

ACTS OF THE 26TH SYNOD

OF THE

**REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW
ZEALAND**

REFORMED CHURCH OF HASTINGS

6 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2008

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Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Agenda of the Twenty Sixth Synod

To Be Convened at the Reformed Church of Hastings

6 September 2008 to 11 September 2008

Opening of Synod

Synod will be opened, D.V., on Saturday, 6 September 2008, at 3:00 p.m. at the Reformed Church of Hastings by the Rev. Bruce Hoyt on behalf of the convening church, the Reformed Church of Hastings. After examination of credentials, the election of the moderamen will take place and the newly elected moderator will constitute the Synod.

Prayer Service

A prayer service for synod will be held, D.V., on Sunday, 6 September 2008, at 4:30 p.m. at the Reformed Church of Hastings. The service will be led by the previous moderator, Rev. John Haverland. The sermon will be preached by Rev. Bruce Hoyt.

Agenda

1. Opening and welcome by Rev. Bruce Hoyt
2. Examination of credentials
3. Election of moderamen
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Declaration of agreement with the confessional standards
6. Appointments by Moderamen
 - a. Reporter for the public
 - b. Reporter for Faith in Focus
 - c. Message of loyalty to H. M. Queen Elizabeth
 - d. Advisory committees for synod, as necessary
 - e. Appointments committee
 - f. Finance/Budget committee
7. *Late* correspondence:
8. Presentation and adoption of agenda
9. Overtures 1-11, Reports 1-21, Addenda 1-3 and Communications 1 & 2
10. Appointments
 - a. Appointment of standing and study committees
 - b. Appointment of Stated Clerk
 - c. Appointment of Synodical Treasurer
 - d. Appointment of Synodical Archivist
 - e. Appointment of Deputies for candidates for the ministry
 - f. Appointment of fraternal delegates to sister-churches
 - g. Other appointments as necessary
11. Adoption of Budget
12. Date and place of next synod
13. Final approval of minutes
14. Closing of synod by the moderator

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Overtures, Reports, and Communications

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Section 1

Minutes of the Sessions of Synod

Saturday Afternoon Session – 6 September 2008

1. Opening of Synod

The acting moderator, Rev. B. Hoyt, minister of the Reformed Church of Hastings, welcomed the delegates and opened the Synod by reading John 17. He gave a short meditation on this passage reminding the delegates of the unity which we have in our Lord, a unity that ought to reflect the unity between the Father and the Son. We ought to grieve that this unity is lacking in many areas of the life of the church at large, which keeps the world from seeing how God loves His people. Yet He continues, even through our imperfect unity, to show that He loves us even as He loves His Son. We were encouraged to pray that our meeting this week may be one small means by which the Lord furthers our unity with Him and with each other, so that the world may be drawn to Him.

2. Approval of Credentials

Synod received and approved the credentials of delegates.

There were no credentials from the Reformed Church of Pukekohe. The delegates agreed that the delegates from Pukekohe be seated and that the credentials will be received on Monday.

The delegates from the churches are as follows:

Reformed Church of Avondale	Elder J Ploeg
	Elder J Meinsma
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach	Rev. D Van Garderen
Reformed Church of Hamilton	Elder G. Strayton
	Rev. M Willemse
	Elder P van der Wel
	Elder T Grul (alt)
Reformed Church of Hukanui	Rev. R Noppers
	Elder J Vethaak
Reformed Church of Mangere	Rev. S Bajema
	Elder J Verheij
	Elder B Bartlett (alt)
Reformed Church of the North Shore	Rev. J Rogers
	Elder D Petchell
Reformed Church of Pukekohe	Rev. J Haverland
	Elder A Smilde
Reformed Church of Foxton	Rev. P van Huyssteen
	Elder D Holtslag
Reformed Church of Hastings	Rev. B Hoyt
	Elder B Saathof
	Elder W Van't Sant (alt)
Reformed Church of Masterton	Rev. P Kloosterman
	Elder D Baird
	Elder W Stolte (alt)
Reformed Church of Palmerston North	Rev. M Flinn
	Elder P Mulholland
Reformed Church of Silverstream	Rev. P Archbald
	Elder J Landkroon
	Elder J Leenders (alt)
Reformed Church of Wainuiomata	Rev. L de Vos
	Elder G Leibbrandt
	Elder A Jongepier (alt)
Reformed Church of Wellington	Rev. A Nugteren
	Elder D Spoelstra

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Reformed Church of Bishopdale	Elder B Wierenga (alt) Rev. R van Wichen Elder F Braam
Reformed Church of Christchurch	Elder M De Ruiter (alt) Elder B Mills Elder E Havelaar
Reformed Church of Dovedale	Rev. A Holtslag Elder A van Ameyde Elder P Davey (alt)
Reformed Church of Dunedin	Elder P Schinkelshoek Elder J van Dyk
Reformed Church of Nelson	Elder L Vandenberg Deacon L Draijer

Synod received credentials of the fraternal delegates from the *Christian Reformed Churches of Australia*, Rev. Prof. H De Waard and Rev. G van Schie, the *Orthodox Presbyterian Church, USA*, Rev. J. Sawyer, the *Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Lib.)*, Rev. J. Plug and from the *Canadian Reformed Churches*, Rev. B Wielenga.

Synod also received credentials of the observers from the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia*, Rev. J Kroeze and elder A Plug.

3. Constitution of Synod

The acting moderator declared Synod officially constituted.

4. Election of Moderamen

Nominations for the moderamen were received and the following men were elected:

Chairman	Rev. J Rogers
Vice Chairman	Rev. D Van Garderen
First Clerk	Elder P van der Wel
Second Clerk	Rev. A Nugteren

The members of the moderamen were then asked to take their seats and lead the Synod.

5. Signification of Agreement with Confessional Standards (Arts. 12, 77, 90)

The moderator called the delegates to stand indicating their continued agreement with the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. All delegates stood.

6. Late Correspondence

Synod received the following late correspondence:

- From Session RC Hamilton: Financial review of Long Service Leave Fund
- From Session RC Pukekohe: Pastors' Stipend suggestions

7. Adoption of Agenda

Synod adopted the agenda as presented by the Stated Clerk including the late correspondence.

Synod decided to set the time for the report of the OMB for Wednesday evening.

8. Closing of the Afternoon Session

The acting moderator asked Vicar David Waldron to lead in closing devotions.

Sunday Afternoon Session – 7 September 2008

9. Prayer Service

Rev. J. Haverland, elder F Braam, Rev. L de Vos and Rev. J Rogers participated in the readings and prayer, with Rev. B Hoyt preaching on Hebrews 11:13-16 on *This World Is Not My Home*. Three aspects were noted – 1. *Our forefathers confessed that this world was not their own*; 2. *Our forefathers died in faith anticipating God's promise*; 3. *God was not ashamed to be called our forefathers' God*. We were reminded how we are pilgrims on our way to a better country. This passing world is not our home and we were encouraged to look forward, as our forefathers did, to that city with foundations whose architect and builder is God.

Monday Morning Session – 8 September 2008

10. Opening Devotions

Rev. L de Vos invited us to sing Psalm 25:1-3 from *Sing to the Lord*. He then read from Matthew 7:7-11 and set before us the need to pray to our Father and encouraged us to pray, because we have a loving Father who hears our prayer and will provide in all our needs. After leading the delegates in prayer, he called them to sing Psalm 55:1-4, 11, 15 from *Sing to the Lord*.

11. Welcome to fraternal delegates

The moderator welcomed Rev. Professor Henk De Waard, fraternal delegate of the *Christian Reformed Churches of Australia* and Rev. Mark Stewart, fraternal delegate from the *United Reformed Churches of North America*, and his wife Christy. He also welcomed Rev. Trevor Leggott, fraternal delegate for the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia*, Rev. John Kroeze, observer from the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia* and Rev. Stephanus de Bruyn, fraternal delegate from the *Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA)*.

12. Signification of Agreement with Confessional Standards (Arts. 5, 77, 90)

Elder delegates J Verheij, A Smilde, J van Dyk, B Saathof and D Baird, who arrived this morning stood to signify their continued agreement with the confessional standards of our churches.

The credentials of the Reformed Church of Pukekohe were received (see Art. 2).

13. Synodical Interim Committee (R01)

Rev. J Haverland presented Report 1.

Synod decided

To endorse the actions of the SIC.

14. Appointments (Arts. 16, 39, 54)

The moderator made the following appointments:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| a. Reporter for the public | Elder J van Dyk |
| b. Reporter for Faith in Focus | Rev. S Bajema |
| c. Message of loyalty to H. M. Queen Elizabeth II | Rev. M Willemse |

Advisory committees for Synod:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| d. Finance Advisory committee: | Rev. A Nugteren, Rev. R van Wichen,
Elder P Mulholland, Elder J Ploeg,
Elder J van Dyk |
|--------------------------------|--|

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e. Appointments committee

Rev. J Haverland, Rev. B Hoyt and
the moderamen
Elder J Ploeg

f. Budget committee

15. Stated clerk (R18, Art. 118)

Rev. B Hoyt presented Report 18.

Synod decided

1. To ask the Stated Clerk to add the significant decisions from Synod 2005 and Synod 2008 to the Office-Bearers' Handbook (OBH). That the OBH be produced in A5 format drilled for 2-hole and 3-hole ring binders.
2. To ask the Stated Clerk to oversee the updating of the Index of Synodical Decisions and to add it to the Office-Bearers' Handbook.
3. Not to appoint a Home Missions Committee.
4. That the stated clerk investigate the possibility of having all the Acts of Synod of the RCNZ made available electronically.

Recommendation 4, "That Synod not appoint a Committee for Contact with Political Bodies" was tabled.

Synod expressed its thanks for the work of stated clerk B Hoyt over the past 13 years.

16. Church Order Committee (R06, Art. 115)

Mr. Pieter van der Wel presented Report 6.

Synod decided

1. To give its official approval to the procedural regulations for bringing a gravamen as found in the Office Bearers' Handbook, pp.6-3,4
2. To change the reference to Acts 1971, Art. 61 Recommendation. 6 in the section 'Rules for Overseas Mission' on p. 4-3 in the OBH to Recommendation 5.
3. To remove the section on SPROUT on p. 4-12 from the Office Bearers' Handbook.
4. To remove the section 'Doctrinal Pronouncements' re 'Infallibility of Scripture, Evangelist Defined, Cessation of Revelation, Interpretation of WCF 1.1 and 1.6' on pp. 2-24, 25 from the Office Bearers' Handbook.
5. To discharge the committee from its mandate to study whether a presbytery has jurisdiction to declare a church outside of the denomination.
6. That I.A.3 in the Rules for Preliminary and Final Examinations of Candidates for the Ministry be deleted and replaced with the originally intended rule:

A statement of the session(s) of the church(es) to which the candidate belonged during the last two years, testifying to his doctrine and conduct.

7. That I.B.3 of the Rules for Preliminary and Final Examinations of Candidates for the Ministry be amended so that the first sentence of that article will now read as follows (deleted words are crossed out):

The manner in which each candidate is to be examined must be ~~of a~~ practical, ~~rather than of an~~ not just academic in nature.

8. To make a deduction of 20 members from a church's membership for each full time pastor. Where a church has a Vicar, a deduction of 20 members multiplied by the proportion of the Vicar's costs being paid by the church (e.g. if a church is paying a third of the Vicar's costs a deduction of 7 members would be made).

9. *To ratify the "Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Assemblies in the formal adjudication of written and formal charges" for use in our churches.*
10. *To amend CO Committee report as follows: The sentence beginning "In that case....." in the second paragraph of the report be replaced by: "In that case, the minister appealed to C.O. Article 29 against his session."*

Recommendations 4 and 11 from Report 6 were tabled and referred to an advisory committee consisting of Rev. J Haverland, Rev. J Sawyer, Rev. P Archbald and the members of the Church Order Committee.

17. Closing of morning session

Mr. Len van den Berg led in closing prayer and asked us to sing Psalm 84:1,2,3,6 from *Sing to the Lord*.

18. Opening of afternoon session

Mr. D Petchell asked us to sing Psalm 133 from *Sing to the Lord* , after which he read Ephesians 4:1-7 and led us in prayer.

19. Church Order Committee (O02)

Mr. E Havelaar presented Overture 2.

Synod defeated recommendation 1 of Overture 2

That the Church Order Committee consider the consistency of the concessionary phrase "ordinarily by a minister of the word" in Article 57 of the *Church Order*, in view of the unambiguous teaching in our confessions that the sacraments should only be administered by a minister of the word.

Recommendation 2 of Overture 2: 'That the Church Order Committee report to Synod 2011 any changes to the Church Order and/or the confessions that might be required to ensure consistency' lapsed.

The moderator welcomed Rev. Professor M Capill, the principal of the Reformed Theological College.

20. Church Order Committee (O10, Art. 114)

Rev. R van Wichen introduced Overture 10.

Synod decided not to amend Art. 39 of the Church Order

The proposed amendment to Art. 48 of the Church Order was tabled.

21. Report of the Deputies for Students for the Ministry (R03, Arts. 24, 122, 125)

Rev. M Capill addressed the Synod in his capacity as principal of the RTC.

Rev. J Haverland then presented Report 3.

Synod decided

1. *To appoint two deputies (and an alternate) charged with supervising all RCNZ ministerial students wherever they are studying.*
2. *That the deputies interview each student annually where this is geographically possible.*
3. *That both (or one) of the deputies shall visit the RTC annually to:*
 - a. *meet with RCNZ students;*

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- b. *discuss curriculum and student progress with the RTC faculty;*
 - c. *meet with the CRCA deputies to discuss Vicariate placements.*
 4. *That the deputies continue their responsibility for arranging Vicariate placements.*
 5. *That the Churches continue to support the RTC financially by a recommended contribution of \$63,000 p.a. in the inter-synodical period.*
 6. *That the deputies be instructed to conduct a review of the requirements of the RCNZ for theological education for the future (with the authority to co-opt others to assist in this review) and report back to the next synod with recommendations. This review is to cover:*
 - a. *The content and type of the theological education (i.e. practical/equipping, or academic/theological, or what combination of both and how that combination should be weighted)*
 - b. *The delivery of this education (e.g. through the RTC, MARS, or to be based more in NZ)*

22. Closing of Afternoon Session

Rev. M Willemse called for the singing of Psalm 47 from *Sing to the Lord* and led the delegates in prayer.

