

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

For the EIGHTH Synod of the

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA**

Convening Tuesday, June 12, 2012, at 8:00 A.M., Eastern Daylight Time

At Nyack University, Nyack, New York

Ending Friday evening, June 15, 2012

Registration Monday, June 11, 2012, at 1:00 P.M. – 5:15 P.M.

Supper at 5:15 – 6:15 P.M.; Prayer Service at 7:30 P.M.

Convened by Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church, Pompton Plains, New Jersey

**I. OPENING MATTERS**

- A. Meeting called to order by the convening Consistory, Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church, Pompton Plains, New Jersey.
- B. Opening Devotions
- C. Presentation of the Credentials and roll call of delegates
- D. Report of Credentials Committee
- E. Assent to the Form of Subscription by all the delegates
- F. Synod declared constituted

**II. INITIAL BUSINESS**

- A. Welcome to delegates, visitors, and guests
- B. Election of officers
- C. Reception of Article 32 churches and assent by their delegates to the Form of Subscription
- D. Adopt the provisional agenda and advisory committee assignments
- E. Adopt the Time Schedule (Suggested: Tuesday through Friday – 8:00 A.M. to Noon, 1:00 to 5:00 P.M., 7:00 – 10:00 P.M. Thirty minute breaks at 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M., Supper at 5:15 – 6:15 P.M. Sessions may be extended by vote, if necessary. Breakfast 7:00 – 7:45 A.M.; Lunch 12:00 – 12:45 P.M.; Supper 5:15 – 6:15 P.M.)
- F. Setting times for the special orders of the day; for Ecumenical Observers and Delegates

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- A. Stated Clerk and Alternate
- B. Board of Directors
- C. CECCA and CERCU members
- D. Others if required

#### V. CLOSING MATTERS

- A. Choosing the calling consistory, place, and date for the next synod
- B. Reading of Concept Minutes
- C. Acknowledgments
- D. Closing Devotions
- E. Adjournment



POMPTON PLAINS REFORMED BIBLE CHURCH

**Report of the Convening Consistory**

Synod Nyack, 2012

Dear Brothers in Christ:

*Greetings in the Name of the Lord!*

The Consistory of the Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church of Pompton Plains, New Jersey, was assigned the task of convening the Synod of the URCNA for 2012. Our report to Synod as of Friday, March 30, 2012 is as follows:

- 1.) July 31, 2010: Received and agreed to follow-up on an e-mail correspondence from Eric Luth, Secretary of the Synod London 2010 Organizing Committee, regarding a request from Fraternal Delegates and Observers for Minutes of Synod London.
- 2.) August 19, 2010: After corresponding with a number of possible venues for the hosting of Synod 2012, we made a preliminary visit to the campus of Nyack College in Nyack, NY, to explore it as a possible site for Synod 2012.
- 3.) August 31, 2010: we agreed to contact Nyack College of Nyack, New York, for the hosting of Synod at their facilities pending our Stated Clerks' reply to our concern about its lack of full handicap accessibility. (Note: Our Stated Clerk subsequently agreed that the Nyack site could still serve us as long as a disclaimer stating this fact was clearly publicized well in advance of Synod). On this date the Consistory also approved the request of Rev. Peter Kloosterman to have his expenses for Synod London reimbursed: \$400 - Room and Board; Mileage - 844; Tolls - \$6.25.
- 4.) September 28, 2010: Tentatively scheduled Synod for June 11-15, 2012, noting that Nyack College's policy is to not sign a "conference contract" until the New Year.
- 5.) October 12, 2010: Approved the Stated Clerk's letter to the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. Approved the letter forwarded to us from the Stated Clerk which we believe had been assigned to and written by the Officers of Synod 2010, and was addressed to our brethren in the Canadian Reformed Churches. We adopted a single change in the letter to the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph, last sentence, ending the sentence after the word "unity" and dropping the proposed end of the sentence which had read, "... in order to make credible to the world the gospel of reconciliation." Our reasoning was that such "federative unity" is not necessary "in order to make credible to the world the gospel of reconciliation".
- 6.) October 26, 2010: Received an informational, "Synodical planning CD" from Synod London, 2010 for which we are very grateful. We also finalized the dates of June 11 – 15 for Synod 2012.
- 7.) November 9, 2010: Reviewed a "Task and To Do List" for Synodical preparation.
- 8.) November 23, 2010: Completed Ratification Documents of several items from Synod London 2010.

- 9.) January 25, 2011: Nominated a several-person “Synodical Coordinating Committee” of all members-in-good-standing at PPRBC with the following areas of “special focus”: Chairman, Finance/Treasurer, Volunteers, Technology, Facilities, Secretary/Office Staff, Logistics. (Note: All nominees subsequently agreed to serve and the Committee was officially constituted on March 8, 2012).
- 10.) April 12, 2011: Having received a large shipment of the Acts of Synod, 2010, plans were approved and accomplished for their being sent to the churches of the URCNA
- 11.) July 19, 2011: Performed a second “walk through” at Nyack College.
- 12.) Fall, 2011: The Coordinating Committee continues to meet and regularly informs our Consistory of ongoing plans and developments.
- 13.) January 10, 2012: Needed to replace two Coordinating Committee members (an Elder and his wife) due to the wife’s contracting of severe ALS-type symptoms. Another Elder’s wife graciously agreed to serve with her husband who was already serving on the Committee).
- 14.) February 14, 2012: Processed and ultimately approved the “Synodical observer” request of Gabrielle Avedian from the Christ Reformed Church of Anaheim, California, upon receipt of a “letter of endorsement” from her Consistory.
- 15.) February 28:2012: Received, discussed and approved a special request from the Board of Reformed Missions Services to have one of their representatives briefly address Synod.
- 16.) March 27, 2012: We received a letter from Rev. Ruben Sernas from the Ontario URC of Ontario, California, requesting permission to set up a display table at Synod Nyack, and also requesting permission to address Synod in order to make an urgent financial appeal. While approving the “display table” request, due to our understanding that Rev. Sernas had addressed our previous Synod, and also due to our policy this year of attempting to greatly minimize/limit “addresses to Synod”, we regretfully declined Rev. Sernas’ request to once again personally address Synod. As your Convening Consistory, however, we encouraged Rev. Sernas to directly/personally appeal to our Diaconates; we draw the direct attention of our Consistories and Diaconates to this pressing financial need; and we urge the delegates to Synod to please pray for this Brother and his congregation, to please be sure to stop by his table (*as well as the other ministry displays!*) and to seek to speak with and encourage the Brother personally. Also, having been informed that we need to designate an “official photographer” for Synod, we have begun the process toward such an appointment.
- 17.) March 28, 2012: Followed-up on the inadvertent oversight of neglecting to extend Synodical invitations to a number of Fraternal Delegates and Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship, etc. *Our sincere apologies!*
- 18.) March 30, 2012: Performed a third “walk-through” at the Nyack College campus and met with Administrative Staff to review a wide-range of preparatory details.
- 19.) FINAL NOTES: Under the exceedingly able leadership and chairmanship of Dr. Tony Van Grouw, and with final authorization always being provided by the Consistory of PPRBC, our Synodical Coordinating Committee has also been actively involved over these past many months in far-too-numerous-to-mention “logistical activities/decisions” including, but not being limited to: the procuring of liability insurance for Synod; completing the transfer of funds from Synod London 2010 (Canadian and US) and the establishment of a Synodical Account; finalizing the list of and contacting numerous

“table-display” participants; approving the purchase of Synodical folders/binders/lanyards; establishing a “Synod Nyack 2012” link to the URCNA website, along with the establishment of a Synodical e-mail account at Synod2012@pprborg; posted travel information and a “Frequently Asked Questions” section on our URCNA website link; procuring sufficient “photo-copier capabilities”; forming a Synod 2012 Budget and approving the cost of \$500.00 per-delegate; signing the final contract with Nyack College; approving early “save the date” mailings, as well as sending out Registration Packets to all URCNA churches in January of 2012 which included registration and “committee preference” forms, etc ., which have all also been posted on the URCNA website; approached the churches of Classis Eastern U.S. for volunteers to assist the members of PPRBC in the hosting of Synod; formulated an announcement of Synod Nyack 2012 for publication in the Outlook, Clarion and Christian Renewal; sent out a “Credentials Letter” to all URCNA churches with the intent of a pre-Synod review of all Synodical credentials toward the end of expediting the processing of the Credentials at Synod. And so on.

Needless to say, Brothers, we still have much work to do before Synod Nyack 2012 ... and to that end, *we covet your continued prayers!* We also wish to extend a very sincere, heartfelt word of thanks to our Stated Clerk, Rev. Bradd Nymeyer, whose gracious help has been absolutely invaluable in this endeavor!

May the Lord and King of the Church abundantly bless our joint efforts toward the hosting and holding of Synod Nyack 2012 all for the glory of His Name, the building of His Church, and the coming of His eternal Kingdom!

Sincerely in His Service,  
The Consistory, PPRBC  
Ray Santhouse, Clerk  
Rev. Richard J. Kuiken  
Senior Pastor



## **Appendix 1**

### **Report of the Stated Clerk to Synod 2012**

Brothers,

It has been my great pleasure to serve as your stated clerk for the past two years. Like so many positions, you don't appreciate how easy the previous person made the job look until you try to do it yourself. I continue to be impressed with how well Brother Konynenbelt handled this job.

The first task to undertake was the printing of the minutes of Synod 2010. After completing the editing, the book was printed and then sent to two churches, one in the United States and one in Canada, for shipping. My thanks to Cornerstone United Reformed Church of London, Ontario, and Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church, Pompton Plain, New Jersey, for handling this huge task. I would like direction from the synod with regard to how many extra copies of the minutes to print. We print a copy for every order placed as well as copies to be sent to other federations with whom we are engaged in any ecumenical relations or contact. However, there is no provision for printing extra copies for those who might wish to obtain one in the future. Some direction here would be appreciated.

Following up on synodical items, I distributed the Federal Vision and Justification Report. I sent the correspondence that was assigned. I had the Regulations for Synodical Procedure posted to the web site. I also sent out forms to ratify the decisions of synod and announced the results when they were in.

One of the biggest parts of this position is handling the flow of information to the churches. I regularly send out broadcast e-mails containing licensure and ordination information, as well as newsletters from various churches. It was pointed out to me that many of the newsletters that are forwarded contain appeals for financial support. However, Canadian churches can only support U.S. churches that are part of the Joint Venture Agreement. There is concern that this could cause confusion as to which causes Canadian churches are allowed to support. In light of the recommendations of Canadian Board of the URCNA to cease sending Canadian support to U.S. churches, this confusion may get even worse. It needs to be made clear how the cross-border support is to be accomplished and who is eligible for such support.

A major task was compiling the information for the 2011 directory. Since the work of stated clerk and webmaster are now separate, I relied heavily on webmaster Gary Fisher and on information systems manager Larry Van Den Berg for completing this project. The work on the 2012 directory is currently underway.

I have been in correspondence with the convening consistory regarding the planning of Synod 2012. I have sent out various announcements giving information about synod and directing churches to our web site for all the forms and documents. I've consulted with the convening consistory about the admissibility of several appeals and we concur on the admissibility of all of them. The biggest task was compiling the agenda. Thank you to all who submitted their overtures and reports early. That made the job much easier.

I would like to bring one more matter to the attention of the body. I received a letter from Trinity United Reformed Church of Visalia, California, offering to host the next synod. This letter will need to be answered.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as stated clerk. I have enjoyed the work and enjoyed learning more about this significant position.

The follow matters are brought as **recommendations** to the Synod 2012:

1. That synod determine how many additional copies of the minutes should be printed for future use.
2. That synod make clear to the churches that just because an U.S. church newsletter includes a request for funding, that does not automatically mean that a Canadian church can provide that support.
3. That synod answer the invitation of Trinity United Reformed Church regarding their offer to host the next synod.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer  
Stated Clerk, URCNA

# ***United Reformed Churches in North America***

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

February xx, 2011

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 the privilege of serving the Lord as the US Treasurer since 2001 and to introduce you to the new US Treasurer, Mr. Robert D. Huisjen. 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.

I also wish to inform you that the 2009 End of Year Report was audited with no findings. Any questions about the 2009 End of Year Report Audit can be directed to the Deacons of the Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church.

The Pastors and Elders who attended Synod 2010 approved a budget that was almost double of our current budget. For the upcoming calendar year, please plan your Askings accordingly.

An excerpt from the upcoming Acts of Synod 2010 concerning Askings are:

## **Advisory Committee 2**

Materials: Financial Reports, Healthcare Matters, URCNA Boards of Directors

### Recommendations:

1. That Synod approve the above-mentioned Financial Reports. *Adopted*
2. That Synod recommend strongly that all councils make the federation's Askings a budget line-item. *Adopted*

#### Explanation:

- Synod makes commitments which require financial support.
- 25% of churches (on average) fail to contribute to the financial needs of the federation. Both Treasurers indicated that 'forgetfulness' may be a contributing cause for this failure.
- A budget line-item will keep the matter before the churches on an annual basis.
- The amount budgeted may be raised by offerings or any other appropriate means.
- The Treasurers of the Corporations will be permitted to send reminders to all the churches regarding their contributions towards the federation's expenses.

## OBSERVATIONS

1. By my count, the US has 75 churches. Of those 75 churches
  - a. 8 remain “unorganized” (not member churches)
  - b. 1 of the “unorganized” churches provided askings
  - c. 49 of the remaining organized churches provided askings.
    - i. This translates to a participation rate of 73%
  - d. Of the 18 churches that did not provide askings in 2010,
    - i. 7 churches had provided askings in 2009 (implying that they forgot in 2010)
    - ii. 9 churches had not provided askings in the past two years
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, the Canadian members need to be reimbursed by the Canadian Treasurer and US members need to be reimbursed by the US Treasurer. There have been several instances of reimbursement requests being sent to the wrong treasurer. See the Reimbursement Guidelines at the end of this document for more reimbursement information.
4. In order to follow the direction of Synod 2007 to better share the committee costs between the two countries, adjustments are being made twice a year (February and August). Joint committee costs are calculated in US Dollars and then split 65/35 between the two countries. For 2009, a check was sent to URCNA-Canada for \$1,238.30 USD to adjust for 2008. In August, 2009 a check was sent to URCNA-Canada for \$2,291USD based on the second quarter treasurer’s reports. In February, 2010, a check was sent to URCNA-Canada for \$2,721 USD based on the end-of-year 2009 treasurer’s reports. In summary, for 2009 (even though the cost is split between 2009 and 2010), the US needed to compensate Canada for \$5,012 USD for shared committee expenses.
5. The US Treasurer is recommending Askings to be increased to \$11.00 per family in order to cover expenses.

## STATISTICS

The URC made a conscious decision to avoid assessing quotas to member churches. Instead they came up with the term “Askings”. Many churches have chosen to simply budget an amount or take a special offering instead of using the formula. The following chart is derived from inference in giving and is provided simply to indicate that not all churches follow the Synodical guidelines. Many prefer to provide a budget amount or simply take a special offering. For purposes of sorting this chart, if the amount received from the church had cents or did not end in zero, it was listed as a collection (special offering). It is difficult to sort between askings and budget so, using the 2010 directory, if the number was close to either \$8 or \$10 times the number of families, it was considered askings. Everything else was counted as budget.

	<b>2010</b>		
Type	Number of	Percent	Percent
	Churches	Participated	Collected
Nothing	18	27%	0%
Askings	31	46%	61%
Budget	3	4%	6%
Collection	15	22%	33%

This chart, very simply, indicates the 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%

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

### **ASKINGS**

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. The US Treasurer is suggesting that donation should increase to \$11.00 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. 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.”

Please make your check payable to URCNA Hymnal Fund 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.

## **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 2010 developed a budget for 2011 through 2012 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2010 and the Synodical 2010 Budget. 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**

Synod Schererville 2007 developed a new guideline for reimbursements. They were not changed by Synod London 2010. 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 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 2011, is currently **51** cents per mile. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. It is not necessary to submit receipts for meals unless the total exceeds \$36.00 per day.
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.

/s/ Peter J. Moen

/s/ Robert D. Huisjen

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Robert D. Huisjen, U.S. Treasurer, URCNA  
8443 Farview Drive SE, Byron Center, Michigan 49315  
Home: xxx-xxx-xxxx, Fax: xxx-xxx-xxxx, E-Mail:



# ***United Reformed Churches in North America***

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

March 6, 2012

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 2011. I would also like to thank the previous treasurer Peter Moen for all his help throughout this past year in making this a smooth transition. 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 \$29,276 (up from \$23,394 in 2010) and total expenses were \$30,217 which resulted in expenses in excess of income in the amount of \$941. As of the date of this report I have received \$3,120 in deposits subsequent to year end which were for 2011 askings but reported as income in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2012 since that is when they were received.

The US Board has recently met and our plan is to have this year- end report audited prior to the upcoming Synod this summer.

By way of reminder, the Pastors and Elders who attended Synod 2010 approved a budget that was almost double of our current budget. Askings increased by approximately \$5,800 from 2010 to 2011 which was good. However, as you can see from the statistics later in this report, some churches still do not give any askings and a fair number of churches are not budgeting a line item for the recommended amount per family. The recommended asking amount is currently \$11 per family. For the upcoming calendar year, please plan your Askings accordingly.

An excerpt from the upcoming Acts of Synod 2010 concerning Askings are:

## **Advisory Committee 2**

Materials: Financial Reports, Healthcare Matters, URCNA Boards of Directors

### Recommendations:

1. That Synod approve the above-mentioned Financial Reports. *Adopted*
2. That Synod recommend strongly that all councils make the federation's Askings a budget line-item. *Adopted*

Explanation:

- Synod makes commitments which require financial support.
- 25% of churches (on average) fail to contribute to the financial needs of the federation. Both Treasurers indicated that ‘forgetfulness’ may be a contributing cause for this failure.
- A budget line-item will keep the matter before the churches on an annual basis.
- The amount budgeted may be raised by offerings or any other appropriate means.
- The Treasurers of the Corporations will be permitted to send reminders to all the churches regarding their contributions towards the federation’s expenses.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

1. By my count, the US has 79 churches. Of those 79 churches
  - a. 11 remain “unorganized” (not member churches)
  - b. 1 of the “unorganized” churches provided askings
  - c. 52 of the remaining organized churches provided askings.
    - i. This translates to a participation rate of approximately 76%
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, the Canadian members need to be reimbursed by the Canadian Treasurer and US members need to be reimbursed by the US Treasurer. There have been several instances of reimbursement requests being sent to the wrong treasurer. See the Reimbursement Guidelines at the end of this document for more reimbursement information.
4. In order to follow the direction of Synod 2007 to better share the committee costs between the two countries, adjustments are being made once or twice a year (February and August). Joint committee costs are calculated in US Dollars and then split 65/35 between the two countries. For 2011, a check was sent to URCNA-Canada for \$10.94 USD to adjust for 2011. This is down a fair amount from previous years due to changes in the exchange rate.

## **STATISTICS**

The URC made a conscious decision to avoid assessing quotas to member churches. Instead they came up with the term “Askings”. Many churches have chosen to simply budget an amount or take a special offering instead of using the formula. The following chart is derived from inference in giving and is provided simply to indicate that not all churches follow the Synodical guidelines. Many prefer to provide a budget amount or simply take a special offering. For purposes of sorting this chart, if the amount received from the church had cents or did not end in zero, it was listed as a collection (special offering).

	<b>2011</b>		
Type	Number of Churches	Percent Participated	Percent Collected
Nothing	16	24%	0%
Budgeted	40	59%	78%
Collection	12	17%	22%

This chart, very simply, indicates the 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%

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

### **ASKINGS**

URCNA “Askings” equals “Suggested Donation”. The US Treasurer is **suggesting** that donation should increase to \$11.00 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. 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.”

Please make your check payable to URCNA Hymnal Fund 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.

### **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 2010 developed a budget for 2011 through 2012 in order to provide information on the ongoing activities.

The following pages contain the unaudited End-Of-Year Report for 2011 and the Synodical 2011 Budget. 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**

Synod Schererville 2007 developed a new guideline for reimbursements. They were not changed by Synod London 2010. 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 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 2012, is currently **55.5** cents per mile. Gasoline is not reimbursed when mileage is submitted.
6. Meals will be reimbursed.
7. It is not necessary to submit receipts for meals unless the total exceeds \$36.00 per day.
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](mailto:bob@firstcompanies.com)



# ***United Reformed Churches in North America***

Peter J. Moen, US URCNA Treasurer  
15 Romondt Road, Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 07444-1840  
**2010 End Of Year Report (not audited)**

## **General Fund**

**BALANCE 12/31/2009** **\$5,580.19**

### **INCOME**

Askings <sup>2</sup> (2009)	\$346.43
Askings	\$23,013.67
Interest	\$34.19
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$23,394.29</b>

### **EXPENSES**

Bank Charge	\$5.00
CECCA <sup>3</sup>	\$99.69
CERCU <sup>4</sup>	\$2,784.66
Church Order Committee	\$276.25
Clerk	\$1,950.00
Directory <sup>1</sup>	\$0.00
Doctrinal Commitment Study Committee	\$276.00
Dues	
ICRC	\$1,740.97
NAPARC	\$300.00
MNA <sup>9</sup>	\$500.00
Federal Vision Study Committee	\$0.00
Hymnal Committee	\$3,316.90
Postage	\$22.29
PRJC <sup>5</sup>	\$910.60
Supplies	\$204.07
Synod Registration <sup>6</sup>	\$500.00
Synod Travel <sup>6</sup>	\$1,003.16
Theological Education Committee	\$0.00
US URCNA Treasurer Honorarium <sup>11</sup>	\$833.00
JVA URCNA Treasurer Honorarium <sup>11</sup>	\$650.00
US Share to Canada for 2009 <sup>10</sup>	\$2,721.00
US Share to Canada for 2010 <sup>10</sup>	\$400.12
Web Master Honorarium	\$975.00

**TOTAL EXPENSES** \$ 19,468.71

**NET TOTAL** **\$3,925.58**

### **TRANSFERS**

Transfer From General Fund CD	\$10,480.68
Transfer to New Treasurer Account	(\$8,000.00)

**BALANCE 12/31/2010** **\$11,986.45**

General Fund Notes

1. The URC Directory is being processed through this account
2. Several churches noted that paid askings were for 2009
3. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
4. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
5. PRJC = Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel
6. URCNA General Fund pays expenses for Synodical Functionaries as approved by convening council.
7. \$4,189.89 is in reserve from income and expenses relative to the URCNA directory
8. Note is deleted
9. MNA is the Dues paid, set by the number of URCNA Chaplains, as part of PRJC
10. US and Canada treasurers looked at the end of year payments across all committees and made a general adjustment such that US paid 65% and Canada paid 35%. An adjustment was made for year-ending for 2009 and a second adjustment was made based on the second quarter's treasurer's report.
11. Synod London 2010 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.

General Fund – Certificate of Deposit<sup>1</sup>

<b>BALANCE 12/31/2009</b>	<b>\$10,382.08</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
Interest	\$98.60
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
None	
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>\$98.60</b>
<b>TRANSFERS</b>	
Transfer to General Fund	(\$10,480.68)
<b>BALANCE 12/31/2010</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

NOTES

1. 2010 started with two Certificates of Deposit for the General Fund. Both CD's came due and were rolled back into the General Fund since Synod 2010 will be selecting a new US Treasurer.

## Hymnal Fund

BALANCE 12/31/2009	<b>\$8,205.80</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
<b>Collections</b>	<b>\$722.00</b>
<b>Interest</b>	<b>\$91.88</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$813.88</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>Printing Synod Hymnal Copies</b>	<b>\$2,870.34</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>(\$2,056.46)</b>
<b>TRANSFERS</b>	
<b>Transfer From Hymnal CD</b>	<b>\$26,196.33</b>
<b>Transfer to New Treasurer Account</b>	<b>(\$25,000.00)</b>
BALANCE 12/31/2010	<b>\$7,345.67</b>

## Hymnal Fund – Certificate of Deposit (Two)<sup>1</sup>

BALANCE 12/31/2009	<b>\$25,955.23</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
<b>Interest</b>	<b>\$241.10</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>None</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>\$241.10</b>
<b>TRANSFERS</b>	
<b>Transfer to Hymnal Fund</b>	<b>(\$26,196.33)</b>
BALANCE 12/31/2010	<b>\$0.00</b>

### NOTES

1. 2010 started with two Certificates of Deposit for the Hymnal Fund. Both CD's came due and were rolled back into the Hymnal Fund since Synod 2010 will be selecting a new US Treasurer.

Web Fund<sup>1</sup>

BALANCE 12/31/2009	<b>\$7,228.45</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
<b>Classis</b>	<b>\$1,430.00</b>
<b>Interest</b>	<b>\$16.77</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,446.77</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>Web Site Hosting</b>	<b>\$809.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$809.00</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>\$637.77</b>
<b>TRANSFERS</b>	
<b>Transfer to New Treasurer Account</b>	<b>(\$4,000.00)</b>
BALANCE 12/31/2010	<b>\$3,866.22</b>

As established by Synod 2010, each Classis must provide the US Treasurer with \$100 each year in order to fund the cost of maintaining a Web Site for URCNA.

The budget approved by Synod 2010:

<b>Item</b>	<b>2007 Synodical Budget</b>	<b>Average Yearly Expense</b>	<b>2010 Synodical Yearly Average Budget</b>	<b>Three- Year Budget</b>	<b>Canadian ~35%</b>	<b>USA ~65%</b>	<b>Percent of Total Budget</b>
Accounting/Government Filing	\$0	\$500	\$550	\$1,650	\$550	\$0	0.89%
Bank Fee	\$25	\$31	\$25	\$75	\$0	\$25	0.04%
CECCA	\$10,500	\$4,372	\$10,500	\$31,500	\$3,675	\$6,825	17.00%
CERCU	\$3,500	\$4,230	\$6,000	\$18,000	\$2,100	\$3,900	9.71%
Clerk	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$700	\$1,300	3.24%
Doctrinal Study Committee	\$0	\$4,327	\$8,000	\$24,000	\$2,800	\$5,200	12.95%
Dues							
NAPARC	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$1,500	\$175	\$325	0.81%
ICRC	\$1,700	\$1,637	\$1,800	\$5,400	\$630	\$1,170	2.91%
MNA	\$0	\$500	\$500	\$1,500	\$175	\$325	0.81%
Federal Vision Study Committee	\$0	\$4,307	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.00%
Mission Committee	N/A	N/A	\$2,000	\$6,000	\$700	\$1,300	3.24%
PRJC (Chaplains)	\$1,000	\$695	\$700	\$2,100	\$245	\$455	1.13%
Postage/Supplies	\$50	\$328	\$400	\$1,200	\$140	\$260	0.65%
Telephone/Internet	\$1,000	\$484	\$1,800	\$5,400	\$630	\$1,170	2.91%
Joint Church Order Committee	\$3,000	\$4,712	\$7,500	\$22,500	\$2,625	\$4,875	12.14%
Song Book Committee	\$3,000	\$2,615	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$3,500	\$6,500	16.19%
Synod (Functionaries to attend)	\$0	\$568	\$500	\$1,500	\$175	\$325	0.81%
Theological Education Committee	\$3,000	\$2,850	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.00%
Treasurer - Canada & US & JVA	\$0	\$0	\$6,000	\$18,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	9.71%
Webmaster Honorarium	N/A	N/A	\$3,000	\$9,000	\$1,050	\$1,950	4.86%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$31,275</b>	<b>\$36,656</b>	<b>\$61,775</b>	<b>\$185,325</b>	<b>\$22,870</b>	<b>\$38,905</b>	<b>100%</b>



**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 the Year Ended December 31, 2011 (not audited)

	Avg. Annual Budget - US	YTD Actual
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/11 (General Fund)		\$19,986.45
INCOME		
Contributions / Askings		\$27,949.83
Contributions / Askings (2010)		\$1,260.00
Interest		<u>\$66.82</u>
 Total Income		 <u>\$29,276.65</u>
EXPENSES		
Accounting / Government Filing	\$0.00	\$25.00
Bank Fees	\$25.00	
CECCA (1)	\$6,825.00	\$2,724.10
CERCU (2)	\$3,900.00	\$5,394.46
Clerk	\$1,300.00	\$1,300.00
Doctrinal Study Committee	\$5,200.00	\$5,095.42
Dues		
NAPARC	\$325.00	\$300.00
ICRC	\$1,170.00	\$1,131.63
MNA	\$325.00	
Mission Committee	\$1,300.00	\$2,239.46
PRJC (Chaplains) (3)	\$455.00	\$500.00
Postage / Supplies (7)	\$260.00	\$162.94
Telephone / Internet	\$1,170.00	
Joint Church Order Committee	\$4,875.00	\$1,098.79
Song Book Committee	\$6,500.00	\$4,996.07
Synod (Functionaries to attend)(4)	\$325.00	
 Treasurer - US	 \$2,000.00	 \$2,000.00
Treasurer - Joint Venture (6)	\$1,300.00	\$1,300.00

Webmaster Honorarium (6)	<u>\$1,950.00</u>	<u>\$1,950.00</u>
Total Expenses	<u>\$39,205.00</u>	<u>\$30,217.87</u>
TOTAL INCOME OVER EXPENSES		<u>(\$941.22)</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/11 (General Fund)</b>		<u><u>\$19,045.23</u></u> (5, 8)
		YTD
		<u>Actual</u>
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/11 (Hymnal Fund)		\$32,345.67
Contributions / Askings		\$519.25
Interest		<u>\$50.07</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/11 (Hymnal Fund)</b>		<u><u>\$32,914.99</u></u> (8)
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE - 1/1/11 (Web Fund)		\$7,866.22
Contributions / Askings		\$700.00
Expense - web site updates		(\$446.88)
Interest		<u>\$3.64</u>
<b>ENDING CASH BALANCE - 12/31/11 (Web Fund)</b>		<u><u>\$8,122.98</u></u>
<b>TOTAL CASH BALANCE - 12/31/11 (All Funds)</b>		<u><u>\$60,083.20</u></u> (10)

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. \$4,189.89 is in reserve from income and expenses relative to the URCNA directory
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. To fund supplies shortage for Joint Venture
8. \$15,000 of the general fund balance has been invested in a short-term cd and has earned interest of \$85.44 year to date
9. \$25,000 of the hymnal fund balance has been invested in a short-term cd and has earned interest of \$142.42 year to date
10. Total cash amount includes balance of \$309.98 yet to be collected from churches for copies of the Acts of the 2010 Synod

# *URCNA - Canada*

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

## **2011 End of Year Report (not audited)**

**March 22, 2012**

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 2011 askings from 36 (2010 – 31) of the Canadian churches. In addition, I received contributions to the Psalter Hymnal Fund from 7 (2010 – 10) Canadian churches. Both classes provided the \$200 US for the web fund.

Overall, 2011 was a positive year with 100% of churches participating and remitting askings. The number of churches contributing to the Psalter Hymnal fund declined from 2010; however the dollar value remained relatively constant.

The exchange rate was very favourable to Canadians this past year, hovering at or near par, resulting in some cost savings on our joint expenses.

The per family asking remains the same for 2012. It is set at **\$12 per family**. Thank you to many of the churches who made their remittances early in the year.

I have also attached a report for the joint venture activities from January to December 2011. This report is in US dollars. At the bottom of the report, you will note that the funds received for the various joint venture causes have not been distributed. We need contributions to those same causes to come from the URCNA – US in order to satisfy Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) requirements. A further report on this issue will be made at Synod.

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

Fax: 905-386-0477  
Home: 905-386-0492  
E-Mail: [kphessels@bellnet.ca](mailto:kphessels@bellnet.ca)



# URCNA - Canada

Pam Hessels, Canadian URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0  
**2011 End of Year Report (not audited)**

General Fund	Budget	Actual
<b>INCOME</b>		
Askings	24,471	27,278.00
Reimbursed expenses <sup>1</sup>		3,791.00
Reimbursed expenses <sup>2</sup>		10.70
Joint Venture Causes <sup>3</sup>		16,107.30
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>24,471</b>	<b>47,187.00</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Accounting	2,729	2,052.48
Acts of Synod		3,391.98
CECCA <sup>4</sup>	3,932	2,802.96
CERCU <sup>5</sup>	2,247	4,255.23
Church Order Committee	2,809	1,247.88
Doctrinal Commitment	2,996	1,002.12
Dues (NAPARC, ICRC, MNA)	1,048	605.07
Federal Vision		0.00
Hymnal Committee	3,745	1,835.81
Joint Venture Advances <sup>6</sup>	2,943	2,521.31
Joint Venture Causes <sup>3</sup>		17,107.30
Mission Committee	749	0.00
Postage	150	499.60
PRJC (Chaplains)	262	0.00
Supplies		170.65
Synod travel	187	0.00
Telephone	674	0.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>24,471</b>	<b>37,492.39</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>		<b>9,694.61</b>

## Balance Sheet

<b>Bank<sup>7</sup></b>	22,673.66
<b>Accounts Receivable<sup>8</sup></b>	841.02
<b>Prepays<sup>9</sup></b>	4,327.92
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	0.00
<b>General Fund Balance</b>	27,842.60

### NOTES

1. Represents the amount billed to cover the cost of printing and mailing the Acts of Synod.
2. Represents the reimbursement from the URCNA-US for committee expenses.
3. Represents the amounts collected for the joint venture causes that were transferred to the \$US account in the JVA (see attached sheet for breakdown of donations received and dispersed)
4. CECCA = Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad
5. CERCU = Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity
6. Represents the Canadian portion for the webmaster, clerk and JV treasurer stipends and expenses. These stipends and expenses are paid via the "joint venture" since they are paid to individuals outside of Canada.
7. The bank balance is being provided for information purposes at the end of each quarter.
8. Represents the refundable portion of GST (goods & services tax) to be received from Canada Revenue Agency
9. Represents reimbursement for travel expenses for a 2012 expense and advances to the URCNA JVA

## Hymnal Fund

<b>INCOME</b>	
Collections	4,285.40
TOTAL INCOME	4,285.40
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
TOTAL EXPENSES	0.00
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>4,285.40</b>
Bank balance at Dec-31-11	21,016.61

## Web Fund<sup>1</sup>

<b>INCOME</b>	
Classis	200.00
"Askings" <sup>2</sup>	106.17
TOTAL INCOME	306.17
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Annual fee	239.79
Upgrades to website	900.90
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,140.69
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>(834.52)</b>
Bank balance at Dec-31-11	3,461.31

### NOTES

1. As established by Synod 2007, each Classis must provide the Treasurer with \$200 US each year in order to fund the cost of maintaining a Web Site for URCNA. Synod 2010 reduced this amount to \$100 US each year.
2. Various churches have submitted a \$0.15 per family "asking" that is not budgeted or requested by Synod – the website is to be funded by Classis

## Analysis of Exchange Rates on Budget

(repeat from 2010 report)

Item	2010 Synodical Yearly Average Budget	Canadian ~35%	At 2010 YTD Avg of 1.03	At 2007 to 2010 Avg of 1.07
Accounting/Government Filing	\$550	\$550	\$567	\$589
Bank Fee	\$25	\$0	\$0	\$0
CECCA	\$10,500	\$3,675	\$3,785	\$3,932
CERCU	\$6,000	\$2,100	\$2,163	\$2,247
Clerk	\$2,000	\$700	\$721	\$749
Doctrinal Study Committee	\$8,000	\$2,800	\$2,884	\$2,996
Dues				
NAPARC	\$500	\$175	\$180	\$187
ICRC	\$1,800	\$630	\$649	\$674
MNA	\$500	\$175	\$180	\$187
Federal Vision Study Committee	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Mission Committee	\$2,000	\$700	\$721	\$749
PRJC (Chaplains)	\$700	\$245	\$252	\$262
Postage/Supplies	\$400	\$140	\$144	\$150
Telephone/Internet	\$1,800	\$630	\$649	\$674
Joint Church Order Committee	\$7,500	\$2,625	\$2,704	\$2,809
Song Book Committee	\$10,000	\$3,500	\$3,605	\$3,745
Synod (Functionaries to attend)	\$500	\$175	\$180	\$187
Theological Education Committee	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Treasurer - Canada & US	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$3,090	\$3,210
Webmaster Honorarium	\$3,000	\$1,050	\$1,082	\$1,124
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$61,775</b>	<b>\$22,870</b>	<b>\$23,556</b>	<b>\$24,471</b>
Asking per family (2,042 families)			<b>\$11.54</b>	<b>\$11.98</b>

### Discussion:

Over the past 3 years (calculated as September 2007 to October 2010), the exchange rate has varied from a low of \$0.97 Canadian per US dollar (November 2007) to a high of \$1.26 Canadian per US dollar (March 2009) and has resulted in an average exchange rate of \$1.07 Canadian per US dollar. The average exchange rate since January 1, 2010 is \$1.03 Canadian per US dollar.

The Canadian finance committee has recommended that the per family asking be set at \$12 to ensure that the Canadian funds are not depleted by adverse exchange rates. Other considerations to setting the asking at \$12 per family include a history of expenses exceeding budgeted amounts and non-participation of 25% of the churches.

**Recommendation:** 2011 to 2013 per family askings be set at \$12 per family.



# URCNA - Joint

Pam Hessels, Joint URCNA Treasurer  
74025 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON, L0R 2J0  
**2011 End of Year Report (not audited) - In US\$**

## General Fund

### INCOME

URCNA - Canada <sup>1</sup>	3,577.39
URCNA – United States <sup>2</sup>	6,638.31
Interest	1.22

TOTAL INCOME 10,216.92

### EXPENSES

Clerk Expenses	
Postage	74.40
Supplies	32.82
Stipends	
Clerk	2,000.00
Treasurer	2,000.00
Web Master	3,000.00
Bank service charges	9.35
Postage	12.85
Web Master Expenses	3,087.50

TOTAL EXPENSES 10,216.92

**NET TOTAL 0.00**

## Balance Sheet

<b>Bank</b>	16,632.92
<b>Accounts Receivable<sup>3</sup></b>	1,211.02
<b>Accounts Payable<sup>4</sup></b>	1,427.91
<b>Deferred Revenue<sup>5</sup></b>	16,416.03
<b>General Fund Balance</b>	0.00

## NOTES

1. Represents the Canadian share (35%) of expenses for the period of January to December, 2011
2. Represents the US share (65%) of expenses for January to December, 2011
3. Represents amounts owing from URCNA – US for 2011 expenses
4. Represents advances from URCNA – Canada to cover 2011 expenses
5. Represents the money received from URCNA – Canada for the joint venture causes; these funds cannot be distributed to the various causes until there is money received from URCNA – US to “match” the donation (The amount needed from URCNA – US is indicated in the brackets below). The money held for these causes in US\$ is as follows:

Catechism Project	\$ 1,439.54	(\$ 2,673.43)
Costa Rica – Rev. Green	479.85	( 891.15)
David Meengs – Dutton URC	5,936.91	( 11,025.69)
Kauai URC	2,435.94	( 4,523.89)
Messiah’s Reformed Fellowship	3,131.68	( 5,815.98)
Needy Churches	271.96	( 505.07)
Reformed Youth Services	896.74	( 1,665.37)
Spanish Ministry – Ontario URC	1,823.41	( 3,386.33)
TOTAL	\$16,416.03	(\$30,486.91)

## Joint Venture Collections<sup>1</sup>

	TOTAL	Catechism Develop.	Rev. Green	David Meengs	Kauai URC	Messiah's Reformed Fellowship	Needy Churches	Reformed Youth Services	Spanish Ministry
<b>INCOME</b>									
Collections	16,107.30	500.00	500.00	6,186.26	2,538.25	3,265.00	283.38	934.41	1,900.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>16,107.30</b>	<b>500.00</b>	<b>500.00</b>	<b>6,186.26</b>	<b>2,538.25</b>	<b>3,265.00</b>	<b>283.38</b>	<b>934.41</b>	<b>1,900.00</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>									
Disbursement <sup>2</sup>	17,107.30	1,500.00	500.00	6,186.26	2,538.25	3,265.00	283.38	934.41	1,900.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>17,107.30</b>	<b>1,500.00</b>	<b>500.00</b>	<b>6,186.26</b>	<b>2,538.25</b>	<b>3,265.00</b>	<b>283.38</b>	<b>934.41</b>	<b>1,900.00</b>
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>(1,000.00)</b>	<b>(1,000.00)</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Bank balance at Dec-31-11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

### NOTES

1. As noted in the letter to the Canadian churches dated October 27, 2011, the URCNA joint board has approved a number of causes that funds will be directed toward. The complete list of causes is:
  - a. The Spanish Ministry of the Ontario URC, California.
  - b. The ministry of David and Mary Meengs of the Dutton URC, Michigan
  - c. The All Saints Reformed Church
  - d. The South India Mission of the Lynwood URC
  - e. The Kauai Reformation Church of the Oceanside URC
  - f. Reformed Youth Services
  - g. The Chino Catechism project.
  - h. Messiah's Reformed Fellowship, New York City
  - i. The Costa Rica Ministry of Bethany URC, Michigan
  - j. Christ Reformed Church, Washington, D.C.
  - k. The Sioux Falls Church Plant of Hills URC.
2. The amounts received in 2011 have been exchanged and deposited into the Joint Venture US dollar account for dispersal to the various causes.

## **Overture #1**

### **Theological Education**

Classis Michigan overtures Synod 2012 to adopt the language of Appendix 3 of the Synod 2010 Theological Education Committee Report (Acts 2010 pp. 563-564), with revisions as footnoted below, as Appendix 1 of the Church Order of the URCNA, to be referenced after the phrase “thoroughly reformed theological education” in Art. 3 of the Church Order, with the existing Appendices to be renumbered accordingly, the new Appendix 1 to be titled “Minimum Requirements for a Thoroughly Reformed Theological Education” (ibid p.544).

#### **Appendix 1:**

#### **Minimum Requirements for a Thoroughly Reformed Theological Education**

1. Old Testament Biblical Languages and Studies
  - 1.1. Language competency as demonstrated by a working knowledge of Hebrew in all genres and literary categories of the Old Testament;
  - 1.2. Knowledge of Old Testament background and canonicity; hermeneutics/Textual Criticism
  - 1.3. Courses in the main sections of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetry, Prophets
2. New Testament Biblical Languages and Studies
  - 2.1. Language competency as demonstrated by a working knowledge of Koine Greek in all genres and literary categories of the New Testament;
  - 2.2. Knowledge of New Testament background and canonicity; hermeneutics/textual criticism
  - 2.3. Courses in the main sections of the New Testament: Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation
3. Church History
  - 3.1. Courses which cover the Ancient, Medieval, Reformation and Modern Church, including without limitation, URCNA Federational<sup>1</sup> history.
4. Systematics and Apologetics
  - 4.1. Courses in the 6 loci: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, including theological education.
  - 4.2. Courses in symbolics and the study of the Reformed confessions, with an emphasis<sup>2</sup> on the Three Forms of Unity.
  - 4.3. At least one course of Ethics.<sup>3</sup>
  - 4.4. At least one course of Apologetics.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “denominational” was removed.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase “with an emphasis” replaces the original wording of “including.”

<sup>3</sup> 4.3 and 4.4 replace the original wording: “At least one course in each of Ethics or Apologetics.”

## 5. Practical Theology

- 5.1. Four preaching courses, including a course<sup>4</sup> in catechism preaching.
- 5.2. Courses in teaching, Catechetics, counseling, pastoral care, evangelism, polity, missions.
- 5.3. Church polity/ecclesiology (both theory and application of the URCNA<sup>5</sup> Church Order).
- 5.4. Successful completion of at least ten weeks of pastoral internship<sup>6</sup>, supervised through his home consistory or his theological seminary.

### **Grounds:**

1. Article 3 of our Church Order specifies that when a man aspires to the ministry his Consistory “shall assume supervision of all aspects of his training, including his licensure to exhort, *and assure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education.*” However, the phrase “thoroughly reformed theological education” is not defined. This Overture would correct that oversight.
2. While the URCNA has drawn on a number of seminaries, it is unclear in some instances which seminaries might or might not be acceptable for the training of our men. Even if an unsuitable choice is discovered well before the Candidacy Exam, the potential waste of time and resources could be extensive. Consistories and students need an objective means of evaluating seminaries, which this Overture would offer.
3. The existing Appendices in the URCNA Church Order implicitly assume the content of this or a very similar set of requirements. This Overture would make them explicit.
4. The URCNA does not currently have a means to inform seminaries of our minimum requirements for theological education. This overture provides a necessary link to the seminaries that serve our churches.

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<sup>4</sup> “A course” was added to emphasize the need of our churches to have trained ministers in this area.

<sup>5</sup> “URCNA” was added for clarity.

<sup>6</sup> The word “duration” was removed and the phrase “supervised through his home consistory or his theological seminary” was added.

## **Overture #2**

### **Divide Classis Southern Ontario**

#### **Background**

Thirteen churches of the present Classis Southern Ontario were present at the inaugural synod of the United Reformed Churches, Synod Lynwood 1996. At that synod, these thirteen churches were grouped together and were designated Classis East. The two other classes of United Reformed Churches were simply Classis West (at that time made up of nine congregations all from Western Canada) and Classis Midwest (made up of fourteen churches from the Midwest including Michigan and one church each from New Jersey and Florida).

Synod St. Catharines 1997 approved a realignment of the churches in answer to an overture from Classis Midwest (Overture 74). The overture which was adopted, requested the following:

*That synod realign the classes of the URC, making them smaller in size and more regional in composition.*

To support this request, the following grounds were listed:

- a. *With our continued growth in number of churches, such a division becomes possible.*
- b. *Smaller and regional classes are more economical because travel expense will not be as great.*
- c. *Smaller and regional classes will keep one classis from becoming more powerful. Historically, Reformed churches were partial to this arrangement for this reason.*
- d. *The need of smaller classes is obvious and it would serve the churches well to have these classes established now.*

*(Acts of Synod 1997, Article LXIV.D)*

With the adoption of that overture the United Reformed Churches in North America were at that time apportioned over six classes. These classes varied greatly both in terms of their number of churches and the expansiveness of the geographical territory they included. What had been renamed Classis Southern Ontario at that time probably covered the smallest geographical area but contained the largest number of churches (15). The other classes and their numbers of churches at that time were as follows: Classis Eastern US (4), Classis Michigan (11), Classis Central US (11), Classis Western Canada (11) and Classis Southwest US (9).

Whereas the 1997 overture had asked for classes that were smaller in size, the number of churches in Classis Southern Ontario remained rather large. Both the relative geographic contiguity of the churches as well as the newness of the churches and federation would have been factors at that time combining as reason for keeping these churches together as one classis.

Presently, by the grace of God, Classis Southern Ontario is comprised of some 23 congregations, two of which are unorganized. Since we are no longer a new federation made up of new churches, it is our conviction that for the more effective functioning of classis and for the gospel's advance the churches would be better served and God would receive greater glory if classis Southern Ontario were divided into two smaller units.

## **Overture**

Classis Southern Ontario overtures Synod 2012 of the United Reformed Churches in North America to divide classis Southern Ontario into two, with the new designations Classis Southwestern Ontario and Classis Ontario – East.

### **Classis Southwestern Ontario**

1. Aylmer, Bethel United Reformed Church
  2. Brantford, Living Water Reformed Church
  3. Hamilton, Rehoboth United Reformed Church
  4. Listowel, Immanuel United Reformed Church
  5. London, Cornerstone United Reformed Church
  6. Sheffield, Zion United Reformed Church
  7. Strathroy, Providence United Reformed Church
  8. Woodstock, Bethel United Reformed Church
  9. Wyoming, Covenant Christian Church
- Unorganized Churches:*
10. Scarborough, New Horizon United Reformed Church
  11. Toronto, Hope Centre

### **Classis Ontario – East**

1. Bowmanville, Salem United Reformed Church
2. Brampton, Hope Reformed Church
3. Brockville, Bethel United Reformed Church
4. Charlottetown, United Reformed Church of PEI
5. Dunnville, Grace Reformed Church
6. Jordan, Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church
7. Nobleton, Immanuel Reformed Church
8. Oro-Medonte, Grace United Reformed Church of Simcoe County
9. St. Catharines, Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church
10. Toronto, Covenant Reformed Church
11. Vineland, Adoration United Reformed Church
12. Wellandport, United Reformed Church

### ***Grounds:***

1. Article 26 of the Church Order designates that, “*A classis shall consist of neighboring churches*”. Whereas Classis Southern Ontario (together with Classis Michigan) is somewhat unique among the United Reformed Churches with regard to the relatively high geographical concentration of UR congregations, an even closer linking geographically would appear to be possible, natural and beneficial for the witness and wellbeing of the churches.
2. A primary focus of classis is to serve as a deliberative body. As classis Southern Ontario is arranged presently, classis meeting agendas are unnecessarily long. There is not enough time at any given classis meeting for meaningful participation by every one of the local church’s delegates. Smaller classes would allow for more careful, meaningful deliberation, and also for more frequent and meaningful participation of the elder delegates in addition to the ministerial delegates.

3. There is today a maturity among a solid core of our churches in both of the new proposed classical regions that would allow for such a classical distribution today which may not have been wise earlier in our history.
4. The division of classis would allow for the cultivation and development of those relationships regionally in more intense ways.
5. Mission. The Mission of the Church could be greatly enhanced if the churches in each of the proposed classes would focus together on the pursuit of home missions and church plant opportunities in their respective regions.
6. Ecumenicity. The cause of ecumenicity envisioned from a classis to classis (or classis to Presbytery) level in our Church Order in Article 35 would be enhanced. For instance, with the Canadian Reformed there are already four classes in the same region in Southern Ontario. Instead of ecumenicity being merely synodical and distant, relating locally at a classis to classis level would serve the organic development of such relationships regionally.
7. Much of the federational committee work is assigned on a classis by classis basis (cf. representation on CERCU, CECCA, Synodical Study Committees, etc). Having additional classes with more representatives would keep the work of such committees closer to the churches and the members in the pew.
8. Stewardship. Smaller classes spread over a smaller geographical area would reduce travel time and expenses.

Done in Classis, March 29, 2012

Rev. Al Korvemaker, Clerk of Classis Southern Ontario



## **Overture #3 Regarding Proposed Lord's Supper Forms**

### **1. Background**

Various synods of the URCNA have given provisional approval to liturgical forms to be used in URCNA churches. In our opinion, the two provisional forms can be improved in one significant area. Here's the portion from "Celebration of the Lord's Supper: Form Number 1" which is posted on the URCNA website (noted as being approved 03/15/10):

*In breaking and distributing the bread, the minister shall say:* The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for **a complete remission of all our sins** [these words highlighted in this overture].

*And when he gives the cup:* The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink all of it, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for **a complete remission of all our sins** [these words highlighted in this overture].

Here's the same portion from "Form for the Frequent Celebration of the Lord's Supper" which is posted on the URCNA website (noted as being approved 2/15/07; revised 12/07/09):

Communion: (*The elements are distributed, and the minister may use the formula*)

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for **a complete remission of all our sins** [these words highlighted in this overture].

The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink all of it, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for **a complete remission of all our sins** [these words highlighted in this overture].

### **2. Overture**

Classis Southern Ontario overtures Synod 2012 to change the phrase in both liturgical forms from "a complete remission of all our sins" to "**the complete forgiveness of all our sins.**"

### **3. Grounds**

**3.1. The Greek word in translation.** Matthew 26:28 seems to stand behind this particular phrase found in our liturgical forms for the Lord's Supper. The KJV renders Jesus' words at the institution of the Lord's Supper as "for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Instead of rendering the Greek words as "remission of sins" the ESV, NIV, and many other translations render them as "the forgiveness of sins."

The Greek word translated as “remission” or “forgiveness” is “aphesis” derived from the Greek verb, “aphemi.” According to the standard Greek dictionary, “aphesis” can be rendered “release from captivity,” or “pardon, cancellation of an obligation/punishment” or, later in that dictionary entry, as “forgiveness” when combined with the noun “sins” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, 1957, p. 124).

That entry lists ten other NT texts in which the noun “forgiveness” is connected to the genitive phrase, “of sins” (Mk 1:4; Lk 1:77; Lk 3:3; Lk 24:47; Ac 2:38; Ac 5:31; Ac 10:43; Ac 13:38; Ac 26:18; Col 1:14). Interestingly, the NKJV actually prefers rendering the phrase as “forgiveness of sins” and not “remission of sins” in four of these ten verses (Ac 5:31; Ac 13:38; Ac 26:18; Col 1:14). This shows some inconsistency in the NKJV’s translation of the phrase. Or, putting it more positively, the NKJV allows freedom in translating this phrase as “forgiveness of sins.”

With that freedom in the NKJV and the preference of the ESV and other translations, we believe we should change the phrase in both of our liturgical forms for the Lord’s Supper.

### **3.2. The Canadian Reformed churches.**

The Canadian Reformed churches have long used the wording we are recommending in our overture in their “Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper.” Here is how their form reads: “Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken **for the complete forgiveness of all our sins**” and “Take, drink from it, all of you, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for the **complete forgiveness of all our sins**” (quotes from the 1984 edition of the “Book of Praise, Anglo-Genevan Psalter,” p. 600; also found in their “Book of Praise,” 2010 revision, p. 596).

With this federation in phase 2 ecclesiastical fellowship with the URCNA, we would do well to seriously consider their wording.

### **3.3. Intelligible English language.**

We believe that one of the highest expressions of God’s display of His redemptive work in Jesus is seen (and tasted) in the Lord’s Supper. Why would we use language which seems to obscure the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, telling our members that Jesus’ blood has been shed for the “remission” of their sins? Should we not prefer more intelligible language, declaring the Saviour’s blood for the “forgiveness” of their sins? To speak of “remission” of sins seems to set up an unnecessary linguistic barrier particularly for our younger and newer church members, but probably also for our older church members.

Done in Classis, March 29, 2012

Rev. Al Korvemaker, Clerk of Classis Southern Ontario

## **Overture #4 Hymn Selection**

**Background:** This overture arises in response to the URCNA Acts of Synod 2010, Article 39.3, regarding the Hymn Proposal submitted to the church by the Synodical Songbook Committee.

**Overture:** Classis Southwest US overtures Synod 2012 to make the following suggested changes to the proposed hymn section and communicate its decision to the Psalter Hymnal Committee.

1. **Under Guideline 7's concern to avoid artificiality, we ask that the following Hymns be removed as they strike us as excessively repetitive:**
  - a. #20: *Worthy of Worship*
  - b. #21: *You are Worthy*
  
2. **Under Guideline 2's concern to keep the Book of Psalms foundational, we ask that the following Hymns be removed as they paraphrase Psalms and thus would detract from the use of the Psalms themselves:**
  - a. # 3 *Amid the Thronging Worshipers*
  - b. # 4 *Come, All Who Fear the Lord God*
  - c. # 5 *Come, All You People, Praise Our God*
  - d. # 69 *O God Our Help in Ages Past*
  - e. # 70 *O Worship the King*
  - f. # 71 *The Heavens Declare Your Glory*
  - g. #223 *Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds*
  - h. #228 *Tell You Children*
  - i. #230 *Christ Shall Have Dominion*
  - j. #243 *Christ Shall Have Dominion*
  - k. #252 *The Ends of All the Earth Shall Hear*
  
3. **Under Guideline 5's concern for edifying language and Principle 3's commitment to songs that are aesthetically pleasing, we ask that the following Hymns be removed as they strike us as having poor or rather wooden poetry, which probably will not sing well:**
  - a. # 27 *Kind and Merciful God, We Have Sinned*
  - b. # 38 *Speak, O Lord*
  - c. # 47 *'Twas On That Night When Doomed to Know*
  - d. # 84 *By Grace I'm Saved*
  - e. # 87 *Give Thanks to God the Father*
  - f. # 100 *These are the Facts as We Have Received Them*
  - g. # 104 *A Great and Mighty Wonder*
  - h. # 113 *In the Beginning Was the Word*
  - i. # 146 *Jesus Lives and So Do We*
  - j. # 171 *For Your Gift of God the Spirit*
  - k. # 174 *The Spirit Sent from Heaven Above*
  - l. # 187 *Our Outer Natures Wastes Away*

- m. # 201 *Seek Ye First the Kingdom 2*
  - n. # 225 *O Gracious Lord*
  - o. # 227 *Praise Be the Father*
  - p. # 234 *I Am the Lord Your God*
  - q. # 242 *All Authority and Power*
  - r. # 246 *Give Me the Faith*
  - s. # 247 *How Shall They Hear the Word of God*
  - t. # 250 *O Shine Upon These, Lord*
4. **Under Guideline 6’s concern to avoid secular trends in our society, we ask that the following Hymns be removed, which are rather obscure Christmas carols from the already unduly large Christmas section, as compared to the sections related to the other events of Christ’s life, which perhaps reflects the excessive emphasis on Christmas in our society:**
- a. # 104 *A Great and Mighty Wonder*
  - b. # 106 *Blessed Be the God of Israel*
  - c. # 107 *Come and Stand Amazed, You People*
  - d. # 109 *Comfort, Comfort Now My People*
  - e. # 110 *From East to West*
  - f. # 113 *In The Beginning Was the Word Eternal*
  - g. # 117 *Of the Father’s Love Begotten*
  - h. # 120 *Song of Simeon*
5. **Under Guideline 4’s concern for faithful Scriptural teaching, we ask that the following Hymns be removed, as it seems to us that they have theological problems:**
- a. #8 *Holy God We Praise Thy Name*
    - (verse 4) seems modalist in its contrast between “three we name you” and “though in essence only one”;
  - b. # 39 *Baptized Into Your Name Most Holy*
    - seems perhaps to teach baptismal regeneration
  - c. # 44 *Behold, The Lamb*
    - “we drink of his sacrifice” seems vague relative to Rome’s notion of sacrifice in the mass
  - d. # 46 *Gift of Finest Wheat*
    - v. 3 has a typo (“to” for “the”)
    - v. 4 speaks of “mystery” unnecessarily
  - e. # 49 *Apostles’ Creed*
    - 1 and 3, “Three in One” seems to be filler which is unclearly related to the distinct persons of the Trinity
  - f. # 90 *I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Grace*
    - is quasi-Arminian because we do know why God made his grace known to us, namely his electing love
  - g. # 133 *As Moses Raised the Serpent*
    - 3 may seem to teach a universal atonement.

6. **Under Guideline 2's concern to keep the Book of Psalms foundational, we ask that the following Hymns be removed as they are not very Christocentric and redundant of themes fully covered in the Psalms:**
- a. # 1 *All Creatures of Our God and King*
  - b. # 9 *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*
  - c. # 13 *Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven*
  - d. # 14 *Praise the Lord With the Sound of Trumpet*
  - e. # 15 *Praise to the Lord the Almighty*
  - f. # 16 *Sanctus*
  - g. # 17 *Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above*
  - h. # 19 *We Praise You, O God*
  - i. # 22 *Be Just in Judgment*
  - j. # 31 *As Saints of Old*
  - k. # 32 *Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver*
  - l. # 33 *We Give You But Your Own*
  - m. # 57 *All Things Bright and Beautiful*
  - n. # 58 *Do You Not Know? Have You Not Heard?*
  - o. # 65 *Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise*
  - p. # 66 *In the Beginning*
  - q. # 67 *Lord, I have Heard the Tidings*
  - r. # 72 *We Sing the Mighty Power of God*
  - s. # 73 *For the Beauty of the Earth*
  - t. # 78 *We Plow the Fields*
  - u. # 181 *When All Your Mercies, O My God*
  - v. # 205 *Be Thou My Vision*

**General Grounds:**

- 1) We are concerned that the committee may have selected too many Hymns; proposing about 280 Hymns in comparison to about 180 hymns in the blue Psalter Hymnal currently in use.
- 2) We understand the appeal of having a wide variety of Hymns to choose from and utilize under the oversight of local consistories, but we think for at least two reasons the number of hymns might well be reduced.
  - a. First, our Church Order calls for the psalms to have principal place in public worship; therefore, we suggest limiting hymns to matters not explicitly covered in the psalms.
  - b. Second, book size may well require the elimination of some songs; preferably hymns.

Adopted by Classis Southwest US, January 17, 2012

Rev. Stephen Donovan, Clerk



## **Overture #5 Hymn Changes**

### **Overture**

Classis Southwest US overtures Synod 2012 to approve the following changes to the proposed hymn section and communicate its decision to the Psalter Hymnal Committee.

**1. That Hymn 14, “Praise the Lord With the Sound of Trumpet,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

- 1.1. This hymn contradicts “Guidelines for Selecting Songs” (GSS) #3, “When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.” It does this by starting each stanza with the language of Psalm 150:3–5 and then going on to add simplistic language that is not of the same quality or gravity as the Psalm.
- 1.2. This hymn contradicts GSS #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.” It does this by artificially adding to a hymn some of the words of Psalm 150 and adding to this venerable Psalm of praise and exultation the sentimental images of “a weekday morning,” “a Sunday noon,” “by the light of sun or moon,” “the peace and quiet,” and “work and play.”

**2. That stanzas 5 and 6 of Hymn 39, “Baptized Into Your Name Most Holy,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

- 2.1. Stanza 5 contradicts GSS principle #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” and GSS principle #4, “...the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” As a Reformed church we believe baptism is the promise of God and not our offering and vow to God (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 66, 69; Belgic Confession, art. 33, 34).
- 2.2. Stanza 6 contradicts GSS principle #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” and principle #4, “...the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” In speaking of being “faithful to Your altar,” this aspect of this Lutheran hymn is unacceptable to a Reformed church.

**3. That Hymn 43, “According to Thy Gracious Word,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

- 3.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #4, “...the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” This entire song is about our personal remembrance (e.g., “I will remember Thee” is repeated five times) while as a Reformed church we believe the Lord’s Supper is primarily God’s promise to us, and only our remembrance secondarily (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 66, 75, 76; Belgic Confession, art. 33, 35).
- 3.2. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from...sentimentality, and individualism.” We were not at Gethsemane nor at Calvary (stanzas 3 and 4), which means our only “remembrance” of Jesus is through faith, not individual sentiment.

**4. That stanza 4 of Hymn 44, “Behold the Lamb,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

- 4.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” and principle #4, “...the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” Because of this song’s association with the Mass (cf. copyright info that this is a Roman Catholic hymn) it is unacceptable to a Reformed church.
- 4.2. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from...sentimentality, and individualism” with its language that the Lord “comes in our hearts to dwell.”

**5. That “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted” be added to the *Psalter Hymnal* under the section “Jesus Christ: Atonement.”**

***Grounds:***

- 5.1. This hymn is an example of a song that exemplifies GSS principles #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions,” #5, “The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of Christ,” and #6, “The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.”

**6. That Hymn 57, “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

- 6.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from...sentimentality, and individualism,” with its language of little flowers, little birds, tiny wings, and the sunset that brightens up the sky.

**7. That Hymn 66, “In the Beginning,” be removed.**

**Grounds:**

- 7.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #3, “When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.” It both changes the content and form of Genesis 1.
- 7.2. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #8, “The music of the song should suit the text,” by not fitting the gravity of the creation account.

**8. That Hymn 73, “For the Beauty of the Earth,” be removed.**

**Grounds:**

- 8.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content...the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality,” for example, with the language of “for the mystic harmony.”

**9. That Hymn 74, “God of Our Fathers,” be removed.**

**Grounds:**

- 9.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” It does this by violating the New Testament teaching of the unity of the people of God (e.g., Eph. 2:11–22) and the reality that the church is an international body “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). Because of this biblical reality, every believer from every culture should be able to join us in singing our songs; this hymn, though, is a nationalistic hymn, written to celebrate the centennial of the Declaration of Independence and later the U.S. Constitution (cf. *Psalter Hymnal Handbook* [CRC Publications, 1998], 774).

**10. That Hymn 75, “Hours and Days and Years and Ages,” be removed.**

**Grounds:**

- 10.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #1, “The songs of the Church...are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” This song is not a song about the Triune God at all, but a song about times and seasons.

**11. That “What Child is This” be added to the *Psalter Hymnal* under the section “Jesus Christ: Birth” (cf. *Trinity Hymnal* 213).**

**Grounds:**

- 11.1. This hymn is an example of a song that exemplifies GSS principles #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions,” #5, “The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of

Christ,” and #6, “The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.”

**12. That Hymn 125, “My Redeemer and My Lord,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

12.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions,” as the words blur the distinction between our once for all justification in Christ and the Final Judgment.

**13. That Hymn 126, “My Song is Love Unknown,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

13.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” The words ask why “they” crucified Jesus, without also identifying and implicating our own sins as equally culpable reasons for Christ’s death on His cross.

**14. That Hymn 135, “Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder,” be included with the proposed tune as well as with the alternative tune “All Saints” (cf. Trinity Hymnal 172).**

**15. That Hymn 137, “No Weight of Gold of Silver can Measure Human Worth,” be removed.**

***Grounds:***

15.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions.” The words are unclear and create mental images that include crass comparisons of our worth with that of Christ's death, or unbiblical notions that our inherent worthiness created the necessity of His death. Our inherent unworthiness is improperly overshadowed in this song.

**16. That Hymn 185, “Jesus Loves Me This I Know,” be moved into a newly created “Family Worship” section of the *Psalter Hymnal* with songs that are appropriate for that setting.**

***Grounds:***

16.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.” This hymn can easily do this.

16.2. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #9, “The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.” This song is not expressive of the Reformed tradition, despite its popularity.

**17. That Hymn 188, “All For Jesus,” be removed.**

**Grounds:**

17.1. This hymn contradicts GSS principle #7, “In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from...individualism,” as the entire song is about “my” consecration.

**18. That Hymn 223, “Let the Children Hear The Mighty Deeds,” be placed into the Psalm section of the *Psalter Hymnal*.**

**Grounds:**

18.1. This is a setting of Psalm 78:3–8.

**19. That “Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God” be added to the Psalm section of the *Psalter Hymnal*.**

**Grounds:**

19.1. This is a meaningful and contemporary setting of Psalm 51:10–12.

19.2. This is an example of a song that exemplifies GSS principles #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” #2, “The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church’s songs,” #3, “When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text,” #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions, #5, “The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of Christ,” and #8, “The music of the song should suit the text.”

**20. That “He Has Shown Thee” (© 1978, 1980 *Maranatha! Praise 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.*, #207) be added to the *Psalter Hymnal* under the section “The Law.”**

**Grounds:**

20.1. This is a meaningful and contemporary setting of Micah 6:8.

20.2. This is an example of a song that exemplifies GSS principles #1, “The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical,” #2, “The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church’s songs,” #3, “When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text,” #4, “the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture as summarized by our Reformed confessions, #5, “The songs of the Church must be intelligible and edifying to the body of Christ,” and #8, “The music of the song should suit the text.”

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Stephen Donovan, Clerk  
Classis Southwest US



## **Overture #6 Musical Suggestions**

### **Overture:**

Classis Southwest US overtures Synod 2012 to refer these suggestions for improvement to the Psalter Hymnal Committee.

### ***Grounds:***

- 1) URCNA Synod London (2010) established this procedure for receiving suggestions for improving the hymnal; Christ Reformed Church is following the mandate of the Synod in presenting this overture.
- 2) The following suggestions are in accordance with the synodically approved “principles and guidelines” to which the Psalter Hymnal committee is bound and, in fact, enables the committee to better accomplish its mandate.

### **Note of information:**

The consistory of Christ Reformed Church has enlisted the expertise of one of its members who is qualified to make suggestions for improvement to the hymnal. Mrs. Pamela Compton is a professional church musician, has an M.M. in sacred music from the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California, and is nearing completion of a doctoral degree in choral music at the same institution.

The suggestions included in this overture are primarily of a musical nature, with the intent to improve the compositional quality of the hymn tunes in order that the URCNA might publish a songbook that exhibits careful attention to musical detail and displays musical excellence.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Stephen Donovan, Clerk  
Classis Southwest US

### **Notational Considerations:**

- System Breaks should (ideally) be aligned with the musical/textual phrasing, allowing measures to be divided between two systems, as necessary.
- Beaming of eighth notes is inconsistent throughout. Generally sets of 2 are easier to read than groups of 4, though there are exceptions to this depending on the meter signature and text.
- The number of verses contained within staves is inconsistent throughout. 4 contained + block text, or 5 contained + block text?
- Indication of the need for unison singing is often missing. (#11 and #46, for example)
- Stem Direction in the bass clef is inconsistent throughout. (The default setting doesn't seem to be correct.) Whenever a bass note and tenor note of the same duration sound simultaneously, both stems should be down.

### **Musical Considerations:**

- **Vocal Range:** The general rule of thumb is that Bb to Eb is a comfortable vocal range for untrained voices (i.e., most folks in our congregations). Exceptions to this “rule” are often made when the tessitura of a melody lies particularly high or low; in these cases, a low A or high E is considered acceptable. Lowering hymns, simply to make the melody lower, often has a detrimental effect on the non-melodic lines: alto, tenor, and bass parts start to sink out of range. Lowering the melody tends to hinder tenors who are singing melody, as their range bottoms out around low C. Lowering the melody also may hinder young children's voices, which tend to have a very limited (yet high) vocal range.

Please note: I've asked another member of our congregation, Ann Johnson, to speak specifically to this issue. Ann's area of expertise is in voice pedagogy, and her degrees are in vocal performance. Please see Ann's comments, attached to the end of this document.

- **Key:** There is much to consider when it comes to key selection for hymnody. All keys are not created equal, in terms of their affect. Some are bright, some are dark, some are warm, some are hollow, etc.... Keys should be chosen based on their suitability to the text (so that the words are best represented and communicated) and the music (so that the melody and harmonies are within appropriate vocal range). While avoiding certain keys due to their difficulty is very practical (and sometimes necessary!), it is certainly not always the best choice.

### **Literary/Grammatical Considerations:**

- Capitalization of “small” words is inconsistent. Examples: with, unto, without, only, is, it, are
- Punctuation in Table of Contents is sometimes missing.
- Some index titles do not match hymn titles.
- Abbreviation of words is inconsistent. Example: heaven/heav'n
- Attributions are incomplete: missing dates, missing references, missing “alt.,” etc....

- Thee/Thou vs. You/Your: My opinion is that each hymn text should be evaluated individually to decide whether “Thee/Thou” should remain or “You/Your” should replace it. In some cases a switch to “You/Your” stilted the poetry; in other cases, a change to “You/Your” fosters fluidity. In cases where I disagree with the switch to “You/Your”, I’ve noted it under the hymn’s title (see subsequent list).

**Table of Contents Considerations:**

- The “Confession & Forgiveness” section is particularly weak musically. I’m wondering if we even need such a section, given that the Psalms contain an enormous amount of confession and forgiveness language?
- The “Father & Creation” section seems to be a mix of topics. For example, *Father, Long Before Creation* has nothing to do with creation (even though the word is in the title!). Could Father be a separate section (such as “God the Father”) and Creation be its own section?
- Is it feasible to have a Table of Contents with headings that reflect particular doctrines? For example, “General Revelation”, “Special Revelation”, “Justification”, “Preservation”, “Election”, “Covenant”, “Sovereignty”, “Gospel”, etc...? These seem more objective and focused, and less subjective and vague (in contrast with “Spiritual Growth”, for example).
- Would it be helpful to lay out the Psalter Hymnal as the Bible is laid out? Creation hymns first, second coming hymns last, etc.... This would mean Psalms are in the middle! Just an idea....

**Content Considerations (Additions):**

- Please consider adding more hymns to the Lord’s Supper section. With the trend toward more frequent celebration of the sacrament (monthly or weekly, rather than quarterly) churches will likely be in need of such hymnody. A few possible additions are:

*Taste and See* (Gray PH #301, verses 1 & 2 only)

*In the Quiet Consecration* (Gray PH #302)

*Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness* (Red Trinity or Gray PH; excellent for Maundy Thursday also)

*Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands* (Red Trinity #427; also works well set to ROCKINGHAM)

- Please consider adding more of Boice/Jones’ *Hymns for a Modern Reformation*. They are excellent hymns – texts so closely tied to Scripture, and music so excellently composed. Though they are currently unfamiliar to most of our churches, they are definitely worth learning. I recommend adding the following:

*Give Praise to God*

*Alive in Christ*

*Heaven’s Gift*

*Christ Alone*

- Please consider using more of Luther’s hymns.
- Other Recommended Additions (from within our hymnals):

*My Faith Looks Up to Thee* (Gray PH #262)  
*God, the Father of Your People* (Gray PH #322)  
*Savior of the Nations, Come* (Gray PH #336)  
*Christ, the Life of All the Living* (Gray PH #371)  
*Lift High the Cross* (Gray PH #373)  
*What God Ordains Is Always Right* (Gray PH #451)  
*Jesus, Lover of My Soul* (Gray PH #578)  
*The God of Abraham Praise* (Gray PH #621)  
*God, in the Gospel of His Son* (Red Trinity #141)  
*The Law of God Is Good and Wise* (Red Trinity #150)  
*Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted* (Red Trinity #257)  
*At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing* (Red Trinity #420)  
*How Sweet and Awesome Is the Place* (Red Trinity #469)  
*Jesus Sinners Doth Receive* (Red Trinity #473)  
*Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace* (Red Trinity #519) (but alter it to *O Fount of Never-Ceasing Grace* so that the emphasis is on the right syllable!)

- Other Recommendations (from outside our hymnals):

*Ride On, Ride On in Majesty* (THE KING'S MAJESTY\*)  
*Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending* (HELMSLEY\*)  
*We Have a Gospel to Proclaim* (GERMANY\*)

\*I have digitalized versions of these, if you should want them.

- *Lutheran Worship* (1982) has many gems. I would urge you to peruse this hymnal. The texts are substantial and the music is outstanding (particularly the rich harmonies).

#### **Content Considerations: (Alterations):**

- Hymns with great potential, but need significant musical revision:

#25 *Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight*  
 #127 *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*  
 #172 *The Gift of the Holy Spirit*

#### **Content Considerations (Deletions):**

- Some selections in the hymn section seem like they'd be a better fit in the Psalm section (#3, #4, #5, #69, #70, #71, #223, #230/#252, #243).
- The Christmas section could perhaps use some revision. This section is quite lengthy; could some of the lesser known (and less likely to be sung) hymns be omitted (#110, #113, #121)? For clarity, should Advent and Christmas be distinguished? Please consider adding Luther's *Savior of the Nations, Come*.
- *Musically* weakest hymns:
  - #13 *Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet*
  - #20 *Worthy of Worship*
  - #21 *You Are Worthy*
  - #26 *Just As I Am, Without One Plea*

- #28 *Lord, Like the Publican I Stand*
- #90 *I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace*
- #135 *Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder*
- #147 *Low in the Grave He Lay*
- #170 *Eternal Spirit, God of Truth*
- #175 *All the Way My Savior Leads Me*
- #191 *Have Thine Own Way, Lord*
- #193 *Jesus Calls Us; O'er the Tumult*
- #208 *O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts*
- #222 *Whatsoever You Do to the Least*
- #275 *Romans Doxology*

- Keith Getty and Stuart Townend's music might be a bit over-represented in this hymnal proposal.

### **Textual Considerations:**

- Singing Scripture: I understand the desire to sing the words of scripture, and I wholeheartedly agree. What I'm wondering about and struggling with is what seems to be the inclusion of scripture songs, just for the sake of including scripture songs, without (perhaps) regard for their feasibility and usability. For example, #204, *The Fruit of the Spirit*...this is a direct quote of scripture, but will this hymn actually be sung in our churches? If not, is it a wise use of hymnal space, even if it is indeed scripture? I can see more of a need for (and use of) a hymn such as *My Faith Looks Up to Thee*, even though it is not a direct quote from scripture.

### **Requests:**

Thorough, detailed, easy-to-read subject index

1. All Creatures of Our God and King
  - 1<sup>st</sup> chord: A stem direction should be up
  - missing ties
  - m. 6 – fermata needed?
2. All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
  - m. 2, beat 3: half rest behind the A note
  - m. 9: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
  - m. 11, beat 4: missing A note
3. Amid the Thronging Worshipers
  - stem direction is inconsistent throughout
  - m. 4, beat 1: missing melody
  - m. 5, beat 2: missing A note
  - m. 14, beat 3: SA stem direction should be upward
4. Come, All Who Fear the Lord God
5. Come, All You People, Praise Our God

6. Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
7. God Himself Is With Us
  - add A passing tones
  - m. 19, beat 3: wrong A note
  - m. 20: missing T tie
8. Holy God, We Praise Your Name
  - vs. 4: capital “T” on “Three” to match capital “O” on “One”
9. Let All Things Now Living
  - I recommend the harmonization from the Gray PH (#453)
10. Let Us of Christ Our Lord and Savior Sing
  - recommended key: G (for brightness)
  - v. 3, m. 4: missing comma after “frame”
11. O Breath of God
  - unison
  - recommended key: Eb (for warmth)
12. O Savior, Precious Savior
  - m. 14, beat 3: incorrect TB notes (should be C# and E)
13. Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
  - m. 6, beat 1: T note should be G
  - m. 10, beats 1 and 2: incorrect A notes
  - use the harmony found in both the Gray PH and the Red Trinity
  - missing punctuation in attribution
14. Praise the Lord With the Sound of Trumpet
15. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
  - m. 2: no need for natural sign
  - m. 8: no need for natural sign
16. Sanctus
17. Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
  - v. 1, m. 6: missing comma after “love”
18. We Come, O Christ, To You
  - lowercase “t” on “to” in title?

19. We Praise You, O God

20. Worthy of Worship

- overly repetitive

21. You Are Worthy

- overly repetitive

22. Be Just in Judgment

23. Love God with All Your Soul and Strength

24. The Ten Commandments

- final chord: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches

25. Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight

- 1<sup>st</sup> complete measure, the & of beat 2: missing T note
- m. 3, beats 1 and 2: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 7, beats 1 and 2: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 7, the & of beat 1: missing T note
- m. 8, the & of beat 3, to m. 9, beat 1: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 10: incorrect voice leading in T, voice-crossing in TB
- m. 11, beat 3, to m. 12, beat 1: parallel 5<sup>th</sup>s in TB
- m. 12, the & of beat 1, A voice: need accidental clarification
- m. 14, beat 1: parallel 5<sup>th</sup>s in TB voice
- m. 18, beats 2 and 3, all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 22, beats 2 and 3, all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 25: final ending is not properly indicated; see hymn 22 as an example.

