rev. R. Ter Beek, assured us that they are eager "to further ecclesiastical unity" with us - a sentiment also expressed in their October, 2005 letter to us. Specifically, their letter states, inter alia: "Our relationship with you has thus entered - from our perspective - a new phase. This phase was entered into when it was decided: ... to enter into a sister-church relationship with the URCNA". CECCA will, no doubt, be reporting on this matter to Synod 2007.

Though we had planned a meeting with the brothers from the RCNZ, a mutually suitable time could not be found. They did, however, confirm that the recent Synod of the RCNZ had received our

communication and that they were ready and eager to proceed to the second (last for us) step of ecumenical relations.

I wish to express that the meetings of the ICRC were very stimulating, richly rewarding and significantly important for our ecumenical relations. Especially the smaller federations prize such meetings highly. They sense, and indeed are assured, that they do not stand alone, that there are brothers and sisters world-wide who stand with them, pray for them, and support them in their ministry. We also heard/learned again that there are churches world-wide that not only express their need of us, but from whom we can learn a great deal as we together seek to fulfill our Mission Mandate in and to the world. May the Lord continue to richly bless the work and calling of the ICRC.

Recommendations

1. That Synod express its approval of the proposed change in the wording of Article IV, 1.a. (Membership) of the ICRC Constitution and so inform the Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. C. Van Spronson.
2. That Synod confirm our wholehearted support of the work of the ICRC by 1. appointing a contact person "to liaise with other member churches in their region", and 2. encouraging the congregations to participate in such activities of the ICRC as the Regional and Mission Conferences when such are scheduled in their area.
3. That Synod mandate its Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) to retain contact with the Interim Committee of the ICRC so that proper preparations may be made by and for the URCNA for the next meeting of the ICRC.
4. That Synod, upon the recommendations of CECCA, appoint delegates to the next meeting of the ICRC.
5. That Synod recognize that the Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema has been re-appointed by the ICRC to serve on its Missions Committee for another four year term.

Humbly Submitted,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema,
Secretary, CECCA

Appendix # 6

Consistory of the Community URC
Schererville, In.
8405 Alexander Street,
Schererville. In. 46375
Email: curcoffice@sbcglobal.net

August 27, 2005

Dear Brothers in the Lord,

Recently our committee, the CECCA, met in Hamilton, On. At this meeting a question was raised, as follows: How are we to interpret the meaning of Art. 81, D.1 of the Minutes of Synod Calgary?

After some discussion, the following motion was adopted: "Rev. Sikkema is instructed to ask the convening church for Synod 2007 for an interpretation of the decision of Synod 2004 which speaks of limiting the CECCA committee to 'one visit per year' (with churches with whom we have - or are seeking to establish - ecumenical relations) in addition to attending meetings of the ICRC. Specifically the question to be asked is: Does the decision of Synod mean one visit per church per year; or does it mean one visit to only one of the churches with whom we have or are seeking a relationship in any given year?"

We recognize that possibly the latter understanding ("one visit to only one of the churches ...") is the one intended, though we would submit that it need not so be read. Our concern is that if that is indeed the correct understanding, we (the URCNA, not to mention its committee, the CECCA) will soon be severely hampered in our ecumenical relations.

Brothers, for the "foreign" churches "ecumenical relations" means first and foremost contact, flesh and blood contact with each other. We, that is, the URCNA, are not at all isolated; we have ready access to other church bodies of like confession; we, therefore, do not sense or experience what it means to be "out there" with little or no direct fellowship with other church bodies. But that is not so for Reformed churches in places like New Zealand. India, Indonesia, etc. - churches which long for contact with other Reformed churches more often than once in four years at a meeting of the ICRC.

If, then, our committee (and consequently the URCNA) were to limit "visiting contact" with churches with whom we have or with whom we are seeking to establish ecumenical relations to one visit to only one church per year, and if the number of such churches were to come to only six - which may soon be the case - then already that would mean only one visit every two years. It would also mean that as the one figure (the number of churches) goes up, the other figure (the number of visits) goes down. The

question then becomes more earnest: What exactly does "ecumenical relations" mean for our churches? Do we understand, do we appreciate not only the wonderful blessings of the Lord we may enjoy; but, more importantly, do we understand the awesome responsibility which is ours to be of blessing to those who sense so much a need for our support and encouragement?

Brothers, we lay this matter before you with the hope and prayer that you will be able to serve us with good advice on this important issue. Allow us to thank you beforehand for giving this matter your careful attention.

In Christ's service
For the CECCA committee,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, Secretary

Appendix #7

Community United Reformed Church
8405 Alexander Street
Schererville, IN 46375

9 November 2005

CECCA
c/o Rev. Raymond Sikkema
rayandchris@hotmail.com

Esteemed brothers,

After some delay, we are in receipt of your letter of August 27, 2005, requesting our interpretation of Synod Calgary's decision regarding the number and frequency of committee visits to churches with whom the URCNA is seeking to establish ecumenical relationships.

Our analysis of both the history of synodical decision and your request for interpretation is as follows.

1. History of the synodical deliberation and decisions

1.1. From *Agenda for the Fifth Synod of the URCNA*, pp. 123-124:

In Appendix 2 of its report, the CECCA recommended the following as part of its report (the matter under discussion with the Community URC Consistory is underlined):

“The CECCA committee proposes to Synod Calgary a Terminology document – which at the same time spells out the Mandate of the committee. We recommend a two step/two phase approach, as follows:

- I. The first step, Ecumenical Contact, will focus on studying matters of general concern between the URCNA and the ‘foreign’ federation. This step will be implemented, where possible and desirable, by:
 - a. Exchange of official observers at major assemblies.”

Thus, the proposed Guideline I.a. stipulated the exchange of official observers at major assemblies.

1.2. From *Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA*

1.2.1. Art. 56.B.5. (p. 22): the synod decided to substitute the following reading of Guideline I.a.: “Exchange of official observers at major assemblies *such that one visit be made to one assembly/church per year*” (italic added).

1.2.2. Art. 81.D.1.-2. (p. 32): the synod decided the following:

“D.Motion is made and supported to reconsider CECCA guidelines (Appendix 2, p. 118 [correct as p. 123])

1. Motion is made and supported to amend the recommendation to read: ‘Contacts will be limited to one visit per year plus ICRC meetings and correspondence; however, additional visits (of official observers at major assemblies) can be made when at no cost to synod.’
2. Motion is made and supported to adopt a substitute motion by adding after the amended Recommendation 1a (from Article 56.B.5): ‘Of churches with whom ecumenical relations are being established.’ *Adopted*”

In light of these records, the Community URC Consistory understands the synodically adopted Guideline I.a. to read in its final form: “Exchange of official observers at major assemblies such that one visit be made to one assembly/church per year of churches with whom ecumenical relations are being established.”

2. Request for interpretation from CECCA

2.1. In its letter of August 27, 2005, the CECCA inquires: “How are we to interpret the meaning of Art. 81, D.1 of the Minutes of Synod Calgary?”

2.2. The second paragraph of its letter reports the following committee-adopted motion:

““Rev. Sikkema is instructed to ask the convening church for Synod 2007 for an interpretation of the decision of Synod 2004 which speaks of limiting the CECCA committee to “one visit per year” (with churches with whom we have – or are seeking to establish – ecumenical relations) in addition to attending meetings of the ICRC. Specifically the question to be asked is: Does the decision of Synod mean one visit per year; or does it mean one visit to only one of the churches with whom we have or are seeking a relationship in any given year?””

3. Response of the Community URC Consistory

3.1. Ad 2.1., the Consistory judges that Art. 81, D.1. has no force, since there is no record of Synod Calgary having adopted this reading, and in fact Synod Calgary adopted a substitute motion, as recorded in Art. 81, D.2.

3.2.1 Ad 2.2.

3.2.1.1. The Consistory judges that that the phrase “one visit be made to one assembly/church per year of churches with whom ecumenical relations are being established” is ambiguous. It is capable of two interpretations. If we assume the number of such churches with whom the CECCA has made ecumenical contact to be six, then the following would obtain:

The *aggregate* interpretation: one visit to any of the churches per year
(total annual visits: one)

The *distributive* interpretation: one visit to each of the churches per year
(total annual visits: six)

However, we are not clear regarding the number of churches with whom the CECCA has made ecumenical contact since the Synod Calgary 2004 adopted this guideline.

In light of this ambiguity, and in light of the history of URCNA ecumenical discussions and decisions, the consistory judges that the distributive interpretation (one visit to each of the churches with whom the CECCA has made ecumenical contact) is permissible and desirable.

3.3.1.2. The Consistory observes that adopted Guideline I.a. makes no mention of the involvement of the CECCA in the ICRC. Therefore, the Consistory offers no comment or advice regarding the relevance of Guideline I.a. to the involvement of the CECCA in the ICRC.

We trust that this interpretation satisfies your need, and that it will receive the approbation of Synod 2007.

Wishing you the Lord’s blessing upon your labors, we remain

Fraternally yours,
On behalf of the consistory,

Nelson D.Kloosterman, chairman

Appendix #8

Greetings

Presented to the GKSA on Friday January 6, 2006

Thank you, Mr Chairman;

Beloved Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

This is the second time that I attend the meeting of the GKSA Synod in Potchefstroom; I want to assure you that I count that a wonderful privilege. I want to greet you with the words which the Apostle Paul uses in greeting “the Churches in Galatia”. “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen”. (Gal 1:3-5)

Our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad had decided that, in the event we would receive an invitation to send an observer to the 2006 meeting of the GKSA Synod, we should and would respond positively and that with joy! It is therefore my responsibility to extend to you the hearty greetings of your brothers and sisters in the Lord who gather from Sunday to Sunday as members of the URCNA.

The URCNA

Since I explained in some detail the history of our federation when last I addressed you from this microphone, I will be very brief on that matter now. Suffice it to say that we have grown to about 90 congregations roughly 1/3 in Can and 2/3 in the US.

I want to say also that our federation continues to be deeply concerned about the havoc that is wreaked upon the church, the destructive power of the so-called “New Hermeneutic”. Our Churches seek diligently to be on guard against it – though we recognize that it enters the church subtly. Seldom will anyone say – within our churches: I am a proponent of the New Hermeneutic. Always those (yes especially those) infected with it will affirm in the loudest voice that they are bound to Scripture; that the Scriptures are the Word of God – to which we must be subject. But all too often they either fail or they refuse to recognize that it is the spirit of the age that drives their reading and understanding of the Scripture. It is the spirit of the age that leads them to frame the questions asked of Scripture in such a way that the answer they get is the answer they knew beforehand they wanted.

Let me, in this context, refer also to the fraternal letter which the Synod of the URCNA, Synod Calgary 2004, sent to you. I quote the first three paragraphs:

“It is our joy and privilege to greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord and King of the church. He, our Saviour and Lord, feeds and nourishes His church by His Word and Spirit, ever leading and directing her into the truth – that she may be the pillar and foundation of the truth. The Word of the Lord is also “the sword of the Spirit” which the church is called to handle – to uphold, to defend, and to administer – in faithfulness and in truth.

Such, we confess, is the mandate of each and every congregation; such is also the task of a federation of churches and of the member churches of the ICRC vis a vis each other. It is, therefore, also the responsibility of churches and of federations of churches to hold each other to their sacred task and calling, and to admonish each other and call each other to repentance when they depart from the teaching of the Word.

That brings us to the reason for this fraternal letter to you, the 2006 Synod of the GKSA. It is our conviction that your most recent Synod, that of January 2003, made a decision which is in conflict with the clear teaching of the Lord of the church. We refer to your decision regarding “Women in Office”, your opening of the office of deacon to women. It grieves us that you chose to take this divisive action. In the light of our newly adopted Guidelines for Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship with Churches Abroad, your present course on this matter may have adverse implications for our future relationship.”

The sermon of Dr. Buys

That leads me to say a word about the sermon of Rev. Flip Buys on Wednesday evening – a sermon I much appreciated; a sermon also that set me to thinking. You see, it struck me not only that it says in the prophecy of Zachariah that those ten men from “every language of the nations ... have heard that God is with you”, with that Jewish man, with the Church! - but that, if that is indeed (to be) so, the question must also be answered: How? How can the world hear that God is with us – Immanuel? Surely that can be so only if the church speaks the Word – only the Word, all of the Word, nothing but the Word of the Lord.

When you then think through the reality of that confession, then you know that people are drawn to the Church – can only be drawn to the Church - by the grace of God. For, a Church that speaks only what the Word says, no more and no less, is an offence to sinful man. And see, sinful man wants to update the Scripture, to assure its relevance to the sensitivities of modern man - often not recognizing that by so doing he loses the Word of God, so losing God. You understand, none of those ten men, in the grip of the grace of God, will go with such a Church – for they will not hear that God is with such a Church!

I am reminded of an article that appeared in the Hamilton Spectator on the 80th anniversary of the United Church in Canada. This Church was founded in 1925 when the Methodist, the Congregational and 2/3 of the Presbyterian Church of Canada joined to become a forerunner of modern day attempts to form an all embracing Protestant Church in the land. In 1925 it had 600 000 members. Projections are that by the year 2050 there will not be 50 000 members left to blow out the candles on its 125th birthday. David Haskell, the journalism professor who wrote the article, tries to give all sorts of sociological insights to help us understand why that might be so. But the fact is, Mr Haskell makes no mention of Zechariah 8. And it is doubtful he knows of the grace of God that would lead people **to – not away from** - the Church where **God** is because his **Word** is there! He doesn't understand, as indeed the United Church of Canada does not understand that God actually says what he means and that He means what He says.

Concerns

Brothers, it is with a sense of trepidation that I now speak to you of my reading of your “Meerderheidsrapport Deputate Leerstellige Sake – Plek van die vrou in die Kerk”. It was given to me when I attended the ICRC meeting in October in Pretoria. As I read it, I became more and more disturbed. Oh to be sure, all manner of truths (plural) – waarhede - are mentioned. How could it be otherwise? But the Truth, where is “the truth of Word” in this matter?

I sat down to write a critique. After nearly ten pages I quit. I had only - certainly incompletely - covered some of the samevattende aanbevelings and points 4.1.1 to 4.1.8. I had read the rest of the report, mind you, but despaired of writing more since it would only be a response to more of the same in a tendentiously written report that again and again mentions just enough of the facts regarding a passage to lead an unwary reader to think that he had heard the Truth of the Word expounded while in fact he was consistently and systematically being led astray!

I am persuaded that the writers of the report simply are not hearing what it is the Lord is saying. An example, one among many that could be mentioned. The report relates that already in the OT women functioned “in die regeerampste van rigter en koning”; referring then to Athalia as an example of women “in die regeerampst”. Surely, that is foisting deception on the reader. Anyone reading this passage must remember that Athalia, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, when she saw that her son, Ahaziah, was dead arose and killed all “the royal heirs”. Surely we must understand that the “Kingship” of Athalia was a judgement upon the sin of Judah and not a recommendation of women “in die regeerampst”. Not to see that is to be blinded – if not by **the** new Hermeneutic, then certainly by **a** new Hermeneutic!

It is therefore my hope and prayer that you will wholeheartedly reject both this report and its recommendations. Not to do so would indeed jeopardise your relationship with the URCNA and for that matter with the ICRC – which would be sad. Not to do so, however, would also surely open the gates to all manner of “new ways” – ways which of old, and throughout her history, the Church wholeheartedly rejected. That would be much sadder! For, you see, such “new ways” may indeed make the GKSA more acceptable to the world but it will not move the world to want to join the GKSA in humble confession of the Word of the Lord unto life! Why, after all, would the world join a church that offers nothing more and nothing other than the world itself already has – unto death. So the GKSA would jeopardise her very life and wellbeing.

In closing I would like to read to you Jude: 24, 25:

“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen”.

It is my prayer that the blessing of the Lord may indeed be yours in rich abundance.

Thank you, Mr Chairman

Appendix #9

Report: GKSA Synod, January 4 – 13, 2006 Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema Delegated Observer

The National Synod of the GKSA began its tri-annual meeting on Wednesday morning in its Sinode Gebou at Potchefstroom. The first item of business, after appropriate opening devotions and welcoming of delegates, was the election of the Moderamen. Thereupon the Rev. Dr. Douw Breed, the newly elected chairman, took his place at the head table, and invited the brothers to commit themselves to the work of the 49th sitting of the GKSA Synod: working through an Agenda of 516 pages and an Aanvullende (a Supplementary) Agenda of 415 pages – 931 pages in total; a daunting task! By the time Synod finished meeting – late on the evening of the 13th – it had produced over 275 pages of Committee Reports; some 50 pages of Notes re its Minutes; and many pages recording the Daily Schedules.