23. Opening of evening session

Rev. P Archbald read from 2 Timothy 4:1-8 and after leading us in prayer asked us to sing Psalm 110 from *Sing to the Lord*.

24. Report of the Deputies for Students for the Ministry (R03, Arts. 21, 122, 125) - continued

Rev. J Haverland continued his presentation of Report 3.

Synod decided

That the deputies determine if there are men currently in training at theological seminaries such as GPTS and MARS who would be both suited to and interested in serving in the RCNZ. After careful investigation such men would then be placed in a twelve month Vicariate in our churches with a view to being made available for call in the RCNZ.

25. Student Assistance Committee, RTC (R10)

Mr P Davey presented the report.

Synod decided

1. *To adopt the report and accept the audited accounts as a true and accurate record of the financial position of the RTC and the Student Assistance Committee.*
2. *To extend its gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Amersfoort for the significant efforts they have faithfully expended on behalf of our denomination for the training of future ministers.*

26. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the OPC (Art. 27)

Rev. J Sawyer conveyed greetings from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in North America (see Appendix 1 to these minutes, pp.1-31 to 33).

27. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the OPC (Art. 26)

Rev. D van Garderen responded to the address of Rev. J Sawyer.

28. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Canadian Reformed Churches (Art. 29)

Rev. B Wielenga conveyed greetings from the Canadian Reformed Churches and read out a letter from their Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (see Appendix 2 to these minutes, pp.1-34 to 37).

29. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Canadian Reformed Churches (Art. 28)

Rev. B Hoyt responded to the address by Rev. Wielenga.

30. Presentation of his missionary work for OPUM by Mr. A Dickson

Rev. M Willemse introduced Mr. A Dickson, who will work for Orthodox Presbyterian Uganda Mission as a missionary deaconate associate. He then gave a presentation of the work he anticipates doing for OPUM in Uganda.

31. National Diaconate Committee (R20, Art. 35)

Rev. D Van Garderen presented Report 20.

Synod decided

- 1. To approve the actions of the NDC in the inter-synodical period.*
- 2. To continue the mandate of the Committee and encourage vigilance in monitoring the needs of the Church as to where our assistance, as a loving neighbour, can help in the Name and Spirit of Christ.*

32. Closing of Evening Session

Mr. D Baird asked us to sing Psalm 68b from *Sing to the Lord* and led the delegates in closing prayer.

Tuesday Morning Session – 9 September 2008

33. Opening Devotion

Rev. R Noppers invited us to sing Psalm 111:1-4 from *Sing to the Lord*. He then read from Revelation 2:1-7 and encouraged us from that passage to persevere in the faith, to stick close to the Word, to live lives that bear witness to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and reflect His love. To make Christ our first love and live for Him with all our being. After leading the delegates in prayer, he called them to sing the verses 5-7 from Psalm 111:5-7.

Mr. E Havelaar announced that brother Henk Bos from Reformed Church of Christchurch passed away yesterday, Monday 8 September.

Rev. J Haverland passed on greetings from brother R Voschezang Snr, who is currently in hospital for tests and therefore could not be at the Synod.

The moderator accorded speaking rights to Rev. A Douma.

34. Approval of minutes

Synod approved the minutes of Saturday's and Sunday's sessions.

35. National Diaconate Committee (R20, Art. 31) – continued

Rev. D Van Garderen continued his presentation Report 20.

Synod decided

1. *To recommend that Presbyteries arrange annual deacons' meetings for the purpose of information sharing and training.*
2. *To charge the NDC to organise a National Deacons' Conference during the inter-synodical period in order to instruct and encourage the work of our deacons at home and abroad.*
3. *To call on sessions to encourage their deacons to attend this conference as part of their diaconal task.*
4. *Encourage the Deacons' Courts in their ministries and the congregations in compassion, prayer and generosity for the ministry of mercy to those who are our needy neighbours.*

Rev. P van Huyssteen addressed the Synod further on the matter of Care for the disabled within our denomination.

36. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Art. 37)

Rev. T Leggott addressed the Synod, passing on fraternal greetings from the Synod of the PCEA (see Appendix 3 to these minutes, pp.1-38 to 39).

37. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Art. 36)

Rev. S Bajema responded to the address by Rev. Leggott

Elder A Jongepier, delegate from Wainuiomata, was seated at the Synod and indicated his agreement with the standards of our church by standing. (Arts. 5, 12)

38. Calvinist Cadet Corps and Calvinettes (R09)

Rev. R Noppers presented this report.

Synod decided

- 1. To continue to encourage the local churches to prayerfully and financially support their local Cadet and Calvinette Clubs.*
- 2. To make available an annual grant of \$500.00 to the CCC&C Board help cover the costs of the IN TOUCH magazine.*
- 3. To make available an annual grant of \$1000.00 to the CCC&C Board to assist clubs who struggle financially in sending delegates to the Annual Executive.*

39. Education Resource Committee (R07, Art. 110)

Synod decided

To appoint Mr. P Davey, Rev. A Holtslag and Rev. J Haverland (convenor) to an advisory committee to consider the recommendations of the report from the Education Resource Committee.

40. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the United Reformed Churches of North America (Art. 41)

Rev. M Stewart conveyed greetings from the URCNA (see Appendix 4 to these minutes, pp.1-40 to 41).

41. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the United Reformed Churches of North America (Art. 40)

Rev. P Kloosterman responded to the address by Rev. Stewart, highlighting the great spiritual benefit of fraternal relationships between churches even if they are far apart geographically as the RCNZ and URCNA are. He reminded us of the eternal perspective we should have when looking at these matters and not just look at the financial strain this might put on our resources.

42. Address of the observer from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 43)

Mr. A Plug conveyed greetings from the FRCA (see Appendix 5 to these minutes, pp.1-42 to 44).

43. Response to the observer from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 42)

Rev. M Flinn responded to the address by Mr. A Plug. He expressed thankfulness and joy for the many things we have in common as churches and for the various areas in missions in which we work together. He also expressed a measure of sadness that the impediment for full sister-church relations (the RCNZ sister-church relationship with the CRCA) continues to be the reason that a full sister-church relationship cannot be entered into at this time.

The Moderator welcomed Rev. Geoff Van Schie, fraternal delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. He also welcomed Rev. Geoff McPherson, observer from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

44. Abortion Study Committee (R17, Arts. 54, 113)

Rev. R van Wichen introduced Report 17.

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Synod decided

To affirm that human life begins at fertilization, not implantation.

45. Closing of morning session

Mr. A van Ameyde asked us to sing Psalm 92 from *Sing to the Lord* and led in closing prayer.

46. Opening of afternoon session

Rev. A Holtslag read to us from Job 42:1-6 and asked us to sing Psalm 89b from '*Sing to the Lord*', after which he led us in prayer.

The moderator welcomed Mr. Bill & Mrs. Louise Weeda and extended condolences on behalf of the Synod on the passing of Mr. Weeda's brother-in-law Mr. Henk Bos from the Reformed Church of Christchurch..

The moderator also welcomed Mr. M Leenders, a member of the Long Service Leave Committee and of the Emeritus Committee and gave him speaking rights in that capacity.

47. Synodical Treasurer Report (R13)

Mrs. A Saathof, the Synodical treasurer, introduced this report.

Synod decided

1. *To receive and accept the Statement of Income and Expenditure for the period ended 31 March 2008.*
2. *To receive and accept the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2008.*
3. *That a budget be presented at the close of this Synod for the coming inter-synodical period 2008 – 2011.*

Thanks were expressed for the work of the previous Synodical treasurer Mr. R Vanderpyl for his many years of faithful and able service in this capacity. The stated clerk was instructed to write a letter of thanks.

48. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Art. 49)

Rev. G McPherson conveyed greetings from the GPCNZ and read out a letter of greetings from Rev. A Young, the moderator of the GPCNZ. He then spoke of the various challenges both our churches face in this nation at this time and of our common mandate to preach the gospel of Christ to our nation (see Appendix 6 to these minutes for copy of the letter, p.1-45).

49. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Art. 48)

Rev. R van Wichen responded on behalf of Synod and expressed special delight in and appreciation for the cooperation we enjoy already now, even before there are any official church relationships. He also alluded to the need for us to encourage and strengthen each other as churches so that we both may continue to grow in Christ and be a blessing to our nation.

50. Emeritus Fund Committee (R11)

Rev. R van Wichen introduced the work done by the Finance Advisory committee (see Art.14), which looked at various recommendations from the Emeritus Fund (Report 11), Long Service Leave Committee (Report 12), the Church Extension Committee (Report 16) and Overture 3 (which concerned the Long Service Leave Fund).

Mr. W Weeda gave a brief history of the Emeritus Fund and introduced Report 11.

Rev. A Nugteren expressed sincere thanks on behalf of the ministers and the churches for 47 years of faithful work that Mr. Weeda has done in this area over these years, which was enthusiastically acknowledged by the Synod.

Rev. R van Wichen introduced the recommendations of the Finance Advisory committee with regard to the Emeritus Fund.

Synod decided

1. *That the emeritus allowances recommended by the Emeritus Fund trustees be approved.*
2. *That no quota be levied for the years ending 31 March 2009, 2010, and 2011.*

The moderator affirmed the sentiments expressed by Rev. Nugteren and thanked Mr. & Mrs. Weeda.

51. Long Service Leave Committee (R12, O03)

Rev. R van Wichen introduced the recommendations of the Finance Advisory committee with regard to the Long Service Committee.

Synod decided

1. *To discontinue the Long Service Leave (LSL) fund.*
2. *That the LSL fund be distributed among the churches in an equitable manner.*
3. *That the LSL committee determine how this is to be done.*
4. *That the LSL committee determine a simple and equitable method of administering long service leave entitlements for use in our churches.*

52. Church Extension Committee (R16, Arts. 53, 112)

Rev. R van Wichen introduced Report 16, esp. with regard to the recommendations of the Finance Advisory committee re ministers' stipends.

Synod decided that with regard to Minister's Stipends

That for the next inter-synodical period:

1. *The minimum base stipend be set at \$40,000 p.a., as at 1 April 2009.*
2. *The minimum base stipend be adjusted annually using the average weekly wage index.*
3. *The current seniority allowances be set as follows:*
 - a. *For ministers who have served 2-5 years, 3% of the minimum base stipend*
 - b. *For ministers who have served 6-10 years, 6% of the minimum base stipend*
 - c. *For ministers who have served more than 11 years, 9% of the minimum base stipend*
4. *The minimum non-taxable reimbursing allowance remain \$2,623.*
5. *The Church Extension Committee conduct a comprehensive review of ministerial remuneration.*

These recommendations replace recommendation 8 from the Church Extension Committee report.

53. Church Extension Committee (R16, Arts. 52, 112,) - continued

Rev. R van Wichen proceeded to present the recommendations from the Church Extension Committee, since no members of that committee were present at the Synod.

Synod decided

1. *That Synod ADD to point 3c a further sentence (cf. The Financial Support of Vicars - Office*

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Bearers' Handbook Section 3-E): Applications are to include a copy of official notification from Deputies RTC or similar that a prospective candidate has been granted a Vicariate in their congregation; a financial budget for that Vicariate for that period; a date when funds are required by, and an indication of the minimum level of financial support required for the Vicariate (the latter deemed helpful to the committee in the event of pressure on the Vicariate Fund from other Vicariate applications).

2. That Synod REMOVE point 3d of the rules as superfluous.
3. That Synod INCREASE the account cap from \$40,000 to \$60,000 (reference 3e of rules).
With regard to the Rules for Needy Churches" (cf. Office Bearers' Handbook, section 6)
4. That the minimum number of units to remain at twenty (20).
5. That the minimum annual contribution by each unit remain at \$1,900 pa.
6. That Synod
 - 6.1 REMOVE the account numbers in the "Rules for Needy Churches" (cf. Office Bearers' Handbook, section 6 - #3 definition of Needy Church) for the sentence to be amended from "assistance for building purposes is available by way of loans from account No IV of Church Extension Committee" to "assistance for building purposes is available by way of **a Building Loan from the Church Extension Committee.**"
 - 6.2 REMOVE the account numbers in the "Rules for Needy Churches" (cf. Office Bearers' Handbook, section 6 - #4 - administration) for the sentence to simply read "The Fund for Needy Churches shall be administrated by the Church Extension Committee" with the words "(accounts Nos 11 and 111)" at end of sentence being removed.
 - 6.3 REDUCE the number of copies required to be sent with an application from FIVE to ONE, for the sentence in the "Rules for Needy Churches" (cf. Office Bearers' Handbook, section 6 - #6 application) to be amended to read "The assisted church, while receiving such support, shall forward **a copy** of their financial statement each year to the secretary."
7. That Synod REDUCE the number of copies required to be sent with application from FIVE FOLD to ONE, for the sentence in the "Rules for Denominational Building Fund" (cf. Office Bearers' Handbook, section 6 - #4) to be amended to read "Applications for new loans must be in the hands of the secretary, together with ..." etc REMOVING the words "in five fold".

The moderator ruled that brothers J Ploeg and R van Wichen constitute an ad hoc committee to clarify Recommendations 9 & 10 from the CEC report.

54. Abortion Study Committee (R17, Arts. 44, 113) - continued

Rev. R van Wichen continued his presentation of Report 17.

Synod decided

That Recommendation 3 be referred to an advisory committee.

Synod agreed that Revs. Robert van Wichen (c), Renier Noppers, Michael Flinn, Paul Archbald and Peter Kloosterman be the members of this committee.

The moderator ruled that Recommendations 4 and 5 from the Report be tabled.

55. Overture from the Reformed Church of Palmerston North (O11)

Rev. M Flinn introduced overture 11: Who may preach.