26. Just as I am, Without One Plea

- m. 4, beat 4: T stem direction should be down
- m. 9 should contain 5 beats, not 6

27. Kind and Merciful God, We Have Sinned

28. Lord, Like the Publican I Stand

29. No, Not Despairingly

- m. 2, beat 3, to m. 3, beat 1: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 8: missing 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
- m. 11, beats 2 and 3: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 12, beat 3, to m. 13, beat 1: all voices move in parallel motion

30. Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

31. As Saints of Old

- m. 7, beat 3: incorrect TB notes
- m. 8, beat 1: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
- final chord: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches

32. Lord, You Love the Cheerful Giver

- Recommended key: Bb
- m. 4, beats 2 and 3: all voices move in parallel motion

33. We Give You But Your Own

- m. 2, beat 4: B note should be F natural

34. Almighty God, Your Word is Cast

35. Blessed Jesus, At Your Word

36. Master, Speak! Thy Servant Heareth

- m. 11, vs. 4: “every” = “ev-ery”

37. O Word of God Incarnate

- m. 4, beat 4: missing T note (stem)
- m. 8, beat 4: missing T note (stem)

38. Speak, O Lord

39. Baptized Into Your Name Most Holy

- m. 18, beat 3: T note should be Bb
- m. 22, beat 1: T note should be a half note
- Last chord: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup>

40. O God Great Father, Lord and King

- m. 6, beats 1 and 2: B notes need to be an octave higher for better voice leading

41. Our Children, Lord, in Faith and Prayer

- would highly recommend the Gray PH version (#270): better part-writing, more interesting harmonies, more accurate meter signature
- vs. 1: changing “Thee” to “You” doesn’t work in this case; it affects the rhyme scheme

42. This is the Promise of the Lord

43. According to Your Gracious Word

44. Behold, The Lamb

- recommended key: D

45. Come Take By Faith the Body
  - would recommend the version in the Gray PH (#74): no voice crossing, great passing tones, more interesting harmonies
46. Gift of Finest Wheat
  - m. 8: should be 2 beats instead of 3
47. 'Twas on that Night When Doomed to Know
  - m. 15, beat 1: make dotted rhythm even eighths
48. Until He Comes
  - m. 7, beat 3: missing A note
49. Apostles' Creed
  - m. 4, beat 1: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
  - m. 8, beat 1: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
  - m. 16, beat 1: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
50. Apostles' Creed 2
  - eliminate all bar lines
51. I Have No Other Comfort
  - recommended key: C
52. All Glory Be to You, Most High
  - m. 6, beat 1: incorrect chord
53. Come, Thou Almighty King
  - would highly recommend the harmony in the Gray PH (#246)
54. Glory Be To God the Father
  - m. 7, beat 1: missing T note
  - m. 8, beat 1: half rest hiding behind A note
  - spelling of "halleluia"
  - are there verses missing? 3 of the 4 are about Christ – not really a Trinitarian hymn.
55. Holy, Holy, Holy
  - missing ties (broken ties preferred)
  - m. 15, the & of beat 4: missing A note
  - m. 16: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
56. We Praise You, God the Father

57. All Things Bright and Beautiful
- inconsistent stem direction
  - recommended harmony: one that combines the best of the Presbyterian Hymnal, the Gray PH, and the Red Trinity
58. Do You Not Know? Have You Not Heard?
- not sure if barlines are helpful
59. Father, Long Before Creation
- m. 6, beat 3: half note hiding behind A note
  - m. 13: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
60. Give to Our God Immortal Praise
- m. 2, beat 2: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
  - recommended harmony: a combination of the Gray PH (#191) and URCNA Hymnal.
61. God Moves in a Mysterious Way
- m. 5, beat 4: restructure the chord to avoid two 7<sup>th</sup>s; give A an E instead of C#. See Gray PH #434 for better part-writing of m. 5, beat 4, and m. 6, beats 1 and 2.
62. Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- m. 18, beat 2: A note should be D
  - m. 32: T note should be F#
63. How Great Is the Love of the Father
64. How Great Thou Art
- Performance Practice would call for dotted rhythms on refrain
65. Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
- m. 1, beat 1: A note should be Middle C
  - vs. 3, m. 6, beat 2: capital Y on “you”
66. In the Beginning
- m.7, beat 1: SA stem direction
  - vs. 5, line 3: incorrect punctuation
67. Lord, I Have Heard the Tidings
- attribution should include scripture reference (Habakkuk 3)
68. My God, How Wonderful You Are
- m. 8: T note should be G

69. O God, Our Help in Ages Past

70. O Worship the King

71. The Heavens Declare Your Glory

- recommended key: C (for brightness)
- m. 2: no need for tie in T voice
- m. 4, beats 1, 2, and 3: incorrect notation in A; should be dotted half note
- m. 16: missing A note (likely a stem)

72. We Sing the Mighty Power of God

73. For the Beauty of the Earth

- inconsistent use of You/Your and Thee/Thou: vs. 5 = Yourself; refrain = Thee

74. God of Our Fathers

- vs. 3, m. 6: incorrect text underlay

75. Hours and Days and Years and Ages

76. Now Thank We All Our God

- m. 1, beat 4: B note should be a quarter note
- m. 3, beat 3: B note should be a quarter note
- m. 7, beat 2: A notes should be Eb and D (eighth notes)

77. Sing to the Lord of Harvest

78. We Plow the Fields

- a low G in the melody is unacceptable
- m. 6, beats 1 and 2: missing ties
- m. 15, the & of beat 2: SA notes should be A

79. Adam

80. All Praise to Christ

- attributions are incomplete; should indicate that it's based on Revelation 1:5-7

81. Amazing Grace

- m. 8: consider passing tones (see gray PH #462 as an example)

82. And Can It Be

- m. 9, beat 3: half rest hiding behind S note

83. Beautiful Savior

- m. 8, consider part-writing from the Gray PH (#461)

84. By Grace I'm Saved

- I don't think this is O DASS ICH TAUSEND, as indicated in the attributions
- But please do consider using O DASS ICH TAUSEND! (See Red Trinity #456)

85. Christ Whose Glory Fills the Skies

86. Come to the Waters

- attributions are incomplete; should indicate that it's based on Revelation 22

87. Give Thanks to God the Father

- m. 4, beat 4 through m. 6, beat 4: TB stems should be connected
- m. 16, beat 1: missing A note

88. How Vast the Benefits Divine

89. I Greet My Sure Redeemer

- please consider the Red Trinity version (#168): same melody, easier rhythm
- The 1982 Luther Book of Worship has a fantastic harmonization of this tune (#313).

90. I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace

91. I Sought the Lord, and Afterward I Knew

- to maintain the integrity of FINLANDIA, there should not be a bass plunk on beat 1 of mm. 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21.
- m. 1, beat 2: missing B note
- m. 7, beat 3: incorrect T note
- m. 13, beat 4: missing A note
- m. 23, beat 4: missing A note
- Why no meter signature?
- recommended harmony: combination of Blue PH, Red Trinity, and Gray PH

92. I Will Sing of My Redeemer

- m. 8: missing A note (stem)
- m. 13, beat 2: missing T note (stem)
- m. 17: missing T notes (stems)
- m. 19: missing T notes (stems)
- m. 25, beat 1: B note should be A (same as T), not C
- m. 26, beats 1 and 2: B note should be dotted rhythm
- m. 32: missing A note (stem)

93. In Christ Alone
- recommended key: Eb
94. Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness
- please consider retaining “Thy” for this classic hymn text
  - Part-writing/Voice-leading could be improved on a couple of chords
95. My Lord, I Did Not Choose You
96. Not What My Hands Have Done
97. O Christ, Our Hope, Our Heats Desire
- m. 15, beat 1: missing A note
  - m. 1, m. 5, m. 6: Gray PH (#485) has better part-writing/voice-leading
98. Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
- m. 5, the & of beat 1: missing T note (should be eighth note G )
99. Salvation Unto Us Has Come
- see Lutheran hymnal #462; Red Trinity #321
100. These Are the Facts As We Have Received Them
- m. 2, beat 3: missing ST ties
  - m. 4, beat 2: B notes should be eighth note Bbs
  - m. 6, beat 3: missing SAT ties
  - m. 8, beat 1: missing A tie
101. To God Be the Glory
- m. 1, the & of beat 3: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 2, beats 1 and 2: A notes should be B
  - m. 9, the & of beat 3: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 25, beat 2: missing A note
  - m. 25, the & of beat 3: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 32: B note should be G in lower octave
102. When Peace Like a River
- m. 2, beat 1: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 9, beat 3: missing A note (stem)
  - m. 11, beat 4: missing A note (stem)
  - m. 13, beat 1: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 18, beat 3 through m. 21: SA stems should be connected

103. Your Works, Not Mine, O Christ
- vs. 4 has lost its rhyme scheme because of the “Thee” to “You” change
  - please consider retaining the “Thy/Thee” language for this hymn
  - m. 4, beat 1: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord (should be a B in the A voice)
104. A Great and Mighty Wonder
- m. 9, beat 2: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 9, beat 4: missing T note (stem)
  - m. 10, beat 1: missing A note (stem)
  - m. 11, beat 4: B note should be an octave higher
105. Angels We Have Heard on high
- please consider retaining the classic text of this carol
  - m. 9, beat 1: TB stems should be connected
  - m. 15, beat 1: TB stems should be connected
  - m. 20: B note should be a whole note
106. Blessed Be the God of Israel
- every 3-note chord is missing a stem
107. Come and Stand Amazed
- m. 3, beat 3: T note should be a quarter note
  - m. 13, beat 1: B note is incorrect (should be an A)
108. Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
109. Comfort, Comfort Now My People
- please use the original Genevan tune for this hymn; the  $\frac{3}{4}$  time signature destroys the syllabic stress (peoPLE, instead of PEoPle; cryING, instead of CRYing; coVER, instead of COVer, etc....), and turns the final phrase into an awkward and cumbersome ending.
  - the attribution is incorrect; should be GENEVA 42
  - m. 27, beat 1: inadvertent rest below T note
  - m. 27, vs. 3: “token” is missing a hyphen
  - mm. 29-31: incorrect TB notes; see Gray PH #194 for correct notes
110. From East to West
- m. 7, beat 1: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
  - m. 7, beat 3: missing TB notes
111. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- m. 4, 16, and 20: lower B octaves are unnecessary
  - m. 7, the & of beat 4: incorrect T note
  - slight preference for the harmony in the Gray PH

112. How Bright Appears the Morning Star
- many missing ties
  - m. 17, beat 4: missing B note (should be a quarter note A)
  - m. 18, beat 1: missing B note (should be a half note B)
  - m. 20, beat 2: A note should be a quarter note C# (eliminate passing tone B)
113. In the Beginning Was the Word
- m. 1, beat 1: T note should be F
  - m. 13, beat 1: B note should be a quarter note
  - m. 13, beat 2: B note should be D
114. Joy to the World
- m. 6: missing T notes (stems)
  - mm. 11 and 17: incorrect beaming
115. O Come, All Ye Faithful
- m. 6, beats 1 and 2: missing ties
  - m. 7, beats 1, 2, and 3: missing ties
  - mm. 9-10: bring B notes up an octave
116. O Come, O Come, Immanuel
- vs. 4: “heavenward” should be two syllables, not three (heaven-ward or heav’n-ward, but not heav-en-ward)
  - consider Presbyterian Hymnal #9, to more authentically represent this as a chant than a hymn
  - I have an excellent digitized version of this, if you’re interested
  - This might be an example of when it’s advisable to retain “Thee/Thou”. After all, it is an ancient text in an ancient form (chant).
117. Of the Father’s Love Begotten
- recommended key: Eb (for warmth)
  - multiple beaming problems
  - multiple missing ties
  - multiple unconnected stems
  - m. 5, last beat: A note should be C#
118. Once in Royal David’s City
- consider alt. harm. in Presbyterian Hymnal
119. Song of Mary
120. Song of Simeon
- m. 14: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
121. The People Who in Darkness Walked

122. While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks
- m. 2, beat 2: missing A note (stem)
  - arranger: Lowell Mason
123. All Glory, Laud and Honor
- m. 10, beat 1 and 2: dotted ties are needed because of text
124. Hosanna, Loud Hosanna
- m. 5, beat 1: A note should be Ab
  - m. 10, beats 1 though 3: incorrect A rhythm
  - m. 10, beat 4: A notes should be eighth notes C and Db
  - m. 11, beat 1: A note should be Eb
  - m. 16, B note should be low Ab
125. My Dear Redeemer and My Lord
126. My Song is Love Unknown
- recommended tunes: EASTVIEW or MARLEE
127. O Love How Deep, How Broad
- this is an excellent tune, but I would recommend re-harmonizing it
  - the tune inclines itself toward unison melody, with organ accompaniment; not SATB part-writing
  - if it remains “as is”, the following corrections need to be made:
  - pick-up m., beat 3: missing ST ties
  - pick-up m.: the & of beat 3: missing A note
  - pick-up m., beat 4: incorrect doubling of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
  - m. 1, beat 3: missing S tie
  - m. 1, beat 4: tie S notes; make ATB quarter notes
  - m. 1, beat 4 to m. 2, beat 1: B leap of a m 7<sup>th</sup> is not recommended
  - m. 3, beat 3: missing S tie
  - m. 3, beat 4: tie S note; make TB quarter notes
  - m. 4, beat 3: missing ST ties
  - m. 4, the & of beat 3: missing A note
  - m. 4, beat 4: B Bb should be an eighth note
  - m. 5, beat 3: missing S tie
  - m. 5, beat 4: tie S note; make ATB quarter notes
  - m.. 6, beat 1: missing T note
  - m. 7, beat 3: missing S tie
  - m. 7, beat 4: tie S note; make TB quarter notes
  - m. 9, beat 3: missing S tie
  - m. 9, beat 4: missing STB ties
  - m. 9, beats 3 and 4, vs. 2: text underlay is incorrect

- m. 11, beat 1: incorrect doubling of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
- m. 11, beat 3: missing 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord (is this intentional?)
- m. 11, beat 3: missing S tie
- m. 11, beat 4: missing SATB ties
- m. 12, beat 4: Bb against B natural (is this intentional?)
- m. 13, beat 3: missing SA ties
- m. 13, beat 4: missing ties in SA; make TB quarter notes
- m. 15, beat 3: missing S tie
- m. 15, beat 4: missing tie in S; make TB quarter notes

128. Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

129. Who Is He Born in a Stall?

130. Your hands, O Lord, in Days of Old

131. Ah, Dearest Jesus

- m. 5, beat 3: missing T note (stem)

132. Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

- recommended harmony: a combination of the Red Trinity and URCNA hymnals
- add extension bars (with possible passing tones) after m. 7 and m. 14

133. As Moses Raised the Serpent Up

- m. 5, the & of beat 1: missing T note (stem)

134. How Deep the Father's Love for Us

- final chord: duration is not clear

135. Let Us Love and Sing and Wonder

- recommended tune: ALL SAINTS OLD (see Red Trinity #172)
- pick-up bar: inconsistent stems
- pick-up beat to m. 1, beat 1: voice crossing
- m. 6, beat 1: voice crossing

136. Man of Sorrows – What a Name

- I would propose a slightly modified harmony (combining the best of this and Red Trinity #246)
- vs. 1: missing punctuation after “sorrows”
- vs. 1: incorrect punctuation after “came”
- vs. 3: missing punctuation after “Guilty”

137. No Weight of Gold or Silver

- recommended tunes: LLANGLOFFAN, AURELIA,
- m. 7, beat 3: missing T note (stem)

- m. 13, beat 6: missing A note (stem)
- m. 15, beat 4: A note should be a quarter note
- m. 15, beat 6: missing A note (should be C#)

138. O Perfect Life of Love

139. O Sacred Head Now Wounded

- m. 12, missing T note (stem)

140. Oh To See the Dawn

141. When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

- m. 2, beat 3: missing A note (stem)
- m. 10, beat 3: missing A note (stem)
- m. 16: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
- would recommend setting this text to ROCKINGHAM on the opposite facing page

142. Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord

- m. 16: TB stems should be connected

143. Alleluia! Alleluia!

- m. 13, beats 1 and 2: incorrect harmony

144. Christ, the Lord, Is Risen Today

- please consider the original text for this classic hymn
- m. 2, beats 3 and 4: missing SA ties
- m. 6, beats 3 and 4: missing SA ties
- m. 14, beats 3 and 4: missing SA ties
- mm. 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16: missing multiple ties in every voice
- vs. 5: “heaven” should be one syllable
- vs. 5: “given” should be one syllable
- vs. 5, system 3: text underlay is askew
- vs. 5: “every” should be “ev-ery”

145. Come You Faithful, Raise the Strain

- m. 7, beat 4: SA stems should be connected

146. Jesus Lives and So Do We

- vs. 1: “grace” should be “grave”
- have Kim compare texts of GPH and RTH?

147. Low in the Grave He Lay

- m. 16, the & of beat 1: A voice needs accidental clarification

148. Praise the Savior Now and Ever
- recommended key: D
149. Sing Choirs of New Jerusalem
- m. 4, beat 4: S note should be A
  - m. 12, beat 4: missing A note
  - m. 19, beat 1: missing T note
  - m. 21: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
150. The Day of Resurrection
151. The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Won
- missing the coda
  - very first note should be small (since it's not sung) with stem down
152. Thine Be the Glory
- m. 3, beat 1: missing T note
  - m. 5, beat 2: SA and TB stem direction???
  - m. 7, beat 3: missing T note
  - m. 8: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
  - m. 19, beat 1: missing T note
  - m. 21, beat 2: SA and TB stem direction???
  - m. 24: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
153. Worship Christ the Risen King
- recommended key: Bb
  - m. 2, beat 1: half rest hiding behind A note
  - m. 6: octaves???
  - m. 8, beat 1: half rest hiding behind A note
  - m. 9, beat 1: half rest hiding behind A note
154. A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing
- see notes on Hymn 1
155. Alleluia, Sing to Jesus
156. At the Name of Jesus
- consider the RVW tune on the opposite-facing page
157. Christ Above All Glory Seated
- recommended key: Bb
  - m. 4, beats 2 and 3: all voices move in parallel motion

158. Crown Him with Many Crowns
- m. 12, beat 4: A note should be E
  - m. 16: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
159. Hail, O Once-Despised Jesus
- recommended tunes: IN BABILONE or RUSTINGTON
160. Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise
- mm. 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16: stem direction inconsistent
  - m. 13, beat 3: TB notes should be F and A
161. Hear How the Adoring Throngs Above
- Different than the ST. MAGNUS on p. 165
162. Rejoice, the Lord Is King
163. See the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph
164. Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus
- Recommended Key: Bb
  - m. 5, beat 3: missing T note
  - m. 7, beat 3, missing T note
165. The Head that Once Was Crowned with Thorns
- Different than the ST. MAGNUS on p. 161
166. You Servants of God
167. Breathe on Me, Breath of God
- m. 6: T note should be middle C
  - m. 13: no need to double the B note (upper F is sufficient)
168. Come Praise the Holy Spirit
- Different than the TOURS on p. 4
  - part-writing on p. 4 is superior to p. 168
169. Creator Spirit, By Whose Aid
- fermatas on final chord are unnecessary
  - vs. 3: “practice” vs. “practice”
170. Eternal Spirit, God of Truth
- please consider an alternate tune; this one is incredibly weak

171. For Your Gift of God the Spirit

- m. 13, beat 1: don't add lower B octave – it creates parallel octaves
- m. 13: beat 4: don't add lower B octave – it creates parallel octaves

172. The Gift of the Holy Spirit

- m. 4, beat 4 to m. 5, beat 1: B leap of M7 downward is not recommended; leading tone should resolve upward
- m. 7, beat 2 and 3: parallel 5<sup>th</sup>s in S and A
- m. 7, beat 3: T leading tone (F#) should resolve to tonic (G)
- m. 10, the & of beat 1 to beat 2: all voices move in parallel motion
- m. 11, beat 3: missing A note
- m. 15, beats 2 and 3: parallel 5<sup>th</sup>s in S and A
- m. 17 is not necessary to include

173. The Spirit Came as Promised

- m. 4: A note should be C#
- m. 16: B note should be D
- m. 16: T note should be F#

174. The Spirit Sent from Heaven Above

- Recommended Key: Bb
- m. 4, beat 4: missing A note

175. All the Way My Savior Leads Me

- throughout, the SA beaming is different than the TB beaming
- vs. 2, m. 6: missing punctuation
- m. 10, beat 1: B note should be G

176. Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

- m. 1, the & of beat 4: T note should be B
- m. 5, the & of beat 4: T note should be B
- throughout, beaming of eighth notes needs adjustment

177. How Firm a Foundation

- m. 3, beat 2: I believe the melody note should be G (not A)
- m. 11, beat 2: I believe the melody note should be G (not A)

178. If You But Trust in God to Guide You

- m. 2, beat 3: TB stem direction
- m. 10, beat 3: TB stem direction
- m. 17, beat 3: TB stem direction
- m. 18, beat 3: T note should be B
- m. 23, beat 3: TB stem direction

179. Lead Me, Lord, Lead Me in They Righteousness
- m. 5, beat 1: B note should be F#
  - m. 7: need dotted slurs
  - m. 11: need dotted slurs
  - m. 14: need dotted slurs
180. Loving Shepherd of Your Sheep
181. When All Your Mercies, O My God
182. Abide with Me
- m. 2, beat 1: missing A note
183. Hallelujah!
- This hymn MUST be in the key of Db. To do otherwise, without the composer's consent, is unethical, given his clear explanation on the significance of the chosen key: "The key, D-flat major, was selected for its warmth, power and resonance as well as for the five flats, since the doctrine of perseverance is the fifth point of Calvinism" (p. 16, *Hymns for a Modern Reformation*).
184. I Hear the Words of Love
- This tune is ST. MICHAEL (not to be confused with ST. MICHAEL'S)
  - The first 2 beats contain incorrect part-writing in SA voices (voice-crossing)
  - m. 1, beat 1: A note should be B
  - m. 1, beat 1: T note should be G
  - See the Presbyterian Hymnal (1990) for much superior voice-leading and part-writing in mm. 1-4
185. Jesus Loves Me, This I Know
- Though a simple harmony is fitting for this simple text, the traditional harmony borders on boring. See alternate harmony, attached.
186. Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners
- Attributions need acknowledgment of altered text (vs. 5, first phrase)
187. Our Outer Nature Wastes Away
- m. 4, beat 1: A note should be D
  - m. 12, beat 1: A note should be D
  - m. 16, beat 1: A stem direction
188. All for Jesus!

189. Be Still, My Soul
- to maintain the integrity of FINLANDIA, there should not be a bass plunk on beat 1 of mm. 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, and 21.
  - m. 15 and m. 23: text underlay is not clear
  - m. 15, the & of beat 4: incorrect A note? Should be C#?
190. Forth in Your Name, O Lord, I Go
- Consider using GONFALON ROYAL for this text
191. Have Thine Own Way, Lord
192. I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus
- consider adding an extra bar after m. 7 (identical to m. 7)
  - m. 9, beat 1: A stem direction
193. Jesus Calls Us; O'er the Tumult
- Consider using STUTTGART for this text
194. Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken
- m. 7, beat 3: incorrect #707 for better part-writing
195. My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less
- m. 12, beat 3 & 4 to m. 13, beat 1: parallel octaves. See Gray PH #183 for better part-writing.
  - m. 13, beat 3: incorrect B notes
  - consider a different harmony for pick-up to m. 1 and the pick-up to m. 5. Perhaps octave Cs, or a V6 chord (C in first inversion).
196. Take My Life and Let It Be
- m. 1, beat 4: text underlay doesn't line up the same for all verses
197. Fill Thou My Life, O Lord My God
- mm. 2, 6, 10, 14: there should be no half notes; see Gray PH #547
  - m. 10, beat 1: A note should be Eb
  - m. 10, beat 4: missing the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord
198. May the Mind of Christ My Savior
- I would recommend Eb instead of D, partly for range of melody, but also for warmth of key
199. Nearer, Still Nearer
- I would recommend Db instead of D, for warmth of key
  - the quarter rests are unnecessary; make each dotted half note a whole note

- m. 8: the moving bass line is better played by the accompanying instrument than sung by the basses. Keep the bass note as a whole note A. As it is currently, the basses will sing a solo low E on beat 4 – certainly not what is intended!
  - m. 20: need double whole note to indicate both SA pitches
200. Seek Ye First the Kingdom
- m. 1, 3, 9, 11: replace slurs with dotted slurs
  - m. 3, beat 2: missing A note (stem)
  - m. 11, beat 2: missing A note (stem)
  - m. 6, beat 1: A stem direction
  - m. 14, beat 1: A stem direction
201. Seek Ye First the Kingdom 2
- m. 10, beat 3: T note should be A
202. Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord
203. The Beatitudes
- m. 14, beat 1: B stem direction
  - m. 9 to m. 11: B note one octave higher. It's easier for them to jump the octave at a breath (between mm. 8 and 9) than in the middle of a phrase (m. 11).
  - m. 15, beat 2: add T passing tone (G)
204. The Fruit of the Spirit
- m. 1, beat 2: A notes should be beamed like S, T, and B notes
  - m. 2, beat 1: missing T note
205. Be Thou My Vision
- this harmony could be improved significantly
206. How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds
207. My Jesus, I Love Thee
- surprised to see this one, after what was written about it! 😊
208. O Jesus Joy of Loving Hearts
- would highly recommend using Gray PH #307 instead
  - would this hymn fit better in the Lord's Supper section?
209. Behold the Throne of Grace
- missing meter attribution (6686 or SM)
  - missing tune name

210. Hear Our Prayer, O Lord

- m. 6, beat 1: bass clef upper G octave is unnecessary
- wondering about the quarter rests in m. 2 and m. 8. They seem unnecessary. If they're necessary to indicate breaths, why not also in m. 4 and m. 6?

211. The Lord's Prayer

212. What a Friend We Have in Jesus

213. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

214. Am I a Soldier of the Cross?

215. Christian, Do You Struggle?

216. Fight the Good Fight

217. Lead On, O King Eternal

218. Soldiers of Christ, Arise

219. Blest Be the Tie That Binds

220. Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

221. If I Speak a Foreign Tongue

222. Whatsoever You Do

223. Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds

224. Lord, Today Bless this New Marriage

225. O Gracious Lord

226. Oh, Blest the House

227. Praise Be the Father

228. Tell Your Children

229. Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation

230. Christ Shall Have Dominion

231. Church of God Elect and Glorious

232. For All the Saints

233. Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

234. I Am the Lord Your God

235. I Love Your Church, O Lord

236. In Christ There Is No East or West

237. Jesus, With Your Church Abide

238. Lo, What a Cloud of Witnesses

239. Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns

240. The Church's One Foundation

241. Your hand, O God, has Guided

242. All Authority and Power

243. Christ Shall Have Dominion

244. Come to the Savior Now

245. Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

246. Give Me the Faith

247. How Shall They Hear the Word of God

248. Jesus Shall Reign

249. Lord, Speak to Me that I May Speak

250. O Shine Upon These, Lord

251. The Battle Is the Lord's

252. The Ends of All the Earth Shall Hear
253. Another Year Is Dawning
254. By the Sea of Crystal
255. Come, Lord Jesus, Maranatha!
256. Day of Judgment, Day of Wonders
257. Here from All Nations
258. Jerusalem the Golden
259. Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending
260. Lo, What a Glorious Sight Appeared
261. Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers
262. Thank the Lord and Come With Praise
263. The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns
264. The Sands of Time Are Singing
265. When This Passing World Is Done
266. Glory Be to the Father 1
267. Glory Be to the Father 2
268. God Be with You Till We Meet Again
269. Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing
270. May the Grace of Christ, Our Savior
271. Now Blessed Be the Lord our God
272. Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow
273. Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (Tallis)
274. Praise God, You Angel Hosts Above
275. Romans Doxology
276. Savior, Again to Your Dear Name We Raise
277. The Day You Gave Us, Lord, Is Ended
278. Two- & Threefold Amens

A word about vocal range of the Hymn Proposal for the United Reformed Churches:

I am concerned about the musical choice to lower the key of many of the hymns included in the Hymn Proposal. It seems an overall effort was made to avoid pitches higher than the fourth line of the treble clef (D5), presumably to make hymns easier to sing for the majority of congregants. The reverse side of this choice, however, renders some hymns out of range for many singers.

The majority of people have medium voices, that is, more people are able to sing notes within a medium compass, rather than within extremely high or low registers. Untrained singers can usually sing melodies that lie within one octave or up to a tenth. Our system of music notation on the grand staff doubles as a visual map of the human voice range: if a pitch lies on the treble staff, an average treble voice can sing it; likewise if a pitch lies in the bass clef, the average male voice can sing it. If a pitch falls below or above the treble or bass staff, it becomes more difficult or impossible for many voices to sing.

Hymn composers limit the range of melodies within a tenth or so, and keep harmonies within the bounds of the treble and bass staves. If a hymn is lowered one or two pitches, it often forces bass and alto pitches below the staff and forces the melody to go below the treble staff. Average voices are more likely to sing well one or two pitches above their comfort zone than to sing accurately or with good tone below their comfortable range.

As an example, the tune EWING (“I Have No Other Comfort,” and “Jerusalem the Golden,”) in the URC Hymn Proposal has been lowered to B $\flat$  from what other hymnals typically set in C or even D $\flat$ . The melody spans ten pitches. The lower key transposed the highest pitch from E to D, while the lowest pitch is now B $\flat$  below middle C. The lowest pitch occurs eight times in the melody, while the highest pitch only occurs twice. For the sake of two notes, eight or more of the melodic pitches are now below the treble staff. Choosing to lower hymns’ key presents a more significant difficulty for the congregation than asking them to sing two pitches at the top of their comfortable zone.

“I Have No Other Comfort” – the hymn from the Heidelberg Catechism – is perfect for teaching to the children in a congregation. In the key of B $\flat$ , however, much of the melody falls below the range of most young singers. Though some children can sing pitches below the treble staff, it educes a distorted, weak sound, rather than the clear, strong sound most children can produce quite easily in the higher parts of their range. Should adult singers attempt to sing harmony to EWING in the lowered key of B $\flat$ , altos must sing into the bass clef, and basses must sing below the bass clef to a low F. (In our choir of 25 semi-trained singers, only one of our basses can sing this low.) Retaining higher keys for hymns benefits the whole congregation, especially children’s voices, by allowing them to sing with greater vocal energy and volume in the most functional part of their range.

The lowering of keys is, in my opinion, unnecessary, as most of the hymnody in use since the 1950’s has already undergone modification. In many cases in the URC Hymn Proposal, I believe lowering the keys of hymns is more detrimental than helpful to congregational singing. If we as a denomination seek to commend and encourage the practice of hymn-singing by the publication of a hymnal, then we ought also to upgrade our expectations. Hymns demand of us a more vigorous vocal production, just as they challenge us to a more rigorous exercise of thought and worship.

Respectfully submitted by Mrs. Ann M. Schweitzer-Johnson, B.M., M.M. Voice Performance  
Co-Director of Music, Christ Reformed Church, Anaheim, CA  
May 2, 2011



## Overture #7

### Amend Appendix 4 of the Church Order

#### 1. Background

According to the “Guidelines for a *Colloquium Doctum*” found in Appendix 4 of the URNCA Church Order, there are five specific areas of examination: Practica, Church Polity, Confessional Knowledge, Reformed Doctrine and Ethics. The areas of Bible Knowledge, Biblical exegesis and Church history, which are included in the Candidacy Exam, are absent. Presumably, the minister who is being examined, by virtue of having ministerial experience, has already demonstrated competency in these areas. This may well be true but given the critical importance of knowing the Bible and being able to interpret it, the church should at least consider adding a “Bible” component to the *Colloquium Doctum* in order to confirm competency.

In particular, it would be wise for the church to add a section that would test the candidate’s basic knowledge of the Bible including competency in the original languages of the Bible.

#### 2. Overture

Classis Southwest US overtures Synod 2012 to amend Appendix 4 of the Church Order of the United Reformed Churches, “Guidelines for a *Colloquium Doctum*,” by adding the following area for examination under “3. Content”:

*(6) Bible knowledge and biblical exegesis: the candidate demonstrates a basic knowledge of the contents of the Bible, hermeneutics and competency in biblical Greek and Hebrew. Competency in biblical Greek and Hebrew shall be demonstrated by the ability to translate Greek and Hebrew texts.”*

#### 3. Grounds

- a. Knowing the Bible well and knowing biblical Greek and Hebrew is essential for writing biblical sermons. Because other denominations do not always require competency exams in this area, it behooves our churches to test the candidate’s knowledge.
- b. Our churches test candidates fresh from seminary in Bible knowledge and Greek and Hebrew knowledge; why should there be any difference in the *Colloquium Doctum* merely because the candidate has already been a minister? As a minister, the candidate should have no problem with such an exam.
- c. The sponsoring consistory for the candidate will interview and perhaps examine the candidate but an objective body, such as the Classis, will greatly aid the process of determining the fitness of the candidate.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Stephen Donovan, Clerk  
Classis Southwest US



## **Overture #8 Modify Songbook**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 2012 to direct the Songbook Committee to significantly modify and restrict its approach to the implementation of a new songbook and consider ways by which there may be the least amount of unrest and concern preceding and subsequent to the implementation of a new song book; modifying and restricting with respect to the following 6 matters:

1. Modification to gender-neutral language as deployed in many of the songs presently proposed by the committee is beyond the mandate given by any Synod since the committee was first appointed in 1997. Gender-neutral language in songs derived from scripture violates the Word of God by changing the original intent and meaning. Gender neutral modification to songs not derived from scripture alters the intent and meaning of the originating author. Adopting a policy of using gender neutral language is a capitulation to worldly standards and policies.

Proposed songs that have been altered in this manner include:

40 “O God, Great Father” PH: 415; 69 “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” PH: 176; 75 “Hours and Days and Years and Ages” PH: 474; 90 “I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Grace” PH: 378; 109 “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People” PH: 406; 114 “Joy to the World” PH: 337; 123 “All Glory, Laud and Honor” PH: 348; 144 “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” PH: 356; 147 “Lo in the Grave He Lay” PH: 357; 148 “Praise the Savior Now and Ever” PH: 361; 177 “How Firm a Foundation” PH: 411; 206 “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” PH: 384; 223 “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds” PH: 150; 230 “Christ Shall Have Dominion” PH: 135; 233 Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken” PH: 402; 237 “Jesus, With Thy Church Abide” PH: 426; 243 “Christ Shall Have Dominion” PH: 135; 248 “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun” PH: 399; 252 “The Ends of all the Earth Shall Hear” PH: 36; 274 “Praise Ye the Lord, Ye Hosts Above” PH: 490.

2. The argumentation upon which to discontinue the use of Jehovah (JHVH) as suggested by the committee as cause sufficient to jettison songs is unconvincing. Words have been coined in the English language to describe Yahweh or Elohim over many centuries and include words such as “Lord”, “God”, or “Father.” None of these names used for God in the English language are to be found, in any form thereof, in the original biblical languages.

Proposed songs that have been altered in this manner include:

PH: 37 ...”Jehovah will I bless”	3 ...”the Lord God I will bless”
PH: 483 “Come, ye that fear Jehovah”	4 “Come all who fear the Lord God”
PH: 311 ...”To Thee, great Jehovah”	19 ...”To You, great Deliverer”
PH: 488 “Now blessed be Jehovah God”	271 “Now Blessed Be the Lord Our God”

Strangely left unchanged: PH: 407 “Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah” 176.

3. Many word changes in the proposed book appear to be unnecessary or trivial. No foundational support or Biblical grounds have been offered for these changes.

A partial list of songs altered in this manner:

19 “We Praise Thee, O God” PH: 311; 26 “Just As I Am, Without One Plea” PH: 424; 41 “Our Children, Lord, in Faith and Prayer” PH: 416; 52 “All Glory be to Thee, Most High” PH: 319; 55 “Holy, Holy, Holy!” PH: 318; 62 “Great is Thy Faithfulness” PH: 408; 69 “O God, Our Help in

Ages Past” PH: 176; 71 “The Heavens Declare Thy Glory” PH: 31; 85 “Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies” PH: 448; 90 “I Know Not Why God’s Wondrous Grace” PH: 378; 91 “I Sought the Lord, and Afterward I Knew” PH: 387; 102 “When Peace, Like a River” PH: 445; 109 “Comfort, Comfort Ye My People” PH: 406; 141 “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” PH: 350; 143 “Alleluia! Alleluia!” PH: 360; 148 “Praise the Savior Now and Ever” PH: 161; 206 “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” PH: 384; 232 “For All the Saints” PH: 442; 233 “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken” PH: 402; 244 “Come To the Savior Now” PH: 410; 252 “The Ends of All the Earth Shall Hear” PH: 36.

4. The multitude of changes presently proposed will make it very difficult for those who have memorized scores of songs over many years. Especially the older generations will experience difficulties if these changes are implemented, and congregational singing will suffer greatly from it. Acquiescing to the wholesale changes as proposed eliminates the ability of many mature members to sing “by heart” and alienates those who have no other alternative. This disrupts, for no pressing reason, the ability to sing from memory, and places no value on the many years invested in the learning of the songs of the Church. In some cases, the majority of the words have been changed, leaving only skeletal remains of the original text.

A partial list of songs with drastic changes:

5 “Come, All Ye People, Bless Our God” PH: 120; 15 “Praise To the Lord, the Almighty” PH: 327; 33 “We Give Thee But Thine Own” PH: 482; 40 “O God, Great Father” PH: 415; 42 “Thus Saith the Mercy of the Lord” PH: 419; 68 “My God, How Wonderful Thou Art” PH: 328; 70 “O Worship the King” PH: 315; 75 “Hours and Days and Years and Ages” PH: 474; 88 “How Vast the Benefits Divine” PH: 386; 89 “I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art” PH: 432; 92 “I Will Sing of My Redeemer” PH: 439; 95 “’Tis Not That I Did Choose Thee” PH: 385; 96 “Not What My Hands Have Done” PH: 389; 98 “O For a Thousand Tongues” PH: 383; 116 “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” PH: 331; 119 “My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord” PH: 332; 120 “Now May Thy Servant, Lord” PH: 334 ; 123 “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” PH: 348; 130 “Thine Arm, O Lord, in Days of Old” PH: 347; 144 “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today” PH: 356; 159 “Hail, Thou Once Despised Jesus!” PH: 369; 162 “Rejoice, the Lord is King” PH: 368; 177 “How Firm a Foundation” PH: 411; 182 “Abide With Me” PH: 470; 211 “Our Father, Clothed With Majesty” PH: 431; 215 “Christian, Dost Thou See Them?” PH: 464; 223 “Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds” PH: 150; 225 “O Perfect Love” PH: 481; 235 “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” PH: 479; 237 “Jesus With Thy Church Abide” PH: 426; 248 “Jesus Shall Reign, Where’re the Sun” PH: 399; 258 “Jerusalem the Golden” PH: 471; 269 “Lord, Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing” PH: 325; 271 “Now Blessed Be Jehovah God” PH: 488; 274 “Praise Ye the Lord, Ye Hosts Above” PH: 490; 276 “Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise” PH: 326; 211: “Our Father Clothed in Majesty” has only approximately 35 of the original words of PH: 431.

5. Some proposed songs remain unaltered in the proposed hymnal. This demonstrates an arbitrariness or inconsistency in the process of changing select songs, possibly on the basis of preference rather than on principle.

The songs that remain without any change from those in the CRC 1976 Blue Psalter Hymnal: 28 “Lord, Like the Publican I Stand” PH: 430; 53 “Come, Thou Almighty King” PH: 317; 132 “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed” PH: 352; 156 “At the Name of Jesus” PH: 372; 170 Eternal Spirit, God of Truth” PH: 390; 199 Nearer, Still Nearer” PH: 454; 249 “Lord, Speak to Me that I May Speak” PH: 404; 253 “Another Year is Dawning” PH: 475; 266 “Glory Be To the Father” PH: 492; 267 “Glory Be To the Father” PH: 491; 270 “May the Grace of Christ Our Savior” PH: 487.

6. Some proposed songs have little or no track record, tradition, or established durability in Reformed Churches, or the wider Church community. History shows that many songs have a limited shelf life of only a few years before they fade into obscurity. Short-lived popularity does not warrant inclusion and violates the guideline approved by Synod: “The music of the church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.”<sup>1</sup>

Songs with a life span of less than 15 years include: # 11; 25; 44; 80; 86; 93; 134; 140; 172; 183; 211

### ***Grounds***

1. The transition to a new songbook is too great and abrupt, and may cause great turmoil in the church. Since the inception of the PH Committee in 1997, it has been understood by many churches that a new production would build on the 1976 CRC Blue Psalter Hymnal as its starting point and would not be a from-the-ground-up new work. The PH Committee promoted this way of thinking early on in their work by asking the churches for input on songs in the 1976 Blue Hymnal. Additionally, the Committee identifies itself as “The Psalter Hymnal Revision Committee” on the front cover of “The Hymn Proposal” (2010).

2. Consideration ought to be given to a process, as undertaken in other denominations, of seeking a smooth and painless transition. One could look to the CRC when the Blue Hymnal (1957) took the place of the Red Psalter Hymnal. Uniformity between the books and education of the church community by means of official publications lessened considerably the impact of change within the congregations.

3. Many members of the URCNA have experienced the introduction of a new hymnal in their former congregation. For some it was part of their motivation to seek an alternative church federation. Because a great number of the new proposed songs seem to come directly from the hymnal they once rejected, the present proposal by the Synodical Committee opens up old wounds, as it threatens them with a similar experience. Publication of comments and the clarification of their purported mandate by the Committee subsequent to Synod 2010 have done little to alleviate the fears that the URCNA is headed down a similar road.

4. Learning new songs is a long-term process that can span a generation or more. The present proposal contains far too many changes, adjustments and new material for it to function well in the foreseeable future.

5. The report from Synod 2010 concerning a new songbook and the subsequent communications from the Committee have already caused significant unrest and concern in both the pew and the consistory room. While some concerns may be of a trivial nature, nevertheless the tide of significant objection gives cause for review and reflection.

6. There exists a misunderstanding as to the will of the originating classis whose overture was adopted by Synod 1997.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts of Synod 2005, Art. 96. 1. “Guidelines” #9



## **Overture #9**

### **Publish Songbook**

#### **Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 2012:**

1. To instruct the Psalter Hymnal Committee to proceed towards the publication of a songbook for the use of the URCNA without further delay subject to synodical approval.
2. To instruct the Psalter Hymnal Committee to develop a songbook that has as its basis the 1976 Edition of the CRC Blue Psalter Hymnal, incorporating a limited number of new and generally accepted (in Reformed churches) renditions of Psalms and/or hymns.
3. To instruct the Psalter Hymnal Committee to include all Synodically approved liturgical forms in the songbook.
4. To instruct the Psalter Hymnal Committee to minimize changes as much as possible in the new songbook, relative to the wording of songs and the music as it is presently being used in the churches by means of the Blue Psalter Hymnal.
5. To instruct the Psalter Hymnal Committee to develop a transition process to the new songbook similar to the transition process undertaken by the CRC when the Blue Psalter Hymnal was produced.

#### ***Grounds:***

1. This is in keeping with the expressed desires of previous synods that a URCNA songbook be created.
2. This alleviates unrest in the churches concerning various proposals, publications and comments concerning the present, partially proposed songbook which has created controversy in the churches.
3. This clarifies an underlying understanding that the Blue Psalter Hymnal is not being jettisoned.
4. This allows for possible further contact with the OPC should Synod so request and approve of such, without the URCNA having to wait for an updated songbook.
5. This allows the Psalter Hymnal Committee to continue to work with the OPC, should Synod so request and approve of such, taking all the time necessary to further refine and meet the needs of the churches.



## **Overture #10 Reading Sermons**

Classis Western Canada overtures synod 2012 to approve the collection of two reading sermons from each URCNA minister to be posted to a secure section on the official URCNA website and to communicate its decision to the URCNA Website Committee.

### **Background:**

It is a continual struggle for elders to find a consolidated location of URCNA sermons whenever a reading service is required. Recently when church visitors were invited, they inquired if we only employed men from a Reformed persuasion when guest ministers or unordained men are invited to preach and if the consistory approves sermons that are read at reading services. Even though the consistory could adhere and agree to the questions, it further reinforced the need for URCNA churches to have a single depository of sermon material for these occasions. Advice on this matter was also requested from the church visitors who knew of no such support mechanism for the URCNA churches.

### **Grounds:**

1. Some resources such as [www.theseed.info](http://www.theseed.info), has only four of our 110 ministers represented while <http://wrathtoriches.wordpress.com/> adds another five. This is sufficiently inadequate, particularly to those vacant churches, as many sermons are limited by specific historical events.
2. This would encourage the elders to uphold and to aid them in their task to “maintain the purity of the Word”, as outlined in Church Order Article 14. Reading services are also covered with this call just as it pertains to the weekly preaching and to visiting ministers.
3. Church Order Article 38 notes a principle taught in God’s Word is “that the preaching of the Word ha[s] the central place”. The elders will better regulate the worship service with printed copy of a sermon laid out before them which can be practiced in the days or weeks prior.
4. Historically in Reformed practice, one service is a teaching service where the Three Forms of Unity are utilized. Church Order Article 40 says that the minister shall “preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity”. A vacant church certainly is hard pressed to uphold the Church Order with the lack of Catechism sermons that are in print within the URCNA.
5. Utilizing the suggested recommendation that follows would provide the elders with over 220 sermons and two years worth of sermons by URCNA ministers.
6. A single depository such as this would certainly aid our elders who are busy enough with their families, employment, and commitments. Currently elders may spend several hours over several days in their limited time to simply locate Reformed sermons on the full counsel of God with a complete summary of the Heidelberg Catechism and Belgic Confession, of which, very few are from our own ministers.
7. A federation that desires to be united, serves itself well to support one another with Biblical preaching and an encouragement to uphold the Church Order.

If a recommendation may be offered, it would be to strongly encourage all URCNA ministers to send two sermons to the Website Committee to upload in a single location on the [www.URCNA.org](http://www.URCNA.org) website. One sermon would be a free selected text, and another on a Lord's Day and/or a Belgic Confession article. Might we suggest the alphabetizing of the ministers names and assign sequentially a Lord's Day until all are allotted and then assign the Belgic articles in sequence until they are allotted.

## **Overture #11 Appeals Committee**

### **Overture:**

Classis Western Canada overtures Synod 2012 to establish a "Standing Committee For Appeals," to function as a committee of pre-advice to subsequent synods. All properly processed appeals sent to synod would be given to this committee by the Stated Clerk as soon as they are available so that the committee may review all the pertinent material connected to the appeals and make recommendations to the next synod regarding the adjudication of the appeals. This committee should be composed of representatives elected from each classis.

### **Background:**

During the last Synod meeting, in July 2010 in London Ontario one of the Surrey Covenant Reformed Church's consistory members was assigned to the "Appeal" committee to deal with several appeals from different appellants. It became clear very soon that the committee could not deal with the issues as required in the time frame allotted. It was felt that this led to "pre-advise committee work" being done during the full session of Synod in one case. This is undesirable. To prevent this to happen again we submit this overture.

### ***Grounds:***

1. Insufficient time was available during the Synod period to interview the different appellants and the members of the Classis who dealt with the cases.
2. No other investigations could be done before Synod convened.
3. This will provide Synod with a more balanced and thorough opinion of the committee's work.
4. It would prevent possible "pre-advise committee" work during the full session of Synod.
5. This would give the committee a minimum of four months (the usual time between the agenda deadline for synod and the synod meeting) to study the appeals rather than the 48 hours which the committee of pre-advice had at Synod London.



## **Appeal #1 Songbook**

### **The Living Water Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario appeals Synod Pompton Plains...**

*Approved in Consistory February 7, 2012*

#### **Background**

At our Synod meeting held in London in the year 2010 Synod London adopted recommendation 3 of Advisory Committee 9. This recommendation and its adoption is recorded under Articles 24.3 of the minutes of Synod 2010 and reads as follows:

“That Synod 2010 affirm the production of an official songbook which will be purchased and used by all URCNA churches.

#### ***Grounds:***

- a. This is in keeping with Synod 1997’s decision to appoint the Psalter Hymnal Committee.
- b. An official songbook for all the churches would promote the unity, identity, and well-being of the federation.
- c. This would keep the cost of producing the songbook to a minimum.
- d. This would give a positive impetus to a project on which the committee has spend thousands of hours and reviewed over 2,000 songs.”

We appreciate the sentiment of Synod 2010 in making this decision, yet believe that altering this decision will better serve the unity of the churches and the encouragement of the songbook committee in this matter.

#### **Appeal**

The Living Water Reformed Church of Brantford appeals Synod Pompton Plains (2012) to alter<sup>2</sup> the decision of Synod London to read, “That Synod 2010 affirm the production of an official songbook and encourage this songbook to be used in all URCNA churches.”

#### ***Grounds***

1. Article 39 of our Church Order tells us that only hymns “which are approved by the Consistory” (Art. 39) are to be sung in the worship service. A decision of Synod that a certain songbook must be purchased and used *by all URCNA churches* creates the possible situation that a Consistory which is not in agreement with Synod’s decision must purchase and use a songbook containing hymns which may not meet that local consistory’s approval. By making the previous decision Synod has gone beyond the limits of her authority as determined by Article 39.

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<sup>2</sup> We realize that the word ‘alter’ is a somewhat new term in treating with a matter like this. It is taken from 6.5.2.d of our synodical rules and procedures and was the best word we could find. Words like “amend” and “rescind” do not apply in this situation as the decision was made at a previous synod. Therefore alter was the best we could do. If the word is wrongly chosen we trust that the delegates can substitute the appropriate word and still consider the appeal.

2. Synod's decision to mandate that each URCNA church will purchase and use the new songbook violates Article 33 of our Church Order which states that, "Each congregation shall have exclusive control over all of its temporalities, nor shall the exercise of its property rights, through the decisions of its Consistory, be subject to the supervision of the broader assemblies, nor shall the broader assemblies have the right to revise those decisions." By making a decision that mandates the purchase of an official songbook by all URCNA churches, Synod is mandating how local Consistories (or Councils) will use the assets that belong to the local church (specifically, the money they must spend to purchase these books). This goes against Article 33 of our Church Order.
3. Synod's decision was made in part to promote the "unity, identity, and well-being of the federation" (Ground 'b' of the original decision, found above). On a practical level we believe this will best be fostered through letting individual churches make their own decision on purchasing songbooks. Past history has made many churches and individuals within our congregations sensitive to change, both rightly and wrongly. Because of this an effort to coerce the churches into purchasing and using a new official songbook, however good that songbook may be, may set us upon a potentially divisive course that is easily avoidable by amending Synod's previous decision.
4. By leaving the final decision regarding songbooks with local Consistories Synod allows local Consistories to exercise greater pastoral wisdom in bringing changes to songs within the local church. This is clearly in line with Article 39.
5. Grounds 'c' and 'd' of the original decision, referenced above, are important but not determinative for how the new songbook is introduced to the federation. Certainly, churches would be much better off paying a little more *financially* for a songbook if it would promote the unity of the federation. Even more, the songbook committee will receive much greater encouragement in its work if the work they produce is received willingly, and potential 'attacks' upon them are rendered unnecessary since the local church can determine the use of their work on their own.
6. The word "encourage" still communicates that Synod's desire is to see the churches of the federation singing out of a common, solid, Biblical and Reformed songbook. However, it does this while keeping within the guidelines for the churches which we have mutually adopted through our Church Order.

## Personal Appeals

Appeal #2  
Appeal #3  
Appeal #4  
Appeal #5  
Appeal #6  
Appeal #7  
Appeal #8  
Appeal #9  
Appeal #10

### Note:

Appeals #2 through #10 are personal appeals. In order to protect the parties involved, the Convening Consistory and the Stated Clerk agreed not to publish the appeals in the agenda which is a public document. All of the materials will be sent to the delegates assigned to serve on the Advisory Committee for Appeals. Any other delegate who wishes to review the files may request them by e-mail from the Stated Clerk.



## **Communication #1**

### Communication to Synod 2012

Re: the Modus Operandi of Synod London, 2010 and  
the Consequences Thereof

Note:

This Communication contains the names of individuals, as well as complaints against a consistory and classis in our federation. In order to protect the parties involved, the Convening Consistory and the Stated Clerk agreed not to publish the Communication in the agenda which is a public document. It will be sent to the Advisory Committee to which it is assigned, as well as to any delegate who requests it by e-mail from the Stated Clerk.











**Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity**  
Report to Synod Nyack 2012

**I. Introduction**

Esteemed Brothers,

Our committee works with 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 inception as a federation of United Reformed Churches there has always been among us a strong desire to pursue a broader confessional unity with all of those churches that share with us a like and precious confession. This desire came to expression already in the choosing of the name of our federation – *United Reformed*.

The actual pursuit of unity, however, has not been without its challenges among us. The history of our ecumenical pursuits as a federation bears that out. We are a young federation; we have needed to grow in maturity, as well as in patience with one another and in appreciation for one another. Doctrinal controversies among the Reformed churches on the North American scene have not only required our own careful attention, but they have also in some cases, occasioned concerns and suspicions in connection with our unity pursuits.

We have come to understand together that true unity cannot be forced. It arises from a mutual recognition of the unity we have in Christ, by the Spirit, in accord with the truth we confess (Eph. 4:3-6). Unless we continue to grow among ourselves to trust one another more fully and to love one another more truly, any of our efforts to come to fuller, visible expressions of unity with others will result in friction and bitterness.

In recognition of this reality among our churches and of our need to catch our collective breath, ecumenically speaking, your committee is not making any substantively new recommendations to the churches in this report. What we are recommending is a careful and gentle pressing on in the good work that has been begun in our ecumenical pursuits with all of our ecumenical counterparts, and particularly in connection with the Canadian Reformed. We are also reissuing the recommendation our committee made at our last synod to proceed to a Phase Two – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship with the RPCNA. And, finally and perhaps most significantly, we will also be calling attention to the unfolding prospects for greater unity in the

encouraging developments we see coming to expression at NAPARC. Further elaboration on these matters can be found in the body of our report that follows.

In the present circumstances, we see it as our task as a committee to aid our churches in fostering an environment of mutual understanding and appreciation: for each other, for our ecumenical calling, for our concerns and fears regarding the pursuit of this calling, and for our brothers and sisters of neighboring federations of churches that share our confession.

With a view to the ongoing development of such mutual understanding and appreciation, and we trust with all of the patience and forbearance this entails, as a committee we continue to labor with the conviction that the glory of our Savior is promoted by the visible unity of his church. Jesus prayed for the visible unity of the church apart from which the gospel is incredible to the world. The world's resistance to the message of reconciliation is increased when it is proclaimed by those who resist the pursuit of reconciliation with one another. Jesus taught that we will be recognized as his disciples by our observable love for one another.

We humbly submit that where Christians are not separated by seas, continents, civil government or different languages, the main impediments to unity are the limitations of human understanding and the sinful prejudices of the human heart. Such limitations and prejudices must not remain unchallenged. They should be the focus of efforts at reconciliation. Reconciliation, to be genuine, should produce visible expressions of the already existing spiritual unity.

The error of liberal ecumenical efforts, that we rightly resist, is to seek *organizational* unity where there is no *spiritual* unity. However where spiritual unity exists, evidenced by a good confession of faith, we do believe that federations of true churches should continue to strive for a greater and greater degree of visible and organizational unity as providential circumstances allow.

The existence of several conservative confessionally Reformed federations of churches on the North American continent, united also by language and culture, should not be left unchallenged. In a spirit of humility, we should seek to learn from one another and if necessary, correct and challenge one another. In matters of custom and personal preference, we need to practice self-denial. Cultural pride and ethnic prejudice ought to be put to death. The God given spiritual unity we recognize and confess requires that we make work of seeking reconciliation on those issues which divide us. With time and the Lord's blessing, we believe that such reconciliation should be visible in ever increasing cooperation and organizational unity. Our Savior enjoins it and the mission of his church is enhanced by it.

It is incumbent upon all who believe, to be completely humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love, as we labor to maintain the unity created by the Spirit in a fraternal and ecumenical bond of peace and reconciliation, considering others better than ourselves. We will continue to need such humility and patience in our dealings with others, but perhaps even especially amongst ourselves. Such a blessing can only be ours in prayerful, humble dependence upon our gracious God and seeking the blessing of His Spirit.

Let us with such a spirit, therefore continue to labor for greater expressions of unity using 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, Terms and Budget

### *a. Committee membership and Terms*

The committee is currently comprised of three members-at-large and seven classical representatives, one per classis. These members are as follows:

#### Classical representatives:

<u>Classis</u>	<u>Delegate</u>	<u>Alternate</u>
1. Central United States	Rev. Dan Donovan	Rev. Todd De Rooy
2. Eastern United States	Rev. William Boekestein	Rev. Jeremy Veldman
3. Michigan	Rev. Casey Freswick	Rev. Ed Marcusse
4. Pacific Northwest	Elder Al Vermeer	Rev. Eric Tuininga
5. Southern Ontario	Rev. John Bouwers	Rev. Al Korvemaker
6. Southwest United States	Rev. Greg Bero	Rev. Adam Kaloostian
7. Western Canada	Rev. Ralph Pontier	Rev. Daniel Kok

Alternates have been apprised of all committee discussions and have, on occasion represented the churches in place of the primary delegate.

#### Members-at-large:

1. Rev. Harry Zekveld – appointed by Synod 2004
2. Rev. Peter Vellenga – appointed by Synod 2007
3. Rev. Bill Pols – appointed by Synod 2007

Alternate: Rev. Brian Vos – appointed by Synod 2010

Synod London 2010 determined that the matter of term limits for *classical representatives* be considered a classical prerogative (**Art. 68.4**). This has proved to be a good arrangement both for the sake of continuity as well as for the growing engagement of the issues and challenges of ecumenicity at the classical level throughout the federation. 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.

With regard to the *members-at-large*, the **Regulations for Synodical Procedure** adopted by Synod London 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.**). There having only been two years that have elapsed since Synod London, your committee is not sure whether the terms of these men end with the new Synod, or whether they ought to continue to 2013? Synod will need to clarify the approach that it wishes to be taken. Our recommendation is that with the new Synod their terms will have been completed, which means Synod will need to appoint or re-appoint three members-at-large. Revs. Bill Pols and Peter Vellenga are eligible for reappointment.

#### *b. Budget*

The annual budget for CERCU set by Synod London is \$6,000.00. We have continued to make every effort to be stewardly with the finances allotted to us. When delegating fraternal representatives every attempt is made to do so in the most economical way feasible, also making use of local URC pastors in certain circumstances. We also anticipate holding full committee meetings annually each year in connection with the meetings of NAPARC. During these meetings we take opportunity to continue our ecumenical pursuits and discussions with the ecumenicity committees of many of the bodies represented there as a stewardly use of the churches' finances. Due to the anticipated addition of a new classis in Ontario, Canada, your committee requests synod to increase the annual budget allowance for CERCU from \$6,000.00 to 6,500.00.

### **III. Reports on Churches in Ecumenical Relations**

Your committee engages in ecumenical dialogue and continues to seek to promote greater unity among 11 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 Churches (HRC)
4. Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)
5. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
6. Presbyterian Reformed Church
7. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

## 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)

## **A. Churches in Phase One – *Corresponding Relations***

### **1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)**

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church began in 1782 when the Associate Presbytery and the Reformed Presbyterians joined together to found the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Both are of Scottish background. Some of the second group did not join, and are today’s RPCNA. Today the ARPC is composed of about 23,196 communicant members in approximately 294 churches and mission congregations. They are located primarily in the southeast United States.

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Their ordination vows include the this question, “Do you accept the doctrines of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as founded on the Word of God and as the expression of your own faith, and do you resolve to adhere thereto?” They allow scruples if they are approved by ordaining or receiving presbytery. They allow the ordination of women deacons, although this is an historic practice not linked to feminist movement of the latter half of the twentieth century. They are officially opposed to lodge membership but it is tolerated in a number of their congregations, seemingly without complaint from others.

They are members of NAPARC and the World Reformed Fellowship. They have fraternal ties with most of the NAPARC churches. In 2011 they withdrew from the International Conference of Reformed Churches and ended fraternal relations with the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

Because of geography and their ties with the CRC, no face-to-face meetings have been held with the ARP Interchurch Relations Committee since November 2003 except informal contacts at NAPARC meetings. If NAPARC begins to schedule time for bi-lateral meetings, we hope to pursue the Phase One dialogue with them in the future since they have now broken ties with the CRC.

### **2. Free Reformed Churches (FRC)**

We reported to Synod London 2010 that Phase One dialogue with the FRC had produced three unity statements with a fourth in progress (History, Doctrine of the Church, The Covenant, and View of the Congregation). Those statements were included in the report to synod London. Since then little progress has been made because some elements in the FRC are reluctant to proceed.

We had a bilateral meeting with their delegates to NAPARC in November 2011 and were told that they feared that their distinctive emphasis on experimental preaching would be lost in a merger with a federation such as ours. They view us as a broad stream containing several different currents. They could feel at home with one element of the URC but not with all. The FRC has no desire to be broader. A neo-Puritan outlook is vital to their understanding of who they are, and they are drawn only to those churches where the Puritans are a living and dominant force. This is their purpose for existence apart from which they say they have no reason for a continued separate existence. They have cut off all fraternal dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches and are apprehensive about us because of our effort toward unity with the Canadian Reformed. Their concerns for both the URC and the CanRC are an undue influence of Abraham Kuyper and a “hyper covenantal objectivism.”

We are encouraged to see the close ties they are developing with the Heritage Reformed Congregations, a group that is much more ecumenically minded. Perhaps, in time, the FRC will mature in their understanding of confessional unity and the ecumenical imperative of Scripture and allow us to benefit from greater exposure to their strengths. We are also thankful that some members of their ecumenical committee do wish to move forward with us at the committee level in a discussion of the appropriation of salvation and the view of the congregation. URC congregations are urged to continue to seek to develop relations with the FRC at the local level.

### **3. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)**

We had a bilateral meeting with the three representatives of the HRC at NAPARC in November 2011. The meeting was positive and encouraging. They, like us, are a relatively new denomination and have therefore moved somewhat slowly in developing ecumenical relations. They did express an eagerness to work more closely with the URC. At this time, pulpit exchanges would only be possible with HRC churches by way of local communication.

CERCU agreed to continue working particularly with this body in an effort to develop closer relations. From their side, 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

The HRC brethren expressed an eagerness to move to their level 2 which would correlate 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 plan to further these discussions through email contact, with an anticipated follow up meeting in conjunction with NAPARC in November 2013. Rev. Bouwers and Rev. Vellenga attended the most recent Synod of the HRC on March 29, 2012.

#### 4. **Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC)**

The KAPC was established in 1978 and currently has 27 presbyteries and 600 local congregations with about 70,000 communicant members and 1,200 ministers. They have 94 missionaries supported by their own World Missionary Society and they have 18 men serving as chaplains in the US military.

Their recent General Assembly ruled, in response to an inquiry regarding “the New Apostolic Reformation” (NAR) group and the International House of Prayer (IHOP) ministries, that these movements promote religious practices and convictions that are not consistent with the teachings of their church’s confession, and, therefore, it is not fit for their church members and ministers to participate in or collaborate with them.

Our contact with the Korean Presbyterian Church has been minimal, restricted to informal contacts at NAPARC. Contact with this church is further hindered by the fact that they are a predominantly Korean speaking federation of churches and the translation of their official documents into English are not always clear and have not been officially approved by any governing body of that federation. We do not anticipate any more meaningful contact with the KAPC until they become a more English speaking federation, which is in progress, but may take a generation. Rev. Kevin Hossink brought fraternal greetings to the 2011 General Assembly on behalf of the URC.

#### 5. **Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)**

The PCA is the largest federation of churches with membership in NAPARC. As of 2010, they were comprised of 79 presbyteries, 1,456 churches, 302 missions, 3,798 ministers and 346,814 members including both communicant and non-communicant members.

The 39<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PCA met in June 2011. One action of note is a decision on the “Insider Movement” and Bible translation. Some missiologists have suggested that people who become believers in the Lord Jesus Christ – and who are in circumstances where the public baptism and joining a Christian church may subject a person to death, persecution, or being ostracized from their families and communities – that such Christian believers remain in their non-Christian religious communities (hence “Insider Movement”). Moreover, some missiologists who advocate Insider Movements suggest that translations of the Bible that cause offense to non-Christians (for example references to the Trinity, God as Father, the deity of Christ, Christ’s being the Son of God, etc.) be adjusted to be non-offensive. Insider Movement advocates think that such an approach enables people to become Christians without crossing cultural barriers. The PCA’s Mission to the World (MTW) has taken the position that people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ should not continue to practice non-Christian religions but should become part of the Church, and that Bible translations that remove from the text references to God as “Father” (*pater*) or Jesus as “Son” (*huios*), so as to alter the doctrines of the Trinity, the doctrines of the person and work of Christ, or the doctrine of Scripture, are unfaithful to God’s revealed Word.

Rev. Casey Freswick brought fraternal greetings to their 2011 General Assembly.

Our contact with the PCA has been restricted to informal contacts at NAPARC. We have not begun our Phase One dialogue with them, although, because of our mutual membership in NAPARC, they consider us to be a sister church in what we would refer to as a Phase Two relationship. We encourage classes and congregation to pursue contact at the local level, where possible, to gain greater awareness and familiarity with the PCA.

## **6. Presbyterian Reformed Church**

The Presbyterian Reformed Church is perhaps 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 four congregations in the US (Des Moines, IA, Columbus, IN, Charlotte, NC, and East Greenwich, RI), one in Chesley, Ontario and one in England.

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 pursued a Phase One 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. Rev. Peter Vellenga represented our federation and brought greetings to their 2011 Presbytery (they do not have a synod) when it was held in his vicinity in Chesley ON, May 25, 2011.

## **7. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)**

The RPCNA has its roots in Scottish Presbyterianism. It was organized in North America in 1798. In 2009, they celebrated 200 years since the meeting of its first Synod in 1809. In 2010, they observed the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their theological school, the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, in Pittsburgh, PA. 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. The RPCNA also owns and operates a liberal arts college, Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA, which is now 164 years old. We rejoice with the RPCNA in the faithfulness of God in preserving them through times of joy and trial, and for the evidence of a renewed zeal for Reformed orthodoxy in their midst over the past several decades.

For many years the RPCNA experienced decline in orthodoxy, witness, and numbers. For the last 30 years, however, God, by His grace, has reversed this trend with new appointments of solid, Reformed men at RPTS, by raising up ministers and elders who are convicted preachers and guardians of the everlasting Gospel, and through renewed focus on Reformed missions and evangelism. Since then the RPCNA has witnessed a 25% increase in membership. The RPCNA numbers close to 7,000 members in approximately 80 congregations and 10 church plants. The vast majority of these congregations are in the United States and Canada; a few of its congregations are abroad, in Japan, Ireland, and Cyprus. The RPCNA is divided into seven presbyteries.

For several years now your committee has been blessed to be able to meet with their Interchurch Committee. We have always been received with brotherly love and respect, and our discussions have been warm and friendly. There is among the brothers of the RPCNA evidence of deep piety undergirded by a wholehearted commitment to the Reformed Faith.

At Synod Calgary 2004 our churches voted to enter into *Corresponding Relations* with the RPCNA. Subsequently at their own 173<sup>rd</sup> Synod, meeting that same month the RPCNA reciprocated with a parallel decision from their side to welcome the URCNA into their own category of *Corresponding Relations*. At their following 174<sup>th</sup> Synod held in June of 2005, the RPCNA took a decision to invite the URCNA into *Fraternal Relations* with them, a relationship similar to our Phase Two - Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

However, Synod London 2010 “tabled indefinitely” the CERCU recommendation to enter Phase Two with the RPCNA. There was concern at that synod about the RPCNA practice of ordaining women deacons and there was no representative from the RPCNA present to answer questions (as there was for the ERQ which also has women deacons and with whom we did approve Phase Two relations). CERCU believes that if more information were available, our churches would be willing to enter into Phase Two with the RPCNA. To that end, in November of 2011, CERCU sent to all the churches two RPCNA reports. One report shows that their historic practice of ordaining women deacons, which predates the feminist movement of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is not the result of a liberalizing or destructive hermeneutic. The other report is a valuable contribution to issue of sexual orientation. It contains sound exegesis and insights that will benefit all our churches as we deal with the decline of sexual ethics in the culture around us. We also urged the RPCNA to make every effort to have fraternal representatives available at Synod Nyack to address our delegates and answer questions.

We are therefore renewing our recommendation to enter into Phase Two, Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RPCNA. For that reason we repeat in the following the results of our mandated Phase One dialogue with the RPCNA in the areas of: view and place of the Holy Scriptures, creeds and confessions, formula of subscription to the confessions, significant factors in the two federations’ history, theology, and ecclesiology, church order and polity, liturgy and liturgical forms, preaching, sacraments, and discipline, theological education for ministers.

#### View and Place of the Holy Scriptures:

When asked about their view of Scripture, the RPCNA Interchurch Committee provided the following statements concerning their doctrine of the Scripture:

- Inspired by God, authoritative, inerrant, infallible (WCF.I.1)
- All 66 books inspired, nothing added (WCF.I.2)
- These Scriptures are the Word of God (WCF I.4)
- They are applied by the Holy Spirit (WCF I.5)
- The Scriptures include the whole counsel of God (WCF I.6)
- The rule of Scriptures’ interpretation is Scripture itself (WCF I.9)

They write: *Our beliefs all stem from a full commitment to the authority of the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God. This means that we believe in the Triune God: Father, Son,*

*and Holy Spirit. We acknowledge our total inability to save ourselves and, in faith, depend on Christ alone as our Savior. We acknowledge Him as Covenant Lord in every area of life, and we vow together to advance His Kingdom on earth. We rejoice in this commitment to the authority of Scripture, and to its application in all of life.*

### Creeds and Confessions

The RPCNA submits to the teachings of the Word of God as summarized in their doctrinal standards: the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Larger Catechism, and the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

In addition, the RPCNA subscribes to the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America*, which seeks to apply Scripture and the Confessions to contemporary situation. In its published format, the Testimony is placed in a column parallel to the Westminster Confession of Faith.

With most of the Testimony we find ourselves in hearty agreement. There are a few areas which are cause for concern. First and foremost is the teaching that Christ covenants with the nations of this earth, and the nations are obligated to covenant with Christ. While we recognize the Lordship of Christ over all nations in His mediatorial reign and the duty of the civil magistrate to protect the sacred ministry that the kingdom of Christ may be promoted (Heidelberg Catechism, QA 50-51; Belgic Confession, Article 36), we are not convinced that nations of this earth are called to covenant with Christ. This doctrine is applied variously within the RPCNA. There is substantial disagreement within the RPCNA on this issue and does not seem to be applied rigorously. The Interchurch Committee indicates that fundamental principles of this point of the Testimony, while different in formulation, are in agreement with the teaching of Belgic Confession, Article 36. These underlying principles are still valid and required in the RPCNA.

Another concern is the ordination of deaconesses. In the RPCNA the office of deacon is an office with a kind of ecclesiastical authority, though the deacons do not serve together with the elders in the ruling of the church. Further attention is given to the authority of deacons below, under *Church Order and Polity*. While many in the RPCNA disagree with this position of the Testimony, it is still practiced to a small degree.

A third area of concern, requiring abstinence from the use of alcohol and tobacco (Testimony, Chapter 26:5-6), and a vow to that end among officebearers, has been removed. A recent Synod of the RPCNA decided that this requirement went beyond the bounds of Scripture. While abstinence from the use of alcohol is still encouraged, members and officers are no longer required to refrain from beverage alcohol. Similar restrictions—for example, ones on the use of tobacco—have also been revised or removed.

### Formula of Subscription to the Confessions

Concerning vows for communicant membership, members are asked, in part, *to submit in the Lord to the teaching and government of this church as being based upon the Scriptures and described in substance in the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*. (Membership, Query 4)

When a new congregation is to be instituted, all communicants are expected to take the vows of communicant membership and to make the following pledge: *Do you solemnly covenant with God and with one another that you will live together in brotherly unity as an organized congregation on the basis of the Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; that you will be obedient to the courts that are over you in the Lord; and that you will, by a godly life, seek to promote the purity, peace, and prosperity of the church as a whole?*

Officebearers must answer the following the question in the affirmative: *Do you believe in and accept the system of doctrine and the manner of worship set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as being agreeable to, and founded upon, the Scriptures?* (Ordination, Query 4) Ruling elders, teaching elders, and deacons are examined as to soundness of faith and commitment to the RPCNA Testimony. (*Directory of Church Government* 3.I.E.1.c, 3.II.E.3.b.3, 3.III.E.1.3)

Subscription includes not only the Westminster Standards but also the RPCNA Testimony as equal in authority (see Chapter I, Article 12; the Testimony is available on the RPCNA website). The Testimony takes precedence over the Westminster Standards whenever there is a discrepancy between the two. At certain points the Testimony will expressly reject small portions of the Westminster Confession of Faith (eg., 23.18, 24.21).

### **Significant factors in history, theology, and ecclesiology**

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America holds the doctrines and principles of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and, in particular, testifies to the duty of public covenanting by churches and nations. *Reformed Presbyterians have also been referred to historically as Covenanters because of their identification with public covenanting in Scotland, beginning in the 16th century. This act was a protest for Christ's crown rights over the state and the recognition of Christ as King over the Church without interference from the government. Our roots also include those referred to as the Seceders, who share in the testimony for Christ's Crown and Covenant.* (from website)

Following the example of the nation of Israel which made binding covenants with God in the days of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Nehemiah, Presbyterians in Scotland, England, and Ireland covenanted together in 1643 to follow the Lord in the *Solemn League and Covenant*, a treaty with English parliamentarians, to uphold the “crown rights” of Christ as King over the church as well as the state, and to protest government interference in the life of the church.

In later years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the governments of these nations would ignore this covenant and many Presbyterians, called Seceders, became dissenters, refusing to accept this new governmental and ecclesiastical situation. The sovereignty of Jesus Christ over church and state failed to be officially recognized in 1691, when Presbyterianism became the Established Church in Scotland. As a result, the early Covenanters formed the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and also in Ireland, where many fled to avoid persecution. Later many immigrated to the American colonies where they organized covenanter churches.

The history of dissent continued long into the 19<sup>th</sup>, and even into the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Reformed Presbyterians bound themselves to refrain from voting in national elections and swearing oaths of public office and military service as long as the government of the United States did not officially recognize the crown rights of King Jesus over the nation in its constitution.

A significant aspect of RPCNA history is *The Covenant of 1871*, officially called *The Covenant Sworn and Subscribed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, May 21, 1871 and by the several congregations*. This document belongs to the RPCNA Constitution and is part of the membership and ordination vows of every officebearer and communicant member. (cf. *Directory for Public Worship*: 4.3) Prefaced by a confession of ecclesiastical and national sins in the American context, RPCNA members and officebearers swear by this covenant

- *to receive for ourselves and for our children the Lord Jesus Christ as He is offered in the Gospel to be our Saviour and to live for the glory of God as our chief end;*
- *to understand and uphold more fully the doctrine, government and worship set forth in the Westminster Standards, Form of Government, and Directory for Public Worship;*
- *to pray and labor for the peace and welfare of our country, and for its reformation by a constitutional recognition of God as the source of all power, of Jesus Christ as the Ruler of Nations, of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme rule, and of the true Christian religion; and we will continue to refuse to incorporate by any act, with the political body, until this blessed reformation has been secured;*
- *to pray and labor for the visible oneness of the Church of God in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order.*
- *to dedicate ourselves to the great work of making known God's light and salvation among the nations, and to this end will labor that the Church may be provided with an earnest, self-denying and able ministry.*
- *to bear true testimony in word and in deed for every known part of divine truth, and for all the ordinances appointed by Christ in His kingdom; and to tenderly and charitably, but plainly and decidedly, oppose and discountenance all and every known error, immorality, neglect or perversion of divine institutions.*

There is much in this document that is edifying and essential to the welfare of the true church of Christ. We commend it to our churches for study and reflection.

Consistent with past history, the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over church and state continues to be upheld as a foundational principle of the RPCNA. *We reject the view that nations have no corporate responsibility for acknowledging and obeying Jesus Christ. (Testimony: 23.5) We reject the idea that Christians should not seek the establishment of Christian civil government. (Testimony: 23. 8)* Both the Christian and the church also have the duty to maintain public witness against national sins and for biblical justice. To this end the General Synod has a standing committee to appeal to the civil governments of Canada and the United States to witness against national sins, to promote biblical justice, and to seek a constitutional amendment recognizing the Lord Jesus as King of the nation. At times in her history her political distinctives threatened to overshadow the preaching of Christ and Him crucified.

In the last 50 years or so, the emphasis on political dissent and a constitutional amendment has waned, and there has been evident recovery of the church's task to preach the Gospel as God's holy, spiritual nation living amongst the temporal nations of the earth along with a renewed emphasis on faithful worship. In his *Foreword* to the 2005 republication of W. Melancthon Glasgow's The History of the Presbyterian Church in America, first published in 1888, Nathaniel Pockras writes:

*In 1888, if a Covenanter minister were asked to name the most distinctive principle of his church, the response would surely deal with political dissent—an issue about which many members know little today. If a similar question were asked of an RP minister today, the response would surely deal with worship—a matter relatively little debated then.*

The RPCNA continues to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints and to strive to maintain the pure worship of God. At its 177th Synod, in 2008, the Synod by a unanimous vote *declared solidarity with Reformed brethren in rejecting the “New Perspectives on Paul” and “The Federal Vision.” The delegates reaffirmed their commitment to the biblical, historical, and confessional doctrine of justification. The Synod recommended the study reports on the matter of the PCA, OPC, RCUS, and Mid-America Reformed Seminary for use within its churches.* (RPCNA Report to NAPARC 2008)

### **Church order and polity**

The Testimony traces the idea of authority from Christ through the members of the church to the officebearers:

*The Lord Jesus Christ has clothed His Church with power and authority. This authority is vested in the whole membership of the Church, which has the right to choose its officers from among those of its own members who possess the scriptural qualifications.* (25:6)

*Christ has appointed in His Word a particular form of government for the visible church. It is government by elders (Greek: presbyters) and is therefore called presbyterian. Each congregation should be ruled by a session of ordained elders, elected by the membership of the congregation.* (25.7)

The congregation is required to meet annually. *It shall elect its own chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer, although the treasurer may be elected by the board of deacons.* (Form of Government, 2:13) *The congregation and its officers are under the oversight of the session. At its meeting the members of the congregation elect elders to rule them, and deacons to minister mercy in their midst.*

The officebearers of the church are elders and deacons: *The permanent officers to be set apart by ordination are elders and deacons. The office of elder is restricted in Scripture to men. Women as well as men may hold the office of deacon. Ordination is a solemn setting apart to a specific office by the laying on of the hands of a court of the Church and is not to be repeated. Installation is the official constitution of a relationship between one who is ordained and the congregation.* (25:8)

RPCNA polity recognizes a distinction between two types of elders: teaching and ruling. (25:9) They are also distinguished by their vows of ordination. *The ruling elders promise to watch over the spiritual growth of the members of the congregation, to endeavor to win others to Christ, to*

*visit the afflicted and to attend the meetings associated with [their] office. The ministers, as the teaching elders are also called in RPCNA polity, promise to bring to [their] congregation the fruits of earnest study of the Word, to maintain a testimony for the Kingdom of God, to endeavor to minister to others and win them to Christ, and to watch for souls as one[s] who must give account. (Queries for Ordination, Installation, and Licensure: 8)*

At the same time, the testimony asserts that *[a]ll elders are equal in the government of the church. This office is referred to in Scripture by two terms used synonymously: elder, and bishop or overseer. [25:9]* In RPCNA polity, the teaching elder/pastor is a member of the congregation and his ministerial credentials are held by the presbytery. (*Form of Government 2.1*)

Another distinction is made between the authority of the elder and of the deacon. The elders alone have authority to rule in the courts of the church: *The elders are organized in courts (the session, the presbytery and the Synod) to which is committed the power of governing the church and of ordaining officers. This power is moral and spiritual, and subject to the law of God. (25:10)* The authority of the deacon is not the same as that of the elder; the diaconate is subordinate to the session of the church: *The diaconate is a spiritual office subordinate to the session and is not a teaching or ruling office. The deacons have responsibility for the ministry of mercy, the finances and property of the congregation, and such other tasks as are assigned to them by the session. (Testimony: 25:11)* The Form of Government (2.1) recognizes the oversight of the elders when it defines a local congregation as *a fully organized congregation...made up of a group of members with a session of elders for the oversight of the congregation and a board of deacons responsible chiefly for the ministry of mercy and stewardship.*

Sessions send certified delegates to each meeting of Synod, which also meets annually. The Synod is referred to as *the highest court of the church, and is the body of organic union, cooperation, and mutual helpfulness, between the presbyteries. It is responsible for the continuing reformation of the church in maintaining the subordinate standards of the church in harmony with the Scriptural truth and order. Its decisions are final, but its authority is limited by its subordinate standards.*

### **Liturgy and liturgical forms**

The worship of the RPCNA is set forth in the *Directory of the Worship of God* (1945) and its denominational songbooks, *The Book of Psalms for Singing* (1973) and the recently published *The Book of Psalms for Worship* (2009), a thoroughgoing update and revision of the previous songbook. A revision and updating of *The Directory of the Worship of God* is nearing completion. The revised *Directory* remains faithful to the Reformed principles of worship spelled out in the earlier version, and in the doctrinal standards.

