

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

For the TWELFTH Synod of the  
**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Convening Monday, October 17, 2022, at 8 p.m., Eastern Daylight Time

At the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, Buffalo, New York

Ending Friday, October 21, 2022

Registration Monday, October 17, 2022, from Noon – 7:00 p.m.

Prayer Service Monday October 17, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Convened by Wellandport United Reformed Church, Wellandport, Ontario

**I. OPENING MATTERS**

- A. Meeting called to order by the convening consistory, Wellandport United Reformed Church, Wellandport, Ontario.
- B. Opening devotions
- C. Presentation of the credentials and roll call of delegates
- D. Preliminary report on the credentials by convening consistory
- E. Assent to the *Form of Subscription* by all the delegates
- F. Synod declared constituted

**II. INITIAL BUSINESS**

- A. Welcome to delegates, fraternal delegates, fraternal observers, visitors, and guests
- B. Election of officers
- C. Reception of Article 32 churches and assent by their delegates to the *Form of Subscription* – see communications 1 and 2
- D. Adopt the provisional agenda and advisory committee assignments
- E. Adopt the proposed time schedule:
  - Morning session: 8:00 a.m. to Noon
  - Lunch: Noon – 1:00 p.m.
  - Afternoon session: 1:00 – 5:30 p.m.
  - Supper: 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
  - Evening session: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. (Wednesday evening is reserved for missionary presentations.)
  - 30-minute breaks at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- F. Setting times for the special orders of the day: for fraternal delegates and observers, and for scheduled presentations or programs
- G. Newly elected officers assume their duties

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- A. Choosing the convening consistory, place, and date for the next synod
- B. Reading of concept minutes
- C. Acknowledgments
- D. Closing devotions
- E. Adjournment

## **Convening Consistory Report to Synod Niagara**

June 2018: The Council of Wellandport URC formed a committee to begin preparations for organizing Synod 2020.

July 2018: The committee held its initial meeting and discussed some of the general needs for Synod and some possible venues. Elder Dick Baarda agreed to take on the role of Chair of the committee.

August 2018: The committee met via skype with Mr. Fred Colvin, Chair of the Oak Glen Convening consistory of Synod Wheaton 2018. Mr. Colvin gave us a broad overview of the requirements for a venue. We were also informed that there would be some excess funds leftover to be sent to us.

September 2018: The Council of Wellandport URC decided on using Redeemer University as a venue for Synod 2020.

October 2018: A lease agreement for use of Redeemer University was signed.

November 2018: Our committee met with URCNA Stated Clerk Rev. Ralph Pontier, who gave us some helpful advice and suggestions on some of the duties that are required of us.

January 2019: It was decided that the name of the upcoming Synod would be Synod Redeemer 2020, to be held on June 8-13. The registration deadline was set for March 31, 2020. Some discussion was had on setting up a website as a long-term, re-usable sight for subsequent Synods. Mrs. Pam Hessels agreed to take on the role of treasurer of our committee. We received approximately \$22,000 in excess funds from Synod Wheaton, as well as lanyards from the Synod Wheaton convening consistory. We agreed to make use of digital hallway signs at Redeemer at an approximate cost of \$300.

February 2019: A “Save the Date” was sent out to the churches via the stated clerk. It was agreed to charge \$300 Cdn per table for exhibitors (\$250 U.S.).

March 2019: We received a request from the US URCNA board to distribute their minutes to the churches via the URCNA Stated Clerk. Our recommendation was to send out a report rather than the minutes.

April 2019: Liability coverage for Synod was reviewed, and a liability policy is to be extended by the current policy holder of Wellandport URC. Correspondence from CERCU was received regarding a request from the CRC executive director to consider engaging in discussions around unresolved conflicts and reconciliation between the URCNA and the CRC. Four recommendations were included in the report. We encouraged CERCU to respond in a positive manner and consider conversation using the recommendations listed.

May 2019: The Acts of Synod were received and re-packaged to be distributed to the various classis of the Federation. A request was received from Reformed Mission Services for permission to distribute a newsletter via the Stated Clerk. The committee recommended that they not distribute their newsletter via the Stated Clerk, but that they distribute it themselves using the emails available via the church website.

June 2019: Contracts were signed for various hotels in the Ancaster area. TD Bank will be used for processing payments for registration.

September 2019: Acquired addresses for the Acts of Synod to be sent to, and the Acts were distributed to the various classis of the federation. A list of questions was developed to be included in the registration forms. Information of date and location of Synod Redeemer 2020 was sent to the URCNA Stated Clerk to be forwarded to NAPARC churches. We were informed by CECCA that they would inform their own delegates of the date and location.

October 2019: Contacted Dr. David Murray and asked if he would be willing to do a presentation to Synod delegates on mental health.

November 2019: A communication was received from the Missions Committee outlining 5 proposals towards creating a broader, classical model for doing missions, and requesting feedback from the churches.

We received a request from the Missions Committee to have 2 evening presentations during Synod. We informed the committee that we would allow them one evening to speak, but not on the mission committee's proposals, as we felt this would give them an advantage that is not normally afforded with other overtures.

An appeal and a communication was received from Elder Mark Vandermolen and Rev. Doug Barnes regarding an overture from Classis Eastern U.S.

December 2019: Established approximate costs of registration for Synod delegates.

January 2020: Sent a communication to the churches via the URCNA Stated Clerk regarding registration details. Reps from both CECCA and CERCU were contacted and asked to assist in getting fraternal delegates to and from Synod.

February 2020: Finalized some matters pertaining to the website for Synod, and extended the deadline for registration of delegates to April 15. A request was received from the Missions Committee to move their presentation to Tuesday evening in order to generate better discussion for any questions and words of encouragement delegates might have for the missionaries in the following days. This presentation will focus on the reports of specific missionaries with some explanation of the current state of missions in the URCNA. This request was granted.

March 2020: Registration was opened, and an invitation for registering was communicated to all delegates via the Stated Clerk. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided to postpone Synod for one year. The decision was made on the following grounds:

- 1) The Church Order allows for it.
- 2) Postponing at this point in time would not incur significant cost.

3) The current situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic is too unpredictable.

April 2020: Upon advice from the appeals committee, the convening consistory ruled that an appeal from Mr. Henry Moes was out of order and will not be included on the agenda for Synod. The grounds for this decision were as follows:

- 1) Appeal guideline #1 requires an appellant to be a member of a church in the URCNA, which Mr. Moes is not.
- 2) The documents submitted did not meet the timeliness requirements of the Church Order and its attendant regulations. The document did not conform to the format and content requirements of Guideline #5.

Summer/Fall 2020: Discussed various options for Synod, should complications from the COVID pandemic continue into June of 2021. An update was sent to the churches listing various options that may be available for Synod, and welcoming feedback from the churches. A Federational Interim Budget for 2021 was approved (attached at the end of this report).

December 2020: Decided to delay Synod one more year to June of 2022, due to continued uncertainties around the COVID pandemic. A communication was sent out to the churches informing them of our decision.

October 2021: Sent an update to the churches via the Stated Clerk regarding changes to travel restrictions over the Canada/U.S. border. Polled the churches to gauge the ability/willingness of churches to send delegates to Synod in light of travel restrictions.

November 2021: Updated the churches on responses to the poll, indicating that roughly 30% of U.S. based congregations would not likely be able to send delegates to Synod under existing travel restrictions. A similar percentage of Canadian churches also indicated that they would be unlikely to be able to send delegates to attend a U.S. based Synod. A Federational Interim Budget for 2022 was approved (attached at the end of this report).

February 2022: Decided to postpone Synod to the fall of 2022, and began exploring options for holding Synod in the U.S. A communication was sent to the churches via the Stated Clerk, informing them of our decision.

April 2022: After exploring alternative options for hosting Synod, it was decided by the Wellandport URC Council to host Synod at the Buffalo Convention Center in Buffalo, NY. This decision was communicated to the churches via the Stated Clerk. Synod Redeemer was re-named Synod Niagara 2022.

May 2022: A contract for the Buffalo Convention Center was reviewed and signed. Fees for exhibitor tables were updated to \$300 US, or \$395 CDN.

June 2022: Agreements were made with local hotels to secure blocks of hotel rooms. An insurance policy was secured. A budget for Synod Niagara 2022 was reviewed and approved.

## **Recommendations:**

1. When we obtained the financial report for Synod Wheaton, it became apparent that, while Synod Wyoming made it mandatory that a financial report be prepared, there were no guidelines established as to what was to be contained in the report. The report prepared by Synod Wheaton lacked some of the detail that would be helpful in establishing a budget for synod.

The convening Synod committee recommends that a standardized report format be adopted. The report should contain details as to the number of attendees (preferably with the number of delegates / non-delegates indicated), revenue and expense line items with a dollar amount over \$500 given separate line items on the report, and the costs related to CERCU / CECCA guests be separated. A template of what should be included is attached to this report.

### *Grounds:*

- i. A standard report would ensure that the financial information is presented in a consistent basis (allow for better comparison of costs).
  - ii. A template would standardize what is to be included in a financial report (it is not left up to each convening committee's interpretation).
2. The convening Synod committee made the decision to invest money into the establishment of a permanent Synod website that would allow for electronic payment.

The convening Synod committee recommends that the URCNA synod website be continued to be used as a permanent Synod website.

### *Grounds:*

- i. Money will not need to be spent to establish a new website with each succeeding Synod.
  - ii. On-line payment of fees is made more feasible as the programming does not need to be redone with each Synod
3. The convening Synod committee recommends that the Synod funds be held by the Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) so that the expenses for future synods will be paid (either in the form of advances to the convening consistory or direct payments to vendors) from the JVA bank account (rather than local consistories opening bank accounts, paying for costs, and forwarding the excess to the next consistory).

### *Grounds:*

- i. Synod is a joint activity of the URCNA Federation and fits into the activities of the JVA.
- ii. The JVA is better equipped to exchange money from US to Cdn dollar (and vice versa) and to forward money across the border (accounting for funds going outside Canada after Synod is completed is problematic for Canadian churches)

- iii. The JVA is better suited to claim Canadian government rebates than the local Canadian church (easier for Canadian churches to keep the Synod recordkeeping “off the books” and not claim the rebates to avoid reporting excess funds going outside Canada).
  - iv. Future Synods are able to utilize the on-line payment system (better exchange rates can be obtained when exchanging funds; less risk of theft).
  - v. EFT allows for payments to be made directly from the JVA bank account; need for all the money to be held locally is not as necessary.
4. The Synod convening committee recommends that the JVA Treasurer be responsible for preparing the financial report for Synod and ensure any unspent money forwarded to the local consistory is returned to the JVA account.

*Grounds:*

- i. This follows with the passing of recommendation 3. If the JVA holds the funds, it is reasonable to expect that the JVA treasurer would be responsible for the recordkeeping.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Wassenaar  
Clerk of the Synod Convening Committee for Wellandport URC

United Reformed Churches in North America  
 Financial Report  
 Synod \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_, Treasurer

Beginning cash balance		\$ xx,xxx.xx A
<b>INCOME</b>		
Registration fees	# attendees: xxx	\$ xx,xxx.xx
Display fees	# displayers: xx	x,xxx.xx
Other (specify amounts > \$500):		x,xxx.xx
_____		<u>x,xxx.xx</u>
_____		<u>x,xxx.xx</u>
<b>TOTAL Income</b>		<u>\$ xx,xxx.xx B</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Meals		\$ xx,xxx.xx
Facility / meeting rooms		x,xxx.xx
Lodging		xx,xxx.xx
CERCU / CECCA guests	# attendees : xx	x,xxx.xx
Technology		x,xxx.xx
Transportation		xxx.xx
Insurance		x,xxx.xx
Office / clerical		x,xxx.xx
Other (specify amounts > \$500)		xxx.xx
_____		<u>xxx.xx</u>
_____		<u>xxx.xx</u>
<b>TOTAL Expenses</b>		<u>\$ xx,xxx.xx C</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME OVER EXPENSES</b>		<u>\$ xx,xxx.xx (B-C)</u>
<b>Ending cash balance</b>		<u>\$ xx,xxx.xx (A+B-C)</u>

Federational Interim Budget  
 Budget: Combined US and Canadian  
 In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.2879 – Cdn\$ items identified with \*\*\*)

Item	2020		2021		2022		Notes
Acts of Synod							
Bank charges	240		86		64		
Committee Expenses							
CECCA	12,500		12,500		16,000		1
CERCU	10,000		12,500		16,000		2
Missions Committee	19,000		19,000		21,000		3
PRCC liaison	500		500		500		
Directors & Liability Insurance							
Canadian board	872	*	723	**	776	***	
US board	1,000		1,000		1,000		
Dues							
ICRC	2,200		2,200		2,200		
MNA / PRCC	1,000		1,000		1,000		
NAPARC	1,000		1,000		1,000		
Government filing fee							
Canadian churches	16	*	14	**	16	***	
US churches	25		20		20		
Missions Coordinator							
Salary + benefits	96,805	*	90,283	**	100,192	***	4
Mileage	5,000		5,000		5,000		
Book fund	1,500		1,500		1,500		
Office supply	2,000		2,000		1,000		5
Travel	15,000		15,000		18,000		5
Communication / Telephone	4,000		4,000		2,000		5
Postage / supplies							
Treasurer(s)	150		136		136		
Stated Clerk	500		500		500		
Professional fees							
Canadian churches	1,981	*	1,881	**	2,096	***	6
US churches					250		6
Publications							
Liturgical Forms	5,000						
Psalter Hymnal	10,000						
Synod	4,000						
Stipends							
Treasurer(s)							
Canadian	3,963	*	3,617	**	3,882	***	
Joint	6,340	*	5,788	**	6,212	***	
US	5,000		5,000		5,000		
Clerk	5,000		5,000		5,000		

Web Master	5,000	5,000	5,000		
Statistician	2,433 *	2,315 **	2,485 ***	7	
Website		600	600	8	
	<u>219,592</u>	<u>195,248</u>	<u>215,344</u>		

Estimated “askings” / family

Cdn	45.38	44.95	44.58
US	35.11	31.39	34.93

\* In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.2618 – Cdn\$ items identified with \*)

\*\* In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.38225 – Cdn\$ items identified with \*\*)

Notes for the budget

- 1 CECCA budget was increased in 2022 to \$16,000 to reflect the increase to \$15K that was planned for Synod as well as an additional \$1K to cover PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel. Given the increase costs to travel, this increase seems prudent.
- 2 CERCUC budget was previously \$10K. The committee had planned to request an increase to \$12.5K at synod; this increase was done in 2021. The budget was increased in 2022 to \$16K to reflect additional travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel.
- 3 Missions Committee budget was increased in 2022 to \$21,000 to reflect additional travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel.
- 4 Assumed inflation rate of 2% over 2020 budget and 4% over 2021. Synod 2018 approved that the salary and benefits would increase by the rate of inflation. An additional increase was made to payroll taxes as inflation increase is not sufficient. At time of budget, the rate of inflation is an estimate; salary is adjusted to actual rate of inflation at December. The salary + benefits in Canadian dollars is \$129,003 (2021 - \$124,793).
- 5 Office supply and telephone/communication budgets were decreased by \$3K (combined) to reflect more closely the actual costs incurred each year. The travel budget was increased by \$3K to \$18K to reflect the increased travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required to travel.
- 6 Fees for external accountant increased by \$100 in 2021 and again in 2022 to cover anticipated increase in fee for the review engagement. US Board has requested \$250 to be budgeted for 2022 for their external accountant review.
- 7 Statistician stipend was set at \$3,000 Cdn. Extra \$200 is to cover payroll liabilities related to the stipend.
- 8 New websites established in 2019. New budget item for 2021 and 2022.

## **Appendix**

### **Stated Clerk's Report to Synod Niagara**

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

#### **1. The Work of the Clerk**

- a. If this report seems unduly verbose, note that one of its purposes is to equip future stated clerks. The best preparation for this position is to read the reports of all past stated clerks.
- b. The work of the stated clerk continues to increase from year to year. For six months a year, it averages about four to five hours a week dealing with email and phone inquiries, announcements, and other correspondence – mostly answering questions. For the three months before synod and three months after synod, it can average from six to ten hours a week. For comparison, in September 2018, the OPC advertised for the position of “Stated Clerk of the General Assembly” and described it as “averaging 20 hours per week.” We are not there yet, but even now I dread the thought of a full-time pastor trying to add the duties of our stated clerk to his pastoral responsibilities.
- c. I have answered numerous requests for information and referred numerous emails to the appropriate committees. I deal with about 1,200 emails a year dealing with my general duties. In July 2022 I had 63 emails just dealing with preparations for this synod. (My mail program can give me an exact count in a second.) I average 4-5 emails, six days a week, many of which require close attention, research, and a reply. That does not include the ones I trash from advertisers.
- d. In addition to daily correspondence, my two major tasks are the preparation of the acts of synod for hard copy publication, and the preparation of the agenda for the next synod. I have done this without secretarial help other than that the first clerk of synod gives me a “finished” and “official” copy of the minutes of synod which I don't need to proofread. But I must then reduce it in size to fit a 9-inch by 6-inch page for hard copy publication. Reducing the minutes is fairly easy but reducing the agenda is a tedious and time-consuming task since several pages have graphics that don't shrink well, or multiple columns that sometimes must be completely retyped and/or reformatted. Previous page breaks must be removed which sometimes causes unexpected changes in both format and text. Compiling the minutes and agenda, creating an index, and putting it all in one pdf with correct page numbers is a task of forty to eighty hours depending on the size of the agenda and the complexity of the types of pages. It is also a task that requires text editing skills for MSWord and Adobe pdf that not every computer user has. It requires a paid subscription to Adobe for editing features not available in the free version (for which I have been reimbursed). Some previous stated clerks have hired secretarial help. I have not, although my wife donates her time to proofread what I have written.

#### **2. Synod Wheaton 2018 Follow-up**

- a. After Synod Wheaton, I sent out “thank you” letters to various committees and individuals as instructed by the chairman of that synod.

- b. I informed the churches of the need to vote before December 31, 2018, on ratification of four items: the decision to enter Phase 2 with the Evangelical and Presbyterian Church of England and Wales, and to ratify three changes to the *Church Order*. All 112 churches voted (although I had to pester a few to get their vote on time). The Phase 2 ratification was unanimous. The secretary of CECCA informed the EPCEW. The CO items all received far more than the two-thirds majority required. Ballots were submitted electronically. I made hard copies and saved them.
- c. I updated the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* with the 10 changes made by Synod Wheaton and posted the new edition to the website.
- d. I updated the *Church Order*, adding the three amended articles after ratification and adding Appendix 7 *Guidelines for Appeals* and Appendix 8 *Pastoral Advice Regarding Membership Departures*.
- e. I formatted and posted on the website the *Marriage Affirmations*. I sent copies to NAPARC and the PRCC as instructed.
- f. I arranged for the publication of the *Acts of Synod Wheaton 2018* in hard copy. According to established practice, the distribution of the printed Acts was the responsibility of the next convening consistory. They sent them to each classis at the address of the classis' next venue. This worked well in most cases, except for Western Canada. The Acts were printed and sent to the convening consistory 11 months after synod (shipped May 5, 2019). However, the minutes were available for download from the website one month after synod. The Acts could have been ready six weeks sooner if I had not waited until they were ready for the printer before taking orders. That was a mistake since we could not start printing until we knew how many we needed. If given another opportunity, I'll take orders early so that does not hold up the process. The editing process was slowed by the fact that soon after receiving the official minutes from the First Clerk, I accepted three interim positions away from home, each lasting about two months with short breaks between them.

### 3. Synod Redeemer 2020

All items for the provisional agenda for the cancelled Synod Redeemer 2020 were published for the federation in April 2020 in an *Interim Report*. All the overtures and appeals of the *Interim Report* automatically carried over to the provisional agenda for Synod Niagara 2022. Committees and other report writers were asked to submit new reports covering the entire four year period. Some communications also carried over but some were rewritten.

### 4. Ratification of Churches Received Provisionally

- a. Communications 1 and 2 contain the record of four congregations received provisionally under CO Art. 32 since the last synod which now must be voted on for ratification.
- b. Before the agenda deadline, I was notified that there is the possibility of a late communication coming concerning another church that has made application to be received under CO Art. 32. The classis involved is schedule to meet and act on the matter on September 7. Since we were notified before the agenda deadline, and because it could not be ready by

the agenda deadline, and because it would be an unnecessary hardship to make the church remain provisionally received for over two years, I recommended to the convening consistory that, should such a late communication come, they recommend to the synod that the late communication be added to the agenda. The assembly can vote on that recommendation.

**5. Ministerial News Service**

Because new consistory members are coming on board every year, I continue to have to remind/educate some consistories about this feature and give them instruction concerning it. I have prepared a one page document that explains how to make announcements and how to update “My Profile” and it appears to be helpful. The webmaster has a longer document that covers the subject more thoroughly which he sends to new churches and others. Subsequent stated clerks should be prepared to have to educate new consistory members in perpetuity.

**6. Error in Footnote**

It was brought to my attention that footnote #1 in Appendix 8 of the CO has a wrong page number in it (page 31 should be page 39). I have corrected the copy in my files and the one that can be downloaded from the website.

**7. Page n of x**

The convening consistory of Synod Wheaton 2018 suggested to me, after that synod, that they would like to see the addition of “Page n of x” as a footer on each of the three advisory committee reporting templates found in Appendix C of the *Regulations*. This is needed to enable delegates to find the right material referred to when advisory committees issue multiple reports over several days. I informed the organizing committee and they deemed the matter a minor editorial change and authorized the change.

**8. Agenda Page Numbers**

It was brought to my attention that there is a problem when the minutes of synod refer to page numbers in the agenda for synod. When the agenda is printed with the *Acts* after synod, it is reformatted, and the page numbers are different than the original agenda published as a pdf prior to synod. Since the original agenda is not available on the website after the *Acts* are available, when someone reads the minutes and sees a reference to a page number in the agenda, that page number does not correspond to the only agenda then available on the website. This can be easily remedied by advisory committee reporters and synodical clerks making more specific references to agenda materials, using the outline divisions of most agenda materials or by quoting agenda material rather than merely referring to a page number as the only reference.

**9. Capitalization of “Consistory”**

We have an inconsistent practice of capitalizing the word “consistory” in the *Church Order* and its appendices.

The word “consistory” appears capitalized in the *Church Order* in all but Article 32. The words “classis” and “synod” are not capitalized unless as the first word in a sentence. In the *Church Order* Appendix 2 and 4, it is capitalized. It appears uncapitalized in Appendix 1, 7, and 8. It is inconsistently capitalized in Appendix 3, 5, and 6. It appears 44 times in the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* and is

only capitalized twice – in the names “Oversight Consistory” and in “Interim Committee/Convening Consistory.”

The capitalization appears to be a “hangover” for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the CRC capitalized many common nouns in the Church Order referring to the offices and assemblies and other matters (when English was still a second language for many church leaders). However, in the 1965 and subsequent church orders of the CRC, none of those common nouns were capitalized. There is no grammatical reason to capitalize “consistory” and every reason to seek consistency. Any religious reason to capitalize it would be hard pressed to find biblical support. I am not authorized to make a recommendation for an editorial change to our *Church Order*, but I bring the matter to your attention.

#### **10. Late Consistory Overture**

On August 11, 2022, seventeen days after the synodical agenda deadline, I received a consistory overture that had failed to be adopted by its classis on March 10, 2020 (two and a half years earlier). A cover letter indicated it was the consistory’s intention to send it to Synod Redeemer 2020, however it was never sent. Now, more than two weeks after the agenda deadline, the consistory sent it to Synod Niagara 2022 asking that it be placed on the agenda. No reason was given why it was late. Because the stated clerk’s duties include assisting the convening consistory in matters of admissibility, I advised the convening consistory that it be judged inadmissible because it was late without any justifying reason.

#### **11. Consistory Overture Withdrawn**

An overture from Covenant Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa was received in time for Synod Redeemer 2020 and published with the *Interim Report* given to the churches in April 2020. It was an overture which failed at classis but was then forwarded by the consistory to synod. In May of 2022, the same consistory informed me that they wished to withdraw the overture because other material anticipated to be on the agenda for synod better represented their views. Therefore the overture has been removed from the provisional agenda.

#### **12. Stated Clerk Archives**

- a. After assuming the office of Stated Clerk, I received five packing boxes of material from the previous clerk. The boxes were shipped to him by the clerk before him and three of them were still unopened. (He knew their contents and knew he didn’t need to open them.)
- b. Two boxes contained file folders for a filing cabinet. It appears that hard copy paper files were filed regularly until 2004, after which the stated clerks saved very little hard copy files. Most work is done digitally. I have kept my digital files on two different computers and in the cloud so that they are always available should I have trouble with one computer.
- c. Three other boxes contain copies of minutes of the broader assemblies of various churches together with some yearbooks and directories. In my years as stated clerk, the three boxes of books have expanded to four.
- d. I took the following inventory:

**ARPC**

Standards of the APRC (paperback), and Minutes of Synod: 1998 (also available at <http://arpchurch.org/governing-documents/>).

### **CanRC**

The *Yearbook* for 1992, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009. Much more current information on the Canadian and American Reformed Churches is available at their website: <https://canrc.org>. (Old volumes of yearbooks may be of use for historical research.) There is also a copy of the *Acts of the General Synod Dunnville 2016* (also available online at <https://canrc.org/documents/8308>).

### **FRCNA**

*Acts of Synod*: 1997 (also available at <http://frcna.org/resources/acts-of-synod>).

### **ICRC**

Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of the ICRC: 1993, 2001 (also available at <https://www.icrconline.com/general>). Mission Committee Field Survey: 2013.

### **OCRC**

Minutes of the OCRC synod: 1999, 2001

### **OPC**

The *Minutes of the General Assembly and Yearbook*: 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 (also available at <https://opcgaminutes.org>).

### **PCA**

*Minutes of the General Assembly*: 1998, 2001, 2002, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2021. (Also available at <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/ga/index.html#a46>.)  
*Minutes of the General Assembly* on CD's: 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. Also the *PCA Yearbook* for 2009, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021. Each yearbook has two 1.5-inch-thick paperback volumes. The first volume of each year has the General Assembly Directory, the Presbytery Directory, the Church Directory, and Statistical Reports. The second volume has the Ministerial Directory. The Church Directory and Ministerial Directory are available for free online. The 2019 two-volume edition sells in the PCA online bookstore for \$71.50. Editions from the 1980's are cheaper. In between there is nothing available online that I can find.

### **RCNZ**

*Acts of Synod*: 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017 (also available at <https://rcnz.org.nz/synodical/>). *Yearbook* of the RCNZ: 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015. Acts of the 31<sup>st</sup> Synod 2021-2022.

### **RCUS**

The synodical *Abstract of the Minutes*: 1984, 1997, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 (also available at <http://www.rcus.org/resources/downloads/synodical-abstracts/>).

### **RPCNA**

The RPCNA Constitution in a ring binder (also available at <https://rpcna.org/history/constitution.pdf>), the Standards of the RPCNA, the Minutes and Yearbook: 1999, 2002 (also available at <http://www.rparchives.org/synod.html>).

Except for the minutes of the OCRC, almost all the above materials are available for free online. I see no reason to continue to store them or ship them to the next stated clerk for storage.

I also have in storage the following URCNA bound, paperback volumes:

Acts of Synod 1996-1999 (1 copy)

Acts of Synod 2001 (1 copy)

Acts of Synod 2012 (16 copies)

Acts of Synod 2014 (11 copies)

Acts of Synod 2016 (11 copies)

Acts of Synod 2018 (3 copies)

The Alliance of Reformed Churches directories: 1993, 1995, 1996

The URCNA directory: 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001.

I believe that the URCNA volumes (*Acts* and directories) should be kept in the Stated Clerk's archives and passed on to future clerks. Some extra copies of the *Acts* could be sold.

- e. In the *Acts of Synod 2018*, Art 28.3. Reads. "That synod direct the stated clerk to consider bringing a recommendation to Synod 2020 regarding what to do with archive materials in his possession".

### **Recommendation 1**

That synod instructs the stated clerk that he make available to any interested parties, at their expense, the hard copies of the acts and minutes of other denominations and federations, and that he keeps, and passes on to the next clerk, the hard copy acts and directories of the URCNA and the Alliance of Reformed Churches.

### **Grounds**

1. Most of the material from other denominations and federations is available free online.
2. The stated clerk has no need to consult the acts or minutes of other federations or denominations.
3. Transferring numerous heavy boxes from one stated clerk to the next is an unnecessary expense and burdensome chore.
4. Synod Wheaton 2018 authorized the stated clerk to bring a recommendation on how to dispose of the archived materials from other federations and denominations.

## **13. Review of the Regulations for Synodical Procedure**

The stated clerk is required by the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 4.5.4.k to:

"Submit a written report of his work to Synod, as part of the written report of the convening consistory. This report may include proposed changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with prior synodical decisions and practices and shall be included in the Provisional Agenda. Any such proposed conforming changes must be supported by citation to the prior decision or practice."

I bring the following additional **four** matters to synod's attention:

**a. Synod Appoints Committee Chairman and Reporter**

*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 5.1.2 states that "Synod shall appoint the chairman and reporter of each committee." This appears in the *Regulations* as part of the general regulations for all committees. The *Regulations* then name four kinds of committees: *ad hoc*, advisory, standing, and study. However, synod does not appoint the chairman and reporter of those standing committees whose membership is also appointed in part or in whole by classes (e.g. *Acts of Synod 2018*, Art. 64.3A where synod only appointed a convener for a committee of classical appointees). The fact that synod does not appoint the chairman and reporter for all committees may have led to confusion in 2016 when synod, contrary to 5.1.2, did not appoint a chairman and reporter for a study committee (*Acts of Synod 2016*, Art. 70.3) but only appointed a convener even though the entire committee was appointed by synod. Synod did follow 5.1.2 in 2014, appointing a chairman and reporter for a study committee, *Acts of Synod 2014*, Art. 61.2.

**Recommendation 2**

That *Regulation* 5.1.2 be amended to read, "When synod creates a committee made up entirely of synodical appointees, synod shall appoint a chairman and reporter. When synod creates a committee that includes classical appointees, synod shall appoint a convener."

**Grounds**

1. This will eliminate any confusion regarding whether synod should merely appoint a convener or whether synod should appoint a chairman and reporter.
2. This is consistent with past practice (with one unexplained exception).
3. There is wisdom in synod appointing a chairman and reporter for synodical committees where it appoints all the members. It requires the synodical advisory committee (which recommends) and synod (which appoints) to give attention to choosing men who are gifted in leadership, scholarship, writing, word processing, and other necessary skills for the committee's work. It also eliminates any tension within the committee regarding choosing its own leadership.

4. *Regulation 4.5.4.k* gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

**b. Sending the Acts of Synod to churches with whom we have ecumenical relations.**

The last synod adopted the following, “*That synod declare that we should discontinue sending the Acts of Synod books to the churches with which we have ecumenical relations. Rather we will send the Acts of Synod in a digital format.*” *Acts of Synod 2018*, Art. 28.4.

**Recommendation 3**

That synod amends *Regulation 4.5.4.e*. It currently reads: “*Prepare and distribute the Acts of Synod. At federation expense, one copy shall be sent to each federation with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. All other copies shall be purchased by those who order them.*”

The recommended amendment would read (additions underlined, deletions strikethrough): “*Prepare and distribute the Acts of Synod in hard copy and digital form. ~~At federation expense,~~ One digital copy shall be sent to each federation or denomination with whom the United Reformed Churches are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. Hard ~~All other~~ copies shall be purchased by those who order them.”*

**Grounds**

1. This will conform the *Regulations* to the last synod’s action and preserve the decision of the last synod for future generations.
2. The removal of the words “At federation expense” will remove the implication that a hard copy is the expected method of sending the *Acts* to other denominations.
3. The inclusion of the word “digital” will make the matter clear.
4. *Regulation 4.5.4.k* gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

**c. Handbook on Hosting Synod**

*Regulations for Synodical Procedure 4.5.4.d* requires the stated clerk to, “*Provide a current handbook for the convening consistory of synod, listing the various responsibilities of the convening consistory, and the provisions that need to be made in order to host a synod.*”

To the best of my knowledge, no stated clerk has done this in any substantial way, primarily because the stated clerk is not involved in the logistics of hosting a synod. I know of no such handbook **from** previous stated clerks. However, recent convening consistories have passed on to the next convening consistory either a notebook or something equivalent that has been a help to the next conveying consistory. A three-

ring binder was passed from Visalia to Wyoming to Lansing. Lansing boxed up everything and sent it to Wellandport along with digital files. Lansing also had a conference call with Wellandport and answered a few lengthy emails. The stated clerk was not involved in any of that except occasionally asked for his opinion on matters under discussion by the convening committee.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That *Regulation* 4.5.4.d be eliminated (renumbering subsequent duties) and in its place, under the duties of the convening consistory, *Regulation* 1.8 be added, “Provide a handbook and other assistance to the next convening consistory describing the responsibilities and logistics of convening and hosting a synod.”

#### **Grounds**

1. This is the current practice.
2. The stated clerk is not involved in or knowledgeable regarding the hosting of a synod.
3. *Regulation* 4.5.4.k gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

#### **d. Order of elections of officers and ratification of Art. 32 churches**

There has been an inconsistent practice (confusion) regarding the order of business conducted by the chairman *pro tem* after synod is declared constituted. In 2012 and 2016 we declared synod constituted, elected officers, and then ratified Art. 32 churches. In 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 we ratified the Art. 32 churches first after synod was declared constituted and before the election of officers. (There were no churches to be ratified in 2018.) I believe this confusion is due to the wording of *Regulation* 3.1 which states (underlining added):

**3.1. Provisional Agenda.** A provisional agenda is prepared for each synod by the convening consistory with the assistance of the stated clerk. Its contents shall be limited to a compilation of the reports, overtures, appeals, and communications addressed to the synod. Following the ratification of Article 32 churches and the seating of their delegates, this provisional agenda shall be acted upon for adoption before proceeding to act on any of its subsequent items.

This appears to make ratification the first order of business which is in conflict with *Regulation* 2.2.1.e which lists the election of officers ahead of ratification of Art. 32 churches.

There is good reason to do election of officers first. It allows the chairman *pro tem* to begin work on the other four items of business assigned to him while ballots are being counted for the four officers of synod.

The confusion can be eliminated if the third sentence of *Regulation* 3.1 is amended to read (new words in italics) “Following *the election of officers and* the ratification of Article 32 churches and the seating of their delegates,” . . . etc.

### **Recommendation 5**

That Regulation 3.1 be amended to read (new words in italics)

**3.1 Provisional Agenda.** A provisional agenda is prepared for each synod by the convening consistory with the assistance of the stated clerk. Its contents shall be limited to a compilation of the reports, overtures, appeals, and communications addressed to the synod. Following the *election of officers and* the ratification of Article 32 churches and the seating of their delegates, this provisional agenda shall be acted upon for adoption before proceeding to act on any of its subsequent items.

### **Grounds**

1. This will eliminate any confusion in the future.
2. This is consistent with the practice of the last two synods where Art. 32 churches were ratified.
3. *Regulation 4.5.4.k* gives the stated clerk authority to propose changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to bring them into conformity with past decisions or practices.

### **14. Election of the Stated Clerk**

I was elected alternate stated clerk by Synod Wyoming 2016, and assumed the stated clerk's position a few weeks later, when the newly elected stated clerk resigned at the request of his consistory who feared he would be over extended by the responsibilities of the position. I was elected to a second term by Synod Wheaton 2018. According to *Regulation 4.5.2*, I am eligible for a third term. (A term is defined as the time from one synod to the end of the next synod; it is not defined in years.) I am willing to serve a third term.

Respectfully submitted, your servant,  
Ralph A. Pontier  
URCNA Stated Clerk

**Synod Wheaton 2018 Financial Statement  
December 31, 2018**

Mr. Tim Boer CPA  
Treasurer Synod Wheaton 2018  
Oak Glen United Reformed Church, Lansing, Illinois

Beginning Cash Balance - 9/30/16		\$ 17,860.73
Income		
Delegates	92,500.00	
Observers	13,515.00	
Displayers	<u>1,500.00</u>	
Total Income		<u>107,515.00</u>
Expenses		
Lodging	36,720.00	
Meeting rooms	12,500.00	
Meals (less reimbursements)	32,834.79	
Snacks	5,422.61	
Custodial	336.00	
Golf carts	730.00	
Technology and website	6,698.25	
Bank and conversion charges	2,017.95	
Office and administrative	<u>5,843.26</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>103,102.86</u>
Expenses over Income		<u>4,412.14</u>
Ending Cash Balance - 12/31/18		<u><u>\$ 22,272.87</u></u>

# United Reformed Churches in North America

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
8443 Farview Dr SE, Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 9, 2019

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

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2018. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$113,030 (compared to \$108,103 in 2017) and total expenses were \$111,328 (compared to \$88,136 in 2017) which resulted in income in excess of expenses in the amount of \$1,702 (compared to \$19,967 in 2017). As of the date of this report we have received \$639.03 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2018 askings but reported as income in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019 since that is when they were received.

The Pastors and Elders who attended Synod Wheaton 2018 approved a budget totaling \$229,996 (US Share of \$137,941) for the calendar year 2019. 2019 Askings were increased to **\$34.14** per family from the 2018 amount of \$30.43 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please continue to plan your Askings accordingly.

## OBSERVATIONS

1. According to the 2017 directory, there are currently 80 US churches of which 74 are organized churches and 6 are church plants.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.
3. When seeking reimbursement for work done on a committee, Synod 2012 implemented that all committee expenses be paid directly by the Joint Venture. Continue to send me the reimbursement form and I will forward it in a timely manner to the Joint Venture treasurer. Committee chairman have been provided with revised reimbursement forms.

## STATISTICS

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

Year	Church Non-Participation
2007	26%
2008	25%
2009	23%
2010	27%

2011	24%
2012	7%
2013	10%
2014	8%
2015	7%
2016	8%
2017	9%
2018	9%

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

Year	Church Participation
2003	7
2004	7
2005	10
2006	7
2007	10
2008	9
2009	8
2010	4
2011	2
2012	2
2013	6
2014	6
2015	5
2016	6
2017	7
2018	6

**ASKINGS**

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. Beginning in 2019, the askings donation was adusted to \$34.14 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the “Askings” from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder “statements” reminding the churches of their recommended “Askings”. Please inform your deacons and have last year’s treasurer remind this year’s treasure about “Askings”.

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

**PSALTER HYMNAL FUND**

The first resolution from Report 3, from the Psalter Hymnal committee, that was adopted by Synod 2001 was “That synod establish a fund to finance the cost of producing the new Psalter Hymnal.” The second resolution that was adopted from the Psalter Hymnal committee states “That synod request churches to contribute to that fund by suggesting that free-will offerings be collected for this cause until the new Psalter Hymnal is completed.” The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$106,976.84 as of 12/31/18.

## **WEB SITE FUND**

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: "That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund." Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches **MUST** send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

## **ENCLOSURES**

Synod Wheaton 2018 developed a budget for 2019 and 2020 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2018. An audit will be completed for both years 2018 and 2019 prior to 2020 synod. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

## **INCOMING MAIL**

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

## **CHECKS**

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

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

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

## **REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES**

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)
3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2019, has increased to **58** cents per mile, up from

- 54.5 cents per mile in 2018. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
  7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
  8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
  9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
  10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

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

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together,

Robert D. Huisjen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA  
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
 8443 Farview Dr. SE  
 Byron Center, MI 49315  
 Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)  
 Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

Financial Report for 4th Qtr and Year Ended December 31, 2018

	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>4th Qtr Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/18 (General Fund)				\$89,682.93
<b>INCOME</b>				
Contributions / Askings			\$46,896.82	\$110,865.97
Contributions / Askings (2017)				\$2,014.98
Interest			<u>\$59.14</u>	<u>\$149.40</u>
Total Income			<u>\$46,955.96</u>	<u>\$113,030.35</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>		
Accounting / Government Filing	\$25.00	\$25.00		\$20.00
Bank Fees	\$26.00	\$26.00		
Appeals	\$1,950.00	\$1,950.00		
CECCA (1)	\$4,875.00	\$4,875.00		\$4,966.48
CERCU (2)	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$3,642.19	\$6,993.45
Clerk	\$2,600.00	\$2,600.00	\$1,300.00	\$3,250.00
Doctrinal Study Committee				
Dues				
NAPARC	\$455.00	\$455.00	\$650.00	\$1,300.00
ICRC	\$1,625.00	\$1,625.00		\$1,418.63
PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5)	\$663.00	\$845.00	\$585.00	\$585.00
ICRC Travel				
Missions Coordinator	\$70,457.50	\$70,700.00	\$17,645.31	\$64,043.60
Mission Committee	\$9,750.00	\$9,750.00	\$1,808.74	\$8,841.83
PRCC Liason	\$325.00	\$325.00		
Postage / Supplies	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$164.22	\$169.57
Acts of Synod plus shipping	\$162.50	\$0.00		
Directors and Liability Insurance	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		\$898.00
Song Book Committee	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00		\$1,416.99
Liturgical Forms Committee	\$5,850.00	\$5,850.00		\$2,758.99
Membership Departure	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Emeritation/ Retirement Committee	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4)	\$0.00	\$1,300.00		\$1,469.14
Treasurer - US (6)	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00
Treasurer - Joint Venture (6)	\$2,600.00	\$2,600.00	\$1,848.09	\$4,734.34
Statistician Honorarium			\$805.39	\$805.39 (9)
Webmaster Honorarium (6)	<u>\$3,575.00</u>	<u>\$3,375.00</u>	<u>\$1,462.5</u>	<u>\$3,656.25</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$119,739.00</u>	<u>\$121,101.00</u>	<u>\$30,911.44</u>	<u>\$111,327.66</u>
TOTAL INCOME OVER (UNDER) EPENSES			<u>\$16,044.52</u>	<u>\$1,702.69</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (General Fund)</b>				<u><u>\$91,385.62</u></u> (7)

	<u>4th Qtr Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/18 (Hymnal Fund)		\$8,654.11
Reimbursement from Songbook sale		\$71,674.63 *
Expenses		
Interest		<u>\$0.00</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (Hymnal Fund)</b>		<b><u>\$80,328.74</u></b>
 BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/18 (Web Fund)		 \$4,657.33
Contributions / Askings	\$100.00	\$877.00
Web Maintenance	\$797.23	\$1,501.09
Interest		
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (Web Fund)</b>		<b><u>\$4,033.24</u></b>
<b>TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/18 (All Funds)</b>		<b><u>\$175,747.60</u></b>
 <b>Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA</b>		 <b><u>\$106,976.84</u></b> <sup>(8)</sup>

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for Synodical Functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the Dues paid, set by the number of URCNA Chaplains, as part of PRJC
6. Synod London established Honorariums for the Treasurers and the Web Master. US and Canadian treasurers are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Web Master are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. \$15,521.21 of the general fund balance has been invested in a short-term cd
8. The JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. These funds are currently being held in anticipation of a future printing of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal
9. Statistician Honorarium was added to the budget at Synod 2019

**United Reformed Churches in North America**

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
8443 Farview Dr SE  
Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 23, 2020

To: Pastors, Elders, and Deacons of URCNA Member Churches  
From: US URCNA Treasurer

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2019. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA’s finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$111,259 (compared to \$113,030 in 2018) and total expenses were \$113,663 (compared to \$111,328 in 2018) which resulted in expenses in excess of income in the amount of \$2,404 (compared to \$1,702 surplus in 2018). As of the date of this report we have received \$1,234 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2019 askings but reported as income in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020 since that is when they were received.

The Pastors and Elders who attended Synod Wheaton 2018 approved a budget totaling \$236,508 (US Share of \$141,835) for the calendar year 2020. 2020 Askings were increased to **\$35.11** per family from the 2019 amount of \$34.14 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please continue to plan your Askings accordingly.

**OBSERVATIONS**

1. According to the 2019 directory, there are currently 84 churches.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical “Askings”. Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical “Askings” must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church’s “Askings” to me.
3. When seeking reimbursement for work done on a committee, Synod 2012 implemented that all committee expenses be paid directly by the Joint Venture. Continue to send me the reimbursement form and I will forward it in a timely manner to the Joint Venture treasurer. Committee chairman have been provided with revised reimbursement forms.

**STATISTICS**

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Church Non-Participation</b>
2007	26%
2008	25%
2009	23%
2010	27%
2011	24%

2012	7%
2013	10%
2014	8%
2015	7%
2016	8%
2017	9%
2018	9%
2019	8%

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Church Participation</b>
2003	7
2004	7
2005	10
2006	7
2007	10
2008	9
2009	8
2010	4
2011	2
2012	2
2013	6
2014	6
2015	5
2016	6
2017	7
2018	6
2019	7

**ASKINGS**

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. Beginning in 2020, the askings donation was adusted to \$35.11 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the “Askings” from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder “statements” reminding the churches of their recommended “Askings”. Please inform your deacons and have last year’s treasurer remind this year’s treasurer about “Askings”.

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check c/o Robert Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

**PSALTER HYMNAL FUND**

The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$159,608.69 as of 2/29/2020, of which \$45,000 is reserved for printing, \$12,000 for digital development, and \$37,500 for royalty reserves.

#### WEB SITE FUND

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: "That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund." Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches **MUST** send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

#### ENCLOSURES

Synod Wheaton 2018 developed a budget for 2019 and 2020 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2019. An audit will be completed for both years 2018 and 2019 prior to synod. An audit was scheduled to be completed but was cancelled due the current pandemic. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

#### INCOMING MAIL

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

#### CHECKS

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

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

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

#### REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)

3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2020, has decreased to **57.5** cents per mile, down from 58.0 cents per mile in 2019. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

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

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together,  
Robert D. Huisjen  
U.S. Treasurer, URCNA  
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
 8443 Farview Dr. SE  
 Byron Center, MI 49315  
 Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)  
 Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

**Financial Report for 4th Qtr and Year Ended December 31, 2019**

	Avg. Annual Budget - US	Avg. Annual Budget - US	4th Qtr Actual	YTD Actual
.1				
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (General Fund)				\$91,385.62
<b>INCOME</b>				
Contributions / Askings			\$50,363.50	\$110,862.98
Contributions / Askings (2018)				
Interest			<u>\$118.34</u>	<u>\$396.26</u>
<b>Total Income</b>			<u>\$50,481.84</u>	<u>\$111,259.24</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>		
Accounting / Government Filing	\$25.00	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$20.00
Bank Fees	\$26.00	\$26.00		
Appeals	\$1,950.00			
CECCA (1)	\$4,875.00	\$8,125.00	\$1,562.67	\$6,689.23
CERCU (2)	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$5,066.24	\$7,011.31
Clerk	\$2,600.00	\$3,250.00	\$1,625.00	\$3,439.64
Dues				
NAPARC	\$455.00	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00
ICRC	\$1,625.00	\$1,430.00	\$0.00	\$1,418.63
PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5)	\$845.00	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00
ICRC Travel				
Missions Coordinator	\$70,700.00	\$79,504.00	\$17,710.13	\$67,195.43
Mission Committee	\$9,750.00	\$12,350.00	\$557.39	\$11,155.47
PRCC Liaison	\$325.00	\$325.00		
Postage / Supplies	\$50.00			
Treasurer		\$50.00	\$33.00	\$33.00
Stated Clerk		\$325.00	\$113.20	\$116.83
Acts of Synod plus shipping	\$0.00	\$0.00	(\$1,306.00)	(\$119.37) (9)
Directors and Liability Insurance	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$910.00
Song Book Committee	\$3,250.00			
Publications				
Liturgical Forms		\$3,250.00	\$503.75	\$503.75
Psalter Hymnal		\$6,500.00		\$0.00
Liturgical Forms Committee	\$5,850.00			
Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4)	\$1,300.00			
Treasurer - US (6)	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$5,000.00
Treasurer - Joint Venture (6)	\$2,600.00	\$4,155.00	\$2,084.62	\$4,159.11
Statistician Honorarium		\$1,581.00	\$393.48	\$1,580.20 (8)
Webmaster Honorarium (6)	<u>\$3,375.00</u>	<u>\$3,250.00</u>	<u>\$1,625.00</u>	<u>\$3,250.00</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>\$121,101.00</u>	<u>\$137,941.00</u>	<u>\$32,768.48</u>	<u>\$113,663.23</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES</b>			<u>\$17,713.36</u>	<u>(\$2,403.99)</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (General Fund)</b>				<u>\$88,981.63</u>

	4th Qtr Actual	YTD Actual
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (Hymnal Fund)		\$80,328.74
Disbursement from Songbook sale		\$75,000.00
Expenses		
Interest		\$0.00
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (Hymnal Fund)</b>		<u>\$155,328.74</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/19 (Web Fund)		\$4,033.24
Contributions / Askings	\$364.00	\$1,172.00
Web Maintenance	\$765.05	\$765.05
Interest		
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (Web Fund)</b>		<u>\$4,440.19</u>
<b>TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/19 (All Funds)</b>		<u>\$248,750.56</u>
<b>Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA</b>	<b>2/2920</b>	<u>\$159,608.69</u> (7)

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for synodical functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the dues paid, set by the number of URCNA chaplains, as part of PRJC
6. Synod London established honorariums for the treasurers and the Webmaster. US and Canadian treasurers are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Webmaster are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. The JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. The amount reflects the URCNA share of those funds, some of which are reserved for future printing and copyright expenses.
8. Statistician Honorarium was added to the budget at Synod 2018.
9. Acts of Synod are being billed back to the churches who ordered.

# United Reformed Churches in North America

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
8443 Farview Dr SE, Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 15, 2021

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

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2020. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$108,080 (compared to \$111,259 in 2019) and total expenses were \$94,480 (compared to \$113,663 in 2018) which resulted in income in excess of expenses in the amount of \$13,600 (compared to \$2,404 deficit in 2019). As of the date of this report we have received \$2,074.62 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2020 askings but reported as income in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2021 since that is when they were received.

Given the current surplus in the general fund, the US Board of directors has decreased the 2021 Askings amount to **\$25.00 per family**, a decrease from the 2020 amount of \$34.14 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please plan your Askings accordingly.

## OBSERVATIONS

1. According to the 2020 directory, there are currently 85 churches.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.
3. COVID hampered the travel related to various committees, as well as the work of the Missions Coordinator.
4. Budget 2021. One of the activities of Synod is to approve the budgeted expenses. Since Synod was unable to meet this year, the convening consistory has approved the interim budget for 2021.

## STATISTICS

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

Year	Church Non-Participation
2007	26%
2008	25%
2009	23%
2010	27%

2011	24%
2012	7%
2013	10%
2014	8%
2015	7%
2016	8%
2017	9%
2018	9%
2019	8%
2020	8%

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

Year	Church Participation
2003	7
2004	7
2005	10
2006	7
2007	10
2008	9
2009	8
2010	4
2011	2
2012	2
2013	6
2014	6
2015	5
2016	6
2017	7
2018	6
2019	7
2020	7

## ASKINGS

URCNA "Askings" equals "Suggested Donation". Beginning in 2021, the askings donation was adjusted to \$25.00 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) and the US Board reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the "Askings" from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder "statements" reminding the churches of their recommended "Askings". Please inform your deacons and have last year's treasurer remind this year's treasurer about "Askings".

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check c/o Robert Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

## PSALTER HYMNAL FUND

The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$95,260.02 as of 12/31/2020, of which \$45,000 is reserved for printing, \$12,000 for digital development, and \$37,500 for royalty reserves.

## WEB SITE FUND

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: "That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund." Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund to Robert D. Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

## ENCLOSURES

Synod Wheaton 2018 developed a budget for 2019 and 2020 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities. The budget for 2021 was completed by Synod Interim Committee and review by the board of director for the US and Canada.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2020. An audit is schedule to be completed prior to issuance of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2021 report. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

## INCOMING MAIL

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

## CHECKS

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

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

### REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

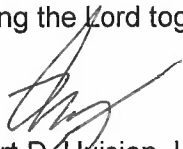
All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)
3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2021, has decreased to **56.0** cents per mile, down from 57.5 cents per mile in 2020. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

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

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together,



Robert D. Huisjen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA  
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
 8443 Farview Dr. SE  
 Byron Center, MI 49315  
 Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)  
 Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

Financial Report for 4th Qtr and Year Ended December 31, 2020

	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>4th Qtr Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/20 (General Fund)				\$88,981.63
<b>INCOME</b>				
Contributions / Askings			\$40,889.93	\$105,596.08
Contributions / Askings (2019)			\$0.00	\$1,234.00
Interest			\$301.86	\$1,250.54
<b>Total Income</b>			<u>\$41,191.79</u>	<u>\$108,080.62</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>		
Accounting / Government Filing	\$20.00	\$20.00		\$20.00
Bank Fees	\$26.00	\$26.00		
Appeals				
CECCA (1)	\$8,125.00	\$8,125.00		\$3,732.16
CERCU (2)	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00		\$293.31
Clerk	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00	\$812.50	\$3,250.00
Doctrinal Study Committee				
Dues				
NAPARC	\$650.00	\$650.00		
ICRC	\$1,430.00	\$1,430.00		\$1,418.63
PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5)	\$650.00	\$650.00		
ICRC Travel				
Missions Coordinator	\$79,504.00	\$80,798.00	\$14,764.79	\$62,002.85
Mission Committee	\$12,350.00	\$12,350.00	\$4,776.64	\$8,208.16
PRCC Liason	\$325.00	\$325.00		
Postage / Supplies				
Treasurer	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$60.45	\$60.45
Stated Clerk	\$325.00	\$325.00		\$264.88
Acts of Synod plus shipping	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Directors and Liability Insurance	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00		\$936.00
Publications				
Liturgical Forms	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00		\$390.00
Psalter Hymnal	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00		
Membership Departure	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Emeritation/ Retirement Committee	\$0.00	\$0.00		
Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4)		\$2,600.00		
Treasurer - US (6)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,250.00	\$5,000.00
Treasurer - Joint Venture (6)	\$4,155.00	\$4,155.00	\$1,034.11	\$4,073.21
Statistician Honorarium	\$1,581.00	\$1,581.00	\$400.50	\$1,580.97
Webmaster Honorarium (6)	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00	\$812.50	\$3,250.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>\$137,941.00</u>	<u>\$141,835.00</u>	<u>\$23,911.49</u>	<u>\$94,480.62</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES</b>			<u>\$17,280.30</u>	<u>\$13,600.00</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/20 (General Fund)</b>				<u>\$102,581.63</u>
				<u>Advance to URCNA - Joint Venture</u>
				<u>\$10,000.00</u>

	4th Qtr Actual	YTD Actual
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/20 (Hymnal Fund)		\$155,328.74
Reimbursement from Songbook sale	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Expenses		
Interest		\$0.00
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/20 (Hymnal Fund)</b>		<b><u>\$255,328.74</u></b>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/20 (Web Fund)		\$4,440.19
Contributions / Askings		\$770.00
Web Maintenance	\$821.27	\$854.54
Interest		
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/20 (Web Fund)</b>		<b><u>\$4,355.65</u></b>
<b>TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/20 (All Funds)</b>		<b><u>\$362,266.02</u></b>
<b>Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA</b>	12/31/2020	<b><u>\$95,260.02</u> (7)</b>

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for Synodical Functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the Dues paid, set by the number of URCNA Chaplains, as part of PRJC
6. Synod London established Honorariums for the Treasurers and the Web Master. US and Canadian treasurer's are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Web Master are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. The Trinity Psalter JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. \$94,500 of these funds are currently being held in anticipation of a future printing of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, digital development, and royalties reserve.

# United Reformed Churches in North America

Robert D. Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
8443 Farview Dr SE, Byron Center, Michigan, 49315

March 18, 2022

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

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer during 2021. The purpose of this letter is to provide some observations and information relative to the finances of URCNA as well as summarize the US URCNA's finances for last year.

As you can see on the attached financial report, total income for the year for the general fund was \$116,380 (compared to \$108,080 in 2020) and total expenses were \$100,668 (compared to \$94,480 in 2020) which resulted in income in excess of expenses in the amount of \$15,712 (compared to \$13,600 in 2020). Note also on the 2021 report \$17,194 of the income was from 2020 askings received and reported in January of 2021 since that is when they were received. Taking that into account, 2021 was closer to a "breakeven" year which is what the US Board of Directors was intending.

Given the current surplus in the general fund, the US Board of directors has decided to keep the 2022 Askings amount the same as 2021 at **\$25.00 per family**. 2020 was \$34.14 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please plan your Askings accordingly.

## OBSERVATIONS

1. According to the 2021 directory, there are currently 82 US churches, 5 of which are designated as church plants.
2. Classical Dues are not the same as the Synodical "Askings". Any fees that are due to a particular classis must be paid to that Classis Treasurer. Any Synodical "Askings" must be paid to the US (or Canadian) Treasurer. These are separate amounts that are due. Classis will not forward a church's "Askings" to me.
3. COVID has again hampered the travel related to various committees, as well as the work of the Missions Coordinator.
4. Budget 2022. One of the activities of Synod is to approve the budgeted expenses. Since Synod was unable to meet this year, the convening consistory has approved the interim budget for 2022.

## STATISTICS

This below chart, very simply, indicates the historical percentage of member churches that did not provide any Askings. Organizing churches were omitted from the calculation.

Year	Church Non-Participation
2007	26%
2008	25%

2009	23%
2010	27%
2011	24%
2012	7%
2013	10%
2014	8%
2015	7%
2016	8%
2017	9%
2018	9%
2019	8%
2020	8%
2021	8%

This chart, very simply, indicates the number (not percentage) of US churches that took a collection for the Hymnal Fund.

Year	Church Participation
2003	7
2004	7
2005	10
2006	7
2007	10
2008	9
2009	8
2010	4
2011	2
2012	2
2013	6
2014	6
2015	5
2016	6
2017	7
2018	6
2019	7
2020	7
2021	7

**ASKINGS**

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. For the calendar year 2022 and 2021, the askings donation was adusted to \$25.00 per family with the Treasurers (US and Canada) and the US Board reviewing annually the recommended askings per family for the following year. This money is used for the ongoing activity of URCNA. Some churches choose to take a free-will offering instead of using the formula. Each member church has a responsibility to participate, in whatever way, in the overall ministry of URCNA.

It has been suggested that many member churches do not remember about the “Askings” from year to year because of the yearly changes in the council. Beginning in 2014 the treasurers started to send out reminder “statements” reminding the churches of their recommended “Askings”. Please inform your deacons and have last year’s treasurer remind this year’s treasurer about “Askings”.

Please make your check payable to URCNA and send the check c/o Robert Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

### **PSALTER HYMNAL FUND**

The new Trinity Psalter Hymnal was completed and approved at Synod Wheaton 2018.

A 50/50 Joint Venture agreement was put in place between the URCNA - US and the OPC. There is a fund balance being held by the OPC for future printings of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and also for a potential digital edition. The current cash value of the URCNA - US interest in the JVA is \$103,638.00 as of 12/31/2021, of which \$45,000 is reserved for printing, \$12,000 for digital development, and \$37,500 for royalty reserves.

### **WEB SITE FUND**

Article 88 of Synod 2004 directed the treasurers of US and Canada to set up funds for the URCNA Web Site. A separate fund has been established by the US Treasurer. Article 84 B of Synod 2005 states: "That the initial funding of the web site be through equal contributions from each classis in the amount of \$500 (USD) by December 31, 2004 and \$500 (USD) annually thereafter payable on or before the calendar year end. The treasurers of the URCNA US and Canadian corporations shall set up and jointly manage this fund." Synod 2007 modified that amount to \$200 per classis. **Synod 2010 modified that amount to \$100 per classis.** For those churches that are responsible for the classis treasurers, please inform your classical treasurer to mail the **\$100** check payable to URCNA-Web Fund c/o Robert Huisjen, 8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315. Canadian churches MUST send their checks to the Canadian treasurer, Mrs. Pam Hessels.

### **ENCLOSURES**

The budgets for 2021 and 2022 were completed by Synod Interim Committee and Joint Venture Treasurer and reviewed by the board of directors for the US and Canada.

The following pages contain the audited End-Of-Year Report for 2021. In addition, guidelines for reimbursement are also provided. The reimbursement guidelines are intended to adhere to the guidelines defined by the U.S. Government.

### **INCOMING MAIL**

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

### **CHECKS**

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

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

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

### **REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES**

All reimbursement requests must be submitted to the committee chairman for approval prior to being sent to the Treasurer for reimbursement. The goal is to keep the process from being complicated while providing the chairman knowledge of what is being spent. To reduce the amount of time between submittals and reimbursement, once the committee chair has approved the expense, he should mail the reimbursement request directly to the appropriate Treasurer. Attached to this document is a copy of a Synodical Expense Reimbursement Form.

1. Receipts must be presented to the Committee Head who will approve the receipts and send them to either the Canadian or US Treasurer, depending on if the member has a Canadian or US address.
2. When possible, provide actual receipts. (Fax or scanned copies are acceptable. Just make sure the information being faxed is legible.)

3. For airline travel, provide the last portion of the ticket, which contains the entire round-trip information. For those who get E-tickets, the cost of the ticket will not be printed. In addition to that ticket, please provide some sort of receipt from the travel agency or, as a last resort, a photocopy of the bankcard statement with the ticket charge circled. Please do not send boarding passes. You may keep them as a souvenir of your trip.
4. If a receipt has items that are personal, send a photocopy of the receipt and circle the reimbursable items.
5. Mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS rate, which, for 2022, has increased to **58.50** cents per mile, up from 56.0 cents per mile in 2021. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. Please also submit receipts for meals.
8. If somebody pays for a group meal, that receipt must be submitted.
9. When staying at a hotel, sharing a room is not a requirement.
10. Please indicate which URCNA committee is being represented when requesting a reimbursement so that it can be properly documented.

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

Thank for your attention to these financial items.

Serving the Lord together,

Robert D. Huisjen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA  
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
Home: 616-554-0051, Fax: 616-698-0900, E-Mail: bob@firstcompanies.com

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Robert Huisjen, US URCNA Treasurer  
 8443 Farview Dr. SE  
 Byron Center, MI 49315  
 Phone 616-588-4113 (Day) 616-554-0051 (Evening)  
 Email Address: bob@firstcompanies.com

Financial Report for 4th Qtr and Year Ended December 31, 2021

	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>Avg. Annual Budget - US</u>	<u>4th Qtr Actual</u>	<u>YTD Actual</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/20 (General Fund)				\$102,581.63
<b>INCOME</b>				
Contributions / Askings			\$35,180.90	\$98,209.98
Contributions / Askings (2020)			\$0.00	\$17,194.00
Interest			\$220.12	\$976.47
Total Income			<u>\$35,401.02</u>	<u>\$116,380.45</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>		
Accounting / Government Filing	\$20.00	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$20.00
Bank Fees	\$26.00	\$35.00		
Appeals				
CECCA (1)	\$8,125.00	\$8,125.00	\$0.00	(\$559.79)
CERCU (2)	\$6,500.00	\$8,125.00	\$2,742.00	\$2,742.00
Clerk	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00	\$1,625.00	\$3,451.75
Dues				
NAPARC	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00
ICRC	\$1,430.00	\$1,430.00	\$0.00	\$1,418.63
PRCC/MNA(dues) (3) (5)	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$650.00	\$1,300.00 (5)
Missions Coordinator	\$80,798.00	\$81,173.00	\$18,892.50	\$72,934.43 (8)
Mission Committee	\$12,350.00	\$12,350.00	\$171.29	\$332.93
PRCC Liason	\$325.00	\$325.00		
Postage / Supplies			\$199.44	\$200.17
Treasurer	\$50.00	\$50.00		
Stated Clerk	\$325.00	\$325.00		
Acts of Synod plus shipping	\$0.00			
Directors and Liability Insurance	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$964.00
Legal			\$0.00	\$2,492.00 (9)
Publications				
Liturgical Forms	\$3,250.00			
Psalter Hymnal	\$6,500.00			
Websites				
Prayers/forms website	\$0.00	\$195.00		\$195.00
Threeforms.org	\$0.00	\$195.00		\$195.00
Synod (Functionaries to attend) (4)	\$2,600.00			
Treasurer - US (6)	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$1,250.00	\$5,000.00
Treasurer - Joint Venture (6)	\$4,155.00	\$4,095.00	\$2,218.46	\$4,404.87 (8)
Statistician Honorarium	\$1,581.00	\$1,638.00	\$421.28	\$1,677.44 (8)
Webmaster Honorarium (6)	\$3,250.00	\$3,250.00	\$1,625.00	\$3,250.00
Total Expenses	<u>\$141,835.00</u>	<u>\$131,911.00</u>	<u>\$30,444.97</u>	<u>\$100,668.43</u>
TOTAL INCOME OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES			<u>\$4,956.05</u>	<u>\$15,712.02</u>
ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/21 (General Fund)				<u>\$118,293.65</u>
Advance to URCNA - Joint Venture				<u>\$10,000.00</u>

	4th Qtr Actual	YTD Actual
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/21 (Hymnal Fund)		\$255,328.74
Reimbursement from Songbook sale		\$50,000.00
Expenses		\$0.00
Interest		\$0.00
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/21 (Hymnal Fund)</b>		<b><u>\$305,328.74</u></b>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/21 (Web Fund)		\$4,355.65
Contributions / Askings	\$200.00	\$600.00
Web Maintenance	\$983.73	\$1,074.84
Interest		
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/21 (Web Fund)</b>	<b>(\$783.73)</b>	<b><u>\$3,880.81</u></b>
<b>TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/21 (All Funds)</b>		<b><u>\$427,503.20</u></b>
<b>Cash Value of Interest in Trinity Psalter Hymnal JVA</b>	<b>12/31/21</b>	<b><u>\$103,638.00</u></b> (7)

General Fund Notes

1. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
2. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
3. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
4. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for Synodical Functionaries as approved by convening council.
5. MNA is the Dues paid, set by the number of URCNA Chaplains, as part of PRJC. 2020 and 2021 dues were paid in 2021.
6. Synod London established Honorariums for the Treasurers and the Web Master. US and Canadian treasurer's are paid fully by their respective countries and the JVA Treasurer and Web Master are paid jointly based on the 65/35 split.
7. The Trinity Psalter JVA is a separate entity from the URCNA that we maintain a 50% stake in. \$94,500 of these funds are currently being held in anticipation of a future printing of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, digital development, and royalties reserve.
8. The Missions coordinator, JVA Treasurer, and Statistician are paid in Canadian Dollars. Budget for 2021 was established using an exchange rate of 1.27. Actual expenses were a bit higher as the exchange rate became less favorable at the time of payment.
9. Legal expense was for legal representation regarding defense of a potential legal claim.

**URCNA - Canada**  
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2018 End of Year Report (not audited)**

April 29, 2019

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the End of Year Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2018 askings from 40 (2017 – 40) of the Canadian churches. In addition, no Canadian churches (2017 – 9) have taken a collection for the Psalter Hymnal Fund. Three classes (2017 – 3) have provided the money for the web fund.

Askings:

Overall, 2018 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported on the 2018 quarterly reports, the Canadian board of directors decided that for 2018, the asking amount would be set so that 80% of the budgeted expenses would be collected. This was to account for the fact that 100% of the askings have been collected by the Canadian churches while only 82% of the budgeted expenses have been spent in the past. As a result, we projected a budgeted deficit of \$17,216 for 2018. We are happy to report that the results for 2018 was a profit of \$710. This small profit is the result of the following factors:

1. The askings rate of \$32 per family was determined using 2,152 families as the budget base; askings were received for 2,205 families.
2. Actual expenses were 86% of the budgeted expenses.
3. The sale of the liturgical forms book generated a small profit of \$4,199.

Please note that included in the expenses are a number of items that were approved for payment at Synod 2018 and that were unbudgeted items for 2018. These unbudgeted items include (1) the statistician's stipend (included in the "stipends" amount on the Canadian report and is listed separately on the JVA report (in US\$)) and (2) the clerk's reimbursement for office expenses (included in the "supplies" amount on the Canadian report and is listed separately on the JVA report (in US\$)).

The askings for 2019 have been set at \$41.50 per family. Statements were issued in January, 2019 to clerks/treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church.

Please note that payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

Psalter Hymnal:

As the Trinity Psalter Hymnal is now available for purchase, funding was no longer accepted for the Psalter Hymnal fund in 2018. The hymnal fund statement accounts for the sale and distribution of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal to the Canadian churches. As at December 31, 2018,

there was \$7.29 balance in the Psalter Hymnal Fund. This balance has been transferred to the General Fund to assist with the printing / purchase of the liturgical forms books (as approved at Synod 2016).

Website:

Significant expenses were incurred to maintain the website in 2018 which has significantly decreased the website funds. Classical treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

JVA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December 2018. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room and to set budgets for their committee.

Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2019, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form and drafted an expense reimbursement guideline to help speed up the reimbursement process. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the guideline and reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2018 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

Also, please remember to use the gmail account for expense reimbursements and correspondence related to the URCNA. The gmail address is [CdnURCNA@gmail.com](mailto:CdnURCNA@gmail.com).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

Pam Hessels  
Treasurer, URCNA  
74025 Wellandport Road  
Wellandport, ON  
L0R 2J0

Home: 905-386-0492  
E-Mail: [CdnURCNA@gmail.com](mailto:CdnURCNA@gmail.com)

**URCNA – CANADA**  
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2018 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)**

**General Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
Askings	68,448.00	2,112.00	70,560.00	68,864.00
Donations and other	-	4.53	4.53	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>68,448.00</b>	<b>2,116.53</b>	<b>70,564.53</b>	<b>68,864.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
<b>Joint Venture Advances</b>				
Bank charges	6.26	4.14	10.40	17.65
<b>Committee expenses</b>				
Appeals	-	-	-	1,324.00
CECCA (note 1)	3,023.32	-	3,023.32	3,310.00
CERCU (note 2)	308.72	2,749.11	3,057.83	4,413.00
Liturgical forms	1,865.56	-	1,865.56	3,972.00
Missions	5,693.67	369.42	6,063.09	6,620.00
PRCC	-	-	-	220.00
Songbook	962.27	-	962.27	2,207.00
<b>Dues</b>				
ICRC	946.39	-	946.39	1,100.00
MNA	-	417.86	417.86	575.00
NAPARC	-	464.29	464.29	310.00
Missions coordinator	31,282.27	11,158.14	42,440.41	47,642.15
Stipends (note 3)	4,988.84	1,925.00	6,913.84	6,201.35
Supplies (note 4)	21.83	236.40	258.23	22.00
Synod attendance	392.61	-	392.61	883.00
Bank charges	135.00	45.00	180.00	-
D&O insurance	-	723.00	723.00	1,100.00
Government filing fee	-	20.00	20.00	30.00
Postage	29.09	7.06	36.15	50.00
Professional fees	2,359.44	-	2,359.44	2,300.00
Treasurer	2,920.06	998.95	3,919.01	3,782.85
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>54,935.33</b>	<b>19,118.37</b>	<b>74,053.70</b>	<b>86,080.00</b>
	<b>13,512.67</b>	<b>(17,001.84)</b>	<b>(3,489.17)</b>	<b>(17,216.00)</b>

Liturgical Forms Book				
Book sales	47,969.65	12,965.70	60,935.35	-
Publication costs	<u>46,652.85</u>	<u>10,083.31</u>	<u>56,736.16</u>	-
Profit on LFB (note 5)	<u>1,316.80</u>	<u>2,882.39</u>	<u>4,199.19</u>	-
Net Total	<u>14,829.47</u>	<u>(14,119.45)</u>	<u>710.02</u>	<u>(17,216.00)</u>

Balance Sheet		2018	2017
Bank		58,231.83	85,569.56
Accounts receivable (note 6)		8,957.27	4,911.96
Inventory: LFB		24,998.41	-
Prepays (note 7)		1,000.00	2,985.84
Accounts payable		3,274.53	4,264.40
General fund balance		89,912.98	89,202.96

NOTES:

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, statistician and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the “joint venture” since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada. The statistician position was created and approved at Synod 2018. The statistician stipend was not included in the budget set at Synod 2016.
- (4) Synod 2018 approved reimbursement of the clerk’s expenses; these were not included in the budget set at Synod 2016
- (5) The liturgical forms book selling price was set to recover expenses related to the printing of the book; however, the exchange rate has fluctuated and has resulted in a greater profit being realized as books have been sold (selling price is set in US\$)
- (6) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (7) Represents committee expenses pertaining to 2019 (paid in 2018)

**Hymnal Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL
Income			
TPH Sales	<u>193,221.94</u>	-	<u>193,221.94</u>
Total Income	<u>193,221.94</u>	-	<u>193,221.94</u>
Expenses			
Publications: TPH	246,041.44	101.30	246,142.74
Total Expenses	<u>246,041.44</u>	<u>101.30</u>	<u>246,142.74</u>
Net Total (note 1)	<u>(52,819.50)</u>	<u>(101.30)</u>	<u>(52,920.80)</u>

Balance Sheet	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Bank	76.16	51,986.19
Accounts receivable	32.43	941.90
Accounts payable	101.30	-
Psalter fund balance (note 2)	7.29	52,928.09

NOTES:

- (1) The deficit on the sale of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal represents the cost of the TPH's purchased for the Canadian churches.
- (2) The Psalter Hymnal fund balance of \$7.29 has been transferred to the general fund to assist with the purchase of the liturgical forms books (as approved at Synod 2016)

**Web Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL
Income			
Classis	300.00	-	300.00
Total Income	<u>300.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>300.00</u>
Expenses	536.75	499.80	1,036.55
Total Expenses	<u>536.75</u>	<u>499.80</u>	<u>1,036.55</u>
Net Total	<u>(236.75)</u>	<u>(499.80)</u>	<u>(736.55)</u>
Balance Sheet		<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Bank		306.00	942.55
Accounts receivable		-	100.00
Web fund balance		306.00	1,042.55

**URCNA – Joint**  
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2018 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) – in USD**

**General Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
URCNA - Canada	39,866.29	13,501.45	53,367.74	62,386.49
URCNA - US	74,037.37	25,074.16	99,111.53	115,860.51
Interest	27.64	0.72	28.36	-
Sundry - presentations	-	318.82	318.82	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>113,931.30</b>	<b>38,895.15</b>	<b>152,826.45</b>	<b>178,247.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Bank charges	40.07	9.85	49.92	40.00
<b>Committee expenses</b>				
Appeals	-	-	-	3,000.00
CECCA (note 1)	6,949.64	-	6,949.64	7,500.00
CERCU (note 2)	707.03	6,018.06	6,725.09	10,000.00
Liturgical forms	4,244.60	-	4,244.60	9,000.00
Missions	13,096.75	814.88	13,911.63	15,000.00
Songbook	2,179.99	-	2,179.99	5,000.00
<b>Dues</b>				
ICRC	2,182.50	-	2,182.50	2,500.00
MNA	-	900.00	900.00	1,200.00
NAPARC	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	700.00
<b>Missions coordinator</b>				
Office supplies/telephone	1,943.46	798.53	2,741.99	7,500.00
Salary and benefits	62,672.19	20,050.69	82,722.88	80,622.00
Travel and mileage	6,407.41	3,552.83	9,960.24	20,000.00
PRCC	-	-	-	500.00
<b>Stipends (note 3)</b>				
Clerk	3,000.00	1,000.00	4,000.00	4,000.00
Statistician (note 4)	622.85	616.21	1,239.06	-
Treasurer	4,371.55	1,419.44	5,790.99	5,550.00
Webmaster	3,375.00	1,125.00	4,500.00	4,500.00
<b>Supplies</b>				
Clerk (note 4)	-	482.61	482.61	-
Office supplies	-	30.55	30.55	50.00
Synod	905.40	-	905.40	1,585.00
Website	1,232.86	1,076.50	2,309.36	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>113,931.30</b>	<b>38,895.15</b>	<b>152,826.45</b>	<b>178,247.00</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

Balance Sheet	2018
Bank (note 5)	4,270.91
Accounts receivable (note 6)	17,657.28
Prepays (note 7)	2,870.44
Accounts payable (note 8)	6,093.83
Advance from URCNA – Canada (note 9)	8,704.80
Advance from URCNA – US (note 10)	10,000.00
General fund balance	-

NOTES:

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the webmaster, clerk, statistician, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US Treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations
- (4) Represents items approved for payment at Synod 2018 that were not budgeted for at Synod 2016.
- (5) The bank balance is provided for information purposes
- (6) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses
- (7) Represents committee expenses pertaining to 2019 (paid in 2018)
- (8) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members
- (9) Payments for the liturgical forms book made in US\$ not converted into Cdn\$ but left in the JVA for future publication costs
- (10) URCNA – US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner

**URCNA - Canada**  
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2019 End of Year Report (not audited)**

January 29, 2020

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the End of Year Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2019 askings from 42 (2018 – 40) of the Canadian churches. In addition, three classes (2018 – 3) have provided the money for the web fund.

Askings:

Overall, 2019 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported on the 2019 quarterly reports, when the board reviewed the budget items approved at Synod 2018, it was noted that most of the items were reasonable. Rather than doing a broad reduction like it had in 2018, the board looked at each item and set the askings based on what was anticipated to be spent. Consequently, there was a budgeted deficit of \$2,560 for 2019. We are happy to report that the results for 2019 was a profit of \$4,023. This small profit is the result of the following factors:

1. The askings rate of \$41.50 per family was determined using 2,205 families as the budget base; askings were received for 2,177 families<sup>1</sup>.
2. Actual expenses were 98% of the budgeted expenses.
3. The sale of the liturgical forms book generated a small profit of \$4,768.

Please note that included in the expenses is the creeds and confessions app that was approved for payment at Synod 2018 but was not included in the amount to be collected via askings. The Canadian board decided to have the development costs related to the app be paid out of surplus funds. Other expenses that were not budgeted include the website fees related to threeforms and prayers and forms websites. They are noted here so that they will be included in future budgets.

The askings for 2020 have been set at \$41.00 per family (decreased from the previously announced \$43 per family). Statements were issued in January, 2020 to clerks/treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church as well as to explain the reason for the decrease in rate.

Please note that on the Canadian financial report, payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

<sup>1</sup> Please ensure that your church keeps your church statistics up to date with the Statistician. The family numbers are used to set the askings budget amount. Incorrect and non-updated records make determining the askings amount more challenging.

Website:

Significant expenses were incurred to maintain the website in 2019 which has significantly decreased the website funds. I have brought the declining bank balance to the attention of the website oversight committee for them to make a recommendation at Synod 2020 to rectify the situation. Classical treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

JVA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December 2019. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room and to set budgets for their committee.

Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2020, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form and drafted an expense reimbursement guideline to help speed up the reimbursement process. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the guideline and reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

**Committee chairmen**, please take note when setting budgets for 2021 onward, that the Canadian mileage rate will be increased to \$0.53 per km (from the current \$0.48 per km).

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2019 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

Also, please remember to use the gmail account for expense reimbursements and correspondence related to the URCNA. The gmail address is [CdnURCNA@gmail.com](mailto:CdnURCNA@gmail.com).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

Pam Hessels  
Treasurer, URCNA  
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**URCNA – CANADA**

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2019 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)**

**General Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
Askings	89,935.00	332.00	90,267.00	91,367.00
Acts of Synod - sales	381.14	-	381.14	-
Donations (note 1)	-	400.00	400.00	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>90,316.14</b>	<b>732.00</b>	<b>91,048.14</b>	<b>91,367.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
<b>Joint Venture Advances</b>				
Acts of Synod	24.69	-	24.69	-
Bank charges	5.34	4.56	9.90	18.65
<b>Committee expenses</b>				
CECCA (note 2)	4,707.04	-	4,707.04	5,818.75
CERCU (note 3)	1,164.76	3,522.50	4,687.26	4,655.00
Missions	7,965.40	1.58	7,966.98	8,844.50
PRCC	-	-	-	232.75
<b>Dues</b>				
ICRC	1,042.35	-	1,042.35	1,024.10
MNA	-	461.20	461.20	465.50
NAPARC	450.75	-	450.75	465.50
Missions coordinator	36,490.74	11,394.56	47,885.30	54,673.85
Stipends (note 4)	6,542.03	2,176.61	8,718.64	8,602.65
Supplies	72.13	183.03	255.16	256.00
Website (note 5)	349.33	-	349.33	-
Acts of Synod – cost of sale	381.14	-	381.14	-
Bank charges	45.00	14.00	59.00	200.00
D&O insurance	-	723.00	723.00	1,100.00
Government filing fee	-	20.00	20.00	20.00
Postage	28.24	7.92	36.16	50.00
Professional fees (note 6)	2,794.50	-	2,794.50	2,500.00
Publication: Creeds app	5,623.89	-	5,623.89	-
Qualified donee donation(1)	-	400.00	400.00	-
Treasurer	3,897.75	1,299.25	5,197.00	5,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>71,585.08</b>	<b>20,208.21</b>	<b>91,793.29</b>	<b>93,927.25</b>
	<b>18,731.06</b>	<b>(19,476.21)</b>	<b>(745.15)</b>	<b>(2,560.25)</b>

Liturgical Forms Book & Creeds / Confessions Booklet				
Book sales (note 7)	19,040.88	5,671.98	24,712.86	-
Cost of sales	15,239.39	4,165.42	19,404.81	-
Exchange loss	509.57	30.52	540.09	-
Profit on book sales	<u>3,291.92</u>	<u>1,476.04</u>	<u>4,767.96</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Total	<u>22,022.98</u>	<u>(18,000.17)</u>	<u>4,022.81</u>	<u>(2,560.25)</u>

Balance Sheet	2019	2018*
Bank	50,597.28	58,307.99
Accounts receivable (note 8)	8,102.03	8,989.70
Advance to JVA (note 7)	7,891.84	-
Inventory: LFB + CCB (note 9)	24,107.72	24,998.41
Prepays (note 10)	12,197.83	1,000.00
Accounts payable (note 11)	8,053.62	3,375.83
Deferred revenue (note 12)	900.00	-
General fund balance	93,943.08	89,920.27

\* restated to include Psalter Hymnal fund balance transferred to General Fund

NOTES:

- (1) Donation was received from Canada Helps (on-line donation facilitator). Donation was anonymous; however, it was indicated that money was to be used to support children. The Board donated the money to a Canadian URCNA charity that works with children to honor the request.
- (2) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (3) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (4) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, statistician and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the “joint venture” since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada.
- (5) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website
- (6) Legal fees were incurred to review proposed Missions Committee recommendations
- (7) The liturgical forms book and creeds/confessions booklet (CCB) sales are received in US funds. The funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB have been deposited into the JVA account. Funds were used to pay for the creeds and confessions booklet. Funds continue to be deposited into the JVA account for future replenishment of inventory. The “advance to JVA” and LFB/CCB sales have been presented in Canadian dollars for this report. The exchange loss represents the money “lost” due to exchange rate fluctuations.
- (8) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (9) Represents the value of unsold copies of liturgical forms book (LFB) and creeds and confessions booklet (CCB)

- (10) Deposit paid for Synod 2020. URCNA Canada board has approved Synodical expenses to be paid using URCNA funds. Amount to be reimbursed in 2020 when Synod occurs.
- (11) Large payable due to payroll remittances changed by Canada Revenue Agency from monthly remittance to quarterly.
- (12) Represents synod display fees received in 2019; amount to be reimbursed in 2020 when Synod occurs.

