

FELLOWSHIP OF UNITING REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

meeting October 1, 2 and 3, 1996

**Lynwood Christian Reformed Church Independent
Lynwood, Illinois**

Registration: 12:30 - 1:30 P.M.

Meeting to begin at 1:30 P.M. C.T.

1. Opening devotions – Rev. E. J. Knott
2. Presentation of credentials of congregations that have indicated membership in the Federation prior to this date. Roll call of delegates.
3. Declaration by president pro-tem that this first synod of the Fellowship is constituted.
4. Election of officers for this meeting:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Clerk
5. Consideration of requests from other congregations, if any, to join the Federation. If approved, the seating of their delegates.
6. Reading the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity to which the delegates respond with their assent.
7. Recognition and welcome of official representatives, if any, of other congregations and/or denominations. Welcome to visitors etc.
8. Adoption of time schedule for meetings and meals.
(Suggested: Tuesday, 1:30 - 5:30, 7:00 - 9:00; Wednesday, 8:30 - Noon, 1:30 5:30, 7:00, 9:00; Thursday, 8:30 -11:30. Fifteen minute breaks at 10 A.M, and 3 P.M.)
9. Report of Acting Clerk of Uniting Churches (Beverly CRCI).
10. Incorporation – Structure – Recommendation from Canadian and U.S. Attorneys will be sent in separate mailing
11. Church Order – Delegates are encouraged to remember copy mailed earlier.
 - A. Establishment of Classes
 - B. Matter of finances

12. Choosing of Name – Four names presented for vote:

Evangelical Reformed Churches In North America

Orthodox Reformed Churches of North America

Reformed Christian Churches of North America

United Reformed Churches of North America

13. Overtures

A. [Wellandport O.R.C.](#)

1) [Matter of structure](#)

2) [Membership in ICRC](#)

3) [Church Order – Question of delegation](#)

B. [Trinity Ref. C. Lethbridge: Membership in ICRC](#)

C. [Sheffield Ind. Ref. Church](#)

1) [Contact with Inter-Classical Conference, CRCNA](#)

2) [Time of future meetings of Federation](#)

D. [Grace Orthodox Ref. Church, Simcoe County](#)

1) [Church Order – Article 3](#)

2) [Church Order – Article 16](#)

3) [Church Order – Article 54](#)

E. [Trinity Ref. Church, Cape Coral, Florida: Contact with churches of the "Covenant Union" CRCNA](#)

F. [Bethel Independent Ref. Church, Jenison, MI: Contact with Inter-Classical Conference, CRCNA](#)

G. [Grace Orthodox Reformed Church, Clinton, ON – Items regarding the Church Order](#)

H. [Others](#)

14. [Request for Advice: Covenant Christian Church, Wyoming, ON – Matter of transferring charitable funds across the borders.](#)

15. Other Matters?

16. Closing Matters

- A. Place and date for the next meeting
- B. Reading of the Concept Minutes
- C. Acknowledgements and Adjournment
- D. Closing Devotions

Overtures

Wellandport ORC

R. R. #1

**Wellandport, Ontario. LOR 2J0
Canada.**

To The Council of Beverly CRC Independent
2019 Porter St. SW,
Wyoming, MI 49509, USA

Dear Brothers,

The Council of Wellandport ORC respectfully submits the following overtures for the meeting of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches to be held 1, Oct. 1996. in Lynwood.

Overture 1

The Council of Wellandport ORC overtures the FURC (Fellowship of Uniting Reformed churches) to adopt and legally structure itself according to model "B" as described in our letter of information.

Grounds

- 1. This would structurally keep us from having levels of bureaucracy and bureaucrats.
- 2. This would prevent the federation from collecting monies and establishing various Boards for all ventures would have to be carried out through the local churches.
- 3. This avoids the duplication of structures to satisfy Canada and the USA as seen in the CRC with its two-fold headquarters and Boards.
- 4. This model more faithfully reflects the truth that Christ rules His people through the local church.

Overture 2

The Council of Wellandport ORC overtures the FURC to mandate one or two member Councils to pursue denominational membership in the ICRC on behalf of the our Federation

Grounds

1. We are in full agreement with the basis of the ICRC as the following quote shows:

"The basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms)."

2. We desire the same purpose that the ICRC seeks as follow:

"The purpose of the conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among member churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary mandates;
4. to study 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."

3. The ICRC has as members 15 denominations with 4 others applying for membership. These are good and reformed denominations from whom we would mutually benefit.

4. The ICRC has its next meeting in October, 1997 and hence it would give us time to make application. The meetings are only every four years.

