

The United Reformed Churches in North America
Synod Wheaton 2018
Press Release #2
Tuesday, June 12, 2018

Initial Work

Tuesday morning at 8 A.M., Synod reconvened jointly with the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Rev. Michael Dengerink of the OPC read and exhorted from Revelation 7:9-14, led the joint assemblies in prayer, and called for the singing of *By the Sea of Crystal*.

Ecumenical Relationships

Before the delegates were recessed to begin their work as advisory committees, it was with joy that the delegates received greetings from Rev. Travis Grassmid of the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS). Rev. Grassmid encouraged the delegates in the business before them, provided a recap of the recent Synod of the RCUS, and expressed gratitude for the blessing of the friendship between our church federations.

When Synod reconvened after lunch, Rev. Michael Fintelman of the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) brought greetings. Rev. Fintelman provided an introduction and overview of the HRC and their seminary, highlighting the work of their most recent Synod. He requested prayer for them and assured the delegates of their prayers for the URCNA.

Throughout Synod, not only are greetings brought from groups near to our own but also from communions throughout the world. Rev. Yonson Dethan of the Calvinist Reformed Church of Indonesia (CRCI) brought greetings. Rev. Dethan expressed appreciation for the ecumenical relationship his churches have experienced with the URCNA, urging the delegates to continue that work and to consider visiting their churches. He expressed love for our churches because of the faith we share and presented a gift to each of the officers of Synod, the Stated Clerk, and the chairman of CECCA on behalf of the CRCI. To close, Rev. Dethan blessed the churches of the URCNA, singing Psalm 121 in the Indonesian language.

Functionary and Committee Reports

Synod turned its attention to reports coming from some advisory committees that had finished work during the morning work time. The reports of the convening Consistory and the Stated Clerk were received, with Synod expressing its appreciation for their work leading up to Synod. Financial reports by the Treasurers were received and approved, and a communication sent to Synod by a minister in the federation was acknowledged as received.

Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU)

Synod next took up matters related to CERCU. Rev. Bill Boekestein and Rev. Richard Miller were each appointed for a three-year term as a “member-at-large” on the committee. To continue performing their work, Synod approved keeping the annual budget at \$10,000. Synod also encouraged local churches and classes to take advantage of the opportunity presented with the Canadian Reformed Committee for Church Unity being supplemented with more members who

can help answer questions, speak at local churches and at classes, and promote the unity of our churches.

Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Church Abroad (CECCA)

Prior to taking up the report concerning CECCA, Synod acceded to Overture 4, thereby adopting an updated classical rotation for hosting Synod, and approved setting an annual budget of \$500 to cover travel costs related to chaplaincy.

The first item of CECCA business saw Synod reappoint Rev. Dick Moes as “member-at-large.” Other items included remaining in Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia, the Reformed Churches in Indonesia, and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. Synod voted to enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church as well as to enter into Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase 2) with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW). Entering into Phase 2 with the EPCEW will require ratification of a majority of the Consistories by December 31, 2018.

Additionally, Synod directed CECCA to study how the URCNA might support needy churches abroad with whom we have ecumenical contact (Phase 1) or fellowship (Phase 2) and to report back at our next synod, consulting with the URCNA Missions Committee, sister churches, and relevant organizations.

Having reached the time set for the afternoon break, Synod recessed until 8 A.M. Wednesday, providing more time for the advisory committees to perform their work and to give time for ecumenicity with the OPC Tuesday evening.

OPC Ecumenicity

Having enjoyed an excellent meal served by the Wheaton College staff, delegates of Synod gathered with the commissioners of the OPC General Assembly and assorted guests for a time to sing as well as to review the history, current status, and future hopes of the URCNA-OPC relationship.

Rev. Christopher Folkerts led a time of singing from the newly published Trinity Psalter Hymnal. After the singing, Rev. Dr. Alan Strange of the OPC introduced the Trinity Psalter Hymnal and provided the timeline of the OPC’s steps toward producing it. Rev. Derrick Vander Meulen provided the timeline of the URCNA’s steps leading toward the Trinity Psalter Hymnal.

The evening concluded with six delegates – three from the URCNA and three from the OPC – engaging in a colloquium concerning the history of both groups of churches and of their relationship. Those participating in the colloquium from the URC were Rev. John Bouwers, Rev. Todd De Rooy, and Rev. Steve Swets. From the OPC, participants were Rev. Jack Sawyer, Dr. Anthony Curto, and Rev. Danny Olinger. Rev. Leo De Vos from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand also spoke. It was very edifying to hear recounted how God sovereignly worked in bringing the two communions to where we are today, and to hear of how we might move even closer together.