The doctrine of worship is beautifully and succinctly summarized in the opening article of the *Directory*: *Christian worship is the expression of the soul's love for God, dependence on God and joy in God. God alone, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, is the object of worship. Worship is to be offered only in accordance with His appointment, and in harmony with the Scriptural principle that whatsoever is not commanded in the worship of God is forbidden. Worship is acceptable only as it is offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. (1.1)*

The Directory does not require a particular order of worship, but does stipulate the biblical elements that belong to divine worship. *The parts of public worship named in the Word of God are: praise; prayer; the reading, preaching, and hearing of the Word of God; the presentation of offerings; the benediction; and the administration of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. To these may be added special ordinances, as fasting, thanksgiving and public covenanting. (Directory: 1.8).* In 1.9 the Directory helpfully suggests an order to follow but forbids the church to establish an *unchangeable order of public worship.*

The *Directory* gives substantial attention to singing in worship, requiring that only the psalms be sung, without instruments. It states: *The singing of praise is an ordinance of worship and is expressed in words set to music. The Psalms of the Bible, by reason of their excellence and their Divine inspiration and appointment are to be sung in the worship of God, to the exclusion of all songs and hymns of human composition. They are to be sung without the accompaniment of instruments, inasmuch as these are not authorized in the New Testament. (2.1)*

Set liturgical forms are not used within the RPCNA. With respect to baptism the *Directory* simply states: *The minister shall give a brief explanation of the meaning and purpose of the Sacrament. (3.5)* However, a consecration formula must be spoken prior to the baptism [*"Bless so much of the element of water as shall be used upon this occasion, which we hereby, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, set apart from a common to a sacramental use."* (3.6)] and the following baptismal formula is stipulated: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God over all, blessed forever. AMEN."* (3.6) Vows to be made by the parents are also required and provided in the *Directory*. A congregational vow following the baptism is suggested.

More detailed directions are given for the administration of the Lord's Supper, including words that are to be spoken before, during, and after the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Marriage vows and other key elements of a Christian marriage are also set forth by the *Directory*.

### **Preaching, sacraments, and discipline**

The Form of Government and Directory for worship does not require RPCNA congregations to hold two services on the Lord's Day. It is the common practice to assemble twice for worship on Sundays, but in some places where members are scattered over a large area, only one service is held. The second service is usually less formal than the first.

In each service, the Word of God is preached. The Directory for Worship defines preaching in the following way:

*The sermon is a discourse based upon a passage of Scripture, unfolding the truth taught, and applying it to the hearts and consciences of the hearers, including the children. Its purpose is to convict and convert sinners, to lead them to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, to build them up in the most holy faith, and to fill them with zeal for the Kingdom of God on earth, that they may glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The minister is ordained to bear*

*witness for the whole truth as it is in Jesus Christ and against all error, wrong, and injustice, without respect of persons. (2.11)*

Hearing the sermon also receives attention:

*The worshipers in the fact and manner of their attention have a part in the preaching. They should attend upon it “with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in their hearts, and practice it in their lives” (Shorter Catechism, Answer 90). (2.13)*

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are faithfully observed. The *Directory* requires that *[b]aptism is to be administered to those who make a credible profession of their faith in Christ and to their children. (3.4)*

The Lord’s Supper is administered only to communicant members who have made a credible profession of faith and have assented to the Covenant of Communicant Membership. Frequency is not prescribed; the Lord’s Supper is to be *observed at stated intervals, as often as the session may decide. (Directory: 3.8)* Observance of the Lord’s Supper in Reformed Presbyterian congregations ranges from twice a year to every week.

The congregation must be exhorted to engage in self-examination prior to the celebration. Regarding the supervision of the Lord’s Supper, a wide variety of practices is used. In order to commune, non-members must be members of an evangelical church, and give a credible confession of faith to the Session. Some sessions would require that a quorum of elders is needed to examine candidates for communion; other sessions would allow several elders to meet with candidates and report back to the session. The *Directory* states:

- a. The Lord’s Supper is to be administered only to those who have been baptized, and are communicant members in good standing in some true branch of the visible church.*
- b. No person should be admitted to the Lord’s Supper whose manner of life is notably inconsistent with his Christian profession or who is unknown to the session in charge of the Table. Casual visitors are not to be invited to commune.*
- c. Every session must guard the purity of the Sacrament by exercising diligent and continual oversight of those under its care, never assuming that church membership alone is sufficient basis for admission to the Sacrament. Those who seek to commune but are not under care of the session must be examined. (3.10)*

The *Directory* adds an interesting note: *The use of tables, which has come down from the past, has helped to guard the purity of the ordinance and should not lightly be set aside. (3.13)*

The discipline of the RPCNA is clearly spelled out in a recent version of *The Book of Discipline*, adopted by the General Synod in 2003. The Book of Discipline opens thus: *Discipline is a vital element in discipleship, and discipleship, in turn, is based upon a call by Jesus involving a personal allegiance to Him in love and obedience... The purpose of Christian discipline is to bring about a redemptive change, and a continuing growth toward holiness in the life of a Christian. Although we all fall into sin, as Christians we must still become involved in every process which produces righteousness and leads an individual toward growth in grace. Thus, Christians must set a good example of encouraging each other in love and in good deeds (Heb. 10:24). (Book of Discipline, Introduction)*

Several purposes for Church Discipline are listed: *primarily, to reclaim a sinning member; then to deter others from similar offenses; to maintain the honor of Christ and the purity and peace of His Church; to maintain the truth of the gospel; and to avoid the wrath of God coming upon the church.* (Discipline, 1:3)

Formal discipline is exercised in accordance with the pattern outlined by Christ in Matthew 18, and takes the following course: *admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition, and excommunication.* (Discipline: 4.1) Suggested forms are provided in *The Book of Discipline* for each step. Deposition applies only to office-bearers. Members may be excommunicated without the involvement of presbytery; suspension, deposition and excommunication of officebearers is under the jurisdiction of the presbytery. Provision is made for a special judicial commission to adjudicate a trial in place of the session, presbytery or general synod. A judicial commission is permitted to bring to trial officebearers and members whom the session refuses to try.

When discipline is exercised officially, the session functions as a “court.” If they are convinced that they have been wronged, members may appeal to the “higher” church courts (Presbytery or Synod).

#### **Theological education for ministers**

In order for a man to become a teaching elder or minister in the RPCNA, the following steps must be taken:

- a. *He must present himself to his session as one desiring to prepare himself to become a teaching elder.*
- b. *If the session supports his intentions they shall request presbytery to take him under care.*
- c. *In ordinary cases he shall complete a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent before undertaking specific theological education.*
- d. *Upon completion of his collegiate degree or its equivalent and his reception by presbytery as a student of theology, he shall be expected to complete the course of seminary instruction required by his presbytery leading to a Master of Divinity or its equivalent.*
- e. *Under ordinary circumstances he shall be expected to attend at least one full year in a Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. (Form of Government)*

The RPCNA has its own seminary, called the “Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary” in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It has five full-time professors and eight adjunct professors. Students can obtain a Master of Divinity or a Master of Theological Studies degree there. The Seminary is under the direct control of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and is governed through a Board of Trustees, elected by that body.

In addition, there are two other institutions controlled by the RPCNA which, though not accredited, offer a diploma. These are the Ottawa Theological Hall, in Ottawa, Canada, and Kobe Theological Hall, in Kobe, Japan. After receiving a diploma from these institutions, students can pursue further studies at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh to obtain the required degree.

We recommend entering into Phase Two Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RPCNA for the following reasons.

- a. They are a federation of true churches of Christ confessing the same like precious Reformed faith as we. The Reformed faith lives among them in a vibrant and faithful manner as indicated by the Phase One dialogue summarized in this report.
- b. The presence of women deacons among them is an historic practice that predates the feminism of the latter half of the 20 century and is not the product of a liberal and destructive hermeneutic. In their polity, deacons are not part of the ruling body of the church. Their position on woman deacons is no different than that of women deacons in the ERQ with whom we do have Phase Two relations.
- c. It is unlikely that we will, in the foreseeable future, recommend moving to Phase Three – Church Union, with the RPCNA because of the unlikelihood that a plan of union could be crafted that would work out a compromise acceptable to both regarding their practice of exclusive psalmody without musical accompaniment.
- d. A Phase Two relationship with the RPCNA will allow greater opportunity for iron to sharpen iron. The RPCNA has an extensive program of short term mission opportunities which could provide our members with additional opportunities to bear witness to the love of Christ in a needy world.
- e. The RPCNA broke fraternal ties with the CRCNA in 2002 and supported the expulsion of the CRCNA from NAPARC over the issue of women elders.
- f. The RPCNA presently has Fraternal Relations (similar to our Phase Two) with the following federations: ARP, OPC, KAPC, PC Eastern Australia, PCA, and RCUS. In 2005, the RPCNA extended an invitation to us to enter into Fraternal Relations with them.

## **B. Churches in Phase Two– Ecclesiastical Fellowship**

### **1. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)**

Of all of our contacts, we believe the Canadian Reformed Churches are generally the churches with which we share the most in common, in terms of confession, history, and church polity. Our pursuit of unity has and continues to present its challenges, but, we trust it has also been a blessing. Certainly the testimony of those from the Canadian Reformed side, with whom we interact, has uniformly been that this pursuit has and continues to be a great blessing to them.

With regard to our relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches, at our most recent synod (London 2010), we said:

Art. 47, p.28

*Recommendations:*

1. *That Synod explicitly reaffirm our conviction that the Canadian Reformed Churches are a federation of true and faithful churches of Christ, whom we love and respect as fellow-workers in the kingdom. **Adopted without dissent***
2. *That Synod express thanks to the members of our unity committees, as well as the members of the corresponding committees in the Canadian Reformed Churches, for their faithful service. **Adopted***
3. *That Synod encourage the churches to facilitate further opportunities to interact with the Canadian Reformed Churches by implementing the essential*

*work of organizing events, speaking at conferences, writing columns, filling pulpits, and otherwise building the organic, heartfelt unity on which federative unity must be built." **Adopted***

Synod London also continued the work of the Joint Church Order Committee with respect to the CanRC.

With these decisions, synod placed the responsibility of building “organic heartfelt unity” upon the churches, not primarily upon CERCU. However since our committee mandate also entails pursuing unity, we have been seeking to encourage the churches in the task given them by the last synod. We have focused on getting to know one another and getting to trust one another.

**1. Getting to know one another.**

When the URCNA was formed, the congregations did not affiliate with one another in a federation on the basis of knowing every other congregation but rather on the basis of confessional agreement; something which does exist between the URCNA and the CanRC. Nevertheless, the close contact which many of our churches had prior to 1995 in the Alliance of Reformed Churches and its predecessor organizations, greatly facilitated the formation of the URCNA. If we are to develop good relations with the Canadian Reformed congregations, we need to open our pulpits to their ministers and our minister need to preach in their churches. Classes need to extend invitations to fraternal delegates for the purpose of developing closer ties. Classes should also hold joint CanRC/URCNA classis meetings (where feasible). Classical clerks (or the appropriate functionary or committee) should invite classical representatives from the CanRC to give a presentation regarding the URCNA/CanRC relationship. As a step toward getting to know each other Rev. Willem den Hollander of the CanRC has given a brief presentation on CanRC/URCNA history and relations which can be viewed at Youtube.com. Lack of knowledge of one another can contribute to the concern that our two denominations are simply too different from each other. However, we should not fear diversity within confessional bounds. It can be a source of strength, provided that those who disagree on non-confessional matters make no attempt to bind the conscience of others.

**2. Getting to trust one another.**

There are some in the URC who mistakenly associate the CanRC with the Federal Vision (FV) stream of thought. Given the positions taken against FV by the URCNA and other NAPARC denominations, such a view naturally breeds distrust. Dr. Wes Bredenhof of the CanRC has written a series of articles to help dispel this false perception by distinguishing the CanRC from FV. (The article, in three installments, can be found at <http://www.reformedfellowship.net/articles.htm> or in the July/August 2011 Outlook magazine and the next two issues of that magazine).

Our CanRC brothers readily acknowledge that there has existed in the CanRCs an element of exclusivism which has been a hindrance to fraternal relations. However, this has changed a great deal in the last decade, especially because of their contacts with the URC and their involvement in NAPARC. The old thinking that existed among some in

the CanRC was that there could be only one visible manifestation of the true church in any location. This was never an official position and it is now far less common. Membership in NAPARC, for example, involves them with denominations with which they do not have any other form of fraternal relations, but membership in NAPARC entails the recognition that these other bodies are faithful manifestations of the true church.

There is also a fear among some of our churches that the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) is hierarchical. However, we have to ask ourselves if this is not more an indication of a functional congregationalism that may exist among us because of our past experience in the CRC where, to be faithful to God's Word and the Reformed confessions, we got used to distrusting and ignoring decisions of the broader assemblies. We would do well to remember that by 1994 (and perhaps a decade earlier), the progressives in the CRC were in the majority and that even if all the congregations had delegates at a synod, the conservatives would have been outvoted. The abuse of a system of government by unprincipled men (who sign the Form of Subscription while concealing different sentiments) should not cause us to reject a system of government that has served Reformed churches well for over four hundred years. There is no system of church government that can guarantee the preservation of orthodoxy from generation to generation, and those systems that tend toward independency only make it easier for churches to depart from sound teaching and practice. We heartily encourage the provisional adoption of the PJCO as the church order to be used if and when a merger is effected with the CanRC.

In summary, CERCU encourages each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA. The Canadian Reformed brothers expressed their eagerness and willingness to come to any classis to address any concerns to enable us to come to know and trust one another more fully.

Those who have been involved in the process of facilitating greater unity have been profoundly impacted with the spirit of unity. Throughout the process, warm and cordial relationships have been formed and misconceptions dispelled. We have experienced how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity (Psalm 133:1).

## 2. **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

During 2010, the OPC experienced a growth of 1.51 % bringing membership to a total of 29,842 souls gathered in 327 particular and mission congregations, and served by 494 ministers, 1075 ruling elders, and 835 deacons. The OPC has extensive mission work in Asia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Japan, Quebec, Ukraine, Uganda, Uruguay and South Africa. Over 50 home mission works were sustained or begun in 2010 with more fields opened in 2011. A resource book for church planters, *Planting an Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, is available online and in print.

We do not anticipate a move to Phase Three, *Church Union*, with the OPC in the near future since uniting with churches that share the same confessional basis (the Three Forms of Unity) should take priority, unless a synod should decide otherwise for a particular federation or

denomination. Because the confessional basis and church polity of the OPC are different than ours, the prospect of working out an acceptable plan of union is more distant."

Nevertheless, as we have always sensed a deep sense of spiritual unity and affinity with our brethren in the OPC, both historically and doctrinally, we appreciate that we have much to learn from this body. Perhaps particularly in the area of missions, both at home and abroad, our churches could benefit greatly from intensified ecumenical contact and fellowship with these churches. We encourage those classes and congregations in geographic proximity with OPC classes and congregations to continue the exchange of fraternal delegates, and to engage in other ecumenical activities that may be available.

### **3. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)**

In 2011, the RCUS consisted of about 43 congregations and 3,792 members. In 2000 they reported 4,236 members.

We are in Phase Two, Ecclesiastical Fellowship, with the RCUS and do not anticipate recommending moving forward to Phase Three, Church Union, any time in the foreseeable future primarily because there is no serious interest among the majority of leaders in the RCUS for a merger with any federation.

We encourage those classes and congregations in geographic proximity with RCUS classes and congregations to continue the exchange of fraternal delegates, and to engage in other ecumenical activities that may be available.

### **4. Reformed Church of Quebec / L'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ)**

The ERQ consists of five congregations and a total of about 300 members. They have accepted our invitation to enter into Phase Two, Ecclesiastical Fellowship.

We do not anticipate recommending moving forward to Phase Three, Church Union, any time in the foreseeable future for two reasons. First, the ERQ is a French speaking federation in a French speaking culture (Quebec). The ERQ has no intention of transitioning to the English language because their outreach is to a French speaking culture. Language barriers are a natural boundary which hinders the kind of close cooperation and contact needed to function together well in one federation. Secondly, their representative at NAPARC 2011 explained that the majority of their leaders and members have no desire for merger with anyone for fear that they would lose their unique identity. They do not want to become "but a drop in the ocean of Reformed churches."

We encourage those classes and congregations in geographic proximity with ERQ classes and congregations to continue the exchange of fraternal delegates, and to engage in other ecumenical activities that may be available.

## C. NAPARC

On November 14-16, 2011, most of the members of CERCU met in Atlanta Georgia in connection with NAPARC 2011.

The URCNA is presently in Phase One – *Corresponding Relations* with all of the Churches of NAPARC except for those four federations with whom we have a Phase Two – *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* relationship, namely the CanRC, the RCUS, the OPC and the ERQ.

It was a great encouragement to fellowship with representatives from the NAPARC member churches and to be reminded of the work that God is doing through the various denominations as well as the unity we enjoy in Christ and in our confessions. Of particular interest at this year's meeting was an extended discussion on the commitment of the respective NAPARC churches to element of the Basis and Constitution of NAPARC *to hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice*. Part of this involved a helpful, challenging and encouraging presentation by Dr. Robert Godfrey of Westminster Seminary in California.

Dr. Godfrey challenged the member churches of NAPARC with "A Reformed Dream" he had published already about 10 years ago. This dream is of a united Presbyterian and Reformed church federation, made up of multiple denominations of Reformed Confessions under one uniting organizational structure. In such an organization, the federations or synods which make up its membership would be able to maintain their respective church orders and government, without interference by the broader uniting assembly or synod. Yet such an umbrella structure would serve as a testimony to the world, through a common name, of our unity, and provide meaningful assistance and cooperation among the churches. It would also exercise real ecclesiastical authority, at the least in receiving or excising the membership of churches on the basis of their adherence to the Reformed Confessions.

The attractiveness of this notion at this time would be the hope that such a model might also provide the avenue and incentive for greater, more complete, organic unity to continue to develop within the broader structure being proposed. Without dissent, a motion was approved to give Dr. Godfrey's proposal to an existing committee of NAPARC (Committee of Review) for further consideration in order to come with recommendations at the next NAPARC meeting.

It will be our (the URCNA's) turn to host NAPARC in November 2012. Arrangements have been made for the meeting to take place on the grounds of Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

Regarding all NAPARC federations, the classes, and in particular the classical clerks are urged to remain diligent in inviting fraternal observers (Phase One churches) and fraternal delegates (Phase Two churches) from local NAPARC classes or presbyteries to our classical meetings. In the letter of invitation the clerk should remind the churches that we welcome input from the speakers. We also desire fraternal contact for the purpose of fostering closer organic unity through informal conversations during meals and breaks. It might also be beneficial to remind the invitees (as well as ourselves) of the stated purposes of NAPARC membership:

1. To facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common and by the sharing of insights “communicate advantages to one another” (*Institutes IV, 2, 1*).
2. To promote the appointment of joint committees to study matters of common interest and concern.
3. To exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.
4. To promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.

Although we are allowed only four official delegates to NAPARC, we attempted to gather our whole committee together to conduct our annual meeting among ourselves and also to have bilateral talks with a number of delegations from the other member federations. We had bilateral talks with the FRC, OPC, CanRC, RPCNA and the HRC. This proved to be a very economical use of our budget. We had these meetings before NAPARC started, during meal breaks and after NAPARC concluded. Those of our number not delegated to NAPARC were nonetheless allowed to observe and enjoyed the many opportunities for informal fellowship with all the delegates from the member federations. We have suggested to NAPARC that the official schedule be designed in the future to allow for more in depth bilateral meetings.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

1. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to committee Reporter Rev. Harry Zekveld to make a summarizing presentation of the work, hopes and expectations of the committee (Regulations for Synodical Procedure **5.1.3**). And, that the committee chairman and secretary shall have the privilege of the floor when committee matters are being considered (Regulations **5.4.2**).
2. That the classes be reminded of their continuing responsibility to appoint or reappoint classical representatives (and alternates) to CERCU in the manner the classes deem appropriate.
3. That Synod clarify its understanding of the approach that will need to be taken when the dates that terms of committee members are scheduled to end do not coincide with the date of the synod.
4. That Synod appoint or re-appoint three members-at-large. Revs. Bill Pols and Peter Vellenga are eligible for reappointment.
5. That Synod set the budget for CERCU at \$6,500.00 per annum.
6. That Synod remind the churches of our mutual responsibility to engage one another in our ecumenical task through classical dialogue, local efforts and the expression of concerns.
7. That the URCNA enter into Phase Two *Ecclesiastical Fellowship* with the RPCNA and make arrangements for ratification by the churches according to Church Order Article 36.

#### ***Grounds:***

- a. They are a federation of true churches of Christ confessing the same like precious Reformed faith as we. The Reformed faith lives among them in a vibrant and faithful manner as indicated by the Phase One dialogue summarized in this report.
- b. The presence of women deacons among them is an historic practice that predates the feminism of the latter half of the 20 century and is not the product of a liberal and

destructive hermeneutic. In their polity, deacons are not part of the ruling body of the church. Their position on woman deacons is no different than that of women deacons in the ERQ with whom we do have Phase Two relations.

- c. It is unlikely that we will, in the foreseeable future, recommend moving to Phase Three *Church Union*, with the RPCNA because of the unlikelihood that a plan of union could be crafted that would work out a compromise acceptable to both regarding their practice of exclusive psalmody without musical accompaniment.
  - d. A Phase Two relationship with the RPCNA will allow greater opportunity for iron to sharpen iron. The RPCNA has an extensive program of short term mission opportunities which could provide our members with additional opportunities to bear witness to the love of Christ in a needy world.
  - e. The RPCNA broke fraternal ties with the CRCNA in 2002 and supported the expulsion of the CRC from NAPARC over the issue of women elders.
  - f. The RPCNA presently has Fraternal Relations (similar to our Phase Two) with the following federations: ARP, OPC, KAPC, PC Eastern Australia, PCA, and RCUS. In 2005, the RPCNA extended an invitation to us to enter into Fraternal Relations with them.
8. That Synod encourage each classis and consistory to continue to engage the issue of an eventual merger between the CanRC and the URCNA by inviting Canadian Reformed ministers to fill our pulpits, inviting Canadian Reformed representatives to our classis meetings, seeking open dialogue with Canadian Reformed brothers regarding any outstanding areas of concern, organizing joint events with Canadian Reformed congregations, attending joint conferences, and writing columns to foster our mutual understanding and affection

**Grounds:**

- a. Those who have been involved in the process of facilitating greater unity have been profoundly impacted with the spirit of unity. Throughout the process, further dialogue has consistently resulted in warm and cordial relationships and misconceptions have been dispelled.
  - b. This would be an encouragement to the Canadian Reformed Churches who through their synodical communications have expressed their willingness to continue working through the challenges involved in seeking unity.
  - c. Our own unity as emerging URCNA churches was formed through much of these kinds of relations and interactions before our own official start together.
9. That Synod approve the work of the committee without adopting every formulation in its dialogue.

Humbly submitted,  
Rev. John A. Bouwers, chairman  
Rev. Ralph A. Pontier, secretary



## Report of the Proposed Joint Church Order Committee to Synod 2012

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### 1. Decisions of URCNA Synod London 2010

Regarding The Proposed Joint Church Order 2010 and the URCNA Church Order Committee, Synod London made two sets of decisions.

The first set is found in Article 41 (Acts of Synod 2010, pages 25-26):

1. That Synod thank the committee for the work it has completed;
2. That Synod receive for information the committee report and the PJCO 2010 (with the two-column document comparing PJCO 2007 and PJCO 2010 as an appendix, as well as the Majority and Minority Reports on PJCO Article 36).
3. That Synod accept for continued study the PJCO 2010 as the Church Order for a united federation of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches.
4. That Synod remind the churches that suggested changes to PJCO 2010 should be directed to the Synod by way of overture through the Classes.
5. That Synod take note of and mandate the Proposed Joint Church Order Committee to develop Forms of Discipline for a united federation.
6. That Synod reappoint the current committee for the sake of continuity, with the mandate to continue working closely with the church order sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches to draft joint regulations for synodical procedure and to address matters yet unfinished (such as PJCO Article 4).
7. That Synod declare that this be our answer to Overture 18.

Grounds:

- a. Recommending continued study by the Churches would promote the opportunity for harvesting the good fruit produced by the committee.
- b. With regard to G.3. of the Report (Recommendations 3. above), Advisory Committee 7 chose to use the phrase "accept for continued study" instead of "adopt" is used because the PJCO 2010 is a work in progress.

The second set is found in Article 45: (Acts of Synod 2010, page 27): That Synod withhold action on the recommendations of the Majority and Minority Reports regarding Article 35 (PJCO 2010, Article 36).

Ground: the PJCO 2010 has been received and accepted for continued study, it is still subject to change by way of overture.

## 2. Mandate

Based on points 5 & 6 above, the mandate of the reappointed Proposed Joint Church Order Committee is as follows:

1. To develop Forms of Discipline for a united federation.
2. To continue working closely with the church order sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches to draft joint regulations for synodical procedure and to address matters yet unfinished (such as PJCO Article 4).

## 3. The Committee and its activities

The committee members are Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, and Mr. Harry VanGurp. Dr. Kloosterman indicated that he would not be present for our joint meeting, and has subsequently resigned from the committee. A letter of thanks by the committee for his faithful and diligent work was sent to him.

The members of the Canadian Reformed Church Order Sub Committee, also reappointed by Synod Burlington 2010, are Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art Witten. They received the following mandate (Acts of General Synod Burlington 2010, Article 151, p. 238):

- 4.4.1 To give a final evaluation of the letters from the churches.
- 4.4.2 To finalize those matters deemed to be yet unfinished (see: Article 4 PJCO).
- 4.4.3 To adopt the recommendations under Consideration 3.3 in consultation with the committee of the URCNA.
- 4.4.4 To prepare a final edition for Synod 2013, sending it to the churches six months prior to synod.

We met with the Canadian Reformed Church Order Sub Committee as a joint committee for four days in June 2011. Since Dr. Kloosterman, our previous chairman indicated that he could not be present at the joint meeting we chose Rev. Scheuers as our chairman. As before, Mr. Nordeman prepared the Press Release, Rev. VanWoudenberg recorded the minutes, and Rev. Nederveen kept track of the changes adopted to the Proposed Joint Church Order (PJCO) since 2010. A single set of minutes was kept and a common press release published. An additional two day meeting was held in July 2011 by committee members Sikkema and VanGurp with the Canadian Reformed committee in order to finish a draft proposal for joint synodical regulations. We continued to enjoy excellent working relationship both internally as well as with the brothers of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

#### **4. Matters yet unfinished**

As indicated above, the mandate of the Canadian Reformed Church Order Sub Committee included evaluating letters from their churches in response to the PJCO 2010 (4.4.1 above), and consulting with the URCNA Proposed Joint Church Order Committee about adopting formulations for specific articles in the PJCO as recommended by Synod Burlington 2010 (4.4.3 cf. their Acts of Synod Burlington, Article 151, Consideration 3.3).

The PJCO Committee decided that it was proper to consider such additional matters thus brought forward by our Canadian Reformed brothers. Although Synod London decided that suggested changes to PJCO 2010 should be directed to the Synod by way of overture through the classes, the committee understood this as a direction to the churches, and not a restriction of the PJCO Committee's freedom to consider additional changes. Furthermore, given our task to continue working closely with the Canadian Reformed Church Order Sub Committee, your committee judged that these matters thus brought to our attention belonged to "matters yet unfinished". Many of the proposed changes deal with minor matters and linguistic questions. Others, such as the new proposed Article 4, are of a more substantial nature. The committee recommends these changes as valuable improvements to the 2010 edition of the PJCO. The attached document called "Comments on the PJCO 2012" constitutes our report on this matter. The reader will wish to read through this document with the two-column document comparing PJCO 2012 to PJCO 2010 at hand.

#### **5. Forms for discipline**

Synod London 2010's mandate included the task of drafting forms for discipline, evidently in consultation with the CanRC Church Order Sub Committee. Thankfully we were able to draft proposed forms for discipline for a united federation. Please find this in an attached document called "Proposed Forms for Discipline for a United Federation."

#### **6. Synodical Regulations**

Synod London 2010 also mandated its committee to continue working closely with the church order sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches to draft joint regulations for synodical procedure. We were not able in the course of our single joint meeting to come to a proposal on this matter. We also did not consider it a prudent usage of time and resources to call for another joint meeting (requiring substantial travel) just to finish off this matter, particularly since such regulations would only function if the PJCO is actually adopted for usage in a combined federation.

The joint committee had several rounds of discussion noting such points as:

- Regulations should focus on "housekeeping" rules. These regulations can fairly easily be modified, whereas the Church Order cannot easily be changed;
- The regulations should fit with the PJCO;
- The difference in length of the current procedures in each federation is due to history. The CanRCs have a number of "unwritten procedures" that function. There is not as much of

this in the URCNAs as compared to the CanRCs;

- The regulations should foster deliberation;
- There is a common fear of functionaries with power: this has to be kept in mind.

The joint committee then mandated the brothers living in Ontario, Canada to compose a draft that could eventually be used by the joint committee to come with a definitive proposal. This draft could give the churches an idea of how the synods of a united federation would work. At the same time this draft could serve as the basis for an actual proposal from the joint committee upon the synods adopting the PJCO. Please find this draft in an attached document called “Draft for Synodical Regulations.”

## **7. Conclusion**

The committee thanks the Lord for the work that could be done, and for the ongoing spirit of brotherly harmony and growing understanding and love between the brothers from the Canadian Reformed Churches and the brothers from the United Reformed Churches. We pray that the Lord will bless our work as we move forward as federations towards full unity.

With a sense of humble gratitude to the Lord for blessing our efforts we present to Synod 2012 this report and the following attached items:

1. The revised Proposed Joint Church Order called PJCO 2012
2. A two-column document comparing PJCO 2012 to PJCO 2010
3. Comments on PJCO 2012
4. The Press Release of our July 2011 joint meeting
5. Proposed Forms for Discipline for a United Federation
6. Draft for Synodical Regulations

## **8. Recommendations**

In concert with the Church Order Sub Committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Proposed Joint Church Order Committee recommends that:

1. Synod thank the committee for the work it has completed;
2. Synod receive the committee report and the PJCO 2012 (with the two-column document comparing PJCO 2010 and PJCO 2012 as an appendix);
3. Synod provisionally adopt PJCO 2012 as the Church Order for a united federation of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches;
4. Synod provisionally adopt the Forms for Discipline for a united federation of the United Reformed Churches in North America and the Canadian Reformed Churches;
5. Synod, contingent upon the (provisional) adoption of PJCO 2012 by the Canadian Reformed Churches general synod 2013, reappoint, for the sake of continuity, members of the current committee who are able to serve, with additional members for a total of four, with the mandate to continue working closely with the Church Order Sub Committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches in North America to finalize synodical regulations.

Respectfully submitted,

William Pols  
Ronald Scheuers  
Raymond J. Sikkema  
Harry VanGurp

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Biblical and Confessional Basis**

We Reformed believers maintain that the standard for personal, public, and ecclesiastical life is God's Word, the inspired, infallible, and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. As a federation of churches we declare our complete subjection and obedience to that Word of God. We also declare that we are confessional churches, in that we believe and are fully persuaded that the Three Forms of Unity, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, summarize and do fully agree with the Word of God. Therefore, we fully agree with these Reformed Confessions.

Both the Word of God and these Reformed Confessions demand that in our ecclesiastical structure and rule we openly acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the supreme and only Head of the church. Christ exercises His headship in the churches by His Word and Spirit through the ordained offices, for the sake of purity of doctrine, holiness of life, the spread of the gospel, and order in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:40). The churches of our federation, although distinct, willingly display their unity and accountability, both to each other and especially to Christ, by means of our common Confessions and this Church Order. Congregations manifest this unity when their delegates meet together in the broader assemblies.

### **Historical Background**

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, at various ecclesiastical assemblies, with the first official assembly held in Emden, Germany in 1571. For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

The Church Order adopted at Emden was revised at the Synods of Dordrecht (1574 and 1578), Middelburg (1581), and The Hague (1586), before being adopted by the well-known Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619). Our Church Order follows the principles and structure of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

### **Foundational Statements**

The following list of foundational statements, though not exhaustive, provides a clear biblical basis for and source of our Church Order.

1. The church is the possession of Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant.  
Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27
2. As Mediator of the New Covenant, Christ is the Head of the church.  
Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-24; Colossians 1:18
3. Because the church is Christ's possession and He is its Head, the principles governing the church are determined not by human preference, but by biblical teaching.  
Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:18; II Timothy 3:16-17

4. The catholic or universal church possesses a spiritual unity in Christ and in the Holy Scriptures.  
Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20, 4:3-4; I Timothy 3:15; II John 9
5. In its subjection to its heavenly Head, the universal church is governed by Christ from heaven by means of His Word and Spirit with the keys of the kingdom, which He has given to the local church for that purpose. Therefore, no church may lord it over another church.  
Matthew 16:19; 23:8; John 20:22-23; Acts 14:23; 20:28-32
6. The offices of minister, elder, and deacon are local in authority and function. The Lord gave no permanent universal, national, or regional offices to His church by which the churches are to be governed. Therefore, no office-bearer may lord it over another office-bearer.  
Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11-16; Titus 1:5
7. In order to manifest our spiritual unity, churches should seek contact with other faithful, confessionally Reformed churches for their mutual edification and as an effective witness to the world.  
John 17:21-23; Ephesians 4:1-6
8. The exercise of a federative relationship is possible only on the basis of unity in faith and in confession.  
I Corinthians 10:14-22; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:16-17
9. Although churches exist in certain circumstances without formal federative relationships, the well-being of the church requires that such relationships be entered wherever possible. Entering into or remaining in such relationships should be voluntary; there is however a spiritual obligation to seek and maintain the federative unity of the churches by formal bonds of fellowship and cooperation.  
Acts 11:22, 27-30; 15:22-35; Romans 15:25-27; I Corinthians 16:1-3; Colossians 4:16; I Thessalonians 4:9-10; Revelation 1:11, 20
10. Member churches meet together in broader assemblies to manifest ecclesiastical unity, to guard against human imperfections, and to benefit from the wisdom of many counselors. The decisions of such assemblies are settled and binding among the churches unless they are contrary to Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, or the adopted Church Order.  
Proverbs 11:14; Acts 15:1-35; I Corinthians 13:9-10; II Timothy 3:16-17
11. The church is mandated to exercise its ministry of reconciliation by proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth and by administering the sacraments in the congregation.  
Matthew 26:26-30; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:38-39; I Corinthians 11:17-34; II Corinthians 5:18-21
12. Christ cares for and governs His church through the office-bearers, namely, ministers, elders, and deacons, whom He chooses through the congregation.  
Acts 1:23-26; 6:2-3; 14:23; I Timothy 3:1, 8; 5:17

13. The Scriptures require that ministers, elders, and deacons be properly qualified for the suitable discharge of their respective offices.  
I Timothy 3:2-9; 4:16; II Timothy 2:14-16; 3:14; 4:1-5
14. Being the chosen and redeemed people of God, the church, under the supervision of the consistory, is called to worship Him in reverence and awe according to the scriptural principles governing worship.  
Leviticus 10:1-3; Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Psalm 95:1-2, 6; Psalm 100:4; John 4:24;  
Hebrews 12:28-29; I Peter 2:9
15. Since the church is the pillar and ground of the truth, it is called through its teaching ministry to build up the people of God in faith.  
Deuteronomy 11:19; Ephesians 4:11-16; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 2:2; 3:16-17
16. The church's evangelistic and missionary calling consists of preaching and teaching the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing new churches or expanding existing churches. This calling is fulfilled by ministers of the Word ordained to be missionaries, and by equipping the congregation to be the light of the world.  
Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 4:11-13; Philippians 2:14-16;  
I Peter 2:9-12; I Peter 3:15-16
17. Christian discipline, arising from God's love for His people, is exercised in the church to correct and strengthen the people of God, to maintain the unity and the purity of the church of Christ, and thereby to bring honor and glory to God's name.  
I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; Hebrews 12:7-11
18. The exercise of Christian discipline is first of all a personal duty of every church member, but when official discipline by the church, to whom the keys of the kingdom are entrusted, becomes necessary, it must be exercised by the consistory of the church.  
Matthew 18:15-20; John 20:22-23; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 5:13; I Peter 5:1-3

# CHURCH ORDER

## Article 1

### The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order

For maintaining proper ecclesiastical order, the Church Order must regulate the offices; the assemblies; the supervision of doctrine, worship, sacraments, and ceremonies; and the discipline. Therefore we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions:

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| I. Offices                               | (Articles 2-20)  |
| II. Assemblies                           | (Articles 21-33) |
| III. Worship, Sacraments, and Ceremonies | (Articles 34-48) |
| IV. Discipline                           | (Articles 49-59) |

## I. OFFICES

### Article 2

#### The Three Offices

The offices of the church are the minister of the Word, the elder, and the deacon. No one shall exercise an office without having been lawfully called to it with the cooperation of the congregation and without subscribing to the Three Forms of Unity.

### Article 3

#### The Duties of the Minister

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, visiting the members in their homes, comforting the sick with the Word of God, catechizing and instructing the youth in the doctrines of Scripture, and finally, together with the elders, watching over his fellow office-bearers, shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

### Article 4

#### Preparation for the Ministry

##### A. Theological Education

To train for the ministry of the Word, the churches shall maintain and support a theological seminary that is properly accountable to the churches.

Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. This consistory with the deacons shall also help him ensure that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.

##### B. Licensure

A man aspiring to the ministry shall seek licensure to exhort in the churches. Such licensure shall be granted only after the student has completed at least one year of theological education, and has sustained the prescribed Licensure Examination as conducted by his classis. Classis shall give license only to one who is preparing for the ministry, and only for

the duration of his theological training. All his work as a licentiate shall be conducted under the supervision of the consistory where the work is performed.

#### C. Candidacy

At the conclusion of his training a student shall ask his consistory to request classis to conduct the prescribed Candidacy Examination. Upon sustaining this examination, the classis, with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, shall declare him eligible for call among the churches of the federation.

#### D. Exceptional Circumstances

Only under circumstances of general tribulation or severe persecution which make the completion of regular theological education impossible, may a consistory request that an exceptionally gifted brother be presented to classis for the prescribed Candidacy Examination. In such a situation, his consistory and the classis should also have assurance of his godliness, humility, modesty, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and public speaking ability.

### **Article 5**

#### **Calling a Candidate**

The procedure for the lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of the following:

First, the election of a candidate by the consistory with the deacons with the approbation of the congregation after preceding prayers, and the advice of the counsellor appointed by classis;

Second, the prescribed Ordination Examination that shall be conducted to the satisfaction of the classis to which the calling church belongs.

Third, the public ordination before the congregation with proper instructions, admonitions, and prayers, followed by the laying on of hands by the minister(s), with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

### **Article 6**

#### **Calling a Minister Within the Federation**

A minister within the federation shall be called in a lawful manner by the consistory with the deacons. Any minister receiving a call shall consult with his current consistory with the deacons regarding that call. He may accept the call only with their consent.

The classis shall ensure the good order of the calling process by verifying the issuance of written ecclesiastical testimonies from:

- a. the consistory of the church from which he is leaving concerning his doctrine and life, his ministerial service, and his honorable release from his service in that church;
- b. the classis within which he last served concerning his honorable release from that classis;
- c. the consistory of the church that he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

The church shall then install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

## **Article 7**

### **Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation**

A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

A minister from a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship shall be declared eligible for a call within the federation only after becoming a member of a congregation in the federation, after an adequate period of consistorial supervision determined by his consistory, and after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

## **Article 8**

### **Bound to a Particular Church**

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of that congregation or as one charged by that church with some other specific ministerial task such as a missionary, a professor of theology, or a chaplain. Each minister shall remain bound to the Church Order.

## **Article 9**

### **Bound for Life**

A minister of the Word once lawfully called is bound to the service of the churches for life and shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation. He may leave this vocation only for weighty reasons, upon the approval of his consistory with the deacons and with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod.

## **Article 10**

### **Support and Emeritation of Ministers**

Each church shall provide honorably for its minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall provide for the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support, with the assistance of the churches if necessary.

The emeritation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons, and with the concurring advice of classis and of the deputies of regional synod.

## **Article 11**

### **Temporary Release**

If because of illness or other substantial reasons, a minister requests a temporary release from his service to the congregation, he shall receive the same only with the approval of the consistory with the deacons. If the duration of the release is greater than one year, the consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis. He shall at all times remain subject to the call of the congregation.

## **Article 12**

### **Exceptional Release of a Minister**

When for weighty reasons and exceptional circumstances a pastoral relationship has been irreconcilably broken, a consistory with the deacons may release its minister from his call only under all of the following conditions:

- a. This release shall not occur for delinquency in doctrine or life, which would warrant church discipline;
- b. This release shall occur only when attempted reconciliation, with the involvement of classis, has been unsuccessful, resulting in an intolerable situation;
- c. This release shall occur only with the approval of classis and the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod;
- d. This release requires the approval by classis of the provision for the adequate congregational support of the minister and his family for up to two years.

The church from whose service he has been released shall announce his eligibility for call. This eligibility shall be valid for two years, whereafter he shall be honorably discharged from office. Upon the request of the consistory that released the minister, classis may extend his eligibility for call for no more than two additional years.

## **Article 13**

### **The Nomination and Election of Elders and Deacons**

The consistory with the deacons shall provide for the instruction and training of elders and deacons. The procedure for the lawful calling of elders and deacons shall consist of the following:

First, the consistory with the deacons shall nominate only male communicant members who meet the biblical requirements for office, and who indicate their willingness to sign the Form of Subscription. Prior to nominating, the congregation may be invited to direct attention to suitable men. Ordinarily, the number of nominees shall be twice the number of vacancies.

Second, after announcing the names of the nominees to the congregation on two Sundays, and with public prayer, elders and deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the local regulations adopted for that purpose.

Third, the consistory with the deacons shall appoint the elders and deacons, and shall announce their names to the congregation on the two Sundays prior to entering office, in order that the congregation may have opportunity to bring lawful objections to the attention of the consistory.

## **Article 14**

### **The Term and Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

Elders and deacons, having been elected in accordance with local regulations to a specified term, and having been appointed by the consistory with the deacons, shall be ordained with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

## **Article 15**

### **Subscription to the Confessions**

Each office-bearer shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription. Anyone refusing to subscribe shall not be ordained or installed in office. Anyone in office refusing to subscribe shall, because of that very fact, be immediately suspended from

office by the consistory, and if he persists in his refusal, shall be deposed from office.

## **Article 16**

### **Parity Among Office-bearers**

Among the office-bearers, parity shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their respective offices and in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and, if necessary, of classis.

## **Article 17**

### **The Duties of Elders**

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of shepherding and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. The elders, together with the minister, shall watch over their fellow office-bearers, and ensure that they faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, persist in praying for the congregation, assist in catechizing the youth in the congregation, and promote schooling at all levels that is in harmony with the Word of God as summarized the Three Forms of Unity. Moreover, they shall visit the members of the congregation according to need, engage in annual home visits, preserve and promote concord and unity among the members and between the congregation and its office-bearers, exercise discipline in the congregation, promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order.

## **Article 18**

### **Protecting Doctrinal Purity**

To protect the congregation from false teachings and errors which endanger the purity of its doctrine and conduct, ministers and elders shall use the means of instruction, refutation, warning, and admonition, in the ministry of the Word, in Christian teaching, and in family visiting.

## **Article 19**

### **The Duties of Deacons**

The duties belonging to the office of deacon consist of performing and supervising works of Christian mercy in the congregation. The deacons shall do this by acquainting themselves with congregational needs, exhorting members of the congregation to show mercy, gathering and managing the offerings of God's people in Christ's name, distributing these offerings according to need, continuing in prayer, and encouraging and comforting with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's mercy. Needs of those outside the congregation, especially of other believers, should also be considered.

The deacons shall ordinarily meet monthly to transact the business pertaining to their office, and they shall render a regular account of their work to the consistory. The deacons may invite the minister to visit their meetings in order to acquaint him with their work and request his advice.

## **Article 20**

### **The Civil Authorities**

As the task of civil government includes protecting the freedom of the Christian church, so it

is the responsibility of the church to respect the government as instituted by God. In order that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, and that the witness of the gospel may be protected and advanced, the office-bearers must lead the congregation by their admonition and example. They shall ensure that prayers for the government are regularly offered and that members render due honor and lawful obedience to the civil authorities, thereby living as good citizens under Christ and promoting the true welfare of the land in which they live.

## II. ASSEMBLIES

### Article 21

#### Ecclesiastical Assemblies

##### A. Identification

Among the churches of the federation, four assemblies shall be recognized: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, and the general synod. The terms classis and synod designate either ecclesiastical assemblies or ecclesiastical regions. As assemblies, classes and synods are deliberative in nature, and exist only for the duration of their meetings.

##### B. Convening

Regulations for broader assemblies shall delineate the function of the convening church and/or of the designated clerk serving the convening churches.

##### C. Delegation

Those delegated to the broader assemblies shall be issued proper credentials by their delegating body, thereby receiving authorization to deliberate and decide upon all the matters properly placed before them. A delegate shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church is particularly involved.

##### D. Jurisdiction

In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All these matters, with the exception of appeals, must originate with a consistory and must receive the support of the narrower assembly before being considered by the broader assembly.

##### E. Decisions

All decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be received with respect and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity, or the Church Order.

##### F. Proceedings

The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin and end with prayer. In every assembly there shall be a chairman, a vice-chairman, and a clerk. It is the chairman's duty to state and explain clearly the business to be transacted, to ensure that the stipulations of the Church Order are followed, and to ensure that every member observes proper order and decorum. It is the vice-chairman's duty to assist the chairman. It is the clerk's duty to keep an accurate record of the proceedings for approval by the assembly. These assembly duties shall cease when the assembly itself ceases.

G. Censure

Admonition shall be given to those who demonstrate unworthy behavior, either during the meeting or regarding a decision of a narrower assembly.

H. Archives

Each ecclesiastical assembly shall ensure the proper preservation of its archives.

I. Press Release

Each broader assembly shall approve for publication a press release regarding its proceedings.

**Article 22**

**The Consistory**

In each church there shall be a consistory composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders, which shall ordinarily meet at least once a month. The consistory is the only assembly which exercises authority within the congregation, since the consistory receives its authority directly from Christ.

**Article 23**

**Small Number of Office-bearers**

Where the number of elders is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the deacons. This shall invariably be done where the number of elders is fewer than three. Where the number of deacons is small, they may perform their duties with the advice of the elders. This shall invariably be done where the number of deacons is fewer than three.

**Article 24**

**Instituting a New Church**

A church shall be instituted with its first consistory only under the supervision of a neighboring consistory and with the concurring advice of the classis.

**Article 25**

**Classis**

A. Composition

A classis shall consist of neighboring churches whose consistories shall delegate two members, ordinarily a minister and an elder, with proper credentials to meet at a time and place determined at the previous classis. Ordinarily a classis shall consist of between eight and twelve churches.

B. Frequency

A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have submitted by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

C. Convening

The churches shall take turns convening classis. The assembly shall choose one of its members to preside. The same person shall not function as chairman twice in succession. Each classis shall appoint a convening church and determine the time and place of the next classis.

D. Mutual Oversight

The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistorial and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and schooling that is in harmony with the Word of God as summarized the Three Forms of Unity is promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

E. Delegation to Regional and General Synod

The last classis before regional synod shall choose delegates to that synod. If the regional synod consists of three classes, each classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. If the regional synod consists of four or more classes, each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders. The second last classis before general synod shall choose delegates to that synod. Each classis shall delegate two ministers and two elders.

F. Classis Contracta

A minimum of three churches may convene as a classis contracta exclusively to approbate a call, or to release a minister who has accepted a call, and to appoint a counselor for the ministerial vacancy.

**Article 26**

**Church Visitors**

Every two years classis shall appoint a number of its more experienced and competent ministers or elders to visit all the churches of the classis once during that period. At each church visit at least one of the visitors shall be a minister.

These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers perform their duties in harmony with the Word of God, adhere to sound doctrine, observe the Church Order, and properly promote, by word and deed, the edification of the whole congregation. Moreover, they shall fraternally encourage the office-bearers to fulfill their offices faithfully, and they shall admonish those who have been negligent, so that by their advice and assistance the visitors may help direct all things to the peace, edification, and profit of the churches.

Upon the request of a consistory, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

The church visitors shall submit a written report of their work to the next classis.

**Article 27**

**Counselors**

The consistory of a church with a ministerial vacancy shall request classis to appoint the minister specified by that consistory to serve as counselor. His task is to help the consistory follow the provisions of the Church Order, particularly in the matter of calling a minister. Along with the consistory with the deacons, he also shall sign the letter of call.

**Article 28**

**Regional Synod**

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall convene once per year unless the convening church, in consultation with its classis, concludes that no matters have been submitted by the classes that would warrant the convening of a regional synod. Cancellation of

a regional synod shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

A regional synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches by way of the classes, with lawful appeals of classical decisions, and with the reports of its deputies. It shall also determine the time and place for the next regional synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

## **Article 29**

### **Deputies of Regional Synod**

In order that proper unity, good order, and sound doctrine be safeguarded, each regional synod shall appoint two deputies and an alternate for each classis, who shall assist the classes in all cases provided for in the Church Order. Upon the request of a classis, they may also be called to assist in cases of special difficulty.

In cases of disagreement between the deputies, the decision of classis shall stand. In cases where the deputies cannot give concurring advice, the classis may request a judgment from regional synod.

The regional deputies shall keep a proper record of their actions. They shall submit a written report of their actions to the next regional synod and, if so required, they shall further explain those actions. The deputies shall serve until they are discharged from their duties by their regional synod.

## **Article 30**

### **General Synod**

A general synod shall be convened once every three years. If a general synod is necessary before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.

A general synod shall deal only with matters properly placed on its agenda by the churches by way of the classes and the regional synods, with lawful appeals, and with reports which were mandated by the previous synod. It shall also determine the time and place for the next general synod, and designate a convening church.

The chairman, vice-chairman, and clerk(s) shall be chosen at the meeting to facilitate the work of the synod.

## **Article 31**

### **Appeals and Procedure**

When all avenues for settling a dispute with the consistory have been exhausted, and a member is convinced that an injustice has been done to him by a decision of his consistory, he may appeal the decision to classis for its judgment. The judgment of the broader assembly shall be reached by majority vote, received with respect, and considered settled and binding unless proven to be in conflict with Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity, or the Church Order.

Any appeal to a broader assembly must provide written grounds, and the broader assembly shall provide adequate grounds for its decision to sustain or not sustain an appeal. If an assembly does not sustain an appeal, the appellant may appeal the decision of the narrower

assembly to the next broader assembly. If a general synod does not sustain that appeal, the appellant may appeal synod's decision only once and that to the next general synod.

A member who desires to object to a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, shall bring the matter to his consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.

A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a broader assembly conflicts with the Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the broader assembly next in order as soon as feasible.

## **Article 32**

### **Ecumenical Relations**

#### **A. Local ecumenical relations**

The churches of the federation are encouraged to pursue ecumenical relations with congregations outside of the federation which manifest the marks of the true church and faithfully demonstrate allegiance to Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confessions. Each church shall give account to classis of its ecumenical activities with churches not in ecclesiastical fellowship. Since local ecumenical relations aim at federative unity, each church must receive the approbation of classis before such ecumenical relations progress to include preaching exchange and fellowship at the Lord's Supper.

#### **B. Ecclesiastical fellowship**

The churches as a federation may enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with other federations by a synodical decision of two-thirds majority. Ecclesiastical fellowship with churches abroad that faithfully uphold the Reformed Confessions shall be regulated and maintained by general synod. Churches abroad shall not be rejected on the basis of minor differences of ecclesiastical polity or practice.

## **Article 33**

### **Admitting a Church**

A church shall be admitted into the federation by the nearest classis with the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod, only upon recommendation from a consistory, and provided that its office-bearers subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity and agree to abide by the Church Order. If one of these office-bearers is a minister, he shall be examined as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

## **III. WORSHIP, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES**

## **Article 34**

### **Regular Worship Services**

The consistory shall call the congregation together for public worship twice each Lord's Day.

The consistory shall regulate the worship services, which shall be conducted according to the principles taught in God's Word, namely, that the preaching of the Word have the central place, confession of sins be made, praise and thanksgiving in song and prayer be given, and gifts of gratitude be offered.

At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

### **Article 35**

#### **Special Worship Services**

Each year the churches shall, in the manner decided upon by the consistory, commemorate the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In addition special worship services may be called in connection with prayer for crops and labor, Thanksgiving Day, the turning of the new year, and times of great distress or blessing.

### **Article 36**

#### **Psalms and Hymns**

The 150 Psalms shall have the principal place in the singing of the churches. In the worship services, the congregation shall sing faithful lyrical renditions of the Psalms, and hymns which faithfully and fully reflect the teaching of Scripture in harmony with the Three Forms of Unity, provided they are approved by general synod.

### **Article 37**

#### **Admission to the Pulpit**

Consistories shall permit men to preach the word and administer the sacraments only according to the following stipulations:

- a. The consistory must give its consent before any minister may preach the Word or administer the sacraments in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to ministers of churches within the federation and to ministers of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship. Any exception to this requirement shall be granted to any church only occasionally for a minister who subscribes to the Reformed Confessions, and only with prior approbation of classis.
- b. The consistory must give its consent before any licentiate or candidate may exhort in the congregation. Such consent shall be given only to licentiates and candidates within the federation and to licentiates and candidates of churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.

### **Article 38**

#### **Administration of the Sacraments**

The sacraments shall be administered under the authority of the consistory in a public worship service by a minister of the Word with the use of the synodically adopted liturgical forms.

### **Article 39**

#### **Baptism of Covenant Children**

The consistory shall ensure that God's covenant is signified and sealed by holy baptism to the children of communicant members in good standing. Parents shall present their children for baptism as soon as feasible.

## **Article 40**

### **Public Profession of Faith**

Those who desire to profess their faith and thereby be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be evaluated by the consistory regarding their motives, their knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity, and their walk of life. This profession of faith shall occur after proper announcements to the congregation and with the use of the adopted liturgical form.

## **Article 41**

### **Baptism of Adults**

Adults who have not been previously baptized shall be engrafted into the Christian church by holy baptism upon their public profession of faith.

## **Article 42**

### **Administration of the Lord's Supper**

At least once every three months the Lord's Supper shall be administered in a service of public worship, under the supervision of the consistory, according to the teaching of God's Word, and in a manner most conducive to the edification of the congregation.

## **Article 43**

### **Admission to the Lord's Supper**

The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. The consistory may also admit visitors who profess the Reformed faith provided that it secures from them a satisfactory testimony in either written or verbal form about their doctrine, life, and church membership.

## **Article 44**

### **The Church's Mission Calling**

Each church shall fulfill its mission calling, which is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted at home and abroad with the goal of establishing churches. This shall be carried out by missionaries who are ministers of the Word set apart for this labor by being called, supported, and supervised by their respective consistories for this task. Such missionaries shall proclaim the Word of God, and administer the sacraments to those who have been converted to the faith. They shall also institute church offices according to the provisions of the Church Order. The consistory shall promote the involvement of church members in service that assists in fulfilling this mission calling. If necessary, a calling church shall invite churches within its classis or regional synod to cooperate by agreement regarding the field, support, and oversight of the mission work.

## **Article 45**

### **The Church's Evangelism Calling**

Each church shall fulfill its evangelistic calling in faithfulness to the Word of God. Relying on the Holy Spirit it shall make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those in its area who do not know God or are estranged from Him and His service. It shall seek to persuade them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which includes joining His church through profession of faith.

**Article 46**  
**Marriage**

Scripture teaches that marriage is to be a lifelong monogamous union between a man and a woman. Consistories shall instruct and exhort those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry only in the Lord. The minister, as authorized by the consistory, shall solemnize only marriages that accord with Scripture, using the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage adopted by general synod.

**Article 47**  
**Funerals**

A funeral is a family matter and shall not be conducted as a worship service.

**Article 48**  
**The Church Records**

The consistory shall maintain accurate records which include the names of the members of the congregation and the dates of their births, baptisms, professions of faith, marriages, receptions into and departures from the church, and deaths.

**IV. DISCIPLINE**

**Article 49**  
**The Nature and Purpose of Discipline**

Ecclesiastical discipline, one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities. The purpose of ecclesiastical discipline is that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church, and one's neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ.

**Article 50**  
**Consistory Involvement**

When a member's sin in doctrine or life is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed. A private sin from which the sinner repents after having been admonished by one person alone, or subsequently in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be brought to the consistory.

When a member does not repent after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.

**Article 51**  
**The Reconciliation of a Member**

The reconciliation of a member, whose sin is public or has become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. The consistory shall determine whether, for the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.

## **Article 52**

### **The Discipline of a Member**

#### **A. A communicant 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:

1. *Silent Discipline*: a member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from participating in the sacraments, and is thereby not a member in good standing. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory.
2. *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 offense and the failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak to and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
  - a. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that the member may be somewhat spared.
  - b. In the second step, the consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation.
  - c. 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.
3. *Excommunication*: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, thereby excluding the member from the church of Jesus Christ, using the synodically approved liturgical form.

#### **B. A non-communicant member**

A non-communicant member who is delinquent either in doctrine or life, who after repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory does not repent, shall be excluded from the church of Christ. The sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the offense and the failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may pray for this member. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that the member may be somewhat spared.

The consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation and a date set at which the excommunication shall take place, thereby excluding the member from the church of Jesus Christ. The intervals between the two announcements and the excommunication shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

The public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

## **Article 53**

### **The Readmission of an Excommunicated Person**

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically

approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicant member, shall be readmitted only upon the public profession of faith.

#### **Article 54**

##### **No Lording it Over**

No church shall lord it over other churches, and no office-bearer shall lord it over other office-bearers.

#### **Article 55**

##### **Mutual Censure**

The minister(s), elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort and encourage one another in a loving and edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices.

#### **Article 56**

##### **The Suspension and Deposition of an Office-bearer**

When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of his consistory, he shall be suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.

Included among the sins requiring suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; in short, all sins which would warrant the discipline of any other member.

Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required. No broader assembly may suspend or depose an office-bearer.

Suspension or deposition in itself does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.

A man once deposed may be reconsidered for office only with the involvement of the consistory which deposed him, after a sufficient period of time, and upon evidence of genuine repentance. The regular procedure for entering office shall be followed.

#### **Article 57**

##### **The Reception and Departure of Members**

###### **A. The Reception of Members**

Members from churches within the federation or churches with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship may be received under the spiritual care of the consistory upon receipt of a letter of testimony from their former consistory regarding their doctrine and life. Others may be admitted only after the consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. In such cases the consistory shall determine whether a public profession of faith shall be required. The reception of members shall be appropriately announced.

B. The Departure of Members

Upon their request, a letter of testimony shall be given to those members who are departing to a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship. The consistory shall send a copy of this letter to that church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care. Departing members remain under the supervision and care of the consistory until they are received as members into that church.

The departure of members shall be properly announced.

**Article 58**

**Property**

All property, whether real or personal, held by a local church for the benefit of that local church, shall remain the property of that local church in accordance with its own by-laws or regulations and the governing laws of the jurisdiction in which the church is located. All property, whether real or personal, held for the benefit of the federation by a local church, a classis or synod or a committee, trustee or trustees thereof, or otherwise, shall be held in trust as property in common of all of the churches within the federation, in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by classes or synods of the federation. In the event a local church withdraws from the federation, unless the rules and regulations of the federation provide otherwise, the withdrawing church shall cease to have any benefit in such property.

Notwithstanding the laws of the jurisdiction in which a local church is located, the final authority for any acquisition or disposition of property by a local church, whether real or personal, shall be the consistory with the deacons of that church in accordance with the church's own by-laws or regulations, regardless of how the property is held.

Any appeals to broader assemblies with respect to property shall be governed by this article.

**Article 59**

**The Observance and Revision of the Church Order**

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, having been adopted by common consent, shall be observed diligently. Only when the good order and welfare of the churches make it necessary, shall this Church Order be revised. Any proposed revision of the Church Order shall be adopted only by a majority vote of a general synod.

## **Ecclesiastical Examinations**

1. The Licensure Examination — cf. Article 4
2. The Candidacy Examination — cf. Articles 4 and 5
3. The Ordination Examination — cf. Article 5
4. Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship — cf. Article 7 part 1
5. Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister of a Church with Whom the Federation Does Not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and Who is Seeking Eligibility for Call to a Church of the Federation — cf. Article 7 part 2
6. Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister of a Church with Whom the Federation Does Not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and who, Together with his Congregation, is Seeking Entrance into the Federation — cf. Article 33

## **The Licensure Examination (cf. Article 4)**

A theological student who is a member of a church within the federation and is preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments must undergo the licensure examination in order to be authorized to exhort in the churches.

### **A. Required Documents:**

1. Proof of successful completion of at least one year of training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. A letter from the student's consistory which
  - a. in consultation with the faculty of his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
  - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. A brief statement from the student regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

### **B. Procedure and Content:**

1. The student's consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the student a sermon text.
4. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the student's written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
5. The student shall deliver the sermon at classis.
6. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is sufficiently competent in the following areas:
  - a. knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity (20-30 minutes);
  - b. understanding of public worship (15-25 minutes);
  - c. exegesis and homiletics (15-25 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the student to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain a student so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.

7. If classis judges the student's performance to be acceptable, and he promises to teach in accordance with the Three Forms of Unity, classis shall issue him a license to exhort in the churches as long as he continues preparing for the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

## **The Candidacy Examination (cf. Articles 4 and 5)**

A man aspiring to the office of minister who is a member of a church within the federation and has graduated from an approved seminary must undergo the candidacy examination in order to become eligible for call within the federation.

### **A. Required Documents:**

1. Proof of successful completion of required training at a seminary approved by the federation.
2. Written recommendations from one or more consistories and ministers of the federation under whom the prospective candidate has labored in ministerial training for a minimum equivalent of six months of full-time work.
3. A letter from the prospective candidate's consistory which:
  - a. In consultation with his seminary, gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life,
  - b. Recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
4. A medical report of health.
5. A brief statement from the prospective candidate regarding his wholehearted commitment to the Lord, His Word, and the Three Forms of Unity.

### **B. Procedure and Content:**

1. The consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
  - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
  - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
  - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
  - a. Practica: the prospective candidate's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the

theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).

- b. Knowledge of Scripture: the prospective candidate's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
- c. Biblical Exegesis: the prospective candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the prospective candidate's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the prospective candidate's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time to ask questions after each area of the examination. After a maximum of ten minutes of questioning by classis in each area, classis will vote to signify that it has received enough information from the applicant to proceed to the next section of the examination. Classis may decide not to sustain an applicant so that a subsequent classis can re-examine him in specified areas.

8. Classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
  - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - c. his promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
9. If the candidacy exam is sustained and the candidate accepts a call within one year in the classis that examines him, the ordination exam may be waived. The classis that examined him may make such a decision.
10. If after two years the candidate has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his consistory, request an extension of his candidacy for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

## **The Ordination Examination (cf. Article 5)**

A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination.

### A. Required Documents:

1. A letter of call.
2. A letter of acceptance of the call.
3. A written declaration of candidacy.
4. A letter from the candidate's consistory which:
  - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
  - b. recommends that classis proceeds with the examination.

### B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the candidate a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the candidate shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
  - a. Practica: the candidate's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
  - b. Biblical Exegesis: the candidate's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
  - c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the candidate's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
  - d. Reformed doctrine: the candidate's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture

and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section without thereby indicating that the candidate has sustained this section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
  - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon ordination.

A candidate who does not sustain his examination may undergo the ordination examination again, in whole or in part, by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

**Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church  
with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship  
(cf. Article 7 part 1)**

A. Documents:

1. A letter of call
2. A letter of acceptance
3. Letter of the consistory of the church from which he is leaving concerning his doctrine and life, his ministerial service, and his honorable release from his service in that church
4. Letter from the classis within which he last served concerning his honorable release from that classis
5. Letter the consistory of the church which he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The calling church shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis with the request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Five weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant a scripture passage for examination in exegesis, from which he is also to prepare a new sermon.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of the written sermon to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver the sermon. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermon to be acceptable, shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
  - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
  - b. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned passage (15-20 minutes).
  - c. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
  - d. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and

Eschatology (20-30 minutes).

- e. Church Polity: the prospective applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his examination upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
  - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - c. his promise to sign the form of subscription upon installation.
9. An applicant who does not sustain his examination may undergo the above examination again by a subsequent classis upon the request of the calling church.

**Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister of a Church  
with Whom the Federation Does Not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship,  
and Who is Seeking Eligibility for Call to a Church of the Federation  
(cf. Article 7 part 2)**

A. Documents:

1. A letter from the minister requesting the examination for ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory which:
  - a. gives a positive testimony regarding his doctrine and life, and
  - b. recommends that classis proceed with the examination.
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he last served regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The sponsoring consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
  - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
  - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
  - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
  - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
  - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).
  - c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages

and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).

- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the candidacy examination.

8. Classis shall decide whether the applicant:
  - a. has sustained the examination and need not undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
  - b. has sustained the examination and yet needs to undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry before being declared eligible for call, or
  - c. has not sustained the examination.
9. If classis decides that the applicant need not undergo a period of testing before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then classis shall issue a written declaration, valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:
  - a. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - b. the applicant's promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
10. If Classis judges that the applicant should undergo a period of testing in the work of ministry by the sponsoring consistory before declaring him eligible for call to the churches in the federation, then Classis shall determine how long this period of testing should be, Classis shall issue the applicant a license to preach in the churches in the federation for that time period upon the applicant's promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity. The sponsoring consistory, after the prescribed period of testing and upon approval of his performance, shall recommend to a subsequent classis to declare the applicant eligible for call to the churches in the federation. This subsequent classis shall issue the applicant a written declaration,

valid for two years, that the applicant is eligible for call to the churches in the federation upon:

- a. the affirmative vote of the classis,
  - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - c. the applicant's promise to adhere to Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity.
11. If after two years the applicant has not received a call he may, with the recommendation of his sponsoring consistory, request an extension of his eligibility for a call for another year. To grant this request classis may require another examination.

**Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister of a Church  
with Whom the Federation Does Not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship,  
and who, Together with his Congregation, is Seeking Entrance into the Federation.  
(cf. Article 33)**

A. Documents:

1. A letter from his congregation requesting the examination for ministers and providing information relating to the background of the minister and the congregation, the pastoral record of the minister, and the circumstances leading to this request,
2. A letter from the sponsoring consistory recommending that classis proceed with the examination,
3. Documentation relating to seminary training, and
4. A letter from the church he served prior to his present congregation regarding his pastoral record.

B. Procedure and Content:

1. The ministers' consistory shall submit the required documents to the convening church of classis, and request that the examination be placed on the provisional agenda of classis.
2. The convening church shall notify each of the churches regarding the request by way of the provisional agenda.
3. The convening church shall notify the deputies of Regional Synod regarding the request.
4. Six weeks prior to the classis, the ministers appointed by a previous classis shall assign the applicant the following:
  - a. an Old Testament passage for examination in exegesis;
  - b. a New Testament passage for examination in exegesis; and
  - c. three sermons, one from each of the assigned scripture passages, and one from an assigned Lord's Day.
5. Three weeks prior to the classis, the convening church shall send two copies of each of the applicant's written sermons to each consistory in the classis for those delegated to classis.
6. At classis the applicant shall deliver one of the sermons. This sermon shall not have been previously delivered.
7. Only if classis judges the sermons to be acceptable shall it examine him to determine if he is competent in the following areas:
  - a. Practica: the applicant's personal and spiritual life; his relationship with the Lord; his growth in faith; his background and preparation for ministry; his understanding of ministerial office and his motives for seeking it; and his understanding of this office with respect to the theory and practice of preaching and public worship, of pastoral work among the congregation, and of evangelism and missions (at least 25 minutes).
  - b. Knowledge of Scripture: the applicant's doctrine of Scripture; his understanding of canonicity and hermeneutics; and primarily his familiarity with the contents of the various books of the Bible (15-20 minutes).

- c. Biblical Exegesis: the applicant's ability to work with the original languages and to exegete the assigned Old Testament and New Testament passages (15-20 minutes).
- d. Knowledge of the Creeds and Confessions: the applicant's knowledge of the history and content of the creeds and confessions, and his willingness to subscribe to them by signing the form of subscription (15-20 minutes).
- e. Reformed doctrine: the applicant's knowledge of the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions regarding the six major areas of Reformed doctrine: Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology (20-30 minutes).
- f. Church Polity: the applicant's knowledge of the history and principles of Reformed Church Polity and of the Church Order (10-15 minutes).
- g. Church History: the applicant's knowledge of church history in terms of major persons, heresies, and developments, with special emphasis on the Reformation and the history of the Reformed churches (15-20 minutes).
- h. Ethics: the applicant's knowledge of the meaning and function of the Decalogue, including its relation both to Christian motivation and character and to contemporary moral problems (10-15 minutes).

Members of classis will be given sufficient time ask questions after each area of examination. After a maximum of ten minutes for each area, classis will vote to proceed to the next section. This period of questioning by classis may be extended by a majority vote.

Classis may decide not to sustain the applicant for the sake of a subsequent classis re-examining him in specified areas.

An applicant who does not sustain his examination may be reexamined by a subsequent classis in all or specific areas of the above examination.

- 8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,
  - b. the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, and
  - c. the applicant's promise to sign the Form of Subscription.

**CLASSICAL CREDENTIAL**

The Consistory of \_\_\_\_\_ (church) at \_\_\_\_\_ (place)

has on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) delegated the following brothers:

Delegates	Alternate delegates (in order)
	1
	2

to the Classis \_\_\_\_\_ (region) which is to be held on  
\_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (place).

These brothers have been authorized to deliberate and decide upon all matters that have been legitimately brought to this Classis. They are to do this in total submission to the Word of God, in faithful adherence to the Confessions of the Church, and with loyal observance of the adopted Church Order.

The Consistory with the Deacons, on their part, promise to abide by all decisions which have been taken in accordance with the above conditions.

Wishing your assembly the wisdom from above through the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

With fraternal greetings,

For the Consistory

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_

**REGIONAL SYNOD CREDENTIAL**

The Classis \_\_\_\_\_ (region) of the \_\_\_\_\_

(federation) held \_\_\_\_\_ (date) has delegated the following brothers:

Delegates		Alternate delegates (in order)	
Ministers	Elders	Ministers	Elders
		1	1
		2	2
		3	3

to the Regional Synod \_\_\_\_\_ (region) which is to be held on  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (place), in  
 accordance with Article 25e of the Church Order.

These brothers have been authorized to deliberate and decide upon all matters that have been legitimately brought to this Regional Synod. They are to do this in total submission to the Word of God, in faithful adherence to the Confessions of the Church, and with loyal observance of the adopted Church Order.

Wishing your assembly the wisdom from above through the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

With fraternal greetings,

For the Classis on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL SYNOD CREDENTIAL**

The Classis \_\_\_\_\_ (region) of the \_\_\_\_\_  
 (federation) held \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (place) has  
 delegated the following brothers:

Delegates		Alternate delegates (in order)	
Ministers	Elders	Ministers	Elders
		1	1
		2	2

to the General Synod which is to be held on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
 at \_\_\_\_\_ (place), in accordance with Article 25e of the  
 Church Order.

These brothers have been authorized to deliberate and decide upon all matters that have been legitimately brought to this General Synod. They are to do this in total submission to the Word of God, in faithful adherence to the Confessions of the Church, and with loyal observance of the adopted Church Order.

Wishing your assembly the wisdom from above through the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

With fraternal greetings,

For the Classis on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_

## INTRODUCTION

### Historical Background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571). For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

## CHURCH ORDER

### Article 3

#### The Duties of the Minister

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, visiting the members in their homes, comforting the sick with the Word of God, catechizing and instructing the youth in the doctrines of Scripture, ~~watching over his fellow office-bearers, and finally, together~~ with the elders shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

### Article 4

#### Preparation for the Ministry

##### A. Theological Education

Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. This consistory with the deacons shall also help him ensure that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.

The JCO considers this article incomplete; see our report to Synods

## INTRODUCTION

### Historical Background

Our Church Order has its roots in the continental European background of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformed churches desired to be faithful to God's Word in practice and life as well as in doctrine. Therefore, as early as the mid-sixteenth century, and even in the midst of persecution, the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, at various ecclesiastical assemblies, with the first official assembly held in Emden, Germany in 1571. For the most part, the decisions of the assemblies in this period leaned heavily on the church orders already in place and used by the Reformed churches in France and Geneva.

## CHURCH ORDER

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The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, visiting the members in their homes, comforting the sick with the Word of God, catechizing and instructing the youth in the doctrines of Scripture, and finally, together with the elders, watching over his fellow office-bearers, shepherding the congregation, exercising church discipline, and ensuring that everything is done decently and in good order.

### Article 4

#### Preparation for the Ministry

##### A. Theological Education

To train for the ministry of the Word, the churches shall maintain and support a theological seminary that is properly accountable to the churches.

Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. This consistory with the deacons shall also help him ensure that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.

#### Article 5

##### Calling a Candidate

The lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of:

First, the election by the consistory with the deacons of a man who has been declared a candidate after sustaining the prescribed Candidacy Examination, after having prayed and having received the advice of the congregation and of the counselor appointed by classis.

#### Article 6

##### Calling a Minister Within the Federation

- c. the consistory of the church which he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

~~Upon verification of these documents, the church shall install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form and he shall subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity by signing the Form of Subscription.~~

The advice of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

#### Article 7

##### Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation

A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation, ~~and~~ only after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation, ~~whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.~~

A minister from a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision and only after becoming a member of a congregation in the federation, only after an adequate period of consistorial supervision determined by his consistory, and only after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation, whereupon he may be declared eligible for call.

#### Article 8

##### Bound to a Particular Church

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of the congregation or as one charged with some other ministerial task, such as chaplains and professors of theology. Each minister shall remain bound to the Church Order.

#### Article 5

##### Calling a Candidate

The procedure for the lawful calling to the office of minister of those who have not previously been in that office shall consist of the following:

First, the election of a candidate by the consistory with the deacons with the approbation of the congregation after preceding prayers, and the advice of the counsellor appointed by classis;

#### Article 6

##### Calling a Minister Within the Federation

- c. the consistory of the church that he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

The church shall then install him with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

The approval of classis shall be required for a second call to the same minister regarding the same vacancy.

#### Article 7

##### Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation

A minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to serve a church within the federation only after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

A minister from a church with whom the federation does not maintain ecclesiastical fellowship shall be declared eligible for a call within the federation only after becoming a member of a congregation in the federation, after an adequate period of consistorial supervision determined by his consistory, and after sustaining the examination as prescribed in the relevant section of the Ecclesiastical Examination for ministers from outside the federation.

#### Article 8

##### Bound to a Particular Church

No one shall serve in the ministry of the Word unless he is bound to a particular church, either as a minister of that congregation or as one charged by that church with some other specific ministerial task such as a missionary, a professor of theology, or a chaplain. Each minister shall remain bound to the Church Order.

**Article 10**

**Support and Emeritation of Ministers**

Each church shall provide honorably for its minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

**Article 21**

**Ecclesiastical Assemblies**

**D. Jurisdiction**

In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All matters that pertain to the churches in common must originate with a consistory and must receive the support of the narrower assembly before being considered by the broader assembly.

**Article 25**

**Classis**

**B. Frequency**

A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have been sent in by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

**D. Mutual Oversight**

The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistorial and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and ~~confessionally-Reformed schooling~~ schooling is promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

**Article 10**

**Support and Emeritation of Ministers**

Each church shall provide honorably for its minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall provide for the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

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In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be transacted, and only in an ecclesiastical manner. Matters once decided on may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds. The broader assemblies shall exercise jurisdiction exclusively relating to matters properly before them. Only those matters shall be considered in the broader assemblies that could not be settled in the narrower assemblies, or that pertain to the churches in common. All these matters, with the exception of appeals, must originate with a consistory and must receive the support of the narrower assembly before being considered by the broader assembly.

**Article 25**

**Classis**

**B. Frequency**

A classis shall be held every four months, unless the convening church, in consultation with the neighboring church, concludes that no matters have submitted by the churches that would warrant the convening of a classis. Cancellation of a classis shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

**D. Mutual Oversight**

The classis shall inquire of each church whether consistorial and diaconal meetings are regularly held; the Word of God is purely preached; the sacraments are faithfully administered; church discipline is diligently exercised; the poor are adequately cared for; and schooling that is in harmony with the Word of God as summarized the Three Forms of Unity is promoted. The classis shall also inquire whether the consistory needs the advice or the assistance of classis for the proper government of the church, and whether the decisions of the broader assemblies are being honored.

**Article 28**  
**Regional Synod**

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall ordinarily meet once per year. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

**Article 30**  
**General Synod**

~~A general synod, consisting of those delegated by the classes, shall meet once every three years. If it appears necessary to convene a general synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.~~

**Article 40**  
**Public Profession of Faith**

~~—Baptized members who have been instructed in the faith and who have come to the years of understanding shall be encouraged to make public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who wish to profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory concerning their motives, doctrine and life, and their public profession shall occur in a public worship service after adequate announcements to the congregation and with the use of the appropriate liturgical form. Thereby the baptized members become communicant members and not only shall they be obligated to persevere in the fellowship of the church and in hearing God's Word, but also in partaking of the Lord's Supper.~~

**Article 43**  
**Admission to the Lord's Supper**

The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. ~~Visitors may be admitted to the Lord's Supper provided that the consistory has secured confirmation, by means of letter of testimony or interview regarding their proper profession of faith, their godly walk of life, and their biblical church membership.~~

**Article 28**  
**Regional Synod**

A regional synod, consisting of three or more classes, shall convene once per year unless the convening church, in consultation with its classis, concludes that no matters have been submitted by the classes that would warrant the convening of a regional synod. Cancellation of a regional synod shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession. If it appears necessary to convene a regional synod before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its classis.