Overture 3

The Council of Wellandport ORC overtures the FURC to change Art. 26 and 28 of the Proposed Church Order to read, ". . . delegate three of their members . . ." instead of, ". . . delegate two of their members."

Grounds

1. This would better reflect the balance of responsibility of the Council with respect to the minister and elders.
2. This would guard against the temptation of ministers to overly influence and lead the broader assemblies.
3. This would involve elders more and impress upon them the rulership responsibilities that God has placed upon them.

Done in Council on 12th August 1996.

/s/ President: Rev. J. S. Gangar

/s/ Clerk: Mr. A. Veldhuizen

**TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH OF LETHBRIDGE
1807 – 2ND AVENUE 'A' NORTH PHONE 328-4799
LETHBRIDGE – ALBERTA**

August 12, 96

To the Fellowship of Uniting Churches,
c/o Rev. Art Besteman
Wyoming, Mich.

The consistory of the Trinity Reformed Church of Lethbridge overtures the Fellowship of Uniting Churches, to meet at Lynwood Oct. 1 & 2, to take steps toward joining the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

Grounds:

1. The ICRC is an organization of confessional Reformed Churches throughout the world which seeks the unity of all Reformed churches who take their confessions seriously. It is an organization in which we would feel very much at home.
2. Four observers from the Independent churches attended the 1993 meeting in Zwolle, the Netherlands, and found it to be rewarding and encouraging.
3. The ICRC meets every four years, and it will meet in Korea next year, 1997. Then it will not meet again till 2001. Hence, we ought to have our application for membership at the 1997 meeting, so we can begin the process toward union.

Note: A church which applies for membership needs the recommendation of two member-churches (federations). We are confident that we could get such recommendation from the Canadian Ref. Churches, the Free Reformed Churches and the RCUS. If we apply for membership soon, then we could seek the necessary recommendations from these sister churches.

/s/ P. De Graaf, clerk

Overtures to the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches Federation Meeting (Oct. 1-3, 1996) fr. Sheffield Independent Reformed Church's Consistory, dated 9-5-96

1. The consistory of Sheffield Independent Reformed Church overtures the federative body to appoint a committee to contact the group to meet at South Holland, Ill., Nov. 1996, in order to warmly invite them to join with us in federation.

Grounds:

1. Our Lord wills Biblical – working unity in His church. Jn.17:20-23; Acts 15:6-33; Eph.4:1-16

2. Though the two groups at issue have had different histories, we each worship the same Lord: believe the same Bible; confess the same creeds as forms of unity; have the same concerns for the Reformed faith: and share a common ecclesiastical heritage.

3. As like-minded believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we need not and must not come under Christ's judgment of the scribes and Pharisees: "Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." Matt.15:66

2. The consistory of Sheffield Independent Reformed Church overtures the federative body to establish that future federation meetings be held at times which do not encroach upon planting or harvesting seasons.

Grounds:

1. Our Lord wills that we consider the needs of others for our common good. Jn.13:34,35: Phil. 2:3,4

2. Many of our brethren are farmers, who have difficulty attending such meetings during these crucial times for them. '

**GRACE ORTHODOX REFORMED CHURCH
(of Simcoe County)**

August 28, 1996

The Council of
Beverly Christian Reformed Church, Independant
2420 Avon Avenue, SW
Wyoming, Michigan

Re: October 1-3 meeting of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches.

Dear Brothers,

Please include the following overtures on the agenda for this meeting.

OVERTURE #1

The Grace Orthodox Reformed Church of Simcoe County overtures the churches of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches gathered for the October 1-3, 1996 meeting to replace the last sentence of Article #3 with the following sentence used in the former revision of the church order so that it reads as follows: "If there is a need, the council of his church should provide assistance for the student".

Grounds:

1. This wording allows for a broader umbrella of assistance to the student. For the way the proposed church order reads the emphasis is on the financial needs only whereas our suggested wording calls the council to be aware of all the student's needs.
2. The current church order uses the phrase, SHOULD ENSURE, which implies that the council has an obligation to provide for the student's funding if the student is short of the money needed to proceed through his education. We find this is restrictive to the council who may, for example, deem it healthier for the student to only be partially assisted by the church with the remainder of his finances being gained through work experience. Our suggested change allows the council to decide what they believe to be the wisest path in assisting the student.
3. Not all our churches have the financial capacity to fully ensure that the student's complete financial needs are met by their church. Our suggested change allows each church to give according to its' capacity.