**Web Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL
Income			
Classis	375.00	-	375.00
Total Income	<u>375.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>375.00</u>
Expenses	-	530.53	530.53
Total Expenses	<u>-</u>	<u>530.53</u>	<u>530.53</u>
Net Total	<u>375.00</u>	<u>(530.53)</u>	<u>(155.53)</u>
Balance Sheet		<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Bank		275.47	306.00
Deferred revenue (note 1)		125.00	-
Web fund balance		150.47	306.00

**NOTES:**

- (1) If expenses are the same as that incurred in 2019, there is not sufficient money in the bank account to cover the expense in 2020. The bank balance reflects the collection of one classis askings for 2020 (shown as deferred revenue). Only \$250 remains to be collected from the remaining 2 Canadian classis in 2020.

**URCNA – Joint**  
Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

**2019 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) – in USD**

**General Fund**

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
URCNA - Canada	44,718.49	13,972.70	58,691.19	63,952.68
URCNA - US	83,048.62	25,949.32	108,997.94	118,769.20
Interest	21.05	0.88	21.93	-
Sundry - presentations	-	600.13	600.13	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>127,788.16</u>	<u>40,523.03</u>	<u>168,311.19</u>	<u>182,721.88</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Acts of Synod	53.44	-	53.44	-
Bank charges	32.61	11.00	43.61	40.00
<b>Committee expenses</b>				
CECCA (note 1)	9,507.05	-	9,507.05	12,500.00
CERCU (note 2)	3,311.93	7,794.20	11,106.13	10,000.00
Missions	17,162.27	3.54	17,165.81	19,000.00
<b>Dues</b>				
ICRC	2,182.50	-	2,182.50	2,200.00
MNA	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
NAPARC	1,000.00	-	1,000.00	1,000.00
<b>Missions coordinator</b>				
Office supplies/telephone	1,435.39	498.62	1,934.01	7,500.00
Salary and benefits (note 3)	68,634.62	22,658.97	91,293.59	89,951.88
Travel and mileage	9,423.15	2,250.52	11,673.67	20,000.00
PRCC	-	-	-	500.00
<b>Stipends (note 4)</b>				
Clerk	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Statistician	1,825.71	605.35	2,431.06	2,465.00
Treasurer	4,784.47	1,614.16	6,398.63	6,015.00
Webmaster	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
<b>Supplies</b>				
Clerk	-	357.96	357.96	500.00
Office supplies	160.02	51.71	211.73	50.00
Website (note 5)	775.00	1,177.00	1,952.00	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>127,788.16</u>	<u>40,523.03</u>	<u>168,311.19</u>	<u>182,721.88</u>
<b>Net Total</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Balance Sheet	2019
Bank (note 6)	13,872.74
Accounts receivable (note 7)	1,284.56
Prepays (note 8)	2,193.60
Accounts payable (note 9)	1,282.59
Advance from URCNA – US (note 10)	10,000.00
Advance from URCNA – Canada (note 11)	6,068.31
General fund balance	-

**NOTES:**

- (1) CECCA – Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU – Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) The missions coordinator’s salary and benefits are budgeted in Canadian dollars. The amount over budget reflects exchange rate differences from what was projected.
- (4) Represents the webmaster, clerk, statistician, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations
- (5) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website as well as the federation website.
- (6) The bank balance is provided for information purposes
- (7) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses
- (8) Represents airfare and accommodation expenses paid in 2019 for the missions committee January 2020 meeting.
- (9) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members
- (10) URCNA – US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner
- (11) Represents the funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB that have been deposited into the US\$ account. Funds were used to pay for the printing of the creeds and confessions booklet and will be used for future inventory replenishment.

**Synod**

Balance Sheet	2019
Bank (note 1)	22,272.87
Synod balance	22,272.87

**NOTE:**

- (1) The funds remaining after Synod 2018 were forwarded to Wellandport URC and deposited into the JVA US\$ bank account. The URCNA Canada board has approved for Synodical expenses to be paid using Canadian funds. The funds will be used to offset expenses incurred in 2020 when Synod occurs.

# URCNA - Canada

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2020 End of Year Report (not audited)

February 8, 2021

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the Fourth Quarter Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2020 askings from 42 (2019 – 42) of the Canadian churches. In addition, all 3 Canadian classis (2019 – 3) have provided money for the web fund.

### Askings:

Overall, 2020 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported in the 2020 quarterly reports, the board reviewed each budget item (approved at Synod 2018) and set the askings based on what was anticipated to be spent (similar to what was done in 2019). As a result, there was a budgeted deficit of \$4,412 planned for 2020. We can report that the results for 2020 was an unplanned profit of \$22,748. This profit is significantly higher than projected and is the result of the follow factors:

1. The askings for \$41 per family was determined using 2,231 families as the budget base; askings were received for \$2,234 families.
2. COVID severely hampered the travel related to various committees, as well as the work of the Missions Coordinator.
  - a. Of the \$19,110 budgeted for committee meetings, only \$7,321 was spent.
  - b. Of the \$9,100 budgeted for travel by the Missions Coordinator, only \$1,344 was spent.
  - c. NAPARC did not meet, so the budgeted dues were not required.
  - d. Synod was unable to meet so the \$1,820 budgeted for fiduciaries to attend was not spent.
3. The sale of the liturgical forms and creeds and confessions books generated a small profit of \$1,973.

Please note that on the Canadian financial report, payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

### Website:

Significant expenses were incurred again to maintain the website in 2020 which has significantly decreased the website funds. As I indicated in my 2019 end of year report, the declining bank balance was brought to the attention of the website oversight committee for them to make a recommendation at Synod 2020 to rectify the situation. The website oversight committee did address the issue in their report; however, Synod was not able to meet and the issue could not be addressed.

As a temporary measure the Board of the URCNA has recommended and approved that the cash shortfalls and fund deficits will be covered by transfers from the general fund, on a yearly basis, until Synod can meet and the issue can be dealt with.

Classical treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

#### Budget 2021:

One of the activities of Synod is to approve the budgeted expenses. Since Synod was unable to meet this year, the convening consistory has approved the interim budget for 2021 (circulated with the third quarter report). Please note that the budget was drafted and approved in June 2020 when the exchange rate was very favorable for the US dollar. The amount calculated on the budget is only an estimate. US churches, please contact the US Treasurer for the US 2021 asking amount.

The askings for 2021 have been set at \$28.00 per family (a significant decrease from \$41.00 per family set in 2020). Statements were emailed at the beginning of January 2021 to clerks / treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church as well as to explain the reason for the decrease in rate (2020 surplus has been applied toward the 2021 expenses).

#### JVA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December, 2020. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room for their committee.

#### Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2021, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form and drafted an expense reimbursement guideline to help speed up the reimbursement process. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

**Committee chairmen**, please take note that the proposed increase in the Canadian mileage rate has been deferred until budgets can be approved at Synod.

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2020 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

Also, please remember to use the gmail account for expense reimbursements and correspondence related to the URCNA. The gmail address is CdnURCNA@gmail.com.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

Pam Hessels  
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URCNA Synod Niagara

# URCNA - Canada

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2020 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)

### General Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
Askings	89,916.50	1,968.00	91,884.50	91,471.00
Donations	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>89,916.50</b>	<b>1,968.00</b>	<b>91,884.50</b>	<b>91,471.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Joint Venture Advances				
Bank charges	3.11	0.70	3.81	18.20
Committee expenses				
CECCA (note 1)	2,770.67	(391.51)	2,379.16	5,687.50
CERCU (note 2)	-	-	-	4,550.00
Missions	4,909.52	32.08	4,941.60	8,645.00
PRCC	-	-	-	227.50
Dues				
ICRC	1,065.79	-	1,065.79	1,001.00
MNA	-	454.60	454.60	455.00
NAPARC	-	-	-	455.00
Missions co-ordinator	34,393.70	10,051.88	44,445.58	55,306.20
Stipends (note 3)	6,531.28	2,143.38	8,674.66	8,497.65
Supplies	-	141.12	141.12	250.25
Synod attendance	-	-	-	1,820.00
Website (note 4)	293.00	-	293.00	-
Bank charges	-	-	-	200.00
Director's & officers insurance	-	755.40	755.40	1,100.00
Government filing fee	-	12.00	12.00	20.00
Postage	234.02	7.06	241.08	50.00
Professional fees	2,504.95	-	2,504.95	2,600.00
Treasurer	3,897.75	1,299.25	5,197.00	5,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>56,603.79</b>	<b>14,505.96</b>	<b>71,109.75</b>	<b>95,883.30</b>
	33,312.71	(12,537.96)	20,774.75	(4,412.30)
Liturgical Forms Book & Creeds/Confessions Booklet				
Sales (note 6)	8,053.77	6,666.47	14,720.24	
Cost of sales	6,275.90	5,800.17	12,076.07	
Exchange loss (gain)	(181.33)	852.09	670.76	
	1,959.20	14.21	1,973.41	-
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>35,271.91</b>	<b>(12,523.75)</b>	<b>22,748.16</b>	<b>(4,412.30)</b>

## Balance Sheet

Bank	74,952.28
Accounts receivable (note 5)	8,351.37
Advance to JVA (note 6)	19,406.25
Inventory - LFB + CCB (note 7)	13,711.67
Prepays (note 8)	10,289.77
Accounts payable (note 9)	10,020.10
General fund balance (note 10)	116,691.24
	-

## NOTES

- (1) CECCA - Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU - Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the "joint venture" since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada
- (4) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website
- (5) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (6) The liturgical forms book and creeds/confessions booklet (CCB) sales are received in US funds. The funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB had been deposited into the JVA account. Funds were used to pay for the creeds and confessions booklet. Funds continue to be deposited into the JVA account for future replenishment of inventory. The "advance to JVA" and LFB sales have been presented in Canadian dollars for this report. The exchange loss represents the money "lost" due to exchange rate fluctuations.
- (7) Represents value of unsold copies of liturgical forms book (LFB) and creeds and confessions booklet (CCB)
- (8) Deposit paid for Synod 2022. URCNA Canada board has approved Synodical expenses to be paid using URCNA funds. Amount to be reimbursed in 2022 when Synod occurs.
- (9) Large payable due to payroll remittances changed by Canada Revenue Agency from monthly remittance to quarterly.
- (10) Until Synod can meet again (where the funding formula for the Web Fund can be addressed), the URCNA-Canada Board has approved that deficits to the web fund will be covered by General Fund. On January 1, 2021, \$93.64 was transferred to the website fund to cover the deficit in that fund.

## Web Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL
Income			
Classis	375.00	-	375.00
Total Income	<u>375.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>375.00</u>
Expenses	30.40	588.71	619.11
Total Expenses	<u>30.40</u>	<u>588.71</u>	<u>619.11</u>
Net Total	<u>344.60</u>	<u>(588.71)</u>	<u>(244.11)</u>

### Balance Sheet

Bank	(75.45)
Accounts payable	18.19
Web fund balance (note 1)	(93.64)
	-

### NOTES

- (1) Until Synod can meet again (where the funding formula for the Web Fund can be addressed), the URCNA-Canada Board has approved that deficits to the web fund will be covered by General Fund. On January 1, 2021, \$93.64 was transferred to the website fund to cover the deficit.

# URCNA - Joint

Pam Hessels, Joint URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2020 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) - In USD

### General Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	YTD Budget
<b>Income</b>				
URCNA - Canada	37,591.92	10,049.94	47,641.86	66,800.06
URCNA - US	69,813.62	18,664.22	88,477.84	124,057.34
Interest	5.58	1.78	7.36	-
Sundry - presentations / speeches	-	1,725.84	1,725.84	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>107,411.12</b>	<b>30,441.78</b>	<b>137,852.90</b>	<b>190,857.40</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Bank charges	11.98	3.35	15.33	40.00
Committee expenses				
CECCA (note 1)	5,741.80	(861.22)	4,880.58	12,500.00
CERCU (note 2)		-	-	10,000.00
Missions	10,304.70	70.57	10,375.27	19,000.00
Dues				
ICRC	2,182.50	-	2,182.50	2,200.00
MNA	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
NAPARC	-	-	-	1,000.00
Missions co-ordinator				
Office supplies / telephone	1,271.63	340.35	1,611.98	7,500.00
Salary and benefits	71,248.16	22,715.05	93,963.21	94,052.01
Travel and mileage	1,991.53	868.71	2,860.24	20,000.00
PRCC	-	-	-	500.00
Stipends (note 3)				
Clerk	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Statistician	1,816.10	616.16	2,432.26	2,361.54
Treasurer	4,675.54	1,590.94	6,266.48	6,153.85
Webmaster	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Supplies				
Clerk	-	310.38	310.38	500.00
Treasurer	-	-	-	50.00
Synod attendance	-	-	-	4,000.00
Website (note 4)	667.18	1,287.49	1,954.67	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>107,411.12</b>	<b>30,441.78</b>	<b>137,852.90</b>	<b>190,857.40</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

## Balance Sheet

Bank (note 5)	24,324.50
Accounts receivable (note 6)	2,227.99
Accounts payable (note 7)	1,310.38
Advance from URCNA - US (note 8)	10,000.00
Advance from URCNA - Canada (note 9)	15,242.11
General fund balance	-

## NOTES

- (1) CECCA - Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU - Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the webmaster, clerk, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US Treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations.
- (4) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website as well as the federation website
- (5) The bank balance is provided for information purposes.
- (6) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses.
- (7) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members.
- (8) URCNA - US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner.
- (9) Represents the funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB that have been deposited into the US\$ account. Funds were used to pay for the printing of the creeds and confessions booklet and will be used for future inventory replenishment.

## Synod

### Balance Sheet

Bank (note 1)	6,201.11
Accounts receivable (note 2)	0.18
Prepays (note 2)	16,077.77
Accounts payable (note 2)	6.19
Synod balance	22,272.87

### NOTE:

- (1) The funds remaining after Synod 2018 were forwarded to Wellandport URC and deposited into the JVA US\$ bank account. The URCNA Canada board has approved for Synodical expenses to be paid using Canadian funds. The funds will be used to offset expenses incurred in 2021 when Synod occurs.
- (2) Represents costs incurred (and not yet paid) for Synod 2020. These costs will be "rolled over" and recovered in 2022.

# URCNA - Canada

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2021 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)

February 11, 2022

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Please find the Fourth Quarter Treasurer's report for the Canadian churches of the United Reformed Churches in North America attached. From a participation perspective, I have received 2021 askings from 42 (2020 – 42) of the Canadian churches. In addition, all three Canadian classes (2020 – 3) have provided money for the web fund.

### Askings:

Overall, 2021 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings.

As reported in the 2021 quarterly reports, the board attempted to deplete the surplus generated in 2020. As a result, there was a budgeted deficit of \$31,131 planned for 2021. We can report that the results for 2021 was a loss of \$8,028. This loss is significantly less than projected and is the result of the follow factors:

1. The askings for \$28 per family was determined using 2,273 families as the budget base; askings were received for 2,282 families.
2. COVID severely hampered the travel related to various committees, as well as the work of the Missions Coordinator:
  - a. Of the \$19,779 budgeted for committee meetings, only \$2,215 was spent.
  - b. Of the \$8,890 budget for travel for the Missions Coordinator, only \$6,946 was spent.
3. Professional fees are over budget due to the legal fees incurred, which is an unbudgeted expense.
4. The sale of the liturgical forms and creeds and confessions books generated a small profit of \$975.

Please note that on the Canadian financial report, payments made by the JVA are reflected separately under joint venture advances. Only the Canadian portion (translated from US to Canadian dollars) is reported.

### Website:

Significant expenses were incurred again to maintain the website in 2021 which has significantly decreased the website funds. As I indicated in my 2020 end of year report, the declining bank balance was brought to the attention of the website oversight committee for them to make a recommendation at Synod to rectify the situation. The website oversight committee did address the issued in their report; however, Synod has not been able to meet and the issue has not been addressed.

As a temporary measure the Board of the URCNA has recommended and approved that the cash shortfall and fund deficit will be covered by a transfer from the general fund, on a yearly basis, until Synod can meet and the issue can be dealt with.

Classis treasurers are reminded that Synod 2018 increased the Canadian asking to \$125 per classis for 2019 onward.

### Legal Fees:

The URCNA corporation has been named in a lawsuit resulting from a charge against a Canadian federation church. The corporation has paid a deposit with the law firm to cover the legal fees. The deposit is expected to be returned at the end of the lawsuit. Legal fees paid have been reflected in professional fees on the Canadian report. At this time the amount of costs to be incurred is not known.

### Budget 2021:

One of the activities of Synod is to approve the budgeted expenses. Since Synod has been unable to meet, the convening consistory has approved the interim budget for 2022 (attached to this report). Please note that some of the committee expenses have been increased to cover expenses related to Covid PCR tests as travel is expected to resume in 2022 for these committees. The asking amount calculated on the budget is only an estimate. US churches, please contact the US Treasurer for the US 2022 asking amount.

The askings for 2022 have been set at \$43.40 per family (a significant increase from \$28.00 per family set in 2021). Statements were emailed at the beginning of January 2022 to clerks / treasurers to show what has been budgeted to be received from their church.

### JVA Report:

Attached is the joint venture report for the period of January to December, 2021. Please note that this report is in US dollars. Effective January 1, 2014, all committee expenses, dues and stipends are paid directly by the joint venture as recommended by the finance committee and approved at Synod 2012. Committee chairmen should use this report to evaluate their spending room for their committee.

### Committee Expenses:

In the beginning of 2022, the US Treasurer and Canadian Treasurer revised the expense reimbursement form to reflect the current mileage reimbursement rate. Committee members are asked to contact either the US or Canadian Treasurer for a copy of the reimbursement form, if they do not already have a copy.

**Committee chairmen**, please take note that the proposed increase to the Canadian mileage rate has been deferred until the budget can be approved at Synod.

The URCNA corporation is a federally incorporated charity. The Not-for-Profit Corporations Act requires that all non-profit organizations be audited (or reviewed if they fall below a specified threshold) by a public accountant, yearly. The 2021 financial statements have been sent to the accountant. At the time of this report the draft financial statements have not been completed. If you would like to obtain a complete copy of the reviewed financial statements, please contact the Canadian treasurer and a copy will be forwarded to you.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Serving the Lord together.

Pam Hessels, Treasurer, URCNA  
Home: 905-386-0492  
E-Mail: CdnURCNA@gmail.com

# URCNA - Canada

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2021 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited)

### General Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	Yrly Budget
<b>Income</b>				
Askings	62,048.00	1,848.00	63,896.00	63,644.00
Acts of Synod	10.07	-	10.07	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>62,058.07</u>	<u>1,848.00</u>	<u>63,906.07</u>	<u>63,644.00</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Joint Venture Advances				
Bank charges	(1.45)	0.84	(0.61)	22.00
Committee expenses				
CECCA (note 1)	118.03	(118.03)	-	5,556.00
CERCU (note 2)	-	2,018.19	2,018.19	5,556.00
Missions	76.92	119.76	196.68	8,445.00
PRCC	-	-	-	222.00
Dues				
ICRC	942.82	-	942.82	978.00
MNA	-	454.46	454.46	445.00
NAPARC	422.26	-	422.26	445.00
Missions co-ordinator	36,291.19	13,985.71	50,276.90	55,511.00
Stipends (note 3)	6,231.14	2,142.76	8,373.90	8,365.00
Supplies	-	149.50	149.50	244.00
Synod attendance	-	-	-	-
Website (note 4)	259.19	-	259.19	266.00
Bank charges	-	-	-	50.00
Board expenses	-	77.82	77.82	-
Director's & officers insurance	-	789.96	789.96	1,000.00
Government filing fee	-	12.00	12.00	20.00
Postage and supplies	16.73	9.57	26.30	50.00
Professional fees (note 5)	3,488.22	224.52	3,712.74	2,600.00
Treasurer	3,897.75	1,299.25	5,197.00	5,000.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>51,742.80</u>	<u>21,166.31</u>	<u>72,909.11</u>	<u>94,775.00</u>
	10,315.27	(19,318.31)	(9,003.04)	(31,131.00)
<b>Liturgical Forms Book &amp; Creeds/Confessions Booklet</b>				
Sales (note 7)	4,768.20	496.98	5,265.18	
Cost of sales	3,842.99	382.09	4,225.08	
Exchange loss (gain)	58.18	6.48	64.66	
	<u>867.03</u>	<u>108.41</u>	<u>975.44</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>Net Total</b>	<u>11,182.30</u>	<u>(19,209.90)</u>	<u>(8,027.60)</u>	<u>(31,131.00)</u>

## Balance Sheet

Bank	59,273.23
Accounts receivable (note 6)	4,400.43
Advance to JVA (note 7)	29,368.98
Inventory - LFB + CCB (note 8)	10,290.47
Prepays (note 5,9)	15,479.69
Accounts payable (note 10)	10,242.80
General fund balance	108,570.00
	-

## NOTES

- (1) CECCA - Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU - Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the Canadian portion of the webmaster, clerk, and JV treasurer stipends. These stipends are paid via the "joint venture" since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada
- (4) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website
- (5) The URCNA Corporation has been named in a lawsuit resulting from a charge against a Canadian federation church. A \$5K deposit has been made with the law firm to cover the legal fees. The deposit is expected to be returned.
- (6) Represents the refundable portion of GST/HST to be received from Canada Revenue Agency as well as amount owing from the JVA for committee expenses paid to Canadian committee members (payment is made quarterly).
- (7) The liturgical forms book and creeds/confessions booklet (CCB) sales are received in US funds. The funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB had been deposited into the JVA account. Funds were used to pay for the creeds and confessions booklet. Funds continue to be deposited into the JVA account for future replenishment of inventory. The "advance to JVA" and LFB sales have been presented in Canadian dollars for this report. The exchange loss represents the impact of exchange rate fluctuations.
- (8) Represents value of unsold copies of liturgical forms book (LFB) and creeds and confessions booklet (CCB)
- (9) Deposit paid for Synod 2022. URCNA Canada board has approved Synodical expenses to be paid using URCNA funds. Amount to be reimbursed in 2022 when Synod occurs.
- (10) Large payable due to payroll remittances changed by Canada Revenue Agency from monthly remittance to quarterly.

## Web Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL
Income			
Classis	250.00	125.00	375.00
Total Income	<u>250.00</u>	<u>125.00</u>	<u>375.00</u>
Expenses	49.94	680.52	730.46
Total Expenses	<u>49.94</u>	<u>680.52</u>	<u>730.46</u>
Net Total	<u>200.06</u>	<u>(555.52)</u>	<u>(355.46)</u>

### Balance Sheet

Bank	(480.46)
Accounts receivable	125.00
Accounts payable	-
Web fund balance (note 1)	(355.46)
	-

### NOTES

- (1) Until Synod can meet again (where the funding formula for the Web Fund can be addressed), the URCNA-Canada Board has approved that deficits to the web fund will be covered by General Fund. On January 1, 2022, \$355.46 (2021 - \$93.64) was transferred to the website fund to cover the deficit. The fund began with a zero balance on January 1, 2021 and 2022.

# URCNA - Joint

Pam Hessels, Joint URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0

## 2021 Fourth Quarter Report (not audited) - In USD

### General Fund

	Jan - Sep	Oct - Dec	YTD TOTAL	YTD Budget
<b>Income</b>				
URCNA - Canada	36,327.98	14,244.34	50,572.32	67,760.00
URCNA - US	67,466.29	28,845.23	96,311.52	125,844.00
Interest	12.71	5.08	17.79	-
Sale of Acts of Synod	22.59	-	22.59	-
Sundry - presentations / speeches	1,718.32	699.70	2,418.02	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>105,547.89</b>	<b>43,794.35</b>	<b>149,342.24</b>	<b>193,604.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Bank charges	9.30	6.85	16.15	50.00
<b>Committee expenses</b>				
CECCA (note 1)	-	-	-	12,500.00
CERCU (note 2)	279.50	4,192.36	4,471.86	12,500.00
Missions	178.08	263.53	441.61	19,000.00
<b>Dues</b>				
ICRC	2,182.50	-	2,182.50	2,200.00
MNA	-	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
NAPARC	1,000.00	-	1,000.00	1,000.00
<b>Missions co-ordinator</b>				
Office supplies / telephone	1,394.64	677.00	2,071.64	7,500.00
Salary and benefits	76,080.73	25,042.56	101,123.29	97,384.00
Travel and mileage	9,187.62	5,947.57	15,135.19	20,000.00
PRCC	-	-	-	500.00
<b>Stipends (note 3)</b>				
Clerk	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Statistician	1,932.56	648.12	2,580.68	2,520.00
Treasurer	5,086.78	1,689.94	6,776.72	6,300.00
Webmaster	3,750.00	1,250.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
<b>Supplies</b>				
Clerk	-	328.98	328.98	500.00
Treasurer	-	-	-	50.00
Website (note 4)	716.18	1,497.44	2,213.62	600.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>105,547.89</b>	<b>43,794.35</b>	<b>149,342.24</b>	<b>193,604.00</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

## Balance Sheet

Bank (note 5)	26,381.80
Accounts receivable (note 6)	9,857.25
Accounts payable (note 7)	3,073.74
Advance from URCNA - US (note 8)	10,000.00
Advance from URCNA - Canada (note 9)	23,165.31
General fund balance	-
	-

## NOTES

- (1) CECCA - Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
- (2) CERCU - Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
- (3) Represents the webmaster, clerk, and JV treasurer stipends. The stipends paid to the Canadian and US Treasurers are represented on the financial report from the Canadian and US operations.
- (4) Website expenses represent the cost for the prayers/forms website and threeforms.org website as well as the federation website.
- (5) The bank balance is provided for information purposes.
- (6) Represents the amount owing from the Canadian and US treasurers to the JVA for committee expenses.
- (7) Represents the amount owing to the US committee members for travel expenses as well as amounts owing to the Canadian URCNA for expenses incurred by Canadian committee members.
- (8) URCNA - US has advanced money to the JVA to ensure that expenses can be paid in a more timely manner.
- (9) Represents the funds received on the sale of the LFB and CCB that have been deposited into the US\$ account. Funds were used to pay for the printing of the creeds and confessions booklet and will be used for future inventory replenishment.

## Synod

### Balance Sheet

Bank (note 1)	6,141.71
Prepays (note 2)	16,137.17
Accounts payable (note 2)	6.01
Synod balance	22,272.87
	-

### NOTE:

- (1) The funds remaining after Synod 2018 were forwarded to Wellandport URC and deposited into the JVA US\$ bank account. The URCNA Canada board has approved for Synodical expenses to be paid using Canadian funds. The funds will be used to offset expenses incurred in 2022 when Synod occurs.
- (2) Represents costs incurred (and not yet paid) for Synod 2022. These costs will be "rolled over" and recovered in 2022.

Synod Interim Budget  
 Budget: Combined US and Canadian  
 In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.2879 - Cdn\$ items identified with \*\*\*)

Item	Report	2020	2021	2022	Notes
Acts of Synod					
Bank charges		240	86	64	
Committee Expenses					
CECCA		12,500	12,500	16,000	1
CERCU		10,000	12,500	16,000	2
Missions Committee		19,000	19,000	21,000	3
PRCC liaison		500	500	500	
Directors & Liability Insurance					
Canadian board		872 *	723 **	776 ***	
US board		1,000	1,000	1,000	
Dues					
ICRC		2,200	2,200	2,200	
MNA / PRCC		1,000	1,000	1,000	
NAPARC		1,000	1,000	1,000	
Government filing fee					
Canadian churches		16 *	14 **	16 ***	
US churches		25	20	20	
Missions Coordinator					
Salary + benefits		96,805 *	90,283 **	100,192 ***	4
Mileage		5,000	5,000	5,000	
Book fund		1,500	1,500	1,500	
Office supply		2,000	2,000	1,000	5
Travel		15,000	15,000	18,000	5
Communication / Telephone		4,000	4,000	2,000	5
Postage / supplies					
Treasurer(s)		150	136	136	
Stated Clerk		500	500	500	
Professional fees					
Canadian churches		1,981 *	1,881 **	2,096 ***	6
US churches				250	6
Publications					
Liturgical Forms		5,000			
Psalter Hymnal		10,000			
Synod		4,000			
Stipends					
Treasurer(s)					
Canadian		3,963 *	3,617 **	3,882 ***	
Joint		6,340 *	5,788 **	6,212 ***	
US		5,000	5,000	5,000	
Clerk		5,000	5,000	5,000	
Web Master		5,000	5,000	5,000	
Statistician		2,433 *	2,315 **	2,485 ***	7
Website			600	600	8
		219,592	195,248	215,344	
Estimated "askings" / family	Cdn	45.38	44.95	44.58	
	US	35.11	31.39	34.93	

\* In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.2618 - Cdn\$ items identified with \*)  
 \*\* In USD (amounts budgeted in Cdn\$ converted at 1.38225 - Cdn\$ items identified with \*\*)

#### Notes for the budget

- 1 CECCA budget was increased in 2022 to \$16,000 to reflect the increase to \$15K that was planned for Synod as well as an additional \$1K to cover PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel. Given the increase costs to travel, this increase seems prudent.
- 2 CERCU budget was previously \$10K. The committee had planned to request an increase to \$12.5K at synod; this increase was done in 2021. The budget was increased in 2022 to \$16K to reflect additional travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel.
- 3 Missions Committee budget was increased in 2022 to \$21,000 to reflect additional travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required for travel.
- 4 Assumed inflation rate of 2% over 2020 budget and 4% over 2021. Synod 2018 approved that the salary and benefits would increase by the rate of inflation. An additional increase was made to payroll taxes as inflation increase is not sufficient. At time of budget, the rate of inflation is an estimate; salary is adjusted to actual rate of inflation at December. The salary + benefits in Canadian dollars is \$129,003 (2021 - \$124,793).
- 5 Office supply and telephone/communication budgets were decreased by \$3K (combined) to reflect more closely the actual costs incurred each year. The travel budget was increased by \$3K to \$18K to reflect the increased travel expenses related to PCR / Covid tests that will be required to travel.
- 6 Fees for external accountant increased by \$100 in 2021 and again in 2022 to cover anticipated increase in fee for the review engagement. US Board has requested \$250 to be budgeted for 2022 for their external accountant review.
- 7 Statistician stipend was set at \$3,000 Cdn. Extra \$200 is to cover payroll liabilities related to the stipend.
- 8 New websites established in 2019. New budget item for 2021 and 2022

## Statistics and Directory Report for Synod 2022

The role of Statistics and Directory Editor was created at Synod Wheaton 2018 and can be summarized as the collection and compilation of statistical and contact information for each of the churches in the URCNA. This data is reviewed, analysed and presented in appropriate formats in the annual archival directory, the live directory on the URCNA website and in written and oral reports for each Synod. To begin, we will examine the statistical data that has been collected in the year 2018 through to the end of 2021.

### STATISTICS:

**Process:** The submission of statistical information for the URCNA is completed by most churches at the end of the calendar year, although some churches are diligent to update their stats as baptisms, professions and membership transfers occur within their congregation. The numbers are validated by the statistician when they are submitted (i.e. new data is compared with previously inputted numbers, number of baptized and professing members reported are added together to equal total members and numbers on the statistics form are compared with the information in the church directory info file.)

Closer examination and review of the statistical numbers is performed before the publication of the archival directory at the end of January. Statistical analysis is completed before Synod meets and is presented, as follows, in this report as well as at Synod itself.

**Analysis:** Prior to 2018, the cut-off date for the statistical data of the URCNA was not consistently December 31. While interesting, analysis cannot be accurately performed on data collected before 2018 due to the variability in the length of time that it may represent. For the purpose of this report, the data gathered in 2018-2021 will be examined with little emphasis on entries before that time. For statistical data (not contact information), the response rate in 2018 was 74% of churches, in 2019, 91%, in 2020, 80% and in 2021, 84%. The accuracy of the following trends and counts is only as accurate as the data submitted by each of the churches in our federation. The cooperation of the churches in submitting their statistical data is much appreciated.

There are four different areas which will be closely examined. If other statistical analyses are desired by Synod, the statistician is willing to include them in future reports but for Synod 2022, statistical data will be examined in: 1) Churches 2) Members 3) Elders & Deacons 4) Ministers.

#### 1) Churches

The total church count at the end of 2021 including church plants was 130. In the last four years, local congregations increased from 112 to 116 churches.

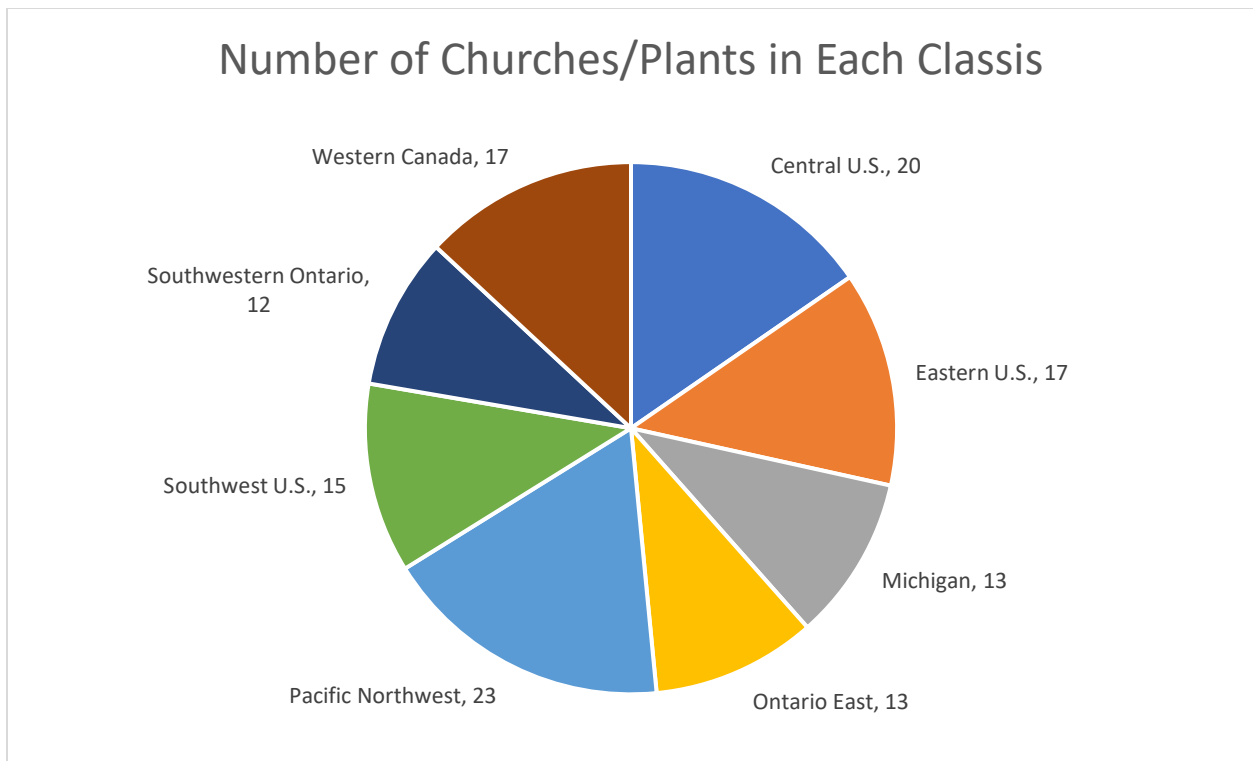
The year 2019 saw the organization of Westside Reformed Church of Cincinnati, OH as well as the addition of Cornerstone Christian Church of Medford, OR to the URCNA. In 2020, we provisionally welcomed Anchor Hope Reformed Church of Silverdale, WA to the federation (to be ratified at Synod 2022). In 2021, the URCNA grew by one church as Redeemer Reformation Church of Regina, SK became an organized congregation.

At the end of 2018, there were 11 church plants in the URCNA. During 2019, Redeemer Reformed Church of Cambridge, MD disbanded and Westside Reformed Church of Cincinnati, OH became an organized congregation. Three new church plants began, namely Pocono Reformed Bible Church of East Stroudsburg, PA, Gig Harbor United Reformed Church of Tacoma, WA and Peace United Reformed Church of Vancouver, WA resulting in the total church plants as of December 31, 2019 being 12. There

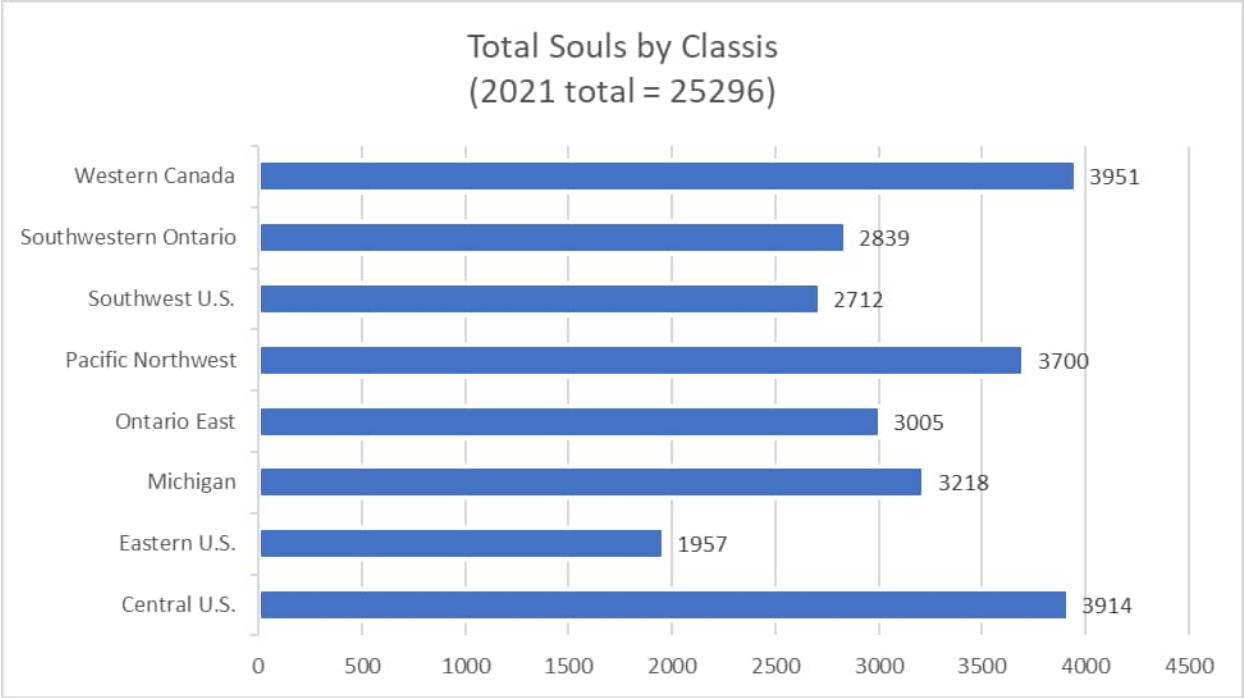
were no changes to the number of church plants in 2020. In 2021, Redeemer Reformation Church of Regina, SK became an organized congregation and Madison Reformed Church of Madison, IN, Indy Reformed Church of Indianapolis, IN and Ventura Reformed Church of Ventura, CA were planted, thus increasing the plant count by two.

	<b>Dec 31, 2018</b>	<b>Dec 31, 2019</b>	<b>Dec 31, 2020</b>	<b>Dec 31, 2021</b>
Local Organized Churches	112	114	115	116
Church Plants	11	12	12	14
<b>Total Number of Churches</b>	123	126	127	130

Of interest is the number of churches and plants in each classis. The classis containing the most churches is Pacific Northwest with 23 and the classis with the least number of churches is Southwestern Ontario with 12.

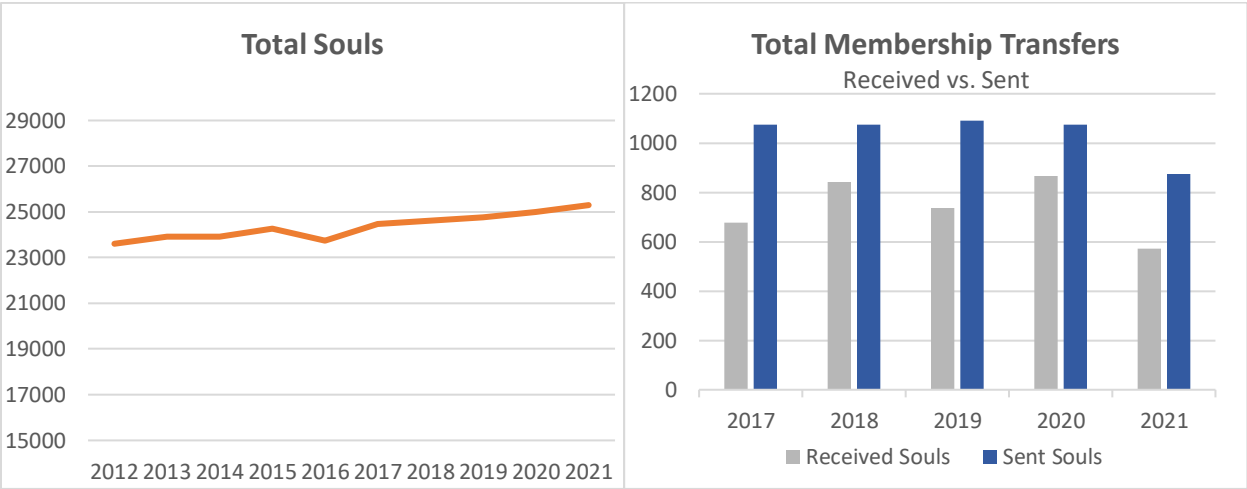


The number of churches in a classis, however, does not necessarily equate with the number of souls as seen by the graph below.



**2) Members**

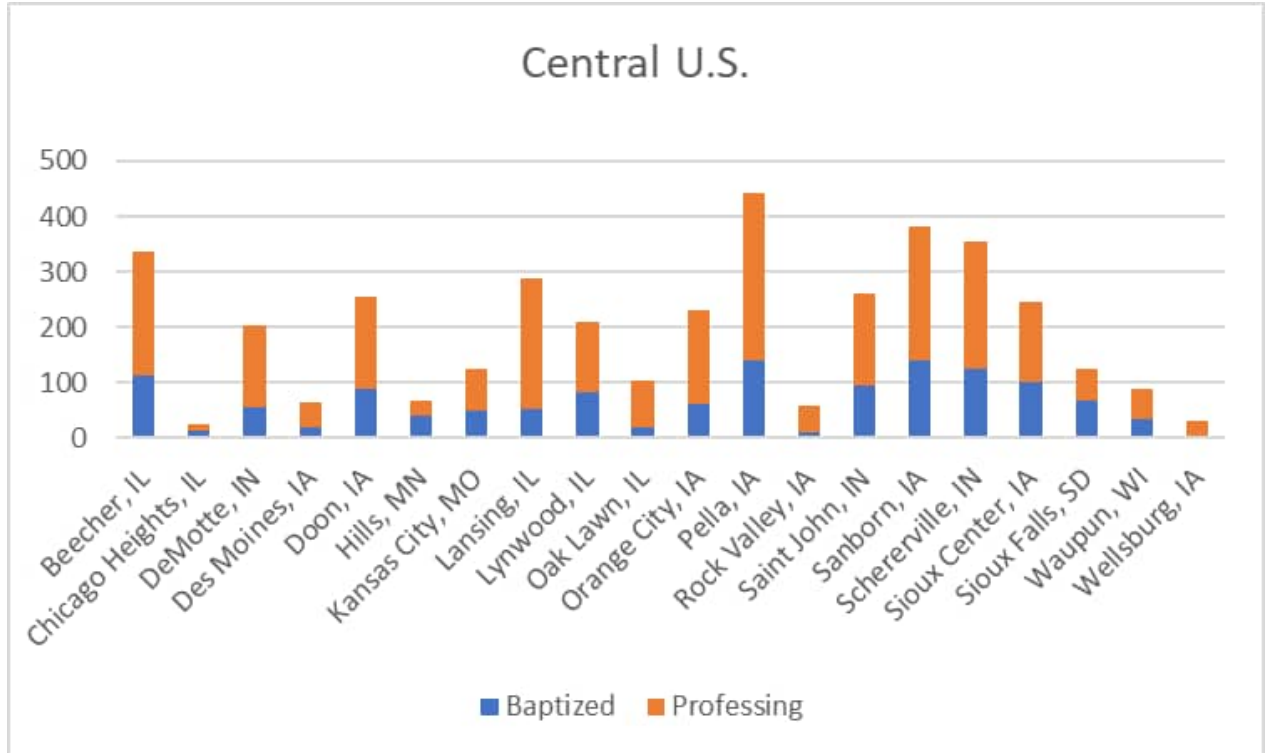
The total number of souls at the end of 2021 was 25,296 souls. This was an increase of 380 members from the total at the end of 2020 (24,916). The trend over the last 10 years has shown the URCNA slightly increasing in size with a 1.0% increase in the last year. Typically, we are transferring more members to other congregations than receiving members from other congregations. Over the last five years however, there was an average of 2.1 baptisms recorded for every death, thus allowing for a slight increase in souls.

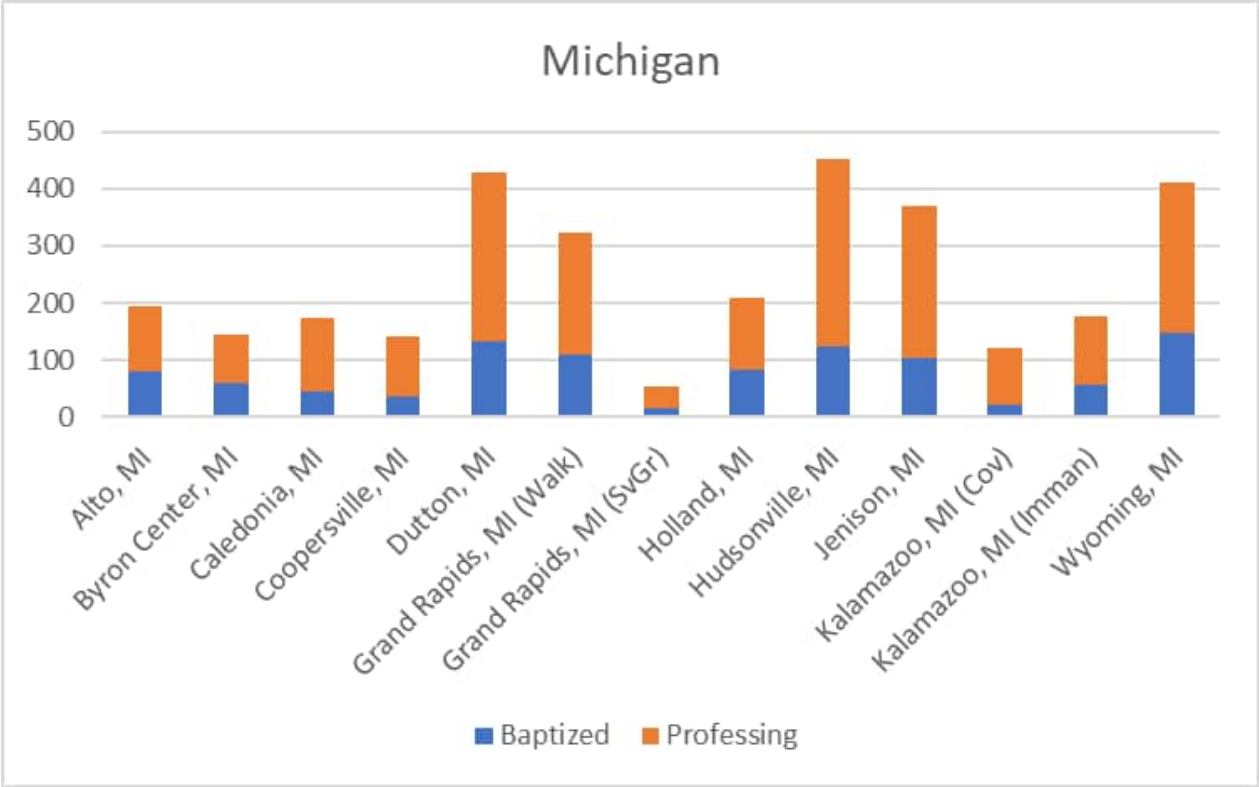
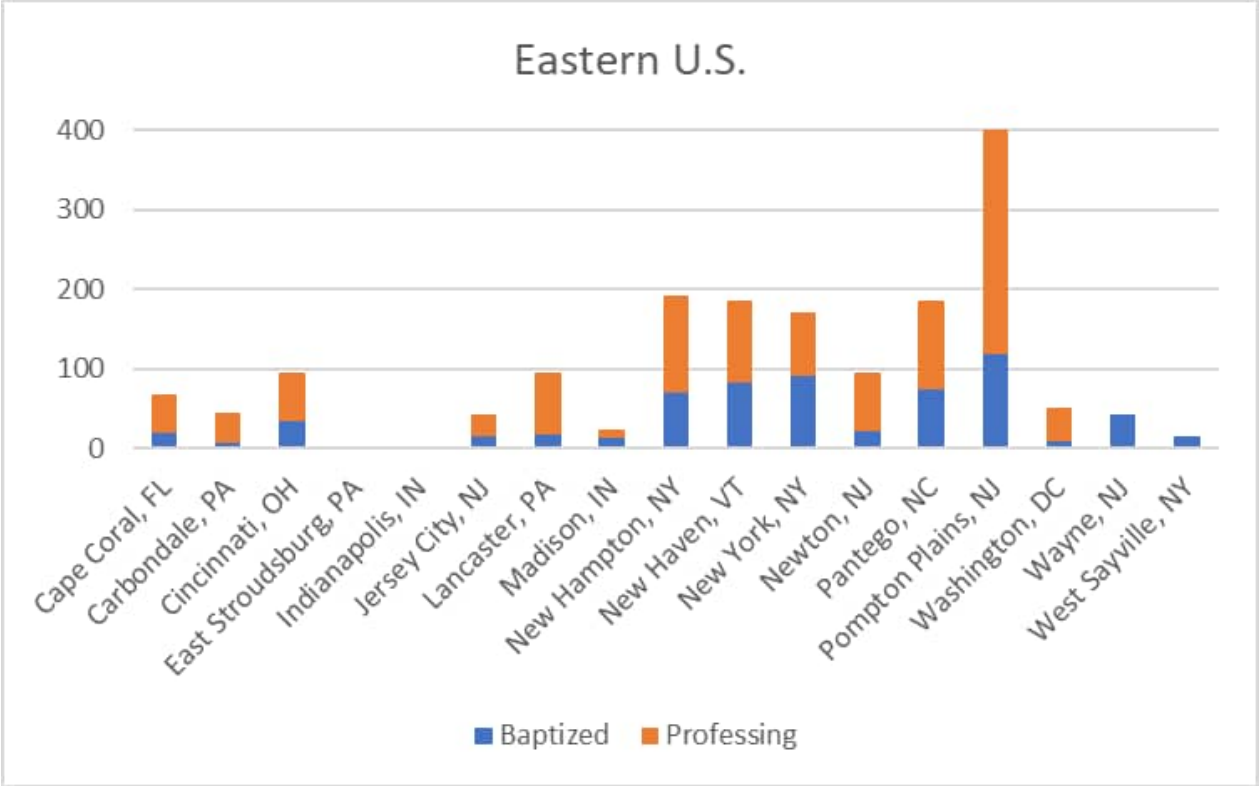


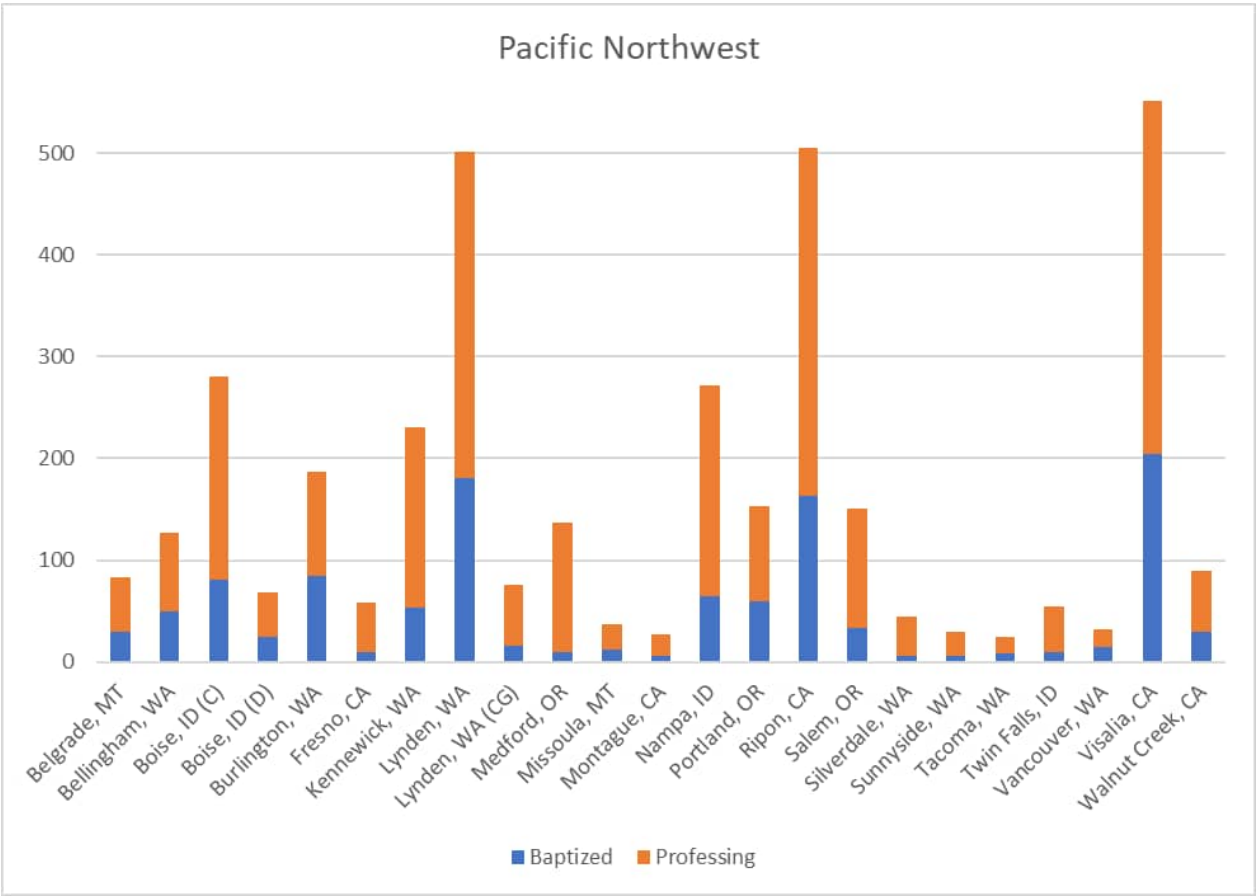
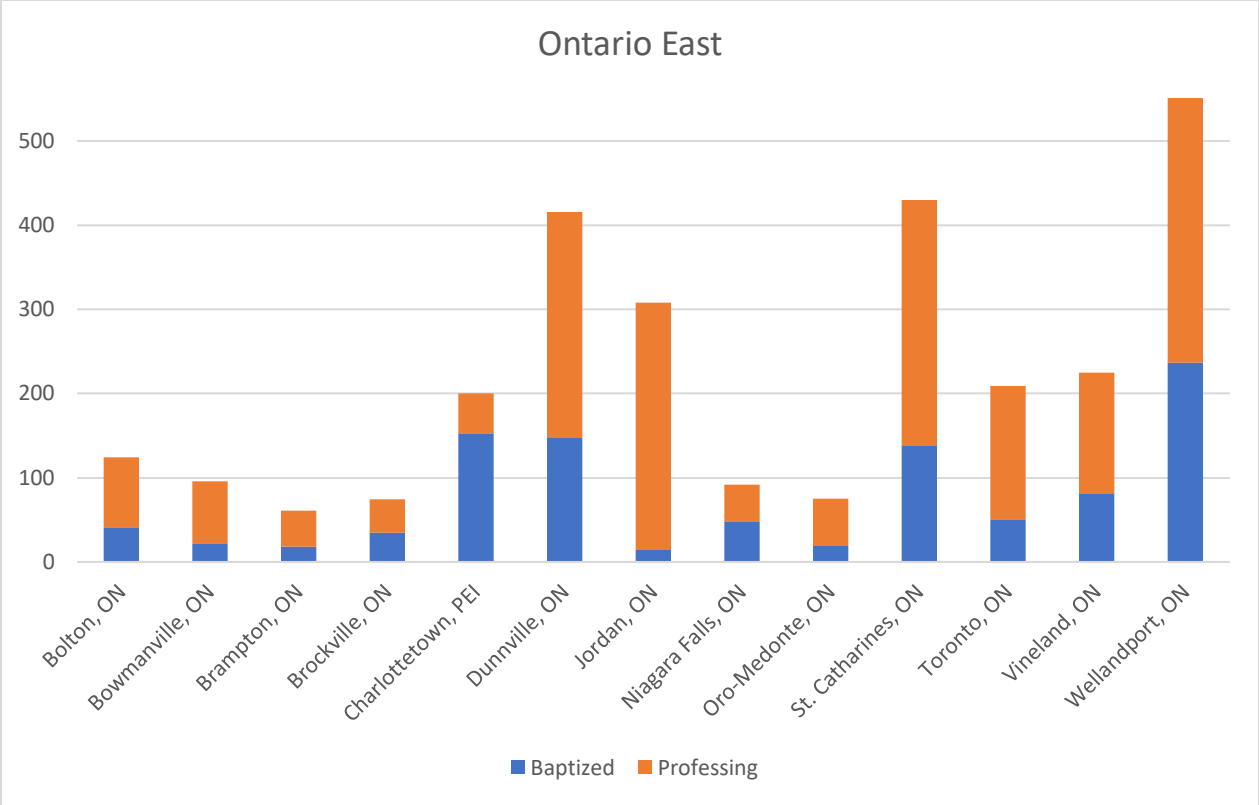
Of the total souls in the URCNA at the end of 2021, 66% were professing members and 34% were baptized members. This ratio has remained very consistent for the past 5 years (within 1% percent).

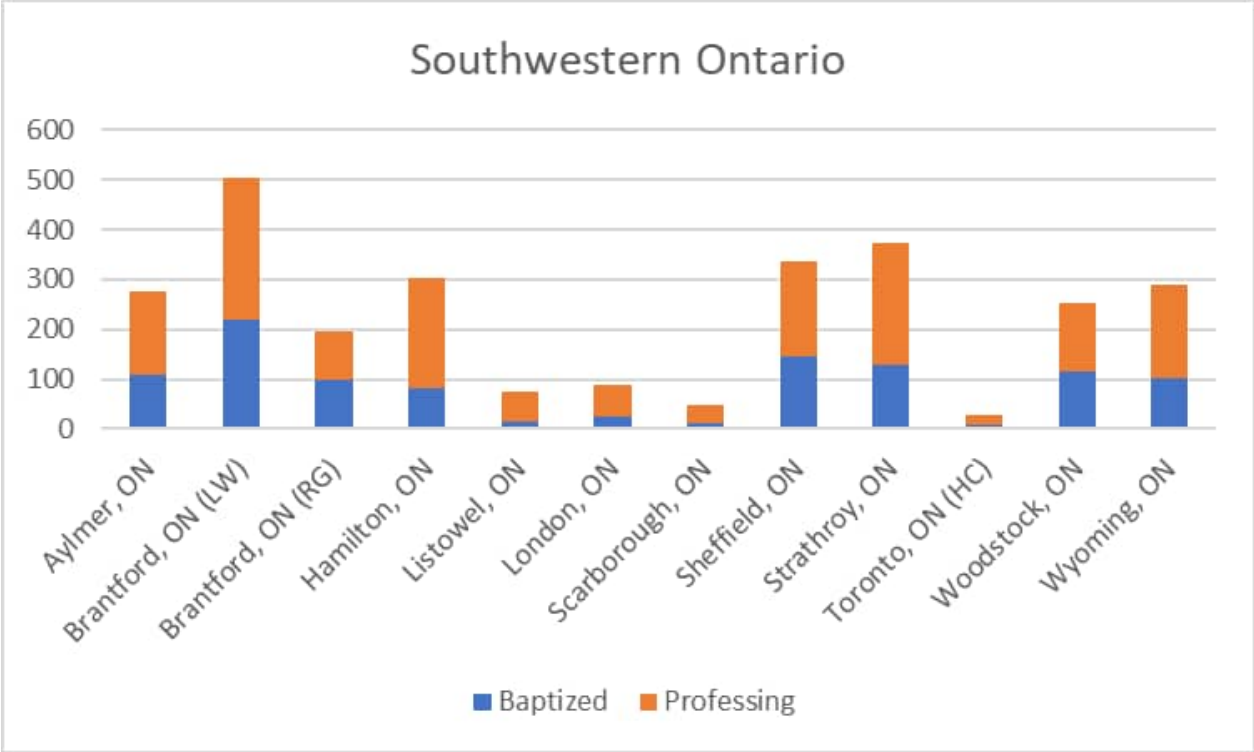
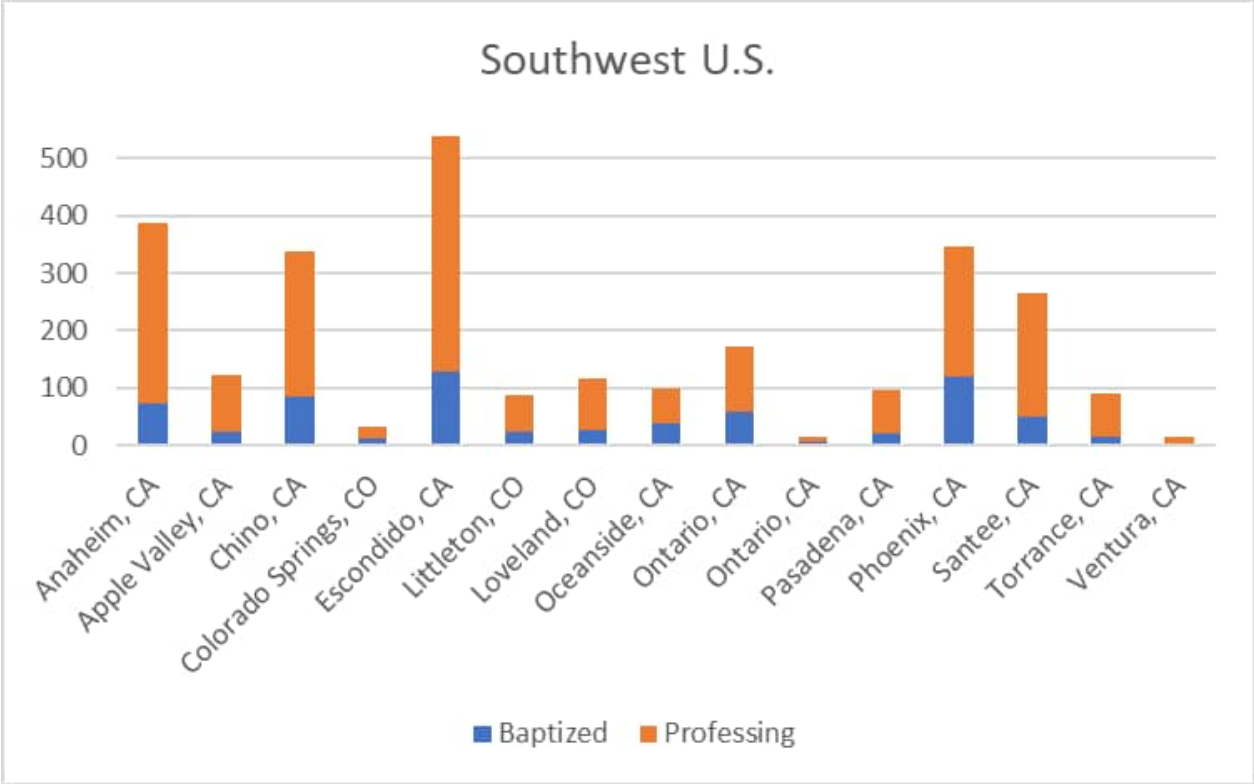
## Demographics of Individual Churches

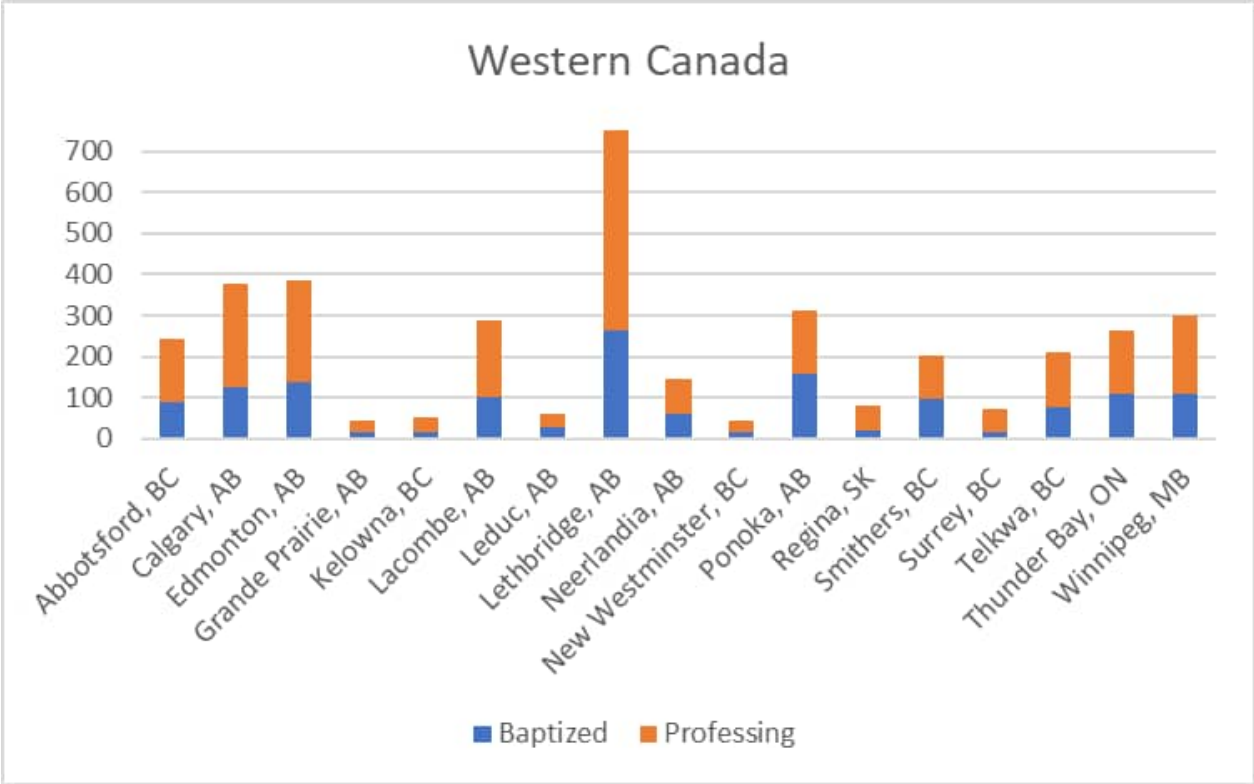
Of interest is a visual picture of the churches in our denomination arranged by classis. The following bar graphs show the total souls for each church broken down as baptized and professing members. While the number of families within a church is useful data to gather (especially as it pertains to askings), it sometimes presents a skewed impression of the church demographics as it does not allow for singles to be very well illustrated, thus the use of baptized vs. professing in the following graphs:











**3) Elders and Deacons**

At the end of 2021, there were 1,171 elders and deacons in the URCNA. With a total of 25,296 souls, a simple ratio could be calculated of one council member for every 22 souls. This is of little significance however, since a council member could be an elder or a deacon. For further usefulness in this field, it is suggested that the number of elders and deacons be reported separately. This would allow analysis to be made on how many souls are under the guidance of each elder or deacon in a congregation.

#### 4) Ministers

The charts below show the changes in ministerial status in the past four years. Over time, this information will be more useful in ministerial analysis as more data will be available. For this report, the following tables are for historical reference and for information.

*Ministerial Totals as of December 31*

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Ministers of Local Congregations	n/a	107	116	114
Missions Coordinator	1	1	1	1
Domestic/Foreign Missionaries	18	20	21	23
Theological Education (MINTS & DHRBS)	7	7	7	7
Seminary Professors	8	8	9	9
Chaplains	5	6	6	6
Emeritus	28	31	36	36
Other	n/a	4	4	2
<b>Total URCNA Ministers</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>198</b>
Candidates	5	9	4	5
Licensed Exhorters	20	20	17	24

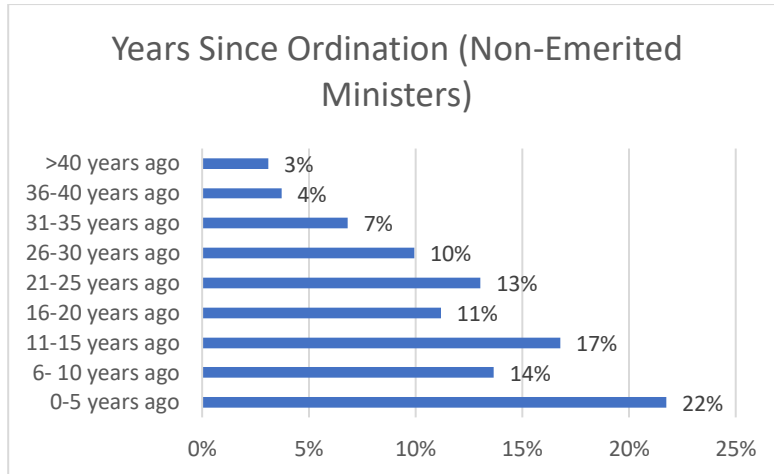
*Ministerial Changes*

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Ordinations	5	5	14	4
Received (Colloquium Doctum etc)	0	4	5	3
Emeritations	2	6	4	3
Deaths	1	3	2	3
Calls Accepted Outside URCNA	3	1	1	3
Depositions	0	1	0	2
Leave of Absence	0	0	0	1

Of interest is the breakdown of ministers in the URCNA as of December 31, 2021. Of our total ministerial count, 162 are in active ministry (Total Count minus Emeritus). At the close of last year, there were 19 vacant churches and plants but only 5 candidates and 2 ministers seeking a call. Should each of the available men be called to a vacant church, there was still a deficit of 12 pastors for the churches of the URCNA as of December 31, 2021. This does not take into account the churches that desire a second pastor to share the ministry. With 24 licensed exhorters who are in various stages of seminary study, there is the possibility that, in time, all of the pulpits would be filled however urging young men to consider the ministry is strongly encouraged.

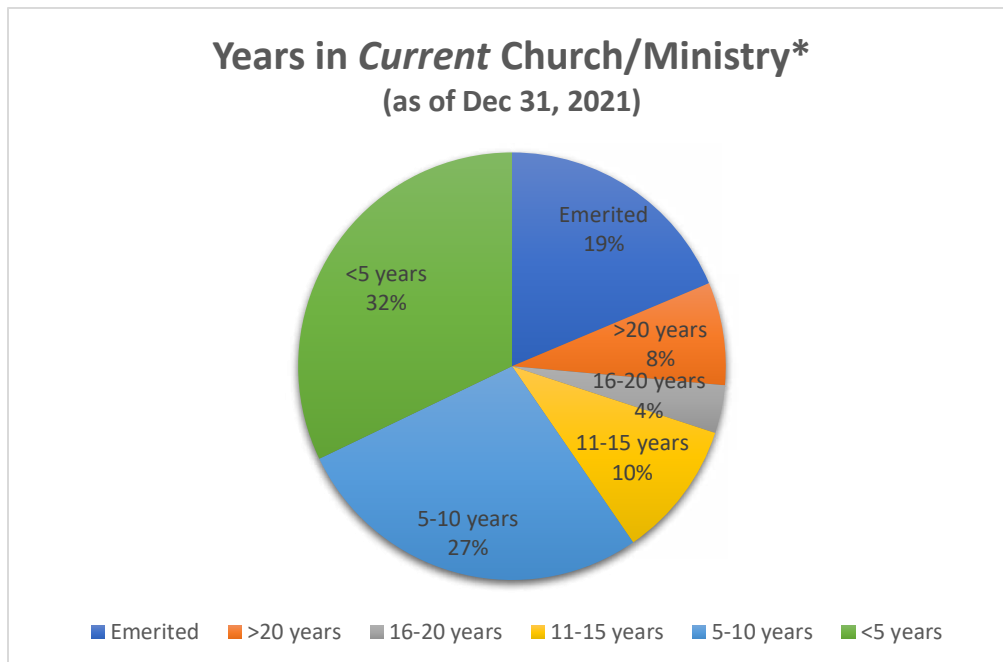
### Number of Years in Ministry

The bar graph below shows how long the ministers of the federation have been in active service. More than half of the men have been in the ministry for 15 years or less (52%). This is useful information; however, it doesn't tell us how many potential years of active ministry are remaining. Adding a field to the Ministerial Info form with date of birth would be advantageous for advanced predictive analysis. This information would not need to be publicly known but could be used for statistical purposes only.



### Number of Years at Current Church/Ministry

This statistic is of interest when considering how frequently ministers move from one congregation to another. As of Dec 31, 2021, 32% of the ministers have been at their current church/ministry for less than 5 years, 27% for 5-10 years and 22% for more than 10 years. Nineteen percent of our ministers are emerited.



*\*If the church the minister is currently serving in has recently joined the URC, the number of years recorded above may be from when they officially became a URCNA congregation.*

There are many interesting statistics that can be analysed with the data that we have for the churches, members and ministers of the URCNA. One thing to routinely count is the blessings we have from God in the word which is faithfully preached, the men who joyfully serve and the congregations which can freely gather. We are not called to rely on the size of our “army” or the strength of our weapons but to fully trust in the awesome God that we serve. May His name be praised and glorified!

## **CONTACT INFORMATION/DIRECTORY**

Whereas the statistics files are typically updated near the end of the calendar year and are used mainly for the archival directory, the contact information (church directory info, ministerial, missionary, candidate and exhorter files) is used for both the archival directory and the live directory on the URCNA website. It is intended to be updated continually throughout the year as changes happen within the churches.

For the directory to be most useful to the churches, the cooperation of the clerks and pastors (or those responsible for updates) is critical. Updating a church’s files on the URCNA website is difficult to remember and is often not a priority for many. The statistician can send out reminders to update church records *only when informed* of ordinations, installations, and successful candidacy/ licensure exams. The churches are strongly encouraged to make good use of Ministerial News. Currently the statistician routinely reads the Ministerial News, the minutes/agendas of each classis, and any emails received to stay informed and to encourage the churches to make necessary changes to the website.

For the Synod 2020 report, it was indicated that knowing the month in which each church votes for new council members would be beneficial, allowing for a reminder email to be sent out about updating the contact details for the new chairman, clerk, treasurer etc. This has since been set up and many churches are updating the Church Directory Info pages with the changes in their council in a timelier manner.

The churches are encouraged to adopt a generic email for their clerk or pastor such as [clerk@mychurch.com](mailto:clerk@mychurch.com) so that the need for changes to their files is not quite so urgent when a change in council takes place.

There is often no response to many emails that are sent out by the statistician to remind and inform. It is suggested that the churches add [stats@URCNA.org](mailto:stats@URCNA.org) to their safe senders list as well as ensuring that the name and email listed in “Who is Making This Update” is accurate for the current submission.

Submissions: When a change is made to a church’s files on the URCNA website, the statistician is informed via email and expected to review the changes and approve the submission. Often email correspondence is necessary to clarify/correct a submission for content. When style and formatting issues arise, the statistician can correct these errors and doesn’t need to contact the local church, however, the time involved for the statistician to make these corrections is often significant. In fact, after the 2018 Archival Directory was published, the statistician was informed by the printing company that after many corrections were already made, there were still 705 style and formatting issues present in that edition. These errors have since been corrected but the time required to make these changes was an unnecessary use of resources should more careful attention have been given by the churches to the Style and Formatting Guide.

## The Archival Directory

The time and effort that went into the publication of the 2018 directory was significant. Many of the pages needed to be re-created in a more up to date format. Much communication was necessary to clarify and correct the data that was currently in the system. Over the last four years, the statistician has reworked the pages of the directory to use the spreadsheets from the website for data but Microsoft Access or Excel to generate the reports. This allows for much greater flexibility in the publication of the archival directory. Initially some of the sections of the directory were only available as an auto-generated output from the website with no ability for modification after they had been compiled. There is still room for improvements in the directory and constructive feedback is much appreciated.

Once all the submissions have been received in early January, the data is carefully examined to ensure consistency in the content submitted by each church (e.g. ministers listed on church profile page jive with ministerial listings and number of ministers listed in statistics form and church directory info form) as well as for syntax, formatting and styling issues. The draft directory is sent to the clerks of each classis and the webmaster to proofread and provide feedback.

Since the last synod, the archival directory has been completed and published by the first week of February at the latest. Many thanks go out to the churches for your cooperation and for your patience and understanding as I am still learning how best to fill this new role of Statistics and Directory Editor of the URCNA. I praise God that I can use the abilities He has given to serve in this way. May this work be for His glory and for the usefulness of the federation.

In His Service,

Jody Luth, Statistics and Directory Editor, URCNA.

## Overture 1

### Amend Church Order Art. 64 re Concurring Advice for Erasure

#### Background

Synod Wyoming (2016) approved the adoption of *Pastoral Advice Regarding Membership Departures* and placed this advice in a new appendix of the Church Order (Appendix 8). Synod Wheaton (2018) decided, with the required 2/3 majority decision for Church Order changes, to codify the advice given in Appendix 8 into Article 64 of the Church Order. The synodical decision was subsequently ratified by the required 2/3 majority of URCNA Consistories.

In making use of the wisdom and provisions of the Church Order and Appendix 8, we have noticed a discrepancy in the language, particularly as it pertains to the matter of erasure. According to Appendix 8.4, the *Pastoral Advice* states that Consistories seeking to erase the membership of one of its members should seek “the advice of classis” before proceeding. According to the present reading of Church Order Article 64, however, the phrase “concurring advice from classis” is mentioned in connection with how a Consistory may proceed. This is a more rigorous expectation, such that if Consistories fail to receive “concurring advice,” they may not proceed with the erasure of the membership.

It is our opinion that the present inconsistency is confusing and unhelpful for the churches and that the language of Church Order Article 64 and Appendix 8.4 should be brought in line with each other and harmonized. Furthermore, since we trust the Consistories of our Federation when it comes to the task of the shepherding and discipline of their respective congregations, we believe that it is the language of “advice” which ought to be used in both instances.