**Article 30**  
**General Synod**

A general synod shall be convened once every three years. If a general synod is necessary before the appointed time, the convening church shall determine the time and place with the advice of its regional synod.

**Article 40**  
**Public Profession of Faith**

Those who desire to profess their faith and thereby be admitted to the Lord's Supper shall be evaluated by the consistory regarding their motives, their knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity, and their walk of life. This profession of faith shall occur after proper announcements to the congregation and with the use of the adopted liturgical form.

**Article 43**  
**Admission to the Lord's Supper**

The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper. To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life. The consistory may also admit visitors who profess the Reformed faith provided that it secures from them a satisfactory testimony in either written or verbal form about their doctrine, life, and church membership.

**Article 45**

**The Church’s Evangelism Calling**

Relying on the Holy Spirit each church shall fulfill its evangelism calling according to the Word of God, which is to make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those within its area of life and influence. It shall seek to persuade those who do not know God or are estranged from God and His service to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily includes being joined to His church through profession of faith.

**Article 52**

**The Discipline of a Member**

A. A communicant member

A 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:

1. Silent Discipline: .....
2. Public Discipline: .....
  - a. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared.
  - b. In the second step, .....
  - c. In the third step, .....
3. Excommunication: .....

B. A non-communicant member

A non-communicant member who is delinquent either in doctrine or life, who after repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory does not repent, shall be excluded from the church of Christ. The sinner’s impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the offense and the failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may pray for this member. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared.

The consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member’s name shall be mentioned to the congregation and a date set at which the excommunication shall take place, thereby excluding him from the church of Jesus Christ. The intervals between the two announcements and the excommunication shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

The public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

**Article 45**

**The Church’s Evangelism Calling**

Each church shall fulfill its evangelistic calling in faithfulness to the Word of God. Relying on the Holy Spirit it shall make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those in its area who do not know God or are estranged from Him and His service. It shall seek to persuade them to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, which includes joining His church through profession of faith.

**Article 52**

**The Discipline of a Member**

A. A communicant 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:

1. *Silent Discipline*: .....
2. *Public Discipline*: .....
  - a. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that the member may be somewhat spared.
  - b. In the second step, .....
  - c. In the third step, .....
3. *Excommunication*: .....

B. A non-communicant member

A non-communicant member who is delinquent either in doctrine or life, who after repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory does not repent, shall be excluded from the church of Christ. The sinner’s impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the offense and the failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may pray for this member. In the first public announcement the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that the member may be somewhat spared.

The consistory shall obtain the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member’s name shall be mentioned to the congregation and a date set at which the excommunication shall take place, thereby excluding the member from the church of Jesus Christ. The intervals between the two announcements and the excommunication shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.

The public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form.

<p><b>Article 57</b>  <b>The Reception and Departure of Members</b>  A. <u>The Reception of Members</u></p> <p>B. <u>The Departure of Members</u>  <u>Members departing to a church within the federation or a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship shall submit a written request to the consistory. The consistory shall send a letter of testimony concerning their doctrine and life to such a church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care, and shall furnish a copy thereof to the members.</u> The departure of members shall be appropriately announced.</p>	<p><b>Article 57</b>  <b>The Reception and Departure of Members</b>  A. <u>The Reception of Members</u></p> <p>B. <u>The Departure of Members</u>  Upon their request, a letter of testimony shall be given to those members who are departing to a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship. The consistory shall send a copy of this letter to that church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care. Departing members remain under the supervision and care of the consistory until they are received as members into that church. The departure of members shall be properly announced.</p>
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**The Ordination Examination**  
**(cf. Article 5)**

A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination ~~to become eligible for ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the churches.~~

B. Procedure and Content:

8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination, ~~and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments,~~ upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,  
**Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church  
with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship  
(cf. Article 7 part 1)**

A. Documents:

1. A letter of call
2. A letter of acceptance
3. Letter of the consistory of the church from which he is leaving concerning his doctrine and life, his ministerial service, and his honorable release from his service in that church
4. Letter from the classis within which he last served concerning his honorable release from that classis
5. Letter the consistory of the church which he is joining concerning proper announcements made to the congregation for its approbation of the call.

B. Procedure and Content:

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his examination, ~~and is therefore eligible to be installed as a minister of the Word and sacraments,~~ upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,

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**Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister of a Church  
with Whom the Federation Does Not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship,  
and who, Together with his Congregation, is Seeking Entrance into the Federation.  
(cf. Article 33)**

8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the examination ~~for ministers, and is therefore eligible to be admitted as minister of his congregation in the federation,~~ upon:
  - a. the affirmative vote of classis,

## REGIONAL SYNOD CREDENTIAL

The Classis \_\_\_\_\_ (region) of the \_\_\_\_\_  
 (federation) held \_\_\_\_\_ (date) has delegated the following brothers:

Delegates		Alternate delegates (in order)	
Ministers	Elders	Ministers	Elders
		1	1
		2	2
		3	3

## Prefacing Comments

We composed this document to assist the reader in evaluating PJCO 2012.

Before getting into the substance of this document, the reader should be aware of our “modus operandi” as joint church order committee.

Synod Burlington 2010 of the Canadian Reformed Churches, when dealing with the report from the Church Order sub-committee, reviewed 45 letters from the churches regarding PJCO 2010. In considering all this input Synod Burlington decided to highlight a number of items for specific direct input and direction, and then to mandate the committee to “adopt the[se] recommendations...in consultation with the committee of the URCNA” (Article 151, 4.4.3). It also decided to mandate the committee to “give a final evaluation of the letters from the churches” and “to finalize those matters deemed to be yet unfinished” (Article 151, 4.4.1).

To carry out these mandates the CanRC committee first reviewed the letters from the churches. On the basis of this review it proposed a number of changes to PJCO 2010 for consideration with the URCNA brothers. It also presented all the directives from Synod 2010 to the URCNA brothers.

The URCNA brothers were able to engage in these negotiations since Synod London 2010, though mandating the churches to send suggested changes to PJCO 2010 to synod instead of to the committee, also reappointed the committee to “continue working closely with the church order sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches ...to address matters yet unfinished (such as PJCO Article 4) (Acts of Synod London, Article 40).

At a joint meeting in June 2010 all the recommendations from Synod Burlington 2010 as well as the above mentioned proposals were duly deliberated and decided upon. These specific deliberations and decisions form the basis for the comments made in this document.

This document, therefore, is not at all exhaustive. Rather, this document is meant to highlight some of the rationale for the changes made to PJCO 2010.

The reader will wish to read through this document with the two-column document at hand.

## Formatting of the PJCO

We made a few very minor formatting changes in the PJCO in order to correct some inconsistencies that were brought to our attention.

## Introduction

In the “Historical Background” section of the introduction, PJCO 2010 originally stated that “...*the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, including those in Wezel, the Netherlands (1568), and in Emden, Germany (1571).*” We followed a suggestion from one of the churches to amend that line to “*the Reformed churches set down the foundation of the Church Order at various ecclesiastical assemblies beginning in 1563, at various ecclesiastical assemblies, with the first official assembly held in Emden, Germany in 1571*” for the sake of historical accuracy and clarity.

## PJCO Article 1, The Purpose and Divisions of the Church Order

We considered removing the words “relations and” from the phrase “*Therefore we order our ecclesiastical relations and activities under the following divisions*” since that could suggest that the matter of “relations with other churches” is more important than other matters. In context, however, the phrase “ecclesiastical relations” is primarily about the churches in the federation working together – and it is important to highlight that the Church Order is a document by which the churches relate together.

## PJCO Article 3, The Duties of the Minister

Several churches expressed concern that the phraseology of “watching over his fellow office-bearers” had a latent hierarchy in it. Looking at this article again we reworded it noting the following:

- While the suggested terminology of “assisting them in their work” fits with the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship, the terminology of “watching over” fits with the office.
- That the phrase “together with...” is found in PJCO 17 but not PJCO 3 is not an inadvertent inconsistency. Rather, the reason for the inconsistency is that while the minister is a fellow elder, the elder is not a fellow minister.
- The concern could be addressed and PJCO 3 could be improved by separating the “preaching and teaching” duties from the “elder duties.”

## **PJCO Article 4A, Preparation for the Ministry, Theological Education**

Both Synod London 2010 and Synod Burlington 2010 had mandated the combined committee to finalize this article. Synod Burlington gave the following directive: “Seeing as this article is incomplete, the following wording is proposed to the Joint Order Church Committee for its consideration and adoption: *“The churches shall maintain an institution for the training for the ministry and shall support theological education that is properly accountable to the churches.”*”

We considered such matters as the following in finalizing this article:

- Concerns have been expressed about synodical boards over which the churches actually have no control whatsoever.
- In the past, institutions for theological training controlled by the churches have become corrupted and unfaithful to biblical teaching. The responsibility for this, however, actually lies particularly with the churches that were to oversee and control these institutions. Reflected in this is the faithfulness or lack thereof of the churches.
- It is important that the churches take full control of theological education specific to the confessions and creeds of the churches.

## **PJCO Article 4B, Preparation for the Ministry, Licensure**

Synod Burlington gave the following directive:

- *A number of our churches raise questions about a student being able to exhort after only completing one year of theological education. This objection is related to the fact that students from Hamilton need three years of theological education before they can exhort in our churches. It should be noted that there is an obvious discrepancy here between our respective churches that no doubt should be discussed and resolved.*
- *At the same time it should be noted that students coming from Mid-America take at least three courses in Homiletics in their first year of study and that more attention is given to the preparation of sermons.*
- *With regard to (Westminster) California, the catalogue appears to indicate that only one course in Homiletics is required.*
- *In light of these different approaches the... committee should give serious consideration to raising the minimum requirement to two years before granting licensure to exhort.*
- Following are some considerations that contributed to us leaving the article as is
  - While a student may only have had one year of theological instruction, he at the same time still has to pass the licensure examination;
  - It should be kept in mind that a student in under a supervisor, and thus his sermons also are under supervision before being preached;
  - Delaying a student access to the pulpit also delays and curtails practical training;
  - The current practice of “after the first year” in the URCNA has not been disappointing;
  - Practically speaking, how much improvement will one more year of theological education have on the quality of the “sermons” presented?
  - Could one ask the seminary to give more homiletics courses earlier on?

- The current CanRC Church Order does not specify 3 years but instead has “in accordance with general ecclesiastical regulations.”

### **PJCO Article 5, Calling a Candidate**

Extensive editing of articles, especially over time, can result in awkward and superfluous wording that needs to be addressed. The input from several churches made this quite clear with respect to the first two paragraphs of this article. In re-crafting these paragraphs the following matters came up for discussion:

- While some churches questioned the specification that the laying on of hands should be done only by the ministers we decided to keep this stipulation since at stake here is the matter of office.
- PJCO 2010 speaks about both the advice of the congregation and the counsellor: there should be a distinction made which gives more weight to the voice of the congregation.

### **PJCO Article 6, Calling a Minister Within the Federation**

This article also needed some streamlining and could be shortened by the removal of stipulations already covered elsewhere in the PJCO. In connection with the discussion regarding advice and approbation under PJCO 5 it was deemed prudent to change “advice of classis” for a second call to “approval of classis.”

### **PJCO Article 7, Calling a Minister from Outside the Federation**

This article, with its repeated usage of “only” and other awkward phraseology, needed some streamlining and clarification.

### **PJCO Article 8, Bound to a Particular Church**

One church recognized that while the wording “such as” with examples can be intended to limit what can be called an “other ministerial task,” yet in actual fact such wording has the opposite effect. Another church recommended the inclusion of missionaries as the primary example of an “other ministerial task.”

We considered removing all the examples, but felt that this would leave the matter wide open. This would not be good in our day in which many tasks are quickly labeled as “ministerial tasks.” Examples do function to give direction as to what can properly be considered an “other ministerial task.” We also added the word “specific” to clarify that “other ministerial task” should not be taken too broadly.

### **PJCO Article 10, Support and Emeritation of Ministers**

A number of churches pointed out that the words “...shall contribute toward the retirement” could wrongly be taken in a very limited way. We therefore changed “...shall contribute toward...” to “...shall provide for...”

### **PJCO Article 21D, Ecclesiastical Assemblies, Jurisdiction**

Several churches pointed out that the directive “all matters” in PJCO 21D confuses the intent of this article. While the jurisdiction of synod applies to overtures and appeals, the way overtures and appeal come to synod are not necessarily the same. Overtures need to go the ecclesiastical route by way of consistory, classis, and regional synod to general synod. An appeal against a decision of a broader assembly is submitted to the broader assembly next in line; an appeal against a decision of general synod is submitted directly to the next general synod. To clear up any possible confusion we settled on the following formulation that distinguishes appeals from other matters that assemblies have to deal with: *“All these matters, with the exception of appeals, must originate with a consistory and must receive the support of the narrower assembly before being considered by the broader assembly.”*

### **PJCO Article 25D, Classis, Mutual Oversight**

Given the inconsistency of language between PJCO 17 and PJCO 25D about the task of promoting Reformed Schooling we changed the wording of PJCO 25D to *“...and schooling that is in harmony with the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity is promoted.”*

Synod Burlington 2010 gave the following directive regarding this matter: *“It can be questioned whether a classis needs to inquire of the churches whether or not “Confessionally Reformed Schooling is promoted.” The committee is advised to leave the matter of schooling to the local churches and not make it a matter of classical concern.”* Over the years this matter has already been negotiated extensively. We in the end decided to keep the wording as is. Following are some of the points, pro and con, that surfaced in our deliberations:

- A key question here is: is this really the task of classis?
- Would it not be best that classis asks questions around the three marks of the Church?

- Why would PJCO 25 D ask about “schooling at all levels” while not asking about catechizing? Is not the matter of “catechizing” more germane to the task of the elder?
- Would it not be important to also ask if the decisions of the broader assemblies are upheld and the Church Order is followed?
- Would not this question be much more pertinent at a church visitation?
- The well-being of the local church is very much impacted by Reformed education.
- Dort 1914 does make reference to the matter of schooling in connection with classis. Hence historically it is not out of synch to have this question at classis. In the CanRCs the stress on education as a parental matter, which in itself is good, has skewed things in taking it away from classis. This question has a long history in the Reformed Churches: “Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?”

### **PJCO Article 28, Regional Synod**

We completely rewrote PJCO 28 in order to incorporate the suggestion for a provision regulating the cancellation of an unnecessary regional synod, to get rid of some unnecessary stipulations which are covered in other articles already, and to fix up some terminology that could be taken to suggest that a regional synod is a continuing body. In so doing we also made a small change to PJCO 25B for the sake of consistency in terminology.

### **PJCO Article 30, General Synod**

When considering PJCO 28 regarding regional synods we noticed that while it is important that PJCO 28 has the phrase “consisting of three or more classes” in order to highlight that a Regional Synod has to be made up of at least three classes, the parallel stipulation in PJCO 30 to the effect that a general synod consists of those delegated by the classis is not needed since this is covered elsewhere. We noted that here too terminology could be improved to take away any idea that a general synod is a continuing body.

### **PJCO Article 36, Psalms and Hymns**

Synod Burlington 2010 gave the following directive regarding this article: *“From the letters received, it becomes obvious that all the churches which wrote support the Majority Report and thus would like to see the renditions of the Psalms and Hymns “approved by general synod.” The [committee] is urged to decide accordingly. At the same time, the [committee] realizes that exceptional situations can arise as is the case of a church plant being done among different ethnic groups that do not worship in English. In such cases the advice of classis should be sought before proceeding to use alternative Psalms and Hymns.”* Following are some of the points of deliberation that we again had:

- The URCNA Synod Schererville 2007 expressed its strong preference for the minority report, while the CanRC Synod Smithers 2007 expressed its strong preference for the majority report.
- It is interesting that while the URCNA has a committee to prepare a new hymnal that has to be approved by general synod, it does not indicate that when this hymnal is completed that the singing in the worship services be from that book.
- Most URCNA churches would not want the restriction of singing from only one book. It should be noted, however, that PJCO 36 does not mandate singing from only one book.
- Synod Burlington 2010 agrees with the current wording of PJCO 36, and therefore may have hoped that with this directive the minority report would be taken off the table. The committee as a whole, however, cannot do that. Could the chasm not be bridged by adding a provision that other songs may be sung in a certain area but only if approved by synod? Should a procedure like that, however, be specifically stipulated particularly since the current wording already allows for that?
- Neither the URCNA nor the CanRC church orders specify that a synod has to decide on a Bible translation: it is left to the churches.
- The stipulation of “synod approval” is important: the singing of the church is the confession of the church and thus the churches should work on this together.

We decided to leave PJCO 36 as is.

### **PJCO Article 40, Public Profession of Faith**

A number of churches properly expressed weaknesses with the PJCO 2010 version of this article that needed addressing:

- It does not have the character of a Church Order article but rather the nuance of an explanatory paragraph;
- The terminology of “appropriate liturgical form” should be replaced with “synodically adopted form” for the sake of consistency;
- “Those who wish to profess their faith” is not the best terminology;
- Specifying the Three Forms of Unity here would fit with other PJCO articles;

While considering these matters we also questioned the terminology of “*those who wish to profess their faith shall be examined by the consistory...*” Especially in the context of the Church Order, the word reminds of ecclesiastical examinations for entering the ministry.

This all contributed to the new wording of PJCO 40.

### **PJCO Article 43, Admission to the Lord’s Supper**

Synod Burlington 2010 gave the following directive regarding this article:

- *A considerable number of churches wrote to Synod Burlington-Ebenezer commenting on the current wording of this Article. Many of these comments highlight dissatisfaction with the expression “biblical church membership” and wonder what it means and how it will be applied.*
- *The churches in our federation are reminded that the elders of the local church are directly responsible for the doctrine and life of their members. Visitors, on the other hand, constitute “exceptions” and it needs to be understood that “exceptions” are always hard to regulate.*
- *Notwithstanding this, the [committee] is asked to consider the following:*
  - *a) The printing of this article in three paragraphs would clarify the fact that the first part deals with the responsibility of the consistory, the second part with the participation of members, and the third part with the admission of visitors.*
  - *b) The admission of visitors from churches with which we maintain ecclesiastical fellowship is best served by a letter of testimony, but it should be understood that very few churches in North America are familiar with such a practice.*
  - *c) The admission of visitors from other churches has historically been viewed as an exception to the rule and needs to be regulated locally by the elders.*
  - *d) A number of churches cite those biblical passages that refer to the testimony of two or three witnesses (Dt 19:15; Jn 5: 31, 8:13, etc.) and thus conclude that a verbal testimony is insufficient. It should be noted, however, that these passages all deal with legal or judicial proceedings. There is disagreement as to whether these passages can be applied to the celebration of the sacrament.*
- *The [committee] is urged to adopt the following re-wording of the Article:*
  - *The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord’s Supper.*
  - *Only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life shall be admitted by the consistory.*
  - *Visitors who profess the Reformed faith may be admitted to the Lord’s Supper provided that the consistory secures from them a satisfactory testimony about their doctrine and life, in either written or verbal form.*

In our discussions we noted the following which contributed to the rewording:

- Synod Burlington 2010 correctly says that the elders of the local church are directly responsible for the doctrine and life of their members, and that visitor constitute exceptions that are always difficult to regulate. This article has been extensively debated over the years.
- The main concern of Synod Burlington 2010 was the nebulous “Biblical Church Membership,” and thus specifies “the Reformed faith.”
- While the suggested wording of “*only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life*” is somewhat more restrictive than the terminology used in PJCO 2010, Synod Burlington 2010 has made a concession here: it allows for self-testimony but it has to be genuine.
- The last sentence of Synod Burlington’s proposal does leave out the matter of church membership, unless it is covered under “doctrine and life.” Experience has shown, however, that church membership should be spelled out as necessary here.

## **PJCO Article 45, The Church's Evangelism Calling**

Also PJCO 45 was completely rewritten. Synod Burlington 2010 gave the following directive regarding this article: *“The committee should take another look at the style and content of this Article. The present wording is awkward. The [committee] is asked to give due consideration to the following wording: Each church shall fulfill its evangelistic calling in faithfulness to the Word of God and by relying on the Holy Spirit. It shall make known the good news of Jesus Christ to those in its area who do not know God or are estranged from him and his service with the aim of having them join the church through profession of faith.”*

- We came to our revised wording after considering some of the following:
  - The only concern of Synod Burlington seems to be that the style is awkward;
  - Synod Burlington's rendition does not have the matter of “following Christ” and is a bit stronger on the necessity of joining the church.
  - Synod Burlington's rendition separates the matters of “relying on the Holy Spirit” and “in faithfulness to the Word of God.”
  - The word “necessarily” in PJCO 2010 is not really necessary.

## **PJCO Article 52, The Discipline of a Member**

A number of churches weighed in on the formulation of this article citing the following concerns:

- If section B begins with the words “A non-communicant member” then for the sake of consistency section A should begin with the words “A communicant member.”
- The terminology “the member” should be consistently used throughout the article to refer to the person under discipline.
- It was asked if the step of obtaining prior concurring advice from classis should be skipped in cases of public sin. Also in such cases, however, the safeguard of receiving the concurring advice of classis before proceeding with discipline is in place. The point is not only “revealing the name” but “proceeding on with discipline.”

Revisions were made to address these concerns.

## **PJCO Article 57B, The Reception and Departure of Members, The Departure of Members**

Synod Burlington 2010 gave the following directive regarding this article:

- *Numerous churches disagree with the fact that a departing member needs to submit a “written request” in order to receive a letter of testimony.*
- *Several churches also disagree with the requirement that the consistory send a letter of testimony to a local church.*
- *The wording should be changed by the PJCO to:*

- *Upon request, a letter of testimony shall be given to those members who are departing to a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship. The consistory may send a copy of this letter to such a church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care.*
  - *The departure of members shall be properly announced.*
- Following are some of our considerations that contributed to our new formulation of PJCO 57B:
- The stipulation in the PJCO 2010 rendition that a request be in writing was due to the potential of legal problems. If people, however, do not have to write a letter indicating that they would like to join the church, why must they do so when the reverse applies?
  - The onus and responsibility of the individual is a fundamental principle here. The individual should take up his responsibility to seek membership in the “new” church.
  - An underlying point is how we perceive membership. In a legal and corporate environment people have to apply for and resign from membership in a written mode. Church membership, however, is different.
  - The concept of “transfer of membership” is very foreign to the Canadian Reformed Churches. It also tends to foster the idea that membership is not in a particular church, but in the federation.
  - Membership in the church means that the person comes under the spiritual care of the body of elders. One then never has the right to take themselves out of such care and membership – unless they withdraw from Christ’s Church. Unless the spiritual care of an individual is transferred from one church to another, things fall between the cracks. Then spiritual care is not transferred – and that means the elders are not fulfilling their task. The point really is not “transfer of membership” but “transfer of spiritual care” from one body of elders to another. You never put this spiritual care in the hands of an individual.
  - True, the role of the person is important: they are responsible to make the decision to come under the care of other elders of another church. The elders, however, also have a responsibility. There should be no gap or time when a sheep is not under oversight. The important part here is “continuing care.”
  - When someone moves away, you cannot really supervise them. He has removed himself. Electronically you can trace them somewhat – and that is good – but often you cannot really have supervision.

### **Ecclesiastical Examinations**

One of the churches pointed out that the term “eligible” is not correct in connection with the ordination examination since the term implies “possibility.” When a man sustains a candidacy examination then there is a possibility that he gets a call; when he, however, sustains an ordination examination then an ordination is not only a possibility, but he proceeds right to his

ordination. The term “eligible,” therefore, should be used only when there is a possibility of being called to office. The following emendations were therefore adopted:

PJCO 2010	Recommendation
<p><b>Ordination Examination</b> A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination to become eligible for ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the churches</p>	<p><b>Ordination Examination</b> A candidate who has accepted a call within the federation must undergo the ordination examination.</p>
<p><b>Ordination Examination</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments upon:</p>	<p><b>Ordination Examination</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the candidate has sustained his ordination examination upon:</p>
<p><b>Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his ordination examination and is therefore eligible to be ordained as a minister of the Word and sacraments upon:</p>	<p><b>Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation Maintains Ecclesiastical Fellowship</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained his ordination examination upon:</p>
<p><b>Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation does not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the examination for ministers and is therefore eligible to be admitted as minister of his congregation in the federation upon:</p>	<p><b>Ecclesiastical Examination for a Minister from a Church with Whom the Federation does not Maintain Ecclesiastical Fellowship</b> 8. Classis shall declare that the applicant has sustained the examination for upon:</p>

### **The Ordination Examination**

Upon reviewing internal minutes of a previous meeting in 2009 we decided to make the following editorial adjustment to Ordination Examination Regulation: *“If the candidacy exam is sustained and the candidate accepts a call within one year in the classis that examined him, the ordination exam may be waived. The classis that examined him may make such a decision.”*

### **The Examinations for those who already are Ministers**

One of the churches pointed correctly pointed out that a minister coming from another federation within ecclesiastical fellowship should be required to submit the same documentation as those within the federation as required in PJCO 6, and that these documents therefore need to be listed under Ecclesiastical Examinations for a minister from a church with whom the federation maintains ecclesiastical fellowship.

This change was made realizing that different federations have different procedures: would the OPC, for example, have a classical release form? The Church Order, however, has to be responsibly applied in different situations – and not slavishly or legalistically upheld. It is important that the calling church knows that the minister left on good terms.

### **Credential Forms for Broader Assemblies**

For the sake of clarity the number of boxes in the Regional Synod Credential Form was changed from 4 to 3 to coincide with the stipulation in PJCO 25E.

Press Release of the meeting of the combined committees of the  
Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches  
to propose a common church order  
held June 21-24, 2011  
at the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington, ON

Present were: Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema and Mr. Harry Van Gorp representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA), and Dr. Gijsbert Nederveen, Mr. Gerard J. Nordeman, Rev. John VanWoudenberg and Dr. Art Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC).

Dr. Nelson Kloosterman was absent with notification. In view of this the meeting appointed Rev. Scheuers to function as chairman.

Rev. Scheuers opened the meeting with a brief meditation on Ephesians 1, prayer, and a word of welcome.

A general discussion took place on the specific mandates received from the respective synods. The CanRC Synod Burlington 2010 charged the committee to discuss with the URCNA brothers the comments and feedback received from the churches as well as a general direction regarding a few articles in the PJCO. The URCNA Synod London 2010 mandated the committee to continue working closely with the church order sub-committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches to draft joint regulations for synodical procedure and to address matters yet unfinished. The committee was also mandated to develop Forms of Discipline for a united federation. Regarding the latter, the CanRC brothers, after consultation with the CanRC Liturgical Forms committee, agreed to work on this as well.

The minutes of the July 28-30, 2009 meeting were reviewed and approved, as were the agenda and timetable for the next four days.

Synod Burlington 2010 had received 45 letters from the churches outlining various concerns and recommendations for changes to the PJCO. The CanRC brothers prior to this meeting reviewed these submissions and proposed a number of amendments. While in several instances it was decided to retain the proposed article as submitted to the churches and the respective synods, in other instances some changes for improvement were agreed to. Some were of a minor grammatical and formatting nature and could be adopted without much debate. Others took considerable study and deliberation. The following is a brief overview of the more significant amendments agreed upon.

Art. 3 – The duties of the Minister - was changed to remove any possible misunderstanding about the minister lording it over the elders.

Art 4 – Preparation for the Ministry. The synods of both churches had mandated the combined committee to finalize this article. In particular section 4a Theological Education. Concerns have been expressed about synodical boards over which the churches actually have no control whatsoever. Also, in the past, institutions for theological training controlled by the churches have become corrupted and unfaithful to biblical teaching. The committee concluded that the responsibility for allowing this to happen actually lies particularly with the churches that were to oversee and control these institutions. Reflected in this is the faithfulness or lack thereof of the churches. It is important that the churches take full control of theological education specific to the confessions and creeds of the churches. The committee therefore decided to adopt the following wording for PJCO 4a:

**8.1.1.1. A. Theological Education**

*To train men for the ministry of the Word, the churches shall maintain and support a theological seminary that is properly accountable to the churches.*

*Competent men shall be encouraged to study for the ministry of the Word. A man aspiring to the ministry must be a member of a church in the federation and must evidence genuine godliness to his consistory, who shall ensure that he receives a thoroughly reformed theological education. This consistory with the deacons shall also help him ensure that his financial needs are met, if necessary with the assistance of the churches of classis.*

Regarding Art 4b – Licensure - a number of churches raised questions about a student being able to exhort after only completing one year of theological education. It should be kept in mind that students may come from different seminaries. Some already have taken at least three courses in Homiletics in their first year of studies. The committee further considered that typically no sermon is delivered that has not first been passed by the student’s supervisor. Also, no student can exhort before he has passed a licensure examination. It is decided to leave this part of the article as is.

Art. 5 – Calling a candidate - had undergone extensive editing with the result that it reads awkwardly. The revised wording now also includes the terminology “approbation” of the congregation and “advice” of the counselors.

Art. 10 - Support and Emeritation of Ministers. The wording “shall contribute towards his retirement” does not obligate the church to look after the needs of the minister upon his retirement. This has been changed to “shall provide for his retirement”.

The wording in Art 25 has been changed to be consistent with Art 17. It now reads in both articles: “schooling that is in harmony with the Word of God as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity”.

Also the wording in Art 28 – Regional Synod - and Art 30 – General Synod - has been harmonized. In addition, art 28 was changed to allow for the convening of a regional synod to be cancelled if the convening church, in consultation with its classis, concludes that no matters have been submitted by the classes that would warrant the convening of a regional synod. Cancellation of a regional synod shall not be permitted to occur twice in succession.

The committee was persuaded by the arguments presented that the wording of Art 40 – Public Profession of Faith – could be improved upon. The revised article now reads:

*Those who desire to profess their faith and thereby be admitted to the Lord’s Supper shall be evaluated by the consistory regarding their motives, their knowledge of the Three Forms of Unity, and their walk of life. This profession of faith shall occur after proper announcements to the congregation, and with the use of the adopted liturgical form.*

Regarding Art 43 – Admission to the Lord’s Supper – Synod Burlington 2010 of the CanRC had asked that the committee consider the fact that the admission of visitors from churches with which we maintain ecclesiastical fellowship is best served by a letter of testimony, but it should be understood that very few churches in North America are familiar with such a practice. The admission of visitors from other churches has historically been viewed as an exception to the rule and needs to be regulated by the elders. The criterion “Biblical Church Membership” was considered nebulous by this synod and several churches that had written. The committee agreed and has changed this article as follows:

*The consistory shall supervise participation at the Lord's Supper.*

*To that end, the consistory shall admit to the Lord's Supper only those members who have made public profession of the Reformed faith and lead a godly life.*

*The consistory may also admit visitors who profess the Reformed faith provided that it secures from them a satisfactory testimony in either written or verbal form about their doctrine, life, and church membership.*

Art. 57B – The Departure of Members – was discussed in view of comments from the churches and Synod Burlington 2010 of the CanRC. The stipulation that a request for a letter of testimony be made in writing has been removed. The question of membership was considered at length. One becomes a member of a local congregation, not the federation. A transfer of membership is therefore not possible. To send the letter of testimony to the consistory of another church could be interpreted as a transfer. The onus and responsibility of the individual is a fundamental principle. A person departs and freely joins a church. On the other hand, the spiritual care of an individual must be transferred from one consistory to another. There has to be a safeguard that a person does not fall between the cracks in this process. In view of these considerations, the committee agreed to the following wording for this section of the article:

*Upon their request, a letter of testimony shall be given to those members who are departing to a church with which the federation has ecclesiastical fellowship. The consistory shall send a copy of this letter to that church, requesting it to accept them under its spiritual care. Departing members remain under the supervision and care of their consistory until they are received as members into that church.*

*The departure of members shall be properly announced.*

The regulations for various examinations were once more reviewed for correctness, consistency, and language. This resulted in some changes to four sets of regulations.

The committee spent the last two days of its meetings on developing a set of forms for discipline. They consist of: 1. Form for excommunication of communicant members; 2. Form for readmission; and 3. Form for excommunication of non-communicant members. The existing forms were considered as a basis for the proposed forms, and various commentaries were consulted in the process. The committee is grateful that a set of forms including prayers can be presented to the synods and churches of the respective federations. The proposed forms will be included as part of the report of the committee with the recommendation that they be adopted and the committee be relieved of this task.

The mandate to develop regulations for synodical procedures was discussed and the regulations currently in use by the respective federations were compared for similarity. However, due to the different structures of the respective synods and the history of the churches, there are some procedural differences between the two sets of regulations. New regulations will be drafted that reflect the wording of the new PJCOA. General agreement was reached on what should be included in the regulations. A sub-committee consisting of the six brothers living in Ontario was appointed to prepare a tentative set of regulations while keeping the full committee informed of its progress. These proposed regulations will be presented to the respective synods with the recommendation that the present committee be re-appointed to finalize the regulations when the PJCO is adopted and union of the two federations is indeed planned.

The committee will now draft its final report to the respective synods. This should as much as possible be one report. The committee will also present the synods and churches with another 2-column document that contains only the changes to the PJCO 2010, as well as a clean copy of the complete PJCO 2012. Also included will be a brief document with comments on the reasons and deliberations that led to the changes.

In closing comments the committee members reflected on the many hours spent together on this work for the churches. The common thread again was the appreciation for the harmonious and brotherly atmosphere in which the committee could perform its task. Dr. Jack the Jong was remembered for his contributions in the early years and the sadness felt when illness forced him to resign. Appreciation was expressed for the contributions of Nelson Kloosterman to the work of the committee. His leadership and his gifts and talents were much appreciated by the members of the committee.

With this the committee considers that it has completed the tasks given to it by the synods of the respective federations. It is the prayer of the committee that the Lord will be pleased to use these labors to the benefit of the churches, and, if it is His will, for a combined federation. To God be the praise and the glory. Following prayer of thanksgiving, Rev. Scheuers closed the meeting.

This press release, as well as copies of previous releases can be found at the following web sites:  
<http://sites.google.com/site/churchorderpjco> and  
<http://www.canrc.org/resources/press/index.html>

For the committee  
Gerard J. Nordeman

## Prefacing Comments

The URCNA currently uses the “Form for Excommunication” and the “Form for Readmission” as found in the 1976 Psalter Hymnal. The CanRCs have matching forms which are very close in content: it is clear that the forms have a common root. The CanRC forms, however, are a bit more up to date in language and provide helpful cross references to scripture. The CanRC forms include the announcements as part of the form, whereas in the URCNA each church drafts its own announcement. The CanRCs also have a form for excommunication of non-communicant members.

Given how we would not be engaging in in depth study into the forms as we did with the church order articles, and given how the discipline forms have a long history, we decided that we should restrict ourselves as much as possible to making only linguistic and stylistic modifications.

Given how the CanRC forms are more up to date linguistically, and given how only the CanRCs have a form for excommunication of non-communicant members, we decided to use the CanRC forms as templates. The CanRC forms, however, use the NIV84 Bible translation. Due to time constraints we continued with this but also decided to highlight this as something that should be subject to review.

Below are the actual forms that have been drafted.

## Form for Excommunication of Communicant Members

### First Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory informs you with sorrow that a member of the congregation has become guilty of sin against the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment(s). In spite of several earnest admonitions, there is no evidence of repentance. Therefore the consistory had to suspend this member from the communion of the Lord’s Supper. However, this silent discipline has not led to repentance. To its great sorrow, the consistory is now obliged to proceed to public discipline. We therefore make this known to you and seriously exhort you to pray to the Lord that He may bring this member of the body to repentance.

### Second Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory has previously informed you that a member has become guilty of sin against the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment(s). This member was suspended from the Lord’s Supper because of refusal to repent. In spite of continued discipline no true repentance has become apparent. On the contrary, all admonitions remained fruitless. The only result was a further hardening of heart. Therefore, having obtained the concurring advice of classis, we now with sorrow proceed to the

second step of public discipline and make known to you the name of the unrepentant member, namely \_\_\_\_\_ (name). We seriously exhort you to admonish this brother (sister) continually in love. Pray that the Lord may bring about repentance so that the sinner may be saved and the sin be banned from the congregation.

### Third Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

On two occasions the consistory has had the sad duty of informing you that our brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ (name) is guilty of sinning against the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment(s). You heard that he (she) remained impenitent and therefore was suspended from the Lord's Supper. Since that time no true repentance has been shown and all admonitions have remained fruitless. Therefore, to our great sorrow, we now inform you that if brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ (name) does not come to repentance, he (she) will be excommunicated from the church of Christ on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). For the last time we exhort you to admonish him (her) most urgently and in love. Pray that it may please the Lord to lead him (her) to repentance so that the impenitent member is restored and excommunication is prevented.

### The Excommunication

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has announced to you that brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ (name) has persisted in grievous sin. The purpose of these announcements was that by your prayers and admonitions he (she) might turn to the living God and thus be delivered from the power of Satan who has taken him (her) captive. To our deep sorrow, however, no one has informed us of any evidence of true repentance, although he (she) was warned by many. His (Her) guilt, which was already serious, has only become all the greater because of his (her) persistence in sin. We have shown much patience with him (her), but now are compelled to proceed to the ultimate remedy given us by the Lord in His Word, namely, excommunication. This excommunication is intended to make this brother (sister) ashamed of his (her) sins, to ensure that this corrupt member does not affect the whole body which is Christ's church, and to prevent the blaspheming of God's Name. Christ Jesus has assigned the exercise of discipline to His office-bearers with the words, "*I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Mt 18:18).

Because he (she) obstinately persists in his (her) sin, we as the elders of the church of God in this place, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ excommunicate \_\_\_\_\_ (name) from the church of the Lord.

He (she) is now excluded from the fellowship of Christ and from His kingdom. Therefore he (she) may no longer use the sacraments and no longer has any part in the spiritual blessings and benefits which Christ bestows upon His church. As long as he (she) persists in sin, let him be to you as a pagan and an outcast (cf. Mt 18:17).

### Warning to the Congregation

We exhort you, beloved Christians, not to look on him (her) as an enemy. On the contrary, try to warn him (her) as a brother (sister). But do not associate with him (her) so that he (she) may be ashamed and come to repentance (cf. 2 Thess 3:14-15).

This excommunication, beloved, is a warning for us all. Fear the Lord and be cautious for, “...if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Cor 10:12). For the sake of your eternal salvation, continue in true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ together with all upright believers.

You have seen how our excommunicated brother (sister) began to fall and gradually came to ruin. Learn from this how subtle Satan is in bringing man to destruction (cf. 2 Cor 2:11) and how he causes him to despise God’s Word and His sacraments.

Therefore, resist evil from the very beginning.

*Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:1, 2).*

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8).*

*Pray so that you will not fall into temptation (Lk 22:46).*

*Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts (Heb 4:7).*

*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12)*

Let everyone repent of his sins lest our God humble us again and we have to grieve for another member of the body. Living in godliness and unity, be our crown and joy in the Lord.

Since it is God, however, who works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure (cf. Phil 2:13), let us call upon His holy Name with confession of our sins.

### Prayer

Righteous God and merciful Father, before Your holy majesty we blame ourselves for our sins. We acknowledge that we are deserving of the sorrow and grief caused by the excommunication of \_\_\_\_\_ (name). Surely, we all are worthy to be excluded from Your presence because of our many transgressions. But, O Lord, be gracious to us for Christ’s sake. We repent of our sins and ask for Your forgiveness. Work in us by Your Spirit so that, knowing more and more our sin, Your judgment, and Your grace, we may endeavor to please You. Help us to avoid the evil influence of the world and of those who have strayed from You. We pray that the excluded member may become ashamed of his (her) sins and return to You, for You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Help us, Your people, always to welcome those who return to You. Kindle in our hearts love and zeal that, by our admonitions as well as by our example, this excommunicated person and others who live in unbelief may be brought back to You. Bless our endeavors so that we may rejoice again over him (her) for whom we now mourn. In this way may Your holy Name be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Or: ...through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*”)

## Form for Readmission

### Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date) our brother (sister)

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) was excommunicated from the church of Christ. The consistory now informs you with gratitude that this remedy has borne fruit. The Lord has blessed our admonitions and prayers so that \_\_\_\_\_ (name) has repented and has requested to be received again into the communion of the church.

Since it is God's gracious will that we receive penitent sinners with joy, and since all things should be done in a fitting and orderly way (cf. 1 Cor 14:40), we inform you that at the next celebration of the Lord's Supper we shall loose him (her) from the bond of excommunication and readmit him (her) to the fellowship of the saints. If any of you should have a valid reason against the readmission, you should notify the consistory within \_\_\_\_\_ week(s). Meanwhile let us thank the Lord who has shown His grace to this lost sheep and let us beseech Him to perfect His work in him (her) to eternal salvation.

### Readmission According to the Scriptures

Beloved Congregation:

We have recently informed you of the conversion of

\_\_\_\_\_ (name), to the end that, with your approbation, he (she) might be received again into the church of Christ. No one has brought forward any objection against this readmission, and therefore we will now receive him (her) again into the communion of saints.

The Lord Christ instructed His church to excommunicate impenitent sinners and said, "*Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven.*" However, He immediately added, "*...and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Mt 18:18).

He taught us that excommunication does not take away all hope of salvation. For God has sworn by Himself, saying, "*As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live*" (Ezek 33:11). Therefore the church keeps hoping and praying for the repentance and return of the lost sinner, always eager to receive the penitent. The apostle Paul commanded the saints at Corinth to forgive and comfort the brother who had been reprovved and had come to repentance. He exhorted them to reaffirm their love for him lest he should be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (cf. 2 Cor 2:5-7).

Christ also teaches us that the sentence of absolution, passed upon a repentant sinner according to the Word of God, is considered binding by the Lord: "*...whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Mt 18:18). For this reason no one who truly repents should have even the slightest doubt that he is certainly received by God in grace, as Christ has declared, "*If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven...*" (Jn 20:23).

### Questions

\_\_\_\_\_ (name), before we proceed to remove your excommunication and thereby readmit you to the church of Christ, we request that you answer the following questions.

Do you declare with all your heart before God and His church that you are sincerely sorry for the sin and stubbornness for which you were justly excluded from the church?

Do you also truly believe that God has forgiven all your sins for the sake of Christ's blood and now receives you in grace?

Do you, therefore, desire to be readmitted to the church of Christ and do you promise, by the grace of the Lord, to live from now on in all godliness according to the Word of God?

\_\_\_\_\_ (name), what is your answer?

### Answer

I do.

### Readmission

As elders of the Church of Christ, together with the Church here assembled (1 Cor 5:4), we, with the authority of Christ declare you, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to be absolved from the bond of excommunication. We receive you again into the church of the Lord with joy and gratitude, and declare that you share in the fellowship of Christ, of the holy sacraments, and of all spiritual gifts and blessings of our Savior which God promises to and bestows upon His church. May the eternal God, through His only Son Jesus Christ, preserve you in His grace to the end. *"The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it"* (1 Thess 5:24). Amen.

### Charge

Beloved brother (sister), be assured in your heart that the Lord Himself has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtleties of Satan, the wickedness of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh, lest you again become entangled in sin. The love of Christ has brought you back; love Him, for He has forgiven you much. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit who has promised in your baptism to dwell in you, sanctifying you to be a member of Christ.

Beloved congregation, receive \_\_\_\_\_ (name) in love. Rejoice and be thankful, for this brother (sister) was dead and is alive; he (she) was lost and is found (cf. Lk 15:32). Rejoice with the angels, for Christ said, *"I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine persons who do not need to repent"* (Lk 15:7). Look on him (her) no longer as a stranger but as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God (cf. Eph 2:19).

Since there is no good in ourselves, let us with praise and thanksgiving implore the Lord Almighty for His grace.

### Prayer

Gracious God and Father, we thank and praise You through Jesus Christ that You have granted this brother (sister) godly grief and repentance unto life and have caused us to rejoice in this.

Give him (her) Your grace that he (she) may become more and more assured of the complete remission of all his (her) sins, and may derive from this assurance unspeakable joy and delight to serve You.

Since for a time he (she) has grieved us by his (her) sins, grant that he (she) may now edify us by his (her) conversion. Grant that he (she) may walk steadfastly in Your ways until the end.

Father, teach us by this example that with You there is forgiveness so that You may be praised. Grant that we together may serve You with childlike fear and obedience all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit is the one only true God. Amen.

(Or: ...through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose Name we conclude our prayer: “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*” )

## **Form for the excommunication of non-communicant members**

### First Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory informs you with sorrow that a non-communicant member, who was by baptism incorporated into the Christian Church, has become guilty of sin against the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment(s). In spite of several earnest admonitions, there is no evidence of repentance. Therefore the consistory, to its great sorrow, is now obliged to proceed to public discipline. We therefore make this known to you and seriously exhort you to pray to the Lord that He may bring this member of the body to repentance.

### Second Announcement

Beloved in the Lord:

The consistory has previously informed you that a non-communicant member has become guilty of sin against the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment(s). In spite of continued admonitions and instruction no true repentance has become apparent. On the contrary, all admonitions remained fruitless. The only result was a further hardening of heart and a continued wilful disobedience to the covenant of God. Therefore, having obtained the concurring advice of classis, we now with sorrow make known to you the name of the unrepentant member, namely \_\_\_\_\_ (name). Unless he (she) repents, the consistory will be obliged to excommunicate this brother (sister) from the communion of the church on \_\_\_\_\_ (date). We exhort you to admonish this member with affection and to pray to the Lord for his (her) conversion.

### The Excommunication

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

The consistory has previously announced to you that brother (sister) \_\_\_\_\_ (name), by baptism incorporated into the Christian church, has persisted in grievous sin. The purpose of these announcements was that by your

prayers and admonitions he (she) might turn to the living God and thus be delivered from the power of Satan who has taken him (her) captive. To our deep sorrow, however, no one has informed us of any evidence of true repentance, although he (she) was warned by many. In spite of many earnest admonitions he (she) obstinately denies communion with Christ and his church, which was signified and sealed to him (her) in baptism. We have shown much patience with him (her), but now are compelled to proceed to the ultimate remedy given us by the Lord in His Word, namely, excommunication. This excommunication is intended to make this brother (sister) ashamed of his (her) sins, to ensure that this corrupt member does not affect the whole body which is Christ's church, and to prevent the blaspheming of God's Name. Christ Jesus has assigned the exercise of discipline to His office-bearers with the words, *"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"* (Mt 18:18).

Because he (she) obstinately persists in his (her) sin, we as the elders of the church of God in this place, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ excommunicate

\_\_\_\_\_ (name) from the church of the Lord.

He (she) is now excluded from the fellowship of Christ and from His kingdom. Therefore he (she) no longer has any part in the spiritual blessings and benefits which Christ bestows upon His church. As long as he (she) persists in sin, let him be to you as a pagan and an outcast (cf. Mt 18:17).

#### Warning to the Congregation

We exhort you, beloved Christians, not to look on him (her) as an enemy. On the contrary, try to warn him (her) as a brother (sister). But do not associate with him (her) so that he (she) may be ashamed and come to repentance (cf. 2 Thess 3:14-15).

This excommunication, beloved, is a warning for us all. Fear the Lord and be cautious for, *"...if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"* (1 Cor 10:12). For the sake of your eternal salvation, continue in true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ together with all upright believers.

You have seen how this baptized member began to fall and gradually came to ruin. Learn from this how subtle Satan is in bringing man to destruction (cf. 2 Cor 2:11) and how he causes him to despise God's Word and His sacraments.

Therefore, take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, departing from the living God (Heb 3:12). He admonishes us:

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise - "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:1-4).*

*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older (1 Pet 5:5).*

*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful men, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 Jn 2:15-17).*

But since it is God who works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13), let us call upon His holy Name with confession of our sins.

### Prayer

Righteous God and merciful Father, before Your holy majesty we blame ourselves for our sins. We acknowledge that we are deserving of the sorrow and grief caused by the excommunication of \_\_\_\_\_ (name). Surely, we all are worthy to be excluded from Your presence because of our many transgressions. But, O Lord, be gracious to us for Christ's sake. We repent of our sins and ask for Your forgiveness. Work in us by Your Spirit so that, knowing more and more our sin, Your judgment, and Your grace, we may endeavor to please You. Help us to avoid the evil influence of the world and of those who have strayed from You. We pray that the excluded member may become ashamed of his (her) sins and return to You, for You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Help us, Your people, always to welcome those who return to You. Kindle in our hearts love and zeal that, by our admonitions as well as by our example, this excommunicated person and others who live in unbelief may be brought back to You. Bless our endeavors so that we may rejoice again over him (her) for whom we now mourn. In this way may Your holy Name be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Or: ...through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*")

Prefacing Note: This document in its current state is only a working document formulated by a sub-committee of the committee. Though not finalized, this document has been included in the report to the general synods simply to give some indication of what regulations could be adopted to function with the PJCO in a federation made up of both United Reformed and Canadian Reformed Churches. Should the federations proceed with uniting together, the committee would willingly craft a final proposal.

## **1. The Convening Church**

- 1.1. The previous general synod appoints a convening church for the next synod (cf. PJCO 30). This is done in rotation between the regional synods.
- 1.2. The designated clerk (cf. PJCO 21B) appointed by general synod to serve the convening church shall serve this church in carrying out its duties. He is responsible in this work to the convening church.

## **2. The convening and constituting of a synod**

- 2.1. Nine months prior to convocation, the convening church shall publish:
  - 2.1.1. The time and place of the next synod;
  - 2.1.2. The time and place for the prayer service;
  - 2.1.3. The address of the convening church to which all material is to be sent;
  - 2.1.4. The address for obtaining a copy of the Church Order and the Regulations for General Synod;
  - 2.1.5. The requirements that:
    - 2.1.5.1. The convening church must be in receipt of all material for synod no later than six weeks prior to the convocation date of synod. Material received after this date may not be added by the convening church to the Provisional Agenda, but shall be submitted to synod for its judgment regarding admissibility;
    - 2.1.5.2. Materials submitted to synod that quote any foreign language source must provide a full English translation, and in a footnote the citation in the original language.
- 2.2. At least six months prior to convocation the convening church shall send the (first) Provisional Agenda to all the churches.
- 2.3. The convening church shall forward to the delegates and first alternates:
  - 2.3.1. A provisional agenda of all materials, including:
    - 2.3.1.1. Reports;
    - 2.3.1.2. Correspondence from the churches;
    - 2.3.1.3. Overtures;
    - 2.3.1.4. Appeals.
  - 2.3.2. A copy of the current Regulations;
  - 2.3.3. A copy of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship.
- 2.4. The convening church shall forward to the churches all overtures submitted by the regional synods for general synod.
- 2.5. The consistory of the convening church shall call an official prayer service to be held prior to the opening of synod.

- 2.6. The convening church shall provide a chairman to chair the meeting of the delegates until synod has been constituted. In the meeting of the delegates he shall call the meeting to order with scripture reading and prayer.
- 2.7. The convening church shall:
  - 2.7.1. Examine the credentials, reporting to the meeting of delegates;
  - 2.7.2. Oversee the election of the officers in this order: chairman, vice-chairman, first clerk, and second clerk. Election to office is to be by majority of valid votes cast (cf. PJCO 30);
  - 2.7.3. Declare synod constituted;
  - 2.7.4. Present a report of its work to synod.

### **3. Matters Properly Before a Synod (Admissibility)**

- 3.1. Provisional Agenda
  - 3.1.1. Immediately upon being constituted the synod shall use the provisional agenda to establish its agenda.
- 3.2. Reports
  - 3.2.1. A report is a written document from a committee or an appointee of a synod indicating the work performed in response to a synod's mandate and presenting recommendations to synod.
- 3.3. Overtures
  - 3.3.1. An overture is a written proposal to synod, originating from a consistory and processed through a classis and regional synod, requesting a decision regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches.
  - 3.3.2. In order to be admissible an overture must provide written grounds.
- 3.4. Appeals
  - 3.4.1. An appeal is a written request made to a synod by a consistory or individual within the federation for a judgment regarding a matter previously decided upon by an assembly within the federation.
  - 3.4.2. In order to be admissible an appeal must provide written grounds (cf. PJCO 31).
  - 3.4.3. An appellant has the right to defend his appeal personally or together with a spokesperson.
- 3.5. Correspondence from the churches
  - 3.5.1. Correspondence from the churches includes:
    - 3.5.1.1. Interaction with matters pertaining to committee reports;
    - 3.5.1.2. Correspondence from churches in ecclesiastical fellowship.

### **4. Officers and advisory committees of a synod**

- 4.1. The officers shall perform the duties listed below and any others assigned by synod (cf. PJCO 21F). Their official functions shall end at the conclusion of the synod.
- 4.2. The chairman
  - 4.2.1. He shall call the members to order at the appointed time, call the roll and shall see to it that each session is properly opened and closed.
  - 4.2.2. He shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible.
  - 4.2.3. He shall recognize only those who have properly asked for the floor.

- 4.2.4. He shall ensure that members observe the rules of order and decorum and shall pastorally admonish those who do not.
- 4.2.5. He shall welcome fraternal delegates or other guests and respond to greetings received or appoint other members for this purpose.
- 4.2.6. He shall place before synod every motion that is properly made and seconded, and shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken.
- 4.2.7. He shall state matters of fact, inform synod regarding points of order, and duly exercise the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order.
- 4.2.8. In case of a point of order, the chairman must make a ruling at once. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.
- 4.2.9. If he feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman until the matter under consideration is decided. He shall retain his right to vote on any question.
- 4.2.10. He shall close the Synod with appropriate remarks and with prayer.
- 4.3. The vice-chairman
  - 4.3.1. He shall function as chairman in the absence of the chairman.
  - 4.3.2. He shall assist the chairman as circumstances require.
  - 4.3.3. He shall prepare the Press Release.
- 4.4. The first clerk
  - 4.4.1. He shall keep a proper record of the business of synod. This record shall ordinarily contain:
    - 4.4.1.1. The roll call;
    - 4.4.1.2. The opening and closing of sessions;
    - 4.4.1.3. All final reports of committees;
    - 4.4.1.4. All decisions of synod, including all motions and amendments, whether carried or defeated. He shall not include in the Acts any motion that was withdrawn;
    - 4.4.1.5. All fraternal greetings;
    - 4.4.1.6. All documents that synod by a majority vote has decided to insert in the Acts.
  - 4.4.2. Every morning he shall present the proposed Acts of the previous day for approval.
- 4.5. Second Clerk
  - 4.5.1. He shall function as the clerk in the absence of the first clerk.
  - 4.5.2. He shall assist the first clerk as circumstances require.
  - 4.5.3. He shall handle outgoing mail on behalf of synod.
- 4.6. Advisory Committees
  - 4.6.1. Advisory committees serve the synod by facilitating the work of synod during its sessions.
  - 4.6.2. The officers of synod shall propose advisory committees, with a convener, to serve for the duration of synod. A committee member shall have had no prior involvement in the matters he has to deal with.
  - 4.6.3. The officers of synod shall propose an arrangement of matters on the agenda to the appropriate committees. These committees shall serve synod with reports on their assigned agenda items. The reports shall include:
    - 4.6.3.1. Materials;
    - 4.6.3.2. Admissibility;
    - 4.6.3.3. Observations;

- 4.6.3.4. Considerations;
- 4.6.3.5. Recommendations;
- 4.6.3.6. Grounds.
- 4.6.4. Reports shall be distributed in adequate time before discussion.
- 4.6.5. The committee reporter shall present the reports.
- 4.6.6. During the discussion the task of defending the report shall rest primarily with one member of the committee of the committee's choice. Other committee members shall receive the privilege of the floor to elaborate on and clarify any point.
- 4.6.7. If there is a minority report, both the majority and minority reports shall be given into discussion, but the majority report shall be voted upon first.
- 4.6.8. The report may be referred back to the advisory committee for reconsideration.
- 4.6.9. Non-delegate advisors shall not be appointed to the committee.
- 4.6.10. Someone who has been requested to advise synod on a matter shall address synod on this point only when asked to do so by the chairman.
- 4.6.11. Advisory committee meetings shall be opened to fraternal delegates.

## **5. Standing and Ad Hoc Committees**

- 5.1. A synod may appoint standing committees and ad hoc committees. The authority of these committees shall be limited to the mandates given them by synod. No committee may arrogate to itself duties or mandates not specifically assigned to it.
- 5.2. Standing Committees
  - 5.2.1. A standing committee, whose members and alternates are appointed by synod, serves on a continuing basis until discharged.
  - 5.2.2. A standing committee made up of individuals or a church may be appointed by a synod to carry out specific synod functions such as managing finances, archiving, etc.
  - 5.2.3. Its members are appointed for specified terms. The committee and its mandate continue even though the members of the committee serve only until their terms are completed.
  - 5.2.4. The members of a standing committee shall serve no more than three consecutive three-year terms, each term commencing at the time of synodical appointment. Members who have completed three consecutive terms are eligible for reappointment after one year. A church or a committee may suggest names to synod for consideration for appointment.
- 5.3. Ad hoc committees
  - 5.3.1. An ad hoc committee (and alternates) is appointed by synod to perform a specified task only. The deadline by which it is to report is determined by synod.
  - 5.3.2. An ad hoc committee shall report to an intervening synod on:
    - 5.3.2.1. Its progress;
    - 5.3.2.2. The need to review, alter, or continue its mandate;
    - 5.3.2.3. The need to alter or continue the committee's membership.
- 5.4. Reports from standing and ad hoc committees:
  - 5.4.1. The report of these committees shall contain the following:
    - 5.4.1.1. A review of the committee's mandate;
    - 5.4.1.2. A summary of the committee's activities;
    - 5.4.1.3. Recommendations for synodical action.

- 5.4.2. These committees shall send their reports to the local churches six months prior to general synod for their review and recommendations to synod.
- 5.4.3. The reports of these committees should stand on their own merit at synod. If synod requires some clarification, it can ask one of the committee members to elaborate.
- 5.4.4. When synod has decided on a matter, it shall declare that its decision constitutes synod's answer to that particular matter.

## **6. Rules of Order**

### **6.1. Open and closed sessions of synod**

- 6.1.1. An open or plenary session is a session open to everyone.
- 6.1.2. A closed session is a session where only members of synod and office-bearers may be present. This shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.
- 6.1.3. A closed-restricted session is a session where only members of synod may be present. Such a session may only be held when synod judges that such a course is dictated by due regard for personal honour or the welfare of the churches in extremely delicate situations.

### **6.2. Main Motions**

- 6.2.1. A main motion is one which presents a specific matter for consideration or action.
- 6.2.2. A main motion is acceptable under the following conditions:
  - 6.2.2.1. The motion is in accord with the Scriptures as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity, and the Church Order (cf. PJCO 21); and
  - 6.2.2.2. The mover has been recognized by the chair;
  - 6.2.2.3. The motion has been seconded;
  - 6.2.2.4. The chairman judges the motion acceptable;
  - 6.2.2.5. The motion is presented in writing.
- 6.2.3. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:
  - 6.2.3.1. If another motion is before synod;
  - 6.2.3.2. If it conflicts with any decision already taken by this synod;
  - 6.2.3.3. If it interferes with any matter that has been tabled to a definite time;
  - 6.2.3.4. If it is substantially the same as a motion already rejected by synod.

### **6.3. A Motion to Amend**

- 6.3.1. This is a proposal to alter a main motion in language or in meaning before final action is taken on the motion.
- 6.3.2. A motion to amend may propose any of the following: to strike out, to insert, or to substitute certain words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs.
- 6.3.3. A motion to amend is not a proper amendment if it nullifies the main motion or is not germane to it. No new matter may be introduced to synod under the guise of an amendment. The chairman shall judge whether an amendment is acceptable or he may submit the matter to a vote.
- 6.3.4. A motion to amend an amendment is permissible and is called a secondary motion. Only one such amendment may be considered at a time.
- 6.3.5. All motions may be amended except the following:
  - 6.3.5.1. To adjourn;
  - 6.3.5.2. To table, or to place again a tabled motion before the body;
  - 6.3.5.3. To reconsider;
  - 6.3.5.4. To rescind;

- 6.3.5.5. To take up a question out of its regular order;
  - 6.3.5.6. Appeals to the floor from the decision of the chair;
  - 6.3.5.7. Calls for the order of the day, requests or questions of any kind;
  - 6.3.5.8. Points of order.
- 6.4. A motion to table
- 6.4.1. A motion may be made to postpone a matter temporarily or to a definite time. A motion may not be made to postpone a matter indefinitely.
  - 6.4.2. A motion to table temporarily
    - 6.4.2.1. Tabling a matter temporarily implies that synod will resume consideration on the matter at a later unspecified hour or date.
    - 6.4.2.2. This motion is not debatable or amendable.
    - 6.4.2.3. When synod wishes to resume consideration of the matter any member may move to place again the matter before the body. The motion to place the matter again before the body is not debatable or amendable.
    - 6.4.2.4. All matters that have been tabled temporarily must be placed before the body again before synod adjourns.
  - 6.4.3. A motion to table to a definite time
    - 6.4.3.1. Tabling a matter to a definite time implies that synod will resume consideration on the matter at a specified hour or date.
    - 6.4.3.2. This motion is debatable and may be amended.
    - 6.4.3.3. If a motion to table to a definite time has passed, no other motion similar in word or thought to the tabled matter may appear before synod.
    - 6.4.3.4. The matter tabled to a definite time may be taken up before the specified time by a majority vote of synod.
    - 6.4.3.5. If a motion to amend has been tabled definitely, the main motion to which the tabled amendment is related is likewise deferred.
    - 6.4.3.6. Any number of matters may be tabled to the same time. When that time arrives, the matters tabled are taken up in the order in which they were tabled.
    - 6.4.3.7. When the hour arrives to which such matters have been tabled, and synod is at that time busy with another matter, synod may decide to finish this matter first.
    - 6.4.3.8. All matters that have been tabled to a definite time must be placed before the body before synod adjourns.
- 6.5. Privileged motions
- 6.5.1. Call for the order of the day. When any member of synod believes that the regular business of synod is being obstructed or interrupted by irrelevant or unimportant material, he has the right to rise and to call for the order of the day. This means that he desires synod to return to the regular course of action. The following rules apply:
    - 6.5.1.1. A call for the order of the day may be made without recognition and may be done while another member is speaking;
    - 6.5.1.2. Such a call needs no seconding, is not debatable, and must be put to a vote;
    - 6.5.1.3. It has precedence over every other motion except a motion to adjourn or to take a recess.
  - 6.5.2. Point of order. It is the duty of the chairman to apply the rules of order and to prevent infractions. Should a member believe that the rules have been misinterpreted or misapplied, he may rise stating that he wishes to make a point of

- order. Asked by the chairman to state the point, he does so, and the chairman renders his decision at once on the point in question. The following rules apply:
- 6.5.2.1. A point of order may be raised at any time and must be recognized by the chairman;
  - 6.5.2.2. It needs no seconding and is not debatable;
  - 6.5.2.3. If the member making the point of order is not satisfied with the decision of the chairman he may challenge the ruling. When this is done the point of order becomes debatable and a simple majority is sufficient to sustain or reverse the chairman's decision.
- 6.5.3. Call for a division of the question
- 6.5.3.1. With a majority vote of synod, a motion consisting of several parts must be divided into its component parts and each part must be voted on separately.
- 6.6. Right of protest
- 6.6.1. It is the right of any member to protest against any decision of Synod.
  - 6.6.2. Protest should be registered immediately, or during the session in which the matter concerned was acted upon.
  - 6.6.3. Protests must be registered individually and not in groups.
  - 6.6.4. A member may request that his name and dissenting vote be recorded. Such a request must be made immediately after the vote is taken.
- 6.7. Motion to bring matters once decided again before synod
- 6.7.1. If for weighty reasons any member of synod desires reconsideration of a matter once decided, one of the following motions may be used.
  - 6.7.2. Motion to reconsider
    - 6.7.2.1. The intent of such a motion is to propose a new discussion and a new vote. This motion must be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side.
    - 6.7.2.2. Such a motion is not acceptable if action has begun in accordance with the motion in question.
    - 6.7.2.3. A motion to reconsider may be tabled to a definite time, but it may not be amended or referred to a committee.
    - 6.7.2.4. The motion to reconsider is debatable only insofar as the reasons for reconsideration are concerned.
  - 6.7.3. Motion to rescind
    - 6.7.3.1. The intent of such a motion is to annul a decision.
    - 6.7.3.2. A motion to rescind shall require a two-thirds majority to carry.
    - 6.7.3.3. A motion to rescind is debatable, including both the reasons for rescinding as well as the merits of the original question.
    - 6.7.3.4. Such a motion can only be used to rescind a decision taken by synod while in session. It cannot be used to rescind decisions taken by a previous synod.
- 6.8. Deliberation
- 6.8.1. In order to facilitate the discussion on a pending issue, the chairman shall ordinarily call for the discussion in two rounds. In the first round opportunity is given to members to express remarks related to the issue in question. In any following rounds members may react to the discussion on the issue in question.
  - 6.8.2. The discussion may be extended by discretion of the chairman or by a decision of synod.
  - 6.8.3. To obtain the floor, a member must be recognized by the chairman.

- 6.8.4. When a member obtains the floor, he shall address his remarks exclusively to the chairman, and may not call into question another member's motives or character.
- 6.8.5. If he fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy, the chairman shall call attention to these faults and insist on pointedness and brevity.
- 6.8.6. In subsequent rounds the chairman shall give priority to those who have not yet spoken.
- 6.8.7. When the chairman believes that a matter under consideration has been deliberated sufficiently, he may propose cessation of discussion at the end of a round. If a majority of synod votes to sustain his proposal, discussion shall cease immediately and the vote shall be taken.
- 6.8.8. Any member of synod, when he deems a matter to have been discussed sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. Should a two thirds majority be in favour, the vote shall be taken, but only after those who have already requested the floor have spoken. However these speakers shall not be allowed to offer any amendments. A motion to cease deliberating is not acceptable when either a motion to table or a motion to commit or recommit to a committee is before synod.
- 6.8.9. A member may not speak to a matter and then immediately move to cease debate.
- 6.8.10. A notice of a motion or of an alternative motion may be given during the discussion.
- 6.9. Procedural inquiry
  - 6.9.1. Any member of synod may request advice of the chairman regarding how to accomplish a purpose for which he does not know the proper means.
- 6.10. Voting
  - 6.10.1. The chair shall normally call for a show of hands.
  - 6.10.2. Voting about persons shall always be by ballot.
  - 6.10.3. A member shall not vote on any matter in which he himself or his church was particularly involved (PJCO 21C).

## **Appendix A**

### **Guidelines for Overtures to General Synod**

#### **Definition**

An overture is a written proposal to synod requesting a decision regarding a specific matter for the benefit of the churches.

#### **Guidelines**

1. An overture must originate from a consistory and be processed through a classis and regional synod before being sent to synod.
2. An overture must deal with a matter pertaining to the churches in common (cf. PJCO 21D).
3. If an overture is not adopted by classis, the consistory may appeal this decision to regional synod.
4. An overture must:
  - 4.1. Provide a brief background of the matter being proposed;
  - 4.2. State clearly what is being proposed;
  - 4.3. Provide specific grounds for the proposal;
  - 4.4. Meet the deadline for the provisional agenda.

## **Appendix B**

### **Guidelines for Appeals to General Synod (cf. PJCO 31)**

#### **Definition**

An appeal is a written request for a judgment regarding a matter previously decided upon by a regional or general synod.

#### **Guidelines**

1. An appeal may be made by a consistory or individual who is a member of a church within the federation.
2. A consistory which is convinced that a decision of a regional synod or of the previous general synod conflicts with the Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity, or the Church Order, shall appeal the decision to the next general synod.
3. When a consistory appeals a decision, the matter being appealed must first have been dealt with at the regional synod or at the preceding general synod.
4. When an individual appeals a decision against his personal appeal, the matter he appeals against must first have been dealt with at the regional synod or at the preceding general synod.
5. When an individual wishes to appeal a decision of general synod regarding a matter pertaining to the churches in common, he must bring the matter to the consistory and urge it to appeal the decision to the next general synod.
6. An appellant must
  - 6.1. Provide a brief history or background of the appeal;
  - 6.2. Provide a written copy of and reference to the specific decision of the narrower body which is being appealed;
  - 6.3. Interact with the grounds of the decision of the assembly that previously judged the matter;
  - 6.4. State clearly what is being appealed;
  - 6.5. Stipulate specific grounds for the appeal.

**Report of the Psalter Hymnal Committee  
of the  
United Reformed Churches in North America**

Synod 2012 (Nyack, NJ)

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## **Introduction**

When Synod 1997 appointed our committee, the delegates understood that the process for producing a new songbook would be lengthy. It is no small task to evaluate, plan and produce a book that will contain songs for the worship of God's people. Two years ago at Synod London our committee provided the churches with printed copies of our *Hymn Proposal*. To give you some idea of the scope of that project, our committee considered: the 182 hymns of the *Psalter Hymnal* (1959 edition); the 404 hymns of the *Psalter Hymnal* (1987 edition), the approximately 600 hymns of the *Trinity Hymnal* (1990 edition); the 65 hymns of the *Book of Praise* (1984, Canadian Reformed songbook), the 28 hymns of the *Book of Praise, Augment to Hymnary* (2007, Canadian Reformed); approximately 100 hymns from *Cantus Christi* (Canon Press, 2002); the 14 hymns of the *Hymns for a Modern Reformation* (James Montgomery Boice and Paul Jones, 2000); and 74 suggested hymns from various sources sent to our committee by members and councils of United Reformed churches. We also evaluated more recently produced hymns written by Stuart Townend, Keith and Kristyn Getty, and others.

In addition to those main sources various members of our committee scanned through parts of the first edition of the *Trinity Hymnal*, (Great Commission, 1961); *Sing! A New Creation*, (CRC Publications, 2001); *Lutheran Book of Worship*, (Augsburg Publishing House, 1978); and *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Word Music, 1986) and a collection of hymns published by GIA Publications (Chicago, Illinois).

This means that we had evaluated, either together in committee or personally by assignment, more than 2000 hymns.

Since Synod 2010 (London) we have been busy with Psalm evaluation and dealing with the communications sent to our committee from the various classes. We have also been in communication and met with the Psalter Hymnal Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and are making a recommendation to Synod Nyack concerning this below.

With this report we seek to provide you with an update of our work and seek your direction on an important and exciting development. We submit this report with 3 main headings: History and Mandates; Summary of Activities; and Recommendations.

## **I. History and Mandates**

Since the appointment of our Committee in 1997 many things have changed in our Committee and in the URCNA. We therefore believe it is important to keep the delegates to Synod 2012 informed of the various decisions and actions made by previous synods.

**A. SYNOD 1997 (St. Catharines, ON)** appointed a Psalter Hymnal committee "to explore what is required to produce, reproduce, or obtain a Psalter Hymnal." The grounds for this mandate were:

1. A common psalter hymnal would promote unity among the churches of our federation;
2. The *Psalter Hymnal* used in the majority of our churches is presently out of print;
3. Because the process of producing a psalter hymnal is lengthy it would be wise to begin the process as soon as possible.

(Minutes of Synod, October 1997, Article LXII.C. [pp.33-34])

**B. SYNOD 1999 (Hudsonville, MI)** Our Committee explored the options of producing, reproducing, or obtaining a psalter hymnal and reported its finding to Synod 1999. This synod approved the republication of the 1976 edition of the CRC Psalter Hymnal, added members to the Committee, and gave us the following mandate:

1. "...To begin the work of producing for publication a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal." (Minutes, Article XLI.b)
2. To provide "a recommendation of songs to be included in the new Psalter Hymnal" (Article XLI.c.(a))
3. To provide "a recommendation of other materials (Liturgical forms, the 3 forms of Unity, Creeds, Prayers, etc.) to be included in the new Psalter Hymnal." (Article XLI.c.(b))
4. "That the committee consult with those churches with whom we have entered into corresponding relations." (Article XLI.c.(c).i.(d))
5. "That the Psalter Hymnal Committee report to the next meeting of synod with a proposal for funding the new songbook." (Article XLIX.C)

**C. SYNOD 2001 (Escondido, CA)** Having begun this work, our Committee reported our progress to Synod 2001. Synod Escondido approved entering into "Phase Two" of ecumenicity with the Canadian Reformed Churches and made the following decisions regarding our committee:

1. Approved the establishment of a fund to finance the cost of the new psalter hymnal and requested the churches to collect free-will offerings for this cause. (Minutes, Article XXXV,D,2,3)
2. Reaffirmed our mandate of Synod 1999 and requested that we present the guiding principles for study by the churches and for adoption by the next synod. (Minutes, Article XXXV,D,4)
3. Added the following to our mandate: "That the present 'Psalter Hymnal Committee' work together with the Canadian Reformed 'Book of Praise Committee' to consider for inclusion in this song book the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality." (Minutes, Article XLV,B,2,c)

**D. SYNOD 2004 (Calgary, AB)** released our Committee from the responsibility to prepare and provide recommendations for the non-musical portion of the songbook (liturgical forms, prayers, confessions, etc.) and appointed another committee to take on that responsibility. (Minutes, Article 96.3-5) Further, Synod Calgary appointed more members to our committee (Article 96.6-7), recommended that the churches of the URCNA "familiarize themselves with the *Book of Praise*" (Article 96.2), and adopted these principles and guidelines to inform the Committee's work:

## **PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING MUSIC IN THE CHURCH (Article 96.1):**

### **PRINCIPLES:**

The song of the church is to be suitable for the church's worship to the glory of God!

1. *The songs of the Church are to be Scriptural*

In content, form, and spirit the Church's songs must express the truth of the Holy Scriptures.

Augustine, referring to the singing of Psalms, said, "No one can sing anything worthy of God which he has not received from Him. . . then we are assured that God puts the words in our mouth."

2. *The songs of the Church are to be a sacrifice of praise*<sup>3</sup>

Singing is an important element of the congregation's response to God's redeeming work in Christ Jesus and the Word proclaimed in the worship service.

John Calvin wrote, "Singing has great strength and power to move and to set on fire the hearts of men that they may call upon God and praise Him with a more vehement and more ardent zeal. This singing should not be light or frivolous, but it ought to have weight and majesty."

3. *The songs of the Church are to be aesthetically pleasing*

The songs for worship are to be a beautiful blend of God-honoring poetry and music.<sup>4</sup>

About such beauty, Abraham Kuyper remarks: "The world of sounds, the world of forms, the world of tints, and the world of poetic ideas, can have no other source than God; and it is our privilege as bearers of His image, to have a perception of their beautiful world, artistically to reproduce, and humanly to enjoy it."

### **GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING SONGS:**

1. The songs of the Church must be thoroughly biblical. They are to represent the full range of the revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>
2. The Book of Psalms is foundational for the Church's songs. Therefore, all of these Psalms, in their entirety, ought to be included in the Church's songbook.
3. When Psalms or other portions of Scripture are set to music, the words must be faithful to the content and form of the inspired text.<sup>6</sup>
4. In the case of songs other than the versification of Scripture, the words must faithfully express the teaching of Scripture<sup>7</sup> as summarized by our Reformed confessions.
5. The songs of the Church must be intelligible<sup>8</sup> and edifying to the body of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 13:15

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 92:1-4

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 147:1

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 30:6

<sup>8</sup> I Corinthians 14:15

<sup>9</sup> Colossians 3:16

6. The songs of the Church must reflect and preserve the language of the Church of all ages rather than accommodating current secular trends.<sup>10</sup>
7. In content and form, the songs of the Church must be free from artificiality, sentimentality, and individualism.
8. The music of the song should suit the text.
9. The music of the Church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition. Use is to be made of the music developed in the tradition of this rich heritage.
10. The music of the Church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the Church and the worship of God.<sup>11</sup>
11. The melodies and harmonies of church music must be suitable for congregational singing, avoiding complicated rhythms, excessive syncopation, and a wide range of pitch.

**E. SYNOD 2007 (Schererville, IN)** clarified our Committee’s mandate - particularly Synod Escondido’s decision regarding our working relationship with the CanRC’s Book of Praise Committee which stated: “That the present 'Psalter Hymnal Committee' work together with the Canadian Reformed 'Book of Praise Committee' to consider for inclusion in this song book the 150 Psalms in metrical settings (one note for each syllable) from an English translation of the Genevan Psalter, as well as other non-Genevan settings for the Psalms, and also hymns that meet the standard of faithfulness to the Scriptures and to the Reformed Confessions. The two song books primarily in use need not be included in their totality.”

The decisions of Synod Schererville included:

1. Acceding to Overture 17 in order to clarify these three phrases of the Synod Escondido decision as follows:
  - a) “*work together with*” includes both consultation with and careful consideration of views advanced by the Canadian Reformed “Book of Praise Committee” but only insofar as such work does not hinder, delay, or divert the Psalter Hymnal Committee from fulfilling its purpose as originally adopted;
  - b) “*to consider for inclusion*” neither implies nor necessitates inclusion of any or all metrical psalmody;
  - c) “*this song book*” refers to a new URCNA Psalter Hymnal that will serve the churches of our federation alone, whether or not we are in ecclesiastical fellowship with any number of denominations / federations.  
(Minutes, Article 63.6)
2. “That Synod 2007 continue the Songbook Committee’s mandate given by previous synods.” (Article 78.1)
3. “That Synod 2007 maintain the goal for production and use of a Common Song Book, but establish that the production and use of a Common Song Book is not a condition for federative unity with the Canadian Reformed Churches.” (Article 78.10)
4. “That Synod 2007 provide direction to the committee, regarding whether the inclusion of all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms would be detrimental for the churches to accept the Common Song Book, by mandating the URCNA Songbook Committee to contact the churches of the URCNA for their input on this question.” (Article 78.11)

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 12:2a

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 5:18-21

**F. Synod 2010 (London, ON)** approved the addition of members to the Committee from classes not yet represented, and adopted the following decisions:

1. That Synod 2010 affirm the production of an official songbook which will be purchased and used by all URCNA churches.

Grounds:

- a. This is in keeping with Synod 1997's decision to appoint the Psalter Hymnal Committee.
  - b. An official songbook for all the churches would promote the unity, identity and well-being of the federation.
  - c. This would keep the cost of producing the songbook to a minimum.
  - d. This would give a positive impetus to a project on which the committee has spent thousands of hours and reviewed over 2,000 songs. (Article 24.3)
2. That Synod approve the following process for evaluation and approval of the hymn section:

- a. That each consistory evaluate the proposed hymn section in light of the synodically approved "Principles and Guidelines" (included in the Psalter Hymnal Committee report), and send recommended changes in the form of an overture to its classis.

The overtures should follow this format: "The Consistory of \_\_\_\_ Church overtures Classis \_\_\_\_\_ to approve the following changes to the proposed hymn section and communicate its decision to the Psalter Hymnal Committee. ..." The overture should include grounds.