OVERTURE #2

The Grace Orthodox Reformed Church of Simcoe County overtures the churches of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches gathered for the October 1-3, 1996 meeting to add the following to Article #16: "All decisions made at broader assemblies, except those that are procedural or administrative in nature, shall be made by a two thirds majority vote"

Grounds:

1. We believe that a two thirds majority vote makes right decisions harder to over turn by future meetings of broader assemblies while also making unbiblical decisions harder to achieve (eg. The decisions re. women in ecclesiastical office would not have happened as they did in the CRC if two thirds majority vote was in effect).
2. We further believe that our churches are conservative now and can make solid decisions on a two thirds majority vote so that we need not fear a liberal minority later on.

OVERTURE #3

The Grace Orthodox Reformed Church of Simcoe County overtures the churches of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches gathered for the October 1-3, 1996 meeting to change Article #54 so that the second step of church discipline reads as follows: "In the second, the Consistory shall seek the advise of classis (Or in exceptional circumstances, the advise of two or more neighboring Consistories), whereupon his name shall be mentioned.

Grounds:

1. There may arise a case, even as we faced as a church. where a person's involvement in open and unrepentant sin calls for the name to be mentioned with the first step so that comfort may be openly shown to the one sinned against and also the sin may be openly dealt with as people may now be encouraged to call this person to repentance. To wait up to six months for a classis meeting restricts the implementation of discipline by the consistory.
2. This causes the last sentence to make sense which says: THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE STEPS SHALL BE LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF THE CONSISTORY. With the clause we are requesting to have added the consistory is not bound to wait up to six months and so can act quickly.
3. The clause we desire to add still up holds the wisdom of seeking advise before making the decision spoken of in the second step.

4. Article #54 in its present form appears to be ambiguous and contradictory when we compare the first and second steps; For the phrase, NEED NOT, in step one leaves the impression that the consistory is free to mention the name if they desire, while step two clearly states that this can't be done until the advice of classis is sought. Our suggested change brings consistency and removes ambiguity.

Signed on behalf of council.

Chairman: /s/ Rev. Brian Schouwstra

OVERTURE

THE FELLOWSHIP OF UNITING REFORMED CHURCHES

meeting in Lynwood, Illinois, October 1-3, 1996

The Council of the Trinity Reformed Church of Cape Coral, Florida hereby overtures the FELLOWSHIP OF UNITING REFORMED CHURCHES at the first meeting of our new Federation, to communicate with the Churches of the "Covenant Union" of the Christian Reformed Church of North America to join us in the effort to establish a strong and faithful Federation of Reformed Churches.

Grounds:

1. These churches share our historical commitment to the Reformed confessions, namely, the "Three Forms of Unity."
2. These churches share our concern for the true Reformed character of the Church of Christ.
3. The concerns which these churches addressed to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in June of 1996, were not met by that Synod.

Done in Council, July 24, 1996.

Signed:

/s/ Rev. Dennis W. Royall, President of Council

/s/ Mr. Arthur Docter, Vice President of Council

Bethel Independent Reformed Church

P.O. Box 561, Jenison, MI 49429-0561

The council of Bethel Independent Reformed Church overtures the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches (meeting October 1-3, 1996) to send a communication to the November meeting of the C.R.C. Inter-classical Conference. This communication shall include a brief history of who we are and express:

1. that we share in their sorrow and grief over the spiritual decline of the Christian Reformed denomination;
2. that if they are led to secede from that denomination, we encourage them to look to us and join us;
3. that whether this occurs or not, we will pray for God's blessing upon them as they contend for the faith.

Grounds:

- a. Such a communication would encourage good relations between our groups.
- b. We are united in our biblical and confessional convictions.
- c. We share a common history.
- d. Seeking such unity with those of like-mind is pleasing to God:
 1. Psalm 133:1 – How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!
 2. John 17:11 – I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name -- the name you gave me -- so that they may be one as we are one.
 3. John 17:21 – that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
 4. John 17:22 – I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. . . .
 5. Ephesians 4:3 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
 6. Philippians 2:2 – then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Done in Council, September 9, 1996

Herm Scholten, Vicar

Larry Kerkstra, President

September 10, 1996

The Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton, Ontario, respectfully overtures the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches, to consider the following items regarding the proposed Church Order for clarification and revision

Regarding Article #1: We question why Professors of Theology was left out of this article?

Regarding Article #3: We would suggest that the last sentence be concluded with these words: The council of his church should ensure with the cooperation of the neighboring churches that his financial needs are met.

Regarding Article #4: We would suggest that the following be altered: At the conclusion of such training, a student must approach his Consistory to become a candidate for the ministry of the Word, which shall arrange and is responsible for his examination. In the presence of his consistory and with the help of the Classis the person shall be declared a candidate upon sustained examination of his Christian faith and experience. . .

Regarding Article #6: We would suggest that in the last sentence of this article the words and by the elders of the congregation be omitted on the grounds that ministers are ordained but elders are installed. In like manner elders do not raise their hands during the votum or benediction during for example a reading service

Regarding Article #8: We would suggest that the word careful added before the word examination and we would ask for clarification on who declares eligibility? Also we would suggest that the examination be conducted to the satisfaction of the consistory rather than the classis.

Regarding Article #10: Who is responsible for the making the arrangements towards the retirement and disability needs of the minister of the congregation. Also is this to be during the ministry or after the ministry or both?

Regarding Article #12: As in article #6, what is the distinction between ordination and installation with respect to the elders and deacons?

Regarding Article #14: We suggest that the last sentence read as follows: The deacons shall meet according to the need of the church to transact the business . .

Regarding Article #16: Do we need to define what ecclesiastical matters are?

Regarding Article #19: How do you foresee "next convening consistory" supervise the duties of the clerk, especially if the distance is great? Perhaps the clerk shall perform his duties under the supervision of his local consistory.

Regarding Article #20: Perhaps the first sentence of this article could be strengthened by adding and according to the needs of the church.

Regarding Article #21: Could this article be strengthened by adding the following insertion "When a congregation is to be organized. . ."

Regarding Article #23: This article is redundant as the same words appear in article 14.

Regarding Article #25: Where is there protection or a safe-guard for the individual member. As well, what process is to be pursued if the council or consistory is in the wrong.

Regarding Article #26: We suggest that consistories delegate three elders of which one may be a minister with proper . . . The grounds for this is to remain consistent with an overture that was accepted in the Ontario Fellowship.

Regarding Article #27: We suggest that visiting is to be done at least once every two years and/or according to the needs of the church on the grounds that issues would more promptly dealt with. Also perhaps this article would be strengthened by removing the word fraternal.

Regarding Article #28: Is there a place for a "particular" synod?

Regarding Article #29: Must an entire congregation be expelled by the decision of their consistory? Is there protection or a safe-guard for the congregation?

Regarding Article #30: What happens if members of the congregation do not agree?

Regarding Article #31: We would suggest that the words of the 1914 Church Order Article 31 be adopted but also changing minor assembly to local consistory and inserting the words first and foremost before the words Word of God. This would strengthen this article and acknowledge the place the Word of God has in such a situation.

Regarding Article #34-36: Because this is new material some explanation may be necessary. For example, what does it mean that "churches must seek and pursue"? Is pulpit exchange and table fellowship a responsibility of classis? Where does the ultimate authority lie? What is meant by ecclesiastical and perhaps would ecumenical be a better word?

Regarding Article #38: Perhaps this article could be strengthened and some consistency maintained by adding the words in a liturgy commonly adopted by the churches to the end of the article

Regarding Article #39: Perhaps this article could be strengthened by adding the words as adopted by the churches at the end of the article.

Regarding Article #40: Perhaps this article could be strengthened by replacing the word "ordinarily" with faithfully.

Regarding Article #43: Could this article be strengthened by altering the second sentence to read: Those who wish to profess their faith shall be interviewed by the elders of consistory (and) if the interview is to the satisfaction of the consistory they shall be sustained in their request . . .

Regarding Article #44: Could the consistory be properly assured through a letter of attestation or a verbal attestation from his/her home consistory? If this is done, however, should a consistory accept an attestation (verbal or written) from a consistory that they do not have ecclesiastical fellowship with?

Regarding Article #49: This article should include dates of birth and records of transfer.

Regarding Article #55: What are the responsibilities of the church with an excommunicated member? Can these responsibilities be incorporated into this article?

Regarding Article #57: If a consensus cannot be reached should the advice of classis be sought? Should the classis be informed?

Regarding Article #60: Perhaps this article could be strengthened by incorporating or is under suspicion of a public or gross sin in the first sentence.

Regarding Article #63: Would this article be better placed following article 49 (in the section of 'Function and Task')?

Done in Council September 9, 1996

Grace Orthodox Reformed Church at Clinton, Ontario

/s/ Ralph Lubbers

Clerk

Overtures H

Trinity Reformed Bible Church

The Council of Trinity Reformed Bible Church overtures the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches to change the language of the proposed Church Order in Article 6 and 8 to conform with the language of Article 4. Especially the phrase which calls for the "concurring advice of the delegates."

Article 6 to read: "Second, the examination of both doctrine and life, which shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the calling council with the concurring advice of the delegates, according to a regulations adopted by the federation;"

Article 8 to read: "A minister who has been ordained in a church outside the federation shall not be admitted to serve in a church within the federation without an examination conducted under the supervision of the calling council with the concurring advice of the delegates, according to the regulations . . ."

Grounds:

1. This emphasizes the original authority of the local council.
 2. The concurrence or disagreement of the delegates should be sufficient advice for the local council.
 3. These changes reflect the spirit and the letter of Article 20 of the proposed Church Order.
- (underlined sections reflect the changes)

The Council of Trinity Reformed Bible Church overtures the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches to change the word "Classis" and the word "Synod" in the proposed Church order to "Regional Assembly" and "General Assembly".

Grounds:

1. The Dictionary defines "Classis" as a "judicatory or directing group of ministers and elders." "Regional Assembly" more accurately describes the advisory role of the meeting.
2. "Synod" is defined as "governing assembly", implying authority and direction setting powers. "General Assembly" more accurately describes the deliberative and advisory role of the meeting.

Adopted in Council meeting 9-9-96

OVERTURE REGARDING THE 1934/1914 C.R.C. CHURCH ORDER.

The Council of the Independent Christian Reformed Church at Aylmer, Ontario, Canada, overtures the Oct. 1-3, 1996 meeting of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches in N.A. as follows:

That the F.U.R.C. in N.A. continue to use the C.R.C. Church Order of 1934 as adopted at its first meeting in November 1995 "with the understanding that work will continue on a church order :for the federation". (See minutes of the Meeting of the Independent Reformed Churches held November 15 & 16, 1995. page 3). In order that other churches such as the Orth. Christian Ref. Ch., the Canadian Ref. Ch., Free Ref. Ch., Protestant Ref. Ch., R.C.U.S. etc, may have opportunity to give input on the proposed C.O. This would ensure that it is as compatible as it can possibly be to theirs.

Grounds:

1) Most of the above mentioned churches have church orders which are very similar to the C.R.C.'s of 1934/1914. All of them would be able to work with it. (Of course, some discussion would be necessary.) we should not adopt a church order that may hinder greater unity and build walls, that could take years to break down!

2) There are some twenty three thousand denominations in the word today. It is the Lord's will that His people seek and display their unity in Christ (John 17:21-23, Eph. 4:1-6). The world stands in desperate need of a united Reformed witness. It would be sinful if we did not make every effort to be united visibly, with other faithful and Confessional Reformed Churches.

3) The churches of the F.U.R.C. in N.A. have not had sufficient time to study or make a responsible decision about adopting the proposed church order. The C.R.C, church order of 1934/1914 that we adopted' last year, will serve us well 3n the meantime.

Done In Council. Sept. 12-1996

/s/ Clerk, Elder Neil Van Gorp.

OVERTURE REGARDING THE PROPOSED CHURCH ORDER OF THE F.U.R.C. IN N.A.

The Council of the Independent Christian Reformed Church at Aylmer, Ontario, Canada, overtures the Oct. 1-3, 1996 meeting of the Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches .in N.A. as follows:

That the F.U.R.C. in N.A. forward the above mentioned C.O. to all of the Federations of the following churches. Namely, the Orthodox Christian Ref. Ch., the Canadian Ref. Ch., Free

Ref. Ch., Protestant Ref. Ch., R.C.U.S. Requesting them for their evaluation, and/or recommendations on our proposed C.O.

Grounds:

1) Most of the above mentioned churches have church orders which are very similar to our proposed C.O. Their input could greatly benefit us, as well as them. (Proverbs 15:22. Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisors they succeed).

2) It is the Lord's will, and our duty as His people to seek and. display our unity in Christ (John 17:21-23, Eph. 4:1-6). The world stands in desperate need of a united Reformed witness. It would be a visible effort to be united with other faithful and Confessional Reformed Churches.

Done in Council. Sept. 12-1996

/s/ Clerk, Elder Neil Van Gorp.

Request for Advice

COVENANT CHRISTIAN CHURCH
PO Box 774, Wyoming, Ontario, N0N 1T0

Aug 29, 1996

Fellowship of Uniting Reformed Churches

Dear brothers,

Greetings from Covenant Christian Church council in Wyoming.

The deacons of this church seek the advice of the Federation regarding charitable fund transfers across the borders. It would be desirable for Canadian churches to be able to legally support U.S.A. churches and visa versa as needs come up. Perhaps this is possible by setting up an organization of the churches in the Federation with this mandate.

The Lord of the Church be with you.

In His service;

/s/ Joe Anjema, Clerk

Covenant Christian Church
P O Box 774
Wyoming, Ontario
N0N 1T0