Synod decided

To appoint a study committee to consider the biblical concept of preaching and the relationship between preaching and commissioning by the Church with a view to providing guidance and recommendations on the following:

1. *Ministers of the Word who are released from service to a congregation under Article 16b of the Church Order, but who, on not receiving a call for two years, are declared released from the ministerial office in accordance with the decision of Synod 2005, Article 99.5c. Are there any circumstances in which they can be invited by a session to lead an occasional worship service and preach a sermon of their own making or does their release from the ministerial office mean that they are no longer able biblically to do this?*
2. *Ministers who have served for a number of years, but who are now retired. According to Church Order Art. 17, they “retain the honour and title of a Minister”, but on what basis biblically can they continue to preach their own sermons when a minister who is released from local service under Article 16b and then two years later is released from ministerial office may not be able to do this?*
3. *Ministers who retire from the ministry in order to pursue another calling or kingdom service, such as theological teaching. On what basis biblically can they continue to preach in the churches, when they are no longer called as ministers of the Word and sacraments?*
4. *Candidates for the ministry who have been able to lead worship services and preach their own sermons in accordance with Church Order Article 20, and who have been declared by a Presbytery eligible for call, but who have not received a call for a period of two years. Does their ability to lead worship services and preach sermons of their own making cease after a two year period?*
5. *Persons who may have the necessary gifts for preaching but who have not received a call to the ministry and are not intending to pursue the ministry. If there is need in the churches, can they be authorized to preach for a period, upon passing an examination by a Presbytery, or is this not possible biblically on the grounds that preaching in Scripture is always to be associated with calling and commissioning by the churches, i.e. ordination to office?*

56. Ministers and Wives' Conference (R21)

Rev. A Nugteren presented Report 21.

Synod decided

1. *Provide for another Ministers & Wives' Conference in the next inter-Synodical period;*
2. *Appoint the Auckland Presbytery ministers to organize the next Conference.*

57. Synodical Archivist (R19)

Rev. A Nugteren presented Report 21.

Synod decided

1. *That the budget be reduced to \$200 per annum.*
2. *That the Synodical Archivist be reappointed for a further term.*

58. Closing of Afternoon Session

Mr. P Schinkelshoek called for the singing of Psalm 63b from *Sing to the Lord* and led the delegates in prayer.

59. Opening of evening session

Mr. M de Ruiter read from Ps. 147 and after leading us in prayer asked us to sing Psalm 21 from *Sing*

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to the Lord.

The moderator announced the members of the ad hoc committee appointed to consider recommendation 3 from Report 17 (see Art. 54) viz. Rev. R van Wichen (convenor), Rev. M Flinn, Rev. R Noppers, Rev. P Kloosterman and Rev. P Archbald.

60. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 61)

Rev. H De Waard addressed the Synod on behalf of the CRCA (see Appendix 7 to these minutes, pp.1-46 to 48).

61. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 60)

Rev. R Noppers responded to Rev. De Waard's address on behalf of the RCNZ. He expressed appreciation for the honesty and integrity with which Rev. De Waard spoke. There are matters to be discussed, yet there is a strong relationship that should be treasured by us.

62. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) (Art. 63)

Rev. S de Bruyn conveyed greetings from the GKSA (see Appendix 8 to these minutes, pp.1-49 to 50).

63. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) (Art. 62)

Rev. P Archbald responded to Rev. de Bruyn's address on behalf our churches. He thanked him for their continuing desire to maintain and strengthen the relationship between our churches as is evidenced by the presence of GKSA delegates at our Synods of late. Rev. Archbald also alluded to the real difficulty the GKSA is facing with regard to the issue of women in office. He closed with the request to pass on warm greetings to the GKSA.

64. Address of the Fraternal Delegate from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (lib.) (GKNv) (Art. 65)

Rev. J Plug addressed the Synod on behalf of the GKNv (see Appendix 9 to these minutes, pp.1-51 to 52).

65. Response to the Fraternal Delegate from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (lib.) (GKNv) (Art. 64)

Rev. D Van Garderen responded to this address. He encouraged us, as sister-churches, to live together before the Lord in the places where we are to the glory His name. In closing he requested Rev. Plug to pass on the warm greetings of the RCNZ to the GKNv.

66. Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee (R04)

Rev. J Rogers asked us to sing Psalm 8 from *Sing to the Lord* and then began to present Report 4.

Synod decided

1. *To charge the Psalm & Hymn Selection Committee to continue its work as mandated by Synods 2002 & 2005 with a view to:*

- i) *final approval of Psalm and hymn selections in 2011; and*

ii) authorisation of publication in 2011.

2. *To request the Churches to use and study the provisional Psalm selection and give feedback with any suggestions and/or criticisms to help the committee improve the selection where thought possible or necessary.*

Rev. Rogers commended to the churches the 'Introduction to Sing to the Lord (Provisional) for Ministers and Musicians' written by Mrs. Lieda Brooks.

He sought clarification with regard to the statement in the mandate of the committee 'not to include original material' and asked for permission to do so after all. Synod gave its permission to include original material by common consent.

Synod decided

To express its thanks to the committee for the work done so far.

The moderator instructed the stated clerk to put this in writing to the committee.

67. Closing of Evening Session

Rev. Pieter van Huyssteen asked us to sing Psalm 33:1,8,9,10 from *Sing to the Lord* and led the delegates in closing prayer.

Wednesday Morning Session – 10 September 2008

68. Opening Devotion

Rev. J Haverland led the delegates in prayer and read with us from Proverbs 1:1-7. He encouraged us to consider *the fear of the Lord*, i.e. our sense of love and awe for our God, which is the beginning of wisdom. He gave a description of the Proverbs made by Derek Kidner: *Matters too fine for the grid of the law* and encouraged us to bear these things in mind esp. with regard to our discussions today about *Interchurch Relations*. He invited us to respond by singing Psalm 39b, from *Sing to the Lord*.

69. Approval of the minutes

Synod approved the minutes of all the Monday sessions and the Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions as recorded in Articles 10-58.

70. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.1)

Rev. B Hoyt introduced Report 2 Section A.1, regarding the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (CGKN).

Synod decided

1. *To continue our sister-church relationship with the CRC Netherlands.*
2. *To continue to encourage closer contact and cooperation where and as possible especially via the International Conference of Reformed Churches.*

Rev. B Hoyt read the letter from the CGKN as found in Communication 2.

71. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.2, Art. 97)

Rev. B Hoyt presented Section A.2, regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church USA (OPC).

Synod decided

To continue our sister-church relationship with the OPC, USA.

To table the following motion To send a delegate to an OPC General Assembly during the next inter-synodical period

72. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.3, Art. 74)

Rev. B Hoyt then presented Section A.3 regarding the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

Synod decided

1. *To continue our sister-church relationship with the GKSA.*
2. *To send a fraternal delegate to the next synod of the GKSA.*

73. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.6, Art. 101)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section A.6 regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA).

Synod decided

To continue our sister-church relationship with the PCEA.

74. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.3, Art. 72) continued

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of Section A.3 regarding the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

Synod decided

To continue to monitor discussions within the GKSA and synodical decisions on the subject of women in office.

75. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.4, Art. 78)

Rev. B Hoyt then presented Section A.4 regarding the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA).

Synod decided

To go into committee of the whole.

The moderator welcomed Rev. Kobus Gerber from the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa (DRC)

76. Closing of morning session

Mr. D Spoelstra asked us to sing Psalm 139b:1-3,7,8,10 from *Sing to the Lord* led in closing prayer.

77. Opening of afternoon session

Mr. J Meinsma called us to sing Psalm 1b from *Sing to the Lord* and read to us from 1 Kings 3:5-15. He then led us in prayer.

The moderator welcomed Mr. B Bartlett, the alternate elder delegate for RC Mangere, who arrived this afternoon to take the place of Mr. J Verheij who had to leave, and asked him to stand to signify his continued agreement with the confessional standards of our churches.

78. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.4, Art. 75)

Synod continued 'in committee of the whole'.

Synod decided

To come out of committee of the whole

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of Section A.4 regarding the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA).

Synod decided

- 1. To continue our sister-church relationship with the CRCA.*
- 2. To continue the meetings between the CER of the CRCA and our IRC.*
- 3. To send two delegates to the next synod of the CRCA.*

79. Women as deacons in the CRCA (O05)

Rev. B Hoyt introduced overture 5 from RC Hastings

Synod defeated the following overture

That Synod urge the CRCA to rescind their decision to ordain women as deacons.

80. Images of Christ in Worship in the CRCA Synod (O06)

Rev. B Hoyt introduced overture 6 from RC Hastings

Synod defeated recommendations 1, 2, 3 & 4 of this overture as follows

1. *That Synod express its grave concern that one of the delegates called the CRCA Synod 2006 to reflect on the sufferings of Christ through the use of images of Christ clipped from the movie "The Passion of the Christ" and that no action was taken by the CRCA Synod 2006 as a body to express its disapproval.*
2. *That Synod urge the CRCA to re-affirm their commitment to the 2nd Commandment and its implication for worship stated in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 35, which forbids making any images (even of creatures) "if one's intention is to worship them or to serve God through them" because God does not want his people instructed "by idols that cannot even talk".*
3. *That Synod urge the CRCA to ensure that all office-bearers uphold Scripture and Confession in the prohibition of images used for purposes of worship and to affirm that "different views on this issue" are not to be allowed on a confessional matter.*
4. *That Synod urge Presbyteries and Synodical examiners to ensure that CRCA ministers who seek to enter the ministry in the RCNZ can affirm without hesitation that Scripture and Confession prohibit using images for the purpose of worship.*

81. Strained Relationship with the CRCA (O07, Art. 83)

The moderator ruled that Overture 7 lapsed, but granted Rev. B Hoyt the floor to present a motion in its place:

That Synod convey to the CRCA through the Interchurch Relations Committee that our sister-church relationship continues under strain due their approval of the practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon.

Synod decided

To table this motion till overture 4 has been dealt with

82. Sister-church Relationship with the CRCA (O04)

Rev. P Archbald presented overture 4.

Synod defeated the following overture

That the Reformed Churches of New Zealand suspend the sister-church relationship with the CRCA.

83. Strained Relationship with the CRCA (O07, Art. 81) - continued

The Synod continued the discussion on the motion tabled under Art. 81.

Synod decided

That Synod convey to the CRCA through the Interchurch Relations Committee that our sister-church relationship continues under strain due their approval of the practice of ordaining women to the office of deacon.

At this time the moderator asked Rev. J Haverland to lead us in prayer.

84. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.5)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section A.5 regarding the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (lib.) – GKNv.

Synod decided

1. *To continue our sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN-lib).*
2. *To continue to encourage closer contact and cooperation where and as possible especially via the International Conference of Reformed Churches.*

85. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.7)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section A.7 regarding the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Synod decided

1. *To express our appreciation to the CanRC for their acceptance of our invitation to enter a sister church relationship with them.*
2. *To continue to work closely with the CanRC in connection with the mission work in PNG.*
3. *To send a delegate to the next synod of the CanRC.*

86. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section B)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section B regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

Synod decided

1. *To continue our membership in the ICRC.*
2. *To allocate up to \$5000 to pay a conference organiser for work prior to and during ICRC 2009.*
3. *Not to support the proposed change to the ICRC Constitution.*

87. Address of the observer from the Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa (DRC)

Rev. Kobus Gerber addressed the Synod on behalf of the DRC and brought greetings to our churches in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He urged us to make efforts to draw together as Reformed Churches worldwide to renew our commitment to the foundations of the reformed faith. He asked us to be aware of and pray for God's blessing upon the efforts of the Reformed Churches of Southern Africa to be truly African. He referred to the various challenges and struggles South Africa faces at this time and also asked us to accommodate as best we can the immigrants that come from South Africa to NZ for this reason. In closing he encouraged us to maintain close contacts with the churches in South Africa.

The moderator responded to the address by Rev. Gerber and thanked him for his kind and gracious remarks and assured him that our churches receive people from South Africa as best they can.

88. Address from the Reformed Church of Wanganui

Mr. P Mulholland, on behalf of RC Wanganui, expressed thanks to the churches for the prayer and financial support that has been given to their congregation.

89. Closing of Afternoon Session

Vicar D Wilson called for the singing of Psalm 51b from *Sing to the Lord* and led the delegates in prayer.

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90. Opening of evening session

Rev. P Kloosterman read from Psalm 87 and asked us to sing Psalm 87 from *Sing to the Lord*. He then led us in prayer.

The moderator welcomed Mr. W Stolte, the alternate elder delegate for RC Masterton, who arrived this evening to take the place of Mr. D Baird who had to leave, and asked him to stand to signify his continued agreement with the confessional standards of our churches.

The moderator gave Rev. G Van Schie opportunity to address the Synod briefly.

91. Overseas Mission Board (14)

Mr. J Koolaard, who together with Rev. H Vaatstra visited Papua New Guinea early in 2007, began by presenting an informative slide show of the mission work our churches are involved with in Papua New Guinea.

Rev. A Douma then addressed the meeting. He gave greetings from the CRC of Tivoli, Queensland, which has given much support to the Doumas in their preparation for their work in PNG. He introduced his wife Odette and his 3 children and told us about their spiritual journey up to this time. This journey has come to fruition through his call from RC Hastings to serve as missionary in Reformed Ministries in PNG. He gave a brief description of his anticipated work which ranges from teaching at the Reformed Churches Bible College to church planting. After Rev. Douma's installation in December the Doumas will go on leave and hope to arrive in the Port Moresby area PNG in Feb. 2009 and after introductory training begin their work there in May 2009.

Mr. J Koolaard, chairman of the OMB, then introduced the report.

Synod decided

1. *To provide for two OMB-selected delegates to attend the next ICRC Asia-Pacific Regional Missions Conference.*
2. *To commend Sr. Janice Reid in her training ministry for Christian radio workers in South-East Asia, and encourage her in her ongoing work.*
3. *To commend Br. and Sr. Walter and Jeannette Hagoort in their labour for the Lord and His people in PNG, and encourage them in their ongoing work.*
4. *To commend Rev Alan and Odette Douma in their calling to missionary work in PNG on behalf of the RCNZ.*
5. *To approve the OMB quota at \$65,000 for the 2008/2009 financial year, \$75,000 for 2009/2010 and \$85,000 for 2010/2011.*

Mr. J Koolaard informed the Synod that Mrs. R Cressy has been appointed as administrator to the OMB which has been a great help to the board; Mrs. G de Vries has resigned as treasurer due her family moving to Australia so there is a need for a new treasurer and Mr. Koolaard indicated his desire to resign as chairman but is willing to stay on the board.

92. Denominational Name Change (O01)

Rev. D Van Garderen introduced this overture from Auckland Presbytery.

Synod defeated the following overture

To change our denomination's name to "Reformed Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand".

93. Closing of Evening Session

Mr. E Havelaar led the delegates in closing prayer and asked them to sing Psalm 67 from *Sing to the Lord*.