- b. That classis deliberates the merits of the overture in light of the synodically-approved "Principles and Guidelines." If classis agrees with the overture or a portion thereof, classis shall send an official communication regarding the recommended changes to the Psalter Hymnal Committee for its consideration and written response. Such communication must be received by the Psalter Hymnal committee no later than March 31, 2012.

(Note: since a later decision set the date of the next synod for June, 2012, our committee sent a letter to all the churches setting the deadline for October 31, 2011.)

- c. That the Psalter Hymnal Committee categorizes and prints these communications, along with the written response, in a "master report." This report will also include the final proposed hymn section and be distributed to all the consistories at least six months before the next meeting of synod.
- d. That the Synod which will decide upon the hymn section for the new songbook shall not consider other hymns or changes to the hymns beyond those contained in the previously submitted communications from classes to the Psalter Hymnal Committee or in the "master report" from the Psalter Hymnal Committee.

Grounds:

- a. This process will allow for individuals, churches and classes to have a voice.
- b. This process ensures that the discussions will be directed by the objective criteria of the synodically-approved principles and guidelines.
- c. This process allows for the Psalter Hymnal Committee to give due consideration to the communications, understanding that such communications have the approval of both a consistory and a classis.

- d. This process will ensure that all things are done decently and in good order (1 Corinthians 14:40), avoiding the chaos which would result if delegates make motions from the floor to include or exclude a particular hymn. With this recommended process, we are confident that most of the discussion and deliberation about the hymn proposal will be objective and professional. (Article 39.3)
- 3. That Synod accede to Overture 13.3.a as follows: To conclude the mandate of the Songbook Committee to produce a common songbook with the Canadian Reformed Churches for use in a united federation. (Article 135.1)
- 4. That Synod remind the Songbook Committee that they be in dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches in a manner consistent with Phase 2 relations.  
Grounds:
  - a. These recommendations are in keeping with the original mandate of producing a songbook for use in the URCNA (Synod 1999); given the scope of this mandate, the responsibility to work on yet another songbook would be overly burdensome at this time.
  - b. That the Songbook Committee be in dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches will honor our commitment to them as churches with whom we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship, as they will be informed about the development of the URCNA songbook.
  - c. These recommendations allow for the possibility of a common songbook with the Canadian Reformed Churches for use in a united federation. (Article 135.2)

## II. Summary of Activities

Following Synod 2010, our committee has continued the practice of meeting face-to-face twice a year plus online or conference call meetings at least monthly.

### **A. Hymns**

Following Synod 2010, the majority of our time has been taken up with Psalm evaluation. However, after receiving the communications from classes concerning the *Hymn Proposal* we began the work of categorizing and evaluating the requests. As of March 31, 2012, in response to these communications we have decided to **remove** the following hymns from the *Hymn Proposal* collection:

- 14 *Praise the Lord with the Sound of Trumpet*
- 20 *Worthy of Worship*
- 21 *You are Worthy*
- 22 *Be Just in Judgment*
- 23 *Love God with All Your Soul and Strength*
- 25 *Your Law, O God, Is Our Delight*
- 31 *As Saints of Old*
- 36 *Master Speak!*
- 46 *Gift of Finest Wheat*
- 47 *'Twas on that Night When Doomed*
- 48 *Until He Comes*
- 50 *Apostles Creed 2*

56	<i>We Praise You God the Father</i>
63	<i>How Great is the Love</i>
66	<i>In the Beginning</i>
67	<i>Lord, I Have Heard the Tidings</i>
75	<i>Hours and Days</i>
79	<i>Adam</i>
99	<i>Salvation Unto Us Has Come</i>
100	<i>These Are the Facts as We Have Received Them</i>
107	<i>Come and Stand Amazed</i>
113	<i>In the Beginning Was the Word</i>
137	<i>No Weight of Gold or Silver</i>
142	<i>Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks to the Risen Lord</i>
164	<i>Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus</i>
184	<i>I Hear the Words of Love</i>
201	<i>Seek Ye First the Kingdom 2</i>
204	<i>The Fruit of the Spirit</i>
221	<i>If I Speak a Foreign Tongue</i>
222	<i>Whatsoever You Do</i>
227	<i>Praise Be the Father</i>
231	<i>Church of God Elect and Glorious</i>
234	<i>I am the Lord Your God</i>

We will continue to work through the communications from the classes and inform the churches of more changes to come. These changes will likely include further deletions of songs as well as additions. We are not prepared at this time to offer Synod Nyack a detailed master report of these communications and our response to them for two reasons. First, the amount of changes we were requested to make are many, and we have not had sufficient time to handle them all as of yet. Second, due to unforeseen developments with the OPC, particularly their invitation to the URCNA to produce a Psalter Hymnal with them, we thought that Synod Nyack should answer that question before we engaged in what could possibly become unnecessary work. (See point C below.)

## **B. Psalms**

Most of our work since Synod London has been evaluating and selecting psalm-songs for the psalter portion of the songbook. We intend to number the Psalm selections according to their Biblical number, and designate any multiple renditions of a particular Psalm by letter (e.g. Psalm 103a; Psalm 103b; Psalm 103c). We also intend that at least one rendition of each Psalm will be that Psalm in its entirety.

The primary sources we are using are (in no particular order): the OPC Psalter Hymnal committee's approved psalms; the 1912 *Psalter*; the 1957 (blue) edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*; the 1987 (grey) edition of the *Psalter Hymnal; Sing Psalms*; the Reformed Churches of New Zealand's provisional *Sing to the Lord* hymnal which consists of the entire psalter; and Crown and Covenant's *Book of Psalms for Worship*. Added to these are several secondary sources including the Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise*.

As of March 31, 2012 we have evaluated and chosen recommended songs for Psalms 1-104.

## C. Ecumenical Contact

### 1. Canadian Reformed *Book of Praise* Committee

Synod London mandated our Committee to “be in dialogue with the Canadian Reformed Churches in a manner consistent with Phase 2 relations.” (Article 135.2) We have provided copies of the *Hymn Proposal* to the CanRC Book of Praise Committee and they have kindly provided us with .pdf access to their Psalm selections as we engage in our Psalm evaluation and selection process.

### 2. Development with the OPC’s Psalter Hymnal Special Committee

On November 9, 2010, some members of the “Psalter Hymnal Special Committee” of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) met with our Committee, which was meeting in Lynwood, Illinois. Among other things, they explained the decision of a past General Assembly to produce a new songbook which contained all 150 psalms as well as hymns with solid biblical content. These members informed us that their Committee had already done much work in tentatively selecting psalm-songs to be included in this songbook.

Our committee informed the OPC members about our mandate given by various synods going back to 1997. We explained that a “Hymn Proposal” of 278 hymns was now in the hands of URCNA consistories for evaluation and that we were now in the process of choosing potential songs for the “psalm section” of the new songbook.

At that meeting it became obvious that each Committee could benefit from the other’s work and to that end we have kept in communication with each other. Such communication is in keeping with the Psalter Hymnal Committee’s mandate to “consult with those churches with whom we have entered into corresponding relations” (Synod 1999 Minutes – Article 41.c.(c).i.).

Last year the OPC’s “Committee on Christian Education” (CCE) brought two recommendations to the General Assembly concerning this development. On June 9, 2011, the 78<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the OPC (Sandy Grove, Maryland) overwhelmingly approved these recommendations:

- 1. That the Seventy-eighth General Assembly approve the working together of the CCE’s Special Committee on the Psalter-Hymnal with the URCNA’s Songbook Committee to produce a Psalter-Hymnal for use in a wide range of confessional Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.**
  
- 2. That the Seventy-eighth General Assembly extend an official invitation to the URCNA Synod (next meeting in New York in 2012) to work together to produce a Psalter-Hymnal for use in a wide range of confessional Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.**

Our committee believes that all of this is according to God’s good providence and His wonderful timing and are therefore recommending that Synod Nyack accept this invitation from the OPC. (See **Recommendation #2 below**).

### **III. Recommendations**

- 1. That Synod 2012 receive the work of the committee to date.**
- 2. That Synod accept the invitation from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Seventy-eighth General Assembly "to work together to produce a Psalter-Hymnal for use in a wide range of confessional Presbyterian and Reformed Churches" with the intent that this would be the official songbook of the URCNA (i.e. not a songbook in addition to the present book being worked on).**

#### *Grounds:*

- a. **The URCNA is in Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase 2) with the OPC. This means we "recognize and accept [them] as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus," acknowledging "the desirability of eventual integrated federative church unity..." (Acts of Synod 2007, Article 92.1) Working together with the OPC to produce a Psalter-Hymnal would be practical and discernible evidence of our ecumenicity.**
  - b. **Working together with the OPC to produce a Psalter-Hymnal would give the URCNA a wonderful opportunity to be a blessing to "a wide range of confessional Presbyterian and Reformed Churches."**
  - c. **The OPC Psalter Hymnal committee has many gifted members who will enhance the work that has already been done by our Committee.**
  - d. **The URCNA Psalter Hymnal Committee has many gifted members who will enhance the work that has already been done by the OPC committee.**
  - e. **The OPC is a "partner denomination" with Great Commission Publications (gcp.org). This close relationship will greatly aid in obtaining copyright permissions and licensing, and should prove to be a great help when publication begins.**
  - f. **Working together to produce a Psalter-Hymnal would significantly lessen the financial burden of producing and publishing the book.**
  - g. **The publisher would publish a "URCNA Edition" in which URCNA specific information would be included in the back pages (liturgical forms, prayers, creeds & confessions, etc.).**
- 3. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to OPC representatives when recommendation 2 is being discussed.**
  - 4. That Synod grant the privilege of the floor to members of the Psalter Hymnal Committee when this report is being discussed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Finch, D.M.A. (Classis Western Canada)  
Christopher Folkerts, M.Div. (Classis Pacific Northwest)  
Rand Lankheet, M.Div. (Chairman) (Classis Southern Ontario)  
Mrs. Denise Marcusse (Classis Michigan)  
Joel Pearce, M.A., M.S.L.S. (Classis Eastern US)  
Mrs. Angeline Vanderboom (Secretary) (Classis Southern Ontario)  
Derrick Vander Meulen, M.Div. (Classis Southwest US)  
Daniel Zylstra, M.Ed. (Classis Central US)



**Report of the Liturgical Forms and Confessions Committee**  
Synod 2012

Review of Committee Mandate (cf. *Acts of Synod London 2010*, 481–537)

*Synod 2004 adopted Recommendation 3 of the Songbook Committee to create a new committee that dealt with all the non-musical material in a new Psalter Hymnal: “That Synod 2004 relieve our committee of the non-musical section (liturgical forms, creeds and confessions, prayers, etc.) of the new book and appoint another committee to accomplish this work” (Acts 2004, art. 96.3–5, p. 39; cf. p. 102).*

*Synod 2007 mandated the committee to report directly to the churches and to consult with the comparable committee of the Canadian Reformed Churches.*

Review of Committee Decisions to Date

- a. The committee determined not to undertake new translations of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort.
  - b. The committee determined that new idiosyncratic translations unique to the URCNA would not be helpful to our churches and might become an obstacle to on-going efforts toward ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed churches.
  - c. The committee determined to evaluate and recommend adoption of existing English translations of the Three Forms of Unity. Those under consideration include the current versions in the 1976 *Psalter Hymnal*, as well as translations prepared and adopted by the RCUS and Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC). Others may be considered as well.
  - d. The committee determined that new introductions and additional Scripture references would be useful and will be taken up by the next incarnation of our committee.
  - e. The committee determined to undertake the revision/translation of current liturgical forms keeping the following in mind:
    - i. The need of the churches is the primary consideration.
    - ii. Continuity with the older forms is very important, although shortening and modernization of language may be in order in certain cases.
    - iii. The proposed translation used for the biblical citations in the revised forms and confessions is the ESV.
3. Report of the work of the Committee: (All committee work has been carried by way of Skype meetings)

- a. The committee dealt with correspondence from the Bethel URC of Aylmer Council, Hills URC, Grace URC of Waupan, Rev. Doug Barnes, Rev. Bill Pols, and Rev. John Bouwers as to concerns and comments about and editions to the work already submitted. We humbly thank the churches and these men for their work and make note that most of their recommendations have been accepted and we present in their edited forms for further perusal and usage in the churches the following:
    - o Christian Prayers
    - o Form for the Frequent Celebration of the Lord's Supper
    - o Form for the Reception of Families
    - o Form Number 1 for the Baptism of Infants
    - o Form Number 1 for the Profession of Faith
    - o Form Number 1 for Adult Baptism
    - o Form Number 1 for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper
  
  - b. The Committee reviewed and edited the following forms since Synod 2010, which are presented to Synod for use, and perusal by the churches the following prayers and forms:
    - o Several new prayers
    - o Form for excommunication
    - o Form for readmission
    - o Form for the Installation of Minister of the Word [including extraordinary tasks]
    - o Form for the Installation of Elders and Deacons
    - o Two Forms for the Solemnization of Marriage
    - o Form 2 for Baptism (Form 3 of *Psalter Hymnal*)
    - o Form 2 for Profession of Faith
    - o Form 2 of the celebration for the Lord's Supper (Form 3 of *Psalter Hymnal*)
  
  - c. The committee is presently working on the introductions and translation recommendations for the ecumenical creeds and Three Forms of Unity. At present we are working with editions of the three creeds that the churches are presently using with minor emendations to be presented at a later Synod.
4. **Action** for Synod:
- a. To allow Rev. Al Bezuyen to report on behalf of the committee as needed.
  - b. To adopt for provisional use the forms and prayers presented by the committee [cf. below].
  - c. To encourage the churches to review and correspond with the committee chairman via email [Rev. Danny Hyde: pastor@oceansideurc.org]
  - d. To keep the committee as presently constituted.
  - e. To budget for one face-to-face meeting of the committee after Synod 2012.

Humbly submitted,  
 Rev. Daniel R. Hyde (chair)  
 Rev. Al Bezuyen (clerk)  
 Dr. J. Mark Beach  
 Rev. William Van der Woerd  
 Dr. Brian Lee

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## Doctrinal Standards

### **Form of Subscription**

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons of the United Reformed congregation of \_\_\_\_\_ of the Classis of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby, 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 Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, do fully agree with the Word of God.

We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching, teaching, or writing.

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned Synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose or defend the same, either by preaching, teaching, or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, that the same may there be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, under the penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

And further, if at any time the Consistory, Classis, or Synod, upon sufficient grounds of suspicion and to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine, may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular article of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism, or the explanation of the National Synod, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves, however, the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the Consistory or the Classis; and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

## Liturgical Forms

### **Baptism of Infants: Form 1**

Beloved congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ: There are three principle parts of the doctrine of holy baptism.

#### *Instruction*

*First:* That together with our children, we are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, so that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, unless we are born again. This, the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, through which the impurity of our souls is signified, that we may be admonished to loathe ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation apart from ourselves.

*Second:* Holy baptism witnesses and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized into the Name of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. For when we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and turn aside all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized into the Name of the Son, the Son seals to us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God. Likewise, when we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, imparting to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, until we shall finally be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

*Third:* Since all covenants contain two parts, therefore we are by God, through baptism, admonished and obliged to live in new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a godly life. And if through weakness, we sometimes fall into sins, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and indisputable testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God. And although our children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, since without their knowledge, they are participants in the condemnation in Adam, and so again are received to grace in Christ; as God speaks to Abraham, the father of all believers, and therefore also to us and our children, saying: *And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you* (Gen. 17:7). Peter also testifies to this with these words: *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself* (Acts 2:39). Therefore, God formerly commanded to circumcise them, which was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith; as also Christ embraced them, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Since, then, baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant (Col. 2:11–13), the children should be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and as members of His covenant; and as they grow up, the parents shall be bound to give them further instruction in these things.

### *Prayer*

That we, therefore, may administer this holy ordinance of God to His glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of the church, let us call upon His holy Name:

O almighty, eternal God, who according to your severe judgment, punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, who according to your great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family; who drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea and led your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground—by which you showed us the meaning of baptism—we earnestly pray that you may be pleased of your infinite mercy, graciously to look upon these your children and incorporate them by your Holy Spirit into your Son Jesus Christ, that they may be buried with Him through baptism into death and be raised with Him in newness of life; that they, daily following Him, may joyfully bear their cross, cleaving to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love; that they, being comforted in you, may leave this life, which is nothing but a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ your Son, through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

### *Address to the Parent(s)*

Beloved in Christ the Lord, you have heard that baptism is an institution of God to seal to us and our seed His covenant; therefore it must be used for that end, and not out of custom or superstition. That it may, then, be clear to all that you are in agreement, you are to sincerely answer these questions:

*First:* Do you acknowledge that our children, though conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself, are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His Church ought to be baptized?

*Second:* Do you acknowledge the doctrine which is contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and which is taught here in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?

*Third:* Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, as soon as they are able to understand, in this doctrine, and cause them to be instructed in these things, to the utmost of your power?

¶ *The parents answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

¶ *Then the minister of God's Word, in baptizing, shall say:*

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### *Thanksgiving*

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise you that you have forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through your Holy Spirit as members of your only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be your children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us by holy baptism. We earnestly pray, through Him, your beloved Son, always to govern these children by your Holy Spirit, that they may be nurtured in the Christian faith and in godliness, and grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that they may acknowledge your fatherly goodness and mercy, which you have shown to them and to us all, and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify you, and your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

## Baptism of Children: Form 2

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ:

### *The Institution*

As we are here to celebrate holy baptism, let us first hear our Lord Jesus Christ's institution of this sacrament. After he had risen victorious from the grave, Jesus said to his disciples: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* (Matt. 28:18–20).

In obedience to this command the church has always baptized believers and their children.

### *The Promises*

Let us hear the promises of God which are confirmed in baptism. The Lord made this great promise to Abraham: *I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you* (Gen. 17:7).

Generations later, though Israel was unfaithful to God's covenant with them, God renewed his promise through the prophet: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people...I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more* (Jer. 31:33, 34).

*When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son* (Gal. 4:4), our Lord Jesus Christ, to give pardon and peace through the blood of the cross, the *blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Matt. 26:28).

After Jesus had risen from the dead, the apostles proclaimed: *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself* (Acts 2:38–39).

Anticipating the fulfillment of God's promises, Paul assures us, *If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him...if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself* (2 Tim. 2:11b–12a, 13).

These are the unfailing promises of our Lord to those who are baptized.

### *The Instruction*

Hear also the teaching of Scripture concerning the sacrament of baptism.

The water of baptism signifies the washing away of our sin by the blood of Christ and the renewal of our lives by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). It also signifies that we are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4). From this we learn that our sin has been condemned by God, that we are to hate it, and consider ourselves as having died to it. Moreover, the water of baptism signifies that we are raised with Christ (Col. 2:12). From this we learn that we are to walk with Christ in newness of life. All this tells us that God has adopted us as his children, *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ* (Rom. 8:17).

Thus in baptism God seals the promises he gave when he made his covenant with us, calling us and our children to put our trust for life and death in Christ our Savior, deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him in obedience and love.

God also graciously includes our children in his covenant, and all his promises are for them as well as us (Gen. 17:7, Acts 2:39). Jesus demonstrated this when he embraced little children, and blessed them (Mark 10:16). The apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy (1 Cor. 7:14). So, just as the children of the old covenant received the sign of circumcision, our children in the new covenant are given the sign of baptism (Col. 2:11–12). We are therefore always to teach our little ones that they have been set apart by baptism as God’s own children, and because of that, they are to repent of their sins and embrace God’s promise of forgiveness in Christ by faith.

### *The Prayer of Preparation*

Let us pray:

Our Father in heaven, we pray that you will never destroy us in our sin as you once did with the flood upon the world, but save us as believing Noah and his family, and spare us as the Israelites who walked safely through the Sea. We pray that Jesus Christ, who went down into the Jordan River and came up to receive the Holy Spirit, who sank deep into death and was raised up Lord of life, will always keep us and our little ones in the grip of his hand. We pray, O holy Father, that your Spirit will separate us from sin and openly mark us with a faith that can stand the light of day and endure the dark of night. Prepare us now, O Lord, to respond with glad hope to your promises so that we, and all entrusted to our care, may drink deeply from the well of living water. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *The Vows*

¶ *The minister then addresses the parents:*

Since you, \_\_\_\_\_, have presented this child for holy baptism, you are asked to answer the following questions sincerely before God and his people:

*First*, do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, accept the promises of God made to you in your baptism, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith that is proclaimed in the Bible and confessed in this Christian church?

*Second*, do you believe that your child, though sinful by nature, is received by God in Christ as a member of his covenant, and therefore ought to be baptized?

*Third*, do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct this child in the Christian faith and to lead him by your example into the life of Christian discipleship?

¶ *The parents respond:* We do, God helping us. (*or if only one of the parents is a confessing member:* I do).

¶ *The minister addresses the congregation:* Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive this child in love, pray for him, help care for his instruction in the faith, and encourage and sustain him in the fellowship of believers?

¶ *The congregation responds:* We do, God helping us.

*The Sacrament*

Our Lord said: *Let the children come to me; do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God* (Mark 10:14).

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*A Triumphant Hymn*

*The Baptismal Prayer*

O Lord our gracious God, forever faithful to your promises, we thank you for assuring us again that you will forgive us and receive us as children in Christ. Grant wisdom and love to the parents and to us all as we carry out the vows just made. We pray that you will guide our little ones throughout their lives. Enable all of them to respond in faith to the gospel. Fill them with your Spirit and make their lives fruitful. Uphold them in their hour of trial, and when Christ returns let them celebrate with all the people of God your greatness and goodness forever in the joy of your new creation. Amen.

## Profession of Faith: Form 1

We thank our God concerning you for the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. We praise him for working faith in your heart so that you now desire publicly to profess your faith in the presence of God and his holy church, and enter into the privileges of full communion with the people of God.

### Vows

\_\_\_\_\_, you are now requested to answer sincerely the following questions:

*First:* Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession?

*Second:* Do you openly accept God's covenant promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism, and do you confess that you despise and humble yourselves before God because of your sins, and that you seek your life not in yourselves, but only in Jesus Christ your Savior?

*Third:* Do you declare that you love the Lord, and that it is your heartfelt desire to serve Him according to His Word, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

*Fourth:* Do you promise to submit to the government of the church and also, if you should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline?

\_\_\_\_\_, what is your answer?

¶ *Each individual then answers:* I do.

### Charge

I charge you, then, beloved, that you, by the diligent use of the means of grace and with the assistance of your God, continue in the profession which you have just made. In the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord, I now welcome you to full communion with the people of God. Rest assured that all the privileges of such communion are now yours. *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen* (1 Peter 5:10–11).

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have from the beginning embraced in your covenant the children together with their parents. We thank you that you from the first did include these your servants in the Christian Church, and did grant them all the manifold blessings of Christian culture. We praise you that in their case you did add the special grace of your Holy Spirit, so that of their own will they come here today to profess your truth and to consecrate their lives to your service. We earnestly pray that you will continue to carry on the good work you have begun in them until the day of complete redemption. Increase in them daily the manifold gifts of your grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Grant them the happiness of promoting the glory of their Lord and the edification of His people. Deliver them in the temptations of this life and in the final trial of death. And in that day when you make up your jewels, set also these your servants in your crown, that they may shine as stars, to your praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Public Profession of Faith: Form 2

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ:

We thank the Lord our God for the grace given us by adopting us to be his children and receiving us into his covenant. We acknowledge His love and power, by which He instills in his children the desire to publicly profess their faith in him in the presence of his holy church and thereby receive all the responsibilities as well as the privileges of communion with the people of God.

Today we are privileged to welcome into the full life of the church's fellowship those who wish to confess their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. When they were baptized God made clear His claim on them as his own and they were received into the church. Now they wish to share fully in the life of this congregation and of the whole church of God. And so today they will publicly accept and confirm what was sealed in their baptism, confess their faith in the Lord Jesus, and commit themselves to God as his willing servants. We thank God for having given them this desire and pray that as we now hear their confession, he will favor us with the presence and guidance of his Holy Spirit.

*Vows*

\_\_\_\_\_, will you now stand, and in the presence of God and his people answer sincerely the following questions:

*First:* Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession?

*Second:* Do you openly accept God's covenant promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism, and do you confess that you despise and humble yourselves before God because of your sins, and that you seek your life not in yourselves, but only in Jesus Christ your Savior?

*Third:* Do you declare that you love the Lord, and that it is your heartfelt desire to serve Him according to His Word, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

*Fourth:* Do you promise to submit to the government of the church and also, if you should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline?  
\_\_\_\_\_, what is your answer?

¶ *Each individual then answers:* I do.

*Reception*

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I now welcome you to all the privileges of full communion. I welcome you to full participation in the life of the church. I welcome you to its responsibilities, its joys and its sufferings. May you, by the diligent use of the means of grace and with the assistance of your God, continue in the profession which you have just made. *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good, that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).*

*¶ The minister asks the congregation to rise, and says: Let us together confess what we believe:*

*¶ Congregation:*

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

*Prayer*

Lord, our God, we thank you for your Word and Spirit through which we know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. May those who confessed your name today never cease to wonder at what you have done for them. Help them to continue firmly in the faith, to bear witness to your love, and to let the Holy Spirit shape their lives. Take them, good Shepherd, into your care that they may loyally endure opposition in serving you. May we, with all your children, live together in the joy and power of your Holy Spirit. We ask this, Lord Jesus, in the hope of your coming. Amen.

## **Baptism of Adults: Form 1**

*¶ When adults who have not been baptized desire to receive baptism, they shall first be thoroughly instructed in the doctrines of the Christian religion. And when they have made a good profession in the presence of the consistory, they shall be permitted to make public profession and receive holy baptism; in the administration of which the following form shall be used.*

Beloved congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ:

### *Instruction*

There are three principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism.

*First:* That together with our children, we are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, so that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, unless we are born again. This, the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, through which the impurity of our souls is signified, that we may be admonished to loathe ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation apart from ourselves.

*Second:* Holy baptism witnesses and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized into the Name of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. For when we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and turn aside all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized into the Name of the Son, the Son seals to us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God. Likewise, when we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, imparting to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, until we shall finally be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

*Third:* Since all covenants contain two parts, therefore are we by God, through baptism, admonished and obliged to live in new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a godly life. And if through weakness, we sometimes fall into sins, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and indisputable testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God. And although the children of Christians, despite their inability to understand these things, must be baptized by virtue of the covenant, yet it is not lawful to baptize adults, unless they first confess and repent of their sins, and make a profession of their faith in Christ. For this reason, according to the command of God, John the Baptist preached a baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4, 5 and Luke 3:3), but also our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His apostles, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19). This promise is confirmed by Paul: *Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name* (Acts 22:16). According to this rule as we see in the book of Acts, the apostles baptized no other adults but those who confessed and repented of their sins and who made a profession of faith. Therefore it is not lawful now to baptize any other adults than those who have learned and understand, from the preaching of the holy gospel, the mysteries of holy baptism, and are able to give an account of their faith and profess that faith publicly.

*Prayer*

That we therefore may administer this holy ordinance of God to His glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of the church, let us call on His holy Name:

O almighty, eternal God, who according to your severe judgment, punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, who according to your great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family; who drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea and led your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground—by which you showed us the meaning of baptism—we earnestly pray that you may be pleased of your infinite mercy, graciously to look upon this brother (sister) and incorporate him (her) by your Holy Spirit into your Son Jesus Christ, that he (she) may be buried with Him through baptism into death and be raised with Him in newness of life; that he (she), daily following Him, may joyfully bear his (her) cross, cleaving to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love; that he (she), being comforted in you, may leave this life, which is nothing but a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ your Son, through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

*Address to the Person to be Baptized*

\_\_\_\_\_, since, then, you desire to receive holy baptism, that it may be to you a seal of your incorporation in the Church of God and that it may now appear that you not only accept the Christian religion, in which you have been instructed by us, and of which you have made profession before us, but also that you intend to direct your life accordingly, you are to answer these questions sincerely before God and His church:

*First:* Do you believe in the only true God, distinct in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who of nothing has made heaven and earth and all that is in them, and still upholds and governs them, so that nothing comes to pass, either in heaven or on earth, without His divine will?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

*Second:* Do you believe that you are conceived and born in sin and therefore a child of wrath, by nature totally incapable of doing any good and prone to all evil; and that you, in thought, word, and deed, have frequently transgressed the commandments of the Lord; and do you sincerely repent of these your sins?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

*Third:* Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who is both true and eternal God and very man, who assumed His human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, is given you of God as a Savior; and that you by this faith receive remission of sins in His blood, and that you by the power of the Holy Spirit became a member of Jesus Christ and of His Church:

¶ *Answer:* I do.

*Fourth:* Do you assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian church from the Word of God, and are you determined to continue in the same doctrine to the end of your life; and do you also reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine, and promise that you will persevere in the fellowship of this Christian church, not only in the hearing of the divine Word, but also in the use of the holy supper?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

*Fifth:* Do you firmly resolve always to lead a Christian life, to forsake the world and its evil lusts, as is becoming to the members of Christ and of His Church, and to submit cheerfully to all Christian admonitions?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

The good and great God mercifully grant you His grace and blessing in this your holy purpose, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

¶ *Then the minister of God's Word, in baptizing, shall say:*

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### *Thanksgiving*

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise you that you have forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through your Holy Spirit as members of your only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be your children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us by holy baptism. We earnestly pray, through Him, your beloved Son, always to govern this brother (sister) by your Holy Spirit, that he (she) may lead a Christian and godly life, and grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that he (she) may acknowledge your fatherly goodness and mercy, which you have shown to him (her) and to us all, and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that he (she) may eternally praise and magnify you, and your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

## Reception of Families

*¶ This form has been prepared for use on those occasions when an entire family is received into membership, when the parent(s) make profession of faith and there is infant/child baptism.*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Concerning the covenant of grace, the Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, proclaimed, *The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself* (Acts 2:39). Ever since the days of the apostles, Christ has been pleased to add to his church both individuals and families.

We thank our God concerning you for the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. We praise him for working faith in your heart so that you now desire publicly to profess your faith in the presence of God and his holy church, and enter into the privileges of full communion with the people of God, and to present your children for baptism.

## Profession of Faith

*First:* Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession?

*Second:* Do you openly accept God's covenant promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism, and do you confess that you despise and humble yourselves before God because of your sins, and that you seek your life not in yourselves but only in Jesus Christ your Savior?

*Third:* Do you declare that you love the Lord, and that it is your heartfelt desire to serve him according to his Word, to forsake the world, to mortify your old nature, and to lead a godly life?

*Fourth:* Do you promise to submit to the government of the church and also, if you should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline? \_\_\_\_\_, what is your answer?

*¶ Each individual then answers:* I do.

## Baptism of Infants and Children

Beloved congregation in the Lord Jesus Christ:

### *Instruction*

There are three principle parts of the doctrine of holy baptism:

*First:* That together with our children, we are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, so that we cannot enter into the kingdom God, unless we are born again. This, the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, through which the impurity of our souls is signified, that we may be admonished to loathe ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation apart from ourselves.

*Second:* Holy baptism witnesses and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized into the Name of God: the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. For when we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and

seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and turn aside all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized into the Name of the Son, the Son seals to us that he washes us in His blood, from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God. Likewise, when we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, imparting to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, until we shall finally be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

*Third:* Since all covenants contain two parts, therefore we are by God, through baptism, admonished and obliged to live in new obedience, namely, that we cling to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a godly life. And if through weakness, we sometimes fall into sins, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and indisputable testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

And although our children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, since without their knowledge, they are participants in the condemnation in Adam, and so again are received to grace in Christ; as God speaks to Abraham, the father of all believers, and therefore also to us and our children, saying: *And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you* (Gen. 17:7). Peter also testifies to this with these words: *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself* (Acts 2:39). Therefore, God formerly commanded to circumcise them, which was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith; as also Christ embraced them, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Since, then, baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant (Col. 2:11–13), the children should be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and as members of His covenant; and as they grow up, the parents shall be bound to give them further instruction in these things.

### *Prayer*

That we, therefore, may administer this holy ordinance of God to His glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of the church, let us call upon His holy Name:

O almighty, eternal God, who according to your severe judgment, punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, who according to your great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family; who drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea and led your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground—by which you showed us the meaning of baptism—we earnestly pray that you may be pleased of your infinite mercy, graciously to look upon these your children and incorporate them by your Holy Spirit into your Son Jesus Christ, that they may be buried with Him through baptism into death and be raised with Him in newness of life; that they, daily following Him, may joyfully bear their cross, cleaving to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love; that they, being comforted in you, may leave this life, which is nothing but a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ your Son, through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

*Address to Parent/s*

Beloved in Christ the Lord, you have heard that baptism is an institution of God to seal to us and our seed His covenant; therefore it must be used for that end, and not out of custom or superstition. That it may, then, be clear to all that you are in agreement, you are to sincerely answer these questions

*First:* Do you acknowledge that our children, though conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself, are sanctified in Christ and therefore as members of His church, ought to be baptized?

*Second:* Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, as soon as they are able to understand, in the doctrine that you have professed, to the utmost of your power?

¶ *The parents then answer: We do (or in case only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).*

¶ *Then the minister of Word and Sacrament, in baptizing, will say:*  
\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Thanksgiving**

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise you that you have forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through your Holy Spirit as members of your only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be your children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us by holy baptism. We earnestly pray, through Him, your beloved Son, always to govern these children by your Holy Spirit, that they may be nurtured in the Christian faith and in godliness, and grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that they may acknowledge your fatherly goodness and mercy, which you have shown to them and to us all, and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify you, and your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

## Household Baptism

*¶ This form has been prepared for use on those occasions when an entire family is received into membership, when the parents make profession of faith and the entire household is baptized.*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Concerning the covenant of grace, the Apostle Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, *The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself* (Acts 2:39). Therefore, when converts such as Lydia (Acts 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) professed faith in Jesus Christ, their whole households were baptized and added to Christ's church. Ever since the days of the apostles, Christ has been pleased to add to his church both individuals and families.

We thank our God concerning you for the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus. We praise him for working faith in your heart so that you now desire publicly to profess your faith in the presence of God and his holy church, and enter into the privileges of full communion with the people of God, and to present your children for baptism.

### *Instruction*

There are three principal parts of the doctrine of holy baptism.

*First:* That together with our children, we are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, so that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God, unless we are born again. This, the dipping in or sprinkling with water teaches us, through which the impurity of our souls is signified, that we may be admonished to loathe ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation apart from ourselves.

*Second:* Holy baptism witnesses and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. Therefore we are baptized into the Name of God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. For when we are baptized into the Name of the Father, God the Father witnesses and seals to us that He makes an eternal covenant of grace with us and adopts us for His children and heirs, and therefore will provide us with every good thing and turn aside all evil or turn it to our profit. And when we are baptized into the Name of the Son, the Son seals to us that He washes us in His blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, so that we are freed from our sins and accounted righteous before God. Likewise, when we are baptized into the Name of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit assures us by this holy sacrament that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, imparting to us that which we have in Christ, namely, the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives, until we shall finally be presented without spot among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

*Third:* Since all covenants contain two parts, therefore are we by God, through baptism, admonished and obliged to live in new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a godly life. And if through weakness, we sometimes fall into sins, we must not therefore despair of God's mercy, nor continue in sin, since baptism is a seal and indisputable testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

It is not lawful to baptize adults, unless they first confess and repent of their sins, and make a profession of their faith in Christ. For this reason, according to the command of God,

John the Baptist preached a baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4, 5 and Luke 3:3), but also our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His apostles, *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, (Matt. 28:19). This promise is confirmed by Paul. *Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name* (Acts 22:16). According to this rule as we see in the book of Acts, the apostles baptized no other adults but those who confessed and repented of their sins and who made a profession of faith. Therefore it is not lawful now to baptize any other adults than those who have learned and understand, from the preaching of the holy gospel, the mysteries of holy baptism, and are able to give an account of their faith and profess that faith publicly.

And although our children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, since without their knowledge, they are participants in the condemnation in Adam, and so again are received to grace in Christ; as God speaks to Abraham, the father of all believers, and therefore also to us and our children, saying: *And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you* (Gen. 17:7). Peter also testifies to this with these words: *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself* (Acts 2:39). Therefore, God formerly commanded to circumcise them, which was a seal of the covenant and of the righteousness of faith; as also Christ embraced them, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Since, then, baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign and seal of the covenant (Col. 2:11–13), the children should be baptized as heirs of the kingdom of God and as members of His covenant; and as they grow up, the parents shall be bound to give them further instruction in these things.

### *Prayer*

That we therefore may administer this holy ordinance of God to His glory, to our comfort, and to the edification of the church, let us call on His holy Name:

O almighty, eternal God, who according to your severe judgment, punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, who according to your great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family; who drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea and led your people Israel through the midst of the sea upon dry ground—by which you showed us the meaning of baptism—we earnestly pray that you may be pleased of your infinite mercy, graciously to look upon this family and incorporate them by your Holy Spirit into your Son Jesus Christ, that they may be buried with Him through baptism into death and be raised with Him in newness of life; that they, daily following Him, may joyfully bear their cross, cleaving to Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love; that they, being comforted in you, may leave this life, which is nothing but a constant death, and at the last day may appear without terror before the judgment seat of Christ your Son, through Him, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

### *Address to the Parent/s*

\_\_\_\_\_, you have heard that baptism is an institution of God to seal to us and our seed His covenant; therefore it must be used for that end, and not out of custom or superstition. Since, then, you desire to receive holy baptism, that it may be to you and to your household a seal of your incorporation in the Church of God—that it may now appear that you not only accept the Christian religion, in which you have been instructed by us, and of which you have

made profession before us, but also that you intend to direct your life accordingly, you are to answer these questions sincerely before God and His church:

*First:* Do you believe in the only true God, distinct in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who of nothing has made heaven and earth and all that is in them, and still upholds and governs them, so that nothing comes to pass, either in heaven or on earth, without His divine will?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Second:* Do you believe that you are conceived and born in sin and therefore a child of wrath, by nature totally incapable of doing any good and prone to all evil; and that you, in thought, word, and deed, have frequently transgressed the commandments of the Lord; and do you sincerely repent of these your sins?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Third:* Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who is both true and eternal God and very man, who assumed His human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, is given you of God as a Savior; and that you by this faith receive remission of sins in His blood, and that you by the power of the Holy Spirit became a member of Jesus Christ and of His Church:

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Fourth:* Do you assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian church from the Word of God, and are you determined to continue in the same doctrine to the end of your life; and do you also reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine, and promise that you will persevere in the fellowship of this Christian church, not only in the hearing of the divine Word, but also in the use of the holy supper?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Fifth:* Do you firmly resolve always to lead a Christian life, to forsake the world and its evil lusts, as is becoming to the members of Christ and of His Church, and to submit cheerfully to all Christian admonitions?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Six:* Do you acknowledge that our children, though conceived and born in sin and therefore subject to all manner of misery, even to condemnation itself, are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of His Church ought to be baptized?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

*Seventh:* Do you promise and intend to instruct these children, as soon as they are able to understand, in the doctrine that you have professed, to the utmost of your power?

¶ *Answer:* We do (or if only one of the parents is a confessing member: I do).

The good and great God mercifully grant you His grace and blessing in this your holy purpose, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

¶ *Then the minister of God's Word, in baptizing, shall say:*

\_\_\_\_\_, I baptize you into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Thanksgiving*

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank and praise you, that you have forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through your Holy Spirit as members of your only begotten Son, and so adopted us to be your children, and sealed and confirmed the same to us by holy baptism. We earnestly pray, through Him, your beloved Son, always to govern this family by your Holy Spirit, that the children may be nurtured in the Christian faith and the adults may lead a Christian and godly life, and grow and increase in the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that they may acknowledge your fatherly goodness and mercy, which you have shown to them and to us all, and live in all righteousness under our only Teacher, King, and High Priest, Jesus Christ; and manfully fight against and overcome sin, the devil, and his whole dominion, to the end that they may eternally praise and magnify you, and your Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, the one only true God. Amen.

## Celebration of the Lord's Supper: Form 1

### *The Institution of the Supper*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us give full attention to the words of the institution of the holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are delivered by the Apostle Paul:

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Cor. 11:23–29).*

That we may now celebrate the supper of the Lord to our comfort, it is necessary to examine ourselves fully; and further to carefully consider that purpose for which Christ has ordained and instituted this sacrament—namely, his remembrance.

### *The Call to Self-Examination*

The true examination of ourselves consists of three parts:

*First:* Let every one carefully consider their sins and ungodliness, that they may hate their sins and humble themselves before God, considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great that he, rather than leaving it unpunished, has punished it in his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross.

*Second:* Let every one examine their heart whether they also believe this sure promise of God that all their sins are forgiven them only for the sake of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, and that the complete righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given them as their own—indeed, so completely as if they personally had satisfied for all their sins and fulfilled all righteousness.

*Third:* Let every one carefully examine their own conscience to see if they are fully determined to show true thankfulness to God in every area of life, and to walk sincerely before His face; and also whether they, with full sincerity, strive to lay aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, and earnestly resolve from this day forward to live in true love and unity with their neighbor.

All those, then, who are of this mind, God will certainly receive in grace and count as worthy partakers of the table of His Son Jesus Christ. On the contrary, those who do not feel this testimony in their hearts eat and drink judgment upon themselves. According to the command of Christ and the apostle Paul, those who know themselves to be engaging in the following sins without repentance, have no part in the kingdom of Christ and should therefore abstain from coming to the table of the Lord: idolaters; those who call upon deceased saints, angels or any other creature; those who revere images; those who engage in witchcraft, fortune-telling, or occult practices, or other forms of superstition; all those who despise God, his word, and his holy sacraments; all blasphemers, those who seek to cause discord, factions, and dissension in church or in the state; all perjurers; all who are disobedient to their parents and those in lawful authority;

all murderers, contentious people, and those who live in hatred and envy against their neighbors; all adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, thieves, the greedy, robbers, gamblers, covetous people, and all who lead offensive lives. All those who continue in such sins, shall abstain from the Lord's Supper, so that they feel the weight of God's judgment and condemnation.

But this warning is not intended to discourage those believers with contrite hearts, as if no one might come to the Lord's Supper unless they are without sin. We do not come to this supper to testify about our own perfection and righteousness, but, on the contrary, we come seeking life in Jesus Christ apart from ourselves. We come confessing our misery and that we do have many shortcomings and that we do not have perfect faith, that we do not serve God with sufficient zeal, but that we must struggle daily with the weakness of our faith and struggle against the evil lusts of our flesh. However, since the grace of the Holy Spirit makes us sorry for our shortcomings and gives us the desire to fight against unbelief and to live according to God's commandments, therefore we can rest assured that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can prevent us from being received by God's grace and from being made worthy partakers of this heavenly food and drink.

### *Celebrating Our Salvation in Christ*

Let us also consider the purpose for which our Lord has instituted his supper: that we should do this in remembrance of him. And this is how we remember him by it:

First, let us be fully persuaded in our hearts that our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the promises made to our forefathers in the Old Testament, was sent by the Father into this world; that he assumed our flesh and blood; that he has taken upon himself for us the wrath of God, under which we should have perished eternally, that from the beginning of his incarnation until the end of his life on earth has fulfilled for us all obedience and righteousness of the divine law. This was especially evident when the weight of our sins and of the wrath of God caused him to sweat drops of blood in the garden, where he was bound that we might be loosed from our sins; and, afterwards, he suffered countless insults that we might never be put to shame. Let us confidently believe that he was innocent, yet put to death that we might be acquitted on the day of judgment; that he even allowed his own blessed body to be nailed to the cross so as to cancel *the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross* (Col. 2:15). In doing so, he took from us the curse and bore it himself that he might fill us with his blessing; and he humbled himself to the very deepest reproach and anguish of hell, in body and soul, on the tree of the cross, when he cried out with a loud voice: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matt. 27:46)—all so that we might be accepted by God, never to be rejected by him. Indeed with his death and the shedding of his blood, he has confirmed the new and eternal testament, the covenant of grace and of reconciliation, when he said; *It is finished* (John 19:30).

In order that we might firmly believe that we belong to his covenant of grace, during his last supper *Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"* (Matt. 26:26–28). That is, as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, as a sure reminder and pledge you shall be admonished and assured of my great love and faithfulness toward you, because you otherwise would have suffered eternal death, I give my body and blood for you in my death on the tree of the cross. And as certainly as this bread is broken before you, and this cup is given to you, and with your mouth you eat and drink

in remembrance of me, so surely do I nourish and refresh for everlasting life your hungry and thirsty souls with my crucified body and shed blood.

From the institution of this holy supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that he directs our faith to his perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross, as the only foundation of our salvation, whereby he has become to our hungry and thirsty souls the true food and drink of life eternal. For by his death he has taken away the cause of our eternal death and misery, our sin. He has also obtained for us the life-giving Spirit, who dwells in Christ our head and enables us who are his members, to have communion with him and be made partakers of his riches, including eternal life, righteousness, and glory.

Besides, by this same Spirit we are also united as members of one body in true Christian love, as the apostle Paul says: *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread* (1 Cor. 10:17). As grain is ground to prepare one loaf of bread, and as many grapes are pressed together to produce wine, we who by true faith are incorporated into Christ shall be one body, through Christian love, for the sake of our dear Savior Christ, who has loved us so greatly in order that we might show his love toward one another, not only in words but also in deeds.

May the almighty, merciful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ help us in this, through his Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### *Prayer of Confession and Dependence*

That we may obtain all this, let us humble ourselves before God and with true faith implore him for His grace:

Merciful God and Father, we ask that in this supper, in which we cherish the blessed memory of the death and sufferings of your dear Son Jesus Christ, you will so work in our hearts through the Holy Spirit that with true confidence, we might give ourselves up, more and more, unto your Son Jesus Christ. We pray that this might allow our burdened and contrite hearts, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to be nourished and refreshed with his true body and blood, with him who is true God and true man, the only heavenly bread. Empower us to no longer live in our sins, knowing that he lives in us, and we in him, that we might truly be partakers of the new and everlasting testament, the covenant of grace, not doubting that you will forever be our gracious Father, who does not impute the guilt of our sins to us, and providing us with all that we need for body and soul, as your dear children and heirs. Grant us also your grace that we may take up our cross cheerfully, deny ourselves, confess our Savior, and in all tribulation—with uplifted head—expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, where he will make our mortal bodies like unto his glorified body, and take us to be with him in eternity. Answer us, O God and merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:

#### *¶ Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

#### *Celebration of the Lord's Supper*

By this holy supper, may we also be strengthened in the catholic, undoubted, Christian faith, of which we make profession with heart and mouth, saying:

¶ *Congregation:*

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

That we may be nourished with Christ, the true heavenly bread, let us not cling with our hearts to external things, like bread and wine, but lift our hearts to heaven, where our advocate, Jesus Christ is, at the right hand of his heavenly Father, where the articles of our Christian faith direct us. Let us not doubt that we shall be nourished and refreshed in our souls, with his body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as truly as we receive the holy bread and drink in remembrance of him.

¶ *In breaking and distributing the bread, the minister shall say:*

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for a complete remission of all our sins.

¶ *And when he gives the cup:*

The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink all of it, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for a complete remission of all our sins.

¶ *During the communion a Psalm shall be sung, or some portion of Scripture shall be read, in remembrance of the passion of Christ; such as Isaiah 53, John 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18.*

*The Response of Thanksgiving and Praise*

¶ *After the communion the minister shall say:*

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now nourished our souls at his table, let us together praise his holy name with thanksgiving; and let every one say in his heart:

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,*

*who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,*

*who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy . . .*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.*

*He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;*

*as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*

*As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those*

*who fear him (Ps. 103:1–4, 8–13).*

*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Rom. 8:32)*

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rom. 5:8–10).*

Therefore my mouth and heart shall show forth the praise of the Lord from this time forth for evermore. Amen.

### *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

O merciful God and Father, we thank you with all our heart that of your boundless mercy you have given us your only begotten Son for a Mediator and sacrifice for our sins, and as our food and drink unto life eternal; and that you give us a true faith, whereby we become partakers of these benefits. You have united us to Christ and to each other in a communion of saints. You have given your Son for us and to us and have proclaimed his saving death to the whole world. Having proclaimed and certified the atoning sacrifice of your Son for us, we ask that you would by your Spirit also make us witnesses to this Good News among our neighbors. Strengthen us in faith to live gratefully in this present age as we await our Savior's return in glory. In whose name we pray. Amen.

## Celebration of the Lord's Supper: Form 2

### *Preparatory Exhortation*

¶ *If the Preparatory Exhortation and the communion Formulary are combined for use in the communion service, the following changes should be made:*

1. "...since we hope next Lord's Day," should be changed to "since it is our privilege this day"
2. The paragraph beginning, "And since it is necessary for us..." should be omitted.

Beloved in Jesus Christ, since we hope next Lord's Day to celebrate the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are called to prepare our hearts by rightly examining ourselves. For the Apostle Paul has written: *Whoever...eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup* (1 Cor. 11:27–28).

Let each one, then, examine his life and, considering his own sin and the wrath of God on it, be sure that he humbles himself in repentance before God. Let each one examine his heart to be sure that he trusts in Jesus Christ alone for his salvation—believing his sins are forgiven wholly by grace for the sake of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross. Finally, let each one examine his conscience to be sure that he resolves to live in faith and obedience before his Lord, and in love and peace with his neighbor.

### *Warning & invitation*

All those who do not repent, do not put their trust in the Lord Jesus, and have no desire to lead a godly life, are warned, according to the command of God, to keep themselves from the holy sacrament. If anyone of us is living in disobedience to Christ and in enmity with his neighbor, he must repent of his sin and reconcile himself to his neighbor before he comes to the Lord's Table. *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself* (1 Cor. 11:29).

This solemn warning is not designed, however, to discourage penitent sinners from coming to the holy sacrament. We do not come to the Supper as though we were righteous in ourselves, but rather to testify that we are sinners and that we look to Jesus Christ for our salvation. Although we do not have perfect faith, do not serve and love God with all our hearts, and though we do not love our neighbors as we ought, we are confident that the Savior accepts us at His Table when we come in humble faith, with sorrow for our sins, and with a will to follow Him as He commands.

And since it is necessary for us to come to the sacrament in good conscience, I urge any who lack this confidence to seek from the minister or any elder of this church such counsel as may quiet his conscience or lead to the conversion of his life.

All, then, who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and who earnestly desire to lead a godly life, ought to accept the invitation now given and come with gladness to the Table of their Lord.

### *Prayer*

Let us pray:

Almighty God, who has given us the gospel of Jesus Christ and provided a most wonderful communion with Him through the mystery of the sacrament, we need your grace to

enable us to prepare our hearts for the reception of Holy Communion. To all who sincerely believe in your Son and truly repent of their sins, grant assurance of your gracious readiness to receive and bless them in the Supper of their Lord. To all who have not yet repented and have not put their trust in the Lord Jesus, grant a restraining fear of this Supper, lest their condemnation be greater. But have mercy upon these, and grant them grace to repent of their sins and seek their salvation in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess, O Father, that we have all offended your majesty and deserved your judgment. We have transgressed in our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. Truly there is no strength in us. Be merciful, O God, and grant us your pardon. And let us come to the sacrament in the joy of your forgiving love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

### *Formulary*

Beloved, hear now the words of the Apostle Paul concerning the institution of the Holy Supper:

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:23–26).*

When our Lord said, *Do this in remembrance of me*, He ordained this Holy Supper as a constant memorial and visible proclamation of His death. The Apostle Paul also teaches us that *as often as we eat this bread and drink the cup we proclaim the Lord's death*. As we partake, therefore, we bear witness that our Lord Jesus was sent by the Father into the world to take upon Himself our flesh and blood and to bear the wrath of God on the cross for us. We confess that He came to earth to bring us to heaven, that He was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, that He endured the suffering and death of the cross that we might live through Him, and that He was once forsaken by God that we might forever be accepted by Him.

The sacrament thus confirms us in God's abiding love and covenant faithfulness, sealing to our hearts the promises of His gracious covenant and assuring us that we belong to His covenant family. Let us then be persuaded as we eat and drink that God will always love us and accept us as His children for the sake of His Son.

Our Lord also promises that as we *eat this bread and drink the cup*, we are fed with His crucified body and shed blood. To do this He gives us His life-giving Spirit, through whom the body and blood of our Lord become the life-giving nourishment of our souls. Thus He unites us with Himself and so imparts the precious benefits of His sacrifice to all who partake in faith.

As a means of grace, this meal also unites us with one another in the bond of the Spirit as the apostle says: *we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread* (1 Cor. 10:17). Thus, even as He unites us with Himself, He strengthens the bond of communion between us, His children.

Finally, the remembrance of our Lord's death revives in us the hope of His return. Since He commanded us to do this *until He comes*, the Lord assures us that He will come again to take us to Himself. As we commune with Him now under the veil of these earthly elements, we are assured that we shall behold Him face to face and rejoice in the glory of His appearing.

Our Lord Jesus will surely do what He has promised. Let us draw near to His table, then, believing that He will strengthen us in faith, unite us in love, and establish us more firmly in the hope of His coming.

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev. 1:5–6)*

### *Prayer*

Let us pray:

Almighty God, with one accord we give you thanks for all the blessings of your grace; but most of all we thank you for the unspeakable gift of your Son Jesus Christ. We most humbly thank you that your Son came to us in human form, that He lived a perfect life on earth, that He died for us on the cross, and that He arose victoriously from the dead. We bless you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, for the gospel of reconciliation, for the Church universal, for the ministry and the sacraments of the church, and for the blessed hope of everlasting life. We pray, gracious Father, to grant us your Holy Spirit, that through this sacrament our souls may truly be fed with the crucified body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us the full assurance of your grace as we draw near to your holy table, filling our hearts with humble gratitude for your mercies. Unite us more fully with our blessed Lord, and so also with one another. Enable us, in newness of life, to pledge ourselves in service to Christ and all your children. And lift our hearts to you, that in all the troubles and sorrows of this life we may persevere in the living hope of the coming of our Savior in glory. Answer us, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying:

*¶ Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

*¶ If the table needs to be prepared, an appropriate hymn may be sung.*

### *Creed*

As we draw near to the table of our Lord, let us confess our Christian faith:

*¶ Congregation:*

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe a holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

### *Words of Promise*

¶ *Having approached the table, the minister shall say:*

Beloved, hear these gracious words of promise spoken by our Lord:

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Matt. 11:28, 29).

*I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...whoever comes to me I will never cast out* (John 6:35, 37b).

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied* (Matt. 5:6).

¶ *Then the minister says:*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord; let us lift them up to the God of our salvation.

¶ *Or:*

*Minister:* Lift up your hearts.

*Congregation:* We lift them up to the Lord.

### *Communion*

¶ *As he breaks the bread, the minister shall say:*

*The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* (1 Cor. 11:23–24)

¶ *At the eating of the bread, the minister shall say:*

Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for a complete remission of all our sins.

¶ *As he takes the cup, the minister shall say:*

*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* (Matt. 26:27–28)

¶ *At the drinking of the wine, the minister shall say:*

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for a complete remission of all our sins.

### *Thanksgiving*

¶ *The minister and congregation may read the following Psalm responsively:*

*Minister:* Bless the LORD, O my soul,

*Congregation:* And all that is within me, bless his holy name!

*Minister:* Bless the LORD, O my soul,

*Congregation:* And forget not all his benefits,

Minister: Who forgives all your iniquity,  
*Congregation:* Who heals all your diseases,  
Minister: Who redeems your life from the pit,  
*Congregation:* Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,  
Minister: Who satisfies you with good  
*Congregation:* So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.  
Minister: Let us pray:

Almighty God, we give you our most humble and hearty thanks that of your great mercy you have given us your Son to be our Savior from sin and to be our constant source of faith, hope, and love. We bless you for permitting us to show forth His death and to receive the communion of His body and blood through the holy sacrament. We praise you for uniting us more fully with the body of Christ, and for assuring us that we are heirs of your heavenly kingdom. Grant that our commemoration of His death may tend to the daily increase of our faith, the establishment of our hope, and the strengthening of our love. Enable us henceforth to live always for our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us. Amen.

## Short Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: 1

### *Preparation*

To all of you who have confessed your sins and affirmed your faith in Christ, the promise of Jesus is sure: *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink*" (John 6:54–55). For the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:23–25).

While remaining bread and wine, these sacred elements nevertheless become so united to the reality they signify that we do not doubt but joyfully believe that we receive in this meal nothing less than the crucified body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all who live in rebellion against God and unbelief, this holy food and drink will bring you only further condemnation. If you do not yet confess Jesus Christ and seek to live under his gracious reign, we admonish you to abstain.

But all who repent and believe are invited to this sacred meal not because you are worthy in yourself, but because you are clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness. Do not allow the weakness of your faith or your failures in the Christian life to keep you from this table. For it is given to us because of our weakness and because of our failures, in order to increase our faith by feeding us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ. As the Word has promised us God's favor, so also our Heavenly Father has added this confirmation of his unchangeable promise. So come, believing sinners, for the table is ready. *Taste and see that the Lord is good* (Ps. 34:8a).

### *The Consecration*

Let us pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, who by the blood of your only begotten Son has secured for us a new and living way into the Holy of Holies, cleanse our minds and hearts by your Word and Spirit that we, your redeemed people, drawing close to you through this holy sacrament, may enjoy fellowship with the Holy Trinity through the body and blood of Christ our Savior. We know that our Ascended Savior does not live in temples made by hands, but is in heaven where he continues to intercede on our behalf. Through this sacrament, by Your own Word and Spirit, may these common elements be now set apart from ordinary use consecrated by You, so that just as truly as we eat and drink these elements by which our life is sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls. Amen.

### *Apostles' Creed (optional)*

¶ *The minister then says:*

Let us now go to our Heavenly Table and receive the gift of God for our souls. By the promise of God this bread and wine are for us the body and blood of Christ.

¶ *Minister:* Lift up your hearts!

¶ *Congregation:* We lift them up to the Lord.

*Communion*

*¶ The elements are distributed, and the minister may use the formula:*

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember, and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken for a complete remission of all our sins.

The cup of blessing which we bless is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink all of it, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for a complete remission of all our sins.

*Thanksgiving Prayer*

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessing of this holy feast. Although we are unworthy to share this meal with you, it is by your invitation and dressed in Christ's righteousness that we have come boldly into the Holy of Holies. Instead of wrath, we have received your pardon; in the place of fear we have been given hope. Our High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant has reconciled us to you and even now intercedes for us at your right hand. Please strengthen us by these gifts so that, relying only on your promise to save sinners who call on Jesus' name, we may, by your Spirit, honor you with our souls and bodies, to the honor and glory of your holy name. Amen.

## Short Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: 2

### *Exhortation*

Beloved in the Lord, you who desire to come to the Holy Communion of the body and blood of our Savior must consider how Paul exhorts us diligently to *examine* ourselves, before we presume to *eat of the bread and drink of the cup* (1 Cor. 11:28). For as the benefit of spiritually eating his flesh and drinking his blood and thereby becoming one with him is great, if we receive the sacrament with a penitent heart and lively faith, so is the danger great, if we receive it *in an unworthy manner* (1 Cor. 11:27). For then we are *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (1 Cor. 11:27), we eat and drink to our own *judgment* (1 Cor. 11:29), and we kindle God's wrath against us (1 Cor. 11:30). *But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged...by the Lord* (1 Cor. 11:31, 32). Therefore truly repent of your sins, place a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Savior, and live in love with all people so that you will be worthy partakers of these holy sacraments.

Above all things you must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Savior Christ. Thank him that he who is God became man. Thank him that his Son humbled himself to death upon the cross for us, miserable sinners. Thank him that we, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, have been made the children of God and exalted to everlasting life. Because of this we should always remember the exceedingly great love of our only Savior, Jesus Christ, and the innumerable benefits which he has obtained for us by his precious blood. This is why he instituted and ordained holy sacraments, as pledges of his love and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, let us give continual thanks, submitting ourselves completely to his holy will and pleasure, and seeking to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

To all of you who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who embrace by faith Jesus as your Savior, and who desire more and more to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, draw near and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.

### *Comforting Words*

Hear what comforting words our Savior Christ speaks to all that truly turn to him:

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16).

*The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost* (1 Tim. 1:15).

*If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins* (1 John 2:1-2).

¶ *Then is said:*

*Minister:* Lift up your hearts.

*Congregation:* We lift them up to the Lord.

### *Prayer of Humble Approach*

We do not presume to come to this your table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are our merciful and gracious Lord. Grant us, therefore, so to

commemorate and celebrate in this breaking of bread the death of your dear Son Jesus Christ, that we may feed on him in our hearts by faith, and that we may be united to him, and he to us; who with you and the Holy Spirit is worthy of eternal thanks and praise. Amen.

#### *Words of Institution*

*The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:23–25).*

#### *Communion*

*¶ In eating the Bread, the minister says:*

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

*¶ In drinking the wine, the minister says:*

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful.

#### *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Almighty and ever-living God, we most heartily thank you. You have fed us who have rightly received these holy sacraments, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. You assure us by this bread and wine of your favor and goodness towards us, that we are members of the mystical body of your Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. You have made us heirs of your everlasting kingdom by the merits of the most precious death and passion of your dear Son. And we most humbly pray, O heavenly Father, to assist us with your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as you have prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

## **Excommunication**

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ:

As you know we have announced to you the great sin committed and the grievous offense given by our fellow-member, N\_\_\_\_\_, to the end that, by your Christian admonitions and prayers, *he might come to his senses*, turn to God, and *escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will* (2 Tim. 2:26).

But to our great sorrow no one has yet appeared before us who has caused us to understand that, by the frequent admonitions given *him* (in private, before witnesses, and in the presence of many), *he has come to any sorrow for his sin or has shown the least evidence of true repentance*. Since, then, by *his stubbornness he daily aggravates his transgression*, which in itself is not small, and since we have made known to you the last time that in case *he did not repent*, after such patience shown *him* by the church, we should be constrained further to grieve for *him* and to come to the extreme remedy, we are therefore at the present time compelled to proceed to *his excommunication*. We do this according to the command and charge given us in God's holy Word. Our purpose is that *he may be ashamed of his sins*, that by this corrupt and as yet unrepentant member we may not put the whole body of the church in danger, and that God's Name may not be blasphemed but revered.

### *Pronouncement of Excommunication*

Therefore, we ministers and rulers of the church of God at this place, being assembled in the Name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, declare before you all that for the aforesaid reasons we have excommunicated and hereby excommunicate N\_\_\_\_\_ from the Church of the Lord; that, so long as *he persists obstinately and impenitently in his sins, he is excluded from the fellowship of Christ, and of the holy sacraments, and of all the spiritual blessings and benefits which God promises to and bestows upon His Church; and that he is to be accounted by you as a Gentile and a tax collector* (Matt. 18:17), according to the command of Christ, who says of His ministers, *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven* (Matt. 18:18).

### *Exhortation*

Further we exhort you, beloved Christians, *not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of such sin—not even to eat with such a one* (1 Cor. 5:11) to the end that *he may be ashamed; yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother* (2 Thes. 3:15).

In the meantime let every one take warning by this and similar examples to fear the Lord and diligently to take heed: *let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall* (1 Cor. 10:12); but having true fellowship with the Father and His Son Christ, together with all believing Christians, to remain *firm to the end* (Heb. 3:14), *obtaining the outcome of our faith, the salvation of our souls* (1 Peter 1:9). You have seen, dear brothers and sisters, in what manner this our excommunicated *brother has begun to fall and gradually has come to ruin*. Learn, then, from *him* how subtle Satan is to bring man to destruction and to draw him away from all salutary means of salvation. Guard yourselves, then, against the least beginnings of evil, and according to the admonition of the apostle, *let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith* (Heb. 12:1–2). *Be sober-minded; be watchful* (1 Peter 5:8); *pray that you may not enter into temptation* (Luke 22:46). *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts* (Heb. 4:7), but *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil. 2:12); and let

every one repent of his sin, lest our God humble us again and we be obliged to mourn for some of you; but may you, with one accord living in godliness, be our crown and joy in the Lord.

But since *it is God who works in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure* (Phil. 2:13), let us call upon His holy Name with confession of our sins.

*Prayer of Confession*

O righteous God, merciful Father, before Your high majesty we blame ourselves for our sins and acknowledge that we have justly deserved the sorrow and pain caused us by the excommunication of this our late fellow-member; indeed, if You should enter into judgment with us, we all deserve to be excluded and banished from Your presence on account of our great transgression. But, O Lord, be gracious unto us for Christ's sake; forgive us our trespasses, for we heartily repent of them; and work in our hearts an ever increasing measure of sorrow for them, that we, fearing Your judgments which You bring upon the stiff-necked, may endeavor to please You. Grant that we may avoid all pollution of the world and of those who are excluded from the communion of the Church, in order that we may not make ourselves partakers of their sins, and that *he who is excommunicated* may become ashamed of *his* sins. And since You desire not the death of the sinner, but that he may repent and live, and since the bosom of Your Church is always open for those who return, kindle, therefore, in our hearts a godly zeal, that we, with good Christian admonitions and example, may seek to bring back this excommunicated person, together with all those who through unbelief and recklessness of life go astray. Add Your blessing to our admonitions, that we thereby may have reason to rejoice again in *them* for whom we must now mourn, and that thus Your holy name be praised, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has taught us to pray:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## Readmission: 1

### *Announcement*

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord:

It is known to you that some time ago our fellow-member \_\_\_\_\_ was excommunicated from the church of Christ. We can now announce to you that he, by this remedy and also through good admonitions and your Christian prayers, has come to confess his sin, and now asks to be readmitted to the fellowship of the church. Since it is our duty, according to the command of God, to receive such persons with joy and thanksgiving, and since all things should be done decently and in good order, we inform you that at the next celebration of the Lord's Supper we shall loose this man from the bond of excommunication and receive him again into the fellowship of Christ's church.

If any of you should have reason against such readmission, it is incumbent upon you to give notice as soon as possible. Meanwhile let us thank the Lord, who has shown favor to this lost sheep, and let us earnestly ask him to perfect his work of conversion in him to eternal salvation. Amen.

*¶ Afterwards, if no hindrance occur, the minister shall proceed to the readmission of the excommunicated sinner according to the following form:*

### *Readmission*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We have recently informed you of the conversion of \_\_\_\_\_, to the end that, with your consent, he might be received again into the church of Christ. No one has brought forward any objection against this readmission, and therefore we will now receive him again into the communion of the saints.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught his church to put out of the fellowship those who refuse to repent of their sins. In Matthew 18 he says, *Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*. But he immediately added, *and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Matt. 18:18). Indeed, he taught us that excommunication does not take away all hope of salvation. For God has sworn by himself, saying, *As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 33:11). Therefore the church keeps hoping and praying for the repentance and return of the lost sinner, always eager to receive those turning from and sorrowing for their sins. The apostle Paul commanded the congregation at Corinth to forgive and comfort the brother who had been reprovved and had come to repentance. He exhorted the church to reaffirm their love for him lest he should be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

Christ also teaches us that God reckons the sentence of absolution, passed upon a repentant sinner according to the Word of God, as binding. For this reason no one who truly repents needs to doubt in any way that he is certainly received by God in grace, as Christ has declared, *If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven*” and *“whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (John 20:23; Matt. 16:19).

### *Confession*

That we may proceed to your readmission into the fellowship of Christ and his people, I ask you, \_\_\_\_\_, to stand now, and in the presence of God and his church respond to the following questions:

*First:* Do you declare with all your heart that you are truly sorry for the sin and stubbornness on account of which you were justly excluded from the church?

*Second:* Do you also truly believe that the Lord has forgiven all your sins for the sake of Christ's blood and now receives you by his grace and mercy through him?

*Third:* Do you, therefore, desire to be readmitted to the church of Christ, promising, by the grace of God, to live from now on in all godliness according to the Word of God?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

### *Declaration*

We, then, here assembled in the Name and the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on his behalf, declare to you, \_\_\_\_\_, that you are absolved from the bonds of excommunication. We joyfully receive you again into the church of our Lord, and declare that you share in the fellowship of Christ, of the holy sacraments, and of all the spiritual gifts and blessings of our Savior which God promises to his church and bestows upon her. May the eternal God preserve you in this to the end, through his only Son Jesus Christ. *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it* (1 Thess. 5:24). Amen.

### *Charge*

Dear brother, be assured in your heart that the Lord himself has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtleties of Satan, the wickedness of the world, and the weakness of the flesh, lest you again become entangled in sin. The love of Christ has brought you back. Love him, for he has forgiven much. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit anew, who has promised in your baptism to dwell in you and to sanctify you as a member of Christ.

And you, dear fellow Christians, receive this brother with all your love. Rejoice and be thankful, for this brother was dead and is alive; he was lost and is found. Rejoice with the angels, for Christ said, *I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance* (Luke 15:7). Count him no longer as a stranger, but as a fellow member with the saints of the household of God.

### *Prayer*

Since there is no good in ourselves, let us, with praise and thanksgiving, implore the Lord Almighty for his mercy:

Gracious God and Father, we thank and praise you through Jesus Christ that you have granted this brother godly sorry and repentance unto life and have brought us to rejoice in this. We ask you to show him your grace, that he may be continually assured of the complete remission of all sins, and may derive from that assurance joy and delight to serve you. Since for a time he has grieved many by his sin, grant that he may now edify many by his new path of faith. Grant also that he may walk steadfastly in your ways till the end. Teach us, Father, by this example, that with you there is always forgiveness, and may you therefore be praised and adored. Grant that now, we, with our brother, may serve you with childlike fear and obedience all the

days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit is the one and only true God. Amen.

*¶ Or:*

... through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## Readmission: 2

### *Announcement*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

As you are aware, some time ago our fellow-member \_\_\_\_\_ was excommunicated from the church of Christ because of his persistence in a serious and offensive sin without any token of genuine repentance. As a congregation, it has been our prayer that God would use this excommunication as the extreme remedy to bring him to conversion. We thankfully announce that the Lord has answered our prayers, and we rejoice in the blessed results of Christian discipline and with joy we announce that \_\_\_\_\_ has repented and expressed his desire to be restored to fellowship with Christ and his people. According to God's command, we are to receive back joyfully those who repent of their sins, and so, if there are no lawful objections, this readmission will be celebrated on \_\_\_\_\_. Meanwhile, let us praise the Lord for the favor shown this poor sinner and ask God to perfect his powerful work of grace in him to his eternal salvation. Amen.

*¶ Afterwards, if no hindrance occur, the minister shall proceed to the readmission of the excommunicated sinner according to the following form:*

### *Readmission*

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

It is known to you that \_\_\_\_\_, who was excommunicated, has requested to be readmitted to the communion of Christ and his church. Since no one has presented any valid reason why this restoration should not take place, we now proceed with gladness to receive our brother again into the church of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord teaches us in Matthew 18 that those who have been excommunicated from the life and fellowship of the church are not deprived of all hope of salvation, for in the way of faith and repentance sinners may once more be set free from the bonds of condemnation. God even declares in his Word that he takes *no pleasure in the death of the wicked* but rather that he should *turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 18; Luke 15). Likewise, the church always hopes for the conversion of those who have fallen into gross sin and is ready to receive back the penitent, which is in keeping with what the apostle Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 5. Therefore, all who truly repent should not doubt in any way that the Lord receives them in grace, as Christ assures us: *If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven* and *whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (John 20:23; Matt. 16:19).

### *Confession*

\_\_\_\_\_, please stand now, and in the presence of God and his people respond to the following questions:

*First:* Do you declare before God and his church that you are truly sorry for your sin, and do you believe that the Lord has forgiven you for the sake of Christ?

*Second:* Do you reaffirm your union with Christ and desire to be readmitted to the covenant family of God, promising to live from now on in all godliness according to the command of the Lord?

*Third:* Do you promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring and

submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord to which he calls us?

¶ *Answer:* I do.

#### *Declaration*

We, then, being here assembled in the Name and the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ declare you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be absolved from the bonds of excommunication. We joyfully receive you again into the church of our Lord, and declare that you share in the fellowship of Christ, of the holy sacraments, and of all the spiritual gifts and blessings of our Savior, which God promises to his church and bestows upon her. May the eternal God preserve you in this to the end, through his only Son Jesus Christ. *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it* (1 Thess. 5:24). Amen.

#### *Charge*

Dear brother, be assured in your heart that the Lord himself has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against the subtleties of Satan, the wickedness of the world, and the weakness of the flesh, lest you again become entangled in sin. The love of Christ has brought you back; love him, for he has forgiven much. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit anew, who has promised in your baptism to dwell in you and to sanctify you as a member of Christ.

And you, dear fellow Christians, receive this brother with all your love. Rejoice and be thankful, for this brother was dead and is alive; he was lost and is found. Rejoice with the angels, for Christ said, *I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance* (Luke 15:7). Count him no longer as a stranger, but as a fellow member with the saints of the household of God.

#### *Prayer*

Since there is no good in ourselves, let us, with praise and thanksgiving, implore the Lord Almighty for his mercy:

Gracious God and Father, we thank and praise you through Jesus Christ that you have granted this brother godly sorry and repentance unto life and have brought us to rejoice in this. We ask you to show him your grace, that he may be continually assured of the complete remission of all sins, and may derive from that assurance joy and delight to serve you. Since for a time he has grieved many by his sin, grant that he may now edify many by his new path of faith. Grant also that he may walk steadfastly in your ways till the end. Teach us, Father, by this example, that with you there is always forgiveness, and may you therefore be praised and adored. Grant that now, we, with our brother, may serve you with childlike fear and obedience all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit is the one and only true God. Amen.

¶ *Or:*

... through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## **Ordination (or: Installation) of Ministers of the Word**

Congregation of Jesus Christ:

We have before made known to you the name of our brother here present, who is now to be ordained to the Ministry of the Word (or: installed in the ministry to which he has been called). Since there were no lawful objections against his person or teaching, we shall therefore proceed, in the name of the Lord, to his ordination (installation).

The Holy Scriptures teach us that God, our Heavenly Father gathers his church out of the corrupt race of men to life eternal, and to give to his church such teaching and care that she may grow in faith, love and service. God, by a particular grace, uses men for service to these ends appointing them to the preaching of the Gospel, and to a diverse ministry for the building up of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul solemnly charged Timothy to *preach the word* (2 Tim. 4:2), and our Lord Jesus charged his disciples to *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Matt. 28:19–20) The apostle Paul declares that the Lord Jesus Christ has given *the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ* (Eph. 4:11–12).

Let us now hear what the Scriptures say concerning the office of the minister of the Word. The minister of the Word is called by the command of God to preach the Gospel of his kingdom. This preaching has the twofold object of calling sinners to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, and nurturing believers in the faith and life of the kingdom of God. Ministers are called *ambassadors for Christ*, as though God were pleading by them, *Be reconciled to God* (2 Cor. 5:20). This preaching must be addressed to all people. The preaching of the Gospel must also be addressed to the gathered congregation for the nurturing of Christian faith and life and for strengthening them against all error. Paul charged Timothy *in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, to preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching* (2 Tim. 4:1–2), and he charged Titus that a minister *must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it* (Titus 1:9). The minister of the Word is called to administer the sacraments which the Lord has instituted as signs and seals of his grace. Christ gave this charge to his apostles, and through them to all ministers of the Word, when he commanded them to *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 28:19); and when he said of the Lord's Supper: *Do this in remembrance of me* (1 Cor. 11:24–25). The minister of the Word is called to the service of prayer. In speaking of their calling, the apostles say: *We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word* (Acts 6:4). So, too, it is the calling of all God's ministers to lead the people of God in *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanks givings...for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions* (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

The minister of the Word is called, together with the elders, to shepherd the people of God in the Christian life, giving guidance and counsel in all things needful, exhorting them to *contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3), and keeping the church of God in good order and discipline. They are pastors, appointed to shepherd the church of Christ which he purchased with his own blood, in keeping with the Lord's command: *Feed my sheep! Feed my lambs!* They, together with the elders, watch over the house of God for the right and fruitful ordering of the faith and life and worship of the people of God. In their exercise of the keys of the kingdom, what they *bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*, and what they *loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven* (Matt. 18:18).

¶ *The officiating minister shall now read paragraph (1), (2), (3), or (4), depending on whether this is the ordination, or installation, of the pastor of an established congregation, a foreign missionary, or a home missionary, or the ordination of a teacher of theology.*

*(1) For the Pastor in an Established Congregation*

We will now proceed to ordain (install) a minister of the Word in this congregation. We rejoice that in his faithful love the Lord Jesus has provided a minister to serve as pastor and teacher to this people, and also as their leader in the missionary calling of this church. We receive this servant of our Lord from the hand and heart of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. We are grateful that our Savior has committed preaching, teaching, and pastoral care to the office of the ministry, and that he will continue to use sinful men for such high and holy purposes until the day of his return.

No one is equal to this holy ministry in his own strength. We set our hope on Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has said: *Behold I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Now, in order that it may appear that you, \_\_\_\_\_, are willing to accept this office, you are requested to stand, and in the presence of God and his church give your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation you are called by God himself to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?

Do you promise to discharge the duties of your office faithfully, to conduct yourself worthily of this calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

¶ *Answer:* I do so believe and promise, God helping me.

¶ *The officiating minister shall then say (in the case of ordination with the ceremony of the laying on of hands, other ministers present participating):*

God, our Heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, enlighten you with his Spirit, strengthen you with his hand, and so govern you in your ministry that you may be engaged in it faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of his Name and the coming of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

¶ *The officiating minister shall address the congregation:*

Dear people of God and members of this church, since this solemn act involves obligations also on your part, I ask you before God:

Do you in the name of the Lord welcome this brother as your pastor?

Do you promise to receive the Word of God proclaimed by him and to encourage him in the discharge of his duty?

Will you pray that he may, in the power of the Spirit, equip you in the work of advancing God's Kingdom for the honor of Christ our Lord, the building up of his church, and the salvation of men?

To these questions, what is your answer?

¶ *Answer:* We do, God helping us.

¶ *The officiating minister (and/or others designated) shall then exhort the ordained minister and the congregation in the following manner:*

Beloved brother and fellow-servant in Christ, take heed to yourself and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you a guardian, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. Love Christ and feed his sheep, exercising the oversight, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge. Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have. Take heed to your teaching. Be patient in all trials. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. And when the chief Shepherd appears you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

And you, beloved Christians, receive your minister in the Lord, with all joy, and hold him in honor. Remember that through him God himself speaks to you. Receive the Word which he, according to the Scripture, shall preach to you, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God. Let the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, and bring the Good News, be beautiful and pleasant to you. Submit to those whom God has placed over you, for they care for you as those who shall give account. May they do this with joy and not with sorrow, for this would be unprofitable for you. If you do these things, the God of peace shall enter your homes. You who receive this man in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, and through faith in Jesus Christ, the inheritance of eternal life.