Since I reported in detail on the Modus Operandi of the GKSA Synod in my 2003 Report, I will not again focus on that – except in instances where it may help clarify the actions/decisions of the Synod. It is my intention to focus on issues/matters that (may eventually) directly impact on the ecumenical relationship between the URCNA and the GKSA, specifically (1) the Reports of their Ecumenical Relations Committees, both Domestic and Foreign, (Deputate Ekumenisiteit – Binnenlands; and Rapport Deputate Ekumenies – Buitenland); (2) the Majority and Minority Reports: Women in Office (Meerderheidsrapport and Minderheidsrapport Deputate Leerstelling – plek van die vrou in die kerk), as well as the various Appeals against the 2003 decision to allow women to serve in the Office of Deacon (Beswaarskrifte teen besluite van Sinode 2003 oor toelating van die vrou in die diakenamp).; and (3) Other Matters of Interest.

1. Ecumenical Relations Matters

- a. As does the URCNA, the GKSA has two committees that focus on ecumenical relations. The Deputate Ekumenisiteit – Binnenlands (the Ecumenical Relations Committee that works with South –African Churches) submitted two reports, some of whose contents occasioned spirited debate. At issue was especially the question: Should the GKSA be a member of such organizations as the SARK, (the Suid-Afrikaanse Raad van Kerke) and the TKR, (the Tussenkerklike Raad) – respectively, the South-African Council of Churches and the Intra-Church Council. Those who raised objections, as well as those who were firmly opposed, focused their concern on the question: Is our confessional integrity not being jeopardized when we work with or through such (liberal!) organizations? The proponents, who eventually proved to be the majority, argued that the church should not be afraid to let its light shine. Here, they said, we have opportunity to bear witness to the truth – also to those in government! – as we confess it in Christ, in faithfulness to His Word. Yes, we will be challenged, but we must not shrink from our task and calling to be “the Light” and to be “bearers of the Light” in a sin-darkened world. It was also acknowledged that it is the responsibility of the GKSA to be self-consciously monitoring itself in this regard since (1) lofty ideals/words must not be confused with what is actually done, and (2) there is the distinct possibility that “the world” defines you by the company you keep – rather than by the witness you (seek to) give.

One other item of importance – to both the GKSA and to us! – is the “Belydenis van Belhar” (the Belhar Confession). Since this confession is being discussed in the NG Kerk of SA, a member of the SARK, it must now be discussed by all the SARK member churches. The focus of such discussion is on five concerns, as follows:

1. the actual content of the Belhar Confession;
2. the “marks” (kenmerke) which must characterize a confession;
3. the conditions which (must) give rise to the writing of a confession;
4. the relationship between the Belhar Confession and the other Reformed Confessions;
5. the effect, or the implication, of the acceptance or the non-acceptance of the Belhar Confession on the relationship between the various churches (of SARK).

The GKSA Synod expressed its appreciation for the “pro-active” attention given (by the participants) to the implications which the Belhar Confession will have for the relationship between the various church bodies.

- b. The GKSA committee which focuses on ecumenical relations with churches abroad, the committee with which our CECCA committee corresponds, submitted a lengthy report on its far-reaching activities. No less than ten churches are listed with whom the GKSA has Ecumenical Unity (Ekumeniese Eenheid), including: the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN); the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NGK); the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) (PCK(K)); the Reformed Church Japan (RCJ); the Christian Reformed Church in Australia (CRCA); the Reformed Church New Zealand (RCNZ); the Free Church of Scotland en Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCS en FCS(C)); the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRCNA); the Reformed Church Botswana (RCB); and the Eglisee Reformee Confessante au Congo (ERCC).

The report on each of these churches begins with a statement re the (new or renewed) Mandate within which the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the GKSA will work in the future. The Committee of Pre-advice then lays this proposed Mandate (or a revised version thereof) before the Synod for its discussion/approval. Of interest to me – and a matter on which I expressed myself both on the floor of Synod, and later, after it was re-submitted to the Committee of Pre-advice, before that committee – was the question of the (continuing) relationship between the GKSA and the CRCNA. Though there was indeed dissent expressed, the Synod adopted a proposal to the effect that its Ecumenical Relations Committee meet with the CRCNA to (continue to) discuss a number of developments within the CRCNA – in order to come to a “normalized” relationship with the CRCNA, a relationship which has been “on hold” since the 2003 Synod. The issues on which the contact/correspondence is to focus includes: (1) Was/is there a departure from Reformed Hermeneutics in the CRCNA decision re Women in Office? (2) Are there departures from Reformed church practice in Liturgy, etc? (3) What is the *position* of, and what is the *practice* in the CRCNA re the homosexual? (4) How does the Church Order really function in the CRCNA? A report on the findings is expected at the next meeting of the GKSA Synod in 2009.

Also listed under the rubric: Ecumenical Unity was a report on Gereformeerde Jeug in London, Reformed Youth in London. Hundreds of SA youth have moved to England, especially to London, many of whom are wandering away from the (a) church. The GKSA is seeking ways to minister to these youth – especially through the London City Presbyterian Church (Rev. David Strain) and the Cobham Presbyterian Church (Rev. David Millar). I mention this since there are also many people from SA in Canada (and perhaps in the USA) who are likewise wandering and are in need of pastoral care.

The Churches with whom the GKSA has Ecumenical Bonds (Ekumeniese Bande) include:

1. The Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland, Vrijgemaakt (GKN(v)). This federation, in a communication dated 16 June 2005, had offered to enter into the “Ecumenical Unity” relationship with the GKSA. This proposal was gratefully accepted.
2. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). The Synod accepted with thankfulness the recommendation of its Ecumenical Relations Committee that the GKSA enter into the “Ecumenical Unity” relationship with the OPC.
3. The United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). The Synod not only took note of the letter sent by Synod Calgary 2004, it expressed its sorrow/regret (spyt) that the URCNA did not see its way clear to enter into an “Ecumenical Fellowship” (our designation) relationship with the GKSA. It requests, moreover, that the URCNA point out (aandui) how the GKSA decision re Women in the Office of Deacon is in conflict with the Word of God. Additionally, it requests that we specify which “decisions/developments which are (also) disturbing the peace of the GKSA” we are referring to and whether we mean to admonish them re such “decisions/developments”. It should be noted that the GKSA genuinely seeks Ecumenical Unity (their terminology) with the URCNA.

4. Reformed Church of the United States (RCUS). The GKSA will seek to strengthen its Bonds with the RCUS, with a view to eventually establishing an Ecumenical Unity relationship with this federation.

The churches with whom the GKSA has Ecumenical Contact – in various stages of “development” – include:

1. Kerke in Spanje en Frankryk;
2. Kerke in Sri Lanka;
3. Kerke in Indonesie, including: Die Calvinisties-Gereformeerde Kerke van West-Timor (GGRCI) and Kerke in Java;
4. Kerke in Africa;
5. The First Evangelical Presbyterian Reformed Church in Singapore (FEPRCS);
6. The Samen op Weg Kerke (PKN); and
7. The Presbyterian Church of America (PCA);

Additionally,

1. The GKSA decided to retain its Observer status with the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC); it will send delegates (afgevaardigdes) to the next REC meeting.
2. The GKSA took thankful note of its acceptance into the membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC); it is cognizant of the fact that its (future) decisions re Women in Office will have a direct bearing on that membership.
3. The GKSA fully accepted its participation in the ministries of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF); two delegates are to be sent to the various District and National Conferences.

2. The Women in Ecclesiastical Office Issue

As was reported to Synod Calgary 2004, the GKSA had acted favorably on a report submitted to its 48th Sinode in 2003 which permitted the ordination of women to the Office of Deacon. That Synod also appointed a committee which was to study and report on the question: May women serve in the office of Elder and Minister of the Word. As was expected, many Appeals (Beswaarskrifte) – no less than 12 – were submitted to the 49th Sinode re the 2003 decision – all of which were both declared properly before synod and given to a number of Committees of Pre-Advise. Additionally, there were the Majority and Minority reports re Women serving in the Office of Elder and Minister – the first in favor of, the other in opposition to it – both of which were also given to a Committee of Pre-Advice, after having been declared properly before Synod. The stage was set for a showdown! Though it could surely not be said that this was (to be) a “one issue” synod – not with an Agenda of 931 pages! – it soon became clear that the “Women in Office” issue was foremost in the minds of the delegates – and indeed had been so in the mind of the churches in selecting its delegates to this Synod.

a. The committees of Pre-advice

It should be noted at the outset that the 12 Appeals were assigned to three separate Committees of Pre-advice. Moreover, as there is a very clearly defined way for writing an Appeal, so there is also a clearly defined way of responding to an Appeal. The format is as follows: after noting the pages in the Agenda where the Appeal is recorded and having noted the action of Synod re its admissibility, the committee proceeds to record its *Discussion* re the first ground of the Appeal (Beredenering); it next records its *Findings* (Bevinding); and then records its *Recommendation* (Aanbeveling). It should be noted that this is done with *each* of the Grounds of an Appeal. It is possible, and indeed it happens, that an Appeal is judged to have *succeeded on only one ground* – all of the other Grounds proposed having been found wanting.

On the day the issue of Women in Office came to the floor for the first time, a package of 16 pages dealing with seven of the 12 Appeals were in the hands of the delegates – two each from 2 of the Committees of Pre-advice, and three from the third. Among them were two Minority Reports – submitted by one elder – who argued that the two Appeals his committee

had handled had succeeded; all the other Reports judged that all of the Appeals had failed. The Modus Operandi of the Synod dictates not only that each of these Reports be handled separately, each of the Grounds presented (and responded to) are also handled separately. The chairman chose to begin with an Appeal which argued that Synod 2003, by deciding that the Office of Deacon be opened to women, had violated both Art.46 and Art. 31 of the GKSA Church Order. (Art.46 stipulates that a matter once decided cannot be acted on again unless it is shown that there are new grounds; Art.31 stipulates that a decision once made can only be changed if it is shown that it conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order.) The Appeal argued that the Committee reporting in 2003 had violated the decision of Synod 1988 which had found that there is no Scriptural ground for Women in Ecclesiastical Office – period. Synod 2000 had appointed a Committee with the Mandate: What “ministries” may a woman legitimately perform – other than that of the three ecclesiastical offices? The Committee reporting in 2003, so said the Appeal, went beyond its Mandate when it proposed that women may (after all) serve in the Office of Deacon; and the Synod, by acting favorably on that Report, violated the two CO articles.

The Committee of Pre-advice, reporting on this Appeal, argued that Synod 2003 had not violated the CO, since the assertion that the decision of 1988 had already been “tested” by a later Synod was not true to fact, and that the Mandate given to the Committee appointed in 2000 (reporting in 2003) could be read as permitting that Committee to re-study the matter. Therefore, it said, the Appeal on its first Ground, should be judged to have failed. Similarly, it argued that the second Ground of the Appeal failed, since Synod 2000 had clearly said that there were still unanswered questions remaining from the 1988 study. It therefore recommended that Synod judge that this Appeal in its entirety failed.

A discussion ensued; it became clear that not all the delegates were in agreement with the Recommendation of the Committee. The matter was brought to a vote on the first Ground; the vote was too close to call; it was counted – and re-counted. It was undeniable: the Recommendation of the Committee of Pre-advice had FAILED. The matter was brought to a vote on the second Ground; it, too, was counted and re-counted. The outcome was the same! Consternation; disbelief; uncertainty. What to do next? It was suggested that, by upholding the Beswaarskrift van Partikuliere Sinode Bosveld, Synod had in fact not only decided all of the concerns raised in the other Appeals, but that it had also thereby decided that the Leerstellig Rappports – plek van die vrou in die kerk – (the Study Reports re Women in Office) were illegitimately before Synod.

Eventually Synod appointed an Ad Hoc Committee – which submitted a report later that (Wednesday) evening. The Committee began its report by reminding Synod of two things, namely that Christ is the Head of the Church and that the confession of Art. 32 of the Belgic Confession re the governing of the church must be honored. It affirmed that Synod had indeed decided that the Appeal of the Particular (Regional) Synod Bosveld had been sustained. This, said the Committee, opened three possibilities, as follows: (1) By adopting the Appeal, Synod not only decided that all of the other Appeals had been answered, it also declared that all other matters flowing from the (erroneous) 2003 decision were therefore off the table. (2) By adopting the Appeal, Synod had only agreed with point 4 of the 2003 decision (as referred to in the Appeal); therefore, all Appeals referring to this point must be considered answered. However, everything else (of the 2003 decision) should be regarded as legitimately before Synod, to be dealt with by Synod. (3) Though the Appeal had indeed been adopted, (this) Synod should look at all the givens of Scripture re the question of Women in the Office of Deacon, and whatever the decision, that would constitute the GKSA position on the matter. Furthermore, the Study Reports presented re Women in Ecclesiastical Office should be accepted as legitimately before Synod and should be acted on by Synod. Before retiring for the evening, the Chairman recorded a long list of speakers who, he said, would be given opportunity to address the matter in the morning.

On Thursday morning, a fourth proposal was presented – prior to any “speeches” from delegates, as follows: (4) Since the Appeal has been adopted, a Study Committee should be appointed with the Mandate to advise the next Synod on the question: Can women serve in the Office of Deacon and/or in other diaconal ministries?

The Chairman “ruled” that, since the Ad Hoc Committee agreed with the fourth proposal, the first three proposals were off the table – and with it the list of speakers he had recorded. A new list of speakers was drawn up (+/- 60 speakers). All were encouraged to address only the fourth proposal; many disregarded this – addressing instead one of the earlier proposals. After 2 hours of debate, another committee was asked to formulate a proposal, noting in particular the points of the third proposal. The proposals of this (new) Ad Hoc Committee were adopted nearly unanimously. A prayer of thanksgiving was offered and the body sang Psalm 146:1. An English translation of the decision was provided (attached).

It should be noted for the record (1): That the Committee of Pre-advice re the Study Report on Women in the Office Elder and Minister, had prepared a report that *rejected* the conclusions and recommendations of the Majority Report (favoring Women in Office). (2): That this Committee met with the Fraternal Delegates and Observers who were encouraged to interact with the recommendations of the Study Report. Three – the Rev. Dr. George W. Knight III of the OPC, the Rev. John Rogers of the RCNZ, and I – presented papers which critically analyzed the argumentations presented by the Study Committee. Clearly, these efforts were received with appreciation. It should be noted, moreover, (3): That – though there was a sizeable number of churches/delegates who are of the opinion that women may serve as Deacons, since that is a ministry (they say) that will not involve them in *the rule and discipline* of the church – there was clearly a large majority of churches/delegates who are flat-out opposed to women serving in the office of Elder and Minister. And, finally, it should be noted (4): That most of the Fraternal Delegates and Observers clearly spoke out against the adoption of the Majority Report in their Greetings/Address to Synod. My speech is attached.

3. Other Matters of Interest

There were again many Appeals against the decision to recognize (and adopt) what is called the Kloete Beryming (in distinction from the earlier – 1936 – Totius Beryming) of the Psalms. Though the GKSA is not an “exclusive Psalmody” church, it not only will not sing Hymns – permitting only Skrifberyminge – it also is concerned that the Psalms be faithfully rhymed, and that such rhyming convey a Christo-centric reading of the Psalms. Of particular concern at this Synod was the rhyming of Psalm 110 in the Kloete Beryming. Kloete, it is known, does not hold to the idea/confession that certain Psalms are directly messianic. Since that is a “given”, how did that position of Kloete impact his work on Psalm 110? The appellants (there were several Appeals on the issue) argued that Kloete’s rhyming of the Psalm in effect forces the churches to deny the messianic focus of the Psalm, and should therefore be rejected. Included in the debate on the matter was the question: Are we to sing the Psalms as did the OT believers or indeed as NT believers? None of the Appeals succeeded. (Our Songbook Committee would do well to apprise itself of the issues and the responses – not only of the GKSA, but also of e.g. the RCNZ, which actively are involved in discussing the singing/Songbook of the church. Some of our Psalm selections in the Blue Psalter Hymnal may not make their cut – for a variety of reasons.)

Another issue that stirs within the GKSA (as indeed in other ICRC member churches) is the question: May Christ be *pictured* – in our Bibles and study materials? Though the specific Appeal failed, the issue is very much alive in the GKSA.

There was much discussion on Financial Matters, especially re the care of the retired pastors and the aged. The church’s Ministry to the Youth, Evangelism, Media and Publications – though all receiving much attention, will not be commented on in this report. I trust that I have given adequate attention to those matters that are important for our discussion/decision re our (future) relationship with the GKSA.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the URCNA propose to the GKSA that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship (Ecumenical Unity) relationship with each other.