#### Overture

Classis Central US overtures Synod Niagara 2022 to remove the word “concurring” from Church Order Article 64, in order to make it consistent with the language adopted in Appendix 8.4 of the Church Order. And to replace the word “should” in Appendix 8.4 with “must,” to agree with Article 64. Thus, the last sentence of Article 64, which currently says, “*The Consistory may, with concurring advice from classis, erase the membership of those with whom they have not been able to communicate for at least two years.* (See Appendix 8.) (emphasis added), will be changed to say, “***The Consistory must seek the advice of classis prior to the erasure of*** the membership of those with whom they have not been able to communicate for at least two years. (See Appendix 8.) (emphasis added)

THE PRESENT READING OF CHURCH ORDER APPENDIX 8.4 is as follows:

Consistories may erase the membership of those with whom they have had no contact for at least two years, thus rendering consistories unable to assess that member’s doctrine or life. Lack of contact must not be for lack of effort on the part of the consistory, but may be because the consistory cannot locate the member, or because the member is too distant to visit and will not respond to communication attempts. ***The consistory should seek the advice of classis*** before acting to erase a membership, demonstrating due diligence in its efforts to contact and give pastoral care to the member. The consistory should inform the congregation of this action and the reasons for it. (emphasis added)

THE PRESENT READING OF CHURCH ORDER ARTICLE 64 (as amended by Synod Wheaton [2018], Article 89.5, with the required 2/3 majority for Church Order changes) is as follows:

Those who seek the transfer of their membership to another congregation within the federation or one in ecclesiastical fellowship shall request in writing that their current Consistory send to the receiving Consistory an official letter including pertinent membership information and testimony concerning doctrine and life, requesting the receiving Consistory to accept them under its spiritual care. The Consistory may release members in order to affiliate with congregations not in ecclesiastical fellowship when the Consistory judges that doing so may aid the spiritual growth of the members. ***The Consistory may, with concurring advice from classis***, erase the membership of those with whom they have not been able to communicate for at least two years. (See Appendix 8.) (emphasis added)

PROPOSED CHANGE TO CHURCH ORDER ARTICLE 64 would be as follows:

Those who seek the transfer of their membership to another congregation within the federation or one in ecclesiastical fellowship shall request in writing that their current Consistory send to the receiving Consistory an official letter including pertinent membership information and testimony concerning doctrine and life, requesting the receiving Consistory to accept them under its spiritual care. The Consistory may release members in order to affiliate with congregations not in ecclesiastical fellowship when the Consistory judges that doing so may aid the spiritual growth of the members. ***The Consistory must seek the advice of classis prior to the erasure of*** the membership of those with whom they have not been able to communicate for at least two years. (See Appendix 8.) (emphasis added)

### **Grounds**

1. Consistency between the language of Church Order Appendix 8.4 and the language of Church Order Article 64 is important to prevent confusion and potential disagreement among the churches.
2. Knowing that the Consistories of our Federation humbly strive to do a Christ-honoring job in the exercise of the duties of their office, we believe that this overture helps them toward that end, as the reading of the relevant Church Order Article (64) and Appendix (8.4) will be harmonized.
3. This change would also be in keeping with Church Order Article 55, which only requires Consistories to seek the advice of Classis in matters pertaining to formal, official church discipline.

Classis Central US  
Rev. Ralph A. Pontier, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 2**

Amend Church Order Articles 22 & 47 with Reference to Church Planting Manual

### **Background**

Wonderful work is being done to bring order to URC missions. We have established church planting committees, published a church planting manual, and appointed a missions coordinator. Yet, these advances are not yet reflected in our Church Order, a document of great importance to our identity and unity.

### **Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add a parenthetical statement at the end of Articles 22 & 47 in the Church Order: ‘(See *The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at [urcna.org](http://urcna.org)*)’

## **Article 22 – Instituting a New Church**

When a congregation is organized within the federation, this shall take place under the supervision of a neighboring Consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis. (*See The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.*)

#### **Article 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling**

The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries. (*See The Church Planting Manual adopted at Synod 2014 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.*)

#### **Grounds**

1. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than article 22 explains.
2. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than article 47 explains.
3. We have a helpful tool that was approved in Synod 2014 for guidance. (see pp.53-55 of Acts of Synod 2014)
4. By citing ‘*helpful guidelines*’ this motion does not run the risk of giving any authority to this Manual. Rather it stands in line with the decision of Synod 2014.
5. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
6. Future pastors, who may be unaware of this tool, would now have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
7. Other appendices approved by previous Synods are referenced in this way throughout the Church Order.
8. The source of the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

### **Overture 3**

Amend Church Order Article 48 with Reference to Marriage Affirmations

#### **Background**

In Synod 2018 ‘Affirmations Regarding Marriage’ was adopted as a Doctrinal Affirmation without dissent. Yet, this wonderful statement stands isolated in the minutes and on the website.

#### **Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add a parenthetical statement at the end of Article 48 in the Church Order: ‘*See Affirmations Regarding Marriage adopted at Synod 2018 for helpful guidelines at urcna.org.*’

#### **Article 48 – Marriage**

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

marriages that conflict with the Word of God. (*See Affirmations Regarding Marriage adopted at Synod 2018 for helpful guidelines at [urcna.org](http://urcna.org).*)

## Grounds

1. This reference gives more aid to what ‘*marriages that conflict with the Word of God*’ means.
2. We have a helpful tool that was approved in Synod 2018 as a Doctrinal Affirmation. (see pp. 79-90 of Acts of Synod 2018)
3. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
4. Future pastors, who may be unaware of this tool, would now have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
5. Other appendices approved by previous Synods are referenced in this way throughout the Church Order.
6. The source of the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Classis Eastern US

Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

## Overture 4

Add Index to URC Website – Synodical Decisions

## Background

Classis Eastern U.S. adopted two overtures for Synod in the fall of 2019 to add parenthetical references to synodical actions within the Church Order. Upon further analysis and reflection, we thought it would be wise to give another option for pursuing a similar path. Rather than parenthetical statements within the Church Order, this motion pursues the path of an index that can be found on the URCNA website.

## Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add an Index of Synodical Decisions to the URCNA website.

### Index of Synodical Decisions

*This index includes particular actions of recommendation, referral, adoption, and advice.*

#### Synod 1997 (St. Catharines)

[Letter of Call](#)

[Letter of Minister's Consistorial Credential](#)

[Office of Deacon in the Churches Report](#)

#### Synod 1999 (Hudsonville)

[Form of Subscription](#)

#### Synod 2001 (Escondido)

[A Biblical and Confessional View of Missions Report](#)

*Synodical Affirmation of Creation in Genesis 1&2*

[URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report](#)

#### Synod 2007 (Schererville)

[Report Regarding Justification](#)

#### Synod 2010 (London)

[Federal Vision and Justification Report](#)  
[Regulations for Synodical Procedure](#)

**Synod 2012 (Nyack)\_**

[Report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment Necessary](#)  
[Report on the Synodical Study Committee on Missions](#)

**Synod 2014 (Visalia)**

[The Church Planting Manual of the URCNA](#)

**Synod 2016 (Wyoming)**

[Report on Membership Departures](#) (see [Church Order](#) Appendix 8).

**Synod 2018 (Wheaton)**

[Affirmations Regarding Marriage](#)  
[Guidelines for Appeals](#) (see [Church Order](#) Appendix 7).

**Grounds**

1. These references on a website index give consistories more immediate access to an overview of synodical advice and recommendations.
2. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on Synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
3. Future pastors, who may be unaware of the advice/recommendations of previous Synods, would now be able to have a central reference point on the website.
4. Future Synodical decisions can be added to this overture for continuity.
5. The opening reference to the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.
6. This format gives the website committee the ability to update the index after each Synod.

Classis Eastern US

Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

**Overture 5**

Add Appendix to Church Order – Index of Synodical Decisions

**Background**

Classis Eastern U.S. adopted two overtures for Synod in the fall of 2019 to add parenthetical references to synodical actions within the Church Order. Upon further analysis and reflection, we thought it would be wise to give another option for pursuing a similar path. In addition to parenthetical statements within the Church Order, this motion pursues the path of an appendix to the Church Order.

**Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add an Appendix ‘Index of Synodical Decisions’ to the Church Order of the URCNA:

**Appendix 9**

**Index of Synodical Decisions**

*All references may be found on [urcna.org](http://urcna.org) under ‘Documents,’ ‘Synod,’ or ‘Missions’  
This index includes particular actions of recommendation, referral, adoption, and advice.*

**Synod 1997 (St Catharines)**

- Letter of Call*  
*Office of Deacon in the Churches Report*
- Synod 1999 (Hudsonville)**  
*Form of Subscription*
- Synod 2001 (Escondido)**  
*A Biblical and Confessional View of Missions Report*  
*Synodical Affirmation of Creation in Genesis 1&2*  
*URCNA-OPC Study Committee Report*
- Synod 2007 (Schererville)**  
*Report Regarding Justification*
- Synod 2010 (London)**  
*Federal Vision and Justification Report*  
*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*
- Synod 2012 (Nyack)**  
*Report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment Necessary*  
*Report on the Synodical Study Committee on Missions*
- Synod 2014 (Visalia)**  
*The Church Planting Manual of the URCNA*
- Synod 2016 (Wyoming)**  
*Report on Membership Departures (see Church Order Appendix 8)*
- Synod 2018 (Wheaton)**  
*Affirmations Regarding Marriage*  
*Guidelines for Appeals (see Church Order Appendix 7)*

## **Grounds**

1. These references in a Church Order Appendix give consistories more immediate access to an overview of synodical advice and recommendations.
2. Due to term eldership in many churches, it is difficult to depend on Synodically-approved advice to carry on without some continual reference.
3. Future pastors, who may be unaware of the advice/recommendations of previous Synods, would now be able to have a reference in their studies of the Church Order.
4. Future Synodical decisions can be added to this overture for continuity.
5. The opening reference to the website gives a helpful reminder where these documents may be found.

Classis Eastern US  
 Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 6**

Amend Church Order 10 re Dissolution of a Church Plant

### **Background**

As we at Zeltenreich Reformed Church have recently been sought to oversee works of missions and church planting, we have been left with questions that our consistory thought we could not answer. What should happen if a mission/church plant ends? What promises should be made for oversight from the outset?

### **Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to add the following to the Church Order:

#### 10.2 – The Support and Necessary Release of Church Planting Ministers

When for practical reasons and in the sorrowful circumstances that a church plant/mission work is no longer progressing to a sustainable end, and the overseeing council of the overseeing congregation desires to dissolve the church plant/mission work, that dissolution may occur only when all the following conditions have been met:

- a. before the church plant/mission work officially begins, the overseeing consistory and church planter/missionary shall have a written understanding in the letter of call that describes how the overseeing church will care for the church planter/missionary if their church plant/mission work comes to an end;
- b. this written understanding in the letter of call shall include the time period of financial support after a church plant/mission work ends, and it should describe the overseeing church's intent either to continue using the church planter/missionary in their own work or announcing his eligibility for a call;
- c. should an overseeing church and/or church planter/missionary desire to dissolve the church plant/mission work, this dissolution shall occur only with the concurring advice of classis
- d. this request for concurring advice is to ensure that the care promised in the letter of call is being upheld, and that the overseeing council's provision for support of the church planter/missionary and his family is known to the classis.

The council of the overseeing congregation with which the church plant/mission work has ended shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for at least two years, whereafter it shall be under the overseeing consistory's discernment to extend the eligibility or honorably discharge the church planter/missionary from office.

#### **Grounds**

1. There is a need for more guidance in our church planting process than articles 22 and 47 provide.
2. Without more guidance in the church order, both parties (church planters/missionaries and overseeing churches) may be hesitant to pursue these opportunities.
3. This motion would open a door for a church planter/missionary should their church plant/mission work end.
4. With the current articles 10 and 11 already in place, there are many helpful similarities that can be followed if a church planter/missionary must find another call.
5. This could open the door for more willingness from organized churches to oversee these church plants/ mission works.
6. This could open the door for more willingness from church planters/missionaries to pursue paths of church planting/mission work.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

### **Overture 7** Redevelop URCNA Website

#### **Background**

The URC has been well-served by faithful members seeking to create and preserve an effective electronic presence on the internet, often with abundant portions of volunteer time and energy. Early on, our internet presence was hosted by a local congregation, for which we should all be grateful. When synod formed a committee and asked them to develop a website (2004), they began a process that was completed in 2012. Our current website, with a number of revisions and additions, dates from this initial period of development.

One of the challenges of the internet is its rapid rate of change. While you can future-proof a website to a certain degree by designing in functional simplicity and clarity, many aspects of today's internet culture were impossible to anticipate in 2007. With this in mind, we believe that our federation would be well served by a new website that is up to date, both technologically and in terms of its functionality.

As every preacher knows, the most important aspect of effective communication is properly identifying your audience and clearly identifying your message. We need a clear sense of WHO we are talking to and WHAT we want to say. The internet is a powerful aggregator of information and therefore of vital importance for internal archival storage and retrieval of information needed by members of the URCNA. It also holds forth the promise of making a positive first impression upon our neighbors outside the church and directing them to the good news of Jesus Christ.

This overture assumes they can both work together if the broadest possible audience is properly prioritized. Our website should speak to the world in a clear and simple way about the mission and purpose of the URCNA while also providing an access point for members, officers, and committees to store and access the information they need ("under the hood," so to speak). One example of this is provided by the recently produced RCUS website (<https://rcus.org>), though even here improvements can be made.

## **Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod Niagara 2022 to:

1. Mandate the Web Oversight Committee to entirely redevelop the urcna.org website, according to the following general design principles:
  - a. The homepage of the website should be overwhelmingly oriented towards a general audience of unbelievers and non-URCNA members, providing simple action items that we desire a visitor to take, such as "Find a church," "join," and "contact." Note that the new RCUS website provides a good model for how this might be done (<https://rcus.org>).
  - b. Resources for members and officers should be easily accessible through a menu that directs visitors to deeper and more complex archival information.
  - c. Password protected information should be provided at a deeper level of member navigation, not on the home page.
  - d. A simple, aesthetically pleasing, and well-organized design must guide visitors logically to the information they need.
  - e. An obvious search function on the homepage will use an engine that enables visitors to find the information they are seeking in a few clicks.
  - f. We should seek to incorporate seamlessly the current web properties of missions, creeds and confessions, and forms and prayers.
  - g. Branding (fonts, logos, images) must be consistent across all pages.
  - h. Integrated tools will make public information on the website easy to print, copy, and share via social media, email, and other avenues.

- i. Navigation of the website should be mobile friendly (standard phone size, tablet-size, and desktop) and reactive to user device.
2. Provide the Web Oversight Committee with the authority to spend up to \$20,000 in order to hire professional help in the design and development of the new urcna.org website.
3. Ask the committee to review the current website staffing (webmaster position and job description) and recommend to the next synod the appropriate staffing to maintain the website to a suitable degree of functionality. Such considerations should include knowledge of the necessary back-end and front-end technology stack needed to maintain the website.
4. Mandate the committee to review the website prior to each meeting of synod and make recommendations in their synodical reports on the website's status and potential need for upgrade or redesign.
5. Amend the committee's mandate as follows: "Classes should prioritize expertise in web design and development when appointing future representatives to serve on the Web Oversight Committee."
6. Move the organizational workflow from lifeline (lifeline@homeschool-life.com, the domain currently used to send out URCNA emails) to another service provider (such as Zoho or Google) and develop a URCNA domain email, such as "@urcna.org".
7. Include considerations to maintain/implement/develop security protocols (public/private information stored on a database, log-in process, 2 factor-authentication, SQL-injection hacks through search bar, etc.).

## **Grounds**

1. As of 2022, the current website will be approximately ten years old. Based on its age and the pace of technological change, it is due for a redesign.
2. First impressions matter. The urcna.org website is the most important outward-facing form of communication we have, and its beauty and effectiveness should be a top priority.
3. The current Web Oversight Committee and staff supporting the website lack a mandate to periodically revisit and redesign the website, and are not sufficiently resourced with the manpower and financial resources to do so.
4. Synod should encourage the Web Oversight Committee to explore hiring professionals to redevelop and redesign our website. By analogy, just as we hire professional printers to produce our Trinity Psalter Hymnal and Forms and Prayers books, so we should consider hiring professionals to produce our electronic communications platforms.
5. The scale of this project is large, and the financial resources necessary to complete it are difficult to anticipate. By setting a relatively high upper limit for the budget, this overture provides the Web Oversight Committee with the flexibility it requires to complete this project in a timely and professional manner.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Daniel Ragusa, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 8**

### Amend Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity

## **Background**

In our current "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity," Phase Two assumes that we desire "integrated federative church unity" with every church that we recognize as "true and faithful." However, there are many churches which we may wish to acknowledge as true yet nevertheless realize that

practically it would not be prudent to seek complete organizational unity with them before Christ's return. Practically, the URCNA has not pursued complete unity with all churches with whom we are in Phase Two relations.

This overture seeks to clarify the distinction between Phase Two and Phase Three in our guidelines, establishing Phase Three as the expression of an intent to pursue complete unity.

## **Overture**

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod Niagara 2022 to make the following changes to our "Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Order":

Replace this current description of Phase Two:

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

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in acknowledgment of the desirability of eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

With this amended description of Phase Two (change underlined for comparison):

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

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus. Integrated federative church unity may or may not be desirable. This ecclesiastical fellowship shall entailing the following:

## **Grounds**

1. The ecclesiastical fellowship with true and faithful churches described in Phase Two is a desirable end in itself.
2. It is not necessary that we acknowledge "the desirability of eventual integrated federative church unity" with every church that we recognize as true and faithful.
3. The revised description more clearly distinguishes between Phase Two and Phase Three.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Daniel Ragusa, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 9**

Choral Recordings of Psalms from the TPH

## **Background**

We give thanks that the Lord has provided the URCNA with a new *Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH)* to share with our brothers and sisters in the OPC and believers around the world. We also rejoice in the faithfulness of all those who have labored in its production. The Lord has truly endowed with his Spirit

craftsmen to adorn his temple with praise, and we are very thankful for the popularity and success of this songbook thus far. Praise God.

The publication of the *TPH* presents a unique opportunity to spread faithful, God-glorifying worship music, both within our own communions and to the broader church. While significant efforts are already underway to further the reach of this project — including digital files and a mobile app — a choral recording of key psalm settings in the *TPH* has great potential to deepen and broaden the impact of this great labor.

There is precedent for this kind of work. In 1999, after the publication of the *Trinity Psalter*, Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia undertook the recording of two high quality volumes of Psalms from this collection. *Psalms of the Trinity Psalter, Vols. I and II*, featuring the Scottish Festival Singers. These audio resources remain available to the church, and continue to introduce new audiences as well as familiarize current audiences with the beauty and grandeur of Psalm singing.<sup>1</sup>

One unique benefit of the *TPH* is that many OPC and PCA churches that lack a strong psalm singing tradition are buying the book as an upgrade and replacement for the *Trinity Hymnal*. Thus, there is an even greater opportunity to introduce new audiences to the psalter portion of the book.

Conversations regarding such recordings have already taken place among former Psalter-Hymnal committee members, increasing the likelihood of a rapid and relatively low cost implementation of this project. This overture would leave many details up to those responsible for implementation in order to give them flexibility, including the selection of specific tunes. However, it should be noted that due to the fact that our Psalter collection uses a number of popular tunes repeatedly, recording approximately 40 key tunes could easily cover over half of the Psalms in the psalter.

## Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to facilitate the choral recording of select psalms from the *TPH* by doing the following:

1. Appoint three men to serve on an ad hoc *TPH Choral Recording* committee to oversee the production of a choral recording of the Psalms, recording approximately 30 – 40 songs for distribution. The committee’s mandate would be as follows:
  - i. Identify appropriate musicians to oversee the technical matter of producing high quality choral recordings in a style that emphasizes both the musical and verbal beauty of our Psalter collection;
  - ii. Select key Psalms to record, including selection criteria such as beauty, theological significance, popularity, frequency of tune usage, etc.;
  - iii. Work with the *TPH Joint Venture Committee* to ensure that appropriate permissions are secured, consistent branding is produced, and proper distribution that complements the current print and digital production;
  - iv. Securing widespread distribution via top streaming platforms (Spotify, YouTube, AmazonMusic, others as advisable) and producing physical CD’s only if they are deemed necessary and cost-beneficial.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the tunes recorded in the *Psalms of the Trinity Psalter* has some overlap with the *TPH*, but the words are invariably different settings than our collection. For audio, see: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_kqCBj0\\_jZqWLq3YAT--1KvJ9VdOCutQI8](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_kqCBj0_jZqWLq3YAT--1KvJ9VdOCutQI8)

2. Direct the *TPH* Joint Venture Committee of the URCNA-OPC to coordinate with this work with the *TPH Choral Recording* committee in the following:
  - i. Advising and securing legal permissions for recording purposes;
  - ii. Allocating promotional funds as appropriate from committee resources;
  - iii. Coordinating consistent branding.
3. Provide necessary funding for the recording, production, and distribution of these choral recordings, up to \$10,000 USD as necessary. If funds are available from the *TPH* Joint Venture Committee, these should be used as appropriate to defray the costs of this production.

## Grounds

1. Choral recordings will assist our churches in learning the music of the new songbook.
2. Choral recordings will serve to promote the *TPH*, and expand the impact of this work, thereby increasing the harvest from this investment of labor and resources, and potentially increasing sales of this already popular songbook.
3. Choral recordings will introduce and increase familiarity with the psalter collection in particular, which is unfamiliar to many of the users of the *TPH* who have never used a *Psalter Hymnal* before.
4. Choral recordings will bring pleasure, beauty, and increased familiarity with God’s word to the daily lives of the members of our churches.
5. Choral recordings will introduce the new psalter portion of our songbook to many contemporary musicians outside the Reformed tradition who are seeking excellent settings of biblical psalms.
6. High quality choral recordings will manifest to the world that we treasure excellence in our worship and rejoice in the beauty of congregational singing.
7. Choral recordings of the psalter will make the worship of our churches visible on digital music streaming services, one of the most common and popular entertainment channels in the broader culture, bearing witness to the glory of God’s word and the worship of his saints.

Classis Eastern US  
 Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

## Overture 10

Publish List of URCNA Pulpit Vacancies

### Background

Currently, there is no officially maintained list of vacant pulpits in the URCNA, though the Stated Clerk informally keeps a list and shares it upon request.

This overture would request that Synod see to the maintenance and publication of such a list on the [urcna.org](http://urcna.org) website. Synod could work with the Stated Clerk, Statistician, and Webmaster to determine how best to assign responsibilities to ensure that an up-to-date list is easily available.

### Overture

Classis Eastern U.S. overtures Synod to maintain and publish an official list of URCNA pulpit vacancies.

1. Delegates gathered at Synod shall determine which functionary — Stated Clerk, Statistician, or Webmaster — should be assigned the responsibility of maintaining an official list of vacancies.

2. Synod shall ensure that the list is maintained in an up-to-date fashion on the publicly available portion of the website by assigning responsibilities for doing so to appropriate parties.

### **Grounds**

1. Additional information about vacancies may aid in the filling of these pulpits in a timely fashion and increase the likelihood of filling them with a suitable candidate.
2. The federation should make known as widely as possible the need for ministers, to keep before us all the need to maintain “the gospel ministry and the schools for it” (HC Q&A 103).
3. Current vacancies provide important information for those studying to enter the ministry and considering seeking calls in the URCNA.
4. Vacancies should be a constant concern of prayer for the churches.

Classis Eastern US  
Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 11** Establish Nation Synods

### **Introduction**

Classis Michigan overtures Synod Niagra 2022 (or the next Synod of the URCNA) to amend the *Church Order* and the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* to establish national synods in addition to a general (international) synod where delegates to the general synod are chosen by the classes.

### **Background**

The idea of national or regional synods is not new. Regional synods were prescribed in the Church Order created by the National Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619) and have a long history in the Reformed tradition. They have helped expedite the work of general synods. When the broadest assembly is a delegated assembly where not all of the consistories are directly represented, regional synods allow for greater participation of all the consistories in those matters that proceed to the general synod.

As our federation grows, a general synod with every consistory represented will become more of a convention than a deliberative assembly. Already we have the prospect of a synod with over two-hundred delegates meeting for only five days, which does not allow for the majority of delegates to enter into debate. Increasingly, the heart of synod’s deliberative work will be done in smaller advisory committees, with the plenary sessions limited to voting up or down the recommendations of the committees. That is the direction in which we are moving.

Recent developments regarding cross-border restrictions provide added incentive to have a general synod where it is not necessary for every consistory to be represented.

Our Reformed church order tradition from Dordrecht has long employed the practice of classes choosing the delegates for the general synod. The URCNA rejected that idea at its inception for a few reasons. The primary reason was that those who came out of the CRC thought the conservatives had lost control of the CRC because they had been underrepresented at the synods – implying that, if every church had been represented, the conservative cause could have won the day. But that reasoning ignores the fact that since the early 1950’s, most CRC ministers had imbibed deeply of liberalism at Calvin Seminary and, when at classis and synod, encouraged by their peers, often voted more liberal than they dared to preach at home. It is also noteworthy that when women elders and ministers were approved based on a hermeneutic that

contradicted the confessions, only about 10 percent of the CRC membership left. Progressive leanings and institutional loyalty, among both clergy and laity, were far more pervasive in the CRC than confessional integrity. The demise of orthodoxy in the CRC in the 1990's was inevitable regardless of whether all the churches had been represented at synod. Those who wanted to uphold the confessions were far fewer in number than they knew at the time.

We also rejected the idea of limiting the number of delegates to synod because we were small in number, came from all over the US and Canada, and needed time to get to know each other. We were dealing with foundational issues (e.g. a new church order) where input from everyone was vital. Now, our foundations have been laid, and we are no longer small. We have established lines of communication by which we are able to keep in contact with one another so that a general synod meeting is no longer essential for that purpose.

This overture envisions a system where the general synod would normally meet once every three years, and two national synods (one in the US and one in Canada) would also meet once in three years (although the national synods could meet twice between the general synods if they so desired) to more carefully process matters of importance to the churches.

## **Overture**

Classis Michigan overtures the next synod of the URCNA to amend the following articles of the *Church Order* and its *Appendices*, and the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, as indicated. [~~Strike through~~ indicates removal from the present wording. *Italics* indicates addition to the present wording.]

### **1. Article 16 – The ~~Three~~ *Four* Assemblies**

Among churches belonging to the federation, ~~three~~ *four* assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, *the national synod*, and the *general synod*. Classis, *the national synod*, and *the general synod* are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the consistory is a continuing body.

### **2. Article 25 – Delegates and Matters of Broader Assemblies**

Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be seated only with properly signed credentials, and each delegate shall have only one vote. In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered. All such matters shall originate with a consistory and be considered by classis *and the national synod* before being considered by *general synod*. No broader assembly shall have the power to depose an office-bearer or otherwise exercise church discipline, since these powers belong to the consistory.

### **3. Article ## – National Synods**

*A national synod, consisting of all classes within its nation's borders, shall convene every year except the year of a general synod unless the convening church, in consultation with its classes' convening consistories, concludes that no matters have been submitted by the classes that would warrant the convening of a national synod. Each consistory shall choose two of its members to be delegated to its national synod. Cancellation of a national synod shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession. If it appears necessary to convene a national synod before the appointed time, the convening consistory shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classes' convening consistories. It also shall determine the time and place for the next national synod and designate a convening consistory.*

### **4. Article 28 – General Synod**

The churches shall convene a *general synod* at least once every three years. Each classis shall delegate six of its ministers and six of its elders to ~~this meeting~~ *the general synod at least eight weeks prior to the start of the general synod*. Each *general synod* shall determine a time and place for the subsequent synod and shall authorize a consistory to convene that synod. If a majority of the classes deem it necessary that a *general synod* meet earlier than the regular time determined, the consistory charged with convening the meeting shall determine when and where the meeting is to occur.

5. Make editorial changes to CO Articles 29, 32, 36, and 66 to change “~~synod~~” to “*general synod*” or “*the general synod*” and “~~by synodical decision~~” to “*by a decision of the general synod*,” and “~~synodically approved Consistories~~” to “*the consistories approved by the general synod.*”
6. Make similar editorial changes to Appendix 7 (*Guidelines for Appeals*) and Appendix 8 (*Pastoral Advice Regarding Membership Departures*).
7. Much of the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* can remain the same and function for both the national and general synods. However, the following amendments are here proposed:
  - 1.3 Each consistory shall delegate two of its members to a *national synod*. *Each classis shall delegate six of its ministers and six of its elders to a general synod at least eight weeks prior to the start of the general synod*. Consistories and classes which cannot send ~~two~~ *the requisite number of delegates* shall be required to submit an explanation to synod.
  - 1.4 “~~synod~~” to “*general synod*”

## Grounds

1. This will reduce the size of general synods and promote the deliberative aspect of both the general and national synods. Deeper levels of fellowship will also be enhanced with fewer people in attendance.
2. If we learn to meet in general synod once every three years, and in national synod once in two years (assuming it will generally not be necessary to convene a national synod two years in a row), it will help promote the principle of subsidiarity – the principle that the best decisions for dealing with an issue are those taken at the lowest (or narrowest) possible level or closest to where the issue will have its effect.
3. Dealing with overtures and appeals at a national synod before proceeding to a general synod will help reduce the work of dealing with them at the general synod.
4. Reducing the number of ministers and elders at the general synod level will make it easier to obtain delegates given the sometimes difficult nature of international travel.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. Doug Barnes, Stated Clerk

## Overture 12

Adopt Pastoral Advice re the Relationship of Church, State, and Family

## Background

We inhabit an era of serious – even potentially catastrophic – moral and cultural decline. Society in Canada and in the United States, is renouncing, both in law and in socio-cultural life, its historic Christian heritage in pursuit of liberty without the Gospel, justice without God’s law, truth without the Scriptures,

flourishing without obedience, atonement without the cross, love without faithfulness, peace without repentance, salvation without Christ, and a world without creational norms. Given the danger and the folly of this trend, it is incumbent upon a faithful church to set forth, to all powers and authorities, the claims of Christ and the freedoms possessed by His Kingdom people, the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 1:9-11, 17; 3:15; 1 Pt. 2:16-17; 5:11).

Just before He ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus openly declared that He possesses all authority (Matt. 28:18). He is the One whom all the nations are to serve with fear, as the King who sits in judgment over them (Psalm 2). And He commands His people to worship and serve Him (Heb. 12:28-29), confessing and obeying Him even when ungodly powers forbid it (Matt. 10:26-33).

In a cultural context in which ultimate authority is being seized by – or readily surrendered to – the state, imperiling our sacred obligations and exposing both government and citizens to divine judgment, we must be mindful that freedoms not defended are soon forfeited. It is the obligation of the church to oppose whatever seeks to usurp ultimate authority, lovingly protecting our neighbors from enslavement to tyranny.

Furthermore, these developments have sown confusion among the churches regarding the relationship of church and state, the proper submission due to governing authorities, and the boundaries belonging to the family, the church, and the state. The need to apply Scripture and our Confessions to our contemporary context is important for the unity of the church on these significant matters.

The following overture contains nine Affirmations of Scriptural and Confessional truth concerning Christ, His church, the family, and the state. It is our prayer that the church will be mindful of these Biblical findings in all their decisions and actions concerning the relationship of church, state, and family, passionately defending these truths when they are assaulted.

## Overture

Therefore, Classis Michigan overtures Synod 2022 to adopt the following Affirmations as Pastoral Advice, in accordance with the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix D.

### Affirmations Governing the Relationship of Church, State, and Family

1. Jesus Christ claims and owns total authority over the nations as the Creator and Ruler of the kings, judges, and governors of the earth (Ps. 2:7-12; Ps. 110; Luke 23:3; John 19:11; Acts 17:7; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 1:5).
2. The one, holy, catholic (i.e. universal), and apostolic church was founded by our Lord Jesus Christ long before our contemporary temporal authorities came into existence, and the church grows and remains until the return of Christ, even when the nations where she is found crumble (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:7-13; Col. 1:18; *Belgic Confession* Art. 27).
3. The church of Jesus Christ does not have her position in the nation assigned to her by the permission of civil government, but *jure divino* – she has her own organization, and she possesses her own office-bearers (Matt. 10:1-15; 18:15-20; 28:18-20; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 6:1-7; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:9-13; *Belgic Confession* Arts. 30 & 31; *URCNA Foundational Principles* 3, 6, and 12).
4. The authority of the state and the authority of the church exist side by side, instituted by God according to the purpose and means assigned by God and in service to God, as recognized in the Scriptures. The magistrate is instituted by God and is endowed with power, in order that it, on its part and within the limits set for its authority, may maintain and promote the flourishing of human life and its development as a society pleasing to God in agreement with

- the law of God (Mark 12:13-17; Acts 5:29-32; Rom. 13:1, 4; 1 Cor. 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; *Belgic Confession* Art. 36).
5. The church shall recognize and honor the magistrate in its God-given power and service by faithfully proclaiming the full demands of the Word of God, both for the office and life of the magistrate and for that of its subjects; and by being mindful of the apostolic injunction to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all men, including kings and those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; see also Ezra 6:10; Jer. 29:7; 1 Pet. 2:17; *Belgic Confession* Art. 36).
  6. The magistrate, under penalty of forsaking its proper office and falling into tyranny, should forbear assuming the right and power of the only King of the church, Jesus Christ, who from heaven rules and protects and saves His church. The church with its officers, in all that has been given and entrusted to her, owes allegiance and responsibility to Christ alone, and shall for the coming of His kingdom and the overthrow of the kingdoms of antichrist have her expectation fixed alone upon the power of His Spirit and the revelation of His glory. (Ps. 2:7-9; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 2:4-5; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 20:7-10; *Belgic Confession* Arts. 27 & 36).
  7. The church must fulfill its obligation freely and fully to preach and teach the Law and Gospel of Jesus Christ, proselytize, establish churches, and disciple those who wish to follow Christ, despite any form of censorship or penalties imposed by temporal civil authorities. We reject all false doctrine asserting that the church must surrender the content or form of her message to the prevailing ideological and political convictions of our day. The Christian church is in all things to acknowledge and declare the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose Word upholds all things. The civil magistrate is called to protect the preaching of the Gospel and all the holy service of God with all the means given to it by God, in order that freedom of conscience to serve God according to His Word be guaranteed and every anti-Christian power which would threaten the church in the exercise of her holy ministrations be resisted and prevented (Psalm 82; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; *Belgic Confession* Art. 36; *Canons of Dort* Head 2, Art. 5).
  8. The church and her members must remain committed to meeting in person for religious worship, prayer, the study of the Bible, or any other purpose necessary to her mission in spite of disturbance or interruption from any persons. The sacred duties to assemble for worship and engage in Christian ministry are divine obligations laid down in Holy Scripture and should be recognized and protected by civil authorities. Christians have the obligation to join with the assembly of Christ's church wherever God has established it, even if civil decrees forbid it and death and physical punishment result (Ps. 92:1-2; Psalm 100; Heb. 10:19-25; *Heidelberg Catechism* Lord's Day 38; *Belgic Confession* Art. 28).
  9. Parents in Christian churches must continue to disciple, educate, and catechize their children in the faith and confession of the church and lawfully resist all persecution, reprisal, or the seizure of their children by the state. We reject the false ideology that beyond its God-ordained and limited sphere as a ministry of public justice, the state should become sovereign over human life and so presume to fulfill the vocations of the family and the church (Eccl. 2:24-26; Eccl. 3:12-14; Daniel 1; *Heidelberg Catechism* Lord's Days 1 & 13; *Belgic Confession* Art. 36).

## Grounds

1. Serious cultural errors and a broad moral decline presently are infecting and marginalizing the church, such that our civil society is renouncing, both in law and in socio-cultural life, our historic Christian heritage.
2. Increasingly the state is imperiling our God-given obligations and exposing our government and citizens to divine judgment.
3. These developments have sown confusion among the churches regarding the relationship between church and state, the proper submission due to governing authorities, and the boundaries belonging to the family, the church, and the state. The need to apply Scripture and our Confessions to our contemporary context is important for the unity of the churches on these significant matters.

Classis Michigan  
Rev. Doug Barnes, Stated Clerk

### **Overture 13**

Amend Appendix 4 re Sermon Review for Ordination Exam

#### **Background**

It is the practice of Classis Ontario-East to include a sermon review element in our Ordination exams. Our Classical Rules and Procedures stipulate and detail this element, both for the delegates and for the one being examined. This requirement is not as significant as in the Candidacy exam, i.e., there is only one sermon (not three). This emphasis on preaching does not call in to question previous examinations, any more than the other areas of an Ordination exam call into question the Candidacy exam. Rather, the inclusion of a sermon review gives expression to our conviction that preaching remains at the heart of the minister's task. Having benefited from this practice for the past number of years and believing that standardizing this practice across the Federation would be beneficial, it seems wise to us to recommend this change to our Church Order.

#### **Overture**

Classis Ontario-East overtures Synod 2021 to amend Appendix 4 of our Church Order by inserting at point 3 the following:

- a. Sermon Review: The Consistory convening the Classis shall appoint a Consistory other than the calling Consistory to examine a sermon of the minister-elect. The sermon text shall be assigned by the Consistory examining the sermon. The sermon evaluation shall be based on a sermon preached in a public worship service. The manuscript of the minister-elect's sermon shall be distributed by the Convening Consistory to the churches of the Classis at least three weeks before the date of the proposed examination. The examining Consistory shall provide the delegates to the Classis with a written evaluation of the content and delivery of the sermon, including their recommendation that the Classis either proceed, or, not proceed with the examination, on the basis of their evaluation.

(What is currently point 3 in the Appendix would become 3.b.)

#### **Grounds**

1. Such a review emphasizes the importance of preaching in the work of those ordained to the Ministry of the Word.

2. Such a review is in keeping with the nature of an Ordination exam which reviews the vital topics of a Candidacy exam.
3. This would standardize this practice across the Federation.

Classis Ontario East  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 14**

### Amend Appendix 4.a re Concurring Advice

#### **Background**

Synod Wyoming 2016 approved the adoption of “Pastoral Advice Regarding Membership Departures” and placed this advice in a new Appendix to the Church Order, Appendix 8. Synod Wheaton 2018 decided, with the required 2/3 majority decision for Church Order changes, to codify the advice given in Appendix 8 into Article 64 of the Church Order. The synodical decision was subsequently ratified by the required 2/3 majority of URCNA consistories.

In making use of the wisdom and provisions of the Church Order and Appendix, we have noticed a discrepancy in the language, particularly as it pertains to the matter of erasure. According to the Appendix 8.4, the Pastoral Advice states that the consistories seeking to erase the membership of one of its members must seek the advice of classis before proceeding. According to the present reading of Church Order Article 64, however, the consistories must attain the ‘concurring’ advice of classis. This is a more rigorous expectation, such that if consistories fail to receive concurring advice, they may not proceed with the erasure of the membership.

It is our opinion that the present inconsistency is confusing and unhelpful for the churches and that the language of the Church Order Article 64 and Appendix 8.4 should be brought in line with each other. Furthermore, in order that the practice of erasure not be abused by consistories avoiding the task of discipline, we believe that it is the language of ‘concurring’ advice which ought to be used in both instances.

#### **Overture**

Classis Ontario-East overtures Synod Redeemer 2022 to add the words “shall seek the concurring” to Appendix 8.4 of the Church Order in order to make it consistent with the language adopted in the Church Order itself in Article 64.

#### **Present reading of Church Order Appendix 8.4**

##### **4. Membership Erasure** (Adopted by Synod Wyoming 2016, Article 121.2)

Consistories may erase the membership of those with whom they have had no contact for at least two years, thus rendering consistories unable to assess that member’s doctrine or life. Lack of contact must not be for lack of effort on the part of the consistory, but may be because the consistory cannot locate the member, or because the member is too distant to visit and will not respond to communication attempts. The *consistory should seek the advice of classis* before acting to erase a membership, demonstrating due diligence in its efforts to contact and give pastoral care to the member. The consistory should inform the congregation of this action and the reasons for it (emphasis added).

**Present Reading of Church Order Article 64** (as amended by Synod Wheaton 2018 Article 89.5 with the required 2/3 majority for Church Order Changes):

### **Article 64 – Departure of Members**

Those who seek the transfer of their membership to another congregation within the federation or one in ecclesiastical fellowship shall request in writing that their current Consistory send to the receiving Consistory an official letter including pertinent membership information and testimony concerning doctrine and life, requesting the receiving Consistory to accept them under its spiritual care. The Consistory may release members in order to affiliate with congregations not in ecclesiastical fellowship when the Consistory judges that doing so may aid the spiritual growth of the members. *The Consistory may, with concurring advice from classis, erase the membership of those with whom they have not been able to communicate for at least two years. (See Appendix 8.)* (emphasis added).

### **Proposed Change to Church Order Appendix 8.4:**

#### **4. Membership Erasure**

Consistories may erase the membership of those with whom they have had no contact for at least two years, thus rendering consistories unable to assess that member's doctrine or life. Lack of contact must not be for lack of effort on the part of the consistory, but may be because the consistory cannot locate the member, or because the member is too distant to visit and will not respond to communication attempts. *The consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before acting to erase a membership, demonstrating due diligence in its efforts to contact and give pastoral care to the member. The consistory should inform the congregation of this action and the reasons for it.* (proposed change underlined).

### **Grounds**

1. Consistency between the language of the Church Order Appendix (8.4) and the language of the Church Order itself (Article 64) is important to prevent confusion and disagreement among the churches.
2. The expectation of concurring advice will better ensure and encourage Consistories to practice Christian discipline in keeping with Church Order Article 64.

Classis Ontario East  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, Stated Clerk

### **Overture 15**

Establish Study Committee re Virtual and Digital Worship

### **Overture**

Classis Ontario East overtures Synod to establish a Study Committee to provide Pastoral Advice to the churches on the degree to which viewing or hearing worship via broadcast is participation in corporate worship. The Study Committee should include in its report a consideration of this question in the light of Article 27, 32 and 35 of the Belgic Confession, Lord's Days 35 and 38 of the Catechism, and Articles 37, 38, 41, and 46 of our Church Order.

### **Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic required churches in many areas to severely limit or cancel in-person worship services. In response, many churches turned to virtual or digital means to broadcast services.

Through this, questions have arisen as to how we should view the "participation" of our members in these "digital services", that is, when not physically worshipping in the same location. For the edification of the churches and benefit of the members there is value in establishing a unity in the Federation as to how we should properly understand the viewing and participation in services provided digitally or virtually.

While the church has traditionally assumed the physical gathering of members in worship, the relatively new ability to view corporate worship while not physically gathered in the same location may not have had a fulsome discussion in the Federation. The modern context and modern technology present a need to clarify further the application of Article 32 of the Belgic Confession, Lord's Days 35 and 38 of the Catechism, and Articles 37, 38, 41, and 46 of our Church Order. If left to individual churches and consistories to make such determinations, different approaches and decisions could create significant and challenging theological understandings within the Federation undermining unity. In fact, at this point it is understood different consistories have taken opposite positions on the matter. A Study Committee providing recommended Pastoral Advice would greatly assist avoiding such disunity and provide a base for careful consideration by Synod.

Some of the questions that arise from the broadcasting of services virtually or digitally are:

1. Can virtual or digital worship be corporate worship?
2. If yes, what are the key aspects or elements that must be present?
3. If no, is participation using virtual or digital means in fact worship?
4. If it is not possible to be worshipping through virtual or digital means, is such means of broadcasting services merely educational or pastoral?
5. What constitutes "the living preaching of the Word?" Is the Word preached received in the same way at home as it is *in the assembly*? Or stated differently, what is the difference (or is there any difference) between receiving God's Word as a *physically gathered community* versus receiving it at home as family units?
6. If gathering is essential to corporate worship, then what percentage of the congregation constitutes a gathering?
7. And what of the administration of the sacraments during a time when the whole congregation cannot be gathered (e.g. 10 members out of 500)? With regards to baptism, how are we to balance what our Church Order says about its being "*administered by the Minister of the Word in a service of corporate worship*" with "*shall be administered as soon as feasible*?" (Church Order, Art. 41). And with regards to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, what percentage of the congregation constitutes "*in a service of corporate worship*?" (Church Order, Art. 46).

While the Study Committee should be free to further define what is meant by virtual or digital, for the purposes of this overture virtual or digital is "*the ability to view and/or hear services while not in the same physical location but at the same time (live)*".

When considering these questions, it may be necessary to parse different technological means, however the intent is for the Study Committee to consider virtual and digital means in the most broad sense so as much as possible to have lasting application.

## Grounds

1. This is a matter relevant to the modern church.
2. This was a pressing issue during the days of this pandemic.
3. This is a matter of pastoral concern in leading those who are unable or unwilling to attend in-person worship.
4. A degree of unity within the Federation on this matter is theologically of importance.

Classis Ontario East  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, Stated Clerk

**Overture 16**  
Establish Study Committee on Human Sexuality

**Background**

Some years ago, our churches took steps to strengthen the language of Article 48 in our Church Order. That amendment was brought to the churches' attention in part so that our churches would be able to provide a defense for why we do not sanction same-sex marriage. Since that time the culture in which we minister has only become more passionately committed to sexual immorality. Peter's "flood of debauchery" phrase in 1 Peter 4:4 is increasingly true of our culture. And into this flood our members wade every day. It is increasingly vital that we provide the sheep under our care the direction and biblical perspective they need to navigate this world. As it is to be expected that we as churches will increasingly face these issues in our pastoral ministry, Classis Ontario East overtures Synod 2022 to:

**Overture**

Establish a study committee to address the biblical teaching concerning human sexuality with a particular attention to same-sex attraction and transgenderism, providing biblical response to these matters as well as pastoral advice for both office-bearers and members on how to minister the Word of God to these matters.

**Grounds**

1. The cultural pressures and message on these matters are increasingly a matter of concern for our churches.
2. Godly counsel is needed for our congregations as they minister to these challenging pastoral matters.

As there has been good work done on this question by other churches, especially by the PCA in its *Ad-Interim Report on Human Sexuality* (<https://pcaga.org/aicreport/>) the appointed study committee should make as much use of this report as possible. The report of this study committee should focus its attention on the nature of sin, temptation, and repentance especially as it concerns sexual sins. It should address the use of the term "gay Christian" and provide a biblical teaching on the question of same-sex orientation. It should offer pastoral advice on how to minister to same-sex attracted members and to members struggling with "transgenderism". And it should interact with those arguments raised in defense of same-sex attraction sometimes used within Christian circles.

Classis Ontario East  
Rev. Joel Dykstra, Stated Clerk

**Overture 17**  
Amend LS Form 1 re Lord's Day and Liars

**Background**

The new *Forms and Prayers* book includes four forms for the celebration of the Lord's Supper: two long forms and two short forms. The first long form in the new F&P book includes a list of sins, those guilty of which are admonished to "abstain from coming to the Table of the Lord".

The new Form 1 includes each of the 10 commandments except the 4<sup>th</sup>: "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy". In contrast, the list of sins in Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal included the violation of the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment: "all who desecrate the Lord's Day". It also included "liars" which is not found in the new Form 1.

## **Overture**

- A. Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to direct the insertion of the text "all who desecrate the Lord's Day;" into the long Form 1 for the celebration of the Lord's Supper following the words: "all blasphemers;" and to make this change to the official, posted, electronic form and any future printings of the F&P book and thus direct the churches to adopt this amendment into their reading of Form #1.

### **Grounds**

1. The entire decalogue was woven into Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
  2. The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is the only commandment that is not included in the new F&P Form #1.
  3. Since the Lord's Day is largely disregarded in the time in which we are living, its inclusion in the form is a helpful testimony to both our members and guests, as to the continuing relevance, importance, and status of this commandment.
- B. Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to direct the insertion of the text "and liars" into the long Form 1 for the celebration of the Lord's Supper between the text "all perjurers" and the semicolon and to make this change to the official, posted, electronic form and any future printings of the F&P book and thus direct the churches to insert this amendment into their reading of Form #1.

### **Grounds**

1. "Liars" was included in Form 2 of the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
2. The commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour" is not addressed fully in the Form, being addressed only in the legal context of perjury.
3. In its exposition of the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, Lord's Day 43 includes "every kind of lying".

Classis Southwestern Ontario  
Mr. Ed Gazendam, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 18**

Amend CO Art. 47 re Sending and Removing Missionaries

### **Background**

Synod Wyoming 2018 mandated the URCNA Missions Committee to research the models of missions taken within the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the older Christian Reformed Church, and the current URCNA Joint Venture Agreement model. The task assigned to the Missions Committee was, "To see if

they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Acts of Synod 2018; Minutes, Art. 76.7).

In the recommendations the Missions Committee is considering is a recommended change to the URCNA Church Order. Because the Church Order must be changed by overtures from the churches (not from standing committees), this overture was brought to Classis Southwestern Ontario so it can come before Synod 2020 in an orderly and proper way.

Classis Southwestern Ontario would also note that this change to Article 47 stands alone as a good idea to improve cooperation among the churches in our missionary endeavors. Whether the proposals from the Missions Committee are accepted by the Synod or not, changing Article 47 in the way proposed still bears wisdom to grow our mutual accountability in serving Christ faithfully.

## Overture

Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod Redeemer 2020 to change Article 47 of the Church Order by adding the phrase, “A local Consistory shall seek the advice of Classis before sending or removing a foreign or domestic missionary from a field.” The new church order would read as follows, with the italicized words given to highlight the change.

### **Article 47 – The Church’s Mission Calling**

The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this task is to be performed beyond the field of an organized church, it is to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories. *A local Consistory shall seek the advice of classis before sending or removing a foreign or domestic missionary from a field.* The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries.

## Grounds

1. Our churches have agreed to “make every effort to unify all of our resources (gifts, talents, and finances) as one united federation in order to bring the gospel from our homes and churches to the nations of the world” (*Acts of Synod Nyack 2012*, pp 516-517). Our commitment to unity would be enhanced and displayed through this codified change to our Church Order.
2. To wisely send a man to the foreign field requires significant consideration and generally commits the federation to ministry in an area of the world for a considerable period of time. Having a broad base of support, agreement, and advice is an invaluable step to seeing this done well among our churches, whether this be the first man sent to a field or an additional man sent to help reinforce the work that is already going.
3. We have agreed on page 9 in our church planting manual (“How to Plant a Reformed Church”) that sending a man to begin a new work domestically should be done with the advice and awareness of the Classis. Requiring this advice in our Church Order helps a greater representation of the federation to be involved and supportive of the growing mission in the URCNA and gives good and helpful accountability to local Consistories eager to begin new mission works.
4. Removing a missionary from a field (foreign or domestic) has significant consequences for the missionary and the church/field where he served. Requiring the concurring advice of Classis protects both the missionary and the field that we, as a federation, have supported.
5. Article 11 of our Church Order recognizes the seriousness of dissolving a relationship between a pastor and a congregation. However, within the range of missions and church planting, there is no protection or safeguards in place for the well being of either the missionary or the believers

(and community) that this man may have served. This Church Order change would recognize that, equally in a mission, a minister's call is weighty and should not be changed without the input of the classis.

6. The inclusion of this line before the statement, "The churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries," presents the advice of Classis in a positive light that reminds us this advice is sought as we seek to support our missionaries. Having the advice of Classis before sending a man to a field increases the base of support within the URC for each of our prospective missions.

Classis Southwestern Ontario  
Mr. Ed Gazendam, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 19**

Add CO Article to Establish Mission Visitors

### **Background**

Classis Southwestern Ontario wishes to break out the first recommendation of the Synodical Missions Committee Minority Report to Synod Redeemer 2020 and present it as an overture to Synod. As Church Order changes can only arise from the churches and in the interest of providing better care for our missionaries sooner, we wish for Synod Redeemer 2022 to have the options properly before it as it weighs how to best oversee our missionaries in the coming decade.

The Consistory of Cornerstone URC of London made the following comments to Classis Southwestern Ontario: "Having overseen a domestic missionary for over 15 years, we have been strengthened in our faith at seeing the Lord's provision for the field and the many answers to our prayers. Yet we have concerns that the independent nature of our oversight could lead to an unhealthy comfort with the "status quo" in how we care for our missionary. We believe greater accountability, parallel to how regular churches are held accountable through regular church visitors, would bless both our missionaries and the overseeing churches. Our missionaries would be better cared for if official visitors from classis regularly visited and encouraged them in the Word and prayer. And our overseeing councils would do better in caring for our missionaries if we were subsequently asked questions pertaining how we are doing in this particular matter."

Moving forward, every sending consistory of a foreign or domestic Missionary would be expected to invite Mission Visitors to visit both the missionary and the sending council every two years. Mission Visitors shall not take over the sending churches' responsibility to visit their fields, but only supplement the sending churches' visiting schedule. Mission Visitors shall inquire about the missionary and his labors to the end that they may encourage the missionary and seek to advance the church's missionary task in that region.

No more than six weeks after visiting a missionary, the Mission Visitors will follow up by also visiting the council of the sending church. In consultation with all parties, the Mission Visitors shall submit a report to classis. The Lord willing, these reports will inspire a sister church in classis to join a JVC to send another family into the same region, protecting against ministerial isolation by strengthening the fields with multiple persons. Mission Visitors shall also serve as church visitors to missionaries and their councils when invited.

Here are questions Mission Visitors might ask that are easily neglected in regular Church Visits:

**A. To the mission:**

1. Describe your history as a church plant and the body of believers God is developing. What obstacles, practical, material, or spiritual, has the church plant faced? In what ways did these obstacles become part of God's means of showing His grace?
2. What signs of growth do you see in the ministry, in the number of individuals reached or within individuals that regularly attend? How are believing and unbelieving parents, singles, children, elderly, and others being ministered to? How do you nurture the communion of the saints? How have you seen regular attendees growing in their love for the Lord, for one another, for the Word of God and for worship, for Reformed theology and for the Three Forms of Unity? What materials have you found useful in leading membership classes?
3. What leadership roles are taken by non-officers in the church plant? Do people joyfully offer their gifts to the church? How do you protect people from burnout? How are you working towards developing future office bearers?
4. How have you worked to reach the lost in your area? What role does prayer have in this?
5. What obstacles do you face personally? How are you approaching these challenges?
6. Describe your relationship with the planting church. How do you and lay officers of the church plant participate in Consistory and council meetings? What advice or direction have you been given by your planting church? How often do they visit you in person? How do you decide non-essential questions like the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper in worship, whether the minister wears a robe, or how to collect the offering?
7. How have you communicated your needs to other URCNA churches? Who is praying for you? How do they receive updates and how have you let the church plant know they are being cared for by sister churches? How has our classis been helpful in supporting the ministry? Is there anything our churches can do to assist you better?
8. Are there other like-minded churches in your area? How is your relationship with them? Where would there be need for the gospel in surrounding areas that our classis might consider planting another church in? Are there groups that are in your area that are culturally distinct in a way that a particular ministry to them should be considered?
9. To what degree is the church plant self-financing? To what degree do you receive outside funds? What are you doing to raise financial support?

**B. To the planting church:**

1. How do you support the church plant? When was your last visit? How do officers of the church plant participate in Consistory and council meetings? In what ways do you give advice?
2. What is your impression of the growth in the church plant? Is the relationship positive? How do you work to promote a healthy, God-glorifying dynamic between the church plant and planting church, so that matters of finances and control are not the primary concerns in your meetings?
3. Do you have concerns about continuing as the planting church? If you were to have to dissolve the church plant or seek another church to assume responsibility for it, do you have a plan to care for the minister's needs and for the needs of those in the church plant?
4. How do you personally support and encourage your missionary?
5. How has classis been helpful collectively and as local churches in supporting the work?
6. How does the church plant administer the Lord's Supper if a local elder is not present?
7. Do you have questions about planting this church?

## Overture

Classis Southwestern Ontario overtures Synod 2022 to add a new article to the Church Order concerning Mission Visitors (and renumber subsequent articles accordingly):

### Option 1) New Article 28 - Mission Visitors

#### Article 28 – Mission Visitors

Each Consistory of the classis supervising a foreign or domestic missionary shall invite two experienced officer-bearers appointed by classis, either two ministers or a minister and an elder, to visit the missionary and subsequently visit the council once every two years, who shall give account of their visits to the classis. Mission Visitors shall inquire about the missionary and his labors to the end that they may encourage the missionary and seek to advance the church's missionary task in that region. These visitors may fraternally admonish those office-bearers who have in anything been negligent and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, edification, missionary task and greatest profit of the churches.

*Or if Synod prefers avoiding renumbering all subsequent articles, we propose:*

**Option 2) New Article 27b – Mission Visitors (text similar). The original Article 27 would become Article 27a.**

#### Grounds

1. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14; “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Proverbs 15:22; “For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 24:6
2. As a parallel to Church Visitors, Mission Visitors shall assist missionaries and their sending churches by seeking to understand and apply pastoral wisdom and advice as necessary. Mission Visitors allow for a timelier process should corrective action be in order, involve the narrower assemblies, and simplify the appeals process should one arise.
3. The Mission Visitors approach meshes well with classes that already have a standing Missions Committee. Trust will develop as Mission Visitors assist the local church without taking over. Advice will be more readily received by brothers coming from within classis.
4. As it would be simpler and less costly for Mission Visitors to be sent from one classis to one region, classis will naturally seek to adopt and support nearby fields.
5. This codifies past synodical mandates to the classically appointed committee members to maintain contact on domestic and foreign missionaries within their respective classes, and with the consistories that oversee these works, and with any joint venture committee or classis missions committee with which the missionaries are connected. (Article 85 of Acts of Synod 2012, referencing Synodical Agenda 2012 pages #376-379)
6. While this proposal causes the classes to incur financial and man-power costs, the costs of not supporting mission works better is arguably greater in both recent domestic and foreign cases.

Classis Southwestern Ontario  
Mr. Ed Gazendam, Stated Clerk

## Overture 20

### Amend Church Order, Article 31 - Appeals by Church Members

#### Background

Synod 2018 adopted Appendix 7 “Guidelines for Appeals” as an appendix to the Church Order. Appendix 7 begins with the following introduction: “In accord with *Church Order*, Articles 29 and 31, the following guidelines must be observed in preparing and adjudicating an appeal. These guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal.”

After defining what an appeal is, the guidelines specify which parties may file an appeal. Appendix 7, Guideline 1 states in part: “Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation.” The guidelines then proceed to specify where an appeal ought to be filed first. Appendix 7, Guideline 2 states in part: “An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies.” The guidelines for appeals seem clear that any consistory or church member may appeal the decision of any assembly of the federation directly to that assembly.

However, Church Order, Article 31 states that an appeal by a church member to a broader assembly must originate with a consistory. Article 31 reads in pertinent part: “An individual’s appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly.”

The language of Church Order, Article 31 and of Appendix 7, Guidelines 1 and 2 creates the potential for confusion. If a church member alleges that a decision of a broader assembly has been made in error and that he or she has been wronged by that decision, should an appeal be filed directly with the broader assembly or must the appeal first be filed with a consistory?

The clearly stated intention of the churches was to make guidelines for appeals that were in accord with Church Order, Articles 29 and 31. This overture seeks to bring further clarity to the matter of the origination of appeals by amending Church Order, Article 31.

#### Overture

Classis Southwest U.S. overtures Synod to amend Church Order, Article 31 as follows:

Remove the word “Consistory” in the second sentence and replace it with the phrase “assembly whose decision is being appealed”.

Current wording:

#### **Article 31 - Appeals by Church Members**

If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual’s appeal must proceed first to the Consistory, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.

*(See Appendix 7)*

Wording as amended (deletions struck-through; additions underlined):

#### **Article 31 - Appeals by Church Members**

If any church member complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a narrower assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the broader assemblies. An individual’s appeal must proceed first to the Consistory assembly whose decision is being appealed, and only then, if necessary, to a broader assembly. Until a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed. *(See Appendix 7)*

#### Grounds

1. The proposed amendment would help remove any potential for misunderstanding that currently exists between Church Order, Article 31 and Appendix 7, Guidelines 1 and 2.
2. The proposed amendment uses the same language already approved by Synod in Appendix 7, Guideline 2.
3. The proposed amendment would remove any appearance that the Church Order can be or has been changed by way of an appendix.
4. Article 31 as amended would better serve the churches by giving further clarity to the appeal process.
5. The appeal process is a matter that pertains to the churches of the broader assembly in common. As has been previously expressed by our churches: “The appeal process is worth taking time to improve and strengthen, as it is closely related to upholding righteousness and justice among the churches of Christ represented within our federation, and as our decisions as a church reflect our only Head, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts of Synod 2016, Article 70, pp. 73-74).

Classis Southwest U.S.  
Rev. Michael Spotts, Stated Clerk

## **Overture 21**

Amend the Church Order Articles 55 & 56

### **Background**

The exercise of Christian discipline is one of the most important duties which Christ has entrusted to His church on earth. As we confess in Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 31, the preaching of the holy gospel and Christian discipline toward repentance are the “keys of the kingdom.” These keys “open the kingdom of heaven to believers and close it to unbelievers.”

Since the elders of the church are especially entrusted with the important work of Christian discipline, it is imperative that they understand the stages and steps of Christian discipline (the specific steps are outlined in Articles 55 & 56 of our current URCNA Church Order). Our classis believes that improvements can be made to the Church Order in clarifying the stages and steps of discipline as well as identifying the use of “silent censure” and how it stands in relation to the overall process of church discipline. We present this overture in the confident hope that this amendment, if adopted, will guide and assist our consistories in doing the hard but good work of Christian discipline.

### **Overture**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod Niagara 2022 to change Articles 55 & 56 of the Church Order as follows (two parts to the overture):

#### **Overture Part A**

That URCNA Church Order Articles 55 & 56 be replaced with a new Article 55 as follows:

#### **Article 55 – The Discipline of a Member**

A communicant member whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages:

A. Silent Discipline:

A member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory.

B. Public Discipline:

If the silent discipline and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak with and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be done with the use of the appropriate liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

1. In the first step, the name of the sinner need not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared;
2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation;
3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date.

C. Excommunication:

If these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, but rather harden the sinner in his ways, the consistory shall proceed to the extreme remedy, namely excommunication, in agreement with the Word of God and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.

## **Grounds Part A**

1. This article more clearly defines and outlines the proper stages and steps of the disciplinary process. This article will be of immeasurable help and service to consistories who have young and/or inexperienced elders.
2. Our current article 55 does not explicitly use the language of 'Silent Discipline' nor does our article explain how silent discipline is to be applied and that it is not to be made public. All of these are very helpful distinctions to make.
3. The paragraph on the resignation of members (which was a late addition to Article 55 adopted by Synod Wheaton 2018) could now have its own article and be easier to find/access by our consistories.

## **Overture Part B**

That URCNA Church Order Article 56 be amended as follows and re-assigned to address the Resignation of Members.

### **Article 56 – The Resignation of Members**

In the event a member seeks to resign while under church discipline, the consistory need not proceed further with the aforementioned three steps of discipline while they warn the member against resignation. If the member remains impenitent and persists in resigning, the consistory should seek the advice of classis before acting to exclude him from membership. The consistory need not seek advice if classis has previously advised it to proceed to the second step of public discipline. Having been advised by classis, the consistory may proceed to exclude from membership the one who is forsaking Christ's church. The consistory should notify the person of this action, admonishing him and calling him to repentance. The consistory should also inform the congregation of this action and solicit their prayers for the former member. (See Appendix 8)

## **Grounds Part B**

1. It makes sense to separate the stages and steps of discipline from membership resignation (as resignation is actually an intrusion upon and an interruption of the process of discipline).
2. For simple ease of reading and access, it makes sense to dedicate a separate article to this subject.

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. Jason Vander Horst, Stated Clerk

## Appeal 1

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

To: Clerk of Convening Consistory of Synod 2020 (Wellandport United Reformed Church):

And now, this November 22, 2019, comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and appeal the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in the matter of the adoption of an overture which provides that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted in written form administered and graded outside a meeting of classis Eastern U.S. and outside the presence and hearing of the delegates at a meeting of classis.

Provided with this this Appeal are the following:

1. *Notice of Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 1, 2019*
2. *Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 3, 2019, with attachments including the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which is being appealed.*
3. *Relevant portion of the Minutes of the October 16, 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. reflecting their disposition of the Appeal*
4. *Notice of Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 on November 15, 2019.*

In support of said Appeal, the appellants state that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

1. Specification of Error #1: The decision violates the letter and spirit of the Church Order requirement that a candidacy exam be conducted at a meeting of classis in the presence and hearing of delegates to such meeting.

Grounds:

- a) The Church Order repeatedly states that a candidacy examination be conducted “**at** a meeting of classis”. [Emphasis added] *C.O. Article 4.*
- b) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that a consistory must request a “meeting of classis **for the exam**”. [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2(a).*
- c) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that upon passing the candidacy exam, waiver of an ordination exam can occur if the candidate were to receive a call within that classis: “Taking note of that possibility, the delegates **hearing the candidacy exam** should determine whether the performance is sufficient to warrant such a waiver.” [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2 (e)*
- d) Throughout the history of our federation, our churches in every classis have uniformly conducted candidacy examinations by way of oral examinations performed and heard in the presence of delegates at a meeting of classis.
- e) The decision disrupts the unity in our federation’s practice by introducing a method unique to Classis Eastern U.S., consisting of written examinations administered and

graded outside the presence or hearing of delegates at a meeting of classis. This decision also sets a precedent for other classes to introduce disparate examination methods. Furthermore, the decision allows but does not require *any* oral examination of the candidate at a meeting of Classis Eastern U.S on the sections assigned for the written examination. “The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order.” *Introduction to the Church Order.*

- f) The question of whether the decision has any merit to warrant changing the federation’s adopted procedure for candidacy exams is not the dispositive issue for consideration of this appeal. Rather, the decision has preemptively bypassed the good and orderly method for *all* the churches of *every* classis to consider the merits or demerits<sup>1</sup> of a new procedure, *i.e.*, presenting a carefully crafted overture to change or add specific provisions to the Church Order, adopted by a 2/3 vote at a meeting of Synod, and thereafter ratified by 2/3 of the consistories of the federation. *C.O. Article 66.*

Date: November 22, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen,  
Appellant Immanuel URC,  
DeMotte, Indiana

Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant  
Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa

<sup>1</sup> Potential demerits not acknowledged in the Overture include: a) reverting in part to a narrowerselect group conducting parts of the exam, similar in principle to the more hierarchical committee method used in the CRC which our URCNA Church Order sought to guard against; b) diminished testing of the candidate’s ability to think “on his feet”, an important skill in ministry; c) diminished testing of a candidate’s physical and mental stamina in undergoing the rigors of the *entirety* of an oral exam; and, d) diminished observation of the candidate’s confidence in oratorical/rhetorical skills in answering difficult questions, another important skill in ministry.

**ATTACHMENTS TO APPEAL 1**

**From Page 4 of Classis EUS Minutes 2019 10 16**

Article 20. Appeal from Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes Motion that the appeal be ruled out of order.

**Adopted**

Ground:

Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.

The clerk will inform the appellants.

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**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPEAL**

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis East of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 1st day of May, 2019 comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and give notice of intention to appeal to Classis East from the decision of Classis East, made on April 5, 2019 regarding:

*The adoption of an overture which specifies that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted as a written exam administered and graded outside the presence and hearing of the delegates to a meeting of Classis East.*

Date: May 1, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant  
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana  
Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant  
Covenant Reformed, Pella, Iowa

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**APPEAL**

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis Eastern U.S. of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 3rd day of May, 2019, comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and appeal the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in the matter of the adoption of an overture which provides that portions of a candidacy examination be conducted in written form administered and graded outside a meeting of classis Eastern U.S. and outside the presence and hearing of the delegates at a meeting of classis. The "*Overture Regarding Candidacy Examinations*", *Article 18 and Appendix 4 from the Minutes of the April 5, 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S.* are attached to this Appeal.

In support of said appeal, the appellants state that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

1. Specification of Error #1: The decision violates the letter and spirit of the Church Order requirement that a candidacy exam be conducted at a meeting of classis in the presence and hearing of delegates to such meeting.

Grounds:

- a) The Church Order repeatedly states that a candidacy examination be conducted “**at** a meeting of classis”. [Emphasis added] *C.O. Article 4.*
- b) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that a consistory must request a “meeting of classis **for the exam**”. [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2(a).*
- c) The “Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam” specifies that upon passing the candidacy exam, waiver of an ordination exam can occur if the candidate were to receive a call within that classis: “Taking note of that possibility, the delegates **hearing the candidacy exam** should determine whether the performance is sufficient to warrant such a waiver.” [Emphasis added]. *C.O. Appendix 3, par. 2 (e).*
- d) Throughout the history of our federation, our churches in every classis have uniformly conducted candidacy examinations by way of oral examinations performed and heard in the presence of delegates at a meeting of classis.
- e) The decision disrupts the unity in our federation’s practice by introducing a method unique to Classis Eastern U.S., consisting of written examinations administered and graded outside the presence or hearing of delegates at a meeting of classis. This decision also sets a precedent for other classes to introduce disparate examination methods. Furthermore, the decision allows but does not require *any* oral examination of the candidate at a meeting of Classis Eastern U.S on the sections assigned for the written examination. “The churches of the federation, although distinct, voluntarily display their unity by means of a common confession and church order.” *Introduction to the Church Order.*
- f) The question of whether the decision has any merit to warrant changing the federation’s adopted procedure for candidacy exams is not the dispositive issue for consideration of this appeal. Rather, the decision has preemptively bypassed the good and orderly method for *all* the churches of *every* classis to consider the merits or demerit<sup>2</sup> of a new procedure, *i.e.*, presenting a carefully crafted overture to change or add specific provisions to the Church Order, adopted by a 2/3 vote at a meeting of Synod, and thereafter ratified by 2/3 of the consistories of the federation. *C.O. Article 66.*

<sup>2</sup>Potential demerits not acknowledged in the Overture include: a) reverting in part to a narrower select group conducting parts of the exam, similar in principle to the more hierarchical committee method used in the CRC which our URCNA Church Order sought to guard against; b) diminished testing of the candidate’s ability to think “on his feet”, an important skill in ministry; c) diminished testing of a candidate’s physical and mental stamina in undergoing the rigors of the *entirety* of an oral exam; and, d) diminished observation of the candidate’s confidence in oratorical/rhetorical skills in answering difficult questions, another important skill in ministry.

Date: May 3, 2019  
Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant  
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana  
Rev. Doug Barnes, Appellant  
Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa

**From Page 25 Classis EUS Agenda for 2019 04 05**

Overture B  
Overture Regarding Candidacy Examinations  
*Presented as an Overture to Classis Eastern  
U.S. From West Sayville Reformed Bible  
Church*

Background:

The process of a candidacy examination appears to have turned the floor of Classis into a place for committee work. The incredible amount of man-hours invested into a candidacy examination on the floor of Classis is too high. Practical changes could ease that burden on the delegates as well as on the examinees with no loss of content or rigor to the examination. These examinations remain a priority for the Classis, but classis could be conducting them in a more advantageous manner.

Overture:

The consistory of the West Sayville Reformed Bible Church overtures Classis Eastern US to take the following actions related to the process of the Candidacy Examination:

1. Require examiners in the areas of Bible Knowledge, Confessional Knowledge, Church History, and Church Polity to produce written examinations to be taken by the prospective candidate before the meeting of Classis. The written examination will be proctored by a member of the consistory of the prospective candidate's sponsoring congregation. Their completed written test will then be scored by the examiner and distributed to all delegates along with the other examination materials prior to the Classis meeting for review.
2. The written examinations should be crafted with an approximate minimum time frame of one hour and a maximum time frame of 2 hours in mind for completion at the discretion of the examiner.

Grounds:

1. The use of a written examination will help remove the time pressures of the floor of classis related to basic questioning.
2. The use of a written exam in areas of basic knowledge will be a better use of time for all parties.
3. Often, examinees become physically exhausted by the latter sections of an examination, and eliminating basic work on the floor through a written exam will make the whole exam quality increase.
4. The use of written materials in support of the floor exam does not preclude the opportunity for additional floor questions and clarifications in each section. In our view this enhances and completes the church order requirements related to an examination and does not relax them in any way. This test will not eliminate the floor portion of any exam area. However, it may bring the delegates to a decision sooner because they have arrived at the meeting already informed about the prospective candidate's basic qualifications in these exam

areas.

- 5. The candidacy examination often has a rushed feel to it, which does not work in the favor of the candidate or the delegates of Classis. This could help ease that malady.

Done in West Sayville Reformed Bible  
Church Consistory November 16, 2018

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**- From Page 4 Classis EUS Minutes 2019 04 05**

Article 18: Overture B. Candidacy Examinations

Rev. Eenigenburg presented on behalf of WSRBC.

Overture Adopted (Appendix 4)

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**From Page 10 of Classis EUS Minutes 2019 04 05**

**Appendix 4. Overture B as  
Adopted**

The consistory of the West Sayville Reformed Bible Church overtures Classis Eastern US to take the following actions related to the process of the Candidacy Examination:

- 1. Require examiners in the areas of Bible Knowledge, Confessional Knowledge, Church History, and Church Polity to produce written examinations to be taken by the prospective candidate before the meeting of Classis. The written examination will be proctored by a member of the consistory of the prospective candidate's sponsoring congregation. Their completed written test will then be scored by the examiner and distributed to all delegates along with the other examination materials prior to the Classis meeting for review.
- 2. The written examinations should be crafted with an approximate minimum time frame of one hour and a maximum time frame of 2 hours in mind for completion at the discretion of the examiner.

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**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO  
APPEAL**

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

To: Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (Wellandport United Reformed Church)

And now, this November 15, 2019 comes Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes and give notice of intention to appeal to Synod 2020 from the decision of Classis East, made on April 5, 2019 regarding:

*The adoption of an overture which specifies that portions of a candidacy examination*

*be conducted as a written exam administered and graded outside the presence and hearing of the delegates to a meeting of Classis East.*

Date: November 15, 2019

Mark Van Der Molen, Appellant  
Immanuel URC, DeMotte, Indiana

## Appeal 2

### BY THE CONSISTORY OF COVENANT REFORMED CHURCH OF PELLA FROM A DECISION OF CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.

To the Clerk of Wellandport URC, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (now 2021)  
and Rev. Ralph Pontier, URCNA Stated Clerk

And now, this 23rd day of March 2020, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella and appeals the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that “*Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.*” [Minutes of the 16 October 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. are attached to this Appeal. See Art. 20.]

Provided with this appeal are the following attachments, in this (reverse-chronological) order:

1. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal for the present action, filed with the Stated Clerk on 17 March 2020.
2. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 12-13 March 2020, rendering a decision on the original appeal.
3. Our initial Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
4. Our Notice of Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
5. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 16 October 2019, which prompted our appeal.

A separate communication has been submitted alongside of this appeal document, including the reply of our Consistory to the Classis Eastern U.S. rejection of our appeal.

As a preliminary statement, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church has been wronged by the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in at least 2 ways. (This note was included with our original appeal.)

1. Classis Eastern U.S., in contradicting the adopted procedures found in Appendix 7 of the Church Order, damages our fellowship as churches by circumventing the process we have all agreed to follow.
2. This decision (if it stands) sets a dangerous precedent that could encourage assemblies to ignore the plain language of our Church Order Appendices, a practice which would further undermine our federative unity.

In support of said appeal, the appellant states that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

#### **Specification of Error #1:**

Classis Eastern U.S.’s disposition contradicts Appendix 7 to the Church Order, Guidelines for Appeals, which explicitly **permits** an individual appeal of a classis decision and **requires** such an appeal to be directly initiated with the assembly whose decision is being appealed.

#### **Grounds:**

- a) Classis Eastern U.S.’s citation of Church Order Article 29 is irrelevant, in that Article

29 applies to appeals by “assemblies.” The appeal before Classis Eastern U.S. was not an appeal initiated by an assembly, but was submitted by individuals.

- b) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision misreads Church Order Article 31 to suggest that **every** individual appeal must first be filed with the individual’s consistory. However, Article 31 refers to an individual’s appeal from a “narrower assembly” – which, in context, refers to a **consistory** decision. This relevant language from the article clarifies that an appeal against a *decision of a consistory* must be appealed first *to the consistory itself*, rather than directing the appeal to the classis to which the consistory belongs. In other words, the appeal must go first to the assembly which made the offending decision.
- c) The articles of our Church Order provide succinct governing principles, while the Appendices to the Church Order provide expanded and detailed procedures which are fully in accord with those principles.
- d) Appendix 7, Guidelines for Appeals, which was adopted at Synod 2018, explicitly states that these guidelines are “*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*” and that “*these guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal*” [Appendix 7, Introduction]. This shows that Synod adopted the Guidelines for Appeals with the explicit understanding that the more detailed provisions of those Guidelines were in accord with the general principles found in the Church Order.
- e) Appeal Guideline #1 explicitly guarantees an individual right to appeal a classis decision:

*“Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation**” [emphasis added].*

- f) Appeal Guideline #2 explicitly requires the initiation of the appeal to be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed:

*“Origination: **An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies.** The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal” [emphasis added].*

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals initiated by assemblies and those initiated by individuals. This Guideline clarifies that *every appeal* must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In the present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were not merely permitted, but were *required*, to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

- g) Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision erroneously reads CO Article 31 as somehow being in conflict with the Guidelines for Appeals and/or assumes that Article 31 somehow acts as a retroactive limitation on the clear procedure found in Guideline #2. Instead, Article 31 and its general principle regarding an individual appeal from a consistory decision should be read in harmony with the specific Guidelines for Appeal that allow an individual to appeal a decision of any assembly (consistory, classis, synod), which

demonstrates that such appeal must be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed (consistory, classis, synod).

Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church,  
Appellant  
16 March 2020

**ATTACHMENT #1**

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPEAL

To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk of the URCNA

And now this 16th day of March, 2020, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, giving notice of intent to appeal to Synod Redeemer 2020, from the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. made on October 16, 2019, to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that “*Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.*”

On March 9, 2020, Classis Eastern U.S. rejected our appeal of their action. We now plan to appeal to Synod 2020.

Consistory – Covenant Reformed Church of  
Pella  
16 March 2020

**ATTACHMENT #2**

Minutes for Classis Eastern U.S.  
of the United Reformed Churches in North  
America Fiftieth Session – March 12-13, 2020

Article 29. Appeal from Covenant URC (Pella)

**Defeated**

- A. Ground A was ruled to be invalid.
  - a. Church Order 29 *is* relevant, because article 29 describes the *only* appeal that may bypass a Consistory.
- B. Ground B was ruled to be invalid.
  - a. Church Order 31 describes the *only* avenue for appeal by individuals and reflects the wisdom of our church order in that individual appeals should first be vetted by a Consistory (cf. CO 25).
- C. Ground C was ruled to be invalid.
  - a. It begs the question as to whether the Church Order or the

- Appendix supercedes the other.
- b. The introduction to Appendix 7 instructs us to read Appendix 7 “in accordwith” Church Order 29 and 31.
- D. Ground D was ruled to be invalid.
    - a. The introduction to Appendix 7 is prescriptive, not descriptive.
  - E. Ground E was ruled to be invalid.
    - a. If Synod intended to create a new right of appeal—*any individual* appealing *any assembly* directly—it would have amended Church Order 25, 29, and 31.
  - F. Ground F was ruled to be invalid.
    - a. It begs the question as to whether an individual needs to go through his/her Consistory.
    - b. Church Order 29 stipulates that an appeal to an assembly must be made by an assembly.
  - G. Ground G was ruled to be invalid.
    - a. It begs the question as to whether or not Appendix 7 *can* be read in harmonywith Church Order 25, 29, and 31.
  - H. In sum, we believe that Appendix 7 *cannot* be read in harmony with Church Order Articles 25, 29, and 31, and therefore are bound to follow the clear teaching of these three articles.

### **ATTACHMENT #3**

#### **APPEAL AGAINST CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.**

To Rev. Zachary Wyse, Clerk of Classis Eastern U.S. of the United Reformed Churches:

And now, this 18 November 2019, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella and appeals the judgment or decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes “out of order” on the stated ground that “*Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.*” [*Minutes of the 16 October 2019 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S. are attached to this Appeal. See Art. 20.*]

As a preliminary statement, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church has been wronged by the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. in at least 2 ways.

1. Classis Eastern U.S., in contradicting the adopted procedures found in Appendix 7 of the Church Order, damages our fellowship as churches by circumventing the process we have all agreed to follow.
2. This decision (if it stands) sets a dangerous precedent that could encourage assemblies to ignore the plain language of our Church Order Appendices, a practice which would further undermine our federative unity.

In support of said appeal, the appellant states that Classis Eastern U.S. committed the following error:

#### **Specification of Error #1:**

Classis Eastern U.S.'s disposition contradicts Appendix 7 to the Church Order, Guidelines for Appeals, which explicitly **permits** an individual appeal of a classis decision and **requires** such an appeal to be directly initiated with the assembly whose decision is being appealed.

**Grounds:**

- a) Classis Eastern U.S.'s citation of Church Order Article 29 is irrelevant, in that Article 29 applies to appeals by "assemblies." The appeal before Classis Eastern U.S. was not an appeal initiated by an assembly, but was submitted by individuals.
- b) Classis Eastern U.S.'s decision misreads Church Order Article 31 to suggest that **every** individual appeal must first be filed with the individual's consistory. However, Article 31 refers to an individual's appeal from a "narrower assembly" – which, in context, refers to a **consistory** decision. This relevant language from the article clarifies that an appeal against a *decision of a consistory* must be appealed first *to the consistory itself*, rather than directing the appeal to the classis to which the consistory belongs. In other words, the appeal must go first to the assembly which made the offending decision.
- c) The articles of our Church Order provide succinct governing principles, while the Appendices to the Church Order provide expanded and detailed procedures which are fully in accord with those principles.
- d) Appendix 7, Guidelines for Appeals, which was adopted at Synod 2018, explicitly states that these guidelines are "*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*" and that "*these guidelines shall serve as the standard for admissibility of an appeal*" [Appendix 7, Introduction]. This shows that Synod adopted the Guidelines for Appeals with the explicit understanding that the more detailed provisions of those Guidelines were in accord with the general principles found in the Church Order.
- e) Appeal Guideline #1 explicitly guarantees an individual right to appeal a classis decision:  
"Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation**" [emphasis added].
- f) Appeal Guideline #2 explicitly requires the initiation of the appeal to be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed:

*"Origination: An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies. The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal"* [emphasis added].