No man is of himself sufficient for these things. Let us call upon the name of God:

Merciful Father, we are thankful that it pleases you by the ministry of men to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the gift of this your servant, sent to this people as a messenger of your peace. Send now the Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him the ability to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel. Grant him the wisdom to care for and guide the people over whom he is placed. Through his ministry build up your holy church, and grant her increase in number and in virtue. Give your servant courage through your Spirit to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and to be steadfast to the end. We pray that this people may receive him as having been sent by you. May they receive his teaching and exhortation with all reverence, and believing in Christ through His Word become partakers of eternal life. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

(2) *For a Foreign Missionary*

We now proceed to ordain (install) \_\_\_\_\_ as a foreign missionary, for service in \_\_\_\_\_. It is the task of these ministers to bring the Gospel to foreign lands, so that all peoples may come to the knowledge of salvation and to the service of the Lord, and the church of Jesus Christ be established in all the earth. Jesus Christ has said: *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come*" (Matt. 24:14). In the person of her missionaries the church reaches into the lives of those who are yet without God and without hope. She brings to all lands the witness that Jesus is the Son of God, that the glory of the nations belongs to him, and that his grace, love, and redemption are offered to them in the way of repentance and faith. In this work of missions the church may lift up her eyes to the Lord's coming, and look with longing to the day when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

No one is equal to this holy ministry in his own strength. We set our hope on Jesus Christ our Lord, who has said: *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Now, in order that it may appear that you, \_\_\_\_\_, are willing to accept this office, you are requested to stand, and in the presence of God and his church give your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation you are called by God himself to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?

Do you promise to discharge the duties of your office faithfully, to conduct yourself worthily of this calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

¶ *Answer:* I do so believe and promise, God helping me.

¶ *The officiating minister shall then say (in the case of ordination with the ceremony of the laying on of hands, other ministers present participating):*

Go, then, beloved brother, and bring the Gospel to those to whom you are sent. Make disciples of them, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God, our Heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy ministry, enlighten you with his Spirit, strengthen you with his hand, and so govern you in your ministry that you may be engaged in it faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of his name, and the coming of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ.

And you, beloved congregation, be in continuing fellowship with this missionary whom you send forth in the name of Christ. Sustain him with your fervent prayers. Support him with your gifts. Strengthen his hand and heart in every need. As Christ received you, be ready to receive those who are brought into the body of Christ through his ministry, that there may be one flock, one shepherd.

No man is of himself sufficient for these things. Let us call upon the name of God:

Merciful Father, we thank you that it pleases you by the ministry of men to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the gift of this your servant,

now being sent by this people in your name to be a messenger to others of the Good News of your peace. Send now the Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him the ability to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel. Grant him the wisdom to care for and guide the people over whom he is placed. Through his ministry build up your holy church, and grant her increase in number and in virtue. Give your servant courage through your Spirit to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and to be steadfast to the end. Let those to whom he comes see in him the ambassador of Christ, calling them to be reconciled to God. May they receive his teaching and exhortation with all reverence, and believing in Christ through his Word become partakers of eternal life. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

(3) *For a Home Missionary*

We now proceed to ordain \_\_\_\_\_ as a home missionary for service in \_\_\_\_\_. The calling of these ministers is in particular the preaching of the Gospel, the spiritual care, and the instruction of those in our homeland, who, though exposed to the witness of the church and the Gospel have been alienated or are yet estranged from the Lord and his church. In the parable of the Great Supper the Lord Jesus Christ has spoken about the lord who sent his servants out into the streets and lanes of the city, into the highways and hedges, to invite all men to his feast. Even so our Lord calls us to bring men into the house of the King through the ministry of his love, in order that his house may be filled. The Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached for a testimony to our own nation as well as to all nations of the world. Thus men are called to walk in the way of God's commands and promises. And in this ministry we look to the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

No one is equal to this holy ministry in his own strength. We set our hope on Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has said: *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Now in order that it may appear that you, \_\_\_\_\_, are willing to accept this office, you are requested to stand, and in the presence of God and his church give your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation you are called by God himself to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?

Do you promise to discharge the duties of your office faithfully, to conduct yourself worthily of this calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

¶ *Answer:* I do so believe and promise, God helping me.

*¶ The officiating minister shall then say (in the case of ordination with the ceremony of the laying on of hands, other ministers present participating):*

Go then, beloved brother, and bring the Gospel to those to whom you are sent. Call the unbelieving to faith, the faithless to obedience, and invite men in the name of the Lord into the house of your King. May God, our Heavenly Father, enlighten you with his Spirit, strengthen you with his hand, and so govern you in your ministry that you may fulfill it faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of his Name, and the coming of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ.

And you, beloved congregation, be in continuing fellowship with this missionary whom you send forth in the name of Christ. Sustain him with your fervent prayers. Support him with your gifts. Strengthen his hand and heart in every need. As Christ received you, be ready to receive those who are brought into the body of Christ through his ministry, that there may be one flock, one shepherd.

No man is of himself sufficient for these things. Let us call upon the name of God:

Merciful Father, we thank you that it pleases you by the ministry of men to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the gift of this your servant, now being sent by this people in your name to be a messenger to others of the Good News of your peace. Send now your Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him the ability to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel. Grant him the wisdom to care for and guide the people over whom he is placed. Through his ministry build up your holy church, and grant her increase in number and in virtue. Give your servant courage through your Spirit to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and to be steadfast to the end. Let those to whom he comes see in him the ambassador of Christ, calling them to be reconciled to God. May they receive his teaching and exhortation with all reverence, and believing in Christ through His Word become partakers of eternal life. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

*¶ Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

*(4) For a Teacher of Theology*

Congregation of Jesus Christ: \_\_\_\_\_ has been appointed by this congregation for the particular task of teaching at \_\_\_\_\_. We are mindful of the need for the training of men who as ministers of the Word shall preach the Gospel of salvation to the people of God in the church of Christ and to men outside of the church of Christ.

The first messengers of peace in the days of the New Testament were taught directly by our Lord Jesus Christ, and were by him personally trained and sent. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he gave diverse extraordinary gifts and knowledge of the mysteries, for the salvation of sinners and the edifying of the saints. But since those extraordinary methods lasted only as long as the Lord judged them to be necessary for the founding of his church among the nations,

the necessity was soon recognized of training men for the holy ministry under the ordinary dispensation of the Spirit by the regular methods of education. Thus Paul wrote to his fellow-minister, Timothy: *...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also* (2 Tim. 2:2).

For the most effective discharge of this task in our day, the church has established a theological school, and appoints ministers of the Word who will serve the cause of the Gospel by teaching and training those who are to become ministers of the Word in Christ's church. Our brother \_\_\_\_\_ has been called to serve in this important task.

No one is equal to this holy ministry in his own strength. We set our hope on Jesus Christ our Lord, who has said: *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Now, in order that it may appear that you, \_\_\_\_\_, are minded to accept this office and fulfill this task, you are requested to stand and in the presence of God and his church give your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation you are called by God himself to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?

Do you promise to discharge the duties of your office faithfully, to conduct yourself worthily of this calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

¶ *Answer:* I do so believe and promise, God helping me.

¶ *The officiating minister shall then say*

God, our Heavenly Father, enlighten you with his Spirit, strengthen you with his hand, and so govern you in your calling that you may discharge its duties faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of his name, and the coming of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

No man is of himself sufficient for these things. Let us call upon the name of God:

Merciful Father, we are thankful that it pleases you by the ministry of men to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the gift of this your servant, sent to train men to be messengers of your peace. Send now your Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him the power to teach others to speak to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel. Endow him with wisdom to instruct and care for those men who are preparing for the Gospel ministry that through his ministry your church will be preserved in peace that she may increase in number and in virtue. Give your servant courage through your Spirit to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and to be steadfast to the end. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

(5) *For Other Extraordinary Tasks*

Congregation of Jesus Christ: \_\_\_\_\_ has been called by this church for the particular task of serving as it is recognized that this is a task which is spiritual in character, directly related to the ministry of the Word, and one which is to be performed as a service for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is required that one so appointed be mindful of his ordination to the ministry of the church in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the service of prayers, and the ministry of the care and discipline of the church of God. It is further required that one so appointed serve in his particular task as a minister of the Word of God, and in loyalty and service to the church by which he is called.

No one is equal to this holy ministry in his own strength. We set our hope on Jesus Christ our Lord, who has said: *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matt. 28:20).

Now, in order that it may appear that you, \_\_\_\_\_, are minded to accept this calling, you are requested to stand and in the presence of God and his church give your answer to the following questions:

Do you believe that in the call of this congregation you are called by God himself to this holy ministry?

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every teaching in conflict with them?

Do you promise to perform your task faithfully, to conduct yourself worthily of this calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

¶ *Answer:* I do so believe and promise, God helping me.

¶ *The officiating minister shall then say:*

God, our Heavenly Father, enlighten you with his Spirit, strengthen you with his hand, and so govern you in your calling that you may discharge its duties faithfully and fruitfully, to the glory of his name, and the coming of the kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

No man is of himself sufficient for these things. Let us call upon the name of God:

Merciful Father, we are thankful that it pleases you by the ministry of men to gather your church out of the lost human race to life eternal. We acknowledge the extraordinary gift of this your servant, to participate in that calling. Send now your Holy Spirit upon him. Enlighten his mind to know the truth of your Word. Give him the power to teach the mystery of the Gospel. Give your servant courage through your Spirit to fulfill his calling against every difficulty and to be steadfast to the end. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for the sake of your dear Son, in whose name we pray:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## **Ordination of Elders and Deacons**

Congregation of Jesus Christ:

We have before made known to you the names of our brothers here present who were chosen to the office of elders and deacons in this church, and have indicated their belief in our confessions by their agreement with the Form of Subscription. Since there were no lawful objections, we shall therefore, in the Name of the Lord, proceed to their ordination.

### *Instruction*

Let us hear what the Word of God teaches regarding these offices.

The office of elder is based on the kingship of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when he ascended, left his Church in the world and provided it with officers who should rule in his Name. The apostle Paul, in Acts, insists upon the ordination of elders in every church, and, in his letter to Timothy, commands those who *rule well to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching* (1 Tim. 5:17). In this and other passages Paul distinguishes between the elders who labor particularly in the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, and those who are responsible for the supervision of the church together with the ministers of the Word. Therefore the Church, from the beginning, has had elders in addition to ministers and pastors.

The work of the elders is that of ruling in the Name of the ascended King, and as servants of the great Shepherd, caring for his flock. It is also the duty of the elders to maintain the purity of the Word and sacraments, to uphold the good order of the church, carefully guarding the sacredness of the offices and faithfully exercising discipline. They should with love and humility promote the faithful discharge of the office by their fellow-officers, having particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word, that the church may be edified and may show itself to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

To fill such a sacred office worthily, the elders should set an example of godliness in their personal life, in their home life, and in their relations with their fellow-men. Walking thus in all godliness, and faithfully discharging their office, *when the chief Shepherd appears, they will receive the unfading crown of glory* (1 Peter 5:4).

The office of deacon is based upon the love and concern of Christ on behalf of his own. This concern is so great that he considers what is done unto one of the least of his brothers as done unto him. In this way our Lord appoints the needy as his representatives in our expression of sympathy and benevolent service on earth. *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me* (Matt. 25:35–36).

According to Acts 6, the apostles themselves in the beginning ministered unto the needy; but afterwards, being overburdened with this service to the extent that some were neglected, certain men were chosen to whom they committed the special responsibility of exercising this ministry, leaving the apostles greater opportunity to continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Word. Since that time the Church has recognized this service as a distinct office.

The work of the deacons consists in the faithful and diligent gathering of the offerings which God's people in gratitude make to their Lord, in the prevention of poverty, in the humble and cheerful distribution of gifts according to the need, and in the relief of the distressed both with kind deeds and words of comfort and encouragement from Scripture.

To fill such a sacred office worthily, the deacons, as well as the elders, should set an example of godliness in their personal life, in their home life, and in their relations with their

fellow-men. Thus conducting themselves as worthy representatives of Christ's loving care, and faithfully ministering in His Name to those who are the beloved of God, they *gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus* (1 Tim. 3:13).

#### *Vows*

Brothers, in order that the church may hear that you are willing to take your respective offices upon you, please answer the following questions:

*First:* Do you elders and deacons feel in your hearts that you are lawfully called by God's church, and therefore by God himself, to your respective holy offices?

*Second:* Do you believe the Old and New Testament to be the only Word of God, and the doctrinal standards of this church to be in harmony therewith?

*Third:* Having heard the description of the purpose and requirements of these offices, do you promise to fulfill them faithfully by the grace of God: you elders, in the government of the church, together with the ministers of the Word; and you deacons, in the ministration to the poor?

*Fourth:* Do you promise to walk in all godliness and submit to the government of the church in all things pertaining to your office?

¶ *Each answers individually:* I do.

May the Almighty God and Father replenish you all with his grace, that you may faithfully and fruitfully discharge your respective offices. Amen.

#### *Exhortation*

I charge you, elders, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be diligent in the government of the church which is committed to you jointly with the minister of the Word. Be faithful watchmen over the house of God, taking heed that purity of doctrine and godliness of life be maintained.

I charge you, deacons, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be diligent in receiving the gifts of God's people, wise and cheerful in the distribution of the same, sympathetic and self-denying in the ministry of Christian mercy.

I charge you, beloved Christians, to receive these brothers as the servants of God, sustaining them with your daily prayers. Render to the elders all honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord. Provide the deacons generously with the necessary gifts for the needy, remembering that in so much as you do it unto the least of these his children, you do it unto him. May God give us to see in the ministry of the elders the supremacy of Christ, and in the ministry of the deacons the care and love of the Savior.

Being thus engaged in your respective callings, each one of you shall receive of the Lord the reward of righteousness.

#### *Prayer*

O Lord God and heavenly Father, we give thanks that you have been pleased, for the better edification of your Church, to ordain in it rulers and assistants besides the ministers of the Word, by whom your Church may be preserved in peace and prosperity, and the needy assisted. We thank you for giving us in this place men who are of good testimony and by your promise

endowed with your Spirit. We ask you to provide them more and more with such gifts as are necessary for them in their service: with the gifts of wisdom, courage, discretion, benevolence, sympathy, and self-denial, to the end that every one may acquit himself as is becoming in his respective office. May the elders take great care of doctrine and life in keeping out the wolves from the sheepfold of your beloved Son, and in admonishing and reproving disorderly persons. Likewise, the deacons in carefully receiving gifts and generously and wisely distributing them to the poor, and in comforting them with your holy Word. Give grace both to elders and deacons, that they may persevere in their faithful labor, and never become weary by reason of any trouble, pain, or persecution of the world. Grant especially your divine grace to this people, over whom they are placed, that they may willingly submit themselves to the good exhortations of the elders, counting them worthy of honor for their work's sake. Give unto the rich generous hearts towards the needy, and to the needy grateful hearts towards those who help and serve them; to the end that, every one acquitting himself of his duty, your holy Name may thereby be magnified, and the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ enlarged, in whose Name we conclude our prayers. Amen.

## Solemnization of Marriage: Form 1

¶ *Where the wedding takes place before the congregation the following announcement is to be made on the previous Sunday:*

The consistory announces that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have indicated their intention to enter into the married state, according to the ordinance of God. They desire to begin this holy state in the Name of the Lord and to complete it to his glory. If no lawful objection is brought forward, the ceremony will take place, the Lord willing, on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

Beloved in the Lord, we are assembled here in the presence of God for the purpose of joining in marriage \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Since the consistory has received no lawful objections, we may now proceed to the solemnization of their marriage in the Name of the Lord. Therefore, let us reverently call to mind what the word of God teaches us about marriage.

### *Instruction*

The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God himself at the very beginning of history. He created man in his own image, he supplied him with many blessings and gave him dominion over all things. Moreover, God said: *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him... So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, this at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Gen. 2:18, 21–24). We therefore believe that the Lord also today gives husbands and wives to each other. Since they are united by his hand, nothing shall separate them in this life.

Our Lord Jesus honored marriage by his blessed presence at the wedding in Cana, and confirmed it as an institution of God, as an honorable state, and as a lasting bond when He declared: *What therefore God has joined together let not man separate* (Matt. 19:6). Since God has made marriage such a strong bond, *He hates divorce* (Mal. 2:16), as also our Lord Jesus Christ shows in these words: *whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery* (Matt. 19:9). Since the Lord forbids immorality, *each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband* (1 Cor. 7:2), so that our bodies may be preserved as *a temple of the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor. 6:19) and we may *glorify God in our body* (1 Cor. 6:20).

The apostle Paul shows the exalted nature of marriage when he calls it a symbol of the mystical union of the Savior and the Church, his redeemed bride, commending it as a state honorable among all. The word of God also teaches us the purpose of marriage. First, husband and wife shall live together in sincere love and holiness, helping each other faithfully in all things that belong to this life and to the life to come. Secondly, by marriage the human race is to be continued and increased. Thirdly, by marriage the advancement of the kingdom of God is to be promoted. This purpose calls for loving devotion to each other, and a common responsibility

for the nurture of children in true knowledge and fear of the Lord, which the Lord may give them as his heritage and as parties to his covenant.

For the home which marriage establishes the Lord ordained that the man should be the head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the Church, and that he should protect her and provide for her in love, a love which, if exercised in the spirit and after the example of Christ, will be conducive to mutual happiness. God also ordained that the wife should be subject to the husband in all things that are according to his Word, showing him respect even as the Church to Christ. Thus the liberty of both husband and wife is glorified by mutual loyalty to law, and a home so begun in the name of the Lord and regulated by his commandments becomes the very foundation of a Christian society and affords a foretaste of the eternal home.

Marriage, then, is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness to man, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of the union of Christ and his Church. We may, therefore, as Christians look with confidence for grace in the discharge of our mutual responsibilities and for guidance and help in our common difficulties and trials.

*Statement of Intent*

And now, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ having heard from the Word of God the teaching concerning marriage, do you consent thereto, and do you desire to enter into this holy estate as ordained by God?

¶ *Groom:* I do.

¶ *Bride:* I do.

May the Lord God confirm the desire and purpose of your hearts, and your beginning be in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

*Vows*

¶ *To the groom:*

\_\_\_\_\_, do you declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that you take as your lawful wife \_\_\_\_\_, here present? Do you promise to love and guide her faithfully, to maintain her, and to live with her in holiness, according to the holy gospel? Do you also promise never to forsake her, but to be true to her always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as you both shall live? What is your answer?

¶ *Groom:* I do.

¶ *Optional:* I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that I take to myself and acknowledge as my wife \_\_\_\_\_ here present. I promise with the gracious help of God to love and guide her faithfully, to maintain her, and to live with her in holiness, according to the holy gospel. I promise never to forsake her, but to be true to her always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as we both shall live.

*¶ To the bride:*

\_\_\_\_\_, do you declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that you take as your lawful husband \_\_\_\_\_, here present? Do you promise to love and obey him, to assist him, and to live with him in holiness, according to the holy gospel? Do you also promise never to forsake him, but to be true to him always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as you both shall live? What is your answer?

*¶ Bride:* I do.

*¶ Optional:* I \_\_\_\_\_ do solemnly declare here before the Lord and these witnesses that I take to myself and acknowledge as my husband \_\_\_\_\_ here present. I promise with the gracious help of God to love and obey him, to assist him, and to live with him in holiness, according to the holy gospel. I promise never to forsake him, but to be true to him always, in good days and bad, in riches and poverty, in health and sickness, for as long as we both shall live.

### *Ring Ceremony*

*¶ To the Groom:*

Do you give this ring as a symbol of your constant faithfulness and abiding love?

*¶ Groom:* I do.

*¶ Optional:* I give you this ring as a symbol of my constant faithfulness and abiding love.

*¶ To the Bride:*

Do you give this ring as a symbol of your constant faithfulness and abiding love?

*¶ Bride:* I do.

*¶ Optional:* I give you this ring as a symbol of my constant faithfulness and abiding love.

### *Pronouncement*

I now pronounce you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, husband and wife, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate. From now on you go down life's pathway together, and may the Father of all mercies, who of his grace has called you to this holy state of marriage, bind you together in true love and faithfulness and grant you his blessing.

### *Prayer*

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, since we cannot expect anything from ourselves, you shall kneel before the Lord and we shall pray with you and for you that he may enable you to fulfill your vows and grant you his blessing.

Most merciful and gracious God, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, we ask you to, set your seal of approval upon the marriage into which our brother and sister have entered this day. Give them your fatherly benediction; grant them grace and your Holy Spirit to fulfill with pure and constant affection the vow and covenant made between them.

Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace, that, loving and serving you with one mind and heart all the days of their life, they may be abundantly enriched with the tokens of your everlasting favor in Christ Jesus our Lord. In all life's experiences lift up your countenance upon them, that they may be thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity. May their marriage be fruitful for this life and for the life to come. Grant them wisdom and strength to build a home which shall be to the glory of your Name and the coming of your kingdom. May they live together many years, and in the hour of death may they part in the blessed hope of celebrating forever with all the saints of God the marriage of Christ and the Church he loved. Hear our prayer in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

*¶ Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## Solemnization of Marriage: Form 2

### *Declaration of Purpose*

We have come together before the face of God to join \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. We seek to honor the will of God for marriage, the concern of the Christian church for its well-being, and the interest of the state in the orderly development of society.

### *Parting from Parents*

Today \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ leave their parents to establish a new home. Do you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, give your blessing to them and promise them your continued love and support?

¶ *The parents answer:*

We give them our blessing, and so promise, God helping us.

Who gives this woman to this man?

¶ *The one giving the bride answers:*

I do.

### *Prayer of Invocation*

God, our Father, we praise you for making and redeeming us to live together in love. We thank you for the love and trust which bring \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to this their marriage day. Favor them with the honor of your presence at their wedding. Unite them by your Spirit so that together they may reflect the love of Christ for his church. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *Instruction*

Since we have received no lawful objections to this proposed union, let us reverently call to mind the institution, purpose, and obligations of the marriage state.

The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God himself at the very dawn of history. Making man in his own likeness, he endowed him with many blessings and gave him dominion over all things. Moreover, God said: *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him* (Gen. 2:18). Thereupon God created woman of man's own substance and *brought her to the man* (Gen. 2:22). *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Gen. 2:24).

Our Lord Jesus honored marriage by his blessed presence at the wedding in Cana, and confirmed it as a divine ordinance, as an honorable estate, and a lasting bond when he declared: *What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate* (Matt. 19:6). The apostle Paul shows its exalted nature when he calls holy wedlock a symbol of the mystic union of the Savior and the Church, his redeemed bride, commending it as a state honorable among all.

The purpose of marriage is the propagation of the human race, the furtherance of the kingdom of God, and the enrichment of the lives of those entering this state. This purpose calls for loving devotion to each other, and a common responsibility for the nurture of the children the Lord may give them as his heritage and as parties to his covenant.

For the home which marriage establishes the Lord ordained that the man should be the head of the wife even as Christ is the Head of the Church and that he should protect her and provide for her in love; a love which, if exercised in the spirit and after the example of Christ, will be conducive to mutual happiness. God also ordained that the wife should be subject to the husband in all things that are according to his Word, showing him deference even as the Church to Christ. Thus the liberty of both husband and wife is glorified by mutual loyalty to law, and a home so begun in the name of the Lord and regulated by his commandments becomes the very foundation of a Christian society and affords a foretaste of the eternal home.

Marriage, then, is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness to man, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of the union of Christ and his Church. We may, therefore, as Christians look with confidence for grace in the discharge of our mutual responsibilities and for guidance and help in our common perplexities and trials.

#### *Statement of Intent*

And now, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ having heard from the Word of God the teaching concerning marriage, do you assent thereto, and do you desire to enter into this holy estate as ordained by God?

¶ *Groom:* I do.

¶ *Bride:* I do.

May the Lord God confirm the desire and purpose of your hearts, and your beginning be *in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth* (Ps. 124:8).

#### *Vows*

¶ *To the groom (repeating after the minister):*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife. I promise before God, and all who are present here, to be your loving and faithful husband. I will love you and give myself up for you, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in riches and in poverty, in sickness and in health. I will serve you with tenderness and respect, and encourage you to develop the gifts that God has given you, and never forsake you, as long as we both shall live.

¶ *To the bride (repeating after the minister):*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband. I promise before God, and all who are present here, to be your loving and faithful wife. I will love you and submit to you, as the church loves and submits to Christ. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in riches and in poverty, in sickness and in health. I will serve you with tenderness and respect, and encourage you to develop the gifts that God has given you, and never forsake you, as long as we both shall live.

#### *Ring Ceremony*

¶ *To the Groom:*

Do you give this ring as a symbol of your constant faithfulness and abiding love in covenant established in Jesus Christ?

¶ *Groom:* I do.

¶ *To the Bride:*

Do you give this ring as a symbol of your constant faithfulness and abiding love in covenant established in Jesus Christ?

¶ *Bride:* I do.

*Pronouncement*

According the ordinances of the Church of Christ and the power vested in me by the State/Province of \_\_\_\_\_, I now pronounce you husband and wife, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder. From now on as you go down life's pathway together, may the Father of all mercies, who of his grace has called you to this holy state of marriage, bind you together in true love and faithfulness and grant you his blessing.

¶ *The minister may say to the groom:* \_\_\_\_\_, you may now kiss your bride.

*Prayer*

Most merciful and gracious God, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, we ask you to set the seal of your approval upon the marriage into which our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have entered this day. Give them your fatherly benediction; grant them grace and the Holy Spirit to fulfill with pure and constant affection the vow and covenant between them made. Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace, that, loving and serving you with one mind and heart all the days of their life, they may be abundantly enriched with the tokens of your everlasting favor in Christ Jesus our Lord. In all life's experiences lift up your countenance upon them, that they may be thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity. May their marriage be fruitful for this life and for the life to come. Grant them wisdom and strength to build a home which shall be to the glory of your Name and the coming of your kingdom. May they live together many years, and in the hour of death may they part in the blessed hope of celebrating forever with all the saints of God the marriage of Christ and the Church he loved. Hear our prayer in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying:

¶ *Congregation:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

## Prayers

### **Preface**

These prayers are for voluntary use. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not impose the use of prescribed forms of public prayer in worship nor does the United Reformed Churches in North America today. These prayers are offered as aids and examples for congregational use as well as for those who are called to lead in public prayer.

### **Prayers for the Lord's Day**

#### *Prayer of Invocation—1*

Almighty God, to you our hearts are open, our desires are known, and from you no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the gracious power of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### *Prayer of Invocation—2*

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and to give more than we desire, or deserve; pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy; forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

#### *Prayer of Confession—1*

Dearly loved brothers and sisters, we are called to examine ourselves in the light of God's Law. Let us go to God in public confession:

#### *¶ Prayed in unison:*

Our Father, we are sinful and you are holy.  
We recognize that we have heard in your Law difficult words,  
knowing how often we have offended you in thought, word and deed,  
not only by obvious violations,  
but by failing to conform to its perfect commands,  
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.  
There is nothing in us that gives us reason for hope;  
for where we thought we were well, we are sick in soul.  
Where we thought we were holy, we are in truth unholy and ungrateful.  
Our hearts are filled with the love of the world;  
our minds are dark and are assailed by doubts;  
our wills are too often given to selfishness  
and our bodies to laziness and unrighteousness.  
By sinning against our neighbors,  
we have also sinned against you,  
in whose image they were created.  
In this time of silent confession we bring you our particular sins.

¶ *An opportunity for silent confession may be given.*

¶ *Prayed by the minister:*

Our Father, although you are a holy God who cannot look upon sin, look upon Christ our Savior and forgive us for his sake. You have promised us that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. For if we do sin, we have an Advocate before your throne, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Give us your pardon by your mercies, dear Father, for you have clothed us in Christ's righteousness. We ask also that you would give us an increase of the grace of your Holy Spirit, so that we may learn the wisdom of your ways and walk in your holy paths, for your glory and the good of our neighbor. Amen.

*Prayer of Confession—2*

Dearly beloved, the law causes us to acknowledge and confess our many sins and wickedness; not hiding them from the face of Almighty God our heavenly Father but confessing them with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart that we may obtain forgiveness, by his infinite goodness and mercy. Therefore I urge you to join me with a pure heart and humble voice, before the throne of grace, praying:

¶ *Prayed in unison:*

Almighty and most merciful Father,  
we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep,  
we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts,  
we have offended against your holy laws,  
we have left undone those things which we ought to have done,  
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done;  
and there is no health in us.  
But you, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders,  
spare us, as we confess our faults,  
restore us, as we are penitent,  
according to your promises declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord;  
and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake,  
that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life,  
to the glory of your holy Name. Amen.

*Pastoral Prayer*

Almighty and merciful God, we realize and confess before you that if you should regard our merits, we would be unworthy to lift our eyes toward heaven and present our prayers before you. Our consciences accuse us, and our sins testify against us. And yet in your fatherly goodness you have adopted us in Christ and delight to hear our prayers which we offer through his mediation. Therefore we look to no other King and seek no other Advocate for the help that we need in this world and in the world to come. You call us to seek not only our own salvation and good, but that of your whole church and the world, and we do so now.

We pray first for your benediction on your holy Gospel, that it may be faithfully proclaimed and the world filled with the knowledge of your truth. To that end, please send workers into your field to plant, water, and harvest a people for your name. But frustrate the work of those who would sow weeds of heresy and discord. Pull down all of the strongholds of Satan in this world and establish your kingdom throughout the earth. Please give fatherly attention to your servants who suffer persecution for the sake of the Gospel and strengthen them in mind and body by your Spirit through the means of grace. *[Specific prayers added for the peace, purity, and progress of the Gospel throughout the world.]*

We pray also for those who serve our common welfare in temporal affairs, especially those who govern us, that they may do so with wisdom, integrity, and the knowledge that their councils stand under your final judgment. Dear Father, who sends rain upon the just and the unjust alike, give to us also, we pray, such humility of conduct and faithfulness in our worldly callings, that we may contribute to the good of our neighbors. We ask that you would restrain wickedness and vice in society, promote justice and the common good, and cause us to be salt and light in this evil age. *[Specific prayers added for civil authorities.]*

We remember also all who suffer from physical dangers, temptation, doubts, illness of mind or body, financial distress and especially those who are near death. May the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ your Son refresh them in their trials and give them the grace to bear the difficulties you send them for their good. Give also to us the grace to share in their suffering and provide for their needs as we are able. Comfort, we pray, all widows and orphans and be to them a father. Show your mercy to prisoners, to those in the military or whose business takes them great distances. Guard their families and bring them back safely, we pray. *[Specific prayers added for members of the congregation.]*

Bless the land with fruitful harvest, and give us wisdom and patience to be good stewards of it and of the resources you graciously give us for our callings. Keep us from exploiting your good gifts for our own selfish accumulation and grant that we may be ever mindful of our duties to each other and your creation. Order our priorities and interests, so that our callings in life will promote rather than hinder our love for you and our neighbor. We ask that you would deepen the bonds between us as spouses, parents and children and resolve conflict and strife according to your wisdom and grace. Give to those among us who are single gifts for building up the communion of saints as well as faithfulness in the face of temptation, and grant that your people may build them up in the most holy faith. Strengthen us through your means of grace that we may worship you not only with our words but with our lives, and so build us up into one body, a city in the world whose light cannot be hidden. Make each of us, we pray, a living sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving pleasing to you. For this is our reasonable service in view of that sacrifice which alone has reconciled us finally and forever with you. We bring to your throne these intercessions on behalf of each other through that intercession of our Elder Brother at your right hand, even Jesus Christ your eternal Son. Amen.

*Prayer Before the Sermon—1*

Eternal Father, who has spoken in various times and in various ways to your people in the past, but in these last days in your Son, the Incarnate Word, we pray that you will open the mouth of your servant to proclaim that Word in the power of the Spirit. And we pray that this same Spirit

will open the hearts of its hearers here assembled to receive your holy Gospel and write on their hearts your holy Law, even as you have promised. All of this, gracious Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying: “Our Father...”

*Prayer Before the Sermon—2*

Blessed Lord, who has caused Holy Scripture to be written for our learning; grant that we may hear, read, learn, and inwardly digest them, that through the comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Prayer After the Sermon—1*

Our merciful God, who is pleased to condescend to speak to us through your word, grant us all grace that we may not be mere hearers of your word, but doers also. Give us the grace of your Holy Spirit that we may believe what has been promised to us. May we bring glory and honor to your name in all that we do, as you conform us to the image of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. All of this, gracious Father, we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying: “Our Father...”

*Prayer After the Sermon—2*

Almighty God, grant that the words we have just heard meekly with our outward ears to be grafted inwardly in our hearts by your grace. As we receive your Word with pure affection, may our hearts be filled with love and reverence for you. Cause us to bear the fruits of the Spirit and to live in holiness, diligently following your commandments. And may it please you to use us in leading into the way of truth all who are lost, wandering, and confused. All this we pray for the honor and praise of your Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Prayer Before the Explanation of the Catechism*

Almighty and everlasting God, our heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we are sinners, conceived and born in sin, unable of ourselves to do any good. But we do repent of our sins, and seek your grace to help us in our remaining infirmities. Through the teaching of your word, satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst with your refreshing truth, that we, with all our hearts, may love and serve you, together with our Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, one only true God, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

*Prayer After the Explanation of the Catechism*

Gracious and merciful Father, we give you thanks for having established your covenant with believers and their children. This promise you have not only signified and sealed by holy baptism, but daily prove it by perfecting your praise through the mouths of children. You also continue to establish your saints in this faith throughout their lives. “For,” as you have told us, “the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” So give us, we pray, the grace to inwardly digest the food you have given us and to bring forth works of service and gratitude in this world. All of this we ask in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying: “Our Father...”

### *Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we, your unworthy servants, do give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for your inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech you, give us that due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be sincerely thankful: and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

### *Concluding Prayer*

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have given us grace to offer our common prayers with one heart. You have promised to grant the requests of just two or three who are gathered together in Jesus' name. Fulfill now the desires of our hearts and the petitions of our mouths, as is most beneficial for us, your servants. And grant us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with the Father and Holy Spirit is eternally praised. Amen.

## **Prayers for Special Services**

### *Christmas*

Merciful Father, you so loved the world that you gave your only begotten Son. He who was rich for ourselves became poor, the eternal Word made flesh, a great Light shining in the darkness. Only because of your Word and Spirit have we seen that Light and been drawn into its brightness. Give us the grace humbly and joyfully to receive your Son even as the shepherds and princes who welcomed him, and to look no further for our redemption than to this child lying in a manger. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

### *Good Friday*

Our Father, who so loved the world that you gave your only-begotten Son, we acknowledge and marvel at your mercy. Even while we were enemies, you reconciled us; even while we were strangers, you made us co-heirs with Christ of all eternal blessings; even while we stood condemned, you redeemed us; even while we were imprisoned, you delivered us from the tyranny of sin, death, and the devil. On this solemn occasion, we loathe our miserable estate and celebrate your marvelous grace. Beneath the cross of Christ, we come to know that ours is the guilt, but yours the forgiveness; ours the condemnation, but yours the gift of justification; ours the bondage, yet yours the freedom of adoption and new obedience. Even the faith with which we confess our dear Savior's sacrifice was won for us by his death. Therefore, we cry out to you in sorrow for our sins and in thanksgiving for your gift. Give us the grace, we pray, to receive again this word of the cross which alone can refresh us on our pilgrim way, and send us out again into the world as witnesses to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.

### *Easter*

Holy Father, giver of all perfect gifts, we join the heavenly choir to herald the news that you have defeated the powers of sin, death, and condemnation by the victory of Jesus Christ your Son over the grave. We confess that the circumstances of this present age often rise up to testify against the promise that you have declared in your Word. Nevertheless, we bring the experience of our hearts under your judgment: You have raised Jesus Christ from the dead as the first fruits of the whole harvest at the last day. As in his resurrection you have brought the new creation into this passing evil age, raise us up and seat us with Christ—in this life, through faith, and in the next, beholding with our own eyes the resurrection of our bodies in life everlasting. All of this we pray, with joy and thanksgiving, in Christ's name. Amen.

### *Ascension*

Almighty God, although we could not ascend to your holy place, you have descended to save us and after your Son won our redemption he ascended to the seat of all authority and dominion. Even now, he intercedes for us at your right hand, ruling over all of his enemies, and ours, for our salvation and the glory of your holy name. Help us to receive and to make known throughout the world this good news that Christ Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And fill our hearts with longing expectation for his return in power and glory to restore all things. In the name of Christ our King. Amen.

### *Pentecost*

Father in Heaven, we give you thanks especially on this day for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Just as you sent your Son to redeem us, you sent your Spirit to renew us after his image, and to begin even now the new creation that awaits us fully and finally at the last day. Forgive us for grieving the Spirit, forgetting the great work that he performed at Pentecost and continues to perform as he makes your Word effectual for the justification and sanctification of sinners. We give you praise for sending your Spirit of adoption into our hearts, so that we may call you "Father"; for his ministry of testifying to Christ, convicting the world of sin and judgment, and opening our hearts to receive the gospel of your Son. Even now, through the gospel, he is gathering from all nations a church to declare your goodness. May we be filled again with marvelous wonder at this saving operation of the Holy Spirit, who, together with you and the Son, is worshiped and glorified, one God, world without end. Amen.

### *Day of Prayer*

O God, of infinite wisdom, power and goodness, we acknowledge you as the Creator of all things in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. We adore you for the grandeur and beauty of all your works. We adore your lovingkindness, in having made all things subservient to the needs and happiness of your children. What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? You have given him dominion over the works of your hands—the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea. You have given to us for food every moving thing that lives, and every herb yielding seed, and every fruit tree yielding fruit, after its kind. You have crowned us with mercy and loving-kindness.

We adore you for your gracious promise of old, that while the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. You visit the earth and bless it. You send the springs into the valleys which run among the hills. You cause the grass to grow for all cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth. You make the furrows of the field soft with showers; you bless the springing thereof. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy. You crown the year with your goodness; your clouds drop fatness; they drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. O Lord, how manifold are your works; in wisdom you have made them all.

We would adore you, O God, not only in the riches of your bounty and compassion, but in your righteous judgments. You open your hand, and we are filled with good; you hide your face, and we are troubled. But we know, O God, that in your wrath you remember mercy; and we acknowledge your long-suffering and your loving-kindness. Give us grace to believe and feel, that whom the Lord loves he chastens; and make us ever ready to offer unto you, in spirit and in truth, the prayer of the holy prophet: Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet we will rejoice in the Lord, we will joy in the God of our salvation.

For ourselves and our country, O gracious God, we thank you, that notwithstanding our manifold transgressions of your holy laws, you have so constantly done good to us; that you have given us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. These have been among the witnesses of your great goodness, for they assure us that you are the living God. Teach us to believe with a strong faith, that you are Lord of the seasons; that you cause the earth to bring forth, and it obeys you. Accept our thanksgivings for all your blessings; fill our hearts with humility and love, with gratitude and trust; continue your loving-kindness to us, and assist us to show forth the fruits of grace, in a sincere obedience to his will, through whom all blessings are given, your Son our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### *National Day of Thanksgiving*

Our Sovereign God, who created all things for your pleasure and who gives to all life, breath, and every good thing, we praise you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life. For rain and sunshine, in abundance and in lack, we acknowledge that our times are in your hands. You supply all of your creatures with your good gifts: the just and the unjust alike. Nevertheless, we especially give you praise for the surpassing greatness of your saving grace that you have shown to us in Christ Jesus our Savior. For our election in him before the foundation of the world; for our redemption by him in his life, death, and resurrection; for our effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and all of the blessings of our union with him, we give you our heartfelt thanks. And we look with great anticipation toward that day when you will raise us to life everlasting, glorified and confirmed in righteousness, so that we may sing your praises without the defilement of our present weaknesses, distractions, and sins. As you have served us with these gifts, we ask that you would give us grateful hearts so that through us you may serve our neighbors. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, who taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father...."

### *New Year's Eve*

Almighty and most gracious God, as we close the year with this day, we thank you for all your tender mercies bestowed upon us during the whole course of our lives, and especially during this past year. We therefore offer unto you the sacrifice of our praises, and we acknowledge, that through your great goodness and help, we are enabled to pass our years in peace, although we have offended you in innumerable ways. O merciful God, pardon all who sincerely repent of their sins. Grant that, while our years are passing away, we may work out our salvation with fear and trembling in the time you give to us. Enable us to press onward always towards the end of our heavenly calling, even that blessed eternity, which Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, has prepared for us. Amen.

### *New Year's Day*

Eternal and Almighty God, we humble ourselves in your presence to dedicate to you the beginning of this year, by adoration, prayer and praise. We come before your Supreme Majesty, and acknowledge, with gratitude, the manifold blessings which you have freely bestowed upon us, through the whole course of our lives. We thank you, that having preserved us to the present time, you have permitted us to enter upon a new year. You have not ceased, O most gracious God, to give to us the abundance of your lovingkindness. But you have especially sustained us with every spiritual blessing by keeping in the midst of us the light of your Gospel. You have invited us to repentance, through your mighty help, through your great goodness, and through the warnings of your Word and Spirit; and have mercifully granted unto all of us favorable opportunities to grow in grace. Despite our unworthiness, for the love of Jesus Christ, take not away from us your protection and favor.

Moved by your grace, we devote ourselves to you at the beginning of this year, desiring to employ it better than we have done the years that are past. And since this day also warns us that our years pass away like a flood, like a dream, give us grace that we may seriously number our days that we may have a heart of wisdom; that we may discern the vanity of this life; and that we may aspire to that better life, when days, and months, and years, shall be counted no more forever. While we continue in the flesh, may we more and more live not according to its desires, but according to your will. And grant, O God, that when our years shall come to an end, and the day of our death arrives, we may depart in your peace that passes all understanding and in the sure hope of life everlasting. Favorably hear us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Prayers for Personal and Family Use**

### *Morning Prayer*

Merciful God, thank you for keeping watch over us last night. As we face a new day, we ask that you would fix our eyes on Christ as our only hope and your glory as our only aim. You alone are worthy of this glory because you are the very author of our life, the creator and sustainer of all that exists. The heavens declare your wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness to all you have made. Yet our highest praise is reserved for the great deeds of redemption that you have worked for us poor sinners. Bound in our sin, suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, by nature children of wrath even as the rest, we have nevertheless heard the good news that you have delivered us from slavery, freed us from the condemnation of your just law, and brought us new life from above. Even as we face our ordinary tasks this day, recall to our hearts the extraordinary comfort

of your promise. Grant also, we pray, the strength of your Spirit to live out the callings you have given us and to all people as creatures made in your image. Make us fit vessels for your work in this world this day—a sacrifice of thanksgiving well-pleasing in your sight and a light that shines before our neighbors. All of this we ask in the name of your Son, who taught us to pray, “Our Father...”

#### *Evening Prayer*

Merciful God, we come to you now at the end of this day in the name of our Savior, that Light shining in the darkness, dispelling the night of our sins and the blindness of our hearts. Lord of our labor, now be Lord of our rest. Free us of doubts, anxieties, and temptations and continue to work your sanctifying grace in us even as we sleep. Remembering that we are not only frail but sinful, we ask you to defend us from all dangers, but especially from the assaults of the world and the devil as also from the disease of our own hearts. We confess that we have not spent this day without grievously sinning against you, to whom all hearts are open and no wickedness is hidden. Yet, clothed in the righteousness of your dear Son, we invoke your name and claim your salvation. Give us repentant and believing hearts that delight in following your ways. We ask also that you would be with those who are afflicted with grief, pain, temptation, doubts, and especially for [*specific requests*]. Together with them preserve us all in one communion and body until we enter at last your everlasting rest. In the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.

#### *Prayer Before Meals*

The eyes of all wait for you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. You attend to our every need through the creatures you have made, especially our neighbors whose vocations serve to bring these provisions to our table and we ask a special blessing for those who have prepared it for us. If not even a sparrow can fall from the sky or a hair fall from our head apart from your fatherly care and wisdom, we cannot fail to look to you alone for security in this life as also in the life to come. So give us grateful hearts as we pray, saying, “Our Father...”

#### *Prayer After Meals*

We praise you, Lord, for our creation, our preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all else we praise you for your greatest gift: Your Son Jesus Christ, who was born, lived, died, and rose again from the dead for us and for our salvation. As he intercedes for us at your right hand even now, we enter your sanctuary boldly to intercede on behalf of [*specific requests*]. Praise the LORD! O give thanks to his name, for he is good; for his loving kindness lasts forever. Amen.

#### *Prayer for the Sick/Spiritually Distressed*

Eternal God, the only Creator, Preserver, Judge and Savior of the world, you alone hold the powers of life and death. Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he had conquered death and hell, announced, “I was dead, but I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades in my hand.” Yet often our circumstances seem to us to testify against your promise. What we see does not appear to agree with what we have heard. Yet, even at the cross, where you seemed so absent and your Son so cruelly and unjustly abandoned by you, we have been taught that he was thereby fulfilling your purposes to redeem us from the power of darkness. We confess that our hearts are so bound to the realities that we see with our eyes in the moment that we easily forget

the greater realities that we hear with our ears through your word.

Teach us through these trials to number our days, recognizing that we are but fading flowers in this age, but flourishing oaks in the age to come. We know that these struggles are not tokens of your wrath, but are part of your plan to save us, sanctify us, and glorify yourself. While we may fear the circumstances, we no longer fear the condemnation of the law, the sting of death, or the sharp arrows of Satan. For we know that your Son gained victory for us by his cross and resurrection. We ask that you would, even through these tests, deepen our confidence to appear before you clothed not in the filthy rags of our own works, but in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ our Savior. Continue to look upon us in him, for we pray in his name, who taught us to pray, "Our Father..."

#### *Prayer Before Communion*

Eternal and Almighty Father, we commemorate today the death of your Son in the celebration of the holy Supper. He ordained it as a pledge of his love to us and for our remembrance of his sufferings that have ransomed us from our sins. Since we are miserable sinners who are unworthy to be partakers of your holy sacraments, we pray you will favorably look upon us. Sanctify us, O Lord, by your Holy Spirit, that we may serve you acceptably in showing forth with faith and joy the death of our Savior, and that we may glorify you by holy lives; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### *Prayer after Communion*

Heavenly Father, we praise you that in your abundant mercy, you delivered up Jesus to the death of the cross. We thank you that today we experienced the comfort of commemorating that death, in the holy Supper. We extol you for a gift so precious. We pray that you would cause our souls to benefit from the sufferings of our Redeemer, signified and sealed in communion: the pardon of our offences, the graces of your Spirit, the comfort of your love, the light of your peace, and, after this life, the glory of your kingdom. Hear us in the name and for the sake of our merciful Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Prayers for Ecclesiastical Assemblies**

#### *Opening Prayer for Ecclesiastical Assemblies*

Heavenly Father, eternal and merciful God, it has pleased you according to your infinite wisdom to gather a church to yourself out of the nations of all the earth, and to govern it through weak servants. Called by you to watch over your flock purchased by your Son's precious blood, we invoke your name now for this solemn assembly, gathered here according to the example of the apostolic churches. Faced with many weighty issues concerning the care of your people, we ask that you would make us truly mindful of your purposes for your church. Draw our minds and hearts away from vanity and pride, discord and pettiness, and do not let these sins which still cling to us distract us from advancing your great cause in this world. Renew us, we pray, in the joyful commission of bringing your good news to the ends of the earth, making us more faithful stewards of the mysteries and ambassadors of reconciliation. We ask that your Spirit would be present among us to guide us into all truth, bringing us to agreement on the matters before us. May Scripture reign in our hearts, just as the Living Word reigns over your church, for we

acknowledge only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. All of this we ask because Christ is our Mediator and Advocate, who with you and the Holy Spirit, the only God, deserves eternal praise and glory. Amen.

*Closing Prayer for Ecclesiastical Assemblies*

Lord God, we give you heartfelt thanks for gathering a church in our land and for making us ambassadors and guardians of such a kingdom. As those who are receiving rather than building your kingdom, make us ever mindful that it is not our labors but your electing, redeeming, justifying and sanctifying grace alone that renders your church indestructible and victorious against all adversaries. We give you praise for your providence in preserving liberty in this land for the free proclamation of the Gospel and ask that you would, by your Holy Spirit, fill us with joy to make diligent use of such opportunity. Your Spirit, who leads your church into all truth, has been present in our assembly, giving us wisdom in our deliberations. We pray that he would also give us the strength to bless the efforts that we purpose to put forth and finish the work that he has begun. Continue to draw the remnant of the nations to your heavenly Jerusalem that is coming down out of heaven and maintain the peace and purity of your church, we ask. Strengthen us with a mighty zeal for the ministry of word and sacrament, as well as for the care of your flock in body and soul. As you hold Christ Jesus ever above and before us as the Mediator for sinners, may our churches faithfully proclaim this good news to those who have never heard it. Give strength, humility, and boldness to your under-shepherds, we pray: to ministers, elders, and deacons. We also ask that you would give prudence to our civil rulers, so that they may act with justice and wise restraint. As you have promised to be present with us even to the end of the age, we ask you to enlighten, guide, awaken, convict and console us by your Word and Spirit. Hear us, dear Father, through your Son, who with you and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, is worthy of eternal praise and glory. Amen.

*Opening Prayer for the Meetings of Deacons*

Merciful God and Father, you have not only declared that we will always have the poor with us, but have also commanded us to bear their burdens with them. For this reason, you have established the office of deacon. We ask that you would give us wisdom to faithfully discharge the duties of our office in this place. We acknowledge that in your kingdom each member supplies what is lacking in the other, so that your name may be exalted and your people drawn together with ever-stronger cords of love and affection. And since we do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from your mouth, help us to assist our brothers and sisters in such a way that they may look to these offerings and services as tokens of your covenant faithfulness. May they together with us render you everlasting thanks in this age until that age when our trials will yield to that everlasting rest you have prepared for us from the foundation of the world. In the name of Christ our Savior we ask this. Amen.



## CECCA Report to Synod Nyack, New York, June 11-15, 2012

Esteemed brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,

It is once again our privilege, as Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), to report to you on the activities of your committee since our report to Synod London, 2010. 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;
  - c. significant factors in the two federations’ history, theology, ecclesiology and stands on ethical issues.
  - d. church order and polity;
  - e. liturgy and liturgical forms;
  - f. preaching, sacraments and discipline;
  - g. theological education for ministers.
  - h. Exchange of Minutes (Acts) of the broadest assemblies.
  - i. Exchange of denominational Church Directories (Yearbooks).
  - j. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Confessional Standards.
  - k. Exchange of the most recently published edition of the (Book or Manual of) Church Order.
  - l. Exchange of the most recently denominationally published editions of Psalters/Hymnals.
  - m. 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:

- a. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option).
- b. Intercommunion, including ready reception of each other’s members at the Lord’s Supper
  - but not excluding suitable inquiries upon requested transfer of membership – as regulated by each consistory (session).

- c. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
- d. Agreement to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of one another.
- e. Joint action in areas of common responsibility.
- f. Agreement that, as changes in polity, doctrine or practice are instituted, the churches will inform each other – understanding that the adoption of substantial changes may jeopardize the established ecumenical relationship.

Since our report to Synod London, CECCA has met eight times: seven times by way of conference call meetings and one face-to-face meeting. This report will first focus on churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Fellowship (phase 2). Second, it will focus on churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Contact (phase one). Third, it will focus on churches with whom we are corresponding with a view to entering into Ecumenical Contact (phase one). Fourth, it will focus on various churches with whom we are in contact with a view to entering into Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship. Fifth, it will highlight a brief note about the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) to be held in 2017. Sixth, it will 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)**

We received a letter from the Stated Clerk of the RCNZ inviting us to send a delegate to attend their synod in Bucklands Beach from September 30-3, 2011. CECCA accepted this invitation and delegated Rev. Bill Boekestein to represent the URCNA. Rev. Boekestein's report of his visit to the RCNZ Synod was received and discussed by CECCA (**See Appendix 1**). His speech to this synod is attached (**See Appendix 2**).

#### II. Churches with whom we are in Ecumenical Contact

##### **A. The Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)**

We received a letter from the Administrative Bureau of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) inviting us to attend their Synod in Potchefstroom which met from January 4-14, 2012. CECCA delegated Rev. Dick Moes to this synod. Rev. Moes' report of his visit to GKSA Synod was received and discussed. CECCA agreed with the recommendation that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the GKSA at this time. (**See Appendix 3**). Rev. Moes' speech to the GKSA Synod is attached (**See Appendix 4**).

##### **B. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv)**

CECCA received an invitation from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv) to send a delegate to attend their Synod in Hardewijk in 2011 during the Foreign Delegates Week which

took place from March 28 – April 1, 2011. CECCA delegated Rev. Ray Sikkema to attend this Synod. The report of his visit was discussed. CECCA agreed with his suggestion that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the GKN(v) at this time (**See Appendix 5**). Rev. Sikkema's speech held at the Synod is attached (**See Appendix 6**).

### **C. The United Reformed Churches in Congo (URCC)**

CECCA received an invitation from the United Reformed Churches in Congo (URCC) to send a delegate to attend their Synod scheduled to meet July 23-28, 2012 in Kananga, DRC. CECCA delegated Rev. Ray Sikkema to attend this Synod. In the light of the fact that our relationship with the URCC still needs time to mature, CECCA recommends that we remain in phase one of Ecumenical Contact with the URCC at this time.

### **D. The Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT)**

CECCA received an invitation from the Calvinist Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRC-NTT) to attend their Synod which met from July 13-15, 2011. Due to the late notice of the invitation we are unable send a delegate. We did, however, wish them the Lord's blessing over their labors by way of letter. In this letter we also wrote:

It has been brought to our attention that Rev. Souman and Rev. Pol [two Canadian Reformed ministers] were instrumental in bringing about reconciliation and cooperation between the GGRI and the GGRC who had gone separate ways some eight years ago. While we realize that this needs to be ratified at your synod, we now already thank the Lord for the progress that has been made so far. If the Lord of the church has given us the gospel of reconciliation, we need to embody this gospel as church to a world that is in dire need of reconciliation. May the Lord bring this great work He has begun in our lives to completion!

CECCA thankfully notes that the reconciliation was ratified by the synod of the GGRC-NTT).

CECCA decided to recommend to Synod that, since our relationship with the GGRC-NTT still needs to mature and no visit has yet been made to them, that we remain in phase one of Ecumenical Contact with the GGRC-NTT at this time.

### **III. Churches with whom we are corresponding with a view to Ecumenical Contact**

Since Synod London, 2010, we are corresponding with the following churches with a view to entering into an Ecumenical Contact (Phase one) relationship: the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCSC) and the Free Protestant Church in Argentina.

## 1. The Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCSC)

In our report to Synod London, 2010, we recommended to Synod that we receive further clarity about the relationship between the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCSC) before we recommend entering into phase one of Ecumenical Contact with the FCSC. Since Synod London, using documentation provided by the Canadian Reformed Churches, CECCA has made the following timeline of the relationship between the FCS and the FCSC:

- Many of the ministers of the FCSC who have seceded were affiliated with the Free Church Defence Association which was concerned about various trends in the FCS
- The secession centers on dissatisfaction with the way in which the accusation of immorality against Donald McLeod was handled.
- Up until 1999 there were persistent efforts to have this matter dealt with once again after previous General Assemblies had tried to bring closure on the matter.
- In January, 2000, this came to a head when some ministers refused to accept the decisions of previous assemblies as settled and binding.
- They were accused of defying the Presbyterian courts, denying their ordination vows in which they promised to submit to the government and discipline of the church.
- Those who seceded claim that this was an abuse of power on the part of the Commission of the Assembly called to deal with the issue, i.e. the Form of Process states that all processes against any minister are to begin before his Presbytery (Chapter VII, paragraph 1).
- Those who were disciplined by the Commission of the Assembly and not the Presbytery, however, made no effort to appeal this action to the forthcoming General Assembly, but ended the process by seceding.
- Since those who seceded (FCSC) claim to be the lawful continuation of the FCS, they initiate court action against the FCS concerning name or assets of the FCS.
- On March 25, 2005, a court over which Lady Paton presided decided that the FCSC had “not departed from any fundamental tenet of the Free Church of Scotland” and that “from the point of view of adherence to fundamental beliefs and faiths [the FCSC] have not forfeited any entitlement to the assets and property held in trust for the Free Church of Scotland.” This court also decided that those who stood opposed to the decisions of the FCS in the years leading up to the 2000 schism were allowed to go on with their dissent, but should not have gone on with continued protest.
- In October, 2005, the FCSC applied for membership in the ICRC. Because of the ongoing court action of the FCSC against the FCS this application was turned down. It urged the FCSC to drop its action in the civil courts and urged the FCS and the FCSC to seek biblical ways of reconciliation.
- On March 7, 2006, the FCSC unilaterally withdrew legal action against the FCS and made proposals for an equitable settlement of their dispute.
- On March 23, 2006, the FCS responded with what is known as the ‘One Church Solution.’ This would require all who had left the FCS to return and show repentance for their divisive actions. The FCS, however, also left a “Two Church Solution” open. This meant that the FCSC would be recognized as a separate denomination, but all buildings

would be returned to the FCS and frozen bank accounts released. Moreover, further legal processes related to the dispute would be worked out between the two churches.

- On March 27, the FCSC responds with astonishment and disappointment that their offered negotiated settlement had apparently been ignored by the FCS.
- In December 2008, the FCS declares that the suspensions of suspended ministers a terminated on the grounds that the FCSC is a denomination distinct from and separate from the FCS. Moreover, it declares that the ministers whose suspensions have been lifted are no longer subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts of the FSC. It furthermore declares that these actions are a sincere overture of peace and reconciliation towards the FCSC. In addition, it directs the Deacons' Court to initiate and engage in discussions with the FCSC over unresolved issues of property, funds church records or any other assts with a view to reaching solutions acceptable to both sides, thereby avoiding having to settle matters by legal action.
- In October, 2009, the FCSC was accepted as a member of the ICRC.

Based on the information in the above timeline and the fact that the FCSC holds to the Westminster Standards and Presbyterian Church Polity, CECCA recommends that the URCNA enter into phase one of Ecumenical Contact with the Free Church of Scotland Continuing.

CECCA received an invitation to send a delegate to the General Assembly of the FCSC which met from May 23-26, 2011. Because of the short notice of the invitation, no delegate was sent. However, a letter extending the brothers the Lord's blessing on their work was sent.

## **2. The Free Protestant Church in Argentina (FPCA)**

In January 2011, CECCA received a letter from Rev. José Podesta on behalf of the Argentina Mission of the Free Protestant Church in Argentina in which he asked us to look into the possibility of beginning fraternal relations and working together. He referred us to Rev. [Stephen Larson](#) of the OPC for a reference. When we followed up his advice, Rev. Larson wholeheartedly commended Rev. Podesta to us. Upon our request, Rev. Podesta sent us the required information about his church federation ([Appendix 7](#)).

## **IV. Various churches with whom we are in contact with a view to entering into Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship**

From time to time, we get requests from pastors of churches who would like to enter into Ecumenical Contact and Ecumenical Fellowship with us. Recently, we have received two such requests from pastors in Kenya. We responded to these requests by asking whether they are independent or federated churches. We also asked these brothers to send us independent references that might be recognized by us. It appears that they are ministers of independent churches. Moreover, up until now, they have not provided us with any references that might be recognized by us. We ask Synod to clarify CECCA's mandate in terms of how we are to interact with these and other such foreign, independent congregations. We do so with the concern that these requests be handled carefully and thoroughly.

From time to time, we also get requests from churches who would like us to facilitate humanitarian/diaconal aid to their churches or countries. We ask Synod to clarify CECCA's mandate in terms of how we are to deal with such requests.

## **V. The International Conference of Reformed Churches**

In our report to Synod London, 2010, CECCA recommended that Synod inform the ICRC that the URCNA is willing to host the 2017 meeting of the ICRC. This has been done. In the meantime, three churches in the Niagara Peninsula have expressed interest in acting as a host church for this ICRC meeting in 2017.

## **VI. Recommendations**

CECCA recommends to Synod Nyack:

1. that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA);
2. that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv);
3. that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC);
4. that the URCNA remain in Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the Calvinistic Reformed Church in Indonesia (GGRT-NTT);
5. that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCSC);
6. that the URCNA enter into Ecumenical Contact (phase one) with the Free Protestant Church in Argentina (FPCA);
7. that Synod clarify CECCA's mandate in terms of how we are to interact with foreign, independent congregations (who may or may not supply us with references);
8. that Synod clarify CECCA's mandate in terms of how we are to respond to requests from foreign churches seeking humanitarian/diaconal aid for their churches and/or countries;
9. that Synod welcome the fraternal delegates present at Synod, extending to them the opportunity to address Synod on behalf of the sending church; that Synod welcome the fraternal observers who may be present, extending to them the opportunity to greet Synod on behalf of the sending church;
10. that Synod grant the privilege of the floor to the following members of CECCA to answer Synod's questions regarding this report: Rev. Ray Sikkema, chairman and Rev. Dick Moes, secretary.

Humbly submitted,

Rev. Ancel Merwin, member  
Rev. Bill Boekestein, member  
Rev. Jason Tuinstra, member  
Rev. Paul Ipema, member  
Br. Huibert Den Boer, member  
Rev. Nick Smith, member  
Rev. Ray Sikkema, chairman  
Rev. Dick Moes, secretary.

## Appendix 1

### **Twenty-seventh Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand September 3-9, 2011 Bucklands Beach, New Zealand**

Synod Bucklands Beach was relocated from Christchurch due to the devastating earthquakes that have affected New Zealand's South Island throughout this year. The change of location allowed Bucklands Beach its first opportunity to host a Synod since its founding in 1953.

Chairman pro-tem Rev. Dirk van Garderen read from John 15:1-14, reminding the delegates of the need to abide in God's love. Rev. van Garderen also gave a rousing reminiscence of five ministers who passed away during the time between the last Synod and the present. The Synod selected for its officers Rev. B. Hoyt (chairman), Rev. P. Kloosterman (vice chairman), P. VanderWel (first clerk), Rev. M. Willemse (second clerk). That both chairmen of the Synod are American is probably coincidental.

After some discussion, Synod adopted a weighty agenda consisting of 22 overtures, 22 reports, several communications and two appeals. Pre-advice committees were formed to consider the hymn selections for the proposed new denominational hymnal, the adoption of revised forms and confessions, questions relating to Bible translations for use in the churches, and regarding an appeal case.

The Moderator acknowledged that since Synod Hastings the Reformed Church of Mangere has closed and several ministers have taken calls outside of the federation. On the other hand several new ministers have come into the federation, many from the U.S.

Although an overture which called for Synod to "set aside extended time or times during the meeting to reflect on [the RCNZ's] current position as a denomination and then pray together" was defeated, the Synod was characterized by much prayer, both scheduled and spontaneous. It was apparent that much thought also went into several of the devotionals which opened each session.

Overall, the spirit of unity was palpable among those present at this Synod. Perhaps one of the factors contributing to this unity is an annual Ministers and Wives' Conference attended by all the Pastors and wives in the denomination. Synod mandated the Wellington Presbytery to organize this conference during the ensuing inter-synodical period.

What follows is a summary of some of the significant actions taken by Synod.

Much time was devoted to ecumenical relations. With respect to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKN-Lib) it was noted that there had been concerns raised about certain developments in doctrine and practice by other sister churches. It was agreed to continue to monitor these developments and communicate concerns. The RCNZ agreed to continue their sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) but to express their deep concern to the GKSA concerning its decision to allow women to be ordained as deacons, and to warn that this could negatively affect their sister-church relationship. It was further decided to establish a new category of ecumenical relations in addition to the existing sister-church relationship called "Ecclesiastical Fellowship". It was agreed to discontinue the sister-church relationship with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia (CRCA) and instead take steps to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod expressed appreciation to the United

Reformed Churches of North America for entering into full Ecumenical Relations with us. It was decided to send a delegate to our next synod.

Much discussion was also devoted to matters pertaining to corporate worship. In response to the question, “Who may preach?” it was agreed to maintain the norm that only ministers, students and emeritus ministers be permitted to preach in RCNZ churches. It was further declared that this decision is not in conflict with a prior exception allowed to the preaching of ruling elders. Elders who are called upon to preach typically draw their sermons from either the RCNZ-CRCA publication "Word of Salvation" or "the Seed" website (<http://theseed.info/>). The RCNZ website also has a number of sermons written by RCNZ ministers among its resources which can be drawn upon. Elders may write their own sermons with the approval of their session and, in the first instance, under the guidance of the local pastor or possibly a neighboring pastor, before they are preached. The sermons of students are approved for use in the pulpit by their supervising professor or the supervising pastor if any training takes place during an internship.

The RCNZ is in the process of completing a new Psalter Hymnal to be titled “Sing to the Lord.” The new book is approved for provisional use with a view to final adoption to be considered at synod 2020. Presbyteries continue to be authorized to approve additional songs. (Sessions concerned about the apparent discrepancy between Church Order Art 66<sup>12</sup> and current practice were encouraged to overture the next Synod.) It was decided not to include the liturgical forms in the new hymnal but instead to produce a supplementary book of the new provisionally approved forms. Synod decided to take no action with respect to Dovedale’s overture to affirm the need for the biblical Psalms to remain formative in the life of the church and that they not be overshadowed by the singing of hymns.

An overture that the 2011 revision of the New International Version be explicitly not approved for pulpit use was upheld. The grounds of this overture are to be included in the Acts of Synod as a potential teaching aid for the churches. It was also agreed to appoint a study committee to evaluate the suitability of the English Standard Version and New King James Version.

By far the most controversial and emotional matter of Synod was an appeal by a session against a presbytery regarding the discipline case of members who had resigned from the church. Synod decided to uphold the appeal recognizing, however “the pastoral realities that continue to exist within the congregation, the Presbytery, with those involved in the disciplinary cases, and with those involved in the original offending.”

Synod has appointed a pastoral committee to visit affected parties to assist them by providing mediation and, by the grace of God, effecting reconciliation. The moderator expressed thanks that, having sought the Lord’s will, a clear decision was reached. He prayed that the Lord would grant humility and healing. Lingering questions regarding the discipline of those who resign were committed to the Church Order Committee.

A Sexual Abuse Study Committee, which had prepared a report substantially related to the above appeal, was reappointed to revise and expand the report guidelines in light of an overture and other feedback received.

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<sup>12</sup> Article 66 reads: “In the worship services of the church only the 150 psalms and the collection of hymns for church use, approved and adopted by synod, shall be sung. However, while the singing of psalms in divine worship is a requirement, the use of the approved hymns is left to the freedom of the churches.”

The RCNZ coordinates its foreign-field mission activity by way of an Overseas Mission Board (OMB) which is funded by quotas fulfilled by the churches. In response to an overture it was agreed to support medium-term mission work in Mbale, Uganda at a cost of approximately \$40,000 per year. Synod approved quotas for OMB for the next four years at \$100,000, \$211,400, \$221,400 and \$231,400 for the next four financial years. Rev. Peter Kloosterman pointed out that at the higher level the commitment would be \$2 per communicant member per week. Many acknowledged that the churches have been richly blessed and even despite the recession most members have a substantial discretionary.

Through the devotions, times of informal interaction and also in the debate on the floor, a wonderful brotherly spirit and sense of common purpose was deeply impressed upon all in attendance.

Based on my experience at Synod Bucklands Beach, I am personally grateful for Synod London's decision to enter Ecumenical Fellowship with this denomination.

Humbly Submitted,  
William Boekestein  
Fraternal delegate, on behalf of CECCA

## Appendix 2

### Fraternal Greetings to Synod Bucklands (RCNZ), September 2011

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,

It is my privilege to bring you greetings in the name of our risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America: “Grace to you and peace from God and the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:2).

Those brothers from your churches and from ours who have had the opportunity to interact closely with each other have spoken highly of this experience. I look forward to bringing back to our churches a similar report from this meeting.

We were delighted, at Synod London, to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (Phase Two) with the RCNZ.” (After adoption of this motion the assembly rose to sing the Doxology “in recognition of the significance of this moment in the life of the churches.”).

We share with you a desire to fulfill Christ’s mandate given in John 17 to seek and express unity of doctrine and practice within the body of Christ. We feel the need for this unity as we can sympathize with the difficulties of being a small federation. In fact, proportionate to the population of our respective countries, the URCNA is significantly smaller than the RCNZ.

By God’s grace we have experienced some growth over the past few years. Our last guest delegate in 2008 mentioned that we had about 90 churches across Canada and the United States with about 20,000 souls. Our most recent directory indicates an increase of approximately twenty percent in both number of churches and souls (23,505 souls; 112 churches).

We lament over the news that since our last visit to your Synod one of your churches has closed but are encouraged to note that many vacancies have been filled. We would continue to encourage you to avail yourselves as needed of the use of the seminaries from which many of our men have received training. There also continue to be a number of eligible URCNA ministers and candidates whom your churches are encouraged to consider.

Our churches were blessed to receive greetings from Rev. Kloosterman at Synod London (2010). We were grateful to hear Rev. Kloosterman’s encouragement to pursue greater cooperation in mission efforts and to think carefully in our pursuit of federational identity and security. I trust this advice from a more seasoned reformed federation will not go unheeded. As a member of the committee considering the need for a federational missions coordinator I particularly appreciated Rev. Kloosterman’s comments regarding cooperation in missions.

Rev. Kloosterman has noted that there exists “an important opportunity for the RCNZ to encourage the [URCNA] to work through [their struggle for unity] both inwardly, not striving for uniformity but unity, and also externally in furthering their relationships with other denominations.” We certainly welcome such encouragement and trust that we will be helped by it. We are blessed to see your churches in the light of Paul’s words in Philippians 3:17 where he

says, “Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” In the RCNZ the URCNA has a pattern of careful, biblical piety. For that example we praise God.

Since our churches have recently entered into closer relations with each other we have the opportunity to “exercise mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity,” as our guidelines for ecumenicity put it. That being the case I offer some thoughts regarding a few overtures and reports on your agenda.

Regarding the use of the 2011 NIV, I can say that many of our congregations share your concern with this newest revision and I suspect that your anticipated decision regarding its use in your congregations will be of help to us. We share the conviction, as our Belgic Confession says, that “from a special care which [God] has for us and our salvation, [He] commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing...Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures” (Art. 3). It follows that the church of Christ should be careful to only utilize Bible translations that faithfully honor God’s special revelation. Many of us are convinced that the 2011 NIV no longer fits that description.

The report on dealing with child sexual abuse certainly broaches a disturbing topic but we are thankful for the committee’s work in this area and anticipate this report being of great value for churches in our own federation. It is increasingly becoming the case that lack of thought and policy regarding this moral blight equals culpability. We thank you for putting careful thought and policy before us for the sake of Christ’s little ones and for the honor of his name and church.

God bless you all for your hospitality and for the encouragement my wife and I have received during our stay in your midst.

I leave you with Paul’s benediction to the Ephesians: “Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity. Amen” (6:23-24).

Humbly submitted  
Rev. William D. Boekestein  
Fraternal Delegate of the URCNA

Appendix (submitted in writing)

Esteemed Brothers and Fathers,

I cannot speak officially on behalf of the URCNA at this point, but I am certain that I express the sentiments of many of our congregations in encouraging you to no longer officially endorse the New International Version of the Bible following its 2011 revision.

I believe that such an action on your part will not only facilitate greater faithfulness in expository preaching but will also provide a pattern for the families in your congregations of holding Scripture in high regard. Such an action regarding the 2011 NIV will also, I believe, provide a sound pattern for many of our churches who are also wrestling through this matter.

Thank you all for your fellowship in the gospel. It will not be forgotten.

Rev. William Boekestein  
Covenant Reformed Church of Carbondale (URCNA)

## **Appendix 3**

### **The Fifty-First National Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), January 4-14, 2012 in Potchefstroom, South Africa**

The Fifty-First National Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), met in Potchefstroom from January 4 to 14, 2012. The GKSA has approximately 102,000 members within 390 local congregations served by 273 fulltime ministers of the Word. It is made up of a variety of language groups.

I left Vancouver on Monday, January 2 at 6:30 am and flew via Minneapolis and Atlanta to Johannesburg, arriving in Johannesburg on Tuesday afternoon at 5:30 pm. After a reasonable night's sleep, I joined all the delegates and other observers in the synod auditorium.

After the regular opening items, synod began tackling its 760 page agenda. From the matters synod dealt with, I will focus on the following four: ecumenicity matters, missional matters, doctrinal matters and liturgical matters. I will end with a conclusion and recommendation.

#### **I. The GKSA and Ecumenicity**

The GKSA practises ecumenical relations in three concentric circles. The broadest circle is called "ecumenical contact," the middle circle "ecumenical ties," and the innermost circle "ecumenical unity." The GKSA currently has ecumenical unity with the following churches: Reformed Churches in Botswana, United Reformed Churches in the Congo, Reformed Church in east Africa, Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKv), the Free Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Reformed Churches of New Zealand, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, Presbyterian Church in America, Christian Reformed Church in North America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Church in Japan, and the Presbyterian Church in Korea.

The GKSA considers the unity of the Reformed Churches as the most urgent and important ecumenical calling and mission. They consider the purpose of ecumenical conversation is to be the conveyance of the universal gospel by means of which all churches are called to obedience to the Word of God, and called as a united church community according to the doctrine. They therefore consider the ecumenical call as directed at the restoration and re-establishment of the unity of the church. In practising the ecumenical calling, the GKSA considers the focus not to be on a discourse or conversation of how the church communities can visibly demonstrate unity, but on the prophetic witness for the truth and against the lie, as well as on cooperation in as far as there is a mutual task that has to be taken care of. Regarding the latter, the GKSA cooperates in mission work with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (in Botswana), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (in Congo), the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (in Natal), the Presbyterian Church in America (London).

The deputies for ecumenicity proposed to offer ecumenical unity to the Presbyterian Church of Australia. This federation consists of about 500 congregations, 750 preaching points and 500 ministers. At the moment, it has 9 Afrikaans speaking ministers. Synod decided to offer this ecumenical unity.

Since the General Assembly of the PCA is investigating the possibility that women may serve as deacons, the studies conducted by the GKSA in this regard were handed over to the Stated Clerk of the PCA.

With regard to the Christian Reformed Church in North America, the deputies for ecumenicity reported the following to their Synod:

The Synod of the CRCNA made a decision in 2011 regarding the three Confessions that is of importance for the GKSA.

#### **1.2.2.1 The decision of the Synod of the CRCNA**

"That Synod 2011 adopt the revised translations of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort as presented (see Appendices, pp. 183-298) for use in the CRC."

#### **1.2.2.2 The grounds of the decision of the CRCNA**

The Synod accepted the following as grounds for the decision:

1. The revised translations not only preserve the best from our previous excellent translations but in many instances more closely reflect the meaning of the original documents.
2. These revised translations have now benefited from taking into account the many responses and suggestions from churches and individuals since the proposal before Synod 2010.
3. The sharing of a common confessional text among three Reformed denominations has the potential for positive ecumenical impact. In fact, the work on this common text has already placed the CRC in the position of encouraging confessional renewal in other denominations.
4. A common translation of the confessions will greatly increase cooperation and partnership between the CRC and RCA denominations.
5. This is consistent with the decision of Synod 2010 to create "a common text of the three forms of unity as important for increasing cooperation and partnership between the RCA and the CRC" (*Acts of Synod 2010*, p. 819).

#### **1.2.2.3 The approach followed with the translations of the confessions**

It is clear that a specific approach was followed in the translation of the confessions. The approach becomes evident from the pieces sent to the churches of the CRCNA before the Synod in 2011:

"Some divergences in previous translations had to do with gender usage for humanity and God. The task force adopted the following approach in these cases: in references to humankind, all references to *men* or other exclusive terms have been changed to *human* or to a similar gender-inclusive term. With regard to language about God, the task force sought to reduce the number of male pronouns for God when it could be done with

felicity but did not attempt to eliminate them altogether. Several principles guided this process. On the one hand, excessive repetition of the male pronoun for *God* was avoided. On the other hand, excessive repetition of the word *God* as a substitute for the pronoun *him* was also avoided. In addition, when the elimination of a male pronoun for *God* would obscure the theological point of the passage, the pronoun was retained. These principles echo the protocol used by Faith Alive Christian Resources."

#### **1.2.2.4 Matters in the new translation that should be discussed with the CRCNA**

From a preliminary study of the CRCNA translations, it is clear that there are matters surrounding these translations that the GKSA should discuss with the CRCNA. This includes among other things the following:

1. **The fact that the Bible uses male prepositions for God freely, while these translations accepted by the CRCNA intentionally attempts to eliminate them.**
2. **Translations of parts where the chosen translation approach possibly causes the meaning of the original text to be lost (see for instance HC Q&A 26:  
*"That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son" (in other words not "his Son").***
3. **Translations of parts where the chosen approach possibly has the consequence that there is a move away from the personal character of the confessions, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. An example of this is the Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 98:  
*"Q. But may not images be permitted in churches in place of books for the unlearned?  
A. No, we should not try to be wiser than God. God wants the Christian community instructed by the living preaching of his Word-not by idols that cannot even talk."***

#### **1.2.2.5 The confessions and the relationship between the GKSA and the CRCNA**

From the third and the fourth grounds (see 1.2.2.2 above) it becomes clear that the CRCNA is aware of the fact that communal confessions play an important role in the ecumenical unity between churches. It is therefore incomprehensible that the CRCNA accepted the new translation, in which a very specific approach comes to the fore, without consulting with the GKSA, with whom the CRCNA has ecumenical unity.

### **1.3. Request from the CRCNA with regard to the Belhar document**

#### **1.3.1 Request after the CRCNA has already taken a directive decision regarding the Belhar document**

Rev Bruce Adama, a member of the CRCNA's Ecumenical Committee, informed dr. Breed that the GKSA is invited to the CRCNA's Synod in 2012 specifically so that "you all [the GKSA and Soutpansberg] can speak into our Belhar debate and help in

discernment." This request, as well as the discussions with dr. Peter Borgdorf in September 2009 (see the first report on the CRCNA point 1.2.3) followed after the CRCNA's Synod has already taken a directive decision, namely "[to] propose to Synod 2012 the adoption of the Belhar Confession as part of the standards of unity of the CRC (as a fourth confession) ..." Before taking this decision the CRCNA did not give any indication that they wanted to consult with the GKSA regarding the acceptance of an additional confession. During the CRCNA's Synod in 2009 the delegates from the GKSA indicated that the GKSA has not been consulted regarding the acceptance of a possible fourth confession, and that the acceptance of an additional confession affects the relationship between the two churches. The Synod nonetheless continued with the decision as described above.

**1.3.2** The sensibility of the GKSA delegates taking part in the discussions at the CRCNA Synod of 2012

Because the CRCNA will only make a final decision regarding the acceptance of the Belhar document as a fourth confession, it is crucial that the GKSA's delegates do give input during this Synod.

For decision

**1.4. Recommendations**

**1.4.1** That Synod takes note with disappointment of the two decision taken by the CRCNA since 2009 that directly affect the relationship with the GKSA *without consulting the GKSA beforehand*: (i) the decision regarding the Belhar document and (ii) the decision regarding the new translations of the Belgic Confession, the Doctrines of Dort and the Heidelberg Catechism.

**1.4.2** The unity between the GKSA and the CRCNA is constituted by the unity in confession as expressed in the three formularies of unity. When one church community takes decision regarding the bond of unity without consulting the other, this endangers the unity.