Humbly Submitted,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, Observer

Appendix # 10

THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
The Rev. James Maciver,
Principal Clerk of Assembly

May 8, 2006

Esteemed Brothers in the Lord,

It is our joy and privilege to greet you in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, the sovereign king of the church whom we seek to serve in humble obedience to His Word of Truth. Since you may be reading this letter of greeting at your forthcoming General Assembly Meeting – due to open on the 22nd of May, 2006 – we wish to express the prayer that you may seek, and indeed experience in rich measure, the guidance of the Holy Spirit through whose infallible leading the FCS also will surely be led to discern the truth as it deliberates the issues on its Agenda – that so the church of Jesus Christ in Scotland may be the Light that shines clearly in a sin-darkened world.

Brothers, we indeed want to thank you for the invitation extended to us – the URCNA – to be in attendance as Observers at your General Assembly. Our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) took grateful note of both the invitation and the gracious hospitality you were prepared to offer to us. However, the CECCA decided that “because of our limited resources, it will not be possible for us to accept the invitation at this time”. We want to convey to you our genuine concern for you as you deliberate “the issues involving the Free Church of Scotland v. Free Church (Continuing) dispute”. It is our prayer that also herein you may diligently search the Scriptures for guidance and direction – fully assured that the Lord of the Church will direct you to the solution that will be pleasing in His sight.

We would like to raise one other matter in this letter. Our CECCA has received a number of communications from a Pastor Lalchungnung Lushai of the Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bangladesh, (ERPCB). Since we did not know anything about this church, we contacted the BBK of the GKN(v) requesting information re this church. The BBK has responded that it does not have “any contacts in Bangladesh”, but that “as far as we know the Free Church in Scotland does have relations in that country” – suggesting also that perhaps you can give us more information about this church. Hence our question: Do you know anything about the ERPCB and/or Pastor Lushai? If yes, are you willing/able to share such information with us? We would very much appreciate receiving any help you may be able to offer us re this Pastor/church.

In closing, it is our prayer that the Lord richly bless you and your ministry – as indeed the ministry of the FRC – “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of wisdom, may give you a spirit of wisdom ...” for His glory and fore the upbuilding of the church of Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever.

In His service,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema
Secretary, CECCA

Appendix #11

Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
Deputate Ekumenies: Buitenland
C/o Dr. Douw Breed, et al

November 17, 2006

Dear Brothers,

It is my joy and privilege to greet you in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ and to inform you of the decision which our CECCA committee adopted at our recent committee meeting, namely that we recommend to our Synod “that the URCNA propose to the GKSA that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship (Ecumenical Unity) relationship with each other.”

This recommendation will be presented to Synod Schererville, 2007 for action with the following grounds:

1. The CECCA committee, having met with delegates of the GKSA – both in SA and in NA – and having looked into recent decisions of the GKSA Synod, is persuaded that the GKSA is committed to be faithful to the Scriptures and to the Three Forms of Unity. (See the January 2006 Report of the Delegated Observer to the GKSA Synod.)
2. The ICRC, after full discussion of “issues of concern” – (issues which were subsequently favorably reflected in the decisions taken by the Synod of the GKSA in January 2006) – received the GKSA into full membership. Additionally,
3. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to engage more effectively in “the exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity” with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, c.)
4. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to engage more effectively in “joint actions in areas of joint responsibility” with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, e.)
5. Such a relationship will enable us (the URCNA) to warn more effectively against the adoption of “fundamental changes in polity, doctrine or practice” by the GKSA – since the adoption of “fundamental changes” in such matters “may jeopardize the (proposed) established ecumenical relationship” with the GKSA. (Cf. the Terminology Document, point II, f.)

Brothers, it is our conviction that it is of crucial importance that our churches stand as one in a sin-broken world as we seek to be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel and the Lordship of Jesus Christ to that world. It is, however, also our conviction that we must seek to fulfil that task with churches of like precious faith/confession.

It is, therefore, my responsibility to alert you to the fact that our committee is fully persuaded that our Synod will inquire of us what information we can provide re the relationship between the GKSA and the CRCNA – a matter which, as you know, we raised with you both at our recent meeting in St Catharines and which was raised at the most recent Synod meeting of the GKSA. (As a matter of fact, it was raised already when first we met in Grand Rapids with Dr. Du Plessis and Dr. Du Plooy.)

Let me simply and clearly state that for the URCNA the issue is not: What has happened in the CRCNA in the last 15 years? The fact is, one will receive a variety of answers – depending on who it is that asks the question and of whom the question is asked. Neither is the issue: How are such more recent developments to be weighed/judged? For then, too, the answer depends on who asks and of whom it is asked. Rather, the issue is that by the early nineties the CRCNA had departed substantially from the confessional position it had historically adhered to – (which gave rise to the formation of the URCNA!) – and that it has refused to rescind such action in subsequent years. It was for that reason, you understand, that the NAPARC member churches voted to remove the CRCNA – (a founding member of that body) – from its membership; and it is for that reason that the URCNA can not and will not abide a relationship with those who believe they can tolerate the departure from the historic Reformed faith/confession of the CRCNA.

Brothers, I trust that you will understand that I have written with candor – since it makes no sense to lead each other around the proverbial mulberry bush. I have sought to relate clearly the concerns raised in our committee – and how we, as committee, believe we can effectively respond to such and similar concerns we anticipate from the floor of our Synod. In that connection, I would ask that you give careful thought also to our fifth ground, above.

It is our hope and prayer that Synod Schererville will heartily adopt our proposal which, we trust, will open the door to a long and fruitful relationship between our two federations.

Let me also alert you to the fact that our Stated Clerk will be asked to send you an official invitation to send a delegate to our Synod scheduled to meet in July of 2007, DV.

May the Lord richly bless the ministry of the GKSA for His praise and glory.

In His service,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema
CECCA Secretary

Appendix #12

Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland, Vrijgemaakt
Ds. R.C. (Karlo) Janssen, Secretary BBK

November 17, 2006

Dear Brothers,

It is my joy and privilege to greet you in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ and to inform you of our decision that we begin the process of establishing Ecumenical Fellowship with the GKN(v).

At the meeting of our CECCA committee we adopted the following motion: After discussing at some length the “Rapport deputaten vierde gebod en zondag” and the “Divorce and Remarriage” reports as well as referring to the report submitted by the Rev. Fritz Harms re his visit with the GKN(v) Synod in 2005, the motion was made and passed that we “agree to recommend a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the GKN(v)” on the following grounds:

1. The GKN(v) Synod Amersfoort (2005) declared “sister church” relations with the URCNA.
2. Entering into a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the GKN(v) at this time is an appropriate reciprocal action at this time.
3. Establishing a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the GKN(v) is in keeping with the purpose of such a relationship, namely that we “focus on studying matters of general concern” – with a view to the establishment of a full, Ecumenical Fellowship, relationship with the GKN(v).

Brothers, it is our conviction that it is of crucial importance that our churches stand as one in a sin-broken world as we seek to be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel and the Lordship of Jesus Christ to that world. By way of explanation, let me point out that our Synod(s) are committed to following a two step (two phase) approach in establishing the Ecumenical Fellowship relationship we look forward to – as per our guidelines in these matters.

As committee, we believe that Synod Schererville will enthusiastically adopt our proposal – which will then open the way for a recommendation to the next following Synod that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship relationship with each other.

Let me also alert you to the fact that our Stated Clerk will be asked to send you an official invitation to send a delegate to our Synod scheduled to meet in July of 2007, DV.

May the lord richly bless the ministry of the GKN(v) for His praise and glory.

In His service,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema
CECCA Secretary

Appendix #13

Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Rev. Bruce Hoyt, Stated Clerk

November 17, 2006

Dear Brothers,

It is my joy and privilege to greet you in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ and to inform you of our decision that we begin the process of establishing Ecumenical Fellowship with the RCNZ.

At the meeting of our CECCA committee we adopted the following motion: After a brief discussion on the September 28, 2006 letter received from the RCNZ, the motion was made and passed that we “agree to recommend (to our Synod Schererville, 2007) a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the RCNZ” on the following grounds:

1. The RCNZ has moved to establish ecumenical relations with the URCNA.
2. Entering into a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the RCNZ at this time is an appropriate reciprocal action at this time.
3. Establishing a Phase One, Ecumenical Contact, relationship with the RCNZ is in keeping with the purpose of such a relationship, namely that we “focus on studying matters of general concern” – with a view to the establishment of a full, Ecumenical Fellowship, relationship with the RCNZ.

Brothers, it is our conviction that it is of crucial importance that our churches stand as one in a sin-broken world as we seek to be faithful in proclaiming the Gospel and the Lordship of Jesus Christ to that world. We recognize that it is “the hope” of the RCNZ that we “would soon be able to establish Ecumenical Fellowship” with each other. However, our committee is also cognizant of the fact that our Synod(s) are committed to following the two step (two phase) approach in establishing such relationships – as per our guidelines in these matters.

As committee, we believe that Synod Schererville will enthusiastically adopt our proposal – which will then open the way for a recommendation to the next following Synod that we enter into the Ecumenical Fellowship relationship with each other.

Let me also alert you to the fact that our Stated Clerk will be asked to send you an official invitation to send a delegate to our Synod scheduled to meet in July of 2007, DV.

May the Lord richly bless the ministry of the RCNZ for His praise and glory.

In His service,
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema
CECCA Secretary

Appendix # 14

Invitation Letter

Draft of letter to be sent to churches invited to send a Fraternal Delegate to Synod Schererville.

Name of the Church

Name of the person to whom the letter is sent

Date of the letter

Dear Brothers in the Lord,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord and Savior of the church. It is our prayer that His indispensable blessing rest upon you in rich abundance.

As you may already know, the Synod of the URCNA is scheduled to meet from the 9th till the 13th of July 2007 at Palos Heights, near Chicago, Illinois. Our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) has requested that I, on behalf of the URCNA, invite your federation to send a fraternal delegate to that meeting, a man who would then also bring your greetings and address the Synod on behalf of your federation.

We will warmly welcome your delegate, provide hospitality – including accommodations and meals – and acquaint him with the modus operandi of the Synod. It should be noted that the URCNA, though gladly providing transportation for the delegate while he is in attendance at the meetings, is not responsible for the cost of the transportation to and from the venue of the meeting; such costs are the responsibility of your federation.

We eagerly anticipate receiving the news that you have appointed your fraternal delegate for the meetings of the upcoming URCNA Synod. Please inform us of the time of his arrival; we will be sure to welcome him and bring him to his place of lodging – at which time he will also be given the appropriate documents for the meetings.

It should also be noted that it is the intention of our CECCA committee to schedule a meeting with your fraternal delegate some time during the week that Synod meets. We trust that such a meeting will serve to strengthen the ties between our federations as we seek to encourage each other in the task to which the Lord calls us.

Yours in the Lord's service,
Mr. Bill Konynenbelt,
Stated Clerk, URCNA

Appendix # 15

Invitation Letter

Draft of letter to be sent to churches invited to send an Observer to Synod Schererville

Name of the church

Name of the person to whom the letter is sent (if known)

Date of the letter

Dear Brothers,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord and Savior of the church. It is our prayer that His indispensable blessing rest upon you in rich abundance.

As you may already know, the Synod of the URCNA is scheduled to meet from the 9th till the 13th of July 2007 at Palos Heights, near Chicago, Illinois. Our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) has requested that I, on behalf of the URCNA, invite your federation to send an official observer to that meeting, a man who may be asked to bring your greetings and address the Synod on behalf of your federation.

We will warmly welcome your observer, provide hospitality – including accommodations and meals – and acquaint him with the modus operandi of the Synod. It should be noted that the URCNA, though gladly providing transportation for the observer while he is in attendance at the meetings, is not responsible for the cost of the transportation to and from the venue of the meeting; such costs are the responsibility of your federation.

Should you decide to send an observer to attend our Synod, we request that you inform us of the time of his arrival; we will be sure to welcome him and bring him to his place of lodging – at which time he will also be given the appropriate documents for the meetings.

It should also be noted that it is the intention of our CECCA committee to schedule a meeting with the observers in attendance some time during the week that Synod meets. We trust that such a meeting will serve to strengthen the ties between our federations as we seek to encourage each other in the task to which the Lord calls us.

Yours in the Lord's service,
Mr. Bill Konynenbelt,
Stated Clerk, URCNA

URCNA Web Site Committee Report

March 30, 2007

Esteemed Brothers,

It is with humility and a bit of fatigue that we present this report for your consideration. The task so briefly set out for us by Synod 2004 has indeed proved to be enormous. We are well aware that many have had great expectations for the new URCNA website. We are also aware that many expectations have been disappointed so that you might be wondering what we have been up to.

The story behind the story is that “you don’t know what you don’t know” – just like “we didn’t know what we didn’t know” – what is involved in putting a website together, especially as a community effort. From the beginning the non-technical members of the committee have been on a steep learning curve – discovering just the most basic of the complexities involved behind the web sites that we all take for granted on the internet. The ones we like the most – that are most pleasing to the eye and most responsive to meet and exceed our expectations – are sites that are supported by vast and ongoing resources of time, money, and/or equipment (in that order).

We have not needed to buy equipment or pay monthly fees because of the generous provision of a dedicated server and bandwidth by Mr. Ken Marcus, the owner-operator of Precision Web (www.precisionweb.net). We have not yet spent any of the \$5,506.54 available to us as of 12/31/2006¹ from Classical contributions. This amount is not enough to contract out for the planning, building, populating, and maintaining of the website by a commercial enterprise. Therefore, from the beginning, committee members (and particularly members of the technical sub-committee we established to help us),² have expended much personal time and effort to follow our mandate.

Because Synod mandated that each Classis be represented,³ we did not establish a quorum until the end of January 2005 and were not fully constituted until May 2005. We conducted our first conference call on February 2, 2005. At that time Mr. Bill Konynenbelt was elected as chairman; Rev. Stephen Donovan as vice-chairman, and Mr. Roger Vanoostveen as secretary. In attendance were:

Classis Central US	Mr. Brian Yonkman
Classis Eastern US	Rev. Paul Murphy
Classis Michigan	Mr. Gregory Rickmar
Classis Southern Ontario	Mr. Roger Vanoostveen
Classis Southwest US	Rev. Stephen Donovan
Stated Clerk	Mr. Bill Konynenbelt

By the time of our second conference call on May 25, 2005, the following additions were noted to the committee:

Classis Western Canada	Rev. Kevin Efflandt (added)
Classis Central US	Mr. Jay DeYoung (replaced Mr. Brian Yonkman)

¹ URCNA Treasurer’s Report dated February, 2007.

² Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA (2004), page 34; Article 84.A.

³ Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA (2004), page 16; Article 40.B.

The present membership reflects some further changes:

Classis Michigan	Mr. Gary Fisher (replaced Mr. Gregory Rickmar)
Classis Western Canada	Mr. Kevin Pasveer (replaced Rev. Kevin Efflandt)

Immediately, we sought to establish a technical subcommittee to help us in our work. The mandate for this committee was introduced on February 11, 2005 and finally adopted on April 21, 2005 (see appendix A to this report).

The first and most fundamental issue faced had to do with what operating system and database design we would use. The unofficial website hosted by Covenant URC of Kalamazoo is on a Microsoft Windows server and the database is in Microsoft Access. The committee wrestled with whether to maintain this architecture or to transfer and translate the website to an Open Source based server (Linux) and database (MySQL).

Continuing with a Microsoft platform would allow for a faster transfer of the website from the Covenant URC server, but keep us more constrained by proprietary licensing costs of software. A change to the Open Source platform would delay the transfer, but allow for greater liberty in securing low-cost or no-cost software. The discussion regarding this fundamental decision was protracted and passionate. In the end, it was decided to transition the Microsoft to the Open Source platform. This decision was extremely important and took considerable time and effort to reach; something that we know may well be lost on the users of the website who enjoy the fruit of this decision.

Progress to date has depended entirely on the donated time and expertise of gifted and dedicated members of the URCNA, many of whom have been willing to serve in this effort – in both large and small ways. But, as is so often true, the most willing are also the most committed – to other demanding projects in church, home, and /or school. Therefore, we have continually found willing spirits to be frustrated by frail flesh. What progress we have made is largely the fruit of the labors of a handful of technically savvy and committed individuals.

Those of you who have posted and maintain your own websites may be particularly frustrated with our efforts. After all, it likely took you no time at all to get your site up with your hosting service. We would remind you of some luxuries you enjoy that we do not. Within the confines of your website template, you are free to act in a more-or-less entrepreneurial way: spending your own time and money to do what you think is best as quickly as you can arrange to do it (right now!) subject only to the constraints of conscience and, if you are a church officer, oversight by your local consistory.

We, on the other hand, have been asked to speak and facilitate communication for a federation in which there are many with differing ideas of what is best, using other people’s money and “spare” time, while working as a committee rather than alone. Therefore, our expansive task is fundamentally a reductionistic one, wherein we must consider the needs of the many over those of any one. You can monitor our progress at www.urna.info. When this site is adequately established, the address for the present unofficial site will be directed to this new site so that it will also be found at www.urna.org.