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals initiated by assemblies and those initiated by individuals. This Guideline clarifies that *every appeal* must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In the present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were not merely permitted, but were *required*, to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

- g) Classis Eastern U.S.'s decision erroneously reads CO Article 31 as somehow being in conflict with the Guidelines for Appeals and/or assumes that Article 31 somehow acts as a retroactive limitation on the clear procedure found in Guideline #2. Instead, Article 31 and its general principle regarding an individual appeal from a consistory decision should be read in harmony with the specific Guidelines for Appeal that allow an individual to appeal a decision of any assembly (consistory, classis, synod), which demonstrates that such appeal must be filed with the assembly whose decision is being appealed (consistory, classis, synod).

Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church , Appellant  
Date: 18 November 2019

**ATTACHMENT #4**

NOTICE OF INTENT TO APPEAL

To: Rev. Zachary Wyse, Stated Clerk, Classis Eastern U.S. of the URCNA

And now this 18th day of November, 2019, comes the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella, Iowa, giving notice of intent to appeal to Classis Eastern U.S. from the decision of Classis made on October 16, 2019, to rule the individual appeal of Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes "out of order" on the stated ground that *"Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis."*

Consistory – Covenant Reformed Church of Pella  
18 November 2019

**ATTACHMENT #5**

Minutes for Classis Eastern U.S.  
of the United Reformed Churches in North  
AmericaForty-ninth Session – October 16, 2019

Article 20. Appeal from Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug BarnesMotion that the appeal be ruled out of order.

**Adopted**

Ground:

Church Order articles 29 and 31 do not allow an individual to directly initiate an appeal against the decision of a classis.  
The clerk will inform the appellants.

## **Communication 1**

Classis Pacific Northwest re the Provisional Reception of Three Churches

From: Classis Pacific Northwest

To: Synod Niagara 2022

Re: Church Order Art. 32

Date: June 8, 2022

Classis Pacific Northwest has provisionally received the following churches under Article 32 of the Church Order and requests synod to ratify their decisions.

1. Cornerstone Christian Church, Medford, OR on September 24, 2019
2. Anchor of Hope Reformed Church, Silverdale, WA, on March 10, 2020
3. Redeemer United Reformed Church, Anchorage, AK, March 23, 2022

Rev. Quentin B. Falkena  
Clerk, Classis PNW of the URCNA

## **Communication 2**

Classis Western Canada re the Provisional Reception of One Church

To Synod Niagara 2022 of the URCNA:

Please be advised that Classis Western Canada, at our meeting of March 8, 2022, provisionally accepted Redemption Reformed Church of Chilliwack into our federation as a member church. We ask that Synod would ratify this decision.

In Christ,

Classis Western Canada  
Rev. Jason Vander Horst, Stated Clerk

## **Communication 3**

Regarding Appeal 1

To: The Clerk of Wellandport United Reformed Church, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020  
To: Rev. Ralph Pontier, Stated Clerk

Dear brothers:

Having previously sent you our Notice of Appeal, we are now hereby filing our Appeal of a decision of Classis Eastern U.S. As required by Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 2, this appeal was initially filed with Classis Eastern U.S., the assembly whose decision is being appealed.

As required by Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c), the present appeal to Synod is the same in substance as the appeal submitted to Classis Eastern U.S. No new materials or arguments have been added.

According to Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c), we are submitting with this Appeal the following:

1. *Notice of Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 1, 2019*
2. *Appeal filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on May 3, 2019, with attachments including the decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which is being appealed.*
3. *Notice of Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020*
4. *Appeal filed with the Stated Clerk and Clerk of Convening Consistory for Synod 2020, with attachment including the October 16, 2019 decision of Classis Eastern U.S. on the Appeal.*

As permitted by Church Order Appendix Guideline 5 (c) (iii): “*the appellant may respond to the arguments, decisions, and grounds used by the narrower assembly in its disposition of the appeal. Such response does not alter or add to the appeal under consideration, but shall be treated as a communication under Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.5.*”

**APPELLANTS’ REPLY TO CLASSIS EASTERN U.S.’S DECISION AND  
GROUNDS IN THEIR DISPOSITION OF THE APPEAL**

**Classis Eastern U.S.’s disposition in ruling the Appeal “out of order” directly contradicts the newly adopted Guidelines for Appeals, Appendix 7 to the Church Order.**

Classis Eastern U.S cited Church Order Articles 29 and 31 as not permitting “*an individual to directly initiate an appeal against a decision of classis*” [Classis Eastern U.S. minutes, Article 20].

However, Church Order Article 29 addresses appeals made by **assemblies**, not individuals. Thus Classis Eastern U.S’s citation to Article 29 is irrelevant to the present appeal which was made by individuals.

Church Order Article 31 has generally applied to an individual’s appeal of a decision **made by a consistory**, in which the appeal must first be filed with the consistory which made that decision. Also, note that Article 31 requires that “*[u]ntil a decision is made upon such appeal, the church member shall conform to the determination and judgment already passed.*” This clearly applies to a decision made by a consistory, since an individual church member is directly bound to a decision of his consistory, unlike the present case in which there is nothing in Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision which would bind an individual church member.

Even more to the point, Synod 2018 adopted new procedures for the adjudication of appeals which are codified in Appendix 7 to the Church Order. The Introduction to the Guidelines states that these Guidelines are “*in accord with Church Order Articles 29 and 31*” and that these “*... [g]uidelines shall serve as the standard for the admissibility of appeals*” [emphasis added].

Guideline #1 states:

*Appellant: An appeal may be made by a consistory or an individual who is a member of a church within the federation. The appeal may be submitted by the appellant himself or by a representative. **Any consistory or church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation**” [emphasis added].*

This Guideline plainly states that any individual church member may appeal against a decision of any assembly of the federation. Of course, this would include an individual’s appeal against a decision of a classis, which is the case with our present appeal.

The next question is *where* an individual appeal against a classis decision must be initiated. Guideline #2 provides the clear answer:

*“Origination: **An appeal must first be made to the assembly whose decision is being appealed before appealing to broader assemblies.** The assembly whose decision is being appealed is the respondent to the appeal [emphasis added].*

Guideline #2 makes no distinction between appeals by assemblies or individuals. This Guideline applies to all appeals. All appeals must be initiated with the assembly which rendered the decision being appealed. In our present case, the decision being appealed was made by Classis Eastern U.S. Therefore, the Appellants were **required** to initiate their appeal with Classis Eastern U.S.

Classis Eastern U.S.’s decision to rule our appeal out of order on the ground that an individual cannot directly initiate an appeal of a classis decision requires reading Appendix 7 of the Church Order as somehow being in conflict with Church Order Article 31. However, they are not in conflict, but are “*in accord*” with each other as the Introduction to the Guidelines for Appeals itself states. Rather, it is Classis Eastern U.S.’s stated ground that is in direct conflict with the plain language of Appendix 7 regarding both the right of an individual to appeal the decision of any assembly, and the requirement that such appeal be initiated with the assembly that made the decision being appealed.

Respectfully submitted,

Elder Mark Van Der Molen and Rev. Doug Barnes.

#### **Communication 4** Regarding Appeal 2

To the Clerk of Wellandport URC, Convening Consistory for Synod 2020 (now 2021)  
and Rev. Ralph Pontier, URCNA Stated Clerk

Dear Brothers,

On 17 March 2020, we sent you a Notice of Intent to Appeal a decision of Classis Eastern U.S. which was rendered on 16 October 2019, having appealed first to that classis. This appeal was considered and rejected at the 9 March 2020 meeting of Classis Eastern U.S.

As directed by Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 5(c), this appeal to Synod is the same in substance as the initial appeal that we submitted to Classis Eastern U.S. No new materials or arguments have been added.

In accordance with that same Guideline, we are submitting with this Appeal the following:

1. Our Appeal-proper, with an attachment indicating the ruling of Classis Eastern U.S. concerning our appeal, which was rendered on 12-13 March 2020.
2. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal for the present action, filed with the Stated Clerk on 17 March 2020.
3. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 12-13 March 2020, rendering a decision on the original appeal.
4. Our initial Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
5. Our Notice of Intent to Appeal, filed with Classis Eastern U.S. on 19 November 2019.
6. The Minutes of Classis Eastern U.S. from 16 October 2019, which prompted our appeal.

Church Order Appendix 7, Guideline 5(c)(iii) permits an appellant to respond to arguments, decisions, and grounds used by the narrower assembly in its disposition of the appeal. This response is to be regarded as a communication under Regulations for Synodical Procedure 3.5. Therefore, the remainder of this communication will comprise the (brief) response of the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church to the ruling of Classis Eastern U.S. which was rendered on March 12-13 of this year.

### **Appellants' Reply to the Classis Eastern U.S. Rejection of Its Appeal**

The decision of Classis Eastern U.S. to reject our appeal hinges on the judgment that Synod Wheaton 2018 adopted an appendix which stood in conflict with Articles 25, 29, and 31 of our Church Order. This seems improbable at best, particularly given the careful deliberation, both by a study committee and by the synodical assembly itself, which preceded that adoption.

Appendix 7 can easily be understood and applied in a manner which stands in full agreement with the applicable articles of the URCNA Church Order. The appendix was adopted to help the churches in applying the Church Order to specific situations, and there is no sound reason to suppose that the two stand in conflict with each other. Therefore we see no justification for Classis Eastern U.S. to have discovered a conflict between them.

We urge the synodical delegates to recognize that Appendix 7, in all of its provisions, stands in full agreement with Art. 29 and Art. 31 of the Church Order.

As to the introduction of the question of Church Order Art. 25, which specifies that all matters addressed by a broader assembly "shall originate with a Consistory and be considered by classis before being considered by synod," the objection of Classis Eastern U.S. carries no weight. In an appeal, the essential matter has already been introduced to the assembly – presumably in a manner consistent with Art. 25. The appeal simply calls upon the assembly to revisit that previous decision in the light of a new objection. This is not the introduction of a new matter, but the request for reconsideration of a matter that has already been introduced. This article, therefore, is not germane to the issue.

In conclusion, it appears to us that Classis Eastern U.S. rejected our appeal on the basis of an essential disagreement with Appendix 7 of our Church Order, rather than on the merits of the Church Order and appendices which were adopted according to good order. For this reason, we

think it imperative that the Synod hear and adjudicate this appeal, thereby removing all doubt concerning the unity of purpose between our Church Order and its appendices.

Submitted with Respect and Love,  
*The Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Pella*

**Communication 5**  
Classis Central US Fraternal Relations

FROM: Classis Central US  
RE: Ecumenical Relations and *Church Order* Art. 35  
DATE: June 17, 2022

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

*Church Order* Art. 35 states:

**Article 35 – Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level**

The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond.

In keeping with CO Art. 35, Classis Central US wishes to inform synod, by means of this communication, that it has extended an invitation to Classis Minnkota of the Christian Reformed Church in North America to enter into fraternal relations with Classis Central US. It did so by approving the following overture.

***Overture to Enter Ecumenical Relations on a Classis Level with Classis Minnkota of the Christian Reformed Church***

**I. Background**

At the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of Classis Central US, Rev. Jon Bushnell was examined by way of Colloquium Doctum, as requested by Sioux Center URC. Rev. Bushnell was serving as the minister of Prinsburg CRC, which is a church in Classis Minnkota of the CRC. During the course of the Colloquium Doctum, Classis became aware that Classis Minnkota was in the practice of sending delegates to Synod under protest because of the presence of women delegates at the Synod of the CRC. Classis Minnkota is comprised of some 21 churches, five of which are outside the geographical boundaries of the Classis, but have been granted entrance into the Classis by the Synod. These five churches requested membership in the Classis for biblical and theological issues, the rejection of women serving in ecclesiastical office being primary among those issues. In recent years, Classis Minnkota has also sent overtures and communications to the Synod regarding the CRC Office of Social Justice.

In 2018, NAPARC received a communication from Classis Minnkota of the CRC requesting membership in NAPARC. NAPARC did not grant their request because the constitution of NAPARC does not allow a Classis or Presbytery to join NAPARC. Membership is only granted at the level of the denomination or federation.

On October 14, 2019, Rev. Jon Bushnell and Rev. Todd De Rooy traveled to Pipestone, MN, to visit with some of the ministers of the Classis Minnkota InterNos (ministerial). At that meeting, Rev. Bushnell and Rev. De Rooy proposed the idea of Classis Central US inviting Classis Minnkota into ecumenical relations. One of the ministers said he was humbled and encouraged that we would even think of their Classis and their churches. The ministers of the InterNos expressed an openness to the idea.

Through this process, two things have become apparent: first, Classis Minnkota is a Classis that is theologically isolated from its denomination, and that sense of isolation is particularly palpable for their synodical delegates; and, second, there is biblical, confessional, and theological like-mindedness between the churches of Classis Minnkota and Classis Central US. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis provides an opportunity to encourage isolated churches, reminding them that they are not alone in their service in God's Kingdom.

## **II. Overture**

The Consistory of Redeemer United Reformed Church of Orange City, IA, overtures Classis Central U.S. to invite Classis Minnkota of the CRC to enter into ecumenical relations with Classis Central U.S., according to Article 35 of the URCNA Church Order.

## **III. Grounds**

1. Article 35 of the URCNA Church Order states: "The churches of a classis may, as a group, enter into ecumenical relations with an individual church or group of churches such as a classis or presbytery. The classis shall keep synod informed of such ecumenical relations, thereby honoring our federative bond."
2. This is an opportunity for our Classis to encourage like-minded and theologically isolated churches in a region that borders our own Classis.
3. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis do not have organic union as a goal, and therefore do not come under the categories of ecumenicity in the mandates of CERCU and CECCA.
4. Ecumenical relations at the level of Classis would allow for our Classis to send fraternal delegates to Classis Minnkota, and for us to receive fraternal delegates from Classis Minnkota, so that we might encourage one another.

Adopted by Classis Central US  
March 9, AD 2020  
Rev. Ralph A. Pontier  
Stated Clerk Classis Central US

After Classis adopted this overture, a formal invitation was sent to Classis Minnkota of the CRC. Classis Minnkota accepted the invitation without dissent and welcomed their first fraternal delegate from Classis Central US of the URCNA. Since that time, our Classis has received fraternal delegates from Classis Minnkota and has sent fraternal delegates to their Classis. This relationship has afforded wonderful opportunities for encouragement, especially to a group of churches that are isolated in their denomination because of their biblical and confessional commitments.

On behalf of Classis Central US,  
Rev. Ralph A. Pontier  
Stated Clerk Classis Central US

## Communication 6

### Cornerstone URC, London, ON Urges Adoption of Missions Minority Report

Synod Niagara 2022 of the United Reformed Churches in North America c/o the convening consistory.

\*Communication to synod Regarding The Missions Alternate Proposal (Ref. Missions, Section IV, Minority Report)

July 14, 2022

Esteemed brothers,

The consistory of Cornerstone URC in London urges the delegates of synod to adopt the Minority Report from the Missions Committee.

We expect a lot from our missionaries – possibly more than is physically or mentally possible. If they break or retire, or the sending church “tires” of the work, the missionary suffers, the mission field suffers, and our aim of furthering the kingdom of Christ suffers. As our consistory has worked through how to address this, we note the scriptural pattern of sending out men in pairs. Our Lord sent out disciples in pairs, and after the Savior’s resurrection, the apostles went out in teams. As such, we appreciate how the Minority Report emphasizes this pattern and we urge our federation to adopt the Minority Report for the following reasons:

#### **1. It strengthens the classes and streamlines our synod**

The Synodical Mission Committee, reduced to eight men, would develop broad mission strategies and would issue the call for prayer and generosity. The committee would be supported by a part time Mission Clerk who would take on the practical tasks that are part of the Mission Coordinator’s role. The spiritual tasks associated with the Mission Coordinator’s current role are too much for one man to carry out alone. The Minority Report moves these spiritual tasks into three classical appointments, one of which is an appointment that is hired, directed and overseen by classis. One major benefit over the Majority Report is that visiting and advising will happen in pairs.

#### **2. It promotes accountability and continuity in our mission fields with coworkers**

Boots on the ground can do more than advisors can from afar. Federation Matching Funds will assist churches in sending elders, deacons, lay workers, or full-time missionaries as coworkers. The Missions Committee would still set the vision for missions and would oversee the matching funds system, but the onus would remain with the consistories to apply for funding and send out their members to the mission fields. There are substantial advantages over the Majority Report:

- Twenty part-time men could go out for the cost of two full-time Mission Coordinators
- Churches will grow more engaged in missions as they send members to the mission field.
- Many men (and their families) will be trained up as they actively serve in the mission field.

#### **3. It fosters unity by addressing our Church Order**

We all agree that consistory is the sending body. The question centers on what role classis and synod take in relation to the consistory. Our Church Order gives classis an advisory role and synod a regulatory role. In practice, the beehive of activity ought to be in churches, advised by and accountable to classis, regulated by synod. The Minority Report buttresses

the classes with a revision to Church Order. We warn against the Majority Report which we believe will add managerial bureaucracy at the classical level without proper oversight. There is no clear line of appeal if a consistory or missionary is aggrieved by a committee decision. What regulates committees and coordinators? What prevents them from overstepping? We foresee many problems arising within the federation if we give standing committees responsibility without clearly laying out the parameters of such committees in our Church Order.

This last concern was our rationale for submitting the Mission Visitors Overture (# TBD) which shows how the Minority Report integrates well with our Church Order.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of addressing you in this way. We pray for the Lord to bless our deliberations. May God be praised as we labor together for the cause of Christ our missional King!

Yours in the Lord,

On behalf of consistory with the deacons, Ken McIntyre,

Acting Chairman  
Wes Bergsma  
Clerk

**COMMUNICATION 7**  
Escondido URC Offers to Host the Next Synod

July 25, 2022

Dear Synod Niagara in care of the Stated Clerk,

The Escondido United Reformed Church is offering to host the next synod in response to Synod 2018 Art. 36 that designated classis Southwest as the next classis in rotation for hosting synod.

We have completed our new facility which includes a new sanctuary and two levels of classrooms, along with a renovated social hall, kitchen, and other buildings that would provide enough space to host a Synod. Our only desire would be to host Synod in the summer months so that there is no conflict with our local Christian school.

Sincerely,

The Council of the Escondido United Reformed Church

**Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)  
Report to Synod Niagara**

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is once again our privilege, as the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), to report to you on the activities of your committee since our report to Synod Wheaton, 2018. The following terminology document serves as the mandate of our committee:

I. The first step, Ecumenical Contact, will follow a period of initial exploration.

Ecumenical Contact will focus on studying matters of general concern between the URCNA and the “foreign” federation. This step will be implemented, where possible and desirable, by:

1. Exchange of official observers at major assemblies such that one visit be made to one assembly/church per year to churches with whom we have ecumenical relations.
2. Consultation on issues of joint concern, including:
  - a. authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
  - b. creeds and confessions;
  - c. formula of subscription to the confessions;
  - d. significant factors in the two federations’ history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues;
  - e. church order and polity;
  - f. liturgy and liturgical forms;
  - g. preaching, sacraments and discipline;
  - h. theological education for ministers;
  - i. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies.
  - j. Exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks);
  - k. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards;
  - l. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order;
  - m. Exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals;
  - n. Exchange of information regarding current ecumenical relations.

II. The second step, Ecumenical Fellowship, will focus on the oneness of the URCNA with the “foreign” federation, even though we are separated by geographical boundaries. This step will be implemented according to church order article 36, (in addition to the points listed under step one above) by:

1. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option);
2. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other’s members at the Lord’s Supper– but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership as regulated by each consistory (session);
3. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity;

4. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another;
5. Joint action in areas of common responsibility;
6. Agreement that, as changes in polity, doctrine or practice are instituted, the churches will inform each other – understanding that the adoption of substantial changes may jeopardize the established ecumenical relationship.

Before we get into the details of our report, CECCA want to acknowledge the death of one of its members, Rev. Rick Miller, whom the Lord called home at the age of 62. Rick faithfully served CECCA with the talents he had been given. May the Lord continue to strengthen his wife Maria, his daughter Maria, son Thomas, and all the other members of the family.

Since our report to Synod Wheaton, CECCA has met eight times by way of conference calls and once via a face-to-face meeting. This report will:

1. focus on churches with which we are in Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II)
2. focus on churches with which we are in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I);
3. focus on churches with which we are corresponding with a view to entering into Ecumenical Contact (Phase I);
4. focus on the upcoming ICRC meeting in Windhoek, Namibia in October, 2022;
5. focus on our response to Synod Wheaton’s direction to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to churches abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact or Ecumenical Fellowship;
6. focus on our annual CECCA budget;
7. focus on the practice of having a member-at-large;
8. conclude with a number of recommendations that require action by Synod.

## **I. Churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Fellowship**

### **The Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)**

The RCNZ is a federation of churches established in 1953 by young Dutch immigrants of reformed persuasion who were unable to find a spiritual home within the more established (mainstream) churches in this country. From the beginning the denomination wanted to be a New Zealand rather than an immigrant church. English became the accepted and spoken language of the church within a few years of its establishment. As a confessional church the three forms of unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dordt) as well the Westminster Confession of Faith were accepted as its standards. Some initial tension was experienced in this area but, by asking office bearers to subscribe to the ‘whole system of doctrine’, a successful confessional basis has been achieved and maintained. There is therefore a merger of confessional traditions (Reformed and Presbyterian) evidenced in their congregations. The RCNZ remains a small denomination consisting of 3 presbyteries: Auckland – 6 congregations; Wellington – 8 congregations and one preaching place; South island – 7 congregations and one preaching place (total of 21 churches). They currently have 20 ministers and three vicars. They also have seven retired ministers five of whom still serve as they are able. They have 3,278 members, as of February 2019. Their congregations are clustered mainly around the major population centers:

Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, Hastings, Palmerston North, Nelson and Dunedin. For more details, see [www.rcnz.org.nz](http://www.rcnz.org.nz).

The RCNZ's latest triennial synod was held September 2021. Because of Covid restrictions, CECCA sent a letter of fraternal greetings. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 1**.

### **The United Reformed Churches in Congo (URCC)**

The URCC is a federation of churches comprised of 189 churches, organized in ten regional synods, which are subdivided into 43 classes. In addition there are 43 preaching stations with a view to church planting. The URC has 34 ordained pastors, 395 elders and 262 deacons. The total membership of the churches remains at approximately 14,000. The churches operate one Theological Seminary and nine Biblical Training Centers.

While CECCA planned to send a fraternal delegate to the URCC's General Synod held July 22-27, 2018 in Lubumbashi, this visit did not materialize due to extenuating circumstances and travel considerations. It appears that no General Synod has been held since that time.

### **The Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)**

The Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) came into existence in 1859 and grew from the original five churches to 388 churches in 2019, with a total of 254 ministers of the Word. The churches are spread right across the RSA and also in Namibia, Zimbabwe and Zambia. These churches are currently being served by 254 ministers, in approximately 15 languages. The GKSA established its own theological school, founded in 1869 in Burgersdorp and operating since 1905 in Potchefstroom. The Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP) is staffed with 14 professors and three administrative officials, connected to the Faculty of Theology of the NWU, and has its own library.

The GKSA operates from an efficient building complex that includes a well-equipped auditorium and the denomination's archives. Ecumenical ties have been established with churches in the USA, Scotland, Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, the Congo, Japan and Korea. The GKSA operates in accordance with Holy Scripture, the three Formularies of Unity and the Canons of Dordt.

Since no synod was held during this reporting period, no visit was made.

### **The Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT)**

The GGRC-NTT is a federation of churches comprised of 15 congregations spread out in different islands of Indonesia, including Timor, Sabu, Rote and Java. The GGRC was established as a federation in 1950. The federation is organized in two classes. It has a total membership of 1,608 members. Most of the pastors studied at the Reformed Theological Seminary on Sumba (about 45 minutes flying from West Timor). One pastor received his training at the Theological Seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario. Elders and deacons and

other church leaders are trained by local leaders via seminars. The GGRC has known the URCNA since 2001 and would love to receive their help in the training of church leaders.

Brother Dick Moes visited the General Synod of the GGRC in August 2019. A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 2**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 3**. CECCA plans to send a fraternal delegate to visit their General Synod in August 2022.

### **The Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC)**

The FCC is a federation of churches made up of six presbyteries, representing forty-two congregations. The FCC was formed in 2000 but sees itself as a continuation of the Free Church of Scotland. Given this, they trace their history back to the Disruption of 1843 when, under the leadership of Thomas Chalmers, 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland. Through the Church of Scotland, the FCC dates back to 1560 and the Reformation under John Knox. While the URCNA has a different confessional background than the FCC, it is clear that we share the same, like precious faith. Our practices may differ at points (no instruments, exclusive metrical Psalm singing), but our similarities are clear.

Brother Jason Tuinstra visited the General Assembly of the FCC in May 2022. A copy of the address given can be found in **Appendix 4**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 5**.

### **The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW)**

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW) is a federation that was established in 1996 with then 5 churches. The number of congregations within the EPCEW currently stand at twenty congregations, of which three are church plants in varying stages of growth, these are in Salford, Oxford and Sunderland. Two of their congregations are outside of the UK, one in Sweden (Tranas, to the West of Stockholm) and one in Germany, in Berlin). Statistics for the beginning of 2019 show a total of just over 820 baptised members and about 600 communicant members. A church plant was recently started in Oxford, which has some 40 people attending the morning services. In addition, there are a growing number of people meeting together in Sunderland in the north of England, and they started their first services on Easter Sunday this year. In November 2019, presbytery called two ministers (to Sheffield Presbyterian Church and All Saints Presbyterian Church in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (formerly Gateshead Presbyterian Church) with a view of planting a church in Lincoln and Zurich (Switzerland) respectively.

CECCA received an invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the EPCEW's biannual meeting where sister churches and other friends of the Presbytery come and share with them about the Lord's work in our denomination. Because this meeting only lasts one day and we had sent a fraternal delegate two years ago, we decided to send a letter. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 6**. No physical biannual meeting has been held since this time.

## II. Churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Contact

### The Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT)

The ERCLAT consists of two congregations. The first congregation, the Riga Reformed Bible Church, was planted in 1990 by Pastor Alvis Sauka. Ten years later, a second congregation was planted in Riga. Recently, a third congregation was started in Pardaugavas.

Church leaders and members embraced Reformed theology through the teaching received at Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary in Riga. Professors such as Mark Vanderhart, Cornelis Venema, Gerard Van Groningen, Hans Buyer, Simon Kistemaker, Larry Sibley and more have been instrumental in mentoring the congregations.

Brother Glomsrud made a visit to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia in February 2020. A copy of the address can be found in **Appendix 7**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 8**.

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the ERCLAT.

### The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT)<sup>1</sup>

The GGRI-NTT in the province of East Nusa Tenggara is a federation consisting of 19 established churches that are located on Sumba, Savu and Timor. It is organized in 4 classes and has a membership of 8000 people. The federation maintains a Theological College in East Sumba. There are 14 students on campus at the moment. There are 12 students doing practicum in the churches at the moment; four of them are in Papua; the rest are in Sumba. There are four full-time lecturers and some parttime lecturers. The college is back in village where the once started because there is no money anymore to rent a building in the city and no money to build our campus yet, even though they have bought a piece of land in Waingapu, the capita of East Sumba. In the village, there is no general electricity and no telephone reception. They use a small generator for four hours and after that no power. This is a challenge for the lecturers and for the students when they have to do their work.

Brother Dick Moes made a visit to the General Synod of the GGRI-NTT in August 2019. A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 9**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 10**.

Since we have been an Ecclesiastical Contact relationship for seven years and there are no outstanding issues **CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the GGRI-NTT with a view to the GGRI-NTT overturing their national synod in

<sup>1</sup> There are three Indonesian churches that have GGR in their acronym: the GGRC, the GGRI-NTT, and the GGRI-nasional. GGR stands for *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi* meaning: *Reformed Churches*.

September 2022 to extend this relationship to the GGRI-nasional. CECCA plans to send a delegate to the Synod of the GGRI-national.

### **The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)**

The PCEA is a federation of 12 congregations organized in three presbyteries. The congregations are spread from Brisbane in the north down to Geelong in Victoria. There is one congregation in Ulverstone, Tasmania. The PCEA does not have a seminary, but uses the colleges of the Presbyterian Church in Australia, which is complemented by reading, and essays set by their own Training of Ministry Committee to cover their own distinctive doctrines, history and practice. The PCEA has a membership of about 700 members. It holds to the Westminster Standards and the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government.

CECCA received an invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the PCEA's annual General Assembly in May, 2022. CECCA decided to send a letter of fraternal greetings. A copy of this letter can be found in **Appendix 11**.

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enters into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the PCEA.

### **Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC)**

The Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC) was founded in 1962. At the moment, it has 87 churches and 12 church plants spread out over seven presbyteries. 60 pastors, 58 elders, and six deacons serve the churches. The federation has a total of 9600 communicant members. The federation has a theological seminary and two Bible Colleges. The federation holds to the Westminster Standards and has a presbyterian form of church government. The AEPC is a member of the ICRC.

Since no visit has been made to the AEPC due to Covid restrictions, **CECCA proposes** that the URCNA remain in Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the AEPC at this time.

## **III. Churches with whom we are corresponding with a view to Ecumenical Contact**

### **Free Church of Scotland (FCS)**

The Free Church of Scotland traces its roots to the Disruption of 1843 and the struggle of the Scottish church to remain 'free' from State interference. Under the leadership of the Free Church's first moderator, Thomas Chalmers, 450 ministers left the Church of Scotland. The denomination currently has over 100 congregations in Scotland, as well as two in London, plus sister churches founded by mission work in India, Peru and South Africa. The Church has a full time seminary in the middle of Edinburgh for the training of its ministers and other Christian workers. The Free Church is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and has fellowship with many other Reformed churches throughout the world. The FCS stands firmly in the tradition which accepts the Bible as its supreme standard and the Westminster Confession as its subordinate standard. While the Free Church continues to prize

its heritage and traditions, it also feels compelled to work creatively to bring the good news about Jesus to bear on each generation, convinced that the timeless message of the gospel speaks to all of life with up-to-the-minute relevance and power.

Brother Jason Tuinstra addressed the 176<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in May of 2019. A copy of the address given at this GA can be found in **Appendix 12**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 13**. A copy of a letter of fraternal greetings to their General Assembly in May 2022 can be found in **Appendix 14**.

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the FCS.

### **Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)**

Post-World War II migrants established this denomination in 1951. Currently, the CRCA has an active membership of around 7800 in over fifty churches spread throughout Australia. From exclusively Dutch beginnings, the CRCA is now a culturally diverse group, reflecting the character of Australian society, and is seeking to proclaim the Christian message in a contemporary and relevant way. It is actively engaged in Christian missions both within Australia and abroad. The CRCA subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession. The basic unit of the CRCA is the local church, which is governed by the local session as elected by the congregation. All sessions within a geographical area (typically on a statewide basis) meet every 3-4 months as a classis. Nationally, delegates meet every three years as Synod. The synod deals only with issues raised by a classis. The CRCA is a member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the CRCA.

### **Sudanese Reformed Churches**

The Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC) started as a small household fellowship in outskirts of Khartoum in 1992. This fellowship gave birth to three other household fellowships in Khartoum. By February 2005, these four fellowships were organized as a Christian denomination under the name ‘Sudanese Reformed Churches’. On October 31, 2005, the need for a governing body was discussed and a committee was formed. The governing body was formed with the purposes that it would provide leadership, would govern these churches and ensure that matters of doctrine and life, and growth (in faith as well as numbers) were and are grounded in the Reformed faith as taught by the Reformers (Luther and Calvin) and the Reformed confessions. A church order was adopted in the same year. Three synods were held between 2009 and 2013. Because of recent security and logistical difficulties in South Sudan, no synod has been held since. The SRC now has sixteen churches plus 18 groups in different internally displaced person (IDP) and refugee camps divided over three classes with a total membership of more than 6000. It adheres to the three Ecumenical Creeds and the three Forms of Unity. For more information on the SRC see **Appendix 15**.

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the SRC.

### **Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA)**

The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) are a federation of 16 congregations, 14 of which are in Western Australia, two in Tasmania and a home-congregation in Cairns. They are a membership of about 5,000 members. Their historical roots are in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated (GKv) as a result of post-World-War II immigration. The churches subscribe to the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. The FRCA terminated their sister church relationship with the GKv in 2018 because of increasing liberal trends and decisions in the GKv.

Brother G. Swets made a visit to the General Synod of the FRCA in Bunbury in 2018. A copy of the address given at this synod can be found in **Appendix 16**. A report of the visit made can be found in **Appendix 17**.

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the FRCA.

#### **Evangelical Reformed Church in India (ERC)<sup>2</sup>**

The Evangelical Reformed Church in India is a federation of churches comprised of 58 congregations spread out in different States of India, including a few fellowships in Nepal. The ERC was established as a federation on November 12, 2010. The federation is organized in five classes. It has a total membership of 1821 members. Most of the pastors studied at the Reformed Theological Institute in North India. One of them has been trained in Mid-America Reformed Seminary Dyer, IN USA. Elders and deacons and other church leaders are trained by the Mission of Peace-Making (MPM) *Teaching Learning Events* (TLEs). The ERC has been the result of many prayers and financial support of the URCNAs since 2004 under the leadership of Mission of Peace Making. The confessional basis of the ERC is in the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. Presently the ERC has 48 ministers.

In response to our form letter to explore whether we are able to be in an Ecclesiastical Contact relation, we received the required information from the ERC. Their response can be found in **Appendix 18**

**CECCA proposes** that the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the ERC.

#### **IV. The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)**

The International Conference of Reformed Churches is a conference of Reformed Churches around the world held once every four years. The first preliminary meeting was held in 1982 in the Netherlands with the Free Church of Scotland and the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) taking leading roles. Subsequent meetings have been held in Scotland (1985), Canada (1989), The Netherlands (1993), Korea (1997), the USA (2001), South Africa (2005), New Zealand (2009) and Wales, United Kingdom (2013), Canada (2017). The next conference will, the Lord willing, be held in Windhoek, Namibia in 2022 with the GKSA being the hosting federation.

<sup>2</sup> The acronym ERC should not be confused with the acronym ERQ (the Reformed Church in Quebec)

The purpose of the conference is:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world

The theme of the 2022 conference is Theological Education. In addition, the agenda will deal with membership applications from four churches, a final decision on the GKN(v)'s membership, introductions by observing churches, committee reports on missions, theological education, diaconal relief, regional conferences, report of the Treasurer and lots of time for member churches to discuss their situations, challenges and needs. A tentative timetable can be found in **Appendix 19**.

#### **V. Response to Synod Wheaton's direction to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to Churches abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship**

##### **Factual Background:**

Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in either Ecclesiastical Fellowship and Ecclesiastical Contact.

Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA's recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

##### **Synod's Directive:**

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod's response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

##### **Grounds:**

a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

- b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.
- c. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.
- d. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.
- e. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.
- f. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

**Activities Undertaken by CECCA in Response to Synod’s Directive:**

In accordance with the directive of Synod Wheaton, CECCA undertook a detailed investigation of the practices and policies of as many of our sister federations/denominations in NAPARC as possible in order to gain needed information from them that would assist in our development of best practices in respect of providing diaconal services. CECCA further consulted directly with URCNA Missions Coordinator Rev. Richard Bout. Finally CECCA made detailed inquiry of two relevant organizations currently actively involved in providing diaconal assistance to churches abroad on a daily basis. These organizations are Reformed Mission Services (“RMS”), Rob Brinks, Administrative Director and Word and Deed, Rick Postma, Executive Director of Public Relations.

In terms of contact with sister churches CECCA reached out to several sister churches in writing and requested description of their practices. Some of them responded and some did not. Nonetheless, the process of investigation was greatly simplified by virtue of the fact that NAPARC conducted a World Missions Consultation, September 17-18, 2019 at the Orthodox Presbyterian Church Administrative Offices in Willow Glen, Pennsylvania. Nine of the 11 member churches of NAPARC, including the URCNA attended and gave detailed reports of their missionary and diaconal activities abroad.

CECCA sent a representative World Missions Consultation. He has reported in detail the information obtained from our sister churches and that report is attached hereto as Appendix A.

**CECCA summarizes as to its investigations as follows:**

1. The three larger of our sister churches have formed and are operating missional/diaconal organizations with corresponding processes and procedures in place. In none of those cases, however, is the distinction between missional and diaconal services precisely defined or delimited. In the smaller denominations there generally is no separately defined diaconal activity.
2. Our own Missions Committee was not yet ready to make any specific recommendations or offer advice as to how CECCA might best proceed in response to Synod’s directive.
3. Both Word and Deed and RMS are organizations that are regularly undertaking diaconal response work and both can be trusted to carry it out faithfully and effectively.

As Rev. Bout was present at the Consultation, the CECCA representative took advantage of that opportunity to engage him and, through him, the URCNA Missions Committee, on the subject matter of Synod’s directive to CECCA. A discussion was had of the current status of our Missions Committee’s thinking in respect of providing diaconal assistance abroad and Rev. Bout

was at that time was unable to offer anything specific due to on going development by the Missions Committee of its URCNA Missions Plan 2020. That plan has now been published to the churches and their response and input have been solicited. As currently presented the plan makes no comment on nor contains proposals related to the provision of diaconal services either at home or abroad.

Rob Brinks of Reformed Mission Services made a formal PowerPoint presentation on behalf of that organization. He described in detail the several ways in which RMS is equipped to and has been providing diaconal assistance in recent years. It was evident that RMS is actively engaged in the types of diaconal assistance in foreign countries that are of the kind contemplated by Synod Wheaton's directive. It has significant experience in delivering them efficiently as well as in monitoring their effectiveness going forward once delivered.

With respect to Word and Deed, CECCA has direct experience working with it in an effort to respond to diaconal needs of the United Reformed Church in the Congo (URCC). CECCA has been asked to assist the URCC to assist in the construction a Christian school building in the city of Mbujimaya Batiment at a currently estimated cost of approximately USD \$175,000.

CECCA approached Word and Deed in the matter and learned much of its preferred processes and procedures. CECCA's familiarity with Word and Deed has occurred against the backdrop of the URCC's above-described request. CECCA contacted Rick Postma, Word and Deed's Director of Public Affairs. Brother Postma indicated that in Word and Deed's experience it might be unadvisable to start diaconal assistance to the URCC with such a large project. The joint thinking became that it would be preferable first to explore whether CECCA and Word and Deed in partnership could assist the URCC in the matter of theological education and the training of qualified pastors.

In furtherance of this goal, Brother Postma organized a conference call among Rev. Kabongo of the URCC, himself, CECCA Chairman Rev. Jason Tuinstra and CECCA member Douglas Field. This was a detailed conversation at which Rev. Kabongo provided much needed information. There were additional questions posed as to which he did not have answers at his fingertips and we continue to await his further response. Brother Postma recently followed up, but CECCA has heard nothing additional. This is because, it is believed, Rev. Kabongo has not made any additional response or had further contact.

### **Deliberations of CECCA in Respect of Investigatory Information Obtained:**

During and after the assembly of the foregoing background information, CECCA has met three times to discuss its findings and to develop its specific response and recommendations to Synod Niagara in answer to Synod Wheaton's directive. CECCA met face to face on May 7, 2019 at Bethel United Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan, and by lengthy telephone conferences October 16, 2019 and December 18, 2019.

In preparation for its meetings CECCA identified several essential conditions. As its contact with sister federations/denominations and with RMS and Word and Deed demonstrated, at present there exists among them no common, shared or comprehensive approach for dealing with

providing diaconal services for needy churches abroad. CECCA had hoped to avoid “reinventing the wheel” but it developed upon investigation that CECCA would likely need to “start from scratch.” This proved to be a large and daunting task, but CECCA had the advantage of proceeding at significant liberty, unburdened by previous attempts and precedents relating to the subject.

For purposes of full discussion, CECCA proceeded on the basis that there are 3 general approaches that could be taken in developing institutional structure and operational processes and procedures to provide effective, meaningful and lasting diaconal response to requests for assistance and support from churches broad. CECCA anticipated and tried to think through as many problems and permutations as possible.

The 3 general approaches identified were:

1. CECCA sets up and then itself operates a comprehensive program for responding to requests from abroad including vetting and execution.
2. CECCA locates trusted organizations that have the capacity of both vetting requests and responding to them and refers out requests to those organizations for further disposition thus surrendering further involvement. Regarding requests for travel assistance to and from URCNA synods, CECCA is competent to evaluate such requests so that our federation can share its gifts and financial considerations do not prohibit certain needy churches from strengthening our fraternal relations.
3. CECCA develops a hybrid process whereby it vets requests and responds to them up to a specified level of financial commitment and/or complexity of execution. Otherwise, it refers out to other qualified organization(s) for further processing those found to be in excess of its capacity to handle.

CECCA recognized that as to alternatives 1 and 3 there would be a steep learning curve in undertaking itself all aspects of meeting requests from abroad. CECCA recognized that a significant challenge would be to ensure that any effort at providing diaconal services were operated and carried out in strict accordance with URCNA principles and values.

Accordingly, for the Committee’s benefit and to aid in discussion the reaching of valid and workable conclusions, there were prepared: (1) a “bare-bones” outline of what CECCA’s task could be envisioned to be, (2) a “fleshed in” set of proposed policies, practices and protocols that contains ideas as to how CECCA might specifically, consistently and effectively respond to requests for assistance if it did so on its own and (3) a draft of a possible formal response to be submitted to Synod in response to its request. Those documents are attached to this report as **Appendices B, C and D** respectively.

### **Response of CECCA to Synod Wheaton’s directive:**

After engaging in the research, investigation, envisionment and exhaustive deliberation and consideration of the three alternative approaches suggested above, CECCA determined that Alternative 2 is, in all the circumstances, the alternative most suitable to our current needs.

In making its recommendation that follows CECCA has taken into account the scale and frequency of requests that can at the present time be anticipated, our URCNA Church Order, our federational preference for the diverse, diffuse and non-hierarchical “consistorial” form of church governance and the organizational effort, resources and specialized knowledge (already amassed and being carried out by the trusted auxiliary organizations mentioned above) which would be essential to operating an efficient, effective and incorruptible diaconal services program on our own.

**Accordingly, CECCA recommends to Synod Niagara 2022 as follows:**

- that synod authorize CECCA the amount of \$15,000 (to be reviewed at each synod), which CECCA is authorized to use at its discretion for the sole purpose of assisting foreign pastors and elders with travel and related expenses for the purpose of attending our synods;
- that all other diaconal assistance requests by needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical relations be referred to Reformed Mission Services (RMS) or such other similarly capable organization as CECCA in its discretion may select for response. Grounds for choosing RMS for responding to diaconal requests are: (i) RMS is closely related to the URCNA; (ii) RMS operates under the authority of a local consistory, viz. the Trinity URC, Caledonia, MI.
- that CECCA remain at all times available to local URCNA congregations to provide information and advice relative to diaconal requests they may be considering on their own.

**Closing Comments:**

CECCA is grateful to and thanks Synod Wheaton for its directive to look into, study and make recommendations as to the foregoing matters. CECCA understands that there may be questions and the need for information. It is ready to receive and will promptly respond to all inquiries.

**VI. Our annual CECCA budget**

CECCA recommends that their budget be designated an accruing account, the accrued amount not to exceed CECCA’s annual budget.

**Grounds:**

1. International travel is a significant expense that can vary from month to month due to unforeseen economic realities. A fund that is allowed to grow, can absorb these fluctuations.
2. CECCA’s expenses vary from year to year, sometimes significantly, due to our schedule of visits. For example, some years CECCA may only visit a meeting or two due to another denominations schedule. Another year, that could be doubled. An account that is allowed to grow from year-to-year will help bridge the lean and full years.
3. Capping this fund would allow CECCA to have greater flexibility without having the funds endlessly grow beyond their intended purpose.

## **VII. Member-at-large**

CECCA recommends that the practice of having a member-at-large be discontinued.

### **Grounds:**

This practice was introduced when our federation was relatively small. It was done so for the sake of having continuity in the CECCA committee when CECCA members could no longer represent their classis because they accepted a call to a church in another classis. Without a member-at-large, CECCA has eight members, five of whom are either not a minister or a minister not serving a local congregation.

## **VIII. Recommendations**

CECCA recommends to Synod Niagara that:

1. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT);
2. the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI-NTT) with a view to the GGRI-NTT overturing their national synod in the fall of 2020 to extend this relationship to the GGRI-nasional.
3. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia;
4. the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC);
5. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Free Church of Scotland;
6. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Christian Reformed Churches in Australia (CRCA);
7. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC);
8. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA);
9. the URCNA enter into Ecclesiastical Contact (Phase I) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in India;
10. Synod accept the recommendations of CECCA in response to Synod Wheaton's directive to investigate and advise as to means and methods for providing diaconal services to

Churches Abroad with which the URCNA is in Ecumenical Contact or Fellowship;

11. Synod accept the recommendation of CECCA that their budget be designated an accruing account, the accrued amount not to exceed CECCA's annual budget.
12. Synod accept the recommendation of CECCA regarding the practice of having a member-at-large.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. John Van Eyk, member  
Rev. Ray Sikkema, member  
Rev. Richard Bout, member  
Rev. Stephen Wetmore, member  
Br. Gerald Swets, member  
Br. Ryan Glomsrud, member  
Br. Douglas Field, member  
Rev. Jason Tuinstra, chairman  
Rev. Dick Moes, secretary.

## **Appendix 1**

### **The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)**

United Reformed Churches in North America  
Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

August 5, 2021

Reformed Churches of New Zealand  
P.O. Box 5088  
Dunedin 9058  
NEW ZEALAND

Dear brothers,

Thank you for the invitation to send fraternal greetings by way of letter because Covid restrictions do not allow you to invite to be personally present at your synod. I have asked brother Doug Field to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited one of your synods in the past.

Warmest blessings in Him!

Dick Moes  
Secretary CECCA

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Dear Brethren:

Hearty Greetings to the RCNZ in the precious and holy name of Our Savior Jesus Christ:

CECCA is in receipt of your kind letter of August 2, 2021, notifying the United Reformed Churches in North America of your upcoming Synod to be held at the Reformed Church of Hukanui from November 11 - 17, 2021.

We understand, of course, that travel restrictions will prevent in person attendance of fraternal delegates this year. Accordingly, we are pleased to send this letter of fraternal greeting.

I had the privilege of attending your Synod in 2014 at Christchurch and fondly recall the warm and brotherly manner in which I was welcomed by you and received your excellent hospitality. The RCNZ and URCNA have remained in personal contact since well before 2014. We have continued that pattern and practice since and it is our fervent hope that we will continue to maintain this contact.

While we cannot attend your Synod this year in person, the URCNA extends warm fraternal greetings to you. We have you continually in our prayers and greatly enjoy having news of your progress there in New Zealand in spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will uphold your Synod and your individual congregations before the Throne of Grace and will ask God's blessings upon all of its activities and proceedings both spiritual and administrative.

As it has in New Zealand, the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant disruptions in the in the U.S. The activities of the URCNA's broader assemblies have, of course, been greatly curtailed. The convening of Synod has been postponed twice. Synod is now scheduled for the summer of 2022. Meetings of our several classes have been canceled or conducted with limited agendas and in-person participation. Likewise, all meetings of CECCA have been severely limited.

With the advent of vaccinations for this terrible disease and the passage of time since the pandemic started, we are prayerfully hopeful that the end of disruptions is in sight and that we may soon return to a level of normalcy.

Nonetheless the life of the church has gone forward, and it must continue to do so.

Beyond the disruptions of COVID-19, we are acutely aware that you like we face significant challenges in being the church of Jesus Christ in our post-modern, secular and highly technological world that is often so very hostile to Him and His Church. We ask that you pray for us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to preaching the Christ-centered gospel, to

administering the sacraments and conducting church discipline when necessary, to catechizing our youth and to educating our laity. We will pray for you as you do likewise.

Again, we regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next Synod. We will make every effort to attend and be with you face to face at that time.

May God bless you and your Synod in every respect.

Sincerely in Christ,

DOUGLAS L. FIELD

## **Appendix 2**

### **Address to the Synod of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia held in Korlok on the island of Rote on August 13-15, 2019**

Mr. Chairman, dear brothers,

I bring you greetings from the GGRI-NTT. I attended their synod last week and the brothers asked me to convey their greetings to you. I was deeply impressed by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, for them “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”. I was also deeply impressed by their fellowship in the Spirit. I don’t think they ever voted once, but took all decisions by consensus. Moreover, their love for God the Father, for each other and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ deeply warmed my heart. I was profoundly impressed by the professional manner in which they conducted their meetings. It was somewhat of a surreal experience to listen to 38 men debate the finer points of Reformed church polity in one of the most remote places on the island of Sumba. Because they knew their stuff so well, I told them they had nothing to be ashamed of. I wished them the Lord’s blessing as they continued to labour in faith, hope, and love for the edification of their local churches and their church federation.

It’s good to be in your midst again. I have fond memories of my previous visit to you last year. During that time, I had the privilege of leading worship services in Malang on the island of Java and Kupang on the island of Timor. I was deeply touch by being able to accompany the elders after the worship service and visit the sick, praying with them and offering them words of encouragement. This past Sunday, I had that same privilege when we visited the widow of one of the founding members of your church federation. I read Psalm 23 with her and pronounced the Aaronic benediction upon her. I am also very impressed by your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, your fellowship in the Spirit, and your love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I see that you are conducting your meetings in the same professional manner as the GGRI-NTT. Also you, have nothing to be ashamed of when it comes to your understanding of Reformed church polity. You too, just like your brothers in the GGRI-NTT, by the grace of God can humbly hold your heads up high!

In Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that we believe that as members of Christ we not only have communion with Christ and share in all his benefits and gifts, but that we use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of the other members of the church. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understand our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ through faith vertically, we are also united to each other through faith horizontally. And we desire to come along side other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith together to the new heaven and new earth.

As we are on our journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth, we have the awesome privilege of participating in God's mission for his glory or his drama of redemption in which he is restoring creation and humanity to the Sabbath rest of living in his loving presence and participating in his life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Father is the author of this drama; the Son is the main actor; and the Holy Spirit is the director and producer of the drama. The Bible is the script of the drama. And the church, as the theater of God's drama of redemption, performs the script of the drama on the stage of this world.

However, there is also an opponent to the church being the theater of God's drama of redemption and participating in God's mission for his glory on the stage of this world. That opponent is Satan. He uses our own sinful flesh and the stories of our idolatrous culture to capture our imagination and to tempt us to perform the script of those stories instead of or in addition to the script of Scripture. We as United Reformed Churches in North America feel the tension between those two stories every day. I am sure that you here in Indonesia feel the same tension. That is why it is so urgent to daily pray the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Because we participate in the same redemptive mission for God's glory and share the same struggles of faith as you do, we are here to offer you our encouragement for your faithful performance of God's drama of redemption as church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old. Our membership is around 25,000 spread out over about 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. Together with the OPC we have produced the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards in the back. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings last year in Wheaton, Illinois.

Brothers, I have to leave a little earlier than I would like to. I wish you a good remainder of your Synod. May the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ continue to lead and guide you in your discussions and decision-making. May he also lead and guide you as churches as he makes you receptive to the voice of your heavenly Father, open to his provision, and available to his leading.

On behalf of the URCNA, I bring you our warmest greetings in Christ.

Dick Moes  
Fraternal Delegate

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Report of the Visit to the Synod of the GGRC on August 13-15, 2019**

After driving for some two and a half hours with a taxi driver over paved and unpaved roads full of potholes (much like Sumba) from Ba'a, the capital of the island of Rote, to Korlok, a remote village on this island, a busload of delegates and fraternal delegates arrived in Korlok, where the convening church of the synod of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia was located and where synod was held. The brothers who were already there warmly welcomed us. Rev. Andrew Pol, former missionary to Sumba and fluent in the Indonesian language, was present on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches together with brother Otto Bouwman. Two brothers from the Free Reformed Churches were also present as fraternal delegates. The GGRI-KB (= Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia) had also sent two fraternal delegates as deputies of the GGRI-nasional. And Rev. Anup Hiwale from the Evangelical Reformed Church in India was present as an observer. As was the case with the GGRI-NTT, so also with the GGRC I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, they conducted their meetings in the same professional manner as the GGRI-NTT.

Prior to synod on August 11, a prayer service was held. The next day, when synod was opened, a government official spoke on behalf of the government. Rev. Andrew Pol delivered a meditation on Psalm 133.

I offer the following summary of some of the discussion points and decisions taken.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv)**

An emotional discussion took place about what to do about the sister church relationship the GGRC has with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv). While some were of the opinion that this relationship should be discontinued, others felt that a letter of admonition should first be sent since this had never been done. By consensus, synod agreed to do the latter. If the GKv refuses change its ways and return to the clear teaching of Scripture, it can be expected that the GGRC will sever ties with the GKv at its next synod.

#### **Relationship with the GGRI-Timor**

<sup>3</sup> This summary could not have been made without the excellent notes taken by Rev. Dr. Andrew Pol, the consecutive oral translation he gave during synod and the report he and brother Bouwman wrote for their committee.

The most difficult topic that synod addressed was the relationship between the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor (Smithville) churches.<sup>4</sup> Synod spent more time on this topic than on any other. After a lengthy discussion on the floor of synod about the relationship between the two federations, Synod Korlok finally decided: (1) to ask the Canadian Reformed delegates to communicate the deep unhappiness of the GGRC federation to the Smithville Mission Board. The GGRC do not accept the argument of Smithville that the establishment of the GGRI-Timor was a local matter and that Smithville needs to accept as binding whatever the local GGRI-Timor churches decided. In their minds, Smithville must accept responsibility for the developments in their mission field. Since Article 18 of the Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches makes it clear that missionaries are accountable to the sending church, the sending church also is to accept responsibility for the actions of the missionary. (2) To ask Rev. Andrew Pol to try to set up a mediation meeting between the respective inter-church delegations from both church federations before his departure from the Kupang area. As a result, Rev. Pol sent out an invitation that night; a day or so later GGRI-Timor delegates replied that, though they were willing to meet with some of the synodically appointed GGRC delegates, they refused to meet with all of them.

### **Church Literature**

Given the limited financial resources of the GGRC, many members of congregation, including elders and young people, do not have church literature. The leadership would like to improve the congregation's biblical knowledge as well singing and praising the Lord in private and public worship. Sunday school materials are needed to instruct church members as well leaders in our churches. In this light, synod decided to mandate the Deputies for External Relations and for Internal Affairs to arrange for funding in regard to Bibles, a Book of Praise containing the

<sup>4</sup> In 2003, the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church opened a mission field in Timor, settling its missionary, Rev. Edward Dethan (Rev. Yonson Dethan's brother) in Kupang. Subsequently a Theological Seminary and a Teachers' College (STAKRI) was established here. Kupang is where the GGRC currently have several churches and STAKRI is within a few miles of where the GGRC operate a K-12 school (Children of Light). The intention of the Smithville CanRC has been that any churches formed out of its mission work would join the GGRC. The GGRC were informed of this in letters dating to 2003 and 2004, and reassured of this in 2012. However, much to the frustration of the GGRC, this has not happened. Rather, in the fall of 2016, the nine churches born out of Smithville's mission work federated as the GGRI-Timor. In a letter dated April 9, 2018, the Smithville Canadian Reformed council informed the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches of this. The letter noted: "Despite Smithville's encouragement and hope that the mission churches would have joined themselves to the GGRC, this did not occur." Within the GGRI-Timor the impression exists that the GGRC has a tendency to hierarchy and strong men; thus it is not appealing for those who are now in the GGRI-Timor, among whom there are some former members of a liberal church with hierarchy and strong men, to join the GGRC. On August 4, 2018, the CRCA was informed by the Timor Mission Board that the GGRI-Timor is seeking to join the GGRI-nasional.

Psalms (Genevan melodies), *Kidung Jemaat* (Hymnbook), and the Sunday School material written by Mrs. Pol.<sup>5</sup>

### **Construction of church buildings**

Local GGRC churches are growing in members. Most of the buildings they have were very simple and small. Thus, local churches asked the Committee to see if it can find some supports or donators to help the local churches that need to either build a new church building or help renovating the old church building. Some of the churches already have some funds to begin building. However, they do not have enough funds to continue. In addition, new mission churches need a place to worship. Thus, given the limited financial resources of the GGRC, synod decided to mandate the Financial Commission to try to get funding from outside the GGRC through sister churches, the government, or other institutions that will not apply conditions with a view to the construction of church buildings. Synod was advised to approach organisations, such as Word and Deed, rather than church federations for this purpose.

### **Financial Support for ministers, retired ministers, and families of ministers who have passed away**

Synod decided in accordance with article 13 of the Church Order that the church where the pastor serves is obliged to take care for the pastor and his family. The same applies to looking after the families of ministers who have passed away. What prompted this decision was the fact that some years ago, a pastor passed away and there is now the impending death of another pastor. The question came up as to whether support should be provided by the churches together or by the local church. Synod decided that the latter should be the case.

### **Raising the human resources and economy of the congregations**

<sup>5</sup> The Church Book was originally published by the GGRI-NTT and contains the Creeds and Confessions, the Reformed liturgical forms, etc., and the Church Order. Dr. Pol therefore advised them to interact with the GGRI, as well as with LITINDO, a translation organization originally set up through the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. A previous Synod of the GGRI decided that the Indonesian translation of the Church Book can use some improvement and appointed a committee to look into this. The Dutch churches have handed translation and publication work over to the Free Reformed Church of Mundijong to take care of this in the future. The Sunday School materials written by Mrs. Pol were originally published through Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, a publisher in Jakarta. After the existing supply was sold, LITINDO arranged for republication.

Because the GGRC realizes that it needs to increase the income of the church members and churches in order to be able to meet the needs of their pastors and pastors' families, as well as other projects (e.g. literature for the churches), synod decided to give a mandate to the Financial Commission to take steps for cooperation with the sister churches, churches with which we have contact, and the government with a view to raising the human resources and economy of the congregations, through English courses and sewing instruction for mothers and women in the area of the GGRC. Moreover, Synod mandated the Financial Commission to try to get financial assistance for other efforts in the realm of agriculture, livestock, and other areas. As before, Synod was advised to approach organisations, such as Word and Deed, rather than church federations for this purpose.

### **Advancement and Enhancement of the Reformed Confessions in the GGRC**

The Synod decided to advance and enhance the Reformed teachings in GGRC with the help of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, the United Reformed Churches in North America, and the Canadian Reformed Churches. This could take the form of courses for office bearers, or helping with the production of Reformed literature for the churches.<sup>6</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to bless them and make them a blessing to one another and to those outside their federation.

Respectfully submitted.

Dick Moes  
Fraternal delegate

### **Appendix 4:**

#### **Fraternal Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)**

Moderator, fathers and brothers,

I am humbled to once again address this assembly of the Free Church Continuing. It is a joy to be among you. Even though it has been well over a year since the passing of Mr. John McLeod, allow me to express my sympathies to you all and say how much a pleasure it was to work with him in his role as Principle Clerk. It was also always informative, if not mildly entertaining, to witness his participation at you General Assemblies. No doubt, he is missed as much as he was loved. And as he loved Christ and the preciousness of the gospel, may you all take comfort in the One who has removed the sting of death and conquered the grave.

<sup>6</sup> As Rev. Pol plans to retire on October 1, 2020, he hopes to provide assistance in this area.

I believe this is my fourth time being among you since 2013. As before, I have come here on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Committee for Ecumenical Contact on which I serve. I join with you in the grace of Christ that both binds us and drives us to go to the nations as heralds of his truth.

Like many of you, our churches have struggled to navigate the unique challenges that COVID brought, both locally and in our broader federation. Just a few weeks ago, it was announced that our synod will assemble in Buffalo, New York from October 17th to the 21st. Sadly, this is our first Synodical meeting since 2018. This is due, in large part, to the international make up of our federation. Of our 131 churches in North America, 42 congregations and church plants are in Canada and 89 are in the United States. With the border between our two nations closed for a significant length of time and, even now, not terribly easy to navigate, it has made doing our federative work a challenge.

The work of our Ecumenical Committee has been, by-in-large, shuttered since the beginning of the pandemic. Locally, many of our congregations dealt with internal tensions produced by second-guessing leadership and how to best balance our civic responsibilities and our need for corporate worship. We are thankful that these days are behind us, and grateful to the Lord for the lessons he is teaching us through them.

Now, more than ever, we see the need for broader relations built on our confessional commitments. This is why we continue to have and seek out contacts with federations and denominations outside of North America, that are confessionally Reformed, from whom we can learn and hear how best to navigate some of the global challenges that we all face. As a federation, we continue to have ecumenical relationships with churches in the Congo, New Zealand, South Africa, Indonesia, Latvia, Australia, and the UK.

At Synod Buffalo, our committee is going to recommend entering into what we call “Phase I, Ecumenical Contact” with the Free Church of Scotland. Part of our commitment to you, and the relationship that we have had with you since 2013, is to make you aware of these developments. We do so in this case, especially knowing the history between your respective denominations. We recognize them as true churches of Jesus Christ and partners in faithfully proclaiming the precious gospel of Christ and him crucified.

Our Ecumenical Committee was tasked by the federation to study how we might support churches with whom we have ecumenical relations and are in need of benevolent support. As you might imagine, this is a significant task and not easy to navigate. We have benefited from working with Word and Deed, a ministry of the Free Reformed Church, to help answer this question. Part of our mandate is to consult other churches who may have experience with this. We welcome any input or wisdom you might have for us.

Missions continues to be a significant focus among our churches. We support 15 church plants across North America, along with other ministries. Outside of North America, we continue to support foreign works in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Italy and Romania. Many of our churches also engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level.

There has been a resurgence among many of our churches to cultivate a distinctly missional vision. This has been changing through the efforts of our federation's mission coordinator, annual mission conferences, regular calls to pray for particular missions and the development of our mission committee's handbook entitled, "How to Plant a Reformed Church."

In closing, we would ask you to be in prayer for our federation and our upcoming synod. It will have several matters to be deliberated.

1. There is the possibility of accepting two new churches into our federation. They are located in Chilliwack, British Columbia and Anchorage, Alaska.
2. Our Missions Committee has developed proposals for re-organizing the manner in which we conduct, supervise, and fund missions. Up for discussion is our overall approach to missions, the structure of our classical and consistorial involvement in missions, refinement of the role of our missions coordinator and, whether to take on a second missions coordinator.
3. Our Ecumenical Relations Committee, and the possibilities for advancing and/or amending the status of our ecumenical relations with our sister Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Among others, it is expected that we will be dealing with our relations to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church in America.

Brothers, we commend you in your sacred duties and the noble task that remains unfinished. You have been called to both feed Christ's little lambs and gather his wandering sheep. May God help you and supply for your every need.

May you, his heralds, be faithful in this task. And may the Captain of our Salvation be honored in all that we do as his beloved Bride.

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra  
Foreign Delegate (URCNA)

## **Appendix 5**

### **Report on the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) 2022**

On May 25, 2022, I was blessed to be able to attend the 2022 General Assembly of the Free Church (Continuing). It was held at the historic Liberton Kirk in Kirkgate, Edinburgh, Scotland. This was the first in-person meeting of their General Assembly since the beginning of the pandemic. I was warmly welcomed as a delegate and represented the United Reformed Churches in North America by delivering the attached addressed and participating in their assembly.

The day began with a significant time of devotion. For an hour, they read God's Word (Isaiah 59, Revelation 12), sang unaccompanied metrical Psalms (Psalm 85, Psalm 82, Psalm 37), and sought God's face in prayer. Every one of the three sections of prayer was led by a minister and an elder.

This set the tone of their deliberations as not simply an administrative exercise, but a spiritual responsibility entrusted to them.

After the fourth sederunt was called to order, the GA took up the report of the Committee of Public Questions, Religion and Morals. This committee interacts with the various cultural and political questions that impact the church's witness in the world. At the forefront of this discussion was the abortion issue. Attention was drawn to the developments that are occurring in the United States regarding abortion and how, by-in-large, this is not even a debate in Scotland. This was lamented and a challenge was given to the churches to press into this issue given all the attention drawn to it with the developments in the United States. One speaker, Rev. Fraser, wisely pointed out that there is no sanctity for human life because there is not sanctity for marriage. He commented that abortion is an issue because the sin of fornication is not seen as an issue. After some further reflection on this matter and the church's response to the current situation in Ukraine, the report was received and the committee was thanked.

The next significant item that was taken up was an overture from members of the house. This was not an item on the printed agenda. It rather arose from within the assembly to address developments that transpired on May 23, 2022, at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This overture expressed the FCC's "grave concern at the decisions taken by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland." The national church adopted two items that the house felt the urgent need to publicly "deplore." First, the overture from the house denounced, from Scripture, the National Church's approval to solemnize same sex marriages. Second, the house's overture denounced, from Scripture, the National Church's adoption of "The Saint Margaret Declaration." This declaration brings the National Church and the Roman Catholic Church closer together through a recognition of a shared faith and a repentance of past divisions. This overture was unanimously approved. Speeches were made suggesting that, in light of these developments, the FCC may have to seek a new location for their General Assembly given that they currently rent from the Church of Scotland for their General Assembly meetings. No action was taken, but multiple speeches were made suggesting such an action take place. Part of this overture was that it be sent to the Church of Scotland and also be issued to the press and other media.

The next report taken up was the work of the Publications Committee. This is a very active committee given the number of publications that the FCC produces. Along with a magazine for their denomination and a publication for their youth, they produce a series of tracks on various subjects including the Lord's Day, Baptism, the Five Points of Calvinism, God's Covenant and many more. They are also wrapping up the editorial work of a book which chronicles their denominational formation entitled "History of the Division of 2000." At present, this work is estimated to be some 800 pages, consisting of 267,000 words. Significant concern was raised about the size of this publication and that it might not be widely read due to its length. This delegate's concern relates to what this publication might do in driving a wedge between the FCC and the Free Church of Scotland, the denomination from whom they were "divided."

While it has been over 20 years since the formation of the FCC out of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS), there is still, in this delegate's opinion, an unhealthy view toward the FCS in the FCC. For example, in the report of the Special Committee on Psalmody, under the heading of "Encouragement of the Use of Metrical Psalms in Public Worship" they write, "This seems [the general encouragement to sing metrical Psalms in the FCC] even more important given the departure of the erstwhile Free Church of Scotland from the principle of purity of worship in using only inspired materials of praise in public worship, unaccompanied" (Reports to the General Assembly 2022, pg.

43). In this statement the FCC is calling attention to the fact that, in recent years, some FCS churches have begun to sing hymns and utilize instruments in public worship. The fact is, both the FCC and the FCS are members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, as is the URCNA. The purpose of being apart of the ICRC is to, among other things, "express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ; to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches; and present a Reformed testimony to the world" (Constitution of the ICRC). It is unfortunate, given our commitments as members of ICRC, that one church uses another as a foil for their encouragement. This should not be. It is the hope of this delegate that the "History of the Division of 2000" does not divide these two faithful denominations, whose unified witness is necessary for the advancement of the gospel and the building of Christ's church in Scotland.

After the report of the Publications Committee was received, a matter of private concern was addressed by the Assembly. The public visitors, along with foreign delegates, were dismissed. Following this private deliberation, there were only a few closing matters to be attended to as the GA was concluding a day early. In light of this, I made my way and prepared my thoughts for this report.

The URCNA is blessed to have a relationship with the Free Church Continuing. While the URCNA is different from the FCC in many ways, this shows that our confessional commitment transcends whatever local differences there might be. We can hold our convictions while simultaneously recognizing the unity we share, expressed in our shared confessional adherence. We can learn much from the FCC in terms of their piety, devotion, cultural interaction and commitment to heralding the gospel. In a dark world, they seek to do their utmost to shine with the light of truth. It is my hope that, in our continued contact and relationship, we can be mutually edified through the various encouragements we offer each other.

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra

## **Appendix 6**

### **The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW)**

United Reformed Churches in North America  
Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

February 1, 2019

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales  
c/o Brother Falko Drijfhout  
Presbytery Clerk  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales

63 Larchwood Keele  
Newcastle-under-Lyme

Dear brother Drijfhout,

Thank you for the invitation to attend your upcoming Presbytery meeting where sister churches and other friends of the Presbytery come and share with you about the Lord's work in our denomination. Since we are unable to send a fraternal delegate, I have asked brother Richard Miller to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited your biannual Presbytery meeting two years ago and he is thus known to you.

Warmest blessings in Him!

Dick Moes  
Secretary CECCA

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Dear Brothers of the EPCEW with Sister Churches and Friends:

It is with greetings in our Lord Jesus that we, the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), extend our affection to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW).

The CECCA received the invitation to send a fraternal delegate to the EPCEW Biannual meeting with Sister Churches and Friends on Saturday 21 March 2020.

We regret that we are unable to send a fraternal delegate to the biannual meeting this year.

We did attend the biannual meeting in 2018 which was held in the city of Chelmsford, UK. It was a wonderful time of fellowship with the EPCEW and other Churches of like faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fellowship and hospitality was indeed wonderful. Lord willing, we look forward to being with you again.

As a reminder that the URCNA continues to be a federation of approximately 120 congregations and church plants in Canada, Italy, and the United States. We celebrated our last Synod 2018 in Wheaton, Illinois. One notable distinctive of our Synod was that it was conducted contemporaneously with and at the same venue as the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with which we maintain close ecumenical contact. There were many joint activities between us not the least of which, by the grace of God, was the collaborative work and publication of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

It will interest you to know that this same Synod Wheaton 2018 has tasked CECCA, which is a duly constituted and regular synodical committee, to investigate, evaluate and report to Synod 2020 on means and methods by which CECCA can best respond to requests from abroad for

diaconal assistance. Among the elements of our work has been to survey sister Reformed and Presbyterian denominations as to their practices and procedures in these types of matters.

As we look to the future, our next Synod, Lord willing, is scheduled 8-13 June 2020 at Redeemer University, in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. We give thanks to our heavenly Father for the upcoming Synod. We heartily extend an invitation to the EPCEW to attend the URCNA “Synod Redeemer 2020.”

As we fight for the gospel, let us complete the task together in the name of Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we pray for the EPCEW, we ask that you pray of us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to our Lord’s Crown and Covenant.

Again, we regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next biannual meeting. We will make every effort to attend and be with you for the glory of God.

Affectionately in Christ,

RICHARD J. MILLER

For the Committee on Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad

## **Appendix 7**

### **Fraternal Address to the Saints of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) Riga, Latvia, February 2020**

Pastors, brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It is a great joy to be in your midst and to enjoy a time of fellowship with the saints here in Riga. I bring you fraternal greetings from the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). Like the Apostle Paul who wrote of the church in Philippi, we in North America thank our God for what we hear of your partnership in the gospel, and we trust and pray that the good work that the Lord has begun in you, he will continue, and will bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6-7). I have enjoyed learning something of the history of your city and nation, but more importantly I have enjoyed seeing how the Lord has worked in your midst by the power of the Spirit. I thank you for welcoming me so warmly even as the weather in February is so cold!

My name is Ryan Glomsrud and I have served as an elder in the URCNA for several years now. More recently, I joined our federation’s Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad, or CECCA, as we refer to it. And although I am enjoying the opportunity to teach (and bring you greetings from Westminster Seminary California), the first reason I am here with you is to observe your love for Christ and your desire to advance his gospel as we prepare to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with those of you who belong to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT). In this capacity, and on behalf of the URCNA, please

allow me the opportunity to remind you briefly of the history of our federation as well as provide some information about the significance of this proposed phase of ecumenical fellowship.

The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old (formally organized in 1996). Our membership is around 25,000 saints who worship in approximately 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are served by nearly 1,200 elders and deacons along with 191 pastors or ministers of Word and Sacrament. Outside of North America, we are engaged in missions in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines, and Romania, and many of our churches engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level. Together, we confess the Christian faith as summarized in The Three Forms of Unity (namely, the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dort). We believe that these documents provide the fullest and most accurate summary of what God has revealed in Holy Scripture.

Along with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), we recently produced the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* which was printed along with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity, and the Westminster Standards. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings two years ago in Wheaton, Illinois. While we conducted our particular business separately, we began each day united in song and worship, and ended each day in a combined meeting where we could share in each other's joys, labors and particular challenges. It was in that context that I first met Pastor Alvis Sauka as he address our Synod and had many conversations with other pastors and leaders.

As Reformed churches, we are called to confess our broader unity in a number of ways. Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism explains that as members of Christ we not only have communion with our Savior and share in all his benefits, but we use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of other members of the communion of saints. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understands our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationships with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ by faith in a vertical sense, we are also united to each other in a horizontal sense. And we desire to come alongside other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith together.

Following a period of initial exploration called Ecumenical Contact, wherein we have studied matters of general concern to both of our churches (such as the place and importance and authority of the Scriptures, as well as the Reformed creeds and confessions, along with other matters of worship and polity), in this second proposed phase called Ecumenical Fellowship we are eager to proclaim our "oneness" with you in the body of Christ. This is the highest level of public fellowship wherein our unity is manifested by pulpit exchange, intercommunion, the exercise of mutual concern and admonition, and agreement and joint action in areas of pastoral work and common responsibility.

We share this official status of Ecumenical Fellowship with many Reformed churches around the world, in the Congo, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, and Great Britain, for example. This is evidence of the marvelous work of God in the world and a foretaste of the great diversity of

the multitude of saints who will one day praise the Lord together in the new heavens and new earth.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your hospitality and for this opportunity to address you as fellow believers and co-heirs of the kingdom. I regret only that my time among you is so short this trip. I do hope to return and continue this growing friendship. But I hope this brief address gives you a glimpse into who we are as the United Reformed Churches of North America. We look forward to sending you an official invitation to our upcoming Synod in Wellandport, Ontario, in 2020, and, Lord willing, strengthening our ecumenical ties. Until then, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you all as you labor in His love, and for the glory of His name.

Humbly Submitted,

Dr. Ryan Glomsrud , Elder, URCNA

## **Appendix 8**

### **Report on the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT)**

#### General Overview

I was privileged to visit several ministers and elders of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) in Riga, Latvia, this past February 2020. According to the pastors, there is no trace of a Christian culture or Reformed heritage in Latvia because of the communist legacy in the region. Ninety-nine percent of the members of the Evangelical Reformed churches are first-generation Christians. These brothers are therefore enthusiastic for and faithful to the Great Commission; their first priorities have been and must be for evangelism, outreach, and discipleship. The first congregation, Riga Reformed Bible Church, was founded in 1990 by the most senior minister, Pastor Alvis Sauka. There are now three congregations, with a second in Riga and a third on the outskirts of the city in Pardaugavas, along with various regional missions who are learning about Reformed theology. Regarding the latter groups, they hope that these will enjoy an organic process of moving from baptistic roots to a growing interest not only in the doctrines of grace but, Lord willing, a robust understanding of covenant, baptism, and ecclesiology.

It was a joy to be in their midst and fellowship with some of the saints. The pastors report that Latvians are coming to faith and growing in their trust in the Lord. The ministers feel that they themselves are learning on the job as many were engaged in ministry even before they studied at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary (BRTS). The seminary has been very important for the life of the church, although it is not officially connected to the denomination. It has been a source for Bible teaching, catechesis, and preacher training. Among the leaders, their love for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is evident and we should continue in prayer that the good work that the Lord has begun in them, he will continue and bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

#### Trip Summary

I was picked up from the airport by an elder of the church and an administrator of the seminary, Jānis Perkons, and delivered to my hotel. Later, I enjoyed dinner and fellowship with Artis Celmiņš who is also an elder and director of the seminary. On Thursday, 19 Feb. 2020, I had the privilege of teaching for three hours at BRTS in a space that they rent on the third floor of an old Methodist church in Riga. BRTS students were in attendance, along with pastors, a handful of spouses, and other interested members of the broader Christian community, including a Lutheran minister in Riga and a ruling elder of the PCA who is working in Latvia as a member of a Mission to the World (MTW) team.

Friday, 20 Feb. 2020, I met with a group of pastors and elders of ERCLAT. The two-hour meeting, which began and ended with prayer, was a wonderful exchange of news and information, questions and answers. Overall, it was a valuable time of fellowship together. I began by reading the formal letter of greetings on behalf of the CECCA committee of the URCNA and then the discussion proceeded more informally. Those present included two elders, Jānis Perkons and Aleksandrs Timofejevs, a local business man. The ministers present were Alvis Sauka and Artis Celmiņš of Riga, along with Ungars Gulbis who is the church planter of the third congregation near Riga. A church intern and seminary student, Miroslavs Tumanovskis, was also present. They described the strength of their church as expository preaching and teaching such that they have a reputation in Riga as the place to go for those who want to learn what God's Word teaches openly, plainly, and in some depth of detail. In a time of mutual encouragement, we shared items for which we both are grateful to the Lord, along with matters of concern and requests for prayer (see below). After the meeting, I had a long lunch at a restaurant with Pastors Sauka and Celmiņš and we continued our discussion of many different challenges and opportunities facing our collective churches. That evening, I taught for another three hours at the Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary. My lectures surveyed the theology of the nineteenth century and then the life and legacy of Karl Barth. Despite the jetlag, I thoroughly enjoyed my time and had good and productive discussions in class and casually during coffee breaks.

The pastors and leaders of the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Latvia are grateful to the Lord for his kindness to their covenant children. Many of their members are young families with children, and sometimes the number of children nearly outnumbers the adults in Lord's Day worship. This is quite striking in comparison to Latvian society generally, where population and birthrates are static or in decline. They believe this is evidence of the life-giving nature of the Gospel and the joy of the Lord that believers have even in the midst of hardships. May the Lord continue to bless the covenant children as they grow in faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus! The brothers are also thankful that their evangelistic efforts are showing fruit and that the members of the congregation support their outreach efforts with patience and understanding regarding time and travel. By God's grace, the Latvian churches are self-sustaining financially.

The men also spoke of the challenges of ministry in their context, given their political history with the Soviet Union and the current state of world affairs. More specifically, however, the brothers requested prayer and help finding qualified professors for the seminary who might be willing to come to teach short-term intensive courses. They have particular needs in practical theology as they look to start a three-year program in counseling for their pastors. They also go before the Lord asking his help and aid, and for much wisdom, in discipling the periphery groups

with whom they have contact. There are many conversations needing to take place regarding church government, baptisms, and public worship. They desire to see these groups press on in maturity and ultimately come into communion with them as member churches of ERCLAT.

In conclusion, it was a very encouraging visit. Evidence of the Lord's work among them is everywhere present. The brothers are faithful in shepherding the flock of God among them, exercising oversight, not under compulsion or for shameful gain but willingly, eagerly, as good examples to the flock. May the Lord continue to bless them until the chief Shepherd appears.

Sincerely,  
In Christ,

Ryan Glomsrud  
Elder, Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, California  
CECCA Representative, Classis Southwest of the URCNA

## **Appendix 9**

### **Address to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI-NTT), held in Kakaha on the island of Sumba on August 6-9, 2019**

Mr. Chairman, dear brothers,

It is a joy to be in your midst this week and to be able to attend your synod. Last year, I made a personal visit to Sumba and had the joy of introducing your theological students to an integrative model preaching for transformative proclamation. I spent five days on your island, both the east as well as the west side, and thoroughly enjoyed my time with brothers and sisters who are united to Christ through faith who address God as Abba Father through the Spirit of adoption as we do.

In Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism, we confess that we believe that as members of Christ we not only have communion with Christ and share in all his benefits and gifts, but that we are to use the gifts God has given us for the wellbeing of the other members of the church. This is how the United Reformed Churches in North America understand our Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with other Reformed churches throughout the world. Because we are united to Christ through faith vertically, we are also united to each other through faith horizontally. And we desire to come along side other Reformed churches and encourage them and have them encourage us as we continue the journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth.

As we are on our journey of faith to the new heaven and new earth, we have the awesome privilege of participating in God's mission for his glory or his drama of redemption in which he is restoring creation and humanity to the Sabbath rest of living in his loving presence and participating in his life in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Father is the author of this drama; the Son is the main actor; and the Holy Spirit is the director and producer of the drama. The

Bible is the script of the drama. And the church, as the theater of God's drama of redemption, performs the script of the drama on the stage of this world.

However, there is also an opponent to the church being the theater of God's drama of redemption and participating in God's mission for his glory on the stage of this world. That opponent is Satan. He uses our own sinful flesh and the stories of our idolatrous culture to capture our imagination and to tempt us to perform the script of those stories instead of or in addition to the script of Scripture. We as United Reformed Churches in North America feel the tension between those two stories every day. I am sure that you here in Indonesia feel the same tension. That is why it is so urgent to daily pray the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Because we participate in the same redemptive mission for God's glory and share the same struggles of faith as you do, we are here to offer you our encouragement for your faithful continuation in God's drama of redemption as church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The URCNA is a young federation that is just over 20 years old. Our membership is around 25,000 spread out over about 125 congregations, including a number of church plants that have not yet been organized as independent congregations. We are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. Together with the OPC we have produced the Trinity Psalter Hymnal with the Ecumenical Creeds, the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards in the back. Because of the profound ecumenical and historical significance of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, our Synod and the OPC General Assembly had combined meetings last year in Wheaton, Illinois.