**1.4.3.** That the GKSA reacts positively to the invitation of the CRCNA to comment with regard to the Belhar document in a suitable fashion and that delegates of the GKSA will give input during discussions at the CRCNA Synod within the framework of Scripture and the three formularies of unity.

**1.4.4** That the Deputies Ecumenical Matters receive the assignment to thoroughly study the CRCNA's translations of the Confessions in order to ascertain whether the translation is really true to what the CRCNA and CKSA communally confess. This study should also determine whether the approach followed during the translation (see point 2.2.3) is Scripturally responsible. The results of this study should be included in the report on the CRCNA.

Synod adopted all the recommendations.

\* \* \*

With regard to the URCNA, the deputies for ecumenicity express their great sadness with the decision Synod London, 2010 took with regard to the GKSA. In their report, they also include the correspondence of the second clerk on behalf of the URCNA Synod. Because many delegates at this synod may not have been at Synod London and/or may not have consulted the Acts of this Synod, I include this letter here.

The Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America meeting in London, Ontario, Canada July 27-30, A.D. 2010

October 18, 2010  
Rev. Bradd L. Nymeyer, Second Clerk 227  
1st Avenue SE  
Sioux Center, Iowa 51250

To the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika,

Beloved Brothers in Christ,

We extend warm greetings to you in the name of our Triune God whom we serve with you as fellow believers.

During our Synod held at London, Ontario, Canada, July 26-30, 2010, it was our privilege and opportunity to meet your fraternal representatives, Dr Douw Breed and Rev Risimati Hobyane. Dr Breed addressed our assembly, and along with Rev Risimati Hobyane, had the opportunity to interact with the delegates of our assembly. We are filled with joy and thanksgiving that we could meet your fraternal representatives and spend profitable time in fellowship with them. Thank you for sending them to our assembly.

The officers of Synod were charged with conveying to you the decision of Synod London to not enter into Phase Two of Ecumenical Relations with the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. We do so with deep appreciation to you for being the first church outside of North America to reach out to our fledgling federation in the hope of establishing Ecumenical Fellowship with the United Reformed Churches in North America. Your effort to fellowship with us is truly a blessing and encouragement to us as we find our place among the churches of Reformed and Presbyterian background.

We commend you, brothers, for your accomplishment in uniting the various National Synods under one umbrella. In particular, we are thankful for the monumental decision that your Synod took to restrict the teaching and authoritative offices to males only. As you may know, our recent history with the Christian Reformed Church of North America has left lasting pain and tenderness in the mind and heart of the churches. We were especially grieved that in the CRCNA the ecclesiastical offices were opened to women, resulting from a faulty perspective on Scripture. We believe our concern regarding women deacons in the GKSA, and an overly positive evaluation of the CRCNA by the GKSA, prevented our synod from moving to Phase Two of Ecumenical Fellowship at this time. Our pain and the memory of our experience coming out of the CRCNA are still relatively fresh, and therefore make us very cautious.

We are mindful that our decision was both disturbing and hurtful to you. We can appreciate that hurt as brothers in the Lord. And yet, we ask for your patience and

understanding in this matter. From our perspective, the Synod's decision to not move to Phase Two at this time does not mean that we have rejected you. Nor does it mean that the opportunity to enter Phase Two has been lost. We wish to reaffirm our commitment to you in Phase One of Ecumenical Contact, and express our desire to move to Phase Two as soon as the matter of women deacons no longer stands as an obstacle.

Perhaps a word would also be helpful regarding our policy about "strict executive session." In particularly sensitive cases that could involve personal matters or appeals, our Church Order envisions the calling of this rare use of strict executive session. In such sessions only the synodical delegates may be present. Calling of such a session is not intended to reflect negatively on any person within our own federation or any fraternal representative from outside our federation. Please be assured that in no way did our dealing with a most sensitive appeal during our strict executive sessions reflect negatively towards the GKSA.

Thank you for receiving our conveyance of Synod's decision regarding Phase Two in the humble and loving spirit in which it was made. We look forward to fostering a more intimate relationship with the GKSA in the future. May the Lord of His church extend His gracious blessings to you.

On behalf of Synod London 2010,  
Rev Bradd L Nymeyer Second Clerk

In the light of our decision at Synod London, 2010, the deputies for ecumenicity recommended the following to their synod:

### *2.3 Recommendations*

2.3.1 That gratitude be shown for the testimony that the URCNA strives with great earnestness to be true to the Word of God and the confessions.

2.3.2 That it be noted with great sadness that the URCNA, after all the positive testimony about the GKSA that was presented to Synod and in the light of church's calling to ecumenical unity and cooperation, still decided not to have closer ecumenical ties with the GKSA.

2.3.3 That, in the light of the decision of the URCNA, it be accepted that there is no *ecumenical unity* between the GKSA and the URCNA, but only *ecumenical ties*.

2.3.4 That there will still be attempts to strengthen ties with the URCNA through contact and visits were possible.

Synod adopted all the recommendations.

## II. The GKSA and Missional Matters

The following overture was received from one the GKSA's regional synods regarding the adoption of a reversal strategy.

### 1. **Background:**

On the 13 September 2011, the church council of the Reformed church Frankfort discussed the decline of members in the Eastern- Free State classis and in other churches in South Africa. We therefore forwarded the following point of discussion to the Classis Free State East, who forwarded it to the Regional Synod Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, who by this forward it to the General Synod.

### 2. **Expositions:**

#### 2.1. **The declining number of members in the Classis Free State East and the RCSA in general over the past 40 years.**

In 1971 there were 104000 members in the GKSA. Of this number 40000, or 38% were baptismal members. Presently there are between 80000 and 90000 members. Of this number 63000 are members from the old Afrikaans Reformed churches. The numbers of these congregations declined from 104000 to 63000, i.e. nearly 40%. Of this number there are only 10000 baptismal members, that is 16% at present from the original 38% in 1971

The number of members in the classis have declined by 31% since 1971, compared to the nearly 40% of the all denominations in spite of urbanization. Some of the congregations have become too small to be self sufficient, and receive sustentation. In the cases of declining numbers over a long period, sustentation only indicate the symptoms and not the cause of the problem.

#### 2.2. **Missionary focussed members, church councils, congregations and denominations**

The RCSA congregations must be more effective in the implementing the command of God as set out in Mathew 28:19-20., by complying to the two pronged emphasis given by Christ when He said "make disciples of all the nations" and "teach them to obey. everything I have commanded you". While we are doing so with great enthusiasm it is not dependant on human ingenuity, creativity, or ability for success in this command, but the promise of Christ in Mathew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".

We as Church of the Lord glorify Him by spreading the gospel, making disciples and cherishing them to spiritual maturity, where they can use their faculties optimally as part of the body of Christ.

It is God's will that each believer should receive sufficient support. This requires a lot of time, faculty and loyalty. Spiritual maturity is revealed in the fruitful life and work of believers as part of the church and beyond. Effective and responsible cherishing and support will allow the ministry of a congregation to grow.

Churches should focus on the cultivation of leaders, to develop more leaders. Effectively equipping Gods people requires reliable, effective and competent ministration of Gods word by endowed shepherds and ministers.

Churches must be encouraged to re-think the influence of the church-culture and church-ethos. Ethos is the coalescence of attitudes, values and behaviors of

members and leaders. The ethos of the church can not be attained or altered by merely changing of words or synod resolutions. Ethos is what we actually do as a church it is the actual circumstances, the expression of life and beliefs of the members and congregations.

We should be focused on a intentional, creative, development and fostering of a environment to fit the church where disciples can grow and multiply, where congregations show the outcome of a healthy and dynamic biblical life, where these churches show signs of growth by planting other churches who in turn plant more churches. Where God is active, churches should function by creating other churches. Our calling is to trust God who will give his blessing if we execute the task He laid upon us. It is also a blessing if congregations can work together. Together we can support each other and share the fruits of our efforts. We pray for good fruit. Poor or no fruit is not an option.

This brings us to the challenge, namely. be creative and innovative. Growth and accompanying change is not something optional in the life of a believer or in any congregation. A new approach to reinstate old truths according to what God reveals in His word is required to bring it back in the lives of people and churches, and must be done on a responsible manner. The RCSA should be known as a catalyst for biblical-change. In that way growth and maturity can be achieved by striving towards maturity. As a calling by God it is also a integral part of being a church. However good planning is required so that it can be executed by all congregations. It must be purposeful, sustainable, focused and applicable. It is important to call on members for purposeful change and not just any change. It is further important that al levels of our church governance fit in this ministration focus

### **3. Findings**

The RCSA has the greatest “treasure” and truth to preach, with many well qualified ministers’ .The ministration focus of ministers, church councils and congregations must be structured so that our “treasure” can be presented in a way that it will address people.

If the RCSA proclaims Christ as He teaches us in His word, thereby addressing the needs of this world, we believe that the church will grow again. Therefore it is the utmost important that a reversal strategy be implemented. We are forced by circumstances to execute our responsibility, to do everything in our power to create a positive growth, based on pure preaching of the word of God together with pure principles.

### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1. That a reversal strategy be developed, planned and implemented to counter the declining tendency in the number of members in the GKSA and other churches in S.A. to create growth in the kingdom of our Lord.
- 4.2. In reply to Christ’s command, to spread the gospel and the call for what the church should be and do, each congregation and greater assembly of the GKSA is called on to separately and combined plan to become churches that glorify God by guiding people to religious maturity, with the result that believers collectively can take the responsibility to bring people and communities under the authority of Christ.
- 4.3. In dependency on God every congregation and church meeting should plead that we as believers under guidance of His Spirit seek to please our savior in al that we

do, such as living a godliness life and filled with a prayerful and sacrificial compassion for those in the world that are lost.

- 4.4. Each local church is called on to increase their numbers to equip, care and attend to their members, and become parent-churches for as many as possible religious groups and congregations by using initiatives and cooperation to penetrate into the communities that were inaccessible to the local church, with the gospel and filled with prayer and sacrificing compassion for all in the whole world that are lost.
- 4.5. That the GKSA have as object to multiply the number of good qualified persons (ordained, not-ordained, fulltime, part-time, volunteers) that can spread the gospel on a loving, devoted manner in every possible walk of life.
- 4.6. That the way of living of the GKSA (including our church ethos, habits, church order, use of resources, church deputies, supporting personnel etc.) continuously be reformed, to satisfy the order given by our Lord to which our church must comply.
- 4.7. Study deputies must be appointed to do study
  - 4.7.1. Common cause in the cases, where congregations grow or decline.
  - 4.7.2. Reverse strategies that have positive results in other churches all over the world.
  - 4.7.3. How members of churches perceive the church and their calling in the church.
  - 4.7.4. The available material for training and develop new material.
  - 4.7.5. The correctness and applicability of the teaching offered at every level, and how it could be expanded further.
  - 4.7.6.

Synod adopted the recommendations of this overture.

### **III. The GKSA and Doctrinal Matters**

At its Synod 2009/10, the GKSA took the following decision regarding women serving in the office of elder or minister:

In light of the Report under consideration Synod has come to the persuasion that women may not serve in the special services of minister and elder.

Seven appeals were received against this decision at this synod. The two major motivations for these appeals were that synod has adopted a conscience-binding decision on the strength only of the conviction of the majority without sufficient Scriptural justification. Moreover, since there are no adequate grounds regarding the question whether women may serve in the offices of minister and elder, a decision in this regard should be left up to the local congregations.

At its Synod 2009/10, the GKSA took the following decision regarding women in the office of deacon:

Synod approves in light of Scripture that women who have the necessary gifts may be elected and confirmed as deacons in the GKSA.

Four ministers appealed this decision in one appeal.

After the various committees has wrestled with all the appeals and had submitted their reports, the following order motion was put on the floor for discussion:

## **ORDER MOTION**

1. That the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches.

### 2. Motivation

2.1 The General Synod 2012 has eight petitions of protest with regard to women in the particular services on its table. It has become clear during this Synod that there exist differences in viewpoints and practices with regard to women in the particular services, despite decisions taken during Synods. Even if the Synod was to adjudicate upon the petitions of protest, it would not really solve the problem in respect of the differences. The possibility is greater that – if adjudication is done now – the result may deepen the differences. The foundational reason(s) for these differences in viewpoints and practices should first be determined and receive concrete attention.

2.2 The Lord has led the General Synod to place the missionary calling of the Churches at the forefront. The Synod has decided to work out a Turnaround Strategy for the GKSA to fulfil this calling. Should there be adjudication on the petitions of protest during this Synod the different viewpoints will still not be clarified. To the contrary, it can place the focus of our churches rather on the mutual differences. And thus the wonderfully positive and unanimous attitude of churches towards the decision regarding our calling can be quelled.

### 3. Recommendations:

That the General Synod appoints deputies with the following mandate:

3.1 To determine in cooperation with local churches what the fundamental reasons are why there are still differences in viewpoints and practices in matters already decided, despite decisions that churches have taken together.

3.2 To advise the synod 2015 on the petitions of protest with regard to women in the particular services.

3.3 To advise the Synod:

3.3.1 on how unity and diversity in our churches can serve our missionary calling.

3.3.2 when does freedom in diversity cross the line of disobedience to the Word.

3.3.3 when the decisions and actions of the local church compromise the common accord

3.3.4 when ecclesiastical decisions place a yoke on persons' conscience (NGB, Art. 32)

3.3.5 how the Reformed Churches can be freed from a paralysing perception of a dying church to a clear image of our missionary calling.

3.4 The Synod calls in earnest upon churches during this period until the petitions of protest are finalised, to:

3.4.1 deal with the diversity of customs in our churches with love and understanding in the spirit of Rom 14.

3.4.2 not to introduce other customs that differ from those which the churches agreed upon or are currently in use.

These calls are made specifically to help churches in this time to focus on the Turnaround Strategy and not to be tempted into questions of strive by differences.

Synod adopted all the recommendations of this motion.

#### **IV. The GKSA and Liturgical Matters**

The present wording of article 69 of the Church Order of the GKSA states the following about what may be sung in the worship services:

In the churches only the 150 Psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the Hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses which have been approved by the Synod, is left over to the jurisdiction of each church council.

The deputies for liturgical matters proposed the following ammendation:

In the churches only the 150 Psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the Hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses **and Scriptural faithful hymns** which have been approved by the Synod, is left over to the jurisdiction of each church council [amended to: each local congregation].

This proposed change takes into account the different historical backgrounds of the various language groups that make up the GKSA and now meet together in one national synod.

The deputies give interesting historical information about this background in their report. Because this background may be of interest to us, I include it in this report. They write:

*1.4. The different practices in the RCSA with regard to what is being sung in the worship service*

1.4.1 Most of the Afrikaans-speaking churches sing only Psalms and Scriptural hymns according to the ruling in the present wording of CO, art 69. There are also some rhymed versions of the confession which were approved by Synods and are sung in these churches. Furthermore it seems that there are Afrikaans-speaking churches which already follow the practice of singing other songs than above-mentioned.

1.4.2 Most of the Sotho- and Tswana-speaking churches sing from the *Lifela tsa Sione* songbook. To clarify the origin and contents of the *Lifela tsa Sione* the following is quoted from a study that served before the deputies:

“The *Lifela tsa Sione* hymnbook, as Müller (1990:41) states, was originally composed by French missionaries of the Parish Evangelical Missionary Society in Lesotho. These authors, namely; F Coillard, E Casalis, S and E Rolland, T Arbousset and A Mabile were reformed people as Müller (1990:41) argues. Their missionary work began in 1833 (Setiloane, 1976:1). One should understand the background of this music within the historical and social context of that era. When the missionaries came to Lesotho the heathendom was still very strong. They did not know anything about Christianity and the saving power of Jesus Christ. Ancestral worship was robust and it was still part of the being of the African. Nevertheless, not all these songs are originally from the missionaries. The people from where the missionaries came wrote some of these songs and the work of the missionaries was to do the translations into the languages of the natives. They wrote these hymns under the following rubrics: God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, the Religion, Death and the Service of the Lord. They are altogether 449 hymns, of which 10 are Psalms, 5 are NT Scriptural songs and the other are doctrinal religious hymns and choruses as in the old Hallelujah hymnbook of some of the Afrikaans speaking churches. Despite the fact that the authors and the composers of the hymns were evangelical in tradition, their music was influenced by the music of the seventeenth century. Irrespective of the fact that the *Lifela tsa Sione* was also used in the Dutch Reformed Church in SA, before the use of the *Hosanna*, some hymns are still being used, one cannot deny the fact that the theology of some of these hymns is questionable.”

1.4.3 The Zulu-speaking churches use the *iMbongi* as songbook. It contains 76 Psalms which were rhymed by the Zulu ministers with the guidance of Dutch missionaries. To clarify the origin and contents of the *iMbongi* the following is quoted from a study that served before the deputies:

“Since the Zulu-churches had no hymnbook in the years ’70, a beginning was made in that time to compile such a hymnbook. The editor at that stage, and for the following 25 years, was rev WL Kurpershoek, missionary in Nqutu, sent out by the Netherland Reformed Churches. The latest edition of *iMbongi* is that of 1992, when it was revised for the last time.

The hymnal is compiled as follow: A number of Psalms (listed below) were rhymed by Dutch missionaries, in co-operation with local Zulu ministers and co-workers. These rhymed versions were mutually checked on Scriptural faithfulness. A selection was also made from existing hymnals in use by other churches in South Africa. For this a list was made of songs which may possibly be suitable, after which the songs went through a strong examination process. Songs were tested on Scriptural faithfulness, to guard against intrusion of heresy. Superficial songs, which are often based on simple, short phrases which are repeated endlessly, were also not included. The list of songs which were eventually included in *iMbongi*, was much shorter than the original list. The hymnal does

not include so called “choruses” (which are very popular in the other churches).

The rhymers of the Psalms were the following persons: Rev R Keesenberg, rev WL Kurpershoek, rev JJ Miya, rev AH Reitsema, rev J Vonkeman. A few rhymed versions of Psalms were also taken from “Dumisani” and “Hosana” (hymnals of the Dutch Reformed Church), as well as from a hymnal of the Anglican church. The rhymed versions of the Psalms include the following (songs 1-76 in iMbongi): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 47, 51, 62, 65, 67, 71, 73, 75, 81, 84, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 98, 100, 103, 115, 116, 118, 119, 121, 123, 124, 127, 130, 131, 133, 134, 136, 138, 139, 143, 146, 148, 150. After the 76 rhymed versions of Psalms the hymnal also includes 79 other Scriptural faithful songs. In total the hymnal consists of 175 songs.

iMbongi was officially recognised by Synod Midlands.”

1.4.4 The Xhosa-speaking churches sing from the *Inkqubo Nkonzo*, the Xhosa Psalmbook which only contains the 150 Psalms. To clarify the origin and contents of the *Inkqubo Nkonzo* the following is quoted from a study that served before the deputies:

“The non-Afrikaans speaking Reformed Churches in Classis Karoo-Kei only sing the 150 Psalms. They make use of the Xhosa Hymn book of Psalms now already the 3rd edition initiated by the Free Church of Scotland in South Africa. The 1st publication was edited by Prof JJ Jolobe BA of the Presbyterian Church with their request. Psalms 23, 100, 133 remained unchanged and Psalm 124 was produced/revised by the late Prof John Knox Bokwe and William Kobe Ntsikana and added in the second edition.

The 1st and 2nd edition did not have a liturgy as addendum. However it has now been included in the 3rd edition. The Hymn Book is printed by the Free Church in South Africa – Lovedale Press.”

1.4.5 The Venda-speaking churches sing from the *Lutheran hymnal*. To clarify the origin and contents of the *Lutheran hymnal* the following is quoted from a study that served before the deputies:

“When the mission work was started in Venda, the Lutheran hymns were the only ones known by literate people. They were generally of a high poetic and doctrinal quality – much better than the average hymns in the African languages. They contained inter alia a few Psalms, such as Pss 146, 121, 90. There were no “reformed” hymns available. The churches obviously had to sing, and there were at that time no reformed poets or composers. As a result of all this the Lutheran hymns have become part of the Reformed Church tradition among the Venda people. The synod Soutpansberg at one time appointed Deputies to work on the Psalms and rearrange them for the purpose of singing. A number of Psalms were arranged in that way, as were the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, but they are rarely sung in the churches.”

1.4.6 As far as the Deputies could determine, all the hymnals referred to in 1.4.2 until 1.4.5, went through a path of approval and/or acceptance in the respective churches, as stated above.

1.4.7 From above-mentioned it is clear that there are different practices in the RCSA with regard to what is being sung in the worship service, which are not in accordance with the ruling in CO, art 69.

The deputies then give a careful explanation why it is justified to move from a primarily psalm singing church to a church that also sings hymns that are faithful to Scripture. They write:

*1.6 Matters to be taken into account in a possible amendment of CO, art 69*

1.6.1 The importance of Scriptural faithfulness regarding the songs which are sung in the worship service.

1.6.2 That the decision of the Synod of 1618-19 regarding CO, art 69 was taken under particular circumstances and in a specific context:

1.6.2.1 The Reformed Churches of the 16th century time and again decided to sing mostly Psalms in the worship service. This was in imitation of Calvyn who, although he did not condemn the singing of other songs specifically, gave preference to the Psalms.

1.6.2.2 In Overijssel and the northern provinces the farming population was very attached to the “Oosterse lofzangen” (Eastern songs), therefore to certain German church songs. The question was: Should they be sung, yes or no?

1.6.2.3 The Remonstrant Synod of 1612 in Utrecht decided, directly against the decision of earlier Synods, that a Commission must compile a hymnal of “gesange”. This was a dangerous precedent and therefore, according to the Post-Acta of dr HH Kuyper, it was necessary that the Synod of Dordrecht 1618-19 had to handle the “gesange”- issue.

1.6.2.4 In the Psalmbook of Datheen which was approved during the Convent of Wezel (1568), there were some songs, namely the versification of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, three hymns of praise from the New Testament and the prayer-song before the sermon. During the Synod of Dordrecht of 1578, where it was decided that the Psalms of Dawid, rhymed by Petrus Datheen, should be sung in the Christian gatherings of the Dutch churches, it was also decided that the songs which could not be found in the Holy Scripture, should be left. In light of this it was necessary for the Synod of Dordrecht to give more clarity, especially to avoid uncertainty regarding the songs “O God, die onze Vader bist” (the prayer-song before the sermon which was eventually left over to the freedom of the churches by the Synod of Dordrecht 1618-19) and the “Avondtgebedt” (evening prayer).

1.6.2.5. Totius who refers to above-mentioned three matters, alleges that the decision of Dordt (which also included that except for the Lord’s Prayer, etc the rest of the “gesange” must be removed from the churches, and where it were already implemented, it should be

removed in a fitting way) was necessary *because of circumstances* (Collected Works Part 3:432).

### 1.6.3 The way CO, art 69 was interpreted and applied:

1.6.3.1 The Deputies on church singing who reported at the Synod of the GKN Arnhem (1930), came to the following conclusion: “A *fundamental verdict* that only Psalms may be sung, was never done (as Voetius remarks) by the Reformed Churches in Netherlands. If our old Reformed synods in the 16th and 17th century prescribe only the Psalms in the worship service and reject all songs which are not derived from Scripture, it happen more out of *fear for the misuse* of these church songs than to *set a principle* that only Psalms and Scriptural hymns may be sung in the church” (Totius Collected Works Part 3:369).

1.6.3.2 The Deputies Doctrinal Matters who were appointed by Synod 2006 regarding the Scriptural and Confessional faithful songs, report as follow to the General Synod 2009: “Voetius took part at Dordt in the formulating of the article while he himself, as well as other experts in church law wrote commentaries about it. The important point from these works is that the wording of CO, art 69 does not state a principle for church singing, but a specific application of it, especially as a result of the fierce church-struggle in those times. Because many heretics (at that stage in particular the Remonstrants) used the principle that the church song must be Scriptural faithful, as a opening to import their heresy into the church, time and again it was chosen and at Dordt again established as order-ruling to only sing songs of which the text appear in Scripture” (Acts 2009:741, 1.4.3.2).

1.6.3.3 Rev Dirk Postma’s point of view before the General Church Assembly on 10 January 1859 is well-known: He will not condemn a church who sings orthodox hymns, but the safest way for a church is to sing hymns of which the text appear in Scripture. This point of view is widely accepted in the RCSA. Totius himself says that it is a solid point of view (Collected Works Part 3:383).

1.6.3.4 When Totius defends the ruling of CO, art 69, his argument is not based on it that CO, art 69 states a principle that Scripture forbids the singing of other songs in the worship service, but that the ruling of CO, art 69 is the safest and most practical way (Collected Works Part 3:357-389).

1.6.3.5 The RCSA maintain correspondence with foreign churches who also sing other songs than Psalms and Scriptural hymns in the worship service.

1.6.3.6 The fact that churches from the former Synod Midlands and Classis Capricorn sing Songs of Zion, Lutheran hymns and other Scriptural faithful songs in the worship service, did not stand in the way of church unity in the RCSA.

1.6.3.7 From the above it seems that CO, art 69 was not interpreted or applied as if Scripture forbids the singing of Scriptural faithful songs in the worship service, but because it was considered to be the safest way.

1.6.4 Churches which want to sing other Scriptural faithful songs apart from the Psalms and Scriptural hymns, can not be forbidden from Scripture to do it. Furthermore can churches also not be obliged to also sing other Scriptural faithful songs apart from Psalm and Scriptural hymns.

1.6.5 In light of 1.6.3 en 1.6.4 above consciences may not be bound in this matter.

1.6.6 The importance that the Word must be central in the church song. This matter was very important for Calvin and the other church reformers in the 16th century. It means that they regarded the church song as a funnel through which the knowledge of the Word is served in and to the hearts of the church members and there find an entrance.

1.6.7 The important place of the Word in the church song is also evident from Colossians 3:16. The importance to guard that heresy does enter the church through the church song. In the church's history this matter played a very important role, also in the formulating of CO, art 69.

1.6.8 The necessity to promote unity.

1.6.9 The different historical backgrounds in the RCSA as is clear from the history of the origin of the different hymnals (1.4 above). Unity despite the diversity will not be maintained and promoted by making the history of one group of the RCSA normative for all the churches in the RCSA.

Synod adopted the amendment of the deputies for liturgical matters with the proposed amendment. Synod also approved a small number of hymns

## V. Conclusion and Recommendation

When you spend nine days from 8 am to 9 pm listening to synod delegates discuss, argue, read the Scriptures, pray, sing, take decisions, worship and so forth, you get a pretty good feel of what they are like. This is all the more the case when you make use of the opportunity during intermissions and meals to engage in meaningful discussions.

I have the distinct impression that the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) want to be a Reformed church federation firmly based on the Scriptures and Confessions. However, as you have been able to read in this report, there are differences in viewpoints and practices with regard to women in office *despite decisions taken by Synods*. In other words, some churches just go ahead and do their own thing despite what a synod has decided.

The GKSA needs time to sort out why churches within its federation are doing this and how they are going to deal with this. On the one hand, they need time to sort out when freedom in diversity crosses the line of disobedience to the Word of God and when the decisions and actions of the local churches compromise the common accord adopted by the Church Order. On the other hand,

they need to sort out when ecclesiastical decisions place a yoke on a person's conscience (cf. Art. 32 Belgic Confession).

Until the GKSA has come to grips with these deep problems within their midst and taken a firm stand as to what kind of a church federation it wants to be, I recommend that we:

1. take note of the GKSA's more critical attitude towards the unilateral actions of the CRCNA;
2. continue to commit the GKSA to the Lord in prayer for wisdom and guidance;
3. remain in phase one of Ecumencial Contact with the GKSA at this time.

Humbley submitted

Rev. Dick Moes

Fraternal delegate of the URCNA

## Appendix 4

### Speech to the 51<sup>st</sup> National Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) at Potchefstroom, January 4-13, 2012

Beloved brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

On behalf of the United Reformed Churches in North America I greet you in the name of our risen and ascended Saviour and Lord. When I say, “in the name,” I do not mean that I greet you on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that I greet you from the place where we are united in love through faith: the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Through faith, we share in his fellowship of love with the Father. And through faith we share in his ministry of love from the Father. Because we are one in the Lord Jesus and participate in his fellowship and ministry, I greet you as a fellow participant and brother in the Lord.

I stand before you today with a sense of wonder and amazement. Recently, I preached on the Word of God summarized in Lord’s Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. I explained to my congregation that what we ultimately confess in Question and Answer 54 of this Lord’s Day is the fulfillment of the promise God gave to Abraham. One day his offspring would be as countless as the stars in the heavens! To show the fulfillment of this promise I took the congregation to Revelation 7 where the apostle John sees this countless offspring as a multitude from every tribe, nation, language and tongue together praising the Father and the Son through the bond of the Holy Spirit and singing: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Salvation is all their work and their work alone through the Spirit of adoption. I imagine myself at this moment to be in the vestibule of heaven, as it were, and having a glorious foretaste of this heavenly reality.

Yet, I not only stand before you with a sense of wonder and amazement. I also stand before you as a mourner. At the latest conference of the ICRC in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2009, Rev. Dirk Van Garden spoke with deep conviction on the second beatitude of the Lord Jesus. The character profile of Jesus’ followers includes that they unceasingly mourn their own sinfulness and the destructive impact this has on their own lives and the lives of others. The more we become aware of this destructive impact, the more we mourn because of it—even though we are alive in Christ, or perhaps I should say, precisely because we are alive in Christ. As all pastors do, I represent an imperfect church federation made up of imperfect churches that daily struggle with lack of wholehearted love for God and their neighbour. This is evident in the sin of idolatry: we do not always trust God alone and look to Him for every good thing, but boast to find this in others and ourselves. It is evident in the sin of taking the name of God in vain: our loveless behaviour causes others to dishonour God’s holy name. It is evident in our sin of adultery: marriages fall apart and allegations of sexual abuse have been reported among us. Abraham’s offspring is not without sin. We mourn about our transgressions and our inadequacies. But blessed are the mourners for they shall be comforted! Where would we be without the forgiving, healing and liberating grace of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Last, but not least, I stand before you with hope. The United Reformed Churches in North America, a federation with a membership of 23,500, made up of 112 churches plus 15 church

plants with about 110 actively serving ministers, did not extend the hand of full ecclesiastical fellowship to your church federation at our synod in London, 2010. Our Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) regrets this; we had recommended differently. But as you yourselves know all too well, unexpected things sometimes happen on the floor of synod. Nevertheless, I stand before you with hope because, as we both increasingly live into our common identity and unity in the Lord Jesus Christ as children of God's love, we will find a way to resolve our differences. After all, "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." I stand before you with hope because together we mourn the devastating impact that sin has on our own lives and the lives of others. The more this penetrates deeply into the inner recesses of our souls, the more we truly will participate in full ecclesiastical unity not only in Jesus' fellowship of love with the Father, but also his ministry of love from the Father. May the Lord bless the Reformed Churches of South Africa in general and this synod in particular! Grace and peace be with you all!

Rev. Dick Moes  
Fraternal delegate of the URCNA

## Appendix 5

### Report of Visit to GKV Synod Harderwijk March 28 – April 1, 2011

Dear Brothers,

Herewith the report of my visit to the Synod of the Gereformeerde Kerk Vrijgemaakt (the GKv, that is, the Reformed Churches, liberated) in the Netherlands. Though the Synod had begun meeting – typically for one or two days per week – in late January, the week of March 28 – April 1 was set aside as “the Foreign Delegates” week. There were 33 foreign delegates present, representing 23 church federations – one from each of those federations would eventually address the Synod for +/- 10 minutes and be responded to for roughly the same length of time by a member of the BBK (the GKv’s equivalent of our CECCA committee).

Since **Monday** was ‘the arrival day’, this day was spent settling in at a beautiful lodging place in Hierden, a small village on the outskirts of Harderwijk. The foreign delegates and a number of members of the BBK were the only guests at the Park Hotel – so there was ample room and time for fellowship and discussion of the issues on the Agenda of Synod, especially re the question of the Role of Women in the church and indeed concerning the challenges the various churches are confronted with on their home turf. This was also the venue where our breakfasts were served and some of the other meals. A great place!

On **Tuesday**, a Conference was held at our Park Hotel in Hierden for the foreign delegates with the members of the BBK and the Executive of the Synod. This Conference was opened by Klaas Wezeman, the Chairman of the BBK. He informed us that, after the opening devotions, the day would focus on presentations by a number of people associated with the BBK. The devotions were led by Elly Urban, a Deputy of the BBK and the Chairperson of one of its Sections. Some of the attendees found this choice bordering on the on the provocative – seeing that for many this was an “in your face” selection.

That day we heard a number of presentations about the work of not only the BBK, but also an overview of the Synod’s Agenda, a presentation of the work of the Committee on Diaconal Ministries and report on the work of the Committee on Men and Women in the Church. The latter “report” relayed what work this committee has been engaged in since the meeting of Synod Zwolle Zuid which had opted for a “three-track” approach, as follows: “1. *academic considerations*; 2. *consideration within the churches*; and 3. *making preparations for practical decisions for the short term*.” The committee also reported, in re #1, “*that because the Theological University saw no need for this*” it “*recommended that this instruction not be continued*.” In re #2, the committee reports that, though it is still engaged in that mandate, “*it does not seem useful to us if this instruction is continued*”. In re #3, the committee reports: “*Now that the consideration seems to be in full progress, the road is clear for specific decision-making. We think it is desirable that a new Committee be appointed for this task. In our view, this new Committee should also prepare a decision with respect to female office-bearers*.” That evening we heard an “interactive presentation” on the ministry of “De Verre Naasten” (the Distant Neighbors). It proved to be an interesting and informative day.

On **Wednesday** we traveled to Kampen, the home of the Theological School (University) of the GKv. The Agenda for the day called for presentations on the theme: “Holy Scripture and the Agenda for Theology”. Herewith a list of the topics and the presenters of the topics, as follows:

1. Prof. Dr. B. Kamphuis, the Chairman of the Systematic Theology department, introduced the topic: “Thinking About Hermeneutics in Kampen – from Douma to Haak”.
2. Dr. Eric de Boer, Lecturer in Ecclesiology, introduced the topic: “The Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue and Sunday Observance in Ethics”.
3. Prof. Dr. Ad de Bruijne, professor in the Ethics and Spirituality department, introduced the topic: “The ‘Kingdom Style’ in Personal Ethics” – focusing on questions relating to marriage, divorce and re-marriage.
4. Drs. C. J. Haak, Lecturer in Missiology, introduced the topic: “Contextual Reading of the Bible” – focusing on the “impact” which issues/concerns as confronted on the mission field play in our reading/understanding of the Bible.
5. Dr. K. Van Bekkum (not further identified) introduced the topic: “Joshua, Historicity and Archeology” – focusing, i.a., on the question: Did the sun really “stand still”?
6. Prof. Dr. G. Kwakkel, the Chairman of the Old Testament Studies department, introduced the topic: “Creation in Genesis, General and Special Revelation”.

After each topic was presented (in +/- 15/20 minutes) there was a (brief) discussion period which provided the participants the opportunity to raise questions – which were subsequently answered by the presenter of the topic. There were also lively discussions on the latest topic presented in the recess and/or during the Coffee and Tea breaks which followed most presentations. The day was ended with a tour of the IJssel river aboard “De Veerman van Kampen” (The Ferryman of Kampen) with dinner aboard ship. A great day was had by all!

On **Thursday** the real work – of the Synod with its “Foreign guests” – began. The Chairman of the Synod, the Rev. Pieter Neimeijer, cordially welcomed us with an opening speech which he entitled “*RECIPROCITY*” – a copy of which was subsequently made available to the Foreign Delegates. Reflecting on Paul’s letter to the church at Rome, Rev. Neimeijer pointed out that the Apostle was eager to share some spiritual gifts (charismata) with the church at Rome – as he hoped also to be blessed by their sharing such gifts with him. Having introduced the idea of reciprocity, the speaker pointed out that “*according to Paul, reciprocity (pre)supposes faith on both sides.*” That fact, he said, makes it possible for both sides to engage each other in seeking to know the will of the Lord for the ministry of the church.

*“What a wonderful reality”, said Neimeijer. “How different we are many times. Suspicious when things turn out different from what we are used to. Or stressed when we have our concerns. Or condescending when we observe weaknesses or needs in which we want to provide. In discussion many times we are focused on our own stand. Not really listening to one another, just ‘picking our grain’ and preparing our critical reaction. In such cases we don’t even hear anymore what someone else is saying, anxious to fortify our own meaning with new arguments.”*

Thereafter, the Advisory Committee, which had reviewed and studied the report which the BBK was presenting to the Synod, presented its report. One of the first issues discussed was the relationship of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) with the GKv. Significantly, the Advisory committee expressed disagreement not only with the communication which the BBK had received from the FRCA – pointing out that the FRCA should communicate its concerns and disagreements directly to the Synod of the GKv, and not publish such matters in their Acts of Synod for all to read. It also expressed disagreement with the BBK’s response to the FRCA. The FRCA had requested that the BBK not send a female deputy to its Synod, since that would contradict the FRCA’s stand on the question of Women in Office. The BBK had acquiesced to that request. The Pre-advice Committee, however, judged that by so doing, the BBK was needlessly jeopardizing the position of the GKv – which holds that deputies are appointed to serve “not because of their sex or office, but strictly because of their competence”. If therefore, the FRCA would in the future refuse to accept the deputies commissioned to visit its Synod, said the Pre-advice committee, that church (any church doing such) would thereby seriously jeopardize its relationship with the GKv. Synod concurred.

In somewhat the same vein, Synod decided not to continue to offer a Sister-church relationship to the OPC. Apparently, such an offer had been “on the table” for a number of years. Since the OPC had not responded positively to that offer, the Synod decided to place the OPC on its list of churches with whom it maintains an “Ecumenical Contact relationship” – in the hope that the OPC, from its side, will eventually take the initiative to ask for a Sister-church relationship with the GKv.

The Synod also decided to end the “Sister-church relationship” with the ERCC (the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Congo) which had occasioned a schism with what is now the URCC – (with whom we also have a relationship). However, the GKv will continue an “Ecumenical Contact relationship” with the ERCC. Additionally, two other churches were removed from the Ecumenical Contact list, the one – because it had ceased to exist; the other – because there had been no contact for some time and no further contact is deemed possible.

On a much happier note for the Synod – and surely for the churches concerned – was the acceptance and the welcoming of four new churches into a “Sister-church relationship” with the GKv. The four were:

1. the Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Westminster Bekenntnis (ERK-WB);
2. the Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-Papua);
3. the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB); and
4. the United Reformed Church in the Congo (URCC).

Each of the four was addressed at some length by a deputy from the BBK and heartily welcomed into the Sister-church relationship with the GKv. This brings the number of churches with whom the GKv maintains a Sister-church relationship to 32 while an additional 26 churches are in the Ecumenical Contact relationship status.

The Synod adopted a budget for the BBK of 348,800.00 Euro.

Throughout the day – both on Thursday and on Friday – the Synod heard from the “foreign” churches that had sent delegates/observers to the Synod. It was interesting to hear that many of the speakers – though in many and varied ways to be sure– expressed serious concern about the

issue of Women in Ecclesiastical Office. Though certainly the members of the BBK, but also some members of the Synod insistently and persistently pointed out that no one may say (or even suggest) that the GKv is moving in the direction of Women in Office – (because the Synod has not as yet officially decided anything of the kind, we were told) – the fact could not be denied (or ignored) that many of the Foreign Delegates saw that differently. Again and again the warning note was sounded: Beware that you do not fall victim to the ‘spirit of the age’ – as that spirit comes to expression in the New Hermeneutic! It is a false spirit! It leads astray! (Note, my speech to Synod Harderwijk, wherein I also speak “a word of warning” to the GKv, is attached.)

Between the speeches of the Foreign Delegates (and the response of the BBK to those speeches) the Synod engaged, i.a. in a discussion on a Report of its Committee for Church Unity. This Report contained sub-reports on a number of matters, including:

1. The status of the talks between the GKv and the CGK – a church in the Netherlands dating from the Afscheiding (the Secession) of 1834 with whom the GKv is engaged in unity talks.
2. The status of the talks between the GKv and the NGK – another church in the Netherlands with whom the GKv is engaged in unity talks. The NGK separated from the GKv in the sixties because of doctrinal and Church Order disputes.
3. A paper on “Catholicity and Unity” – a “guideline for talks” between the CGK and GKv (the two churches mentioned in # 1 above). An accompanying letter, signed by the officers of the two federations serving on the committee, encourages the member churches of the two federations to study the “*Catholicity and Unity*” paper and reflect on the words of Christ in John 17 – so as to move toward closer relationships.
4. A paper, referred to as Appendix 8, which deals with “*The Doctrine of Baptism, the Holy Spirit, the Church and the Lord’s Supper*”. This paper was written in response to the Mandate assigned by Synod Zwolle-Zuid to its Committee for Church Unity working with its counterparts from the NGK (as per #2, above). Synod Zwolle-Zuid had instructed this committee to direct its attention to the following issues:
  - a. The different ways in which ‘binding to the confession(s)’ is put into effect within the ecclesiastical practice of the GKv and the NGK.
  - b. The differing ways in which specific and continuing deviations from the confession(s) are dealt with, within the ecclesiastical practice of the GKv and the NGK.
  - c. The issue of Women in Office and the fact that the offices have been opened to sisters by the NGK.
5. A paper, referred to as Appendix 9. This is another paper of the Committee for Church Unity of the GKv and the Committee for Contact and Discussion of the NGK which deals with “*Agreement on Hermeneutical Principles*” – an important paper immanently worth a careful read. Its sub-sections include:
  - a. The Bible is the Word of God
  - b. Context-bound precepts in the Bible
  - c. The appeal to creation
  - d. Man’s responsibility
  - e. Credibility and culture
  - f. Hermeneutics and Exegesis

Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 were both included on the Agenda for Synod's discussion on Friday. If I understand correctly, these papers can be "obtained" (for reading and reflection) by contacting: [dao@gkv.nl](mailto:dao@gkv.nl)

In closing, some notes from the "Church Press" regarding matters discussed and/or decided by the Synod of the GKv, as follows:

1. The talks between the GKv and the NGK re Women in Office will continue in the year ahead, focusing specifically on the NGK report "*Women Elders and Ministers*". The NGK has already adopted – and acted on – that report by ordaining women to ecclesiastical office.
2. The discussion on Appendix 8 (above) was judged to be such that – even though there are some differences between the GKv and NGK – there is a 'level of trust' between the two federations which should make it possible for talks to be held between member churches of the two federations at the local level.
3. Though the report re Hermeneutics has, at this point, no official status in the GKv, it will "function" in the talks with the NGK – e.g. in re the "*Women Elders and Ministers*" report.
4. A report from the committee appointed to advise Synod re problems relating to "*Marriage and Divorce*" has led the Synod to commission an 'empirical study' of the divorce-problem in the GKv. In order to obtain an 'impartial' result, the committee appointed must consult not only with Consistories, but also with people who are facing the problem.
5. A new Church Order is expected to be adopted by the Synod of 2014. To that end, a second "provisional version" is being made available to the churches for "review". Thereafter, a third "definitive" edition is expected to be presented to the Synod of 2014 for approval and adoption.

Since the matter re the Ordination of Women remains undecided, I believe it will be wise that we recommend to Synod 2012 what was also advised to Synod 2010: "... *that at this time we remain in phase one of Ecumenical Contact with the GKv*". Once the GKv has resolved the issue of Women in Ecclesiastical Office, we can recommend accordingly what our relationship with the GKv should thereafter be.

Humbly submitted,  
Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema  
Delegated Observer of the URCNA

## Appendix 6

### GKv “Synod Harderwijk” Speech April 1, 2011

**Dear Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ,**

Permit me to begin my address to you with a reading of the words of salutation which the Apostle Paul often used in his letters to the churches: “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*”.

I indeed count it a privilege to address you on behalf of the URCNA. On prior occasions you have heard from this platform some information about the URCNA – its birth, its size, its growth, its ministries at home and abroad. I will not repeat that information here; it is a matter of record.

I do, however, want to recount that it was in the year 2007 that our Synod Schererville adopted the recommendation of its Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA), namely: “*That the URCNA enter into Phase One, (Ecumenical Contact) with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKv).*” So began our ecumenical relations with you some 4 and a half years ago – a matter in which we rejoiced.

Three years later, however, our Committee, (CECCA) decided not as yet to recommend that we move on to the Second Step (Ecumenical Fellowship, that is, the Sister-Church) relationship with you. The reason is as follows (as recorded in our report to Synod London, 2010): “*Since there are concerns about developments in the GKv, we (that is, CECCA) decided to make a systematic study of these concerns – using documentation available to us. These concerns center on the following four areas: Sabbath and Sunday; marriage and divorce; liberal criticism of the Bible and women in office*”.

Our report goes on to say (in reference to each of the first three areas of concern mentioned): “*the issue is not an impediment to maintaining ties with the GKv*” – though it must be recognized that there are indeed members in our churches who are very much troubled by developments also in those “*areas of concern*”.

It was, however, the last “*area of concern*”, namely: the question of Women in Office, which led us to recommend to Synod London that we not proceed to the Ecumenical Fellowship relationship with you at this time. Brothers, we are aware of the fact that both your “Synod Amersfoort-Centrum (2005)” and your “Synod Zwolle-Zuid (2008)” have focused on questions re the role of women in the church. It is our understanding that a committee is expected to report to “Synod Harderwijk (2011)” on its findings and recommendations.

We therefore agreed that we should “*wait and see what this synod decides before recommending any change in our present relationship with the GKv*”. We also decided “*to send a letter to the GKv expressing concerns that live in the URCNA because of some of the*

*hermeneutical issues that have surfaced during the past year*". No doubt, you have that letter on file.

Brothers, it is indeed the question of hermeneutics that lies at the heart of our concern. After all, one's hermeneutics determine not only how he will read the opening chapters of Genesis, or how he will exegete an historical given from the book of Joshua but one's hermeneutic will also determine how he will read the Scriptural givens regarding the role of women in the church.

Our committee (CECCA) submitted its report to Synod London by March of 2010. Since that time, the clock has not stood still. Needless to say, we are becoming increasingly more concerned about developments in the area of hermeneutics as we see (and hear of) them unfolding here, in the GKv.

For me personally, that is a matter of *déjà vu*. Brothers, I've seen it all before. Always: the reason given – for studying a matter once again – is expressed in language that sounds so good, so very commendable. *We only want to hear what the Scriptures say* (on issues on which the church for many generations firmly believed it knew and understood what the Scriptures said). *How could that possibly be wrong, or dangerous, or suspect?* they say. But the underlying reason for another study of such matters, (usually not so openly acknowledged or expressed) is: *we want to, yes we must come to another, to a different conclusion than was accepted and embraced to date – because the times, they are a'changing!*

Let me simply affirm: Every Reformed/Presbyterian church in the USA that adopted the "*ordination of women*" position did so by adopting a new, a different hermeneutic – which was, at least in some cases, also openly acknowledged. And, once embraced, that new hermeneutic has been (and it will be) used to address – and eventually to alter – the church's position on matters relating to ethics and morality, not to speak of its liturgy and outreach endeavors. (I think, e.g. of questions relating to infant baptism – (dopen of zegenen?) – as decided by Classis Amsterdam-Leiden and of questions relating to admitting homosexuals to ecclesiastical office, as it will be studied/discussed by the NGK with whom you are reportedly holding unity talks, [cf. RD, 14-02-2011].)

Brothers, as many of you, no doubt, are aware, Professor Jochem Douma begins his *Inleiding* to his sketch of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* with these remarkable words:

*“Niemand zal mij tegenspreken als ik beweer dat er in de Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) veel veranderd is. Wie twintig jaar teruggaat, zou nog in alle opzichten de kerken herkennen die uit de Vrijmaking van 1944 zijn voortgekomen. In twee decennia is er echter wel zoveel veranderd dat de vraag opkomt, of zich een afbraakproces voltrekt, dat aan het eigen karakter van deze kerken een einde zal maken. Het eens zo gesloten bolwerk van de vrijgemaakten is op allerlei manieren opengebroken.”*

Yes, those are remarkable words! They are also very disturbing words. One wants to ask: Is that so? Really? Or is the Professor only an alarmist who fails to understand the onward march of time? Does he not understand that the church must strive to remain current, up-to-date (“*hedendaags*”)? Are the changes he signals not really nothing more and nothing other than

changes that are occasioned by (called for) because the church is burdened with a sincere desire to be heard and to be understood by the man of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Or, or do they in fact signal that the church is losing her way?

You may know also that Prof. Douma calls attention to a number of areas of concern, including questions relating to “*het gezag van de Heilige Schrift*” – the authority of Scripture.

Brothers, it is here the questions relating to hermeneutics rise. Be aware! Be warned!

Consider it well: Is the church of the Reformation served well with a move toward Evangelicalism – broadly conceived of – or is it precisely her faithfulness as to being Reformed that will enable her to be a voice unto healing in a sin-broken world?

May the Lord grant you wisdom to discern His will in a world that wants nothing more and nothing other than to supplant His sovereign, divine, authoritative Word with its own word – a word born of rebellion against the Lord, a word that comes to powerful expression in ‘the spirit of the age’.

I close with these words – from the book of Jude: “*Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of His glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Rev. Raymond J, Sikkema  
Delegated Observer from the URCNA

## Appendix 7

### INFORME / REPORT

#### **In English**

Dear brother apologize I hope the spelling mistakes, and I'm using the google translator because my English is very bad, so I send the report in English and Spanish, so it can be understood, with any questions you can ask me what needed.

In Christ. Very. Rev. José Luis Podesta  
Moderator Free Protestant Church – Argentina

#### **1- The authority and sufficiency of Scripture**

Our century has witnessed the progressive rejection of the authority of the Word of God, the Bible, however, the Free Protestant Church believes the Bible is the Word authorized and disclosed through the centuries, the only infallible rule of faith and human conduct.

We believe that the Bible alone gives us the correct knowledge of who God is and how we can serve and that we require for our lives. It teaches that God the Father gave his only begotten Son Jesus Christ to death on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of his people.

We are aware that to have a committed and pleasing to Him, we must be faithful to the Scriptures, and the explanation of the points on the confessions of faith and catechisms of the Reformed theological tradition, in which faithfully expresses the content the truth revealed to men in the Word of God.

#### **2- Creeds and confessions**

We are a church being established in the territory of the Republic of Argentina, for that we doctrinal instructive elements include:

+ Apostles' Creed. + Symbol Council of Nicea. + Symbol of Athanasius.+ Westminster Confession of Faith + Heidelberg Catechism

Also as a study guide and the canons of Dort and the Belgic Confession.

#### **3- formula of subscription to the confessions the F.P.C.**

We, the undersigned, ministers of the Gospel Pastors, elders and deacons of the congregation of the Protestant Church Free-Argentina than this, with sincerity, good and honestly before the Lord Jesus Christ, declare our firm at the foot of the compromise formula, we sincerely believe and are convinced that all the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation and revealed Word of the Triune God and it is our rule of faith and life, as well as articles and points of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism, which are light and guidance for communities, as well as the Belgian Confession and the Canons of Dort help us to explain some points of Christian doctrine, with these confessions and catechisms fully agree with the Word of God.

We therefore commit to teach diligently and faithfully defend the doctrine revealed in the Holy Bible and the confessions and catechisms of the churches historical heirs to the reform, making sure that it meets the same without additions or deviations, or who directly or indirectly,

contradict them by our preaching, public education, or in writing, and if they happen to have the principle of amends to return the body of doctrine of the above documents and especially the Word of God.

We declare, moreover, that not only reject all errors that are opposed to this doctrine, in particular those who were condemned by the synod of churches historical daughters of the reform, which is why we must be ready always cheerfully submit to the correction fraternity, presbyteries or Classis, or Synod if applicable in the future, under the correction of the brothers, and in severe case in a good way to accept the sanction granted by them. Also, if at some point, presbyteries or Classis, or Synod, is a sufficient ground of suspicion with us or our community has the duty to preserve the uniformity and purity of doctrine emanating from the Holy Scriptures and set on confessions and catechisms of the Church, including documents that the synod made for better interpretation of the Word of God in a special theme, the presbytery or synod may consider appropriate to demand of us a more detailed explanation of our feelings about any Article of the Confession of Faith or Catechism, or doctrinal interpretation or explanation of pastoral action, which this promise is always ready to meet the request for such statements, under penalty framed in the order book or books successive provide guidance to our Free Protestant Church, remembering that we always have the right to appeal if we are not consistent with the actions or sanctions ecclesiastical court and believe that it harms us to be the ruling of the Presbytery or Synod unfair to our understanding and to that a decision on that appeal, we accept the tribunal's determination.

Signed before God and the glory of the Church in Argentina, the subscription formula of fidelity and obedience to God and brothers.

#### **4- Significant factors in your federation's history, theology, ecclesiology and standson ethical issues**

We are a church in training as such our history is very short, in the year 2006 began with a project to plant churches, seminaries, schools, etc. Reformed in the vast territory of Argentina, with much effort and total lack of financial resources, material and human, do keep a constant struggle against theological liberalism, without losing the reality of social problems that affect human different regions of the country, without abandoning the truth of the Gospel.

With great difficulty we incorporated some churches with great fidelity to the Word of God and with no economic resources, aligned to our thinking and ecclesial project. Each mission or church, or point of preaching, missionary work in different fields, family, youth, prisons, social work, theological training, etc.

Unfortunately, some pastors and believers group were influenced by theological liberalism and decided to leave, leaving a deep wound in the body of the church missionary of the Free Protestant Church. It is good to note that this mission in Argentina, arises from the concern and good will of the Reverend E. Larson, of the Reformed Church of the Living Lord in Santa Ana California (OPC), now found as a missionary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Uruguay . Without their efforts

and interests Ubiera not able to start planting the seed of reformed faith in Argentina.

We find fraternal ties with the Rev. E. Larson and the Church of the Living Lord of the OPC.

Our theology is totally reformed, faithfully following Bible, the Word of God revealed to men, as the creeds, confessions and catechisms of church heirs of reform, following closely the theology advanced by John Calvin in his institution of the Christian religion and other authors faithful through the story presented the biblical doctrine.

The vision is reformed ecclesiology, although for reasons of maintaining the line foundation Reformed Presbyterian and believe that the form of government, from the time of Abraham in the Old Testament, God's church has been led by the elders, men gifted by God and called to govern his church. The word priest comes from the New Testament presbyteros Greek word meaning "elder." Free Protestant Church has followed this biblical pattern for church government. The local church elders, along with the pastor, is a "local session or consistory" to care for the spiritual welfare of members.

Also issues of common concern for churches in a given region, such as establishing new congregations and ordination of ministers, are regulated by a body of ministers and elders called "presbytery or classis." While everything is still in training, we are a small group of missions that seek to become a Calsis organized to operate according to the biblical pattern, so we are in the organizing process, which takes considerable time and not without problems of all kinds the lack of budget, maintenance of the shepherds, places and resources, has the organizational problems quickly.

We maintain the biblical and Reformed view of ethical concepts for human beings and society in which life develops, stand firm belief outlined in the catechisms, and confessions of faith, which explains some important points in the development of our ethics. We as a temporary guide book order in Spanish of the OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church) as we find it very useful until we can devise a proper book order following the historic Reformed view and faithful to the Scriptures.

### **5-Church order and polity**

We are using the order book of OPC in Spanish until near future we can devise our own order book of the Free Protestant Church, or take a book from a sister church officially as a proper book. We follow the rules for worship, discipline, governance, etc., with some minor adjustments in our reality, as the church begins to be born in this territory.

### **6-Liturgy and liturgical forms**

The liturgy used is the revised, using the historical model and according to biblical standards. Attention to details and rules of order of participants in worship. Not using nothing to divert attention to what is being done, being the order of the same the following:

Outline of the Order of Worship

+ Greeting (after a welcome highlights the importance and solemnity of the moment of worship, you can use formulas apostolic greeting.) + Bible verses for an invitation to worship. + Prayer of invocation (the Assembly is standing.)

+ sing a hymn (Psalm sung preferred). + Read the Old Testament + Singing a hymn + Reading the New Testament

+ Prayer. The prayer of praise, worship, intercession + Singing a hymn + Gospel reading + Sermon

+ sing a hymn (incorporates the theme of the sermon) + Supper (if you make the worship of the Lord's Supper) + ads (you can also read a Sunday in the Heidelberg Catechism and comment briefly. + Closing Prayer. + Pater Noster (pronounced possibly all). The assembly is to the end of worship. + Gloria (sung or other liturgical phrase) + Blessing (Biblical) + Amen (sung) + Postlude-music (which the shepherd goes out to greet the participants in worship).

### **7-Preaching, sacraments and discipline.**

The preaching is based on the Scriptures, also using as a guide explaining the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession, or canons of Dort.

Our sacraments are two Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as it explains what the confession of faith and the Heidelberg Catechism, based on the Holy Bible.

The discipline is still guided by the book in Spanish of the OPC to make your own or adopt some current and true to the reformed teachings.

### **8-Theological education for ministers and information regarding your current ecumenical relations**

Ministerial training for new candidates that are making in our nascent seminar, virtual and distance learning and face to some, there is no charge money for training, only minimal cost to cover shipping material, photocopies, etc. We need to equip both materially, economically sustainable, etc. To become a training and missionary expansion. Looking for fidelity in content, we rely agreements with the theological seminary of St. Augustine OPC Colombia, and the Reformed Theological Seminary of Colombia, for the recognition of our certificates through MINTS.

At the moment we only have fraternal relations with the Church of the Living Lord of the OPC Santa Ana, through the Rev. E. Larson.

Not having any kind of communion with liberal churches, or strange doctrines. It's so pretend to have brotherly relations and belong to other churches URCNA and files that we have fellowship and communion.

[www.iopresbiteriana.com.ar](http://www.iopresbiteriana.com.ar)  
<http://moderatura.wordpress.com/>

**URCNA Web Oversight Committee Report**  
March 30, 2012

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

The Web Oversight Committee is a Synodically appointed committee with representatives from each Classis, as well as a Webmaster appointed by Synod (a paid position).

Our membership is currently as follows:

Classis Central US	Mr. Jay de Young (Secretary)
Classis Eastern US	Mr. Ray Lackey
Classis Michigan	Mr. Gary Fisher (Webmaster appointed by Synod)
Classis Pacific Northwest	Rev. Adrian Dieleman
Classis Southern Ontario	Mr. Bruce Vrieling (Chairman)
Classis Southwest US	Mr. Kevin Bruny
Classis Western Canada	Mr. Kevin Pasveer

Since Synod London in 2010, the Committee has expended its effort in transitioning to the new Webmaster and updating portions of the back-end code dealing with church statistics, records, and preparation of the live and static Directories. Before these important updates, collecting and maintaining church information was very labour intensive and depended on the Webmaster juggling numerous files and collating information from multiple sources into the online databases and finished directory (with help from other Committee members and the overseeing Consistory). After the update, much of this process has been placed under the direct control of the churches. In addition to reducing the likelihood of transcription errors and increasing the overall quality of the directory, this has freed time for more productive tasks.

With the "backend" of the website in a much better state, our focus has changed to concentrate more on the "look and feel" of the website. The website is run by a content-management system (CMS) which places some restrictions on the degree to which the website's appearance can be changed. We are currently developing a proposal to enhance or augment the CMS to allow us to improve the graphical look of the website, which, though functional, currently lacks visual appeal.

Our partner in producing and maintaining the federation website is Service-Life.com, the creators of the content management system which runs the website behind the scenes. We have been very pleased with this relationship. Service-Life.com is responsive, professional and their rates for development work (design, programming, project management) are excellent. The federation website sees about 300-500 visitors a day or approximately 15,000 visitors a month.

## **Recommendations**

We have a couple of recommendations to bring to Synod for your consideration and request your adoption. They are as follows:

**Recommendation 1:** That Synod thank Mr. Gary Fisher for his work as Webmaster, and re-appoint him for another term.

**Recommendation 2:** That Synod thank the Consistory of the Grace United Reformed Church of Waupun for their oversight of the Committee, and request that their oversight continue until at least the next Synod.

## Report of the Oversight Consistory for the WOC

Esteemed brothers,

The consistory of the Grace United Reformed Church humbly presents this report to synod for our duties as the oversight consistory for the Website Oversight Committee (WOC).

Synod London 2010 (article 57.9 of the Acts) reappointed Grace United Reformed Church (Waupun, WI) as the “oversight consistory for the Website Oversight Committee” until the next Synod. The following tasks were also assigned related to the WOC, either from Synod Schererville 2007 or Synod London 2010:

1. Approve the WOC’s commissioning, posting, and updating of
  - a. A brief “Introduction to the URCNA”
  - b. A “History of the URCNA” (2007 Acts, article 51)
2. Approve the duties of the Webmaster as established by the WOC (2010 Acts, article 57.2)

We approved the two documents the WOC presented to us, as listed in item 1. We have not received duties of the Webmaster from the WOC, as listed in item 2.

In April, 2011, the WOC requested us to rule on a matter related to material posted on the public side of the website. After the request was made the posted material was altered, which resolved the issue, as far as what our Consistory’s duties were. This demonstrated to us the need to have guidelines for who posts what on the federation website.

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 **recommendations** for synod:

1. That Synod appoint a Consistory to serve as the Oversight Consistory for the Website Oversight Committee until the next Synod.
  - a. **Ground:** Synod London’s appointment of the Grace URC was until the “next synod.”
2. That Synod mandate the WOC to develop duties for the Webmaster. These duties are to be approved by the Oversight Consistory.

**Grounds:**

  - a. Stated and published duties promote good order.
  - b. The federation is paying the webmaster but has not specified the labor for which he is paying him.
  - c. Synod London 2010 did not mandate the WOC to develop duties but simply gave authority to do so.

3. That Synod mandate the WOC to develop guidelines concerning (1) who posts material, (2) at whose direction that material is to be posted (i.e. who is responsible for the content of the material), and (3) what type of material is to be posted to the website (public and private/secure sides). These guidelines are to be approved by the Oversight Consistory.
  - a. **Ground:** Stated and published guidelines promote good order.

Sincerely, in Christ

Done in consistory, March 12, 2012

Larry Van Den Berg

Clerk – Grace United Reformed Church

## Report of the *Ad Hoc* URCNA Synodical Rules Committee to Synod 2012

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

With gratitude to God we hereby make our report on an item assigned to the *Ad Hoc* Synodical Rules Committee by Synod London 2010. We are thankful for your prayers and for the blessing of God to be enabled to complete this task for the church. Committee members are Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, Rev. William Pols, Rev. Ronald Scheuers, Rev. Raymond Sikkema, and Mr. Harry Van Gorp. The committee met in Burlington, Ontario on June 23, 2011 in conjunction with a Joint Church Order Committee meeting, thus incurring no additional expense to complete our work. Dr. Nelson Kloosterman was absent with notice.

### **Background**

Classis Central US overtured Synod London 2010 to adopt various definitions regarding the status of advice and affirmations, findings of study committees, and determinations of judicial appeals; and to incorporate these definitions into the Regulations for Synodical Procedure (*Provisional Agenda - Synod 2010, Overture # 14*). Synod London assigned this overture to Advisory Committee 11, which proposed an edited version of the original definitions of the Classis Central overture for adoption by Synod 2010. Synod 2010 then adopted a motion to "commit this matter to the Synodical Rules Committee to perfect these definitions in order to effectively promote sound doctrine without binding officers and members beyond Scripture and the Confessions." (*Acts of Synod 2010, Article 94, p. 50*).

### **Mandate**

The Synodical Rules Committee was given the specific mandate "*to perfect these definitions in order to effectively promote sound doctrine without binding officers and members beyond Scripture and the Confessions.*" Your committee understood this to be a very limited mandate, asking us to work with the specific definitions proposed by Advisory Committee 11 in order to "perfect them." Thus your committee did not endeavour to identify and define the status of other kinds of decisions made by synods, but worked only with those proposed by Advisory Committee 11.

### **Proposed Document**

For comparison purposes, the two documents below are **I**) The definitions and explanations proposed on the floor of Synod 2010 by Advisory Committee 11, with our committee's proposed changes indicated by dark print and strike-thru; and **II**) a clean copy of the committee's efforts to perfect these definitions for "**Appendix D: Definitions and Authority of Synodical Actions**"

**I) Definitions and explanations proposed by Synod 2010 Advisory Committee 11 (with changes):**

**1. Doctrinal Affirmations:** A *Doctrinal Affirmation* is an interpretation of the of the ~~Confessions-Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity~~ on a specific point of their teaching (*Acts of Synod 2004*, Article 76.B.b., p. 29).

1.1 A Doctrinal Affirmation serves the churches by ~~guiding us back to the Confessions and giving clarification~~ **directing them to the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, applying them** in response to doctrinal questions **that have arisen in the churches. The Scriptures, Ecumenical Creeds, and Three Forms of Unity alone may serve as grounds in matters of discipline** (*Acts of Synod 2007*, Article 67.4, p. 36).

1.2 A Doctrinal Affirmation should be received by the churches with respect and submission, and it ~~should~~ **may** not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Form of Subscription*). **The Scriptures, Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of Unity alone may serve as grounds in matters of discipline** (*Acts of Synod 2007*, Article 67.4, p. 36).

1.3 A Doctrinal Affirmation may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

**2. Pastoral Advice:** *Pastoral Advice* is the application of the Scriptures and the Confessions in response to particular circumstances in the **life of the churches**.

2.1 Pastoral Advice expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care. ~~It may not serve as grounds in matters of discipline.~~

2.2 Pastoral Advice should be received with ~~reverence and~~ respect. It would be unwise to ~~contradict or~~ disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. **It may not however, serve as grounds in matters of discipline.**

2.3 Pastoral Advice may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

**3. Study Committee Reports:** A *Study Committee Report* is the **work performed in response of to a Study Committee to the mandate given it by Synod Synod's mandate, presenting one or more recommendations for action by Synod** (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.2 and 5.3.3.a.).

3.1 A Study Committee Report, if received by Synod, serves to recommend action by Synod on the basis of grounds (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 5.3.3.c.3). If ~~these a~~ recommended actions calls for Synod to adopt Doctrinal Affirmations or to provide Pastoral Advice, ~~these~~ **such an** actions should be clearly identified and distinguished as such.

3.2 A Study Committee Report ~~becomes a matter of record in the Acts of Synod as such shall not be adopted by Synod. However, if Synod judges that a Study Committee Report is of value to the churches, it may be referred to the churches for study.~~ Any Doctrinal Affirmations adopted or Pastoral Advice given by Synod **in response to a Study Committee Report** should be received by the churches as agreed in 1.2 or 2.2 respectively.

3.3 A Study Committee Report, ~~as a matter of record, may not~~ **cannot** be appealed; **however**, Synodical actions arising from a Study Committee Report may be appealed as outlined in CO Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

**4. Synodical Judgement:** A *Synodical Judgment* is the answer of Synod to an appeal (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4; Appendix B, 6 and 7).

4.1 A Synodical Judgement either sustains or denies an appeal on the basis of specified grounds determined to be valid or invalid, **responding to each ground of the appeal by a) stipulating whether each ground is valid, and why or why not, and b) stipulating upon which of its grounds the appeal has been sustained or denied** (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B, 6 and 8).

4.2 A Synodical Judgement should be received by the appellants with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B, 7).

4.3 A Synodical Judgement may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31. (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

## II) Proposed Appendix D: Definitions and Authority of Synodical Actions

**Doctrinal Affirmation:** A *Doctrinal Affirmation* is an interpretation of the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity on a specific point of their teaching (*Acts of Synod, 2004*, Article 76.B.b., p.29).

A Doctrinal Affirmation serves the churches by directing them to the Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, applying them in response to doctrinal questions that have arisen in the churches.

A Doctrinal Affirmation should be received by the churches with respect and submission, and it may not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Form of Subscription*). The Scriptures, Ecumenical Creeds, and the Three Forms of Unity alone may serve as grounds in matters of discipline (*Acts of Synod 2007*, Article 67.4, p. 36).

A Doctrinal Affirmation may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Form of Subscription, Regulations for Synodical Procedure* 3.4 and Appendix B).

**Pastoral Advice:** *Pastoral Advice* is Synod's application of the Scriptures and the Confessions to particular circumstances in the life of the churches.

Pastoral Advice expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care.

Pastoral Advice should be received with respect. It would be unwise to disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. It may not however, serve as grounds in matters of discipline.

Pastoral Advice may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

**Study Committee Report:** A *Study Committee Report* is the documentation of the work performed in response to a Synod's mandate, presenting one or more recommendations for action by Synod (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.2, and 5.3.3.a.).

A Study Committee Report recommends an action to be taken by Synod on the basis of specific grounds (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 5.3.3.c.3). If a recommended action calls for Synod to adopt Doctrinal Affirmations or to provide Pastoral Advice, such an action should be clearly identified and distinguished as such.

A Study Committee Report as such shall not be adopted by Synod. However, if Synod judges that a Study Committee Report is of value to the churches, it may be referred to the churches for study. Any Doctrinal Affirmations adopted or Pastoral Advice given by Synod in response to a Study Committee Report should be received by the churches as agreed in 1.2 or 2.2 respectively.

A Study Committee Report cannot be appealed; however, Synodical actions arising from a Study Committee Report may be appealed as outlined in CO Articles 29 and 31 (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

**Synodical Judgement:** A *Synodical Judgement* is the answer of Synod to an appeal (*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4; Appendix B).

A Synodical Judgement either sustains or denies an appeal on the basis of specified grounds determined to be valid or invalid, responding to each ground of the appeal by a) stipulating whether each ground is valid, and why or why not, and b) stipulating upon which of its grounds the appeal has been sustained or denied (*Regulations for Synod Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B, 6 and 8).

A Synodical Judgement should be received by the appellants with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order (Church Order Articles 29 and 31; *Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B, 7)

A Synodical Judgement may be appealed as outlined in Church Order Articles 29 and 31.  
(*Regulations for Synodical Procedure*, 3.4 and Appendix B).

**Recommendations:**

1. That Synod adopt the above **Definitions and Authority of Synodical Actions** as **Appendix D** of our "Regulations for Synodical Procedure.

**Ground:** 1. These definitions serve to effectively promote sound doctrine without binding officers and members beyond Scripture and the Confessions.

2. That Synod declare that the *Ad Hoc* Synodical Rules Committee has completed its work and thank the members for their faithful and diligent service.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. William Pols  
Rev. Ronald Scheuers  
Rev. Raymond Sikkema  
Mr. Harry Van Gorp



## Report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment Necessary for Membership in URCNA Congregations

### Introduction

At its sixth Synod in 2007, the United Reformed Churches in North America took up overture 8, which dealt with the issue of membership in our churches. The original overture stated, “The consistory of the Covenant Reformed Church in Kansas City, Missouri, overtures Classis Central US to overture Synod 2007 to appoint a committee to study the level of doctrinal commitment advisable for communicant membership in our churches” (*Acts of Synod Schererville 2007*, p. 174). The advisory committee subsequently recommended that Synod accede to this overture (*Acts of Synod Schererville 2007*, p. 16). Synod 2007 went on to appointed a six-member committee, made up of the following (*Acts of Synod Schererville 2007*, p. 16):

Rev. Tom Morrison (chairman)—High Desert URC, Apple Valley, CA  
Dr. Nelson Kloosterman (reporter)—Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dyer, IN  
Rev. Daniel Hyde—Oceanside URC, Carlsbad/Oceanside, CA  
Rev. Rich Kuiken—Pompton Plains Reformed Bible Church, Pompton Plains, NJ  
Elder Wil Postma—Covenant Reformed Church, Kansas City, MO  
Rev. Mitch Persaud, New Horizon URC, Scarborough, ON

Synod 2010 was presented with two reports, both signed by three members (*Acts of Synod London 2010*, pp. 691–725). After debate, Synod declared “that neither report...is satisfactory as presented in order to provide guidance to the churches” and therefore “recommit[ed] this matter to the study committee to perfect their report” (*Acts of Synod London 2010*, pp. 61, 62).

The committee wishes to make known several things to the churches by way of preface.

First, over the course of our discussion and work, we discussed on many occasions the state of the question in theory, but because of the URCNA’s existing liturgical forms for profession of faith and adult baptism, the committee has always come back to what does exist in our current forms, not what may be preferable to each of us individually. While each of us may have his own personal perspective, opinion, and belief on this issue, we have limited ourselves to what we understand the forms to say: **those desiring communicant membership in our churches must be able to give assent to what is taught in the confessions of our church** (cf. Affirmation 4 below).

Second, our forms pose a problem because their language is not uniform in answering the question at hand:

- *Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 1* asks, “Do you *heartily believe*” and then goes on to speak of the object of that hearty belief being the doctrine contained 1) “in the Old and the New Testament,” 2) “in the articles of the Christian faith,” and 3) “taught in this Christian church.”
- *Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 2* and *Baptism of Adults: Form Number 2*, asks, “Do you *believe*” and then goes on to speak of the object of that belief being “that the Bible is the Word of God...and that the confessions of this church faithfully reflect this revelation.”

- *Baptism of Adults: Form Number 1* asks, “Do you *assent*,” then goes on to speak of the object of that assent being “all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian church from the Word of God,” and ends with a rejection of errors: “do you also reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine.”

Third, we as a committee have not been mandated either to change or to suggest changes to our synodically-approved forms. Since our forms concern a matter “that pertain[s] to the churches...in common,” any suggestions for changes must “originate with a Consistory and be considered by classis before being considered by synod” (*Church Order*, art. 25).

Therefore, to bring peace of conscience and unity of practice to our churches, the study committee presents the following affirmations as our answer to the question concerning “the level of doctrinal commitment advisable for communicant membership in our churches.”

### **Affirmations & Explanation**

#### **Affirmation 1: We affirm that we are a federation of confessional churches.**

##### ***Explanation***

This basic, fundamental affirmation is the unified basis from which we minister and live as a people in covenant together. In the words of our *Church Order*:

We as a federation of churches declare complete subjection and obedience to the Word of God delivered to us in the inspired, infallible and inerrant book of Holy Scripture. We believe and are fully persuaded that the Reformed Creeds do fully agree with this Word of God and therefore do subscribe to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. (*Church Order*, Introduction)

#### **Affirmation 2: We affirm that every minister, elder, and deacon in our churches subscribes the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort because (*quia*) they agree with the Word of God.**

##### ***Explanation***

Every office-bearer in our churches promises to preserve the confessional nature of the church when they affirm, in writing, the Form of Subscription:

We, the undersigned, Ministers of the Gospel, Elders and Deacons . . . do hereby, 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 Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism of the Reformed Churches, together with the explanation of some points of the aforesaid doctrine made by the National Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-‘19, do fully agree with the Word of God. We promise therefore diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching, teaching, or writing. (“Form of Subscription”)

#### **Affirmation 3: We affirm that it is the responsibility of the pastors and elders of the local church to evangelize the unsaved, catechize converts and covenant youth, and teach their congregations in the aforesaid doctrines from the Word of God.**

### ***Explanation***

This confessional nature of our churches is not only preserved formally in the Form of Subscription, but is propagated practically in particular by our ministers and elders:

The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing...in the ministry of the Word...catechizing the youth... (*Church Order*, art. 2)

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in...ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced . . . They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth . . . actively promote the work of evangelism... (*Church Order*, art. 14)

At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence. (*Church Order*, art. 40)

Baptized members who have been instructed in the faith... (*Church Order*, art. 43)

When adults who have not been baptized desire to receive baptism, they shall first be thoroughly instructed in the doctrines of the Christian religion... (“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 1”)

**Affirmation 4: We affirm that those who desire communicant membership in our churches must assent to the confessions of our churches and evidence an educable spirit for continued growth in understanding.**

### ***Explanation***

All who desire communicant membership must answer in the affirmative the following: Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and the New Testament, and in the articles of the Christian faith, and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in this profession?”(“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 1”)

Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God revealing Christ and his redemption, and that the confessions of this church faithfully reflect this revelation? (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 2”/“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 2”)

Do you assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian church from the Word of God, and are you determined to continue in the same doctrine to the end of your life; and do you also reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine, and promise that you will persevere in the fellowship of this Christian church, not only in the hearing of the divine Word, but also in the use of the holy supper? (“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 1”)

In deriving the above affirmation in light of the relevant forms, the following must also be made clear:

First, “assent to the confessions of our churches” is not the same thing as confessional subscription. Our forms and practice understand that there is a qualitative difference in the level of doctrinal understanding between the office-bearers, who literally *subscribe* their names to the Form of Subscription, and believers, who give a *verbal* assent to the doctrine of the church. For example, our Church Order recognizes that not every male confessing member in the local church is eligible for being nominated to the offices of elder and deacon, but nominees must “meet the biblical requirements” as well as “indicate their agreement with the Form of Subscription” (*Church Order*, art. 12).

Second, “assent to the confessions of our churches” does not mean full comprehension or even awareness of all the nuances of our doctrine nor the ability to defend our doctrine. If this were the case there would be no need for teaching, which is clearly commanded in the Scriptures. What this does mean is that an educable spirit by those who desire communicant membership includes the expectation to read, to understand to the best of their ability, and to have “unity of mind” (1 Peter 3:8) with our confessional documents.<sup>13</sup>

**Affirmation 5: We affirm that those entering into communicant membership in our churches must also promise submission to the government of the church.**

### *Explanation*

Uniting with the church is more than just a verbal assent to doctrine, it is a reality to be lived out in covenantal fellowship with other believers, who are overseen and shepherded by ministers and elders (the “government” of the church):

Do you promise to submit to the government of the church and also, if you should become delinquent either in doctrine or in life, to submit to its admonition and discipline? (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 1”)

Do you firmly resolve always to lead a Christian life, to forsake the world and its evil lusts, as is becoming to the members of Christ and of His Church, and to submit cheerfully to all Christian admonitions? (“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 1”)

Do you promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring and submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere? (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 2”/“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 2”)

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<sup>13</sup> Before our current forms for profession of faith were adopted (Form 1 in 1932; Form 2 finalized in 1976), the denomination from where we originated used “the questions of Voetius.” Gijbertus Voetius (1589–1676) related question one, which read:

Do you confess the doctrine of our church, **at least to the extent to which you have learned, heard and professed it**, to be the true and wholesome doctrine, conforming to the Holy Scriptures?

[*Declaratisne vos doctrinam Ecclesiae nostrae, quousque eam didicistis, audiistis, & professi estis, habere pro vera & salutari doctrina, Sacris literis conformi*].

*Politica Ecclesiastica*, Partis I, Liber II, Tractatus II, Sectio IV, Cap. III [p. 756]. These questions are still used by the Free Reformed Churches in North America (FRCNA).

**Affirmation 6: We affirm that the consistory is responsible to receive persons into communicant membership in a way that is consistent with the Church Order—being satisfactory to the consistory and edifying for the congregation.**

***Explanation***

The consistory must not only keep in mind its satisfaction when interviewing and receiving communicant members, but it must also keep in mind the spiritual well-being of the congregation, before whom new members are welcomed:

Baptized members who have been instructed in the faith and who have come to the years of understanding shall be encouraged to make public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who wish to profess their faith shall be interviewed to the satisfaction of the Consistory concerning doctrine and life . . . (*Church Order*, art. 43)

Persons coming from denominations other than those with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life. The Consistory shall determine in each case whether public profession of faith shall be required . . . (*Church Order*, art. 44)

This is also in keeping with the spirit of *Church Order* article 46, which speaks of the consistory administering the Lord’s Supper “in such a manner as is most conducive to the edification of the congregation.”