In the rest of this report we will serially consider the purposes we were mandated to pursue by Synod 2004; reporting on what we have done as well as making recommendations for what we would do.

“THE COMMITTEE SHALL ENSURE THAT THE WEB SITE IS SECURE, ACCURATE, AND CURRENT.”⁴

This was nearly Synod’s last word on the website matter; brief, yet loaded with implications. Each of these characteristics requires investment of time and/or money – not only to establish and launch such a site, but also the more demanding tasks of maintaining security, accuracy, and currency.

Security:

There is no such thing as an absolutely secure website. Therefore, everything that is posted on the website will be continually backed up in case of hacking from without or system failure from within.

In light of this inherent insecurity, not everything that can be done necessarily should be done. Not everything that can be posted should be posted, nor should everything that is posted be viewable by everyone. This reality becomes more pronounced the more sensitive the information involved – among the most sensitive being financial information involved in conducting e-commerce and personal information disclosed in executive sessions of Synod or Classes.

- ***Recommendation 1:*** That the URCNA website not include any e-commerce functions unless and until Synod is prepared to provide the financial and human resources to safeguard financial information that would be gathered; and to accept and protect against the liability attached to a breach of security in this regard.
- ***Recommendation 2:*** That the URCNA website not include items involving Executive Sessions in the documents posted from Synodical and Classical assemblies. The Stated Clerk will maintain hard copies of the unedited minutes for review by those authorized to do so.

Security of less sensitive information can largely be automated, but not completely. Software and hardware updates and upgrades require a human element – just as resolving failures or breaches in security do. Therefore, someone needs to be responsible for maintaining security. Much of this is delegated to (and provided by) the hosting service for our hardware. Even so, the nature and status of these measures must be assessed, reviewed, and changed as necessary by someone within the federation. This will be the duty of the Web Oversight Committee through the agency of the Technical Subcommittee.

Accuracy and Currency:

Accuracy and currency are both monitored most effectively by users of the website who continually serve to proofread the data; lots of man-hours at no cost that greatly benefit the site when the webmaster is informed of errors. These two qualities complement one another but can work against one another when data-entry and management resources are limited. Fewer data entry sources tend to enhance consistency (accuracy), while more data entry sources tend to enhance timeliness (currency).

How does this look for the URCNA website? At one extreme we could centralize access and control to the Stated Clerk (and/or someone responsible to him). This would enhance accuracy but delay currency because all data would be read, entered, and monitored by the same person as

⁴ Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA (2004), page 34; Article 84.A.

a series of tasks). At the other extreme we could decentralize access and control to each local Consistory (to the clerk and/or someone responsible to him). This would enhance currency but diminish accuracy because the data would be read, entered, and monitored by several persons working in parallel. The former is easier for everyone except the Stated Clerk; of whom it demands too much. The latter requires a little more work from everyone else – at least to many among us. Even so, we are well to remember that “many hands make light work”.

These three characteristics are most prominently displayed (or found to be lacking) when we consider an online Directory for the URCNA. This area of the website reflects the most complete and fluid database with which we must work. Security for this data is enhanced in two general ways: on the data-entry side when fewer people have authority to make changes, and on the viewer side when access to information is limited to various degrees according to the nature of the user.⁵ Accuracy of this data is enhanced when it is somehow monitored by the Stated Clerk – the repository of all federational information. Currency is enhanced when it is provided by local consistories regularly as required and immediately when necessary.

- ***Recommendation 3:*** That the ability to view or place data on the website be tiered according to user login status (e.g. consistorial, classical, or synodical assembly or committee; as distinct from the general public) to be managed by the Stated Clerk and/or Webmaster.

⁵ We must always bear in mind that if someone can see it on the internet, they can print it, save it, or distribute it.

“THAT SYNOD MAINTAIN A FEDERATIONAL WEB SITE... TO PROVIDE AN INTRODUCTION TO AND INFORMATION REGARDING URCNA (HISTORY, CONFESSIONAL STATEMENTS, CHURCH ORDER, ETC.)”⁶

The information referred to here is relatively stable. Once it is established and posted it should not change apart from an act of Synod. The members of the committee did not consider themselves qualified to draft an authoritative “Introduction to the URCNA” or “History of the URCNA”. Further, they did not believe that other editorial statements presently on the unofficial website should be transferred to the official website without the approval of Synod.

- **Recommendation 4:** That Synod commission the writing and approve the content of an “Introduction to the URCNA” to be posted on the website; the briefer the better.
- **Recommendation 5:** That Synod commission the writing and approve the content of a “History of the URCNA” to be posted on the website. We recommend something short and simple; approximately 500 words.⁷
- **Recommendation 6:** That Synod determine whether to post the “May 1996 Letter to the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches” (now posted on the unofficial site) in whole or in part; or to reference the substance of this letter in the “History”, if at all. Unless Synod makes such a determination, the letter will not be posted on the new site.
- **Recommendation 7:** That Synod determine whether to post the “Frequently asked Questions” prepared by Rev. Edward J. Knott (now posted on the unofficial site) in whole or in part. Unless Synod makes such a determination, the FAQ’s will not be posted on the new site. The committee believes that the Creeds and Confessions, the Church Order, and a well written history and/or introduction to the URCNA should answer any anticipated questions.
- **Recommendation 8:** That the Ecumenical Creeds (and their introductions) posted on the website be the same translations / versions published in the URCNA’s current Psalter Hymnal; e.g. presently, the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
- **Recommendation 9:** That the Three Forms of Unity (and their introductions and footnotes) posted on the website be the same translations / versions published in the URCNA’s current Psalter Hymnal; e.g. presently, the Blue Psalter Hymnal. Mentions of “Christian Reformed Church” should be substituted with “United Reformed Church”.

On January 29, 2007, Rev. Donovan spoke with Lynn Setsma of Faith Alive Publications (CRCNA) about whether permissions were required to publish the Three Forms of Unity on the URCNA website as printed in the Blue Psalter Hymnal. She said they consider them "public domain" - even the Heidelberg Catechism translation that was new in 1976 (it was changed again in the 1987 Gray Psalter Hymnal). Faith Alive Publications has no opposition to having them posted on our website.

⁶ Ibid. Article 40.A.1.

⁷ A very thorough history, “An Abstract of the History of the United Reformed Churches in North America” was written by CERCU and published in the Clarion, Volume 48, No. 15, July 23, 1999. We believe this or any similarly detailed and thorough history is too involved to be posted on the website for the general public, but we could not think of anything already considered and/or approved by Synod to recommend for posting.

- **Recommendation 10:** That Synod direct the Stated Clerk to write to Faith Alive Publications asking for written authorization to reproduce on our website the creeds and confessions, along with introductions and footnotes, as published in the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
- **Recommendation 11:** That Synod determine what other translations, if any, of the Three Forms of Unity ought also to be available on the website (e.g. English translations published in previous editions of the CRCNA *Psalter Hymnal* (1927, 1934), the CanRC *Book of Common Praise*, or by the RCUS (1986); and/or translations in other languages).
- **Recommendation 12:** That Synod commission and approve a logo for the URCNA. Once approved it will be incorporated into the website. In the meantime, if any graphics are included in the website, their purpose will be to communicate both that we are historically reformed and that the gospel we preach is relevant in the 21st century.

The URCNA website should offer connections to other organizations on the internet. As a committee, we do not believe that either the Synod or the Classes have the same freedom as Consistories to host pages for or to post links to others. The choices of one Consistory may not be the same as those for another – perhaps for any other. Therefore, we recommend rather limited hosting and linking on the federation website.

- **Recommendation 13:** That the website post links to websites belonging to:
 - a. URCNA member churches
 - i. This allows consistories the flexibility to update and change their own websites as they desire and to include content that will not be included on the federation site (e.g. audio sermons, reading sermons, links to parachurch sites, etc.)
 - ii. For churches that do not have a website of their own, a very limited informational page could be included on the URCNA website upon request by the consistory.
 - b. URCNA church plants being organized under CO Article 22
 - i. This allows overseeing consistories the flexibility to update and change the websites for their church plants as they desire and to include content that will not be included on the federation site.
 - ii. For church plants that do not have a website of their own, a very limited informational page could be included on the URCNA website upon request by the overseeing consistory.
 - c. URCNA churches provisionally accepted into the Federation under CO Article 32
 - i. This allows consistories the flexibility to update and change their own websites as they desire and to include content that will not be included on the federation site.
 - ii. For churches that do not have a website of their own, a very limited informational page could be included on the URCNA website upon request by the consistory.
 - d. Denominations with which the URCNA has established ecumenical relations under CO Article 36; identified as to the phase of our relations (e.g. Canadian Reformed Church, Phase 2; RCUS, Phase 2; etc).
 - e. Organizations of which the URCNA is a member (e.g. NAPARC)

- ***Recommendation 14:*** That the website post a link to Mid-American Reformed Seminary.
- ***Recommendation 15:*** That the website post a link to Westminster Seminary California.
- ***Recommendation 16:*** That Classical pages of the website include links to churches with whom that classis has entered into ecumenical relations under CO Article 35.

“THAT SYNOD MAINTAIN A FEDERATIONAL WEB SITE... TO ACT AS A CURRENT DIRECTORY FOR THE CHURCHES”⁸ “INCLUDING THE ABILITY TO PRINT A CURRENT DIRECTORY FROM THE WEBSITE.”⁹

Establishing an online directory has proved difficult for several reasons.

- 1) The important, but protracted, discussion that delayed our decision as to which platform to use (see above).
 - a. The decision to print the 2005 directory was made because the time to publish came before we had yet had our first meeting as a committee.
 - b. The decision to print the 2006 directory was made because the time to publish came before we were able to translate the database from the old to the new platform.
 - c. The decision to print the 2007 directory was made because the time to publish came after the database had been translated but before the data could be made current.
 - 2) The present mechanism for updating the data in the directory is cumbersome and plagued by inaccuracies. Some churches are slow in returning the annual request for current information. The Stated Clerk reports that he regularly encounters year-to-year inconsistencies in the reports made by some churches which require him to seek clarification and/or make corrections before they can be entered in the database.
 - 3) Some churches are cautious about how much information they want available to the general public, especially with regard to personal information such as telephone numbers, email addresses, and postal addresses for church officers and functionaries. Therefore, some churches submit incomplete reports. The committee shares their concerns, especially when it comes to posting such information online, and we have spent considerable time discussing how to protect information from some users even as we make it available for others.
 - 4) Visitors to our website will be able to print whatever they see. The challenge in “including the ability to print a current directory from the website” has to do with what format to use for printing and what file type to use for downloading a directory or portion thereof.
 - a. The amount of information that will appear in the directory accessed by particular individual uses will vary with the degree to which they can access the data.
 - b. We are used to booklets, but not every user will be able to print and bind in this format.
 - c. We have yet to determine whether the database will generate an HTML page and/or a PDF page and/or some other file type.
- **Recommendation 17:** That access to website data (especially the directory) be two-tiered. Tier 1: Information that is available to everyone on the internet – including web crawlers (e.g. Church name, address, minister, etc.). Tier 2: Information that is available only to Consistories (clerks and/or those authorized by a consistory to act on their behalf), classes (classical clerks and/or those authorized by a Classis to act on their behalf), and synod (State Clerk and/or Synodical committee members) with a user ID and pass code (e.g. all Tier 1 information, plus more sensitive information such as personal phone numbers and email addresses, etc.)”

⁸ Ibid. Article 40.A.2.

⁹ Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA (2004), page 34; Article 84.E.

- **Recommendation 18:** That the URCNA Church Directory be formatted to print on 8 ½” x 11” paper. This is the US standard and both available and acceptable in Canada. This will allow for printing and incorporating portions of the directory rather than the whole.

- **Recommendation 19:** That the following categories be added to and/or be searchable within the URCNA directory:
 - a. URCNA Missionaries
 - b. Candidates for the office of Minister of the Word
 - c. Licensed Exhorters
 - d. Non-ordained ministerial staff

- **Recommendation 20:** That Synod approve the following procedure for maintaining the directory data in order to maximize security, accuracy, and currency:
 - a. On an annual basis:
 - i. The Stated Clerk will distribute to each consistory in the federation a standardized form (paper and/or electronic) for collecting data.
 - ii. Within 30 days, each Consistory will send the completed form to their Classical Clerk (or someone else that the classis would appoint) for validating the data (for completeness and continuity of statistics).
 - iii. Within 30 days, the Classical Clerk will then send the validated (and/or corrected) data to the Stated Clerk of the URCNA for updating the directory.
 - b. At any time:
 - i. The Stated Clerk may correct data on the website when errors come to his attention.
 - ii. The Stated Clerk (and/or Webmaster) may also make significant changes when requested in writing by the clerk of a Consistory or a Classis, or when such a change is obviously necessary. (This provision is for information such as a change of minister, change in service times or location, change in church’s web address, etc. that should not wait until the next annual update.)

“THAT SYNOD MAINTAIN A FEDERATIONAL WEB SITE... TO PUBLISH MINUTES AND/OR REPORTS OF CLASSIS AND SYNOD”.¹⁰

The present unofficial site includes postings of Synodical agendas and minutes, but not those of the Classes.

- **Recommendation 21:** That the synodical page include the most recent agenda and minutes (edited for public viewing) and a link to archives of all previous agendas and minutes (edited for public viewing).
- **Recommendation 22:** That each Classis have a page that includes the most recent agenda and minutes (edited for public viewing) and a link to archives of all previous agendas and minutes (edited for public viewing).
- **Recommendation 23:** That the Synodical and/or Classical pages include links to a page for news briefs submitted through the Stated Clerk and/or Classical Clerk noting:
 - a. Churches without a minster
 - b. Calls extended
 - c. Calls accepted
 - d. Items that the Church Order requires to be distributed to the churches by local consistories and/or councils.
- **Recommendation 24:** That each Synodical committee be provided with a separate page that is password restricted to members of that committee where they can post, pass, store, and maintain information pertaining to their work. Each committee will be responsible for maintaining the currency and accuracy of their information.

¹⁰ Acts of the Fifth Synod of the URCNA (2004), page 16; Article 40.A.3.

“THAT SYNOD MAINTAIN A FEDERATIONAL WEB SITE... TO ACT AS AN INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS TOOL FOR THE FEDERATION, INCLUDING THE STATED CLERK, CONVENING CHURCH AND SYNODICAL COMMITTEES”.¹¹

When it comes to making the website an “interactive communications tool for the federation”, the shopping list of possibilities suggested by the report from Kalamazoo and the expectations present in the minds of many within the federation is not commensurate with the resources with which we have to work. One might say, “We want a new Cadillac with our used-Chevrolet budget.” The committee decided that for now we would focus on establishing and maintaining the features already outlined above. Each feature added to the website requires resources of time and/or money not only to establish it, but also to secure it and maintain it over time. “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch!” (TANSTAAFL).

- **Recommendation 25:** That web pages established for Synodical Committees provide access to discussion group capabilities for these committees. This is easily accommodated and limited in scope.
- **Recommendation 26:** That the website include limited online calendars (essentially the same as “bulletin boards”) for the purpose of posting items of interest to the federation as a whole (e.g. meetings of Classes and Synod; Classical or Synodical committee meetings.) Postings would be made by the appropriate clerk (Synodical or Classical) when so informed by those calling the meetings.
- **Recommendation 27:** That, if requested by a convening consistory for Synod, the website be used for registration that does not include e-commerce (see Recommendation 29 below).
 - a. Online registration through the website could be used by the convening consistory to assist their “manual” registration and collection process.
 - b. Community URC in Schererville has contracted out the registration process to include e-commerce. The estimated cost for this service in 2007 is approximately \$3000.
- **Recommendation 28:** That the website not provide e-commerce services.
 - a. By this we mean that it not be used to perform economic transactions and accept monies.
 - b. We do not have the infrastructure or resources (financial or human) to take on the responsibility for securing individuals’ personal financial information.
 - c. If “Synod” wants to sell something, (e.g. Acts of Synod) the site could certainly take the order via online forms, but the payment transaction should take place “manually” as they have been in the past.
 - d. There are e-commerce sites that can be contracted to sell things and collect registration fees. Of course they will earn a fee, but they have the infrastructure and staffing (the economy of scale) to carry on such business.
- **Recommendation 29:** That the website not host audio sermons.
 - a. Consistories and/or ministers may do so on their churches’ websites or through services readily available on the internet (e.g. www.sermonaudio.com).

¹¹ Ibid. Article 40.A.4.

