

The Unofficial Acts of Synod Fergus 2008

To date, we have been unable to locate an official electronic copy of the Acts of Synod 2008. This document is a compilation of updates from the synod, but is by no means official.

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133. Reopening

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148. Closing Words of the Chairman
149. Words to the Chairman
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MORNING SESSION - Tuesday, May 05, 1998

Article 1

Opening

On behalf of the Church at Fergus, its counsellor, Rev. J. G. Slaa, calls the meeting to order. He asks the brothers to sing from Psalm 122: 1, 2, reads from Ephesians 1, and leads in prayer. Thereafter he addresses the meeting with some fitting [introductory words](#) (as found in [appendix 1](#)).

Article 2

Examination of Credentials

The church at Fergus examines the credentials which are found to be in order. All *primi* delegates are present with the exception of Rev. R.J. Eikelboom who is an alternate delegate to Rev. R.A. Schouten. In attendance are:

From Regional Synod East:

Ministers: W. den Hollander, P.G. Feenstra, A.J. Pol, G.H. Visscher

Elders: L. Jagt, W. Oostdyk, J. Schouten, W. Smouter.

From Regional Synod West:

Ministers: R. Aasman, R.J. Eikelboom, J. Moesker, W.B. Slomp.

Elders: W.A. Pleiter, A. VanLeeuwen, P. Vanwoudenberg, T.M. Veenendaal

Article 3

Election of Officers

Voting for officers of Synod takes place, with the following result:

Chairman: Rev. R. Aasman

Vice-chairman: Rev. W. den Hollander

First clerk: Rev. G. H. Visscher

Second clerk: Rev. P. G. Feenstra

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. J. G. Slaa declares General Synod Fergus 1998 constituted. He invites the officers to take their places.

Article 4

Welcome

Rev. R. Aasman thanks everyone for the confidence placed in him and the other members of the executive. He expresses appreciation for the words of Rev. J. deGelder during the prayer service the previous evening and the words of Rev. J. G. Slaa this morning. Rev. R. Aasman thanks the church at Fergus for their extensive labours in preparing for this synod. He expresses words of welcome to Rev. C. Bouwman who is present as a fraternal delegate from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. Also the schoolchildren from the Maranatha Canadian Reformed School of Fergus are welcomed, as are the members of the press. It is decided to seat the counsellor of the church at Fergus, the Rev. J. G. Slaa, as advisor to Synod. Thereafter synod takes a break in order to give the executive an opportunity to make some arrangements for the proceedings.

Article 5

Presence on The Internet

Synod meets in order to discuss some introductory matters. Synod is informed by the convening church that the possibility exists for synod to have a home page on the Internet. It is agreed that the Acts will be uploaded to this home page ([index.html](#)) as they become available.

Article 6

Privilege of the Floor to Representatives

The Executive places the following items of the provisional agenda before Synod.

The church at Ancaster requests Synod to allow representatives from the United Reformed Churches of North America to be given the privilege of the floor. It is decided that besides fraternal delegates from federations with whom the Canadian Reformed Churches have official relations, observers from ERQ, RCUS and URCNA will also be given this privilege.

Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad informs us that Rev. C. Bouwman will be present as representative of the FRCA, that Rev. G. Syms and Elder David Stelpstra will represent the Reformed Church in the United States.

Article 7

Committees of Synod

The executive make the recommendation that the following committees be formed with material assigned to each committee as designated below.

Executive

Items II.DD, III.E, III.Z, IV.C, IV.J, for the executive

Committee I: J. Moesker (convener), G.H. Visscher, W. Oostdyk, P VanWoudenberg

OPC I.C, II.M, II.T, II.X, II.NN, II.TT, II.BBB, III.F, III.V, IV.E, IV.F, IV.L, IV.N, IV.Q, IV.S, IV.T(re OPC), IV.V(re OPC), IV.Y, II.B, III.D, III.G, III.BB, II.SS, III.X

PROLIFE II.MM

Committee II: R. Aasman, W. B.Slomp (convener) W.A. Pleiter, T. M.Veenendaal

Appeals re Dismissal of Rev. Hoogsteen III.K, III.M, III.N, III.O, III.Q, III.R

Appeal re Hofford IV.A

Appeal Burger et al III.L, III.Y

Book of Praise I.E, II.A, II.C, II.H, II.L, II.II, II.QQ, II.XX, II.YY, II.DDD, IV.B, IV.D, IV.H, IV.R, IV.T(part 3), IV.V(part 5), IV.BB

Committee III: W. DenHollander (convener), P.G. Feenstra, W. Smouter, A. VanLeeuwen

Appeals re Denver II.D, III.C, III.I

RCUS I.D(re RCUS), II.GG, II.HH

L'ERQ I.A, II.J, II.K, II.N, II.Q, II.R, II.V(part 2), II.Y, II.AA, II.JJ, II.LL, II.OO, II.VV, II.WW, II.ZZ, II.AAA, II.CC, IV.G, IV.T(part 1), IV.V(part 6)

FRC II.G, II.V(part 3), IV.V(part 6)

FCS I.D(re FCS), III.S, III.T, III.U, III.X

PCK I.D(re PCK), III.W, III.X

ICRC I.D(re ICRC), II.O

CRCA I.D, II.S, II.V(part 1), II.W, II.CC, II.FF, II.UU, IV.M, IV.T (part 4), IV.V(part 3), IV.W, III.H

Appeal W Heights III.A

Committee IV: R.J. Eikelboom, A.J. Pol (convener), L. Jagt, J. Schouten

General Fund I.H

Archives I.I

Inspect Archives I.J

Audit Finances I.K

Theological College I.B, II.Z, II.BB, II.KK, IV.K, IV.O, IV.U, IV.V(part 1), IV.Z

Women's Vote II.C, (II.F), II.I, II.RR, (III.B), III.P

Bible Translation I.G, III.J, III.AA, IV.V(part 4), IV.X

URCNA &Deputies I.F, II.P, II.V(part 1), II.EE, IV.I, IV.J, IV.P, IV.V(part 6) IV.AA

Mexico II.PP

Appeal Vandermeulen II.U

Article 8

Time Schedule and Procedures

The Executive made the following recommendations:

1. The time schedule will be: Monday* to Friday 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Monday sessions will begin at 9:30 a.m.
2. Saturdays will be optional.
3. Synod plans to meet on the holiday, May 18.
4. Upon request of the Foundation for Superannuation, Synod will not convene on Saturday, May 9, 1998.
5. Synod shall begin and close each day with prayer and thanksgiving in plenary sessions.
6. Press Release will not be published until after Synod has been closed.
7. Advisory committees shall provide each delegate with a copy of their report, plus three copies for the first clerk, before it is dealt with in plenary sessions.
8. Copies of documents are available only to members of Synod, and fraternal delegates.
9. For all procedures the Guidelines as adopted by the General Synod of Cloverdale 1983, Acts, Article 45 (and as amended by following synods) will apply.
10. The chairman confirms that those who have expenses related to travelling to Synod may submit them at any time to sr. T. Swaving. Mileage is set at twenty-five cents per kilometre.

ADOPTED.

Article 9

Presentation to chairman

Br H. Bouwman of the church at Fergus presents the chairman with a gavel for his labours here and his possession later as a memoir. The chairman expresses great appreciation for the labours of br H. Bouwman and other members of the church at Fergus.

At noon, after singing from Psalm 121: 1, 4 synod adjourns for lunch. Thereafter committees will meet until the next plenary session.

AFTERNOON SESSION - MAY 05,1998

Article 10

Reopening

At 3:00 pm, the chairman, Rev. R. Aasman reopens plenary session.

Article 11

Late material

It is noted that the Guidelines for Synod (published by the convening church) state that "All material for Synod should be received by the convening Church (in twenty-two) copies no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of General Synod. Material received after this date shall ordinarily not be added to the agenda unless Synod is satisfied that the reasons given for

later arrival are reasonable"(see Appendix II *Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995*, p.103; cf. Article 110 and 111 of the same). In this instance the date six weeks prior to convocation date was March 24, 1998.

With this rule in mind, synod considers whether to add the following material to the agenda.

1. CCOPC, recommending that synod appoint representative to next meeting of General Assembly of the OPC. Received March 30, 1998. Declared admissible.
2. Abbotsford re OPC, CRCA and ERQ. Received April 1. Declared inadmissible.
3. Langley re women's voting. Received March 28. Declared inadmissible.
4. Smithers, re ERQ, Governors, OPC, CRCA, Bible Translations. Received March 28. Declared inadmissible.
5. Chilliwack: re ERQ. Received March 31. Declared inadmissible.
6. Owen Sound, re ERQ. Received March 25. Declared inadmissible.
7. Owen Sound, re Standing Committee for Book of Praise. Received March 25. Declared admissible.
8. Houston, re first rule for ecclesiastical fellowship. Received March 28. Declared inadmissible.
9. London, re Standing Committee for Book of Praise. Received March 31. Declared inadmissible.
10. Ebenezer Burlington, report of the CRCA. Received April 2. Declared inadmissible.
11. Grace Winnipeg, re URCNA. Received April 6. Declared inadmissible.
12. Brampton, re OPC, ERQ, CRCA. Received April 6. Declared inadmissible.
13. Smithville, re Pastoral Proficiency Program, and ERQ. Received April 6. Declared inadmissible.
14. Brampton, re CRCA and Pastoral Proficiency Program. Received April 7. Declared inadmissible.
15. Smithville, re CCOPC. Received April 10. Declared inadmissible.
16. Hamilton, re ERQ and the Pastoral Proficiency Program. Received April 3. Declared inadmissible.
17. Grand Valley, re CRCA. Received April 14. Declared inadmissible.
18. Financial Statements for Theological College, replacement copies of previous report with some corrections. Declared admissible.
19. Denver, re CCOPC. Received April 15. Declared inadmissible.
20. Aldergrove re Surrey's proposal. Received April 16. Declared inadmissible.
21. Willoughby Heights re Standing Committee for Book of Praise. Received April 16. Declared admissible.
22. Ebenezer Burlington, report as Address Church. Received April 18. Declared admissible.
23. Watford, re CRCA. Received April 18. Declared inadmissible.
24. Br. Bill VanderVeen of Carman, re Nicene Creed. Received April 28. Declared inadmissible.
25. Redeemer Winnipeg, re endorsement of Grace Winnipeg. Received April 28. Declared inadmissible.
26. Rockway, re CRCA. Received April 28. Declared inadmissible.
27. Standing Committee for Book of Praise, reacting to comments received on Nicene Creed. Received May 1. Declared admissible.

28. T. Kingma, edited copies of his earlier submissions. Received May 4. Declared inadmissible.
29. Burlington-Waterdown, re Inspection of the Archives. Received May 5. Declared admissible.
30. CRCA re appointments and retirements. Declared admissible.
31. Rockway, re the meeting on Saturday May 9 1998 where Dr. J. Faber and Dr. P.Y. DeJong will speak. Received for information.

The items declared admissible above will be added to the agenda of Synod (see Article 13 below. These items are designated as L plus the number given above)

Synod adjourns for supper.

EVENING SESSION - Tuesday, May 05, 1998

Article 12

Reopening

Synod meets in plenary session.

Article 13

Rockway's Request re Procedure ad Article 32, C.O.

The Executive presents:

Material

Agenda Material II-DD

Observations:

With a view to their concerns about the appeals relating to their church and the Rev. T. Hoogsteen, the church at Rockway asks:

- A. In the event that a delegate to General Synod has participated as a delegate to a minor assembly in a decision of that assembly pertaining specifically to a person, such a delegate shall not:
 - a. serve on the advisory committee appointed with respect to such matter; and
 - b. vote in the disposition of an appeal of that decision by that person to General Synod.

Considerations

- A. Rockway's interpretation of article 32 is contrary to the intent of this article. Article 32 pertains to matters in which a delegate would judge in his own case (personal or local church).
- B. Whether delegates abstain from voting on matters which they needed to make a decision about before depends upon their own personal discretion and judgement.
- C. Synod has already taken into consideration the concerns of Rockway in that it has given the matters pertaining to Rockway and Rev. Hoogsteen to a committee composed entirely of delegates from the west. This is also a standing practice of general synods.

Recommendation

That synod not accede to Rockway's request.

ADOPTED

Article 14

Late Information re VanAndel Appeal

A letter is received from C. & A. VanAndel appellant indicating support of other brothers and sisters re their appeal. Declared inadmissible.

Article 15

Adjournment

Rev. A.J. Pol requests that H. 47: 1, 2, 3 be sung whereafter he leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - Wednesday, May 06, 1998

Article 16

Opening - Wednesday, May 06, 1998

On Wednesday morning, May 6, 1998, Rev. R. Aasman asks that Ps. 71: 1, 2 be sung, reads 1 John 1, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 17

Adoption of the Acts

The Acts, Articles 1 - 14 are adopted. Synod is adjourned for committee work.

Article 18

Adoption of the Agenda

The following is adopted regarding the remainder of the agenda:

8. Incoming Mail

SYNOD PROCEDURES

I. H. Church for Administration of the General Fund

I. J. Church for the Inspection of the Archives of General Synod (see L.29)

I. K. Church to Audit the Finances of General Synod 1995

II. DD. Church at Rockway, ON re proposed amendment to the Guidelines

III. E. Church at Burlington (Ebenezer), appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995(Art. 117)

III. Z. Church at Guelph, ON, re Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 117)

IV. C. Church at Smithers, BC.

IV. J. Church at Ancaster, ON re inviting URCNA representatives

L.22. Burlington (Ebenezer), report as Address Church

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

A. ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

I. C. Report of Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

L.1. CCOPC, re representative to next General Assembly

II. M. Church at Yarrow, BC

II. T. Church at London, ON

II. X. Church at Attercliffe, ON

II. NN. Church at Calgary, AB

II. TT. Church at Lincoln, ON

- II. BBB. Church at Elora, ON
- III. F. Br. W. DeHaan of Watford, ON
- III. V. Church at Grand Rapids, MI
- IV. E. Church at Willoughby Heights, BC
- IV. F. Burlington (Ebenezer), ON
- IV. L. Church at Surrey, BC
- IV. N. Burlington (Fellowship), ON
- IV. Q. Church at Guelph, ON
- IV. S. Church at Blue Bell, PA
- IV. T. Church at Orangeville, ON
- IV. V. Church at Taber, AB
- IV. Y. Church at Elora, ON

Appeals re OPC

- II. B. Church at Watford ON, appeals decision of Synod Abbotsford 1995
- III. D. Church at Attercliffe appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 106)
- III. G. Church at London, ON appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 106)
- III. BB. Br. T. Kingma, Lynden, WA appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101 & 106)
- II. SS. Church at Grand Rapids, MI appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995
- III. X. Church at Blue Bell, PA appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101, 106), Synod Lincoln 1992 (Art. 72, 11, 128), Synod Coaldale 1977 (Art. 91).

Appeals re Denver

- II. D. Church at Taber AB appeals Acts Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 115)
- III. C. Church at Barrhead appeals Acts Abbotsford 1995 (Art.115)

III. I. Church at Coaldale, AB appeals Acts Abbotsford 1995 (Art.115)

Appeals re Rev. Hofford

IV. A. Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic, OPC re statements of Rev. Hofford.

B. REFORMED CHURCH OF THE U.S.

I. D. Report of Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

II. GG. Church at Yarrow, BC

II. HH. Church at Fergus, ON

C. EGLISE REFORMEE DU QUEBEC

I. A. Report of Committee for Contact with the E.R.Q.

II. J. Church at Watford

II. K. Church at Chatham

II. N. Church at Yarrow, BC

II. Q. Church at Willoughby Heights, BC

II. V. Church at Surrey, BC

II. Y. Church at Attercliffe, ON

II. AA. Church at Lincoln, ON

II. JJ. Church at Fergus, ON

II. LL. Burlington (Fellowship), ON

II. OO. Church at Calgary, AB

II. VV. Church at Guelph, ON

II. WW. Church at Houston, BC

II. ZZ. Church at Grand Valley, ON

II. AAA. Church at Neerlandia, AB

II. CCC. Church at Elora, ON

IV. G. Burlington (Ebenezer), ON

IV. T. Church at Orangeville, ON

D. FREE REFORMED CHURCHES

II. G. Regional Synod West re formation of committee for contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America

II. V. Church at Surrey, BC

E. UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES & DEPUTIES FOR ECCLESIASTICAL UNITY

I. F. Report of Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

II. P. Church at Hamilton

II. V. Church at Surrey, BC

II. EE. Church at Rockway, ON

IV. I. Burlington (Ebenezer), ON

IV. J. Church at Ancaster, ON

IV. P. Burlington (Fellowship), ON

IV. AA. Church at London, ON

F. FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

I. D. Report of Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

III. S. Grand Rapids, MI appeals Synod Abbotsford 95 re FCS

III. T. Grand Rapids, MI appeals re the FCS and Rule 5 for ecclesiastical fellowship

III. U. Grand Rapids, MI

III. X. Church at Blue Bell, PA appeals Acts Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101, 106), and Acts Lincoln 1992 (Art. 128)

G. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA

I. D. Report of Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

III. W. Church at Grand Rapids, MI appeal re Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

III. X. Church at Blue Bell, PA appeals Acts Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101, 106) and against Acts Lincoln 1992 (Art. 111)

H. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF REFORMED CHURCHES

I. D. Report of Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

II. O. Church at Yarrow, BC

I. COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD & OTHER INTERCHURCH MATTERS

I. D. Report of Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad

L.30 CRCA re appointments and retirements

II. S. Church at London, ON

II. W. Church at Aldergrove, BC

II. CC Church at Willoughby Heights, BC

II. FF. Church at Yarrow, BC

II. PP. Toronto, ON re establishing relations with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico

II. UU. Church at Guelph, ON re GKN

III. H. Church at London, ON appeals Synod Abbotsford Art. 101

III. BB Br. T. Kingma, Lynden, WA re Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101 & 106)

IV. M. Fergus, ON

IV. T. Orangeville, ON

IV. V. Church at Taber, AB

IV. W. Church at Elora, ON

BOOK OF PRAISE

I. E. Report of Standing Committee for the Book of Praise

L.27 Standing Committee for Book of Praise, re Nicene Creed

II. A. Watford ON

II. C. Burlington (Ebenezer) ON

II. H. Church at Cloverdale, BC

II. L. Church at Langley, BC

II. II. Church at Fergus, ON

II. QQ. Burlington (Fellowship), ON

II. XX. Church at Barrhead, AB

II. YY. Church at Grand Valley, ON

II. DDD. Church at Elora, ON

IV. B. Church at London, ON

IV. D. Church at Carman, MB

IV. H. Burlington (Ebenezer), ON

IV. R. Church at Guelph, ON

IV. T. Church at Orangeville, ON

IV. T. Church at Orangeville, ON

IV. V. Church at Taber, AB

IV. BB. Br. J.D. Gansekoele, Fergus, ON

L.7 Owen Sound, ON

L.21. Willoughby Heights, BC

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

I. B. Report of Board of Governors Theological College

1. Board of Governors Report

2. Financial Report

3. Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency Program

4. Proposal for expansion of the College facilities.

L.18. Financial Statements for Theological College

II. Z. Church at Burlington (Ebenezer), ON

II. BB. Church at Willoughby Heights, BC

II. KK. Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON

IV. K. Church at Watford, ON

IV. O. Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON

IV. U. Church at Lincoln, ON

IV. V. Church at Taber, AB

IV. Z. Church at Elora, ON

WOMEN'S VOTING

II. C. Church at Burlington (Ebenezer), ON

II. F. Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON.

II. I. Church at Aldergrove, BC

II. RR. Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON

III. P. Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art.51)

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

I. G. Report of Committee on Bible Translations

III. J. Church at London, ON appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art 72)

III. AA. Church at Elora, ON appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art.72)

IV. V. Church at Taber, AB

IV. X. Church at Elora, ON

OTHER APPEALS

Appeals re Dismissal of Rev. Hoogsteen

III. K. Br. M. Werkman, St. Mary's, ON appeals Regional Synod East of Nov. 15, 16, 1995 (Art. 19)

III. M. Rev. Hoogsteen, appeals decisions of Regional Synods

III. N. Rev. Hoogsteen and Br. C. VanAndel, appeals Regional Synod East 1997

III. O. Br. & Sr. C. VanAndel, appeals Regional Synod East 1995

III. Q. Br. H. Ouwersloot of Vineland, ON- appeals Regional Synod East 1996

III. R. Br. H. Ouwersloot of Vineland, ON appeals decision of the Council of Rockway

Grand Rapids - Burger et al.

III. L. Mrs. A. Burger, Mrs. I. Kruyswijk, Miss A. Sikkema, Mrs. W. Sikkema of Grand Rapids, MI re Regional Synod East 1995

III. Y. Br. G. Kruyswijk, Kentwood, MI appeals decisions of Synod 1992 and Synod 1995

Miscellaneous

II. U. Br. P. VanderMeulen, Langley, BC re admittance to Lord's Supper

III. A. Church at Willoughby Heights, BC, appeals Regional Synod West of Dec. 5, 1995 (Art. 5B)

II. MM. Church at Toronto, ON re Pro Life Policy of the Can. Ref. Churches

9. Appointments

10. Censure ad Art. 44 C.O.

11. Publication of the Acts

12. Financial Matters

13. Preparation next General Synod

14. Adoption of the Acts

15. Approval of Press Release

16. Closing.

Article 19

Adjournment

At the end of the day, Synod meets for closing devotions. Psalm 34:1,2 is sung and br J. Schouten leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - Thursday, May 07, 1998

Article 21

Opening

On Thursday morning, May 7, 1998, Rev. R. Aasman asks that Ps. 72:1,10 be sung, reads 1 John 2: 1 - 17, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 22

Adoption of Acts

Article 16 - 20 of the Acts, pertaining to May 06, 1998 are adopted.

Article 23

Internet: Re Appeals

It is proposed by the executive that the first clerk be instructed to keep from the publication of the Acts on the Internet, either at the discretion of the executive or by instruction of Synod, sensitive matters such as appeals by persons. The reason for this is to prevent such situations where an appellant who has made an appeal on a sensitive issue would have people discussing the response to his appeal without he himself knowing the result of his appeal.

ADOPTED

EVENING SESSION - Thursday, May 07, 1998

Article 24

Adjournment

After having spent the day in committee work, Synod meets for closing devotions. Hymn 42: 1, 2, 8 is sung and Rev. W. B. Slomp leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - Friday, May 08, 1998

Article 25

Opening

On Friday morning, May 8, 1998, Rev. R. Aasman asks that Ps. 73: 1, 8 be sung, reads 1 John 2:18 - 29 and leads in prayer. Congratulations are conveyed to br J. Schouten with his wedding anniversary; mention is made of the wedding in the W.den Hollander family today. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 26

Adoption of Acts

Articles 21 - 24 of the Acts, pertaining to May 07, 1998 are adopted.

Article 27

Closed Session

Synod continues in closed session (articles 28 - 30)

Article 31

Adjournment

Rev. W. den Hollander requests permission to be absent for the remainder of the day for the wedding of his son; this is granted. Synod adjourns the meeting in order to do committee work.

EVENING SESSION - Friday, May 08, 1998

Article 32

Reopening

The chairman asks that H. 40:1, 2 be sung. Roll call shows that Rev. W. den Hollander is absent with notice. The chairman welcomes Rev. C. Bouwman, the fraternal delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and gives him the privilege of the floor.

Article 33

Address of Rev. C. Bouwman

Rev. C. Bouwman then responds with the [words](#) that can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Rev. J. Moesker is then given the opportunity to [respond](#) to the address of Rev. C. Bouwman. These words too can be found in [Appendix 1](#). It is striking that this evening in Fergus these two brothers, both with family roots in Fergus, today represent church federations on two continents many miles apart but united in faith and heart.

Article 34

Contact with Churches Abroad: Australia and South Africa

Committee III presents:

Agenda item: I.D.

I. MATERIAL

Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) and the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA).

II. INTRODUCTION

The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad received from Synod 1995 the following mandate.

- A. General
 - 1. To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA and the FRCSA in accordance with the adopted rules.
 - 2. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to the sister churches abroad to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible.

- B. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- C.
 - 1. To request the CRCA to convey our appreciation for the support given by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to our Theological College.
 - 2. To mandate the CRCA to solicit a response to our reservations about the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship adopted by the Free Reformed Churches.

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

The CRCA notes

- 1. The FRCA decided to terminate their membership in the ICRC. The main reason for this action was "the membership of the FRCA in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches."
- 2. The FRCA gave an explanation of the words "give account" in one of their Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, which reads "the churches shall give account to each other concerning the establishing of relations with third parties," as questioned by Synod Lincoln 1992. They responded by stating that "in their opinion this wording provides details and grounds for the impending relationship that was to be entered into by our sister churches, and would then enable rule 1,2,3 to be practised should that be deemed necessary by the informed church." They also added that this rule was never intended to "lord it over" any sister church.
- 3. With respect to interchurch relationships Synod Kelmscott decided:
 - a. To continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Korea, and the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (Sumba, Savu, and Timor)
 - b. To continue contacts with other Reformed churches in Indonesia

- c. To strive for sister relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.
4. It was decided to continue to "recommend" the use of NKJV in the churches and to "recognise" the NIV as a faithful and reliable translation which may be used by the churches which prefer this translation of the Bible.
5. Synod Kelmscott decided to continue their support for the Canadian Reformed Theological College.
6. Synod Kelmscott decided to change the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons so that the charge to the deacons now reads, "Encourage the congregation to do good to all men especially to those of the household of faith", and to inform the Canadian Reformed Churches of this change.

B. The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

The CRCA notes

1. The FRCSA gave an extensive update of developments in their churches. Mention was made of several ministers and a congregation leaving the Dutch Reformed Church and requesting membership in the FRCSA.
2. Upon repeated request the CRCA decided to send Rev. J. Moesker to visit the churches of the FRCSA.
3. Synod Capetown 1996 gave much attention to the work of mission. Deputies for mission explored the idea of an office of evangelist in mission. Synod instructed them to report further on this to the next synod.
4. Synod Capetown instructed deputies for theological training to look into initiating theological training in South Africa. Ad-Hoc Synod 1997 appointed five instructors and five curators for the work of theological training with the FRCSA. As of January 1st, 1998 the FRCSA has its own theological college.
5. Synod decided to continue sister church relations with the FRCA, CanRC, and RCN. They maintain brotherly contact and exploratory contact with various federations including the PCK and the ERQ. Synod instructed the deputies to urge the Australian sister churches to reconsider their withdrawal from the ICRC. Synod also instructed deputies to study the Report on Theological Affirmation made to the ICRC in 1993, and to exchange ideas with sister churches concerning the recognition of other churches as "true churches" within the same country.

IV.

V. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. From the correspondence and the Acts of the FRCA and the FRCSA we may gratefully conclude that these churches are faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order.
- B. The CRCA has fulfilled its mandate regarding our Ecclesiastical Fellowship with these churches.
- C. The FRCA are to be commended for the generous support they give to the Theological College in Hamilton.
- D. The response of the FRCA to "our reservations about the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" has been answered sufficiently.
- E. The FRCSA are to be commended for their endeavours in establishing a Theological College.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide

- A. To thank the CRCA for the work done since 1995.
- B. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FRCA and the FRCSA in accordance with the adopted rules.
- C. To request the CRCA to convey our commendations to the FRCA and the FRCSA.
- D. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to these sister churches to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of their churches if invited and when feasible.

ADOPTED

Article 35

Contact with Churches Abroad: The Netherlands

Committee III presents:

Agenda items: I.D, II.S, II.W, II.CC, IV.W, II.UU, IV.M, IV.T (part 4)

After discussion this report is taken back by the committee for further consideration.

Article 36

Adjournment

In closing Br. W. Smouter requests that Ps. 24:1,5 be sung and leads in prayer. The chairman adjourns synod until Monday, 9:30 a.m

MORNING SESSION - MONDAY, MAY 11, 1998

Article 37

Reopening

The chairman reopens synod, asks the brothers to sing from Psalm 75: 1, 6. He reads from 1 John 3: 1 - 10 and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present. It is noted that Rev. P. Feenstra the day before declined the call to Redeemer Winnipeg. The chairman also welcomes Rev. George Syms from the Reformed Church of the United States.

Article 38

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 25 - 36 of the Acts, pertaining to May 08, 1998 are adopted. Synod adjourns for committee work.

EVENING SESSION - MONDAY, MAY 11, 1998

Article 39

Reopening

The chairman asks that Ps. 92: 1, 2 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present. Visitors are welcomed. A special welcome is extended also to br. D. S. Stelpstra of the Reformed Church of the United States. A warm welcome is extended also to Rev. J. J. Petersen of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Article 40

Committee for Churches Abroad: RCN

Committee III presents:

Agenda items: I.D, II.S, II.W, II.CC, IV.W, II.UU, IV.M, IV.T (part 4)

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Vrijgemaakt)] (RCN).
- B. Letters from the churches at London, Aldergrove, Willoughby Heights, Guelph, Fergus, and Elora.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad received from Synod the following mandate:

1. To continue Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to the sister churches abroad to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to General Synods of such churches abroad if invited and when feasible.
3. To mandate the CRCA to discuss with the Dutch deputies, pursuant to our Rule Six, our questions concerning the "blessing elder" and its possible consequences regarding the distinction between the offices of elder and minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
4. To mandate the CRCA to seek clarification from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands concerning the use of the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship].

III. OBSERVATIONS

A. From the Committee Report we note:

1. The CRCA asked the deputies of the RCN to respond to the matters of the "blessing elder" and about the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship but the report does not indicate whether an answer was received.
2. The RCN informed the CRCA of their decision to intensify contact with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil.
3. The RCN continues to be very busy in their contacts with churches abroad such as CanRC, OPC, and RCUS.
4. Synod Berkel decided to cease all official contact with the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken especially in light of the toleration of deviation from the Reformed Confessions in those churches.
5. Synod Berkel upheld the decisions of Ommen 1993 regarding voting rights to women and allowing elders to give the benediction.
6. Synod Berkel approved an alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage which no longer makes reference to the husband's obligation to work faithfully in his daily calling so that he may support his family. The CRCA recommends that they inquire further about this change.

B. From the churches the following concerns are raised:

1. The churches of Willoughby Heights, London, and Fergus, observe that the CRCA did not receive a response to their inquiry concerning the matter of "the blessing elder" and on the wording "to inform" in Rule 3 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
2. The churches at Elora and Fergus urge General Synod to accede to the Committee's recommendation to explore the reason why the RCN has approved an alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage.
3. The church at Aldergrove expresses disagreement with Synod 1995 mandate to the Committee with respect to the "blessing elder". They also

disagree with the CRCA's recommendation regarding the alternate Form for the Solemnization Marriage

4. The church at Willoughby Heights suggests that the Committee be instructed to use the actual name of the "Reformed Churches in the Netherlands" . They suggest to do the same when referring to churches in countries where the language is other than English.
5. The church at Fergus notes that Synod Berkel 1996 upheld the decision of Ommen 1993 giving women voting rights, notwithstanding the fact that 35 submissions were received to the contrary. Fergus requests that the deputies try to convince the Dutch churches to take back this decision since it does not reflect the overall sentiments of the churches.
6. The church at Guelph brings to Synod's attention statements made by certain ministers in the RCN which they believe to be in conflict with Scripture, the Reformed Confessions and in violation of the Form of Subscription. They refer to an article published in Reformed Perspective dealing with homosexuality. They question whether the commitment to the authority of Scripture and the Reformed Confessions is being upheld. They also cite a series of articles in De Reformatie addressing an alleged deviation from Reformed doctrine regarding Christ's suffering on the cross, the concepts of eternal death and of substitutionary atonement. They question whether the Form of Subscription is being upheld.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. From the correspondence and the Acts of the RCN we may gratefully conclude that these churches are faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions, and the Church Order.
- B. The CRCA should as yet obtain an answer to their inquiry about the "blessing elder" and the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the RCN.
- C. The CRCA does not need to receive a specific mandate to investigate matters of concern. In Rule 1 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship there is already the mandate " to assist each other in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations".
- D. Synod disagrees with the church at Aldergrove that the matter of the "blessing elder" and the alternate Form for the Solemnization of Marriage needs more substantial proof before it falls within the scope of Rule Six of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Rule Six speaks of information and consultation when major changes and additions are being considered to the confessions, church government or liturgy. The above issues fall within these parameters.
- E. Although Synod could agree with the church at Willoughby Heights in regards to the name of the sister churches in the Netherlands, Synod considers establishing a rule applying to all churches abroad is neither feasible nor practical.
- F. The request of the church at Fergus falls outside the mandate of the CRCA. Synod cannot judge to what extent the 35 submissions reflected the overall sentiments of the churches.

- G. G. Synod agrees with the concerns expressed by the church at Guelph. In view of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the church at Guelph could have conveyed its findings directly to the CRCA.

V. V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide

- A. To thank the CRCA for the work done since 1995.
- B. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCN in accordance with the adopted rules and to be vigilant in applying these rules in regards to any concerns coming to their attention.
- C. To mandate the CRCA as yet to inquire about the matters of the "blessing elder" and the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the RCN.
- D. To mandate the CRCA to discuss the points raised in observations III A.6 & III. B.6.E.
- E. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to RCN to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to their General Synod if invited and when feasible.

An amendment is proposed to add to the end of V.D.:

And addressed in Considerations IV. G.

DEFEATED

An amendment is proposed to change Recommendations V. D. to

To mandate the CRCA to discuss the points raised above.

ADOPTED

An amendment is proposed to add the following recommendation between V. D. and V.E.:

To inform the churches that if there are concerns about relations with churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship they should address those concerns directly to the CRCA.

An amendment is proposed to this amendment, namely to change the word "should" to "may."

ADOPTED

The proposal of Committee III as amended is put to a vote.

ADOPTED

Thus Recommendation V reads:

SYNOD DECIDE:

- A. To thank the CRCA for the work done since 1995.
- B. To continue the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCN in accordance with the adopted rules and to be vigilant in applying these rules in regards to any concerns coming to their attention.
- C. To mandate the CRCA as yet to inquire about the matters of the "blessing elder" and the word "inform" in Rule Three of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the RCN.
- D. To mandate the CRCA to discuss the points raised above.
- E. To inform the churches that if there are concerns about relations with churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship they should address those concerns directly to the CRCA.
- F. To charge the CRCA to send an invitation to RCN to attend the next General Synod as soon as its date has been established and published by the convening church and to have our churches represented by a delegate to their General Synod if invited and when feasible.

Article 41

Committee for Churches Abroad: ICRC

Committee III presents matters pertaining to the ICRC.

Article 42

Closing

Br. A. Van Leeuwen asks that Ps. 116: 1, 7, 10 be sung, and leads in prayer. Synod adjourns until tomorrow morning

MORNING SESSION - TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1998

Article 43

Reopening

The chairman calls the brothers to order, requests that Ps. 76: 1, 5 be sung, reads from 1 John 3: 11-24 and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 44

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 37 - 42 of the Acts, pertaining to May 11, 1998 are adopted.

Article 45

Committee for Churches Abroad: ICRC (continued)

It becomes apparent that some new proposals have been drafted by members regarding the ICRC.

The following motion is made:

To distribute the submission by Rev. Pol and br. Pleiter to all the delegates and that this matter be tabled until the matter of RCUS has been dealt with.

DEFEATED

Article 46 and 47 were in closed session.

Article 48

Adjournment

Synod adjourns until the evening in order to do committee work.

EVENING SESSION - TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1998

Article 49

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 10: 1, 9, 10 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present. A special welcome is extended to Revs. Paulin Bedard and Jean Guy de Blois from the Eglise Reformee du Quebec. The floor is given to Rev. George Syms of the RCUS.

Article 50

Address of Rev. G. Syms

Rev G. Syms, also on behalf of br David Stelpstra, expresses his gratitude for the possibility of being here this evening. He addresses Synod with the [words](#) found in [Appendix 1](#). Thereafter br. T. M. Veenendaal speaks some appropriate [words](#) (as also found in [Appendix 1](#)).

Article 51

Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad: RCUS

Committee III presents: Agenda items: I.D, II S, IV W, II GG, II HH.