**Affirmation 7: We affirm that those desiring communicant membership in our churches must promise to act in accord with the requirements of the Scriptures, the Confessions, and the Church Order.**

***Explanation***

A new member assents to the doctrine “taught in this Christian church” and promises to live in accordance with it “steadfastly” (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 1”). New members also promise to live in submission “to the government of the church” and if they “become delinquent either in doctrine or in life” promise submission “to its admonition and discipline?” (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 1”) Several other forms spell this out in more detail:

Do you promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honoring and submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere? (“Public Profession of Faith: Form Number 2”/“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 2”)

Do you assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here in this Christian church from the Word of God, and are you determined to continue in the same doctrine to the end of your life; and do you also reject all heresies and errors conflicting with this doctrine, and promise that you will persevere in the fellowship of this Christian church, not only in the hearing of the divine Word, but also in the use of the holy supper? (“Baptism of Adults: Form Number 1”)

**Affirmation 8: We affirm that while assent to the confessions of our churches is required for communicant membership, pastoral sensitivity and congregational patience must be exercised toward those who do not yet possess full understanding of parts of such teaching, but who do not disagree with our doctrine.**

***Explanation***

This situation in which we find ourselves as churches, in which believers are so fragmented theologically, demands our commitment to patient pastoral care and diligent instruction of those who desire communicant membership as well as after they do become members. For example, in speaking of other believers, when the *Church Order* speaks of “persons coming from denominations other than those with which we have ecclesiastical fellowship,” it says that they “shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the Consistory has examined them concerning doctrine and life” (art. 44).

Between the time these believers come to one of our churches and their examination before the consistory, the *Church Order* wisely does not prescribe that whole host of pastoral ways and means to transition people into membership, such as hospitality, inquirer’s/new member’s classes, and personal discipleship; however, some of these ways and means are set forth as well as deduced in our current forms:

The ministry of the Word is called, together with the elders, to shepherd the people of God in the Christian life, giving guidance and counsel in all things needful . . . and keeping the church of God in good order and discipline. . . . They, together with the elders, watch over the house of God for the right and fruitful ordering of the faith and life and worship of the people of God (“Form for the Ordination [or: Installation] of Ministers of the Word”).

The work of the elders is that of ruling in the Name of the ascended King, and as servants of the great Shepherd, caring for His flock. It is therefore also the duty of the elders to maintain the purity of the Word and sacraments, to uphold the good order of the church (“Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons”).

To “*shepherd the people of God in the Christian life, giving guidance and counsel in all things needful*” means ministers of the Word and elders must consider the abilities of those who desire communicant membership to understand the Three Forms of Unity. These abilities include, but are not limited to, those coming from a non-English speaking background, those who may have intellectual or mental disabilities, and those who are aged.

**Recommendations**

1. That Synod Nyack 2012 grant the privilege of the floor to the members of this committee when this report is discussed in the advisory committee and plenary sessions.
2. That Synod Nyack 2012 receive this report as fulfillment of the mandate adopted by Synod Schererville 2007.
3. That Synod Nyack 2012 publish this report in a printable format and advise consistories to study and implement this report with pastoral care.
4. That Synod Nyack 2012 dismiss the committee with thanks, taking note of the contribution of Dr. Nelson Kloosterman.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Daniel Hyde

Rev. Rich Kuiken

Rev. Tom Morrison (chairman)

Elder Wil Postma (reporter)

Rev. Mitch Persaud



# **Report of the Synodical Study Committee on Missions**

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## **I. Background**

### **A. Mandate and Composition of the Study Committee**

At its meeting in London, Ontario in July 2010, Synod London adopted the following recommendation:

That Synod 2010 [of the United Reformed Churches in North America] accede to overture 8 to evaluate the need for a full time / part time or volunteer position of URCNA coordinator of missions with this position functioning under the authority and oversight of a specific Consistory. One of his responsibilities would be to edit and publish the federation's mission newsletter.

1. That Synod 2010 appoint a study committee to evaluate the need for a missions coordinator.
2. Mandate:
  - a) That Synod 2010 mandate this study committee, in evaluating the need for a missions coordinator, to make inquiries of NAPARC churches regarding their policies on missions.
  - b) That Synod 2010 mandate this study committee to develop a proposed set of federational mission policies and guidelines.
    - (1) This report should include the possibility of developing a missions coordinator position.
    - (2) This report should include recommendations regarding:
      - (a) How to encourage communication between URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils and congregations.
      - (b) How to obtain updates from the missionaries and church planters for publication in the missions newsletter.
      - (c) How to maintain the "missionsURC.org" website and utilize it to post prayer requests and other matters relevant to URCNA membership – e.g., when and where missionaries are "home" and available for speaking.
      - (d) How to 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).

3. The grounds for this mandate were stated as follows:
  - a) The URCNA has realized substantial growth in the scope of domestic and foreign mission activities of its member congregations and classes.
  - b) While the URCNA stands as one in spirit and truth, there exists among many of our member congregations, missionaries and church planters a sense of standing alone.

Synod London appointed seven members to the study committee, one from each classis of the federation:

Rev. Michael Brown, *Chairman* (Classis Southwest US)  
Rev. Jody Lucero, *Clerk* (Classis Central US)  
Rev. Richard Anjema (Classis Western Canada)  
Rev. Bill Boekestein (Classis Eastern US)  
Rev. Harry Bout (Classis Southern Ontario)  
Rev. Kevin Efflandt (Classis Pacific Northwest US)  
Mr. Paul Wagenmaker (Classis Michigan)

The decision of Synod London to appoint our study committee was taken in response to Overture 8 (stated above) which Classis Michigan brought to Synod London.

## **B. The Committee's Work and Approach to its Mandate**

### **1) Study and Research**

In order to fulfill its mandate from Synod London, the Committee studied the Biblical and Confessional View of Missions (hereafter BCVM), which is the report recommended to the churches by Synod Escondido 2001. Particular attention was given to the BCVM's Joint Venture Model (hereafter JVM) as a foundation for developing a set of federational mission policies and guidelines.<sup>14</sup>

The Committee then researched the mission policies of NAPARC denominations. Rev. Anjema researched the policies of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC) and Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC). Rev. Boekestein researched the policies of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). Rev. Bout researched the policies of the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ). Rev. Efflandt researched the policies of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). Rev. Lucero researched the policies of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Mr. Wagenmaker researched the policies of the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) and Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC). The Committee made evaluations of these policies in light of the BCVM, the polity of the URCNA, and the present challenges and deficiencies we are experiencing in our federation in our attempt to do missions and fulfill our Lord's Great Commission.

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<sup>14</sup> The BCVM in its entirety is posted on the URCNA website ([www.urnca.org](http://www.urnca.org)) under "Federation Documents."

We recognized that most of these denominations had well thought-out mission policies and highly structured denominational mission committees. For example, the PCA has a denominational mission committee composed of fifteen elders: eight teaching (ministers) and seven ruling. They are elected by the PCA's General Assembly to serve for five years, and serve as an "enabling" committee to encourage and enable the PCA at every level to function as a missionary church. Their primary task is to assist in the planting of confessional churches. They also assist in recruiting candidates for mission service, oversee missionary training, and keep the home church aware and supportive of their missionaries.

Likewise, smaller denominations in NAPARC, such as the RCUS and HRC, have established denominational missions committees made up of ministers and elders. The Foreign Mission Committee of the RCUS is responsible to provide reports and recommendations to each annual synod, and then to carry out the program and budget approved by that synod. Membership on the committee is for three-year terms, staggered in order to maintain stability.

As our Committee researched the various approaches to missions taken by NAPARC denominations, it became clear that we could learn a great deal from the missions work of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. While the OPC has a slightly different church polity from the URCNA, their coordination and cooperation in missions have so impressed us that we thought it would be important to provide at least a glimpse of their denominational infrastructure for missions.

The work of the OPC in missions is especially striking when one considers the origin of their denomination. In the early twentieth century, the corruption of foreign missions within the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) led J. Gresham Machen to establish an independent board for foreign missions. This culminated not only in his being deposed from the liberal denomination, but also in the eventual formation of the OPC, which has always maintained a vigorous witness to the world – and one that has not been hindered in the least but rather helped greatly by their denominational coordination. In other words, the OPC did not overreact against particular abuses in the PCUSA by ruling out or minimizing the importance of denominational missions committees. On the contrary, they have established denominational missions committees that have proven to be highly effective and efficient in the planting of churches at home and abroad.

The OPC has a plan for "Worldwide Outreach" that involves the work of three committees – the Committee on Christian Education, the Committee on Home Missions & Church Extension, and the Committee on Foreign Missions. For our purposes here we will take a look at the latter two committees. Both missions committees are composed of fifteen men (ruling and teaching elders) who are elected by the OPC General Assembly (akin to our synod), and accountable to that body for the work that they do. Committee members are elected to a term of three years and eligible for re-election indefinitely. Serving each of these two missions committees is a general secretary and an associate general secretary; all four men are ordained officers (teaching or ruling elders) and paid for full-time employment. The secretaries have no vote on their respective committees, are directly accountable to their committees, and serve at their committee's pleasure. It is noteworthy that the OPC hopes to get about twenty years of service from these four secretaries.

The Committee on Foreign Missions has some oversight of all missionaries in their nine active mission fields (China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Haiti, Japan, Quebec, Uganda, Ukraine, and Uruguay), but this oversight is very general and administrative – setting goals for the missions, providing financial support, encouraging missionaries on furlough, and visiting missionaries on the field. All pastoral/disciplinary oversight, however, is in the hands of a missionary’s presbytery. The Foreign Missions committee also gives instruction to the denomination in biblical missionary principles, formulates mission policy, and encourages each presbytery to develop their own foreign missions committee (most presbyteries have one).

The Committee on Home Missions & Church Extension has partial oversight of those church plants to which it gives financial aid. Church plants that are not financially aided by this committee rely on the local giving of their attendees and of the presbytery to which they belong. Each OPC presbytery (akin to our classis) has its own home missions committee as well, which coordinates with the Committee on Home Missions for the work of church plants.

Funds for the support of all foreign missionaries and numerous domestic church plants, for the remuneration of the secretaries and administrative personnel who serve the two missions committees, and for the support of the Committee on Christian Education are provided by the regular monthly giving of OPC congregations to Worldwide Outreach. To meet the budget of Worldwide Outreach, most congregations simply make their contribution a line item in their own budget based on Worldwide Outreach’s suggested yearly amount for each communicant member. For 2012, the 3.5 million dollar budget of Worldwide Outreach translates to a suggested amount of \$162.66 per communicant member for the year. Each congregation also takes an annual Thank-Offering (usually around Thanksgiving) which also helps meet the budget of Worldwide Outreach. Again, these funds support all three committees of Worldwide Outreach, but about eighty percent of funds collected for OPC missions go directly to the mission field. This is a denomination that makes it a priority to ensure that its missionaries and church planters are fully funded.

## **2) Meeting**

The Committee met on March 28-29, 2011, at Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, CA.<sup>15</sup> In preparation for this meeting, the chairman assigned the study and research noted above. The Committee’s first item of main business was to review the mandate that was adopted at Synod London 2010. After discussing this, the Committee listened and responded to individual members present a synopsis of the mission policies of those NAPARC denominations he was assigned to research. The Committee then spent considerable time discussing and evaluating the BCVM. The chairman presented several questions for the Committee to address, such as: Does the Committee agree that points one through three in the BCVM are adequate for a proposed set of federational mission policies and guidelines? Is the Committee satisfied with the JVM proposed by the BCVM as a sufficient model for doing missions? Has it allowed churches to accomplish what it was designed to do, namely, “maintain the intimate relationship that the missionary has with his Consistory and his church, which at the same time...encourage the

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<sup>15</sup> All the Committee members were present with the exception of Rev. Kevin Efflandt, who was unable to attend due to extraordinary circumstances.

participation of sister churches in this effort?” Does the Committee believe that a synodical missions committee or missions coordinator would assist the churches to apply and follow Church Order Article 47 more responsibly? If such a synodical missions committee and/or coordinator were established, what would they be tasked to do and how would it operate under the oversight of local Consistories?

After an in-depth consideration of these questions, the Committee reached the consensus that points one through four of the BCVM formulate a solid biblical and theological foundation for missions. We have sought to build on that foundation and apply it to our present circumstances. Concerning point four of the BCVM, the Committee agreed that the JVM should remain in place as an option for any classis to use in its support of a particular mission work, whether foreign or domestic. It was duly noted, however, that the JVM has not been implemented for all mission works in our federation. In some cases where the work of church planting is being done within the URCNA, those involved in the work are not even familiar with the JVM. For some church-planters, missionaries, and overseeing Consistories, the BCVM is an unknown document. Thus, the Committee identified the need not only to establish federational mission policies and guidelines, but also to make them widely known in the URCNA. This task, however, seems to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the organization that a federational missions committee would provide. Without such a committee, we will have a greater tendency to function like Congregationalists in our mission efforts.

The Committee also recognized the necessity of developing a structure in addition to the JVM which will more adequately involve URCNA churches in the support of URCNA missions. The Committee believes that the establishment of such a structure will:

- encourage URCNA churches to follow more closely Article 47 of our Church Order;
- encourage URCNA churches to prioritize their giving to URCNA missions *over, above, and before* para-church organizations and non-URCNA (in some cases, non-Reformed) mission works;
- discourage disconnection of a missionary or church planter from the churches of the federation.

The Committee then deliberated at length over how to develop a proposed set of mission policies and guidelines for the URCNA. The chairman presented three possible scenarios of a shared URCNA strategy for missions, serving as a catalyst for the Committee’s discussion and an aid toward drafting a report. These scenarios included a missions coordinator (scenario one), a synodically appointed missions committee (scenario two), and a missions committee with federation-wide coordinated efforts for funding (scenario three).

The Committee discussed the possible advantages and disadvantages of each scenario, including how each model would encourage communication between URCNA churches, missionaries and church planters, maintain a URCNA missions website and newsletter, and keep churches abreast of the disparate financial needs of and pertinent information about URCNA missionaries and church planters. After much discussion and analysis, the Committee decided that a hybrid of scenarios one and two should be included in our proposed mission policies and

guidelines, namely, that synod appoint a standing missions committee, composed of ordained ministers and/or elders who are representatives of each classis, with a chairman who is a minister that functions as the missions coordinator for the federation.<sup>16</sup>

The Committee offers the following report to the churches with the earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit will use the United Reformed Churches in North America to make disciples of Christ to the ends of the earth. To that end, we also pray that the Lord would give us wisdom, passion, and courage in the planting of churches and support of missionaries so that we will fulfill his Great Commission. We are well aware that the mission work of preaching the gospel and establishing true churches through its power is part of the very essence of Christ's church. We pray that we will seek to do this work well and use wisely the time given to us in this life.

## **II. Fulfilling the Great Commission: A Proposal for a Shared Strategy in URCNA Missions**

### **A. Policies**

#### **1) Biblical and Confessional Basis for Missions**

##### **a) Our Own History**

As a relatively young denomination, it has been necessary to spend a great deal of time and energy to purge ourselves from the errors of a previous generation. This has been a painful but necessary process, so that we might be faithful to the scriptures and to our confessions. There must be a concern in every generation to keep the church faithful to the truth of God's Word. However, the church will not be kept pure if we neglect to do what God has commanded of us. The Lord has given his church a most strategic place in the history of the world. We must make every effort to work together in proclaiming the gospel, careful that our fear of a denominational hierarchy does not prevent us from joyfully working together in a fruitful manner, obedient to our Lord's commands. As one URCNA minister put it, "The zeal of those who formed the URCNA in the preservation of our inheritance must now lead us to zeal for the propagation of our inheritance."

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<sup>16</sup> Because the Committee did not choose scenario three as part of its report, a synopsis of that scenario is provided here. A synodically appointed missions committee would be responsible for encouraging the URCNA to give financially in a *shared strategy initiative*, which might run as follows: 1) The synodically appointed missions committee would encourage churches to give to a *shared strategy initiative* and raise annually a set dollar amount. 2) This money would be used to fund foreign and domestic church plants on a sliding scale basis set for a number of years. For example, a new church plant might be funded for four years at the rate of \$80,000 the first year, \$60,000 the second, \$40,000 the third, and \$20,000 the fourth to help get the work started. If 100 churches in our federation contributed \$4,000 annually, we could plant two new churches every year and provide them with financial aid for four years. 3) Potential missionaries and church planters, through their overseeing Consistories, could apply to the missions committee for funding. 4) The missions committee would review applications and be given authorization by synod to approve or deny funding based on a set of synodically approved criteria, such as: a) Number of core families in the initial group; b) potential financial viability within four years; c) recommendation of missionary by his Consistory and classis; d) perceived need in particular geographical area; e) priority of need in comparison to other applicants. Such a *shared strategy initiative* would enable the federation to work together in pooling funds and planting churches. Moreover, a sliding-scale of financial assistance over a set number of years would stimulate church plants with needed funds and encourage them to become self-supportive.

Eleven years have passed since Synod Escondido 2001 recommended the *Biblical and Confessional View of Missions* to the churches in order to encourage us to work together in reaching the world with the gospel. So far we have been very limited in effectively carrying out that task because we are not working together with all of our gifts and resources. With greater mutual support and encouragement throughout our federation, it seems we could accomplish so much more.

As federated churches we have bound ourselves to work together in reaching the nations with the gospel. The Church Order, Article 47, requires the churches “to preach the Word of God to the unconverted” and “assist each other in the support of their missionaries.” To that end, we propose that we 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. We envision that our proposal for a missions coordinator and a synodical missions committee, composed of representatives from every classis, will be an effective means of motivating and helping our churches to do the work the Lord has commanded us to do. It is our hope and prayer that this will be a great help and encouragement to our missionaries and to the elders of the sending churches.

Synod 2010 appointed us to evaluate the need for a missions coordinator, and to propose a set of federational mission policies and guidelines. We first summarize the biblical and confessional foundation on which our proposals rest.

## **b) God’s Mission**

From beginning to end, the scriptures reveal clearly the heart that God has for his lost children, and his purpose to save sinners throughout the whole earth. In Genesis 3:9, immediately after Adam’s fall into sin, God called out, “Where are you?” not only to judge man but also to make the covenant of grace with him, promising to send a savior, the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). Just as God clothed Adam and Eve in animal skins in order to cover their shame (Gen 3:21), so also he would cover all of his sinful people in the perfect righteousness of our Savior who would die for our sins (2 Cor 5:21).

The Lord later called Abraham, made the covenant of grace with him, and promised to bless Abraham and give him and his descendents the land of Canaan. From the very start, God revealed his purpose to use Abraham to bring salvation to people throughout the whole world: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3; cf. Gen 22:18).

Many generations later, fulfilling his covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord God graciously delivered the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex 6:2-8). Out of all peoples, God made them his treasured possession, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5-6). God’s purposes of salvation seemed for a time to become far narrower with Israel, as Moses reminded them: “Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day” (Deut 10:14-15). Still, in his very next breath, God called them to share his love with strangers: “He executes justice for the fatherless and the

widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (Deut 10:18-19). This love of God for sojourners from other nations was demonstrated in a noteworthy manner in the inclusion of Rahab and her Canaanite family within the covenant people of Israel (Josh 6:22-25), and in the inclusion of Ruth the Moabite – both women being ancestors of Christ Jesus, our Savior (Mt 1:5).

Of course, God’s plan to bring salvation to the ends of the earth through the seed of the woman, who would also be the seed of Abraham, took on greater clarity in his covenant promises to King David, to whom God said, “I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:12). The nations would have to bow down to this royal son of God, or else be broken with a rod of iron, and dashed into pieces through his just judgment (Ps 2:9). But in becoming the possession of this Davidic King through the redemptive grace of God, the nations would be blessed in him (Ps 72:17), for he would be their Savior, “a covenant for the people, a light for the nations” (Isa 42:6). To the Christ, God the Father says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

In the fullness of time, God the Father sent his eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be born of woman, to become a true man – the seed of the woman, of Abraham, and of David – that he might live, die, and rise again for our salvation (Gal 4:4ff). But he was slain in order to ransom people for God “from every tribe and language and people and nation,” and he has made them “a kingdom of priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9-10). Throughout redemptive history, God has repeatedly shown that he would not abandon us in our sin but would provide for us a Savior. He has sought out sinners, repeatedly making promises of redemption by grace, which promises he has fulfilled in the person and work of Christ his Son.

### **c) The Church’s Mission**

While redemption has been accomplished through the work of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, it remains for that redeeming work of God to be applied to people throughout all the nations of the world. Reconciliation is likewise God’s saving work for sinners through the death of Christ, yet he includes us in the outworking of that reconciliation through the ministry of gospel preaching. “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:18-20).

After he finished his work on earth and before he ascended into heaven, Christ commissioned his apostles, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:18b-20). These words, known as the Great Commission, provide us with the authority, goal, means, and promise of the church’s mission to the world.

### *The Authority of the Church's Mission*

The basis of the church's mission to the world is Christ's supreme authority. Before the Lord Jesus issued his command to "go," he gave the basis for that imperative in this indicative: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." This is the first part of the Great Commission. The church's mission to make disciples is grounded in what God has already accomplished in *his* mission. As explained above, God is the original missionary and the whole Bible is, in one sense, a mission document. It reveals how the Father sent the Son to accomplish redemption for the elect, and how the Son subsequently sent the Spirit upon his church so that disciples would be made throughout the world. Thus, as the church seeks to fulfill her commission to make disciples, she does so in the power of the Holy Spirit and by the authority of the exalted Christ.

This should bring us tremendous encouragement as we engage in mission work and seek to plant churches on domestic and foreign soil. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the Head of the church. He has authority to redeem a people for himself from all nations. He has authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom the Father gave to him (John 17:2). He will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Mt 16:18). Our mission is to claim the prize which the Lord Jesus already won. The Spirit sends us to plant and water in the field that belongs to Christ, and Christ will ensure the increase, for all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.

### *The Goal of the Church's Mission*

The reason Christ sends his church into the world by his authority is to make disciples: "Go therefore and *make disciples* of all nations" (emphasis added). The main verb in this sentence is not "go" but "make disciples." Christ did not commission his church to make mere converts but to make disciples who are set apart by and devoted to Christ and the Christian faith. The life of Christian discipleship begins at baptism and continues in instruction from God's Word until death. Throughout their pilgrimage in the wilderness of this world, disciples are being nurtured in the faith, trained for good works, and sustained with the nourishment of the gospel.

In order for the lost and unbelieving to enter into the life of discipleship, however, they must first hear the gospel, for "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). It is therefore our duty, and highest calling as the church, to proclaim God's saving grace in Christ to the nations. But it is also a task we must be eager to fulfill, sharing with God a love for lost sinners. He is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet 3:9), for he "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4; CD 2.5; 3/4.8).

In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus gives us a striking picture of God's heart for sinners. The father was out on the road, waiting for his lost son to come home. While the son was yet a long way off, the father ran to embrace him, and called for celebration, saying, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24a). Indeed, there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. If we know the sacrifice the Father made for our

salvation, and if we know the Son loved us so much that he “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men,” and “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7-8), we must then be compelled by the love of Christ to love lost sinners in the most important way – by calling them to repentance and to faith in Christ, the only Savior.

### *The Means of the Church’s Mission*

Christ’s disciples are made through the ministry of his Word and sacraments. Jesus commissioned his church to baptize and teach: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, *teaching* them to observe all that I have commanded you” (emphasis added). It is his Word about his victory that we are called as the church to announce to the world. We are subsequently to baptize those who receive that announcement, and to nourish believers with the Lord’s Supper and continual proclamation of the gospel. Thus, it is through the ordinary ministry of Word and sacrament that disciples are made, and then spiritually nurtured and equipped for good works.

This is clear from the way in which the apostles carried out the Great Commission. After receiving the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), they preached Christ (2:14-36), baptized believers with their children (2:37-41), and began meeting regularly with those who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (2:42). Thus, the first new covenant church was established.

The entire book of Acts goes on to describe how this pattern of planting churches continued, following Jesus’ prophecy that the apostles would be his witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8b). The apostles went throughout the world preaching the gospel, baptizing believers and their households, and planting churches where they appointed elders to oversee the new disciples (Acts 14:21-23). The church, therefore, is not only a people consisting of disciples from every nation, but it is also the place where people are continually being made disciples through the means of grace.

To that end, true churches must continue to be planted where few or none exist. As a federation of churches, we must be committed to the task of making disciples not only in our established congregations but also by planting new ones. Our missionary task, as our Church Order says in Article 47, “is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted,” which is often “performed beyond the field of an organized church.” Such an important task is “to be carried out by ministers of the Word set apart to this labor, who are called, supported and supervised by their Consistories.” Moreover, we recognize that this missionary task of calling URCNA ministers to plant churches takes priority over all other mission-related endeavors, for we have covenanted together that “the churches should assist each other in the support of their [i.e. URCNA] missionaries.”

At the same time, it is important that every member of our churches understands that reaching out to the lost world around us is not exclusively for ordained ministers or those church members who have a special interest in doing evangelism and missions. In Luke 8:39, we read that the man delivered from many demons begged Jesus if he could go with him. Jesus sent him

away with these words: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” He did so, telling the whole city all that Jesus had done for him. In Acts we read that most of the believers in Jerusalem had to flee because of persecution, and those who were scattered went about Judea and Samaria proclaiming the gospel (Acts 8:1-4).

While God does supply his church with men especially called to and equipped for this task of preaching (Eph 4:11-12), redeemed sinners are all made witnesses of Christ, and should not be able to contain within themselves the good news of our gracious Savior. In gratitude we should all seek to bring glory to Christ by sharing his gospel with other sinners. It is not enough to confess Christ within the walls of the church, only before the elders and the congregation. Our Lord said, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32-33). We are called, then, not only to live as salt and light for him (Mt 5:13-16), but also to be prepared to speak to others about our hope in him (1 Pt 3:15).

If we do not remain committed to the primary means of fulfilling our mission by planting churches and evangelizing our neighbors, we will neglect the calling God has given the church. If we are not actively spreading the gospel to our neighbors, communities, and to our nation, then we are withholding the riches of God’s grace in Christ from sinners who have no other hope of salvation. And, as one URCNA church-planter said, “If we are not planting new churches at home and abroad, the Lord’s vineyard among us will wither and die.”

### *The Promise of the Church’s Mission*

Just as his Great Commission to the church begins with an encouraging indicative, so also it ends with one: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20b). This should fill us with confidence as we evangelize our neighbors, send out missionaries, and plant churches. It should cause us to be unashamed of the gospel, and to have an urgency for the evangelization of the lost. Christ has promised to be with his church in all of his authority until the great day of his return. He has already been victorious in his conquest. Our task is to be faithful in announcing his victory throughout the world and instructing those who receive it.

Christ has not yet returned. He is still bringing the gospel to the nations and making his disciples throughout the world. And he continues to use ordinary local churches, even those in the URCNA.

### **d) God’s Mission and the Church’s Mission in Our Confessions**

God’s mission is found repeatedly in our Three Forms of Unity. For example, we read in the Belgic Confession, Article 17:

We believe that our most gracious God, in his admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thrown himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him when he trembling fled from his presence, promising him that he would give his Son, who would be born of a woman to bruise the head of the serpent and to make him blessed.

The blessing of salvation through God's Son is received only through faith in Christ. Article 24 reminds us that true faith is "wrought in man by the hearing of the word of God, and the operation of the Holy Spirit." We should have no expectation that sinners will be saved apart from the preaching of God's Word, and it is precisely for that reason that in a true church ministers or pastors are ordained for the pure preaching of the gospel (Articles 29 & 30).

The Heidelberg Catechism teaches us in Q/A 21 that true faith comes from the Holy Spirit, who works in our hearts by the gospel. Then again in Q/A 65 we are told how we obtain true faith: "From the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the holy gospel and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments." Q/A 84 adds further weight to the preaching of the gospel by reminding us that through this primary means of grace the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers. Finally, Q/A 86 points out that the fruit of the gospel in the lives of believers, namely, their good works, helps win their neighbors to Christ.

The Canons of Dort remind us that "all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death" (First Head, Article 1), but that hope for sinners comes through God's gracious love, which moved him to send his Son to save all those who would believe in him (First Head, Article 2). Then Article 3 reminds us how we come to faith in Christ:

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom he will and at what time he pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?" (Romans 10:14-15).

In the Second Head of Doctrine, Article 5 emphasizes how broadly the gospel should be preached to sinners: "Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel." (See also CD 3/4.8)

Of course, the ministry of gospel preaching is not given to the church only for bringing sinners into the church, but also for nurturing them and discipling them, as Christ commanded in the Great Commission. In the Fifth Head of Doctrine, Article 14 provides a fitting conclusion to why the gospel needs to be preached continuously in all churches: "And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments."

The Three Forms of Unity unite us together through faith in Christ our Savior, but they also stand to unite us in our mission to evangelize the lost world of sinners all around us.

## e) Conclusion

So we see very clearly, both from the scriptures and our confessions, that we as the church of Jesus Christ must be planting churches, evangelizing, and preaching the gospel to the whole world. This is not optional but essential to being the church of Christ. If we neglect the evangelization of the nations, we will lose our identity as the church, which is called to be the salt of the earth. The Lord's warning in Mathew 5:13 is a very serious one: "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet." We must reach out with the good news of the gospel to those still in the slavery to sin. If we are slow to do this, it may be that we need to remember again how precious the gospel is that brought us salvation by God's grace. May we all recover the wonder of God's calling out to us through his Word and giving us everlasting life in Christ by grace alone. As one united federation of churches, may we be found faithful to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel, so that the name of the Lord be praised and glorified.

## 2) Priority of Support

Because the URCNA recognizes its obligation to fulfill the Great Commission, we have written and agreed to follow Article 47 of our Church Order which states:

*The church's missionary task is to preach the Word of God to the unconverted. When this 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.*

Having understood our Lord's mandate to us as his church, it is incumbent upon us that each local congregation is involved in sending out its own missionary or supporting another church within our federation who has called an ordained minister to preach the gospel to the unconverted. Since we have covenanted together to abide by our Church Order, it follows that we need to support one another financially in sending out URCNA missionaries both to the foreign and domestic fields rather than sending funds to other "mission" causes that are not under the authority of one of our Consistories.

Our obligation to URCNA missions is similar to the work of the deacons; they are mandated by God first to care for the needy within the congregation and then, as resources permit, they may help those outside the congregation (see Church Order Article 15; cf. Gal 6:10). In wisdom, we prioritize how we use the funds God has entrusted to us for acts of benevolence. Likewise, we must prioritize how we use the funds God has entrusted to us for missions. Since we are mandated by God to send our missionaries to the unconverted, we are obligated to support our own missionaries first. Every URCNA congregation, therefore, should financially support URCNA missionaries or church plants.

Moreover, every URCNA congregation should prioritize their giving to URCNA missions *over, above, and before* para-church organizations and non-URCNA mission works.

Because of our duty to fulfill the Great Commission and our obligation to our missionaries as articulated in Church Order Article 47, URCNA congregations should not fund para-church organizations or non-URCNA mission works if URCNA missionaries or church plants are lacking funds. It is essential that we have our priorities properly ordered.

### **3) Synodical Missions Committee with Missions Coordinator**

#### **a) Grounds for Forming a Synodical Missions Committee and Chairman-coordinator**

In order to facilitate greater coordination and cooperation of mission efforts within the URCNA, this study committee recommends the formation of a federational missions committee composed of seven elders/ministers, each representing a classis, and an eighth man who serves as the committee's chairman and fulltime coordinator of home and foreign missions. The formation of this committee responds to:

- our need to work together as federated churches, as required by the scriptures, our confessions and our Church Order;
- the substantial growth in the scope of domestic and foreign mission activities of URCNA member congregations and classes;
- the sense of standing alone that exists among many of our member congregations, missionaries and church planters;
- the desire of URCNA churches to be more effective in fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission.

The URCNA historically has had an aversion to the use of standing committees in general, and to the use of any denominational mission board in particular. Article 47 of our Church Order expresses our shared conviction that it is the Consistory of the local church that directly calls, sends, and supervises the ordained servant for the ministry of the Word in any missionary effort. There is much consensus amongst our churches that this direct relationship between the local Consistory and its missionary should remain intact. In other words, there is general agreement within our federation that a synodical missions board should not exist to replace the missionary task given to the local Consistory as outlined in Church Order Article 47.

The same article, however, also states that our "churches should assist each other in the support of their missionaries." To that end, Synod Escondido 2001 received a report from our first study committee on missions that proposed the use of a Joint Venture Model of doing missions. Since that time certain Consistories have established JVM missions committees which typically consist of representatives from the councils and/or membership of other supporting churches in the classis to which the calling/sending Consistory belongs. While the local Consistory continues to be the calling, sending, and supervising body for any mission work, JVM missions committees have facilitated greater cooperation, coordination, and encouragement from other churches and have been used and blessed by God for the greater support of various missionaries.

But not all of our calling/sending Consistories that have engaged in missionary efforts are making use of JVM within their respective classes. Consequently, many other churches within our federation are not as involved in the support of our missionaries as they could be, and some of our missionaries are not receiving the support they need and could be receiving. It is for this reason that our federation, while not replacing the JVM, and while not usurping the missionary tasks given to the local Consistory as outlined in Article 47, should implement a synodical missions committee that will function as an informational and communicative body (comparable to other synodical committees, such as CERCU and CECCA), to the end that all of our churches and classes are more closely connected to our missionaries and their calling/sending Consistories.

We believe that a combination of committee and coordinator will best meet the needs of greater cooperation in missions. A committee without a fulltime coordinator would likely not have the ability to adequately discharge the matters committed to it. The need for regular and sustained communication regarding mission efforts in the federation calls for a greater level of involvement than may be possible for the average committee member. A coordinator without a committee would likely be overwhelmed with the work and could possibly fail to represent the churches and their classes in the work of missions coordination.

#### **b) Functions and Tasks of the Synodical Missions Committee**

- (1) The committee would function as an information hub for URCNA missions, encouraging communication between URCNA missionaries, church planters, councils and congregations by doing the following:
  - (a) obtaining updates from the missionaries and church planters for publication in the missions newsletter and missions page of the URCNA.org website;<sup>17</sup>
  - (b) ascertaining and remaining 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) generally promoting the cause of missions in the URCNA in a way that consistently represents our commitment to function as a covenanted body;
  - (d) gathering information about the work of missions and church planting which could be contributed to a manual of helpful guidelines to assist Consistories, missionaries and church planters in the day-to-day activity of missions (this is addressed more specifically below).
  - (e) producing a report on the work of URCNA missions to each synod.

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<sup>17</sup> The Committee recommends that the [misionsurc.org](http://misionsurc.org) website be discontinued and a webpage on the [urcna.org](http://urcna.org) website be developed for all URCNA mission work, both home and abroad, as is done successfully in other NAPARC denominations such as the OPC and PCA.

- (f) having 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.

(2) Specific Tasks of Committee members:

- (a) Committee members shall assist the Chairman-coordinator in the execution of his tasks; this shall include an annual review of the labors of the Chairman-coordinator to be given to his Consistory and to synod;
- (b) Committee members shall report to their respective classes on the work of the committee;
- (c) Committee members shall maintain contact with domestic and foreign missionaries within their respective classes;
- (d) Committee members shall request financial data pertaining to support of missions from the churches of their respective classes. This financial data will be published to the churches along with amount of money needed to support URCNA missions (in terms of total monies allocated to missions within the federation; the churches providing these monies will not be identified).<sup>18</sup>

(3) Chairman-Coordinator:

- (a) The Chairman of the missions committee will serve as the coordinator of mission related communication for the URCNA;
- (b) The Chairman-coordinator shall maintain contact with domestic and foreign missionaries;
- (c) He shall maintain contact with calling churches for current needs and financial status of their mission work;
- (d) He shall encourage congregations to support financially foreign and domestic missionaries and remind them of the priority of such works with respect to para-church organizations;
- (e) He shall coordinate with the URCNA stated clerk for official correspondence from missionaries and their requests for funding from churches;
- (f) He shall visit missionaries periodically for encouragement, exhortation, and preaching/teaching/counseling, in order to assist the calling churches and missionaries as requested by either party;

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<sup>18</sup> This could be done in a fashion similar to the OPC in their *New Horizons* magazine, in which they publish quarterly pie graphs indicating amount of money needed to sustain foreign and domestic missions. As many ministers, church-planters and foreign missionaries attest, congregations are more likely to respond to such published information than to individual requests from missionaries.

- (g) He shall maintain a missions webpage on URCNA.org (the official website); the missions webpage may include the following:
- i. A media library of URCNA and NAPARC resources relating to missions for the benefit of the churches. Updates relating to the missionaries and church planters under consistorial oversight within the federation;
  - ii. Links to the websites of missionaries and church planters under consistorial oversight within the federation;
  - iii. The Chairman-coordinator shall produce and disseminate to all churches the official federational missions newsletter;
  - iv. The Chairman-coordinator may assist the churches/classes with the organization and promotion of missions conferences;
  - v. The Chairman-coordinator may assist in mission trips and other needs of mission works as requested by missionaries and their overseeing Consistories;
  - vi. The Chairman-coordinator may inform churches when a missionary is available for a call.

**c) Qualifications for Synodical Missions Committee Members**

(1) For committee members:

- (a) Committee members must be ordained ministers or elders.<sup>19</sup>
- (b) Committee members should have experience with missions, foreign or domestic.
- (c) Committee members should possess communication skills, particularly in the utilization of technology.

(2) For Chairman-coordinator:

- (a) The Chairman-coordinator must be an ordained minister of Word.
- (b) The Chairman-coordinator should have had personal experience and direct involvement in planting a church, foreign and/or domestic.
- (c) The Chairman-coordinator should show strength in both pastoral ministry and administrative skills.
- (d) The Chairman-coordinator should possess communication skills, particularly in the utilization of technology.
- (e) The Chairman-coordinator must be able to devote a significant amount of time to the work committed to him.

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<sup>19</sup> Ordained elders implies that the elder is serving in the term determined by his Consistory.

#### **d) Appointment of Members**

##### **(1) Committee Members:**

(a) Number of appointees: One representative shall be appointed to represent each classis of the federation, along with one alternate per classis.

##### **(b) Means of appointment:**

- i. Each classis shall appoint an elder or minister to serve as their representative.
- ii. Until the committee's Chairman-coordinator is appointed at a synod meeting, any committee member may be elected by the committee to serve as chairman *pro-tem*.<sup>20</sup>

##### **(c) Term of appointment:**

- i. The term of service for committee members shall be three years.
- ii. Each committee member shall be eligible to serve up to three terms.

##### **(2) Chairman of committee:**

##### **(a) Means of appointment:**

- i. Each classis is encouraged to nominate a minister of the Word for the position of Chairman-coordinator of the Synodical Missions Committee.
- ii. From the pool of nominees synod shall elect a Chairman-coordinator for the Synodical Missions Committee.

##### **(b) Term of appointment:**

- i. The term of Missions Committee Chairman-coordinator shall be the period between the meeting of two consecutive synods following the synod meeting at which he is appointed.
- ii. Missions Committee Chairman-coordinators shall be eligible to serve up to three terms.

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<sup>20</sup> This provision is included since, as recommended, the committee would be authorized by synod and the positions filled by subsequent Classes before the fulltime coordinator could be nominated and chosen by a subsequent synod.

## **B. Guidelines**

The Missions Committee shall develop a manual of helpful guidelines to assist Consistories, church planters and missionaries in the day-to-day activity of the work of missions. This manual might include the following:

### **1) Guidelines for Compensation and Benefits**

- a) Pay
- b) Housing
- c) Missionary's health care/insurance
- d) Professional expenses
  - (1) car
  - (2) office equipment
  - (3) other
- e) Retirement

### **2) Guidelines for Sabbatical/Home Assignment**

- a) Purpose of sabbatical/home assignment
- b) Suggestions for frequency of sabbatical/home assignment
- c) Suggestions for activities to be involved in:
  - (1) ordination/installation
  - (2) professional development
  - (3) preparing teaching material for the field

### **3) Guidelines and Policies for Cases of Unusual Situations**

- a) Kidnapping
- b) Death threats
- c) Civil disruption
- d) Disease
- e) Natural Disasters

### **4) Guidelines and Suggestions for Filling Out Immigration Papers**

### **5) Other Specific Guidelines**

- a) Personal grievances between missionaries
- b) Whistleblower policies
- c) Sexual harassment
- d) Death

### **C. Budget**

The finances required for this shared strategy should include an annual compensation package for the Chairman-coordinator similar to that of other URCNA ministers (i.e. salary, housing, medical benefits, retirement, etc.), as well as expenses for travel and website management. These costs could be met by federation-wide contributions to the synodical budget and/or the support of the Chairman-coordinator's calling church. Additional finances may also be needed to defray expenses for the Missions Committee for website management, literature, communication and travel.

#### **1) Suggested Budget for Synodical Missions Committee**

Annual meeting	\$6,000
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#### **2) Suggested Budget for Chairman-coordinator<sup>21</sup>**

Salary	\$40,000 - \$60,000
Housing	\$10,000 - \$30,000
Medical	\$6,000 - \$20,000
Retirement	\$4,000 - \$6,000
Office	\$4,000
Office equipment	\$2,000
Communication/phone	\$4,000
Travel	\$15,000
<hr/>	
	\$85,000 - \$141,000

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<sup>21</sup> As with any call of a minister, the compensation package for the Chairman-coordinator will depend upon many circumstances, such as cost of living in the city where he resides, number of dependents, etc.

### **III. Summary and Conclusion**

As a federation of churches, we have the ability to reach the lost and make disciples within our communities and throughout the world. Yet, we have reached the point where we must establish a set of policies for missions if we are to act responsibly in our commitment to the Great Commission. We need a shared strategy that will enable us to be more effective in planting churches on domestic and foreign soil. As a Committee, we are convinced that this set of proposed policies and guidelines represents an important step in that direction. Appointing a Missions Committee and Chairman-coordinator will help us share a common vision and effort for missions, making us more wise with our resources and reliable in our communication. Similar structures in other NAPARC denominations (such as the OPC in particular) have proven to be efficient in funding their missionaries and planting more churches. May God provide us with the wisdom, passion, and courage we need to make disciples throughout the world until our Lord's return.

### **IV. Recommendations**

- A. That synod grant the privilege of the floor to Rev. Michael Brown (chair) and Rev. Jody Lucero (clerk) as well as any other members of the study committee present during the discussion of this report.
- B. That synod adopt this report as the mission policies for the URCNA so that churches may begin implementing it immediately.
- C. That synod appoint the study committee to serve as the interim Missions Committee until the next synod (at which time synod would form the Missions Committee proper through election of its members).

## Report of the Emeritation Study Committee

Synod 2010 (London) gave to this committee the following mandate:

That the committee study and report on the matters of:

- Status of an emeritus minister's credentials.
- Status of membership upon their emeritation.
- The role of Consistory, Classis and Synod in these matters.
- Financial support of emeriti ministers.
- The bearing of potential dissolution of a congregation and/or implementation of Church Order Article 11, or a geographical move, on the above items.
- Review of previous Synodical decisions and Church Order related to the above items.
- How the above mentioned matters are interconnected.

To that end the chairman of this committee, Rev. Harold Miller, proposed a number of matters to be addressed. Those matters were:

1 - The meaning, historically speaking, of "Emeritus" along with how that meaning came to be realized in practice. This question will need to be examined in the light of various synodical decisions (perhaps including CRCNA decisions as well as others), and the resulting official Church Order rulings on the question.

2 - The relationship between the credentials and membership of an Emeritus minister. Is it necessary, financially speaking, for the church at which the man is a member to also hold his credentials? Why or why not?

3 - The relationship between potential government retirement support, the current directive in Article 10 of the Church Order, and possible diaconal interaction with a man who is, even given those first two, in need of financial aid. This question may need two different answers given the current differences in the Canadian and American "government retirement support" systems. Also, it is important to remember that some of our ministers have "opted out" of the American Social Security plan.

4 - What is the relationship between the supervision of the local consistory of such a man and the interaction of the classis or the synod? If we (URCNA) to consider a Federation-wide retirement system what would be the impact of such a system on consistorial supervision, if any?

5 - How do we integrate into our understanding of Emeritation potential developments with local congregations such as church closure or of the Emeritus man desiring to move to a different, smaller congregation or even to help with a church plant work?

6 - Does it seem like this line of consideration respecting Emeritation will work given the development of our Federational system of church governance? What are the other areas of how we live under our Church Order which may be impacted by a new, more fulsome definition of the question of Emeritus?

Each member of the committee took one of the above questions and proposed a response. Those proposals were distributed to committee members via e-mail. We then held a conference call via iMeet on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. Out of that meeting it was decided to survey the churches of our federation on the question of emeritation. A survey was devised and disseminated. We received replies from Escondido URC in Escondido, Trinity URC in Lethbridge, Rehoboth URC in Hamilton, Living Water Reformed Church in Brantford, and Cornerstone URC in London.

Based on the information garnered from these responses and from the reports produced by the committee members our committee offers the following as the fulfillment of our mandate.

#### **STATUS OF AN EMERITUS MINISTER'S CREDENTIALS:**

In order to understand the status of an emeritus minister's credentials it is worth recalling how credentials function in our churches. Ministerial credentials, the permission and authority to administer the Word and Sacraments, are extended to a man by a local Consistory when he is issued and accepts his formal and initial call to the ministry. These credentials are sent from Consistory to Consistory each time the minister receives and accepts a call within the federation (cf. CO Art. 7). These credentials are never the possession of the man himself but are always the possession of the Consistory he serves.<sup>22</sup> Since the office of minister is a life-long office credentials normally are valid for life. The only way a Consistory can revoke the credentials of their minister according to our Church Order is by deposition (Art. 61) or if two years pass without a call after Article 11 has been implemented.

It is also worth thinking about what is meant by emeritation<sup>23</sup>. Our Church Order currently uses the language of retirement. This language is ill-fitting as it fails to emphasize the honour and dignity the office deserves. The word emeritus and its implication of honour is better suited to the office of the minister. Thus, in the words of our Church Order, an emeritus minister retains the "title and dignity" of the office. It is for this reason that an emeritus minister, though he no longer actively serves a local congregation as he once did, is yet permitted to preach and administer the sacraments within the federation.

For these reasons the credentials of an emeritus minister are actively held by his last calling Consistory and remain valid after he has been granted emeritus status.

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22 It is worth noting at this point that while the Consistory holds and maintains ministerial credentials, the federation has a vested interest in this matter. The federation exercises that interest through its Classes. It is the Classis that approves the initial extending of credentials to anyone entering our federation (as a Candidate or from another denomination) by either a Candidacy exam or a Colloquium Doctum.

23 Historically a minister was granted emeritus status when he could no longer fulfill the rigorous work the office required. Health considerations played a principle role in the timing of emeritation. In our day, the age of 65 is considered the year emeritation may be considered. However, the question of ability ought to be the dominate question in the consideration of emeritation.

### **STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP UPON THEIR EMERITATION:**

Distinct from the question of credentials is the question of membership. While the two are closely linked (one should not serve a congregation one is not a member of), they remain separate matters. Ministerial credentials are a matter of the office of Minister. Church membership is a matter of the office of all believers. All believers must join themselves to a local congregation. This includes those believers that serve in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Should an emeritus Minister move to a new community one would expect (even demand) that his membership be moved to a local church. However, since the credentials of the man in question are held by the last church which called him, they remain with the Consistory he last served. To illustrate this point, should a Minister's membership be transferred to a church, even a church which belongs to another federation or denomination, his membership is transferred to that new church but his ministerial credentials remain with the church he last served.<sup>24</sup>

### **THE ROLE OF CONSISTORY, CLASSIS AND SYNOD IN THESE MATTERS:**

The Church Order does not currently require the involvement of any of the ecclesiastical assemblies of our federation, not even the Consistory. Article 10 of the Church simply states, "Those who have retired from the active ministry shall retain the title and dignity of the office of minister of the Word." The language of this Article suggests that emeritation (or retirement) is a decision of each minister individually. Were the Consistory to be involved in this decision the Church Order Article would at least speak in the passive voice: "Those who have been retired from the active ministry" or "Those who have been granted retirement from the active ministry". The practice within our churches is varied on this matter. Some leave the matter entirely to their minister. Others expect the Consistory will be involved in determining when emeritation should take place. In light of the significance of credentials within all the churches of the federation this oversight should be corrected in our Church Order. The Consistory and the federation through its Classis ought to be involved in the matter of emeritation.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF EMERITI MINISTERS:**

The financial support of emeriti ministers is already addressed by Article 10 of the Church Order. There each church is required to provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and should contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. The expectation among our churches is that our ministers will not need

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<sup>24</sup> There are a number of reasons why a minister might transfer his membership outside of our federation. It is the responsibility of the local Consistory to ensure that those reasons are valid. In such a situation his credentials remain valid in our churches. It is also possible that a minister transfers his membership for invalid reasons and so may become subject to Article 65 of our Church Order. In such a situation his credentials would cease to function in our federation.

further financial assistance once they have retired from the active ministry. However, in the instance where a brother needs support, each Classis has been advised to institute a ministerial assistance fund. Such a fund, if properly maintained, should provide financial assistance as needed. It remains, however, the local Consistory's responsibility to ensure that their emeritus minister is well provided for.

It is not at all certain whether the above noted expectation is a workable solution. Some Classis' have not established a ministerial assistance fund. Other potential difficulties may be caused by ministers who have opted out of government plans, ministers who have been unable to save sufficiently during their income earning years, the inadequacy of the minimum 5% contribution<sup>25</sup> to their pension plan, or congregations that are of such small size that they can hardly afford a minister, let alone be responsible for the care of an emeritus minister. Any one of these issues may impact the decisions of ministers and congregations concerning emeritation and / or the issuance of a call to a minister who is nearing retirement. A recommendation is offered at the close of this report to address this issue.

**THE BEARING OF POTENTIAL DISSOLUTION OF A CONGREGATION AND/OR IMPLEMENTATION OF CHURCH ORDER ARTICLE 11, OR A GEOGRAPHICAL MOVE, ON THE ABOVE ITEMS:**

There are three potential scenarios in this question, and each is significantly unique. On the matter of geographical move we have already provided an answer: the credentials remain while the membership is transferred.

The matter of emeritation is not involved in the typical implementation of Article 11. The only instance where these two issues might converge is if a minister is close to retirement age when Article 11 is implemented. If a 63 year old minister, for example, and his congregation were to part ways under Article 11 and he was to fail to receive a call within two years, he could conceivably receive emeritus status. In this way his credentials would remain active though he would no longer serve his local church in the active ministry.

It is in the dissolution of a congregation that this matter becomes challenging. Since credentials are extended by a Consistory to their minister, when the Consistory no longer exists those credentials effectively no longer exist. Simply put, it becomes impossible to fulfill the requirements of Article 7 which state, "Upon receipt of proper credentials from the church he last served, he shall be installed with the use of the appropriate liturgical form..." However, allowing a minister's credentials to fail simply because in God's providence his congregation has

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<sup>25</sup> Acts of Synod 2004, Art. 99

closed is inappropriate and inconsiderate. It does not show honour or dignity to the office.<sup>26</sup> There is and ought to be a commitment to ensuring that in such a situation the minister of the closed congregation may continue to serve in the ministry. However, achieving that goal while maintaining our principles of church government is challenging. How do we maintain Credentials that are the possession of a calling Consistory when that Consistory no longer exists? We offer a solution in the conclusion to this report.

#### **REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SYNODICAL DECISIONS AND CHURCH ORDER RELATED TO THE ABOVE ITEMS:**

The issue of emeritation has not been directly addressed by any of our Synods. We have made decisions which impact on this matter. As has been noted, Synod 2004 (Calgary) decided to establish Ministerial Assistance Funds within each Classis. However, none of our Synods have addressed the matter of emeritation directly. It was addressed directly by the CRC. In 1965 the CRC's Revised Church Order, Article 18, maintained a traditional view of ministerial credentials and the support of emeriti ministers. In that Article we find the following:

*A retired minister shall retain the honor and title of a minister of the Word and his official connection with the church which he served last, and this church shall be responsible for providing honorably for his support and that of his dependents according to synodical regulations.*

However, by 1968 a more flexible view on credentials was adopted by the CRC.<sup>27</sup> As the Church Order of the CRC still reads,

*A retired minister shall retain the title of minister of the Word and the authority, conferred by the church, to perform official acts of ministry. Supervision shall remain with the church last served unless transferred to another congregation. The supervising church shall be responsible for providing honorably for the minister's support and that of qualifying dependents according to synodical regulations.<sup>28</sup>*

When our churches wrote the original Church Order of the URCNA they returned to the traditional view of credentials. Based on Article 10 one could reasonably infer that the emeritus minister's credentials and supervision remain with the church last served, and thus are not transferrable to a different church the minister may wish to join. Though we have not addressed

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<sup>26</sup> Such a treatment of ministerial credentials would also do harm to smaller congregations and church plants. Any congregation that might dissolve due to its small size would find it difficult to obtain a minister since the dissolution would result in his termination in the ministry.

<sup>27</sup> Van Dellen and Monsma's comments in their Revised Church Order Commentary ought to be read as opposing these changes.

<sup>28</sup> The Church Order of the CRCNA also provides a method for transferring the credentials of an emeritus minister.

this matter directly, there are Synodical decisions that impact this matter. The Proposed Joint Church Order does address this matter. The PJCO Committee did state,

*...that the responsibility for emeritation ought to be retained by the consistory of the church in which the minister last served, but that the other churches are obligated to help where this is necessary.*

Article 10 of the PJCO retains the traditional view that the official “bond” {or credentials} remain with the church last served. And while there is no restriction on the “cooperative assistance” by the churches for the support of an emeritus minister, the responsibility for providing such assistance remains with the church last served. Equally significant, the PJCO envisions the local church obtaining the concurring advice of Classis when granting emeritation.

#### **HOW THE ABOVE MATTERS ARE INTERCONNECTED:**

All of these matters are interconnected by the importance of the office of minister. As Reformed believers we hold the concept of office in high regard, and wisely so. It is because of this high view of office that we expect all office-bearers to fulfill the work given them. We hold our ministers accountable for their work and ensure that they are well-suited to the congregation they serve. We are careful to ensure that men are qualified for the ministry and that they are willing to surrender their lives in service to the King. Yet, this high view of office also means that we ought to show the office the respect that it deserves. In the words of the Church Order we ought to give the office of minister the title and dignity that it deserves. This means recognizing by what authority a man serves in the ministry and the church’s obligation to their minister. By thus holding a high view of the office we are simply holding a high view of Christ’s on going work upon this earth. It is He who gives us men to serve in the ministry, equips, blesses and uses them in His Church. For this reason we do well to honour the office of minister, both in the active ministry and in the days of emeritation.

#### **TOWARDS A SOLUTION:**

As has been mentioned, our current Church Order makes no reference to any of the Ecclesiastical Assemblies in its treatment of emeritation. This is an oversight that requires correcting. The Church Order is explicit in the involvement of Consistory and Classis for those entering the ministry. The Church Order ought to be as explicit on the matter of emeritation. The rationale for this is quite simple. First, ministerial credentials are not the property of the minister; they are the property of the calling church. Therefore the calling church alone can grant emeritus status to their minister. Second, ministerial credentials are a matter of concern to the entire federation. Once a man is given credentials within our federation he is allowed to administer the Word and Sacraments from every pulpit in our federation and in the federations of those with whom we

have Phase 2 relations. For this reason the local Consistory and the Federation should be involved in a meaningful way. The Church Order ought to be amended to reflect this.

Furthermore, it should be the practice of our churches that the credentials of a minister only transfer when a call is issued and accepted from another congregation. Credentials are extended and maintained by the Consistory of the church a man serves. In light of this principle, when a minister is granted emeritation his credentials ought to remain in the last church which has called him. A minister may not simply ‘transfer’ his credentials, nor may his Consistory unburden themselves of the responsibility for overseeing his ministry. The local Consistory must fulfill the obligation it placed itself under when it extended a call. For this reason, as a general rule, ministerial credentials ought to remain with the local Consistory. Regardless of which church an emeritus minister attends, he is to be viewed as a minister under the authority of the church which called him.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, though there are a number of possible solutions to the challenges which the closing of a congregation poses we ought to seek that solution which best reflects our understanding of ministerial credentials and the lifelong service expected of all ministers. In the instance of a congregation’s dissolution the following ought to be observed regarding the ministerial credentials of the minister. In order to oversee his work and ensure that such a man is provided for one of the local congregations in the Classis ought to assume responsibility for his credentials. It ought to be a congregation in the Classis he last served since they would know him better than any other congregation and would be best suited to oversee his ministry. What is more, if emeritation is granted when the church dissolves it is likely that the minister will remain in the area he served. The decision to receive the credentials of such a Minister ought to be made by a local Consistory in conjunction with the Classis. In the instance when a minister is younger than 65 and his congregation dissolves he should not be granted emeritus status. If a man is over 65 and the congregation dissolves he may be granted emeritus status. In either circumstance if such a man requires financial assistance the local church should ensure he is provided for in conjunction with the Classical Ministerial Assistance Fund. If the brother is not granted emeritus status he is encouraged to seek a call within our churches. Until such a call is issued he ought to serve the churches and his family in a suitable manner and under the oversight of his local Consistory. During this time the principle of Article 9 should be maintained. Only after he turns 65 or after he becomes ill and therefore unable to fulfill the work of the ministry should he be granted emeritus status.

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<sup>29</sup> Van Dellen and Monsma have an informative section in The Revised Church Order Commentary which deals with this matter (pgs. 74-79). On page 78 they write, “To be emerited by a church presupposes the fact that the minister in question was the minister of that church. One cannot retire from a church which he has not served, as one cannot become the professor emeritus of a school whose professor he has not been.”

**IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:**

1. That Synod 2012 amend Article 10 of the Church Order in the following manner:

Each church shall provide honorably for its minister and his family while he is serving that church, and shall provide for the retirement and disability needs of its minister. In the event of the minister's death, adequate provision shall be made for the support of his dependent wife and children.

A minister who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or other personal disabilities, shall retain the honour and title of Minister of the Word, and shall retain his official bond with the church he last served, which shall provide honourably for his support, with the assistance of the churches if necessary.

The emeritation of a minister shall take place with the approval of the consistory with the deacons, and with the concurring advice of classis.

In the event of the dissolution of the church to which the emeritus minister is officially bound, the Consistory and the emeritus minister shall promptly request the advice of classis for the purpose of having his credentials held by another church of the federation in a manner consistent with Article 7 of the Church Order.

Current reading of Article 10:

Each church is to provide adequately for the minister of the Word and his family while he is serving that church, and should contribute toward the retirement and disability needs of its minister. Those who have retired from the active ministry shall retain the title and dignity of the office of the Minister of the Word.

***Grounds:***

- a) Ministerial credentials are a matter of the churches in common and ought to be addressed in this way.
  - b) Our current church order does not address the matter of ministerial credentials as it relates to emeritus ministers.
  - c) This change to our church order will adequately clarify the status of the credentials of the increasing number of emeritus ministers in our federation.
2. That Synod establish a committee mandated to give advice concerning the compensation and retirement concerns faced by URCNA ministers, to determine if the present course of action of the URCNA churches sufficiently addresses these matters without undue hardship on either the congregations or its ministers. This mandate ought to include, but not be limited to:

- a. Outlining biblical principles relative to ministerial compensation, addressing the question of benevolence or merit based payment.
  - b. Consideration of all past Synodical decisions relative to compensation and retirement and the effectiveness of those decisions.
  - c. Projecting the future needs of URCNA ministers relative to their retirement needs (25 - 40 years).
  - d. Any other financial issue relative to compensation and retirement concerns deemed appropriate by Synod so as to put this question to rest and establish a workable framework for many years into the future.
3. That Synod 2012 receive this report and release the committee from its work.

Humbly submitted:

Rev. Harold Miller, Chairman

Rev. Joel Dykstra, Reporter

Mr. Art Miedema

Rev. Dennis W. Royall

Mr. Mark Van Der Molen

Rev. Hank Van Der Woerd



**Report on Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission  
on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRJC)  
to Synod 2012**

Synod London 2010 adopted the following recommendation:

That Synod appoint Faith URC of Beecher, IL, to send one observer in two years to the annual, two-day meeting of the PRJC, at URCNA expense (should not exceed \$1,000 per trip), and to submit reports on the PRJC to future synod meetings. This is in accord with Recommendation 3 of the report of the PRJC (Article 132, Acts of Synod London 2012)

The consistory of Faith URC (Beecher, IL) sent an observer to attend the February, 2012 meeting in Atlanta. Minutes for the other PRJC meetings have been received and reviewed. We report our observations below.

**I. Brief Review of PRJC Function & URCNA Involvement**

Synod Schererville 2007 voted to apply for affiliate membership in the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRJC). This decision was based on the fact that no one may serve as a U.S. Military chaplain without an ecclesiastical endorsement from “a qualified Religious organization.”

The PRJC’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 four member denominations: the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). It is also the endorsing body for three associate member (non-voting) denominations: the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Ko-Shin) (KPCA), and the URCNA. Membership in the PRJC is limited to NAPARC denominations.

The Commission meets together twice per year—once in person (usually in Atlanta, Georgia in February), and once more usually via electronic means. The Commission oversees the work of the full-time executive director, (ret) Chaplain (Brigadier General) Douglas E. Lee, who is assisted by an administrative assistant (Gary Hitzfeld) and one to two part-time associate directors who help with visiting the chaplains.

The executive director actively attends military and endorser meetings, attempts to visit the chaplains annually (assisted by the associate directors), conducts training for the chaplains, leads various retreats and seminars, oversees a quarterly newsletter with reports from the chaplains, serves as a liaison in a variety of ways, and among other duties, intervenes when issues arise between a superior officer and one of the PRJC chaplains.

The PCA has the most prominent role in the PRJC, yet the Commission is governed jointly by member denominations whose commissioners work well together and serve to influence positively one another.

The total number of military chaplains currently endorsed by the PRJC is 181 (this includes: 14 ARPC, 21 KAPC, 6 KPCA, 15 OPC, 121 PCA, 3 RPCNA, and 1 URCNA). The PRJC also endorses 80 civilian chaplains (including 11 OPC and 66 PCA).

In addition to the one URC Army chaplain who is endorsed by the PRJC (Rev. Andrew Spriensma of Faith URC, Beecher, IL, who is now stationed in Germany and anticipating deployment to Afghanistan), the URCNA also have one “Chaplain Candidate” on the PRJC roles, Mr. Jonathan Zuill (Christ URC, Santee, CA) who is engaged in seminary studies and working toward the Army Chaplaincy.

## **II. Recent Decisions & Actions of the PRJC**

### **A. ARPC Membership**

The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC) applied for full membership in the PRJC. They were first granted associate membership (07/14/12) to expedite their transfer from their current endorser, the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel (endorsing body of the United Presbyterian Church of the USA). Their approval for full membership was approved by the PRJC (02/22/12), but still requires the approval of the broader assemblies of the four full-member denominations.

### **B. Name Change**

The Commission voted to change the name of the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (aka: PRJC) to Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (aka: PRCC), subject to the approval of the General Assemblies and Synod of the member denominations. The change was requested because the current name has proven cumbersome and the shorthand title is unclear since “PRJC” does not actually contain anything about “chaplain” or the purpose of the Commission (02/22/12).

### **C. Associate Member Participation**

Since there are few guidelines governing the participation of associate member delegates in the PRJC meetings, the Commission sought to bring some clarity. The Chairman is to appoint an *Issues and Concerns Committee* to provide guidance in this area (02/22/12).

### **D. Homosexuality in the Military**

The most significant concern to come before the PRJC in the past three years has been the issue of open homosexuality in the U.S. military. Since the U.S. Congress repealed the so-called “Don’t Ask – Don’t Tell” policy, thus allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the military, the PRJC has been closely watching how this will be enacted and what it will mean for Christian chaplaincy.

The PRJC has sought to advise and protect their chaplains by adding a lengthy section to its Chaplains’ Manual: Policy and Guidance Handbook. Now, in addition to five other sections (including “Women in Combat” and “Praying in Jesus’ Name”), the handbook includes a section on “Religious Ministry and Homosexuality.” This section was added in 2010 and further revised in 2012. This section repeatedly states that chaplains cannot be required to compromise their beliefs at any point, and are expected to minister graciously yet firmly. At one point it states:

*If a chaplain is challenged to cease and desist from addressing what is wrong with homosexual thinking or behavior, or to cover up his belief that it is wrong, especially if by one who is senior to the chaplain, we expect our endorsed chaplains to seek God’s*

*strength not to waver, even if unjustly accused of failing to support the command, or some aspect of the command's policies, such as equal opportunity programs. Further, if placed in such a situation, we encourage the chaplain promptly to contact the PRJCCMP for such assistance and protection as we are able to provide.*

Since the whole of this chapter provides a window into the history of the current issue, the rights of chaplains to minister faithfully, and the faithful counsel of the PRJC, it may be worth reading in its entirety. (You can find it at:

<http://pcamna.org/chaplainministries/chaplainmanual.php> It is the very last pages of the *Chaplains' Manual* and there is also a separate link to this section under *Reversal of DADT*.)

The PRJC executive director, Doug Lee, also serves beyond the PRJC in defending the rights of military chaplains. He serves on the steering committee of the recently founded Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, born out of the "Don't Ask – Don't Tell" repeal issue. This organization has had opportunity to work with several congressional representatives, give interviews to media outlets, and publicly address the issues.

### **E. Budget, Dues & Contributions**

The 2013 budget of the PRJC is \$409,831. The PRJC is supported primarily through the contributions of member denominations and donations from interested individuals and churches. Income is supplemented by the dues of endorsed chaplains.

Dues are required of full/associate member denominations in the amount of \$500.00 per endorsed chaplain. The military chaplains themselves are also required to pay dues calculated as a percentage of their base pay. For active duty military chaplains dues range from \$348 to \$996 per year.

The PRJC is looking for supporting churches and individuals. The PRJC eagerly seeks additional funds not only to meet the current budget but to enhance ministry by increasing chaplain conferences & retreats (marriage, training, reintegration) and to supply literature and resources for chaplains.

The PRJC also wants to make known that it is now an approved Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Charity. United States federal employees can give to the PRJC by selecting CFC #38370 Mission to North America (PRJC).

### **III. Evaluation**

We continue to be impressed with the faithfulness, diligence, and helpfulness of the PRJC. This Commission is made up of men of confessionally Reformed, NAPARC churches who are eager to encourage and protect ministry that is faithfully Reformed. Most of them have significant military experience and many are retired chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces. They carry with them a wealth of ministry experience and military knowledge, and they possess useful military and political contacts and influence. They demonstrate a deep-seated love for the Lord and for the men and women of the Armed Forces, especially the Presbyterian and Reformed chaplains they oversee. The PRJC is dedicated to helping its chaplains remain faithful to the Reformed faith while working in a challenging pluralistic atmosphere.

The PRJC has proven hospitable and helpful to the URCNA. When the URCNA sought associate membership in the PRJC in 2007, the Commission honored the URCNA request that they add the *Three Forms of Unity* as an alternative to the Westminster Standards in their policy statements. Our URCNA Chaplain, Rev. Andrew Spriensma, has found the PRJC to be a great source of encouragement, guidance, and assistance. Early on, the executive director mitigated

the fall-out when Chaplain Spriensma declared himself unable to conduct an Army chapel service with the involvement of a woman as a worship leader.

As an associate member of the PRJC, our URCNA chaplains enjoy the same rights and privileges as those from full member denominations; however, the URCNA is not entitled to voting privileges on the Commission. Associate members are not obligated to attend PRJC meetings, but they are permitted and encouraged to do so.

Since it does not seem wise for the URCNA to take on full membership responsibilities, having only one PRJC chaplain and one chaplain candidate, the URCNA should formalize a method for supporting its associate membership status. This should include specifying a contact/liaison to serve on an ongoing basis, with the tasks of receiving and replying to communication from the PRJC, observing their meetings, and reporting to URCNA synod meetings.

There is a question as to whether and how often URCNA representatives should be sent to the annual, face-to-face, PRJC meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. Three considerations should be noted: 1) While meeting attendance is not required, occasional participation has proven beneficial and participation is recommended by the PRJC executive director; 2) Attendance does not appear to be absolutely essential since the minutes of each meeting are distributed; nonetheless, a particular issue may arise at some point where it might be important to be present for discussion and input. 3) As noted earlier, a PRJC committee has been tasked with providing guidance concerning the participation of associate member delegates in meetings of the PRJC. Perhaps forthcoming recommendations will make clearer what is permitted and expected of associate member denominations. Thus, given these considerations, maybe it would be wise to leave attendance at meetings to the discretion of the appointed liaison.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

1. That Synod 2012 appoint one consistory to serve indefinitely as the URCNA liaison to the PRJC, and to request this consistory to submit reports on the PRJC to future synod meetings.
2. That Synod 2012 authorize the appointed consistory to send one or two observers to PRJC meetings occasionally, at URCNA expense, leaving it to the consistory's discretion whether and when such observers will be sent. Costs should not exceed an average of \$500 per year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Todd Joling  
Consistory of Faith URC  
Beecher, Illinois

## **Report from the Canadian Board of Directors of the URCNA to Synod 2012**

Brothers in the Lord,

In the two years since our last Synod the Board of the URCNA Corporation (Canada) has been busy implementing the decisions of Synod London (2010). Of particular concern has been the work of the Joint Venture Agreement and its Board. As a Board we decided that it would be best that all our federational expenses be drawn from the same bank account. Up to this point, expenses incurred by Americans were paid by the Treasurer of the URCNA Corp. (USA) and those incurred by Canadians were paid by the Treasurer of the URCNA Corp. (Canada). However, there are expenses we have in common, such as the Stated Clerk and the Website. These funds have been paid by the Canadian Treasurer, and continue to be paid by the Canadian Treasurer out of the Joint Venture Agreement account. Both Corporations contribute to a joint account out of which these bills are paid. For this reason, and to simplify matters even further, we determined to pay all the bills for the Federation from this one bank account.

The principal work of our Corporation has been implementing the decisions of Synod London regarding the JVA. Soon after Synod London we asked all the American churches of the URCNA to submit causes for support by our Canadian churches. Those causes were discussed and approved in accordance with the guidelines provided by Synod London. Once the list of causes was approved, the Board of the JVA communicated that list to the Canadian churches for their consideration. The Canadian churches began to take up offerings for these causes. As the JVA Treasurer began processing those monies, it became apparent that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) was taking a tough stance on charities that send monies south of the border. To ensure that we are in compliance with the CRA, the JVA Treasurer contacted the Canadian Council of Christian Charities for advice. With that advice in hand, the Board of the URCNA Corp. (Canada) met again and it soon became apparent that the requirements of the CRA make sending monies to our American churches from Canada extremely difficult and time consuming, both for the Board of the JVA and for the recipients of the financial support. Failure to comply with the CRA's regulations will result in serious consequences for the Corporation and for the Canadian churches of the URCNA. For this reason we think it best to cease supporting American causes with Canadian monies. Due to the complexity of this matter, the committee is asking that Synod permit the Secretary and the Treasurer to explain this matter to Synod in one of its plenary sessions.

In order to ensure that the matters of the Corporation are properly represented at the Synod, the Board of Directors committed to sending the Treasurer to Synod each year. This is intended to ensure that any questions regarding the finances of the federation can be answered to the satisfaction of the Synod.

Finally, Rev. Richard Stienstra, a member of the Board of Directors since the beginning of the Corporation, has asked to be relieved of his position as Director. The Board accepted his request and wishes to express its gratitude to Rev. Stienstra for the years of service he offered the churches in this work.

In light of the preceding the Board of Directors **recommends** the following:

1. That the Synod allow the Canadian Treasurer Pam Hessels and Rev. Joel Dykstra an opportunity to address the assembly in order to explain the challenges presented by the JVA. Since the Board has deemed it best to cease supporting American causes with Canadian dollars at this time we would like to explain this matter to the assembly.
2. That the Synod accept the Board's plan to pay all federation bills through the JVA and encourage all committees to submit their finances to the Treasurer of the JVA, Pam Hessels.
3. That the Synod appoint Rev. Henry Van Olst as replacement to Rev. Richard Stienstra on the Board of Directors. Rev. Van Olst serves the Rehoboth URC of Hamilton and so is geographical proximate to the other Directors. Rev. Van Olst's background in accounting will be an asset to the Board.

May the Lord of the Church continue to bless our work as we seek to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto the Lord what is the Lord's.

Humbly submitted by the Board of the URCNA Corp. (Canada)

Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, Chairman

Rev. Joel Dykstra, Secretary

Mr. Stan Antonides

Mr. Cliffe Hodgkinson

## **Report from the US Board of Directors of the URCNA to Synod 2012**

Brothers,

The US Board of Directors met on January 26, 2012 at Cornerstone URC, Hudsonville, Michigan.

The US Board has appointed a new US Treasurer for the URCNA, Mr. Bob Huisjen, CPA, from Trinity URC, Caledonia, Michigan, who began his duties on January 1, 2011. He is a functionary of the US Board of Directors per the request made to Synod 2010.

US Board Chairman Lynn Brouwer and US Treasurer Bob Huisjen reported that the US Corporation papers are current and are being updated annually for our Federation.

The US Board **MMAS** to create a job description for the URCNA-US Treasurer (see attached).  
**Motion Passed.**

The **US Board requests that Synod empower** the US Board to appoint an Interim Treasurer in the event the treasurer is no longer willing or able to fulfill the position and responsibilities of the office.

The **US Board requests that Synod empower** the US Board to appoint a new board member on an interim basis to fill the position of any member no longer willing or able to fulfill his position. Due to the varying time intervals between Synods and how best to accomplish alternating terms of members to avoid all members' terms of office expiring at the same time, the US Board, in addition, **MMAS and Passed** the following:

- 1) **A request that Synod extend the appointment** of Lynn Brouwer and Glenn Hop from the current expiration date of 2013 up to the Synod date following the 2012 Synod.
- 2) **A request that Synod 2012 reappoint** Henry Gysen, Bob Huisjen, and John Velthouse for a term corresponding to two consecutive terms of Synod following the 2012 Synod.

Bob Huisjen and Lynn Brouwer periodically meet with the International Board of Directors to develop a Federative Joint Venture Agreement (JVA), a mechanism whereby Canadian federation churches are able to financially support the work of the URCNA in the United States, including foreign missions and other outreach organizations which are under the oversight of URCNA consistories in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). The Federative JVA has now become functional and is available to the churches by making a request to the International Board of Directors.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynn A. Brouwer

Chairman of the US Board of Directors of the URCNA  
February 25, 2012



## URCNA-US Treasurer Job Description

### Accountability

- The treasurer is accountable to the URCNA-US Board

### Qualifications

- Must be a member in good standing in a URCNA church
- Must be a member who is above reproach
- Must have the ability to perform the role of the treasurer of URCNA
- The US treasurer is not bonded. There is no requirement to be bonded as the money currently flowing through the organization does not warrant the expense of bonding.

### Service

- The treasurer can be chosen for a three-year term
- The treasurer can serve a maximum of three consecutive terms
- Remuneration for the treasurer shall be \$2,000.00 annually, in addition to expenses approved by the chairman of the board

### Duties

- Maintain all bank and checking accounts.
- Deposit gifts made for the use of the URCNA treasury.
- Review and approve funds for disbursements.
- Make all disbursements of funds.
- Maintain separate funds for:
  - General Fund
  - Hymnal Fund
  - Web Site
- Be a good steward of the money in the General Fund and the Hymnal Fund by the use of Certificates of Deposit.
- On average, keep about \$10,000 in the General Fund and the rest in CDs.
- On average, keep about \$5,000 in the Hymnal Fund and the rest in CDs.
- Use a financial package like Quicken or Quick Books.
- Create a unique email for people to use to contact the US treasurer. This is to be done through the URCNA website and have the Stated Clerk advertise that email address to the member churches.

### Monthly

- Reconcile bank statements with checking accounts.

### **Quarterly**

- Create a "year-to-date" assessment of Income and Expenses.
- The quarter dates are 3/31; 6/30; 9/30; 12/31.
- The 12/31 date is also the end-of-year date.
- This should be done after the bank statements have been reconciled through the end of that quarter. As a goal, try to publish to the Stated Clerk the report one month after the close of the quarter.
- Report Starting and Ending balances.
- Provide a summary of giving.
- Note any exceptions or unusual activity
- See prior quarterly reports for examples.

### **Bi-Yearly**

- Using the 2nd quarter (6/30) and the end-of-year (12/31) statements, reconcile with the Canadian treasurer the payment split of 65% vs 35% for US and Canada.  
**Background:** This was a result of Synod 2007, which recognized that Canada was bearing a greater percentage of the financial burden relative to the number of families in Canada. What the treasurers try to do is, twice per year, balance the expenses that are considered shared expenses. An attempt is made to normalize the cost into US dollars, add the Canadian and US portions, and then calculate the 65/35 split and reimburse whichever side - (so far it has always been the US reimbursing Canada). See prior examples. The normalization is normally done in US dollars because to-date it has been the US who is reimbursing Canada.

### **Yearly**

- The fourth quarter is also the end-of-year statement. Included with this statement are your recommendations for the upcoming year. Included in this are:
  - Mileage reimbursement for the year based on IRS recommendations
  - Reminder of the reimbursement guidelines
  - Update on recommended "askings"
  - Observations on what the church could do better
  - Statistics on giving
- See prior yearly reports for example
- Print a copy of the register of all transactions for the year

### **Independent review**

- For the amount of money that flows through URCNA, it is not currently required by the US government to be formally audited. It is recommended that the books be independently reviewed as directed by the Board annually.
- Revenue Canada requires a copy of all receipts if they decide to do an audit. Since the US has shared expenses with Canada, a copy of all US receipts (income and expenses) is made and this package is mailed to the Canadian treasurer after the end-of-year statement is generated.
- If necessary, generate a 1099 Misc (and associated paperwork) for any honorarium paid over \$600.00 (the current IRS guideline).

### **Synodical Years**

- During a synodical year, all the end-of-year treasurer's reports since the last Synod should be resubmitted to the Stated Clerk for inclusion in the Synodical Agenda.
- Any recommendations that need to be made concerning financial matters, policies, and procedures should be included in this report as well.

### **As-required**

- Pay bills
- Reimbursements require receipts. Receipts can be e-mails, photocopies or faxes.
- With rare exception, should include an approval form signed by the committee chair. Some expenses do not have a committee chair. Committee chairs may send their approval via e-mail.
- Print it all as part of the record.
- Travel is tied to committees and paid out of the General Fund.
- All expenses are tied to the General Fund with the two noted exceptions below:
  - The Hymnal Fund is for the publishing of the Hymnal. The only expense out of this fund, except for bank expenses, was the publishing of Hymns for Synod 2010. No travel is part of this fund.
  - The Web Fund is for the maintenance of the Web Fund and registration of websites. No travel is part of this fund.
- Make deposits
- Photocopy everything
- File in quarters
- Separate files for each bank account
- Read and respond to e-mail