- **Recommendation 30:** That the website not host reading sermons.
 - a. Consistories and/or ministers may do so on their churches' websites or through services readily available on the internet (e.g. www.theseed.info).
- **Recommendation 31:** That the website not host pages for or post links to missions-oriented persons or groups other than URCNA missionaries (and the works) who have been called to serve as ministers of the Word under the oversight of a URCNA Consistory.
 - a. Consistories may do so for other missions-oriented persons or groups on their churches' websites.
- **Recommendation 32:** That the website not host pages for or post links to ministries overseen by particular consistories unless specifically authorized by Synod (e.g. Reformed Youth Services, www.reformedyouthservices.org; Kingdom Seekers, www.kingdomseekers.org).
 - a. Consistories may do so on their churches' websites.
- **Recommendation 33:** That the website not provide email services.
 - a. Many options are already available that are maintained for no to little cost (e.g. gmail, hotmail, yahoo, etc.)
- **Recommendation 34:** That the website not provide newsgroup services.
 - a. Many options are already available that are maintained for no to little cost (e.g. co-urc and others by providers such as Microsoft, Yahoo, etc.)
- **Recommendation 35:** That the website not provide online chat other than what Synod may agree to provide Synodical committees (see Recommendation 26).
 - a. Many options are already available that are maintained for no to little cost (e.g. AIM, Yahoo, Google, MSN, etc)
- **Recommendation 36:** That the website not provide Internet telephone services.
 - a. Many options are already available that are maintained for no to little cost (e.g. Vonage, Skype, etc)
- **Recommendation 37:** That the website not provide data streaming services, whether audio or video.
 - a. The cost to maintain and troubleshoot is too prohibitive.
- **Recommendation 38:** That the website not include a Question and Answer forum.
 - a. This is best provided and overseen by local Consistories.
- **Recommendation 39:** That the website not host web-based continuing education conferences.
 - a. This is best overseen and provided by local Consistories.
 - b. There are more economical options (e.g. burn a DVD and distribute it)

- **Recommendation 40:** That Synod ask all websites sponsored and/or maintained by Consistories or church officers (individually or in concert with others) to include a prominently placed disclaimer to the effect that their site is not the official website of the URCNA federation.
 - a. Because we enjoy certain freedoms within the bounds of our confessions, not all churches will agree in all things.
 - b. Therefore, while individual Consistories and officers under their authority may advocate or defend certain views, it is not right for them to present them as necessarily advocated or defended by each and every Consistory or officer in the federation.

- **Recommendation 41:** That Synod ask all websites sponsored and/or maintained by Consistories or church officers (individually or in concert with others) to include a prominently placed link to the official URCNA website (www.urchna.org).

- **Recommendation 42:** That Synod approve a statement for prominent placement on the official URCNA website to the effect: “This website is the official site of the URCNA. Other sites affiliated with particular URCNA churches or church officers do not necessarily represent the views of the URCNA.”

As a committee we have labored hard against many obstacles to establish the new URCNA website. At the time this report was written, it was not yet complete. In fact, we have some distance yet to go! We beg for your continued patience.

Serving you in the Name of Christ to the glory of God.

The Web Oversight Committee



Rev. Stephen Donovan, acting chairman Classis Southwest US
for the following members who have given their approval to this report

Mr. Jay De Young	Classis Central US
Mr. Gary Fisher	Classis Michigan
Mr. Bill Konynenbelt	Stated Clerk
Rev. Paul Murphy	Classis Eastern US
Mr. Kevin Pasveer, technical subcommittee chair	Classis Western Canada
Mr. Roger Vanoostveen, secretary	Classis Southern Ontario

Appendix A

Mandate for the Technical Subcommittee (WebTech Committee) adopted April 21, 2005

1. Make recommendations on all technical issues related to web hosting including choice of hardware/software platform.
2. Make recommendations on the requirements for a suitable web hosting provider and provide options for hosting.
3. Develop the project plan to transfer the current URCNA web site to the new website once the provider is chosen.
4. Provide advice to the Web Oversight committee on the feasibility, cost implications, and long term maintenance effort for various types of features that they may wish to implement.
5. Provide advice on security issues related to our web site.
6. Develop tools for the website which would allow updating to be done by others in a secure fashion.
7. Deal with ongoing issues such as bandwidth requirements, storage space, upload/download quotas, availability, backup and recovery, etc.

Members who have served and/or do serve on this committee:

Mr. Brian Yonkman	April 21, 2005 to May 17, 2005	Lynwood URC, Lynwood
Mr. Greg Rickmar	April 21, 2005 to June 20, 2005	Covenant URC, Kalamazoo
Mr. Doug Weening	May 3, 2005 to November 19, 2005	Bethel URC, Calgary
Mr. Jeff Steenholdt	April 26, 2005 to January 31, 2007	Covenant URC, Kalamazoo
Ms. Denise Schalk	May 17, 2005 to January 31, 2007	Bethel URC, Calgary
Mr. Bill Konynenbelt	April 21, 2005 – continuing	Bethel URC, Calgary (initial facilitator)
Mr. Jay DeYoung	April 26, 2005 – continuing	Community URC, Schererville
Mr. Kevin Pasveer	May 17, 2005 – continuing	Bethel URC, Calgary (chairman)
Mr. Gary Fisher	July 6, 2006 – continuing	Allendale URC, Allendale

Report of the *Ad Hoc* URCNA Synodical Rules Committee

Esteemed Brothers,

Greetings in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is our prayer that the King of the church is blessing your efforts to fulfill His mandate given to each of us as part of His church.

As the Synodical Rules Committee we herein submit our report. Please study the report so that you might give helpful input at the synod meeting in 2007. Thank you for praying for us as we have been undertaking this task.

Background

In response to a recommendation by the Stated Clerk, the Synod of Calgary, 2004, adopted the following recommendations:

- “1. That ... Synod establish an *ad hoc* URCNA Synodical Rules Committee.
2. That the mandate of the committee is as recommended by the Report of the Stated Clerk, namely:
 - a. a standard of parliamentary law should be adopted:
 1. to ensure that the business of the synod meeting is transacted in an orderly, practical way; and
 2. to assist the officers of synod in overseeing the proceedings and preserving order;
 - b. guidelines should be provided to assist prospective appellants prepare an appeal and be familiar with protocol, standards of admissibility and preferred verbiage;
 - c. the authority and responsibilities of the stated clerk and the convening church should be clearly distinguished and defined so as to address, for example, who determines the admissibility of overtures, appeals and reports and what the standards of admissibility are. In the process of drafting these rules, the committee should research comparable rules employed in other reformed denominations and federations.
 - d. that synod delineate the inter-synodical responsibilities of the stated clerk.
3. That the URCNA Synodical Rules Committee shall consist of Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema, and Mr. Harry Van Gulp (currently also serving as the members of the URCNA Church Order Committee).
4. That the URCNA Synodical Rules Committee deliver its report to be considered by the next Synod and made available to the churches at least 9 months before Synod for input from the churches.
5. [Not applicable]
6. That ...Synod confirms that the inter-synodical responsibilities of the Stated Clerk shall include the preparation and distribution of the synod agenda, the preparation and distribution of the Acts of Synod, act as the point of contact for the federation, invite

fraternal observers and delegates to synod on the recommendation of the synod appointed ecumenical committees, and such other responsibilities as may be delegated to him by synod.”

(*Acts of Synod, 2004*, Article 46, pp. 17, 18)

In preparing this report your committee met several times in connection with our additional assignment on the URCNA Church Order Committee, reviewed several sets of Rules for Synodical Procedure from other churches, and communicated electronically.

Regulations For Synodical Procedure

We herewith present the following “Regulations For Synodical Procedure” for your consideration and adoption.

REGULATIONS FOR SYNODICAL PROCEDURE The United Reformed Churches in North America

INTRODUCTION

Seeking to honor the apostolic command that in the churches all things be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40), we adopt the following regulations for our synodical proceedings. As synodical delegates, we commit ourselves to work in an ecclesiastical manner, to consult mutually and to consider carefully God’s Word, and to deliberate thoughtfully the matters brought before the synod, as we endeavor to make decisions which are mutually agreed upon. These regulations are adopted to facilitate this deliberative process. However, when it seems advisable, they may be suspended, amended, or revised, by a majority vote of the synod.

We have structured these regulations according to the following divisions:

- 1. Convening a Synod**
- 2. Constituting a Synod**
- 3. Matters Legally Before a Synod**
- 4. Officers and Functionaries of a Synod**
- 5. Committees**
- 6. Rules of Order**

1. Convening a Synod

- 1.1.** Synod shall be convened and constituted in accordance with the *Church Order* and these Regulations for Synodical Procedure.
- 1.2.** “If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a synod meet earlier than the regular time determined, the consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.” (*Church Order*, Article 28)
- 1.3.** Each consistory shall delegate two of its members to synod. Consistories which cannot send two delegates shall be required to submit an explanation to synod.

- 1.4. A synod shall convene at least once every three years at a time and place determined by the previous synod. The meetings shall be held in each of the classes in turn. Each synod shall authorize a consistory to convene the next synod.
- 1.5. The convening consistory shall have the duties of announcing the next synod to the consistories at least four months in advance, preparing the provisional agenda with the assistance of the stated clerk, securing the facilities needed for the synodical meetings, arranging the lodging of the delegates, recommending to synod the assignment of each delegate to an advisory committee on the basis of a completed questionnaire, and all other necessary items to facilitate the synod. Expenses incurred in connection with these duties shall be reimbursed by the synodical treasurer(s).
- 1.6. The convening consistory shall call and conduct a prayer service to be held prior to the opening of synod, which the delegates of synod are expected to attend.
- 1.7. The time schedule for the sessions of synod shall be recommended by the convening consistory for adoption by the synod. The time schedule may be changed to facilitate the work of synod.

2. Constituting a Synod

- 2.2. Synod shall be convened by the consistory appointed by the previous synod.
- 2.2.1 Synod shall be called to order by a member of the convening consistory designated by that assembly to serve as chairman *pro tem*.
He shall:
 - a. Conduct the opening devotions.
 - b. Call the roll of delegates identified by lawful credentials from consistories of the United Reformed Churches in North America.
 - c. Preside over the election of the officers, ensuring they are chosen by open ballot from among the delegates of synod in the following order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. The delegate who receives a majority of valid votes cast shall be elected to each office.
- 2.3. The stated clerk shall serve as clerk *pro tem* until the first and second clerks have been elected.
- 2.4. After the officers of synod have been elected, the chairman shall read the Form of Subscription to which every member of synod shall respond by rising to indicate his agreement. Then the chairman shall declare synod to be constituted. Each delegate who takes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his agreement individually in the presence of synod.
- 2.5. Each plenary session of synod shall be in *open session* unless synod decides to meet in *closed session*. In delicate or unusual situations synod may meet in *executive session*, which means that only synodical delegates and other office-bearers meet in closed session. In very unusual situations, because of the personal honor of an individual or the welfare of the church, the synod may meet in *strict executive session*, which means that only synodical delegates meet in closed session. Synod shall decide how the minutes of each executive session shall be recorded. Such minutes shall not be distributed.

- 2.6. Immediately after synod is declared constituted, synod shall:
 - a. Determine the inclusion of those delegated by a church provisionally accepted by a classis.
 - b. Request the included delegates to rise and indicate agreement to the Form of Subscription.
 - c. Adopt the provisional agenda, including the advisory committee assignments of delegates, chairmen, and reporters.
- 2.7. Synod may recess from plenary session to enable the advisory committees to meet.
- 2.8. Each advisory committee shall ensure that its report is prepared according to the standardized reporting format, and distributed to all of the delegates as soon as feasible.
- 2.9. The privilege of the floor may be granted to those not delegated when the synod considers it useful or necessary; such permission shall be granted by majority vote and restricted to the matter under discussion.

3. Matters Legally Before Synod

- 3.1. **Provisional Agenda.** A provisional agenda is prepared for each synod by the convening consistory with the assistance of the stated clerk. Its contents shall be limited to a compilation of the reports, overtures, appeals, and communications addressed to the synod. Immediately when synod has been declared to be constituted, this provisional agenda shall be acted upon for adoption before proceeding to act on any of its items.
- 3.2. **Report.** A report is a written document from a committee or an appointee of a synod indicating the work performed in response to a synod's mandate and presenting one or more recommendations for action by synod.
- 3.3. **Overture.** An overture is a written proposal to a synod, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis, requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds. (See **Appendix A, Guidelines for Overtures**)
- 3.4. **Appeal.** An appeal is a written request for a decision or judgment, made to a synod by a consistory or individual within the federation, regarding a matter previously decided upon by an assembly within the federation. In order to be admissible an appeal must provide written grounds. (See **Appendix B, Guidelines for Appeals**)
- 3.5. **Communication.** A communication is a written document from a consistory or an individual expressing opinions or ideas to a synod, or its appointed committees. A communication requires an acknowledgment, but does not require a decision by the synod or committee to which it is addressed.

4. Officers and Functionaries of Synod

Officers

The officers shall perform the duties listed below and any others assigned by synod. Their official functions shall end at the conclusion of the synodical assembly.

4.1. The Chairman

- 4.1.1.** He shall call the meeting to order at the appropriate times and shall ensure that each session is opened and closed with devotions.
- 4.1.2.** He shall see to it that the members of synod observe the rules of order and decorum, and pastorally admonish those who do not.
- 4.1.3.** He shall see to it that the business of synod is transacted in the proper order and expedited as much as possible.
- 4.1.4.** He shall request the delegates to indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription. A delegate who takes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his agreement individually in the presence of the synod.
- 4.1.5.** He shall welcome fraternal delegates and other guests of synod, and respond to their greetings, or appoint others for this purpose.
- 4.1.6.** He shall recognize only those who have properly asked for the floor.
- 4.1.7.** He shall place before synod every motion that is made and seconded, and shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken.
- 4.1.8.** While holding the chair, he may state matters of fact or inform synod regarding points of order. However, if he feels compelled to speak on an impending matter, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice chairman until the matter under consideration is decided.
- 4.1.9.** He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, synod shall sustain or reject the ruling by majority vote.
- 4.1.10.** He shall retain his right to vote on any question. When there is a tie vote, the chairman may cast the deciding vote, if he has not already voted.
- 4.1.11.** He shall not preside in any matters that concern himself personally or his congregation specifically.
- 4.1.12.** He shall rule on all points of order. If any member is dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair and appeals to the floor, his ruling may be reversed by a majority vote of synod.
- 4.1.13.** He shall close the synodical assembly with appropriate remarks and with prayer.

4.2. The Vice-Chairman

- 4.2.1.** In the absence of the chairman, the vice chairman shall assume all of the duties and privileges of the chairman.
- 4.2.2.** He shall assist the chairman as circumstances require.

4.3. The First Clerk

4.3.1. He shall keep an exact record of the synodical proceedings. This shall contain a record of:

- a. Opening and closing of sessions.
- b. Main motions whether carried or defeated.
- c. All reports of advisory committees and all decisions of synod.
- d. The names of fraternal delegates and others who address synod.
- e. The names of all synodically appointed committees and their members.
- f. Any document or part of debate or address that synod by majority vote decides to include in the minutes.

4.3.2. He shall not include in the record:

- a. Any motion that is withdrawn.
- b. Any incidental motion.
- c. Any defeated motion except it be a main motion.

4.3.3. At the beginning of each day's session he shall read the concept minutes for synod's evaluation and approval.

4.4. The Second Clerk

4.4.1. The second clerk shall serve in the absence of the first clerk.

4.4.2. He shall assist the first clerk in keeping an accurate record of the synodical proceedings.

4.4.3. He shall assist the first clerk as circumstances require.

4.4.4. He shall prepare the synodically approved press release of the synod's actions.

Functionaries

4.5. The Stated Clerk

4.5.1. Qualifications: The stated clerk shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches, currently serving, or having served as a minister or elder within a church of the federation. He must likewise possess:

- a. Thorough knowledge of the *Church Order* and competence in interpreting it,
- b. Ability to write clearly and succinctly,
- c. Administrative and organizational ability,
- d. And proficiency in current communication technology and word processing skills.

4.5.2. Term: Synod shall elect a stated clerk to serve from that synod until the conclusion of the next synod. An alternate shall be elected for the same term, who shall serve should the stated clerk be unable to do so. The stated clerk shall serve for no more than three consecutive terms. Synod shall stipulate his remuneration.

4.5.3. Supervision: The stated clerk shall work under the supervision of the consistory of the church convening the next synod, and is ultimately accountable to synod for the performance of his duties.

