

## Addendum 1 to The Acts of Synod Nyack, 2012

Dear Brothers,

The attached document is the text of the fraternal greetings given at Synod Nyack 2012 by Rev. C.J. VanderVelde of the Canadian Reformed Churches. It should have been included in the Acts of Synod, but it appears to have fallen through the cracks, through no fault of our very able Stated Clerk. Although I received this file last summer, it never made it from my computer to the final draft of the printed Acts.

Rev. VanderVelde was gracious to accept my apologies for this oversight, and I pray that you will likewise accept my regret at this oversight. Please print copies of this for insertion into your bound copy of the Acts.

Thank you, brothers.

Your Servant, in Christ,  
Rev. Doug Barnes  
Covenant Reformed Church of Pella  
First Clerk of Synod Nyack 2012

## **Address to Synod Nyack 2012 of the URCNA**

By Rev. Clarence J. VanderVelde

Esteemed brothers in the Lord,

It is my privilege to bring you fraternal greetings on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). As the two Coordinators of the Committee for Church Unity (CCU), Rev. William den Hollander and I are happy to be here for the duration of your synod. We wish you the LORD's blessing in all your deliberations and pray that your decisions may be to the honour of his Name and for the well-being of Christ's church.

Much has happened since Rev. den Hollander spoke at Synod London 2010. Synod London made important and far-reaching decisions pertaining to the relationship with the CanRC and the efforts toward an eventual merger between the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and the CanRC. As representatives of the CanRC, we cannot hide the fact that Synod London's decisions with respect to the merger efforts met with much disappointment among many in the CanRC. We were disappointed to hear of the decision that your Theological Education Committee's mandate had been fulfilled and was at an end (Art. 53). We would have liked to see further efforts to surmount the impasse regarding how best to train men for the ministry in a united federation. Likewise, we were disappointed with the decision to conclude the mandate of the Songbook Committee to produce a common songbook for use in a united federation (Art. 135).

At the same time, we still found reason for hope with respect to an eventual merger in that Synod London decided that the Songbook Committee be in dialogue with the CanRC and that one of the grounds was that this would allow for the possibility of a common songbook in a united federation. Furthermore, we noted that the Proposed Joint Church Order Committee was continued and was mandated to continue working with the sub-committee of the CanRC to draft joint regulations for synodical procedure and to address some unfinished matters (Art. 41). Even more importantly, we happily noted that Synod London accepted for continued study the Proposed Joint Church Order 2010 as the church order for a united federation. Therefore, although the CanRC experienced disappointment on several significant counts because of the decisions of Synod London 2010, we also found reason for hope on several counts.

Brothers, we want to impress upon you the deep desire of the CanRC for eventual merger with the URCNA. We were greatly heartened by the positive context within which your decisions were made, namely, that Synod London 2010 adopted without dissent the following recommendation: "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" (Art. 47). Moreover, we were grateful that Synod London also adopted the following

recommendation: “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” (Art. 47).

We realize that achieving federative unity requires time. We also realize that we are dependent on the LORD’s timing and blessing. As CanRC, we must recognize and respect that in any relationship both parties must be ready to move forward to the next stage and that it would be counter-productive for one party to be too insistent on moving ahead. Our two federations have made wonderful progress in their relationship over the past twenty years. The CanRC cherish all the things we can already do together in our present relationship with the URCNA. As CanRC, we would have liked to take the step of merging with the URCNA sooner rather than later. However, as CanRC we must respect that Synod London came to the decisions that it made. We also noted that Synod London adopted a recommendation “That Synod recognize that challenges and concerns remain among both the committees and congregations of the URCNA with regard to our relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches” (Art. 47). You know your federation better than we do, and we must respect that. We note that the introduction of the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) report to Synod Nyack 2012 speaks of “concerns and fears” among the URCNA regarding the pursuit of the ecumenical calling (*Synod Nyack Agenda*, p. 108). Therefore, we are happy that we also read: “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” (*Synod Nyack Agenda*, p. 107).

Meetings between our CCU and your CERCU have focused on how best to cultivate continued and deepening contact between churches of our federations, as also articulated by Synod London 2010. May our churches strive to be creative in finding ways to foster greater awareness of one another. And let us use the means available to us in the hope that one day we will all be ready for merger. Brothers, in keeping with the gist of the CERCU report to Synod Nyack 2012, please reiterate what Synod London 2010 said and encourage your churches to implement the essential work of creating occasions at which bonds with the CanRC can be forged and misconceptions removed. Besides pulpit exchanges where our respective churches are in close proximity, as Coordinators for the CCU we have heard of and seen little other activity from your churches since Synod London with a view to facilitating further opportunities for interaction. Because challenges and concerns remain among the congregations of the URCNA with regard to the relationship with the CanRC, please urge your churches to present those challenges and concerns to us as Coordinators so that we can work on them and if possible remove them. As Coordinators for the CCU, we are eager and willing to come to any classis to address any questions or concerns in order to increase knowledge about the CanRC and to build trust.

Let us never forget what was stated in a joint press release after meetings between our two committees held at the time of NAPARC 2011 (where the theme was church unity): “Formal, organic unity is the structure and shape of spiritual unity” (*Christian Renewal*, Feb 29, 2012). We have that spiritual unity. May we one day also have that organic unity. Thank you.