I am aware that your federation here in Sumba (GGRI-NTT) met in conferences with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Kalimantan (GGRI-KB) and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia on the island of Papua (GGRI-Papua) and that in 2012 these conferences were formalized into a synod meaning that the three provincial federations have now together formed a national federation known as the GGRI-nasional. Thus, technically speaking, I am actually addressing a provincial synod today and not a national synod. But that is so because our contact with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia began with the GGRI-NTT and not with the churches in the other two provinces. However, because you are now part of a national federation comprising churches in three different provinces, I would think that it would be wise for the URCNA to work toward the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with your national federation and not just with you. I trust that the Lord will give CECCA the wisdom to come with a proposal to our next synod in this regard since we have already been in an Ecclesiastical Contact relationship with you for more than four years and there are no outstanding issues that prevent us from entering into the Ecclesiastical Fellowship relationship with you.

Brothers, may the Lord of the church bless you and keep you. May he make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he turn his face toward you and give you peace.

On behalf of the URCNA, I bring you our warmest greetings in Christ.

Dick Moes

## Appendix 10

### Report of the Visit to the Fifteenth Synod of the GGRI-NTT on August 5-9, 2019

After driving for some three hours with a taxi driver over paved and unpaved roads full of potholes, Rev. Pila Njuka, professor of Old and New Testament exegesis and homiletics at the Theological Seminary in Waingapu, Sumba, and I arrived in the remote village of Kakaha, Sumba, where the 15<sup>th</sup> synod of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timor (GGRI-NTT) was held from August 5-9, 2019.

The other Indonesian delegates as well as the two fraternal delegates from the Free Reformed Churches in Australia warmly welcomed us. Because both these fraternal delegates spoke and understood Indonesian, I was able to follow what was happening at synod with a great deal of comprehension. I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Truly, for them "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved". I was also deeply impressed by their fellowship in the Spirit. Moreover, their love for God the Father, for each other and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ deeply warmed my heart.

I was also profoundly impressed by the professional manner in which they conducted their meetings. It was somewhat of a surreal experience to listen to 38 men debate the finer points of Reformed church polity in one of the most remote places on the island of Sumba. They never voted once, but took all decisions by consensus. In order to reach this consensus the second clerk listened to the discussion and formulates a decision, which he then reads to synod. If there is no consensus to his evaluation of the discussion, another round of discussion takes place until all are in agreement. The discussion format is fairly strict with one delegate or sometimes two permitted to speak from each classis on each proposal. There are rounds of discussion. The other delegates quickly howl anyone speaking out of turn down. It was noteworthy that two classes from the remote regions often supported each other in the discussions and decision process and two classes from the city regions also often supported each other. Deputies from various committees are included in the synod and take an active part in the discussions.

Prior to synod, a prayer service was held during which three men were ordained into the ministry. Because all three men were from the same classis, and convening church of synod was in this classis, it was decided to combine the ordination of these men with the prayer service for synod for the sake of convenience. Two government officials were present ordination service and at the opening of synod. At the opening of synod, one of them spoke on behalf of the government.

Synod officially began Monday evening at 8 pm. I offer the following summary of some of the discussion points and decisions taken.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Board of Governors of the Theological Seminary**

No report was received from the board of governors of the Theological Seminary, confirming that this board was not operational in any sense. Synod decided to appoint three new members to the board. Rev Arthur Van Delden, emeritus minister of one of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and sessional lecturer at the seminary (in Indonesian) was appointed as an external advisor to the board of governors.

### **Location of the Theological Seminary**

At the moment, the GGRI-NTT rents a facility in Waingapu, which it uses as its seminary. Some time in the past, the federation purchased a property in the same city with a view to building a new seminary campus there. However, the four classes seemed to be split 50/50 as to whether this is most desirable location of the seminary. Synod decided that work on the college buildings on the purchased property be continued and be responsibility of whole GGRI federation. When the current lease of the rental building expires in December 2020, the location where the GGRI-NTT used to have its seminary (about an hour and a half drive from Waingapu in the village of Waimarung) be utilized until such time as the buildings at Waingapu are fit for use. This entails buildings with six to eight bedrooms, four teaching rooms, a chapel and sufficient bathrooms for 35 students.

### **Relationship with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC)**

The URCNA has an Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC). Rev. Yonson Dethan of this church federation has visited our synods a number of times. The GGRI-NTT also desires closer relationship with the GGRC. In order to achieve this, synod decided to encourage pulpit exchanges between churches belonging to both federations, beginning with churches on the islands of Timor and Savu, because travel expenses there would be minimal.

### **Relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv)**

Each classis expressed concerns about developments in the GKv churches in the Netherlands and unanimously agreed that, due to the unfaithfulness of this federation, a letter be written advising them that unless there is sincere repentance and a return to the Reformed understanding of women in office, a proposal to sever ties will be sent to the National Synod to be held in 2020.

### **Seminars to Strengthen the Reformed Character of GGRI-NTT**

<sup>7</sup> This summary could not have been made without the excellent notes taken by brother Eric de Haan and the consecutive oral translation by Brian Bosveld, the two fraternal delegates of the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

Over the years, the Reformed character of the GGRI-NTT has eroded somewhat in various areas, such as the second service and catechism preaching. This concern is being addressed by holding seminars in the congregations to strengthen the Reformed character of the GGRI-NTT. It was decided to send a letter of thanks to Rev. Arthur Van Delden who has been very instrumental in encouraging these churches to get back on track in this area.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Worship service**

Proposal from internal deputies to ask the churches to commit to the 2nd worship service, with catechism preaching each Sunday, was discussed. It was noted that after receiving seminars, a number of churches have already committed to holding a 2nd service on Sunday afternoons. There was some hesitation from churches that had only just received newly ordained ministers, and who had a number of mission posts to serve in addition to their local church. Synod decided that all churches should work towards a 2nd worship service. Catechism preaching should be included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> service where possible, and on alternate weeks in churches where only one service is held each Sunday.

### **Baptism of Culturally Adopted Children**

Because many villages are remote and many church members uneducated, it is difficult for many to fill in all the correct forms for adoption and register this adoption with the government. Consequently, cultural adoptions occur where some parents of children agree to give up their children to another family. This is normally done sitting down together with both extended families as witnesses. Synod decided to accept cultural adoption as a ground for allowing baptism of these infant children. While they are not legally adopted, they are in the permanent case of Christian parents. This decision is not applicable to foster situations where the care is not permanent.

### **Lord's Supper Celebration**

Synod decided that in special circumstances the Lord's Supper could be celebrated on a day other than a Sunday when a minister is sick or there is no minister available. This will apply only to a vacant church and when a minister is not available on the scheduled Sunday. However, the sacrament must be administered together with the preaching.

### **Ministers entering into politics: review of previous synod decision**

A minister entering into politics has been a contentious issue in the churches and the previous decision from synod 2016 was appealed. There are two conflicting views within the churches: one that allows for ministers to enter into politics while serving in office and one that does not. This matter invoked much—sometimes heated—discussion. This issue will be brought to the national synod in November 2020.

### **Retirement Age of Ministers**

Due to the poor health of people in years past, the agreed retirement age for ministers was 60 years. However, because of health care and the economy having picked up, people are living longer. Accordingly, synod set the age of retirement 65 years health permitting.

This will be phased in over a number of years so ministers close to the existing age of retirement will be not be adversely affected and may continue to serve until 65 if willing to do so.

### **The Name of the Federation**

Synod dealt with an overture to change the name of federation from GGRI-NTT to GGRI. The reason for this overture was that not all churches are in the NTT province, but include churches or mission posts in Bali, and in Java (Malang, Dampit and possibly Solo in the future). The deputies were mandated to look into the process of what is involved in arranging a name change.

### **Abuse of alcohol**

The issue of some ministers abusing alcohol was raised. Synod decided that if a minister was drunk or addicted to alcohol this should be dealt with according to the Church Order.

### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

The Jehovah Witnesses are now allowed to promote their teachings within Indonesia, after having been declared a sect by the former governments. They have been active within some districts in Sumba, and have also approached members of the GGRI-NTT. A lively discussion took place on how best to prepare the church members to defend the gospel against this false doctrine. Synod decided that the true preaching from Scripture and the Catechism, teaching students in the catechism classes and at the seminary will be the best defence against false doctrines from this sect.

As you can see, quite a number of topics were discussed at this synod. The fraternal delegates were asked for their advice on the issue of ministers entering in politics, cultural adoption, and the Jehovah's witnesses. Advice was given on each of these topics.

As I mentioned earlier, I was deeply impressed by the Indonesian brothers' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, their fellowship in the Spirit, and their love of God the Father, each other, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord continue to bless them and make them a blessing to one another and to those outside their federation.

Respectfully submitted.

Dick Moes  
Fraternal delegate

## **Appendix 11**

United Reformed Churches in North America

Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

April 25, 2022

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia  
Inter Church Relations Committee  
c/o Reverend Robin Tso  
P.O. Box 30  
Raymond Terrace, NW 2324  
A U S T R A L I A

Dear brother Tso,

Thank you for the invitation to attend your upcoming General Assembly. Since we are unable to send a fraternal delegate this year, I have asked brother Doug Field to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited one of your General Assemblies in the past and he is thus known to you.

Warmest blessings in Him!

Dick Moes  
Secretary CECCA

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Dear Brethren:

Hearty Greetings to the PCEA in the precious and holy name of Our Savior Jesus Christ:

CECCA is in receipt of Brother Robin Tso's kind letter of March 8, 2022, notifying the United Reformed Churches in North America of your upcoming Synod to be held at Raymond Terrace, NSW from May 3 to 6, 2022, and inviting us to send a fraternal delegate.

Sadly, for us it will not be possible to send a delegate this year. As you have suggested we might, we are sending along this letter of greeting to your Synod. It will bring you up to date regarding matters of mutual interest. We then, Lord willing, will hope to attend Synod next year in person and will pray fervently that such opportunity will be realized.

In the absence of personal participation in your Synod, the URCNA extends warm fraternal greetings to you. We have you continually in our prayers and greatly enjoy having news of your progress there in Australia in spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will uphold your Synod and your individual congregations before the Throne of Grace and will ask God's blessings on all of its activities and proceedings both spiritual and administrative.

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to be on the wane in the US and Canada. The activities of the URCNA's broader assemblies have restarted. Our various Classes have again begun their semi-annual meetings and our Synod Niagara is scheduled to meet in October of this year. The convening of Synod was postponed twice. We are cautiously optimistic that a degree of normalcy is now ahead of us including the return of CECCA to its usual activities and meeting schedule.

Nonetheless, the life of the church has gone forward, and it must continue to do so. In furtherance of that goal, I am authorized to advise you that CECCA proposes that the URCNA enters into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase II) with the PCEA. We are hopeful that this proposal will receive favorable consideration and eagerly await your response.

We would ask you to be in prayer for our federation and our upcoming Synod. It will have several interesting matters under consideration.

1. There is the possibility of accepting two new churches into our federation. They are those in Chilliwack, British Columbia and Anchorage, Alaska.
2. Our Missions Committee has developed proposals for re-organizing the manner in which we conduct, supervise, and fund missions. For discussion will be our overall approach to missions, the structure of our classical and consistorial involvement in missions, refinement of the role of our missions coordinator and, whether to take on a second missions coordinator.
3. Our ecumenical committees, both for North America and for the wider world continue their work. Possibilities for advancing and/or amending the status of our ecumenical relations with our sister Presbyterian and Reformed churches both here at home and abroad will be offered and considered. Among others, it is expected these will have reference to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church in America.

Again, we regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next Synod. We will make every effort to attend and be with you face to face at that time.

May God bless you and your Synod in every respect.

Sincerely in Christ,

DOUGLAS L. FIELD

For the Committee on Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad

## **Appendix 12**

### **Fraternal Address to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland**

Moderator, fathers and brothers,

It is a joy to be among you and address you this afternoon. My name is Jason Tuinstra. I have served as a pastor in the United Reformed Churches for just over 20 years. I currently chair our churches Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad - CECCA for short. In this capacity, I was able to attend your General Assembly two years ago and observe your love for Christ and desire to advance His gospel. While I was not able to spend a lot of time among you, it was valuable, nonetheless, to begin to forge the necessary relationships upon which my committee hoped we could build. And now, it is now my distinct honor to be the first to formally and officially bring you greetings on behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America. You may not know much about us, so allow me to use my time to introduce you to the churches that I serve and represent.

The United Reformed Churches of North America was formally organized in 1996. This was an exciting time, but it came in light of a painful process. The preceding years were ones of heartache as we saw our former denomination surrender the authority of Scripture to the same issues that still plague the church today. After years of seeking to work against this erosive tide, the Lord graciously allowed the URCNA to organize.

Since 1996, the Lord has tremendously blessed the URCNA. We are a federation of 124 congregations spread throughout the United States and Canada. We consist of just over 24,000 souls, being served by nearly 1200 elders and deacons along with 191 pastors. We support 15 church plants across North America, along with other ministries. Outside of North America, we have foreign works in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Italy and Romania. Many of our churches also engage in short-term mission projects organized on a local level.

While the ethnic and cultural background of our churches can be traced back to the Netherlands, there has been an increasing effort to cultivate an outward vision in our churches with the rich theological heritage that we possess. This has been changing through the efforts of our federations' mission coordinator, annual mission conferences and the development of our mission committee's handbook entitled, "How to Plant a Reformed Church." Through these efforts there has been a significant revitalization of a missional emphasis within our local churches.

One relationship that we share in common with you is our connection to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We have cherished their friendship over the years, and just last year, we had a combined Synod and General Assembly in Wheaton, Illinois. While we conducted our particular business separately, we began each day united in song and worship, and ended each day in a combined meeting where we could share in each others joys, labors and particular challenges. We also used this combined assembly to officially receive the Trinity Psalter Hymnal, which was produced through a joint effort of the OPC and the URC. This was a particular milestone for our federation, having independently worked on this project for numerous years. It has been good for our churches to come alongside of the OPC as this illustrates how we can use our ecclesiastical relationships to mutually edify one another.

While it might be easier to experience the joy of this kind of ecumenical contact with churches and denominations that are apart of our local communities, we see the need for broader relations as well. This is why, early on, our federation began to form contacts with federations and denominations outside of North America. We currently have ecumenical relationships with churches in the Congo, New Zealand, South Africa, Indonesia, Latvia, Australia, England, Wales and even here with the Free Church Continuing.

Because we see these relationships as significant and meaningful, a number of years ago our committee began to plead with the Liberated churches of the Netherlands to make a clear biblical stand against the ordination of women to the offices of the church. Sadly, after many meetings and numerous pleadings, Synod 2018 approved CECCA's recommendation to cut off relations with the GKv given their determination to open all ordained offices to women. We did this with heavy hearts, but hopeful that God might yet use the blows of a friend to turn them from this dangerous course.

Our committee is currently tasked with studying how we might support churches with whom we have ecumenical relations and are in need of benevolent help. As you might imagine, this is a significant task and not easy. Two weeks ago, our committee met for an all day meeting mainly addressing this question. Part of our mandate is to consult other churches who may have experience or input regarding this matter. We would love to hear from you if you can offer any advice on this matter.

I want to conclude by thanking you for your hospitality and for the opportunity to address you as a fellow-laborer in the cause of our Savior and King. I hope this brief address gives you a little glimpse into who we are as the United Reformed Churches of North America. My prayer is, and has been, that on this building block, the Lord might establish a lasting, enduring relationship for the advancement of His kingdom. We look forward to sending you an official invitation to our upcoming Synod in Wellandport, Ontario in 2020. Until then, may the Lord cause His face to shine upon you all as you labor in His love, and for the glory of His name.

Humbly Submitted,

Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra

Foreign Delegate (URCNA)

## **Appendix 13**

### **Report on the Free Church of Scotland General Assembly 2019**

#### **General Overview:**

On Monday, May 20th, 2019, the proceedings of the 176th General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) began atop Edinburgh's Royal Mile in the historic St. Columba's Church. The evening session began with a challenging address from Isaiah 54 by the retiring moderator, Rev. Angus MacRae.

The General Assembly (GA) comprised some eighty commissioners, representing six presbyteries and over one hundred congregations. The business of this GA, not unlike every year, was to deal with reports from the six standing committees of the FCS (Board of Ministry, Board of Trustees, Mission Board, Psalmody and Praise Committee, Seminary Board and Ecumenical Relations Committee). The GA also has to take up the report of the General Assembly Business Committee.

Interspersed during the proceedings were addresses from a number of representatives of local organizations and foreign denominations, ours included. I had the privilege to address the assembly for first time and introduce the commissioners to the URCNA, encourage them in their labors and thank them for their hospitality. The GA concluded on the morning of May 23 with an address from the Lord High Commissioner. He was appointed by Her Majesty, the Queen, to address the GA on her behalf. With that, the 2019 GA of the FCS was adjourned.

### **The 2019/2020 Moderator:**

Each year a new moderator is selected to oversee various administrative and official responsibilities for the FCS. He is also responsible to chair that year's GA. This year, the FCS welcomed Rev. Donald G. MacDonald as the 2019-2020 Moderator. He was warmly embraced by the assembly and is clearly beloved, being affectionally and simply referred to as "Donny G."

On Tuesday morning, Rev. MacDonald delivered his Moderator's Address. This was one of the most edifying, challenging and encouraging addresses I've heard in this kind of ecclesiastical context. His address was often referenced and quoted by commissioners throughout the GA. I consider it a personal highlight of my time at GA. You can find his printed address, along with a link to the YouTube video, at: <https://freechurch.org/news/moderators-address-2019>

### **GA Highlights:**

1. **Missions:** 37% of Scots claim to have no religion. Fewer than 9% attend any kind of church. Less than 1% of Scotland regularly hears faithful biblical teaching. Surrounded by the daily experience of these statistics, the FCS has undergone a revitalization in the area of missions, not only globally, but locally. The Mission Board is divided into four areas of focus: Church Planting, Church Development, Church Equipping and Global Mission. While there is much that is noteworthy in this area of the FCS, one highlight is their church planting effort. The FCS currently has eight church plants around the country. Half of these church plants are in the greater Edinburgh area. The problem they face is not a lack of enthusiasm for this work, but laborers to do the work. To meet this deficiency, their church planting has benefited from their simultaneous focus on church equipping. On a local level, churches are being equipped to be intentionally missional in their labors. To assist with this, two new initiatives have been set up: Generation19 and Gossiping the Gospel. With Generation19, congregations are encouraged to instigate locally driven evangelistic events, aided by the Mission Board. Gossiping the Gospel is a course which features a series of four videos with relevant teaching to assist people in being evangelistically minded. The material is designed for mid-week classes and/or small groups.

2. Psalmody and Praise: In 2003, the FCS sought to update the vocabulary and grammar of the Psalter with the publication of Sing Psalms. To make it widely available, they recently produced a mobile app called by the same name. This app includes the entire Psalter along with music files for accompaniment. The committee reported on the success of this app and encouraged its use. Also, since 2010, a number of FCS congregations have begun to sing accompanied Psalms and hymns (Prior to 2010 they would only sing unaccompanied metrical Psalms in worship). In 2018, the committee for Psalmody and Praise was tasked with producing a recommended list of hymns. At this GA, the committee reported that, due to the increasing breadth of material in use, and the general move away from a single hymnbook, it is an impossible task to produce anything like a comprehensive list of recommended hymns. The committee simply reminded the churches of their responsibility to choose songs that are consistent with Scripture and the doctrine of the Confession of Faith.
3. Theological Education: The Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) is the official seminary of the FCS. The standing committee which oversees ETS reported that the work of the seminary continues to go forward in preparing suitably gifted men for gospel ministry as well as providing theological education for individuals pursuing other ministry roles (church workers, church planters, missionaries and religious education). One exciting item they reported on was the work of Dr. Alistair Wilson and Professor John Angus Macleod who have developed a Centre For Mission. The center is “intended to provide opportunities for mission-orientated education and training for the people of the FCS and for the wider Christian community in Scotland and beyond.” The center has been used extensively to host training events for elders, deacons and Sunday School Teachers as well as being used for Church Planting and Church Development events (sub committees of the Mission Board).

**Conclusion:**

The work that the Lord is doing in the FCS is noteworthy. The challenges that they have been through have refined them and are being used to revitalize them. Our federations share a mutual love of the Lord, a rich theological heritage, as summarized in our particular confessions, and a burden for the advancement of the gospel. It is the recommendation of this member of CECCA that we should pursue a deeper and more meaningful ecumenical relationship with the FCS.

Humbly Submitted,  
Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra  
Chairman of Ecumenical Committee with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

**Appendix 14**

**Fraternal Greetings to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (2022)**

United Reformed Churches in North America  
Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA)

May 12, 2022

Rev. Malcom Macleod  
Principle Clerk | Free Church of Scotland

Dear brother MacLeod

Thank you for the invitation to attend your upcoming General Assembly. Since we are unable to send a fraternal delegate this year, CECCA has asked Rev. Jason Tuinstra to write you a letter on our behalf since he has visited one of your General Assemblies in the past and he is thus known to you.

Warmest blessings in Him!

Dick Moes  
Secretary CECCA

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Dear Fathers and Brethren,

Greetings in the name of the one “who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

We are overjoyed that you will be having your first in-person General Assembly since 2019. While we give thanks for the technology that helped us navigate the past few years, there is no replacement for personal fellowship and the encouragement it brings. May the Lord’s blessings rest on your labors and sustain you in your deliberations.

Thank you for informing us about the limitation of this year’s General Assembly to only those delegates and observers from within the United Kingdom. We understand your caution and are glad that we can at least reach out through this letter to express our gratitude for the fledgling relationship between our churches. In fact, we are glad to inform you that CECCA is recommending to Synod Buffalo (meeting October 17-21), that the URCNA enter “Phase I, Ecumenical Contact” with the Free Church of Scotland. This phase focuses on studying matters of general concern between our churches, participation at major assemblies and consultation

regarding issues of mutual concern. We trust that this will be well received by our synod and look forward to informing you about this development.

Despite our absence, we will pray for you and the nation into which you bring the gospel, plant Christ's church and live for his glory. Please remember us in your prayers as well. In this way, may the Lord continue bless our respective churches, as we seek his face and delight to do his will. All glory be to our great God!

In Christ,

Rev. Wm. Jason Tuinstra  
Chairman of CECCA for the URCNA

## Appendix 15



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

## Sudanese Reformed Church

### General Synod

P.O. Box 412, Juba, South Sudan. E-mail: [srcchurches@vodafone.com](mailto:srcchurches@vodafone.com)

Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC) originated in Khartoum, Sudan in February 1992. Subsequently, in October 2005 SRC was re-organized and instituted as Reformed denomination. Up to date SRC has two classes (**Khartoum & Juba**) with sixteen (16) congregations plus 18 preaching centers in different IDPs and refugee camps with a membership of more than 6000.

## 1. Fraternal Visits

### A. Ecumenical Guest from OPC

With great joy and open heart SRC family in Juba received fraternal visitors between March 12<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> 2021. The fraternal guests came from OPC Uganda mission and OPC General Headquarter USA.

The fraternal visitors were Rev. Llyod Charles Jackson OPC missionary and Principal of Knox School of Theology, Rev. Henry James Folkerts OPC missionary in Uganda, David Philip Nakhla OPC General Secretary for Diaconal Ministries at OPC Headquarters and

Andrew Ojullo a South Sudanese who labors with Knox Theological College. While in Juba they visited Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) at Jebel camps (these IDPs were displaced by conflict in 2013 and they are being protected by UN forces). They also visited three SRC congregations in Juba: Bethel, Grace, and Tree of Life. On the Lord's Day, they worshipped and fellowshiped with Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church Mangateen Juba. Joyfully, the fraternal historical visit and fellowship were a great learning and blessing to both OPC and SRC.

It is to be noted that OPC and SRC are members of International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). Ecumenically, ICRC is a global Reformed body that encourages ecclesiastical fellowship and unity among the member churches to present a Reformed testimony to the world. Such visits demonstrate meaningful and fruitful growth in the ecclesiastical relationships in ICRC global family.

## **B. Deacon Groenveld in Juba**

Wietse Groenveld is a Deacon of Ede congregation in Netherlands. He came to Juba on mission with South Sudan ZOA. On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021 he paid a short fraternal visit to SRC and worshipped with Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church Mangateen Juba. Amidst COVID19 restrictions he was determined to fellowship with some SRC members and hear about their labor in the Lord's vineyard in Juba. SRC family in Juba commended his great faith, love, and courage. It is worth mentioning that Ede congregation is sponsoring two SRC students who are currently studying at Mukhyano Theological College in South Africa. The love of God goes beyond geographical boundaries and cultural divide.

## **2. Sudan and South Sudan Situation Highlights**

Sudan and South Sudan are the region where Sudanese Reformed Church presents a Reformed witness.

Here are some highlights of the situations in the two Sudanese countries:

### **Sudan**

Overthrow of President Omer El Bishar's regime has brought a lot of changes including religious freedom and hope of return to democratic system of governance. Unfortunately, the agreement between military and political parties' leaders did not go smoothly. The tension between civilian and military resulted in Sudan's military seizing power in October, arresting dozens of officials in the country's transitional government, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. The military thought that the coup was necessary to maintain Sudan's stability amid infighting between the army and civilian parties in the ruling Sovereign Council.

The political stalemate has brought mass protests and civil disobedient campaigns across the country. Although Abdallah Hamdok was reinstated as Prime Minister after an agreement was reached, however the working-relationship continues to deteriorate. The unstoppable demonstration in Khartoum and other towns, reduced household purchasing power, impact of increased conflict, tribal clashes, protracted displacement in parts of Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile, interrupted access to banks, reduced access to income from daily labor and small business for urban poor households and increased prices of goods due to shortages of essential commodities have continued unabated. All these situations combined have affected the livelihood of Sudanese people. The political crisis in the country is still raging on. Thousands of Sudanese continue to protest in the streets demanding a complete civilian government. Sudan future holds a lot of uncertainties.

## **South Sudan**

South Sudan in July 2021 marked ten years of independence and eight years of protracted civil conflict. As peace is concerned, there has been very little progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) that was signed in 2018. Positively, unity government has been formed including the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly. Negatively, a key component of the agreement has not been implemented that is the security arrangements and the formation of unified forces. The slow progress on the implementation of the peace agreement has resulted in recurrent violence, continuous internal displacement, and insecurity in rural areas. The humanitarian situation, food insecurity, and worsening economic conditions remain dire. This year the country has experienced unprecedented flooding that has also caused more displacement and washing away of farms and loss of cattle stock. These crises have greatly affected the people of South Sudan. Hope for peace to return to South Sudan seems bleak. Juba the capital city is relatively secure and stable.

### **3. Church Plants**

By God's grace in 2021 SRC for the first time since the conflict erupted in South Sudan has initiated two church plants outside of Juba. The first endeavor is Church plant in Wau. The outreach and first seeds have been planted by Evangelist Santino Malong Dut. He comes from Rock of Life Sudanese Reformed Church Apada Aweil. He has been passionate to go and start Reformed witness there. Wau is a capital city of Western Bhar El Ghazal State and a key hub-town in Bhar El Ghazal Region. The other church plant is at Ayod. Ayod is a capital town of Ayod a county of Jongeli State. The church plant is being spearheaded by Elder John Pay one of SRC converts at IDPs camp in Juba. He felt called to take Reformed faith to his hometown Ayod.

### **4. Pastoral Visits**

With eruption of civil war in South Sudan two years after independence, visiting areas outside of Juba has been extremely difficult. This came because of high risk of insecurity and expensive logistical cost to reach areas beyond Juba. By God's grace and the slow intensity of violence, this year some SRC leaders have carried out two pastoral visits to the congregations that were never visited since the conflict of 2013. The congregations visited were Hope Sudanese Reformed Church, Bentiu (visited by Rev. Kewy Ismail and Elder Khamis Eko) and Immanuel Sudanese Reformed Church, Malakal (visited by Rev. Kewy Ismail and Eliza Ashout). Mrs. Ashout is Juba Classis Women's Ministry Chairlady.

At the level of the two Sudanese states, Rev. Mugadam Sharfaldin Hassan, Pastor of Savior Sudanese Reformed Church, Khartoum visited SRC congregations in Juba as from 19<sup>th</sup> July to 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Rev. Mugadam visited Juba last in 2012 a year before the eruption of war in South Sudan. In turn Rev. Kewy Ismail Pastor of Tree of Life Sudanese Reformed Church Juba visited SRC congregations in Khartoum between November-December 2021.

Furthermore, congregations in Juba were also pastorally visited. Blessedly, it is to be underlined that such pastoral visits bring encouragement, boost Christian unity, raise hope, ignite faith and light of promoting Reformed witness in the areas where SRC labors. To be Reformed is to be intentionally missional and pastoral.

## **5. Leadership Development**

Although SRC is still lacking well-trained Reformed pastors, indicators show that there is some progress in the leadership development. SRC in partnership with her sister-related churches are exerting all efforts to raise trained leaders who will promote the cause of Reformed witness in South Sudan and Sudan. Early this year two SRC candidates were admitted to Nile Theological College to pursue BA in theological studies.

On the other hand, and with great joy three SRC students have completed their theological training late 2021. Two graduated with BA Theology from Mukhanyo Theological College, South Africa. Thankfully, they were sponsored and supported in their theological studies by Fourth Presbyterian Church Maryland Washington DC. SRC appreciates heartedly the generous support Fourth has given to SRC students during their studies. The third one graduated with Diploma from Nile Theological College. He was supported locally by SRC Juba Classis.

## **6. Eligible candidates for SRC ministry**

Three SRC candidates who have successfully completed their studies this year were examined by Juba Classis on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021. All of them passed their exams and were declared eligible candidates for the ministry of the Gospel at Sudanese Reformed Church. If they show commitment and zeal in the ministry, they will be the best SRC trained leaders with Reformed flavor.

## **7. SRC Schools Highlights**

Word and Deed with great passion has assisted SRC to start a new primary school at Khor Wulyang Juba. The school is called Grace Nursery and Primary School. It bears the name of congregation where the school is situated. With generous assistance from Word and Deed SRC built seven classrooms with semi-permanent materials (Temporary Learning Space). The school with formally opened on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 with nine teachers and three supporting staff and 312 registered pupils. On 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the school was visited by Inspector of Education of Kator Block Council, Juba City Council.

The older and first school is Bethel Primary School, Mangateen Juba. It was started in 2017. The total number of pupils registered for 2021/22 were 514. It is the highest number Bethel could have since its inception. Progressively, this year Bethel has Primary Eight. The classroom for primary eight was also built with assistance from Word and Deed. Early next year 2022 primary eight pupils who are 40 in number will sit for the first time for South Sudan Primary Examination. This examination qualifies a person to enter Secondary School (High School).

These two SRC schools are facing three challenges: (1) running water (2) toilets and (2) pupils' feeding. Juba has no running water system; thus, water is daily bought from the water-tankers. Responsively, early 2021 South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) approved SRC request to build a toilet facility for Bethel Primary School. Responding to the dire need SSRC early December 2021 started the construction of four stances toilet facility worth of (USD\$12000). It is hoped to be completed early February 2022. If completed this will be the best toilet facility SRC could own in her history.

With dire humanitarian situation and worsening economy, many families are not able to provide enough feeding to their kids while in school. Because of lack of enough feeding many pupils in the schools have little physical strength to cope up with their learning during school hours. Although the schools are still in their foundational stage, the projects are relatively sustainable. The schools through the fund raised by school fees payment have regularly paid teachers' monthly stipends and the daily operational cost without an outside financial help. In 2022 SRC hopes to open 1<sup>st</sup> Secondary School (High School) in Mangateen Juba. If started this will be the first SRC high school.

## **8. Humanitarian Response**

Humanitarian situation in South Sudan continues to be dire and challenging to already exhausted population. Lack of political will to implement the signed agreement is preventing return of peace to the country. Hope of return of peace is always being shattered by the political dilemma. Moreover, this year many areas in the country have been hardly hit by unprecedented floods that have displaced hundreds of thousands and washed all the farms and loss of many cattle. SRC with support from Word & Deed and OPC has responded by meeting some of the basic needs of the people who are vulnerable in the target areas where SRC labors. The beneficiaries who were targeted and served were composed of the most vulnerable groups like children, single female headed households, widows, disabled and aging persons.

### **Key Relief Response outputs achieved**

- a. **291** households totaling to **2253** beneficiaries (**1163 adults &1090 children**) were reached with basic food items.
- b. **193** households totaling **1486** beneficiaries (**756 adults 730 children**) benefited from cash transfer in Malakal, Bentiu, and Bor.
- c. The basic food items provided to the beneficiary were rice, maize floor, beans, cooking oil and female dignity kits

## **9. SRC Synod Office**

SRC Synod building construction was started early 2017 and because of scarcity of financial resources the construction process has been very slow. This year SRC has roofed the building. It was a heavy burden roofing it but at the same time it is a distinctive achievement in SRC infrastructural growth. With roofing the building still needs electric wiring, windows, plastering, tiles, and painting to come to its final construction phase.

## **10. Cementing Christian Solidarity**

Although SRC maintains and guards her uniqueness as a Reformed Biblical denomination, she also builds ecumenical bridges with other Christian churches. During 2021 SRC leaders paid friendly visits to some of the denominational leaders that are serving in Juba.

SRC leaders visited Presbyterian Church of South Sudan & Sudan (PCOSS&S) office in Juba and had a friendly meeting with their newly elected leadership. In a friendly response the Moderator of PCOSS&S visited on the last Sunday of August 2021 SRC. He preached and attended Bethel SRC worship service Mangateen Juba.

Furthermore, the newly appointed Catholic Archbishop of Juba Stephen Amayo was visited as well as the newly elected Presiding Bishop James Lagos of African Inland Church (AIC). Christian solidarity is necessitated by uncertainties that overcloud the country.

SRC is an affiliate member of South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). SSCC is a national ecumenical council that brings together seven member-churches and three affiliate member-churches. SSCC is a forum for collective action and consultation on matters of common interest. The churches visited are members of the council.

## **11. SRC Strategic Plan Snapshots 2018-2028**

SRC has Ten (10) Years Strategic Plan 2018-2028. It is envisaged that the strategy will help to plant **35** new churches, leading **15900** souls to Christ and disciple **1590** believers toward maturity in Reformed faith so that they may impact social, educational, economic, and political fabric of community that they serve.

SRC is focusing on four key strategic goals:

1. Promoting Reformed witness in IDPs camps, refugee camps, major towns in South Sudan; Khartoum, and Nuba Mountains in Sudan. Through these endeavors hundreds of souls have been saved and joined SRC family.
2. Doing acts of mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable groups like children, single female headed households, widows, disabled and aging persons (providing life-saving support and supporting people in re-establishing their lives including children).
3. Providing counseling to those with traumatic cases caused by war, suffering, poverty, and displacement.
4. Focusing on Juba (currently Juba is considered as SRC Reformed hub)

### **Focus on Juba**

- Rebuilding of four SRC church buildings that were destroyed during 2013/2016 conflicts in Juba.
- Looking for more lands and developing some infrastructures at those lands to accommodate SRC current and future activities.
- Establishing a network of Reformed congregations with a sense of being a covenantal community with a distinct Reformed identity (DNA).
- Providing education to the IDPs children and the inhabitants' children of the areas where SRC is laboring.

- Preparing, planning, and setting up mission strategies that would strengthen the capacity of SRC to make significant Reformed witness in her mission fields in Sudan and South Sudan. This includes training and leadership development.
- Establishing multi-training center to train and develop potential leaders for future leadership in hope of making more impact on communities in South Sudan and Sudan. The land where the center shall be built has been identified in Juba. Although no necessary funds have been availed for this project, it is hoped that one time it will come to pass.

### **Key achievements of SRC Strategic Plan**

- a. Construction and opening of Grace Primary School at Khor Wulyang, Juba. The school temporal learning space (TLS) was built with a generous assistance from Word & Deed.
- b. Initiation of church-plants in Wau and Ayod.
- c. Graduation of two SRC candidates from MTC and one from NTC.
- d. Roofing of SRC synod office in Juba.

## **12. Prayer Requests**

1. For peace to return to South Sudan and Sudan.
2. Promotion of Reformed faith in Sudan and South Sudan including salvation of souls, spiritual revival, and discipleship.
3. Relief assistance to most vulnerable particularly in IDPs camps in Juba, Malakal, Bor, Bentiu, Aweil and Wau.
4. Diaconal support to SRC 36 pastors and evangelists who are laboring among the IDPs in South Sudan. They continue to hang on with Christian Reformed witness despite all hardships. They are making heroic sacrifices for the cause of Reformed faith.
5. Leadership development of SRC future leaders including those who are studying at Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) South Africa, and Nile Theological College (NTC) Juba, South Sudan. For the Lord to call more labors to HIS vineyard in Sudan/South Sudan.
6. Needed infrastructures: completion of SRC Synod office and establishing of multi training center, Gudele Juba.
7. Safety of SRC pastors and evangelists laboring in areas of high risk and hostility.
8. Rebuilding reopening of SRC school (Ebenezer Primary School) in Juba, starting of first SRC secondary school (High School) in Mangateen Juba and continuous provision of education to IDPs children wherever SRC is laboring.
9. School feeding for SRC schools in Juba.
10. Construction of a mission house in Juba to accommodate serving pastors.

11. Reopening and rebuilding of five churches destroyed during the conflicts of 2013/2016 five in Juba plus Immanuel in Malakal, Hope in Bentiu and Redeemer in Bor.
12. Success of eleven church plants in South Sudan and one in Nuba Mountain in Sudan in 2022.
13. Starting of fund-generating projects to avail financial support to the serving SRC pastors and their families. SRC is hoping to build four shops in 2022 in Juba.
14. SRC Strategic Plan 2018-2028 may come to pass.
15. Provision of one (1) mission vehicle to keep the mission moving.

## **Appendix 16**

### **Fraternal address to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Bunbury, June 18-26,2018**

Dear moderator and delegates to Synod Bunbury,

I count it a privilege to be present at this synod and to bring you fraternal greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America. I am humbled to be able to address this esteemed assembly of brothers and co-workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Allow me to begin my remarks with some information regarding the URCNA. The URCNA is a federation of churches that was formed in 1996 out the desire to maintain the historic testimony of the churches to the Reformed faith, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and to order its life by a Church Order that conforms to biblical and Reformed principles for the government, worship and ministry of the churches. While our history is relatively brief, we share with you a long and rich history that reaches back to the time of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We cherish our rich inheritances in the Reformed faith and pray that, as we seek to hold fast to what we have received, the Lord will open doors of opportunity for ministering the gospel and making disciples from all nations.

Our federation gathers for a synodical conference (General Synod) at least every three years, but recently we have been meeting every two years. We send two delegates from each congregation, then divide the work into smaller subcommittees. The URCNA is divided into eight classes which (ordinarily) meet twice each year. We have 125 congregations, including mission works and church plants not yet officially organized spread throughout the United States and Canada. The federation consists of 16,000 communicant members and over 24,000 members in total, including baptized covenant children. Ministers in the federation have gathered from several different seminaries. The URCNA does not have a federation-operated seminary. A candidate for the ministry, having received a "call" from a congregation, and having successfully sustained a rigorous candidacy and ordination examination before his consistory and classis, is ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments in the URCNA. This process appears to be similar to yours. In fact as I reviewed your church order we have much in common. In our federation the classis is a broader assembly and the synod is considered the broadest assembly. The local

consistory, which we consider the narrowest, comes to the broader assemblies for advice, but is the Final Authority/governing body. This also applies to church planting and mission work.

Our federation has constituted a number of synodical committees. Two of these committees have a mandate to initiate, respond to and cultivate ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. These are CERCU(Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity), which devotes its attention to churches in North America. The second is CECCA(Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad), which I am a member of. Our responsibility oversees our relationships internationally, or abroad. The first official phase in our relationship with other federations or denominations is Ecumenical Contact. The second phase in a relationship is Ecumenical Fellowship where two denominations share an “oneness” despite geographical boundaries. According to the guidelines of CECCA, our ecumenical fellowship comes to expression in several ways: occasional pulpit fellowship, intercommunion, exercise of mutual concerns and admonition, agreement to respect each federation’s discipline, joint action in areas of common responsibility and agreement to inform each other of changes in polity, doctrine or practice. Through CERCU we are in correspondence relations with 7 churches and in “fellowship” with 5 churches in North America, including the CanRC. Internationally, through CECCA, we are in ecumenical fellowship with the (RCNZ)Reformed Churches in New Zealand, which we encourage you in your relationship with them. We also have the United Reformed Churches of Congo, GKSA(South Africa), GGRC-NTT(Indonesia), and FCC(Scotland the continuing church). We are in official contact with seven churches internationally.

Most recently, we are engaged in mission activity in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, India, Italy, Mexico, the Philippines and Romania. At Synod 2016 we officially appointed a mission coordinator who will help the churches pool financial resources to support missionaries and also provides help, logistics and direction to the missionaries and their work.

We just completed Synod 2018 Wheaton last week. A note of significance was that it was a combined meeting with the OPC General Assembly. The highlights included the release of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal that we produced in conjunction with the OPC. Other action included discontinuing relations with Reformed Churches of Netherlands (GKv) in a unanimous vote. We moved to Phase I Evangelical Contact with African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC) and to Phase II Fellowship with Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW), which will require ratification by a majority of the consistories by December 31 to be adopted. We also adopted an “Affirmation Regarding Marriage” as a doctrinal statement.

Finally, I would like to encourage you brothers, as you seek to do God’s work in an increasingly secular world. Know that we will pray for you and ask that you keep these two points in mind. Pray for our ongoing process of seeking unity between our federation and other Reformed bodies. It is important to seek unity with those of like confession and practice. Second pray for the work of URCNA in evangelism and missions, that the Lord would prosper our efforts and use us to reach many with the gospel.

May the Lord bless you in your work and may the spirit guide you. Thank you

Gerald Swets

## **Appendix 17**

### **Report of the visit to the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia held in Bunbury, June 18-26,2018**

The 27<sup>th</sup> synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) was hosted by the Free Reformed Church of Bunbury, Western Australia but held at the Free Reformed Church of Southern River, which is in the southern suburbs of Perth, on the west coast of Australia. The journey was long, but the fellowship was warm. The entire trip was a blessing, as the week I spent with the brothers from Australia and the other International delegates was informational and inspiring. The synod was convened Monday evening and continued through Friday daily from 9am to 9pm. They continued the following Monday and Tuesday, after having the weekend off, to complete the agenda.

Synod was opened on Monday evening June 18<sup>th</sup>. Rev A Souman was elected as chairman in a series of votes. The synod consisted of 18 delegates representing the 20 churches. Each of the three classes sent three pastors and three elders to serve as delegates. The foreign delegates were all welcomed individually, 17 delegates from 11 federations including the CanRC, the OPC.

There were delegates from three different federations in Indonesia, the GGRI, GGRC and GGRI Timor. I bring that your attention since we have relations with the GGRC and they have relations with the GGRI, but that is a different conversation. I was also able to meet with delegates from other federations that would like to begin discussion with us. This included the FRCSA (South Africa) and the DGK (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands-Restored). The DGK and GKN were encouraged to work toward unity with one another.

The business meetings were held with agenda item presented along with the report and recommendation of the deputies. The deputies were assigned at the previous synod three years prior and were given a specific mandate. Their report and recommendations were written and sent to all the churches. Each congregation had opportunity to respond to the report prior to synod. Those letters were also included as part of the agenda. Some of the agenda items were delegated to subcommittees. I was given the impression this was a new process, that they have not done this in the past. When the item or the committee report was given, there was a round where delegates could speak. After that round, the chairman asked if another round of discussion is required. If there was, delegates indicated their desire to speak. The clerk records the names of those who would like to speak, then the chairman calls them to address the group. If a consensus decided another round is not required, a vote is taken. Foreign delegates were scheduled to speak in the evening, so more visitors could be in attendance. I was invited to speak Thursday evening with the business portion of the URCNA to be conducted Friday morning.

#### **Synod decision regarding URCNA**

I addressed the synod on Thursday evening. Knowing the recommendations of the deputies from the agenda, I spent much of the week in discussions with the delegates. I indicated my desires for

this meeting and heard their concerns. This also gave me the opportunity to get a better understanding of how much support there was to work with us. The agenda and the recommendations from the deputies were to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to report and provide recommendations at Synod 2021 on how to proceed. There was a letter from FRC of Launceston supporting Deputies' recommendation to continue contact with the URCNA. There was also a letter from FRC of Darling Downs, proposing to also mandate deputies to investigate and report on the URCNA's relationship with the PCEA, and to address the question of the consistency of their policy in regards to having a relationship with two different federations in one country, which we would have if we continued to develop relations with the FRCA and PCEA. There was also concern about relations with churches so far away from Australia, which was contrary to their guidelines. As a result of my discussions with delegates throughout the week, my speech dealt directly with what we have in common and how our concerns are also their concerns and the manner in which we handle them. We also have an opportunity to assist each other as we build relations with other federations. A perfect example of that was the many different Indonesian churches, how they are encouraging them to work to be in union with each other. A partner like us could also make similar recommendations to enforce their concerns.

The recommendation from the deputies was to continue to liaise with the URCNA and to recommend to FRCA Synod 2021 whether to proceed in establishing a sister church relationship.

2. To acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work. The recommendations were modified to discharge the deputies and to appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
  - a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;
  - b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;
  - c. set aside funds to send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport Ontario in 2020;
  - d. submit a report of work completed, six months prior to the next synod.

Other agenda items included discussion of a local or regional seminary and a new Book of Praise. Currently they are sending all their seminary students to the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary. Financially and logistically this is an issue. They also determined they would like to produce their own Book of Praise. They currently use the Canadian Reformed Book of Praise and decided it is time they have an Aussie Book of Praise. I was able to offer them some valuable insight and experience of assembling a new book and also the advantages of having a seminary close to your churches.

Two brothers from the RCN were there to address the synod regarding the 2015 decision of the FRCA to suspend their relationship with the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. It was then recommended and adopted to terminate that relationship with the RCN.

In closing it was a great experience and I am thankful you brothers gave me the opportunity to attend this synod. In my closing remarks at the end of my stay I shared with the assembly: The hospitality of my host family and you brothers was truly a blessing. It was evident as we enjoyed fellowship together this week, that we share many of the same issues, have many of the same challenges and move cautiously as we do. My impression of your federation and your churches could not be any better. May God be with you as you advance His kingdom. I look forward to welcoming your deputy to our synod in 2020.

Servant of the Lord and His Church

Gerry Swets, CECCA member

## **Appendix 18**

### **EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH INDIA**

Synodical Credential Committee (SCC)

Rev. Sanjeev Kumar Singh

RTI Road, Herberpur Uttarakhand

India 248142

January 12, 2020

Dear brother Moes,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We as ERC are so glad to submit the Form Letter. We as the churches are looking forward to entering into ecclesiastical contact and fellowship with the United Reformed Churches in North America. Following are the pieces of information that you have inquired:

#### 1. The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture

We confess that all sixty-six books of Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and they are not sent or delivered by the will of men but that holy men of God spoke being moved by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:27, 44; II Peter 1:21; II Tim 3:15-16). These sixty-six books are canonical and only scripture that establishes our faith and confessions. Having sole authority over congregations and over every Christian for formation of our doctrine and godly life.

We confess that only the sixty-six books and all that they content are sufficient to teach the entire manner in which God's chosen people could be saved, and can rightly believe in the triune God and perform the foreordained good deeds (Gal. 1:8; II John 10; Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 12:32; Ephesians 2:8-10; I John 4:1; Colo. 3:17).

We also believe that Belgic Confession Article 5 and Heidelberg Catechism LD 7 are the faithful summary of the authority and perspicuity of Scripture, also Belgic Confession Article 7; Heidelberg Catechism LD 7; Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 1, 16-18; LC QA5, QA91; and SC QA1-3 teach authority and sufficiency of the scripture.

#### 2. Creeds and Confessions

We hold dear the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds are taught in our churches and theological institutes. We hold dear two sets of confessions: the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort) and

Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. These are taught in our churches, and we preach from them as well.

### 3. Formula of Subscription to the Confessions

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons of the Evangelical Reformed Church federation, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that all the articles and points of doctrine contained in the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity are faithful summary of the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully defend the doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching, teaching, or writing. We declare, moreover, that we reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, we have first signed consent to the Consistory, Presbytery, and now to the Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Presbytery, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

### 4. Significant factors in our Federation's history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues.

It is significant to note that Evangelical Reformed Church was initiated with prayers and financial commitments of Indian Presbyterians in the year 1999 and later Mid-America Reformed Seminary faculty members, as well as few of the United Reformed Churches in North America through Oak Glen URCNA in 2003 joined the church planting facilitation known as Mission of Peace-Making (MPM). ERC, therefore, is a outcome of URCNA. Most of our ordained ministers were trained through MPM's *Teaching Learning Events* (TLEs) and later they graduated from Reformed Theological Institute (RTI). We hold to the reformed theology. Our ecclesiology is reformed in its doctrine and we are Presbyterian in our church polity. Therefore, our assemblies are named with combination of reformed terms and Presbyterian terms *Consistory, Presbytery and Synod*.

For all our Ethical issues we follow confessional and biblical precepts. We are prolife, and many other cultural ethical issues we make Calvinistic/Reformed confessional appeal to third use of the Law of God. There are various cultural issues such as dowry, food sacrificed to the idols, and participating in the Indian Hindu festivals; those issues we handle with larger biblical principles so that we do not compromise reformed doctrines and remain confessionally evangelical in our clarity of understanding and in practices.

### 5. Church Order and Polity:

The Church Order is attached to the end of this document. It's reformed in doctrine and has three offices *minister of the Word and Sacrament, Elder, and Deacon* help by men.

### 6. Liturgy and Liturgical Forms:

ERC has adopted all the Liturgy and Liturgical Forms from the back of the URCNA used Psalter especially the forms of *Baptism, Lord's Supper, and Ordination*. ERC has started working on editing these forms any in our Synod of 2021 they will be presented before Synod for the final approval. ERC has Indian Psalms and Hymns songbooks.

#### 7. Preaching, Sacraments and Discipline:

**Preaching:** We preach Christ (I Corinthians 1:23) according to the Scripture and with exegetical approach to the Word of God in Indian languages along with the original languages of the Old and New Testaments. We encourage our ministers to consult *Calvin, Bavinck, Historical theology, Confessions, Puritans, and Indian theologians* in the preparation of preaching and teaching.

**Sacraments:** We hold to two Holy Sacraments: *Baptism* of all new adult converts, as well as the Covenant Children of the believers; We observe monthly closed *Lord Supper*.

**Discipline:** ERC uses her Church-Order to deal with issues of discipline under three assemblies namely, beginning with a Consistory then as per the need it may go to a Presbytery, and then finally to the Synod. Synod is the final and highest court.

#### 8. Theological Education for ministers and information regarding our current ecumenical relations.

**Theological Education for Ministers:** All our ministers are graduates of the following institutions:

1. Reformed Theological Institute (RTI), Herbertpur India
2. Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS), Dehradun India
3. Mid-America Reformed Seminary (M-ARS), Dyer, IN USA
4. Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI USA

**ERC's Current Ecumenical Relations:**

1. The Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT), (Since 2019)
2. Reformed and Presbyterian Fellowship India (Since 2010)

Thank you so much. Please feel free to ask any questions that may arise. We look forward to sending our delegates to your 2020 Redeemer Synod.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Sanjeev Kumar Singh

Secretary

Evangelical Reformed Church India

Email: [sanjeevft@rediffmail.com](mailto:sanjeevft@rediffmail.com); Phone: 91-9412916591



## Appendix 19

### TIMETABLE (Tentative) for the 2022 ICRC MEETING

#### WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

**Wednesday, October 12, 2022** - A Prayer Service will be held in Windhoek, Namibia

#### **Thursday, October 13, 2022**

Morning – Opening – Constitution of the meeting,  
Appointment of the Executive,  
Agenda finalized  
Advisory Committees appointed

Afternoon – Conference Business  
Inter-church Relations Committees to meet

Evening – Dr. Mohan Chacko to speak on *“Seminaries: A Centre for Theological Education, Ministry Training or Spiritual Formation?”*

#### **Friday, October 14, 2022**

Morning – Panel Discussion on the topic and speech - *“Seminaries...”*

Afternoon – Conference Business  
Inter-church Relations Committees to meet

Evening – Dr. Douw Breed to speak on *“Models or Alternate Strategies for Ministry Training.”*

#### **Saturday, October 15, 2022**

During the Day – various outings planned  
Evening: Namibian Barbecue

**Sunday, October 16, 2022** – Lord’s Day worship

#### **Monday, October 17, 2022**

Morning – Conference Business (new members)  
Panel Discussion on *“Models or Alternate....”*

Afternoon – Inter-church Relations Committees

Evening – Dr. Arnold Huijgen to speak on *“The Authority of the Scriptures in Diverse*

*Situations and Ethical Contexts.”*

**Tuesday, October 18, 2022**

- Morning – Conference Business (finances and future planning)  
Panel Discussion on the topic and speech – *“The Authority of the Scriptures in...”*
- Afternoon – Inter-church Relations Committees to meet
- Evening – Closing Ceremonies

**Appendix A to CECCA Report and Recommendations**

**Report on NAPARC World Missions Consultation, September 17-18, 2019 at Orthodox Presbyterian Church Administrative Offices, Willow Glen, Pennsylvania**

I had the opportunity of attending the NAPARC World Missions (and Diaconal Services) Consultation that was organized primarily by Brothers Mark Bube and Douglas Clawson of the OPC. The consultation took place at the OPC’s administrative offices in Willow Glen, Pennsylvania on the afternoon of September 17 and the morning of September 18, 2019. The meeting followed typical NAPARC practice whereby each member church made its report, questions were entertained and the previously reporting denomination prayed for the one reporting.

As you know CECCA is tasked with reporting to Synod Wellandport in 2020 its recommendations as to effectively providing diaconal assistance to needy churches abroad and in that connection to ascertain the practices of our sister reformed denominations and federations and to solicit input from our own Missions Committee and that of organizations providing such types of assistance.

In attendance were nine member churches of NAPARC including one or more representatives of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), Free Reformed Church (FRC), Heritage Reformed Church (HRC), Orthodox Presbyterian Church, (OPC), Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC), Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (PRCNA) and our own URCNA. Also in attendance was Rob Brinks, Administrative Director of Reformed Mission Servicers (RMS).

Each of the churches’ representatives made a presentation detailing its world missions activities and (in most cases) its processes and policies for extending diaconal assistance. My brief report of the information provided by each denomination follows:

**ARP:** Heiko Burkin made this presentation. The ARP’s “World Witness” program concerns itself at present primarily with refugees in Europe. These are mainly Turks in Germany and France. World Witness has presence in both Strasbourg and Nantes, France. The Nantes activity

is concerned with refugees from Chad. In addition, they continue to be active with a hospital and several schools in Pakistan and have a pastor in Lithuania endeavoring to revitalize the reformed church there. Outreach North America (ONA) reaches out to refugees coming o the United States.

ARP has no formal diaconal arm.

**CanRC:** The CanRC was well represented by three people, Mike De Borsek, Connie Peet and John Smid. They made a nice PowerPoint presentation on behalf of Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund (CRWRF). CRWRF dates back about 50 years and started as a movement to relieve hunger around the world. It does disaster relief and rehabilitation work. It has extensive reach and when it puts out a call for funds it is usually successful in acquiring significant response. Primary interest is in HIV/AIDS assistance, providing disaster assistance and refugee assistance. It also has a community development arm that concentrates on assisting orphans in Kenya, Mali, Timor, Senegal (especially in the wake of the Ebola crisis) and South Africa. Finally, there is a global awareness and education activity that works in Christian education curriculum development, social media and sending high school students on work projects.

Of great interest was these representatives' discussion of the structural organization of CRWRF. This is described as "organic" and not closely tied to the CanRC central organization. It is incorporated as a Canadian charity. The Board of Directors consists of 25 people all of whom are members of Canadian Reformed or sister churches including two from the URCNA. The board is all volunteers and CRWRF has no employees. Each board member has a "liaison" responsibility and is individually responsible in that capacity for an aspect of the group's activities. CRWRF has member churches and sent out a letter to all CanRC congregations advising them they were members unless they opted out. Evidently not many did. Technically CRWRF is under the authority of their member churches and affirmatively not of the CanRC Synod.

In terms of specific diaconal assistance to needy churches abroad there is nothing formal as they are "very decentralized," but it is obvious that CRWRF frequently receives and deals on a case-by-case basis with such requests.

**FRC:** The presenter was Duane Rogers. Their missions arm has been active in Guatemala since the 1980's. They are involved in church planting and the development of indigenous pastors there.

In terms of diaconal assistance the FRC works with parachurch organizations such as Word and Deed. They have a preference for assisting in "theological education" and they are concerned with avoiding the creation of dependency through their missionary and diaconal activities.

**HRC:** Bill Tanis represented this very small denomination. It has nine congregations. The HRC has a missions board. In the past they had been investing heavily in infrastructure but all that investment has been recently lost so they now concentrate on supporting missionaries around the world. They are waiting on Gods leading as to where they should go in the future.

There is no diaconal board in the HRC. Individual churches get involved in diaconal activities on their own. Most support Word and Deed. Their Disaster Relief Committee makes recommendations to the individual congregations as to where to send funds.

**OPC:** Mark Bube made this report. OPC has a Committee on Foreign Missions. Unhappily in the past year five of their missionary families in China and Uruguay have needed to come home from the mission field. On the more positive side they have missionary works ongoing in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Haiti, Quebec, Uganda, Ukraine, They are ready to explore a much higher level of missionary support.

The OPC has a Committee on Diaconal Assistance. It is comprised of three pastors, two ruling elders and four deacons. The committee meets four times a year and is divided into subcommittees. It has a budget of \$300,000 per year that works out to about \$25.00 per communicant member across the denomination. Brother Bube commented that, “When disasters happen, money pours in. We never ask for funds. We say we will receive funds and much more than the \$300,000 comes in.” Diaconal needs outside the direct purview of the OPC are rare. They do respond to needs generated by war, disaster, famine and persecutions. Word and Deed recently provided a large donation for disaster relief.

As to foreign diaconal assistance the OPC appears to concentrate heavily on disaster relief. It receives funds and volunteer information from other NAPARC churches. It has worked closely with RMS in the past on disaster relief. Their guiding principles are ministering both word and deed, understanding the principle of concentric circles in which concentration is closest to home first, there is wisdom in numbers and concentration on needs that are placed in their path.

**PCA:** Lloyd Kim offered comments on behalf of the PCA. This is, of course, a large denomination and its “sending agency” is Missions to the World (MTW). This denomination is in the midst of a time of extensive self-reflection. It seems currently to be unsure of its footing. As a result the presentation was somewhat scattered and cast in general concepts rather than specific activities. Brother Kim commented that the denomination is facing many challenges and that their situation is “confusing.”

There was little specific that I could glean as to the “on the ground” practical specifics of how the PCA accomplishes its extension diaconal assistance.

**PRC:** Tim Worrell made this presentation. This small denomination is working, as it has done for many years, in Liberia. This is a long-term and difficult ministry. Liberia reportedly has just surpassed Haiti as the poorest nation earth.

In terms of diaconal assistance, Tim indicated that, “We are more word than deed considering our small size.” They maintain a close relationship with Samaritan’s Purse.

**RPCNA:** Heather H. made this presentation. The RPCNA’s mission arm is RP Global Missions. They are on four fields as the present time including, Pakistan, India South Sudan and Japan. They are in the process of commissioning a Congregational Missions Advocate (CMA) in

each of their 100 congregations and have about 25% penetration at the current time. The CMAs act as the contact points between the congregations and RP Global Missions.

No specific or discrete diaconal assistance activity was mentioned other than that in appropriate cases those efforts are “seconded” to experienced organizations but no one was directly named.

Rev. Richard Bout attended, as the URCNA’s representative and reported to the Consultation on our missionary activities.

Rob Brinks made a formal PowerPoint presentation on behalf of RMS. He described in detail the several ways in which RMS is equipped to and has been providing diaconal assistance in recent years.

I engaged Rev. Bout in a discussion of the current status of our Missions Committee’s thinking in respect of providing diaconal assistance abroad and he was currently unable to offer anything specific. He did suggest that CECCA and the Missions Committee meet soon and have detailed discussions of this matter.

Working recently with Word and Deed in the matter of assisting the United Reformed Church in the Congo with a school building project, CECCA learned much of its preferred processes and procedures. Our familiarity with Word and Deed has occurred against the backdrop and with the perspective of a significant request from the URCC to assist in the construction a Christian school building in the city of Mbujimaya Batiment at a currently estimated cost of approximately USD \$175,000.

In response to the URCC’s request, CECCA enlisted the advice and counsel of Rick Postma at Word and Deed. He indicated that in Word and Deed’s experience it might be unadvisable to start diaconal assistance to the URCC with such a large project. Our joint thinking became that it would be preferable first to explore whether CECCA and Word and Deed in partnership could assist the URCC in the matter of theological education and the training of qualified pastors.

In furtherance of this goal, Brother Postma organized a conference call among Rev. Kabongo of the URCC, himself, CECCA Chairman Rev. Jason Tuinstra and me. This was a detailed conversation at which Rev. Kabongo provided much needed information. There were additional questions posed as to which he did not have answers at his fingertips and we continue to await his further response. Brother Postma recently followed up, but as of the date of this report I have heard nothing additional.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this interesting Consultation.

Sincerely,  
DOUGLAS L. FIELD  
September 24, 2019

In addition CECCA Approached and received responses from the Reformed Church in the

United States (“RCUS”) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). They advised:

- a. RCUS: The RCUS receives requests at a synodical level through a standing committee. When a request is deemed worthwhile a recipient may receive funds either directly from one of their churches or from the synodical treasurer. Procedures for accountability are not clear.
- b. FSC (Continuing): The FCS (Continuing)’s Ecumenical Relations Committee has no explicit mandate. Their Stated Clerk passes requests to appropriate bodies within the denomination. Their Finance & Sustentation Committee must approve any expenditure. The Stated Clerk vets and passes requests on (or not) as he deems appropriate.

## **Appendix B to CECCA Report and Recommendations**

### **Task Outline**

- I. The precise task assigned by Synod:
- II. Revision and updating of CECCA mandate:
- III. Assessing the potential need for CECCA diaconal response
  - a. Types of potential requests:
    - i. Financial (i.e. money only)
    - ii. Goods and materials: Integrated projects (i.e. construction of Christian school building) Personnel/craftsmen/professionals Advice and counsel
  - b. Disaster relief
  - c. Size and scope of requests
    - i. Dollar amounts
    - ii. Project duration
    - iii. On site presence/oversight required
    - iv. Location considerations
      1. Political stability/instability
      2. Ease/difficulty of travel
      3. Visas/travel permits
      4. Integrity/corruption of local authorities
      5. Health and disease considerations
  - d. Frequency of requests
    - i. Review of recent history of types and scope of requests received
    - ii. Assessment of likely frequency, types and scope for anticipated requests
  - e. Potential for securing outside assistance
    - i. URCNA Missions Committee
    - ii. NAPARC and ICRC federation/denominations and their diaconal assistance organizations
    - iii. Non-NAPARC/ICRC federations/denominations
    - iv. Organizations with whom federation has ongoing relationships
      1. RMS
      2. Word and Deed

- 3. MINTS
- v. NGOs
- vi. Governmental entities, ministries, departments
- vii. Other secular organizations
- IV. Plan of Action and Protocols
  - a. Establish CECCA Diaconal Response Sub-Committee
    - i. Mandate
    - ii. Constituency
      - 1. CECCA members
      - 2. Outside members
      - 3. Specialist consultants
      - 4. Required ratio pastors to elders
    - iii. Frequency of meeting
      - 1. Regular
      - 2. Ad hoc
  - b. Develop policies and protocols
    - i. Establish policy and procedures manual
    - ii. Solicitation of requests
    - iii. Evaluation and vetting of requests
      - 1. Application forms, formalities and supporting paperwork
      - 2. Obtaining trustworthy references
      - 3. Securing independent confirmation of claimed needs
      - 4. Recognizing and avoiding fraudulent requests
    - iv. Establishment of lines of communication with requesting parties
    - v. Evaluation and vetting of partnering organizations
    - vi. Constituency of diaconal teams
      - 1. Adults
      - 2. Youth
      - 3. Sponsors and supervision
    - vii. Follow up and evaluation
      - 1. "After action" reports
      - 2. Continued monitoring, supervision and assistance
      - 3. Assessment of further need
  - c. Budgets and financial controls
    - i. Sources of funds
    - ii. Administrative budget
    - iii. Budgets for individual projects
    - iv. Bookkeeping/auditing/reporting
- V. Staff requirements
  - a. Paid staff
  - b. Volunteer staff
  - c. Job descriptions
  - d. Qualifications and background checks
- VI. Prayer support
  - a. Dissemination of prayer requests
  - b. Prayer coordinator

- VII. Fundraising
  - a. Synodical appropriations
  - b. Regular appeals/askings
  - c. Special events
- VIII. Reports and public relations
  - a. Bi-annual report to Synod
  - b. Other periodic reports
  - c. Newsletter

### **Appendix C to CECCA Report and Recommendations**

#### **Policies, Practices and Protocols for Diaconal Response by the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad to Requests for Assistance**

##### **I. The precise task assigned by Synod:**

Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in either Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA’s recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod’s response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

Grounds:

a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.

b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.

c. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.

d. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.

e. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.

f. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

## **II. Revision and updating of CECCA mandate:**

At present CECCA has no formally adopted mandate. It is respectfully recommended that one be proposed and submitted for approval and enactment by Synod. In this connection, it is noted that our sister committee CERCU has a formal mandate. Adoption of a specific mandate for CECCA would assist in defining and refining CECCA’s mission and the scope of its activities. It would assist in directing, limiting and sharpening the focus of CECCA’s activities going forward.

A possible form of mandate might be as follows:

The Committee for Ecumenical Contact With Churches Abroad shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian denominations/federations outside the United States and Canada selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order. The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod’s Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The Committee may receive and act upon requests for aid and assistance from churches abroad in need thereof in accordance with Policies, Protocols and Procedures that it shall from time to time propose to Synod and that Synod shall approve of and ratify. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (This is a modification and adaptation of the current CERCU mandate.)

## **III. Assessing the potential need for CECCA diaconal response:** I have detailed these as best as I have been able to imagine them and have added

- a. **Types of potential requests:** In order to develop a workable and comprehensive proposal careful consideration should be made in advance of the types of requests for assistance that may be made to CECCA. Requests can be expected to come in diverse forms and for varying types of help including monetary, material, logistical, professional, advisory and mentoring.

From the outset clear definition and limitation should be made of the focus and scope of the matters and types of diaconal response that CECCA and the Federation have the desire, willingness, capacity and resources to make. It will be advisable to set guidelines and limits in various foreseeable categories and to provide guidance and direction as to the manner in which requests exceeding those guidelines will be processed and forwarded to outside agencies which may have the capability of handling them.

As a starting point for discussion and at a minimum the following types of requests can be anticipated:

- i. **Financial (i.e. money only):** Dollar amount will of course vary and with exchange rates may seem very reasonable. Once it becomes known that CECCA is available to assist, the number of requests and their frequency can be expected to increase.
  - ii. **Goods and materials:** Anticipate requests for specific types tools, equipment, both heavy and light (Bobcats to jackhammers to shovels and hoes) and materials such as roofing, siding, windows, piping, wiring and the like which may be available only (or only of high quality) in North America. Decide whether to do requests in kind or translate into dollars. Shipping costs along with customs and border considerations will have to be taken into account.
  - iii. **Integrated projects (i.e. construction of Christian school building):** This type of request might contemplate both monetary and/or in kind material assistance together with on site supervisory and advisory presence during execution.
  - iv. **Personnel/craftsmen/professionals:** We should expect requests for supply of journeymen in a likely large number trades (ground preparation, concrete, carpentry, masonry, roofing, plumbing, electrical) as well as professional expertise (engineering, architecture, medical, legal, planning and governmental affairs).
  - v. **Advice and counsel:** This could be needed and given either by written correspondence, by video/audio conferencing for up to a moderately extended period on site, off site or both.
  - vi. **Potential for utilization of youth, adult and mixed teams:** Sending out teams of different constituencies (obviously youth teams are easier to organize in the summer months) may prove to be an effective and productive method for rendering assistance. Much benefit accrues both to the team members and the recipients of their work. Fortunately the process and logistics of organizing and sending are known and available.
  - vii. **Disaster relief:** in recent years this has more often been necessitated by hurricanes, tornadoes, and other wind and rain events, flooding, mudslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.
- b. Size and scope of requests:**
- i. **Dollar amounts:** Dollar amount and number of requests per specific period of time limitation should be established as well as one time response vs. recurring requests and possible limits in various eventualities (i. e. max. from CECCA for church land purchase = \$50,000). **Project duration:** Limits on the length of time that a project will take to fully complete should be decided. In addition, it is common in places like Latin America that people build as they can. They often have a multi-story building planned and complete it in phases one floor at a time as resources allow. **On site reconnaissance/presence/oversight required:** Whether or not to establish a requirement that a preliminary site visit be required and the level of presence during the execution of a project should have careful

attention. We should establish a reputation for closely monitoring any project in which we take part.

- ii. **Location considerations:** This is sensitive because requests for help are more likely to come from locations where conditions of all types on the ground will be challenging. Facing such challenges should be embraced as an integral part of the work of assistance. We should be prepared to confront the following:

1. **Political stability/instability**
2. **Ease/difficulty of travel**
3. **Visas/travel permits**
4. **Currency restrictions**
5. **Integrity/corruption of local authorities**
6. **Health, disease and inoculation considerations, availability of suitable food and water, parasites and other dangerous pests:**

- c. **Anticipated frequency of requests**

- i. **Review of recent history of types and scope of requests received:**

Recent experience as well as the number and location of our ecumenical relationships abroad imply that 1 to 3 requests per year might be anticipated. We should be prepared for this number to increase over time as word gets out that we have the capacity and facilities to help.

- ii. **Assessment of likely frequency, types and scope for anticipated requests:**

- d. **Potential for securing outside assistance**

- i. **URCNA Missions Committee:** We are specifically tasked to coordinate with the Missions committee. I anticipate that those discussions will be lengthy and detailed.
  - ii. **NAPARC and ICRC federation/denominations and their diaconal assistance organizations:** To a certain extent we have initiated this process in that we made inquiries and have received back answers and information from several of these groups. We should stay in contact and plan to render mutual assistance when appropriate. Please note that our sister committee CERCUC spends a week every November with the NAPARC brethren so that regular and close contact is preserved. In addition we currently have the benefit of at least 2 of our CECCA members also on CERCUC. Similar considerations apply relative to ICRC.
  - iii. **Non-NAPARC/ICRC federations/denominations:** It would be fair to imagine that there are huge resources here but theological/doctrinal issues will likely dictate that extensive collaboration will be impracticable.
  - iv. **Organizations with whom our federation has ongoing relationships**
    1. **RMS**
    2. **Word and Deed**
    3. **MINTS**
  - v. **NGOs**
  - vi. **Governmental entities, ministries, departments**
  - vii. **Other secular organizations**

- IV. **Plan of Action and Protocols**
  - a. **Establish CECCA Diaconal Response Committee of the Whole or Sub-Committee**
    - i. **Mandate**
    - ii. **Constituency**
      - 1. **CECCA members**
      - 2. **Outside members**
      - 3. **Specialist consultants**
      - 4. **Required ratio pastors to elders**
    - iii. **Frequency of meeting**
      - 1. **Regular**
      - 2. **Ad hoc**
  - b. **Develop policies and protocols**
    - i. **Establish policy and procedures manual**
    - ii. **Solicitation of requests**
    - iii. **Evaluation and vetting of requests**
      - 1. **Application forms, formalities and supporting paperwork**
      - 2. **Obtaining trustworthy references**
      - 3. **Securing independent confirmation of claimed needs**
      - 4. **Recognizing and avoiding fraudulent requests**
    - iv. **Establishment of lines of communication with requesting parties**
    - v. **Identification of local individuals of confidence and responsibility**
    - vi. **Evaluation and vetting of partnering organizations**
    - vii. **Constituency of diaconal teams**
      - 1. **Adults**
      - 2. **Youth**
      - 3. **Sponsors and supervision**
    - viii. **Follow up and evaluation**
      - 1. **“After action” reports**
      - 2. **Continued monitoring, supervision and assistance**
      - 3. **Assessment of further need**
  - c. **Budgets and financial controls**
    - i. **Sources of funds**
    - ii. **Administrative budget**
    - iii. **Budgets for individual projects**
    - iv. **Bookkeeping/auditing/reporting**
- V. **Location and assignment of follow up to congregations interested in long term relationship**
- VI. **Staff Requirements**
  - a. **Paid staff**
  - b. **Volunteer staff**
  - c. **Job descriptions**
  - d. **Qualifications and background checks**
- VII. **Prayer support**
  - a. **Dissemination of prayer requests**
  - b. **Prayer coordinator**

- VIII. Fundraising**
  - a. Synodical appropriations/askings**
  - b. Specific project appeals**
  - c. Regular appeals**
  - d. Special events**
- IX. Reports and public relations**
  - a. Annual or bi-annual report to Synod**
  - b. Other periodic reports**
  - c. Newsletter**

### **Appendix D to CECCA Report and Recommendations**

#### **(Proposed) Response By CECCA To Synodical Request For Study of How The URCNA Might Support Churches Abroad With which It Has Ecumenical Relations**

#### **CECCA Responds and Recommends as follows:**

#### **2. Synod's Request:**

- a. Leading up to Synod Wheaton 2018, CECCA issued a full report on its recent activities and made several recommendations including that Synod address the question of how CECCA going forward might most effectively address diaconal-type requests for assistance from needy churches abroad with whom the URCNA is in both Ecclesiastical Contact and Ecclesiastical Fellowship
- b. Synod Wheaton 2018 took this matter up and formally responded to CECCA's recommendation. Synod Wheaton 2018 has directed CECCA as follows:

“That Synod direct CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with which we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod. In its research, CECCA should consult with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations. That this be Synod's response to CECCA Recommendation #7.

#### Grounds:

- a. In Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 55, we confess in answer to the question about the meaning of the communion of saints: “First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts.
- b. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.
- c. b. CECCA receives a variety of requests, such as financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings, construction projects, and facilitating theological training.

- d. CECCA has no policy to direct its members in how to deal with these requests.
- e. In practice, members of CECCA have sought private financial support for fraternal delegates to travel to our synod meetings.
- f. Consulting with the Missions Committee will prevent overlap.
- g. The URCNA has much to learn from sister denominations and relevant organizations.”

### 3. Revised Mandate:

In order to proceed effectively in this matter CECCA will benefit from revision of its formal synodical mandate. Currently CECCA’s mandate is informal and not formally adopted. Adoption of a specific mandate for CECCA would assist in defining and refining CECCA’s mission and the scope of its activities. It would assist in directing, limiting and sharpening the focus of CECCA’s activities going forward especially in respect of diaconal response to requests from abroad for assistance and help.

CECCA requests synodical approval of a revised mandate as follows:

The Committee for Ecumenical Contact With Churches Abroad shall pursue and make recommendations regarding the establishment of ecumenical relations with those Reformed and Presbyterian denominations/federations outside the United States and Canada selected by synod and in keeping with Article 36 of the Church Order. The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod’s Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The Committee may receive and act upon requests for aid and assistance from churches abroad in need thereof in accordance with Policies, Protocols and Procedures that it shall from time to time propose to Synod and that Synod shall approve of and ratify. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (This is a modification and expansion of the current CERCU mandate.)

4. **Practices of Sister Churches:** CECCA engaged in extensive research into the practices of our sister Reformed churches on the question of how they handle requests from their needy associated churches abroad. A summary of the results of those contacts appears below. It should be noted that none of the respondents has a comprehensive, institutionalized infrastructure for handling these kinds of needs. Some handle requests on an ad hoc basis occasionally through the offices of single individuals within their organizations. As a result of our inquiries it is clear that there is no currently existing, fully operational infrastructure enacted in another Reformed organization upon which CECCA could model a comprehensive program to respond to assistance requests from abroad. Accordingly, CECCA has determined that the best course of action is to create and submit for synodical approval its own original proposal *ab initio*.

- a. **RCUS:** The RCUS appears to be the most intentionally organized of the respondents who answered our inquiry. They receive requests at a synodical level through a standing committee. When a request is deemed worthwhile a recipient

may receive funds either directly from one of their churches or the synodical treasurer. Procedures for accountability are not clear.

- b. **CanRef:** The CanRef currently has no structure (i.e. committees or policies) for dealing with matters of this nature. They deal with them on an ad hoc basis. They struggle with having no diaconal arm for handling these kinds of requests.
  - c. **PCA:** The PCA provided us with a document called “Medical Aid and Other Aid to Nationals.” This document does not appear to be directly responsive to our inquiry and seems to relate to the process for its missionaries providing help and care to foreign nationals and procedures for reimbursement.
  - d. **OPC:** The OPC has acknowledged our inquiry but has not yet responded substantively.
  - e. **Free Church of Scotland (Continuing):** The FCS (Continuing)’s Ecumenical Relations Committee has no explicit mandate. Their Stated Clerk passes requests to appropriate bodies within the denomination. Any expenditure must be approved by the Finance & Sustenance Committee. The Stated Clerk vets and passes requests on (or not) as he deems appropriate.
5. **Sub-Committee Model:** In response to the synodical directive CECCA has now completed its study as to how the URCNA might most effectively support needy churches abroad. CECCA recommends that Synod approve and authorize establishment of a sub-committee within CECCA to receive, evaluate and respond to support requests from needy churches abroad. The name, constituency and authority of the Sub-Committee is proposed as follows;
- a. **Name:** The sub-committee shall be called: CECCA Sub-Committee for Evaluation and Response to Requests for Assistance from Abroad – CECCA-ERRAA.
  - b. **Constituency:** The sub-committee shall consist of 5 members, including at least one URCNA pastor and at least one URCNA elder and a minimum of 3 duly appointed CECCA Classical delegates. Within these guidelines CECCA may appoint members with specialized gifts, talents and experience who may not currently be serving either as pastor or elder but who are members of a URCNA church. It is desirable that at least one member of the sub-committee also be a member of CERCU.
  - c. **Sub-Committee Authority:**
    - i. **Unilateral Authority:** The sub-committee shall have full and unilateral authority to receive, evaluate, meet (if it deems it possible to do so), monitor and effectively administer requests for aid and/or assistance from any church, denomination or federation outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2 up to and including a monetary value of USD \$7,500 and requiring no longer than 14 days to complete.
    - ii. **Advice and Consent of CECCA:** The sub-committee shall receive, evaluate and make recommendation to approve or disapprove all other requests from any church, denomination or federation outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2 to the full CECCA. CECCA shall then approve or disapprove and request and in cases of approval the sub-

committee shall then be tasked with meeting, monitoring and effectively administering such requests as have been so approved.

**iii. Limitation on Eligible Requests and Coordination With Outside**

**Committees and Organizations:** The sub-committee may consider for unilateral approval only requests coming from churches, denominations or federations outside Canada or the United States with which the URCNA has ecumenical relations whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2. The sub-committee shall maintain contact with other committees and organizations associated with and acting under the authority of other NAPARC member churches and may make, receive, evaluate and submit to CECCA proposals to coordinate with such committees and organizations to provide mutual aid and assistance to assist needy churches abroad.

- 6. Protocols, Procedures and Policies:** The sub-committee shall be authorized to develop the policies, protocols and processes necessary to effectuate its responsibilities as set forth herein and submit them to CECCA for approval. Said policies, protocols and processes shall be amended, supplemented and updated as needed based upon experience and its ongoing activities and shall include but not be limited to:
- a. **Applications:** Establishment of forms for application, procedures for researching and evaluation of requests and approval/disapproval process.
  - b. **Financing:** Arranging means and methods for raising necessary funds and procuring material and human resources.
  - c. **Administration:** Defining procedures for administering, monitoring (including travel to on-site locations, if deemed necessary) and ensuring timely completion of authorized projects.
  - d. **Coordination:** Creating processes for coordination of its efforts with other URCNA standing committees including in particular the Missions Committee and CERCU.
  - e. **Mutual Aid and Assistance:** Determining best practices for seeking and responding to requests for mutual aid and assistance to and from similar committees and organizations under that authority of sister NAPARC churches.
  - f. **Evaluation:** Amassing facts and information on all activities so as to permit objective evaluation of results, improvement of policies, protocols and procedures and reporting its activities to successive synods and the URCNA federation at-large.
  - g. **Financial Controls:** Putting in place all appropriate budgetary, financial and accounting controls.

## Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU)

### Report to Synod Niagara

#### I. Introduction

Esteemed Brothers,

Our committee is privileged to serve the churches in our ecumenical opportunities and responsibilities according to the following mandate adopted by Synod Hudsonville 1999:

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

*The Committee shall execute its task and carry out its mandate by following synod's Guidelines for Ecumenicity and Church Unity. The committee shall keep the churches regularly informed of its work and the progress made, and shall publish its reports to synod in the agenda. (1999 Acts, pages 17 & 49)*

From our early beginnings as a federation, the pursuit of genuine biblical and confessional ecumenicity has formed a prominent component of our identity as churches. The desire for such growing expressions of unity was expressed already from the outset, with the choosing of our name – United Reformed. For over two decades, we have been richly blessed (and have been of blessing) through our contact and growing fellowship with many confessionally faithful Reformed bodies that share with us like and precious faith.

We also remain sensitive to the challenge and irony that the pursuit of our ecumenical calling can still be, at times, an occasion for some disunity among us. We continue to learn together that true unity cannot be forced. We need much grace and forbearance of one another as we continue to engage a work that requires patient, prayerful perseverance. And we need the collective wisdom of the body, it is a work we believe can and will only progress as the Lord blesses us with a great degree of unanimity. Unity requires work, but we also understand that by God's grace, it can be a patient work. We have come to see that if the churches feel rushed, forced, or unconvinced with regards to unity, that true and helpful unity will not materialize. Our committee is committed to work according to the mandate we have received from the churches, that we work "with a view toward complete church unity" (CERCU mandate). We believe that in principle, if not always in practice, there is a large degree of unanimity amongst us as URCNA churches on this. We are also humbly aware, though that for a variety of reasons, such complete unity will not always be attained

By the grace of God, we are a federation of churches that is known for its strong commitment to the absolute authority of the Word of God as faithfully summarized by our Three Forms of Unity. Any pursuit of unity that would stand opposed to this commitment to the truth should be summarily rejected. Many of us can speak from painful experience of the damages that have

been done when unity was promoted at the expense of truth. The unity our Savior envisions and prays for is a unity that must be governed by the truth – His Word is truth (John 17:14,17).

We also humbly recognize from the prayer of our Savior regarding all that the Father has given Him, that the unity He prays and works for is a blessing that must be given by the gracious work of His Spirit. Only with His blessing, therefore will organic unity ever come to expression among the churches. Unity cannot be forced or manufactured. Prayerfully and patiently recognizing that, we nevertheless also understand from our Savior that greater unity among all those who've been given to Christ remains a goal patiently to be pursued. Jesus prays and works for greater expressions of unity, in order that the world may know that the Father has sent Him (John 17:21,24).

For the sake of our witness, therefore, we continue to count it a privilege patiently to pray and work for greater expressions of unity. We rejoice that we experience God's blessing as our ecumenical calling serves our missionary calling and vice versa. Through ecumenical relations we've learned more about missions, we've been given more opportunities for missions, and have found help and encouragement from those who've been able to come alongside of us in our mission. Opportunities seized to work together have enhanced our witness to the world.

The question remains, does such blessing require organizational unity? Perhaps not always. But certainly, the unity we enjoy in the truth within our own federation bears witness to our conviction that where such organizational expression of unity is possible, it is a good thing. Jesus prays to the end that our spiritual unity is manifested (see also Foundational Principles of Church Government, number 10). We take organizational unity to be *an* application, a helpful way of bringing the unity Jesus prayed for to expression. We recognize that it would not be proper to assert that this is *the* application, or the only way of bringing this unity to expression. But if, by the grace of God, greater organizational unity can be safely and wisely attained, we believe it does serve the well-being of the church and enhances her mission (Foundational Principle 7).

To one degree or another, greater unity is always something of a goal in all our relationships. As long as we remain on this side of Christ's return, we will not have "arrived", we ought to continue to pray and work for greater expressions of unity. How such blessing gets worked out practically in each situation is a matter for which we as churches together will continue to need the peaceable and pure wisdom that is from above. In God's good providence, and by our decisions as churches, moving relations forward with any particular body requires a high degree of unanimity among our own churches. We believe this is wise.

We seek to carry out this important work joyfully according to the following synodical guidelines.

## GUIDELINES FOR ECUMENICITY AND CHURCH UNITY

### United Reformed Churches in North America

#### *Phase One - Corresponding Relations*

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

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

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

### *Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

The second phase of ecumenicity is one of recognition and is entered into only when the broadest assemblies of both federations agree this is desirable. The intent of this phase is to recognize and accept each other as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus, and in acknowledgment of the desirability of eventual integrated federative church unity, by establishing ecclesiastical fellowship entailing the following:

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

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

### *Phase Three - Church Union*

The third phase of ecumenicity is one of integration with the intent that the two federations, being united in true faith, and where contiguous geography permits, shall proceed to complete church unity, that is, ecclesiastical union. This phase shall be accomplished in two steps:

Step A – Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union Having recognized and accepted each other as true and faithful churches, the federations shall make preparation for and a commitment to eventual, integrated federative church unity. They shall construct a plan of ecclesiastical union which shall outline the timing, coordination, and/or integration of the following:

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

Entering this step of Phase Three requires ratification by the consistories as required in Church Order, Art. 36.

**Step B – Implementation of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union**

This final step shall only be taken when the broadest assemblies of both federations give their endorsement and approval to a plan of ecclesiastical union. Entering this step of Phase Three requires ratification by a majority of the consistories as required in Church Order, Art. 36.

**II. Committee Membership and Budget**

*a. Committee membership and Terms*

The classes are reminded of their continuing responsibility to appoint or reappoint classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.

Regarding the members-at-large, the Regulations for Synodical Procedure adopted by Synod London 2010 stipulate that the members of a standing committee shall serve no more than three three-year terms consecutively, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed three consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year (Regulations 5.3.2.c.). Synod Nyack 2012 clarified that if the term of a member-at-large expires in a year that synod does not meet, he shall serve the full three years of his term and the term shall expire on July 1. The replacement appointed at the previous synod shall assume the position at that time (Art. 54.3).

The committee is currently comprised of three members-at-large and eight classical representatives, one per classis. These members are as follows:

Classical representatives:

<b>Classis</b>	<b>Delegate</b>	<b>Alternate</b>
1. Central United States	Rev. Todd De Rooy	Rev. Joel Vander Kooi
2. Eastern United States	Rev. Robert Godfrey	Rev. Aaron Verhoef
3. Michigan	Rev. Casey Freswick	Rev. Matthew Nuiver
4. Ontario East	Rev. Joel Dykstra	Rev. Martin Overgaauw
5. Pacific Northwest	Mr. Doug Field	Rev. Craig Davis
6. Southwest United States	Mr. Jeff Tyler	Rev. Daniel Hyde
7. Southwestern Ontario	Rev. Steven Swets	Mr. Harry Van Gurp
8. Western Canada	Rev. Jason Vander Horst	Rev. James Roosma

Members-at-large:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Action Suggested</b>
Rev. William Boekestein	Appointed by Synod 2016 with term ending July 1,2019/2022	Re-appointment to term ending July 1, 2025
Rev. Daniel Ventura		Appoint to term ending July 1, 2025
Rev. Calvin Tuininga		Appoint to term ending July 1, 2025

It is with deep sorrow that we lost our brother Rev. Rick Miller to illness this past year. He served faithfully as a member of CERCU and we commit his family to the care of the Lord. His thoughtfulness, care, and pastoral understanding were a blessing as a committee. Rev. Miller was a churchman who appreciated the relationships established in ecumenical pursuits. He was a man who fit in many camps and sought to understand those on the other side of a question. He will be sorely missed.

*b. Budget*

We are asking that the annual budget for CERCU be maintained at \$12,500. The annual meeting of NAPARC each year is the primary place that CERCU meets and that is where the majority of our budget is spent. As a committee, we see the need to continue to have at least one face to face meeting each year. The importance of classical representation necessitates our being a large committee. It is also important to travel for the synods/GA’s of other churches to continue our encouragement in unity. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) will be hosting NAPARC this year in Atlanta, GA.

**III. Reports on Churches in Ecumenical Relations**

Your committee counts it a privilege to engage in ecumenical dialogue and seeks to promote greater unity among 12 synodically approved bodies of churches in North America. They, along with our respective phase of relations with them, are as follows:

Churches in Phase One – *Corresponding Relations*

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
2. Free Reformed Churches (FRC)
3. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)
4. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)
5. Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA)
6. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
7. Presbyterian Reformed Church

Churches in Phase Two – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship*

1. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

3. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ)
5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

At Synod Wyoming 2016 CERCU proposed “Guidelines for speeches of fraternal observers and delegates to our Synod” (Article 20.10 of the *Acts of Synod*) which was approved and immediately implemented. Those guidelines served us well in 2016 as we trust it will in 2022 and going forward.

## **A. Churches in Phase One- *Corresponding Relations***

### **1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)**

The ARP was founded in Philadelphia in 1782. It was a combination of the American portions of two Scottish presbyteries that had previously left the Church of Scotland: The Associate Presbytery began in 1733 and the Reformed Presbytery in 1743. It owns Erskine College and Seminary. The churches no longer are required to practice exclusive psalmody, which was its heritage. In the last quarter of the 20th century, they threw off the influence of neo-orthodoxy, which reached the height of its influence among them in the 1960's.

As of November 2021, the ARP had 10 presbyteries with a total number of organized and unorganized churches at 265. Their total membership was nearly 30,000. The ARPC and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) have been in a process of growing closer to each other as denominations. They have expressed this in more urgent unity meetings, joint General Assemblies at Bonclarken, Flat Rock, NC, among other activities.

The ARPC holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In November 2015 they reported to NAPARC that in addition to these, their standards include. “our recently revised Form of Government, our recently revised Directory of Public Worship, and our Book of Discipline, which is currently under revision.” They are members of NAPARC and the World Reformed Fellowship. They were also at one-time members of the ICRC, but have reported that stewardship considerations have compelled them to withdraw from that arrangement for a time.

Our meetings with this body have been intermittent. As the Lord allows, our intentions are that over the next years we will be able to continue to pursue the Phase 1 dialogue with this body that we trust will one day allow for a recommendation to our churches that we move to a Phase Two relationship. Congregations and classes are urged to pursue opportunities for ecumenical activity with ARP congregations and Presbyteries.

### **2. Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRC)**

The Free Reformed Churches were established in 1921. As of November 2021, they had a total of 22 congregations with a total membership of 5,416. They hold to the Three Forms of Unity. Their churches are scattered across North America, mainly in Canada. The FRC trace their roots to the secession that occurred in the established Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands in

1834. The FRC are the spiritual descendants of the churches in the Netherlands which did not join in the merger of 1892, which formed the GKN. They were then, and are today, particularly concerned about the influence of Abraham Kuyper, most specifically in relation to his view of presumptive regeneration in connection with baptism. Although they trace their roots to the Netherlands, they greatly value and appreciate the theology and preaching of the English and Scottish Puritans and those who followed in their footsteps especially the experimental and discriminating character of Puritan preaching, their emphasis on the need for conversion, cultivating a close personal walk with the Lord and eschewing worldliness. They work closely with the Heritage Reformed Churches in the operation of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A number of our own URC churches have developed very good working relationships with FRC congregations through connections through Christian schooling, conferences and ministries to migrant workers, as well as through mutual involvement with Word and Deed and in Redemption Prison Ministries.

Since our last synod, CERCU has had the opportunity to sit down with representatives from the FRC and discuss what is taking place in our churches. The FRC is in a growing relationship with the Heritage Reformed Congregations. We are encouraged to see this. There are still significant hurdles to union between those two bodies. One of the issues that keep them separated regards the role of a theological seminary. The HRC views Puritan as a witness to the world where men can come from many countries to be trained and then sent back into the field. The FRC views a seminary as an instrument of the church to train their own men for the gospel ministry. The FRC is a federation which has a strong emphasis on experiential preaching. With this in mind a subcommittee of CERCU has been meeting in Ontario for the past several years with representatives from the FRC to discuss the different styles of preaching. Both subcommittees have listened to numerous sermons from each other and then offered critiques. This process has been fruitful. Nevertheless, it would appear that the FRC still continues to have concerns about how some of the preaching is done in the URC. Their criticism is that many of the sermons assume the regeneration of the congregation and that there is not enough discrimination in the preaching. In the discussions, which are ongoing, we have sought to clear up areas of misunderstanding.

We continue to make our way through the Phase One dialogue with the hope that we may, in time, be able to recommend moving to a Phase Two relationship with these churches as well.

### **3. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)**

The HRC was established in 1993. Their synod meets annually with each of their 10 congregations sending a delegation. They hold to both the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster standards. They operate the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which has an enrolment of about 150 students from 20 different countries and 30 denominations.

We have continued bilateral meetings with the representatives of the HRC at NAPARC in every year. The meetings were positive and encouraging.

The HRC has five levels of fellowship, which are as follows:

- Level 1: Informal Contact
- Level 2: Formal Correspondence
- Level 3: Limited Fellowship
- Level 4: Full Fellowship
- Level 5: Full Union

In 2013 the HRC voted to enter into their Level 2 with us which corresponds with our Phase One. As these discussions continue under the blessing of God, perhaps in time further progress into a preliminary level of fellowship may be possible, approaching a Phase Two relationship (in URCNA categories). We have met with their representatives at NAPARC the last few years and have continued to hold before them our desire to work through the prescribed topics for discussion in Phase One with the hope of our being able to move into a Phase Two relationship with them in the Lord's good time. We have enjoyed a growing good will through meeting with these brothers. We have eagerly encouraged them in their growing relationship with the Free Reformed Churches. In the relatively young HRC we have been encouraged by the outgoing and forward-looking emphasis of her leaders. It is somewhat reflective of the reach PRTS is having in the world. We continue to encourage active engagement in opportunities for advancing this relationship at the consistorial level as well.

The HRC committee mentioned to CERCU that there are misperceptions from both sides. For instance, some view the URC as too close to the CRC and some view the HRC as too close to the NRC.

#### **4. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)**

The KAPC was established in 1978. They are a primarily Korean speaking church which makes a pursuit of fuller union with them complicated. Their membership has risen since our last report. As of November 2021, they have 72,000 members in 523 congregations over 31 presbyteries. Most of their growth has taken place due to immigration to America. Their churches are located primarily in large urban centers. They hold a General Assembly annually.

At NAPARC 2016 CERCU met with the representatives from the KAPC for the first time. This was a good meeting. Much of this meeting was "getting to know" each other. They have a fascinating history and relationship with the KPCA (Kosin). We look forward to continuing the process of getting to know each other, but for the foreseeable future, we do not anticipate growing much closer with the KAPC until their church becomes more thoroughly English speaking.

#### **5. Korean Presbyterian Church in America – Kosin (KPCA)**

The KPCA was established in 1985 and as of November 2021 they have 6,200 members over 130 churches. They have active mission fields in many countries where Koreans have immigrated.

We have not had any direct contact or meetings with the KPCA except for informal contact at NAPARC. This is a denomination which is even more connected to Korea than the KAPC. Their services are in Korean and they foresee this as a potential hurdle in the future as the next generation seeks English speaking churches.

## **6. Presbyterian Church in America**

The PCA was established in 1973 as a break off of the PCUSA over the issue of the inerrancy of scripture. It is the largest members church of NAPARC. As of November 2021, the PCA had 383,338 members over 1,928 churches/mission works. They hold to the Westminster standards. In addition to NAPARC, they are members of the National Association of Evangelicals and the World Reformed Fellowship.

The PCA has two levels of ecclesiastical relationships. They designate their entry level of relations as Corresponding Relations. Fraternal Relations is the more intense level of relations, one which they have with all NAPARC denominations or federations by virtue of membership in NAPARC. This means that short of the pursuit of a merger, from the perspective of the PCA we are already in their highest level of relations. The PCA, though certainly open to greater, more complete unity with other bodies, has not been actively involved in pursuing it at NAPARC.

At NAPARC 2016 and 2017 our CERCU committee has had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the PCA. It should be noted that even though the PCA is the largest denomination of NAPARC, they ordinarily send the fewest delegates. In 2017, only one delegate attended from the PCA, whereas there were 10 from the URC. We decided to send a smaller delegation of our committee to meet with their representative. In our bi-lateral meeting with the PCA, we asked their delegate why he was the only one from the PCA. He explained that part of the reason is because their committee is not very well funded by the PCA and they have financial constraints. Also at this meeting in 2017, the Comity Agreement of NAPARC was discussed. It has been the experience of some URC's that a PCA church plant comes to their town and slowly draws some of their membership away. After a frank discussion, we encouraged each other in the work of missions and church planting.

We encourage local churches to seek greater dialogue with their local PCA's.

## **7. Presbyterian Reformed Church**

The PRC is the smallest group in NAPARC. It is an indigenous North American group of churches continuing historic Scottish Presbyterian orthodoxy in doctrine, worship, government and discipline, on the basis of a conviction that these principles and practices are founded upon and agreeable to the Word of God. It consists of 8 congregations. They are committed to a strict adherence to "The Directory for the Publick Worship Of God" (1645) and exclusive psalmody. All of their churches have ministers but most of their ministers are bi-vocational since their congregations are small and unable to fully support their pastors financially.

Although they are committed to organic union with like minded churches, because of geography and their strict adherence to "The Directory for the Publick Worship Of God" (1645), including exclusive psalmody, we have not yet pursued deeper dialogue with this group. We will continue

informal contacts at NAPARC and we urge classes and congregations to pursue local contact where it is available to gain greater awareness and familiarity.

## **B. Churches in Phase Two-*Ecclesiastical Fellowship***

### **1. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)**

We have been in a Phase Two – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship with the Canadian Reformed churches since the ratification of the decision of Synod Escondido 2001. We thank God for this relationship and believe the Lord continues to use it for much mutual blessing between the churches of our respective federations.

As of November 2021, the CanRC consisted of 70 congregations/mission works (58 organized congregations) and 19,319 members. They have a federational seminary in Hamilton, Ontario. Several URC students have graduated from the Canadian Reformed Seminary in the past number of years. This has been a blessing to have a faithful seminary option in Canada.

In many places, our *Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship has borne the fruit of much greater spiritual unity with Canadian Reformed brothers and sisters and congregations in ways that could not have been imagined but a few decades ago. While we thank God for this, it must also be acknowledged that this is not an experience that has been shared by everyone. As the Canadian Reformed Churches exist almost exclusively in Canada, lack of interaction of and with many of our churches in the US is a large factor. It is not the only factor, however. Even in Canada, there remains skepticism among our churches owing to a history of separation, antagonism and isolation, and/or a conviction of incompatibility in terms of church government. The Canadian Reformed are perceived by some of us as being more hierarchical in polity. Generally, there doesn't appear to be enthusiasm among United Reformed Churches for beginning to function together under the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO).

At Synod Wyoming 2016, CERCU communicated to the churches it's intention not to come with any recommendation to proceed to Phase Three, Step A (Development of the Plan of Ecclesiastical Union) with the Canadian Reformed Churches for at least six years. Generally, this commitment was welcomed by the churches as an opportunity to catch our breath, ecumenically speaking. Given this commitment, our interaction as CERCU with our Canadian Reformed counterparts has been reduced at the committee level. As matters stand, we are not proposing a change in our relationship with the CanRC at Synod Niagara 2022.

The CanRC held their general synod this spring in Guelph, ON. It is their practice to hold a synod every three years. They are in the process of expanding their songbook (i.e. The Book of Praise) by adding extra hymns and some alternate Psalm renditions. The decision of their synod that impacts CERCU most clearly is their decision to combine their foreign and domestic ecumenicity committees. There is a change happening in some areas of the CanRC. It seems that they are experiencing some growing pains as it relates to some of their church plants/outreach churches and liturgy. It will be important to see how they navigate these waters.

Since our last synod in Wheaton 2018, at least 4 of our men are now pastoring CanRC congregations (Revs. P. Grotenhuis, H. Lee, A. Vreugdenhill, and J. Zekveld). Many others have been called, but have been lead by the Lord to decline those calls. URC preaching seems well-received on CanRC pulpits and vice versa.

As a committee, we have wrestled with the question of how best to move the relationship forward, without pushing the churches. We would never want our pursuit of unity with another federation to come at the expense of the unity of our own federation. What the committee decided to do was to send out a survey to all of the churches. The purpose of the survey was to gauge where the churches stand on the hurdles that yet remain with our relationship to the CanRC. 58 churches sent responses back to the committee, for which we are grateful. It became clear as the surveys were returned that churches spent a good deal of time on the first question, which asked whether they were in favor of moving to Phase 3A with the CanRC at this time. 21 churches said yes, 21 said no, and 16 said “not at this time.” Our intention was not to propose a change in our relationship in 2022. This threw some churches off in terms of their response. Nevertheless, the committee received some very helpful and thorough responses from the churches. In this report, we offer a summary of the responses as a way to continue to engage in this ecumenical effort.

The first question asked if your council was in favor of moving forward to Phase 3A with the CanRC. Some of the more common responses of churches that said yes were: 1. This will encourage local cooperation; 2. It is commanded in scripture; 3. It is beneficial since we both hold to the 3 Forms of Unity. For the churches that said no to the first question, some of their more common responses were: 1. There are church order issues; 2. Organic/organizational unity is not needed; 3. We could lose our federational distinctives. For those churches that said “not yet” on the question of merger, some of the more common reasons were: 1. It could threaten present unity; 2. The URCNA must be more unified first; 3. They are not familiar with the CanRC; 4. There is a perceived uncompromising spirit in the CanRC (e.g. songbook).

The answer to the first question varied, in part, on which side of the US/Canadian border the church was found. As we have noticed over the past 20 years, those in closer proximity to CanRC congregation have an overall more favorable impression and relationship with the CanRC. With that said, there were some Canadian churches that are hesitant and there are some American churches that are very in favor of moving the relationship forward.

The second question asked whether your church council was in favor of moving forward to Phase 3A with another of Phase 2 churches. The majority of responses were negative. For those that wanted to move forward, the most common answer was that we should move forward with the OPC. The comments made it clear that the concurrent synod and work on the songbook was a true blessing to both of our federations. The process seemed to endear us to each other.

The third questions asked whether your council had any theological concerns regarding a potential union with the CanRC. 8 of the 58 churches said yes and 50 of 58 said no. The most common theological concerns were:

1. The CanRC’s relationship with Federal Vision
2. Differences in guarding the Lord’s Supper table

3. Presumptive regeneration and view of covenant youth.
4. A difference in the subjective/objective nature of the covenant
5. The CanRC's fear of extra-confessional binding

The fourth question asked if there are any church polity concerns regarding a potential merger with the CanRC. It is clear that this is the area of greatest concern. The most common church polity concerns were:

1. A perceived CanRC hierarchy. (e.g. the PJCO) 28 churches made this comment.
2. Demand for a federational/denominational seminary (18 churches)
3. Different practices on fencing the Lord's Supper table (9 churches)
4. Songbook differences (20 churches)
5. Covid differences (5 churches)

The fifth question asked councils if they have any historical concerns. There were very few. Most of the responses involved the same issues found under church polity and how those differences have played out in the past.

The final question asked for advice given to CERCU. Most of these responses were encouragements to continue the important, but often slow process of ecumenicity.

As the CERCU committee, the concerns raised in the survey are things that we need to discuss among our committee. After doing so, these are areas of concern that we need to work through with our CanRC counterparts. Though there is more than one way to interpret some of the answers to the questions in the survey, a few things became clear to CERCU.

First, is that we cherish the unity we have as a federation. Having come out of a denomination which was embroiled in theological controversy, it has been refreshing to focus together on the work of the church. Theological controversies take much time and can cause much hurt. Though we must be ready to defend the truth of God's word, the Lord has been gracious to us over the past 26 years as a federation.

Second, there are some clearly wrong ideas about CanRC belief and practice. Some answers to the questionnaire were simply wrong (e.g. that the CanRC practices exclusive Psalmody or closed communion). What this type of situation shows is the need for further education. However, if there is apathy regarding ecumenicity, the education might be ignored. The reports might remain unread. This makes the process of ecumenicity difficult. Apathy toward ecumenical efforts that seem far away is one thing, but when there is antipathy about the relationship, then progress is slowed by some in a way that frustrates others. Seeking a way forward is then very difficult.

Third, there is a wide diversity of practice in the URCNA. Many of the concerns regarding polity and practice in the CanRC are concerns that should be alive in our own federation. For example, a couple churches are concerned that the CanRC do not permit "unreformed" people come to the Lord's Supper. However, that is the exact practice of some of our own churches. Nevertheless, that difference in practice does not seem to hurt our unity.

Fourth, one of the most common concerns brought out by this survey is the perceived hierarchy of the CanRC. It is an interesting observation. Local CanRC congregations are permitted to sing only the song that are approved by their synod. They also have synodical deputies appointed by a regional synod (they have 2 regional synods), that give concurring advice at classis meetings. This might seem hierarchical to some. However, our practice of church visitors coming to visit local councils every other year to instruct, admonish, and encourage operates under the same principle of accountability (C.O. Art. 27). The CanRC also does not have a stated clerk for their federation or for each of their classes. The URC has multiple members who are “paid” by the federation for their work. Could the role of the URC Stated Clerk become one of hierarchy? As a federation, we are wise to make sure it doesn’t. The claim of hierarchy is an interesting and often inconsistent claim. It could be claimed that the CanRC should have a greater fear of hierarchy, since they were expelled from their denomination in the Netherlands in 1944. Those who started the URC voluntarily left the CRCNA.

Fifth, we still have many things to work through. Receiving direction from the churches through the survey was helpful to the committee.

We are grateful for the Lord’s blessing upon our relationship with this sister church. In many places in Canada the relationship continues to grow. Pulpit exchanges, sharing of schools, conferences, seminary use, youth camps, mission works, and church plants are all being blessed by the Lord. Church unity is a gift of the Spirit. As we work and wait for the Lord, we are comforted in knowing that there is only one, holy, catholic church.

## **2. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)**

The RCUS was established in 1746 by German immigrants. As of November 2021, the RCUS had a membership of 3,560 over 47 churches and mission works. Membership in the RCUS has been experiencing a slow decline.

In many places where there are both RCUS congregations and URC’s side by side there is a good and mutual opportunity to serve together. We have enjoyed a Phase Two relationship with the RCUS since Synod Calgary 2004. The RCUS are a faithful federation which holds to the Three Forms of Unity. They operate a small seminary (Heidelberg Seminary) in Sioux Falls, SD.

In our annual meetings with the RCUS at NAPARC, it has become clear that there is not a great desire of moving the relationship forward between our churches. The RCUS seems content to keep things the way that they are at this point. Though we have noticed over the last number of years that the RCUS is spending more time looking forward to what the future might bring to them as a denomination of churches.

We encourage those classes and congregations in geographic proximity with RCUS classes and congregations to continue to promote and enhance the unity of faith we enjoy with this body through the exchange of fraternal delegates at broader assemblies, and in local engagement and encouragement of combined activities with RCUS churches as the Lord allows.

## **3. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

The OPC is a denomination which began as a stand against liberalism and modernism in the PCUSA in the 1930's. The OPC was established in 1936 and now their membership is 31,809 members among 328 churches and mission works. The OPC has a strong emphasis upon missions in the world. We as a federation view them as something of an older sister who continues to teach us many valuable lessons.

We continue to thank the Lord for the blessing of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal which was produced in cooperation with the OPC. This songbook, containing the entirety of the Psalter has been well-received overall and has gone through multiple printings.

Our Synod 2018 concurrently with the OPC was a tremendous blessings and picture of ecumenicity between churches of like faith and practice. That concurrent synod/GA showed a true love and unity we have had in the past, but also one that continues to grow today. That was a monumental event in the history of our young federation. It was the first concurrent synod we have had with a sister federation of churches. The fellowship was sweet and praise was given to the Lord.

We are in Phase Two *Ecumenical Fellowship* with the OPC since Synod Schererville 2007. Our relationship with the OPC has continued to grow. We have been tremendously blessed by their efforts in church planting. As time goes on, the URC puts into practice many of the policies that are bearing much fruit in the OPC (e.g. a church planting manual, a full-time missions coordinator).

We meet with the OPC each year at NAPARC and our discussions are fruitful and encouraging.

We look forward to more fruit upon our ecumenical efforts with the OPC in the days to come. To that end we heartily encourage classes and congregations in geographic proximity with OPC presbyteries and congregations to continue the exchange of fraternal delegates, and to engage in other ecumenical activities that may be available. One such instance of such fruitful efforts would be the annual *Semper Reformanda* conference held jointly by classis Eastern US and the Presbytery of NJ of the OPC. Concurrent meetings of the classis and presbytery have also taken place in this connection, allowing for growing interaction and familiarity. CERCU is grateful for such efforts as these and encourages other classes to take advantage of such opportunities for enjoying and advancing our ecumenical fellowship together.

#### **4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L'Eglise reformee du Quebec (ERQ)**

The Reformed Church of Quebec is the smallest denomination we have a Phase Two *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with. They have five congregations. The ERQ was established in 1988 and it is the only Reformed denomination in the province of Quebec. All of their churches are French speaking.

The ERQ over the last number of years have been busy in translating solid English books into French. We have had the privilege of hearing about this week each year at NAPARC.

At our bi-lateral meeting at NAPARC, this was the first time the discussion of union seemed to take root. It seemed earlier that since the ERQ is French-speaking, union would be impossible.

However, it was noted that we have churches in our own federation which are Spanish speaking and that actually has a positive effect among our churches. It was noted that many denominations have linguistically unique classes and presbyteries. Is this a possibility in the URC? This is what we seek to pray over and discuss in the coming years.

The ERQ is very eager to receive help from our churches and we encourage this. They continue to be in prayer for French speaking pastors. Nevertheless, many opportunities exist for more mission works of URC members who are not ordained. Quebec is a spiritually dark province of Canada, but the Lord certainly has His church there and we can see that with the ERQ.

## **5. Reformed Presbyterian Church in North American (RPCNA)**

The RPCNA has its roots in Scottish Presbyterianism. It was organized in North America in 1798. As over November 2017, the RPCNA had 7,436 members over 105 churches and mission works. They operate a theological school, the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, established in 1810. The seminary is committed to the inerrancy of Scripture and to the Reformed Faith as summarized in the Westminster Standards and in the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Their worship is characterized by exclusive psalmody and singing without musical accompaniment. The RPCNA owns and operates a liberal arts college, Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, which is now 169 years old.

We are in their Level 2 *Fraternal Relations* category. Their category 1, which is full intercommunion is made up of three denominations overseas.

The RPCNA continues to discuss greater unity with the ARPC, which we encouraged. Exclusive Psalmody with no instrumentality seems to be the biggest hurdle in that process between those denominations.

CERCU met again with the RPCNA at NAPARC. From that meeting we expressed appreciation for the RP's paper on transgenderism. We encourage our churches to read this. It was also noted that by using the new Trinity Psalter Hymnal, this emphasis toward literal Psalm singing brings us closer to the RPCNA in our worship. Many places in North America where our churches are in close proximity, there is a good and healthy relationship. We encourage congregations and classes to continue this process of unity on a grassroots level.

## **C. North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC)**

Since our last synod meeting, NAPARC has met each year with the exception of 2020. NAPARC consists of 13-member churches, all of which we are in a Phase One or Two relationship with us.

The basis of NAPARC's fellowship is "Confessing Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life, we affirm the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts, and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms." (NAPARC Constitution)

A large portion of the meeting is hearing reports from each of the member churches, after which there is an opportunity for questions. It is good to hear updates of each of the churches.

As CERCU, we use the opportunity of NAPARC to meet in bi-lateral meeting with 5-7 other denominations. Over the last couple of years we met with the OPC, RPCNA, PCA, HRC, FRCA, RCUS, ERQ. These meetings were all fruitful and encouraging.

It is also of interest that over the last few years, there are two denominations which are observers to NAPARC. They are the Bible Presbyterian Church and the Protestant Reformed Church. Both of those denominations explained why they are not yet ready to join NAPARC. Though this led to a bit of discomfort, it was wonderful to experience how a brotherly spirit prevailed. These difficult, but important conversations are important in order that we as church may encourage each other to faithfulness, and also to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

CERCU continues to see NAPARC as a tremendous opportunity to show the catholicity of the church in North America. The Lord is certainly blessing many of these relationships.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the committee chairman and secretary when committee matters are being considered (Regulations 5.4.2)
2. That Synod re-appoint as a member-at-large Rev. Bill Boekestein to third three-year term to commence immediately and end on July 1, 2025. (Rev. Boekestein was first appointed by Synod 2016 to a term beginning July 1, 2016. He is eligible for re-appointment.)
3. That Synod appoint Rev. Daniel Ventura to a term to commence immediately and end July 1, 2025. This will be his first term.
4. That Synod appoint Rev. Calvin Tuininga to a term to commence immediately and end July 1, 2025. This will be his first term.
5. That Synod maintain the budget for CERCU at \$12,500 US per annum.
6. That Synod remind the churches of our mutual responsibility to engage one another in our ecumenical task through prayer, classical dialogue, local efforts and expression of concerns.
7. That Synod take note that the Canadian Reformed Committee (CER) is willing to answer questions, speak at classes, and promote the unity of our churches. Synod encourages the classes to use them to that end.
8. That the classes be commended for their faithfulness in appointing or reappointing classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.
9. That Synod approve the work of the committee without adopting every formulation in its various dialogues.

Humbly Submitted,  
Rev. Todd De Rooy, chairman  
Rev. Steven Swets, secretary

## **Liturgical Forms Committee Report to Synod Niagara**

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Over the past two years, the work of the Liturgical Forms Committee, comprised of Rev. Dr. Brian Lee and Rev. Dykstra, has only involved preparing for the publication of our second edition of the Liturgical Forms and Prayers Book (LFB). All errors discovered in our first edition would dutifully be changed in the master copy of the second edition. When we were made aware that the supply of first edition copies of the LFB was dwindling, we contacted the printer used for the first edition and made plans to print the second edition. COVID with its attendant supply chain issues hampered our printing of the second edition, principally due to a lack of supply for the book covers. We decided to wait until the proper materials were available, even though this meant there was a time when no books were available for purchase.

In reflecting on the number of copies to produce, we reviewed the purchase orders from our churches and noted how many copies would be needed to cover the remaining needs of the Federation. We also included some extra as there remains interest for this book outside of our Federation. When it came time to establish the price for the second edition, we faced significant challenges in keeping the cost at our original price. Supply chain issues increased the cost of materials, the smaller run size increased the cost per book, and the expectation that we will not need a third edition for some time meant that there would be a significant rise in future costs. It has always been our goal to provide this book at cost to the churches. We believe that our \$8.00 USD price point accomplishes this.

We have also continued to keep an eye on our websites ([formsandprayers.com](http://formsandprayers.com) and [threeforms.org](http://threeforms.org)). We believe these websites are well established and in use and will not require significant changes to maintain. For this reason, we believe the responsibility for these websites ought to be given over to our Webmaster and the Website Oversight Committee.

Our expectation as a committee is that the next major publication of the LFB will be when the churches review and edit the current Forms and Prayers. For that reason, we do not see a great need for a continuing Liturgical Forms Committee. Should there arise a need for a third edition of this book, we believe that the Canadian Corporation of the URCNA, which holds the copyright on this book, is well situated to provide that service to the churches. For this reason, we recommend that the Liturgical Forms Committee be disbanded and that the responsibility for any future reprints be given to the Canadian Corporation of the URCNA.

### Recommendations:

1. That the websites related to our Liturgical Forms and Prayers be overseen by the Website Oversight Committee.
2. That the Canadian Corporation of the URCNA be given the responsibility of reprinting the Liturgical Forms and Prayers book if such a need should arise.
3. That the Liturgical Forms Committee be disbanded.

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Brian Lee

Rev. Joel Dykstra

## **Missions Committee Report to Synod Niagara**

### **I. Introduction**

“Go and make disciples of all nations” – so the Lord Jesus continues to commission his church today as he has for the previous two-thousand years. And we give him thanks for remaining with us in all our efforts to carry out the Great Commission. Indeed, it is Christ Jesus himself who spreads his Gospel, makes and grows disciples, and increases his Kingdom through the mission work of his church. Glory be to his name in all the earth!

While this report of the Missions Committee will give some attention to current mission work throughout our federation, a considerable portion of the material that follows will turn our eyes back to some of our history, and another large portion will turn our eyes forward to what could be in the near future. The report covers so much ground because of the mandate that the previous synod gave to an enlarged Missions Committee – namely, to “investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so, to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Art. 76.7, Minutes of Synod Wheaton 2018). This report includes the fruit of our investigation, on the basis of which the committee brings recommendations for greater organization and effectiveness in our efforts to fulfill the Great Commission. Since we were unable to reach unanimity, a majority report will be followed by a minority report.

We trust that all Consistories will carefully consider both reports prior to Synod 2022 so that our deliberations will be properly informed. But here is a little preview. The Majority Report proposes a plan that: (1) maintains our commitment to having each missionary called and overseen by a local consistory; (2) widens the support structure for each missionary on a classical and/or synodical level; and (3) divides the labor so that home and foreign missions each has its own synodical committee and coordinator. Alternatively, the Minority Report proposes to send co-workers to all mission fields. In place of the full time missions coordinator, the classes would appoint mission visitors to invite churches to send out men and hire mission advocates to help prepare them. The Synodical Missions Committee will hire a mission clerk for administration, draft a mission order to guide us, and utilize matching funds to kindle generosity.

For much of these last years we have operated as a study committee, engaged in a good deal of research and the drafting of recommendations for the next synod. Still, we have continued to serve local churches and missionaries by providing them with information and encouragement, as well as advice in response to their requests. This will be reflected in the “Missions Coordinator Report” of Rev. Richard Bout.

Synod Wheaton 2018 also recommitted to the committee a document entitled, “International Seminary Students and the URCNA – A Way Forward” so that the committee might better formulate the most appropriate way for our churches to relate to foreign students at seminaries in North America (Acts of Synod Wheaton 2018, Art. 76, pp. 51-52). The committee has revised this document, and is recommending its adoption. It can be found at the end of the report.

## **Overview of the Missions Committee Report:**

- I. Introduction (above)
- II. Mission Models of Reformed Churches (CRC, OPC, URC)
  - II. A. Mission Model of the Christian Reformed Church (1930s-1950s)*
  - II. B. Mission Model of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*
  - II. C. Mission Work in the URCNA – A Brief History*
- III. Majority Report: A New Missions Plan for the URCNA
  - III. A. Home Missions*
  - III. B. Foreign Missions*
  - III. C. Opportunity for a Federation Missions Fund*
- IV. Minority Report: Missions Alternate Proposal
- V. Missionaries in Educational Ministries
- VI. Re-Submission of the Statement on Students from Abroad
- VII. Report of the Missions Coordinator
- VIII. Clerical & Financial Matters

## **Missions Committee Membership**

Pastor Richard Anjema (Cl. WCAN)  
Pastor Jared Beaird (Cl. PNW)  
Pastor Harry Bout (Cl. EON)  
Pastor Richard Bout (Missions Coordinator)  
Pastor John Bouwers (Cl. EON)  
Pastor Greg Bylsma (Cl. SWON, Chairman)  
Pastor Casey Freswick (Cl. MI, Clerk)  
Elder Steve Howerzyl (Cl. SWUS)  
Elder Duane Konynenbelt (Cl. WCAN)  
Pastor Jody Lucero (Cl. CUS, Vice-chairman)  
Elder Harold Meinders (Cl. CUS)  
Pastor Tom Morrison (Cl. SWUS,)  
Pastor Paul Murphy (Cl. EUS)  
Elder Paul Scharold (Cl. PNW)  
Elder Steve Schulz (Cl. EUS)

Elder Paul Wagenmaker (Cl. MI)  
Pastor Steve Williamson (Cl. SWON)

### **Functions and Tasks of the Synodical Missions Committee, and of the Missions Coordinator (from Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee...pt. A.1)**

1. The committee would function as an information hub for URCNA missions, encouraging communication and facilitating cooperation among URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils, joint venture committees, classis mission committees, and congregations by doing the following:
  - a. The committee shall obtain updates from the missionaries and church planters, from their respective councils, and from any joint venture committees or classis missions committees with which they are connected, for publication in the missions newsletter and missions page of the URCNA.org website.
  - b. The committee shall ascertain and remain abreast of the disparate financial needs of missionaries, and disseminate pertinent information to URCNA councils (e.g., location, family, nature & needs of a particular ministry).
  - c. The committee shall generally promote the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body.
  - d. The committee shall serve as an advisory committee to local consistories who are considering sending an ordained man to the foreign mission field in a long-term capacity. The advice of the Missions Committee should be sought by local consistories if they are considering sending such missionaries to the field.
  - e. The committee shall serve as an advisory committee to foreign missionaries, sending consistories, JVCs, and classical committees (where applicable) to help them develop entrance, continuance, and exit strategies that are in line with our adopted guidelines for foreign missions.
  - f. The committee shall gather information about the work of missions and church planting which could be contributed to a manual of helpful guidelines to assist Consistories, joint venture committees, classis missions committees, missionaries and church planters in the day-to-day activity of missions (this is addressed more specifically below).
  - g. The committee shall produce a report on the work of URCNA missions to each synod.
  - h. The committee shall have copies of the Biblical and Confessional Basis for Missions, along with the missions Policies and Guidelines, printed in booklet form and made available to all the churches.

### **II. Mission Models of Reformed Churches (CRC, OPC, URC)**

The previous synod mandated the Missions Committee to “investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model (including financing) for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are feasible for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors, and if so to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Art. 76.7, Minutes of Synod Wheaton 2018). What

follows is the fruit of the committee's research, followed by a brief history and assessment of missions in our federation.

## ***II. A. Missions Model of the Christian Reformed Church (1914-1965)***

Since there is some question as to what, precisely, the “older CRC model” would be, we will seek to summarize developments into and throughout the twentieth century, up to and including the time of the 1965 revision of the CRC Church Order.

In 1914, an English rendition of the Church Order of Dort was adapted and adopted by the CRC synod. Art. 51 of the 1914 Church Order read as follows: *The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order*. It is significant to note that the original Church Order of Dort contained no specific article pertaining to missions. Van Dellen and Monsma explain how the original Art. 51 pertained to the use of two languages in the churches of the lowlands in the seventeenth century. 1914 saw the introduction of this article on missions in place of the original focus.<sup>1</sup> It is also important to note in this article the use of the term “Church” in the singular. Van Dellen and Monsma comment as follows:

The expression “of the Church” in this Art. is singular in form but plural in significance. For, as all will grant, the term does not refer to any particular or local Church. Neither does it refer to the Church of Christ as that term is used in Art. 1 of this Church Order. It refers to all the Churches of the denomination, thought of as one united whole.<sup>2</sup>

The regulation of this work by the churches together through the decisions of the General Synod was clearly specified in this 1914 Church Order Art. 51. The guidelines by which this was to be done were also specified, namely, by a Mission Order. The Mission Order was a brief explanatory document that stood alongside of the Church Order. The 1939 Mission Order<sup>3</sup> states its purpose in a preamble: “That order and unity may be maintained in the mission work of the Church, certain rules and regulations must be observed.” It then goes on in eight articles to detail the respective responsibilities of the Synod, the Christian Reformed Board of Missions, the Executive Committee, the Field Agencies through which the board functions, the Secretary of Missions, the Calling Churches, the Ordained Missionaries, and finally, the Unordained Missionaries. This 1939 Mission Order would be most characteristic of what we might consider the “older CRC model” throughout most of the twentieth century. It was replaced in 1987.

Richard R. DeRidder, in his study, *The Development of the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Church*, chronicles the evolution of missions and its oversight in the CRC in connection with the successive Mission Orders adopted by Synod over the years. It was not until 1886, 29 years after the inception of the denomination that the CRC began its “own work among the heathen.”<sup>4</sup> In 1888, the first Mission Order was formulated, and it was very brief. It

<sup>1</sup> Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 217.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 1941: 218.

<sup>3</sup>The full title is *Mission Order for the Indian and China Missions of the Christian Reformed Church*, CRC Acts of Synod 1939: 191-195. <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1939acts.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Richard R. DeRidder, *The Development of the Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Church*, 1956: 51.

occasioned much confusion and disagreement since it failed to specify the relationship between the church and the synodical committee. The confusion was such that the first missionary was called by the synodical committee not by a church.<sup>5</sup> Synod subsequently clarified that a call should come from the local church.

The 1898 Mission Order was more elaborate than the one it succeeded, but took things in a more decidedly synodical direction, believing that not the local church, nor the board, but the synod was best suited to supervise the work of missionaries.<sup>6</sup> The Synod of 1910 went on record to declare that “the calling of missionaries to home and foreign fields should take place through a local church designated by the synod.”<sup>7</sup> We note the recognition of the necessity of the missionary’s call coming from a local church, but also note that the designation of which local church should do the calling was considered a synodical prerogative.

The 1912 Mission Order took matters in a direction that decidedly emphasized the responsibility of the local church. The appointment, rules, and supervision of the missionary “proceed from the sending church (or churches) in consultation with the Classical Missions Committee, who on occasion shall be informed of the way in which these matters are discharged at regular consistory meetings, at which they have a seat with advisory vote.”<sup>8</sup>As the mission grew, however, particularly in China, it became evident that these developments were moving beyond the capability of the local church, and in actual fact, the local church was involved in little else than calling the missionary in many cases.<sup>9</sup> In light of these developments, the 1939 Mission Order was put in place and moved things in the direction of synodical control with the appointment of The Christian Reformed Board of Missions as its “agency to carry out its decisions.”<sup>10</sup>

The 1939 Mission Order, which we take to be representative of what we would consider the “older CRC model,” proceeds next “upon the principle that Synod shall, as far as possible, control all of our denominational mission work,” by such means as determining the fields, appointing the individual churches to extend missionary calls on Synod’s behalf, and make final decisions as to the expansion or retrenchment of the work, etc.<sup>11</sup> The calling churches are “designated by Synod to call and to send out officially in the name of Synod, the missionaries chosen by Synod.”<sup>12</sup> The calling churches “shall keep in personal contact with their missionaries, and, in conjunction with the church and classis in the midst of which the missionaries labor, have oversight as to their doctrine and life.”<sup>13</sup>

The 1939 [CRC Foreign] Mission Order is available here:

<https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1939acts.pdf> on pages 191-195. Some of the details, in summary, are as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 92.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, 111.

<sup>10</sup> CRC Acts of Synod 1939: 191.

<sup>11</sup> CRC Acts of Synod 1939: 191.

<sup>12</sup>CRC Acts of Synod 1939: 194.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 194.

- The membership of the board was one delegate from each classis, and three delegates-at-large elected by Synod. They would meet annually.
- Since there were 18 classes spread over North America, the board had an executive committee, made up of the three delegates-at-large as well as a delegate from each classis in Michigan and Illinois. These ten members met bi-monthly.
- A missionary was called to a specific post in the field by an individual church, after the man, position, and calling church had been designated by Synod (or the Mission Board).
- The board had a secretary elected by Synod, whose duties were explicitly spelled out. Every year he would visit the General Conference (i.e., field committee) and the missionaries themselves. He would counsel the missionaries and promote harmony between them. Two delegates of the board would accompany him on his visits.
- There was a field committee (“General Conference”) under the oversight of the board. There is almost no description of the field committees in the 1939 order.
- The calling church was responsible for overseeing its missionary’s doctrine and life. The missionary updated his calling church and the board quarterly. The board would not change the location or nature of work of any missionary without first consulting with the missionary and calling church.
- From the 1939 Acts (p. 174), the missionaries’ salaries were paid directly by classes or by the calling churches. The mission expenses and the salaries of the unordained workers were paid by the board. A calling church could be exempted from its quota for the relevant field if it paid more than two thirds of the salary of the missionary.

Subsequently, the 1987 Mission Order replaced the 1939 Mission Order. At this point matters were effectively put into the hands of the Executive Committee in more of a centralized manner. This takes us beyond the era of the “older CRC model” and beyond any usefulness for the purposes of our study as URCNA.

There was also a corresponding Home Mission Order. The 1959 Home Mission Order of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions would be the most representative of what we might consider the “older CRC model” of home missions.<sup>14</sup> It can be found here <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1959agendaacts.pdf> on pages 202-207.

Some highlights of the 1959 CRC Home Missions Order are as follows:

- The Home Mission Board was responsible to and elected by Synod.
- The board was composed of one member from each classis, usually a member of the classical home missions committee. There were also six members-at-large – three to serve on the (central) executive committee, and three from outlying areas. The 18 member board met once a year.
- Because of the distance, the board had a smaller centrally located executive committee, with the three members-at-large carrying on the work of the board. The executive committee met once a month.
- On the board, there was a full-time executive secretary responsible for correspondence, agenda, and visits. There was also a minister of evangelism responsible for preparing plans and materials, training, providing counsel, and speaking.

<sup>14</sup>CRC *Acts of Synod 1959*: 202-206. <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1959agendaacts.pdf>

- The secretary would periodically visit the home missionaries, and visit as necessary the congregations and classes. He was to be diligent in encouraging churches to become calling and supporting churches for missionaries.
- The board was not to lord it over the local church, but to seek their consent and participation. In a new work, sometimes the board recommended that the local church take on the work. Sometimes it recommended that the board do so, with the cooperation of the church. Local churches could request aid of the board, but needed to seek this permission at the next Synod. The board functioned as “consultants to local churches carrying on a mission program.”
- Classes would bring possible new fields to the attention of the board for study.
- In terms of finances, the board received quotas from all the churches, and dispensed these funds to the home missionaries.

The articles pertaining to missions in the 1965 CRC Church Order Revision reflect well what may broadly be considered the “older CRC model.” They are as follows:

*Art. 73*

*a. In obedience to Christ’s Great Commission the churches must bring the gospel to all men at home and abroad, in order to lead them into fellowship with Christ and His Church.*

*b. In fulfilling this mandate, each consistory shall stimulate the members of the congregation to be witnesses for Christ in word and deed, and to support the work of home and foreign missions by their interests, prayers and gifts.*

*Art. 74*

*a. Each church shall bring the gospel to unbelievers in its own community. This task shall be sponsored and governed by the consistory.*

*b. This task may be executed, when conditions warrant, in cooperation with one or more neighboring churches.*

*Art. 75*

*The classes shall, whenever necessary, assist the churches in their local evangelistic programs. The classes themselves may perform this work of evangelism when it is beyond the scope and resources of the local churches. To administer these tasks each church shall have a classical home missions committee.*

*Art. 76*

*a. Synod shall encourage and assist congregations and classes in their work of evangelism and shall also carry on such home mission activities as are beyond the scope and resources of minor assemblies.*

*b. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational home missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.*

*Art. 77*

*a. Synod shall determine the field in which the joint foreign missions work of the churches is to be carried on, regulate the manner in which this task is to be performed, provide for its cooperative support, and encourage the congregations to call and support missionaries.*

*b. To administer these activities synod shall appoint a denominational foreign missions committee, whose work shall be controlled by synodical regulations.*

We believe there are helpful elements here. Considering this survey as a whole, however, it is not difficult to see how eventually and regrettably the engagement of the local church began to wane in the unfolding CRC model of missions. As URCNA we have come again to consider the emphasis on the local church engagement to be indispensable. However, our opportunities for growth and desire for greater effectiveness in our missional task also opens our eyes to the need for cooperation and coordination among us at the federational and classical levels. While the genius of our Dortian Church Order heritage emphasizes the primacy of the local church, it does not permit us to fall into the dangers of independentism, congregationalism or even consistorialism.

Classic Dortian polity has always included the following acknowledgment with regards to the work of the assemblies together. 1914 Church Order Art. 30 reads as follows:

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the Churches of the major assembly in common.

Van Dellen and Monsma helpfully explain that references to “major assemblies” and “minor assemblies” here are not to be taken in the sense of “higher” and “lower,” but in terms of larger and smaller. The URCNA Church Order captures this understanding by stipulating in URCNA Church Order Art. 16 that “Classis and synod are broader assemblies that exist only when meeting by delegation. Only the consistory is a continuing body.” URCNA Church Order 25 likewise maintains the principle that “In the broader assemblies only those matters that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches of the broader assembly in common, shall be considered.” We take note that Van Dellen and Monsma include missionary work as one of those items that pertain to the churches in common, to the effect that the churches may take action together in connection with the work that is shared in common.<sup>15</sup> This commitment and connectionalism is also reflected in the URCNA Church Order’s *Foundational Principles of Reformed Church Government* points 7-9, where it is stated “even though churches stand distinctly next to one another, they do not thereby stand disconnectedly alongside one another.”

<sup>15</sup>Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 140.

The following remarks of Van Dellen and Monsma in their 1941 *Church Order Commentary* are apropos to our study:

Reformed church polity is a well-balanced system of church government. It seeks to do full justice to the inherent rights of the individual Churches, but it also recognizes the need of cooperation and it acknowledges the authority of all the Churches working together through major assemblies.

Essentially every particular Church has the right to carry on mission work among pagan peoples. But pagan peoples are as a rule at a great distance from the Churches and one Church alone simply cannot carry on this all important and beautiful work. The obstacles and requirements are so many that individual Churches must cooperate in order to do anything at all as it ought to be done. Consequently, our Churches have agreed that their mission work should be regulated by the synodical gatherings of the Churches. Art. 51, let it be clear, does not say that only the denomination as such has the inherent right to carry on mission work. For practical reasons Art. 51 stipulates that the Churches in general through their Synods will regulate the mission work of the Churches. The Churches together can buy and sell, manage and supervise as no Church alone can do. For the progressive advancement of the work, the systematic occupation of a field, and the sound, Biblical establishment of Churches, denominational regulation is absolutely necessary.

But Art. 51 does not nullify the rights and duties of particular Churches. Neither does it nullify what has been clearly stated and regulated in other Arts of the Church Order. Thus, for example, Art. 4 and 5 clearly state that the calling to the ministry pertains to the particular or local Churches. The right to call and ordain men to the ministry is nowhere attributed to the major assemblies by the Church Order. Consequently, no major assembly should call a man to the ministry. And if, by common agreement, a Classis or Synod designates a Candidate or Minister for any particular work of the gospel ministry, then the actual call should proceed from a particular Church. And the relationship between the calling Church and the Minister concerned, in case he accepts the call, should be more than merely “official.” We should not merely seek to satisfy “the letter of the law.” The relationship between congregation and Minister should ever be real, vital, and active. Sham and mere form in matters spiritual and ecclesiastical are killing.<sup>16</sup>

In keeping with our commitments and convictions as URCNA, we desire that the engagement and responsibility of the local church to its missionary remain fundamental – “real, vital and active.” At the same time, we “[recognize] the need of cooperation and [acknowledge] the

<sup>16</sup>Van Dellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, 1941: 218-219.

authority of all the Churches working together through [broader] assemblies.” Our goal is to strike this balance.

URCNA Synod Escondido 2001 received the report entitled *Biblical and Confessional View of Missions* [https://www.urchna.org/sysfiles/site\\_uploads/pubs/SL\\_pub3419\\_1.pdf](https://www.urchna.org/sysfiles/site_uploads/pubs/SL_pub3419_1.pdf) (see pp. 101-114). In that report, one of our fundamental convictions as churches was articulated as follows:

A synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Synod of 1896, in calling our attention to the Great Commission, pointed out that the church as a whole does not baptize but only the locally instituted church. The synod does not disciple, “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded” (*An Introduction to the Science of Missions*, J.H. Bavinck, p.59-60). This echoes the pattern of the New Testament church where missions was the task and responsibility of the local church.<sup>17</sup>

While seeking to highlight and emphasize our wholehearted agreement with this core understanding, we believe it is well that we also appreciate that throughout Reformed Church history the prevalent approach has always been a combination of local initiative and federational involvement, even at the Synod of Middelburg 1896. Whereas Acts 13:1-4 provides a Biblical instance of the local church of Antioch sending Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, it’s also important to notice from 2 Cor 8:19 and 23 that Titus and other missionary helpers are said to have been sent out by the *churches* plural.<sup>18</sup> Abraham Kuypers, whose influence marked the focus of Synod Middelburg 1896 on the responsibility of the local church, would also say:

“The authority and calling to do mission lies with every local church. Since individual churches are lacking in manpower and resources it is necessary that churches cooperate for this purpose. This cooperation should be organized not by way of a separate organization but through the regular ecclesiastical structures, and be subject to decisions made by the churches in their Synod.”<sup>19</sup>

## ***II. B. Missions Model of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church<sup>20</sup>***

Before getting into the nuts and bolts of the OPC’s approach to missions, a little history lesson is in order. Due to his rejection of the liberal theology which the mainline Presbyterian church tolerated on the mission field, J. Gresham Machen in 1933 formed the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions. He was eventually suspended from the ministry for not breaking with the independent board – that suspension soon resulted in the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (1936), which almost immediately established a missions committee of its own (1937). Since that time, the OPC, which views all missions as the work of a united church, has developed a robust mission’s infrastructure that has helped their denomination remain unified, pro-active, responsible, and fruitful in their missionary endeavors. For the relatively small size of the denomination, the OPC has maintained a vigorous witness to the world, a witness that has not been hindered but greatly helped by their denominational coordination.

<sup>17</sup> URCNA *Minutes of Synod Escondido 2001*, p. 110

<sup>18</sup> Arjan de Visser in *Living Waters from Ancient Springs: Essays in Honor of Cornelius Van Dam*, 2011: 222.

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Kuypers, *Referaat*, 176. As cited and translated by de Visser, *op cit.*: 223.

<sup>20</sup> The statistical data taken from the OPC dates from 2019, when it was first compiled for Synod 2020.

The OPC has two standing committees for missions – the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension and the Committee on Foreign Missions. These committees are accountable to the General Assembly which elects fifteen men (9 ministers and 6 elders) to each – the members serve a 3-year term, open to reappointment. A “general secretary” and “associate general secretary” serve each committee; these four men are full-time employees of the OPC. The work of the two missions committees, together with the work of the Committee on Christian Education (which has its own general secretary), are voluntarily funded primarily through a combined budget known as “Worldwide Outreach” which is approved annually by the General Assembly of the OPC. Each congregation is requested to include Worldwide Outreach in its budget at a suggested per communicant rate.

### **Foreign Missions in the OPC**

The OPC seeks not only the planting of indigenous Reformed congregations in foreign lands but also the establishment of indigenous presbyteries and denominations that are composed of mutually supporting congregations – by God’s grace, this has been done in China, Ethiopia, Japan, Korea and Uganda. Seeing this great task as exceeding the means and scope of individual congregations and presbyteries in North America, the OPC erected the Committee on Foreign Missions (CFM) to oversee and conduct the work of foreign missions under the direction and control of the General Assembly for the most effective use of denominational resources in advancing the Kingdom.

The CFM meets twice each year; formulates policy in missions; provides instruction for the church in biblical missionary principles; proposes to General Assembly the opening and closing of all foreign fields; sends out missionary personnel and reviews their work; gives general administrative oversight to the work of all field missions and foreign missionaries (the appropriate presbytery/session retains the responsibility for the spiritual care and oversight of the missionary); approves the five-year plan of each field mission; and provides the majority of funding for the work of foreign missions.

The foreign missionaries, called or appointed to labor in a particular field, are organized into a “field mission” which has on-the-ground direct oversight of the work of the missionaries, plans the work of the mission, reports annually on its work to the CFM, and provides mutual accountability and encouragement. Each such missionary is a full voting member of the field mission (though, only ordained presbyters can vote on ecclesiastical or theological matters). The OPC typically looks to have at least four missionary families present on any foreign field for the health and sustainability of the mission.

Secretaries of the Committee on Foreign Missions will usually visit a foreign field at least once each year; but the committee generally works with foreign missionaries by means of subcommittees that serve in an advisory capacity. A “field subcommittee” of the CFM is responsible for monitoring the work of a single mission field and advising the CFM concerning personnel, policies, problems, etc. There are also various “operational subcommittees” that specialize in various areas of support for the missionaries (including new fields, candidates, admin./finance, and missionary training and care).

For foreign missionary personnel there is a detailed vetting process that involves multiple interviews – by the whole CFM, by their candidate’s committee, by a field sub-committee, the appropriate field mission and others. Missionaries on the foreign field send quarterly reports to the CFM, which are forwarded to the field sub-committee.

### **Home Missions in the OPC**

The OPC has erected the Committee on Home Missions & Church Extension (CHMCE) in order to evangelize and extend the church in North America. Under the direction and control of the General Assembly, the CHMCE establishes policies and provides assistance to enable presbyteries and individual churches most effectively to carry out their responsibility in home missions. The work of the committee includes promoting home missions and evangelism throughout the denomination; assisting special evangelistic ministries and new churches; evaluating the progress of mission works; facilitating training and developmental programs; and providing financial aid for individual mission works and regional home missionaries. The whole CHME meets two times each year in person and once by conference call; its executive committee has an additional meeting. The CHMCE is served by a number of sub-committees (Church Planting Subcommittee; Ministry Operations Subcommittee, Finance Subcommittee; other special subcommittees are appointed as needed).

The CHMCE will have only partial oversight of church plants in North America, and only for that period of time while its funds are needed to supplement the local giving within a plant and the financial support of the presbytery to which the plant belongs. Church planting is primarily the work of the presbyteries, many of which have a regional home missionary who helps to establish church plants. Presbyteries hold ministerial credentials of church planting pastors, supply a home missions committee and an overseeing session for oversight of a church planter (in coordination with the CHMCE), and usually contribute some portion of funding for the plant and pastor. For the first four years of a church plant, the CHMCE will provide funds through a presbytery on a declining scale (up to 50% of total budget in first year) – increasing financial support for a plant will be needed from the presbytery and/or sponsoring churches of presbytery unless internal giving is sufficient; for special fields CHMCE aid may continue beyond four years. Regional home missionaries may receive financial aid from the CHMCE (up to 50% of total salary on a scale that does not decline). The CHMCE also oversees the OPC Loan Fund which provides loans to churches for purchase of property and/or capital improvements.

Secretaries of the CHMCE will usually visit a home mission twice during the four-year span of financial support; phone calls are more frequent. Church planters and other mission personnel within a presbytery will submit monthly reports not only to their presbytery missions committee but also to the CHMCE, which may revoke financial support if church planters are delinquent in reporting.

Another important aspect of the OPC’s work in home missions and church extension is their internship program. When a year-long internship is specifically for the development of a church planter, the home mission work providing the internship pays nothing for the funding of the man; the CHMCE and the Committee on Christian Education will jointly cover the whole cost. This

allows the CHMCE to connect pastors/churches that have a proven record in church planting with prospective church planters, and to evaluate the work of those men before sending them into the mission field.

### **OPC Missions by the Numbers**

#### *OPC Foreign Missions:*

- served by 2 full-time “secretaries” (their name for coordinators)
- each secretary has a full-time clerical assistant
- 15 missionaries are currently serving on foreign fields
- 7 medium-term missionaries (1-3 years)
- 105 short-term missionaries were sent in 2019

#### *OPC Home Missions:*

- served by 2 full-time “secretaries” (their name for coordinators)
- each secretary has a full-time clerical assistant
- 8 regional home missionaries serving various presbyteries
- 42 church plants were started in 2020
- over last twenty years, 117 plants were organized; 36 closed
- many short-term teams are involved in home missions

### **Conclusion**

The secretaries serving the two OPC missions committees readily admit that their denomination can grow in various areas, from the vetting/training of personnel to the oversight and care given to missionaries. In the course of our research, a number of OPC brothers noted that in home missions they would like to see presbytery oversight augmented by the care of a sponsoring church – they very much appreciate how URCNA church planters usually have a close relationship with their overseeing consistory.

This reveals a key difference between our two communions – the OPC enjoys broad denominational coordination (as it consciously views itself as one church) and shared oversight in mission work; the URCNA enjoys a more grassroots, local and organic approach. There are pros and cons on both sides, but insofar as our federation is looking to grow more active and effective in its missionary endeavors, we ought to consider how we might retain local connectivity and consistorial oversight/care yet also develop deeper trust and unity for greater cooperation, stewardship and effectiveness in missions.

It can be argued that the extensive infrastructure in OPC missions entails a great deal of bureaucracy and spending, things that are not at all appealing to us in the URCNA. But our federation should notice how that infrastructure translates into notable benefits – (1) unified vision for the fulfillment of the Great Commission; (2) clear priorities which help in stewardship and long-term effectiveness; (3) thorough training of missionaries and other mission personnel; (4) amassing of institutional wisdom and expertise in missions; (5) ongoing promotion of

missions/evangelism throughout the denomination; (6) broadened accountability for the greater care of missionaries and for the development of their work; (7) readiness in responding to mission opportunities and mobilizing people for the work; and (8) promotion of increased unity in the church through a sense of common ownership in the work of the whole church. The OPC's mission model informs us of numerous ways in which our federation can become more faithful and fruitful in the work of missions to the glory of God.

### ***II. C. Mission Work in the URCNA – A Brief History***

The Missions Committee has been tasked with coordinating URCNA missions and working with our sending churches and missionaries. We are thankful for the privilege of serving in this way for the increase of Christ's kingdom, and we are excited about what lies ahead. The fields truly are white for harvest.

In preparation of our proposed plan (which is the next major section of this report), we asked for feedback not only from our current missionaries and their overseeing churches but also from former URCNA missionaries. Their responses were very helpful in identifying key areas where we have struggled and where we could to improve.

#### **Overview of URCNA Missions**

Since our birth, the federation has had a strong desire to be active in missions. Missionaries that came out the Christian Reformed Church were called by local churches to serve in the URCNA. Over the years we have expanded in foreign and home fields. While many works have been attempted, there have been mixed results. Some were blessed by the Lord so that they could organize, but others eventually closed. Here are some of the pertinent numbers:

#### **Home Missions in the URCNA:**

##### *(A) Church Plants (and Daughter Churches) That Have Organized:*

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Grand Rapids, MI        | 11. New York City, NY |
| 2. Apple Valley, CA        | 12. Des Moines, IA    |
| 3. Brea, CA (became RPCNA) | 13. Sioux Falls, SD   |
| 4. Oceanside, CA           | 14. Rock Valley, IA   |
| 5. Santee, CA              | 15. Sioux Center, IA  |
| 6. Pasadena, CA            | 16. Brantford, ON     |
| 7. Twin Falls, ID          | 17. Washington D.C.   |
| 8. Portland, OR            | 18. Cincinnati, OH    |
| 9. Missoula, MT            | 19. Zeltenreich, PA   |
| 10. Clovis, CA             | 20. Regina, SK        |

##### *(B) Current Home Works That Have Not Yet Organized:*

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ajax, ON        | 9. Gig Harbor, WA |
| 2. Scarborough, ON | 10. Vancouver, WA |

- |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3. Ventura, CA          | 11. Chicago Heights, IL              |
| 4. Jersey City, NJ      | 12. Ontario, CA                      |
| 5. Poconos, PA          | 13. St. Catherines, ON               |
| 6. Colorado Springs, CO | 14. Niagara Falls, ON                |
| 7. Big Springs, CA      | 15. Covenant Chinese Church, Anaheim |
| 8. Santa Clarita, CA    | 16. Madison, IN                      |
|                         | 17. Indianapolis, IN                 |

(C) *Church Plants That Closed:*

- |                    |                                  |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Las Vegas, NV   | 8. Holland, MI                   |
| 2. Rifle, CO       | 9. Muskegon, MI                  |
| 3. Kauai, HI       | 10. Waterdown, ON                |
| 4. Boring, OR      | 11. Cambridge, MD                |
| 5. Hanford, CA     | 12. Princess Anne, MD            |
| 6. Tinley Park, IL | 13. Springfield, MO (became ARP) |
| 7. Prinsburg, MN   |                                  |

(D) *3 ordained men work full-time in theological education in prisons (Divine Hope)*

(E) *2 non-ordained men work full-time in URC churches*

**Foreign Missions in the URCNA:**

(A) *Active Foreign Fields (with ordained missionaries):*

- |                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Costa Rica        | 5. Perugia, Italy                |
| 2. Mexico            | 6. Ecuador                       |
| 3. Honduras (vacant) | 7. Romania                       |
| 4. Milan, Italy      | 8. Uganda (working with the OPC) |
|                      | 9. Turkey                        |

(B) *6 Missionaries working in theological training at home or abroad (MINTS)*

(C) *Foreign fields where missionaries were sent but later retracted:*

1. Costa Rica
2. India
3. Philippines
4. Trinidad
5. Honduras

**General Observations**

1. Our federation's commitment to missions is evident in the works that have been begun at home and abroad.

## 2. In Home Missions:

- 20 churches have been planted and organized over the last 25 years;
- a majority of those works organized in the URCNA's first decade;
- 17 church plants are active but not yet organized;
- 13 others have closed (one group moved from URC to ARP).

## 3. In Foreign Missions:

- 2 active fields have closed and 2 new fields have been added;
- we are having difficulty replacing numerous missionaries who near retirement;
- we have very few non-ordained men or women working as missionary associates.

### Analysis

We rejoice over the numerous mission efforts that the Lord has blessed over these last 25 years. Our missionaries served in many places throughout the world, and the fruit of their labors is very evident. The purpose of this report is to look at our history and to give due consideration to how we can learn from the past. The high rate of closure in our mission works is not a mere statistic. It means that the lives of numerous missionaries, their families, and hundreds of congregants have been profoundly affected. As we consider how we might grow in missions, it is important to ask ourselves what lessons we should learn. Having been involved in our mission works over the last several years, here are some of our conclusions:

#### *1. Some Consistories have done well in overseeing missionaries; others have had difficulties.*

- For the most part, oversight has often gone well for large churches that have the resources, strong leadership, and the man-power to handle the work.
- Some churches have admitted that the job was beyond their scope of expertise so that they were overwhelmed by the work of overseeing a missionary –
  - a) In some of foreign fields, visitation was very sporadic (e.g. once in five to ten years).
  - b) Personnel change in Councils or JVCs has impeded continuity in oversight.
  - c) Long-term commitment has been difficult to maintain in certain fields.
- Several churches, after attempting to send a missionary to a field and failing, have expressed their reluctance to try again. Multiple classes have the money and the desire to plant, but the churches are either unwilling or unable to oversee.

#### *2. Some missionaries have thrived under our present system; others have not.*

- The mission field can be very lonely, and many of our missionaries have labored many years without a co-laborer in the Gospel.
- When missionaries reach retirement, caring for the work and transitioning the missionary either into new roles of service or a return to North America has led to difficulties. A number of our former missionaries made it clear that they were

disappointed by the way their work was concluded and in some cases it had a profound effect on those who served faithfully for decades.

3. *When a field has been closed (sometimes due to the lack of long-term planning), those attending the mission work were adversely affected.*

- In some fields, this was done without consultation with the missionary on the field.
- This process has sometimes been very quick (months or even weeks) without proper consideration of the long-term effects on the missionary and on those he served.

4. *We have had difficulty resolving difficulties and divisions in the majority of our foreign fields.*

5. *Some of our works have been started through the vision of one individual who then engages in the work largely by himself.* This is especially the case in foreign missions. It has seldom happened that a local church develops a heart and a vision for a particular field, then investigates that field and seeks to call a missionary. The norm is that a new mission work begins because of the interest and passion of one man. In some instances the sending church has not visited the field prior to sending the missionary; instead, they have relied solely on his testimony.

6. *There are many opportunities in missions that we are missing as a federation.*

- We have very few opportunities for lay people to serve as missionary associates.
- Many of our youth must move outside the URCNA to work in short-term missions.
- Many men who began training or serving in the URC have moved on to work with other denominations due to a shortage of ministry onramps and places to serve.

### **Conclusion**

The Missions Committee submits the following proposals to the churches based on careful examination of the blessings and trials of our past and present practices. Given our relative youth as a federation, it took careful examination of the past and present models of other denominations for us to determine how best to move into the future. Above all, we have prayed to our Lord and searched His Word. Jesus gave us a Great Commission; He also gave us the two great commandments – to love the Lord God with all our heart; to love our neighbors as ourselves. No mission plan will guarantee fulfillment of our calling. But our Savior King continues to bless our imperfect efforts, even as He grows us into more faithful stewards of the glorious riches that He has granted us. In humble confidence, please carefully consider the two plans that follow – and pray that the Lord God would be pleased to guide our churches into great unity and maturity by His Word and Spirit.

### **III. Majority Report: Strengthening Missions as a Covenanted Body of Churches**

Having researched the older CRC missions model and the current approach of the OPC (and having carefully reflected on our own history in URCNA missions) our committee has worked hard to develop a plan of action that we could recommend to our churches. It has been particularly challenging to formulate a balanced plan that could help us achieve greater cooperation and accountability while minimizing bureaucracy and distrust. It is our hope that the plan which is presented here accomplishes this goal.

### ***III. A. The Plan for Home Missions (Majority)***

Our goal is to work with the churches to promote more intentional church planting in North America. We believe that, domestically, we have good structures through which we can operate. We have been blessed to see that the church planting manual, *How to Plant a Reformed Church* (developed by the Missions Committee), has been well received and utilized throughout the federation. As we continue to grow on this strong foundation, we make only five key recommendations to strengthen home missions.

- 1) *The majority of churches were planted in the first decade.* In the last fifteen years fewer churches have been able/willing to plan, send and support new church plants.
- 2) *More work could be accomplished by our federation.* In the OPC (which has about the same number of souls as we have in the URCNA) 117 churches have been organized in the last twenty years, and 43 churches are currently being planted. We believe that our federation needs to develop a much greater vision for church planting at home.
- 3) *A broader support network is needed.* While sending churches have done an admirable job in supporting church-planters, some of our men have felt isolated, and have expressed a need for more support. Numerous church-planters have experienced burnout.
- 4) *Church-planters and their calling Consistories could be greatly helped by a ready network of counsel and encouragement made up of fellow workers who have experience in facing common challenges.* The wider body is helped when we are sharpened by one another.

To strengthen church planting at home, we present the following three recommendations to synod:

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** That synod direct each classis to establish (or maintain where already existing) a Classical Committee on Home Missions (CCHM) for promoting and strengthening evangelism and church planting throughout classis.

The present recommendation does not seek to move the federation from its commitment (as expressed in Art. 47 of the C.O.) to have a single consistory bear responsibility for calling and overseeing a church planter. The goal is to broaden our approach in supporting a consistory through an *advisory* committee that will help it to engage church planting with greater readiness, responsibility, and resilience. Such a committee would bring together in a particular classis

those men who are especially committed to and engaged in church planting so that they might encourage each other in the work, report to one another on progress and problems, advise one another, investigate fields and plan new church plants. In doing so, we believe it would create a practical help for church planters that fits the “Advice for Church Planters” outlined in *How To Plant a Reformed Church*.

**Suggested Guidelines for CCHMs:** What follows are suggestions that may help a classis in shaping the mandate of its Classical Committee on Home Missions:

- a. Composition of committee: Three to five at-large members of classis (pastors and elders with experience and expertise in evangelism and missions); all active church planters in classis; a representative from each overseeing consistory.
- b. Work of the Classical Committee on Home Missions –
  - (1) encourage church-planters and aid their sending consistories;
  - (2) encourage outreach and evangelism in all the churches of classis;
  - (3) investigate potential fields as well as inquiries that arise in the region to:
    - inform the consistories regarding potential new fields
    - connect consistories with selected fields;
  - (4) work with overseeing consistories and church plants to provide internships for identifying/training church planters (which could entail the maintenance of a classical fund that will cover or offset internship costs that most churches cannot handle);
  - (5) give advice to classis regarding the sending and removing of church planters;<sup>21</sup>
  - (6) keep the churches aware of financial needs in the support of church planters;
  - (7) report to classis on the work of the committee in general;
  - (8) disseminate updates throughout classis on current church plants;
  - (9) where difficulties between calling churches and missionaries arise, classical church visitors from the committee could be invited to assist in resolving problems;
  - (10) work toward the creation of a Classical Home Mission Fund to help new missions get established and to fund those that are lacking support.

### **Grounds for Recommendation #1:**

1. Jesus calls us to, “Go and make disciples of all the nations” (Mt. 28:19). Classical Committees on Home Missions can proactively consider new areas of church planting, and promote this among the churches in a way that local churches seldom can do.
2. Classical Committees on Home Missions will serve as the means by which church planters and mission-focused individuals within classis and among sending churches unite their thoughts and prayers for mutual encouragement, improved accountability, and ongoing help/education.

<sup>21</sup> This would be in conjunction with the proposed change to Church Order Article 47 found elsewhere in the Synodical Agenda.

3. The establishment of such committees will encourage more consistories to engage in church planting in the confidence that they will have the support of others with experience in the field.
4. Church planters and the people they serve will have greater security with the support and advice of a whole classis.<sup>22</sup>
5. CCHMs will encourage evangelism, outreach and disciple-making throughout classes.

**RECOMMENDATION #2:** That synod establish a Synodical Committee on Home Missions composed of one representative from each classis<sup>23</sup> for the purpose of developing church planting resources and promoting communication and support between the classes of the federation.

*(Note: the SCHM would partially replace the federation's current Missions Committee if that committee were to split in two in order to focus on Home and Foreign missions, respectively.)*

**Suggested Guidelines for the SCHM:** What follows are suggestions to help synod in shaping the mandate of a Synodical Committee on Home Missions:

- a. Composition of the Committee: a representative from each classis, plus a Home Missions Coordinator (if approved in the recommendation that follows). It might be ideal for each classis representative also to be serving on a Classical Committee on Home Missions (see Recommendation #1 above).
- b. Work of the Synodical Committee on Home Missions:
  - (1) meet four times each year (most meetings conducted remotely);
  - (2) report to synod regarding the committee's work and the state of church planting;
  - (3) report to each classis by means of classis representative serving the committee;
  - (4) maintain a website for posting news, resources, etc.;
  - (5) develop resources for evangelism, disciple-making, and church planting;
  - (6) develop tools for consistories/classes to use in the evaluation of church planters/plants;
  - (7) facilitate training and developmental programs for home missions;
  - (8) when requested, advise Classical Committees on Home Missions;
  - (9) annually inform the federation of the varying financial needs of church plants.

**Grounds for Recommendation #2:**

1. Church planting seems to become more difficult each year in our post/anti-Christian society. While church planting at home is best executed by consistories in connection with and aided by classis, this work would be enhanced through broader communication, prayer support, and practical advice that could be generated through a synodical committee that devoted its attention to this sole purpose.

<sup>22</sup> Particularly if the overture regarding CO Art. 47 is adopted.

<sup>23</sup> And the Home Missions Coordinator, if that position be created by Synod

2. A Synodical Committee on Home Missions will continue to facilitate federation-wide communication that will promote the development and implementation of effective and responsible church planting practices.
3. Such a committee could help facilitate onramps to ministry (e.g. internships) which utilize gifts and resources across the entire federation so that we might be better equipped to retain, attract, develop and employ seminarians.
4. The good promotion of both home and foreign missions in the federation is well served through two separate committees. It would be wise for us to emulate this division of labor which is well-attested throughout the history of faithful denominations.

**RECOMMENDATION #3:** That synod create a full-time position for a Home Missions Coordinator who serves the Synodical Committee on Home Missions.

*(Note: the current Missions Coordinator could become the Foreign Missions Coordinator).*

Description: The Home Missions Coordinator would work to encourage all our home missionaries and their respective classes; he would work to recruit and train church planters. He would also be involved (as time allows) on a local level in helping a fledgling or troubled church plant and/or living temporarily in an area where a new plant might be developed. As with all ordained ministers in our federation, his own consistory would oversee his doctrine and life.

Specific Tasks of the Home Missions Coordinator:

- a. The HMC will serve the Synodical Committee on Home Missions by communicating with churches about the work of home missions.
- b. He shall maintain a connection with all church planters in North America.
- c. He shall remain abreast of the financial status/needs of each plant, and publish this data for the churches, along with the amount of money needed to support URCNA missions.
- d. He shall periodically visit church planters for encouragement, exhortation, preaching and teaching in order to assist calling churches and mission workers as requested by either party.
- e. He shall help interested seminary students and interested mission workers find avenues for practical experience as they seek to serve in the URCNA.
- f. He shall work with the Synodical Committee on Home Missions to maintain the federation's missions webpage ([urcnaMissions.org](http://urcnaMissions.org)).
- g. He shall work with the Foreign Missions Coordinator as necessary.
- h. The Home Missions Coordinator may assist the churches/classes with the organization and promotion of missions conferences.
- i. He may assist in service trips and other needs of church plants as requested by church planters and their overseeing consistories.
- j. He may assist churches in need of revitalization as opportunity allows.

### **Grounds for Recommendation #3:**

1. In researching the approach to missions in the older CRC and the current OPC, we found that both recognized the importance of full-time secretaries/coordinators who can serve the churches with a focus upon *either* the foreign *or* the home work of missions.
2. A Home Missions Coordinator will help divide the labor and allow the Missions Committee(s) to work in a way that balances needs of foreign and home fields.
3. Financial support from our churches has been very strong for the current missions coordinator as well as for new mission works that have started in the last six years.
4. The HMC will be able to aid churches who may need help in revitalization, which is currently beyond the scope of a single missions coordinator.
5. The HMC would be a pastor for pastors in church planting, sharing practical advice and giving pastoral care to many of our men serving on the front lines of missionary endeavor.