Thursday Morning Session – 11 September 2008

94. Opening Devotion

Rev. M Flinn asked us to sing from Psalter/Hymnal 479:1-3, 5 and then read with us from 2 Samuel 1:1-16. After elaborating on this passage and some of the wider context he gave application in three areas: 1. He expressed the desire that his younger colleagues would have a long and fruitful ministry, while encouraging them to remember that the church is greater than the individual in it. 2. He encouraged the elders representing the vacant churches in our midst to persevere in times of difficulty and to trust that the Lord does and will provide in His good time. 3. That we all continue to realise that the Kingdom is bigger than any of our federations and that Christ, who laid down His life for us, is the one whom we follow. He then led the meeting in prayer.

The moderator called the appointments committee to meet at 1.00pm.

Rev. G van Schie drew our attention to 2 sets of CDs containing presentations made by Rev. M Capill at a retreat that focussed on the Changing face of Pastoral Care and at a retreat on Leadership in the Church.

95. Approval of the minutes

Synod approved the minutes of the Tuesday evening session and the Wednesday morning and afternoon sessions as recorded in Articles 59-89.

96. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section C.1, Art. 98)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section C.1 regarding the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA).

Synod decided

1. *To acknowledge with sadness that we have been unable to make progress towards a sister church relationship with the FRCA.*
2. *To inform the FRCA that we cannot accept that our sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting our offer.*
3. *To continue our offer of sister-church relations with the FRCA.*
4. *To convey these decisions to the FRCA by correspondence.*
5. *To send a delegate to the next synod of the FRCA*

97. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.2, Art. 71) - continued

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of Section A.2, regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church USA (OPC).

Synod decided

To take the following motion off the table:

To send a delegate to an OPC General Assembly during the next inter-synodical period.

After discussion synod decided

To send a delegate to an OPC General Assembly during the next inter-synodical period.

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98. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section C.1, Art. 96) - continued

After discussion

Synod decided

That the IRC on behalf of synod extend an invitation to the FRCA to attend the ICRC conference in 2009 as observers.

99. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section C.2)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section C.2 regarding the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA).

Synod decided

- 1. To express appreciation to the URC/NA for establishing Ecumenical Contact with us.*
- 2. To invite the ICRC representatives of the URC/NA to take opportunity to familiarize themselves with our churches in connection with the next ICRC in 2009.*
- 3. To send a delegate to the next synod of the URC/NA.*

100. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section C.3)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section C.3 regarding the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (GPCNZ).

Synod defeated the following recommendation

To adopt the Constitution and By-Laws of the Fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches in New Zealand.(Recommendation 27 from Report 2)

Since this recommendation was defeated Recommendations 28 (To direct the IRC to organise yearly meetings of the FPARCNZ in cooperation with the GPC) and Recommendation 31 (To use the meetings of the FPARCNZ as a means of informing each other of planned conferences as well as home and foreign mission activity.) from Report 2 lapse.

Synod decided

- 1. To encourage pulpit exchange between our two denominations.*
- 2. To encourage local churches to have local contact such as: local church retreats, women's presbyterial meetings, church outings, camps, conferences, etc.*
- 3. To authorise the IRC to appoint delegates to the GPC assemblies depending on the location of these.*
- 4. To direct the IRC to meet with the GPC ecumenical committee with a view to exploring an appropriate ecclesiastical relationship with the GPC and report to Synod 2011.*

101. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section A.6, Art. 73) - continued

Regarding the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA).

Synod decided

That we send a delegate to a synod of the PCEA held during the next inter-synodical period

102. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section C.4)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section C.4 regarding the Korean American

Presbyterian Church (KAPC).

Synod decided

Unless the KAPC (NZ) initiates further contact, no further action be taken.

103. Interchurch Relations Committee (R02, Section D)

Rev. B Hoyt continued his presentation of the report with Section D, Website

Synod decided

That Synod approve funding of up to \$1000.00 per year for the ongoing development and maintenance of the denominational website.

The Synod expressed its thanks to the Rev. A Nugteren for his work in administering the denominational website.

104. Guidelines for Dealing with Sexual Abuse (O09)

Rev. L de Vos presented the overture.

Synod decided

To appoint a study committee to provide the churches with some straightforward guidelines for sessions on how to deal with sexual abuse.

105. Bible Versions Study Committee (R15)

Rev. R Noppers presented the report.

Synod decided

- 1. To take no action with regard to Recommendation 1 of Report 15, i.e. 'not to approve the English Standard Version ('ESV') or the New King James Version ('NKJV') for use as pulpit Bibles in our churches'.*
- 2. That synod confirm that the authorisation given by Synod 1983 (Art. 72) extends to the updated NASB and the ongoing revisions of the NIV. (Synod notes that TNIV is not included in recommendation 2.)*
- 3. That the committee be discharged with thanks.*

106. Committee to Update Forms and Confessions (R05, Art. 109)

Rev. J Haverland introduced this report.

Synod decided

That this committee be re-appointed to continue its work of updating the range of liturgical forms available for use in worship services, paying particular attention to the work being done by the URC

The Synod expressed its appreciation to those who have prepared the meals during the Synod.

107. Closing of morning session

Mr. D Holtslag asked us to sing Psalm 41:1-3, 7 from *Sing to the Lord* and led in closing prayer.

108. Opening of afternoon session

Mr. G Strayton led us in a reading of 1 Peter 2:4-12 and prayer and then called us to sing Psalm 118b from *Sing to the Lord*.

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109. Committee to Update Forms and Confessions (R05, Art. 106) - continued

Rev. J Haverland continued his presentation of this report and indicated that the committee has withdrawn Recommendation 2 from Report 5, i.e. That synod approve the URC Form for Lord's Supper for those congregations who celebrate the Supper frequently.

Synod decided

1. *That this committee provide sample forms for marriages and funerals as guidance for pastors.*
2. *That this committee continue its study of the Canadian Reformed Churches translations of the Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort, interacting with that denomination, and bring recommendations to the next Synod.*
3. *To approve the Modern English Study Version (MESV) of the WCF for study and use in our churches until the next synod.*
4. *That the MESV does not have constitutional authority in our churches.*

110. Education Resource Committee (R07, Art. 39)

Because no member of the committee was present Mr. P Davey introduced the report and presented the recommendations of the advisory committee (see Art. 39).

Synod decided

1. *To reaffirm its instructions to the committee*
Synod 1998 mandated the ERC to "evaluate and promote reformed Bible Study, Catechism and Sunday School materials within our denomination and beyond."
Synod 2005 decided "to instruct the Education Resource Committee (Lampstand) to compile a list of Reformed Bible Study material suitable for use in our churches"
2. *To discontinue the annual quota of \$500 to The Lampstand.*

111. National Publishing Committee (R08)

Rev. S Bajema introduced the report.

Synod decided

1. *To approve the audited financial statements*
2. *That the requirement that "including one representative from each presbytery" be removed from the rules for the NPC (OBH p.2-22).*
3. *To approve the merger of the National Publishing Committee and the Faith in Focus Committee into one, meeting annually*

The Synod gave a vote of thanks to Rev. S Bajema, the departing editor, for the good work he has done over the years.

112. Church Extension Committee (R16, Arts. 52, 53) – continued

Synod agreed that the tabled Recommendations 9 and 10 from Report 16 be taken off the table.

Synod decided

- That the financial statements for the*
- (a) General/Vicariate Fund, and the*
 - (b) Building Fund*

for the period ended 31st March 2008 be received and adopted.

113. Abortion Study Committee (R17, Arts. 44, 54) - continued

Rev. R van Wichen presented the findings of the advisory committee appointed to look at Recommendation 3 of Report 17.

Synod decided

1. *To warn that the “morning after” pill and other hormonal emergency “contraception” may function as abortifacients.*
2. *To reaffirm the declaration made at the 2005 Synod with respect to this matter, namely, ...*
“Since human life begins at conception, wilful abortion is contrary to the sixth commandment, the only possible exception being cases where the life of the mother is in jeopardy, and every reasonable effort has been made to save the life of her unborn child.”

On behalf of the committee Rev. van Wichen withdrew Recommendations 4 and 5 from Report 17.

The moderator expressed thanks to the committee for the work they have done.

114. Church Order Committee – Bishopdale (O10, Art. 20) – cont.

Rev. M Willemse presented the findings of the advisory committee appointed to look at Recommendation 2 of Overture 10.

Synod decided

Presbytery shall make provision for church visitation at least once per year. Each church shall be visited by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). The synodically approved questionnaire shall be followed in general and a report of each visit rendered to the presbytery.

On behalf of RC Bishopdale Rev. van Wichen withdrew Recommendation 3 of Overture 10.

115. Church Order Committee (R06, Art. 16)

Rev. M Willemse presented the findings of the advisory committee appointed to look at Recommendations 4 and 11 from Report 6. He will also deal with Overture 2 on behalf of RC Silverstream.

Synod decided

1. *That the Church Order Committee be instructed to conduct an overall evaluation and review of the Office Bearers Handbook:*
 - a. *To ensure consistency,*
 - b. *To distinguish between regulations and guidelines,*
 - c. *To recommend updates where necessary, and to do this with particular reference to the following sections of the handbook whose status is unclear:*
‘Students for the Ministry’, pp. 3-3 to 6,
‘Vicariate-C’, p. 3-7,
‘Rules for Long Service Leave’, pp.3-12, 13
‘Letter of Call’, p. 3-19,
‘Minister’s Credentials’, p. 3-21,
‘Financial Support for Home Missionaries’ Art.1 and 3, p. 4-20
‘Guidelines for Issuing a Certificate of Membership’, pp. 5-15 to 22 (including the Certificate of Membership sample),
‘Home Visitation’, pp. 5-24 to 26,
‘Home Visitation Guide’, pp. 5-27 to 29,
‘Alternate Home Visitation Guide’, pp. 5-30 to 36,

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- d. *To take into account the concerns of Overture 8 as they conduct their review, i.e. that Question 40 of the Church Visitation Questionnaire reflect our changed relationship with the RTC(see Overture 8 for more detail).*
2. *That the presbytery in which the final examination is conducted shall have the discretion as to how much of the preliminary examination, besides the sermon, shall be repeated, when the final examination is held in the same presbytery as the preliminary examination.*
3. *That the CO Committee be asked to evaluate our current system for examination of candidates for the ministry and to report on this with recommendations to the next synod.*
4. *That this review include consideration of the pros and cons of a single examination.*

116. Election of moderamen of synod

Synod decided

That the SIC be given a mandate to investigate a means of electing the moderamen one month before Synod with a view to beginning the proceedings on Monday afternoon.

117. Committee Appointments

Rev. J. Haverland presented the committee appointments recommended by the moderamen.

Synod decided to make the following committee appointments

A. Standing Committee Appointments

Church Extension Committee

R de Vries (c), G Reinders, P Bakker, J van Garderen, M de Ruiter

Church Order Committee

P van der Wel (c), M Willemse, W Stolte, A Holtslag

Emeritus Fund Committee & Long Service Leave Fund Committee

W van den Engel (c), M Leenders, C Young, J Ploeg, W Kingham, A Nugteren

Education Resource Committee

A Holtslag (c), C Berends, S Davey (Liaison: D Waldron)

Interchurch Relations Committee

B Hoyt (c), D van Garderen, M Flinn, P Archbald

Overseas Mission Board

P Kloosterman (c), J Koolaard, D Cressy, J Goris, J Kloeg (sec), A Meister, H Velvis,
(plus Liaisons appointed by Auckland and Christchurch Presbyteries)

National Diaconate Committee

C Larsen (c), D van Garderen, J Ploeg, G Posthuma, A Ruijne, D Petchell

National Publishing Committee

J Holtslag (c), M van der Zwaag, N Wharekawa (sec) , A Reinders (treas)
P van Huyssteen (ed), (*this was changed, W Walraven has been appointed as coordinating editor as per 22-10-2008*) S Davey (sub ed.), V Hoyt (sub ed.),
Faith inFocus Editorial Advisory Committee: P Archbald, DJ van Garderen, J Rogers

Student Assistance Committee, RTC

H Berends (c), L & A Amersfoort,

Synodical Interim Committee

J Rogers, D Van Garderen, P van der Wel (also Stated Clerk), A Nugteren

Ministers & Wives

Auckland Presbytery ministers and their wives

B. Study Committee Appointments

Forms and Confessions, Committee to Update

J Haverland (c), E Havelaar, A Nugteren, R van Wichen, S Davey (C'tee to co-opt as needed)

Psalm & Hymnody Selection Committee

J Rogers (c), L Brooks, B Hoyt, L Hoyt, J Goris

Who May Preach

L de Vos (c), P Kloosterman, P Archbald (liaise with COC)

Sexual Abuse

R van Wichen (c), J Meinsma, L de Vos, J van Rensburg

C. Other Appointments

Stated Clerk

P van der Wel

Synodical Treasurer

A Saathof

Deputies for Students for the ministry

J Haverland, M Flinn (alternate B Hoyt, theological review: P Archbald)

Synodical Archivist

R Nugteren

Year Book Editor

Mrs J Nugteren

Synodical Liaison to Calvinist Cadet Corps

R Nugteren

Delegates to Sister Churches

CRCA: M Flinn, IRC appointee

GKSA: J Rogers

Other appointments to be made by the IRC

118. Stated Clerk of Synod (R18, Art. 15) – continued

Synod decided

1. *That Synod take Recommendation 4 from Report 18, 'That Synod not appoint a Committee for Contact with Political Bodies' be taken off the table.*

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Rev. B Hoyt then spoke to Recommendation 4 from Report 18.

And synod decided

2. *Not to appoint a Committee for Contact with Political Bodies.*

119. Approval of Synodical Budget

Synod decided

To adopt the budget for the period ending 31 March 2011.