4.5.4. General Responsibilities:

a. Assist the convening consistory to determine questions of admissibility and good order with regard to appeals, overtures and other submissions to synod. Reasons for judging any matters to be inadmissible will be included in the convening consistory's report to synod. All doubtful matters shall be referred by the convening consistory by way of the stated clerk's report to synod for its judgment.

b. Become thoroughly familiar with synodical regulations and past decisions as well as their bearing upon matters proposed for the synodical agenda.

c. Assist the convening consistory with nominating advisory committees for synodical appointment, in order to help ensure that these committees consist of a fair and balanced representation of delegates to synod.

d. Provide a current handbook for the convening consistory of synod, listing the various responsibilities of the convening consistory, and the provisions that need to be made in order to host a synod meeting.

e. Prepare and distribute the *Acts of Synod*. At federation expense, one copy shall be sent to each federation with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any formal ecclesiastical fellowship. All other copies shall be purchased by those who order them.

f. Preserve original records of all proceedings of synod, and all documents, letters and papers having reference to its proceedings.

g. Receive credentials of the delegates of synod, requesting them in a timely manner, ordinarily no fewer than eight weeks before synod convenes. As instructed by synod or its ecumenical committees, he shall invite churches outside the federation to send fraternal delegates or observers to synod, requesting them to forward credentials in a timely manner. He shall also sign the credentials of fraternal delegates and observers representing the United Reformed Churches among churches outside the federation.

h. Maintain and publish alphabetical registers of licentiates, candidates for the ministry, and ordained ministers of the United Reformed Churches, including all emeriti ministers and those who are deceased. He shall also maintain an archival record of those discharged, released, or deposed from the ministry in the United Reformed Churches.

i. Notify all those appointed by synod of their appointment, their mandate, and the due date of their reports, including reminding the respective corporation boards of their annual meetings and reporting responsibilities.

j. Supply advisory committees and other appointees a standardized format for reporting.

k. Attend all meetings of synod, at which he shall be given the privilege of the floor.

- l.** Submit a written report of his work as part of the written report of the convening consistory.
- m.** Serve as clerk *pro tem* of synod before synodical officers are chosen.
- n.** Perform any other duties assigned by synod.

- 4.5.5. Correspondence Duties:** The stated clerk shall carry out all correspondence specifically assigned to him by synod. The following guidelines shall be observed in handling correspondence between meetings:
- a.** Correspondence requesting archival information shall be answered directly.
 - b.** Correspondence pertaining to committee work shall be referred to the appropriate committee chairmen.
 - c.** Correspondence requesting interpretation or evaluation of policies or decisions of synod shall be referred to synod or the convening consistory.
 - d.** Correspondence requesting any action by synod, or the opportunity to address synod shall be forwarded to the convening consistory for its consideration of placement on the provisional agenda, according to rules of admissibility.

4.6. Treasurer(s)

- 4.6.1. Qualifications:** The treasurer(s) shall belong to a member congregation of the United Reformed Churches. He shall have proficiency in current communication technology, and possess financial and bookkeeping capabilities. The treasurer(s) shall be duly bonded.

- 4.6.2. Term:** Synod shall elect a treasurer(s) to serve from that synod until the conclusion of the next synod. An alternate shall be elected for the same term, who shall serve should the treasurer be unable to do so. The treasurer(s) shall serve for no more than three consecutive terms. Synod shall stipulate his remuneration.

- 4.6.3. Supervision:** The treasurer(s) shall work under the supervision of the consistory of the church convening the next synod, and is ultimately accountable to synod for the performance of his duties.

- 4.6.4. Responsibilities:**
- a.** Administer the finances of the federation according to synodical mandate.
 - b.** Pay synodical expenses as authorized.
 - c.** Submit to the supervising consistory an audited financial statement annually, and such a statement to each synod.
 - d.** Notify the councils of all the churches of the financial needs of the federation.

5. Committees

- 5.1. Committees.** A synod may appoint a variety of committees to function on its behalf so that the various mandates of synod will be carried out in an orderly manner.
- 5.1.1.** The authority of committees shall be limited to the mandates given them by synod. No committee may arrogate to itself duties or mandates not specifically assigned to it.
- 5.1.2.** Synod shall appoint the chairman and a reporter of each committee.
- 5.1.3.** The chairman shall convene the committee and ensure that it fulfills its mandate. The reporter shall present, explain, and defend the committee's findings, actions, and recommendations with their grounds for synodical action.
- 5.2. Advisory Committees.** Advisory committees serve the synod by facilitating the work of synod during its sessions. Such committees summarize the matters assigned to them and advise synod by formulating recommendations as to how to proceed with the matters on the synodical agenda. The convening consistory proposes for synodical approval the assignment of each synodical delegate to an advisory committee, and the chairman and reporter of each advisory committee.
- 5.2.1.** Advisory committee meetings shall be open to the public unless the committee decides that for weighty reasons it should enter executive session. However, any member of synod may appear before any committee for the purpose of speaking about a matter referred to it.
- 5.2.2.** Advisory committee reports shall be signed by the chairman and the reporter of the committee. Where a minority report is presented, both the majority and minority report must be signed by the members who favor them.
- 5.2.3.** The report of the majority shall be considered the report of the advisory committee. After the advisory committee's report has been read and the motion to adopt has been made and supported, any report of the minority of the advisory committee shall be read for information.
- 5.2.4.** When the recommendation of an advisory committee is substantially different from that proposed by an overture, an appeal, or the report of a committee of synod, the reporter for such proposed material shall have the privilege to present and defend the proposal prior to synodical deliberation of the advisory committee's recommendation.
- 5.2.5.** While the report is being discussed the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with the chairman and the reporter of the advisory committee. These shall have precedence over every other speaker and shall not be limited as to the number and length of their speeches. Other committee members shall be subject to the accepted rules.
- 5.2.6.** Committee recommendations may be recommitted to the committee when this is helpful to synod.
- 5.3. Committees appointed by a previous synod**
These committees include the following:

5.3.1. *Ad hoc* committee.

a. Description. An *ad hoc* committee is chosen by synod to perform a specified task. Its membership, mandate, duration, and deadline by which it is to report are determined by synod.

b. Reporting. An *ad hoc* committee shall report to each synod on its progress; on the need to review, alter, or continue its mandate; and on the need to alter, augment, or continue the committee's membership.

5.3.2. Standing committee.

a. Description. A standing committee serves the synod under synodical regulations on a continuing basis. Its members are chosen by synod for specified terms and are given a particular mandate. The committee and its mandate continue even though the members of the committee serve only until their terms are completed.

b. Appointment. Any required nominations for committee members shall originate from the standing committee, be presented to the appropriate advisory committee, and then be presented to synod for final approval.

c. Terms. The members of a standing committee shall serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed two consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year.

d. Reporting. A report shall contain the following:

1. A review of the committee's mandate.
2. A summary of the committee's activities.
3. Recommendations for synodical action.
4. A list of nominees required to fill vacancies.

5.3.3. Study committee.

a. Description. A study committee is one which is assigned by synod, on the basis of an overture from the churches, to investigate and evaluate a particular problem, idea, or course of action on behalf of synod. The committee membership, mandate, duration, and deadline by which it is to report are determined by synod.

b. Appointment. Nominations for committee members shall originate from the advisory committee proposing such a study committee, and be presented to synod for final approval.

c. Reporting. A report shall contain the following:

1. A review of the committee's mandate.
2. A presentation of the committee's study.
3. Recommendations for synodical action with the appropriate grounds for synodical action.
4. A list of nominees required to fill vacancies.

5.4. Reports and rules for *ad hoc*, standing, and study committees

5.4.1. In the event of a vacancy in a committee, an alternate appointed by the convening consistory shall complete the vacated term.

- 5.4.2. These committees have the right to explain and defend their reports before the advisory committees of synod as well as on the floor of synod. The spokesmen of these committees shall have the same privileges during the discussion as do the chairmen and reporters of the advisory committees.
- 5.4.3. If the recommendations of an appointed committee and an advisory committee differ significantly, the recommendations of the *Ad hoc*, Standing, or Study Committee shall have precedence and be considered as the majority report.
- 5.5 When synod has adopted a recommendation regarding a matter, it shall declare that its action constitutes synod's answer to that particular matter.

6. Rules of Order

- 6.1. **Main motion:** This motion presents a specific matter for consideration or action.
- 6.1.1. The main motion is **acceptable** under the following conditions:
 - a. If the mover has been recognized by the chair and his motion has been seconded by a member of synod.
 - b. If, at the request of the chairman, the motion has been presented in writing.
 - c. If the chairman judges the motion acceptable.
- 6.1.2. A main motion is **unacceptable** under the following conditions:
 - a. If it conflicts with the *Church Order* or is contrary to Scripture as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity.
 - b. If another motion is before synod; if it conflicts with any decision already taken by synod in its current meeting; or if it interferes with the freedom of action by synod in a matter that was previously introduced but which has not been decided.
 - c. If it is substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod.
- 6.2. **Motion to amend:** This motion seeks to amend a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the main motion.
- 6.2.1. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute for certain words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
- 6.2.2. A motion to amend may not nullify the main motion and it must be germane to the main motion; that is, no new matter may be introduced to synod under the guise of an amendment. The chairman shall judge whether an amendment is acceptable or he may submit the matter to a vote.
- 6.2.3. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion. Only one such amendment may be considered at a time.
- 6.2.4. All motions may be amended except the following:
 - a. to adjourn
 - b. to amend an amendment
 - c. to postpone, or to place again a postponed motion before the body
 - d. to reconsider
 - e. to rescind
 - f. to take up a question out of its regular order

- g. appeals to the floor from the decision of the chair
 - h. calls for the order of the day, requests or questions of any kind
 - i. points of order
- 6.3. Motion to defer or withhold action:** This motion seeks to postpone a matter either temporarily, to a definite time, or indefinitely.
- 6.3.1. Postpone temporarily**
- a. Postponing a motion temporarily implies that synod will resume consideration on the motion at a later unspecified hour or date.
 - b. This motion is not debatable or amendable.
 - c. When synod wishes to resume consideration of the motion any member may move to place again the motion before the body. The motion to place the motion again before the body is not debatable or amendable.
 - d. All matters that have been postponed temporarily must be placed again before synod adjourns.
- 6.3.2. Postpone to a definite time**
- a. Postponing a motion to a definite time implies that synod will resume consideration on the motion at a specified hour or date.
 - b. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
 - c. If a motion to postpone to a definite time has passed, no other motion similar in word or thought to the postponed motion may appear before synod.
 - d. The matter postponed to a definite time may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of synod.
 - e. If a motion to amend has been postponed definitely, the main motion to which the postponed amendment is related is likewise deferred.
 - f. Any number of matters may be postponed to the same time. When that time arrives, the matters postponed are taken up in the order of their postponement.
 - g. When the hour arrives to which such matters have been postponed, and synod is at that time busy with an undecided question, synod need not be disturbed or interrupted in its work by the consideration of the postponed matters, if those postponed matters can wait until the question then before synod has been decided.
 - h. All matters that have been postponed to a definite time must be placed before the body before synod adjourns.
- 6.3.3. Withhold action or postpone indefinitely**
- a. This motion may be used when synod decides that it is wise and prudent to avoid a direct vote on a matter without deciding either positively or negatively.
 - b. This motion is debatable, but not amendable.
- 6.4. Privileged motions**
- 6.4.1. Call for the order of the day.** When any member of synod believes that the regular business of synod is being obstructed or interrupted by irrelevant or unimportant material, he has the right to rise and to call for the order of the day. This means that he desires synod to return to the regular course of action. The following rules apply:

- a. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and while another member is speaking.
 - b. Such a call is not debatable, needs no seconding, and must be put to a vote.
 - c. It has precedence over every other motion except a motion to adjourn or to take a recess.
- 6.4.2. Point of order.** It is the duty of the chairman to apply the rules of order and to prevent infractions. Should a member believe that the rules have been misinterpreted or misapplied, he may rise stating that he wishes to make a point of order. Asked by the chair to state the point, he does so, and the chairman renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:
- a. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the chairman.
 - b. It needs no seconding and is not debatable.
 - c. In case the member making the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chair, he may appeal to the floor. When this is done, the point of order becomes debatable, and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain or reverse the chairman's decision.
- 6.4.3. Call for a division of the question.** With a majority vote of synod, a motion consisting of several parts must be divided into its component parts and each part must be voted on separately.
- 6.5. Motion to reintroduce matters once decided before synod:** If for weighty reasons any member of synod desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, one of the following motions may be used.
- 6.5.1. Motion to reconsider**
- a. The intent of this motion to reconsider is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. This motion must be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side.
 - b. The motion to reconsider must be made the same day on which the motion in question was passed.
 - c. It is unacceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
 - d. The motion to reconsider may be tabled to a definite time, but it may not be amended, withheld indefinitely, or referred to a committee.
 - e. The motion to reconsider is debatable only insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned.
- 6.5.2. Motion to rescind**
- a. The intent of this motion to rescind is to annul a decision.
 - b. The motion to rescind shall require a two-thirds majority to carry.
 - c. The motion to rescind is debatable, including both the reasons for rescinding as well as the merits of the original question.
 - d. Rescinding applies to decisions taken by synod while in session. It does not apply to decisions taken by a previous synod. A succeeding synod may alter the stand of a previous synod or it may reach a conclusion which is at variance with a conclusion reached by an earlier synod. In such cases the most recent decision invalidates all previous decisions in conflict with it.

6.6. Debate

- 6.6.1.** To obtain the floor, a member must be recognized by the chairman.
 - 6.6.2.** If a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks only to the chairman and never to any member of synod. He shall refrain from using personal names, and from addressing persons by name. If he fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy, the chairman shall call attention to these faults and insist on pointedness and brevity.
 - 6.6.3.** A member may not call into question another member's motives or character.
 - 6.6.4.** Those who have not yet spoken twice on a pending issue shall be given priority over those members who have already spoken twice.
 - 6.6.5.** The chairman, when he believes that a matter has been sufficiently debated, shall have the right to propose cessation of debate. Should a majority of the members sustain this proposal, debate shall end at once and the main motion and any pending amendments shall be voted on.
 - 6.6.6.** Any member, when he believes a matter has been sufficiently debated, may move to cease debate. Having been seconded, this motion is not debatable and is to be voted on at once. If it passes by a 2/3 majority, debate shall cease only after all those who had previously requested the floor and been recognized by the chairman have had opportunity to speak. However, these speakers shall not be allowed to offer any amendments. This motion is not acceptable when a motion to table, to commit, to recommit, to postpone definitely, or to withhold action is before synod.
 - 6.6.7.** A member may not speak to a motion and then immediately move to cease debate.
- 6.7. Objection to the consideration of a question:** When a member rises to make such objection, the chairman shall ask him to state his objection. The chairman, having heard his objection, either sustains or overrules it and states his reason for so doing. If the objector is not satisfied by the ruling of the chair he may appeal to the floor. When he does so, the objection becomes debatable and requires a majority to be sustained.
- 6.8. Right of protest:** It is the right of any member of synod to protest any decision of synod. Protests must be registered immediately or during the session in which the matter was decided. Protests must be filed individually and not in groups. A member may request his name and vote be recorded in protest, or he may submit a written protest.
- 6.9. Procedural inquiry:** Any member of synod may request advice of the chairman regarding how to accomplish a purpose for which he does not know the proper means.
- 6.10. Voting methods**
- a. Voice.** This is the ordinary method of voting.

- b. Show of hands.** Whenever the chairman is unable to determine from the voice vote which opinion has prevailed, or if the chairman's determination is questioned by any member of synod, the chairman shall call for a show of hands.
- c. Roll call.** The name and vote of each delegate is recorded in the *Acts of Synod*. This method is to be employed only upon decision by a majority vote of synod.
- d. Ballot.** Synod must vote by ballot in election of officers. In other cases synod may vote by ballot if a majority so decides.

Appendix A

Guidelines for Overtures

In accord with articles of the *Church Order*, such as Articles 17, 25, and 29, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing an overture. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for the admissibility of an overture.

Definition: An overture is a written proposal to a broader assembly, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis, requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds.

Guidelines:

1. An overture must originate from a consistory and “be considered by classis before being considered by synod” (Art. 25).
2. An overture must meet the requirement of *Church Order* Article 25, “In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered.”
3. If an overture is not adopted by classis, the consistory may overture synod for its adoption.
4. Since an overture is a written proposal requesting a definite action regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches, an overture must:
 - a. Provide a brief background of the matter being proposed.
 - b. Provide specific grounds for the adoption of the overture.
5. An overture must meet the deadline for the provisional agenda in order to be considered, unless for weighty reasons the assembly decides otherwise.
6. Judgments of the broader assemblies shall be received with respect, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the *Church Order* (See *Church Order*, Article 29).

7. The consistory authorized to convene synod shall use these guidelines to determine the admissibility of overtures, and provide to synod the reasons why any overture has not been admitted on the provisional agenda.

Appendix B

Guidelines for Appeals

In accord with *Church Order*, Article 29, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing an appeal. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal.

Definition: An appeal is a written request for a decision or judgment, made to an assembly by a consistory or individual within the federation, regarding a matter previously decided by an assembly within the federation. An appellant is either a consistory or individual who registers and defends such an appeal either on his own behalf or through a representative.