**RECOMMENDATION #4:** That synod approve the hiring of Rev. Paul Murphy as the interim Home Missions Coordinator, pending his receiving a call to this work from a URCNA congregation. This position shall:

- a. terminate at the next Synod;
- b. be structured in accordance with synod's decisions in response to recommendation #3, above;
- c. be a full-time position with compensation and budget from the federation as follows (in USD):

Salary (including housing): \$108,000

Benefits: \$21,500

Office: \$3,000

Travel and Mileage: \$15,000

Social Security: \$8,000

### **Grounds for Recommendation #4:**

1. If Synod Niagara were to establish the position of a Home Missions Coordinator in answer to Recommendation #3, it might take years to fill this role. In light of the difficulty of meeting as synod in recent years, the additional stress Covid and its regulations have caused for church leaders (leading many to burnout), and the incredible opportunity we have to bring the Gospel to a hurting world, we believe that it would be best to establish and fill this role immediately.
2. Rev. Murphy has served the churches of the URCNA faithfully and fruitfully. He was a minister for thirteen years at Dutton URC. He has served as a church-planting pastor at Messiah's Reformed Fellowship in New York City for twenty years. He has also served

as the chairman of the Classical Church Planting Committee in Classis Eastern US for about twelve years. He is a well-known veteran in the federation, having a track record of relevant, fruitful, consistent service in his zealous promotion of worship and missions as the church's preeminent tasks and identity.

3. Rev. Murphy planted a church in New York City, one of the harshest and most unforgiving mission fields in North America. Furthermore, the church he currently pastors has planted another church in the metropolitan area. As such, he is endowed with an intimate knowledge of the challenges of home missions and well suited to encourage and help other domestic church plants and planters, as well as offer assistance to their overseeing consistories.
4. As a member of the URCNA Missions Committee, Rev. Murphy has good knowledge of the committee's work, and should be well-equipped to step into this position quickly and fulfill his tasks competently.

**RECOMMENDATION #5:** That synod invite the churches to bring nominations to the following synod for the Home Missions Coordinator position using the already approved procedure for nominating a Missions Coordinator.<sup>24</sup> Namely:

1. Each classis is encouraged to nominate a minister of the Word<sup>25</sup> for the position of Home Missions Coordinator. Nominations shall include:
  - a. The church council that is prepared to supervise the minister of the Word who would also function as the federation's HMC. This minister may already serve this council and its local church, or he might be a minister to whom the council would extend a new call, pending his appointment to the position of Coordinator by synod.
  - b. A clarification of whether the calling church would be lending this man to the work of the HMC as a full-time position or whether the calling church envisions for the man a division of labor between the local church and the broader federation. (Although it would be ideal for the minister to be fully on loan to the federation for the work of missions, the calling council may wish to retain the man for some degree of local ministry, and this should be outlined to synod in the nomination.)
  - c. A compensation plan for the Coordinator in his work and, if applicable, the level of support that will be coming from the calling congregation. The compensation plan should focus on adequate provision of salary, housing, medical, and retirement needs (CO, Art. 10), based on cost of living in the area of the calling church, as well as suggested amounts for items like office, equipment, and travel. The committee will make itself available to interested churches to help set ballpark figures in this regard. Details of the proposed compensation will be subject to the approval of synod.

<sup>24</sup> This procedure was approved at a previous synod.

<sup>25</sup> Two Synods (2012, 2014) have concluded that the work of the Missions Coordinator is not strictly secretarial, and that the man serving in this position should be an ordained minister of the Word.

- d. A brief introduction to the man; which should include a resume of service in the church and the particular gifts and experience that such a man would bring to the position of Home Missions Coordinator.
2. From the pool of nominees Synod shall elect a Home Missions Coordinator. The election shall be by a majority vote, taken by ballot.

### **Grounds for Recommendation #5:**

1. This process is already approved by synod, and will be necessary to fill the position should synod create it.

*This concludes the changes to Home Missions proposed by the Majority Report. We now move on to recommendations for strengthening Foreign Missions.*

### ***III. B. The Plan for Foreign Missions (Majority)***

We thank God for what we have accomplished in foreign missions over these last twenty-five years. Presently we have six ordained missionaries serving in six countries, two partner families working with the OPC, plus one diaconal missionary. At Synod Wyoming (2016) we adopted the URCNA *Foreign Missions Manual* which set forth both the importance of cooperation and the practical steps for how cooperation could progress. As we propose a plan for improving our commitment to function as a covenanted body of churches on foreign mission fields, we are proposing some structural changes based on the research Synod Wheaton (2018) directed us to perform. In proposing these changes we intend to remain fully in line with the principles that synod has already endorsed in the *Foreign Missions Manual*; many of the emphases of that manual are now recommended with practical changes that may, with God's blessing, strengthen our faithfulness and fruitfulness in foreign missions.

Before getting into the recommendations, we want to share three keys points:

1. Due to the nature and complexity of foreign missions, we believe that our federation is best served through making federational cooperation foundational to our foreign mission works. Our goal is to maximize involvement and activity in foreign missions within each congregation, while at the same time promoting stronger federational support and accountability in foreign missions. This admittedly calls for humility and mutual submission from all parties working together in foreign missions, including consistories and any committees that might be created. Our genuine hope is that through more advice and cooperation on our foreign fields we will more responsibly, faithfully and effectively work for the increase of Christ's kingdom abroad.
2. We believe that most of our recommendations build upon previous decisions of synod, including the approval of our *Foreign Missions Manual* as advice for the churches. We encourage all consistories to review the FMM (available at [www.urnamissions.org/resources.html](http://www.urnamissions.org/resources.html)) and past synodical decisions in this regard.

3. An overture to amend Church Order Article 47 was approved at Classis Ontario Southwest. This overture seeks to make it a requirement for a consistory to obtain the concurring advice of its classis in sending or removing a missionary from a foreign field. Some of the recommendations below cite this overture since the proposed church order stipulation would serve such an important role in helping the federation to develop greater cooperation in foreign missions. (Some “working examples” of how this would function are found in “Appendix One to the Majority Report.”)

We have identified five areas where we need to grow

- a. The complexities of sending a family to a field and bringing that family home have often exceeded the ability of a single church. Guidelines can be helpful, but consistories often need assistance in working through such processes.
- b. When conflict and division arise on the foreign field, sending churches have experienced great difficulty in resolving issues – in numerous cases, consistories and missionaries have had to part ways.
- c. Most of our foreign fields have only one missionary, and in the two countries where we have two missionaries the coordination between these men and their overseeing consistories could grow. Moreover, we are lacking not only the vision to develop foreign fields but also a mechanism by which missionary teams can be deployed.
- d. The federation is missing numerous opportunities in foreign missions. More missions infrastructure would help the recruitment, training, and employment of capable men and women who might help us strengthen our foreign fields. This is sufficiently demonstrated by the great contrast between the URCNA and the OPC numbers on foreign fields – our federation has around one-hundred-and-twenty potential sending agencies (i.e. consistories) but only six foreign missionaries; the OPC has a single sending agency (Committee on Foreign Missions) that has deployed 22 full-time missionaries and 105 short-term.
- e. Some of our young people interested in serving in medium-term missions (1-3 years) are going to other denominations. We believe that it would be very helpful for our federation to develop opportunities and training ministries for long- and medium-term missions.

**Recommendation # 6A:** That synod appoint a Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions (or direct one half of the current Synodical Missions Committee to become the SCFM) to advise the federation, classes, consistories, and mission works in starting, strengthening, and at times closing foreign mission fields.

Composition of the SCFM: One representative appointed by each classis, two at large members appointed by synod, and the Missions Coordinator (or Foreign Missions Coordinator, if that

position is created by synod). All committee members should have experience in foreign missions, the desire to work closely with a team, and the ability and willingness to travel.

#### Work of the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions:

1. To continue the regular work of the previous synodical Missions Committee by serving the federation through the development of policies, training, and resources for foreign missions (see previous mandates given to the Missions Committee).
2. To serve the federation by advising consistories that seek to open or close a foreign field.<sup>26</sup>
3. To receive and publish the reports, goals and concerns of the various foreign fields to the churches of the federation in order to encourage and facilitate greater unity throughout the federation in prayer and in the use of resources (e.g. manpower, money, etc.) – this will help us achieve our goal of establishing and/or strengthening foreign federations composed of faithful Reformed churches.
4. To help all consistories to become involved in foreign missions by providing expertise, advice and coordination in the expansion of current fields.
5. To aid in the investigation and planning of new foreign fields, where applicable.
6. To work with consistories through “field committees”<sup>27</sup> that will determine the particular posts that are to be occupied on foreign fields, and to communicate throughout the federation where there is need for more missionaries.
7. To aid in developing potential missionaries by connecting interested individuals with current missionaries (and with calling consistories, where necessary) for short-term service abroad;
8. To work with young people who are interested in foreign missions by organizing internships, cross-cultural missions training, and medium- to long-term mission trips;
9. To serve as an advisory body to the classes of the federation when they consider sending missionaries or removing them from foreign fields.<sup>28</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION #6B:** That synod approve the creation of field committees which will integrate resources and personnel in the URCNA for the supervision of particular foreign mission fields. A foreign mission field is a geographic and cultural region where the URCNA is seeking to establish and strengthen local congregations for the glory of God (for example: Mexico, Ecuador, Italy, Romania, etc.).

#### Composition of a Field Committee for a Particular Foreign Field:

- two to three office bearers (active or inactive) from each sending church with missionaries or long-term missionary helpers on a particular field;<sup>29</sup>
- two representatives of the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions (see recommendation 6A);
- all missionaries and long-term (two years and over) missionary helpers on the field;

<sup>26</sup> This would be in conjunction with the proposed change to Church Order Article 47 found elsewhere in the Synodical Agenda.

<sup>27</sup> See Recommendation 6B

<sup>28</sup> This particular work is in line with the overture recommending changes to Art. 47 of the Church Order.

<sup>29</sup> With only one missionary on a foreign field, the sending church will need more individuals on this committee to share the load. As more missionaries and long-term missionary helpers join the field under God’s blessing, the number of representatives from each sending church would decrease.

- the Missions Coordinator (or Foreign Missions Coordinator) as an advisory/non-voting member.<sup>30</sup>

Work of the Field Committee:

1. To meet regularly for the mutual encouragement, accountability, and prayer support of the particular foreign field.
2. To supervise the field itself by means of:
  - establishing priorities;
  - setting a budget for mission expenses beyond the salary and care of missionaries or missionary helpers and their families;<sup>31</sup>
  - encouraging mission zeal on the field;
  - encouraging zeal in sending congregations through regular communication;
  - growing the mission by determining particular posts that could be occupied on the field, and recommending these posts to the churches;
  - helping with the stabilization of the field in the event of retirements or furloughs;
  - giving help in times of crisis;
  - determining the suitability of prospective candidates who are being considered for work on the mission.
3. To encourage broader support for the mission by facilitating communication among the consistories, the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions, the classes and the mission field.
4. To visit the field by means of delegation, in cooperation with sending churches, at least once every two years.
5. To serve as an advisory body to the classes of the federation:
  - a. when they seek advice about sending new missionaries;
  - b. when they seek advice about removing missionaries from foreign fields;<sup>32</sup>
  - c. when there are inter-personal tensions on the field.
6. To work directly with office bearers on the field so that their perspectives and opinions are carefully considered. With time, the local leadership will take more responsibility for the direction and decisions made on the field.

**RECOMMENDATION # 6C:** That synod affirm that the local consistory has exclusive authority –

- a) to call/send missionaries and missionary helpers, and to oversee their life and doctrine.
- b) to aid the mission work in the spiritual care of its people, as is necessary and appropriate.

In light of the above, every sending consistory should:

<sup>30</sup> Field committees would function much like the Joint Venture Committees that were approved at Synod Escondido (2001). Field committees, however, would automatically give us federation-wide representation, cooperation, and communication, thus gaining some of the benefits gleaned from our research of the old CRC and current OPC models of missions.

<sup>31</sup> Salaries remain exclusively under the calling consistory, and budgets for additional expenses must be supported and overseen by one of the sending churches involved in the field.

<sup>32</sup> This particular work is in line with the overture recommending changes to Art. 47 of the Church Order.

1. have two qualified church representatives actively serving on a field committee;
2. acquire a thorough knowledge of that field with which they are involved;
3. maintain regular contact with the missionary and his family for ongoing faithfulness in overseeing the missionary's life and doctrine;
4. have a representative visit the missionary at least once every two years;
5. ensure adequate financial support for the missionary (or long-term missionary helper) and his (her) family where applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION #6D:** That synod encourage but not mandate involvement in the new plan for foreign missions for all sending churches of the federation.

**Grounds for Recommendation #6A-D:**

1. Throughout our history many decisions have been made in an effort to encourage the faithful and fruitful promotion of Christ's kingdom outside of the United States and Canada. At Synod Escondido 2001 we adopted the idea of using Joint Venture Committees to aid the churches in overseeing and caring for foreign missionaries. At Synod Nyack 2012 we agreed to "make every effort to unify all of our resources (gifts, talents, and finances) as one united federation in order to bring the gospel from our homes and churches to the nations of the world."<sup>33</sup> At Synod Wyoming 2016 we adopted the *URCNA Foreign Missions Manual* as helpful guidelines to assist consistories, missionaries and church planters in the day-to-day activity of foreign missions.<sup>34</sup> The current proposal takes numerous elements not only from all past decisions of the URCNA in connection with foreign missions but also from the lessons learned in researching the successes and failures of sister churches and our own history, and combines these things in a way that faithfully promotes meaningful and intentional cooperation throughout the federation, while keeping local consistories and congregations intimately involved in the work of foreign missions.
  
2. While the oversight of missionaries (and missionary helpers) remains exclusively under the calling consistory, this new model makes the development of our mission fields a matter of federational cooperation, ownership, and care. Knowing that the work of foreign missions is a complex undertaking, and that the Lord directs us to seek safety in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14), we maintain that by voluntarily committing ourselves to meaningful cooperation on the foreign field through field committees, a SCFM, and classical advice, we can:
  - better protect against mistakes that can hurt missionaries and those they serve;
  - provide practical accountability to sending consistories, and decrease the possibility that faithful oversight of the mission will be neglected in times when work in the local church becomes overwhelming;

<sup>33</sup> Acts of Synod Nyack 2012, pp. 516-517.

<sup>34</sup> Acts of Synod Wyoming 2016, Article 64.10.

- demonstrate humility and teamwork that will better reflect the principles and patterns we find in Scripture, and thus better promote the cause of Christ in the nations and better care for those sent to serve that cause;<sup>35</sup>
  - strive to strengthen current fields before starting new ones.
3. The partnership among our churches, sending consistories and those serving on foreign fields will be greatly strengthened by this approach. Owning foreign fields as a united federation (by means of consistorial partnership in field committees and a Synodical Foreign Missions Committee) will create a more united vision for our mission to the world, and help pool resources that are often beyond the reach of a local church without minimizing its involvement in the mission.
  4. The involvement of the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions and the employment of field committees will help us to establish, develop and maintain foreign fields in a more productive and responsible way. It will help us practically apply what we have already agreed upon in our *Foreign Missions Manual*: to commit ourselves to the bolstering of current fields with a team approach, and to carefully research new fields so as not to render the federation ineffective by spreading ourselves too thin. We can expect such humble and intentional partnership to result in greater readiness, responsibility, and resilience in foreign missions.
  5. The work of those serving in foreign missions will be far more encouraging, edifying and enjoyable than in our current model. Representatives from sending consistories, from the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions, and from the foreign mission itself will spend the vast majority of their time together in hands-on work, growing through shared knowledge and prayer, and encouraging one another by means of their field committee connection. This will build camaraderie and mutual support among sending churches, missionaries, and denominational representatives in a way that practically demonstrates our unity in mission. We can expect this new approach to result in greater faithfulness and effectiveness in foreign missions for the increasing joy of all parties involved, and ultimately for God's glory.
  6. By strengthening federational cooperation we will assist sending consistories in improving support and care for their missionary while also strengthening the responsible care of a respective field. By working with a team, consistories will better understand the foreign field, the training that is requisite for deployment, and what proper care of their missionary will involve. Moreover, a consistory will give that care to its missionary in partnership with the synodical/field committee that allows for a more “field-driven” mission, as opposed to a “top-down” approach.
  7. Historically, a majority of Reformed and Presbyterian communions have favored a more “denominational” approach to foreign missions. God has greatly blessed many communions that have partnered in this way for more faithful stewardship in the use of his gifts. The 1939 model used by the CRC was a great blessing to that denomination in

<sup>35</sup> One should note that this idea is supported both in the *Foreign Missions Manual* (pp. 5-6) adopted in 2016 and in the original argumentation for Joint Venture Committees adopted by Synod Escondido 2001 (Acts, pp. 112-113).

helping them to send many hundreds of missionaries and missionary helpers in a coordinated way. Something very similar can be seen in the work of the OPC today.

8. A Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions under these guidelines will help provide an infrastructure that creates more onramps for men and women to serve on the foreign field. Over the last few years we have noticed that several URCNA members (missionaries, seminary students, and others interested in missions) leave our churches to serve in other NAPARC communions that possess greater vision and infrastructure for missions. With the sending consistories and federated churches working together through field committees, the establishment of a broader support network for long-term faithful and effective care of both the mission field and missionaries will create an attractive and exciting place in which to serve the Lord.
9. Nearly all of our current sending churches have committees to aid them in overseeing the mission field. This plan reinforces our current model with broader cooperation across the federation.

**RECOMMENDATION # 7:** That synod reassign the current Missions Coordinator to become the interim full-time Foreign Missions Coordinator who works alongside the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions.

Specific Tasks of the Foreign Missions Coordinator:

- a. To visit missionaries and their fields from time to time, as directed by the SCFM for the purpose of counseling them concerning their work, and promoting such understanding and harmonious cooperation between the workers of the various posts as shall secure the harmony and advancement of the work.\*
- b. As time allows, to visit potential fields or current fields for longer periods of time in order to assist missionaries, or to investigate new fields.
- c. To assist the SCFM in all their work.
- d. To serve as an advisory member on the various field committees.
- e. To visit as many classical meetings and congregations as occasion may require, or as the SCFM may advise and his other duties will permit. The purpose of these visits shall be to enlighten our people on the subject of missions in all its branches, to stimulate prayer for missions, and to encourage participation in the work of missions.\*
- f. He shall encourage young men and women to consecrate themselves to the cause of missions, and help them through the process of preparing to go to the field.\*
- g. To promote and organize mission festivals and conferences, and to present the cause of missions upon these occasions.\*
- h. He shall promote giving, by individuals and congregations, and publish financial needs of foreign mission works to the churches.\*
- i. He shall provide the SCFM with bi-monthly reports of his work.\*
- j. To work together with the Home Missions Coordinator as necessary.
- k. To edit and publish (together with the Home Missions Coordinator) *The Trumpet*, and to distribute other missionary newsletters and information.
- l. To maintain (together with the HMC) the URCNA Missions website.

*\* The asterisks above indicate language taken from the 1939 CRC mission order.*

**Grounds for Recommendation #7:**

1. The work of foreign missions is a great God-glorifying task. A Foreign Missions Coordinator (FMC) will help promote this work, enabling the federation and its missions committees to maintain a balanced and conscientious approach to foreign and home missions, and to engage more efficiently in the work that is peculiar to each.
2. For the last seven years Rev. Richard Bout has faithfully served as the Missions Coordinator for the federation. If the synod decides to establish a SCFM, Rev. Richard Bout would bring experience, devotion and expertise to the role.
3. The current Missions Committee found that both missions models that it researched recognized the importance of full-time coordinators/secretaries who can serve the churches with a focus upon either the foreign or domestic work.
4. Financial support from the churches has been very strong for the current missions coordinator position as well as for new mission works that have begun in the last few years.
5. A Foreign Missions Coordinator will help the federation to recruit seminarians for foreign missions by developing and helping to maintain onramps to foreign fields. Together with the Home Missions Coordinator, the FMC can arrange internships and guide interested parties to the foreign field.
6. While the current Missions Committee has greatly appreciated the work of Rev. Richard Bout, having him serve in this capacity in an interim position will give the churches the opportunity to consider others who might also serve well in this role.

**RECOMMENDATION #8:** That Synod invite the churches to bring nominations to the following Synod for the Foreign Missions Coordinator position using the already approved procedure for nominating a Missions Coordinator.<sup>36</sup> Namely:

1. Each classis is encouraged to nominate a minister of the Word<sup>37</sup> for the position of Foreign Missions Coordinator. Nominations shall include:
  - a. The church council that is prepared to supervise the minister of the Word who would also function as the federation's FMC. This minister may already serve the council and their local church, or he might be a minister to whom the council would extend a new call, pending his appointment to the position of Coordinator by synod.

<sup>36</sup> This format was approved at Synod.

<sup>37</sup> Two Synods (2012, 2014) have endorsed the job of Missions Coordinator as requiring an ordained man rather than being strictly secretarial.

- b. A clarification of whether the calling church would be lending this man to the work of the FMC as a full-time position or whether the calling church envisions for the man a division of labor between the local church and the broader federation. (Although it would be ideal for the minister to be fully on loan to the federation for the work of missions, the calling council may wish to retain the man for some degree of local ministry, and this should be outlined to synod in the nomination.)
  - c. A compensation plan for the Foreign Missions Coordinator in his work and, if applicable, the level of support that will be coming from the calling congregation. The compensation plan should focus on adequate provision of salary, housing, medical, and retirement needs (CO, Art. 10), based on cost of living in the area of the calling church, as well as suggested amounts for items like office, equipment, and travel. The committee will make itself available to interested churches to help set ballpark figures in this regard. Details of the proposed compensation will be subject to the approval of synod.
  - d. A brief introduction to the man; which should include a resume of service in the church and the particular gifts and experience that such a man would bring to the position of Foreign Missions Coordinator.
2. From the pool of nominees synod shall elect a Foreign Missions Coordinator. The election shall be by a majority vote, taken by ballot.

**Grounds for Recommendation #8:**

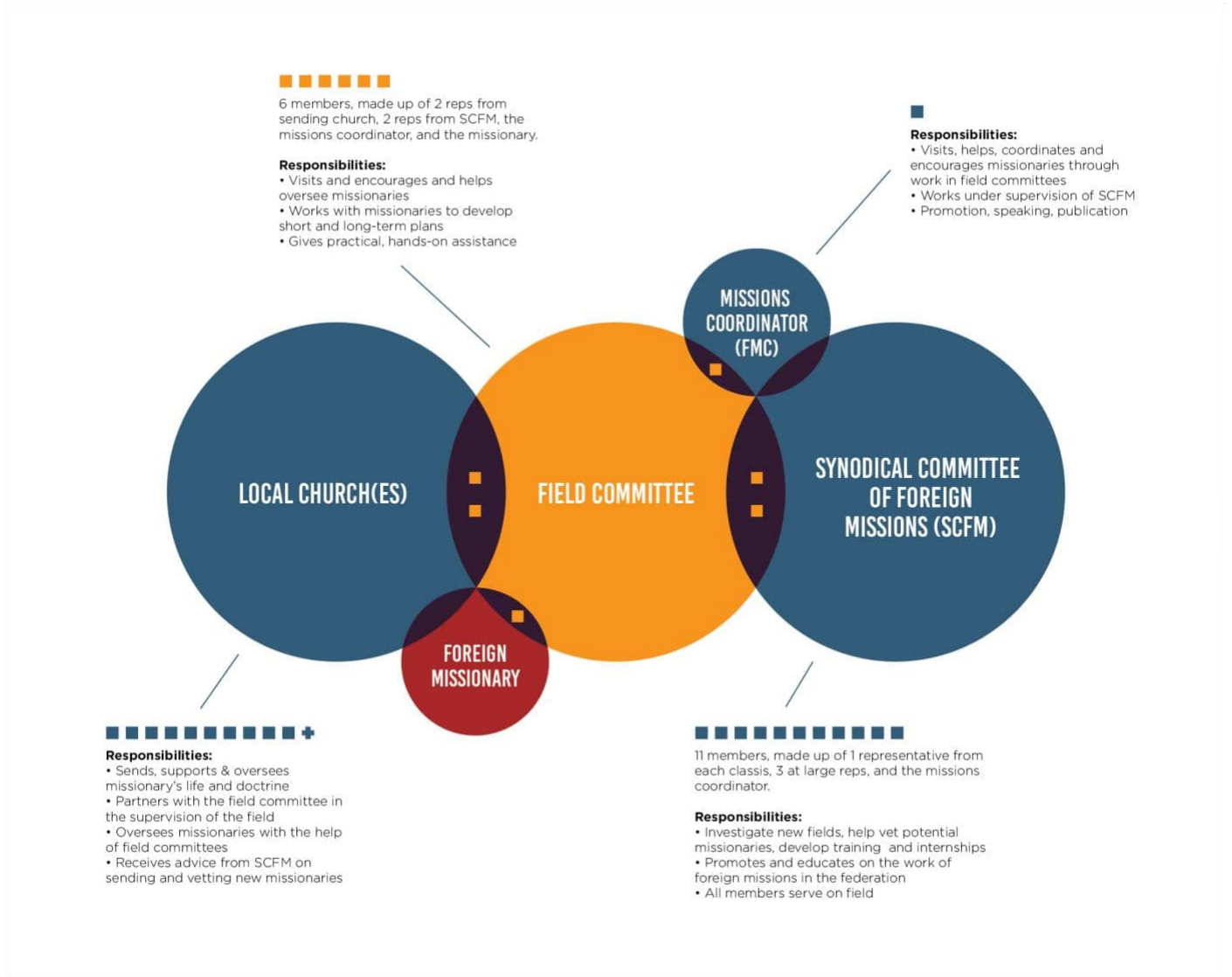
- 1. This process is already approved by synod, and will be necessary to fill the position should synod create it.

**Conclusion to the Majority Plan for Foreign Missions**

An African proverb states that if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. The Majority Report proposes a plan that is an honest and earnest effort to “promote the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body.”<sup>38</sup> Particularly in the area of foreign missions we should not be characterized by isolation and independence. Continuing on our current trajectory whereby one church sends one man to the foreign field where he labors alone is neither good for our missionaries nor for the people whom they serve. Only through stronger, covenanted cooperation can we develop foreign fields and enable more churches to get seriously involved in foreign missions. If we mean to go far, if we desire to be faithful in foreign missions for the long term and to the glory of our Lord, we need to become far more organized and united in concrete ways that enable us more effectively to work *together*. We believe that our proposed plan will help us to this end for the increase of the glorious name of our Savior and the advance of His everlasting kingdom.

<sup>38</sup> Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee, II.A.1.c.

**Flow Chart Showing Operational Connections for the Majority Plan for Foreign Missions**



### *III. C. Opportunity for a Federation Missions Fund*

Our encouraging the establishment of a national, federational missions fund is *not* intended to supply the federation with a general fund through which all missionary salaries and mission budgets are paid. We believe that sending churches should continue to collect, manage, and distribute funds for their missionaries through their local deaconates.

We believe, however, that there is still a great need for a general federation missions fund that will help our churches to do a great deal more in both foreign and home missions. Interested individuals and businesses have informed our committee of their desire to give donations that would aid the work of URCNA missions in a general fashion instead of supporting the cause of one church or mission. If our federation could properly receive and wisely steward such donations, we could be far more proactive in missions. Collected funds could be used for the following:

- internships for potential church planters and missionaries;
- training for current and future church planters and missionaries;
- investigating potential fields and visiting current fields;
- assisting missions, missionaries, and missionary helpers during furloughs;
- supplementing the financial aid that classes give to their mission works.

Calling churches would continue to receive funds for their missionaries, and pay them in the usual way. But this fund would allow for general giving to URCNA missions for much increased development and expansion. Those churches that do not wish to work in any way with a synodical committee would not be affected by decreased giving to the support of their missionary, and yet they could still benefit in various ways from the monies given to the general fund (see more explanation below).

Because our federation exists in both the U.S. and Canada, we would suggest that each nation has its own fund to be used for works within each nation. However, we have been encouraged to learn that the United Reformed Church in Lethbridge has recently created the United Reformed Missionary Association (URMA) as a legitimate, legally approved vehicle through which ministries outside of Canada can be overseen by Canadians in a way that allows Canadian financial support to reach gospel ministry in the U.S. and abroad. We would recommend that both Canada and the U.S. create their respective mission funds, that they function primarily within their own nation, and that URMA be utilized as a tool through which specific efforts (e.g. internships, youth summer camps, building projects) could be supported with Canadian involvement.<sup>39</sup>

To help ensure the right use of funds given for federational missions, and to avoid any potential misuse of funds, we would recommend that monies collected below a certain dollar amount be designated for training, internships, investigation of fields, furloughs, supplemental start-up aid,

<sup>39</sup> Please note that the focus here upon Canadian funds and giving is only in light of different tax laws between Canada and the U.S. In the United States an organization of this nature is not required due to different laws governing charitable organizations. We note also that URMA is willing to continue functioning as it now does or to come under the auspices of the denomination as may be desired by the churches.

etc.; and that monies collected above said dollar amount be distributed equally to the classes for the ongoing financial support of the mission works within their classis.

**RECOMMENDATION #9:** That Synod approve the *concept* of two national Missions Funds as outlined above, and task committees (one for the U.S. and one for Canada) with financial knowledge in their respective nation to explore the potential establishment of these funds, and report back to the next synod for final consideration by the churches.

**Grounds for Recommendation #9:**

1. There have been repeated communications which have come to the Missions Committee from individuals who wish to donate funds that would promote URCNA missions in general rather than going to a single mission work; but heretofore there has been no mechanism by which to receive such donations. National/federational funds would allow for a more proactive approach to investigating potential fields and developing potential servants for the expansion of Christ's kingdom through URCNA missions.
2. The tasks outlined above do not infringe upon the authority or work of local consistories.
3. Discussion of financial legalities on the floor of synod are difficult. At past synods this has led to confusion that has proved sufficient to kill concepts while legalities remained unclear. The Missions Committee knows that it is *not* the body best equipped with insight into financial and legal details, but we felt it would be premature to ask others to investigate this before having synod's endorsement of the general concept.

**Signatories for the Majority:**

Richard Anjema, Harry Bout, Richard Bout, John Bouwers, Greg Bylsma, Casey Freswick, Steve Howerzyl, Duane Konynenbelt, Jody Lucero, Tom Morrison, Paul Murphy, Paul Scharold

**Appendix to the Majority Report: The Majority Plan for Foreign Missions in Practice**

To help explain how the majority plan for Foreign Missions would work in practice we provide here a brief overview of how key elements of foreign missions could function if the new plan were adopted. The descriptions given below assume the passing of both the change to Article 47 (requiring concurring advice/advice from classis before sending/removing a man from the field) as well as the majority plan.

**Joining the New Plan**

The transition towards the new model for consistories with men already on the mission field will need to be implemented in a way that honors those currently serving (both on the field and within the local church), protects the ongoing work of the mission, and yet makes progress toward the goals and structure of the new plan. This may look different in each local context, but generally it would involve:

1. the creation of a field committee if there is *no* current missions committee to help with the mission;
2. the incorporation of two representatives from the Synodical Foreign Missions Committee into any existing missions committee, with the Foreign Missions Coordinator included in an advisory capacity;
3. a period of learning for committee members to understand the current goals for the mission;
4. committee members contributing to long-range planning based on their own gifts and knowledge as well as consideration of how the various resources of the federation might be a benefit within the work of the particular field; committee members would also serve as conduits through which the needs of the field are communicated throughout the federation so that resources may be pooled for the success of the mission;
5. the field committee adopting representatives from other sending churches, should the Lord bless the mission with growth.

### **Sending a Missionary to a New Foreign Field**

When a church council<sup>40</sup> desires to send a man to an area where the URCNA is currently not at work, the following steps should be taken:

1. The council should contact the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions to work together in exploring a potential foreign field.<sup>41</sup>
2. The council should bring a request for advice to their classis, sharing with classis the vision of the church for a particular area, the advice of the SCFM regarding the new venture, and a potential missionary who could serve (if one is already known).
3. In cases where a classis does not give positive advice to proceed, the council should seriously consider directing their missionary zeal into another geographic location where the URCNA is already present.<sup>42</sup> A man zealous to serve in missions who may already be known to the local church should see this advice as part of God's external call that either confirms or redirects missionary zeal for Gospel ministry.
4. If the classis gives positive advice, the council should seek out a man who might be called to this work and strive to train him for the specific task of missions on a foreign field.<sup>43</sup> Classical representatives who serve on the SCFM or the Foreign Missions Coordinator could give advice regarding opportunities for training, and potentially help in accessing funding in this regard.<sup>44</sup>
5. When a missionary has been called, trained, and sent the sending church will oversee the missionary and his family (where applicable) in life and doctrine, and work with the SCFM to create a field committee that will work with the local church in the supervision of the field.

<sup>40</sup> We recognize that in some churches the *consistory* may extend the call, but we name the *council* here in accord with Article 6 of the Church Order.

<sup>41</sup> As noted under the adopted helpful guidelines for foreign missions found in section II.A (p. 8) of the Foreign Missions Manual.

<sup>42</sup> See the *Foreign Missions Manual*, sections I. A (pp. 3-4) and I. E (pp. 6-7).

<sup>43</sup> See the *Foreign Missions Manual*, sections II. B-C (pp. 9-12).

<sup>44</sup> The potential for funding here refers to Recommendation 10 of the report, which proposes our investigating the possibility of national "mission funds" that could be well used for training missionaries or investigating fields.

## **Helping a Missionary to Leave the Foreign Field**

Potential situations and guidelines for when a missionary leaves the field are outlined in the synodically approved guidelines for foreign missions summarized in the *Foreign Missions Manual*. To avoid repeating our work, we encourage churches to reread section II.D.5 ("Training Indigenous Leaders for the Mission") on pp. 16-17, and section II.E ("Phase 5 – Developing an Exit Strategy") on pp. 17-18. With the new plan for mission the key improvement is that having SCFM members working alongside the calling churches in the regular supervision of the mission provides the opportunity to see upcoming changes sooner and to utilize a broader support network to help fill the need. When advice is sought by a church from a classis to send a missionary, the needs of every mission in the federation should be known through the SCFM classical representative who can provide information to the classis to help inform its deliberations. Moreover, with the Foreign Missions Coordinator seeking to build onramps for missions among seminary students and missionary helpers, and with the needs of all mission works regularly coming to the attention of the Synodical Committee, a far more pre-emptive and intentional approach should make strengthening our fields and finding replacements for missionaries a smoother process in the future.

## **IV. Minority Report: Missions Alternate Proposal**

*Go (Matt 28:19), with co-workers (Mark 6:7-13), devoted to prayer and the Word (Acts 6:4)*

### **1. Introduction**

Synod Wheaton expanded the URCNA Synodical Mission Committee with eight new members (preferably an elder and pastor from each classis) to study how we should proceed. One fruit of that is this report, which we pray leads to profitable discussions in our federation to further the cause of missions, to the glory of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The undersigned members of the Synodical Missions Committee submit a feasible alternative drawn from the advice of many sending churches and missionaries. One of our signees is a church planter and three belong to churches overseeing missionaries (*In this report, "missionary" covers both*). We hear missionaries asking for help more than advice. We resist structural changes to overseeing missionaries without addressing Church Order. We fear unregulated committees or coordinators pushing a theory of missions on consistories. For further rationale see Appendix A and Overture 18. We request synod substitute recommendations #1-7 for the Majority's #1-9. See single page summary at [tiny.cc/missionreport](http://tiny.cc/missionreport) for clarity. We also disagree with recommendations #10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and revisions to CO article 47

*The Missions Alternate Proposal lays out the goal to send out coworkers to all mission fields. Missionaries will be strongly supported and souls better cared for by coworkers. Classes and churches will need more investment, but synod will require less. Mission Visitors are tapped to prompt churches to send out more men and Mission Advocates will help nurture and connect them with churches. A Mission Clerk is hired to look after administrative needs. Federation matching funds will inspire generous giving to open many new doors. A Mission Order will guide our federation in wisdom..*

### **2. Missions Alternate Proposal**

#### **Recommendation 1: Synod directs every classis to appoint at least two Mission Visitors.**

Every sending consistory of a foreign or home Missionary is to invite the Mission Visitors to visit both the missionary and the sending council every two years. Mission Visitors must be a minister or an elder. If an elder is appointed, he may continue to serve and continue to be re-appointed even after his term in office is complete. Mission Visitors shall not take over the sending churches' responsibility to visit their fields, but only supplement the sending churches' visiting schedule. Mission Visitors shall inquire about the missionary and his labors to the end that they may encourage the missionary and seek to advance the church's missionary task in that region.

No more than six weeks after visiting a missionary, the Mission Visitors will follow up by also visiting the council of the sending church. To accommodate all parties, this visit could be by video conference. In consultation with all parties, the Mission Visitors shall submit a report to classis. The Lord willing, these reports will inspire a sister church in classis to join a JVC to send another family into the same region, protecting against ministerial isolation by strengthening the fields with multiple persons. Mission Visitors shall also serve as church visitors to missionaries and their councils when invited.

Mission Visitors shall also regularly visit ordained men serving full-time in fields such as MINTS, Divine Hope Reformed Seminary, etc. These visits may be arranged alongside of a regular classis meeting. Questions will focus on doctrine, life, and ministry, ensuring they continue to bless our federation. Mission Visitors can learn from them and their ideas of improving upon our training for men entering into missions. They may inquire of men who may be fitted for our fields. If sinful patterns in doctrine or life arise, a follow-up visit with the sending church would be in order. In consultation with all parties, the Mission Visitors shall submit a report to classis. Reports shall offer classis a mechanism to pray for their ministries. See Overture 18 for suggested questions to ask (depending on who is being visited).

A church that has been supporting a Lay Missionary or Missionary Helper may also request in a communication to classis that classis send the Mission Visitors to the field. If classis concurs, a visit shall be arranged with both the field and the council of the supporting church. Their report to classis may recommend: a) for classis to keep visiting the field every two years and maintain the status quo. b) for classis to ask CECCA to build relationships with churches in the area; or c) for classis to form a new field with an ordained missionary.

**Grounds:**

- A. “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 11:14; “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.” Proverbs 15:22; “For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety.” Proverbs 24:6
- B. As a parallel to Church Visitors, Mission Visitors shall assist missionaries and their sending churches by seeking to understand and apply pastoral wisdom and advice as necessary. Mission Visitors allow for a timelier process should corrective action be in order, involve the narrower assemblies, and simplify the appeals process should one arise.
- C. Missions works have particular needs that warrant separate attention. Visiting both them and their overseeing consistory(ies) within 6 weeks allows more effective help and advice.
- D. The Mission Visitors approach meshes well with classes that already have a standing Missions Committee. Advice will be more readily received by brothers coming from within classis.
- E. As it would be simpler and less costly for Mission Visitors to be sent from one classis to one region, classis will naturally seek to adopt and support nearby fields.
- F. If classis is active in missions, regular church visitors would be overwhelmed by these additional visiting requirements. This also aligns with past mandates for classically appointed committee members to maintain contact on home and foreign missionaries within their respective classes, and with the consistories that oversee these works, and with any joint venture committee or classis missions committee with which the missionaries are connected. (Article 85 of Acts of Synod 2012, referencing Synodical Agenda 2012 pages #376-379).
- G. While this proposal causes the classes to incur financial and man-power costs, the costs of not supporting mission works better is arguably greater in both recent domestic and foreign cases.
- H. Visiting missionaries with two men offers a more balanced assessment of the ministry; without two witnesses a case cannot be established.
- I. Reports on visits will now go to classis rather than the Synodical Mission Committee and Synod which is easily bogged down by such detail level reports that belong at classis.

**Recommendation 2: Synod directs all classes to appoint one Mission Visitor to the Synodical Missions Committee, to shape our broader *Missions Strategy* and create a *Mission Order*.**

Reviewing our history as a URCNA Synodical Missions Committee, Synod Nyack 2012 mandated the committee to be an information hub that shares prayer and financial information with the federation. Synod Wyoming 2016 strengthened the mandate to add giving advice to the churches.<sup>45</sup> This recommendation adjusts our mandate to focus on broader missions strategy.

This proposal appreciates the need for enhanced cooperation in missions. We agree a strong, consistorial emphasis shows unhealthy independence too. But amending sinful mindsets by forming more committees is counterproductive and unlikely to sit well with the independently minded. We heard delegates to Synod Wheaton raise alarm over committee overreach; we must find a more winsome way.

Our history and culture prompt us to ask synod for a Mission Order to help unify us. Synod should direct the committee to take up the relevant synodical mandates and draft up the first articles. The Mission Order can also serve as a catalogue of synodically approved (and updated) mission documents. Developing mission strategy would take place by drafting and deliberating Mission Order articles. We foresee this being a way to sanctify and guide our federation in wisdom.

Drawing from the old CRC model's foreign and home Mission Orders,<sup>46</sup> the introduction of a Mission Order would come through careful consultation with our missionaries and consistories. Each Mission Visitor serving on the committee would overture consistory with the new articles. If consistory agrees, it moves to synod if classis concurs. Feedback from missionaries, consistories and classes will all be received before synod. This is how the Alternate Proposal was drafted.

**Grounds:**

- A. To maintain doctrinal purity and order we submit to scripture as our first degree of unity, creeds and confessions as a second degree, and church and mission order as a third degree.
- B. The central aim of the Synodical Missions Committee as an information hub is enhanced, with more than facts about fields being shared as experience is captured, curated, and circulated.
- C. The current mandate to give field specific advice is not consistently followed, nor is it in any way enforceable. It is better for classes to offer such advice.
- D. Disorder and disunity arise without a proper Mission Order that defines the composition, parameters, goals, and authority structures under which committees and coordinators operate.

**Recommendation 3: Synod encourages consistories overseeing a missionary (church planter) to form a Local Joint Venture Committee to help send out coworkers.**

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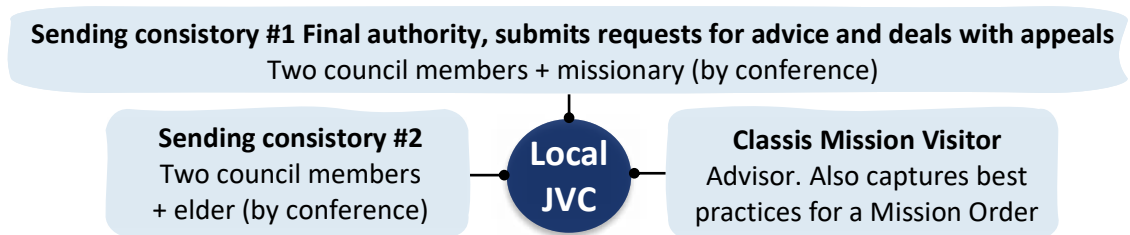
<sup>45</sup> Synod 2016 Acts pgs 30-33 [http://www.urchna.org/file\\_retrieve/42063#page=34](http://www.urchna.org/file_retrieve/42063#page=34)

<sup>46</sup> 1939 CRC Foreign Mission Order <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1939acts.pdf#page=192>  
1959 CRC Home Mission Order <https://www.calvin.edu/library/database/crcnasynod/1959agendaacts.pdf#page=199>

The Joint Venture Committee Model was designed to help multiple churches fund one missionary.<sup>47</sup> The Local JVC aims to send out coworkers to encourage self-governance. Local JVCs are to be comprised of two council members from two or more churches, a Mission Visitor, and the missionary and coworkers (some participants would conference in). Co-workers may be full-time missionaries or elders and deacons called to go out to the mission field. “Retired age” couples and young people including families considering ministry would be suitable as missionary helpers.

## Local Joint Venture Committee Diagram

### Church plant with Missionary + Elder



The missionary and souls of those who are saved are cared for by the first sending consistory, which also holds final authority and submits requests for advice to classis and deals with appeals. Other men / families who are sent are cared for by their sending consistory. With housing costs such as they are in our cities, subsidizing housing costs for brothers and their families to relocate in the city and be supported alongside of their regular calling would be a worthy place to start.

As Local JVCs function per the repurposed goal of sending multiple men to the mission field, the Mission Visitor will capture best practices and incorporate them into a Mission Order by overture.

### Grounds:

- A. This recommendation facilitates cooperation (CO article 47). The direct consistorial oversight complies with articles 5 and 6 of our founding principles and CO articles 16, 21, 24, 65.
- B. Mission Visitors are involved if conflicts arise. If issues continue, appeals can be brought to consistory and then to broader assemblies.
- C. The Local JVC acts as a council dealing with practical matters and for sending out coworkers. The simple priority to send out coworkers keeps them focused on their mandate.
- D. Co-workers called and supported to serve under sending churches will remain committed even if difficulties arise. Sending men in pairs encourages church plants towards self-governance.
- E. As men reach retirement age, coworkers are increasingly important for the field’s continuity.

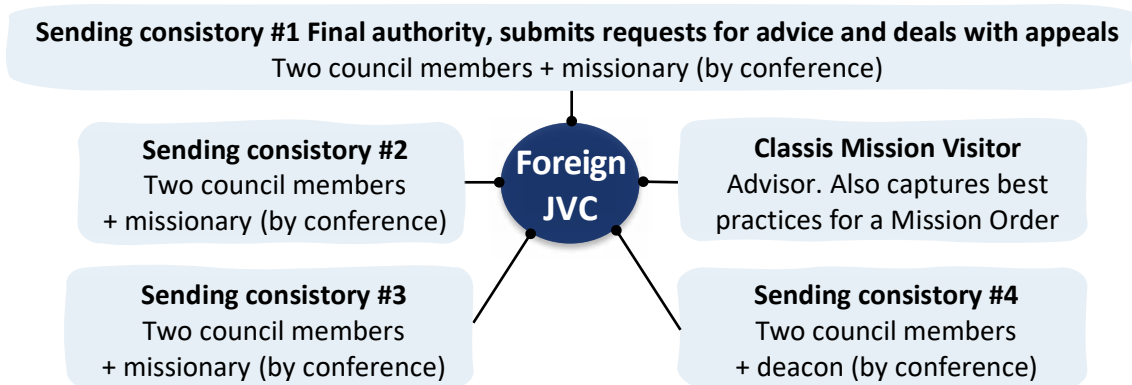
**Recommendation 4: Synod encourages consistories overseeing a foreign missionary to overture classis to form a Foreign Joint Venture Committee to help send out coworkers.**

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.urncna.org/urncna/StudyReports/Biblical%20and%20Confessional%20View%20of%20Missions.pdf>

The Foreign Joint Venture Committee requires the concurring advice of classis to be formed. The foreign JVC allows for the formation of multiple church plants, schools or study centers. Implicit is the obligation to form a classis or to join another. Foreign JVCs are comprised of two council members from 3 plus churches, a Mission Visitor, and the missionaries and coworkers.

## Foreign Joint Venture Committee Diagram

### Mature Mission Field with three Missionaries + Deacon



We see a place for retired couples to be sent out to serve with a subsidy covering expenses without supplying a full salary, though this may be less common than sending out multiple missionaries. As with the Local JVC, each person sent out is cared for by his sending consistory. The souls of those saved are cared for by missionaries with advice from the first sending consistory, which also holds final authority and submits requests for advice to classis and deals with appeals. This distinguishes Foreign JVC's from Classical Foreign Field Committees in the Majority Proposal, with floating oversight from the convening consistory (in some cases).

Moving forward, the first item on the agenda for consistory when opening a foreign mission field would normally be to seek the concurring advice of classis to form a Foreign JVC. Best practices will be captured in the Mission Order after Foreign JVCs are introduced.

#### **Grounds:**

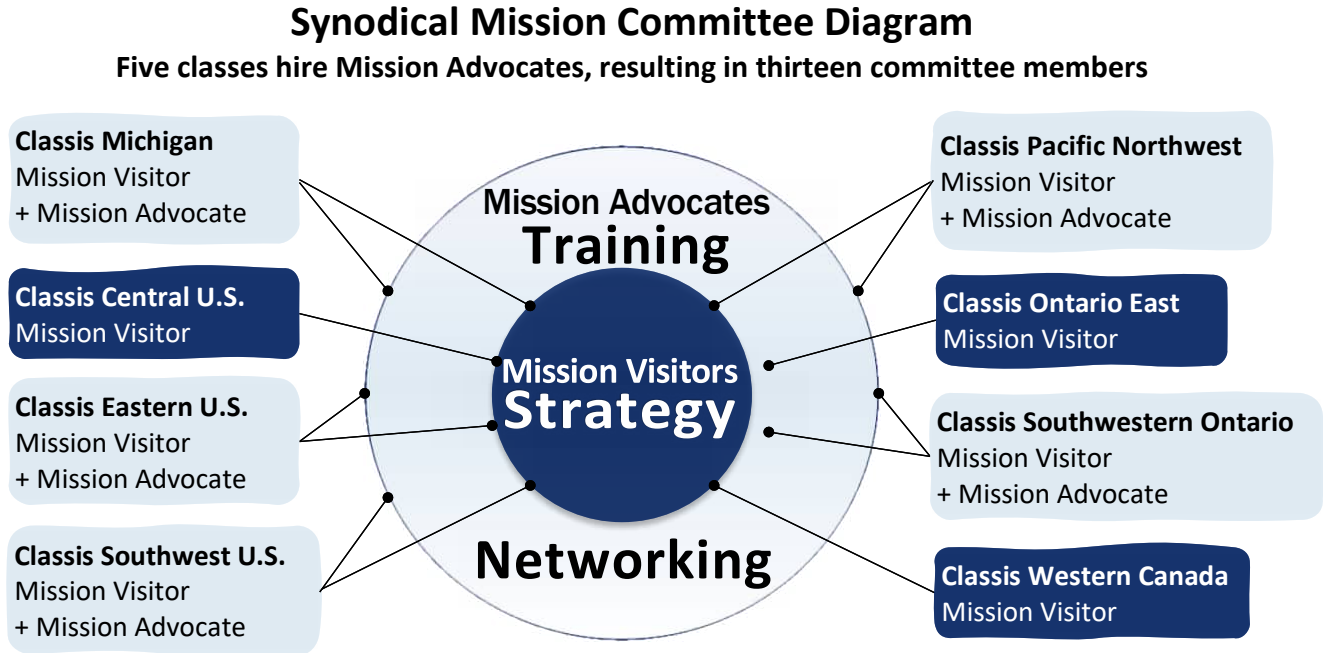
- A. This recommendation facilitates cooperation (CO article 47). The direct consistorial oversight complies with articles 5 and 6 of our founding principles and CO articles 16, 21, 24, 65.
- B. Mission Visitors are involved if conflicts arise. If issues continue, appeals can be brought to consistory and then to broader assemblies.
- C. The Foreign JVC acts as a council dealing with practical matters and sending out coworkers. The simple priority to send out coworkers keeps them focused on their mandate.
- D. Reformed polity involves not going alone. Maintaining order means consistories will not normally plant independent churches. Being independent is unhealthy locally and globally.

#### **Recommendation 5: Synod encourages every classis to appoint and support a Mission Advocate with a particular focus on *training and networking*.**

Beginning in the spring of 2023, Synod directs each classis to draft plans to fund a contract classical appointment of the Mission Advocate. This position is flexible to the local needs and

opportunities and builds up a classical momentum in missions. One man may serve several classes to train seminarians, for example, or a classis may hire a part-time man.

Below is one possible scenario. Appendix B shows how to hire a Mission Advocate.



Mission Advocates would be called when needed by a church of classis to assist in supplemental preaching and teaching to help cultivate a greater witness. They may serve as missions ambassadors, advisors, trainers and visitors. This involves working with other Mission Advocates, which means being delegated to the Synodical Mission Committee as a 2nd delegate from classis.

Mission Advocates shall have a synodical budget of \$15,000. Their responsibilities are as follows:

*As Ambassadors*, they work with Mission Clerk to publish Trumpet / Prayer lists. They publicize what God is doing through mission evenings at synod and consider live broadcasting such events. They serve as natural points of contact to assist seminarians seeking places to serve. For example, Mid America Reformed Seminary is creating the Center for Missions and Evangelism. They serve as liaisons to NAPARC mission meetings and other mission entities and denominations.

*As Advisors*, they assist consistories and Joint Venture Committees of classis as they are called upon to give advice in caring for their missionaries or in searching for suitable candidates. They may assist in revitalizing churches as they are invited to do so. They may be called upon to assist the federation in training the congregation in evangelism and missions. They assist the Mission Clerk's publicity work, helping keep content current, and work to keep next generation engaged.

*As Trainers*, organize or accent biannual Training Conference such as the OPC Timothy Training Conferences ([www.opc.org/cce/Timothy/TimConf2019Prospectus.pdf](http://www.opc.org/cce/Timothy/TimConf2019Prospectus.pdf)) and URCNA Missions Conferences to develop our unity, prayer and love for missions. We cannot presume how this will

look precisely as it will depend on the opportunities each classis sees and takes hold of. What we do foresee is a need for many more men to be raised up, and Mission Advocates can help.

**Grounds:**

- A. Multiple men can shoulder the workload presently carried out by the Mission Coordinator.
- B. Classis will benefit from the mentoring, preaching and help in evangelism and the consistory overseeing him will have a close connection from which to oversee his doctrine and life.
- C. Some duties necessitate co-ordination and delegation to the Synodical Mission Committee. If many classes hire Mission Advocates, they may operate as a sub-committee.
- D. Being spread out enhances sensitivity to local opportunities and reduces travel time and costs.

**Recommendation 6: Synod shall retire the Missions Coordinator with thanks and replace the position with a Mission Clerk, overseen by the Synodical Missions Committee.**

We have observed the Mission Coordinator position is “structurally unhealthy” in three ways:

- *Unique:* If the position is prematurely vacated, it is not easily filled. This is a major concern if the role is made integral to a federation-wide mission model. The program could be neutralized by persecution, moral failure, or fatigue. (Zechariah 13:7)
- *Independent:* It is difficult for a committee spread across the continent to oversee a full-time position. Misunderstandings often arise if the visiting task does not take place in pairs. The job description asks a lot of one man, spiritually, theoretically, and administratively.
- *Authoritative:* The role is inherently powerful, not unlike a seminary professor coming in and critiquing a young man’s ministry. Being on the other side of an expert opinion is tough. Assigning yet more consistorial tasks will lead to more conflict.

Synod directs the committee to spread the Mission Coordinator’s duties to Mission Visitors and Mission Advocates. The committee will hire an ordained deacon or elder as a Mission Clerk to:

1. Update URCNA Missions website, social media, the Trumpet, and the annual prayer map.
2. Act as clerk for the Synodical Mission Committee, forwarding prayer bulletins, quarterly minutes and send requests for advice to the appropriate clerks.
3. Facilitate dialogue among Mission Visitors and Mission Advocates by moderating a discussion board for them to share requests and wisdom, parallel to “InterNos” for URCNA pastors.
4. Ensure receipts of Mission Advocates and Federation Matching Fund requests are in order before submitting them on to the corporation. (See Recommendation #7)

Appendix C offers details and a way to support this idea and apply for this role before synod.

**Grounds:**

- A. Synod’s agenda is reduced and a role is created that is not unique, independent or authoritative.
- B. Hiring an administratively gifted man frees up Mission Coordinators to serve as missionaries.

- C. The narrower assemblies shoulder more mission expenses. Synodical mission expenses decline to 1/3 current (1/6 majority proposal), about \$15 / family. Classes askings increase but as classes meets 6x more than synod, accountability is enhanced. Churches' mission expenses also rise.

<b>2023 Financials Comparison Table (USD)</b>	<b>Alternate</b>	<b>Majority</b>	<b>Current</b>
Foreign Coordinator (based in Canada)	---	\$ 121,500 <sup>1</sup>	\$ 121,500
Domestic Coordinator (based in the US)	---	\$ 155,500	---
Mission Clerk	\$ 20,000 <sup>2</sup>	---	---
Conferences, prayer maps, website	\$ 15,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Synodical Missions Committee	\$ 11,000	\$ 11,000	\$ 11,000
<b>Synodical mission expenses (1x contract)</b>	<b>~ \$46,000</b>	<b>\$ 298,000</b>	<b>\$ 142,500</b>
<b>Classical mission expenses (5x contracts)</b>	<b>~ \$100,000 <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Unknown</b>	
<b>Church mission expenses (14x contracts)</b>	<b>~ \$154,000 <sup>4</sup></b>		

<sup>1</sup> Expenses shows annual increase of 3% from 2019 (when travel was normal).

<sup>2</sup> Contract begins with \$15,000 and allows up to \$5,000 for extra hours, if required.

<sup>3</sup> *Alternate costs close to current (146k)* if 5x classes gave supplemental contracts of \$20,000 to support 5 Mission Advocates and the SMC hires a Mission Clerk (note 2).

<sup>4</sup> *Alternate costs close to majority (300k)* if 14x churches gave a subsidy of \$11,000 to support 14 co-workers, the SMC hires a Mission Clerk (note 2) and 5x classes hire Mission Advocates (note 3) *20x men, couples or families go out in place of 2x full time men.*

**Recommendation 7: Synod directs the corporation of the URCNA in each country to create a “Federation Matching Fund.”**

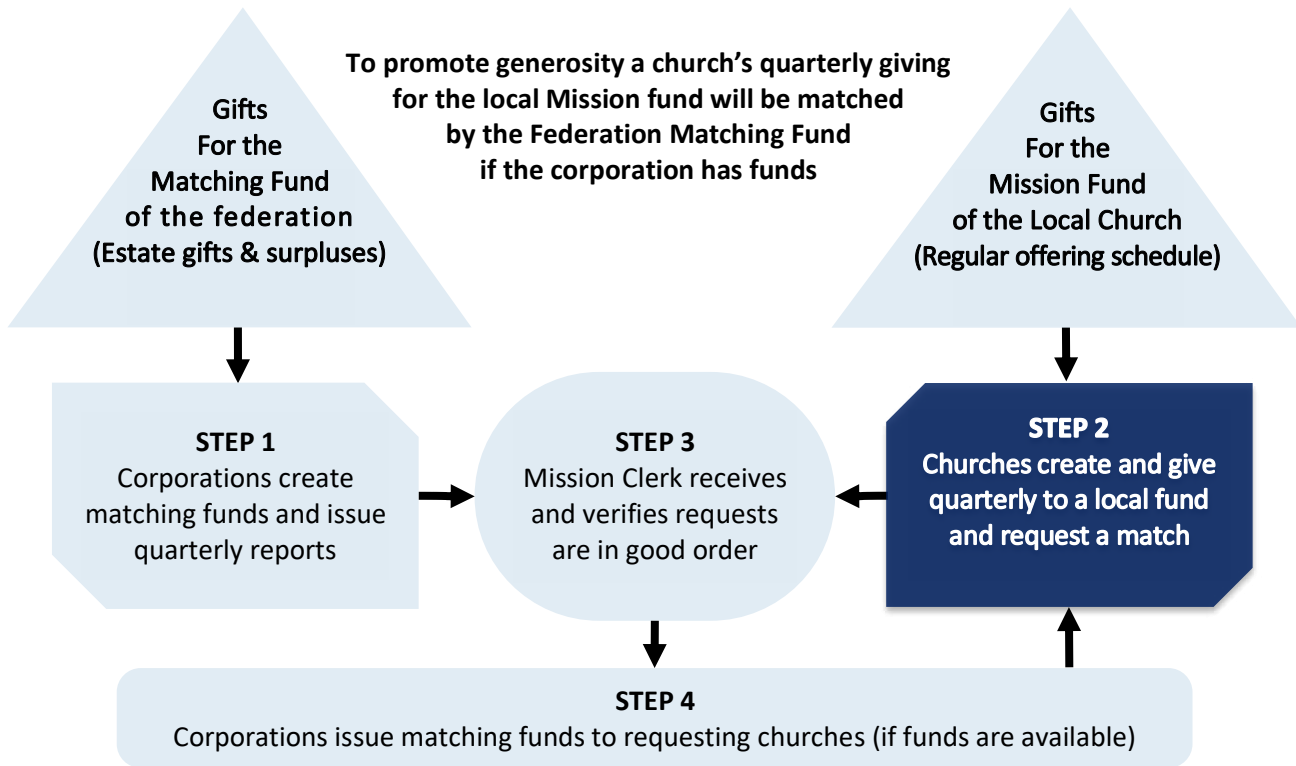
While synodical mission expenses will decrease, classical askings will rise as Mission Visitors go out in pairs, Mission Advocates are hired and more coworkers are sent out. To meet the needs ahead of us, the “matching funds” strategy can be utilized to encourage estate gifts and budget surpluses to be given to a Federation Matching Fund in each country. Matching funds will encourage generous giving to missions and open doors for churches to send out coworkers.

**There are four steps to this process:**

1. In the fall of 2022, each corporation shall establish a Federation Matching Fund.
2. In the fall of 2022, every organized church wishing to participate in the distribution of gifts must create a Missions and Training Fund that they contribute towards.
3. In January of 2023, churches may submit requests for matching funds through the Mission Clerk. If the requests are in good order they shall be forwarded to the corporation.
4. In April of 2023, the corporation in each country will distribute the matching gifts to the requesting churches, with curbs in place to distribute funds in a fair and steady manner.

The flow chart below visualizes this. Appendix D offers details and a way to support this concept.

### Federation Matching Fund Flow Chart



**Grounds:**

- A. Sizeable donations can be easily spread to an entire nation's mission fields, streamlining the effort for donors and estates and simultaneously inspiring smaller donors to give generously.
- B. This model has no committee allocating the funds, eliminating conflicts over the distribution of gifts. Rather than being limited by their local resources, churches may now ask how local giving could unlock new doors for ministry.
- C. The Canadian board of the Joint Venture Agreement advised that each corporation must establish its own matching fund. This may also stir up healthy competition among nations.
- D. This approach encourages church plants to organize so they can be blessed by these gifts too.

**3. Summary of the Missions Alternate Proposal**

We praise God for the faithful labors of our Missions Coordinator. We have tried to capture the concerns and goals given by the committee since Synod Visalia, warning against independentism, promoting training and internships and funding to make them possible, organizing missions conferences and calling for greater support for missionaries and "field input" in making decisions for mission fields. We have heard missionaries pleading for families to come alongside missionaries. *These ideas form the seedbed of the Minority Report.* We trust the Lord will provide

another opportunity to serve within our federation and we request Rev. Bout remain in his role for six more months. We propose Synod strike a committee to advise on obligations for the URCNA and his overseeing council in caring for him through this transition.

**The table below demonstrates the clear feasibility of the Missions Alternate Proposal:**

<b>Improvements Table</b>	
<b>A. Synod</b>	Synodical agendas and expenses are reduced
Mission Coordinator	Position is replaced by three positions consistent with Church Order
Mission Committee	Focuses on broader strategy and gains the Mission Clerk position
Mission Clerk	Carries out administration for the Synodical Mission Committee
Mission Order	Harmonizes and builds our federation-wide mission strategy
Mission Strategy	Strengthens our federation by sending out supported coworkers
Matching Funds	Promotes generosity for missions across our federation
<b>B. Classis</b>	Gains two positions for uniting and prospering missions
Mission Visitors	Carries out biannual visits to all missionaries and sending churches
Mission Advocates	Ambassadors, advisors, and trainers to help raise up more men
Local JVC	Helps churches to send out coworkers to support self-governance
Foreign JVC	Helps churches to send out coworkers to create a foreign classis
<b>C. Churches</b>	Invited and assisted to send out more men in a healthier way
<b>D. Church Plants</b>	Organization becomes feasible as coworkers relocate long term
<b>E. Co-workers</b>	Foster accountability, continuity, and growth in the mission fields
<b>F. Members</b>	Members not going out are inspired to support those who can

**In closing, we cast this vision for our federation:**

1. *Missionaries and souls of those saved in the mission fields supported by coworkers.* The apostles spoke often of coworkers. (Rom 16:9,21, Phil 2:25, Col 4:7-11). Retired missionaries, pastors, elders, young families, seminary students and singles can be supported to serve.
2. *Synod and classes spurring us on to love and good works.* (Hebrews 10:24) Medium sized churches gain assistance to send out missionaries more wisely. Larger churches may join JVCs and send surpluses to the Federation Matching Fund. Smaller churches remain more limited, yet their prayers are essential and Mission Advocates may come alongside to assist them.
3. *Growth in the Spirit* as we sacrificially send out more families and as we all generously give. Titus' joy, refreshment and affection for Corinth affected many others. (2 Corinthians 7)
4. *Obedience to the Christ* by literally going (Matthew 28:19), with coworkers (Mark 6:7-13), devoted to prayer and the Word (Acts 6:4), into fields that are white with harvest (John 4:35).
5. *Witnessing the Father's glory* as the kingdom is delivered unto him (1 Corinthians 15:24) and all peoples, nations and tongues praise him together in glory! (Psalm 67)

**Signatories:** Jared Beard, Harold Meinders, Steve Schulz, Paul Wagenmaker, Steve Williamson

## **4. Appendices with Supporting Information**

### **A. Rationale for the Missions Alternate Proposal**

The Minority Report follows a renewed understanding of the mandate Synod gave to our committee. Synod 2018 mandated to “investigate the current OPC model and the older CRC model for their missionary endeavors, to see if they are *feasible* for the URC to use for our missionary endeavors and if so, to make specific recommendations for how we can do this” (Art. 76.7, Minutes of Synod Wheaton 2018). The key word is *feasible*. The question isn’t about the sufficiency of the OPC and CRC models given their particular polities. The question is the feasibility of these models given our polity and practices.

The committee structures the majority wants to implement, and the changes to the Church Order it needs are not feasible in the URC. The minority report, however, is feasible. It assumes our Church Order and works with our current practices.

#### **Feasibility issue #1 Church Polity**

The history section of the Synodical Mission Committee’s own report shows the infeasibility of the OPC model in our federation:

The secretaries serving the two OPC missions committees will readily admit that their denomination can grow in various areas, from the *vetting* and *training* of personnel to the *oversight* and *care given* to missionaries. In the course of our research, a number of OPC brothers noted that in home missions they would like to see presbytery oversight *augmented by the care* of a sponsoring church/session; they very much appreciate that in the URCNA our church planters usually have a close relationship with their sending/overseeing consistory.

In the OPC, presbyteries oversee the life and doctrine (*vetting, training, oversight, care of*) of the missionary. This fact along with their appreciation shows that we have two different policies and practices. We entrust the oversight of doctrine and life to the consistory alone:

The consistory is the *only* assembly in the church(es) whose decisions possess direct authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ, and thereby is directly accountable to Christ. (CO Art. 21)

The model of mission we adopt must fit our polity and practices. The OPC model is infeasible. The same is true for the older CRC model. This truth is evident in the fact that the majority needs to amend Church Order Article 47.

The majority report cites the failure of some consistories to oversee fields well. The problem inevitably shapes the proposed solutions. If the problem is poor consistory oversight, the solution will ultimately be some form of taking oversight away from the consistories. In the description of the newly formed Synodical Committee for Home Missions, their role will be (among other things) to “(6) *develop tools* for consistories/classes to use in the evaluation of church-planters and church plants; (7) *facilitate training and developmental programs* for home missions.” The classes are to receive (along with the consistories) the tools by which they are to evaluate their oversight from

the newly created Synodical Committee. This is because “While church planting at home is best executed by consistories in connection with and aided by classis, this work would be enhanced through broader communication, prayer support, and practical advice that could be generated through a synodical committee that devoted its attention to this sole purpose.” (cf. majority report) This is infeasible given our polity and practices.

### **Feasibility issue #2 Resembles Consistory**

The majority further proposes the creation of two positions: the Home Missions Coordinator and the Foreign Missions Coordinator. Whether intended or not, the practical outworking of these positions is the creation of another authority that oversees missions and missionaries with regard to doctrine and life.

For instance, the Home Missions Coordinator is to be responsible “to recruit and train church-planters” and “He shall periodically visit church planters for encouragement, exhortation, and preaching/teaching/counseling, in order to assist the calling churches and mission workers as requested by either party.” (cf. majority report) The intent of this position is that “The HMC would be a pastor for pastors in church planting, sharing practical advice and giving pastoral care to many of our men serving on the front lines of missionary endeavor.” (cf. majority report) The “pastoring” of the pastors is not feasible in the URC. The real task of ‘pastoring’ and overseeing doctrine, life, and worship for URCNA planters and their plants belongs to the consistory alone.

The same goes for the Foreign Missions Coordinator. His job will include vetting who gets missions opportunities in the first place since he shall “aid in the *development* of potential missionaries by connecting interested individuals with missionaries (and with their calling consistories, where necessary) for short-term service abroad;” and “work with young people who are interested in foreign mission work by *developing* and *organizing* internships, cross-cultural missions training, and medium- to long-term mission trips.” (cf. majority report) He will also “visit missionaries and their fields from time to time, as directed by the SCFM for the purpose of *counseling* them concerning their work and promoting such *understanding* and harmonious cooperation between the workers of the various posts as shall secure the harmony and advancement of the work.\*” (cf. majority report) This language (taken directly from the CRC model) clearly seems to understand the coordinator’s role to be visitation for the purpose of overseeing missionary work in more than logistical terms.

Assigning synodical coordinators the work of discipling resembles the work Christ has given only to the consistory. We believe this assignment will therefore create conflict between the coordinators and consistories who don’t agree philosophically with the coordinators work.

### **Feasibility Issue #3 Mission Theory**

The problem we see with the majority report is the influence it assigns the coordinators. How will they pastor? How will they attract? What is the standard? What style or philosophy of ministry and missions will they support? What kind of culture will they promote? And will this culture become the de facto culture of the URCNA? These questions are important because our Confessions and Church Order don’t lay out a philosophy of ministry and missions. We don’t share the same theory of ministry.

consistories hold differing convictions on matters such as style and music in worship, eschatology, ecumenical relations, Christ and culture, how much debt to carry, and more. Giving the prerogative to one or two men to choose for the whole of the URCNA will not bode well for the churches that do not hold to their theory. For example, if the pastoring is done in agreement with the convictions of a church's consistory, then the church is happy. But if not, the consistory is upset and so also much of the federation who hold a different theory than that of the coordinators.

We have already experienced this frustration at the committee level and individually. We have heard reports from missionaries who have not been encouraged by the coordinator and committee's suggestions that contradict their own theory. It's not that the coordinator was wrong per se; only he didn't share their convictions and offered his as the correct way. Which is fine as long as those convictions are not being lorded over a mission work or even create tension between a missionary caught between the theory of the coordinator and that of his consistory. The frustrations come down to the authority the coordinator has with his vetting, developing, attracting, teaching, exhorting, training, and discipling.

Again, it is proper for the coordinator to have his own convictions. We are very thankful for his zeal and love for the ministry and mission of the church. The problem is not our coordinator or any mission coordinator, the problem is we do not share a missions and church planting theory like we share our confessional convictions. Therefore, we don't think it's proper to give coordinators the authority to model their theory over other theories across the URCNA. This problem is compounded as synod meets infrequently and corrections to the work of the coordinator and committee can be corrected.

We believe these assignments are in conflict with articles 5 and 6 of our federation's founding principles and articles 21, 24, 65 of Church Order.

#### **Feasibility Issue #4 Committee Creep**

Our premise that the committee has grown in its authority is not conjecture. We believe you can see it in our history and in the trajectory the majority is attempting to set for the future. Since Synod Nyack, the Synodical Missions Committee has morphed from an informational hub to an advisory role as it inches towards a supervisory role.

There are reasons for this, and the committee has requested it, yet the changes Synods have made have led to a conflicted mandate. This has manifested itself in frustration on the floor of Synod as hours were spent at an open mic discussing why mission proposals and overtures were not adopted. It has hindered trust and broken relationships as our committee tries to do its work. We run into dispiriting roadblocks as our advice can be overlooked since we have no authority. Yet transferring spiritual oversight, the vetting, developing, attracting, teaching, exhorting, training, and discipling from consistories to other committees is not the solution.

The only continuing bodies we allow outside of consistory is administrative. So, we have clerks that continue the work of administration long after synod and classis have been dissolved. We don't, however, allow bodies exercising theory to exist outside of consistory. Anything spiritual in nature, theological, biblical, or practical (theory) remains only at the narrowest level and thus

in the hands of local ministers and elders alone unless they themselves delegate that responsibility and give oversight.

According to our polity, once the broader delegated assemblies end, the exercise of theory ends at those levels. The only thing that continues on is the administration of the decisions reached by the broader assemblies. So, any continuing body of theory exercised outside of consistory for, over, or against the lowest levels does not follow our approved Order. Thus, a continuing body of theory may lord over the lowest levels of authority. Our culture will not accept this, nor will our polity, and it could be dangerous given that our Synods meet so infrequently.

We believe these assignments are in conflict with articles 5 and 6 of our federation's founding principles and articles 16, 21, 24, 65 of Church Order.

### **Feasibility Issue #5 Cannot Scale**

The Majority Report adds 9 committees and ties up 25 men in more meetings. Classis mission committees will meet more often (monthly?) to carry out their tasks of encouraging churches and missionaries, advising on internships, missionary departures, new hires, finances and publicity. Some serving on foreign field committees may transfer to them from other committees that are already meeting, but those overseeing missionaries in council meetings will need to carve out time for meetings with new chairmen, clerks, minutes and travel. The Synodical foreign committee will be hard pressed to supply 2 men to each foreign field committee. With just 6 fields, the committee of 10 would need 2 volunteers to serve 2 foreign field committees in addition to serving the synodical foreign mission committee. This means the Majority Proposal cannot scale up as mission fields increase.

In sum, committee meetings proliferate as men serve on multiple committees. Missionaries may feel loved, but these meetings may add stress as well. We wonder how all this will help church plants grow self-governing / self-sustaining? Will doubling the management expense ratio help care for souls? Efficiency and the full potential of synod, classes and consistory is surrendered to what end? By contrast, sending out coworkers for a fraction of the cost offers a direct benefit, scales easily as mission fields increase, and is grounded in scripture's call to go "two by two."

### **Feasibility Issue #6 Conflicts Resolution**

The Majority Report addresses sinful attitudes in our view of missions, without calling out specific decisions of consistories. The report uses words like "aid, assist, advise, support, come alongside, encourage." We appreciate this. Yet we foresee conflicts as committees advise consistories. Can committees' advice be disregarded? How would such issues be mediated? The Majority Report sees consistories yielding to advice as they are delegated to some committees. However, a threat is introduced; to which body would consistory appeal a committee decision? Classis Michigan proposes a committee under the convening consistory. Do appeals transfer every six months to the next convening consistory? With classical committees, is it not distracting for missionaries to be stakeholders in practical, financial and internship decisions of nearby works? Could this not lead to rivalries between missionaries? Might there not be difficulties financially if a church overseeing a missionary opted out of a Committee driven model? Our questions and reservations stem, in part,

from there being no Mission Order drafted to define committee mandates, parameters and authority structures.

### **Feasibility Issues Summary**

The OPC and old CRC denomination's models of missions oversight are not feasible for our federation. "Even the term "federation" rather than "denomination," which does not accord with normal usage in North America, expresses a strongly-held conviction regarding the nature of the relationship between and mutual accountability of the churches in the new denomination. Though it would be unfair to argue that the URCNA Church Order is "congregational," it does reflect a strongly consistorial emphasis and a prevailing ethos in the URCNA that opposes any unnecessary assignment of responsibility to the broader assemblies of the denomination." (Integration, Disintegration, and Reintegration: A Preliminary History of the United Reformed Churches in North America from the book: Always Reformed: Essays in Honor of W. Robert Godfrey Editors Scott Clark and Joel Kim)

Though the above quote from Dr. Venema does not suggest this is a good thing, it reveals our challenge as the article goes on to explain, "The challenge the URCNA faces in terms of sorting out its identity in relation to its roots in the CRCNA is aggravated by a strong ethos of independency and resistance to broader denominational forms of ministry... The present polity of the URCNA is best described as a form of consistorialism, which reserves to the local consistory primary, if not exclusive responsibility to initiate and oversee the church's ministries. There is a strong aversion to the formation of oversight committees at the classical or synodical level... Under the present form of government in the URCNA, broader assemblies generally have agendas that are limited to examinations of students for candidacy and ordination, consideration of overtures regarding provisions in the Church Order, the adjudication of appeals regarding decision of consistories, and inter-church relations." (Integration, Disintegration, and Reintegration: A Preliminary History of the United Reformed Churches in North America from the book: Always Reformed: Essays in Honor of W. Robert Godfrey Editors Scott Clark and Joel Kim)

*We highlight the overture as the given method by which our federation will, by God's grace and blessing, "develop a strong sense of denominational identity and purpose."* The Missions Alternate Proposal was drafted to humbly do this within our existing culture. Many immediate improvements are made and more will follow, as overtures for a Mission Order are considered.

At present, we simply do not have the polity force necessary to implement (let alone regulate) the proliferation of new, powerful committees and coordinators who take over part of the task of overseeing the doctrine, life, and worship of our plants and planters. Without regulation, these attempts to broaden accountability and create bodies and positions to develop, train, and vet missionaries will become too centralized.

### **B. Mission Advocate Hiring Process**

The church interested in calling a Mission Advocate would create a fully funded part time position. They would inform classis in a communication of their plan to fund and oversee a Mission Advocate and of their search for a candidate. Classis may receive multiple communications and decide which one is best to fund with a supplemental contract. Classis may choose to allocate more

or less funding to this role as it deems appropriate. It would be simplest for classis to send the entire supplemental contract funds to the church overseeing the Mission Advocate and have them take care of all things related to payroll.

### **C. Mission Clerk Hiring Process**

Since the hiring process will be taken over by the Synodical Missions Committee, please send resumés to: [missions@cornerstoneurc.ca](mailto:missions@cornerstoneurc.ca) with your council recommendation as a cover letter. In the interest of being timely and orderly, please submit your resume before synod so the committee can make its decision after synod concludes. The contract with the Synodical Missions Committee may be annually renewed if the ordained servant's term on council has concluded. The contract begins in the fall 2022 at a base contract of \$15,000 USD. The expectations are 10 hours per week, 48 weeks per year with additional hours available if the workload requires it. The minimum benefits required by law will be provided. Travel and hourly expenses may be submitted to the chairman of the Synodical Mission Committee and passed on to the respective synodical treasurer.

### **D. Matching Funds Process**





I. The corporation(s) shall advise how charitable gifts, securities and estate gifts can be made. (i.e. Charitable Impact and Canadahelps allow for giving securities; Christian Stewardship Services and Harvest Foundation enable endowments. Endowments are ideal as gifts generate consistent inflows and gain interest) Quarterly financials shall show statements of account.

II. Each council will explain to the congregation that contributions to their local church's fund are the funding mechanism for matching gifts. council can decide how to allocate the contributions given to this fund, remembering the aim is to support local evangelism, missionaries overseen directly or through a JVC, mission trips by members, lay internships, and seminarian support. These funds are not to be used to cover regular costs of the organized churches such as buildings or salaries; such needs are better met by neighboring churches within the local classis.

III. Evidence of local collections and budgets showing how funds are used may be required. Each request would have to be received in a timely manner. If applications are found lacking, the Missions Clerk would flag them and send them to the entire Synodical Missions Committee to either concur with the concerns and deny the request or to approve the request despite the concerns.

IV. The Matching Fund only distributes funds if it closes the prior year with \$200,000 or more. There is also a proportional cap. One third of the closing balance of the Matching Fund may be distributed in quarterly increments, the following year. As no overseeing committee specifies which requests are critical to match, funds will be fairly distributed by mandating: 1) All requests must be received within 30 days of quarter end. 2) All have equal standing.

For example, in the simplified scenario below 2.4 million USD is given to the Federation Matching Fund (FMF) in Q4 '22 and in the same time frame, 41 American churches contribute to their local mission funds. They all request matching funds by Jan 30. The matching fund is "oversubscribed." Quarterly available (A \$200,000) is divided by quarterly requests (R \$300,000) and in Q1 '23 these churches receive (66%) of their requests.

<b>Federation Matching Fund Table</b>				
\$2,400,000 FMF balance in 2022 = (1/3) \$800,000 matches in 2023 = (1/4) \$200,000 every quarter <sup>1</sup>	 5 churches	 20 churches	 16 churches	 Federation
Q4 '22 Contributions	\$10,000 <sup>2</sup>	\$8,500	\$5,000	\$2,400,000
Q4 '22 Sum of matching requests	\$50,000 +	\$170,000 +	\$80,000 =	R \$300,000
Q1 '23 US corporation distributes	\$6,667 (5) +	\$5,667 (20) +	\$3,333 (16) =	A \$200,000

<sup>1</sup> Unless one of the corporations makes it known a gift of \$200,000 or more is received in 2022, the churches should not presume matching funds will be available in 2023.

<sup>2</sup> While unnecessary at present, a cap on individual requests may be useful in the future.

V. If your council supports this concept in principle and has members willing to make certain dollar amount pledges to a Federation Matching Fund, it would be helpful for synod to have this information as it deliberates. Consistory could send a communication to synod with anonymized information. If the synod agenda deadline (July 25, 2022, 5 PM CDT) is missed, sending the communication to [missions@cornerstoneurc.ca](mailto:missions@cornerstoneurc.ca) could help us compile the numbers before synod.

### **E. Practical steps forward**

- Please be in prayer for our federation as we discuss which direction to go.
- If your consistory oversees a missionary, please engage his thinking on this? Consider sending a communication to synod describing your concerns or encouragements and reasons why?
- Speak to colleagues, councilmen and family members about your thoughts. If you know family members that could go to the field as coworkers or missionary helpers, pray for them. Synod's deliberations will be more beneficial if more discussions happen before synod (Appendix A).
- If you know of a brother who could serve well as a Mission Advocate, engage him and if your council is willing and able, prepare a position and draft a communication to send to your classis immediately after synod, if the Alternate Missions Proposal is adopted (Appendix B).
- If you know of a brother who could serve well as our Mission Clerk, encourage him to apply before synod (Appendix C). If the Alternate Missions Proposal is adopted, one of the first orders of business for the Synodical Missions Committee will be to hire the Mission Clerk.
- If you know of a brother or sister open to contributing the seed funding for the Federation Matching Fund in your country, ask them about making a pledge and have his or her consistory draft a communication to synod (Appendix D).