Synodical Budget For the 3 years ended 31 March 2011

	Article	Year ended 31-Mar-09	Year ended 31-Mar-10	Year ended 31-Mar-11
Archivist	57	200	200	200
Cadets & Calvinettes	38	1,500	1,500	1,500
Deacons Conference	35		4,500	
Home Mission C'tee	15	-	-	-
Internet Services	103	1,000	1,000	1,000
Lampstand		-	-	-
Ministers and Wives' Conf.	56		8,500	
Office Bearers' Handbook	15		1,250	
Synodical Decisions	15	500		
RTC Deputies	21	2,500	2,500	2,500
Stated Clerk honorarium	47	3,000	3,000	3,000
Study Committees		1,000	1,000	1,000
Subscriptions		200	200	200
Synod 2008		34,100		
Synodical examiners travel		3,200	3,200	3,200
Synodical Treasurer		200	200	200
Synodical delegates:				
CanRC Synod	85			2,400
CRCA Synod	78	2,100		
FRCA Synod	96	1,200		
GKNv Synod	71	-	-	-
GKSA Synod	72	3,600		
OPC Synod	97			2,400
PCEA Synod	101		1,000	
URCNA Synod	99			2,400
ICRC Synod	86		5,000	
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		54,30	33,05	20,00
		0	0	0
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Opening balance				23,535
Quota - total for 3 years @	\$ 37,938	p.a.		<hr/>
				113,815
				<hr/>
				137,350
Deduct agreed expenditure		2009	54,300	
		2010	33,050	
		2011	<hr/>	
			20,000	
			<hr/>	
				107,350
Closing balance				<hr/>
				30,000
				<hr/>

120. Convening Church for Synod 2011

Synod decided

To agree that the Christchurch Presbytery should decide on a convening church within the Christchurch Presbytery for Synod 2011.

121. Letter to the Queen

By common consent Synod approved the letter of loyalty to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

The letter can be found in Appendix 10 on p.1-53.

122. Report of the Deputies for Students for the Ministry (R03, Arts. 21, 24)

Synod decided

To go into committee of the whole to discuss matters arising out of section H of Report 3 and Art. 24 above.

123. Closing of afternoon session

Mr. J Vethaak asked the synod to sing Psalm 23 from *Sing to the Lord*. He led us in the reading of Prov.3:5-6 after which he led us in prayer.

124. Opening of evening session

Mr. P Davey asked us to sing Psalm 119:41-48 from *Sing to the Lord*. After reading 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 he led us in prayer.

125. Report of the Deputies for Students for the Ministry (R03, Arts. 21, 24, 122)

Synod decided

To come out of committee of the whole.

126. Approval of the minutes

Synod approved the minutes of the Wednesday evening session and the Thursday morning and afternoon sessions as recorded in Articles 90-123.

127. Approval of Thursday evening's Minutes

It was agreed that the SIC should give final approval of the minutes of Thursday evening's sessions.

128. Closing Remarks by the Vice-Moderator

The moderator Rev. J. Rogers was not well and in his place Rev. D Van Garderen, the vice-moderator, expressed, on behalf of all the delegates, his appreciation for the hospitality of the RC of Hastings and to pastors B Hoyt and D Waldron for the preparatory work for this Synod. He thanked the delegates for the generally harmonious discussions. He expressed great appreciation for the interest and concern of the great number of international delegates. On behalf of the moderator he expressed thanks for the way the moderamen has functioned. Rev. Van Garderen expressed deep appreciation for the way Rev. Rogers led the Synod. Rev. S Bajema and Rev. R Noppers were farewelled to their respective places of service in Australia.

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Rev. Van Garderen expressed thankfulness for the way Synod went, for the timely way the business of the Synod was conducted by all.

He then led in a closing prayer of thanksgiving to God. After the synod sang Psalm 103 from *Sing to the Lord* he declared synod closed.

Appendix 1

Greetings from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Fraternal Address to the 26th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

September 6-12 Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Hastings, New Zealand, presented in behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church by the Rev. Jack W. Sawyer, pastor of Pineville OPC, Pineville, Louisiana.

Fathers and brothers, members of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, *those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.*

What a blessed providence it is to be in the Reformed Church of Hasting again, where in this very place I moderated a meeting of the Wellington Presbytery in 1994 shortly before leaving for my new pastorate in New York. The Presbytery voted to send me packing!

Historical reminders, like road signs, are roots that form our identity, part of a living memory that direct and connect us to our heritage and guard us against purveyors of dangerous novelties. Thus I would like to begin my address this evening by calling your attention to the protocol of institution signed by the founding members of this congregation, my heroes, hanging on the wall behind the organ. I used to study that document regularly since I was often alone in this building. (It was always too hot or too cold, that has not changed!!) This document was an encouragement as it reminded me why I as an obscure, young man from rural Alabama was here, far from kith and kin, as many of you. It reminded me why the RCNZ were established in 1953: (AKL, CHCH, PN, and Wellington 1953; Hastings in 1960) in order that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus could be preached unhindered by the encroachments of modernism, then beginning to eat at the heart of post war New Zealand, church and state alike. :” *lifting up unto our own posterity , the world around us, and the heathen on the mission fields that Glorious Gospel once delivered to the saints.*”

Brothers these protocols were heroic acts and great steps of faith by poor immigrants in a strange new land. But more they provide a living testimony of why we are here my brothers , a testimony of numerous saints now with the lord, a gift to us and a calling: Be faithful unto death, gain the victor’s crown of life, and continue to hand down to our posterity the blessed Gospel of our Lord and Savior.

It is my privilege to bring you warm, Christian greetings in behalf of your sister denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We rejoice in your comradeship in the faith once for all delivered to the Saints, and thank you for your continuing fellowship in the work of overseas missions and the ICRC. We also acknowledge the debt a number of us owe you for the privilege afforded to us of serving in your churches over the years . Richard Venema, aged 85 continues to preach in Helena Montana, GI Williamson, aged 83 serves as assistant to the pastor at Cornerstone URC in Sanborn, Iowa, Tom Tyson aged 67 is enjoying a very active and fruitful retirement in Pennsylvania, and yours truly , age indeterminate, has served for the past 14 years in New York and Louisiana. We count ourselves a happy few, pardon the pun, a band of brothers, favored of the Lord to have served down under in the RCNZ. We give thanks to the Lord in our every memory of you.

But beyond this small fraternity it might in fact not be an exaggeration, I betray my bias, to say that the RCNZ is viewed as dearest of sisters to the OPC. And why not? In the providence of the Lord we were drawn together from early days of our existences. Careful study of your history will find the names Stonehouse, Deenick, Galbraith, and Zorn in close proximity, men revered with formative influence in both our churches. Your search for doctrinal identity, ecumenical contacts, and English speaking ministers, stimulated what would become a fruitful cross-pollination between our churches. But after these many years now, we would wish to assure you that we look to you as a full, mature partner in the Lord’s service, one that has much also to give us and to teach us, and help us as once we helped you: a relationship of transparency, mutual accountability, and reciprocity.

To that end we thank you very much for sending Rev. Dirk Van Garderen to our 2007 General Assembly meeting at Dordt College. It was most helpful for our churches to have this sort of contact

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with you unmediated by the prism of Americans, such as myself. And conversely perhaps you have learned the OPC is a more complex body than you may have imagined from knowing the ministers she sent to serve you. May I therefore encourage you, as the world continues to shrink and doors of opportunity remain open, to kindly consider sending a fraternal delegate to our assembly regularly, perhaps even once every intersynodical period. It would be a blessing to be able to keep up with each other face to face, and explore even more areas where we may co-operate in the service of our common Lord.

On a personal note I thank you for your kind hospitality in welcoming me as a fraternal delegate to your synod and its deliberations. It is good to renew fellowship with my friends and colleagues like Bruce Hoyt, John Rogers, Michael Flinn and Dirk Van Garderen. Also, to see again after so many years senior elders still in the race, and young men now called to positions of honor and responsibility esteemed *brothers, fellow workers, fellow soldiers, messengers and ministers in behalf of the work of Christ* causes ones heart to rejoice.

Another word of sincere thanks is in order: We are grateful for the funds that were sent from your churches in 2005 by the hand of your national diaconal committee for hurricane relief in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast region. This was a precious gift, one that was administered by the deacons of my own congregation and used to supply necessities for many people whose lives were devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Let me assure the funds were well spent and accounted for and disburse in the blessed name of Jesus.

But now, no doubt you are wondering how go things with the OPC?

Statistically, our congregations in 2008 numbered over 250, with additional mission works of 60 plus and membership standing at around 28,000 souls representing a slight growth for the year of around one percent. Total offerings stood at over 40 million dollars. There were some 450 ministers and over 1000 ruling elders.

Our denomination continues its vigorous support of home missions with new works from Phoenix to St. Paul. The changing demographics of the country are increasingly felt in our denomination as witnessed by missions named *Iglesia Nueva Vida* in Phoenix and *Nueva Esperanza* in Vineland, NJ as the Lord has opened doors for Hispanic ministry. The recent past has witnessed the reception of two OPC congregations in Puerto Rico and the expansion of the Presbytery of New Jersey to include that American Commonwealth within its bounds.

Foreign Missions were the crucible in which the OPC was born and continue to occupy a central focus in our life as a denomination. In 2006 our churches suffered the tragic and untimely loss in the line of duty of the Rev. Matthew D. Baugh, aged 37 and missionary to Haiti. *The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* We are grateful that the Lord has called the Rev. Benjamin Hopp to continue our work in that benighted country, the most impoverished economically and spiritually in the Western Hemisphere.

The Lord's work goes on with other missionaries in the spirit of Epaphroditus of old, risking their lives for the sake of Christ. How we, as you, bless God for such workers! These we hold in the highest regard, men and women, willing to labor far from hearth home and all that is dear in this world, in order to preach the blessed name of Jesus in China, in Suriname, Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Quebec, and elsewhere. We especially thank the RCNZ for their support in the Uganda mission in the persons of the Rev. Barry James, and the Rev. John Rogers. We eagerly look forward to your sending missionary deacon Andrew Dickson to join this work in the near future.

Due to Government persecution, our mission to Eritrea had to be suspended. Our theological college was closed, our missionaries arrested, jailed, and deported from the country. We pray for the Lord to open this door once again to a country where the OPC has been intermittently for many, many years,

Also of note is our exciting new ecclesiastical relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, perhaps the largest Bible believing Reformed Church in the world. These churches of some 800,000 were begun by Old School Presbyterian Missionaries in the 19th century. Recently they have broken contact with their mother church and sought us out. These contacts have led to a promising new mission in Paraguay led by Rev. Jonathan Falk.

Believing our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, and that we are *a kingdom of priests to our God*, the OPC has for 41 years been working hard on perfecting a revision to our Directory for Public Worship. The near future will see this document approved by the General Assembly and presented to the Presbyteries, the Lord willing. We hope it will be a helpful document not only for us but also for the wider Reformed community.

From our founding on June 11th 1936, approaching 75 years ago, we have endeavored, albeit at times haltingly, to combine worldwide, reformed confessional catholicity, Christian charity, and a valiant concern for *the faith once for all delivered to the Saints*. This is demonstrably our history, whether considering the incomprehensibility of God, the free offer of the Gospel, the Sabbath, charismatic gifts, evolution, the days of creation, or the doctrine of justification by faith alone.. There remains good reason for the OPC to continue, now into her eighth decade, her labor to fight the good fight of faith, and guard the precious scriptural heritage entrusted to us by our fathers.

In this pursuit we have twice voted to reaffirm our unequivocal commitment to all the Westminster Standards chapter eleven, and a study committee of some of our best minds will be presented to our 2006 General Assembly its findings on the New Perspective on Paul, the Federal Vision, the Covenant of Works, the active obedience of Christ, all as they relate to recent controversies surrounding the doctrine of justification. We hope that the results of this study, now published in pamphlet form, will assure those of you who know and love us best that we remain faithful descendants of Machen, Murray, and Van Til and that we are still steadfast adherents to the great solas that unite us as children of the Reformation; sola scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, and soli deo Gloria.

Brothers pray on our behalf, *that utterance may continue to be given to us in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the opening our mouths to make known the mystery of the Gospel*. And for our part, we commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Amen.

Appendix 2

Greetings from the Canadian Reformed Churches

Mr. Chairman,
Members of Synod,
Brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It is a privilege to be among you on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches. And it is especially with much thankfulness to the Lord of the church that I may be here on behalf of a federation of churches who may now be called your sister churches, lately having entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with you—this is a special meeting for us. I bring greetings to you on behalf of these churches in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Head of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

I bring you greetings also from the American Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington to which I belong. Yes, the Canadian Reformed sent an American Reformed delegate. That can happen—legitimately—as you may know, because the federation of Canadian Reformed Churches consists also of four congregations, who by simple geographical necessity must call themselves American Reformed. We in Lynden are, needless to say, thankful members of the Canadian Reformed federation of churches.

In spite of this delegative anomaly, thank you for your gracious hospitality and kind reception. Special thanks to the congregation in Hastings, Rev Bruce Hoyt, and the Willem and Helen vanderWerff family for making it so good to be here in your midst.

It was good to meet Rev Bruce Hoyt at our Synod Smithers in 2007, though it was a brief meeting. It was especially good to hear from him about the Lord's work in his churches here and to also hear of your strong desire for us to accept your invitation to enter into a sister church relation. In his address to our synod, among the many instructive and important things Rev Hoyt mentioned there was the brief but not forgotten description of a nearby well-known island country in which I spent the first years of my life. The description went like this: "that dry and dreary island west of us." Having lived in that place so-described in my early years I don't recall it was quite that way. But, then, living there in those early years of my life I cannot say I ever knew much about this "lush greenery" (Rev Hoyt's words) of your island country lying east of that dry and dreary island west of here. Much less did I know about the churches here.

I first became aware of, and perhaps I could say encountered, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand during my years at the Theological College in Hamilton, in Ontario Canada. In our class was a fellow-student who came from New Zealand, from your churches. It is a dubious exercise to try to get an impression of a whole group through only one representative. But if, perchance, he was representative, that's where I first learned to know you.

That means you are at the very least these things: very intense and keen, knowledgeable, very lively and animated, and endearing Reformed New Zealanders, who also make good music and like driving large American cars.

About learning to know a whole group through only one representative: surely my fellow-student in Hamilton was an exception in being able to represent you so well. The norm in these things would be different. Certainly, one person can learn a lot about a whole group of people, or churches, if many from that group are together in one place. But it will be a challenge to learn all the things you want to know about a whole group of people, or churches, when there is only one of that group present. That needs to be said in this context: It will by its nature be quite difficult to hear and know all the Canadian Reformed Churches in one delegate. From your point of view my presence here is far more symbolic than substantive. If you want to know things about us or hear things from us about certain matters, it will be better to hear from committees or synods. It may be even better, and nicer, to visit

us—and you are most welcome to do so. From my point of view being in your midst will be informative and substantive. Your congregations are all represented here in one place with many delegates. It is possible to receive a true impression and to be impressed by the Lord's work, the gift of his grace and Spirit, in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. It is instructive and a blessing to be among you here.