Guidelines:

1. An appeal may be made by a consistory or individual who is a member of a church within the federation.
2. An appeal must first be made to the body whose decision is being appealed, with a view to possible reversal, and only then to classis and/or synod.
3. Since an appeal requests an assembly to make a decision or judgment regarding a matter previously decided by an assembly of the federation, the appeal must:
 - a. Provide a written copy of and reference to the specific decision of the narrower body which is being appealed.
 - b. Provide a brief history or background of the appeal.
 - c. Stipulate specific grounds for the appeal.
4. An appeal must provide written evidence to substantiate the allegations that are being made.
5. An appellant must notify the body whose decision is being appealed in order to grant sufficient time for its response to synod.
6. When an appeal has been admitted, the adjudicating assembly shall respond to each ground of the appeal by a) stipulating whether each ground is valid, and why or why not, and b) stipulating upon which of its grounds the appeal has been sustained.
7. The judgments of the broader assembly shall be received with respect, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proven that they are in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order. (*Church Order*, Article 29)
8. If a synod does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and to the next synod, responding to the grounds adopted by the synod which denied his appeal.

9. If a member objects to a decision of synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, he should bring the matter to his consistory, and urge it to appeal the decision of synod.

10. The consistory authorized to convene synod shall use these guidelines to determine the admissibility of appeals, and provide to synod the reasons why any appeal has not been admitted on the provisional agenda.

Recommendations

1. That during the discussion of this report by synod or its advisory committee, the members of the *Ad Hoc* URCNA Synodical Rules Committee be granted the privilege of the floor.

2. That Synod 2007 provisionally adopt the “Regulations For Synodical Procedure” herein presented. This means that these regulations will function on a trial basis until either amended or adopted by Synod 2010.

3. That Synod 2007 allow responses from the churches regarding these Regulations to be forwarded to this committee until June 1, 2009 for their consideration.

4. That Synod 2007 mandate the committee to prepare and distribute to the churches by January 15, 2010 a refined version of the Regulations for final approval by Synod 2010.

5. That Synod 2007 assign to the respective corporation boards, assisted by the stated clerk, the task of formulating general policies which will implement the proposed regulations pertaining to:

- a.** The establishment, regulation, and maintenance of an official archive of all synodical decisions, including those made in executive session.
- b.** The proportionate receipt and dispersing of funds designated for the expenses of synodically appointed committees and functionaries.

6. That Synod 2007 reappoint the present committee with its revised mandate.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman

Rev. William Pols

Rev. Ronald Scheuers

Rev. Raymond Sikkema

Mr. Harry Van Gulp

US Health Care Committee Report

We received a request from you regarding what our Deacons were able to find out about a national health care program. In checking with our Deacons the conclusion that was drawn was that the only way to have a national health plan would be to self fund as a federation. Currently our federation is not large enough for this to be feasible. Our understanding is that this conclusion was brought to Synod 2004 where we were asked to review it again. This they did and the same answer applies today as it did in the last report.

Sincerely,

Albert Rumph

Clerk Bethany URC.

Report by Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto on the establishment of a Canadian plan for extended Health Care Benefits for Canadian Ministers and their families

Background:

Synod Calgary 2004 adopted the following recommendations:

1. That Synod appoint a Canadian URCNA church to investigate the establishment of a group insurance plan to provide extended health care benefits (and other benefits if deemed advisable) for Canadian ministers and their families with an existing private group plan insurance provider;
2. That the churches be provided with this information and requested to respond as to their willingness to participate in such a plan;
3. That the plan be established if a sufficient number of churches indicate a willingness to participate; and
4. That all Canadian churches be encouraged to participate, if the plan is established.

Survey:

Following Synod Calgary 2004, a committee appointed by Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto, prepared a detailed survey of all Canadian URCNA churches with respect to the provision made for ministers and their families in providing extended health care benefits not covered by universal health care programs already being provided by the local provinces. Such benefits would include some non essential medical services not covered by the provincial plans, as well as dental care and prescription drugs. The churches were also asked to indicate their interest in participating in a group plan.

The survey was intended to identify what churches or ministers were already participating in an extended health care benefit plan, whether there was a need for such a group plan and whether the churches were willing to participate in such a plan.

Result of the Survey:

The initial response to the survey was extremely disappointing. Less than 50% of the churches or ministers responded to the extensive questionnaire provided. With some additional follow-up, the response increased to about 75%.

The majority of the churches requested additional premium information, before indicating whether they were willing to participate in a group plan.

Proposed Group Plan

As a result of the limited response received, it was decided by the committee that a proprietary group plan was not feasible, unless there was mandatory participation by all the churches. It was obvious from the results of the survey however, that the Canadian churches were not willing to participate in a mandatory plan. It was also obvious from the survey results that the ministers most interested in the plan would be heavy users, thereby increasing the premium burden if the group was limited to most in need.

The committee determined that the only feasible option for a group plan would be to have the Canadian URCNA churches become an add-on to an existing plan. The Canadian Reformed Churches maintain a group plan for their ministers providing life insurance and extended health care benefits at a competitive market rate. If there was sufficient participation by the URCNA churches, this plan could be made available.

Final Result:

There were no Canadian URCNA churches that were willing to commit themselves to becoming a member of the Canadian Reformed group plan at the rates quoted. Although there was some interest expressed, the response was generally negative towards the quoted premium costs in order to participate in this plan.

Conclusion:

The majority of the Canadian URCNA churches are unwilling to participate in a group plan at the prevailing market rates for such a plan. Most of the churches leave it to the ministers to provide for their own extended health care benefits out of their income. The committee perceived a distinct unwillingness on the part of the churches to increase their budgets to accommodate participation in a group plan. Most ministers reported that it was not within their means to participate without budget support. As a result, a Canadian extended health care plan is not feasible at this time.

Reported by Charles M. Loopstra and Art Miedema for Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto. March 31, 2007.

Remarks by Ecumenical Observers and Delegates

The following pages contain the remarks from the ecumenical delegates and observers who provided me with a copy. Several of the men who addressed synod did not provide me with an electronic copy so I was not able to include their speeches.

Dear brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is with gratitude and joy that I bring to you fraternal greetings on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This gratitude is for what the Lord has given to the churches of your federation, and in our relationship. It is a joy because in our contact we recognize each other as churches that want to be faithful to God's Word. Meeting with you and listening to your discussions here at Synod, shows this willingness to be obedient to God's Word in all your decisions. It is this willingness to be faithful to the Lord of the church that binds us together. It makes one feel "at home."

It was in 2001 that the United Reformed Churches and the Canadian Reformed Churches committed themselves to a process which would, under the blessing of the Lord, lead to federative unity. At the time we knew it would not be easy, but we were convinced that the Lord calls us to do this. Since that beginning in 2001 much work has been done, as the reports to our synods show. From these reports we learn that in some areas the work went well. I think not only of the work done by the Church Order and Songbook Committees, but also of the work done at a local level. In other areas we need to do more work. Then I think not only of the questions regarding theological education, but also how churches living so many miles apart and in two different countries can get to know each other and can build trust between each other.

Speaking about building trust, that is something which happened in the CO and SB committees. The report show this, but I also speak from my personal experience in the SB committee. Over the years we have come to work together as one committee. This growing trust allowed GS 2007 to make a small change to the set-up of our contact. In

2001 it was decided that the subcommittees would report to the CERCU and CPEU and they would then bring a joint report to our respective synods. In the past years these subcommittees worked well and could report directly to GS. Our Synod therefore decided to follow the recommendation of the CPEU and take the in-between step away. We see this as evidence of growing trust in each other.

Our General Synod could meet in May of this year and enjoyed the presence of your delegates. Our Synod dealt with the very same reports as you have on your agenda. Since our Synod met earlier than yours, I have the benefit of working with decisions, rather than recommendations. I like to highlight some of them, especially those that involve our contact. This is not meant to tell you what you should do, but to inform you for your benefit. Yes, it is meant to convey our desire that the process started may continue. I believe that the decisions reached express our desire to find each other in federative unity in obedience to the Lord. Some recommendations were rather straight forward and did not take much time, but others required more consideration. In the matters where our committees had questions or disagreements, Synod had to consider whether we are dealing with scriptural principles or practical applications of these principle. I would suggest that this will continue to be the challenge on the road ahead as we deal with practices that are dear to our hearts. This in general.

To be more specific, General Synod acknowledged with gratitude to the Lord the progress of the CPEU and the CERCU and their subcommittees in the work towards federative unity. In 2001 the churches had set a time frame (2007), Synod recognized the difficulty of establishing a definite time frame for federative unity, but encouraged the committees to work diligently towards that goal. When there is the will to seek and find each other then we do not want it to become a process without end nor a hasty one.

Now coming to these subcommittees, our Synod accepted the recommendations of the joint CO committee to give “the four column document” to the churches for discussion and evaluation by them. The churches are to send responses to the sub committee

before March 1, 2009. This will give all the local churches an opportunity to be involved in this work. With regard to the report of the joint Song book Committee, the Synod took over most the recommendations of the committee. One of the items the committee brought to the attention of Synod was the matter of the 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms. Your and our previous Synods did not give the same mandate to each sub committee. Our Synod 2007 expressed a strong preference for a complete AG psalter within a song book, but acknowledged that this may not be a defining obstacle to federative unity. We hope that ways can be explored in which both sides can find themselves. Synod also clearly expressed the commitment to the goal that a common Songbook should be exclusively used in the worship services of the united federation. Note that Synod decided this without stipulating how many of the AG would be in it.

The report of the committee for Theological Education was not as positive as the others, as you know too. The report even speaks of an impasse. Again we are dealing here with a matter that is dear to our hearts, we have been richly blessed by the College in Hamilton, but we also want to try to understand your concerns. Synod considered the following:

It is not acceptable in the course of discussions and agreements leading to federative unity that the committees, or, rather, the way to unity, should reach an impasse on a matter of practice only. There is a way forward: the mandate for the committee should leave sufficient room for a broad range of possibilities to be considered and explored based on the Scriptural principle and in accordance with the agreements the committees have already made.

Synod referred specifically to the Statements of Agreements formulated by the joint committee on January 13, 2004. These six statements could form the basis of further discussions. The principle remains: the churches are responsible for the training of the ministry, we welcome an open discussion about the practical way in which this can be applied. Theological education is a vital part for the future of our churches, and for the unity of the churches. In this connection, though not a matter of General Synod, I must add that a recent statement about doctrinal matters drawn up by Mid-America

Reformed Seminary gives reason for concerns to many of us.

I mention these considerations and decisions to highlight that our Synod wanted to show commitment to work towards federative unity. The fact that all our decisions were taken unanimously underlines this. Does this mean we all agree within the CanRC? No, the letters to the Synod showed this as well. Does this mean there are no difficulties ahead. There certainly are. We believe the Lord calls us to continue on the road towards federative unity. As we walk on this road we want to maintain what we confess, but are willing to discuss differences so that under the blessing of the Lord they can be resolved. We are not asking that you take over exactly what we have done. You need to discuss these matters as well. What we pray for is that also from your side we can see evidence of your commitment. All this for the honour of the Head of the Church.

To highlight some other decisions of the past GS yet. Synod decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the ERQ and the RCNZ. With regard to the churches in the Netherlands, we expressed our concerns and instructed our committee for contact to take up these matters with our sister churches in the Netherlands. We did not enter into a relationship with the churches that broke away. With regard to the BoP Synod decided to update the text of the Psalter.

Brothers, it is good to be here. Your hospitality is much appreciated. We wish you God's blessing. Our prayers are with you and with the URCNA. May the Lord bless our relationship. I like to close with the words of 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.

The Lord be with you all.

Thank You.

Rev. Douwe G.J. Agema

Greetings From PCA To 2007 URCNA General Synod

Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in the Christian Faith:

It's a personal privilege for me to carry greetings from the Presbyterian Church in America to the URCNA this year, and also to welcome you to Chicago. My name is Dave Schutter; I serve as Associate Pastor of Naperville Presbyterian Church, which is located in the western suburbs. Beginning in 1989 as a Wheaton College student, and now for the past six years in pastoral ministry (after a church planting stint in South Dakota, and a tour of duty in Afghanistan as an Army Chaplain), I have been glad to call Chicagoland my home.

Like many of you, I have additional Presbytery responsibilities, and for the past three years I have served as the chairman of Chicago Metro Presbytery's Missions Committee. Having served as a church planter, my work alongside church planting colleagues in the Chicago area has deepened my love for this great city and my hope for the gospel of grace to be preached broadly within our city limits and throughout our suburbs; our local mission field encompasses over 8 million people and is one of the most ethnically diverse locations in North America. You might be interested to know that our ministry effort in Chicagoland includes 16 churches and missions working in this great metropolitan area comprised of more than 8 million persons: our weakness is apparent and our need for God's grace is imminently before us. Clearly the task before us is great; as you travel around our mission field, and if your schedule permits you to see more of our city, I would solicit your prayers for God to bless our efforts, and specifically that he would raise up and call more gospel laborers to this field, and that he would lead these laborers to hearts prepared by the Spirit to hear and respond to the gospel.

Last month we concluded our 35th General Assembly in Memphis, which allows me to make the following overview of 2006 a bit more accurate. Last year in the PCA:

- We reported total membership of approximately 339,000 persons served by 1639 churches and missions, and 75 Presbyteries. 14 Churches dissolved or changed affiliation.
- 54 church planters were fielded in 2006.
- 119 PCA chaplains serve US military personnel, 34 of whom served in the Iraq-Afghanistan war zones in 2006.; 43 additional PCA ministers serve as chaplains in other settings.
- To date, our campus ministry, Reformed University Ministry, is served by 106 ministers working on 102 campuses. In Chicago, our RUF ministry at Northwestern University has concluded its second year of ministry very strongly.
- To date, our Haitian ministry has seen 22 churches planted in Haiti, and several Haitian churches in the US, including one here in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago. We have also identified 54 Hispanic ministries being conducted by Presbyteries and churches.
- Globally, Mission to the World supports 590 full time missionaries serving in 72 countries, 150 two – year missionaries, 326 interns and almost 7000 two-week missionaries.

No review of our 35th General Assembly would be complete without noting that the Assembly received the report of the ad interim committee to study "Federal Vision, New Perspective on Paul, and Auburn Avenue Theologies." The Committee had been tasked to determine whether these views are "in conformity with the system of doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards" and to "present a declaration or statement regarding the issues raised by these viewpoints in light of our Confessional Standards". The Committee made nine theological declarations and presented five recommendations. After debate, the 5 recommendations were approved by the General Assembly: the Committee's report can be reviewed on line at <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/07-fvreport.doc>.

As we grasp the magnitude of the kingdom – advancing opportunity here in Chicagoland (16 PCA churches seeking to bring the message of Christ to more than 8 million people!), and extrapolate that challenge across our continent (1639 PCA churches seeking to do the same for more than 300M people) then together we appreciate the incredible opportunity before us, which leads us to appreciate gospel partnerships such as the one we share with you all the more. More than mere

formality, the privilege of sharing in gospel ministry and laboring for the same King and Cause make us grateful for the partnership that we in the PCA share with the URCNA.

To the end that Christ's glory will shine clearly in our day, and that more would know of his wonderful grace, would you please except not only our well-wishes for a productive and encouraging synod, but also our prayers for God to bless your kingdom labors, and our solicitation of your prayers for us as well?

Thank you very much.

Rev. Dave Schutter

Address to Synod Schererville, July 2007.

Esteemed Brothers,

Thank you for the invitation to these synodical meetings, and for the opportunity to address you. It is a profound privilege for me to be here with you and share these days and hours in fellowship with you in these most wonderful and hospitable surroundings.

Your spirit of worship and exposition of the Word on Psalm 133 last Monday evening was touching and surely brought praise and glory to our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I have the joy of greeting you on behalf of FRCNA, which stands for the Free Reformed Churches of North America. We are a federation of churches, consisting of 20 churches and 2 church-plants, with a total of 4.500 souls approximately (the article in the July 11 Christian Renewal reports erroneously that we are a 2.000 member denomination)

Besides the Word of God and our Three Forms of Unity, we have many things in common with you. The most tenderest bond is that many of our sons and daughters have joined with your federation over the years, and some of yours have joined our federation. In some cases it has been through marriage, and in some cases it has been on account of relocation. From pastoral experience I may say that in most cases our sons and daughters have felt at home with you, and yours with us. This, in part, shows that we share in what the Bible calls, "Like precious faith."

Your delegate, Rev. Harry Zekveld, addressing our Synod last month, was well received by our delegates because of his Christ-centered approach and confessed humility ... two aspects we hold to very dearly. Through our brother we have also lost one of the daughters of our denomination by marriage ... but I believe with all my heart that our loss has been his gain.