### **V. Missionaries in Educational Ministries**

Our Reformed churches have been blessed with a rich and faithful theological tradition. One of the great assets of our federation is found in the careful study and exposition of the Scriptures. Recognizing the importance of “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we have seen a number of URCNA churches and missionaries serving the broader church through educational ministries.

These educational ministries (including but not limited to the work of MINTS, Divine Hope, and Redemption Prison Ministries) have historically been termed “extraordinary missions” within our federation. This label has been applied because, in accordance with our Church Order, “The church’s missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the *unconverted*” (Art. 47).

Missionaries working with educational ministries do not generally focus upon the unconverted directly, but their work is part of the broader mission work of the church, and deserves the support of the federation. Those involved in such ministries take the riches we have in Christ, and use them to strengthen the church in its manifold expressions around the world so that the gospel will ultimately reach many more unbelievers.

As we consider the role of our extraordinary missionaries working in educational ministries, we make the following observations:

- Such men need to be, and are currently, called and overseen by local consistories.
- The work of Divine Hope, MINTS, Redemption Prison Ministries and other such organizations is overseen administratively by their own organizational boards.
- Usually these ministries will not be exclusively URCNA but are missionary efforts that combine gifts, manpower, and accountability with other like-minded Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
- Men involved with MINTS span a broad geographic spectrum within the URCNA, and have historically had calling churches in at least three of our classes. Their focus is primarily on the foreign field.
- Men involved with Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary have historically had calling churches within Classis Central U.S. They labor in U.S. prisons.
- Our pastor involved with Redemption Prison Ministries has his calling church within Classis Western Canada. Their focus is in prisons in Canada.
- We have many ordained ministers functioning with an educational focus. Others in this realm teach in seminaries including but not limited to Mid-America Reformed Seminary and Westminster Seminary California. Such men have historically not been considered missionaries (educational or otherwise) within the URCNA.

Recognizing the oversight structures already in place for these ministries, we suggest the following:

**RECOMMENDATION #10:** That synod adopt the following as pastoral advice to the churches regarding those who labor in educational ministries:

- a. That educational missionaries with a domestic focus (e.g. Divine Hope, Redemption Prison Ministries) be adopted by the classis in which they operate, and that these classes see how they can best serve these men and their calling churches in a way that fits the needs of each particular situation. The synodical committees would be happy to help in giving advice should it be requested.
- b. That other extraordinary missionaries sent by URC consistories, though not considered here, approach the Missions Committee to develop guidelines, so that they are not neglected within the support structures of the federation regarding the work of missions.

- c. That men engaged in such ministry be recognized under Art. 47 of the Church Order, and therefore have the advice of their classis before accepting such a position as a URCNA missionary. We make this recommendation due to the weighty responsibility of those who would take on teaching in this capacity, and as it helps the classis to own and support its educational missionaries in a proper and encouraging way.
- d. If so desired, classis can appoint a man serving in this capacity to be their representative for the Synodical Missions Committee on Foreign or Home Missions.

**Grounds:**

1. See the seven bullet points above.
2. The diversity of oversight structures within educational missions makes it difficult, if not impossible, to give advice that would apply across the board.

**VI. Re-Submission of the Statement on Students from Abroad**

Our committee spent considerable time reformulating a new statement attempting to respond to the directives that Synod Wheaton 2018 gave us. We sent it out to the churches, but only two responded (both in favor of the revision). We are convinced that what follows is a positive revision and submit it to the Synod for approval.

*International Seminary Students and the URCNA*

**Background**

In recent years, with adequate theological education lacking in their home countries, an increasing number of men from abroad have come to seminaries in North America to study for the gospel ministry. Our seminaries have opened their doors to these men and have done much to prepare them. We are very thankful to God for returning so many men to their homelands where they are faithfully preaching the gospel for the advance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The question that arises is, what sort of relationship should the URCNA seek with seminary students from other countries? The Missions Committee is well aware of the fact that some of our current foreign missionaries are nationals of those countries where they are serving. We support these men, and are fully committed to encouraging the churches of the federation to continue supporting them as well.

But going forward in new ventures, our federation must consider how we can most responsibly and faithfully engage in foreign missions for the long term. Having studied the pertinent issues and the practices represented in NAPARC, the Missions Committee offers the following as pastoral advice for our churches.

**I. Common Difficulties in Sending Foreign Nationals**

There are some advantages to ordaining an international seminary student, and sending him back to his homeland to serve as a foreign missionary for a North American church (e.g. training in foreign language and culture will be unnecessary so that the man can more quickly begin his labor in the mission field). Yet numerous Reformed communions have steered away from this practice which has historically not worked well. While the following pitfalls will not be found in every instance of hiring a former international seminary student to serve as our foreign missionary, we offer them as real dangers often connected to the practice.

***A. The Foreign Church Can Develop Dependency on the North American Church:***

Sending churches in North America might aim to take care of the needs of their foreign mission works in a manner that encourages those connected with the mission to be perpetually dependent on their caretakers – this sort of dependency can hinder the maturation of the mission in various ways. It must be acknowledged that dependency can develop in domestic as well as foreign missions, regardless of the origin of the sending church or of the missionary. But when we send one of our own men to a foreign field, all parties involved in the mission should understand from the start that this missionary is seeking to establish an indigenous disciple-making church so that he can eventually return home, thus ending the mission's dependence on a foreign church for leaders and for the remuneration of those leaders.

The danger in sending a foreign man back to his homeland as our foreign missionary is that such a practice can severely hinder maturation in the mission work. If the man, now back in his home country, is employed by and indefinitely remains on the payroll of a North American church, the relationships between the missionary and the countrymen he attempts to serve can be adversely affected – they may, in fact, resent him as a hireling of the foreign church that sent him. Such dependency can also adversely affect the relationship between the missionary and his fellow pastors on the ground. In some cases, a large salary differential has caused jealousy and division within the national church. There is, therefore, increased risk of dependency in the case of employing a foreign national to serve as a missionary for the URCNA.

***B. The North American Church Can Develop Dependency on Those Abroad***

As much as a foreign mission can develop a harmful dependency on its sending North American church, so also the sending North American church can develop an unhealthy dependency when it makes a practice of employing national men as its foreign missionaries. We are referring to an outsourcing of foreign missions which happens in two ways.

*First*, since the foreign man naturally possesses great knowledge about his own country/culture, the sending church can easily become passive with regard to investigating the foreign field and overseeing its missionary. *Secondly*, the North American church can easily develop a dependency on foreign countries to supply it with missionaries instead of raising up and sending its own to the foreign field. Our federation has to grapple honestly and faithfully with God's calling us to raise up our own men and women for ministry in foreign missions. A healthy church is a sending church.

The various aspects of dependency outlined above will not happen in every instance of employing a foreign man as our foreign missionary. But they have historically happened with such regularity that various NAPARC churches have made it their policy not to employ foreign nationals as their missionaries. The URCNA would be wise to learn from history and from much older and experienced sister churches.

## **II. A More Responsible Way Forward in Working with Foreign Nationals**

The difficulties that can arise in sending foreign nationals as our missionaries should not lead us to ignore either the ways in which we might positively serve our brothers and sisters in other nations or the ways in which they might positively serve God and His Kingdom with the gifts He has given them. The goal of this document is neither to prevent future cooperation with foreign churches, nor to cut ties to Christians from other nations who study in North America. Rather, the goal is to help the URCNA work wisely and faithfully to avoid potential pitfalls, and to promote a path leading to the greatest Kingdom benefit when such opportunities for cooperation with foreign Christians and churches arise. To that end we suggest the following guidelines for working with international seminary students who seek URCNA support for mission work in their home countries.

### ***A. Conduct Thorough Vetting of Potential Pastors and Their Home Church***

The New Testament shows us a local church which identified and approved qualified men from its own number, and then sent out those men as missionaries (cf. Matt 28:16-20; Acts 13:1-3). This is the model we have sought to follow in our Church Order when we state in Art. 3, “Competent men should be urged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man who is a member of a church of the federation and who aspires to the ministry must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, which shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training . . .” Ordinarily, such competency is established in the local church as men demonstrate before those church leaders who know them best not only a genuine godliness but also a commitment to serve the Lord and others. Men who meet the qualifications listed in I Timothy 3, and who show that they have the gifts to be a minister of the Word, are recommended for consideration.

*But how do we determine this competency and genuine godliness in the case of men who come from other countries?* Here we are ordinarily working with two church bodies – the foreign home church and the church in North America. North American churches must develop a very close relationship with foreign men and their home churches *before* deciding to work together in mission. Much work is required to establish such a relationship. The national church will need to be visited, and a translator (who is not the international seminary student) will often need to be used.

In its communications with the foreign church that sent a man to seminary, the local United Reformed church should carefully think through and ask the following questions regarding that student’s Christian life and service:

1. How has it been established that the candidate meets the qualifications for pastor as laid out in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3?

2. How has it been established that the man has been faithful in his life and doctrine both during and before seminary (i.e. while living in his home country)?
3. Have the requisite gifts for pastoring and church-planting been demonstrated in the life of the candidate before and throughout his seminary education?
4. How has the man demonstrated long-standing commitment to service in a local church?

Once such questions have been answered to the satisfaction of the sending church, missionary partnership with the man's home church can be properly considered.

### ***B. Determine the Best Strategy for Cooperation in Kingdom-Work Abroad***

The Missions Committee proposes three strategies that should guide the URCNA in working with international seminary graduates who desire to return home to serve as gospel ministers. These should serve as helpful categories both for local churches hoping to continue a support relationship with a foreign national and for international seminary students who are hoping for a relationship with the URCNA in the future.

1. **Blessing** – This pertains to a country where we are not currently working. In such a situation an official relationship with the URCNA would not normally be considered a possibility because we aim to strengthen foreign fields where we are currently active. To give our blessing may involve the following:
  - a. The former international student returns to his home church with the encouragement and prayer support of the URCNA congregations that he has come to know during his seminary training.
  - b. The student would not be sent, ordained or funded by the URCNA.
  - c. A request could be made for the federation to investigate the possibility of opening a new mission field in the home country of the seminary graduate.
2. **Partnership** – A seminary graduate and his home church could enter into a partnership with the URCNA for the cause of the gospel.
  - a. Partnership between the URCNA and a seminary graduate from another country would involve the following:
    - i. Contact is made between the foreign church and the synodical Missions Committee and a relationship developed with them.
    - ii. An on-site visit is made to the field to understand the situation more fully, to talk to leaders, and to determine their needs and how we might best work together.
    - iii. The seminary graduate is ordained by his home church; his oversight would ideally be exercised by the leaders who sent him to North America to study.
    - iv. Any financial support sent by the URCNA is paid through the local foreign church. The elders and deacons of that church determine a faithful pay scale, and administer the funds as needed.
    - v. Financial support would ordinarily be on a declining scale for 5-8 years so as to encourage the local church to take financial responsibility for their own pastor rather than his being an “employee” of a western church.

- b. Partnership between a URC consistory/classis and a seminary student from another country would involve the following:
  - i. A United Reformed consistory commits to a mentoring relationship with a seminary student from another country. While the student remains under the oversight of a foreign church, his relationship with the URC consistory should be akin to the relationship between an overseeing consistory and its seminary students. This mentoring relationship should be reported to classis in keeping with CO Article 34.
  - ii. If desired, needed and recommended by the foreign student's home church, the URC consistory may assist the home church by examining the student for licensure. Also, if desired, needed and recommended by the foreign student's home church, the URC classis may assist the student's home church by conducting a classical candidacy exam. Licensure and candidacy would be recognized and held by the foreign consistory (pastoral leadership), not by any part of the URCNA.
  - iii. The United Reformed consistory agrees to provide teaching and exhorting opportunities for the foreign seminary student during his time of study.
  - iv. The local United Reformed church agrees to receive the foreign seminary student and his family into associate membership not in place of but rather in addition to his membership in his home church abroad.
  - v. The United Reformed consistory's goal in this relationship is to have the foreign seminary student return to his home church abroad.
- c. If it were decided that there is interest in starting a new foreign mission, a United Reformed consistory could arrange for a temporary investigative committee (including members from the interested United Reformed church, classis, and the synodical Missions Committee) to research the viability of such a work. Practical steps could be developed outlining what it would take to get such a project off the ground.

**3. Direct Oversight** – Though generally discouraged, this option pertains to exceptional cases where it is demonstrated that a foreign man would become a missionary who is ordained and funded by the URCNA, and sent to one of our active fields. Ordinarily, it would be considered only in cases where the foreign man, after graduating from seminary, has been active in gospel ministry within URCNA congregations over a period of some years.<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusion**

By following these policies, our federation will be able to present a clear path to international seminary students and graduates. They are encouraged to remain intimately connected and

<sup>48</sup> Note the guidelines developed by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Committee on Foreign Missions: "In the cultural context of missions, the maintenance of a national believer in the country of his origin, as a representative of a foreign church, can easily be harmful to his ministry and to the church in which he labors. To minimize this difficulty, the Committee ordinarily shall not support a national as a missionary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the country of his origin unless he is a citizen of the United States, has lived in the United States at least ten years, and has been engaged for at least five years in an active service as a minister of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church" (p. 26 of the *Manual of the Committee on Foreign Missions*, section 4.1.4.3).

accountable to the foreign church which sent them to seminary; yet, as opportunities arise, we give due consideration to working in cooperation with foreign men and their churches in a manner that does not hinder but aids those churches in becoming healthy and responsible (self-sustaining, self-governing, and self-propagating). At the same time, our federation must strive to be responsible with the resources that the Lord has entrusted to us so that we engage more effectively in foreign missions for the long term. The policies outlined here will help the URCNA not only to focus on raising up and sending out missionaries from our own churches but also to dedicate ourselves administratively and financially to that goal without ignoring the needs of our sister churches throughout the world.

**RECOMMENDATION #11:** That synod adopt the “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as pastoral advice to the churches in working with international seminary students who desire to return to their home countries as URCNA missionaries.

**RECOMMENDATION #12:** That synod encourage the classes of the federation as well as the Missions Committee to use “International Seminary Students and the URCNA” as they advise churches and international students regarding cooperation with foreign nationals in gospel ministry abroad.

## VII. Report of the Missions Coordinator – Rev. Richard Bout

What a joyful privilege to write my Missions Coordinator report to the churches after four years of waiting! Even though much has changed in our lives and God has been sifting us through many trials, there is much to be thankful for. The victorious tone of Psalm 103 comes to my mind – *"But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him . . . The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all"* (Ps. 103:17-19).

My work as Missions Coordinator has been complicated by the pandemic, but by God's grace, I was able to continue. Thankfully, I have been able to travel through most of the pandemic as an essential worker, though with many more hindrances. I have been able to maintain and build relationships with our missionaries and with sister denominations. Though these past years have been hard for all our mission works, there is much spiritual fruit that I see wherever I go, especially as freedom to worship has been opened in recent months. The Holy Spirit's work is evident among us – the church in Mexico moves forward, despite death and loss in their leadership; the Reformed churches in eastern Europe rose up to help the Ukrainian refugees; and there are new people attending in our church plants. Over the last four years I have had the privilege of seeing what God is doing through our missionaries and in our mission works. I wish that I could explain more thoroughly all the blessing I received in the work, but it will suffice to say that there is no more exciting task in the world than to work for Christ's kingdom.

The role of Missions Coordinator is a blessing to me. From my vantage point, which is one of unusually broad scope, I see some areas where we need to grow:

- I see lack of connectedness between churches, where churches have sent missionaries to the same country, without talking with one another. Other denominations build their teams and investigate new fields with much consultation. I believe this is the more prudent path. There is strength in working together.
- Many of our works are begun on the advice, vision and planning of one man who wanted to do mission work in his own area or country (which is good), but it is not the broader church that investigates and takes ownership of the field from the beginning. By having a shared vision, we will have long-term commitment to the field even when the original "visionaries" are gone.
- We need to find a way to better connect and support our missionaries and their families. I hear from missionaries that they feel isolated in their work and often feel disconnected from our federation. This may be part of the reason that we are facing a shortage of both pastors and missionaries.
- Though there is oversight by local churches, often it is given by those who don't have experience (especially on the foreign field). Because of this, almost all the decisions on the field are made by the missionary alone because there is no one else to consult. Long-term, this causes discouragement, burnout, and authority issues on the field. Local churches and their missionaries need working relationships with men who have experienced advice to give.
- When we have tensions or division on the field (which is very common), we have had difficulty in resolving them. Many times, I have been asked to come and give advice in

long-standing problems. This is another area where a broader approach to oversight through shared responsibility can help conflict resolution.

- As a federation, we are not lacking in zeal, but we are running on the spot for lack of knowing where to go and how to get there. We have many separate committees, but what we lack is organization so that joint projects are created, and teams are built. Many young people who desire to serve the Lord in missions are leaving our federation to serve in other churches and missions. Like in other NAPARC churches, we need to set aside men who will lead and assist the future leaders of our federation to have practical, hands-on, long term mission experiences. This is an investment in our future.

In light of the above concerns, I believe the majority report is very helpful because it helps us take greater responsibility for our mission works and helps us plan together for the future. The opportunities that I see for the gospel are all around us. Yet I would love to see our churches involved in doing much more. More men and women sent out as missionaries to the foreign field. More churches planted in our own communities. More coordination and organization because Christ is honored when we are unified. Let us together work for Christ's glory and the conversion of the lost! I look forward to seeing you having the opportunity to discuss these matters at Synod.

Here is a summary of my day-to-day activities, regular and projected:

- i. **Publication of the Trumpet (monthly).** Each month two of our missionaries or church-planters are asked to write, and these are sent to our churches.
- ii. **Weekly prayer requests for URC bulletins** (sent the beginning of every month)
- iii. **Prayer Map 2020 and 2022.** An updated map was sent to all churches in 2020 and I am currently working on the 2022 edition. This will be sent out this summer, DV.
- iv. **Updates on the missions website.** Descriptions of all of our mission works are found at [urcnamissions.org](http://urcnamissions.org) and these are kept up to date. A revamp of the site is presently being worked on and should be completed by August 2022.
- v. **Financial needs.**
  - I receive regular requests/communications throughout the year from churches and individuals about our mission works that need support.
  - At the end of each year, a letter is sent to all missionaries asking about needs, and then those needs were communicated to our churches.
- vi. **Videos Interviews with URC Missionaries.** This project was begun during COVID to communicate with the churches about concerns and needs of our mission works via Facebook and YouTube. I hope to continue with this project in upcoming months, but on a limited basis.
- vii. **On-line Home and Foreign Prayer Meetings.** Another project that was begun during COVID, online prayer meetings are held for all foreign and home missionaries regularly (initially quarterly, but now biannually).
- viii. **Contact with individual missionaries.** I have regular phone or Skype meetings with our missionaries and church-planters to keep abreast of what is current events on-field, to encourage them, and to pray together.
- ix. **Preaching and speaking in URCs.** I continue to regularly accept invites for preaching, presentations and missions seminars, as my schedule allows. This

- includes small/struggling churches that need help in forming a vision to reach their communities.
- x. **Mission Committee Work.** Especially since Synod Wheaton, much time has been spent on discussion and development of the plan for missions, fulfilling the mandate given to us to prepare a plan for missions for the URCNA. I have continued to work with the committee in meetings, planning and in reviews of my work.
  - xi. **Seminary Internship Program.** A description of a missionary training for seminary students' program was included in our 2018 report, but unfortunately this idea has not yet materialized. Through the financial help of URMA (United Reformed Missions Association), Mid-America student Eric Heida was sent to intern under Rev. Bultje for a summer internship. (I would love to see this internship program developed and offered to all seminary students as an onramp for potential pastors and missionaries in the URCNA).
  - xii. **Visiting of Seminaries.**
    - o Over the past years I have visited MARS, Westminster, and Greenville Seminaries.
    - o I also visit and seek to maintain contact with mission-minded students through personal meetings and phone calls.
  - xiii. **Inter-church relationships.** I meet regularly with brothers from other NAPARC churches.
    - o Each September I meet with other mission leaders at the NAPARC World Missions Consultation in Philadelphia, PA to discuss ways that we can work together on foreign fields.
    - o In May 2022 I was invited by the OPC to visit and encourage churches working with Ukrainian refugees. It was a joy to see how funds raised in the OPC (and URC) were being used to help those so affected by the war. I have appreciated the great missions organization of the OPC, and think that we can learn much from them.
    - o I am now serving on CECCA, our federation's committee that seeks to maintain relations with churches outside North America. One desire of missions committee is that we would form relationships with like-minded churches in the countries where we have our own missionaries in order to partner with them.
    - o I serve as an associate board member of Word & Deed.
    - o I serve as an advisor to the URMA (United Reformed Missions Association).
  - xiv. **Summer Training in Missions Program.** Over the last couple of years, Ken Anema, Bill Green, Matthew Van Dyken, and I have been planning a summer program for post-secondary young people to train on the foreign field for a period of 4 weeks in early summer (something that is much needed in our churches!). We hope that this can take place either in Mexico or Costa Rica in 2023.
  - xv. **Visiting of Missionaries and Church-plants.** This vital part of the work allows me to preach in mission works and church plants and connect with our missionaries and church-planters (see below). On each trip I usually visit with the missionaries and others who may be working in the mission, preach and teach as necessary, give a presentation on URC missions, and give on-field advice as requested by the missionaries and/or sending church.

The following activity log records my main trips and visits over the last four years:

## **2018**

- **June 11-16 – Synod 2018 in Wheaton, IL.**
- **July 12-14 – Trip to NJ/NY**
  - Meeting with eastern classical missions committee
  - Meeting with Rev. Rich Kuiken
- **July 24-27 – Trip to CA**
  - Meeting with Escondido/Christ URC
- **September 17- 20 – Trip to NAPARC World Consultations in Philadelphia, PA**
- **October 9-11 – Trip to MI**
  - Meeting with council of Bethany URC
  - Attended Classis MI
  - Meeting with Rev. Steve and Nalini Poelman
  - Meeting with Rev. Brian Najapfour
- **October 12-13 – URCNA YP Youth Conference in Aylmer, ON**
- **November 15-19 – Trip to URCNA in Big Springs, CA**
  - Visit with Rev. Nollie and Evelyn Malabuyo
  - Taught and preached in Big Springs URC
- **November 24 – Speak at missions conference – Covenant URC, Wyoming ON**
- **December 7-10 – Trip to URCNA church plant in Colorado Springs, CO**
  - Meeting with Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen
  - Preached in Colorado Springs URC
  - Visited with leaders in church
  - Met with church-planter Tony Phelps

## **2019**

- **January 22-28 – Trip to Honduras**
  - Visit/meetings with Rev. Ernie Langendoen/ Elder from Immanuel URC
  - Preach/teach in church in Comayagua
- **February 13 - March 9 – Trip to Costa Rica**
  - Visit/meeting with Rev. Bill & Aletha Green
  - Preaching/teaching in churches/ church plants.
  - Preaching/teaching in pastor association meetings
  - Classes in Christian elementary and high school
  - Bible studies/visits with Pastor Lester in Cartago
- **March 23-27 – Trip to URCNA Missions Conference in Bonclarken NC**
  - March 27-30 – Missions Committee Meeting, NC
  - April 3 – Speaking and presentation in Greenville Seminary, SC
- **June 6-11 – Trip to Washington/Gig Harbor**
  - Meeting with Can Ref elders concerning mission in Queretaro, Mexico
  - Meeting/visit with area pastors

- Evangelism seminar in Burlington URC
- Visit with leaders in Gig Harbor church plant
- Preach in Gig Harbor church plant
- **July 19-22 – Trip to NJ/NY**
  - Meeting with Eastern classis missions committee
  - Visit/meeting with Rev. Sam Perez
  - Visit/meeting with Rev. Rich Kuiken
  - Preach in Jersey City, NJ church plant
- **August 5-12 – Visit to Calgary/Regina church plant**
  - Speaker at Summit Reformed Youth Conference (Aug 5-8)
  - Visit to URCNA church plant in Regina, SK (Aug 8-12)
    - Met with Rev. Cochran and leaders in the church
    - Preached on August 7
- **September 4-5 – Visit to Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, IN**
  - Met with missionaries & board
  - Met with seminary students
- **September 17-18 – Trip to NAPARC Missions Meetings in PA**
- **September 20-26 – Trip to CA**
  - Sept 20-23 – Visit to Ontario CA Spanish-speaking church plant
    - Seminar on local evangelism
    - Preaching in Spanish
    - Meeting with Ontario URC council
  - Sept 2 – preached in Ontario URC
  - Sept 22 – visit to Westminster Seminary (met with students and faculty; and gave URC missions presentation).
  - Sept 22 – meeting with councils in Santee and Escondido to discuss Italy mission works
  - Sept 24 – visit to Classis PNW for a presentation.
- **October 5-7 – Trip to Grand Prairie URC**
  - Meeting with leadership
  - Evangelism seminar/preached
- **October 19-21 – Trip to Cambridge, MD, and Washington DC.**
  - Visit/meeting with Rev. Steve & Kathy Arrick
  - Preached
  - Visit with Brian Lee/leaders in Washington DC
- **November 15-18 – Trip to Leduc, Alberta**
  - Evangelism seminar & preaching
  - Meeting with church leadership
  - Visit with Rev. Bill Pols and Peter Wright
- **November 23-26 – Trip to Chicago Heights, IL**
  - Evangelism seminar & preaching
  - Meeting/visit with Rev. Ruben Sernas
  - Visit with MARS students and area pastors

**2020**

- **January 8-10 – Trip to MI**
  - Presentation of missions plan for MI classis
  - Meetings with area pastors
- **January 28-31 – Trip to Phoenix, AZ, for Missions Committee meeting**
- **Feb. 12 - April 22 – Trip to Tepic, Mexico** to replace Rev. Matt Van Dyken during his furlough.
  - Preached weekly in church plant
  - Visited and worked with members and contacts
- **August 17-21 Trip to Edmonton, AB**
  - Visit with area pastors
  - Main speaker at Running camp
- **November 13-16 – Trip to Edmonton/Grand Prairie, Alberta**
  - Meeting with area pastors
  - Preach/visit in Grand Prairie
- **November 21-23 – Trip to Lethbridge, Alberta**
  - Meeting with council of Lethbridge
  - Preach in Lethbridge URC

## 2021

- **February 3-16 – Trip to Mexico**
  - Preaching/teaching in Tepic
  - Visit with leadership (Elder Martin Castillo was in the hospital; is now with the Lord)
  - Visit with Canadian Reformed missionaries in Queretaro
- **March 23-26 – Trip to church-plant in Regina**
  - Preach
  - Visit with leadership and Rev. Brian & Julie Cochran
- **April 28 - May 10 – Trip to church plants on US west coast**
  - Visit with Rev. Kaloostian in Ventura, CA
  - Visit with Rev. Taylor Kern in Ontario, CA
  - Visit with Rev. Yi Wang
  - Visited/preached in church plant in Big Springs, CA
  - Vancouver, WA – preach/teach, visit with Rev. Chris Coleman and area pastors
- **June 11-14 – visit Grand Prairie AB (preached)**
- **June 26-28 – visit Regina church plant (preaching and visiting with leadership)**
- **August 1-5 – speaker at Summit Youth Conference**
- **September 20-23 – Trip to PA for the NAPARC Missions meetings**
- **October 2 – Wellandport Missions Conference**
- **October 12-20 – Trip to MI/ Eastern US**
  - Classis MI & Classis Carbondale
  - Visited/preached in Madison, IN
- **November 2-16 – Trip to Italy**

- Visit with Rev. Andrea Ferrari and preached/visited church in Perugia/visit with leaders
- Visit with Mike Brown and church in Milan; preached
- Visited with Vincenzo and Judit Coluccia in Lecce
- **November 18 - December 10 – Trip to Africa to visit the Van Essendelfts and Folkerts**
  - Visited with both families and met with leadership of OPC team
  - Preached in Karamojan church, and in mountain churches
  - Taught seminary students
  - Spoke at the OPC annual team retreat

## 2022

- **January 27 - February 3 – Trip to Florida and Colorado Springs, CO**
  - Attended MARS for the Missions Training start-up
  - Visit Colorado Springs church plant; preached; visited with Rev. Harms
- **March 1-4 – Missions Conference in Savannah, Georgia**
  - Visited with O. Palmer Roberson – translation work
- **March 20-22 – Trip to MI**
  - Visit with classical missions committee, Rev. Steve Poelman, seminary students, and Rev. Anup Hiwali
- **May 9-19 – Trip to Eastern Europe David Nakhla of the OPC**
  - Visited churches and organizations involved in helping Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Hungary, Lithuania
  - Visited with Mike Brown and Andrea Ferrari; URC seminary student Bryce Klassen
- **June 25-28 – Visit to Pocono Reformed Bible Church/ Rev. Rich Kuiken**
  - Preached/taught/visited with Rich & Margaret Kuiken and area pastors
- **July 7-15 – Trip to Ecuador**
  - Visit to Quito with Rev. Landazuri, with family and with elders of church; preached in the church and in the new mission
  - Visit Josh and Michelle Vogel in Quininde; visited health clinic and children’s ministries; preached and taught.

**RECOMMENDATION #13:** That synod grant an opportunity for Rev. Richard Bout to provide any additions to his report in person on the floor of Synod 2022.

**RECOMMENDATION #14:** That synod approve the work of the Missions Coordinator with hearty thanks.

**RECOMMENDATION #15:** Barring the adoption of a new plan for missions, that synod re-appoint Rev. Richard Bout as the URCNA Missions Coordinator.

**Grounds:**

1. Rev. Bout has served well as Missions Coordinator, and through his labors the federation has been challenged to grow in faithfulness in missions.
2. Rev. Bout is frequently called upon to serve the churches of the federation in giving advice and visiting church planters both foreign and domestic for encouragement and advice.
3. The policies of the URCNA Missions Committee require re-appointment of the URCNA Missions Coordinator by a 2/3 majority vote of synod at the first synod following every three years of service (Policies C.2.c).
4. Rev. Bout's calling consistory, Living Water Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario, approves this reappointment.

**VIII. Clerical & Financial Matters**

**RECOMMENDATION #16:** That synod continue Rev. Richard Bout's salary, expenses, and yearly raises as set by previous synods and with yearly cost of living increases as determined by Revenue Canada.

**Ground:** We continue to give thanks for the faithful work of our Missions Coordinator, and recognize our obligations to support him as he labors on behalf of the federation.

**RECOMMENDATION #17:** That synod establish the budget of the URCNA Missions Committee based upon the decisions of synod as follows:

- If committee size is unchanged (17 men), to increase the budget to \$22,000 USD per year.
- If the committee is divided into a Synodical Foreign Missions Committee and Synodical Home Missions Committee, that the yearly budget of each committee be set at \$11,000 USD.
- If the committee is reduced to its original size of 9 but otherwise unchanged, to set the budget at \$16,000 USD per year.

**Grounds:**

1. Increases in travel costs have been significant for all areas of travel in recent years.

2. Changes to the size of the committee would require changes in their budget.

**RECOMMENDATION #18:** That synod change point A.4.c of the "Policies for the Synodical Missions Committee and Missions Coordinator" as follows:

From:

c. The Clerk – shall keep minutes of all the regular meetings of the Missions Committee, and shall be responsible to present these minutes to the councils of all congregations of the URCNA. The Clerk and/or the Chairman shall serve as signatories for all official documents of the Missions Committee.

To:

c. The Clerk – shall keep minutes of all regular meetings of the Missions Committee, and shall be responsible to present a yearly report of the Missions Committees activities to the councils of all congregations of the URCNA. The Clerk and/or the Chairman shall serve as signatories for all official documents of the Missions Committee.

**Grounds:**

1. Presenting minutes of all meetings to all councils in the federation is a requirement given to no other standing committee of synod except the Missions Committee.
2. Reports on Missions Committee activities are available twice annually at classis meetings through classical representatives.
3. One annual, written report will highlight key activities of the Missions Committee for the attention of the churches.

**RECOMMENDATION #19:** That synod give the privilege of the floor to two designated members of the majority committee when the Majority Report is on the floor, and that synod give the privilege of the floor to two designated members of the minority committee when the Minority Report is on the floor.

## **Website Oversight Committee Report to Synod Niagara**

An action of Synod 2004 created the Website Oversight Committee (WOC) as a synodical committee with a mandate to oversee and maintain the federation's website at <https://www.urchna.org> as well as produce the federation's annual *Archive Directory*. Each classis appoints an individual to serve on the committee. Synods subsequent to 2004 have tweaked the committee's mandate (and alleviated it of the role of producing the *Archive Directory*), but its core task remains to oversee the federation website. The committee does so primarily in cooperation with and via oversight over the federation's current Webmaster, Gary Fisher.

The current members of the WOC include the following:

- Bruce Vrieling – Classis Ontario East (Chairman)
- Rev. Adrian Dieleman – Classis Pacific Northwest
- Rev. Talman Wagenmaker – Classis Michigan
- Micah Van Maanen – Classis Central US
- Tim Feijer – Classis Southwestern Ontario
- Rev. Chuck Tedrick – Classis Southwest US
- Stephen Adamus – Classis Eastern US
- Cameron Kellner- Classis Western Canada
- Gary Fisher – Webmaster

### **Old Business**

Synod Wheaton 2018 made a number of requests of the WOC, enumerated below:

#### 1. Posting the Affirmations regarding Marriage

These affirmations were approved at Synod 2018 (*Acts of Synod 2018*, article 90), and the WOC was requested to post these on the federation website. This has been completed.

#### 2. Regarding the Statistician

Synod 2018 created a new synodical functionary, the Statistician, tasked with maintaining federation statistics and production of the annual *Archive Directory* (*Acts of Synod 2018*, article 87.1). Since these tasks had up until that point been the responsibility of the Webmaster, the WOC and the Webmaster were asked to work with the new Statistician (Jody Luth) to ensure a smooth transition (article 87.5). We believe this has been done (see Appendix A for more detail). Note: the Statistician was made accountable to each Overseeing Consistory for Synod, not the WOC (article 87.1 and *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 4.8.3), so this report contains no further information about the Statistician's work or the *Archive Directory*.

#### 3. Ministerial News

The WOC's 2018 Report to Synod recommended some editorial changes to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* concerning what is allowed to be posted to the Ministerial News section of the website (*Acts of Synod*, article 88.7). The Chairman of Synod ruled this recommendation to be out of order, as changes to the *Regulations* must come from a consistory, not a committee. We have therefore requested that the Oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC) bring these recommendations to Synod 2022 in their separate report in this agenda.

## **For Your Information**

### *Changing our committee's funding model*

Since its inception, the WOC has been funded differently than other synodical committees in that it receives funds through classical askings (currently \$100USD or \$125CAD per year) and its funding does not appear in the synodical budget. After discussions with the Canadian Treasurer, we have decided to request that this be changed to bring us in line with other committees, and that our budget simply be a line item in the synodical budget. Because we were not sure that requesting a change of this type is within the purview of the WOC to bring to Synod, we have asked the OCWOC, a consistory, to request this change on our behalf in their report to Synod.

### *Reappointment of the Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC)*

The *Acts of Synod* 2010 article 57.3 record that Synod decided not to create a term limit for the OCWOC's oversight of the WOC. However, inconsistent with this directive, reports of the WOC to each Synod since that time have requested a *reappointment*, which has been granted. Desiring to come into line with the 2010 action of Synod, we no longer intend ordinarily to bring such a request in our report to Synod (which is, incidentally, consistent with the recommendation approved at the last Synod that the Waupun consistory's oversight "continue until *at least* the next Synod" (*Acts of Synod* 2018, article 88.4, emphasis added)).

That being said, please note the communication from the Waupun consistory asking to be relieved of their overseeing duties, and their request that a new consistory be appointed at this Synod.

### *Webmaster Report*

The report from our Webmaster outlining his activities since the last Synod is contained as Appendix A at the end of this report.

## **WOC Recommendations to Synod 2022:**

1. That Synod set the annual budget for the WOC starting in 2023 at \$2000USD; this recommendation is contingent upon Synod approving the above-mentioned recommendation

from the OCWOC to change the WOC's funding model. This amount is roughly in line with previous annual expenditures of money received through classical askings.

2. That Synod request the synodical committees of the federation to work with the Webmaster to ensure their committee pages on [www.urncna.org](http://www.urncna.org) include their membership, their mandate, and significant documents relating to their committee.
3. That Synod change the annual honorarium for the Webmaster, Gary Fisher, to \$5250USD starting in 2023. The amount currently stands at \$5000USD.
4. That Synod approve a one-time additional "thank you" honorarium payment of \$1000USD (payable in 2023) to Gary Fisher for his substantial work helping to launch the new Synod registration website in 2020 (and used for the first time in 2022).
5. That Synod thank Gary Fisher for his faithful labours as the federation's Webmaster, and that he be re-appointed.
6. That Synod thank the Waupun Consistory for their oversight of the WOC.

## **APPENDIX A: Webmaster's Report to Synod Niagara 2022**

\*Updated and revised from the  
Synod Redeemer 2020 Report

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers;

In accordance with the relevant section of the "Regulations for Synodical Procedure" approved by Synod Wheaton 2018 and bearing in mind the requirements and duties enumerated over the years since this task was first described, I humbly offer this Report, "including website analytics and other technical statistics showing the usefulness of the website." [Regulations 4.7.4.n]

To facilitate your evaluation of the work, I have organized this Report in roughly the order used within the Regulations to define the tasks with which you have entrusted me.

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable direction and assistance given to me by the Web Oversight Committee [WOC], which has always been and continues to be responsive to my requests for guidance, and diligent in relaying website-related questions which arise in their classes. WOC Chair Bruce Vrieling's leadership and the wise counsel of the Classis Representatives have benefitted the website, and the URCNA, many times; this is by no means a "one-man job."

I must also express my gratitude for the appointment of the URCNA Statistician, and for Mrs. Jody Luth's excellent grasp of that position. Following Synod Wheaton, the Statistician and I were in almost daily communications as she was trained on both the software and on the many unique requirements of our Federation Directory, and we worked quite closely as she prepared the 2018 Archive Edition, but over the following years her questions grew both less frequent and more perceptive, and with the exception of occasional technical issues subsequent Archive Directories have been entirely her work from design to execution. Making the Directory and

Statistics a separate and independent position has given both of us the time needed to accomplish our best work.

My General Responsibilities, as described in the Regulations, begin with day-to-day operation of the Federation website, and to this usually predictable task I devote at least the first and last hour of each day, checking first each morning for help requests (lost passwords, etc.), new documents, event listings and Ministerial News items in need of approval, emails from both within and outside the URCNA, reports from the hosting company, and a general check of website functions, keeping a list of issues which will require further processing or follow-up. I attend to these at the time, throughout the day, or during my evening “rounds,” and confront any remaining or continuing tasks on Saturday. I also carry a laptop with me when travelling so that I can perform my duties year-round.

The bulk of requests for my assistance come by email, but my cell number is posted on the site; I typically receive several relevant calls a month. It is my practice, whenever possible, to address phone requests immediately, while the person in need of assistance is still engaged in the task which prompted the call. However, because such calls may come when I am away from my office and unable to do more than talk the caller through the issue, email requests are still best for most requests; when it is requested or the best course of action, I phone the requestor.

From time to time I email the Clerk of each Classis and the Chairman or Clerk of each standing committee to confirm their information and offer my assistance. This has had variable results, as some of our committees do not use the website regularly in their work and some of the Classes likewise do not regularly update their Classis pages. I would in all humility remind both the committees and the churches that we have established URCNA.org precisely for the purpose of facilitating communication among us, and that even brief reports from time to time would help sister churches and fellow members know how to pray and for what; to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, [and] *weep with those who weep*;” and to see the United Reformed Churches as truly united, not just related. To that end I offer

**Recommendation 1:** that Synod Niagara 2022 encourage our Churches, Classes and Committees to keep their pages on the Federation website updated periodically, at least when changes occur, so that members, sister churches, and other visitors (in the case of public information) can be informed of the work being done throughout the Federation. As Webmaster I will and do gladly assist as needed.

I must, with some chagrin, confess that my communications to the Classes by way of our Classis Representatives, who also comprise the Web Oversight Committee, have sometimes fallen short, as I occasionally learn of the agenda cutoff for a given classis only days in advance. There have also been multiple incidents in which new Church Plants or Provisional Churches were not reported to me in a timely fashion. I have been working to develop a “generic” reporting format which Representatives could use in preparing their reports, but with sufficient notice I can tailor

the reports to include facts which might be pertinent to individual classes if that is requested. This effort is still in progress.

Finally, I have worked particularly closely over the past six months with the Synodical Interim Committee in preparing for Synod Niagara 2022, as I did in the months before Synod Redeemer 2020, and in discussions with that Committee was encouraged to offer the following

**Recommendation 2:** that to the extent such documentation can be obtained, records from past and future Synods, particularly planning and working documents, be collected and securely stored on the Federation website for use by future Synodical Interim Committees, at their discretion, for the organization and planning of future meetings of Synod, and for historical purposes, so that the collective wisdom of previous Synod planners can benefit those to come. Provisions for this possibility have already been incorporated into the website but can be improved upon as necessary.

I have prepared and attached three pages below offering statistics, analytics and observations I believe will be helpful in evaluating both the website and my efforts.

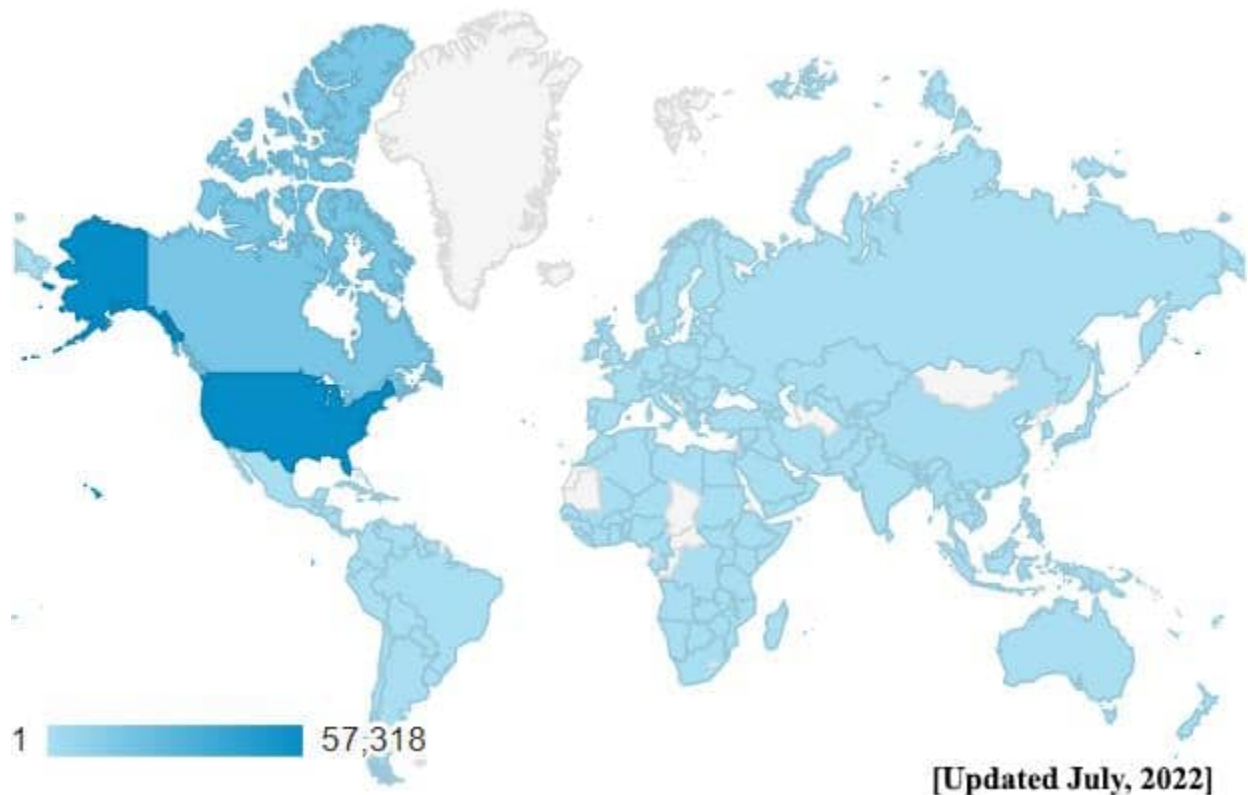
Serving the church in this position, while occasionally taxing, remains a joy and a blessing, and I thank the Synod, our churches, and above all our God for granting me the opportunity to utilize the gifts granted to me in this way. It is my fervent hope that I will be found a profitable servant.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Fisher  
URCNA Webmaster

## Website Utilization

Website utilization continues to grow, not only within but outside the Federation as well. A map of countries from which URCNA.org receives visitors includes every habitable continent; overall, we touch 145 distinct countries throughout the world. Behind only Canada and the United States, the third largest number of website visitors comes to us from China.



While our largest audience comes from North America, we regularly reach thousands in Asia and almost as many in Europe, about 1000 in Africa, and around 750 each in South and Central America, Australia, and the Oceania region. In fact, of the 145 countries we touch, each of the first 22 represents over 100 users, and 80 show visitor figures in two or more digits. These numbers are significantly higher than in 2020.

## How Users Reach URCNA.org

In the early years of the Federation website, both computer and communications technology in widespread use were quite limited in comparison to now. Computers could display only limited colors, display resolution was often barely capable of presenting readable text, and pages took much longer to load, especially if high-quality photos or graphics were being used, largely due to slow internet connections. For most of us, those restrictions have passed into history and highly interactive websites with engaging graphics, animation, and advanced control technology are common and popular.

Nevertheless, both among our membership and especially in light of our apparent impact around the world, as seen above, we need to maintain a careful balance between aesthetics and usability, keeping the website attractive as a visible aspect of the URCNA, yet still accessible to users who might be using older devices and slower – perhaps even dial-up – internet connections.

Here is how people at home and abroad view and use the URCNA website.



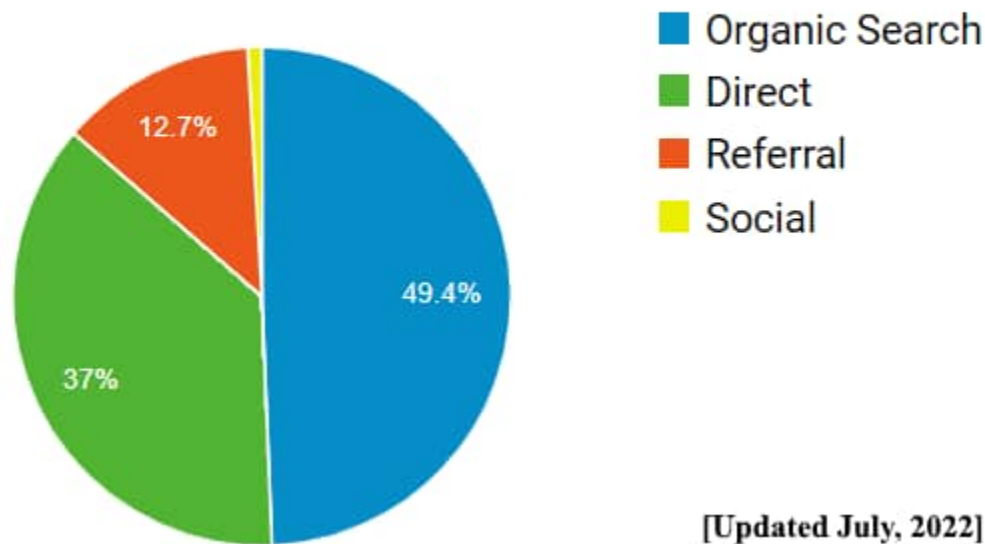
Desktop computers continue to be the most popular device employed by users of URCNA.org, but have dropped year by year. Tablets have also dropped significantly in usage since the last Report. The increase, of course, has gone to cell phones, which are now used by almost half of visitors to the website. At least some of this increase may be attributable to enhancements and improvements made both by Service-Life, the company which developed and maintains the

Content Management System we use on the website, and by myself through careful editing and formatting of the URCNA pages, all in recognition of the reliance people have on their mobile phones.

### How Visitors Find URCNA.org

Unlike buildings, books and brochures, a website, no matter how attractive or useful, cannot gain the interest of passers-by. With almost two billion<sup>1</sup> websites currently vying for attention on the internet, website usage depends entirely on referrals of one sort or another. It is essential to get and keep a website’s URL (“address”) before any intended audience, or they will simply not know about it.

#### Top Channels



The chart above shows that the majority of our visitors find us through Google, Bing, and other search engines. One key to this is a concept called SEO, Search Engine Optimization, which is a method of informing search engines of important keywords and categories, and of ensuring that content for which users might search is presented and organized in ways “friendly” to the search sites. Virtually every public page on URCNA.org has SEO facilities, and when a page is added, edited, or examined in my periodic checks of the site, I also check and, if necessary, update SEO.

A third of our users simply type “URCNA.org” to reach us; these are people who either already know of us, or who have obtained our “address” from a bulletin, a business card, or other source. The remaining two categories are those who follow a link, either from Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, etc. – or from another website. While many of our churches display a link on their own websites leading to URCNA.org, some still do not; this should be encouraged to highlight our unity and to assist those interested in our churches.

[<sup>1</sup> <https://www.internetlivestats.com/total-number-of-websites/>]

July 23, 2022

Esteemed brothers,

The Consistory of the Grace United Reformed Church presents this report to Synod for our duties as the oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (WOC).

Our mandate is (Acts of Synod London 2010, article 57, recommendation #14):

- Acting as a legal entity when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee for the proper fulfillment of the Website Oversight Committee's mandate; the specific actions taken shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
- Acting as the responsible ecclesiastical assembly, in the time between Synods, when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee for the proper clarification and fulfillment of the Website Oversight Committee's mandate; the specific actions taken shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

Actions we took were:

- As needed, we paid for various items related to the operation of the website (e.g. domain registration, web forwarding, email hosting, etc.); we submitted these costs for reimbursement by the federation. We had responded to a security risk by Network Solutions (company that hosts our domain name of urnca.org) and changed the account password. We also implemented MFA (multi-factor authentication) for the domain hosting account. At the request of the WOC, we purchased the domain name of urcna.church and forwarded it to urcna.org.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve the Lord of the churches in this capacity. In keeping with Synodical rules 3.2, we humbly present the following recommendation for Synod:

- **Recommendation #1:** That Synod change the wording of article 4.7.4o of the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* (concerning postings to the "Recent Ministerial News" section of the website) as indicated below. Additions are in *italics* and deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~:

Current:

Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the sustaining of ordination and candidacy exams, receiving a license to exhort, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Proposed:

Post the ministerial information received from the consistories of the federation, including the calling of pastors, the answer to this call, availability for call, dissolution of ministerial relationship, the *scheduling and* sustaining of ordination, ~~and~~ *candidacy and licensure* exams, ~~receiving a license to exhort~~, suspension, reinstatement, deposition, emeritation, and the deaths of ministers that take place in our federation.

Grounds:

- a. It is useful to announce in advance the *scheduling* of ordination, candidacy and licensure exams, not just their sustaining
  - b. The new wording is clearer than the old
  - c. The WOC agrees with the recommendation
- **Recommendation #2:** That the budget for the WOC no longer be funded from annual Classical 'askings' (currently \$100/USD or \$125CAD) and instead the WOC budget would be a line item in the Synodical budget.

Grounds:

- a. Their budgeting process would become more like the other Synodical committees.
  - b. This recommendation comes from the WOC and we concur with it, and therefore their request comes as a recommendation from us as well
  - c. Pam Wessels, URCNA Canadian treasurer, agrees with this
- **Recommendation #3:** That Synod find a replacement for the Grace United Reformed Church consistory as the oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (WOC).

Grounds:

- d. Elder Larry Van Den Berg started working in 2007 with the URCNA web site, building of the federation directory, hosting and domain administration and managed custom application development as requested.
  - e. Elder Larry Van Den Berg has asked to take a break after 15 years of service to the URCNA web site as he transitions into retirement.

Sincerely, in Christ  
 Elder David Kok  
 Clerk

**Liaison Committee for the Presbyterian and Reformed Commission  
on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCC)  
Report to Synod Niagara**

Esteemed Brothers,

As the URCNA liaison to the PRCC, we present the following brief report.

**I. Review of the Committee's Mandate**

Synod 2014 adopted the following recommendations:

*That Synod appoint the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to serve indefinitely without need of re-appointment as the URCNA liaison to the PRCC, and that Synod requests that this Consistory submit reports on the PRCC to future synods.*

*That Synod authorize the Consistory of Faith URC of Beecher, Illinois, to send one or two observers to PRCC meetings occasionally, at URCNA expense, leaving it to the Consistory's discretion whether and when such observers will be sent. Costs should be set at \$500 USD per annum. (Acts of Synod Visalia 2014, pp. 27-28)*

**II. Summary of the Committee's Activities**

Rev. Andrew Spriensma attended the PRCC annual chaplain conference in St. Louis, Missouri from June 26-29, 2021. The consistory of Faith URC (Beecher, IL) did not see a need to send an observer to the annual PRCC commissioner meetings in Atlanta, GA. The Executive Commissioner report and minutes for these meetings have been received and reviewed, followed by telephone calls to the PRCC administrator and executive director. We report our observations below.

**III. Report on PRCC**

**A. The Mission of the PRCC**

Synod Schererville 2007 voted to apply for affiliate membership in the PRCC (formerly PRJC) because serving as a U.S. Military chaplain requires an endorsement from "a qualified Religious organization." The PRCC's Mission Statement declares,

*The Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel is a ministry of member denominations dedicated to obeying Christ's Great Commission by providing men to serve as chaplains in military and civilian organizations. The Commission endorses and ecclesiastically supports ordained, qualified chaplains; approves chaplain candidates; and helps presbyteries and congregations in biblical ministry to military personnel and their families.*

The Commission is governed by representatives or *commissioners* from its five member denominations: ARPC, KAPC, OPC, PCA, and RPCNA. It is also the endorsing body for two associate member (non-voting) denominations: KPCA and URCNA. Associate membership in the PRCC is limited to NAPARC denominations.

Five lines of effort that summarize the PRCC daily work follows: *CATCH* new applicants who are considering a call to chaplaincy ministry, *CREDENTIAL* them properly so that they have ecclesiastical endorsement to serve in their field, provide pastoral *CARE* to chaplains and their families, *COVER* them with spiritual and legal advice to proclaim Christ freely in a secular organization, and *CONNECT* chaplains with their home church congregations.

**B. Chaplains Endorsed by the PRCC**

The PRCC endorses a growing population of 321 military chaplains, chaplain candidates, and civilian chaplains. (236 PCA; 30 KAPC; 25 ARPC; 18 OPC; 8 KPCA; 2 RPCNA; 2 URCNA).

URCNA military chaplaincy has doubled! ☺ We rejoice to report that Rev. Daniel Cortez was commissioned as a chaplain to the U.S. Air Force Reserve in May 2020 under the oversight of Christ URC (Santee, CA). He regularly performs his duties at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada and has a pending application to serve full-time as an active duty chaplain for the U.S Air Force. Chaplain Cortez can be contacted at [cortez\\_daniel22@yahoo.com](mailto:cortez_daniel22@yahoo.com).

Rev. Andrew Spriensma continues his service as an U.S. Army chaplain under the oversight of Faith URC (Beecher, IL). He is currently assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri as the Family Life Chaplain to the garrison, responsible for leading a chapel congregation, providing pastoral counseling to the military community, and conducting training to enhance counseling skills of the unit chaplains. Chaplain Spriensma can be contacted at [amspriensma@gmail.com](mailto:amspriensma@gmail.com).

### **C. Gender Confusion**

The 2019 PRCC Chaplain's Manual updated chapter 7 in order to broaden the topic from "ministry and homosexuality" to "ministry in a culture of gender confusion." This chapter addresses a wider range of contemporary issues surrounding human sexuality such as gender identity, transgenderism, and same-sex attraction and marriage. The chapter is divided into three parts: affirming the biblical doctrines of human sexuality, providing pastoral guidance, and specific restrictions and expectations.

The doctrinal portion affirms the chaplain's responsibility to remain faithful to the Word of God, ordination vows, and denominational beliefs concerning human sexuality. At no point may PRCC chaplains condone beliefs or behavior that the Word of God condemns. These beliefs are summarized as the dignity of all created in the image of God, the creation of two complementary male and female genders, the institution of marriage as a covenant union between one man and one woman, sin's perversion of human sexuality demonstrated in any intimate physical relationship outside of the covenant of marriage and contrary to God's will, and finally, the power of God and the redemptive work of Christ through the Spirit and the Gospel to find forgiveness, renewal, and transformation from sexual sin.

Pastoral guidance is provided where chaplains are encouraged to provide spiritual counsel and guidance to the servicemember struggling with these sins. Chaplains are to proclaim the whole counsel of God, clearly identifying sin as sin, firmly articulating the truths of God's Word, and yet also powerfully demonstrating Christ's grace and compassion while doing so. Chaplains must follow their conscience and their faith convictions to ensure that these criteria can be met in every unique scenario that they may face.

The final portion of the chapter reiterates some clear expectations and restrictions for PRCC chaplains in their duties. They will not perform marriage or union ceremonies for same-sex attraction or transgendered service members, nor will they provide marital counseling supporting such. They will not participate in worship services with fellow chaplains who are openly professing homosexuals or transgendered chaplains. Their preaching and teaching will not be censured from addressing these sexual sins. The chaplain must remain in dialogue with their command, their calling denomination, and the PRCC when any conflict of conscience may arise.

### **D. Religious Liberty and Freedom of Conscience**

The executive director of the PRCC reported on a gradual increase in the frequency of reports concerning infringements upon religious freedoms of chaplains. Whereas they historically were only four or five a year, they have been occurring about monthly in recent years. Most of these have been resolved at the lowest level possible, and thus far, all of them have resolved themselves favorably for the PRCC chaplain

involved. Still, the increased frequency demonstrates a shift in the current culture that is increasingly at odds with biblical standards.

The PRCC response to this trend has included adding a policy section to the PRCC chaplain manual ([https://resources.pcamna.org/resource/chaplain-ministries\\_chaplain-resources\\_chaplainmanual/](https://resources.pcamna.org/resource/chaplain-ministries_chaplain-resources_chaplainmanual/) chapter 10) that familiarizes the chaplains who work in federal institutions with their legal responsibilities and protections, most notably codified in the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). The aim of this instruction is to empower chaplains to assert both their own religious rights and also to ensure the religious freedoms of the federal employees they minister to.

#### **E. Dues**

The PRCC collects funds from both its endorsed chaplains and also from its member denominations. The denominational contributions are \$1000.00 USD for each chaplain per year, which amounts to \$2,000 USD for the total URCNA denominational contribution. The dues for individual chaplains vary depending on rank and duty status, currently set at \$780 USD combined for both chaplains. Synod Wyoming 2016 made this a reimbursable expense to the individual chaplains; however, no receipts have been submitted thus far.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

We have only one recommendation: *That Synod set the budget for the PRCC at \$2,800 USD per annum to cover required denominational contributions, the \$500 travel costs of attending Commission meetings should a representative attend, and individual chaplain dues should they be submitted.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Andrew Spriensma  
For the Consistory of Faith URC (Beecher, IL)

## Standing Committee on Appeals Report to Synod Niagara

Dear Fathers and Brothers,

Synod Wheaton 2018 appointed the Standing Committee on Appeals and gave it the following mandate:

- a. To receive and review appeals submitted to synod, in advance of synod, in order to organize, summarize, and index relevant documents and data.
- b. To assist the convening consistory of synod concerning the admissibility of appeal submissions.
- c. To make recommendations to the relevant synodical advisory committee concerning the proper and timely handling of particular appeals, without making recommendation concerning the disposition of the appeal (Acts of Synod 2018, Article 64, p. 44).

Our committee is currently comprised of representatives from each classis, four ministers and four elders: Rev. Joel Dykstra, Mr. Douglas Field, Rev. William C. Godfrey, Mr. Henry Nagtegaal, Rev. James Sinke, Mr. Steven Tjapkes, Rev. Cal Tuininga, and Mr. Mark Van Der Molen.

The Standing Committee on Appeals provides you the following report of our work:

As directed by Synod 2018, the representative from Classis Eastern U.S. was appointed as the convener of our first meeting. At that first video conference meeting, we reviewed our mandate and elected Rev. Cal Tuininga to serve as Chairman and Rev. William Godfrey as Secretary. At that time, there were no appeals pending for our committee review.

On December 20, 2019, the Committee held a second video conference meeting to review an appeal that had been submitted for adjudication at Synod 2020. The Committee reviewed the appeal and found it in order and properly indexed.

On March 17, 2020, the Committee held another meeting to review an additional appeal and provided advice to the convening consistory concerning its admissibility. The Committee also reviewed a communication from Classis East that asked our committee to provide advice **to Synod** on Church Order issues related to a pending appeal. However, the Committee found that making such recommendations directly to Synod is beyond our Committee mandate to *“to make recommendations to the relevant synodical advisory committee concerning the proper and timely handling of particular appeals, without making recommendation concerning the disposition of the appeal”* (Acts of Synod 2018, Article 64, p. 44). Finally, the Committee also began formulating the advice that our Standing Committee will provide to the Synodical Advisory Committee on Appeals. That advice will be finalized when the deadlines for appeals has passed and the Committee has reviewed all appeals submitted by that deadline.

On March 26, 2020, the Committee met via Zoom. The Committee reviewed another appeal and found it in order and properly indexed. The Committee also discussed the procedure for making recommendations to the synodical advisory committee(s) and decided to consider this matter at a future meeting. We discussed this report and submitted it to the Stated Clerk as a status report on the work of this Committee.

On June 7, 2022, the Committee met via Zoom to discuss a report which would make recommendations to the synodical advisory committee(s) pursuant to the Committee's mandate (see Article c. above). A preliminary report to the synodical advisory committee(s) was received and reviewed. This report was to be finalized at a future meeting. The Committee also discussed our final report to Synod, including one recommendation. This report was also to be finalized at a future meeting. All these documents will be finalized in time for the July 25, 2022 synodical agenda deadline.

On July 13, 2022, the Committee met via Zoom and reviewed and approved the reports to Synod and to the synodical advisory committee.

In closing, the Committee has one recommendation for the Synod:

1. That Synod take up the overture from Classis Southwest U.S. regarding Church Order, Article 31 as early in the agenda as possible.

Grounds:

- a. Our Committee believes Synod's discussion and ruling on this Overture will likely provide clear direction in formulating the Advisory Committee's advice to Synod on Appeal #2.
- b. Our Committee also believes that Synod's resolution of Appeal #2 could affect the Advisory Committee's advice to Synod on Appeal #1.
- c. The sooner the Advisory Committee has clear direction from Synod on the overture regarding Church Order, Article 31, the sooner the Advisory Committee will be able to complete its work on Appeals #1 and #2.

In His service,  
Rev. Cal Tuininga, Chairman  
Rev. William C. Godfrey, Secretary

**Canadian Corporation of the URCNA and of the Board of the JVA.  
Report to Synod Niagara**

Since our last report to the churches (originally intended to be received and reviewed at Synod 2020) the regular work of the Canadian Corporation has continued apace, which means that there were matters which required a decision to be made forthwith by our committee – as a matter of ‘standing in the breach’. The fact is: though Synod 2020 did not meet, several matters needed to be decided without our committee having been able to receive the guidance and direction of our churches – as is offered when the churches meet in Synod. We here present to the churches the work we accomplished in the interim and trust it will receive Synod’s approbation.

The first matter of business that required our attention came in December of 2020 when Rev. Henry Van Olst (having received emeritus status and having moved to Alberta) asked to be relieved of his duties as a member of the Board. The Corporation has been greatly blessed by Rev. Van Olst’s skills and gifts throughout his time as a Director and we wish to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge and thank him for all his diligent service. This presented us with the need to find a replacement for Rev. Van Olst’s position on the Board. We approached Mr. Charlie Fluit, the recently retired CFO of World Vision Canada. Mr. Fluit graciously accepted our request and has served on the Board since 2021.

Another unexpected consequence of the delay between the meetings of Synod’s relates to the Federation’s Budgets. Normally our budgets are approved at Synod, along with the resulting “asking”. Since Synod was unable to meet, it became necessary for our committee to prepare and act on a budget – so as to keep the work of the Federation going. For this reason, early in 2021 we adopted a Budget for the Federation, and again in early 2022. We added nothing significant to the budgets, although we did make accommodations for COVID related issues, such as the testing required for certain forms of travel. We also followed Synod’s decision and increased the Mission Coordinator’s salary by the cost of living, which we would recommend be done with all the stipends being paid by the Federation. Those Budgets were distributed to the churches, after having been approved by the Board. We are grateful that we will not need to do the same this year.

We also oversaw the work of Rev. Bout, our only employee, in a manner consistent with our government’s expectations. We are keenly aware that Rev. Bout is appointed by the Federation and that his work is directed by the Missions Committee. However, as our employee, the government expects that we (that is, the Canadian Corporation) have an active role in his work. Wanting to remain in compliance with the government’s requirements, we have met repeatedly with Rev. Bout to hear about his work and to ensure that his financial needs are being appropriately met. We are thankful for Rev. Bout’s patience in this.

In our review of Rev. Bout’s work for the churches, we note that the Missions Committee has recommended that Rev. Bout bring his wife on a couple of trips each year when appropriate. Our Board has no issue with this decision. However, in order to reimburse such costs, such a recommendation or policy should be included in the official description of Rev. Bout’s employment. The Synod defined the task of the Missions’ Coordinator when the position was

established. We recommend including a line about bring his spouse on trips so that the reimbursement of such expenses will fall in line with the Canadian Tax regulations.

The Canadian Corporation is, unfortunately, included in a lawsuit brought by a one-time member of the URCNA who has suffered harm from another member of the Federation. The lawyer who is bringing this case included as many parties as possible in the lawsuit and seems to have assumed that our relationship as churches is similar to that of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy owning property and being responsible for the affairs of local congregations. As a Board, we retained legal Counsel (the Acacia Group) who are working to release us from this suit. While the matter is not entirely resolved, we do believe it will end in a way that does not materially affect the Canadian URCNA Corporation.

As a result of this experience, and since Rev. Bout is our only employee, we also discussed our responsibility to him, and to the churches should any such accusation be raised against him. This discussion is ongoing, and we hope to develop some policy or plan that would mitigate the possibility of such a situation arising in the ministry of Rev. Bout. We will speak with our legal counsel on how best to accomplish this work and hope to adopt a policy in the near future.

Our Board also keeps an eye on the developments of our Federation, especially as they may impact the activities of the Board. Of significance for this meeting of Synod is the Missions Committee's reports and the potential for a second Missions Coordinator. Without committing on the wisdom of such a decision, which we gladly leave to the churches, should the churches agree to hire a second coordinator, the Corporations of the Federation will be implicated. With this in mind, we have been investigating the best way to accomplish such a potential decision. In our discussions with the brothers on the US Board, they are not keen on being responsible for such an employee. While our Board is able and willing to oversee such a second position, our discussions revolved around the possibility of that Coordinator being an American citizen, living within the USA. This very real possibility presents an added layer of complexity to the matter. Wanting to fulfill any task assigned us by the churches in the best possible way, we have begun discussions on how a second Missions Coordinator might be most efficiently supported by our churches.

On a final note from the Canadian Board of the URCNA, and as an update on a matter raised in our 2020 report, there are insufficient funds in the Canadian website Fund such that each year we are borrowing from the General Fund to bring the Fund to \$0.00. We mention this only to add further weight to our recommendation regarding the funding of the website (see our 2020 report).

As part of our organizational structure, the Canadian Board of the URCNA has established a Joint-Venture Agreement with the American Board of the URCNA. This Board, comprised of the Executive of the Canadian Board and The Chairman and Treasurer of the American Board, meets yearly to review the work of the JVA. Most of the Federation's financial activity runs through the JVA as it allows the Canadian Board of the URCNA to pay for the various activities undertaken by the Federation in the USA. Without this vehicle, support for the Federational activities by Canadian churches could not be easily provided. This work continues to be done and we remain grateful to Mrs. Pam Hessels, our Treasurer, for her faithful and diligent service to the churches in administrating much of our day-to-day expenses.

At our most recent Board meeting for the JVA, we discussed the possibility of maintaining all the finances for our Synod meetings through the JVA. The Canadian Board of the URCNA had recommended that the finances for all Canadian Synod's be maintained by the Canadian Board. The Board of the JVA is recommending that the financing for all future Synods regardless of location be maintained by the Board of the JVA. Practically this would mean that all monies received from delegate fees, etc. would be received by the JVA and all expenses would be reimbursed by the JVA. This does not mean the JVA would organize Synod, only that we would collect the income and dispense the costs. We believe such a decision will simplify matters for those churches convening each Synod, will be a measure of uniformity to costs, and will make the cost of Synod more transparent to the churches.

The last two years have presented unique challenges for all our churches, as well as for our work as the Canadian Corporation. We are thankful for the Lord's guidance in all these challenges and trust that he will bless our work and establish it according to his steadfast love.

Recommendations:

1. That the JVA maintain the finances for all future Synods.
2. That the job description of the current Missions Coordinator include a reference to his spouse's inclusion in travel and certain events as per the Missions Committee recommendation.
3. That all stipends paid by the Federation be increased by the same cost of living given the Missions Coordinator.

In His service,  
Rev. Joel, Dykstra, Secretary

**Board of Directors for the United Reformed Churches in North America (U.S.A.)  
Report to Synod Niagara**

Dear brothers,

The U.S. Board of Directors has held six Board meetings since Synod 2018. Throughout the last four years, additional meetings have occurred between the URCNA and OPC representatives to the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture. The Management Committee created under the Joint Venture Agreement with Canada has also held meetings.

The Annual Reports mandated by the Michigan Department of Labor and Regulatory Affairs have been filed and are current, and the corporation remains in good standing with the State of Michigan.

The financial statements for the corporation were reviewed by the Board and distributed to the churches. The 2018, 2019 and 2020 financial statements were independently reviewed by Phil Vanden Toorn, CMA, MBA. It is anticipated that the 2021 financial statements will also have been reviewed by the time Synod meets.

Donald Roth was appointed as the alternate Treasurer at the Board's September 29, 2018, meeting.

During the last four years, Gary Veldink has kept the Board informed of the developments and ongoing operations of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture. We are thankful for the continued work of the Joint Venture. In addition to retaining sufficient funds for ongoing operations, the Joint Venture has distributed to the U.S. corporation a total of \$296,674.63 (net after payoff of short-term loan), bringing the balance of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal fund to \$305,328.74 as of March 31, 2022. It is expected that the Joint Venture will continue to provide some cash flow in the years to come, although not likely at the level seen in the initial years.

It is anticipated that the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture Board will provide Synod with more comprehensive reports regarding their work as it pertains to the publication of the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

While the first couple of years since the last Synod were dominated by Trinity Psalter Hymnal matters, the last two years have been dominated by legal matters. The Board has had to deal with four legal matters which has required the retention of legal counsel in each matter. Common to all four legal matters is that fact that they all pertain to allegations pertaining to the seventh commandment that allegedly occurred many years ago. It appears that the running of the statute of limitations under the respective state laws has precipitated all of these legal matters occurring at this time.

In the first matter, the URCNA was able to convince the complainant that the URCNA was not legally liable for what allegedly occurred at a local URC church. The URCNA declined to participate in any pre-lawsuit mediation, and the Plaintiff did not include the URCNA in any lawsuit.

The URCNA (and Classis East) as well as many mainline denominations were included in two lawsuits filed in New Jersey state court in which dozens of plaintiffs alleged abuse arising out of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) sex abuse scandal. Prior to having to file an Answer in each case, both cases were dismissed without prejudice due to pending bankruptcy proceedings involving the BSA. It is anticipated that the lawsuits will eventually be refiled after the automatic stay is lifted by the bankruptcy court. As such, our New Jersey counsel sent a letter to the Plaintiffs' attorney demanding that we not be included as a defendant in any future filings. We are unaware of any nexus between the BSA and any church in Classis East as alleged in the Complaints. Church history appears not to be the strength of Plaintiffs' counsel as Plaintiffs allege, among other things, that the URCNA was a chartering organization of the BSA over 100 years ago. Furthermore, the letter prepared by our legal counsel also asserts that, based on the federation structure, the URCNA is not liable for any of the activities alleged to have occurred at local churches. It is unknown at this time whether the Plaintiffs will continue to name the URCNA as a named defendant in any future case once the bankruptcy court's automatic stay is lifted. If so, we will have to defend the matter.

The most recent legal matter involves the URCNA being named as a defendant based on a situation that allegedly occurred approximately 20 years ago in connection with a California URCNA church. Local counsel has been retained and an Answer has recently been filed. Similar to the other legal matters, one of the defenses of the URCNA is that it is not liable for any of the alleged activities (and alleged failures to act) that are claimed to have occurred at a local church. The litigation is at its preliminary stage. It is difficult to predict with certainty how this litigation may go. However, if the Complaint against the URCNA is not dismissed up front, the URCNA should be prepared for the possibility of significant legal expenses. The Board believes handling the legal matter is within its purview, and the Board will assume decision making regarding the litigation is within its discretion unless Synod directs the Board otherwise.

It is the Board's understanding that Synod will entertain an Overture to create national synods – a United States national synod and a Canadian national synod. As part of the deliberation of this matter, the Board urges that Synod take into consideration the legal environment in which such a decision would be made. By way of example, the membership of the U.S. corporation consists of both U.S. and Canadian members per the terms of the corporate Bylaws. As such, even if the Overture were to be approved, the membership of the corporation will continue to consist of members from both countries unless the Bylaws are amended. Perhaps the desire would be that the membership of the corporation would remain unchanged even if national synods were created, but if any change is desired, it would take an act of Synod to approve changes to the Bylaws. Furthermore, there are many other references to "Synod" contained in the Acts of Synod and in the Regulations For Synodical Procedure. For example, Synod must approve the U.S. Treasurer. If the Overture passed created national synods and the desire is to have the U.S. Treasurer appointed by a U.S. national synod, appropriate change to the Regulations for Synodical Procedure would be necessary.

As noted above, the various distributions from the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture have resulted in a balance of \$305,328.74 in the Psalter Hymnal Fund. This balance consists not only of the profits from the Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture, but also a return of the initial funds

contributed by the URCNA for start-up costs and the first printing. The Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture has retained sufficient funds for future operations. Initially, funds were collected from both the Canadian and U.S churches for the psalter hymnal project. However, the Canadian funds that were collected were returned to the Canadian churches that contributed the funds due to Canada Revenue Agency issues. As such, the URCNA was in need of additional funds prior to the first printing. In addition to the corporation obtaining a short-term loan, a generous donor contributed \$30,000 to allow the URCNA to make the necessary contribution to the Joint Venture. With all the start-up funds having been returned and the short-term loan having been paid off, the donor has requested that \$30,000 of the Psalter Hymnal Fund be donated to Reformed Mission Services.

It is the Board's understanding that an Overture will be before Synod to appoint a Domestic Missions Coordinator who may be from the United States. Synod previously determined that "Missions Coordinator shall be compensated by way of federation budget (askings) in coordination with the calling church and additional contributions." (Acts of Synod 2012, Art. 85.f). Furthermore, the grounds adopted by Synod 2014 in connection with the approval of the current Missions Coordinator refer to the local consistory "lending" the person appointed to the work of Missions Coordinator (Acts of Synod 2014, Art. 84). Regardless of how the situation is currently being handled with the current Missions Coordinator, the Board does not want any future Missions Coordinator to be an employee of the U.S. corporation, and strongly urges that any such person be an employee of the calling church with funds being distributed from the corporation(s) to the calling church.

Board members Gary Veldink, Robert Huisjen, Eric Brandt and Mark Van Der Molen have asked to step down from the Board at the end of their current term. The Board is grateful for Gary Veldink's leadership as President of the Board for the past eight years, especially with the added work undertaken by him with respect to the Trinity Psalter Hymnal. The Board is also grateful to Robert Huisjen for his many years of faithful service as Treasurer. Board members Donald Roth, Greg VandeKamp and Will Postma are willing to serve another term.

Recommendations:

The U.S. Board of Directors respectfully recommends that Synod take the following actions:

1. That Synod appoint seven members to the Board including the three current members willing to continue for another term (Will Postma, Donald Roth and Greg VandeKamp) as well as four new Board members.
2. That Synod also appoint one of the Board members as the new U.S. Treasurer.
3. That Synod approve the distribution of \$30,000 from the Psalter Hymnal Fund to Reformed Mission Services.
4. That Synod provide the Board with guidance on how to handle the funds held in the Psalter Hymnal Fund.
5. That Synod provide any guidance it desires to give in terms of the legal matters. Apart from receiving any guidance from Synod or being directed by Synod to receive guidance from a particular body or selected individuals, the Board will assume that it has the authority to handle all decisions related to pending litigation. [Note that if Synod

desires to discuss these legal matters further in any depth, it may be necessary for Synod to move into closed session (delegates only)].

6. That should Synod approve another Missions Coordinator, that such person not be an employee of the U.S. corporation.

As the Board of Directors, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve the churches in this respect.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors,  
Eric Brandt, Secretary

**Trinity Psalter Hymnal Joint Venture Board**  
Report to Synod Niagara

In August 2017, the Board of Trustees of the United Reformed Churches in North America (US) entered into a formal Joint Venture Agreement with the OPC’s Committee on Christian Education (CCE) which has guided the process of producing and distributing the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal (TPH)* in both printed and digital formats. Current members of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* Joint Venture Board (TPHJVB) are URCNA representatives Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen (president), Rev. Christopher Folkerts, and Mr. Gary Veldink; and OPC representatives Mr. Joel Pearce (manager), Rev. Alan Strange, and Mr. David Winslow.

**1. Printing and sales**

By early 2022 there had been five printings of the pew edition, totaling 73,000 copies. The fifth printing took almost a year to produce due to severe supply chain delays, shortages, and changes. We have carefully logged and made corrections to each subsequent printing, no matter how minute, and the planned sixth printing (10,000) copies may have less than 15 corrections.

The TPHJVB has returned a total of \$395,000 to each of the partner churches since sales began, including \$50,000 in 2021. As of December 31, 2021, the JVB had \$207,276 in funds reserved for future printings, royalties, and the completion of digital development (see below).

*Great Commission Publications* (GCP) is ably handling the sales, distribution, and accounting of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* and reports monthly to the Board. In September 2021, the Board entered into a new distribution contract with GCP which increased the sales and distribution fee from 10 percent to 15 percent.

Combined sales for all TPH products for 2018-2021 surpassed \$1.5 million, accounted for as follows:

URCNA	37%
OPC	29%
Individuals	14%
PCA	10%
Other	10%

Approximately 66% of URCNA churches have purchased the TPH and its reception has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the URCNA and the OPC.

**2. Digital**

For the past four years Mr. Joel Pearce has served as the Director of Digital Development of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Under his leadership the TPH website, [www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org](http://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org), was launched and has reached the final stages of development. It will include a full searchable

song collection. The *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* has also been indexed by [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org), and our songs are typically the first default result on the text authority pages.

Three digital editions, the Locked PDF edition, Unlocked PDF edition, and Projection edition, are available for sale via GCP.

**The Locked PDF** edition is meant for personal use on a computer or tablet and is read-only. Since its initial release, several updates including links to songs from the Title and First Line Index have been incorporated.

**The Unlocked PDF** edition is meant for church and organizational use, to assist in reproduction and is especially helpful for small churches that may not be able to afford many copies of the print pew edition. Included in the purchase of the Unlocked PDF are reproduction permissions for all OPC/URCNA copyrighted songs. Third party copyrights still require permissions from copyright administrators.

**The Projection edition** is meant for churches that project their music on a large screen.

In addition, the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* **mobile apps** for Apple iOS and Android OS were made available in 2021. The apps are supplemental to the print and digital editions of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* and feature the full text and music of the songbook, as well as tune recordings. Some key features of the apps include searchable full text, browsable indexes (title and first line, hymn table of contents), bookmarking of songs, and looping of a tune for the number of stanzas in each song. The mobile apps also serve as a resource for planning worship, learning new songs, and singing along in family devotions. Future app upgrades and features are being developed to include more robust Scripture, topic, and tune indexes akin to those in the print editions, as well as higher quality audio for the Android app. Also under consideration is how to incorporate confessional standards and catechisms in the apps.

Total digital sales for 2021 were \$41,099 which includes 2,550 app downloads.

The Board is also investigating the feasibility of commissioning a professional or academic choir to record selections of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*.

### **3. Large Print and Braille**

Text only Large Print and Braille editions (for digital Braille converter devices) are available for those with vision impairment. They are available free of charge (by request only) to churches that have purchased pew editions of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*. Those interested should contact Abby Harting at [abby.harting@opc.org](mailto:abby.harting@opc.org).

Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen (President)

Rev. Christopher Folkerts

Mr. Gary Veldink (President of the URC Board of Trustees – US)