There can be a number of things safely said about the Canadian Reformed Churches that we might call 'the data.' Though to put it like that is certainly not intended to reduce the Lord's gracious and powerful work to a spreadsheet.

Some of these things can be found also in Rev Hoyt's report on his visit to Canada.

Briefly, the following from the 2008 Yearbook of the Canadian Reformed Churches: the churches number 54, four of these churches are in the United States. The total membership stands just over 16,500. There are 70 ministers, 13 of which are retired. The theological college in Hamilton has 6 professors. There are also four foreign missionaries and three home missionaries. In most of the churches the parents are able to use well-established Christian schools for the education of their children. There is a teachers college in Hamilton. Homes for those with special needs and for the elderly have been set up in a few places.

Since the institution of the first Canadian Reformed Church in 1950, the Lord has blessed the churches in many ways. And though it is clear that the Canadian Reformed Churches have through many years of their history leaned on and benefited from the church roots and connections in the Netherlands, it can be said that today the churches and members really find their identity and take their place more naturally and deliberately within the North American society.

But, then, at the same time it must be acknowledged that the churches face the hard challenges of that same culture and society in which they have their place, and must constantly stand firm against the spirit of unbelief and godlessness in its various manifestations. For this, we need to stand together in the truth of God's Word, and see the necessity and desirability to stand together with others nearby and far off who proclaim and confess the same truth.

If we look at the development of this, one of our most recent relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship, there is something remarkable about it. Here we are in 2008. It took a relatively short period of time to seal this relationship. There were some personal contacts over the years, but, as far as I could tell, nothing official until 2002. In 2007 we entered into ecclesiastical fellowship with you.

From the point of view of historical observation this short time-frame is rather unusual for us.

But, then, it also may say something about Canadian Reformed developments. If you look through the Acts of Canadian Reformed synods over the years, and the reports to those synods, you will see a lot of attention given to relationships with other federations of churches. It is clear that there has always been a desire to seek fellowship in organized form with others in the Lord. It is probably also clear from the dealings of our synods that we take those relationships quite seriously; because we know from our own federative experience that strong coherence in the truth is so valuable and also mutually influential. Relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship, just as relationships between churches within the same federation, mean something. They ought to be meaningful.

Looking through the Acts of our synods you will see, then, that the Canadian Reformed Churches do not only have long reports to synods, and long discussions at synod about these things, but have rather long time periods to come into relations of ecclesiastical fellowship. Why exactly that has been the case may depend on each different relationship. But with you the time has been short.

Perhaps this is some indication that our strong sense of federative identity—which over the years has offered us a relatively high level of internal coherence, but which may also have slowed our ability to enter into relations with other churches—has turned the corner sufficiently for us to see a bit quicker the more essential ecclesiastical identity which churches of the Lord all over the world share across federative lines. And we, for our part, need to keep seeing that: any church's federative identity should serve only to promote and foster each church's—and in turn the whole federation's—biblical catholic ecclesiastical identity and vision.

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In light of the importance we see in, and the energy and time we devote to relations of ecclesiastical fellowship, it will not surprise you too much to see how Synod Smithers attached an accompanying word to the acceptance of your invitation to us. Yes, we delight to join with you in ecclesiastical fellowship. And we thank the Lord for what he has given in this. But knowing how we, like you, value this bond of fellowship, and how we both expect it to be meaningful, you will understand that we must bring in from two sides respectively our other relations of ecclesiastical fellowship. That is, our relation with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and yours with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia.

It is because of our meaningful relation of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Free Reformed Churches that we stand with them in their concern regarding your relation with the Christian Reformed Church—and we urge you to continue to hear them on this. We know that you will, being fully convinced that you wish not just to add the Free Reformed Churches as a name on a list, but to have them as a federation with which you can enjoy meaningful and mutual encouragement and watchfulness in the truth in this hemisphere and on that earlier described island to the west of you.

At the same time, and on the other hand, it is because we know you are serious about your relations of ecclesiastical fellowship that we must let you do your work with the Christian Reformed Church in such a way that you are faithful to them and to your commitments to them. This is your duty in this relationship which you did establish under the eyes of the Lord of the church. Precisely because we do know what ecclesiastical fellowship means, we cannot ask you to do anything less than pursue the course on which you once began.

May the Lord give willing spirits, insight, discernment, diligence, and mutual understanding in the truth to come to a blessed conclusion on the issues which keep your relation with the Christian Reformed Church under strain.

May you also find ways to encourage the Free Reformed Churches to bear with you patiently while you do this necessary work, as you both seek the Lord's blessing of good fruit on your efforts. Every relationship, also ecclesiastical relationship, has at least two requirements: patience and direction. No relationship stands still—it is going somewhere; and time will tell.

Brothers, may the Lord bless your ongoing work at synod this week, and may he richly bless his churches in New Zealand. May he prosper the service of the office bearers and richly equip all the members in the local churches that you may be an effective instrument in his hands and a shining witness of the gospel in this island nation. May the Lord also bless your relations with other church federations, including now the sister church relation which we are allowed to enjoy with you. May this relation prove to be the Lord's tool in the advance of the gospel of his Son both at home in the congregations and abroad in the mission fields.

I have brought with me a letter prepared and signed by the clerk of Synod Smithers, who is also now the secretary of the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, Rev Rob Schouten.

Mr. Chairman, I deliver this letter to you on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches, according to the mandate of Synod Smithers.

Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad
of the Canadian Reformed Churches

Rev. Rob Schouten
2469 267th Street
Aldergrove, B.C.
Canada V4W 2Y2

604-607-7974
rob.schouten@telus.net

August 26, 2008

To the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Dear brothers in Christ:

On behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches, we hereby send our greeting to you as sister churches of Christ in New Zealand.

We were very grateful to receive Rev. Bruce Hoyt as a fraternal observer at our most recent Synod held in Smithers, British Columbia in May 2007 and are glad that we may now send Rev. Bill Wielenga as a fraternal delegate to your Synod.

As you know, Synod Smithers 2007 of the Canadian Reformed Churches decided to "recognize that the RCNZ is a faithful church of God" and also "to accept the invitation of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to enter into a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship according to the established rules."

We are very thankful for the faithfulness of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and it is our prayer that our new relationship may enable us to help and encourage each other in fulfilling the calling we have received from our Saviour. In particular, we are hopeful that making our relationship official will promote cooperation in the work of mission.

In its deliberations Synod Smithers took note of the concern of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia about the relationship of the RCNZ with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia. Since this church body has a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church of North America, we share the concern of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

As we live in North America, we are close witnesses of the Christian Reformed Churches and we believe that their current decline into forms of theological liberalism is a danger not only for their own churches but also for their sister churches such as the CRC Australia. Already, approximately 100 congregations have seceded from the Christian Reformed Churches of North America because of its loss of confessional integrity as manifested, for example, in giving permission and encouragement to ordain women in all the offices of the church. We trust that you will continue to watch this situation closely.

It is our prayer that that God would guide you in your deliberations and bless your decisions as Synod. May the Lord enable you to remain immovable and steadfast in your convictions concerning the truth which we have received in Holy Scripture.

Yours in Christ

Rev Rob Schouten
Secretary

Appendix 3

Greetings to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand at Their Synod of 2008.Hastings 6-12 September 2008



Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

**Mail:
3833**

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**PO Box 579 Springwood
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Brethren,

I would like to thank you for your kind invitation and for the opportunity to fellowship with you, and to personally bring a greeting from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

I must admit to a little confusion as to having *fraternal* relations with *sister* churches, and I fall back on the scriptural truth that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all one in Christ Jesus. We look to a strengthening of the bond of fellowship “across the ditch” as time and opportunity permits. We thank the Lord for like-minded brothers and sisters, whilst recognizing the uniqueness of our respective countries, cultures and Christian heritage.

I note from the PCEA Inter-Church Relations Report to our Synod 2008 that we gave five lines to the RCNZ, and that your reports for 2008 give about the same to the PCEA. I would see that this as a very positive comment on the good relationships that have developed between our two churches, especially as we look at issues being struggled through with others.

We have certainly benefited from your brethren visiting our synods and it has been good to build friendships through informal contact at other meetings like the Banner of Truth Conferences. I would also acknowledge the good fellowship, interaction and help your students provided for our Geelong congregation, especially whilst it was vacant.

It would be good if you could let folk from within your congregations, who plan to study, work or move to Australia, know that they should be able to find a happy home in any of the PCEA congregations; and we would be happy to reciprocate with any of our folk who might come to New Zealand.

We at the PCEA can sympathise with your need for more ministers of the Word. I note the comment of your Deputies for Students for the Ministry that you re “critically short of pastors”. For many years we have been dependant on finding men from outside the church and from overseas. Of our current ministers only two have grown up within the church although a number have come from our sister church in Scotland.

Whilst both of our churches have a shortage of ministers it is nonetheless encouraging to note the continued outward focus and interest in the wider work of the Gospel through mission work. We follow your mission work in Papua New Guinea, South East Asia and Uganda with interest. Whilst the

PCEA continues to support its traditional mission fields in South Africa, India, Peru and Christian Witness to Israel, our major focus for the past decade has been in mission to Australian Aborigines. I'm now in my twelfth year seconded to work as the General Director of Australian Indigenous Ministries. There are many needs and opportunities for well qualified and gifted missionaries to serve with AIM, for short-term mission, and for participation in mission awareness tours.

For many years we sought to develop a Reformed witness in Fiji and there remains a lot of potential for us to work together in the Pacific area, and, I would think, particularly in cooperation with missions committee of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

I'd encourage your people to have a look at our website, www.pcea.org.au and get to know us a little better. Our church magazine, the Presbyterian Banner, is freely available there for download.

May I wish you every blessing in the Lord as you continue to faithfully serve Him. It is with great pleasure that I formally extend the fraternal greetings of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to this Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Rev Trevor Leggott
Clerk of Synod

Appendix 4

Greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

Thank you Mr. Moderator

Beloved Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is a great joy for me to address you this morning on behalf of the URCNA (United Reformed Churches of North America). I am a member of the CECCA (Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad) and heartily accepted the invitation to attend your Synod and bring you greetings from our federation of churches. We are grateful to our heavenly Father to be able to say that we share our allegiance to the historic reformed faith and that our churches are actively engaged in the work of the Great Commission, both in our own backyards and in various places around the world. I am impressed and thankful for your careful deliberation on important issues, for your knowledge of us and the broader Reformed world, and for your commitment to the Biblical and Reformed faith.

Many back in New Jersey, including my wife and daughter, have asked me why it is important for us as federations to enter into these kinds of relationships and to invest money in maintaining them: does it really mean anything at all or is it just a way for me to get a free ticket to New Zealand? I've thought about that question over the past couple of months. I was drawn your to Paul's closing words in Romans 16 and 2 Timothy 4, words expressing deep and intimate fellowship but also a sharing of great trials and suffering.

We have friends in the church that encourage and refine us on a close, daily basis - we live and struggle and rejoice together. But it is often the case that conversation with distant friends, with those outside of our own circles, traditions and cultures, can be just as beneficial for our spiritual growth and maturity. We look to you, our international brothers, to help us in the battle against our common enemy, to fill in the gaps in our vision and gifts, to assist us in defending the faith, and to join with us, as we are able, in carrying out the Great Commission around the world; and we would like to be a help to you as well. In a more general way, we enjoy our closer relationship as a way of anticipating our upcoming worship together in the presence of Christ in the age to come (I won't offer any thoughts as to whether we will be playing baseball or cricket there)

Let me give you a few details about the URCNA. We number about 90 churches across Canada and the United States, with concentrations in Michigan, IN/IL/IA, California, Alberta and Ontario. We total about 20000 souls. We have a number of church plants in California, Iowa, Toronto, PEI, and New York. We are actively involved in calling and supporting missionaries to serve in international fields such as San Jose, Costa Rica, India, Mexico and to various countries in South America.

The URCNA is a very young federation in comparison to you, the OPC and the CanRC, so our relationship is also in its younger stages.. Since 2001 we have been drawing closer together as federations. We happily received your delegates at our past two Synods and were glad to speak as a committee last year with Rev. Kloosterman. At Synod 2007, we unanimously agreed to enter into what is our first stage of an ecumenical relationship: Ecumenical Contact. Based on our growing appreciation for each other, we foresee a move to our second and last stage, Ecumenical Recognition, at our next Synod in 2010. This would move us towards a recognition of a deep trust and appreciation between our two federations as well as a deeper commitment to assisting each other and a greater accountability between each other.

The URCNA does not have an official seminary. Our students for the ministry are supervised by their local councils and, after passing their candidacy examination, are declared candidates for a call by their own consistory. Currently, most of our new ministers are being trained at two seminaries: Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, IN, and Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, CA. Many of the professors at these two institutions are URCNA ministers themselves. We currently have

a surplus of ministers and candidates, with only about six vacancies (sadly, we have a recent vacancy with one of our ministers dying suddenly of a heart attack) and at least six candidates without calls. We have sent two to you and recently two to the CanRC. It seems to me that the RCNZ would be well served by approaching students in North American seminaries and educating them on the pressing needs in NZ and Australia. Seminary can be a fruitful time for discovering the direction of one's ministerial gifts and for forming an idea of how best to focus those gifts in regard to current needs.

The URCNA has a number of standing committees, including the Church Order, Theological Education, and SongBook Committees. The latter committee, like yours, involves a long but necessary process as we need our own unique Songbook rather than remain dependent on CRC Publications. The new book will contain new and old psalms and hymns, as well as our approved confessions and forms. We also currently have two synodical committees serving Synod 2007. The profession of faith committee will seek to give our churches some advice with regard to what level of understanding of the reformed church and our confessions should be required before visitors can be received as members. The Federal Vision committee has been charged with giving our federation's official response to a particular movement which has been troubling North American churches. The issues involves confusing and erroneous teachings on justification, the covenant, the church and the sacraments.