Over the years, and by the grace of God, we, (the URC and the FRC) are developing a history of working together closely on a number of projects. In several localities we work together in the Christian education of our children. In the Niagara Peninsula we have the pleasure of working with you among the Spanish speaking migrant workers, and according to reports, have seen gracious fruit upon our combined efforts. Several of your churches continue to support us in our Mission work among the Achi Indians in and around Cubulco, Vera Paz, Guatemala. In fact, in one of our mission papers to our Synod it was reported that one of your churches has been a "Stalward" supporter of our mission to the Achi. We are so grateful for such support, and I may assure you that if you would ever wish to have a Mission-promotion evening for your people from us, we will do all we can to accommodate you.

We have also found a growing partnership with you in the board and activities of Word & Deed, an International Reformed Relief Ministry that is to be warmly recommended to all of you. In fact, if you will look around in the narthex of this building, you will find the P.R. man there with further information to peak your interest. As I perused through one of your Directories, I was pleased to discover that a number of your churches also support and partner with us in the ministry of Come Over And Help, which offers support to churches, ministers, and students,

particularly in countries of Eastern Europe. We are delighted to partner with you in these ministries.

We have, earlier this year, picked up the threads of our fraternal dialogue with you again by way of our External Relations Committee and your CERCU, after we lapsed for several years into non-dialogue. I believe we lapsed into non-dialogue, not because of lack of interest on our side or yours, but because of other and pressing commitments on both sides. I am personally thankful that we have found the time to meet, and we hope to meet again in the near future, the Lord willing. Our fraternal discussions with you have been brotherly and edifying; we are learning to understand each other, and learning from each other, and find much that we are in harmony with, particularly, as it pertains to our common history, the doctrine of the Church, the Covenant, and our view of the congregation. These have been the four topics of discussion in our “pre-lapse” and our “post-lapse” meetings. In the foreseeable future we hope to complete our discussion with you on the article written by Dr. A. Baars, of Apeldoorn, entitled the Appropriation of Salvation. Your input on this has been very valuable to us and has certainly firmed up our fraternal relationships.

It is our hope that you will be patient with us. It is said that when you grow older, you tend to go slower; this is so physically, but in our case, also denominationally. You, as a denomination, are still young, in the vigor of years; we have watched your zeal and admired how you have tackled some difficult issues already with that youthful spirit of conquest, and we want to say to you, “Go on, be strong in the Lord; be faithful to His Word and to the Confessions, and “earnestly content for the faith once delivered unto the saints.”

May the Lord, the King of His Church, so guide you at this Synod, and in the time till He returns, that He will always get the praise and the glory. With you we look forward to the day when “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and ... every tongue ... confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, I thank you.

Rev. H.A.Bergsma

London, FRC.

Brothers, I consider this both a privilege as well as an honour to stand before you as the one delegated to bring you greetings on behalf of The Federation of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches – the OCRC.

It wasn't all that long ago – June of 1999 – that I attended my first meeting of Synod in Hudsonville, MI as a seminary student/observer. But that was as a fellow member of the URCNA. My membership was, at that time, with the Covenant Christian Church of Wyoming, Ontario.

The OCRC, to me, was, at that time, an acronym for a federation of Churches that I knew very little about. But I do recall that the Synod in Hudsonville adopted an overture to invite the OCRC to unite with the URCNA in federative union on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order. To my thinking at the time, it was a generous invitation, based on a likeminded faith, with a shared interest in moving in the same direction, all to the glory of God.

This invitation was taken up at the OCRC Synod in the Fall of 1999, and this statement was made in the minutes, and I quote:

We wholeheartedly express the unity which we have already in Christ, and regard the members of the United Reformed Churches as our dear brothers and sisters in Christ. We also sincerely desire and pray that our spiritual unity be expressed in federational unity. In pursuing this goal, however, we request that your local and broader assemblies respond to our deep concern regarding the issue of the Doctrine of Creation. We are concerned that some of your officebearers hold to a framework hypothesis as compared with a literal six day reading of Genesis 1, as expressed in our Position Paper on Creation.

And so, the gracious invitation of the URCNA was not accepted, but instead, the concern was reverted back to the them, seeking a response.

As you can see, there were some grave concerns. And Synod 2001, held in Escondido, desired to address those concerns where a statement was formulated that is known to all of you. The OCRC Synod of that same year, countered this statement, expressing a desire for a clearer statement – asking that the URC would indeed reject the Framework Hypothesis and speak openly of six literal days.

Brothers, please do not misunderstand. There wasn't any animosity in these deliberations. We stood as a Federation of Churches with particular distinctives. It is how we came into existence. It was our desire to hold on to those distinctives. We recognized then, as we do even now, the parallel paths in which we both traveled, but there was that recognition of the potential for future controversy if the errors of the Framework Hypothesis were to gain favour. Having said that, we have since come to appreciate the reality that there are far more within the URC who have the same distinctives as we do, even though they do not have them in writing, but rather, theirs are founded in a simple understanding of God's Word.

As you have read, or can read in the report from CERCUC, on page 135 of your agenda, contact since that time between our two Federations has been minimal. Again I **stress, it had nothing to do with our lack of desire. It was perhaps more of a "carry on" attitude on our part. Our conversations of unity took a back seat to our regular life as a Federation. You carried on with the business at hand, as did we.**

At that time we were 12 Churches strong, with two accepting the invitation of the URC. shortly after – leaving then 10. A year or so later the Wingham congregation took up an association with our Protestant Reformed brothers. The Church in Everson WA., closed its doors in late 2004, while in that same year we were faced with the Federal Vision controversy. Little did we know the devastating effects this would have on our already small Federation. Three more Churches left our Federation over this issue: New Westminster, BC. (2005), Lynden WA. (2006), and Sunnyside, AWA. (2007). At the present moment we are five churches – three in the East – Bowmanville, Cambridge, and Nobleton, and two in the West – Burlington, Washington, and Kelowna BC.

Where do we go from here? That is the burning question within the minds of many within our Federation. We do recognize that where we stand at this moment in time is indeed a crossroads in our history. At present we continue to function as a Federation. Synod has been called for September 21 of this year in Kelowna, British Columbia. We just recently had a Classis meeting in the East. In the meantime, our

Ecumenical Relations Committee has a meeting set for some time in September in Hamilton with the local members of CERCU of the URCNA. And so, even though it is business as usual, there is that desire to open up dialogue, with the hopes of moving forward in the pursuit of further integral church unity. Whether that will be as a Federation, or as individual congregations is yet too be seen.

Our life, as a viable Federation of Churches is, at this moment, somewhat limited. I **believe that we all recognize this. It's the reality of things. Having said that, the OCRC** is yet very near and dear to many in our congregations. Our congregation in Bowmanville will be celebrating 25 years of existence, by the grace of God. Burlington has already done that a couple of years ago, and the years are passing by as others in our midst establish themselves. So you see, there is history. This Fall the churches in the East will have a second annual Family Conference where we invite the families of our three congregations in the East to come together and show that spirit of unity. Our Young Peoples will again host a youth conference in the West this year.

But there is yet the reality that what we do will always be small – not that small is all bad, but we have so many more brothers and sisters in Christ in our backyards that we also should get to know – who also believe as we do. There is that ever present reality that we could be doing more in the way of Missions – more in the way of upholding one another – more in the way holding each other accountable.

We recognize that the Gospel of salvation has been entrusted, not only into our hands – but also into your hands. Perhaps its time that we should walk, not parallel, with a chasm between us, but rather together. May it be our fervent prayer to seek the well-being of the Church of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless you, my brothers, as you continue in your deliberations. May He **give you the needed wisdom to keep the truth of God's Word intact. We will pray for you.** Please pray for us. Thank You!

Rev. Martin Overgaauw

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Synod 2007 of the URCNA. In 1999 I was ordained to the ministry of the word in Grace URC in Waupun, WI. After serving that congregation for almost 6 years the Lord called me to serve in a congregation in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. I am currently serving the Reformed Church of Masterton which is on the North Island of New Zealand.

For those who are unfamiliar with New Zealand allow me to give you a brief introduction. It is located about 1250 miles southeast of Australia. New Zealand is a country comprised of two main islands and numerous smaller islands. To put things in perspective, NZ is a country whose land area is equivalent to that of Colorado and whose population is also roughly equivalent to Colorado.

Wikipedia says that New Zealand is notable for its geographic isolation. While this is true geographically, I don't think it follows socially or religiously. Socially, NZ is very progressive and flat out secular. In fact, there is a constant erosion of social mores in our society. Prostitution has been legalized and recently the use of corporal discipline by parents has been made illegal. There is an urgent need for God's law to be recognized civilly and socially. About 53% of the population identify themselves as Christians but this is a nominal recognition and not many are committed to following the teaching of God's word.

This is where the RCNZ comes in. This is a church that was founded in the 1950's. Today there are about 3,300 members distributed among 19 congregations. We are a confessionally Reformed denomination with many members tracing their roots back to the continental Reformed tradition. However, there is also some Presbyterian influence. We subscribe to the three forms of unity and the Westminster confession. This is owing to the strong sister relationship we have had with the OPC. We also have had sister relationships with the CRCNA, but broke those off in 1995 when it was apparent the CRCNA was abandoning the authority of Scripture.

Recognizing the URCNA in her commitment to maintain her Biblical stand and confessional identity, we would like to develop and strengthen our relationship as sister churches. Our Synod decided in 2005 "to encourage the URCNA at their next meeting to establish Ecumenical Contact with our churches, with the hope that they will eventually establish Ecumenical Fellowship with us." (Acts of the 25th Synod pg. 4-121).

We were pleased to read of the recommendation of the CECCA committee. [This recommendation had been adopted when I gave the speech so I also said: "We are glad that you have decided in favor of developing closer ties with the RCNZ. We hope that the closer relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship can develop quickly hereafter.

There are some observations that I would like to offer that might help you understand the importance of such a decision. There is a common bond in Christ and in confession between us. As someone, who came from the URCNA, the transition to serving in the RCNZ has gone very well. There have been some adjustments that my family needed to make, but the Lord has blessed us with a much deeper perspective on the life the church. Being geographically isolated we need the input and the assistance of sister churches from around the globe. There is a constant struggle to fill vacant pulpits. As a denomination, we recognize the need for ministers coming from within our own ranks, and we are working to encourage young men to train for the ministry. However, there still remains a current shortage and thereby a need for help. When I left I was asked

by some of those looking for ministers to enquire about interest from any of the URCNA ministers.

It is also interesting to me that while NZ is a remote island her citizens are aware of what is going on around the globe. This is especially true of the churches. There is a desire to know and interact by many with the churches throughout the world not only with the ministers but also with the members. There is a man in the congregation I serve who wants to know what is going on at the URC Synod. So he will be appreciative of the published news releases that you issue. It is not our desire to remain isolated, but to have fellowship with our brothers and sisters around the world. There are global connections that we want to make. To that end I think it is advantageous for both federations to develop closer ties. We desire your input into our life as a denomination.

One uniqueness of the RCNZ is the amalgamation of many members from a variety of Reformed and Presbyterian backgrounds. The unity that you strive for between federations, we have within our own denomination. This has given the RCNZ a unique flavor. It has also come with a variety of unique hurdles to overcome. So I would like to close with that encouragement. You face many struggles with maintaining your identity as a federation. Sometimes that identity seems threatened by moving forward in ecumenical relations. But let us not lose sight of what is of first importance. That is our oneness in Jesus Christ. That unity in Jesus Christ does not require uniformity, but maintains a proper focus and witness before the world.

Rev. Peter Kloosterman

Brothers delegates, or rather, sisters in the Lord, since I'm addressing your churches, it is a great honour and a great pleasure for me to address your synod on behalf of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, popularly known as the liberated churches – I'll refer to them from here on as the GKN(v). We extend you our hearty greetings. I am here in person, first of all, to extend you the right hand of fellowship and invite you into a sisterchurch relation with the GKN(v): that's ecumenical relation in your terminology. To you it may seem that we are very fast, but the fact of the matter is that we have no official phase 1 relationship and we've been 'following' right from your start.

Why do we seek a sisterchurch relation with you? The simple reason is: our historical roots are almost identical and our ties are very close. Further, given where the relationship between the Canadian Reformed and the United Reformed is at it made sense to us to give our relationship with you a certain status. Moreover, our paths cross frequently in missional activities, and experience has taught the GKN(v) that close cooperation is then beneficial to both parties. It is also our sincere desire to explore avenues for cross-pollination in a theological way. We are thus most happy that your CECCA is proposing to enter into a phase 1 relationship with us.

We hope that when we hold our 'foreign delegates week' next year from May 26-31 we may welcome a delegate from the URCNA. I'm not sure what status he would receive: from your point of view he'd be an observer, from ours he could be considered a fraternal delegate with an advisory voice.

Some information is easier seen than heard. On the screen I have compiled some factual information for you, to give you a bit of a picture of where things are at ecclesiastically in the Netherlands in relation to our churches.

At present the GKN(v) are hold talks with a view to organisational unity with two other federations: the Christelijke Gereformeerden and the Nederlands Gereformeerden. The former federation has its roots in the Secession of 1834 and refusal to participate in the merger of 1892. The latter has its roots in a church schism within the GKN(v) during the 1960's over various issues, including confessional subscription and the nature of a church federation. Our relationship with the Christelijke Gereformeerden is hearty, though the way this is practised varies from place to place. Part of the problem is that the CGKN – by own admission (Zoeken naar Eenheid, 2003) - does not display the measure of homogeneity one might expect to see in a federation of Reformed Churches. Our relationship with the Nederlands Gereformeerden is strained. Though we are making progress in the area of confessional subscription, a new issue has arisen: in 2004 their national assembly opened all offices to women.

The NGK decision to open all offices to women is based on a position paper adopted by them in 2004. The CGKN has also adopted a position paper on the issue. The GKN(v), however, have no such paper. Hence synod, upon the request of local churches and broader assemblies, created a committee to look into what should be addressed in a study on the role of men and women in the church. They will report to GS Zwolle-Zuid 2008, and it is anticipated that then a study committee will be created to seek answers to the questions. This study will also help us in dialoguing with our sisterchurch the GSKA on this issue.

It may interest you to know that, upon the initiative of four memberchurches of the ICRC in Europe a European Conference of Reformed Churches was held earlier this year in March. It was so successful that the next meeting is planned for November 2008 and a third in 2010. This new conference focuses on co-ordinating theological training, something we have not yet been able to achieve globally via the ICRC. It will also focus on missional activities in Europe, especially in urban areas. I've been asked by a number of you whether the GKN(v) engages in church plants and sees new converts. I can answer "yes", though not yet to the extent one sees in North America. But we're getting there.

Finally I wish to briefly touch on current issues in our churches. In the past decade attention has been paid to marriage, divorce and remarriage and to the relationship between the Sunday and the fourth commandment. We have also been reviewing our liturgical practices, among others adopting additional liturgical forms for the administration of infant baptism and the Lord's Supper. Much of these materials can be found – in English – on the website of the GKN(v). Much to our regret, under the leadership of one retired minister, some have felt the need to secede from our churches over these issues.

In closing, the unity and catholicity of the church compels us to seek out each other, the sanctity and apostolicity of the church compels us to be involved with each other. As children of God are called upon to look out for one another, so too churches must seek each other's welfare. We therefore pray that the Lord may bless you in all your ecumenical activities, especially your relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. And may our relationship also blossom to God's glory and for the benefit of the Gospel.

May the Lord of mercy bless you in all your endeavours. Go with God.

Thank you.

Rev. Karlo Janssen

This Communication was received from Rev. Thang during Synod 2007 as he had been having difficulty obtained a visa despite having been provided with several written invitations with wording designed to provide consular officials with enough information.

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I received your invitation dated June 25, 07. And I returned to Yangon, and re-applied for my visa to the US Embassy. In spite of that, my visa is rejected. The consular said that the invitation was inconvenient, and I was not able to demonstrate that my intended activities in the US would be inconsistent. He said to me that I might have an intention of staying at the States.

I regret to inform you that I will not be able to make myself present at the URCNA Synod 2007.

I would like to request the Synod that it would accept Rev. S. Poelman as a co-Fraternal Delegate on behalf of the URCM and myself to present at Session 13 (01:00-03:00 PM, July 12) 'Greetings and Address from the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar'.

Besides our letter, which we are sending the Synod, we would also like to make a special request that the URCNA would recommend the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar in applying ICRC membership.

I also would like to request you to convey at the Synod the greetings of the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar and myself. It has been our earnest prayer for the Synod that God's blessing be in every proceeding and deliberation of the Synod.

In the care of His Grace,

Rev. Moses Ngunhlei Thang
Chairman, Synod Interim Standing Committee, United Reformed Churches in Myanmar.