- I. MATERIAL
- II.
 - A. Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the RCUS.
 - B. Letters from the churches of Yarrow, Fergus, London, and Elora.
- III. INTRODUCTION
- IV.
 - A. The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad received from Synod 1995 the following mandate regarding the RCUS:
 - B.
 - 1. To continue the mandate regarding the Reformed Churches in the United States: "to investigate the RCUS with a view to entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, making use of the findings of the church at Carman."
 - 2. To report on this to the churches at least six months prior to the next General Synod, and to the next General Synod.
- V. OBSERVATIONS
- VI.
 - A. From the Committee Report:
 - B.
 - 1. The 251st Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States decided to invite the Canadian Reformed Churches to enter into a fraternal relationship (sister-church relationship) of ecclesiastical fellowship.
 - 2. The Committee has used the work done by the church at Carman.
 - 3. The CRCA has studied the history, background, doctrinal standards and their maintenance, church government and practices of the RCUS.
 - 4. The RCUS now has the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional standards.
 - 5. The CRCA is of the opinion that the RCUS maintains the marks of the true church.
 - 6. The sermons which were heard reflected the preaching of the gospel of grace. By means of the Three Forms of Unity the preaching is safeguarded further.
 - 7. With regard to the pure administration of the sacraments the Committee states, "As we share the same confessions, we can conclude that the sacraments are understood scripturally". The Committee adds a section of the RCUS Constitution to show how they work out the confession concerning the sacraments.
 - 8. With respect to the proper administration of discipline the Report includes a sampling of some of the articles of the RCUS Constitution dealing with the application of discipline. It also makes mention of the practice of erasure.
 - 9. In light of its investigation and contacts which show the RCUS to meet the marks of the true church, the Committee recommends that the Canadian

Reformed Churches enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the United States under the adopted rules.

C. The churches express the following concerns:

D.

1. The church at London considers the recommendation of the CRCA to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS to be premature for the following reasons:
2.
 - a. The fact that we have the same confessions does not mean we have the same understanding of the administration of the sacraments.
 - b. The criteria for admission to the Lord's Table seem to present a double standard with respect to what they demand of their own members compared to what they expect from visitors coming from other denominations. The issue of the supervision of the Lord's Table is still an outstanding impediment for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC and therefore should also be considered an impediment to establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS.
 - c. The underlying problem is the RCUS' understanding of the doctrine of the church. They have a pluriformist view of the church. This was "the major concern in the findings of the church at Carman." The CRCA did not deal with this underlying concern.
 - d. Sunday observance in the RCUS is cause for grave concern due to the fact that generally in the RCUS there is only one worship service per Sunday, "it was acknowledged that some (members) work due to economic pressure...it is not uncommon for people to go out for dinner on Sunday." This is not a minor difference in ecclesiastical practice but a principal one.
 - e. The RCUS is a member of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), and is "considering working towards some sort of closer relationship with all NAPARC churches," (Report CRCA) which would include the Christian Reformed Church at that time.
3. The church at Elora in a similar fashion raises concern about Sunday observance, the fencing of the Lord's Table and is convinced that these points are not to be considered as minor points of Church Order and ecclesiastical practice. They recommend to instruct the Committee to continue the mandate with a view to these concerns, and that it is premature to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time.
4. The church at Fergus expresses concern in regards to the fencing of the Lord's Table and in keeping the Sabbath Day.
5. The church at Yarrow raises the same concerns on the matters of the doctrine of the church, the fencing of the Table, and Sabbath observance. The church at Yarrow also overtures General Synod 1998 "not to invite the RCUS to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC."

VII. CONSIDERATIONS

VIII.

- A. Synod gratefully takes note of the positive contact between the two Committees and thankfully acknowledges the decision of the RCUS to adopt the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional standards.
- B. The Report of the CRCA states that the "RCUS does guard the table, and all who attend must receive permission from the elders. More latitude is allowed in that confession of the Reformed faith is not necessarily required of visitors" (Report of CRCA page 48). The churches at London, Yarrow, Elora and Fergus are correct that in the RCUS the Lord's Supper is not fenced in a manner that is compatible with our Reformed understanding of what the Bible requires on this point. Synod 1992 stated with respect to the supervision of the Lord's Supper that although an identical practice regarding the Lord's Supper is not required, a profession of the Reformed faith is required in the presence of the supervising elders from the guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper (Acts, Article 72, IV.A.1.e.i).
- C. The matter the churches at London and Yarrow raise regarding the doctrine of the church deserves further discussion in view of the fact that the RCUS has now adopted the Belgic Confession as one of their standards.
- D. The church at London judges the doctrinal integrity of the RCUS. They incorrectly call into question the statement of the CRCA that "as we share the same confessions, we can conclude that the sacraments are understood scripturally." When two church federations have the same confessional standards we must assume that the understanding of what the Word of God teaches on these points of doctrine will be the same (eg. The doctrine of the Trinity, Scripture, sin, election etc.). At the same time honesty demands that we admit to diversity in understanding among our churches as well.
- E. The practices in the RCUS with respect to Sunday observance (one worship service per Lord's Day, and non-essential employment, eating out in restaurants) are not in harmony with Scripture or the Reformed Confessions (Nehemiah 13:15-22; Isaiah 58:13; Acts 2:42; Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 38) and Article 180 of the RCUS Constitution. The churches at Elora, Fergus, London and Yarrow rightfully point Synod to this matter.
- F. In the Report of the CRCA, page 22, Art. 119 mention is made of the practice of erasure whereby church membership is terminated. Further clarification should be sought on this practice as to what gives rise to the distinction made between Article 118 (the process of discipline culminating in excommunication) and Article 119 (the process of discipline culminating in erasure).
- G. The church at London suggests that, since the RCUS has stated it desires closer relationships with all NAPARC churches, that this would include the Christian Reformed Church. The church at London, however, overlooks what is stated in the appendix of the CRCA report (page 51) that the RCUS turned down the request of the CRC to enter discussions with them even though both are members of NAPARC. Nevertheless, the continued participation of the CRCNA in NAPARC warrants further investigation.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

X. Synod decide:

- A. To thank the CRCA for fulfilling its mandate with regard to the RCUS.

- B. To acknowledge with gratitude the commitment of the RCUS to the Word of God and the Reformed heritage.
- C. To decline the invitation of the RCUS at this time to enter into a fraternal relationship (sister church relationship) of ecclesiastical fellowship.
- D. To give the following mandate to the CRCA:
- E.
 - 1. To continue working towards a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS;
 - 2. To resolve the matter of proper supervision of the Lord's Supper so that only those who confess the Reformed faith will be admitted;
 - 3. To discuss the matter of Sunday observance and the doctrine of the church;
 - 4. To seek clarification of the concept of erasure;
 - 5. To investigate the position of the CRCNA among the NAPARC churches.
 - 6. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the opening of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 52

Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad: ICRC

The discussion continues on Committee III's proposal re the ICRC

- I. MATERIAL
- II.
 - A. Report of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad regarding the ICRC (I.D)
 - B. Letter from the church at Yarrow (II.O)
- III. INTRODUCTION
- IV. The Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad received from Synod 1995 the following mandate:
 - 1. That the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the ICRC and report to Synod 1998 its findings and evaluation.
 - 2. That the Canadian Reformed Churches be represented at the next meeting of the conference scheduled to take place in Korea during the month of August in the year of our Lord 1997.
 - 3. That the Rev. C. VanSpronsen and Dr. N.H. Gootjes be sent as voting delegates.
- V. OBSERVATIONS
- VI. The CRCA reports:
 - . The Conference took place October 15-23, 1997, in Seoul, South Korea. Rev. C. VanSpronsen and Dr. N.H. Gootjes attended as voting delegates.
 - A. The following churches were received as new members: The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (North America), The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijk Gereformeerd), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of

England and Wales, the Gereja Gereja Masehi Musyafir N.T.T. (Indonesia), the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the United Reformed Churches in North America. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia withdrew their membership. This brings the membership in the ICRC to twenty-one.

- B. The main themes of the Conference were the matter of expressing our unity in the Lord and the execution of the great commission to preach the gospel to all nations.
- C. The next meeting of the Conference has been scheduled for 2001, to be held in the USA. The hosting church will be the OPC.
- D. The number of presentations should be limited to four so as to make more time available for the delegations to have informal meetings.
- E. The CRCA recommends
- F.
 - 1. that the Canadian Reformed Churches continue to participate in the ICRC.
 - 2. that Synod give a mandate to the CRCA to recommend to the ICRC that the next meeting of the Conference limit its speeches to four and allow for meeting time between delegations.
 - 3. That Synod give a mandate to the CRCA to send a normal sized delegation of two voting delegates and two advisors to the next meeting of the Conference to be held in the Northern USA.
- G. Synod observes appendix 3 (Report on the Fourth meeting of the ICRC held in Seoul, Korea from October 15-23, 1997) mentions a change in the Constitution of the ICRC. Article IV, 1 which used to read "Those Churches shall be admitted as members which: a. adhere and are faithful to the confessional standards stated in the Basis" now reads: "Those churches shall be admitted as members: a. which faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed faith." The rationale adduced for this change is that "this defines the faith shared by the member churches as the Reformed Faith expressed in the Three Forms of Unity and several versions of the Westminster Confession of Faith, thus making clearer the intent of the original wording."
- H. The church at Yarrow places an overture before Synod, since they "believe that our membership in the ICRC can usurp the authority of our ecclesiastical bodies, thereby challenging the integrity of our church federation." They overture Synod
- I.
 - 1. To mandate the CRCA not to make any membership recommendations at the ICRC for churches with which we do not have official sister church relations.
 - 2. To mandate the CRCA to express to the next ICRC that we can no longer accept the basis of the ICRC as per Article III.1 in the current ICRC Constitution, and mandate the CRCA to propose the following constitutional changes:
 - 3.

- a. That Art.III. 1 of the ICRC Constitution be changed to read: "to seek and promote unity of faith with member churches of the Reformed confession."
 - b. That Art.IV.1.c be changed so that churches shall be admitted as member to the ICRC which "are accepted by an unanimous vote." This would replace the current two-thirds majority vote.
4. To terminate our participation in the ICRC if the proposed changes to the ICRC Constitution are rejected.

VII. CONSIDERATIONS

VIII.

- . An Interim Committee establishes the agenda of the next Conference (see Proceedings of The International Conference of Reformed Churches Seoul, 1997 Article 84, point 7, p.38). Limiting the number of presentations at the Conference should be taken up with them.
- A. Article V of the Regulations of the ICRC states that "each member Church shall be entitled to send two voting delegates to the meeting." Concerning advisory delegates the same article states, "Each member church may appoint two advisors...". This article does not speak about a "normal sized delegation". Synod also takes note of the fact that at the last ICRC ten member churches out of fourteen sent voting delegates only.
- B. The CRCA should have highlighted and evaluated in its Report the "significant move" of the Conference (ICRC 1997 Press Release) to revise Article IV. 1. a of the Constitution. The notes of the Proceedings explain the change on page 78, "This does not require any applicant church to subscribe to all of the six documents, or even to any of them, thus leaving open the possibility of admission of churches who subscribe other Reformed Confessions than those listed. Such churches and their confessions would have to be in agreement with the Reformed Faith as summarized in the six documents."
- C. The new reading of the Constitution makes an unnecessary distinction between the Reformed Faith and the confessional standards contained in the Basis. It leaves open the question "What is the Reformed faith?" The concept of "the Reformed Faith" could be perceived as the lowest common denominator in confessional unity and takes away from the need for a confessional basis. It has the potential of opening membership in the ICRC to churches whose confessions, upon examination, are found wanting.
- D. What Yarrow proposes in their first recommendation is in line with what Synod Abbotsford expressed in Article 101, IV, B. 3, "that the CRCA should not have supported the request of the FRCNA and the RCUS. The letters of support state more than our Synods have decided with regard to these churches." It should be made part of the mandate given to the CRCA that they make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations.
- E. The church at Yarrow fails to show how their proposed change to the purpose of the Constitution is substantially different from the present wording. The words "express and promote" can refer to two types of members of the ICRC, that is, those with whom we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship and those with whom we do

not. Therefore Synod Lincoln 1992 could state, "the integrity of our churches is not jeopardized by our being members of the ICRC."

- F. The church at Yarrow does not provide grounds why unanimity would be required for admittance to the ICRC.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

X. SYNOD DECIDE

- . To thank the CRCA for the work done with regard to the ICRC.
- A. That the CanRC continue to participate in the ICRC and that the CRCA submit a report to General Synod 2001 on the activities of the Conference, along with an evaluation.
- B. That the Canadian Reformed Churches be represented at the next meeting of the Conference scheduled to take place in the USA in 2001 by two voting delegates.
- C. To mandate the CRCA to make and support membership recommendations at ICRC for those churches only with which we have official sister-church relations.
- D. To mandate the CRCA to convey to the next meeting of the ICRC that the Canadian Reformed Churches disapprove of the change made in the Constitution Article IV.1.a. and to recommend that this Article be changed in such a way that the concerns of the CanRC are addressed.

It is moved to add the words "as outlined in Considerations. C and D above" to V.E.

DEFEATED

It is moved to divide the vote re the five recommendations above.

DEFEATED

The proposal of Committee III above is put to a vote.

ADOPTED

Article 53

Adjournment

Br. P. Vanwoudenberg requests that Psalm 19: 3, 6 be sung, after which he leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1998

Article 54

Reopening

The chairman asks that Ps. 77: 1, 5 be sung, reads 1 John 4:1-6, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 55

Adoption of the Acts

Acts 43 - 53 of the Acts, pertaining to Monday, May 11, 1998 are adopted.

Articles 56 and 57 were closed session.

EVENING SESSION - WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1998

Article 58

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 4: 1, 2, 3, 4 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present. A welcome is extended to the members of the audience, and a special welcome to Rev. A. de Jager from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. He is given the floor.

Article 59

Address of Rev. A. de Jager

Rev. de Jager addresses Synod (some [notes](#) re his address can be found in [Appendix 1](#)). Thereafter Rev. A.J. Pol [responds](#) on behalf of the CanRC (with words found in [Appendix 1](#)).

Article 60

Address of Rev. J. J. Peterson

Next Rev. J. J. Peterson of the OPC is given the floor and addresses the synod with [words](#) found in [Appendix 1](#). Thereafter the vice-chairman, Rev. W. den Hollander gives the floor to Rev. R. Aasman who [responds](#) on behalf of the CanRC (as also found in [Appendix 1](#)).

Article 61

Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad: Strategy

Committee III presents a proposal regarding this matter. After ample discussion, the Committee takes the proposal back for further consideration.

Article 62

Adjournment

Farewell words are expressed also to Rev. C. Bouwman who is leaving us tomorrow. He is asked to convey greetings to the brotherhood in Australia. Rev. Bouwman responds with appreciation

for the time spent at Synod Fergus and wishes Synod the Lord's blessing for its further deliberations.

Br T. M. Veenendaal asks that Ps 119: 34, 35 be sung, and leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - THURSDAY MAY 14, 1998

Article 63

Reopening

The chairman requests that Ps. 78: 1, 2, 3 be sung, leads in prayer, reads from 1 John 4:7-21. It is noted that the Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity of the United Reformed Churches of North America, the Rev. R. Stienstra, and Rev. P. Vellenga, as well as Rev.R. Sikkema of the same federation, are present. They are welcomed.

Article 64

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 54 - 62 of the Acts pertaining to Thursday, May 14 are adopted.

Articles 65 - 67 were in closed session.

Article 68

Adjournment

Synod adjourns for committee work until the evening.

EVENING SESSION - THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1998

Article 69

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 46: 1, 2 be sung. He welcomes the guests among us, also the young people and the children.

Article 70

Address of Rev. Bedard

Rev. Paulin Bedard then addresses the synod and the audience with the [words](#) found in [Appendix 1](#). Rev. G. H. Visscher responds with [words](#) that can be found in the same [appendix](#).

Article 71

Address of Rev. R. Stienstra

Rev. Richard Stienstra prefaces his address with some personal reflections on what he has seen during the day's visit to Synod, expressing appreciation. He then addresses synod with the [words](#) found in the [appendix](#). Thereafter Rev. W. B. Slomp responds with suitable [words](#), as found in the [appendix](#).

Article 72

Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad

Committee III makes their proposal.

Committee III presents Items ID, IIFF, IIW, IV T, IV V, IV W,

I. MATERIAL

1. The Report of the CRCA
2. Letters from the churches at Aldergrove, Elora, Orangeville, Taber, Yarrow

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The CRCA has been having internal discussions on the matter of how best to deal with requests to enter into new relationships with churches in different parts of the world (eg. Lanka Reformed Church).
- B. The CRCA has also been led to question whether it is possible for a small church federation such as ours to do justice to an ever-increasing number of relationships (via establishing ecclesiastical Fellowship with churches in different parts of the world, or via the ICRC).
- C. The CRCA observes that the sister churches in the Netherlands have pursued many relations around the world, also in North America. This makes for a more complicated, even confusing ecclesiastical scene. The CRCA observes that "it would seem more realistic and responsible for the RCN to concentrate its efforts on establishing relations with faithful Reformed churches in its part of the world and for the CanRC to do the same in North and South America.
- D. The Committee considers that this may give a more focused approach, which will enable them to do greater justice to present and future relations, make better use of manpower and resources, and prevent overlap and possible disagreement between sister churches.
- E. The CRCA recommends that Synod mandate the Committee as follows:
 1. Whenever the CanRC receives new requests for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC priority will be given to churches located in the Americas, that is North and South America;
 2. Whenever the CRCA receives a new request from a church located in Africa, Asia or Europe to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the

CanRC, it shall direct that church to take up contact with one of the sister churches in that part of the world;

3. Discussions be entered into with those churches with which we currently maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship with a view to the merits of this strategy and to ask them to give serious consideration to adopting the same.
- F. The church at Aldergrove considers that CRCA does not substantiate why the RCN's large number of contacts abroad might make meaningful relations with those churches impossible. The CRCA fails to argue why the size of our federation makes contact with churches beyond the Americas irresponsible.
 - G. The churches at Elora and Taber fully endorse the recommendations of the CRCA.
 - H. The church at Orangeville support the recommendation of the Committee to give priority to establishing relationships with churches in our immediate geographical area (North and South America). To facilitate the implementation of the proposal of the Committee Orangeville suggests a restructuring of the Committees appointed for contact with other churches.
 - I. The church at Yarrow overtures Synod to mandate the CRCA
 1. Whenever the CanRCs receive new requests for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRCs priority will be given to churches located in the Americas, that is, North and South America;
 2. Discussions be undertaken with the current sister churches on the advantages and disadvantages of the 'regionalized' approach (as proposed by the CRCA) and a full report be provided six months prior to Synod 2001.

II. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The reports and actions of the CRCA make clear that the time has come for reviewing the manner in which we maintain and establish our international contacts.
- B. The CRCA is correct when it suggests that it would seem more realistic and responsible for our sister churches to concentrate their efforts on establishing relations with faithful Reformed churches in their parts of the world and for the Canadian Reformed Churches to do the same in North and South America.
- C. Restructuring the work of CRCA should not detract from our ecumenical calling. Therefore Synod upholds the consideration of Synod Lincoln 1992, Article 128 III D, namely that "a regional approach towards contact with other churches does not exclude the worldwide calling, and cannot avoid worldwide contacts, although by reason of proximity, resources and other practical factors, priority should be given to the ecumenical calling in the church's home environment."
- D. The proposal of the church at Orangeville facilitates a restructuring of the Committees for contact with other churches. With this approach Synod addresses the concerns of the CRCA in the following manner:
 1. Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad
 - a. This Committee will continue functioning as the present Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (that is those

outside of North and South America) with whom we presently have a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

- b. A request for contact will be followed up in consultation with a sister-church in the part of the world from which the request originates.
2. Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas.

This Committee will take over the mandate of the CRCA in as far as it relates to the Americas by establishing and maintaining relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship with churches located in North and South America.

- E. By this approach the need for prior consultation with sister-churches abroad is obviated and the points raised by the church at Aldergrove and Yarrow are addressed.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide:

- A. To restructure the committees for contact with other churches into two Committees known as the Committee for Relation with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA).
- B. To take this into consideration when formulating the mandate of the CRCA and the CCCA and when making Committee appointments.

ADOPTED

Article 73

Mexico

Committee IV presents:

Agenda item II.PP

I. MATERIAL:

Overture from Bethel Canadian Reformed Church in Toronto regarding the Independent Presbyterian Church of Mexico.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

This overture comes from a local church and is presented to General Synod as a new matter. Neither Classis Ontario-North nor Regional Synod-East have dealt with this matter. According to Article 30 CO "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."

III. RECOMMENDATION:

Synod declares this matter inadmissible.

ADOPTED

Article 74

Inspection of the Archives

Committee IV presents:

Agenda item I.J (L.29)

I. MATERIAL

Letter from the church at Burlington-Waterdown re: inspection of the General Archives.

II. OBSERVATION

The church at Burlington-Waterdown informs Synod that the archives of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 were inspected by two members of their consistory and found to be in good order.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide to thank the church at Burlington-Waterdown for examining the archives and reporting to Synod.

ADOPTED

It is noted that while the Church at Burlington West was appointed for this purpose, the Church at Burlington/Waterdown reported because the Church at Burlington West split into two churches: Burlington/Waterdown and Flamborough.

Article 75

Address Church

Committee IV presents:

Agenda item L.22

I. MATERIAL

Report from the address church, the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-East.

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The church at Burlington-East reports on its correspondence as address church.
- B. The church at Grand Rapids, which is our address church in the United States of America, has not submitted a report.

III. CONSIDERATION

The church at Burlington East has fulfilled its mandate as address church.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- 1. To thank the church at Burlington-East for the work done as address church.
- 2. To reappoint the church at Burlington-East as address church in Canada, and church at Grand Rapids as address church in the United States of America.
- 3. To instruct these address churches to report to the next General Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 76

Finances of Synod

Committee IV presents

Agenda Item I.K

I. MATERIAL

- A. Statement of income and expenses from the Finance Committee of General Synod 1995.
- B. Audit report by the church at Yarrow, BC concerning the books of the treasurer of the Finance Committee appointed by Synod Abbotsford, 1995.

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. General Synod Abbotsford appointed the church at Yarrow to audit the books of the finances of General Synod 1995.
- B. The financial statement discloses the following expenses:

Stationery \$1340.41

Telephone \$129.67

Postage \$505.66

Travel (delegates Regional Synod West) \$1336.07

Travel (delegates Regional Synod East) \$6200.34

Food \$2164.76

Equipment & rentals \$2210.46

Printing \$13936.48

Miscellaneous \$333.77

TOTAL: \$28157.62

- C. The church at Yarrow has audited the books of the finances of General Synod 1995, and reports that they were found to be decent and in good order.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

- A. To express appreciation of the work done by the Finance Committee of General Synod 1995 and by the auditing church;
- B. To discharge the Finance Committee for General Synod 1995 on the basis of the auditors' report of the church at Yarrow;
- C. To appoint a Finance Committee which will pay the expenses incurred by General Synod 1998, using funds submitted by the churches in each Regional Synod. This committee will forward any balance of funds to the convening church of the next General Synod. They will also submit a financial statement to the next General Synod, audited by the church at Guelph.
- D. To appoint as Finance Committee of General Synod 1998: sister T. Swaving and brother H. Bouwman.
- E. To appoint the church at Guelph to audit the books of the finances of General Synod 1998 and report to the next General Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 77

General Fund

Committee IV presents:

Agenda Item I.H

I. MATERIAL:

Report from the church at Carman re: General Fund

II. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The church at Carman, MB, submits a financial report of the General Fund for the period from February 6, 1995 to January 20, 1998. The income was \$29,505.86. The disbursements were \$24 801.13. The final balance was \$4 704.73.
- B. The books were audited by two office bearers of the church at Carman and found to be in good order.
- C. The church at Carman notes that the churches have already been assessed 2 times \$2 per confessing member to cover the costs of the General Fund.
- D. The church at Carman requests Synod to thank br. G. Vandersluis who has taken care of the books for the General Fund.

III. CONSIDERATIONS:

It is within the mandate of the church at Carman to request funding as required.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

- A. To express gratitude to the church at Carman for the administration of the General Fund, to the office bearers who audited the books, and to brother G. Vandersluis for keeping the books.
- B. To authorize the church at Carman to collect fund from the churches as required.
- C. To discharge the church at Carman of duties completed during the period of February 6, 1995, to January 20, 1998, and reappoint the church at Carman for the General Fund.

ADOPTED

Article 78

Adjournment

The chairman speaks some farewell words to the fraternal delegates who are leaving soon. He thanks them for their participation and wishes them the Lord's blessing. He also thanks br and sr John Hutten for all the work they did with respect to the mail and the provisional agenda for Synod Fergus 98.

Thereafter Rev. G. H. Visscher asks that Hymn 40 1, 2, 5 be sung, and leads in prayer

MORNING SESSION - FRIDAY MAY 15, 1998

Article 79

Reopening

The chairman asks that Ps. 79: 3, 5 be sung, reads 1 John 5: 1 - 12, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 80

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 63 - 78 of the Acts, pertaining to Thursday, May 14 are adopted.

Article 81

Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

Committee IV presents their proposal regarding the matter of pursuing unity with churches which have left the Christian Reformed Church of North America. After discussion, the committee withdraws their proposal for further consideration.

Synod adjourns for committee work until the evening.

EVENING SESSION - FRIDAY MAY 15, 1998

Article 82

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 135: 1, 2 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present. A special welcome is extended to the professors of the Theological College and their wives.

Article 83

Theological College: Tenure of Dr . J. de Jong and Dr. N. H. Gootjes

Committee IV presents their proposal re this matter.

Agenda Item I.B.1.

I. MATERIAL

A. Report of the Board of Governors to General Synod 1998

II. OBSERVATIONS

1. On September 5, 1996 the Board of Governors of the Theological College decided:

"To ask General Synod 1998 to direct the Board of Governors to grant tenure to Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N. H. Gootjes. According to past practice tenure should have been requested at Synod 1995. This did not happen due to an oversight of the Board of Governors."

2. Synod Abbotsford 1995 adopted a procedure for the granting of tenure (Article 97, paragraph II.B.13).

III. CONSIDERATION

- A. Tenure should have been granted to Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes in 1995.
- B. The fact that this did not take place at that time was caused by an oversight on the part of the Board of Governors.
- C. For this reason, the current procedure adopted by General Synod Abbotsford 1995 has not been followed in the case of Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes.

II. RECOMMENDATION

- A. To direct the Board of Governors to grant tenure to Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes.
- B. To invite Prof. Dr. J. DeJong and Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes to attend a session of synod, so that synod may have the opportunity to inform them of this decision and congratulate them accordingly.

ADOPTED

Thereafter the chairman speaks some suitable words to Dr. J. de Jong and Dr. N. Gootjes.

Article 84

Theological College: General

Committee IV presents their proposal.

Agenda item: I.B.1

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the Board of Governors to General Synod 1998.

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The report of the Board of Governors covers its work and decisions since May 1995. From the report the following highlights are observed. The work at the Theological College could continue without interruption during the past three years.
- B. The work of the board was done in brotherly harmony, and the professors were also able to do their work without serious problems.

- C. In 1997 Dr. Faber was minister of the Word for forty-five years, and in the same year he and his wife also remembered their forty-fifth wedding anniversary.
- D. In September 1995 Rev. G.VanDooren passed away. The board remembers with thankfulness how he instilled in many students the love for preaching the gospel and the pastoral work.
- E. On Oct.12, 1996 Dr. C.VanDam celebrated his 25th anniversary in the ministry of the Word and Dr. and Mrs. VanDam also celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.
- F. From June 1st 1996 to and including December 1996 Dr. VanDam was on a sabbatical. Drs. Hagens from DeBilt-Bilthoven served as his very capable and appreciated replacement. The Senate has indicated to the Board that they consider this first sabbatical to be a success.
- G. Dr. Gootjes is presently serving as Principal of the college. The Board proposes that General Synod appoint Dr.DeJong as Principal for the period 1999-2002, with the transition to take place after the Convocation of 1999. The Board also proposes to appoint Dr. C.VanDam as Principal designate for the years 2002-2005, the Lord willing.
- H. Currently fourteen students are enrolled. Twelve students graduated during the last three years, of which seven entered the ministry of the Word.
- I. The board is considering ways in which they can help foreign students who lack the funds they need to study at the college.
- J. The Governors have regularly visited the lectures. The reports are invariably positive.
- K. In 1995 Prof.J.Geertsema visited the churches in Alberta/Manitoba. In 1996 Dr.J.DeJong visited the churches in Classis Pacific, and also attended the meeting of the Alliance and Synods of the United Reformed Churches. In 1997 Dr.N.H.Gootjes went to Alberta/Manitoba again, and attended the ICRC in Korea. Dr. VanDam went to Mexico in 1997, and gave guest lectures at the Juan Calvino Seminary. The reports of all these activities were positive.
- L. Under the skilful direction of sr. Margaret VanderVelde the automation of the library cataloguing system is progressing well. Upon request of the Senate the Board has made her position permanent.
- M. The Board wants to express its thanks for the work and the contributions of the Women's Savings Action.
- N. The Board acknowledges with appreciation the dedication of sr. Catharine Mechelse the College's administrative assistant.
- O. The board also acknowledges the assistance of many volunteers who help out in the library in various ways.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. On the basis of the report received Synod considers that the professors are making a positive contribution to the churches, not only through the college but also through their other activities.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. To approve all decisions and actions of the Board and of its committees for the years 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998 until the day of the Board's Report.
- B. To express gratitude that the work at the Theological College continues without interruption and that all instruction is given in harmony with the Word of God and in agreement with the Confessions of the Canadian Reformed Churches.
- C. To acknowledge the contribution of the professors to the broader ecclesiastical community.
- D. To appoint Prof. Dr. J. DeJong as Principal for the period of September 1999 to September 2002, and to designate Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam as Principal for the years 2002 to 2005, the Lord willing. This transfer of responsibilities will take place the day after the Convocation in 1999.
- E. To express gratitude for the work done by Rev. G. VanDooren during his lifetime.
- F. To express gratitude for the work of Drs. Hagens of our sister-church in De Bilt-Bilthoven during the sabbatical of Dr. Van Dam.
- G. To express gratitude for the work of the Board of Governors of the Theological College.
- H. To acknowledge the contribution of the Women's Savings Action, Miss M. VanderVelde, the librarian, and also Miss C. Mechelse, the administrative assistant, as well as the many volunteers.

ADOPTED

Article 85

Theological College: Board of Governors

Committee IV presents their proposal regarding the matters pertaining to the Board of Governors. After discussion, Committee IV takes this matter back for further consideration.

Article 86

Theological College: Finances

Committee IV presents their proposal regarding the matters pertaining to the finances of the College.

- I. MATERIAL
 - A. Tri-Annual Reports of the Finance and Property Committee of the Board of Governors of the Theological College to Synod Fergus 1998
 - B. Report from the Board of Governors
- II. OBSERVATIONS

Regarding matters pertaining to the property and finances, the Board reports:

- A. The Finance and Property Committee met regularly. These meetings were attended by the current Principal and the College's administration assistant, Miss Catharine Mechelse.
- B. Regular maintenance of the College property was continued. Repairs and renovations have been undertaken with a view to the long term objectives of the College.
- C. A new handbook was produced and printed for the 1996-1999 academic years and was sent to all of the governors and the churches.
- D. The salaries of all professors have been reviewed and increased annually based on the prescribed formula. At the present time one retired professor is supported. The salaries of the staff have been reviewed and where appropriate, increased.
- E. The churches continue to support the College faithfully. Special appreciation is expressed for the substantial contributions from our sister churches in Australia.
- F. The transition to a computerized accounting system was completed. A decision was made to commence reporting financial matters on a calendar year basis beginning in 1997. Audited statements of years ending May 31, 1995, May 31, 1996 and the subsequent seven month period ending on December 31, 1996 are included as appendices.
- G. Tuition fees for students have been set and approved by the Board of Governors.
- H. Based on the College financial budgets, assessments per communicant member have remained at \$63.00 since January 1, 1995.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. On the basis of the reports received, Synod considers that the affairs of the Theological College are being well managed.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide

- A. To receive for information the audited financial statements and the report of the
- B. Auditors for the previous fiscal periods; to relieve the Treasurer of the Board of all responsibilities for these fiscal periods; and to appoint sr. A. Spithoff, C.A. as Auditor until the next General Synod.
- C. To express thankfulness for the support from the churches in Canada, the United States of America and Australia.

ADOPTED

Article 87

Theological College: Expansion

Committee IV presents

Agenda Items: I.B.1, I.B.4, II.KK, II.ZZ, IV.K, IV.U, IV.V, IV.Z

I. MATERIAL:

- A. Proposal from the Board of Governors of the Theological College with respect to the expansion of the College Facilities.
- B. Letters from the Canadian Reformed Churches at Burlington-South, Watford, Burlington-East, Lincoln, Taber, Orangeville and Elora.

II. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The matter of the expansion of the College facilities was placed before Synod Abbotsford 1995. Section IV, I. states:

"To direct the Board of Governors to study and prepare a more detailed and definite proposal for the expansion of the College facilities, and seek the possibility of financing this project without increasing the assessment to the churches. A proposal should be submitted to the churches and the next Synod at least six months before the next Synod."

- B. The Board of governors appointed a committee "to further consider and develop a comprehensive plan and proposal for the expansion of the Theological College."
- C. The committee was advised by the Senate, faculty, and staff that the library is the primary impetus for the expansion.
- D. The committee met in 1996 to review the mandate given by Synod Abbotsford 1995 and the direction of the Board of Governors. The library and library technicians were requested and instructed to undertake a 'needs assessment' for the library and to seek input from other professional librarians, to formulate any other needs of the college, and determine by way of available statistics and other current resources what the library's needs will be in the next 20 years.
- E. The architect who was consulted was able to demonstrate that it was more cost effective and easier to construct a building specifically for the library than to spread its functions throughout the building and to remodel the building to accommodate those library functions. After extensive discussion with the architect, it was decided that a two-floor plan would best suit the library's needs and would be better situated on the property.
- F. The recommended plan includes 6702 feet of 'additional' space. Of this space, 6250 square feet are devoted to the library and the remaining 452 square feet are comprised of washrooms and an elevator which complies with the current building accessibility requirements.
- G. The recommendation of Synod Abbotsford 1995 included "... and seek the possibility of financing this project without increasing the assessment to the churches." One of the considerations, under Article 97 section III.D states: "... This proposal should indicate how this project can be financed from sources and means other than the regular assessment so that it does not necessarily burden the churches..."
- H. It is expected that the construction period would be approximately six to eight months. Target construction commencement is the summer (September) 1999.
- I. The project is expected to cost \$ 680,160.00. By the end of fiscal 1997 (December 31) the college will have approximately \$193,000 set aside and appropriated for

the expansion. Conservatively it appears that the Women's Savings Action will be able to contribute \$75,000 for the expansion. This means that additional funds of approximately \$500,000 must be raised.

- J. It is proposed that the college obtain commitments of at least 80% of the funds required before construction may commence. The remaining 20% of funding may include private borrowing at preferred or low rates from members of the church federation. The Board requests permission to make its own funding arrangements for the remaining 20% if required.
- K. The Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington suggests that General Synod, via the Board of Governors, revisit the proposal with the intention of scaling it down in view of the financial obligations presently in our communities.
- L. The Grace Canadian Reformed Church at Watford feels that the cost is somewhat prohibitive for their small church. They ask General Synod to keep this in mind when determining the final cost.
- M. The Canadian Reformed Church at Elora encourages General Synod to accept the recommendations of the Board of Governors.
- N. The Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington suggests that construction be postponed until 80% of the funds are collected.
- O. The Canadian Reformed Church at Lincoln reminds us of the decision of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 mentioned in observation G above and that at least 80% of the money should be collected prior to start-up.
- P. The Taber Canadian Reformed Church suggests that the proposal is "a well-considered and suitable one" and offers its full endorsement.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The plan as presented has been well received in the churches.
- B. Several churches have questioned whether we can commence building when money is promised to us, but when it has not yet been received. We trust that our people honour their pledges and therefore we find this stipulation unnecessary. We trust the Board of Governors to use their own discretion on this matter.
- C. Concerns have been expressed with respect to the annual assessments being raised. The committee emphatically states that "the regular college assessment must not and will not be increased as the result of the expansion." Over the last few years the college has been able to set aside \$41,000 of accrued surpluses which will be dedicated to the expansion plan. The assessment has remained at \$63 per communicant member since January 1 1995.
- D. Implementation of this proposal will necessarily encounter many unforeseen circumstances and the Board must have the authority to modify the plan and its implementation provided that such modification or alteration is not materially or substantially different than the recommended plan.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. To thank the Board of Governors and its expansion committee for the thoroughness of their presentation.

- B. To instruct the Board of Governors to proceed with the 'Recommended Plan' on the basis as set out in this report as soon as they have received 80% of the funds required.

ADOPTED

Article 88

Theological College: Pastoral Proficiency Program

Committee IV presents their proposal regarding this subject. After discussion, the Committee takes this matter back for further consideration.

Article 89

Address of Dr. N. H. Gootjes

The chairman expresses thankfulness to the faculty of the Theological College for their dedication and the high caliber of their work. Thereafter he gives the floor to Dr. N. H. Gootjes. He expresses appreciation for the tenure given to himself and Dr. J. de Jong. He notes that today was the last day of the academic season. He notes that all delegated ministers at Synod 1998, with the exception of one, are graduates of the Theological College. He reflects on some aspects of his own field, dogmatology, and on the challenge of teaching theology in a Scriptural and confessional way in today's world. He thanks Synod 1998 for the opportunity the faculty has had this evening to offer their input, noting especially the strong display of support for the expansion of the College building, and expressing the wish for the blessing of the Lord on the rest of Synod's labours.

Article 90

Adjournment

After asking that Ps. 119: 42,44 be sung, Dr. N. Gootjes leads in prayer. The meeting is adjourned until Monday, May 18 at 9:30 am.morning session

MORNING SESSION - Monday, May 18, 1998

Article 91

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 80: 1, 2, 3 be sung, reads from 1 John 5: 13 - 21, and leads In prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 92

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 79 - 90 of the Acts, pertaining to Friday, May 15, 1998, are adopted.

Article 93

Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

Committee IV presents their material on this matter. After discussion, the Committee takes it back for further consideration.

Article 94

The Relationship with the ERQ

Committee III presents their material on this matter. After discussion, the Committee takes it back for further consideration.

EVENING SESSION - MONDAY, MAY 18, 1998

Article 95

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 38: 1, 2, 3, 4 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 96

Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity

Committee IV presents their material on this matter again. Committee IV presents:

Agenda items I.F, II.P, II.V, II.EE, IV.I, IV.P, IV.AA

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity;
- B. Letters from the churches at Hamilton, Surrey, Rockway, London, Taber, and the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington.

II. INTRODUCTION

General Synod Abbotsford 1995 re-appointed Deputies for the promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity to promote the unity of Reformed believers who have left the Christian Reformed Church with the mandate:

1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation wherever necessary.

2. to make themselves available for advice on local developments.
3. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of pursuing ecclesiastical unity;
4. to report on its activities to the churches and to the next General Synod. (Acts General Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. V.B.).

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. Deputies remember with gratitude the work that the late Rev. J. D. Wielenga did as deputy.
- B. From the report of deputies, synod takes note of the following activities
 1. Our churches were represented at meetings of the Alliance of Reformed Churches on November 14-16, 1995, November 11-13, 1996, October 16 and 17, 1997. Dr. J. DeJong was invited to prepare a memorandum to the committee on the church order as it was being discussed among the Alliance churches. The church order was later adopted at the synod of the URCNA in 1997. Deputies hope to continue discussions on the church order with the Committee of Inter Church Relations of the United Reformed Churches (URCNA).
 2. Deputies sent a delegation to the first Synod of the United Reformed Churches, held on October 1 and 2, 1996, in Lynwood, when the URCNA federated. Deputies also attended the second Synod of the URCNA, held October 21-23, 1997. There is rapid growth in the URC; there is much movement and flux in these churches.
 3. The Inter-Church Relations Committee of the UCRNA reports to synod gave considerable priority to the relation of the URC to the Canadian Reformed Churches, but the Synod itself pursued a policy of treating Reformed and Presbyterian churches equally. This has led deputies to believe that "federative unity has become much more of a long term option than before." They see the decision to establish fraternal relations with twelve other national and foreign church federations as implying "that the specific goal of federative unity with Reformed churches of a more immediate range and historical background has been let go in favour of a broader policy on ecumenical relations."
 4. In December 1996, a letter of support and encouragement was sent to the Inter-Classical Conference organizing Committee, based in Escondido, California. Many churches in the conference are considering secession from the CRC.
 5. The committee was also invited to send a delegate to the Classis East of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. They see this as an opportunity to initiate talks on a local level, after which overtures can be presented to major assemblies for the purpose of attaining federative unity.
 6. Several churches of our federation informed the committee of their work and asked for advice in their discussions with independent churches.
- C. Proposal from the deputies

Deputies propose that Synod make the following additions/modifications to their mandate:

1. that deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity;
2. that deputies pursue a more restricted involvement in the Alliance of Reformed Churches with a view to pursuing federative unity with unfederated (independent) Reformed Churches;
3. that deputies represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity;
4. that a new deputy be appointed from western Canada to fill the vacancy among the deputies created by the loss of Rev. J.D. Wielenga.

D. Overtures from the churches

1. The Council of the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton overtures synod to:
 - a. investigate with Deputies from the United Reformed Churches the possibility of a federative unity between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches in North America, and
 - b. present to the churches a report on this investigation, one year before the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Since 1992, the Council of the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton has been engaged in discussions with the Rehoboth United Reformed Church (formerly the Hamilton Independent CRC). Through these discussions, Council of the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church at Hamilton and the Rehoboth United Reformed Church recognized each other as true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to our confession in Art. 27-32 of the Belgic Confession. Classis Ontario-South, while expressing great joy over the fact that this recognition could be given, felt that implementation of this recognition is not permitted according to the Church Order, since such an arrangement appears to be a matter of the churches in common. The Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church respects this decision, and consequently brought this matter to General Synod. They expect the Rehoboth United Reformed Church to place a similar overture on the agenda of their major assembly.

The specific grounds for this overture, then, are summarized:

3. Contact between the Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church and the Rehoboth United Reformed Church has continued for three years since these churches officially recognized each other as true churches according to our mutual confession.

4. The decision of Classis Ontario-South, March 8 1995 obliged both Hamilton churches to question how to experience together the recognition given and how to give concrete content and meaning to the communion of saints.
5. The United Reformed Churches have (since the given recognition) adopted the same confessional basis and the same liturgical forms as the Canadian Reformed Churches have.
6. It is within the mandate of General Synod to deal with federative unity (Article 30 C.O.). It is important, however, that local contact is maintained at the same time as contact is in progress at the federative level.

2. Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church at Surrey proposes:

"To mandate the existing Committees for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity and Contact with L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec or a new committee to work towards establishing a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the United Reformed Churches, the Orthodox Reformed Churches, L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec and the Free Reformed Churches under the existing rules of Ecclesiastical Fellowship as a stepping stone towards possibly further federative unity in the future." The church at Taber supports this proposal.

3. Rockway Canadian Reformed Church proposes:

to appoint Deputies for Ecclesiastical Unity and to authorize these brothers to approach the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches for the purpose of engaging in official discussions with these bodies that are aimed towards ecclesiastical unity.

4. The Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-East proposes:

"that deputies be instructed to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches of North America and specifically explore and discuss the impediments towards establishing federative unity."

5. The Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-South endorses the Hamilton overture and supports the recommendation of the deputies:

"to continue fraternal dialogue with the URCNA with a view towards establishing federative unity."

6. The Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-South informs synod that:

"we regret that the Deputies' speech at the 1997 URCNA Synod appears to impose as a precondition to unity that there be "mutual understanding ... that the Liberation of 1944 was an act of obedience and a necessary development. (Appendix 8)

7. The Taber Canadian Reformed Church indicates agreement with point 2 of the proposed renewed deputies' mandate.
8. The Pilgrim Canadian Reformed Church at London report on their contacts with the United Reformed Churches at Aylmer, Woodstock, London and Clinton. They express frustration because they perceive a lack of willingness on the part of the local URCs to deal with the real issues. The Canadian Reformed Church at London has taken the position that pulpit exchange is only possible in a sister-church relationship but notes that other Canadian Reformed ministers do not follow the same rule. They request synod if possible "to give some direction on this matter in their mandate to the DPEU."

II. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Deputies are requesting a mandate that is generally more aggressive and focused in approach. This approach is consistent with our Scriptural calling for unity, and it also reflects the expressed desire of the churches to pursue substantial progress in this respect.
- B. Instead of being instructed to deal with those who "left the Christian Reformed Church" in general, deputies propose to continue dialogue in particular with the URCNA. Deputies do not need a specific mandate with respect to the Alliance of Reformed Churches because it is adequately covered in points 1,2 and 3 of their mandate.
- C. The proposal of the church at Rockway as well as the 'package' presented by Hamilton both acknowledge that their proposals should have gone to classis before coming to synod. The submission of the church at Surrey - supported by the Church at Taber - is a new proposal in the sense that it allows Ecclesiastical Fellowship as a stepping stone towards possible further federative unity. It is unfortunate that these proposals were not discussed in the minor assemblies before they came to General Synod. Since this was not done, General Synod can do no more than pass on these submissions to the deputies for discussion. The churches should be encouraged to bring these proposals to the minor assemblies, to resolve their differences there, so that the churches may proceed in a united and orderly fashion.
- D. The proposals from the churches at Hamilton, Surrey, and Rockway, and the supporting statement from Taber, offer suggestions on the procedure that should be followed in establishing federative unity. Deputies should be given some freedom, depending on what develops in the dialogue. They should also take into account the suggestions of these churches.
- E. With respect to the concern expressed by the Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-South, deputies at the 1997 URCNA Synod did not impose any preconditions to ecclesiastical unity. Instead they said that a mutual

understanding and appreciation for the Liberation of 1944 would indicate that we have come a long way.

- F. From the reports submitted by the various churches, it appears that local discussions with the URC are encountering different obstacles and proceeding at different rates. In these circumstances it is appropriate that the churches inform the deputies appointed by General Synod of their positive and negative experiences. The deputies should also make themselves available to assist the local churches in particular matters. In this way the concerns expressed by the church at London are addressed.
- G. The church at Hamilton has proposed that deputies be instructed to report to the churches a year before the next synod. The current mandate of deputies is to report to the churches and to the next general synod. Deputies should be instructed to report regularly for the greater involvement of the churches.
- H. The proposal of the Ebenezer Church at Burlington is a good one. The desire of the churches to establish federative unity with the URCNA would be expeditiously accomplished by focusing on what impediments are keeping us apart, and how they can be resolved.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. To thank the deputies for their labours.
- B. To acknowledge, with gratitude to the Lord, the contribution of the late Rev. J.D. Wielenga to the work of the deputies.
- C. To rename the 'Deputies for Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity': The 'Committee for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity.'
- D. To appoint a committee, including a new committee member from western Canada to fill the vacancy created by the loss of Rev. J.D. Wielenga.
- E. To give this committee the following mandate:
 - 1. to make their presence known for the purpose of information and consultation wherever necessary;
 - 2. to represent the churches, whenever invited, at assemblies or meetings held for the purpose of pursuing ecclesiastical unity;
 - 3. to pursue continued fraternal dialogue with the United Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity;
 - 4. to represent the churches (when invited) at meetings of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, with a view to promoting greater understanding and exploring possibilities of federative unity;
 - 5. to make themselves available upon request of Canadian Reformed Churches for advice on local developments;
 - 6. to discuss and develop a proposal as to how to proceed in encouraging federative unity;
 - 7. to provide information to the churches at regular intervals, and to serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 97

Relationship with L'Église Réformée du Québec

Committee III presents: IA, IJJ, IIK, IIN, IIQ, IIR, IYY, IIAA, IIJJ, IIIL, IIOO, IIVV, IIWW, IIZZ, IIAAA, IICCC, IV G, IV T (part 1).

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec
- B. Letters from the churches at Watford, Chatham, Yarrow, Willoughby Heights, London, Attercliffe, Lincoln, Fergus, Burlington South, Calgary, Guelph, Houston, Grand Valley, Neerlandia, Elora, Orangeville, Burlington East.

II. INTRODUCTION

General Synod Abbotsford 1995 gave the Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ) the following mandate:

- 1. To discuss with the deputies of the l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec the differences in Confession, Church Polity and worship which exist between our federations.
- 2. To discuss with the deputies their relations with the Christian Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, and evaluate them;
- 3. To further investigate whether it is possible to have the Canadian Reformed Churches and the l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec as part of the same federation;
- 4. To make use of the report submitted by the church at Ottawa and Classis Ontario North;
- 5. To keep the churches informed about the l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec so that their financial needs and other needs as missionary churches can be responded to in a positive manner;
- 6. To serve Synod 98 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

II. OBSERVATIONS

A. From the Committee Report:

- 1. The ERQ bases its faith on the revealed Word of God as found in the Old and New Testament and has officially adopted the Westminster Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism as its confessional statements. The Committee did not evaluate the Westminster Standards since Synod 1965 already "considered and judged that a church federation maintaining the Presbyterian church government and subscribing to and upholding the Westminster Standards would be a product of the Calvinist Reformation and a true church of the Lord".
- 2. The Preamble to the Westminster Confession, which was added by the founding synod of the ERQ in 1988, allows for freedom of conscience in relation to articles concerning the place of the political government in the

life of the church, marriages with consanguinity, and in relation to the occupations and duties to be accomplished on the Lord's Day. Furthermore The Preamble does not bind the conscience to some of the polemical expressions found in the Westminster Confession.

3. The Committee is of the opinion that no further discussion is necessary on The Preamble.
4. At present the ERQ has no official relationships with any other church federations. Contacts are growing with the United Reformed Churches. The ERQ now has a Committee for Inter-Church Relations.
5. The Committee states that a Reformed church polity shines through in the ODE (Order and Discipline of the ERQ). The Committee reports that though some weaknesses can be pointed out it does not articulate these weaknesses.
6. The office of deacon is open to all members (2.4.3, pg. 29), in contrast to the office of elder which is restricted to the male gender (2.2.4, pg. 28). Thus the office of deacon is open to women. Deacons are not part of the ruling council of the church (5.1.2.1, pg. 10), deacons are "elected" and "ordained" to office. "Pastoral visits must be made part of the work of elders, ministers of the word and deacons under the direction of the local council. The purpose of these visits is to watch over the spiritual growth of the members and particularly their faith and their conduct. " (4.2.5, pg. 31). The Committee quotes Calvin's Institutes to prove that there were deaconesses in the early church.(5.1.2.3, pg. 11)
7. "As in the CanRCs there is no officially adopted order of worship in the I'ERQ." (5.1.3, pg. 12). This same section adds that "there is one worship service a week, generally on Sunday morning" as well that "occasionally a minister from another church may be invited to preach, at the discretion of the local pastor and elders" . The Committee Report provides further information regarding the elements of the worship service in the ERQ. "Prayers in the worship services are led by the conductor of the service and by some people of the assembly. "(5.1.3.6, pg. 14) "On these occasions there might be alternation of appropriate songs and Bible readings, short meditations, banners, Bible stories for and by children etc." (5.1. 3. 6, pg. 15)
8. The Lord's Table is deemed to be "rather open " in that some people who are not members also participate. The ERQ committee admitted "that there is a growing awareness that the councils needed to fence the table more closely. " The Committee recommends that within the framework of Ecclesiastical Fellowship the CanRCs could urge movement to a more closely fenced table.
9. With regards to Public Profession of faith it is stated that "a thorough knowledge of the Reformed doctrine is not demanded." Confession of and binding to the Reformed doctrine are not required (5.1.3.5, pg. 14).
10. There are no standardized liturgical forms (5.1.3.8, pg. 15). "This has as a result some lack of uniformity of practice." The Report states that "though the use of standard liturgical forms is relatively important, the lack of such

forms should not be an insurmountable barrier to Ecclesiastical Fellowship."

11. In view of the Committee's mandate "to further investigate whether it is possible to have the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Eglise Reformee du Quebec as part of the federation" the Committee considered two possibilities: a "French Classis" and "full integration". Neither of these models seemed to be workable. The Committee cannot recommend that church union or merger would be beneficial or advisable. Language is the great divider. The Committee states that "it is important for the CanRCs to understand that the ERQ now needs to maintain this independent 'Francophone' identity."
 12. The Committee recommends Synod accept the request of l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec, made to Synod '95, and reaffirmed at their Synod of Sept 12/13, 1997, to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship and to do so under their adopted Rules (1997)
 13. The Committee recommends to appoint a Committee for Contact with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec with the following mandate:
 - a. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity and worship;
 - b. To initiate and continue discussions with the ERQ CICR concerning the supervision of the Lord's table with a view to admitting only professing members of the church to the table; the need for professing members to express agreement with the confessional standards; the necessity and desirability of adopting liturgical forms;
 - c. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ;
 - d. To be ready to give assistance in developing mission possibilities in Quebec;
 - e. To keep the churches informed about l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec so that we can respond in a positive manner to their financial and other needs as missionary churches;
 - f. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.
 - g. Inform the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the relationship with l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec.
- B. Through overtures and letters several concerns are raised and suggestions are given by the churches:
1. The church at Watford suggests we are not ready to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship since the ERQ allows for women to serve as full-fledged deacons. They also have difficulties with the prominent role given to Synods in ordaining ministers and in matters of discipline.
 2. The church at Chatham is not in favour of entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship until the ERQ adopts a stricter policy regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper.

3. The church at Yarrow urges Synod not to accept the request of the ERQ to enter Ecclesiastical Fellowship because of how they view the fencing of Lord's Supper, confessional membership, women deacons, Sabbath observance. The church at Yarrow is of the opinion that the last two matters should be added to the mandate of the Committee.
4. The church at Willoughby Heights is not in agreement with the report of the Committee and questions why Ecclesiastical Fellowship should be established under the rules suggested by the ERQ.
5. The church at London disagrees with the recommendations of the report. They question whether the matters under discussion are minor points that fall within the scope of Article 50 of the Church Order. The church at London is especially concerned about the confessions (Westminster), church polity, style of worship of the ERQ. They also raise concerns about the worship services and about the ERQ's position on deaconesses.
6. The church at Attercliffe is of the opinion that the considerations and conclusions of the Committee Report "are seriously flawed and that at this time there is no ground to recognize the ERQ as a faithful and true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship." They disagree with the Committee's suggestion that federative unity is impractical and take exception to the reasoning of the Committee on this point. The church at Attercliffe also has difficulties with the Committee's reference to Synod 1965. "Having studied Article 141 of General Synod 1965 Council disagrees with the report. Synod 1965 did not judge that a church federation maintaining Presbyterian church government and subscribing to the Westminster Standards is a true church of the Lord. If that would be true than the implication is that the Canadian Reformed Churches have made such a judgement concerning all kinds of Presbyterian churches."
7. The church at Lincoln overtures Synod not to accept the recommendation of the Committee but to amend the recommendation to read:
 - a. Accept the request of L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec, made to Synod'95, and reaffirmed at their Synod of Sept. 12,13, 1997, to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship and to do so under their adopted rules (1997), subject to the mutual satisfactory conclusion of the discussions on the matters listed in point B 2, of the recommendations as a, b, and c.
 - b. To list under B 2 in addition to a, b, and c:
 - i. The necessity and desirability of conducting two (2) official worship services on each Lord's Day.
 - ii. the desirability of not ordaining women to the office of deacon.
 - c. To delete point C from the recommendations.
8. The church at Fergus is not in favour of entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time due to problems with confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's Supper.

9. The church at Burlington South expresses some reservations about the way the Lord's Day is observed in the ERQ and about entering into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship on the basis of their terms.
10. The church at Calgary is of the opinion that the same approach should be taken with the ERQ as with the OPC. This church wants more extensive discussions with the ERQ on the fencing of the Lord's Supper, confessional membership, deaconesses and on the fact that ministers from other denominations are allowed to preach in the ERQ.
11. The church at Guelph questions the report on the matters of deaconesses, worship, fencing of the Lord's Supper, profession of faith, lack of standardized liturgical forms and why we would have to enter into a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship on the basis of their rules.
12. The church at Houston is not in favour of entering a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship until the issues of fencing the Lord's Supper, confessional membership, the need for adopted liturgical forms and the matter of women deacons are resolved.
13. The church at Grand Valley is of the opinion that the matters of the fencing of the Lord's Supper, Confessional Membership, and women deacons are obstacles for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
14. The church at Neerlandia raises concerns about one worship service per Lord's Day, admission to the Lord's Supper and about having women deacons.
15. The church at Elora urges Synod not to follow the recommendations of the Report because of the issues of Sabbath Day observance, ordination of women deacons, fencing of the Lord's Supper, absence of adopted liturgical forms and order of worship, lack of clarity on their status with the PCA and the position of Synods within in the ERQ.
16. The church at Orangeville expresses concern about the ordination of women deacons and the lack of standard liturgical forms.
17. The church at Burlington East supports the recommendations of the Committee.

II. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. It is obvious that the ERQ is in the beginning stages of church development. On certain matters and issues they have not articulated a position (eg. liturgical forms, fencing of the Lord's Supper, order of worship). A relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, therefore, is neither feasible nor advisable at this time.
- B. From the observations and concerns expressed by the churches it is evident that the following areas need further clarification and should remain topics of discussion:
 1. The nature and status of the deacons and deaconesses;
 2. The matter of liturgical forms, order of worship, supervision of the pulpit and Lord's Day observance;
 3. The fencing of the Lord's Table and possible different practices among the various congregations;
 4. The need for confessional binding for members and office bearers;

5. The differences in the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship of the ERQ and the CanRCs;
6. The question whether federative unity is possible or not.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. To note with gratitude the contact and developing relationship with the ERQ.
- B. To decline the invitation of the ERQ to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at this time.
- C. To re-appoint the committee for contact with the ERQ with the following mandate:
 1. To clarify and discuss the points raised in Consideration B in view of the concerns raised by the churches;
 2. To keep the churches informed about the ERQ so that they may be able to respond to financial and other needs of the ERQ;
 3. To respond if specific requests for assistance and advice are made in matters of confession, church polity, and liturgy;
 4. To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Synods of the ERQ;
 5. To serve Synod 2001 with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

It is moved to delete from IV.B.6: "The question whether federative unity is possible or not."

DEFEATED

The committee proposal is voted on.

ADOPTED

Article 98

Relationship with the Free Reformed Churches

Committee III presents: II G.

- I. MATERIAL
 - A. Letter from Regional Synod West
- II. OBSERVATIONS
 - A. Regional Synod West of December 2, 1997 dealt with the overture of Classis Pacific of December 10, 11, 1996 concerning contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America. Regional Synod gratefully took over the overture of Classis Pacific in toto.
 - B. Classis Pacific made the following recommendations:

1. Classis Pacific notes with joy and thanksgiving the confessional unity which the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove and the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church at Abbotsford have observed in each other and which has led to a mutual recognition as true Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Classis Pacific urges the Regional Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Western Canada to support this unity endeavour by overturing General Synod 1998, at Fergus Ontario, to establish a committee for contact with the Free Reformed Churches of North America with the intent of reaching full federative unity.
3. Classis Pacific advises the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove to refrain from implementing its relationship with the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church at Abbotsford pending the decision of General Synod 1998.
4. Classis Pacific encourages the Church at Aldergrove to keep alive this matter of promoting unity locally and federatively.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The church at Aldergrove has taken the proper ecclesiastical way by channeling their requests via the minor assemblies and by providing these assemblies with sufficient information.
- B. In the light of the developments between the Emmanuel Free Reformed church at Abbotsford and the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove, the cause of unity would require that discussions between churches in these federations also take place on a federative level.
- C. "Fellowship with other churches should be initiated only after a thorough and serious investigation is made and it is clear that these churches not only accept the Reformed confessions and regulations of Reformed church government but also abide by them" (Synod Edmonton 1965, Acts, Art. 141 II). From the enclosed material it appears that the Free Reformed Churches of North America hold that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired and infallible Word of God, have as their doctrinal standards the Three Forms of Unity, and base their church government on the same church polity as the Canadian Reformed Churches.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

- A. To note with gratitude the contact between the Canadian Reformed Church at Aldergrove and the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church at Abbotsford.
- B. To add the following to the mandate of the Deputies for the Promotion of Ecclesiastical Unity:
 1. To take up contact with the External Relations Committee of the Free Reformed Churches of North America.
 2. To initiate fraternal dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches in North America with a view towards establishing federative unity.

ADOPTED

Article 99

Adjournment

Rev. W. den Hollander requests that Psalm 122: 1, 3 be sung and leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned

MORNING SESSION - TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1998

Article 100

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 81: 1, 2, 3 be sung, reads from 2 John, leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present except br. J. Schouten who is absent with notice.

Article 101

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 91 - 99 of the Acts were adopted.

Articles 102 - 104 were dealt with in closed session.

Article 105

Theological College: Board of Governors

Committee IV presents Agenda items I.B.1, II.Z, IV.U

I. MATERIAL

- A. Nominations for the Board of Governors from Regional Synod West, December 2, 1997 and Regional Synod East, November 12, 1997 .
- B. Report of the Board of Governors to General Synod 1998
- C. Letters from Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church (Burlington-East)
- D. Letter from the Canadian Reformed Church at Lincoln

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. With respect to the appointments to the Board of Governors, Synod observes:
 - 1. General Synod 1995 appointed brothers R. Aasman, M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude to the board;
 - 2. Brother A. VanEgmond, one of the governors of the college passed away, after having served on the board for eight years, and needs to be replaced;
 - 3. Brothers van Spronsen and Veldkamp have completed their terms as governors and need to be replaced;

4. The Board of Governors recommends that Synod "appoint, elect, or re-appoint six active ministers to hold office until the next General Synod and to appoint at least three substitutes from each Regional Synod are."
5. Regional Synod West December 2, 1997 nominated the following ministers to serve as Governors of the Theological College: R. Aasman, J. Moesker, J. Visscher; alternates (in order): R.A. Schouten, W.B. Slomp, E.J. Tiggelaar.
6. Regional Synod East November 12, 1997 nominated the following ministers to serve as Governors of the Theological College: D.G.J. Agema, W. den Hollander, P.G. Feenstra; alternates (in order): G. Nederveen, P. Aasman, C. Bosch.
7. The Report of the Governors makes the following recommendations with regard to the Governors who will serve on the Finance and Property Committee:
 - a. to re-appoint brother H.J. Sloots as Governor for a term from the date of his re-appointment until the first General synod held after the date of his re-appointment;
 - b. to re-appoint the brothers M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude as Governors for a term from the date of their re-appointment until the second General Synod held after the date of their re-appointment;
 - c. to appoint the brothers W.Oostdyk and T. VanPopta for a term from the date of their appointments until the third General Synod held after the date of their reappointment (with as alternates the brothers H. van der Velde (for W. Oostdyk) and W. Smouter (for T. Van Popta).
- B. With respect to the appointments to the Board of Governors, Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church observes that all the ministers nominated by Regional Synod East are due to retire in 2001. They suggest that the Board would be able to perform its duties better if the retirement dates were staggered to ensure more continuity.
- C. The church at Lincoln expresses support for all the appointments proposed by the board.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. In accordance with section 3.04(a) of By-Law Number 1 (as amended by By-Law number 3), General Synod shall appoint or re-appoint six active ministers to the Board of Governors.
- B. In accordance with By-Law Number 1, section 3.04(b), General Synod shall appoint or re-appoint five brothers who are not ministers.
- C. Because the Property and Finance Committee is involved in the general operation of the college, it is advantageous to have those governors live in the vicinity of the Theological College. The proposal to expand the college make this even more important.
- D. Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church (Burlington-E) is correct when they observe that all ministers nominated by Regional Synod East are due to retire in

2001. According to the by-laws of the College, the Board may "provide for the election and retirement of Governors in rotation, but no such by-law shall come into effect until it has been confirmed by synod." This is a matter that Regional Synod could have addressed. The Board of Governors has not indicated that this is a concern.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. Not to intervene in the matter raised by the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church (Burlington-East) with respect to the retirement schedule of ministers from the Board of Governors of the Theological College.
- B. To acknowledge the expiration of the term of office of the brs. C. VanSpronsen and K. Veldkamp with grateful acknowledgement of their labours.
- C. To acknowledge with thankfulness the work that brother A. Van Egmond did as Governor of the college.
- D. To re-appoint as Governors of the Theological College the following active ministers and their alternates: From Eastern Canada: D.G.J. Agema, W. den Hollander, P.G. Feenstra; alternates (in order): G. Nederveen, P. Aasman and C. Bosch.
- E. To re-appoint as Governors of the Theological College the following active ministers and their alternates: From Western Canada: R. Aasman, J. Visscher; and to appoint: J. Moesker. To appoint as alternates (in order): R.A. Schouten, W.B. Slomp, E.J. Tiggelaar.
- F. To re-appoint br. H.J. Sloots as Governor for a term from the date of his re-appointment until the first General Synod held after the date of his re-appointment.
- G. To re-appoint brs. M. Kampen and J. VanderWoude as governors for a term from the date of their re-appointment until the second General Synod held after the date of their re-appointment.
- H. To appoint the brs. W. Oostdyk of Guelph and W. Smouter of Ancaster as Governors for a term from the date of their appointments until the third General Synod held after the date of their appointment (with as alternate for W. Oostdyk, br. H.T. VanderVelde of Attercliffe and as alternate for br. W. Smouter, br. T. VanPopta of Langley).

ADOPTED

It is noted that members of synod appointed to positions above abstained from voting. The discussion re IV H was done in closed session.

EVENING SESSION - TUESDAY, MAY 19, 1998

Article 106

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 104:1, 2 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 107

Theological College: Pastoral Proficiency Program

Committee IV presents Agenda Items I.B.1, I.B.3, II.Z, II.BB, IV.O, IV.U, IV.V, IV.Z.

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the Board of Governors to General Synod Fergus.
- B. Proposal from the Board of Governors re: Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency.
- C. Letters from the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-East, the Fellowship Church at Burlington-South, and the churches at Willoughby Heights, Lincoln, Taber and Elora.

II. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The current proposal from the Board of Governors is the response to feedback received from students, consistories and ministers expressing the desire for "some more practical orientation" in the program of studies offered at the college. The proposed program is intended especially for those students who have misgivings concerning the nature of the work of the ministry
- B. A proposal for a Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency was submitted to the churches. Ninety percent of the thirty churches that responded were in favour of this proposal. Some of the suggestions that came from the churches have been incorporated into the current proposal. The Board has considered two options: integrate the program into the overall program of the College, or leave it in the jurisdiction of the churches, eg. to be implemented by means of classical deputies.
- C. The Board asks for the proposed certificate to be considered part of the requirements for admission to the ministry as regulated by the Church Order, Art. 4.B.1.
- D. The Board acknowledges that there are still outstanding matters which have to be looked at, but it is of the opinion that they can best be evaluated by the Senate and the Board as the program is implemented.
- E. The Board proposal includes a three month internship added to the regular training, leading to a Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency. This would not be part of the Master of Divinity degree, but an additional notation to the degree, strictly for ecclesiastical purposes.
- F. The Board insists that the professor of diaconiology and ecclesiology should not be burdened with the organization of this program. The Board proposes that it be authorized to appoint an experienced minister to this task. He should be instructed to work in consultation with the professor of diaconiology, and be accountable to the Senate.
- G. The Board has submitted a proposed curriculum to Synod, outlining what would be required of the students in every year of their study. The details of this program are contained in the Proposal to Synod 1998 re: Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency program.

- H. The Board proposes that a coordinator, in consultation with the professor of diaconiology will draw up a list of ministers who can suitably function as designated mentors for students during their terms of internship in a congregation.
- I. The Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church (Burlington-East) supports the aim of this report, but expresses several reservations regarding the implementation of the program:
1. The administration structure and the students evaluation procedure is confusing and muddled.
 2. Much of the pastoral work can only be done effectively and legitimately by office bearers.
 3. It is not necessary that students prepare sermon outlines or deliver sermons for this certificate, since sermon outlines are already prepared for the Theological College, and experience in sermon delivery is also possible if a student has preaching consent from classis.
 4. The experience that can be acquired in this program is very limited because it would generally take place in the summer months when ministers take their vacations and consistories are generally less active.
 5. To require that the designated church financially support the student during this internship is not really proper, because there would be little real benefit to the particular church.
 6. The necessity or advisability of having a separate program is questionable.
 7. This practical training component rightly falls within the responsibilities of the Diaconiology Department of the college. What is mainly needed is to make these means compulsory for fourth year students and to devise evaluation procedures for them.
- J. The church at Willoughby Heights is of the opinion that this 'Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency' is an unnecessary addition to the present requirements for students seeking to be declared eligible for a call to the ministry, and therefore they urge synod not to adopt this proposal. They raise the following objections:
1. The implementation of this program will require a change to the Church Order.
 2. This whole proposal originates from the Board of Governors, and not from one of the churches;
 3. There is a questionable application of the Theological College Act, Art. 11 C and D because the work of the program coordinator does not fall in the category of administrators, but approaches that of a faculty member.
 4. The coordinator has considerable input as to whether a student should be granted a Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency, and yet the churches (via General Synod) have no say in his appointment. If anything, General Synod should be involved in his appointment.
 5. Some of the components of this program appear to be superficial. For example, the presence of a student with a minister would silence confidential conversation.
 6. The concept of 'internship' is rather clinical, because the student does the work of ministry without being called to that office.

7. It is questionable whether someone can be called pastorally proficient after three months.
 8. Many components of this course naturally belong in the diaconological and Church Polity courses presently taught at the college.
 9. Consistories and churches, and especially the professors at the Theological College should be pastoral enough to address young men who are academically competent yet unsuitable for the office.
- K. The Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church (Burlington-South) supports the recommendations of the Board of Governors, but expresses the following opinion:
1. Part of the program should take place during the Fall or Winter, so that students may be exposed to 'regular' congregational life.
 2. The program is really an extension of the Theological College, and therefore it should be supervised by the professor of diaconology. This would also allow the practical component to dovetail with the academic portion of the course taught.
 3. It is unrealistic to expect a minister to add the responsibility of coordinating this project to his own workload.
- L. The Canadian Reformed Church at Lincoln is of the opinion that this program is unnecessary. They raise the following objections:
1. The cost factor has not been presented in depth. The churches will finally end up paying for both the coordinator as well as the student, regardless of whether it occurs through the Theological College assessment, or through the churches being served by the students, if necessary in conjunction with the Fund for Needy Students.
 2. The most challenging pastoral visits are not open to the student since they involve confidential matters;
 3. Students can obtain the same experience by visiting the sick and the lonely in the congregations of which they are a member. This would be less of a financial burden to the churches and the same experience could still be obtained.
- M. The church at Taber is convinced of the need for a pastoral proficiency program.
- N. The church at Elora encourages synod to accept the Board's proposal.
- III. CONSIDERATIONS:
- A. The task that the churches have entrusted to the Theological College is that of training young men for the ministry (Article 19, C.O.)
 - B. There is at present already the option for students to obtain some measure of practical experience in the future work of ministry through teaching catechism classes or speaking an edifying word in the churches.
 - C. Article 4B1 of the CO stipulates that those presenting themselves for a preparatory examination by the classis must "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." The Board of Governors in co-operation with the Senate of the Theological College have been given the mandate to ensure that young men are properly trained for the work of the ministry. It can be left up to them how to certify that the necessary course of study approved of by Synod has

been completed, whether by means of an M.Div. degree only, an M.Div. degree with an additional notation, or an M.Div. degree with an additional certificate. It is however questionable whether a student should be declared pastorally "proficient" by means of a separate certificate, since the word suggests a high level of expertise or skill, whereas there would only have been a relatively brief exposure to some of the practical aspects of the work of a minister.

- D. Churches already pay students for teaching catechism and for speaking an edifying word. Whether students should be reimbursed for other activities must be left to the discretion of the churches.
- E. The task of the coordinator is more than an administrative one. There are elements in it which have direct connections with work being done in the Diaconological department of the Theological College, e.g. assessing the evaluations of the mentors, consistories, and others involved in this program, consulting with the professor of diaconiology regarding this evaluation and together with him making recommendations to the Senate on the participation and work of the students in the program. Evaluation procedures must be developed and discussed with both the students and the designated ministers and consistories assigned to supervise the students.
- F. The Board of Governors must contemplate the addition of another faculty member for the diaconological department. If the Board proceeds with the appointment of a 'coordinator' such an appointment must be kept temporary until a future synod determines what the financial consequences are. Furthermore, it must be demonstrated that the task is only administrative. Otherwise a future synod should be involved in this appointment.
- G. Although direct supervision of a student by a minister is an advantage for a student, it must be remembered that the work of a minister is also subject to the supervision of his consistory and that his work is done in co-operation with his fellow elders. From this perspective, a case could be made to expand the provisions of the program to allow for the possibility of a student being exposed to the work of the ministry under the supervision of a consistory in a vacant church in conjunction with its counsellor (Art. 45, C.O.), or in a church while the local minister is on vacation.
- H. Various practical concerns pertaining to visits undertaken by the student with or without a minister have been raised. These concerns indicate the limited value of an internship. They are factors which will need ongoing attention and evaluation if the program is to be implemented. Other avenues need to be explored next to or even in the place of such an internship in order to facilitate the entry of the student into the pastoral work he will be required to do in the future.
- I. Whereas the churches already have experience with students teaching catechism classes and speaking an edifying word, the concept of an internship is a relatively new element in a more practice-oriented approach. Its practical implications are not yet fully evident. The provisional character of the present proposal must therefore be stressed. In this regard we take note of a statement in the report of the Board of Governors: "The Board is well aware that this proposal is not the final word, but rather a start of something that the Board and, going by the responses, also the churches would like to see implemented."

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. To express gratitude for the proposed changes to course content and orientation, allowing for the presence of guest lecturers, seminars and workshops, to give a more practical orientation and content to the training for the ministry.
- B. To express thankfulness to the Board of Governors for this report.
- C. To direct the Board of Governors:
 - 1. to proceed with the components of the proposed program, including the internship, on a trial basis, assessing their effectiveness and considering possible alternatives without making them prerequisites for entrance to the ministry at this time (Art. 4.B.1 CO);
 - 2. to consider how elements of this proposed program can best be integrated with the academic courses presently being taught at the college, and whether this can be accommodated without extending the present course beyond four years;
 - 3. to consider the addition of another faculty member for the diaconological department;
 - 4. to serve the next General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of synod.

ADOPTED

Article 108

Grand Rapids Appeal re Presbyterian Church of Korea

Committee III presents agenda item III W.

I. MATERIAL

An appeal from the Church at Grand Rapids re: Presbyterian Church of Korea

II. ADMISSIBILITY

Synod decides that the submission of the church at Grand Rapids is admissible since it is an appeal of Acts 1995 Article 106 VI H.

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The church at Grand Rapids requests Synod 1998 to judge
 - 1. that the decision to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK be rescinded
 - 2. that an explanation and apology be sent to the PCK...

3. that we reaffirm to the PCK our desire to continue contact with them with a view to resolving all impediments remaining which prevent full Ecclesiastical Fellowship,
 4. that the CRCA be instructed to investigate the two issues of supervision of the Lord's table and confessional membership and report to another General Synod.
- B. A similar appeal was made to Synod Abbotsford 1995. Synod 1995 denied the appeal of the Church at Grand Rapids based on the following considerations:
1. "The requests to rescind the decision to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship or to declare that Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS and PCK was premature is based on the assumption that these two federations have the same position as the OPC which to date has prevented Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC. This assumption has been addressed under Consideration A.1.b" (Synod 1995, Article 106, Consideration D.2).
 2. "It must be admitted that with respect to the PCK Synod is not able to evaluate the situation with the information available to us" (Synod 1995, Article 106, Consideration A.2).
- C. The church at Grand Rapids considers that "Synod 1995 gave no reason for denial" of their appeal to rescind the decision of Synod 1992 regarding the PCK.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The church at Grand Rapids appeals the decision of Synod Lincoln 1992 with respect to the PCK on the grounds that the OPC has charged our churches with having a double standard on the issues of confessional membership and the admission to the Lord's Supper. The OPC's CEIR stated "both the PCK and the FCS have essentially the same position as the OPC in matters of confessional membership and the supervision of the Lord's Table"(Synod 1995, Appendix V.II.B.1). The Committee for Contact with the OPC asked for more evidence that this is indeed true (Acts Synod 1995, Appendix V.II.B.4). To date such evidence has not been provided by the OPC.
- B. The church at Grand Rapids also does not provide Synod with any new information which would justify severing ties with the PCK.
- C. Grand Rapids is correct that these two issues should have been resolved prior to a relationship. There is, however, no justification for reversing the decision to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the PCK simply on the basis of third party information. Synod 1995 should, however, have made these concerns part of the mandate of the CRCA.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. To deny points 1, 2, and 3 of the appeal of the Church at Grand Rapids
- B. To include in the mandate of the CRCA a further investigation of the practices regarding the fencing of the Lord's Supper and confessional membership in the PCK and report to the next Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 109

Appeal of Burlington Ebenezer re Women's Voting

Committee IV presents agenda item II.C.2.

I. MATERIAL

Appeal from Ebenezer Church at Burlington-East re: Women's participation in election of office bearers.

II. ADMISSIBILITY

Synod declares this appeal admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. Synod Abbotsford 1995, in Article 51, declared an overture from sister C. VanEerden on the subject of women's voting rights to be inadmissible on the following grounds:
 1. "That according to Art. 33 C.O. matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds;
 2. A new matter which has not been previously presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it (Art. 30 C.O.)."
- B. The council of Ebenezer Church in Burlington asserts that:
 1. Synod Abbotsford 1995 tried to side-step the issue of women voting "while it implicitly made the decision that the practice of our Dutch sister churches is scriptural";
 2. this decision (to the effect that the practice of our Dutch sister churches is scriptural) is implicit in the fact that, in spite of this decision of the Dutch churches, Synod nevertheless concluded that "these churches are faithful to the Word of God, the Confessions and the Church Order [Acts art. 19.IV.A];"
 3. if the Dutch churches are right, then there are new grounds for us to consider, and therefore General Synod should have granted the request of Sr. VanEerden; if the Dutch churches are wrong, on the other hand, then we must correct our Dutch sister churches of the error of their ways;
 4. that the 1996 General Synod at Berkel has upheld the decision of Ommen.
- C. The council of Ebenezer Church in Burlington overtures Synod 1998 "to appoint a committee to study the matter and report to the churches no later than six months prior to General Synod 2001."

IV. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The submission of Sr. VanEerden submitted to General Synod Abbotsford 1995 was not an appeal but an overture. Thus it was, "a new matter"(Article 30.C.O.) and for this reason it was inadmissible.
- B. If the Ebenezer Church in Burlington questions the legitimacy of our continuing relationship with our Dutch sister-churches in the light of their decision to allow women to vote, they may appeal this matter. If the Ebenezer Church wants to deal with the matter of women's voting rights again, the Church Orderly path must be followed. A proposal must proceed through the minor assemblies until it reaches General Synod.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide:

- A. to declare that General Synod Abbotsford 1995 did not err when the overture of Sr. C. VanEerden was declared inadmissible.
- B. not to appoint a committee as requested by the council of the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington-East.

ADOPTED

Article 110

Appeal of Burlington Fellowship re Women's Voting

Committee IV presents agenda item III.P.

I. MATERIAL:

An appeal from Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church in Burlington regarding Article 51 of Synod Abbotsford 1995.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

Synod declares this appeal admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The Council of Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church appeals the decision found in Article 51 of the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 on the following grounds:
 - 1. This decision contradicts earlier Synod decisions with respect to the jurisdiction of synod. This is substantiated by the following arguments:
 - i. the matter of women's voting was not a new matter, and has been dealt with (at) various Synods directly: see Synod Coaldale, 1977, Art 27; Synod Smithville, 1980, Art. 83; Synod Cloverdale 1983, Art. 160;

- ii. the request to appoint (re-establish) a committee is not an appeal, but an overture, and the request was not within the province of a minor assembly.
 - iii. matters which belong to the jurisdiction of the federated churches (i.e. matters involving the churches in common) can be placed directly on the agenda of General Synod: see Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. 73 III b.
2. Synod incorrectly declared the overture inadmissible on the basis that there were no new grounds. This is substantiated (partly) as follows:

having decided that the matter was inadmissible for lack of jurisdiction, it was inconsistent and incorrect for Synod Abbotsford to then consider the merits of the request, including the consideration of whether there are new grounds.

- B. The Council of Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church requests that, if this appeal is granted, General Synod Fergus 1998 "establish a committee with the mandate to study once more the matter of women's voting rights, having regard to the developments since 1983, which committee is to present a report with its specific recommendations to the next Synod."

IV. CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. It is true that 'Women's participation in the election of office bearers' is not a new matter in the sense that it has never been dealt with by the churches before. Yet the submission of Sr. C. VanEerden was not an appeal against a decision of a previous assembly; instead it was submitted to General Synod as a new matter to be dealt with. It is "a new matter"(Article 30, C.O.).
- B. It is also true that previous general synods have dealt with matters even when minor assemblies had not dealt with them. The appellants are also correct in their assertions that synods have, on occasions, defended this course of action on the basis that these matters 'belong to the churches in common.' This is not normative, however, because it is contrary to the adopted Church Order.
- C. It is unfortunate that these precedents have given the appellants the impression that when matters belong to the churches in common, it is no longer necessary for the minor assembly to deal with them first. The fact that Article 30 CO was not always applied properly in the past, however, does not mean that we should violate the adopted order today.
- D. It is also true, as the appellant observes, that the request was not within the province of a common assembly. This does not mean, however, that these minor assemblies do not have to deal with them first. On the contrary: it is first necessary that a consistory place a matter on the agenda of a classis; and only if a classis is convinced of the validity of the proposal will it be placed on the agenda of Regional Synod. If Regional Synod is convinced that the proposal is valid, it will place the matter on the agenda of General Synod.
- E. When an overture is declared inadmissible on the basis of Article 30, C.O., it is not appropriate for synod to interact with the substance of the overture.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS:

General Synod decide:

- A. to declare that General Synod Abbotsford 1995 did not err when it declared the overture of Sr. C. VanEerden inadmissible on the ground of Article 30 C.O.
- B. to declare that General Synod Abbotsford 1995 erred when it used Article 33 C.O. as a second ground to declare the overture of Sr. C. VanEerden inadmissible.
- C. To deny the appeal of the Fellowship Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington South.

ADOPTED

Article 111

Overture of Aldergrove re Women's Voting

Committee IV presents agenda item II.I

I. MATERIAL:

Overture from the Church at Aldergrove regarding the matter of Women's Participation in Election of Office Bearers.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

This is an overture from a church directly to General Synod and consequently it is inadmissible on the ground that "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." (Article 30 C.O.)

III. RECOMMENDATION:

Synod declare this overture inadmissible on the ground of Article 30 of the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 112

Overture of Burlington Fellowship re Women's Voting

Committee IV presents:

Agenda item II.RR

I. MATERIAL:

Overture from the Fellowship Church at Burlington-South regarding the involvement of sisters of the congregation in the election of officebearers.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

This is not an appeal, but an overture that comes directly from a church to General Synod. The subject matter does concern the churches in common, but it is a new matter, and therefore Article 30 of the Church Order applies: "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."

III. RECOMMENDATION:

Synod declare this overture inadmissible on the ground of Article 30 of the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 113

Adjournment

Rev. R.J. Eikelboom requests that Psalm 90: 1, 3 be sung, and leads in prayer. Synod adjourns.

MORNING SESSION - WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1998

Article 114

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 82: 1, 2 be sung, reads from 3 John, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 115

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 100 - 113 of the Acts, pertaining to May 19, 1998 are adopted.

Article 116

Appeals from Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber re Denver

Committee III presents their proposal re these appeals. After a round of discussion, the Committee takes the matter back for further consideration.

ARTICLE 117 WAS IN CLOSED SESSION

EVENING SESSION - WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1998

Article 118

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 41: 1, 4 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 119

Grand Rapids Appeal re the Free Church of Scotland

Committee III presents: Agenda items III S, T, U.

I. MATERIAL:

Three appeals from the Church at Grand Rapids re: 1. The Free Church of Scotland and the Scots Confession

1. The Free Church of Scotland and the issues of Lord's Supper and Confessional membership.
2. The Free Church of Scotland and Rule 5 for Ecclesiastical Fellowship

II. ADMISSIBILITY

Synod decides that the appeals of the church at Grand Rapids are admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The church at Grand Rapids requests Synod 1998 to judge:
 1. That the decision to establish Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS be rescinded.
 2. That an explanation and apology be sent to the FCS...
 3. That we reaffirm to the FCS our desire to continue contact with them with a view to resolving the differences between us so that full ecclesiastical fellowship can be established.
 4. That the CRCA be instructed to discuss these issues with the FCS and report to another General Synod.
- B. This request is based on the fact that the FCS holds teachings (civil magistrate, the doctrine of the church), and practices (fencing of the Lord's Supper, and confessional membership) which are in conflict with the Scripture and our confessions. According to the church at Grand Rapids "the OPC's objection to the

double standard..." in the face of the information available, reflects their understanding that the variation in practice is not a difference in principle.

C. The substance of the first two appeals is identical to appeals which were made to Synod Abbotsford 1995. Synod 1995 denied the appeals of the Church at Grand Rapids based on the following considerations:

1. "The requests to rescind the decision to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship or to declare that Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the FCS and PCK was premature is based on the assumption that these two federations have the same position as the OPC which to date has prevented Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC. This assumption has been addressed under Consideration A.1.b." (Synod 1995, Article 106, Consideration D.2)
2. "...information available to Synod regarding the Lord's Supper, indicates that there are different practices with regards to the supervision of guests at the Lord's Table in the FCS compared to the OPC (see Acts 1989, p. 161; Acts 1992, p. 126; see also Report CCOPC II.B.4)." (Synod 1995, Article 106, Consideration A.2)
3. "With respect to the doctrinal point about the civil magistrate raised by the church at Grand Rapids, it should be kept in mind that this issue is not fully resolved in our own federation (see the words in brackets in Art. 36 of the Belgic Confession). The opinion that the views of the role of the civil magistrate expressed in the Scots Confession as well as in the Westminster Confession are contrary to Scripture and our Confession, is not proven by the conclusion that these views are not taught in the Three Forms of Unity. Further, with respect to the doctrine of the church, it is uncertain what edition was used. The two editions consulted do not agree with the quote 'Then wherever these notes are seen and continue for any time, be the number complete or not, there beyond any doubt is the true Kirk of Christ.' Instead, it reads, 'Wheresoever, then these former notes are seen, and of any time continue, (be the number never so few, about two or three) there, without all doubt, is the true Church of Christ; who according to his promise is in the midst of them: Matt. xviii.19, 20' This sheds a different light on the matter."

D. The church at Grand Rapids finds it impossible to consistently fulfil our obligation under Rule 5 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship: "the churches shall open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches." Discomfort with maintaining this rule stems from the fact that the church at Grand Rapids is of the opinion that what the Scots Confession teaches about the church and the civil magistrate is in conflict with Scripture and confession.

II. CONSIDERATIONS

A. General Synod agrees with the church at Grand Rapids when it states that General Synod 1995 "erred in thinking that the differences in editions of the Scots Confession referred to in their response altered the considerations of Grand Rapids." General Synod 1995 does not substantiate the statement "This sheds a different light on the matter".

- B. The church at Grand Rapids is incorrect that the practice of fencing the Lord Supper in the FCS is similar to the OPC. They fail to observe that in the FCS the practices surrounding the admission to the Lord's Table are implied to be alike for members and guests (see Synod Winnipeg 1989, p. 161, 5.2, Synod Lincoln 1992 p. 126, and confirmed by the Proceedings of the ICRC 1993, Report for Theological Affirmation p.80).
- C. There is no justification for reversing the decision to have Ecclesiastical Fellowship simply on the basis of third party information. Furthermore, previous synods have stated the doctrine of the church is not an impediment to Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Acts Synod 1995 Article 106 V C 5). The CRCA could, however, be instructed to seek further clarification on the practice of confessional membership, the doctrine of the church, and the position of the civil magistrate in relationship to the church.
- D. The church at Grand Rapids misrepresents and misinterprets Rule 5 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship when they turn what is optional into an obligation. The actual reading of rule 5 is as follows: "the churches shall in principle, open their pulpits for each other's ministers in agreement with the rules adopted in the respective churches." In the actual application of the rule every local consistory has the option of inviting a guest minister from within our federation and from those churches with whom our churches have Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide to deny the appeals of the church at Grand Rapids.

ADOPTED

Article 120

CRCA on Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Korea

Committee III presents: Agenda Item I D.

I. MATERIAL

Report of the CRCA on the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Korea

II. INTRODUCTION

III. Synod 1995 gave the CRCA the following mandate:

1. To continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the the Presbyterian Church in Korea in accordance with the adopted rules.
2. To mandate the CRCA to investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan (Acts 1995, Art 101, II, C, 2, 3).
3. To continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland ...in accordance with the adopted rules. (Acts 1995, Art. 101, II, C, 2)

IV. OBSERVATIONS

- A. Regarding the Presbyterian Church in Korea
 - 1. The CRCA reports that even though they have received regular letters of invitation to attend the General Assembly of the PCK they have no longer been receiving an English summary of the PCK's decisions and activities.
 - 2. From the Acts of sister churches in Australia and the Netherlands as well as from the impressions received at the ICRC in Seoul it would appear that the PCK continues to conduct herself as a faithful church of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The CRCA recommends that a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued and that every attempt be made to improve communications between our respective churches.
- B. Regarding the Free Church of Scotland
 - 1. According to a policy of the CRCA of deputizing ministers and professors if their trips abroad coincide with a major assembly of a sister church, Rev. K. Jonker was delegated to attend the General Assembly of the FCS in 1996.
 - 2. For some time the FCS has been involved in a controversy regarding the person of Prof. D. Macleod. Apparently criminal charges were brought against him and this resulted in much unrest in the Church with members and ministers taking sides. In the fall of 1996 Prof. Macleod was acquitted of all charges. Steps were taken by the 1997 General Assembly to promote healing in the Free Church.
 - 3. At the General Assembly in 1997 it was decided that "the teachings commonly known as Theonomy or Reconstructionism contradict our subordinate standard, the Confession of Faith and are inconsistent with our supreme standard, the Bible, particularly on the question of the expiry of the judicial laws."
- C. The CRCA recommends:
 - 1. that Ecclesiastical Fellowship be continued with the Free Church of Scotland under the adopted Rules.
 - 2. that it be charged to express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches of the Free Church of Scotland as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation.

II. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The CRCA correctly draws Synod's attention to the lack of communication with the PCK. For a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship to function properly there must be meaningful communication.
- B. Synod 1995 mandated the CRCA to investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan. There is no evidence in the report of the Committee that this mandate was fulfilled. In all likelihood the lack of communication contributed to this. The CRCA should as yet be instructed to complete this part of their mandate.
- C. The CRCA did not have to wait for a mandate of Synod to express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches for the Free Church of Scotland. It may have been better if the CRCA had informed the churches in our federation

about the unrest within the FCS so that our local congregations could have prayed about these concerns.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Synod decide to give the CRCA the following mandate:
- B. With regard to the PCK:
 - a. To continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Korea in accordance with the adopted rules (Acts 1995, Art. 101, II, C, 2).
 - b. To mandate the CRCA to investigate the suggested exchange of professors between Hamilton and Pusan (Acts 1995, Art 101, II, C, 2, 3).
 - c. That every attempt be made to improve communications between our respective churches.
- B. With regard to the FCS:
 - a. To continue a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland in accordance with the adopted rules (Acts 1995, Art. 101, II, C, 2).
 - b. To express the prayerful support of the Canadian Reformed Churches of the Free Church of Scotland as it enters into what will hopefully be a time of healing and reconciliation.

ADOPTED

Article 121

Bible Translations

Committee IV presents: Agenda items I.G, IV.V, IV.X

- I. MATERIALS:
 - A. Report from the Committee on Bible Translations (CBT)
 - B. Letters from the Canadian Reformed Churches at Elora and Taber
- II. INTRODUCTION:
 - A. General Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Acts, Art. 72,V.D) gave the Committee on Bible Translation the mandate to pass on valid concerns about the NIV text to the NIV Translation Center. According to the mandate, the concerns may come from any of three sources:
 - 1. correspondence from churches and/or members;
 - 2. previous synod reports as well as the committee's reports and its appendices;
 - 3. letters sent to Synod Abbotsford expressing concerns about certain Bible passages.
- III. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The CBT met nine times, primarily to deal with concerns about the publication of a gender-inclusive version of the NIV.
- B. The CBT sought further information about this new version before it began to carry out its own mandate, because it seriously questioned "whether we would be interested in participating in improving an inclusive language edition" of the NIV.
- C. On May 27, 1997, the International Bible Society (IBS) announced the cancellation of the whole inclusive language project. At the same time it announced that "there are no further plans for a further revised edition."
- D. Upon further enquiries, the CBT learned from the NIV Translation Center that the normal refining process of the NIV will continue. It is only subsequent to this that the CBT actually began to carry out the mandate that it received at General Synod Abbotsford 1995.
- E. As a result of the CBT's review of reports submitted to previous General Synods, five matters were brought to the attention of the NIV Translation Center for minor changes to the text.
- F. As a consequence of the seventeen letters that were sent to General Synod Abbotsford 1995 and subsequently passed on to the CBT, five more matters were brought to the attention of the NIV Translation Center for minor changes to the text.
- G. Since 1995 only one item of correspondence was received from a member of one of our churches. The CBT was not persuaded that any matters that were raised in this letter should be sent to the NIV Translation Center.
- H. The CBT reports that "we can wholeheartedly confirm the recommendation of the former Committee on Bible Translations, and the decision made in Article 72 of the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995."
- I. The CBT suggests that if General Synod deems it necessary to appoint a new committee, it should include a member with expertise in English linguistics who can help the committee grapple with the inclusive language issue.
- J. The consistory of the church at Elora expresses thankfulness to the CBT for taking upon itself the responsibility of looking into the matter of a 'gender-inclusive' edition of the NIV, but urges Synod to consider that the IBS's decision to shelve plans for this edition was not a principial one but rather an economic one. Consistory requests that a new committee be instructed to address the IBS about our principial objections against a 'gender-inclusive' Bible translation, because unless the IBS is convinced that this is wrong, it will only be a matter of time before this issue comes up again.
- K. The consistory of the church at Taber expresses great appreciation for the work of the CBT. In principle, consistory endorses the work of the committee.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. When the CBT learned that the IBS intended to produce a 'gender-neutral' edition of the NIV, it was appropriate that the CBT dealt with this issue before it began to carry out its own specific mandate. Synod should take thankful notice of this work.

- B. The consequence of this delay, however, is that the CBT did not have time to carry out the mandate that it received: the nine textual matters that were brought to the NIV Translation Center do not appear to be resolved.
- C. Although the CBT only received one submission from the churches since General Synod Abbotsford 1995, it is appropriate that the churches and its members have an address where they can send their concerns.
- D. A committee is needed to monitor the development of the NIV as it is being revised. It would be advisable to include an expert in English linguistics on this committee, not only for confronting the inclusive language issue, but also to help the committee deal with grammatical and stylistic questions.
- E. The fact that the IBS even considered producing a 'gender-inclusive' edition of the NIV is not encouraging. The IBS responded to the negative reaction of mainstream evangelical churches by shelving these plans. It appears that it is not the IBS that has to be convinced that "gender-inclusivity" is wrong. The mainstream evangelical churches in North America will probably decide this issue in the long-term. However the committee should continue to monitor the activities of the IBS in this regard and express our concerns where there is a suitable opportunity.

V. RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide:

- A. To thank the CBT for the manner in which they served the churches.
- B. To continue to recommend the NIV for use in the churches.
- C. To continue to leave it in the freedom of the churches if they feel compelled to use other translations that received favourable reviews in the reports.
- D. To reappoint a CBT including one member with expertise in English linguistics if possible.
- E. To give the CBT the following mandate:
 1. to receive comments from churches and/or members about passages in the NIV in need of improvement;
 2. to scrutinize these comments, and pass on valid concerns to the NIV Translation Center;
 3. to bring to a resolution those matters that have already been submitted to the NIV Translation Center;
 4. to monitor developments in the NIV as the text is revised;
 5. to serve the next General Synod with a report to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod.

ADOPTED

Article 122

Appeals Regarding Bible Translations

Committee IV presents: Agenda item: III.J, III.AA.

I. MATERIAL:

Appeals from the churches at Elora and London regarding Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art. 72.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

These are appeals against a decision of a previous General Synod. They are declared admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The church at Elora appeals the decision of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 "to recommend the NIV for use within the churches" (Art. 72.V.b).
- B. The church at Elora requests that General Synod:
 - 1. Rescind the decision of General Synod Abbotsford to recommend the NIV for use in the churches.
 - 2. Form a new committee to study and recommend another translation to General Synod 2001, possibly giving attention to the NKJV since most of our sister churches in Australia use the NKJV.
- C. This request is based upon three arguments:
 - 1. A lack of confidence in the NIV. The report to General Synod Smithville 1980 as well as the observations, considerations and recommendations recorded in the Acts of that synod spoke highly of the RSV but criticized the NIV. The consistory at Elora feels that "nothing has changed" since 1980, and therefore the criticism against the NIV still stands. The consistory at Elora also notes that although General Synod Abbotsford has recommended the NIV to the churches in 1995, widely diverging evaluations of the NIV continue to appear in Clarion.
 - 2. The NIV is too free. This was the opinion of the Bible Translation Committee that reported to General Synod Smithville 1980. It was also the opinion of some people who sent letters to General Synod Abbotsford 1995 expressing concern on this matter. This seems to be the result of "the International Bible Society (IBS) desiring readability and what they think the people and the churches want rather than accuracy." They fear that if the IBS moves towards an 'inclusive-language edition', the present edition of the NIV may not be available for long.
 - 3. The decision to recommend the NIV has created disunity within the federation and within the churches. Not all the churches have accepted the NIV.
- D. The church at London appeals the same decision of General Synod. This appeal is based on five grounds:
 - 1. General Synod Abbotsford 1995 failed to interact with the observations and considerations that functioned in the decision made by General Synod Smithville 1980.

2. There is no "systematic attempt" in the Acts of Synod 1995 to "disprove the criticism of Synod 1980." The mandate of the committee appointed in 1992 was specifically to make use of past studies.
 3. The observations and considerations recorded in the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 even reiterate some of the criticism and the main concerns of General Synod Smithville 1980.
 4. General Synod Abbotsford acknowledged that the NIV has some weaknesses, but dismisses them with the comment that "there is no such thing as a perfect translation." London is of the opinion that "although this statement as such is true, it does not help in selecting the most faithful translation.."
 5. General Synod Abbotsford did not interact with the objections that Dr. J. van Bruggen raised against the NIV in 1980.
- E. The church at London requests General Synod:
1. to rescind the decision of Synod 1995 Art. 72, V.B.
 2. to mandate the Committee on Bible Translations to renew their study of the NIV in light of the above-mentioned objections and concerns.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. The decision of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 was based on an extensive report from the Committee on Bible Translations in which criticism brought against the NIV was addressed. The appellants have not brought up any specific matter which was considered to be important in 1980 but ignored in the report of the Committee of Bible Translations to General Synod Abbotsford 1995 (cf. pages 127,128).
- B. The CBT that reported to General Synod Abbotsford responded to the criticism that the NIV is too free with the observation that "a careful paraphrase is sometimes more accurate than a literal translation." (Quoted from B. Holwerda: Report, page 9; see also appendices 1,3,5,6,9)
- C. Although uniformity of practice among the churches is desirable, this may take some time to develop. In the meantime, those churches that feel compelled to use another translation are free to do so.
- D. The church at London asserts, correctly, that General Synod Abbotsford 1995 did not interact explicitly with the decision of General Synod Smithville 1980. There was, however, interaction with the arguments that Synod Smithville used to reject the NIV (Acts, Art 72.III.B. 2.a,d). The CBT has dealt specifically with past studies (page 23, appendix 5) as well as "voices that were raised against the NIV" (pages 23,24, appendices 8 and 9).
- E. In 1980 both the majority report and the minority report of the Committee on Bible Translations recommended also allowing the use of the NIV in the worship services. This recommendation shows that the standpoint of the committees serving synod 1980 is not far removed from the decision of Synod Abbotsford 1995 recommending the NIV.
- F. It is not true that the Committee on Bible Translations failed to interact with Dr. J. van Bruggen. Reference to his criticism of the dynamic equivalent method of translating is found in the 1995 report (p.36,37).

- G. The assertion that 'there is no such thing as a perfect translation' should not be taken out of its context. It is meant to indicate that weaknesses as such are not a reason to reject a certain translation. This statement functions along with other considerations, leading in totality to the recommendation of the NIV for use in the churches.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Synod decide:

To deny the appeals of the churches at Elora and London.

ADOPTED

Article 123

Appeal from London re Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship

Committee III presents Agenda item III H.

I. MATERIAL

Appeal from the church at London regarding Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. In answering a proposal of the church at London to change the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship as adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992, Synod Abbotsford 1995 states in Consideration 101 VII, B, "the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship have been adopted by General Synod 1992 . In order to change these Rules, the church at London must prove that the current Rules are against Scripture, Confession or the Church Order. London does not do this. Therefore Synod cannot do this."
- B. The church at London disagrees with this decision and request that General Synod rescind the decision of Synod 1995 and deal with the original proposal.

III. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Synod 1995 erred when it answered the submission of London as if it were an appeal. Synod should have declared the proposal inadmissible according to Article 30 of the Church Order.
- B. The church at London fails to follow the proper procedure in regards to this submission.
 - 1. Prior to Synod 1992 the proposed changes to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship were submitted to the churches for consideration and evaluation. Any change or objection could be weighed by General Synod.
 - 2. After the adoption of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, churches which desire to propose a change must submit their proposals to classis in order that via the ecclesiastical way the churches again have opportunity

to consider and evaluate such changes (Article 30, Church Order).
Therefore also the proposal submitted to Synod 1998 should follow this route.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. To rescind Article 101 VII C of Synod Abbotsford 1995.
- B. To deny the request of the church of London to deal with their original proposal.

ADOPTED

Article 124

Adjournment

Rev. P. Feenstra asks that Hymn 48: 3, 4 be sung and leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION - ASCENSION DAY, MAY 21, 1998

Article 125

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 47: 1, 2, 3 be sung, reads from Revelation 5, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 126

Relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Committee I presents their proposal re the relationship with the OPC. After a round of discussion, the Committee takes the proposal back for further consideration.

Article 127

Appeals from Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber re Article 115, Synod 1995

Committee III presents their proposal re these appeals. After a round of discussion, the Committee takes the proposal back for further consideration.

Synod adjourns for committee work.

EVENING SESSION - ASCENSION DAY, MAY 21, 1998

Article 128

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 32: 1, 2, 3 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present.

Article 129

Relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Committee I presents their proposal.

I. MATERIAL

Re I.C, II.M, II.T, II.X, II.NN, II.TT, II.BBB, III.F, III.V, IV.E, IV.F, IV.L, IV.N, IV.Q, IV.S, IV.T9(re OPC), IV.V(re OPC), IV.Y, II.B, III.D, III.G, III.BB, II.SS, III.X

II. ADMISSIBILITY

Because this issue is of major concern to the churches, and to avoid the impression of not doing full justice to the matter, all the material above is declared admissible (cf. Acts Abbotsford1995, Article 106, II, p. 63)

III. INTRODUCTION

Synod Abbotsford 1995 gave the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church the following mandate:

- A. to work towards formalizing the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules by using the statements of Synod Lincoln 1992 (Acts 1992, Art. 72, IV.A.1.e.i,ii) as a guideline to arrive at an agreement with the OPC on the matters of the fencing of the Lord's Table and confessional membership;
- B. to communicate to the OPC the discomfort in our churches with respect to their continued relationship with the CRCNA;
- C. to communicate that there is a need to continue to discuss the differences in confession and church polity in accordance with the rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Rule 6);
- D. to serve the churches with regular reports of the work of the Committee, and to serve General Synod 1998 with a report, to be sent to the churches at least six months prior to the beginning of Synod. (Acts, p. 75)

IV. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The CCOPC in its report to Synod Fergus 98 makes the following recommendations:
 - 1. In view of the positive developments mentioned in this report the Committee recommends that General Synod 1998 of the Canadian Reformed Churches decide:

- a. To acknowledge gratefully the commitment of the OPC to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the reformed heritage.
 - b. To acknowledge thankfully that with the statements on the Fencing of the Lord's Table and on Confessional Membership an agreement has been reached on the outstanding issues.
 - c. To note with thankfulness that the OPC, by terminating the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCNA has taken a clear stand in maintaining the truth and authority of the Word of God, and has removed another obstacle for the Canadian Reformed Churches to come to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.
 - d. To invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, according to the adopted rules for this relationship.
 - e. To discontinue the Committee for Contact with the OPC, making the contact and discussion with the OPC part of the mandate of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA).
- B. Re IV. A. 1. b. above, the CCOPC came to the following Proposed Agreement for opening the way to Ecclesiastical Fellowship:

Concerning Fencing the Lord's Table:

The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's supper should not be profaned (1 Cor. 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29,8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the Church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.

Concerning Confessional Membership:

The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom. 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible. The patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.

The Committee also points out

"It may be added that these statements are not intended to prevent further discussions. Rather, it is agreed that there is need to continue to discuss the differences in confession and church policy which can take place within the

relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The intention of such discussions will be mutual upbuilding in the faith to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:3).

- C. In 1997 the CEIR thus reported to the Sixty-fourth General Assembly "that the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches has taken an important step forward. It reported in full detail the Proposed Agreement for opening the way to Ecclesiastical Fellowship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The CEIR report further stated:

"We look forward to the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (in 1998) with the expectation that, in view of this agreement it will act to establish a bond of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC in which we can continue to discuss our differences as churches, and so, if God grants, arrive at a more perfect unity in doctrine, polity, and life."

- D. Numerous Churches have reacted to the Report of the CCOPC to Synod 1998.

1. **The Church at Yarrow, BC (II M)** does not believe that the mandate given by Synod 95 was completed, since the guideline adopted by Synod 92 and referred to by Synod 95 (Article 106, IV D 1), namely, that "it should be agreed that a verbal warning alone is insufficient" was not adhered to. Yarrow states "We read nothing of any such specifics in the statement [Proposed Agreement]. Therefore Yarrow overtures Synod 98
 - a. not to invite the OPC to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CanRC
 - b. and to mandate the CCOPC to continue discussions with the OPC on the matter of the fencing of the Lord's Table.
2. **The Church at London, ON (II. T.)** remarks that the 50th General assembly of the OPC, in dealing with the complaint of Rev. B. Hofford et al, submitted the Report of a special committee struck by the Presbytery of the Mid-Atlantic in 1971, which stated regarding methods of fencing the table: "The first and most common in the OPC, as well as in other Presbyterian Churches, is to have the minister make a statement at the beginning of the service, clearly setting forth the Scriptural qualifications for worthy participation, and then inviting those who meet these qualifications to participate, warning those who are not qualified of the consequences of partaking if not qualified, but leaving it to the individual to decide whether or not he is eligible. The second, and most common in the Reformed churches, is to require visitors who wish to participate to meet with the session before the service for questioning concerning eligibility. The session then either approves or disapproves the person for participation"(cf. Acts Burlington 1986, Appendix 2E, p.170 #4). The 50th Assembly also says, in reference to the complaint of Hofford et al that their approach to the fencing of the Lord's table contains "dangers of a denominational exclusivism in practice if not in principle, an exclusivism that may compromise our witness to the Table as the Lord's." Furthermore, London also notes that "the 33rd General Assembly determined that

members are not to be examined for membership according to the standards" (Minutes 1967, pp.92-6); they also refer to the 34th General Assembly which "decided that those who deny baptism to their children, as well as Arminians and other 'evangelicals' may be admitted to membership as the individual sessions see fit (Minutes 1968, pp. 135-6)."

London therefore asserts "firstly that because of the vagueness of the statement 'concerning fencing the Lord's Table' the CCOPC has not fulfilled the mandate given it by Synod Abbotsford 1995. And secondly, we submit that the conflicting evidence within the OPC against the statement "Concerning Confessional Membership' is not a minor matter, and therefore warrants further discussion of this divergency within the present relation of 'temporary ecclesiastical contact.'" London requests synod "to:

- a. judge that despite the statements on the Fencing of the Lord's Table and on Confessional Membership an agreement has not been reached on the outstanding issues.
 - b. renew the mandate of the CCOPC to continue the discussions with the OPC on these divergencies in our present relationship of temporary ecclesiastical contact, with an attempt to resolve them by dealing with the doctrine that underlines them both, namely, the doctrine of the church."
3. **The Church at Attercliffe, ON** (II. X.) also refers to the 50th General Assembly and asks how the Proposed Agreement functions within the OPC. Attercliffe submits that it does not address how the fencing at the Lord's table takes place. They ask: "If the OPC maintains the position of the 50th General Assembly, what is then the meaning of this proposed agreement?" They question whether the matter of confessional membership is adequately addressed in the Agreement. They add: "Does accepting this statement mean that the questions asked at Public Profession of faith have changed? (See Directory for Worship, chapter 5)." Therefore Attercliffe requests synod not to adopt B and D of the report from the CCOPC.
 4. **Church at Calgary, AB** (II. NN.) urges Synod "to acknowledge thankfully that with the statement on Confessional Membership an agreement has been reached on this issue." However they point out that the guideline for the CCOPC "adopted by Synod Lincoln 1992 and reiterated by Synod Abbotsford 1995 states clearly that simple agreement on the question of whether or not the celebration of the Lord's Supper should be supervised is insufficient. Instead there must also be some agreement on the manner in which the celebration of the sacrament is supervised; and both synods insisted that a general verbal warning is not enough." Therefore they also ask Synod "to note that the matter of 'fencing the Lord's table' has not been resolved in a manner consistent with the mandate given by Synod Abbotsford 1995."

5. **The Church at Lincoln, ON (II. TT.)** points to the statement of Synod 1992 which reads "it should be agreed, however, that a general verbal warning alone is insufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required in the presence of supervising elders from the guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper" (Acts 1992, Art.72, IV.A.I.e.i,ii, underlining added). They also refer to the fact that "at least in the past, the OPC has worked with a 'two-tiered system' for church membership. On the one hand, officebearers are required to fully subscribe to the doctrine of Scripture as summarized in the Westminster Standards. On the other hand, members are required to make 'a credible confession of faith in Christ.'" Lincoln refers in this regard to how the OPC has worked with those applying for admission who do not agree with infant baptism (cf. OPC 33rd General Assembly, pp.92-96). They then ask whether the Proposed Agreement means "that the OPC will no longer use this 'two-tiered system.'" Furthermore Lincoln refers to the fact that the Directory of the OPC suggests that in a significant number of OPC churches there is only one worship service per Lord's Day. Based on the above Lincoln requests Synod "to not enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC at this time, until the above matters have been properly and fully addressed."
6. **The Church at Elora, ON (II. BBB)** notes that in their judgement the words of the Proposed Agreement "do not indicate that changes have occurred with respect to the supervision of the Lord's Supper and confessional members in the OPC," and therefore urges Synod Fergus "not to follow recommendation III D of the committee."
7. **The Church at Willoughby Heights, BC (IV.E.)** expresses reservation about the Report because of "a degree of ambiguity" and asks Synod to consider whether the Proposed Statement "means that the OPC now follows a different practice than it did formerly."
8. **The Church at Burlington (Ebenezer), ON (IV. F.)** concurs with the Report and hopes that Synod will accede to the recommendations.
9. **The Church at Surrey, BC (IV.L.)** endorses the recommendations made by the Committee.
10. **The Church at Burlington (Fellowship), ON (IV. N.)** supports the recommendation that the Churches enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. However they urge Synod "to continue discussions with the OPC with a view to tightening up some of the expressions in the agreement. For example, the term 'membership vows' is not defined. We suggest that the adherence to the doctrinal standards be spelled out. Further this commitment is ongoing, and reflected not only in word, but also in deed. We request that either the CCOPC be continued, or that the Committee for Contact with Churches Abroad take up the matter, so that clear language can be worked out, and a clear understanding as to the accepted practices is in place."
11. **The Church at Guelph, ON (IV.Q)** raises two concerns in connection with the Proposed Agreement. First, that it does not spell out that a general verbal warning is insufficient. Second, they ask whether there is evidence

that a change of practice regarding supervision of the Lord's Supper has taken place throughout the OPC.

12. **The Church at Blue Bell, PA** (IV. S) suggests, regarding fencing the table, that "the issue has never been whether or not the elders should supervise the Table....The issue has always been how the Table is to be supervised by the elders and who is to be admitted. This statement does not address these issues." They refer to the position of the OPC that there are non-Reformed true churches (Acts 1992, p.167) and ask who would not be admitted then. Hence, they say, "we believe that this statement does absolutely nothing to advance agreement, or even understanding between ourselves and the OPC." At bottom, they ask: "Can the OPC affect, affirm, and practice the principle and manner of fencing the Lord's Supper Table found in article 60 (sic, actually article 61) of the Church Order?"

Further, regarding confessional membership, Blue Bell wonders if anyone who answers the membership vow in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the confessions of the church or just to the undefined "doctrine of the Bible." "Can the OPC accept, affirm, and practice binding members to the confessions as is found in the first question of the 'Form for the Public Profession of Faith'?"

13. **The Church at Orangeville, ON** (IV. T.) finds "that the Proposed Agreement is somewhat vaguely worded, and does not satisfy the mandate given to the Committee by Synod 1995." They also feel "that we should strive for greater clarity and further agreement on the matter of fencing of the Lord's Table according to the guidelines of Synod Lincoln 1992. Further, it should be ensured that practices in the local churches of the OPC are in keeping with this agreement."
14. **The Church at Taber, AB** (IV.V.) expresses gratitude for the progress that has been made and hope that by adopting the recommendations the "protracted discussions" will be concluded.
15. **The Church at Elora, ON** (IV.Y) asks whether the issues preventing ecclesiastical fellowship have been resolved.
16. **The Church at Grand Rapids, MI** (II SS) also overtures Synod 1998 to reject recommendations B,D of the CCOPC Report. They do not believe that the CCOPC has fulfilled the mandate given to it by Synod 1995. Grand Rapids states, concerning the fencing of the Lord's Table, "The first problem is that the CCOPC Agreement omits any reference to what Synod [1992 in its guidelines] stated should be agreed upon, namely, that a general verbal warning alone insufficient...The second problem with the CCOPC Agreement is that it omits any reference to the fact that a profession of the Reformed faith is required in the presence of the supervising elders from guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper...In fact, the most common practice in the OPC is for guests to be admitted by the general verbal warning. It is left in the hands of the visitors to make the judgement." A third problem Grand Rapids has with the proposed

Agreement on the Lord's Supper is that admission to the Lord's Table not only requires confession of the Reformed faith, but also a life consistent with that profession (c.f. Art.61 C.O.; H.C., L.D.30 Q/A 81,82). They state that it is simply not possible to establish a history of faithful living by interviewing a guest before the Lord's Supper celebration.

Grand Rapids states concerning confessional membership, "The Committee [CCOPC] took a perfectly clear statement [about confessional membership in 1992 guidelines] which expressed the unbreakable tie between confessing faith and the confessions of the church and created a less clear statement [in the proposed Agreement to Synod 1998] which clouded the connection between confessing faith and the confessions of the church." Grand Rapids notes that in the proposed Agreement both sides agreed that each church would continue to follow their own practices, but adds that then "we must conclude that nothing has really been solved."

- E. Appeals from the churches and individual members regarding the relationship with the OPC and the decisions of previous synods. Regarding the synods, the churches are saying as follows.
1. **Re Synod 1977**
 - a. **The Church at London, ON (III.G.)** is of the opinion that the decision of 1977 "to recognize the OPC as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts, Article 91, II, p. 41) was premature since no official testing or evaluation of the OPC was provided and the justification for it only came by way of the "Evaluation of Divergencies" provided to Synod 1986 (Appendix IIB, pp. 142-151) which they consider "mere formality and tokenism." Their concern is that in 1977 the OPC was still a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, still had a fraternal relationship with the Christian Reformed Church, and the CCOPC had not yet completed its mandate.
 2. **Re Synod 1986**
 - a. **The Church at London, ON (III.G.)** points out that the CCOPC submitted an official "Evaluation of Divergencies" and Synod "receives this report as the detailed evaluation of the divergencies which the General Synod of 1977 neglected to give for its decision to recognize the OPC as a true church of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Article 126, B, Rec 2, p. 55). However, London says this Evaluation was incomplete as two doctrinal points were omitted, namely "more or less pure churches"(Acts 1968, Article 50, p. 58-63), and "Jesus' descent into hell (Acts 1971, Article 92, p. 166)
 - b. **The Church at Grand Rapids, MI (II SS)**

Grand Rapids requests Synod to:

1. Judge the validity of the conclusions in the document submitted to Synod 1986 by Classis Ontario-South (Art.137 B.4).
2. Call the OPC to repentance, and if this repentance is not forthcoming, break the present relationship of contact. The church at Grand Rapids refers in Art.137 B.4 of the Acts of Synod 1986 to a report sent to Synod 1986 by Classis Ontario-South concerning the Tri-County Reformed Church and Rev. B. Hofford and their departure from the OPC. Synod 1986 stated, "Classis Ontario-South also forwards a document 'convinced of the need for Synod to seriously take into consideration the report and its conclusions when judging the case of Tri-County Reformed Church, and when discussing our relationship with the OPC.'" Synod 1986, in response to this (Art 137 C.3), considered that the "Hofford issue" was a matter that at that time had not yet been dealt with in the minor assemblies, and asked Classis to cooperate fully with the CCOPC regarding this issue. Grand Rapids draws attention to the fact that in that Report to Classis about Tri-County Reformed Church it was stated in the Conclusion that since the complaint of Hofford and others about the fencing of the Lord's Table was rejected by the highest assembly of the OPC, "our relationship with the OPC requires serious reconsideration" and "there is a problem here which must be resolved by General Synod." In its letter to Synod 1986 accompanying the report, Classis Ontario South of March 5, 1986 stated that it was "convinced of the need for Synod to seriously take into consideration the Report and its Conclusions when judging the case of Tri-County Reformed Church and when discussing our relationship with the OPC." The church at Grand Rapids maintains that these issues have never been dealt with by a General Synod and believes they must be taken seriously as Classis recommended for the sake of the honest resolution of the Lord's Supper question which caused Hofford and Laurel to leave the OPC.
3. **Re Synod 1992**
 - a. **The Church at Grand Rapids, MI** (III. V.) believes that "accepting the profession of a guest in the presence of the supervising elders eliminates the possibility of validating officially (i.e., by the Christ-appointed officebearers) the membership of the guest. The supervisors are left taking the word of the visitor regarding their membership....It is for this reason that Art. 61, of our C.O. requires attestations concerning both doctrine (including membership in a true church) and conduct." Thus Grand Rapids

believes there are the following deficiencies in the Synod 1992 decision, namely, "a profession of the Reformed faith in the presence of the supervising elders from the guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper is inadequate" (Acts 1992, Article 72, IV.A.1.e.i.) and that "the guideline fails to take into account the necessary criteria for admission to the Lord's Supper" (in accordance with Article 61 C.O. and Lord's Day 30). In their appeal Grand Rapids claims: "This misses Grand Rapids' point. The point is not that Art.61 C.O. is the only possible means of fulfilling the requirements of LD 30; rather the point is that both criteria (cf. Esp. Q.82: "confession and life") for admission to the supper be met." Therefore they ask Synod to "reformulate the guideline for the Lord's supper issue to take into account the above deficiencies."

- b. **The Church at Attercliffe, ON** (III. D.) asks Synod 98, because they feel that Synod 95 did not adequately deal with their appeal re Synod 92 (see below), to "judge as yet that Synod Lincoln 1992 was incorrect in Art.72 V. B. on the basis of the grounds outlined in our appeal to Synod 1995." Attercliffe points to the fact that Synod 1992 decided "to conclude from previous Synods' decisions that the divergencies evaluated in 1971 and 1986 have been sufficiently discussed to confirm that these are not impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC, but may be discussed within the framework of church unity." Attercliffe says that previous synods did not decide that the divergencies had been sufficiently discussed; rather, Synod 1971 decided that the divergencies were "serious enough to remain the subject of further and frank discussion" (Synod 1971, Article 92, conclusion 7) and Synod 1986 decided to "continue the discussion of divergencies" with the hope that they will "remove obstacles to full correspondence" (Synod 1986 Article 128 C, recommendations 3 & 4).

4. **Re Synod 1995**

- a. **Appeal W. DeHaan** (III.F). In his appeal, br. W. DeHaan refers to the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995, Art.106, Consideration C3 where it says; "It should be noted that no church reacted to the substance of the evaluation of divergencies received by Synod 1971 and Synod 1986. None of the submissions challenge that report. The appellants are reacting to the status of the Report rather than the substance of the Report. The burden of proof that the divergencies are not discussed sufficiently and therefore are still impediments for Ecclesiastical Fellowship lies with the appellants, which they do not provide." Br. DeHaan then states, "I do not question whether the divergencies are discussed. I believe they are. The point is whether they are sufficiently discussed, and I dare to say: they are not. For as Canadian

Reformed Churches, we have also knowledge about the happenings of 1944 in the Netherlands: the Liberation and the necessity of the Liberation. ... Therefore, since according to G.S. 1995, proof is not given that there are still impediments for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, there must still be the opportunity to do so, Art.33 C.O." The brother then proceeds to explain the points which in his opinion are still major points of difference.

1. He outlines how, though the Larger Catechism speaks of covenant with believers and their seed, the Westminster Confession speaks of the covenant as made with Christ as second Adam, and in Him with all the elect. He then explains how the OPC, because of this, reasons out from the viewpoint of election, as did the Synodicals in 1944, and misunderstand that the covenant promises are conditional on faith.
2. He explains a difference between what we confess about the church in the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession, and what is confessed about the church in the Westminster Standards. He explains how regarding the church from the viewpoint of election leads, in the Westminster Standards, to working with the idea of the invisible church.
3. He then points to a difference in the fencing of the Lord's Table. Br. DeHaan remarks that the verbal warning in the Book of Church Order in the Directory of Worship, Ch.4, c.2 shows that there is no real supervision of the elders over members or guests who celebrate the Lord's Supper.
4. Br. DeHaan also outlines the issue of confessional membership. He compares the questions asked at profession of faith in the OPC with those asked at profession of faith in the Canadian Reformed Churches, and notes the lack of reference to the confessions in the former. Rev. J.J. Petersen, in his address to Synod 1995, mentioned welcoming of new converts from paganism or who are Baptists into the OPC and described them as follows, "Babes in Christ - first generation believers. The smell of the world, the smell of the Baptists cling to the clothing, but they have taken the step of faith and united with a Reformed body of Christ, and they don't really know what they're getting into, and you don't know that the Lord has put in your way, but you move on in full trust of the Lord of the covenant...and we feel, we cannot, we must not, exclude them from the body of Christ and the sacraments."
5. Br. DeHaan also describes what he sees as hierarchy in the OPC. He points to the Book of Church Order, Form of

Government of the OPC (1992 edition) where it speaks in Ch.12 and 13 about "higher" and "lower" assemblies, in Ch.15 about the general assembly "which is the convening body of the whole church," and Ch.25 which speaks of ruling elders being commissioned to "higher judicatories."

- b. **The Church at Grand Rapids, MI** (III. V) appealed to Synod 1995 raised the objections as above [see IV. E. 2 a.] but Synod 95 rejected their appeal because they had not proved their position from Scripture. Grand Rapids thus appeals to Synod 98 on the same matter.
- c. **The Church at Elora, ON** (IV. Y) questions whether the differences between the OPC and the Can. Reformed Churches were sufficiently resolved so that Synod Abbotsford 1995 could give the mandate that it did to the CCOPC.
- d. **The Church at Watford ON** (II.B.) points to the fact that Synod 95, in connection with discussions re ERQ referred to Synod 65 which said that "fellowship with other churches should be initiated only after a thorough and serious investigation is made" (Synod 65, Article 141,II), but then Synod 1995, after suggesting in Art.106, V.B.3 that there are practices which "give reason for concern" says a little later "we judge each other not on the basis of local practices, but on the basis of our confessions and official documents" (Article 106 V.B.6). Thus Watford appeals to Synod 98 to declare that Synod Abbotsford 1995 erred in stating that "there is reason to continue to discuss these practices [ie. Confessional membership, admission to the Lord's table, contact with the CRC] but they cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" (Article 106.B.3, square brackets Watford's). Thus Watford asks Synod 98 to mandate the CCOPC "to investigate local practices in the OPC, particularly those followed with respect to fencing of the Lord's Supper table, and confessional membership. This information can be gleaned from the OPC committee or from OPC congregations via letters."
- e. **The Church at Attercliffe** (III. D.) appeals the decision of Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Article 106).
 - 1. Attercliffe refers to the fact that Synod 1995 considered that Attercliffe and others are "reacting to the status of the Report [to Synod 1986] rather than the substance of the Report" (Article 106, V.C.3). Attercliffe however says that the reason they did not react to the Report submitted to 1986 was that Synod never officially adopted this report.
 - 2. Furthermore to Synod's comment that "The burden of proof that the divergencies are not discussed sufficiently and therefore are still impediments for Ecclesiastical Fellowship lies with the appellants, which they do not provide" (Article 106, V.C.3), Attercliffe says that Synod

- 1995 has turned matters around, expecting the appellants to provide grounds against decisions when the synods never provided grounds in favour of the same decisions in the first place. As a result "the impression that is given is no matter what the churches say, we go ahead anyways."
3. Attercliffe is also concerned that if the Canadian Reformed Churches enter into fellowship with the OPC without having discussed the divergencies further, "a minister in our federation who would teach these divergencies can not be disciplined because as churches we have judged they do not prevent unity."
 4. Attercliffe responds to the fact that Synod 1995 considers that these matters actually deal with practices and not confessional documents of the OPC (Article 106, V.B.3.) by pointing out that our churches in making decisions re OPC are dealing with matters about which our own confessions speak.
 5. Attercliffe points out that Synod Abbotsford 1995 submitted that to rescind 1977 would undermine our credibility and mean declaring OPC a false church, to which Attercliffe says: "Should our first concern not be faithfulness to Word and Confession? We will gain in credibility when we admit we were wrong... In rescinding 1977 we do not make a statement that the OPC is a false church."
 6. On the basis of the above, Attercliffe appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 106) and asks Synod 98 "to judge that 1. Synod 1995 was incorrect in dealing with the letters and appeals together, 2. Synod 1995 was incorrect in rejecting our appeals."
- f. The Church at London, ON (III. G.)
1. London notes that they have requested Synod 1995 "1. To rescind the decision of 1977 thus withdrawing the recognition of the OPC as a true church and ending the temporary ecclesiastical contact; and 2. To continue the discussion of ALL the divergencies ON A COMMITTEE LEVEL with the OPC since they claim unconditionally to accept the authority of the Holy Scriptures."
 2. London suggests that there has been "a shift in the procedure for discussing the divergencies.... 1. Pre-1977 on a committee level; 2. Post-1977 within a relationship of 'ecclesiastical contact'; 3. post-1995 within church unity (?)". Therefore London requests Synod Fergus "to judge whether the departure from no.1 is justified."
 3. London also refers to another shift. Whereas earlier synods spoke about "serious confessional divergencies"(e.g. Acts

1986, Article 132.E. Consideration b, p.6), Synod 1995 referred to the fact that "churches have their own histories" and "ecclesiological and/or historical differences"(Article 106, V.C.1.a; V.B.3). London cannot find any ground for this switch and therefore asks Synod 1998 not to follow this change.

4. London also refers to the fact that whereas in earlier synods references were made to whether an issue being discussed was in agreement with the Scriptures (e.g. CCOPC Report to Synod 1980, Appendix V, p.196) later synods were less critical, often referring to whether a divergency should prevent recognition of the OPC as a true church.
5. London also believes Synod 1995 is contrary to fact when it argues that "The complaint that the matters at stake (confessional membership, admission to the Lord's table, contact with the CRC) are of a confessional nature actually deals with certain practices in the OPC and not its confessional documents....they are not proven to be a matter of the Westminster Standards. Rather, these are more a matter of the OPC living up to its standards" (Article 106, V.B.3). London rejects this "confessional-practical" distinction.
6. London also disputes the statement that "It is well known that already since the days of the Secession, there was good contact with churches maintaining the Westminster Standards, and they were recognized as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ"(Article 106, V.C.1.b), and proceeds to point out that the churches of the Secession did not distinguish 'recognized' and 'unrecognized' churches when it came to attestations, etc., and to refer to instances since 1948 when the Westminster Standards were viewed less favourably.
7. London points out that OPC has "generally been cordial but not receptive to our Scriptural testing of the divergencies"
8. London thus submits that "obedience to the Word of God is at stake...."
9. London suggests that since relationships with the FCS and the PCK were also made without sufficient evaluation, Synod should not now argue for a relationship with the OPC on the ground that we have one with the FCS and the PCK.

On the basis of all the above, London requests Synod 98

- i. to withhold establishing Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC

- ii. to continue the discussion of all the divergencies on a committee level with the OPC since they claim unconditionally to accept the authority of the Holy Scriptures.
- iii. to indicate to them that if no progress is made on these confessional and principal divergencies before our next General Synod, then our present relationship of "ecclesiastical contact" would have to be reassessed.

London requested Synod Abbotsford 1995, on the basis of their concerns above (re Synods 1977, 86....) "1. To rescind the decision of 1977, thus withdrawing the recognition of the OPC as a true church and ending the temporary ecclesiastical contact."

g. **Br. T. Kingma, Lynden, WA (III. BB)** appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101 & 106) and asks Synod Fergus 1998 to judge (as he summarizes his appeal: "pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in judging:

- 1. Synod '95, when it summarizes what it perceives the ground of our appeal to be in article 101 VIII. A. 2. a. b. c., fails to acknowledge and deal with the very thrust and central ground of our entire appeal, namely, that the explanatory remarks, which provide numerous proofs from the Word of God, the adopted Confessions and/or Church Order of the CARC's, clearly indicate that the divergencies in the adopted standards of the OPC, PCK, FCS are in conflict with the Word of God and the adopted standards of the CARCs which according to our vows [re: the adopted subscription form (see With Common Consent, p. 355), form for the public profession of faith, form for the baptism of infants, and article 27 of the Church Order] do fully agree with the Word of God (see appendix #1 of which the explanatory remarks are again a central ground for this appeal to Synod '98).
- 2. Synod '95, when it grouped and answered the CCOPC report and the 28 other letters, overtures and appeals together in Article 106 in addition to our appeal, it:
 - a. failed to do complete justice of the God-given right (based on Art 31 CO) of the appellants....
 - b. Observation IV, C.6. fails to acknowledge and form as the basis for its considerations the very thrust and central ground for our appeal, namely, the explanatory remarks which provide numerous proofs that the divergencies in the adopted

standards of the OPC, PCK, FCS are in conflict with the Word of God and the adopted standards of the CARCs....

2. That the explanatory remarks in our appeal (see appendix #1, p # 1-3) addressed to Synod Abbotsford '95 and included as part of this appeal gives adequate proof from the Word of God, the Confessions and the Church Order of the CARCs that what Synod's since 1965 repeatedly referred to as "divergencies" ... in confession, and church polity, which includes church life, are indeed in conflict with the Word of God, the adopted Confessions and/or the Church Order of the CARCs.
 3. That should some of the explanatory remarks in our appeal sent to Synod Abbotsford '95 ... not ... be in full agreement in all points with the Word of God and the adopted standards of the CARCs, to inform the appellants ... where precisely and on what point we have deviated from the Word of God, the adopted Confessions and the Church Order of the CARCs.
 4. That General Synod Abbotsford '95 failed to recognize that the change to the new rules is a false ecumenism
 5. To follow through via the CCOPC and the CRWCA with our final plea ...
 6. That the considerations made in this appeal in response to the Considerations B1-6, C1-6, and D1-2 in the Acts General Synod Abbotsford, B.C. 1995 of the CARCs be taken over by Synod '98 to inform the churches of its decision to return to the Word of God, the adopted Confessions, and Church Order in all points of doctrine in its considerations regarding the subject of this appeal."
- b. **The Church at Blue Bell, PA** (III. X.) appeals Synod Abbotsford 1995 (Art. 101, 106), Synod Lincoln 1992 (Art. 72, 11, 128), Synod Coaldale 1977 (Art. 91).

The church at Blue Bell denies Abbotsford's assertion that no church has challenged the substance of the Evaluation offered by Synod 86 since they challenged the substance of it both with respect to the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the covenant to Synod 95 (p.2); Blue Bell asserts that Synod Abbotsford 1995 shifted the grounds of the debate from confessional differences to historical differences (p.3), and maintains that "there may be no divergences of substance between the two sets of confessional documents."(p.4). "The Catechism makes no distinction between the Reformed confession and the gospel; the OPC does."(p.8)

Blue Bell outlines the status of the Westminster Standards within the OPC judging that they do not function well and then traces this to Presbyterian roots. In their judgement the looser view with respect to membership is also rooted in Presbyterianism (cf. A.A. Hodge "The doors of the church must be as wide as the gates of heaven" *Outlines of Theology*, 1908, p.114). Blue Bell then turns to the question how the Elders and Ministers in the OPC maintain the Westminster standards and makes the very serious statement that "it is highly suspect whether any of the ministers and elders subscribe to the propositions in their own standards....In short, we have no way of knowing just what is believed in the OPC" (p.12). Blue Bell maintains that the OPC's method of fencing the Lord's Table rests on the assumption that there are also non-Reformed churches that are true churches. Thereafter Blue Bell revisits many matters (the church, covenant, church government) which have been discussed above and/or by previous synods.

II. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Regarding the reactions to the Report of the CCOPC .
1. Synod 1995 did charge the CCOPC with the mandate "to work towards formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules by using the statement of Synod Lincoln 92 (Acts 92, Article 72, IV A 1 e) as a guideline..."
 2. Synod 92 did state clearly in the guideline concerning the fencing of the Lord's Table that "a verbal warning alone is insufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required in the presence of the supervising elders from the guests wishing to attend the Lord's Supper." The Report of the CCOPC and the Proposed Agreement make no specific mention of the statement in the 1992 guideline concerning the fencing of the Lord's table that "a verbal warning alone is insufficient."
 3. Synod 1992 also stated clearly with respect to confessional membership that though the different situations in the churches must be taken into account, "it should be agreed, however, by the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC that all who profess their faith accept the doctrine of God's Word as summarized in the confessions (standards) of the churches." This guideline was not adequately taken into account in the proposed agreement presented by the CCOPC.
 4. Judging from various letters, especially London's (III.T.), it appears that on the points of Fencing and Confessional Membership, there are divergent views between those held in the OPC and those in the Canadian Reformed Churches. They refer to the 50th GA 1983, 33rd GA 1967, 34th GA 1968 which put forward a broader view of admission to the church and the table. This begs the question, as London also asks: have there been any changes in the OPC positions and practices since then? According to our fraternal delegate from the OPC, Rev. J. J. Petersen, who was present

for Synod 98 Committee 1's discussions, there has been no change in the OPC positions and practices; the exact nature of those practices continues to be largely left to the local session. See also his article "Fencing the Lord's Table" *Ordained Servant* (Volume 3, Number 4), where he commends the report to the 50th General Assembly quoted by London in the above.

- B. Re Appeals from the churches and individual members regarding the relationship with the OPC and the decisions of previous synods.
 - 1. The History of the Relationship between the OPC and the Canadian Reformed Churches

In view of the fact that there seems to be confusion about the actual history of the relationship between the CanRC and the OPC, and since Synods have not always been clear and the CCOPC has not always adequately fulfilled its mandate (Acts Synod 1983 Art.55 C 1 b; Acts Synod 1989, Art.94 D I 2 a b), Synod 1998 presents this following analysis of the relationship.

One common complaint is the fact that Synod 1977 did not provide adequate grounds for its decision. Despite the explanations given so far for such a procedure, it is apparent that it would be good for it to be recognized once again that this was a wrong approach to the matter. Synod 1965 had stated that a thorough investigation should precede a decision to establish relations with another federation of churches. This was not done adequately in 1977. Synods have admitted that they have confused matters. Synod 1980 expressed regret that the evaluation of divergencies was not explained by Synod 1977 and that this may have given the impression in the churches that this decision was premature. (Acts 1980, Art.97 II C Recommendations 1,2).

Thus when subsequent synods were faced with the matter, being convinced that the final decision was justified, they sought yet to rectify it by providing grounds. For this purpose the CCOPC provided Synod 1986 with an "Evaluation of Divergencies" (Acts 1986, Appendix II B).

The complaint voiced by the church at Attercliffe is that this 1986 Evaluation of Divergencies was not adopted by the churches and did not have an official status. W. de Haan similarly complains that the divergencies were not sufficiently discussed. These complaints are without sufficient ground however, for Synod 1986 not only thanked the committee "for publishing the detailed evaluation of the divergencies for the benefit of the churches", but also decided: "Synod receives this report as the detailed evaluation of the divergencies which the General Synod of 1977 neglected to give for its decision to recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 1986, Article 126, Recommendation 1 and 2, p.55). It may be said that Synod 1986 did not

officially adopt the report as the final answer to all the divergencies, but that was because it also acknowledged that various developments in the OPC after 1977, in connection with the Shepherd case as well as the churches at Blue Bell and Laurel, brought to the fore additional divergencies which necessitated further discussions. Therefore synod only received the report, but received it as the grounds for the 1977 decision (cf. 1986's comment on p.55: "This part of the mandate was for historical purposes, i.e. to provide the detailed evaluation not given by the General Synod of 1977"). The churches, including Attercliffe in particular, could still have reacted to this report as it still had a function as the grounds for 1977.

London's complaint that there are divergences that have not been discussed is not entirely true. It is certainly regrettable that the synods were never provided with a "detailed evaluation" on the point of "more or less pure churches." It should be noted however that, given the fact that this matter deals with the doctrine of the church, synods appear to have concluded that this point became intertwined with the question "invisible - visible church." Moreover, the matter of "the descent into Hades" was already dealt with by Synod Toronto 1974 when the CCOPC Committee wrote to the CEIR and stated re the Larger Catechism (q/a 50) "This answer interprets the article of the descent into hell as Jesus' stay 'in the state of death and under the power of death.'...We are aware that both interpretations have had a place in the teachings of the Churches of the Reformation" (Appendix 1, Synod 1974, p.105 cf. Article 149 of same, p.58). This also came to the attention of Synod Smithville 1980 by way of a statement in a letter which the CCOPC wrote to the CEIR which said: "The different interpretation of the clause in the Apostles' Creed 'descended into hell' should not become a point of disunity" (Appendix V, Synod 1980 Report of the CCOPC to Synod, p. 198).

It needs to be noted as well that Grand Rapids' complaint to the effect that the Classis Report concerning Blue Bell and Laurel to Synod 1986 was never dealt with is not true since Synod passed this matter on to the CCOPC (as noted in Article 137, D.1.2. Acts 1986); therefore it subsequently became a matter for the CCOPC to deal with. The Classis Report led to the matters of confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table becoming issues of priority. Thus these matters became part of the discussion which led up to the Proposed Agreement in the Report of the CCOPC which is before Synod 1998. And therefore Synod 1998 no longer needs "to judge the validity of the conclusions in the document submitted to Synod 1986 by Classis Ontario-South (Art.137 B.4)." Furthermore the requests from Grand Rapids and others to call the OPC to repentance go too far at this point as these matters are still being discussed.

2. Remaining Divergencies

Many churches and individuals have expressed concern about what happened to the divergencies and the report on the divergencies to Synod 1986 as well as the context in which discussion about these divergencies ought to take place.

The Report of the Divergencies to Synod 1986 was the report that was received not for the state of the question at that time but as the decision which formed the basis of 1977. It was stated that though these divergencies need further discussion, they need not be seen as impediments to ecclesiastical fellowship. But between Synod 1977 and the Report to Synod 1986, two churches separated from the OPC and joined the CanRC. This brought two other issues to the fore, namely the fencing of the Lord's table and confessional membership. These matters still need to be resolved. Synod then remarked (Acts 1992, Art.72 IV Considerations A 3 d): "The matters which have come up since Synod 1983, especially 'confessional membership' and 'supervision of the Lord's table' are of a more serious nature (see Acts Synod 1983, Art.55, Acts Synod 1986, Art.132, and Acts Synod 1989, Art.94)." These Acts show that these synods did indeed regard these matters as being of a serious nature.

In this regard Synod 1983, (Art.55, C Considerations 2.d) stated that: "... the matter of 'fencing' the Lord's Supper and the admission to the Lord's Supper concerns the Church discipline as well as the doctrine of the Church and should be looked into by General Synod (see B Observations 2, c, I, ii, iii)." That same Synod also recommended (Acts 1983, Art.55, D Recommendations 2.e) "to pay special attention to the new developments in the OPC, with respect to the so-called Shepherd case (see Observations 2, a, I, ii, iii), the Hofford case (see Observations 2, b) and the 'fencing' of the Lord's Supper (see B Observations 2, c, i, ii, iii, and d), and to come to the next Synod with recommendations in this respect...."

Also in this regard, Synod 1986 noted in its considerations (Acts Synod 1986, Art.132 E Considerations b,d,e):

"b. ...'the committee[s]...recommendation that 'the Canadian Reformed Churches should use their ecclesiastical contact to address the OPC on this issue of fencing the Lord's table' indicates that the matter of fencing the Lord's Supper is, indeed, a serious confessional divergency, which is a major issue of mutual concern.

d.... Although guests are not specifically mentioned in Article 61, Church Order, the conclusion of the committee, Observation 5, cannot mean that Article 61, C.O., has no bearing on the admission of guests to the Lord's Supper. Synod considers that Article 61,

C.O., is the rule which governs the admission of all those who seek to partake in the Lord's Supper.

e. The Canadian Reformed Churches have from the beginning of contact with the OPC considered the admission to the Lord's Supper as an essential matter of discipline."

Thus Synod 1986 recommended (Recommendation 3) "To pass on the report about fencing of the Lord's table (including the sections A, B, and C) to the OPC through its committee for Ecumenicity, along with the above considerations of the General Synod 1986 and invite the CEIR to have meetings about these matters."

Likewise, Synod 1989 dealt with the CCOPC report and noted some disappointing aspects (Acts 1989, Art.94, D Considerations 2.c): c. "the matter of fencing the Lord's table, considered by Synod 1986 as 'a serious confessional divergency which is a major issue of mutual concern' (Acts Synod 1986, Art.132. Considerations B), should be treated and presented in this light. Although a beginning has been made, further discussion is mandatory." This Synod mandated the CCOPC (Art.132, E Recommendations I.5c): "to be diligent to continue the discussion on and evaluation of the divergencies such as the doctrine of the covenant, visible and invisible church, the assurance of faith, the observance of the law, the fencing of the Lord's table, confessional membership, church-political differences, and the contact with the CRC." Note that here the two new and major issues: confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table, have become lumped together with the other divergencies which were reported on in 1986 and determined not to be a bar to ecclesiastical fellowship.

The same Synod stated, when considering the churches which have withdrawn from the OPC and been accepted into the Can RC (Art 72, IV A 2 c I) that "The withdrawal of these churches from the OPC may have the positive effect of underlining the need for the OPC and the CanRC to resolve the matter of divergencies which are considered to be impediments to Ecclesiastical Fellowship."

The next synod, Synod 1992, also maintained, in Acts Art. 72, IV Considerations, A 3 f, "From all of the foregoing it becomes clear that the impediments that still need to be removed are:

- i. Lack of agreement on the meaning and application of 'confessional membership.'
- ii. Lack of agreement on the supervision of the Lord's table.
- iii. Lack of agreement on the relationship of the OPC with the CRC.

These items must be addressed by the CCOPC with the OPC. Here, as the Committee itself suggests in its analysis, it may be helpful to discuss whether these divergencies stem from ecclesiological and/or historical differences."

This led Synod 1992 to include in the mandate to the CCOPC (Art 72, V C.5): "to inform the OPC that the matters which still require resolution for the establishment of full ecclesiastical fellowship are (see IV,A3v):

- a. the matter of confessional membership
- b. the matter of supervision of the Lord's table, and
- c. the matter of the relationship with the Christian Reformed Church.

Seeing how c. above has been addressed by the OPC, the remaining question before Synod 1998 is whether these matters, confessional membership and fencing of the Lord's table have been adequately addressed so that the CanRC can enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Although there still is a need to continue discussing the other divergencies within the context of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the focus has consistently remained and remains on these two in particular.

2. Shift or Development?

Some churches have complained that there is a shift here. London asserts that there has been a shift in the procedure for discussing the divergencies. Synod 1965 stated "fellowship with other churches should be initiated only after a thorough and serious investigation is made and it is clear that these churches not only accept the Reformed confessions and regulations of Reformed church government but also abide by them" whereas Synod 1995 said that "there is reason to continue to discuss these practices" and thereby it means to discuss them within Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Watford complains about the shift that takes place from the above 1965 statement to the 1995 comment which says "they cannot in the end be made a condition for Ecclesiastical Fellowship"(Article 106.B.3). It is true that there is a shift here, but this was a natural process and development as the Synods struggled with the matter and considered how to move from a relationship of Ecclesiastical Contact to Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

It should be noted that this process was already foreseen by General Synod 1977 when it stated that ecclesiastical contact could serve as the basis for "further discussion with the OPC with the hope and intent that eventually full correspondence expressing the unity of the true faith can be established" (Art.91, Consideration e). Already from the beginning then, while the terminology would change, a natural progression from ecclesiastical contact to a sister-church relationship was the goal.

3. Other Issues

- a. *Grouping of Appeals.* Some of the appellants complain that the letters and appeals were grouped together and thus were not sufficiently answered. However it is not unusual to group letters and appeals by subject matter. Nor is it incorrect procedure. The question is whether the concerns are given their corresponding weight and consideration. A thorough investigation of the considerations of Synod 1995 dealing with letters and appeals concerning relations with the OPC shows that the appellants raised matters that were previously considered.
- b. *Appeal of br. T. Kingma.* Regarding this appeal also, it should be said that there are really no new grounds provided here. In his appeal to Synod 1995 he attempts to convince from the Word of God that the points being discussed about the Westminster Standards are more than divergencies. Synod cannot interact with all his arguments here. Having reviewed his arguments and proofs however, synod considers that the brother has not proven his point nor has he brought to the fore aspects of Scripture which have not been examined by others (e.g. the Report to Synod 86 re Divergences).
- c. *Background of many of the appeals.* Many of the appellants have argued that the differences between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are not just divergencies between two Reformed Churches but differences of such magnitude that recognition of the OPC is unwarranted because it simply is not a Reformed Church. In this regard, for example, a remark of br T. Kingma (p.3): "having liberated from the superscriptural teachings...of the GKN which were proven to be unscriptural and yet made binding by the synod '43/44". [See the same in Blue Bell III-X, p.18]. Behind this thinking, however, there is a flawed interpretation of our own history. Although appellants are sometimes more careful in their wording, there is frequently the suggestion as above that the Liberation of 1944 was a liberation from the superscriptural teachings whereas, in fact, it was a liberation from the binding to the superscriptural teachings. The two are not the same. The concern of the appellants then is that they believe that the Westminster Standards bring these teachings back into the church. Some appellants question whether a minister who teaches what is taught in the OPC would be tolerated in the Canadian Reformed Churches. What the appellants fail to realize is that while Dr. K. Schilder and others were willing to discuss Kuyperian views within the one federation of churches, the Synod was not willing to have them discussed but made them binding instead. The Synod, in effect, elevated Kuyper's teaching on these points to a "fourth Form of Unity" and hence would not

tolerate any who differed with his views. What the appellants often do however is implicitly elevate Schilder's teaching to the level of doctrinal status and attempt to ensure that anything that seems similar to Kuyper's views is not tolerated. Hence the reaction against the Westminster Standards which they believe are the same as the views of Kuyper. In this regard, they often quote Schilder failing to realize that Dr. K. Schilder, fully aware of the weaknesses of the Westminster Standards, was willing to accept them as Reformed documents and to tolerate Kuyper's views within the Reformed Churches as long as they could continue to be discussed and were not made binding upon himself and other members of the churches.

It should be understood that there is no doubt that the divergencies need to be discussed on an ongoing basis. But it should then also be realized that they can be discussed within a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship. Meanwhile, no one in the Canadian Reformed Churches is bound to the Westminster Standards within such a relationship. The confessions of others may be of interest and value to all, but one is bound only to the confessions adopted by the federation of which one is a member or officebearer. Similarly, in a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, though the pulpits are in principle open, this is still by invitation only.

- d. *Worship Services.* Regarding the suggestion by Lincoln that there are some OP Churches where there is only one worship service, this letter does not sufficiently prove whether there are churches which have only one worship service, nor do they clarify the nature of services in those places. According to our fraternal delegate from the OPC, Rev. J. Petersen, the prevailing approach is to have two services per Lord's Day. Places where this is not the case may very well be new posts where facilities or manpower is limited.

B. The Present State of the Relationship

1. As illustrated above, it has to be acknowledged that, despite many appeals and much discussion, the Canadian Reformed Churches have maintained a fairly consistent line which is summarized in the 1992 guidelines to the CCOPC. The CanRC have continued to maintain 1977 and to work towards closer relations according to the guideline of Synod 1965, namely that "Fellowship with other churches should be initiated only after a thorough and serious investigation is made and it is clear that these churches not only accept the Reformed confessions and regulations of Reformed church government but also abide by them" (Synod Edmonton 1965, Art. 141). Two divergencies remained which still required resolution before entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod Abbotsford 1995 mandated the CCOPC to work towards coming to an

- agreement on these two remaining divergencies and to formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship, hopefully in 1998.
2. Hence the CCOPC has come to General Synod Fergus 1998 with the text of the Proposed Agreement between the CanRC and the OPC as mentioned above. However, there is considerable concern as outlined above that the agreement is too vague and does not sufficiently address the differences. Proceeding with the relationship under the Proposed Agreement as it is will only add to the unrest in our churches and will not help the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to function in a manner that is suitable to one of the Churches of the Reformation.
 3. Our concerns are underlined by the position of Rev. J. J. Petersen who in his speech to both Synod Abbotsford 1995 and General Synod Fergus 1998 defends the right of the OPC to admit to membership and to the Lord's table those who do not make profession of the Reformed faith (E.g. to Synod 1998: "Synod 1992 said 'a verbal warning alone is insufficient.' To those of us who use this method or supervision to hear that 'a verbal warning alone is insufficient' is to depreciate the power of the proclaimed word"). These comments and positions are out of line with the proposal of the CCOPC to General Synod Fergus 1998. The archives of the CCOPC show that the original context of the Proposed Agreement re the Fencing of the Lord's Table contained references to the ICRC Conference in 1993 (Under the proposal the words were added: "See Report of the Committee on Theological Affirmation, in Proceedings of the ICRC 1993, pp. 80f."). This report of the Committee on Theological Affirmation (pp. 80-81) is defending a more restricted and Reformed approach to admitting people to the Lord's Table. It cites also Westminster Confession (chapter 29, section 8):

Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in the sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly person, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

Rev. G. I. Williamson reflects also the concerns of the CanRC when he says about this same point: "In the Orthodox Presbyterian Church... persons are commonly admitted of whom the Session know nothing. I have never been able to see how this common practice can be reconciled with the clearly stated requirement of our confession which says..." (as above, quoting W.C. chapter 29, section 8. G.I. Williamson, "On a More Adequate Fencing of the Lord's Table", *The Ordained Servant*. Volume 3, number 4, p.76). Therefore Synod 1998 suggests to add the words to the first part of the Proposed Agreement: *This means that a general verbal*

warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith is required." As to supervision of life, reference can also be made to the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. & A. 173: "*May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it? Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation*", cf. Heidelberg Catechism, q. & a. 82 "confession and life"). For every church the danger is real that it requests less of guests than it asks of its members. Scripture is quite clear that we cannot automatically take someone's word for it if he professes to be an upright Christian. Matthew 7:21 warns us: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who *does the will of my Father* who is in heaven"(cf. also 1 Cor. 5:11; Mt. 7:6). If elders are faced with guests who have not been under their supervision and of whom it cannot be ascertained that they are indeed God-fearing people, it is therefore important for them to receive a positive written or verbal testimony concerning such guests before admitting them to the Lord's supper. Therefore it is also proposed to add to the Proposed Agreement the words: and confirmation of a godly life.

Regarding the second part of the Proposed Agreement, the concern is that again the OPC leaves room where room ought not to be left. In the Form for Profession of Faith in the OPC profession is made of faith in the doctrine of the Bible alone. It might be assumed that this would mean faith in the doctrine as confessed in the standards of the church. However, it is stated in the document entitled "COEIR-OPC Response to Papers Prepared by CCOPC-CanRC" submitted to Synod 1992 (Acts Synod 1992, Appendix II, p.170), "We [OPC] affirm what you [CanRC] reject - that the church is competent to determine as valid and credible a confession of the Christian faith for communicant membership that is not also in full accord with the church's confession." Therefore, Synod 1998 adds the word "as" in the second part of the Proposed Agreement so that the sentence reads: "*Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible as the patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions.*"

4. Synod 1998 thus proposes that the Proposed Agreement read as follows (additional words underlined):

Concerning Fencing the Lord's Table:

The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's supper should not be profaned (1 Cor. 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29,8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the Church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.

Concerning Confessional Membership:

The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom. 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible as the patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.

5. It is our prayer that the General Assembly of the OPC may find the above proposal acceptable, and that they will communicate their agreement to the CCOPC, so that the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship may then be initiated and the CCOPC can make arrangements according to the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
6. This also means that the Canadian Reformed Churches would need to allow time for the OP churches to define and implement the practical consequences after the acceptance of this agreement by the General Assembly.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Synod decide

1. To express regret once again and to remind the appellants that Synod 1980 (Acts 1980, Article 97, C, 1, p. 69) already did so when it expressed "regret that the evaluation of the divergencies, as discussed in the letter of April, 1976, was not explained in detail by the Synod Coaldale 1977, before stating that these divergencies 'do not form an impediment to recognize the Orthodox Presbyterian Church as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.'(Acts 1977, Article 91, Consideration h)."

2. To affirm that the Evaluation of Divergencies presented to Synod 1986 by the CCOPC is the document which provided the grounds for the 1977 decision to recognize the OPC as a true church.
3. That no new grounds for declaring previous decisions contrary to Scriptures, confessions and the Church Order have been brought forward. Moreover, that the differences between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards are not such that they prevent Ecclesiastical Fellowship but they are divergencies about which there can continue to be discussions among those who belong to Reformed Churches.
4. To acknowledge gratefully the desire of the OPC to be faithful to the Scriptures and to defend the reformed heritage.
5. To note with thankfulness that the OPC, by terminating the Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCNA has taken a clear stand in maintaining the truth and authority of the Word of God, and has removed another obstacle for the Canadian Reformed Churches to come to ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC.
6. To adopt the Proposed Agreement as amended here below as the basis for Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, and to instruct the CCOPC to pass it on to the CEIR for adoption by the General Assembly:

Concerning Fencing the Lord's Table:

The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's supper should not be profaned (1 Cor. 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29,8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the Church exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. This means that a general verbal warning by the officiating minister alone is not sufficient and that a profession of the Reformed faith and confirmation of a godly life is required. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper.

Concerning Confessional Membership:

The churches of the Reformation believe that they have to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and are called to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Rom. 16:17). Anyone who answers the membership vows in the affirmative is bound to receive and adhere to the doctrine of the Bible as the patristic church has summarized this teaching in the Apostles' Creed and the churches of the Reformation have elaborated on this in their confessions. Every confessing member is bound to this doctrine and must be willing to be instructed in it.

7. Should the General Assembly of the OPC adopt the Agreement on Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional Membership as stated above, to invite the OPC to enter into

Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches, according to the adopted rules for this relationship.

8. To instruct the CCOPC, as a sub-committee of the CCCA, upon the adoption of the above by the OPC, to initiate Ecclesiastical Fellowship according to the adopted rules, and to inform the churches and the next General Synod accordingly.

9. That any further discussion re differences in confession and church policy must take place within the relation of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The intention of such discussions will be mutual upbuilding in the faith to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, (Eph.4:3; cf. Report of the CCOPC to Fergus 1998, p. 3).

10. If the General Assembly of the OPC does not adopt the above, to reconsider the present relationship of ecclesiastical contact with the OPC at the next General Synod. In that case, the CCOPC must make recommendations to the next General Synod.

ADOPTED

The chairman notes that this is a historic moment in the life of the Canadian Reformed Churches as a decision has been made which will hopefully serve the Orthodox Presbyterian Church well and will bring this matter to rest in the churches. He notes with gratitude the fact that this difficult decision could be made unanimously.

Article 130

Appeals from Barrhead, Coaldale and Taber re Article 115, Synod 1995

Committee III presents Committee III presents Agenda items II D, III C, III I.

I. MATERIAL:

Submissions from the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber appealing Acts 1995, Article 115 wherein Synod responds to "Appeals against Regional Synod West 1993, Art. 11," from (among others) the Churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber.

II. ADMISSIBILITY

Synod declares the submissions of the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber admissible since they are appeals regarding a decision made by General Synod Abbotsford 1995.

III. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The church at Barrhead "judges Synod to have given wrong consideration in coming to its decision to deny the appeals. Barrhead's difficulty in particular is with Consideration IV.A. paragraph 2 and 3."
- B. The church at Coaldale asks General Synod Fergus, 1998 to rescind Article 115 of General Synod Abbotsford, 1995, "since it is our conviction that this decision

contradicts what we confess in article 27-29 of the Belgic Confession, and is not in accordance with what we, as churches, agreed upon in our adopted church order." Coaldale submits objections to Considerations IV. A, B, and C, and states that "the grounds adduced by Synod for the rejection of Coaldale's appeal are untenable in the light of the Confession, the Church Order and the apparent meaning to the considerations of the decision of Regional Synod West, 1993, article 11."

- C. The church at Taber "requests General Synod Fergus, 1998 to rescind Article 115 of General Synod Abbotsford, 1995 ... in light of the following confessional and church orderly concerns." Taber expresses "Confessional Concern Re IV Consideration A..., and Church Orderly Concern Re IV Consideration B of article 115 General Synod Abbotsford, 1995." Taber also requests Synod "to state that, although it would not now be kind nor even-handed to expel the American Reformed Church of Denver from the federation, the admission of the American Reformed Church of Denver was in violation of the Confession and the Church Order

IV. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. The churches at Barrhead and Taber, in their confessional objections against the admission of the church of Denver correctly adduce the normative character of the articles 27-29 BC. Synod Lincoln 1992 already articulated the same when it considered "these admitted churches are therefore under obligation to pursue, together with the Canadian Reformed Churches, unity with the OPC. This remains, in any case, the striving of the Canadian Reformed Churches and the CCOPC" (Art. 72,IV,2,iv, p.51/52). Article 28 of the Belgic Confession shows the dynamic character of the call to join the true church. In the midst of the difficulties that had developed in the local OPC church (Acts 1995, Art. 115, IV, C,5.), the church at Denver sought to be obedient to the norm of Article 28 by joining a federation of churches they considered true and faithful to the Word of the Lord. Obedience to Articles 27-29 was being sought in the whole process.
- B. The appellants take issue with the interim situation in the relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC. The interim situation had come about because Synod 1977 acknowledged the OPC to be a true church without entering a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod offered the OPC a temporary relationship called "ecclesiastical contact". Special rules were devised (Acts Synod 1977 Article 91), acknowledging a relationship of "full correspondence" could not be entered into at that time because of identified divergencies. It was this temporary relationship and the subsequent developments (e.g. fencing and confessional membership) that complicated the situation.
- C. In regard to the "Church Order Concern" about Consideration B, adduced by the churches at Coaldale and Taber, Synod 1995 noted that Coaldale and Taber did not appeal this decision in the minor assemblies, so that it "can be concluded that appellants accepted the March 1993 decision as settled and binding." Hence, Synod considered "Art. 33 C.O. is not relevant at Classis AB/MB Oct. 1993." Furthermore, Synod explained that "the matter of Denver's requests had been reopened at the Classis March 1993 with as ground the decision of General Synod

1992. General Synod's decision constitutes the new ground according to Art. 33 C.O." Coaldale and Taber seek to prove a discrepancy in the interpretation of the process by suggesting that Synod "confuses 'reopening' a matter with 'proposing' to change a decision without new grounds." Making such distinctions, however, only confuses the issue. Synod maintains the 1992 decision itself was the new ground, leading to the investigation.

- D. From the material presented it can be concluded that more consultation and communication between the OPC and the CanRC's in the process of admitting Denver into the federation would have been helpful. It is evident that the evaluation of the process of admission of the church at Denver into the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches hinges on the evaluation of the history of our contact with the OPC since 1977. This appears from the interpretation of and interaction with the considerations of Regional Synod 1993 as submitted by Coaldale and as dealt with by Abbotsford 1995.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Synod decide to submit the above considerations as its answer to the appeals of the churches at Barrhead, Coaldale, and Taber.

ADOPTED

Article 131

Mandate of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) and the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA)

Committee III presents: Agenda Item I D, II CC, L 30

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the CRCA regarding the mandate, finances and other matters of the Committee
- B. Letter from the church at Willoughby Heights

II. OBSERVATIONS

- A. The CRCA reports on its correspondence with the Lanka Reformed Church and recommends that the LRC be advised to take up contact with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and/or the Presbyterian Church in Korea.
- B. The CRCA reports on retirements, appointments and the finances of the Committee. It notes that in the period of 1995-1998 the Committee spent \$ 10,847. The proposed budget is \$10,000.
- C. The church at Willoughby Heights draws the attention of Synod to the point that the CRCA "should be given enough funds to meaningfully fulfill its mandate."

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide:

- A. As a result of the adopted restructuring, the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) will retain the responsibility for:
 - 1. Our continued participation in the ICRC;
 - 2. Our relationship with the following churches: the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and the Free Church of Scotland.
- B. To advise the CRCA to consult the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and/or the Presbyterian Church in Korea to take up contact with the Lanka Reformed Church.
- C. The Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas (CCCA) become responsible for contact with the following churches:
 - 1. L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and the Reformed Churches of the United States.
- D. To mandate the CRCA and the CCCA to:
 - 1. Investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship;
 - 2. Respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend Assemblies, Synods, or meetings of other churches;
 - 3. Report on their findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod.
- E. To adopt the following budget for the CRCA/ICRC:

fees \$3,500

Meeting ICRC 2001 \$1,000

Travel \$2,500

Miscellaneous \$3,000

Total \$10,000

ADOPTED

Article 132

Adjournment

Br. L. Jagt asks that Hymn 46:1, 2 be sung, and leads in prayer. Synod is adjourned

MORNING SESSION - FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1998

Article 133

Reopening

The chairman asks that Psalm 84: 1, 2 be sung, reads from 1 Corinthians 12: 31b - 13:13, and leads in prayer. Roll call shows that all are present, except for Rev. A.J. Pol who is absent with notice.

Articles 134 and 135 were in closed session

Article 136

Request of Toronto re Pro-Life Stance

Committee I presents their proposal re this matter. After discussion, the committee takes it back for further consideration. Synod adjourns for some committee work and for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION - FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1998

Article 137

Request of Toronto re Pro-Life Stance

Committee I presents their proposal re this matter re Toronto's Request re Pro-life (II-MM)

I. MATERIAL

Request from the Bethel Church at Toronto (II-MM) with enclosure (Report of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion of the 38th General Assembly of the OPC, 1971).

II. OBSERVATIONS

The Bethel church at Toronto, because of the involvement of a sister in pro-life activities and legal difficulties encountered, asks Synod to adopt the above Report of the OPC and give it official status in the midst of the churches.

III. CONSIDERATION

- A. Though churches and their members may benefit from adopting a pro-life policy, the structure of the Canadian Reformed Churches does not allow for a major assembly to make statements about political and social concerns.
- B. The nature of the Reformed church polity of the Canadian Reformed Churches is such that a statement of the Council of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church at Toronto should suffice also for legal purposes. In the polity of the Canadian Reformed Church, the Council of the church (elders and deacons) is the highest ecclesiastical body, from which all other assemblies derive their authority.
- C. In respect to the matter of abortion, Synod Fergus 1998 has no doubt that the Canadian Reformed Churches are of one mind, namely, that with the possible exception of cases in which the life of the mother might be in jeopardy, the abortion of pre-born human life, from conception to birth, is considered to be

contrary to God's Word (Exodus 20:13; Psalm 139:13 - 16) and the Confession (Lord's Day 40, Heidelberg Catechism) of the Canadian Reformed Churches. In this respect, reference is made also to the Report of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion of the 38th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1971.

- D. It is regrettable that this matter did not come to General Synod via the minor assemblies as outlined in Article 30, C.O.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Considering the above, Synod cannot accede to the request of the Church at Toronto.

ADOPTED

Article 138

Matters re The Book of Praise

Re: Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise

Committee II presents:

Agenda Items: I.E, II.A, II.C.I, II.H, II.L, II.II, II.QQ, II.YY, II.XX, II.DDD, IV.B, IV.D, IV.H, IV.R, IV.T (part 3), IV.V (part 5), IV.BB, L7, L21,L27I.

I. MATERIAL

- A. Report of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise
- B. Letters from the churches at Watford, Burlington East (2), Cloverdale, Langley, Fergus, Burlington South, Grand Valley, Barrhead, Elora, London, Carman, Guelph, Fergus, Orangeville, Taber, Owen Sound, and Willoughby Heights, and a letter from br. J.D. Gansekoele
- C. Letter from Standing Committee for Publication of the Book of Praise re: response to several letters received from the churches

II. GENERAL INFORMATION FROM THE STANDING COMMITTEE'S REPORT

A. Observation

1. The Committee authorized a new printing of the Book of Praise shortly after Synod Abbotsford 1995. This edition incorporates the changes adopted by Synod 1995. It also includes an improved hardcover binding. Since then the stock has been depleted and another printing will have to be considered.
2. The Introduction to the Church Order was included in the 1996 edition of the Book of Praise.
3. In addition to placing the provisionally adopted text of the Nicene Creed in the 1996 edition of the Book of Praise, the Committee distributed the text to the churches with the request for comments. Having received these comments from the churches, the Committee provides the final form of the

proposal of the text of the Nicene Creed. Subsequent to the report to Synod, several churches submitted further comments to which the Committee responds. (See below.)

4. Regarding the availability of the Book of Praise in electronic format, the Committee suggests that Synod appoint a church to develop and maintain a formal web page of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.
5. The Committee notes that Rev. G. Nederveen is about to retire from the Committee and that br. L Kingma has requested to be relieved from the Committee due to other commitments.
6. Ebenezer church at Burlington expresses its support for the Committee's report.
7. The church at Orangeville requests Synod not to incorporate provisional material into the published editions of the Book of Praise.

B. Consideration

1. Since the current stock has been depleted, the Committee should authorize another printing, to serve the churches for the next 3 years. The Committee should clearly note the year of edition on the cover.
2. Except by the specific mandate of General Synod, future printings of the Book of Praise should not include provisional material. The solicitation of comments from the churches must not be done by including provisionally adopted material into the Book of Praise.
3. Synod concurs with the Committee to make available the Book of Praise in an electronic format and to develop and maintain a formal presence on the internet. Consideration must be directed to the matter of copyright and the matter of cost. Instead of appointing a particular church to maintain the web-page, several brothers who are competent in these matters can be appointed for this purpose.

C. Recommendations

Synod decide

1. to express gratitude for the years of service offered by br. L. Kingma and Rev. G. Nederveen.
2. to continue the Committee, consisting of four members and appoint two members to fill the vacancies (at least one with musical talents).
3. to appoint a new Committee for the purpose of creating and maintaining an official web page for the Canadian Reformed Churches with the following mandate:
 - a. to serve the churches by creating and maintaining an official web page which would contain official and semi-official materials that reflect the life of the churches, are of benefit to the membership, and of assistance to her witness in this world;
 - b. to report to the next General Synod regarding the activities and noticeable benefits of this web page.

III. ALTERNATE MELODY FOR HYMN 1A (ZWART; STRASBOURG),

A. Observations

1. The Committee notes that it prepared the Strasbourg melody for distribution to the churches by adjusting the melody to fit the English text and by providing a harmonization which is in line with the historical time period of the melody. Both Zwart and Strasbourg melodies and their harmonization were distributed to the churches for comment. In view of the clear consensus of the churches that these melodies should not be considered, the Committee recommends that Synod Fergus put this matter to rest.
2. The church at Burlington East urges Synod to direct the Committee to cease all efforts to find an alternate melody and harmonization for Hymn 1A, to lay the matter of an alternate melody to rest.
3. The church at Orangeville agrees that the alternate melodies of Hymn 1A be put to rest.
4. The church at Guelph requests that the existing melodies for Hymn 1A and 1B be maintained and this matter be put to rest.

B. Considerations.

Since both the Committee and a number of churches have made clear that the matter of an alternate melody of Hymn 1A is not desired, the Committee's mandate should be considered completed and that the existing melodies for Hymn 1A and 1B be maintained.

C. Recommendation

To lay the matter of an alternate melody and harmonization of Hymn 1A to rest and to discharge the Committee of this mandate.

IV. OVERLEAF MUSICAL NOTATION

A. Observations

1. Regarding the Overleaf Musical Notation, the Committee is of the opinion "that the overleaf repetition of the melody does not serve the churches well at this time" because, in an attempt to be consistent, all melodies will have to be repeated. The repeated melodies will likely add approximately 100 pages to the Book of Praise. The cost will likely increase by 30% because of the labour involved.
2. The church at Owen Sound requests that the melodies of the psalms be repeated 'overleaf' to help improve congregational singing for the difficult tunes. They also state that while this will change the numbering of the pages, it is inconsequential as the page numbers are already different from previous editions.
3. The church at Willoughby Heights senses a double standard in reference to the cost regarding the overleaf musical notation and changing the proof texts from RSV to NIV.

B. Considerations

Although the Committee is not in favour of Overleaf Musical Notation, repeating the musical notation when a psalm or hymn continues on the over-leaf (as done in the Dutch church book) has merit (cf. Synod 1995, Art.44, Cons. H.). The church at Owen Sound correctly asserts that adopting overleaf musical notation will help improve congregational singing and appreciation for the (difficult) psalms and hymn in the Book of Praise. Since the cost should not be a over-riding factor in this matter, the concerns of Willoughby Heights are addressed.

C. Recommendation

To mandate the Committee to prepare the Book of Praise with an Overleaf Musical Notation, and to present this revision to the next General Synod.

V. FUTURE REVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF PRAISE

A. Observations

1. Regarding a future revision of the Book of Praise, the Committee seeks direction from Synod on the modification of the rhyming of the Psalms to reflect the text of the NIV.
2. Regarding the use of the NIV for the prose sections of the Book of Praise, the Committee, acknowledging that it was outside of its mandate, has been proactive at the Committee level in its decision to initiate an in-depth comparative review of the RSV/NIV proof-texts found in the Three Forms of Unity and the texts used in the prose of the Liturgical Forms. The Committee also occupied itself with an update of the Prayers with respect to addressing the Lord as 'You'. The Committee urges Synod Fergus 1998 to provide the Committee with a clear mandate on these matters. The Committee wonders whether the NIV should replace the RSV in prose sections, or whether both versions should be made available.
3. The church at Cloverdale asks Synod to mandate the Committee to update "the Scripture quotations and references used in the Canons of Dort, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism from the present text quotations to reflect and be consistent with the NIV." They also asks for the same in "the Liturgical forms and the Prayers to reflect the language used in the NIV." Cloverdale makes these requests so that the present use of archaic language may be removed. Cloverdale also requests Synod to mandate the Committee to make it a high priority to have a suitable revised Book of Praise to present to the first Synod of the next century, Synod 2001.

Furthermore, the church at Cloverdale asks Synod to mandate the Committee to update and change the language of the Psalms and Hymns to reflect the present usage as we have it in the New International Version of the Bible (as the translation recommended by General Synod 1995). This would include not only the pronoun forms (Thou, Thee, Thy, etc.) but also

the antiquated verb forms used, e.g. "sitteth" to "sits," "thence" to "there," and others."

4. The church at Burlington South requests an updating of the language and the text of the psalms, hymns, forms and the prayers, as well as offering alternate melodies for the psalms.
5. The church at Fergus is of the opinion that by revising the Book of Praise with NIV may result in two versions which "would cause confusion and would certainly not be beneficial for the federation, not to mention the cost involved." They also feels that "to update the prayers to address the Lord with 'You' is not necessary as everyone is free to use the pronoun 'You,' 'Thee,' or 'Thou.'" Furthermore, they state that "to change the rhyming of the Psalms would be detrimental to the whole generation of members who have learned the Psalms by heart and sing them from memory during the worship service."
6. The church at Grand Valley requests Synod to refrain from modifying the rhyming of the songs to reflect the text of the NIV. They state that the Book of Praise never intended to reflect a particular Bible translation, and that the poetic text always resists change.
7. The church at Orangeville requests Synod "not to be too hasty in initiating revisions of the Book of Praise to reflect the use of the NIV, in light of the uncertainty in several churches as to which Bible translation to use."
8. The church at Guelph express concern over a possible future revision of the psalms. They feel "that revising the Psalms and prose section of the Book of Praise to reflect the NIV Bible translation would not be proper at this time. They suggest that we should take into consideration our Australian sister churches who have adopted the NKJV.
9. Br. Gansekoele requests Synod not to adapt the Book of Praise to the NIV until more churches have switched to the NIV
10. The church at Willoughby Heights suggests that any changes to the wording of the psalms be measured by the Hebrew original.

B. Considerations

1. While some churches are uncertain in regard to which Bible translation to use, the NIV has been recommended to the churches, so it would be consistent to change the RSV quotations to the NIV in the confessions and prose section of the Book of Praise. In this revision, the Committee should take into consideration the input of our Australian sister churches.
2. Changing the forms and prayers to incorporate the pronoun 'You and Your', would be consistent with the use of the current Bible translation as recommended by the Canadian and Australian General Synods, i.e. the NIV and NKJV.
3. The churches at Cloverdale and Burlington South request a major revision of the language in the Psalms and Hymns to reflect the language of the NIV Bible translation. They also request allowing changes in the melodies in the Palms for Hymns. However, it is questionable whether such a major change is indeed necessary on this basis alone. It could be argued, as with

the Hymns of previous centuries (which have not been revised or altered by previous Synods) that the Psalms and Hymns are poetic and reflect the history and tradition of the reformation. Synod acknowledges that such a major change may also alienate a large section of our church members who have committed these Psalms and Hymns to memory.

4. It is understood that any revision to the Psalms that is deemed necessary by Synod will remain faithful to the original text, thus the concern of Willoughby Heights is addressed.

C. Recommendation

Synod decide

1. To mandate the Committee to prepare the Prose section of the Book of Praise with NIV Bible references, and to present this revision to the next General Synod.
2. To mandate the Committee not to proceed with changes to the Psalms and Hymns.

VI. PROPOSALS FROM THE CHURCH AT WATFORD

A. Observations.

1. The church at Watford proposes that Synod instruct the Committee for the Book of Praise to do the following:
 - a. To find a suitable tune for the Nicene Creed for usage in the worship services. Watford reasons that this creed is very suitable for communal confession in the afternoon worship service (especially with the change from first person singular to first person plural). Such a confession is better sung by the entire congregation instead of just recited by the minister, since it is the confession of the entire congregation (cf. Rom10:10). The congregation at Watford would use the Nicene Creed more often if it were put to melody.
 - b. To find suitable music for the votum (Ps.24:8) used in our worship services. Watford reasons that the votum is the confession of the congregation, and is thus more appropriately sung by the entire congregation than spoken only by the minister on behalf of the congregation (cf. Rom10:10).
 - c. To find suitable music with which the congregation can sing a responsive Amen at the end of the worship services. Watford gives as grounds that the "Amen" is the response of the congregation to the blessing of the LORD and to the entire worship service, and as such is more appropriately sung by the entire congregation than spoken only by the minister on behalf of the congregation (cf. Rom10:10; Neh8:6; 1Co14:16; 2Co1:20; Rev5:14).

B. Considerations

The specific requests to set the Nicene Creed, Votum and the responsive Amen to music should be directed by the Church at Watford to the Committee for their consideration.

C. Recommendation

Synod decides not to accede the proposal of the church at Watford.

VII. CANONS OF DORT

A. Observations.

1. The Committee reviewed the matter raised by br. L. van Zandwyk and recommends that Synod 1998 does not accede to his request. The Committee wishes to retain the present words 'value and worth' as they are used in a discriminatory sense and which have distinct meanings that best fit the context.
2. The church at Guelph partially agrees with br. L. van Zandwyk's proposal to translate 'valoris et pretii' as 'power and value' instead of 'value and worth.' and suggests that it be translated as 'power and worth', as the word 'power' is the primary meaning of 'valoris.'

B. Consideration

The church at Guelph provides no new arguments.

C. Recommendation

To deny the submission of the church at Guelph and accept the Committee's recommendations.

VIII. NICENE CREED

A. Observations

1. General Synod 1995 decided, "To adopt provisionally the following revised edition of the Nicene Creed requesting the churches to test it and to send their comments (if any) to the Standing Committee of the Book of Praise for evaluation." The revised edition of the Nicene Creed is found in the Acts, Recommendation F. Four churches responded to the Standing Committee. Typographical errors in punctuation were corrected and the appearance of the text in printed form was adjusted to facilitate the reading of the text. The Committee presents the final form of the text of the Nicene Creed to Synod.

The Standing Committee sent a late report to Synod as an interaction with the church at Langley's submission and several letters from other churches. The Standing Committee gives a careful response to the submission of Langley and does not concur with any of its suggestions. A

final form of the text of the Nicene Creed is presented with some corrections in punctuation and a suggested lay-out of the text (indentations) as it would appear in the Book of Praise.

2. The church at Orangeville requests that a drastic revision of the Nicene Creed not be undertaken. It can agree with a limited linguistic revision. Orangeville points out that the present version of the Nicene Creed has not been proven to be unscriptural and that a revised edition of the Nicene Creed would hinder ecumenical contacts with other churches.
3. The church at Taber is not convinced that a change in the Nicene Creed be made from the singular "I" to the plural "We."
4. The church at Langley asks Synod to consider their submission regarding the Nicene Creed which had been sent earlier to all consistories and the Standing Committee.
5. The church at London and the church at Carman express their concurrence for the proposal re Nicene Creed as proposed by the church at Langley. Carman expresses its agreement with the proposal. London states that the translation of the Nicene Creed submitted by Langley is linguistically sound, faithful to the originals, and sensitive to the longstanding version used in the English speaking world.

B. Considerations

1. The revision of the Nicene Creed is not a drastic revision, as the church at Orangeville states, but it is as Synod 1995 stated, "The proposed revision of the Nicene Creed is more than a linguistic revision. It is also a structural change. The Committee has followed the suggestion of Dr. N. H. Gootjes and translated the original text making allowances for English language and theological development." The present form of the Nicene Creed does not have to be proven unscriptural in order to have a linguistic and structural change. Revising the Nicene Creed into modern English does not create a hindrance in ecumenical contacts with other Reformed churches who subscribe to the same confessions.
2. The Standing Committee has satisfactorily addressed the concern of Taber. The Committee demonstrates that the Greek text of the Nicene Creed uses the plural form (cf. Acts 1995, Art. 44 Considerations D.2).
3. The letters of the churches at Carman and London give no proof in their letters to show that the Langley translation of the Nicene Creed is to be preferred over the translation of the Standing Committee.
4. The Standing Committee has satisfactorily addressed the submission of the church at Langley. The final form of the text of the Nicene Creed as presented by the Standing Committee is to be preferred.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

Synod decide

To adopt the revised version of the Nicene Creed, as recommended by the Committee, which reads as follows:

[Acts incomplete - to be included at a later date]

IX. STANDING COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

A. Observations

1. The Committee suggests the following mandate:
 - a. To function according to the arrangements for publishing and distribution accepted by General Synod Cloverdale 1983 (Acts 1983, pp. 297-299).
 - b. To maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the Book of Praise.
 - c. To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the Book of Praise among others and to promote the availability of a book of harmonization facilitating the use of the Book of Praise in the English-speaking world.
 - d. To serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the Book of Praise can be directed.
2. The church at Willoughby Heights is uncomfortable that the Committee saw it necessary to be "proactive" with respect to the RSV/NIV proof-texts of the confessions.
3. The church at Elora requests Synod to disapprove of the fact that the "Committee is starting to take on a life of its own", and to instruct the Committee to make two versions of the Book of Praise available to the churches, one with the prose in the NIV and the other with the prose in the RSV.
4. The church at Burlington South is encouraged to read that the Committee is proactive in its work. They feel the Committee work in the future should be broader in scope, and therefore recommends that "an expanded mandate would ensure that we would be looking for continuous improvements in all facets of our Book of Praise
5. The church at Barrhead and Burlington South request that the Committee's mandate be expanded to be open to receiving additional music and to adding to the current selection of hymns to cover such subjects as "our missionary mandate, God's gift in nature, the work of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant.."
6. The church at Burlington South mention that the Committee should tap into the work that has already started in the Netherlands. They provided two names to serve on the Committee.

B. Considerations

1. It is true that the Committee has been proactive by undertaking a comparative study of the RSV/NIV proof texts in the confessions and prose section of the Liturgical Forms. While this initiative troubles the church at Elora and Willoughby Heights, there should, however be no need for concern. Being proactive in their work, suggests that the Committee is 'alive and well' and prepared to address perceived needs of

the churches. However this does not imply that Synod supports all their initiatives or is compelled to take over any or all of their suggestions.

2. While there may be possibilities to add additional hymns to the Book of Praise, the churches at Barrhead and Burlington South provide no compelling reasons or concrete suggestions for Synod to entertain this.
3. Synod disagrees with the church at Elora to have a Book of Praise with NIV references and a Book of Praise with RSV references as it is more advantageous to have only one version of the Book of Praise.

C. Recommendation

Synod decide:

1. to acknowledge the work done by the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise.
2. to mandate the Committee:
 - a. to function according to the arrangements for publishing and distribution accepted by General Synod Cloverdale 1983 (Acts 1983, pp. 297-299).
 - b. To maintain its corporate status in order to be able to protect the interests of the Canadian Reformed Churches in all matters concerning the Book of Praise.
 - c. To foster an increased awareness of the existence of the Book of Praise among others and to promote the availability of a book of harmonization facilitating the use of the Book of Praise in the English-speaking world.
 - d. To serve as the address to which any correspondence regarding the Book of Praise can be directed.
 - e. To present to the next General Synod a revision of the Book of Praise incorporating the mandates mentioned above.

ADOPTED

Article 139

Matters pertaining to Agenda of Synod

Executive presents: Agenda item IV.C

I. MATERIAL:

Overture from the church at Smithers regarding the trend to have letters from individual members added to the material of General Synod.

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

This overture is connected directly with an item on the agenda of Synod 'Adoption of the Agenda' and must therefore be declared admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The church at Smithers concludes from the Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995 that "there is a trend to have letters from individual members added to the material."
- B. The church at Smithers considers that, on the basis of Article 30 of the Church Order, "letters of individual members who have not addressed their local consistories first", should all be declared inadmissible. This would prevent arbitrariness.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. Article 30 CO does not say that people may not address synod unless they have first addressed their consistories. Instead the Church Order says that "a new matter which has not previously been presented to a minor assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it."
- B. Individuals may not place matters on the agenda of synods. But once a matter has been placed on the agenda of General Synod - either via the minor assemblies or via deputies' reports - individuals are free to respond.

V. RECOMMENDATION:

Not to accede to the request of the Church at Smithers.

ADOPTED

Article 140

Regarding Acts of Closed Session

Executive presents:

Agenda items III.E and III.Z

I. MATERIAL:

Letters from the churches at Burlington-East, Guelph

II. ADMISSIBILITY:

Both letters appeal the decision recorded in Article 117 of the Acts of General Synod Abbotsford 1995 and are declared admissible.

III. OBSERVATIONS:

- A. The church at Burlington-East makes the following observations with respect to the past practices of Synod:

1. General Synod 1992 decided to print 'confidential acts' separate from the 'general acts.' (Article 109)
 2. General Synod 1995 decided to "delete from the Acts all Articles dealing with discussion in closed or closed-restricted sessions, and to send two copies of these Articles dealing with discussion in closed or closed-restricted sessions, and to send two copies of these Articles to each Consistory."
- B. The church at Burlington East observes that the matters addressed in the acts of closed sessions include:
1. Appeals regarding interpretation of Scripture or doctrine.
 2. Appeals regarding procedure and Church Order at prior ecclesiastical assemblies.
 3. Appointments to offices or committees.
- C. The church at Burlington-East considers that:
1. It is the duty of individual members of the congregation as well as the consistories to review the Acts of Synod and to appeal if the articles are not in accordance with Scripture and Church Order. Past synods have admitted appeals from members even if they are not directly involved in the original case.
 2. The decisions of synods establish precedents, doctrinal statements and guidelines by which members of the churches and ecclesiastical assemblies direct their lives in the service of the Lord.
 3. The General Synod is the broadest and therefore final court of appeal in the churches, and therefore it is necessary that justice should not only be done, but also appear to be done. In this way the churches will be edified
 4. There is nothing in the confidential acts of Synod Abbotsford that "contained anything that could be detrimental to anyone's reputation in any way.
- D. The church at Guelph appeals the decision recorded in Article 117 of the Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995 on these two grounds:
1. The practice of deleting all articles dealing with discussions in closed or closed-restricted session is a significant change from the long standing practice of including all business conducted by synods in the published Acts. As such, a decision to delete certain items is a matter of principle on which the churches should first be heard.
 2. When all the articles are published in the Acts, all church members can judge the action of synod in light of Scripture, and they can benefit from the judgments made concerning specific issues involved. When honour and reputation is at stake, names can be omitted. It is also possible that honour and reputation are not upheld precisely because an article has been deleted from the Acts.
- E. The church at Guelph requests Synod 98:
1. To judge that the churches will be better served when all business conducted is included in the published Acts of Synod. When honour and reputation is at stake, names can be left out.

2. To decide that changes to the long standing practice of including all business conducted by Synods to be included in the published Acts of Synod should not be made without input from the churches.

IV. CONSIDERATIONS:

- A. The question of what is published in the Acts of Synod is not regulated by Scripture or Church Order.
- B. The Regulations of General Synod do not make any provision for 'public acts' and 'confidential acts.'
- C. All ecclesiastical assemblies retain the right to decide for themselves what should be made public and what should be kept confidential. Thus it would be inappropriate to make a general rule that all Acts of Synod must be included in the 'general acts.' Instead it is the responsibility of every synod to decide for itself whether or not a particular Act should be kept confidential.

V. RECOMMENDATION:

Synod decide not to accede to the request of the churches at Burlington-East and Guelph.

ADOPTED

Article 141

Appointments

The appointments are dealt with in closed session.

The following appointments are made:

I. BOARD OF GOVERNORS:

1. Academic Committee:
2. Eastern Canada: D.G.J. Agema (2001), W. den Hollander (2001), P.G. Feenstra (2001). Alternates: (in order) G. Nederveen, P. Aasman, C. Bosch.
3. Western Canada: R. Aasman (2004), J. Moesker (2007), J. Visscher (2001). Alternates: (in order) R.A. Schouten, W.B. Slomp, E.J. Tiggelaar.
4. Finance and Property Committee: br. M. Kampen (2004) br. W. Oostdyk (2007), br. H.J. Sloots (2001), br. W. Smouter (2007), br. J. VanderWoude (2004).

II. COMMITTEE OF RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD:

Rev. E. Kampen (convener) (2001), Rev. C. VanSpronsen (2001), br. H.A. Berends (2001), br. H. Hoogstra (2007).

III. COMMITTEE OF CONTACT WITH CHURCHES IN THE AMERICAS

RCUS Subcommittee: Rev. J. Moesker (convener) (2004), Rev. K. Jonker (2007), br. W. Gortemaker (2004), br. A. Poppe (2007)

ERQ Subcommittee: Rev. P.G. Feenstra (coordinator of CCCA and convener ERQ) (2004), Rev. A.J. Pol (2007), br. W. Oostdyk (2004), br. John Boot (2001).

OPC Subcommittee: Rev. J. deGelder (convener) (2004), Dr. N.H. Gootjes (2001), br. G. Nordeman (2001), G. VanWoudenberg (2004).

IV. COMMITTEES FOR THE PROMOTION OF ECCLESIASTICAL UNITY:

East: Dr. J. DeJong (2004) (Convener), Rev. W. den Hollander (2001), br. F. Westrik (2007).

West: Rev. R. Aasman (2001), Rev. W.B. Slomp (2007), br. P. VanWoudenberg (2004).

V. STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE BOOK OF PRAISE:

Rev. C. Bosch (convener) (2007), Rev. B.J. Berends (2001), sr. C. VanHalen-Faber (2004), br. T.M.P. VanderVen (2007).

VI. COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Rev. P. Aasman (2001) (convener), Dr. W. Helder (2007), Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. C. VanDam.

- VII. CHURCHES FOR DAYS OF PRAYER: THE CHURCH AT BURLINGTON-WATERDOWN AND THE PROVIDENCE CHURCH AT EDMONTON
- VIII. GENERAL FUND: THE CHURCH AT CARMAN
- IX. ARCHIVES: THE CHURCH AT BURLINGTON-EAST
- X. INSPECTION OF ARCHIVES: THE CHURCH AT BURLINGTON-WATERDOWN
- XI. AUDIT FINANCES OF SYNOD 1998: THE CHURCH AT GUELPH
- XII. ADDRESS CHURCH

Canada: the church at Burlington-East

US: the church at Grand Rapids

- XIII. COMMITTEE FOR PRINTING THE ACTS: THE CLERKS OF SYNOD 1998
- XIV. COMMITTEE FOR OFFICIAL WEB-SITE:

Br. T. Flach, Br. J. Hoogerdijk, Rev. R.E. Pot, Rev. G.H. Visscher (coordinator)

- XV. CONVENING CHURCH FOR NEXT SYNOD: NEERLANDIA (MAY 2001)

ADOPTED

Article 142

Delegation to General Assembly of OPC

Regarding material L1, the request of the CCOPC to appoint a delegate to the next General Assembly. Synod decides that the CCOPC should appoint one of its members.

EVENING SESSION - MAY 22, 1998

Article 143

Reopening

The chairman asks that Hymn 59: 1, 2, 3 be sung. Roll call shows that all are present br A. van Leeuwen and Rev. W. B. Slomp who are absent with notice.

Article 144

Adoption of the Acts

Articles 133 - 143, pertaining to May 22, 1998, were adopted.

Article 145

Censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order

The chairman judges that censure is not necessary.

Article 146

Publishing of the Acts and Press Release

Synod decides that these matters will be taken care of by the Executive. Decisions regarding the Acts will be made especially by the clerks, and the vice-chairman will write the press release.

Article 147

Next General Synod

The next Synod will be convened by the church at Neerlandia in May 2001.

Article 148

Closing Words of the Chairman

The chairman addresses the synod and the audience with the following words.

[Acts incomplete - to be included at a later date]

Article 149

Words to the Chairman

Rev. W. den Hollander, the vice-chairman, expresses his appreciation to the chairman for the way in which he led the meetings and directed the proceedings.

Article 150

Closing

Rev. W. den Hollander requests that Psalm 118: 1, 4 be sung, and leads in prayer. Rev. R. Aasman declares Synod Fergus 1998 closed

Appendices

Speeches to Synod Fergus 1998

At the opening of General Synod, Rev. J.G. Slaa, counsellor of the convening church at Fergus, pastor of the church at Elora, addressed the delegates with the following words.

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

On behalf of the consistory and congregation of Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church, I bid you a heartfelt welcome to Fergus, Ontario, Canada! We hope that you will enjoy the warm hospitality, and that you will have fond memories of it for years to come. The brothers and sisters of Fergus have been working steadily and steadfastly to prepare for this assembly of the churches. And now the day has arrived for Synod to begin. We have good reasons to expect that these same brothers and sisters will serve you in the next 3 weeks with the same dedication they have shown in the past 3 years. Thus, you may concentrate on the task at hand!

And this is good, because, as I understand, every bit of concentration will help! The task which is before you today is an important one. And it is also a difficult one.

It is an important task, because the matters at hand pertain to the well-being of the churches which are gathered under their one Shepherd and Head Jesus Christ. Christ has shed His precious blood for His church, and has made her His own possession. This church consists of His people, gathered together throughout all times and places, who through the office-bearers in the local church receive direction and guidance in their daily lives of thanksgiving. As God's people, we read in Eph 1, they have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of His glory. You, brother delegates, have received the special calling to care for these lambs of Christ, so that they

are able to live in such a way before Christ. God has entrusted to you the task of caring for them by completing the matters lawfully placed on the table of this ecclesiastical assembly. Thus, these are not idle matters, but important ones, for they concern the well-being of God's precious children in this world.

Not only is the task before you important, but it is also difficult. You must make decisions on behalf of the churches. That is a great and heavy responsibility that will not be easy. Individuals and churches appeal to you, because they believe they have been wronged by previous decisions. Some churches have sent overtures, of which there are a number that call for change that will affect us in a variety of ways. Committees have served you with reports which make significant recommendations. And of course, you are also aware of the voices coming out of the churches in response to these matters. From the provisional agenda, it is clear that the churches have spoken. They even offer advice which in many instances appears to conflict. Undoubtedly, you are hearing those different voices in your heart, too. Thus, the solutions to these matters do not come easily. Your inclination, perhaps, is to find solutions that will appease and satisfy all those voices. But that may not always be possible. To add to this, as was already alluded to last night, we can expect to hear those different voices during the discussions here at synod. Yes, your task is difficult.

Whatever your discussion, brothers, whatever your feeling, let your decisions be based on God's Word, and let them render justice to God's holy Name. That is, after all your task: to point both individuals and churches, in the considerations and decisions of Synod, to God's Word. Your task is to show the churches on what Scriptural basis and by what biblical principles you are being guided in your decisions.

Remain hopeful in the fact that Jesus Christ will bless those who are faithful to him, who labour for His church, and not for themselves. Be hopeful in the fact that God is above all, and that He has placed Christ in control of all things for the church, as we could read this morning in Ephesians 1: "He has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all." May you take courage in the fact that Christ has power over life and death, and that He rules heaven and earth, also in these weeks, for the church. This we teach and learn so well in these weeks of commemoration of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of His Spirit. Brothers, if your focus is on Jesus Christ, the ruler of heaven and earth, and if it is your desire to obey and please Him, the Head of the church, in all your decisions, and if what you want is the growth of the churches, then you may be assured that Christ will bless you. Christ has given His Spirit, so that men, having a sinful condition, but changed by the power of Christ, can make sound and faithful decisions that will be a blessing for the churches. Therefore, you may hand over all of these matters to Him, who will give His guidance.

Today, in other regions of the world, there is tension and instability. There are wars, and there are also rumours of wars. Also today, in another city, a different sort of meeting is taking place that may well have a profound impact on the political future course of this world. We know and therefore pray that God has His hand in those discussions. You are meeting, in this place, to deal with different responsibilities. But we also know that God will use your decisions to shape the course of the churches here in this country. Therefore, we pray for God's hand in and His

guidance over the discussions and decisions of Synod Fergus 1998. We also pray that it will be your heartfelt desire to treat each other as brothers in the Lord who seek together to worship God's name, and who work together for the benefit of Christ's church-gathering work in this world.

And now, it's time to get to work. With the apostle Paul, we express our desire that God will give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. God bless you. You will be constantly in our prayers. With these words I declare Synod Fergus 1998 opened.

I invite you to sing with me now from the 122nd Psalm, stanza 3

Rev. C. Bouwman, representing the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, addressed the delegates with the following words:

Esteemed brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is distinctly a pleasure for me to be in your midst. It's a pleasure for me personally, for it's most enjoyable to be back in the town of my youth and make acquaintance again with so many with whom I've grown up. I note with delight that there are brothers at this Synod with whom I used to cavort and discuss at Young Peoples' Society in this very building - and I like to think we're none the worse because of it! Equally, it's a great pleasure to renew contact with various with whom I've spent time at the Theological College - and I admit: it brings back many pleasant memories! And possibly what gives me the greatest pleasure in being here is the opportunity to observe that Australian blood is well and truly represented amongst the delegates to this Synod - undoubtedly for the great benefit of this meeting!!

All of that, Mr Chairman, illustrates something of the warmth and closeness of the bonds existing between the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches. It's that closeness that also prompted our previous Synod in Kelmscott two years ago "to send a delegation to the next Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches" on the ground that "the degree of common interests we have with the Canadian Reformed Churches makes face to face contact desirable."

"The degree of common interest we have," said our Synod. Yes, brothers, our bonds go far beyond the ties of friendships and family. You in Canada (and I admit: even after being gone for ten years it sounds strange to me to speak about "you in Canada"!) and we in Australia have a common origin and so a parallel history. As one of your delegates to our 1994 Synod said it: "we are churches that have developed through immigration from a common ancestral home, with a common confessional heritage.... That history of immigration presents us with common difficulties and challenges...." You in Canada have established a Theological College for the Training of the Ministry, and we in Australia reap the fruits, for the majority of our ministers received their training at this institute. You in Canada have developed a *Book of Praise*, and we in Australia make grateful use of it, Sunday by Sunday in the church services and daily in our

homes and schools. You in Canada have a reformed teacher training institute, and we in Australia eagerly accept graduates from Covenant College to teach the covenant children in the schools we've received. You in Canada produce reformed literature in the English language, notably *Clarion* and *Reformed Perspective*, and these magazines find their way into very many of our homes and hearts. You in Canada raise the young men and the young women, and we send our boys and girls to your land to steal them for ourselves... - and, O yes, we do send some back to assist in cross fertilisation too.... In so very many ways, then, we in Australia benefit greatly from the gifts the Lord has given to our bigger sister in Canada, and it is only fitting to thank the Lord in your hearing for what He in mercy has given to us in you over the years. It is our heartfelt prayer that the Lord will continue to use the Canadian Reformed Churches as a source of blessing for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We are a small bond of churches, consisting of nine congregations with some 3300 members, and so very much feel the need for warm contact with the churches in Canada to whom we are so close.

Yes, we are small. But both Canada and Australia are historically members of the British Commonwealth, and so have inherited from Great Britain the same language, the same legal system, the same political system. The result is that there are no pronounced cultural differences between Canada and Australia - except in those areas that relate to climate. As the children of the first Free Reformed migrants grew up and knew themselves to be dinkie-die Aussies, their sense of affinity to Holland and what that land had to offer to Australian church life lessened in favour for growing affinity with Canada. We understood in Australia: we have so much in common with Canada that bonds with Canada need to grow and be strengthened. We understood too: it is not necessary for us in Australia to do for ourselves what you have already done in Canada. We see, then, no need today to begin our own Training for the Ministry. It is for us no problem to send our young men to the Theological College in Hamilton. I may mention that the College in Hamilton receives regular mention in our prayers as well as collection rosters, so much so that we in Australia refer to the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches as "our" College. We remember with deep appreciation the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches sent Dr Faber to visit us at the time of his retirement, and our upcoming Synod needs to consider a proposal from our Deputies for the Training for the Ministry to invite one of the professors of the College to come to Australia in order to raise the profile of the College in our midst still more. For my part, our Deputies for the Training for the Ministry requested me to take the opportunity while in Canada to meet with the faculty of the College, and I may mention that the meeting was very helpful as we set ourselves to encouraging and preparing our young men for studies in Hamilton.

The same may be said in relation to the *Book of Praise*. You in Canada have laboured for years to develop a Book for the churches, and we in Australia see no need to do that work again. One travels, then, as far away from Fergus as is possible in physical miles, and the church service is the same, with the same confessions, the same psalms and hymns, the same liturgical forms - word for word (be it, as some would say, in purer English pronunciation). It prompts the question: as you consider further developments for the *Book of Praise* - and I notice that suggestions to this extent are on your agenda- might it be possible that ways and means are found for our two bonds of churches to work together in developing the *Book of Praise*? Admittedly, that course will not be without its challenges. Our last Synod, for example, made a small change to the form for the Ordination of deacons so that the command of the apostle in Gal

6:10 (to "do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith") is no longer addressed to the deacons but to the congregation as a whole. Similarly, the large majority of our churches are using the New King James Version, while you prefer a different translation. Such decisions on our part are not meant to be criticisms upon your decisions. Instead, they represent the fact that we are two separate bonds of churches, both responsible for affairs within our own lands. At the same time, such differences do not preclude close consultation and cooperation. We would ask, therefore - given the great amount on interaction between us- that where our decisions differ from your decisions as recorded in a valuable resource as the *Book of Praise*, you grant us the honour of giving our decisions your careful consideration - even as we have considered and will consider your decisions carefully.

I observe that your Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad has informed your assembly that the Free Reformed Churches of Australia decided in their 1996 Synod to terminate membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches - of which the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian Reformed Churches were both charter members. In time past we have requested from your deputies some assistance in coming to grips with the implications of our ICRC membership, and I take the opportunity today to thank you and your deputies for the assistance given. Precisely because we have requested your assistance, it seems to me correct to give some account of why we decided to terminate our membership.

Our Synod mentioned as *Ground* for our decision primarily this: "the membership of the FRCA in the ICRC has not promoted harmony and unity in the churches." This is a reality we have experienced since the initial decision to join was first made in 1983. Over the years, many overtures and appeals have been presented to Synod and deputies have written numerous reports. In writing these appeals and reports, as well as in digesting and answering them, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have definitely studied and made use of the thinking that has occurred in the sister churches on the doctrine of the church. (Consciously we seek to prevent that our relative geographic isolation be a handicap to us!) Yet we could not persuade each other that membership in the ICRC was either commanded by God or forbidden by Him. When Synod Kelmscott, then, was confronted with appeals and overtures from three of our nine churches to terminate membership in the ICRC, our Synod decided to do so. Please note: we have stepped out of the ICRC not on grounds that membership in the ICRC might be unScriptural, but rather on grounds that internal division is not worth the price of ICRC membership. And I may mention to you that our decision to farewell the ICRC has indeed served to restore more harmony and peace within our churches.

Still, you will wonder why membership in the ICRC has been such cause for discussion and difficulty in our midst that one third of our churches requested Synod to terminate this membership. Allow me to mention a couple of reasons. Possibly the reason easiest to explain is this: all member churches of the ICRC consider each other, by virtue of their ICRC membership, to be true churches of the Lord. This reality gave problems in our midst because we have been striving for numerous years to come to the point where we could recognise the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia as a true church of the Lord - and have not been able to. So, within the international forum of the ICRC we were saying that the PCEA was a true church, but within our own country - where the FRCA and the PCEA both live- we could not say that the PCEA was a true church. This tension between saying Yes and No at the same time heightened pressure

in our midst to step out of the ICRC. Did Jesus not said that our Yes must be Yes, and our No, No? (cf Mt 5:37). A second reason relates to the urge of the stated aim of the ICRC Constitution, where the members are encouraged to seek contact and unity with fellow members. So the ICRC was seen as the engine that determined with whom the FRCA ought to establish and formalise contact.

Before we withdrew from the ICRC, concern was communicated to us by sister churches that departing from the ICRC would cause us to be isolated. It is now two years ago that we have withdrawn our membership, and to date there are no indications that we are becoming an island to ourselves. We continue to have contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, to the point that our coming Synod needs to consider a concrete proposal concerning how to make progress with this church. (For that reason we are also keenly interested in what you will decide regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church - and why you will decide it.) Further, our previous synod answered positively a request from the churches to "instruct deputies to continue to gather information regarding the Free Reformed Church of the Philippines..., with the aim of seeing whether official contacts should be opened with them" (*Acts* 1996, Art 68). Again, regarding the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Synod 1996 could declare its "gratitude for the faithfulness which deputies found in the RCNZ" and instruct deputies to "strive for a sister church relation with the RCNZ" (*Acts* 1996, Art 53). We are also very heavily involved with our sister churches in Indonesia, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Indonesia, and have also been involved in giving assistance to the so-called Musafir churches in Indonesia.

You will notice: we are concentrating our contacts to churches in our quarter of the globe. We are small, and so can not be all things to all men. Accordingly, we decided in 1990 already to develop new contacts only with churches who were geographically close to us, for whom we therefore have a greater responsibility. Other churches around the world we would leave to our existing sister churches living in proximity to the new church (see *Acts* 1990, Art 58). Our current practice, then, resembles what your Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad has recommended to this Synod.

As to mission work, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia have for years been busy in Papua New Guinea. Of late responsibility for the work that's been done in Port Moresby and Egoro has passed to Toronto - here's an example of helping each other. We for our part are investigating possibilities in the PNG city of Lae. Efforts are also under way in our midst to establish mission work in India and in China. There certainly is enormous scope for mission work in our part of the world! Maybe, just maybe, we can do more work together in mission.

Dear brothers in the Lord, I must come to an end. Your sister churches in Australia greet you in the name of the Lord, and wish you God's indispensable and promised blessing on all your labours. May we meet more often, consult together more often, do more things together. When all is said and done, we need each other as brothers of one culture, one language, one heritage, one faith.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

Rev. J. Moesker responded to Rev. C. Bouwman's address on behalf of the FRCA with the following words:

Brother Bouwman,

I have been asked to respond to you on behalf of this assembly and the Canadian Reformed Churches in general, and I do so with great pleasure. On a personal level. Br. Bouwman, it's a pleasure for me as former Fergusite to address you as former Fergusite too. We both spent our youth as members of the convening church of Fergus, and knew each other fairly well. But it's not only a personal pleasure. I may address you as delegate from a federation of churches which, though distant in geographic terms, are very close to us here in Canada in heart, spiritually.

Thank you, brother, for the warm greetings you gave here on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We are certainly grateful that the Free Reformed Churches sent a representative to Synod Fergus 1998. It gives our relationship a very personal touch.

Your presence at this assembly certainly signifies how close we are as churches. You yourself are Canadian born and raised, as are some other ministers and members in the Australian churches. On the other hand, at this assembly we have among the delegates two brothers - a minister and an elder - who were Australian born and raised. This shows how close we are as churches, in spite of the geographic distance between us. There is much travelling back and forth, between Australia and Canada, among the members of our respective churches.

And no wonder. You mentioned that too. We share a common heritage, the heritage of the Dutch Reformations. We have a common language, You share our Book of Praise. You substantially support the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, something for which we as churches are very grateful. You share our college, we could say.

We aren't identical, though. We are different and develop differently in some areas. Although the Australians speak English as we do, we don't always catch on to what you are saying, and wonder sometimes why you don't just speak "real" English. Different words and expressions. Different method of church government, without classis. The Australian churches have picked the New King James as their Bible translation of choice. They also, in spite of the assistance given from here to come to grips with what membership in the ICRC means, are no longer member churches of the ICRC with us. So there are differences.

However, what holds us together is far greater than any differences between us. We share a common faith in the one true God and in His Word. We share a common desire to be true to the Word and to serve and glorify His Name in our respective countries. And it is our hope and prayer that even though there may be separate developments and adaptations in our very different countries, we will continue to enjoy that bond of our common faith and that common desire to serve and glorify God. May we continue to seek each other and help each other and even grow in affection for each other as churches. We need each other in this world which, as a famous Canadian stated, is ever more becoming a "global village." Also an ecclesiastical "global village," I might add.

Br. Bouwman, we thank you again for your brotherly greetings from "down under" and we wish the Free Reformed Churches of Australia God's continued blessing and care. We also wish you a good stay here yet among us, also with family, and may God grant you a safe return to your own family, church and country. Peace be with you all.

Rev. G. Syms, representing the Reformed Churches of the United States, addressed the delegates with the following words:

Esteemed Brothers:

It is truly our joy to address you who are delegates to this General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches, and we bring greetings to you from the Reformed Church in the United States. Elder Stelpstra and I are blessed to have been requested by our Synod's Committee on Interchurch Relations to come as observers in your midst. We thank you for your hospitality and kindness to us in the Lord, and for the kindness and care of our host families.

We are thankful to God for the seriousness and thoroughness with which the Canadian Reformed Churches approach the things of our Sovereign Lord. We also him for the Reformed heritage to which you have remained covenantally faithful, for your unequivocal commitment to the Three Forms of Unity. It seems a rare thing indeed, to find churches such as the Canadian Reformed, that unashamedly proclaim the infallible, inerrant, and authoritative Word of the Living God. We do indeed, "thank God, upon every remembrance of you."

We are grateful that in the Providence of God, after many years of discussions, visits, and study, our Synod voted to extend to the Canadian Reformed Churches an invitation to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship. While we have something of a different ethnic and cultural background, we recognize in your churches a common commitment to the historic Reformed faith as confessed in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort. We have, in a sense, found each other in day when much confusion abounds as to the truth of God's Word. Subjectivism and worldly success are the distinctive marks of modernity which is making inroads even into churches professing the Reformed Faith. We also recognize that few churches today bear all three marks of the true church. In the midst of this present religious scene, we are encouraged by your zeal to maintain the purity of doctrine, both in proclamation and instruction, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline. We must include the fact that the articles, books, and other materials produced by your ministers and professors have been extremely helpful to us in the ministry of the Word. May God continue to bless your labors in making known his truth.

It is our desire as well to report to you some of the developments in the RCUS which may be of interest to your churches.

All four of the Classes have ratified the new **Directories of Worship**, one in Old English, and the other in Modern English. The **Vows** for office bearers and members have now been strengthened in binding all to the confessions of the church. These also were ratified by each of

the Classes at their Spring meetings this year. These matters will be finalized, D. V., at the meeting of our Synod, Garner, Iowa, May 18-21, 1998.

In the land of Kenya, our Synod's Foreign Ministries Committee was instrumental in the establishment of the **Free Reformed Church of Kenya**. The Reverend Misters R. Grossmann and H. Opp administered the first adult and infant baptisms. They also ordained two men to the pastoral ministry, and provided training and instruction in doctrine and polity to congregations there.

The RCUS continues to work co-operatively with the **Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Vrijgemaakt**, through the committees which oversee the assistance given to the **Reformed Confessing Church of the Congo**. It is our prayer that God will bless the labors of faithful ministers and also the missionaries of our Dutch brethren in his church-gathering work in that nation, to the glory of his name.

At home in the U.S.A., we are now very hopeful for the establishment of a new church at **Minneapolis, Minnesota**. We are also investigating the possibilities of beginning such a work in **Fargo, North Dakota**. Brothers, we ask that you will pray for these efforts, that God would be pleased to grant an open door for his Word. We also kindly request of you any names of contacts that you may have in these areas, in order that we may initiate correspondence regarding these mission endeavours.

Another opportunity that we hope the Canadian Reformed Churches will consider, is that of an **international, Reformed Radio ministry**. We are aware that you have much experience in this area, and are anxious for you to contribute your leadership and wisdom to what appears to be a viable opportunity for a faithful proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. It is perhaps one of the first missions to the nations of the world, where churches of the **ICRC** may labor together in proclaiming the Reformed and Biblical faith. The possibilities for expansion into many languages seem to be good. Of course, the foundations must be laid well, and the course well charted before such a work is undertaken. I am not ashamed to say, that faithful Reformed Churches need and desire the help of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

There are two theological matters that are of particular concern to us at present, especially in light of the pervasive effort in our society to overturn the created order. The first is that of maintaining the covenantal practice of **voting by men only** in the meetings of the congregation. The impact of humanism and feminism on our culture is obvious. Many in the churches are unaware that they are being subtly influenced by that same culture. We are convinced that we must maintain the antithesis in our thinking and practice, and that we must persevere in teaching the same.

The other matter of serious concern is what we perceive to be a frontal attack on the historic Reformed interpretation **regarding the days of creation**. Those that presently hold to a literal-six-day creation are pejoratively dubbed "fundamentalists" and the like. The name-calling is the least of our worries, but our real concern is the *undermining of a consistently Reformed* hermeneutic. If the creation account is simply a literary or poetic device, could not the account of the resurrection of our Lord be the same? The framework hypothesis is in our opinion a

dangerous tampering with the doctrine of creation, and will inevitably lead to the the undoing of historic Reformed orthodoxy. We do trust that we may further discuss these important matters together, as the issue is very much alive in the seminaries and churches in the United States.

I do appreciate the time and attention you have given to your servant, and it has especially been a personal delight to address you on behalf of the Reformed Church in the United States. We have been made aware of the need to clarify terms, to address some of your concerns, as well as your willingness to continue to speak together on these matters. We believe that you are true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, and trust that someday soon we may join hands in ecclesiastical fellowship as we labor for our Master in our respective nations. In days like these, we need each other.

Indeed, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Brothers, may God bless the Canadian Reformed Churches and the work of your General Synod, as you labor for his Kingdom and glory.

T. M. Veenendaal responded to Rev. G. Syms' address on behalf of the RCUS with the following words:

Mr Chairman,

I feel very privileged and honoured to reply on behalf of General Synod to the kind words addressed to us by the representatives of the Reformed Church in the United States. Rev. Syms, we very much appreciate the fact that we have you and elder David Stelpstra in our midst. Your presence here indicates to us that the RCUS has a deep interest in the Canadian Reformed Churches. I hope that you will find your time spent here interesting.

My interest in the RCUS is partly personal, because I am a member of the church at Carman, Manitoba. Our Carman church has had contact with your churches since 1986, and we are, as Rev. Syms mentioned to me yesterday, your closest neighbour. I was privileged to visit many of your pastors a number of years ago, and the church at Carman shares with a good number of your congregations the great North American plains.

I believe very strongly that my personal interest in the RCUS is shared by the members of this assembly and, indeed, with many other members of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This is due, for a very large part, to the fact that we share with you the very same doctrinal confessions, namely the three Forms of Unity.

The fact that your churches have, besides the Heidelberg Catechism again readopted the Canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession would indicate to us that your church-federation is moving in a very positive direction.

It is my wish that the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Reformed Churches in the United States will make every effort to become more acquainted with each other. For many years I have subscribed to your official church paper, 'The Reformed Herald', which in my opinion promotes good reformed leadership and direction. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, you will allow me to insert a

commercial here, encouraging the members of this assembly to subscribe to 'The Reformed Herald.' Such a subscription will definitely be a positive move to further acquaint ourselves with the RCUS.

I sincerely hope and pray that by the grace of our heavenly Father we may continue and increase our understanding and appreciation of each other's church federations, so that in time, and via an orderly way we may come to realize church unity. The basics are in place in our common confessional statements.

Reverend Syms, and brother Stelpstra: thank you for representing your churches at our synod by your presence. Please pass on to all your church members our thanks and best wishes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me the privilege of addressing the official delegation of the Reformed Church in the United States to the 1998 synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. de Jager makes the following comments on behalf of the RCN

He thanks the chairman for the invitation extended to his committee and to the GKN. He mentions that his committee at the time was getting ready for Leusden 1999. First they thought that no one could come, but he volunteered because he liked to observe our work. However, he admits that he did not realize the consequences of going. Having read the papers and checked the web page, he decided to speak about some items that are on our agenda.

He realizes that he is not just here as a brother who served one of the CanRCs, but as one who serves the GKN. He always feels at home among us, even though he also feels he has lost touch with the English language -- his third language (after Frisian and Dutch!).

The Country

May 4, 1998 was Remembrance Day in the Netherlands. He travelled to Holten, met veterans of the war. It is good to remind ourselves of the freedom enjoyed today also because of the contributions of the Canadians. One can wonder what our people do today with the freedom they enjoy; unfortunately they do not use it to seek the Lord but they use it against the Lord, as was evident again May 6 in the outcome of the federal elections. This displayed the course the Netherlands is on with the socialists cooperating with the Liberals; the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) again lost much support. We have a very materialistic society, and most probably we will again have a purple government (red with the blue liberals).

The Churches

We are still involved in an ongoing struggling to remain Reformed as churches. This is a struggle on more fronts than one. The days are evil. The spirit of the times creeps in. It's hard to build walls because walls alone do not keep away such spirits.

With respect to our young people, we may mention that it is hard to pass on to the next generation that which we have received from the Lord. All other matters seem to be attractive to them. History does not speak to them much anymore, and there is a tendency towards individualism.

In the churches there are also changes, especially with respect to preaching and liturgy. The preaching is done with a view to reach the hearts of the people rather than over their heads. After the Liberation, we were used to a solid exegesis out of the text in order to bring about changes in the lives of the people. But that is no longer effective. Nowadays it is said that we tend to forget the emotional aspect (what we refer to as the second stage).. The solid exegesis has to remain largely in the study and is not brought so explicitly to the pulpit. The attempt is to touch the people; thereby we seek to mould their lives. (I am speaking about the didactical aspect; of course we understand that the Spirit of God must bring about these changes). The Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken always had that element. Kampen is rethinking this matter and is instructing future ministers accordingly.

We are also busy rethinking mission. First, the relation between word and deed, between the preaching and the work of mercy. The responsibility of the work of mercy will be brought back from organizations like *De Verre Naaste* to the churches themselves via the deacons. We also have an I.R.T.T. (International Reformed Theological Training); at the moment there are about twenty people who are being trained by pastors and professors from Kampen for six weeks.

National relations

We are dealing with the Netherlands Reformed Churches (Buiten Verband). Last synod discussions about relations could not progress because there is too much freedom among them with respect to the binding to the confessions. On the other hand, there is locally lots of variety among the ministers and the churches. Thus synod encourages the local contacts in getting local bodies to address their federal body.

The attitude of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken towards our churches is also changing. Discussion is happening for which we are thankful. Here the difficulty is that many are connected with the Netherlands Reformed (Buiten Verband).

International Relations

There seems to be some concern about the number of relations we have. Relations cannot just be seen in themselves; they are always related to history. E.g., Reformed Church of New Zealand chose for the synodical churches and now acknowledge that they were wrong to do so and thus this is corrected. We will most probably have a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. There are Liberated people who are members there who became emotional when visited to establish relations. That kind of thing also happens in mission work. There we have met the OPC and the RCUS.

Another aspect here is the pastoral care of our people who are literally all over the world and struggle with where to go to church. There is a need also to safeguard these people. Finally, there

is a dynamic with respect to article 47 (your article 50, C.O.) in that regard. There is a need to do "as much as possible" (art. 50, your C.O.) because there is one Lord and one Church (Eph.4). Sound Scriptural ecumenicity has a broad view with respect to relations with churches abroad.

Canadian Reformed Churches

Regarding the Canadian Reformed Churches, I know there is discussion. We are helped very much by *Clarion*, regardless of what you think about it. "We take it along and distribute it and seek to keep up with what's happening here. When it's not so friendly and the tone is not so good, we leave it at home. Maybe Reformed Polemics is somewhat better, but I don't know yet. Otherwise we take both of them."

Regarding relations with churches in North America, "I want to say that you do not need to fear us. We know that you do a good job in thoroughly discussing relations beforehand and have taken initiative (e.g. URCNA).

I would like to encourage you in your relation with the RCUS. They were one of the first ones to discuss women's voting with us. They have addressed us about that matter; one brother spoke to one of our synods about this. From that we concluded: "that's why we have sister churches." Before, we often had the attitude: "we know Reformed theology." The times are changing. You need not fear that we will squeeze in. We only seek to help, also with respect to the OPC. We would like to see more progress. We will be sympathetic to your response and we will not be ahead of you. At the same time when we meet them, e.g. on the mission field, we will cooperate with them, but carefully.

The Marriage Form.

I understand that you are concerned about the fact that we will have a new marriage form. I was surprised that you did not take up the main concern. It is true that it has been reworded that it no longer just says that a husband will take care of his family but this is a matter of husband and wife together. This is because of many students who have to do this together with their spouses and therefore cannot say "yes" to this form. It has to do with "Double income families." Your main concern should have been the question about headship, which is also going to be discussed again at the General Synod of Leusden. Some say "head" is "chief", "boss"; others: "head" has to be explained from the context of Ephesians 5, someone who gives himself, who is a servant. This discussion is going on and will come up more.

Greetings

We are thankful for the course you are going. We pray for you because we know how hard it is for you with respect to relations with others and the difficulties you face in your midst as a result. I convey the greetings to you from your sister in the Netherlands. I hope you will remember us before the Lord also with respect to that battle we are waging so that we may be faithful before the Lord who will guide us in this age.

Rev. A. J. Pol responded to Rev. A. de Jager's address on behalf of the RCN with the following words:

Rev. DeJager:

Our personal acquaintance with each other goes back about twenty two years, when we first met each other in Kampen. It is a privilege and with thankfulness to our God and Father that I have the opportunity now to greet you on behalf of General Synod Fergus, 1998. We meet each other as brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ and as members of His church. The fact that you come to us here in Canada as a delegate from our sister churches in the Netherlands highlights the catholicity of the church of Jesus Christ. This church is not confined to one place or to one group of people. Our Lord Jesus Christ gathers His church throughout this world. We may also see that in this work there is continuity with the past. We have a common bond with our Lord and Saviour. Within this bond we observe the faithfulness of the God of the covenant, who works from generation to generation. As a result, there are also family bonds between members of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and the Reformed churches here in Canada and the United States. This gives occasion to much travel back and forth between this continent and the Netherlands, as families reaffirm their bonds with each other. And on Sundays there is the renewed joy of worshipping the LORD together as His people. In this way, the significance of fellowship with each other through ecclesiastical relationships receives an extra, very personal dimension.

We are united through faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We verbalize what our riches are together as Reformed churches through our confessions. What a testimony this is in a world full of unbelief! You must struggle to maintain the truths of Scripture in the midst of a society that is showing more and more its rejection of the Christian faith and Christian values. Our struggle is not essentially different. We share the calling to fight the good fight of the faith and to guard the riches that the Lord has entrusted to us. Let us continue to stand together!

Your church federation is larger than ours. You have a wide variety of means and opportunities for engaging in internal discussions. This is a strength that also has an inherent weakness. Intensive discussions can lead to quick successions of developments that may or may not be beneficial for the life of the churches. As you look at us here on the North American continent, where distances pose barriers for interaction and our smaller numbers compel us to focus differently on various issues, it may seem to you that we are slow and perhaps even far behind you in certain respects. Yet perhaps our situation has an advantage that your people may not always be quick to perceive. When church life is lived at a slower pace there is a greater opportunity for reflection. This does not always mean that such an opportunity is always well used. Initiatives and developments in the midst of your churches can therefore also stimulate discussion and reflection among our churches as we are confronted with issues that you deal with.

We have a God-given obligation to "make every effort keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Phil 4:3). For this reason in our relationship as churches together, what may be real or only perceived differences of insight on matters affecting the life of the churches must sometimes be discussed. We hope that through our Committee for Relations with Churches

Abroad this will continue to be possible in a spirit of brotherly love and with a desire to help each other to stand firm in the faith. We also hope that critical questions concerning matters raised by the committee will be seen in this light.

We are thankful for your description of developments in our sister churches in the Netherlands. You touched on a variety of subjects. How to pass on the Reformed heritage to the next generation is also a concern for us. Matters of liturgy and the preaching of the Word of God are very important. New developments in your midst will therefore undoubtedly be the subject of discussion among us too. Since we also support mission work, we will be interested in hearing more about the re-thinking in your churches of the underlying principles and their application in the execution of this work. We face questions concerning how to go about fulfilling our obligation to seek unity with other Reformed churches on this continent. So we are also very interested in hearing how you approach similar questions in the context of your country.

We continue to see a clear adherence to our Reformed confessions on our part as being of vital importance in our interaction with other churches. And when dealing with churches of a Presbyterian background we regard their faithful adherence to their Westminster Standards as being an important point of departure in being able to establish clearly what we have in common and what matters perhaps need further discussion in the light of Scripture as we seek to promote unity in faith. You will see this reflected, for example, in the decisions of our Synod concerning the ICRC. In particular we have reservations about the change in its Constitution. It no longer speaks of adhering and being faithful to the confessional standards listed in the Basis, but of faithfully adhering to "the Reformed Faith" stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis. We understand fully that this is an attempt to promote commonality between the member churches. Yet the undefined nature of the expression "the Reformed faith" leaves room for a limited instead of whole-hearted acceptance of any of the confessions listed in the Basis. We hope that this concern of ours will also be yours we both seek and promote unity with other churches. True unity can only be pursued and maintained on the basis of a clear and shared understanding of the doctrines of Scripture.

We have a rich heritage. We share in great riches together as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also look forward to a glorious future: the completion of His church-gathering work at His return in glory. Knowing that it is His work encourages and obliges us to maintain the unity of faith with you and to reach out to others in our country and abroad.

It is our prayer for your churches that the Lord will continue to be the object of your faith, the source of your strength, and your guide at all times through His Spirit and Word. May He sustain you as you "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). Please pass on our greetings to our Dutch sister churches.

Rev. De Jager, allow me now to end on a personal note. We wish you the Lord's blessings during your stay in our midst, in your further travels, and on your life and ministry in the Netherlands

Rev. J. J. Peterson, representing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, addressed the delegates with the following words:

Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a privilege to be with you again as the fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the OPC, to a synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This is my fourth time with you - first in 1983 at Cloverdale, then at Winnipeg in 1989, the third time in Abbotsford in 1995 and now in Fergus in 1998. At Cloverdale Brother VanderWel gave me the name Texas Jack - I like that. And so, Texas Jack is back.

In 1936 ecclesiastical trials were held for several ministers in the Presbyterian Church USA. Those who were defrocked were removed from office because they preached the gospel of our Lord and insisted that the church faithfully proclaim that gospel and that Christ, faithfulness to the confessions of the church. On June 11, 1936 the first general assembly of the OPC was held in the New Century Club in downtown Philadelphia, and the OPC was born.

You see, we began as general assembly - a group of 200 souls - ministers, elders and general office bearers. Yes, a few congregations. Fully committed to the Word of God and the Westminster standards. Irregular? Perhaps.

For many years we were looked on and treated as outcasts. We had left a so-called mainline church. We were and are very small. We were narrow - Only the Bible. Only the Reformed faith as summarized in our confessional standards. You know, sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide, sola Christus.

We had few friends. One of the very close friends in the '30s and '40s was the Christian Reformed Church in North America. They sent a telegram of greetings to our First General Assembly. They encouraged us. We took some of their finest men - Stonehouse in New Testament, Van Til in apologetics, R. B. Kuiper in systematics and practica. They sent fraternal delegates to our assemblies. At that time we as church didn't even know about 1944 - only later. That is why we were willing to work patiently with the CRCNA.

We have now terminated our relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCNA. It was an extremely painful decision to have to make - we did it with aching heart - but we did it.

What's going on in the OPC? We are rejoicing that churches, groups of believers, individuals, are coming to us for information, help, assistance, fellowship. In home missions several congregations in our country have come to us seeking closer ties, and some have united with the OPC. In the area of foreign missions groups from all over the world are asking for our help. We have a full time missionary/teacher at the Bible School, a school for training pastors, officers and members, of the Presbyterian Church in Uganda and on the faculty of the Reformed Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in Japan at Kobe. We have a teacher training pastors and church workers in Ethiopia. We have requests for teachers in Nigeria. All this in addition to requests for missionary pastors in several fields.

Ecumenically speaking, we rejoice in being a member of the ICRC. We are enjoyed the gathering of the churches at ICRC Seoul 1997. The fellowship with churches who confess the Reformed faith is enriching and encouraging. Our delegates took the opportunity to have individual meetings with other delegations. In that way we also had personal, individual contact with churches.

The OPC now has an official relationship of "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" with 11 churches. They are the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), the Presbyterian Church in America, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, the Reformed Church in Japan, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, the Reformed Church in the United States and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. We view the relationship of "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" as an expression of the unity of the church demanded by our Lord and as a step toward organic union, or federation. Our document the "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church" sets forth how our confession of the unity of the church works out in our relations with other churches. That document states three things about unity in the section "Toward Perfecting Biblical Unity". They are

1. The unity of the church is in Christ and it is both a given reality and also a requirement. The unity of the faith is both a gift and mandate.
2. The church is compelled to give expression to this reality and requirement, this gift and mandate, by actively seeking the promised goal, namely, that of being one body which serves the Lord in perfect peace, purity, and unity.
3. The ultimate goal of the unity of the church is nothing less than one world-wide presbyterian/reformed church.

Our two churches have been having conversations for over 35 years. I have been privileged to be in on almost 30 of those years. There is now a much greater understanding of and appreciation for the redemptive/historical approach to Scripture. Schilder's trilogy has always been on our book-shelves. S. G. deGraaf's "Promise and Deliverance" is widely used and taught. We were encouraged that you have entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church in Korea/Kosin, both from the presbyterian family of churches.

And now we have come to a significant point in our history together. Synod Abbotsford 1995, after giving the mandate to the CCOPC expressed *"the hope that in this way the protracted discussions between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC can be concluded by the establishment of a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship within the next three years so that, the Lord willing, it can be finalized by Synod 1998"* [Acts, p. 75].

Then the Committee for Contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (CCOPC) and the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the OPC adopted the joint document, 'Proposed Agreement For Opening the Way to Ecclesiastical Fellowship'."

In 1997 we reported to our General Assembly "We look forward to the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (in 1998), with the expectation that, in view of this agreement, it will act to establish a bond of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, in which we can

continue to discuss our differences, as churches, and so, if God grants, arrive at more perfect unity in doctrine, polity, and life."

Let me now address the first part of the statement of agreement which says "Concerning Fencing the Lord's Table: The churches of the Reformation confess that the Lord's Supper should not be profaned (1 Cor. 11:27, see Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 30, Q&A 82; Westminster Confession ch. 29,8). This implies that the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be supervised. In this supervision the [c]hurch exercises discipline and manifests itself as true church. This supervision is to be applied to the members of the local church as well as to the guests. The eldership has a responsibility in supervising the admission to the Lord's Supper."

Let me assure you, brothers of the Synod and brothers and sisters of the Canadian Reformed Churches that the elders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church supervise the Lord's Table. We take seriously the responsibility given us by the Lord of the church. Discipline is carried on in the OPC.

But what about guests? How are they supervised? The decision of the 50th General Assembly 1983 was that the local session bears the responsibility to determine how the guests are to be supervised. In at least one congregation in the past that supervision was carried out by restricting participation to members of the OPC. In many of our local congregations that supervision is carried on by interviewing guests who wish to partake before the service plus the verbal fencing and warning during the service. Others supervise by the verbal fencing and warning during the service only.

It is the latter that has caused reaction by your churches. Synod 1992 said "a verbal warning alone is insufficient". To those of us who use this method of supervision to hear that "a verbal warning alone is insufficient" is to depreciate the power of the proclaimed word.

When you turn to the Word of the Lord and seek light on the question 'how do you supervise the table of the Lord?', it is striking that the one place where that specific question is dealt with, 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, the admonition of the Word of the Lord is "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup" and that the unworthy participation will be judged by the Lord himself.

We are talking about the Lord's Table - HIS table - who do you exclude - who do you admit?

You see, although we do it differently, the table is supervised.

Let me put into real life - experience from Grace Church in San Antonio, Texas.

A family comes to us from baptist background. They say, 'we have found a church home. You feed us the Word of God. We meet our Lord when you preach, we enjoy this fellowship' How do we respond? Dare we refuse to them a place at the Lord's table?

Let me give you an example of how the table is fenced and warning given in San Antonio. And I'll do it as I do existentially - as though I were addressing our congregation in San Antonio.

After stating that the Lord's Supper is instituted by our Lord himself and the meaning of the presence of the Lord in the supper, I often say:

The Supper is an object lesson. Jesus says, this bread is my body - my body given for you - given in sacrifice to make payment for your sins. This cup is the new covenant in my blood - poured out for the forgiveness of sins. This bread and this cup are as essential to you, yes even more so, than the food that you will eat when you get home. Jesus, his body given as the sacrifice for sin, his blood poured out so that your sins might be forgiven, invites you to his table to eat and drink remembering him, feeding on him and anticipating the feast of heaven.

But he also warns you - if you don't know Jesus in this way, if you don't know Jesus and your Lord and savior, if you don't walk in fellowship and obedience to him - don't partake of the supper. Let the elements pass by. For if you partake when you don't know Christ as your Lord and savior, instead of a blessing the sacrament becomes a curse. As Paul puts it "you will eat and drink judgment to yourself".

Back to that family from baptist background: or do we say to this family, we will work with you and teach you and in one, two, three, I've even heard five, years, and then we will welcome you into the church and to the sacraments. Do we? Brothers, no we don't. We, with Philip and the eunuch and Paul with the jailer, - "then, immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God - he and his whole family." Risky? You bet. Babes in Christ - first generation Reformed. The smell of the world, the smell of the baptists cling to their clothing - but they have taken the step of faith and united with a Reformed body of Christ, and they don't really know what their getting into, and you don't know what the Lord has put in your way, but you move on in full trust of the Lord of the covenant - and you preach and you teach and you fellowship - and the Lord "gathers, defends and preserves for himself, by his Spirit and Word, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life."

That's the reality of life in the OPC

Now the issue - knowing this, knowing our differences in understanding the proposed agreement in the supervision of the Lord's table and in confessional membership, the OPC desires to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with you. And our prayer is that you will invite us into that relationship with you.

Brothers and sisters, we in the OPC love you. We have learned from you. Our understanding of the Word has grown through learning from you about the covenant and redemptive/historical understanding of the Scriptures. We want to walk with you and live with you in full ecclesiastical fellowship which will be a step toward the full unity of the church which comes with organic union

Brothers, and sisters, in the Lord, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church greets you. I thank you for your gracious hospitality and the warmth of the fellowship I enjoy when I am with you. We love you in the Lord.

Dankje Well!

Rev. R. Aasman responded to Rev. J. J. Peterson's address on behalf of the OPC with the following words:

Rev. Jack Peterson, on behalf of the brothers at Synod, I express appreciation for your address to this assembly. You tell us: we love you in the Lord. Please know this: the CanRC also love the OPC in the Lord. I feel privileged to have this opportunity to respond to you at this occasion. This is partly for personal reasons. You and I have known each other for over ten years and have met at meetings of the CCOPC and CEIR, at POD of the OPC, and at several synods of the CanRC. In fact, over the years I have seen a couple of nicknames adopted for you, namely, Texas Jack and Cactus Jack. Both nicknames allude to your place of residence which is the state of Texas. There, we have heard, quite a number of cacti make their home as well. The point is this: nicknames are usually developed between friends. The fact that we have two nicknames for you can only be seen as an expression of the close personal bond, which we have together. How wonderful it is to have you in our midst again, to renew our friendship and to develop the bond, which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For many years, there has been good contact between the CanRC and the OPC. This has been expressed in sending delegates to each other's assemblies, the meetings of the CCOPC and CEIR, and more recently, our mutual membership in the ICRC. It is clear that your participation in the ICRC, of which our churches are a charter member, has been well received.

Over the years, there has been much discussion between our respective churches about certain concerns and differences. As we mention that, it needs to be added that some of the major concerns have been clearly addressed by the OPC. At one time the CanRC warned the OPC about membership in the RES. Although the OPC had been deeply involved in the RES and played an important role in the RES, it withdrew its membership when it could not keep the RES on the reformed path. Similarly, the CanRC warned the OPC about its relations with the CRC. It needs to be appreciated that the OPC had very close ties with the CRC and had been supported by the CRC during the rough times in the OPC's history. Nevertheless, after strong warnings to the CRC concerning the women in office issue, it was decided at the General Assembly 1997, by a unanimous vote, to terminate the relationship with the CRC. How tough it must have been for the OPC to terminate this relationship with an old friend! How indicative this is of wanting to serve the Lord in accordance with His Word! There is something else that I feel should be appreciated. Some concerns have been expressed over the years about whether the OPC has a pluriform concept of the church. At Synod 1989, the CCOPC presented to Synod a document from the OPC entitled, "Biblical Principles of the Unity of the Church." In this document it was made clear that the OPC does not want to flee into fantasies of an invisible church concept. Rev. Peterson has referred to this in his address to us.

In a day and age when so many churches are weakening in their commitment to the Word of God and are fleeing into the fantasy of an invisible church concept, we note with deep gratitude that the OPC struggles to be and remain a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We acknowledge with gratitude that in the OPC, God's Word is seen as infallible and inerrant, the Word of God is seen as determinative for both faith and life, and that true ecumenical unity in the light of John

17 is something to be sought. May the Lord continue to bless the OPC in being faithful to His Word. Rest assured, Rev. Peterson, that as the OPC has requested on many occasions, we keep your churches and the needs of your churches in our prayers.

The CanRC have relied to a large extent on their Dutch heritage, which includes Dutch literature. But as our church members are increasingly seeking good reformed literature in the English language, books and articles put out by OPC theologians are being read. In my own library I have a good number of books by OPC authors and I value them highly. We hope to receive more such literature in the years to come.

Our previous Synod mandated the CCOPC, "to work towards formalising the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship under the adopted rules by using the statements of Synod Lincoln 1992..." Synod also expressed "the hope that in this way the protracted discussions between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the OPC can be concluded by the establishment of a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship within the next three years so that, the Lord willing, it can be finalised by Synod 1998." Rev. Peterson, you can see that this whole matter is on the agenda of our present Synod. I do not want to pre-empt the discussions, which will come out about this during plenary sessions. I would like to say one thing in connection with our discussions about Ecclesiastical Fellowship. You can see that there is a genuine and strong desire from our side to see Ecclesiastical Fellowship between our churches on a proper basis. And we know from your side that there is a heightened anticipation and a sense of joy that such fellowship might soon take place. May the Lord bless the important decisions which will be made at this General Synod.

Rev. Peterson, please convey to your churches our appreciation for your representation at our General Synod. May your presence here and the discussions, which take place, be mutually beneficial to your churches and our churches, that is to say, the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you

Rev. P. Bedard, representing l'Eglise reformee du Quebec, addressed the delegates with the following words:

Esteemed Brothers,

It is a joy and a privilege to be with you. I would like to thank you, also on behalf of Rev. deBlois, for the welcome we received. This is the first time I am present at one of your Synods. But it is not the first time I have the pleasure to meet with some of you.

My first official contact with your churches goes back exactly four years ago. In May 1994, I met the consistory of the church at Ottawa. I went with another delegate of our Synod. We were appointed by the Synod of l'Eglise reformee du Quebec to initiate contacts with the Canadian Reformed Churches. At that time, we didn't know much about your churches and about the kind

of relationship that was possible between you and us. We contacted the church at Ottawa. I can bear witness here with gratitude that we have been warmly received by their consistory. They were quite interested to hear about who we were and what was the Lord doing among us in Quebec. We appreciated their willingness and availability to help us go through the whole process of developing official contacts with your Federation. We worked together to prepare an overture presenting the ERQ. The consistory at Ottawa sent the overture to Classis Ontario North. I also had the privilege to be there, in December 1994, for that second step. Rev. deBlois was also there. Classis accepted to send the request for Ecclesiastical Fellowship to Synod Abbotsford, three years ago.

As you know, Synod Abbotsford appointed a committee for contact with our churches. And again, I had the privilege and the responsibility to be part of the next step. Rev. deBlois, Mr. Thibaudeau and myself were appointed by our Synod to work with your committee. And we had the joy to meet together, to work together and to know each other. More than that, we together have appreciated to learn what the Lord was doing in the long history of your churches as well as in the very short history of our churches. I can give evidence again in favor of Rev. Visscher, Rev. VanPopta, Mr. Oostdyk and Mr. Boot. I have appreciated their ability to listen, to ask specific questions, to answer our questions, to raise some concerns, and to give us encouragement. In a word I have seen in their attitude, in their words and deeds a brotherly love, for which I am thankful to the Lord. The committee didn't consider their mandate lightly. After many meetings, readings and discussions, they have submitted a lengthy report to your churches.

During these years, I also had the opportunity to visit some of your congregations and to meet some other people of your churches. And each time I have been impressed by the rich spiritual heritage the Lord gave you and by your serious desire to transmit it to the next generation. Through these experiences I can say, personally, that my vision and my understanding of the church of the Lord has deepened, and my confidence in the Lord's gathering and preserving His people has grown. Not that we should live by sight. No we live by faith alone in His promises. But the fact that the Lord has graciously given us brothers and sisters is a strong encouragement.

Having myself been born and raised in a strong Roman Catholic family, I must admit that it would be easy for me to covet what the young people of your congregations may receive at home and in your churches: the pure Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, the faithful teaching of the Bible, regular prayer, catechism, words of wisdom, fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord, many good examples of Christian families, and so many other things that some of the members of your churches may sometimes take for granted. I encourage them not to take them for granted, and not to neglect, or even to despise the heritage received. If the contacts between you and us may be helpful at least in this area, I would be happy. Whatever will happen in the future about our relationship, the work already done would have not been in vain.

But I am not complaining about what I have not received. I have so many reasons to be thankful. I even fear that if I had to count all the blessings I received from the Lord, I would forget many of them. The king David said: "*Bless the Lord, o my soul, and forget none of His benefits.*" (Ps. 103:2). It would be too long here to tell you my story: Having been baptized in the Roman Catholic church, having received all the Roman Catholic doctrine; then as a teenager starting to read the Bible, being converted at eighteen, rebaptized in a brethren assembly, and later on,

providentially discovering the Reformed faith, struggling with the doctrine of the covenant and infant baptism, and finally accepting and confessing what the huguenots, my ancestors, believed four hundred years ago! And today I have the so great privilege and responsibility to be minister of the Word and sacraments! How can it be possible?

In our churches in Quebec, we are a total of about three hundred people. Most of them have gone through a more or less similar experience. And today, we have children. We teach them the Bible and the Reformed doctrine. By God's grace, we want to be a good example for them. We pray the Lord for this second generation. We also want to reach other people around us with the Gospel that we cherish. The road before us is full of challenges. The world around us is full of dangers. And we lack so much experience. But yes, there are so many reasons to be thankful because there are so many blessings to count!

If you are looking for an established, well organized Reformed federation in Quebec, may be you will be disappointed. May be you will not find it the way you would like to find it. It would be easy for you to say: "Look here, they don't have this, they don't have that, they are not like us." Of course, we are not. How could we be? Yes, we have shortcomings. And you have too. Yes, it takes time to build a Reformed church. And the Lord took time to build your churches. And it is not finished. But should we first concentrate on what we do not have or on what we do very imperfectly? To my eyes, our very existence is a miracle of God's grace! And of course God's grace comes with God's law. There are promises and obligations in His covenant! You see, I have learned it. So, as a new Federation we have to grow, to learn and to apply God's Word in all the areas of our church life. For example, we have to discuss things like confessional membership and the fencing of the Lord's table. And I believe that you may be helpful in these things, as well as we may be helpful to you in other areas.

We have studied your rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship. We have adopted quite similar rules. One thing that attracts me a lot in these rules is the mutual character of the relationship. How could two different Federations, of two different sizes, with two different histories and experiences, be bound in a mutual relationship? This is a good question. We may have the right answer on paper. And I think the rules give a clear answer. But then we have to live up to them. The smaller and younger brother may be tempted to have an inferiority complex. The bigger and older brother may be tempted to have a superiority complex. It must not be so in the Lord's family. We both have things to give to the other and things to receive from the other, mutually. The rules, I believe, express that truth clearly.

But maybe I anticipate too much. The Ecclesiastical Fellowship is not established yet. Our Synod has accepted to approach you and to propose to you such a relationship. But you may still have some questions, some concerns that must be dealt with. Is it feasible to come to such a fellowship? Is it the appropriate time? Are there other discussions and works that should be done before? Your Synod has to make decisions in this regard. I know that you will not consider the subject lightly, but that you are devoting prayer, time and energy to it. All that I can say here is this: May God's will be done and may you have wisdom to make decisions for His glory.

If I may say something about other decisions you still have to make, three words come to my mind: Faithfulness, consistency and courage. I encourage you to continue to be faithful to

Scriptures, to be consistent specially in the way you deal with other churches, and to have the courage to make the good decisions that will express faithfulness and consistency. On one hand, I know your deep desire to help others. To me, it is obvious. On the other hand, I know where you stand with your Confession. It is also obvious. Sometimes you may wonder how those two can go together. How to abide by the Confession, in doctrine and life, and at the same time how to keep your hands opened, ready to help others and share your heritage with others? I have no magic formula to propose to you. But I believe, I have the conviction that they go together, consistency and openness, even if you may not always see it. Sometimes you may have tensions among you, among your churches, about that, even tensions inside yourselves. We live by faith, don't we? Our refuge is in God's wisdom, not ours, isn't it? The best way you can help others is to be faithful, consistent and courageous, and all this by God's grace only. But now I am starting to preach to you. Please forgive me.

I think it is appropriate here to conclude with a word about your generosity. Since your last Synod, and even before, many of your congregations have supported us financially. They have done that *"not reluctantly or under compulsion"*, but as cheerful givers and with amazing generosity. As the Apostle Paul says: *"Whoever sows generously will also reap generously."* (2 Cor. 9:6). May your churches reap, by God's grace, one hundred times what they have given. And be sure that your generosity results in many expressions of thanks to God!

In conclusion, my prayer is that the Lord will continue to guide us together. In each of our congregations, in our respective Federations, and all together may we *"be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose"* (Phil. 2:2), having the same attitude as that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you.

Rev. G. H. Visscher responded to Rev. P. Bedard's address on behalf of the ERQ with the following words:

Rev. Paulin Bedard, Rev. Jean-Guy deBlois, brothers in the Lord, brothers and sisters:

The joy that I experience this evening as I respond to you on this occasion is in one line with the joy and thanksgiving to the Lord that has grown over the past number of years as I have come to know the two of you, and your other committee member, br Luc Thibaudeau. I am sure that I speak for all the members of our committee (also br. W. Oostdyk present here, br. J. Boot, and Rev. John van Popta) when I express tonight the appreciation that we have for you and your churches and your stand for the Reformed faith in that province which still is and hopefully will continue to be part of our great country. In the meetings that took place between our two committees, in Montreal, Quebec City, Cornwall, and Burlington, we have always appreciated the fact that even though it was hard for you and your churches you have sought to remain faithful to the Reformed heritage.

As the sub-title of our report also suggests, in one country we have indeed "two solitudes." It is hard for us west of the province of Quebec not just to understand your language but even more to comprehend the special challenges that you have because of the context in which you live and work - a context which is so predominantly Roman Catholic and yet so entirely estranged from the Word of God. You mentioned growing up Roman Catholic and not reading the Bible until

18; Luc Thibaudeau told us once how he too grew up in a Roman Catholic home but had never even opened a Bible until he went to a Bible study at university. He expressed also the pain that he felt in being rejected as a result by members of his own family. This is pain that you too have and do experience in many ways. What further pain all of you must feel because having come into the community of Reformed churches you have experienced rejection also there. Churches who were involved in the formation of the Eglise Reformee du Quebec are now also strange to you because of the choices they made, choices which you so rightly said were not in accord with your basis, nor your direction. It is because of all this and so much more that you are here tonight and we thank God for you and your churches. We rejoice in the fact that though we may have two solitudes, we know of a deep and wonderful unity. It is not a unity that we create. It is not yet a unity on paper. But it is a unity in the Spirit of God. Our confession speaks of this: a *truly* Catholic church which is "joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith"(Article 27, B.C.). It is only because of that unity that we have been able in the past years to have our discussions.

The fact that we know of such unity and welcome you here tonight does not mean that we do not have differences. You know, we know, they are there. We have discussed them in significant detail as can be seen from our report to Synod Fergus. And you will experience, no doubt, that the Synod will be even more taxing than the four of us in the committee appointed by Synod Abbotsford 1995. But it is our hope and prayer that, regardless of what this Synod decides and how it evaluates our recommendations, you will be patient and not lose heart.

It is my hope that the last number of years have been only a beginning of a longstanding and beneficial relationship. And it certainly does not need to be onesided. You have acknowledged your need for help with respect to directing your course, with respect to benefiting from that common heritage of the Reformation, and with respect to the limitations in your resources. We will be glad to help as we can. Our heritage is our joy. And it is not painful for us either to share with you the financial resources God has entrusted to us for a while. What are we to do with all that but use it as God wants us to? But it is not a one-way street. You need to help *us*. Help us to reach out to the rest of our common nation, help us to speak to a nation which is increasingly become estranged from God, and His Word.

Let me speak at the same time for a moment to the other members of Synod Fergus 1998 about this matter. There will be the temptation to say that we have to use the same standards with respect to the ERQ as we have used with the OPC, as we are using with the RCUS, and all the others. But the great question that we have been wrestling with as committees in the past years is the question: can we do that? Does the Lord ask that of us? Can we relate to the mission churches of Irian Jaya in the same way as we would relate to the RCUS? Can we expect of the mission churches of Brazil what we expect of the United Reformed Churches of North America? Can we relate to the ERQ in one line with these other churches on our continent? Not that they are the same as those mission churches. They are not. As br Bedard once said (you can find it in our report) "we are not refugees!" But yet, all the Lord's people and all the Lord's churches are not the same. To those who are given much, much is required. But to those who are given less, less is required. Brothers, by the grace of God, there are seven ministers of God's Word in a federation that has no more than 300 people, struggling to reap a harvest in a field in our own country that is "ripe for harvest"(John 4:35)? The question before us is: will we embrace and

extend the right hand of fellowship as we continue to help them, and be helped by them as we work in our own backyards?

Brs Bedard, de Blois, on behalf of Synod 1998, I ask you to pass on the greetings to all the brothers and sisters in the province of Quebec. Tell them not to give up. Urge them to remain strong in the faith. For the times are evil and will become more so. And remember: until our Lord returns, the churches that stand on the basis of the Word of God and the precious heritage of the Reformation should not divide and fragment more and more but join arm in arm, heart to heart against the real evil one and those who are his

Rev. R. Stienstra, representing the United Reformed Churches in North America, addressed the delegates with the following words:

Esteemed Brothers,

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

On behalf of the committee I bring you fraternal greetings from our federation. The 70 churches consisting of some 17,000 souls wish you God's richest blessing as you strive to be faithful and true to the high calling of being His people in the midst of a sinful world. May the Lord Who gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself a church chosen unto everlasting life, continue to use and bless your federation in the North American setting as He has done so evidently in the past fifty years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let me expand a little. To our committee it is inconceivable that the Scriptures teach, or that the Reformed Confessions propound that when two churches are in agreement that both demonstrate and practice faithfully the three marks of the true church as confessed in the Belgic Confession, Article 29, there should not be some form of Biblical fellowship between them beyond the perfunctory.

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

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

Rev. W. B. Slomp responded to Rev. R. Stienstra's address on behalf of the URCNA with the following words:

Dear Rev. R. Stienstra, Rev. P. Vellenga, and Rev. R. Sikkema,

I was given very short notice that I would be responding to your address. Thus my words may not be as well-chosen as I would like them to be. My response, therefore, will be more from the heart than from the head. In other words, my words will deal more with the substance of the matter than with the details. For I have the added disadvantage, as far as my preparation is concerned, of not being on the committee charged to deal with you. I am not privy to the fine details of our current dealings with each other on a federal level.

Nevertheless, I am quite pleased to be asked to speak a few words to you. For your churches are very close to my heart, both physically and spiritually. For as you may or may not be aware, I come from the church at Neerlandia, and members of your churches use our church building. Also Rev. Hoekstra, the minister of the local URCNA, lives right across the road from me. Furthermore, living in the small community such as Neerlandia, the people are in frequent contact with each other. Thus, because of our daily contact with each other, we are constantly reminded of our separate ecclesiastical existence. And that hurts us. We are desirous also of a spiritual unity.

In Neerlandia we were glad when a group of people left the CRC, not because a split came about in the CRC, but because it meant a going back to the truth of the Scriptures, and as they are confessed in the Three forms of unity. And when a few years later the Emmanuel church joined together with others to form the URCNA, we were also glad. For that meant there was the realization that an independent existence as local church cannot be maintained on the basis of the Scriptures. The Lord teaches us that as His children we belong together. He teaches us that we also need each other. We live in a world that is hostile to God and His commands. Satan attacks us from all sides. He attacks us from without and within. All our energy is needed to withstand

the fiery darts of the evil one. Our energy ought to be pooled, and ought not to be used to be in continuing our division. We are one in faith. We must also express that unity.

Thus, I was very much encouraged when I heard you speak the words as you did this evening. It is clear from your words that we are already very close, and that you also see the need for even greater closeness. You have already adopted your version of the Church Order of Dort, which is not that much different from ours. And now I also hear you say that you consider "the secession of 1944, or the Liberation, to be God's way and work to bring His people back to Himself from deviant teachings and practices." In your synod report you also make similar statements and have many positive things to say about us. Furthermore, you state in that report that the CRC was wrong in not establishing contact with the liberated churches in the Netherlands.

Such statements gladden our hearts. They gladden our hearts, not so that we can now say, "See, we were right after all." No, the pain of our separate existence from the CRC was always keenly felt. That is why the post-war immigrants who belonged in the Netherlands to the Liberated Churches first joined themselves to the CRC. And that is why we also wrote our appeals in 1963 and in 1977 when you were still in the CRC. And now, for all intents and purposes, the concerns expressed in those documents have been addressed.

Why did we want those issues to be dealt with in one way or the other? So that the truth may be established, not for our sakes, but for the honour and glory of God, and so that there may be a people here on earth established in the truth.

Brothers, on behalf of synod I welcome you in our midst. May your presence contribute to the maintenance of God's truth, and to the unity of His people in true faith. May the Lord bless our contact with each other. May the Lord bless you and guide you