We are faced in America, and I know you are as well in New Zealand, with a post-modern swell against objective truth. Someone had a license plate in California that read like this: "There is no right and wrong; only fun and boring." Groucho Marx once quipped, "These are my principles and if you don't like them...well, I have others..." Os Guinness, in his book *A Time for Truth*, outlines the growing challenges to the church in defending the faith in this culture. However, he concludes like this - "But the darkest night is just before the dawn: the opportunity to speak and live the TRUTH. In terms of distance, the pigsty is the farthest point from home; in terms of time, the pigsty is the shortest distance to dad's house." Instead of compromising the Scriptural call to preach the Word faithfully, to catechize our children, to defend the truth, to worship in Spirit and in truth, the Reformed churches must stand ready to provide the real and lasting answers to the questions and struggles of the human heart, to provide the bread and water to those thirsting for the truth, for hope, for forgiveness, for life. We are glad that we, together with you, by God's grace, have the privilege of holding out the true Bread and the Living Water, the Lord Jesus Christ. We urge you to continue to stand firm on the foundation of the Word of God.

On a personal note, let me thank you for your wonderful welcome and hospitality shown to my wife and I. It was such a privilege to worship in two of your churches and to spend time with some of your members. Thank you and be assured that we continue to pray for God's richest blessing on you and the churches you serve.

Pastor Mark Stewart
Covenant Reformed Church (URCNA)
Newton, NJ

Appendix 5

Greetings from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Address to Synod RCNZ 2008

By Aart Plug, delegate of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Mr Chairman, esteemed delegates and guests, brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's a special pleasure to be standing before you today. Not just because I'm feeling a great deal better than I was a few days ago – and I want to thank you for your prayers and concern in this regard – but also and especially for the fact that we, as brothers and sisters (I mention sisters also, because this is a gathering of churches, and we too represent all of our members) may meet, express the unity of faith that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, and work from that unity.

In 2006, our Synod decided to *“authorize two delegates to attend the next Synod of the RCNZ, in order to convey greetings and discuss matters of mutual interest”*. And we are very pleased and thankful for your invitation that we could do just that. You have made us feel exceptionally welcome, we are able to have many heart-to-heart conversations with you, and the sense of unity in faith and brotherhood in Christ is stronger than ever. At least, that's the way we experience it.

So that's what we'd like to do to begin with. It's our great joy, and pleasure, to convey heartfelt greetings from brothers and sisters on the other side of the Tasman. We thank the Lord for the bond of faith and faithfulness that exists between us, and we pray that the time we spend as guests among you may strengthen and deepen that bond.

In 2006, together with Rev Joe Poppe, I had the privilege and pleasure of visiting a number of your congregations: attending worship services, speaking at congregational meetings, meeting consistories and ordinary church folk, asking and answering questions. It was a marvellous opportunity to get to know you; for me, also, it adds an extra dimension to our conversations here at your Synod. What struck us then, and still strikes us today, is your strong desire to live faithfully as Reformed Christians in the world, and for the world. Faithful to Scripture, faithful to the Reformed Confessions, and faithful to the tasks the Lord has given to you in this country. And we can learn a great deal from that.

At the same time, there is that sticking point. We see a heartfelt and mutual recognition as true and faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ; we acknowledge that we have a great deal to learn from each other, and can mean a great deal to each other; you would think that the obvious and natural next step would be to enter into a full sister relationship. You have invited us to do that, and yet we have not seen our way clear to accepting that invitation.

And here again I'd like to go back to the decision made by our last synod, and I quote:

“...reassuring the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them, but the matter of a triangular relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.”

Brothers, this is a difficult matter for us. On the one hand, we acknowledge that you have a deep and lasting relationship with the CRCA. You have obligations within that relationship, obligations that you cannot simply walk away from, and we honour and respect that. We also know that you have displayed the utmost integrity in carrying that relationship forward, sending a clear Biblical and confessional message, and doing what you can to encourage your sister to return to the path of faithfulness. The relevant items on the agenda of this Synod are testimony to that. We don't want you to stop doing that. On the contrary – and again, in line with the decision of our Synod: we encourage you to continue to use every opportunity available to you to admonish the CRCA, wherever and in whatever way you believe is necessary.

On the other hand, we find ourselves in a situation where we have a bond of churches living on our doorstep. Over the years, we have made a number of attempts to build closer relations with them, none of which have been successful, and the prospect of coming to a fraternal bond seems more

remote now than it has been for a long time.

For us, the consensus position is that *in this circumstance*, a triangular relationship (The RCNZ maintaining sister relations with the CRCA and the FRCA, but the FRCA and the CRCA not having a mutual bond) would not be something we that can live with. Is this a satisfactory situation? Anything but. Are we happy about it? Of course not. We recognize the sadness and disappointment on your part that we seem to be unable to make progress at that level, and we have understanding for the fact that you are not convinced that we have sufficient reason for the stand we have taken. But please accept from us that at this point we cannot, in good conscience, see our way clear to doing anything else.

So, where does that leave us? Again, I'd like to refer to the decision our Synod has made. There are things we can and should be doing together which do not require a formal sister relationship, and our Synod has explicitly acknowledged that, and urged our churches to take advantage of opportunities placed before us in this regard. We think of cooperative ventures in mission work – and in this connection we are deeply appreciative of and encouraged by brother Van Garderen's remark last night "the most meaningful exercise of ecumenical relations is in the field of mission." As an example of such cooperation I'd like to point to the shared responsibility we already have for the Reformed Bible College in PNG. It hasn't been explicitly mentioned in your reports, but we have provided a significant financial contribution to the establishment of the College; we have representation on its Board of Governors; and members of our mission team serve regularly as lecturers at the college.

I also think of opportunities we have to work together in education, and perhaps, in the longer term, in theological training. Most of our congregations already have simplified procedures to receive your members, and we strongly encourage our members, if they should wish to move to New Zealand, to join yours. In the past few years, we have been able to welcome a number of your teachers to work at our schools, and they are making a welcome and high-quality contribution. And I understand that in this regard the traffic has not been entirely one-way, either.

We do see positives, brothers, and we ask you to see them as well. We pray that the Lord will use the good things that are happening for the spread of His gospel, the promotion of His Kingdom, and the glory of His name. Please work with us, with faithfulness and integrity, and leave further progress in the hands of our faithful God. He is greater than any of us, and He is able to make ways where we cannot.

At this point, our closest links are with the Canadian/American Reformed Churches and with the GKN, largely due to our historical associations. Since at this point we are unable to sustain our own training for the ministry, we support the Theological College of our Canadian sister churches in Hamilton, Ontario. Most of our student ministers receive their training there, and we in turn draw our own stock of serving ministers from its graduates. In this connection, I cannot help but think about the discussion you had yesterday about your own provision for training for the ministry. Would it be out of order for us to recommend the Hamilton Theological College as a place to train your young men to be ministers and missionaries?

Our churches are increasingly active in supporting the ministry of the gospel throughout the world. We support a missionary team in Lae, PNG, and as I already mentioned, provide support for the Reformed Bible College in Port Moresby, PNG. One of our congregations supports a missionary in mainland China, others are supporting evangelists on the island of Sumba in Indonesia. With the support of local consistories, members of our churches are busy in outreach within our own home communities, through radio broadcasts, drop-in centres, an information stall, a Christian bookshop, and lately a local food bank.

An increasing number of brothers and sisters have involved themselves in a range of activities of Christian service in the world. We think of projects undertaken by some of our young people on the islands of Sumba and Timor, in Indonesia, to provide development aid at a local level. We also think of the work done by the Free Reformed World Relief Fund. It works quietly and effectively, gathering funds for disaster relief, and distributing it through reputable Christian agencies to provide help where it is most needed.

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Within our own community of churches, there have been a number of noteworthy milestones. Earlier this year, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of Reformed education in Australia. We have been enormously blessed and enriched by well-developed and well-resourced schools where covenant children are instructed within a covenant community. We have enjoyed the blessing of generous government support, with minimal intervention, and we see the gracious hand of our God in that. Just recently, we had a highly successful conference of teachers from all of the John Calvin Schools in Australia. We had the privilege of thinking together about what it means to provide schooling for our children from thoroughly Reformed foundations. And I might take this opportunity to extend our invitation to colleagues from across the Tasman to come and be our guests at the next John Calvin Schools' Teachers Conference, to be held, the Lord willing, in 2010.

Within our community, the Lord has given us to provide an aged-care facility, as well as a group home for brothers and sisters with a range of disabilities. These organizations are well-supported by our members, and provide tangible evidence of our care for each other within the household of faith.

I think I'll bring this talk to a close. Brothers and sisters, we confess *that the Son of man from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends and preserves, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life.* To know that gives enormous comfort and assurance. To experience that is a blessing for which it is difficult to find the right words. Thank you so much for your invitation and your hospitality. May our Lord richly bless you as a community of faith, and may we all together be strengthened as we serve Him faithfully, waiting for the return of our saviour on the clouds of heaven.

Thank you.

Appendix 6

Greetings from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Rev. Geoff MacPherson brought greetings from the church and read out the letter from the Moderator Rev. Andrew Young

6th September 2008

Greetings Brothers,

I am sorry that I am not able to be at your Synod in person. Geoff Macpherson will substitute well, I know. At his suggestion, I take this opportunity to send you greetings as Moderator of the Grace Presbyterian Church.

We were encouraged to receive Revs. Dirk van Garderen and Robert van Wichen at our recent General Assembly in Christchurch. Dirk shared with us ongoing moves in your churches toward closer ties with our Church, and the prospect of some wider association of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand. That heartens us.

The need to look beyond our own specific denominational interests for the sake of the Church of Christ in our land was highlighted in a visit I made to Owaka this past weekend. In the course of conversation I learned that there are five Protestant and ostensibly evangelical groups in Owaka – the PCANZ congregation (30-35 attendees), the Catlins Evangelical Church (30), Baptist (12), Anglican (7) and Brethren (5). None have established ministries, yet all continue to meet most Sundays. Congregations seem overjoyed if they can have pulpit ministry, but exist from week to week without any consistent shepherding or instruction.

While I know there is no easy solution to declining congregations in isolated areas, this situation does highlight the great need there is for biblical ministry in our land today. And it reinforces the need to cooperate wherever we can to provide that ministry. At a local level we enjoy that cooperation in the sense that we are blessed to have the Schoutens in our congregation. The oneness of heart we enjoy with them is indicative of how close our churches are together and how well we can work together in basic matters of the gospel.

So I would seize this moment to encourage you from a distance to keep “the welfare of Zion” in our land much in your hearts as you meet in your Synod. The Lord bless you in the deliberations week, and even more so in the regular life and witness of your churches through the year ahead.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Andrew Young

Appendix 7

Greetings from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Fraternal Greetings to RCNZ Synod 2008

Thank you brothers for the invitation to be represented here as fraternal delegates of the CRCA. It is a joy to be here and to meet up with all of you in the RCNZ and to be reminded again how much we share as partners in Gospel ministry.

I made an address a week or so ago in order to raise issues. Now that I am here I feel different! That's how it is. We can generalize, theorize and criticize across the Tasman, but when we meet face to face with brothers in the faith, all the issues take on a different dimension!

I bring you good wishes and greetings on behalf of CRCA. We pray for the blessing of the Lord on all the deliberations during this week. We trust that as a result of your week together there will be greater clarity on the issues that need resolution and a firmer commitment to follow the call of the Lord to be his instrument of blessing in this nation.

Our two churches we face many similar issues. Let me give you a brief picture of where we are and what has occurred over the last number of years. It is not a story of triumph, of great successes and significant growth. But I can tell you of the triumphs of God's grace in the life of the CRCA.

For some years prior to 2005 we witnessed a decline in our membership. There are many reasons for that. Some left because they found it difficult to accept changes that occurred particularly in liturgy and worship practices. Others found the changes too slow. Some committed young people left to go elsewhere where they sensed a greater freedom and involvement in ministry of their new church. Some have given up on a worshipping community altogether.

That decline has stabilized over the last number of years, in part due to the influx of many brothers and sisters from South Africa. But beyond that the CRCA has gained a new cohesion with a renewed focus on mission and church growth. More and more of our churches are intentionally creating an emphasis on evangelism and outreach and, with the blessing of the Lord, we are beginning to see results.

Like most churches, we are struggling with the tension between being biblical and contemporary. In some ways we all find it easier to be biblical (according to our understanding) than to be contemporary. Yet, we have to be both. In other words, we face the tension between our self-identity and relevance. That is why so many congregations have been busy formulating mission and vision statements. They want to know what the church is supposed to be and do in this world in this twenty-first century. While there is value in reappraising where we are and what we must do, we must of course value and retain continuity with the past.

In the meantime, our struggles are occurring against the background of a lack of candidates for ministry. In that regard, we are in the same boat. We are both struggling to fill vacant pulpits. It means that we all have to be more proactive in encouraging men to train for this task and at the same time project a positive image of the ordained ministry. If ordained ministry is going to be seen as heavy burden to bear rather than a meaningful, fulfilling and joyful service, don't be surprised if young men are not coming forward!

At the local level there are significant initiatives in training men and women for non-ordained ministry. There are also efforts and initiatives to use local church-based training as a spring-board to advanced, academic theological training. Right across the board, there is a desire to train men and women for ministry!

Our 2006 Synod was very encouraging in its support for theological education at a high level and encouraging the churches to make greater use of the facilities we have in Geelong.

At a time when the structures of the church don't function the way they used to, there is ongoing debate and refocusing with an increasing emphasis on the centrality of the Gospel and the need for outreach and church growth. Those churches that are focusing on the proclamation of the Gospel and are willing to leave behind some unhelpful traditions/practices and ways of being the church are having an impact on society.

What has become clear to us that for all of us as churches, it is not 'business as usual'; our world has changed, our culture is changing and within certain limits, we are changing as well. But our commitment to Scripture and Confessions is as strong as ever.

At a time when the activities of the church are focused on 'church growth and the advance of the Gospel, is there still an interest in such matters as fraternal/ecumenical relations? Many of our members, I guess, feel that these kinds of relationships take up an inordinate amount of time and energy and do not really advance the cause of the Gospel.

We certainly cannot accuse you of showing no interest in fraternal/ ecclesiastical relationship. You do show a great interest; sometimes too much so for our comfort! You focus so much on us because you know us so well!

We believe that these relationships of mutual care, support and prayer are an important part of what it means to be part of the universal body of Christ.

I believe that even though at every RCNZ Synod some feel the need to declare our relationship under strain, we have a strong bond. May be, precisely because of that strong bond, some feel the need to speak of strain. While you have the right to make such a declaration, I would like to ask whether it is really helpful. When members of your church and the churches with whom you are in ecclesiastical fellowship read some of the reports and overtures, they must have severe misgivings about the CRCA. These reports and overtures create perceptions that potentially distorts the overall picture of the CRCA denomination. I find that a pity. While you believe that we are moving in a particular direction, we also see you moving in a particular way. Unless we face that issue honestly the danger is that we will move further and further apart. I would like to call upon all of us to continue finding better ways of relating and encouraging each other, especially through the Reformed Theological College and through mission/diaconal efforts.

The RCNZ and CRCA are not identical. We never have been and I guess we will never be. If it is the expectation that we see eye to eye on every issue, our relationship will continue to be marked by ongoing and increasing strain as indicated by some of the overtures that will be dealt with later.

The CRCA has significant diversity in its ranks. But when it comes to questions of biblical truth we are no less concerned that to be faithful than you are.

Whatever the case, we all need a greater degree of modesty...and kindness. None of us has 20/20 vision. Where there is departure from biblical truth we are duty-bound to hold each other accountable. On many other issues, we should feel no compulsion to tell the other how wrong they are! I think that is part of a mature relationship.

We would love to be able to go home at the end of this week and report to our churches that the strain that has inhibited our relationship for so long has eased or has been lifted!

Let me also remind you that you face bigger issues than your relationship with CRCA. I am hoping that the various aspects of that relationship are not going to take an inordinate amount of synod's time. We need to lift our eyes and look at the bigger picture. We are living in an increasingly godless world where the Gospel is desperately needed. In the face of that challenge we are to stand as one for the sake of the Gospel. Hear these words of Paul

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...., I will know that you stand firm in **one spirit, contending as one man** for the faith of the gospel. Philip.1:27*

We are grateful for the RCNZ, what she stands for, her love of truth and commitment to the Scriptures and the desire to **spread** of the Gospel.

We have a long relationship of mutual care and mutual concern. We wish that relationship to continue

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and to flourish.

What about the journey ahead? We cannot tell. We are still on the way. But we look forward to the city whose builder and maker is God. In the meantime, there are threats and challenges, but we face these in the sure confidence of God's covenant faithfulness and the certainty of the final destination.

On behalf of the CRCA, I wish you all the Lord's strength for that journey. May you travel in joy, in hope and love.

Henk DeWaard
Fraternal Delegate
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Appendix 8

Greetings of the GKSA (Reformed Churches in South Africa)

INTRODUCTION

I would like to thank you on behalf of the Reformed Churches in South Africa for your invitation to send delegates to your synod.

This is my first visit to your beautiful country and, of course then, to the RCNZ. Thank you for your hospitality, getting me at the airport at a very inconvenient time, all the arrangements and the accommodation. A special word of thanks to my hosts - Jaïr and Lourette Duinkerke.

Accept the appreciation of our Churches for the fact that you sent a delegate, Rev John Rogers, to our synod of 2006.

Also, thank you, for your participation through Rev Paul Archbaldt's presence at the congress this year that was initiated by our Reformed Theological Association on the subject of women in office.

If the Lord wills, our churches will be 150 years old next year. We not only plan to have our fiftieth Synod in January 2009, but it also will be the first General Synod for all the church groupings of the RCSA.

That means that the 301 churches which are historically Afrikaans speaking will hold a Synod together with the 124 churches which have other African languages as their mother tongue. The membership of the Afrikaans speaking churches is currently round about 88 000.

As part of the celebrations we plan to have an international Reformed Conference on the theme of *Reformed Identity World Wide*. You are most welcome to send one or more representatives to the Synod and to the Conference just afterwards.

SITUATION IN THE GKSA

If I have to say something on the situation in our Churches, I can not do so without saying something about the situation in our country.

You are certainly aware of the fact that we have to deal with a lot of crime, especially violent crimes, in South Africa. I think it is one of the main reasons for people leaving the country nowadays. Theft is seen as a minor thing, because there are daily cases of armed robberies, attacks, rapes and brutal murders. The amount of violence of these cases makes no sense.

The barbaric attacks on foreigners earlier this year made news headlines all around the world. People were set on fire alive. Whatever the reasons were for the attacks, it showed the low regards for human lives.

In these circumstances our Churches have to bring a message of hope and perspective to people who are traumatized in the conditions in which they have to live and work everyday.

Many people (including members of our Churches) have left our country. Some because of experiences they had. Others because they no longer see a future for them and their children in South Africa. Others are afraid that the situation will deteriorate to the same levels as in Zimbabwe.

Each time you hear of someone who is going, especially those you had to minister to and care for, you have concerns about them. It is then a great comfort to know that we have close relations with other reformed churches around the world; that we could send them with an attestation and trust that they will be taken care of spiritually in their circumstances as immigrants, many with unresolved trauma, by our own brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have much to learn from each other on the matter of living as Christians in a secular society.

Our government is in the process of passing legislation which have the objective, according to them, to lift up the morals and values of children at school. The legislation involves the taking of an oath by the

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children that they will uphold certain values.

We have concerns about this proposed legislation and have made it known through our deputies for Christian education. It is a question whether or not you are going to teach children values by forcing them to take an oath, something for which they need values in the first place to do. Also, the Lord told us to be very careful when it comes to taking oaths.

As Reformed Churches in South Africa we now have to equip our children on something that is in the curriculum of the schools, that was not there for many years, namely evolutionism. We have to guide them and teach them to give informed answers to this atheistic worldview. What is positive about this equipping, is that it forced us also to equip ourselves in this area as well as the adult members of our congregations.

One of the concerns of the RCNZ regarding our Churches is our position on women in the office of deacon. As you know, our Churches decided on our synod of 2003 that women may serve in the office of deacon.

On the table of our synod of 2006 there were a number of gravamen against this decision. The first one of these was discussed, voted on, and passed.

The implication of the succeeding of the gravamen was that our Synod of 2003 should not have decided that women may serve in the office of deacon. The Synod of 2006 appointed deputies to advise our Synod of 2009 on the matter of women in the office of deacon.

We ask for your continuing prayer and insights in this regards.

GREETINGS

With this I hoped to shown that our relationship with your Churches is not something that we just value in theory.

It is my sincere prayer that God will lead and guide you in this Synod and also afterwards so that through your Churches the light of His Word will keep shining in this part of the world and that God will keep using your Churches in the coming of His Kingdom.

Rev ASA de Bruyn

Appendix 9

Greetings from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Lib). (GKNv)

Brother Moderator, dear brothers and sisters

It pleases me – as minister in the Groninger city of Hoogezand-Sappemeer – it pleases me no end to have several earlier speakers glory in their association with the famous Groninger Abel Tasman.

New Zealanders, Americans, Australians here gathered: I hope you enjoyed your moment of glory. But please never forget the most basic fact: your Abel Tasman hails from the village of Lutjegast, a stone's throw (by New Zealand standards) from where I am privileged to serve.

Which puts me a few thousand kilometers closer than you to one of your spiritual forebears, John Knox.

Which may explain why none of you during your discussions to this point referred to this great reformer. It would have been helpful to know that Knox did not operate on a two-office view: of elders and deacons; or even a three-office view: of ministers, elders and deacons. But on no less than a six-office view, initially. Ministers, elders, deacons, doctors of theology, readers and superintendents. John Knox would perhaps have told you that the administration of the the sacraments is indeed tied to the ministry of the word, but that *therefore* those called by session appointment to the office of 'reading' would clearly – if not ordinarily – by that fact also be authorized to baptize and officiate at the Lords's table.

I'm not sure what he would have said about who might be appointed as church visitor. But note that he did consider it a distinct ecclesiastical office: he called it 'superintendence', which at the very least says something about the high responsibility he held it to contain.

And you will of course not have forgotten that the Synod of Dort was as international as this present great Synod of Hastings.

Attended, among others, by three of Knox's Scottish successors. And that Synod of Dort established your present Church Order. Overcoming the reluctance of several regional Synods, Dort underscored the weight of church visitation by declaring that the classes should set apart for this purpose *ministers of the word*. And that those so authorized should be of the eldest, most experienced and most capable...

All of which goes to show... well, I'm not sure exactly. But definitely this: that at such places where our ecclesiastical roots coincide, the importance of not working in splendid isolation was clear to our forebears. Not at the local church level. Not at the national level. Not at the world ecumenical level. Being church *in the world* and *for the world* also implies being church *across the world*. One truly catholic church of our one Lord Jesus Christ.

Recently my wife Marijke and I were reading in the book of Acts. *The Bible* book which shows how the church was thrust upon the world stage. And we read of the conversion of Saul, man chosen by our Lord to have such a pivotal role in that process. We were struck, in that account, chapter 9, by two things said by our Lord himself. The first is in verse 4. *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?* Not: *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting my people?* Or: *Saul, Saul, why are you opposing me?* But: *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?* Both would have been appropriate. And clear enough, it seems to me. But no, our Lord goes further. What happens to his people happens to him. What is done to his church is done to him. He suffers their persecution. He and they are one.

That identification of our Lord with his church is awesome and it is humbling. For it is not only true in humiliation, it is also true in glorification. He is the head, his church is the body. He is the vine, his church the branches. Whatever the world may say, however the world may see the church: this is what He says, and this is how He sees it. From Lutjegast to Dunedin: *that all of them may be one, Father, as we are one: I in them and you in me*. That is an awesome reality to which we have been called!

But is is also humbling. For it reminds us that if our identity is not Christ, it is nothing. There is no room in the Gospel of his grace for the unbelief which separates nation from nation, ecclesiastical

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culture from ecclesiastical culture. If we cannot find and recognize each other in Christ we are truly lost.

The second word of our Lord which particularly struck us during our reading was in verse 11 and 12. *Ananias, go to the house of Judas on Straight Street, and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight...*

What struck us here? That our Lord, at this pivotal moment in church and world history, shows both Ananias and Saul, that He works through *people*. Did Jesus *need* Ananias? Could he not have answered Saul's prayer *directly*? As He had spoken *directly* to Saul on the road to Damascus? Sight to the blind. Direction for ministry. Amazing grace. Without an intermediary? To ask the question is to answer it. Of course our Lord could have. But He chose not to. Ananias had to hear it. He had to be pushed, made to overcome his reluctance, he had to cross the Straight Street and make physical contact with a man known to him only as enemy of the church. And Saul had to hear it. He had had been granted a vision while blind. Then wait for it to come true. And feel the physical touch of a brother who had come from a long way. In order that he might be what the Lord intended him to be. A Spirit-filled instrument to carry Christ's name before the Gentiles.

That too is part of the gospel truth. *I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints.* Gathered, protected and preserved by one Lord and dutybound to use its gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members. From up and down the Straight Street to both sides of the Tasman Strait.

And that is why I am here, representing your Dutch sister the Reformed Churches (Liberated). I am refraining this time from giving you an introduction to our churches. Since my previous visit in 2005 there have not been significant developments. Of course, the Lord has been good to us. And we have faced challenges and will continue to do so. Your representative at our present synod, brother Dirk van Garderen, has commented some of those in his report. We were very pleased to have him in our midst, not only at synod, but also on the pulpit. We appreciate the interest and the fellowship which his presence demonstrated.

In practical terms, can our association be translated into many tangible benefits? That would be probably be hard to demonstrate. But if we do not exercise the bond we have we will never know. I suppose you might call me a church visitor of sorts. I do not pretend to be among the eldest, the most experienced or the most capable. But here I am, authorized and willing to offer 'advice and counsel' as I can, in order that 'all things may be directed to the edification and preservation of Christ's church'. But also to be blessed with your experience and counsel, as I have been by your hospitality.

We realize that your association with the English-speaking churches here present is much more significant, in practical terms. And we would encourage you to develop and make full use of these relations. Of particular importance to us is your relationship to the FRCA. We sympathize with the concerns they have expressed, though we are not called and are not able to judge your other sister in Australia. We pray that you will find ways to advance the unity to which Christ calls us all. We would also encourage you to exploit to the full the benefits which the ICRC offers. We are immensely pleased that you will be hosting the next conference, and we wonder whether an invitation from your churches to the FRCA to return to some form of representation there might be opportune...

Brothers and sisters, with great appreciation and joy I convey to you the greetings of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. May the Lord of the Church, He whom Paul first persecuted and then received - to the benefit of many generations of believers across the world - bless you in every way as you stand in his service, together with all the saints.

Rev. Johan Plug

Appendix 10

Message to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

P.O. Box 15-129, Hamilton, New Zealand

Synodical Interim Committee

Rev. J. Rogers
Rev. D. van Garderen
P. van der Wel
Rev. A. Nugteren

Stated Clerk

P. van der Wel
P.O. Box 15-129
Hamilton
New Zealand

21 October 2008
26th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand
Convened in Hastings, New Zealand

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Buckingham Palace
London

On behalf of the 26th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand held in Hastings from 6-11 September 2008, we are writing to express our loyalty to you, our Queen.

Since our denomination was established in New Zealand some 55 years ago, God has been pleased to bless us with growth so that we now number nineteen instituted churches with three further preaching places. From a struggling immigrant church begun at great personal cost to our founding members, our churches have continued to grow both numerically, and in ethnic diversity. We also enjoy sister-church relationships with a growing number of denominations internationally and were blessed to have 10 foreign delegates address our synod. We have also been led and blessed by the Lord in an increasing number of missionary ventures in countries which include Uganda, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Pakistan, Mongolia, China and Papua New Guinea.

We want to register with you, in light of your designation as “Defender of the Faith,” our grave concern over the disturbing trend in recent legislation in our country. We believe that the legalisation of prostitution has had the effect of legalising immorality and the abuse of women. We are also disturbed at both the way the recent “anti-smacking” legislation was passed and its effect of allowing State intrusion into the task of parents. We are also concerned at the increasing godlessness of our nation and its effects – growing disrespect for authority, a growth in immorality and increasing violence in society – and we fear for the future of New Zealand.

We pray that God would continue to guide and bless you as you seek to be faithful in the task to which he has called you. We ask that you would join us in praying that God would be merciful to us in this part of your realm and that His church would increase and His rule be acknowledged by all the citizens of this fair land, all of your realm and indeed all the world.

On behalf of the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,

Chairman, Rev. J. Rogers

Clerk, Elder P. van der Wel

cc The Governor-General, Hon Anand Satyanand
Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark