

## Saturday 13 September 2014

### 1. Opening of Synod

The moderator pro tem, Rev Robert van Wichen, minister of the Reformed Church of Bishopdale, warmly welcomed the delegates, especially the fraternal delegates and those who had travelled far.

He welcomed delegates from the recently instituted Reformed Church of Oamaru, representing their church at a synod for the first time. He also welcomed Rev Erik Stolte, ordained since Synod 2011, and vicars Ben McDonald and Julian Dykman.

Rev van Wichen read letters of apology from Revs Peter Moelker and John Haverland who were unable to attend due to (respectively) birth of a son and recovery from surgery. He noted also that Rev Rick Eikelboom, an intending observer from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, was unable to attend due to a family bereavement. He led in prayer for these ones as well as emeritus minister Carl Larsen (recovering from surgery), Br Derrick Watson (terminally ill) and the Braam family (promotion to glory of Pieter Braam).

Rev van Wichen read from John 17:20–23, commenting on the desire that Jesus has for unity within the church which is to reflect the unity within the Godhead. He then led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 391 to be sung.

### 2. Approval of Credentials

Synod received and approved the credentials of delegates. The delegates from the churches were as follows:

#### Auckland Presbytery

Avondale ..... Elders T Smilde, J Ploeg \*  
 Bucklands Beach ..... Rev D J van Garderen, Elder M Brooks  
 Hamilton ..... Rev M R Willemse, Elders H Hemmes, B van den Engel \* (alt.)  
 Hukanui ..... Rev L de Vos, Elder C van Tonder  
 North Shore ..... Rev J H Rogers, Elders D Petchell, F den Hartigh \* (alt.)  
 Pukekohe ..... Elders G Posthuma, R Voschezang

#### Wellington Presbytery

Foxton ..... Elders A Thomson, P van Echten  
 Hastings ..... Elders L Vandenberg, A Kaijser \*, B Saathof (alt.)  
 Masterton ..... Rev P Kloosterman, Elders J Kloeg, W Stolte \* (alt.)  
 Palmerston North ..... Rev H Vaatstra, Elders J Koolaard,  
 P Mulholland (alt.), D Flinn (adv.)  
 Silverstream ..... Rev P N Archbald, Elders W Walraven, R Arends \* (alt.)  
 Wainuiomata ..... Rev P J J van Huyssteen, Elder L van Vliet  
 Wellington ..... Elders H Snoek, C van der Meulen

#### South Island Presbytery

Bishopdale ..... Rev R J van Wichen, Elder F Braam \*,  
 Rev A J de Vries (alt.), Elder M de Ruiter (alt.)  
 Christchurch ..... Rev D A Waldron, Elders B Mills, R Posthuma (alt.)  
 Dovedale ..... Rev A J O Holtslag, Elders R Snoek, B Hoyt (alt.)  
 Dunedin ..... Rev E Stolte, Elder J D van Dyk  
 Nelson ..... Rev C D Wilson, Elder E Aarsen  
 Oamaru ..... Rev B E Hoyt, Elders A Miller, P de Reus \* (alt.)

### **Fraternal Delegates**

Canadian and American Reformed Churches ..... Rev A Witten  
Orthodox Presbyterian Church ..... Rev J W Sawyer, Elder M T Bube  
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia ..... Rev S Bajema  
Reformed Churches of South Africa ..... Rev A S A de Bruyn  
United Reformed Churches of North America..... Elder D L Field  
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia ..... Revs R Noppers and G P van Schie \*

### **Observers**

Free Reformed Churches of Australia ..... Rev R E Pot, Elder M Bax  
Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia..... Elder K Stevenson, Rev E H Kastelein  
Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand ..... Rev R Milton \*  
Reformed Theological College..... Dr M A Capill \*

\* denotes delegate was not present when credentials were received

Correspondence from Elder J Ploeg apologising for his absence due to recent injury and from Elder F Braam apologising for his absence on Saturday 13 September due to a family wedding was noted.

It was agreed by common consent that the Avondale delegates be seated and that their letter of 28 April 2014 to Synod be accepted in lieu of credentials.

It was agreed that the two vicars in attendance be given the privilege of the floor.

## **3. Signification of Agreement with Confessional Standards**

In response to the moderator's call to indicate their continued agreement with the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand all delegates stood.

## **4. Election of Moderamen**

Nominations for the moderamen were received and the following delegates elected:

Moderator ..... Rev Peter Kloosterman (Masterton)  
Vice Moderator .... Rev Robert van Wichen (Bishopdale)  
First Clerk..... Elder John van Dyk (Dunedin)  
Second Clerk ..... Rev Michael Willemse (Hamilton)

The members of the moderamen were then asked to take their seats and lead the synod.

## **5. Constitution of Synod**

The moderator declared Synod 2014 officially constituted.

The delegates were then given a 30-minute recess to allow the moderamen to attend to immediate issues.

## **6. Late Correspondence**

Synod received the following late correspondence:

- a. Communication 3: Reformed Church of Palmerston North, received 22 August 2014
- b. Audit reports for the Overseas Mission Board's financial statements for 2012, 2013 and 2014 (Report 14), received 23 August 2014
- c. Apology from Rev P Moelker for absence
- d. Apology from Rev J Haverland for absence

## 7. Adoption of Agenda

It was agreed by common consent that the agenda; comprising 20 overtures, 21 reports and 3 communications; be adopted as presented.

## 8. Appointments to Advisory Committees and Other Functions

The following appointments were made:

Reporter for the public.....	Elder P van der Wel (Stated Clerk)
Reporter for <i>Faith in Focus</i> .....	Elder W Walraven
Message of loyalty to H.M. the Queen .....	Rev J H Rogers
Budget Committee .....	Elders P Mulholland and G Posthuma
Appointments Committee .....	Revs B E Hoyt (convenor), D J van Garderen and H Vaatstra (committee to check with moderamen before presenting)
Pastoral Care Advisory Committee .....	(Report 4, Overture 11, Communication 3, Report 7 recommendations 3–7, and Overture 17): Rev J H Rogers (convenor), Rev D A Waldron and Elder R Voschezang
Sexual Abuse Guidelines .....	(Report 18, Overtures 12, 14 and 18): Rev C D Wilson Advisory Committee (convenor), Rev L de Vos and Elder C van der Meulen

Advisory committees were charged to consider how various report recommendations and overtures might be consolidated and to make appropriate recommendations to help synod achieve a smooth passage of business.

## 9. Schedule of Daily Meetings (Monday till Friday)

The schedule for the daily meetings of synod was set as follows:

9:00 am to 10:30 am .....	Morning session 1
10:30 am to 11:00 am .....	Morning tea
11:00 am to 12:30 pm .....	Morning session 2
12:30 pm to 2:00 pm .....	Lunch
2:00 pm to 3:30 pm .....	Afternoon session 1
3:30 pm to 4:00 pm .....	Afternoon tea
4:00 pm to 5:30 pm .....	Afternoon session 2
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm .....	Dinner
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm .....	Evening session

## 10. Closure of Afternoon Session

The moderator called for Psalm 23 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung and led in prayer.

## 11. Prayer Service

Rev B E Hoyt led the service with Rev J H Rogers offering a prayer of thanksgiving, Rev C D Wilson praying for the delegates and Rev P Kloosterman praying for the consideration of the matters on the agenda.

Rev A J de Vries preached from Psalm 133, on how unity in the Lord is both good and pleasant; and reflected specifically on the wonder of unity, the illustrations of unity and the surprise of unity.

## **Monday 15 September 2014**

### **12. Opening of Morning Session**

Rev P J J van Huyssteen read from 1 Samuel 23:15–18, noting the encouragement Jonathan gave to David in finding strength in God. Christ has done the same for us and it is a high calling too for delegates at this synod. Rev van Huyssteen then led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 213 to be sung.

The moderator welcomed delegates of the churches and fraternal delegates.

Elder Fred Braam (Bishopdale) stood to signify his agreement to the confessional standards.

### **13. Education Resource Committee (R1)**

Rev A J O Holtslag presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

*To extend thanks to Mrs Colleen Berends for many years of faithful and efficient service to the Education Resource Committee.*

### **14. Ministers and Wives' Conference (R2)**

Rev P J J van Huyssteen presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To provide for another Ministers and Wives' Conference in the next inter-synodical period.*
- 2. To appoint the South Island Presbytery ministers to organise the next conference.*
- 3. To request the South Island Presbytery to appoint a reporter of the conference.*

### **15. National Publishing Committee (R8, Art. 138)**

Elder W Walraven presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To approve the audited 2011–2013 financial statements.*
- 2. To endorse the appointment of Miss Kathryn Kleinjan as the new Yearbook editor.*
- 3. To endorse the re-appointment of Mr Walter Walraven as editor and Dr Sally Davey as sub-editor of the Faith in Focus magazine.*
- 4. To thank Mr Walraven and Dr Davey for their excellent work with the magazine.*

### **16. Synodical Archivist (R16)**

Elder L Vandenberg presented his report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To approve a budget of \$200 per annum.*
- 2. To reappoint the temporary synodical archivist until a suitable replacement can be found.*

### **17. Forms and Confessions Committee (R17, Art. 100, 113)**

Rev R J van Wichen presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To approve the Creeds as presented by the committee.*
- 2. To approve the Confessions as presented by the committee.*

3. *To appoint an advisory committee to receive and propose a way forward with various concerns about the proposed liturgical forms. Revs B E Hoyt (convenor), J H Rogers and L de Vos were appointed to the committee.*

## **18. Stated Clerk (R21, Art. 28)**

Elder P van der Wel presented his report.

*Synod decided:*

### **Rules for Synodical Procedures**

1. *That in rule I-D-1 (Office Bearers' Handbook (OBH), p. 2-3) "9:00 am of" be substituted with "the designated time on" to bring this rule in line with current practice, so that this rule now reads:*

*"At the designated time on the appointed day and at the appointed place, he shall ..."*

2. *That in rule II-A-1 (OBH, p.2-4) the words "arise, read the Prescribed Declaration and request them to express their agreement in unison" be substituted with "stand and so signify their agreement with the Confessional Standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand" so that this rule now reads:*

*"He shall request the members of Synod and the advisory members of Synod to stand and so signify their agreement with the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. A delegate who assumes his seat at a later time shall be requested to express his individual agreement."*

### **Rules for Stated Clerk of Synod**

3. *That in the rules 4 a 1) & 2), b 2), c 1) & 2) (OBH p. 2-17, 18) the words "Synodical Committee" be substituted with "Synodical Interim Committee" so that these rules comply with current practice.*
4. *That under rule 4-c, "Responsibilities on Behalf of the Denomination", (OBH, p. 2-18) a new Rule c-3) be added as follows, to correctly reflect current practice:*

*3) The Stated Clerk, as secretary for the denomination, is responsible for the annual renewal of the marriage celebrant licences for the ministers of the denomination with the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Stated Clerk is also responsible to arrange for the registration of newly ordained or installed ministers as Marriage Celebrants.*

### **Miscellaneous Matters**

5. *That where the document name, "Discipline of Those Who Resign", appears in church documentation (e.g. OBH, p. 5-39) the words "Guidelines for the" be added at the beginning of the title, per Acts of Synod 2002, Art. 86-3.*
6. *That Rule 1-d of the "Rules for the National Publishing Committee" (OBH, p. 2-22) be updated as follows:*
  - a. *In line 2, after "overtures", "on computer disk" be substituted with "as electronic files"*
  - b. *In line 4, after "available", "on disk at cost" be substituted with "as electronic files".*
7. *To thank Elder van der Wel for his work as Stated Clerk.*

## **19. Reflections**

The moderator reflected on significant events concerning the churches which had occurred during the last inter-synodical period.

Rev Erik Stolte was ordained as a minister (Dunedin).

## Minutes

Revs Dirk van Garderen (Bucklands Beach), Michael Flinn (Palmerston North) and Timothy Rott (Christchurch) retired from their respective callings and retain their status as emeritus ministers.

Revs André Scheepers (Hukanui), Nathan Ketchen (Palmerston North) and Andrew Nugteren (Wellington) departed and took up calls overseas.

Revs Wynford Davies (Bucklands Beach, 1971–76) and Martin Geluk (from CRCA, served interim terms in Dovedale and Dunedin) and Mr Roy Nugteren (former synodical archivist) were promoted to glory.

Messrs Julian Dykman (Bishopdale) and Ben McDonald (Masterton) are currently serving as vicars.

The Reformed Church of Oamaru was instituted in 2013.

The moderator led in a prayer of thanksgiving.

## **20. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (C1, Art. 21)**

*Synod decided to receive this communication.*

## **21. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 20, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Rev D J van Garderen informed the Synod of recent interactions with the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN).

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To express our thanks to the CGKN for the sister-church relationship we have had with them since the establishment of our denomination in New Zealand.*
- 2. That in view of both the limited contact we have had with the CGKN, and the similar sentiments from the CGKN, we discontinue our sister-church relationship.*
- 3. To direct the Interchurch Relations Committee to explore other ways of maintaining contact with the CGKN especially through the ICRC.*

## **22. Synodical Treasurer (R5, Art. 140)**

Mrs Alice Saathof presented her report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To receive and accept the Statement of Income and Expenditure for the period ended 31 March 2014.*
- 2. To receive and accept the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2014.*
- 3. To thank Mrs Saathof for her work as Synodical Treasurer.*

## **23. Reformed Theological College New Zealand Office and Student Assistance Committee (R6, Art. 29)**

Mrs Alice Saathof presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

*To accept the audited accounts as a true and accurate record of the financial position of the Reformed Theological College New Zealand Office and the Student Assistance Fund.*

## **24. Closure of Morning Session**

Elder John Kloeg read from Ephesians 5:25–27, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 190 to be sung.

## **25. Opening of Afternoon Session**

Elder E Aarsen read from Romans 14:1–19 and 11:33–36, led in prayer and called for Psalm 73c from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

The moderator welcomed Rev Alan and Mrs Odette Douma (missionary to Papua New Guinea), Dr Murray Capill (Reformed Theological College), Elder Ken Stevenson and Rev Edward Kastelein (Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia) and Rev Rusty Milton (Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand).

## **26. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (Art. 27, 84, 123)**

Rev Stefaans de Bruyn conveyed greetings from the GKSA (see Appendix 3: p. 1-39). He drew particular attention to our shared hope in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Rev de Bruyn asked that the GKSA request for input from the RCNZ regarding advice on their women in office discussions be taken into consideration when deliberating on the relationship between the churches.

## **27. Response to the Fraternal Delegate of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (Art. 26, 84, 123)**

Rev J H Rogers responded to the address by Rev de Bruyn.

## **28. Stated Clerk (R21, Art. 18)**

*Synod decided:*

*To replace the current wording of section I-D-3 of the “Rules for Synodical Procedures” (OBH, p. 2-4) with the following:*

3. The Moderator and Vice Moderator of Synod shall be chosen by the delegates from their own number, by ballot.

The First and Second Clerk of Synod shall be chosen, by ballot, by the delegates from their own number, and the Stated Clerk (even if not a delegate) may be considered for either of these positions.

Whoever receives a majority of the valid votes shall be elected.

## **29. Reformed Theological College New Zealand Office and Student Assistance Committee (O9, R6, Art. 23)**

*Synod decided:*

1. *To acknowledge that the function of collecting the voluntary contributions has now been assumed by the Synodical Treasurer.*
2. *To acknowledge that the Synodical Treasurer is also acting as treasurer for the RTC New Zealand Office as a separate function to her synodical responsibilities.*
3. *To charge the Church Extension Committee to administer the Student Assistance Fund and set the quota as and when required.*
4. *That the distribution of the Student Assistance Fund be administered by a committee of two Deputies for Students to the Ministry, the alternate deputy and one member of the Church Extension Committee.*
5. *To charge the Deputies for Students to the Ministry to revise the regulations for Students for the Ministry, sections E and F (OBH, p. 3-7), in the light of the above decisions and present this revision to the next synod.*

The moderator ruled that Recommendations 3 and 4 of Report 6 had lapsed.

### **30. Pastoral Care Advisory Committee (R4, C3, O11, O17, R7, Art. 47, 48, 49, 52, 115, 127, 129, 137)**

Rev J H Rogers presented the report.

The advisory committee considered how to deal with Report 4 (Pastoral Care Committee), Overture 11 (Action in Response to Palmerston North), Communication 3 (Palmerston North), Overture 17 (Dispute Resolution) and Report 7 (Church Order Committee), recommendations 3–7.

The committee's view is that Overture 17 and Report 7 (recommendations 3–7) are principal matters and, although related to the other agenda items, ought to be dealt with separately. The particular case referred to by Report 4, Overture 11 and Communication 3 should be dealt with under current church polity provisions and ought to be dealt with first. Report 7 should be dealt with next and Overture 17 last due to its broadness and potential for further study.

*Synod decided to adopt the following approach:*

1. *Consider Palmerston North situation*
  - a. *That Report 4 (Pastoral Care Committee) should be presented*
  - b. *That Palmerston North should be given opportunity to respond under Part 1 of Communication 3 (Palmerston North), followed by a committee-of-the-whole discussion.*
  - c. *Consider Overture 11 (Action in Response to Palmerston North). There may be discussion regarding propriety of the overture which should be dealt with first.*
  - d. *If the overture is ruled in order, Palmerston North should be given first right of reply (Communication 3, part 2). The initial discussion should also be by committee of the whole.*
  - e. *Any recommendations can then be considered.*
2. *Consider Report 7 (Church Order Committee)*
3. *Consider Overture 17 (Dispute resolution)*

The moderator welcomed Rev Geoff van Schie (Christian Reformed Churches of Australia) and Miss Janice Reid (radio ministry mission worker).

### **31. Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (C2, Art. 32)**

*Synod decided to receive this communication.*

### **32. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 31, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Rev D J van Garderen informed the Synod of recent interactions with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN).

*Synod decided:*

1. *To convey that synod is encouraged that the RCN synod did not open the offices to women and that there appears to be a willingness to listen to the concerns of sister churches.*
2. *To express its concern that the RCN synod has not clearly rejected the hermeneutical foundations of the conclusion and recommendations of the "Men/Women in the Church" report.*
3. *To instruct the Interchurch Relations Committee to seek clarification from the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the RCN regarding these decisions, since unless they*

*constitute a clear withdrawal from this hermeneutical direction (see previous point) our sister-church relationship may be affected negatively.*

4. *To continue our sister-church relationship with the RCN at this time.*

Recommendations from the Interchurch Relations Committee as to sending fraternal delegates to synods in foreign countries were deferred to the end of the consideration of the IRC's report.

### **33. Calvinist Cadet Corps and Gems (R9)**

*Synod decided:*

1. *To continue to encourage the local churches to prayerfully and financially support their local Cadet and Gems Clubs.*
2. *To make available an annual grant of \$500 to the Calvinist Cadet Corps and Gems Board help cover the costs of the In Touch magazine.*
3. *To make available an annual grant of \$1,000 to the Calvinist Cadet Corps and Gems Board to assist clubs who struggle financially in sending delegates to the Annual Executive meeting.*

### **34. Overseas Mission Board (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 58, 91, 92, 95–99)**

Rev P Kloosterman relinquished the chair to the vice-moderator and presented the part of the report pertaining to the *Missions Policy Handbook*.

*Synod decided:*

*To provisionally accept the Overseas Mission Board's changes to the Missions Policy Handbook.*

Rev P Kloosterman resumed the chair.

### **35. Closure of Afternoon Session**

Dr M A Capill read from Ephesians 6:10–18, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 491 to be sung.

### **36. Opening of Evening Session**

Rev H Vaatstra read from Numbers 9:15–23, led in prayer and called for Psalm 119:105–112 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

It was noted that Elder T Smilde (Avondale) would be absent until the following day.

Elder Jacob Ploeg (Avondale) was welcomed and stood to signify his agreement to the confessional standards.

### **37. Address of the Observer of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (Art. 38, 39)**

Elder Ken Stevenson conveyed greetings from the PRCA (see Appendix 4: p. 1-41). He observed the similarities of the respective churches: confessional, evangelistic and spiritual. He conveyed his church's desire for unity with the RCNZ. Mr Stevenson spoke of blessings in Sydney, Adelaide and in their mission work in Vanuatu. He spoke of the mutual benefits and blessings which might accrue from closer relations.

### **38. Reply to the Observer of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (Art. 37, 39)**

Elder D Petchell responded to the address by Mr Stevenson.

**39. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 37, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA).

*Synod decided:*

*That the Interchurch Relations Committee work towards recommending that we establish a sister-church relationship with the PRCA at our next synod.*

**40. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the United Reformed Churches of North America (Art. 41, 42)**

Elder Doug Field conveyed greetings from the URCNA (see Appendix 5: p. 1-44). He spoke of the happenings of their recent synod in 2014, their expanding ecumenical relations with a number of churches worldwide, and their desire for a mutually encouraging relationship.

**41. Reply to the Fraternal Delegate of the United Reformed Churches of North America (Art. 40, 42)**

Rev L de Vos responded to the address by Mr Field.

**42. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 40, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA).

*Synod decided:*

*To continue our sister-church relationship with the URCNA*

**43. Address of the Principal of the Reformed Theological College (Art. 60, 70)**

Dr Murray Capill spoke on behalf of the Reformed Theological College.

He noted that, on a day-to-day basis, the College is running very well, unwaveringly teaching from Reformed biblical principles. New faculty members have been a real blessing. Students are enthusiastic and committed. Graeme Zuidema is the sole RCNZ ministry student. Distance education is a growing avenue of teaching and learning. The College has identified 12 key units for candidates for the ministry, six of which will be offered as hybrid/intensive studies and the other six offered online. Dr Bill Berends has established the Kuyper Centre for Christian Worldview Studies.

The future is challenging with declining EFT students and changing enrolment patterns, i.e. more students studying part-time, online, and coming from churches other than supporting churches. Funding is increasingly dependent on property revenue and student fees with a decline in support from churches and members. Increasing the student roll has been problematic as Reformed students are not coming to Geelong, and Geelong churches find the RTC too Reformed.

The RTC board has considered options for the future and has engaged a suitably qualified person from the CRCA to conduct a feasibility study to help determine possible strategies. The RTC is aiming for a strong on-campus option, use of multiple modes of delivery, partnership with others, but with no change to quality or theology.

Dr Capill encouraged continued support for the college from the RCNZ, both financially and by way of student enrolment.

#### **44. Closure of Evening Session**

Elder C van Tonder read from Psalm 135:1–4 and 8:1, led in prayer and called for Psalm 134 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

## Tuesday 16 September 2014

### 45. Opening of Morning Session

Rev E Stolte read from Ephesians 2:11–22, noting that it is not ethnicity or socio-economic status that unites us, but it is the blood of Christ. God builds us both as individuals and as community. Relationships are not always easy, but it is precisely the interaction between believers that God uses to sharpen us in our faith and life. Rev Stolte then led in prayer and called for Psalm 133 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

Elder Tjeerd Smilde (Avondale) was welcomed back after an overnight absence and Mr Colin Young (Emeritus Fund) was also welcomed.

### 46. Synodical Interim Committee (R20, Art. 53)

Elder P van der Wel presented the report.

It was noted that the SIC authorised the Interchurch Relations Committee to decide themselves whether to endorse the Christian Reformed Church of Australia's application for membership to the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

### 47. Pastoral Care Committee (R4, O11, Art. 30, 48, 49, 52)

The moderator read from Ephesians 4:29–30 and exhorted the delegates to carefully watch their words and emotions. He then led in prayer.

Rev A J O Holtslag presented the report.

Elder D Flinn responded on behalf of the Palmerston North Session.

Synod then went into committee of the whole.

On the resumption after morning tea Elder Wim Stolte (Masterton) stood to signify his agreement to the confessional standards.

### 48. Action in Response to Palmerston North (O11, R4, Art. 30, 47, 48, 49, 52)

Synod came out of committee of the whole.

Synod decided, by majority vote, to rule Overture 11 out of order.

### 49. Pastoral Care Committee (R4, O11, Art. 30, 47, 48, 52)

Synod went into committee of the whole.

### 50. Closure of Morning Session

Elder H Hemmes read from Ephesians 5:15–21, called for *Sing to the Lord* 393 to be sung and led in prayer.

### 51. Opening of Afternoon Session

Rev A J de Vries read from Philippians 2:1–11, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 485:1, 2, 4 & 5 to be sung.

Elder Arnold Kaijser stood to signify his agreement to the confessional standards and replaced Elder Bruno Saathof as the second Hastings delegate.

### 52. Pastoral Care Committee (R4, O11, Art. 30, 47–49)

Synod came out of committee of the whole.

*Synod decided:*

*To express its appreciation to the Pastoral Care Committee for their work and discharge it.*

**53. Synodical Interim Committee (R20, Art. 46)**

*Synod decided:*

*To endorse the actions and advice of the SIC.*

**54. Emeritus Fund (R13, O8, O19, Art. 55–57)**

Mr Colin Young presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To receive the report.*
2. *That existing pensions in payment remain inflation adjusted as per previous decisions of Synod. (The 2005 Synod decided to increase emeritus allowance entitlements and pensions annually from 1 April using the increase in the CPI as applied to Government Superannuation allowances. The subsequent Synods made no change to this method.)*
3. *To approve the following emeritus allowances:*
  - a. *From 1 April 2014 the emeritus allowance for an emeritus member with 30 years' service is \$201.32 per week, with a proportionate reduction for members with less than 30 years' service and a proportionate increase for members with more than 30 years' service.*
  - b. *For the widow of an emeritus member, 80% of the pension as calculated on the basis of the years of service of the deceased member.*
  - c. *For the widow of a member who died before emeritation, irrespective of years of service, a minimum of \$80 per week\* and a lump sum payment as shown under "e". In both "b" and "c" the widow's allowance will cease upon re-marriage.*
  - d. *For a member who is permanently and totally disabled under the terms of the Emeritus Fund's Group Life and Disablement Assurance Policy, irrespective of years of service, a minimum of \$80 per week\* and a lump sum payment as shown under "e".*
  - e. *The payment of a lump sum on the death or total and permanent disablement of a member according to the following scale:*

<u>Member's Age</u>	<u>Current Lump Sum (\$)</u>
<i>under 29</i>	<i>212,000</i>
<i>30–32</i>	<i>184,000</i>
<i>33–35</i>	<i>155,000</i>
<i>36–38</i>	<i>127,000</i>
<i>39–41</i>	<i>99,000</i>
<i>42–44</i>	<i>71,000</i>
<i>45–47</i>	<i>56,000</i>
<i>48–50</i>	<i>42,000</i>
<i>51–53</i>	<i>28,000</i>
<i>54–56</i>	<i>25,000</i>
<i>57–59</i>	<i>21,000</i>
<i>60–62</i>	<i>16,000</i>
<i>63–64</i>	<i>14,000</i>

*\* It is possible that a member or surviving spouse can receive a pension based on actual years of membership greater than the minimum of \$80 per week.*

4. *To ratify the Synodical Interim Committee's decision to authorise the Emeritus Fund to continue to use its current 'flat rate' method of calculating and applying quota for the years ending 31 March 2012, 2013 and 2014.*

**55. Emeritus Fund Quota (O8, R13, O19, Art. 54, 56, 57)**

Elder J D van Dyk presented Overture 8 which was defeated.

## **56. Emeritus Fund (R13, O8, O19, Art. 54, 55, 57)**

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To approve a quota based on a 'flat rate' calculation of \$1,500 per annum for each active member (minister and/or missionary) of the Emeritus Fund that each of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand employ during the years ending 31 March 2015, 2016 and 2017 and, provided further that each of the respective churches will also be responsible for paying the Employer Superannuation Contribution Tax ('ESCT') for each active member of the Emeritus Fund that they employ during the years ending 31 March 2015, 2016 and 2017.*
- 2. To appoint Mrs Sarah Bryant to serve in an administrative capacity to the Board of Trustees of the Emeritus Fund up until the time of the next Synod.*
- 3. To determine that the retirement benefit payable to each Member of the Emeritus Fund (having not previously retired from office) upon requesting payment of the retirement benefit having attained fifty (50) years of age and having the consent of the Employer but having not reached the Normal Retirement Date (as set in the Trust Deed) shall be entitled to an immediate pension pursuant to clause 12 of the Trust Deed reduced by such amount as shall be determined by the Actuary to reflect the fact that the Member is retiring before the Normal Retirement Date.*
- 4. To thank Mr Young and the other trustees for their work with the Emeritus Fund.*

## **57. Ministers' Retirement Income (O19, R13, O8, Art. 54–56)**

Elder H Hemmes presented Overture 19.

*Synod decided:*

*To mandate the Emeritus Fund trustees to investigate whether KiwiSaver is a better vehicle through which to provide for our ministers' retirement income than the current system.*

## **58. Overseas Mission Board Report (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 34, 91, 92, 95–99)**

Rev P Kloosterman relinquished the chair to the vice-moderator.

*Synod decided:*

*To acknowledge that the Missions Policy Handbook supersedes the current missions section of the Office Bearers' Handbook (pp. 4-3 to 4-19) and the previous Missions Policy Handbook.*

Rev P Kloosterman resumed the chair.

The minutes of Saturday 13 and Monday 15 September were approved.

## **59. Sexual Abuse Guidelines Advisory Committee (R18, O12, O14, O18, Art. 67–69, 102)**

Rev C D Wilson presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

### **Overture 12 and Report 18**

- 1. That Report 18 (On Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse) be presented by the Sexual Abuse Study Committee, and Overture 12 (Status of "On Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse" Report) be presented by Palmerston North.*
- 2. That, following those presentations, Report 18 and Overture 12 be discussed as a committee of the whole.*
- 3. That the six sub-points under Overture 12, part B be divided and considered as six motions (as below):*

*That further work be undertaken in order to:*

- i. shorten the current guidelines*
  - ii. protect the church from possible liability in the secular courts*
  - iii. ensure that the language used to describe sessions' responsibilities does not place an excessive burden on sessions in light of the fact that:*
    - the guidelines may be used as a disciplinary standard for assessing the conduct of sessions*
    - a session dealing with sexual abuse is already dealing with a difficult situation*
    - when a session deals with a person's sin, that process may be unpleasant for the sinner (Prov. 27:5–6; Heb. 12:11)*
  - iv. avoid undermining sessions' authority and competency to deal with sexual sin*
  - v. guard against the influence of secular psychology*
  - vi. avoid undermining sessions' pastoral work.*
- 4. That, if any of these six motions have been adopted or if other concerns are raised, to decide the question: Can we resolve these concerns here at synod?*
    - a. If yes, then these concerns may be tasked to a new advisory committee to consider and return to synod with recommendations.*
    - b. If no, then these concerns will be tasked to a new committee which will be then be established and a mandate will be defined.*
  - 5. That, if none of those six motions were adopted and no other concerns were raised, then synod should consider and decide Report 18 recommendations 1–4 in order.*

#### **Overtures 14 and 18**

- 1. Overture 14 (Register of Trained Christian Counsellors) be decided.*
- 2. Overture 18 (List of Suitably Qualified Persons) be decided.*

### **60. Deputies for Students to the Ministry (R15, Art. 70, 71)**

Rev M R Willemse presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To appoint two deputies (and an alternate) charged with supervising all RCNZ ministerial students wherever they are studying.*
- 2. That the deputies interview in person each student annually where this is geographically possible and that they do this by Skype or similar means where it is not.*
- 3. That two of the deputies shall visit the RTC annually to:*
  - a. meet with RCNZ students*
  - b. discuss curriculum and student progress with the RTC faculty*
  - c. meet with the CRCA deputies to discuss vicariate placements.*
- 4. That the deputies continue their responsibility for arranging vicariate placements.*

### **61. Closure of Afternoon Session**

Elder H Snoek read from John 13:35, Isaiah 42:1–4 and Matthew 18:6, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 414 to be sung.

### **62. Opening of Evening Session**

Elder A Miller read from 1 Peter 5:1–11, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 391 to be sung.

Elder B Mills (Christchurch) replaced Elder R Posthuma.

### **63. Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee (R10, Art. 131)**

The moderator, in consultation with Rev J H Rogers, called for *Sing to the Lord* 176 to be sung.

Rev J H Rogers presented the report.

Rev Rogers especially thanked Mr Berwyn Hoyt (committee and administrator) and Mesdames Elrike Hoyt (administrator), Lydia Nugteren (transcribing), Lois Hoyt (committee, et al) and Lieda Brooks (committee, et al) for their years of dedicated service in producing the *Sing to the Lord* hymnal. Spouses of these ones were also thanked.

Mr Berwyn Hoyt thanked Rev Rogers for his diligent work in convening the committee throughout a lengthy project. Mr Hoyt presented a gift of an electronic hymnal, Bible, forms and confessions to Rev Rogers. Mr Hoyt offered a prayer dedicating the hymnal to God's glory. He then called for *Sing to the Lord* 431 to be sung.

On behalf of the churches, Rev M R Willemse spoke appreciatively of the benefits of *Sing to the Lord* to the churches. He presented floral tributes to Mesdames L Hoyt, L Brooks, E Hoyt and L Nugteren and specially bound volumes of *Sing to the Lord* to Rev Rogers and Mesdames Brooks and L Hoyt.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To establish a standing hymnal committee with the following mandate:*
  - a. *to receive notification of any errors with a view to*
    - i. *determine whether they are errors (and that is not always obvious!)*
    - ii. *make any necessary amendments to the PDFs for any further reprinting or edition*
  - b. *to receive and keep track of feedback for future editions (as distinct from future reprints)*

It was agreed to put Recommendation 2 to the vote which was then carried.

2. *To task this committee to prepare a reprint of the present book with the following differences:*
  - a. *inclusion of the forms and confessions*
  - b. *of a smaller size (say 19 x 13 cm instead of the present 23.5 x 15.5 cm) and using thinner paper (possibly even an India-type paper) to make 2-a possible*
  - c. *Synod underwrite the cost*

Elder R Snoek registered a protest against the decision arising from Recommendation 2.

*Sing to the Lord* 277 was sung to conclude of the consideration of the report.

It was subsequently agreed to reconsider Recommendation 2.

### **64. National Diaconate Committee (R11, Art. 82, 83)**

Rev D J van Garderen gave a slide presentation showing projects that the churches support through the National Diaconate Committee. The pictures were taken during a recent trip he and his wife, Gonny, had made to India.

In the ACCESS programme, in the Tamil Nadu region, the aim is to improve children's proficiency in the three Rs, addressing basic health and hygiene needs, and developing a Christian world-and-life view. In Madurai a school for 15/16-year-old boys, teaching them trades, is about to open.

In the Help a Child and Woman of India project, the women and children being helped are housed at Peniel Centre in Bangalore and receive vocational training and Christian instruction.

Rev van Garderen spoke glowingly and enthusiastically of the work being done.

### **65. Closure of Evening Session**

Rev C D Wilson read from Psalm 116:5–15, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 365 to be sung.

## Wednesday 17 September 2014

### 66. Opening of Morning Session

Rev A J O Holtslag read from 1 Corinthians 16:1–16, noting that these greetings of Paul to the saints in Corinth are very much a part of Scripture. Those whose names are listed represent different ethnicities, stations in society and genders. All these diverse personalities were moulded together into the church of Christ at Corinth. It is the love of God shown in the Lord Jesus Christ that joins us as brothers and sisters. Rev Holtslag then led in prayer and called for Psalm 84 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

Rev J H Rogers was greeted on his birthday with the singing of the time-honoured song for the purpose.

Elder R Snoek withdrew his protest against the decision arising from Recommendation 2 of the Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee Report.

### 67. On Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse (R18, O12, O14, O18, Art. 59, 68, 69, 102, 114)

Rev P N Archbald presented the report of the Sexual Abuse Study Committee, particularly responding to concerns raised in Overture 12 (Status of “On Dealing with Child Sexual Abuse” Report).

Elder D Flinn presented Overture 12.

Synod went into committee of the whole.

Synod came out of committee of the whole.

Part b-i of Overture 12 to undertake further work to shorten the current guidelines was defeated.

Part b-ii of Overture 12 to undertake further work with the guidelines to protect the church from possible liability in the secular courts was defeated.

Part b-iii of Overture 12 to undertake further work with the guidelines to ensure that the language used to describe sessions’ responsibilities does not place an excessive burden on sessions was defeated.

Part b-iv of Overture 12 to undertake further work with the guidelines to avoid undermining sessions’ authority and competency to deal with sexual sin was defeated.

Part b-v of Overture 12 to undertake further work with the guidelines to guard against the influence of secular psychology was defeated.

Part b-vi of Overture 12 to undertake further work with the guidelines to avoid undermining sessions’ pastoral work was defeated.

The moderator referred those with requests for minor changes to the “Guidelines for Sessions having to deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children” to the Sexual Abuse Guidelines Advisory Committee.

### 68. Register of Trained Christian Counsellors (O14, R18, O18, Art. 59, 67, 69, 102, 114)

Elder L van Vliet presented Overture 14 which was defeated.

### 69. List of Suitably Qualified Persons (O18, R18, O14, Art. 59, 68, 102, 114)

Rev M R Willemse presented Overture 18.

*Synod decided:*

*To charge the Stated Clerk to compile and maintain a list of suitably qualified persons, preferably from within the RCNZ, from whom pastors and elders can seek advice when dealing with allegations of child sexual abuse.*

## **70. Deputies for Students to the Ministry (R15, Art. 60, 71)**

Rev M R Willemse continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *That the deputies seek to arrange summer internships for RCNZ students studying in New Zealand or Australia at the end of the student's second and third years of study with at least one of these being in an RCNZ church.*

Rev P N Archbald and Elder W Walraven requested that their negative votes to the above decision be recorded.

2. *That the churches continue to support the RTC financially by a recommended contribution of \$72,500 for 2015, \$75,000 for 2016 and \$77,500 for 2017 in the inter-synodical period.*
3. *To instruct the deputies to make contact first with the principals and then with students of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary to determine if there are men currently in training who would be both suited to and interested in serving in the RCNZ. After careful investigation such men would then be placed in a twelve-month vicariate in our churches with a view to them being made available for call in our churches.*

## **71. Oversight of Students Studying for the Ministry in North American Seminaries (O13, R15, Art. 60, 70)**

Rev P N Archbald presented Overture 13.

*Synod decided:*

*To encourage the Deputies for Students to the Ministry to arrange at least one visit by an RCNZ minister or elder per inter-synodical period, where practicable, to RCNZ students studying for the ministry at North American seminaries.*

## **72. Amendment to Church Order Article 75 (O1)**

Rev D A Waldron presented Overture 1.

*Synod decided:*

*From Church Order Article 75, strike out the words "Public offenses shall be reconciled" and substitute the words "Those who have committed a public offence shall be reconciled to the church" so that the article reads:*

Those who have committed a public offence shall be reconciled to the church by the session upon sufficient evidence of repentance. In the case of an extremely grave offence a session may demand public confession of the sin. This shall not take place without the concurrence of presbytery.

It was agreed to record the unanimous vote in favour of this amendment to the Church Order.

## **73. Removing Rules of Presbytery and Session from the *Office Bearers' Handbook* (O3, Art. 128)**

Rev D A Waldron presented Overture 3 which was tabled for later consideration.

## **74. Closure of Morning Session**

Elder R Voschezang read from Ezekiel 36:16–38, led in prayer and called for Psalm 103b:1–3 and Psalm 103:4–6 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

## **75. Opening of Afternoon Session**

The moderator noted that the Oamaru delegates had returned home for the day for the funeral of Mrs Anne de Reus.

Elder M Brooks read from Psalm 100, led in prayer and called for Psalm 100b from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

The minutes of Tuesday 16 September were approved.

## **76. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Art. 77, 78)**

Elder Mark Bube conveyed greetings from the OPC (see Appendix 6: p. 1-46). He informed delegates of a number of statistics regarding the OPC, including 30,000 members at the end of 2013, and 322 congregations in 17 presbyteries. In 2011 work was authorised for a new hymnal to be compiled jointly with the URCNA. A second successful deacons' summit has been held. The denominational website, [opc.org](http://opc.org), receives ten million visits per year. Joint work at the John Knox Theological College in Mbale, Uganda is appreciated with Rev P N Archbald having served again and Rev J H Rogers about to return. The OPC looks forward to celebrating its eightieth anniversary in 2016. Mr Bube concluded by quoting from the epitaph of a martyred OPC missionary in Eritrea: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

## **77. Reply to the Fraternal Delegate of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Art. 76, 78)**

Rev D A Waldron responded to the address by Mr Bube.

## **78. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 76, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

*Synod decided:*

*To continue our sister-church relationship with the OPC, USA.*

## **79. Address of the Observer of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Art. 80, 81)**

Rev Rusty Milton conveyed greetings from the GPCNZ (see Appendix 7: p. 1-48). The GPC appreciate the similarity of theological outlook and the relationships that have been formed at local levels with the RCNZ. The GPC, having recently celebrated its tenth anniversary, is much younger than the RCNZ. Being a young church brings its own blessings and challenges. The GPC would appreciate working co-operatively with the RCNZ in endeavours such as conferences, youth work and pulpit exchanges.

## **80. Reply to the Observer of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Art. 79, 81)**

Rev E Stolte responded to the address by Rev Milton.

## **81. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 79, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (GPCNZ).

*Synod decided:*

1. *That the IRC initiate official contact with the appropriate deputies from the GPCNZ in order to explore future cooperation.*
2. *To encourage sessions to meet with the local GPCNZ session when difficulties arise between the churches in order to remove any hindrance to Christian unity.*
3. *To authorise the IRC to appoint fraternal delegates to the GPCNZ assemblies.*

## **82. National Diaconate Committee (R11, Art. 64, 83)**

Rev D J van Garderen presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To express appreciation for the work of the committee during the inter-synodical period.*
2. *To recommend that presbyteries continue to arrange annual deacons' conferences for the purpose of information sharing and valuable training.*
3. *To charge the NDC to arrange one inter-synodical national deacons' conference in a location that is most suitable in terms of personnel, travel and accommodation resources.*
4. *To call on sessions to encourage their serving deacons to attend these conferences as an integral part of their diaconal task.*

The NDC exhorted delegates to encourage the deacons' courts in their ministries, and the congregations, in compassion, prayer and generosity for the ministry of mercy to those who are needy neighbours both at home and abroad.

## **83. National Diaconate Committee Mandate (O10, Art. 64, 82)**

Rev P Kloosterman relinquished the chair to the vice-moderator.

Rev P Kloosterman presented Overture 10 which was defeated.

Rev P Kloosterman resumed the chair.

## **84. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 26, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To approve the adjusted "Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship" as follows.*
  1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies. If feasible, the interchurch relations committees should meet at least once in the inter-synodical period.
  2. The eligibility of call of ministers from each other's churches, subject to our current practice of holding a preliminary evaluation before a call is issued and a *Colloquium Doctum* (see Church Order Article 10).
  3. Occasional pulpit exchange as a means of maintaining and/or developing understanding and relationships, subject to session examination; longer-term pulpit supply should be subject to presbytery evaluation.
  4. Joint exchange of information and, when considered mutually beneficial, co-operation in areas of common responsibility (e.g. diaconal works, mission work, theological education).

5. A willingness to interact and share resources with a view to advancing the Reformed faith (e.g. conferences, teaching, publication ventures).
  6. Communication on major issues with mutual respect for the differences that exist and a willingness to consider one another's concerns.
2. *To change the name of the "Ecclesiastical Fellowship" relationship status to "Ecumenical Fellowship".*

**GKSA**

3. *To continue to express our deepest concern to the GKSA concerning its decision to allow women to be ordained as deacons (with emphasis on the matter of ordination).*

**85. Assess NIV 2011 for Use as Pulpit Bible (O2, R3)**

Rev M R Willemse presented Overture 2 which was defeated.

**86. Bible Translations Committee (R3)**

Rev P J J van Huyssteen presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To declare the ESV suitable for pulpit use.*
2. *To declare the NKJV suitable for pulpit use.*
3. *To discharge the committee with thanks.*

**87. Closure of Afternoon Session**

Elder D Petchell read from Acts 16:6–10 (ESV), led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 191 to be sung.

**88. Opening of Evening Session**

Elder L Vandenberg read from Acts 20:17–38, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 398 to be sung.

The moderator farewelled Dr Murray Capill (Reformed Theological College) and Elder Ken Stevenson (Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia).

**89. Presentation by Miss Janice Reid**

Janice Reid works in the Reach Beyond (formerly HCJB) organisation. She spoke of her work in radio broadcasting training in South-East Asia, and of how radio can be used as a powerful means of bringing the gospel. Her presentation showed the team effort required to start up a new radio station. Reach Beyond has recently celebrated carrying out its one hundredth radio station installation.

In recognition of her 22 years of service in missions, the moderator presented Janice with a floral tribute and a cash gift of \$4,200 from the churches. He then offered a prayer of praise of thanksgiving.

**90. Presentation by Rev Alan Douma**

Rev Alan Douma spoke of the work being done in Papua New Guinea. He told of developments in the Reformed Churches Bible College. There are five churches in the Port Moresby area: Beregoro, Ekoru, Nine Mile, East Boroko and Veifa'a. A co-operating group of the Reformed missionaries in the Port Moresby and Lae areas, called Reformed Ministries, has been formed, although each missionary reports to their home church (RCNZ, FRCA and CanRC). Despite a number of unique challenges, the gospel is being brought resulting in the saving of souls to the glory of God.

The moderator prayed for the work of missions in Papua New Guinea.

## **91. Overseas Mission Board (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 34, 58, 92, 95–99)**

Rev P Kloosterman relinquished the chair to the vice-moderator and continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To commend Br Walter and Sr Sjannette Hagoort in their labour for the Lord and his people at Mapang Mission House in Papua New Guinea, and encourages them in concluding their work.*
- 2. To commend Sr Janice Reid in her training ministry for Christian radio workers in South-East Asia, and encourage her in her ongoing work; to officially record its gratitude for Janice's many years in mission work.*
- 3. To commend Rev Alan and Sr Odette Douma in their missionary work in Papua New Guinea on behalf of the RCNZ.*
- 4. To provide for two OMB-selected delegates to attend the next Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.*

Rev P Kloosterman resumed the chair.

The moderator welcomed Rev Bruce Hoyt on his return from Oamaru.

## **92. Overseas Missions Board as a National Board (O5, R14, O7, O16, Art. 58, 91, 95–99)**

Rev A J O Holtslag presented Overture 5.

*Synod decided:*

*To constitute the Overseas Mission Board as a national body rather than a regional one.*

## **93. Closure of Evening Session**

Rev D A Waldron read from Romans 10:13–18, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 389 to be sung.

## Thursday 18 September 2014

### 94. Opening of Morning Session

Rev P N Archbald read from 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10. He reflected on the nature of the servanthood and service that we are called to as redeemed sinners. He then led in prayer and called for Psalm 116b:1, 5, 7–10 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

The moderator welcomed Elder Andrew Miller on his return from Oamaru.

### 95. Overseas Mission Board (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 34, 58, 91, 92, 96–99)

Rev P Kloosterman relinquished the chair to the vice-moderator and continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To locate a core (or executive committee) of the OMB in the Christchurch area, following a transition period during the inter-synodical period to 2017.*
2. *To initially re-appoint the currently serving OMB members, but that new members for the OMB be appointed by the South Island Presbytery after consultation with the OMB, Synodical Interim Committee and the Auckland and Wellington Presbyteries.*

### 96. Support for Middle East Reformed Fellowship (O7, R14, O5, O16, Art. 34, 58, 91, 92, 95, 97–99)

Elder C van der Meulen presented Overture 7.

*Synod decided:*

*To direct the OMB to provide a recommendation to the next synod, to assist in deciding whether to recommence support for the work of MERF.*

### 97. Overseas Mission Board (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 34, 58, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98, 99)

*Synod decided:*

*That, in order that one of the supporting overseas mission boards may call and send a fulltime expatriate mission worker to manage the Reformed Churches Bible College compound, to contribute one third of the cost of sending a mission worker for this purpose, via:*

- a. *voluntary contributions for getting the mission worker on the field, and*
- b. *quota payment for the mission worker's ongoing stipend and support.*

The moderator ruled that Recommendation 8 in the Overseas Mission Board report had lapsed.

### 98. National Diaconate Committee Support for Papua New Guinea Compound Manager (O16, R14, O5, O7, Art. 34, 58, 91, 92, 95–97, 99)

Rev A J O Holtslag presented Overture 16 which was defeated.

### 99. Overseas Mission Board (R14, O5, O7, O16, Art. 34, 58, 91, 92, 95–98)

*Synod decided:*

*To approve the OMB quota at \$250,000 for the financial years ending 2016, 2017 and 2018.*

Rev P Kloosterman resumed the chair.

## **100. Forms and Confessions Advisory Committee (R17, Art. 17, 113)**

Rev J H Rogers presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *In the Form for Profession of Faith, reword question 5 to read, “Do you promise to honour the office bearers of the church and, if you should become unfaithful in doctrine or life, submit to their admonition and discipline?”*
2. *To rename the Form for the Baptism of Believers to “Form for the Baptism of Adults”.*
3. *In the Form for Baptism of Adults, reword the statement, “Second: Baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ, and on this basis we are brought into fellowship with the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” to read “Second: Baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ. After rising from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

## **101. Exclusive Use of English Standard Version as Pulpit Bible (O15, R3, Art. 86)**

Rev A J O Holtslag presented Overture 15 which was defeated.

## **102. Sexual Abuse Guidelines Advisory Committee (R18, O12, O14, O18, Art. 59, 67, 114)**

Rev R J van Wichen presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

1. *To delete Article 5(d).*
2. *To amend the second sentence of Article 8(d) to read: “However, sometimes this does not happen, even where the abuser has repented, sought forgiveness and done all he can to put things right and the victim has extended forgiveness.”*
3. *To amend footnote 22 to read: “Eyewitness testimony is not the only kind of valid witness; refer to 1 John 5:7-8 as an example.”*
4. *To amend the first two sentences of article 11(e) to read: “It often takes great courage for someone guilty of abuse to voluntarily confess his or her sin. When such a confession is made it needs to be handled with great sensitivity.”*
5. *To amend article 11(f) to read: “Where a minister or elder is a close relative or close friend of the alleged abuser or the person abused, it is strongly recommended that wherever possible they not become involved in the situation in their official capacity. The existence of a close relationship is likely to raise understandable concerns about objectivity.”*
6. *That the following footnote be added after the title, “Guidelines”:*

Synod 2011 defined ‘guidelines’ as follows: “Guidelines are not necessarily binding on a session or church, but should be seen as a practical and Biblically appropriate way to deal with the matter in question and have a direct or indirect reference to Scripture and/or our church polity documents (church order, confessional standards). Guidelines should not be ignored without good reason.”

## **103. Closure of Morning Session**

Elder J Koolaard read from Isaiah 41:8–16, led in prayer and called for Psalm 48 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

#### **104. Opening of Afternoon Session**

Rev L de Vos called for Psalm 145b:1–4 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung, read from Isaiah 35:1–10 and led in prayer.

Rev J W Sawyer conveyed greetings from Rev G I and Mrs Doris Williamson, who are retired and resident in the US.

#### **105. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (Art. 106, 107)**

Rev Arend Witten conveyed greetings from the CanRC (see Appendix 8: p. 1-49). The CanRC have continued to be blessed by the Lord. They consist of 55 churches, 4 in the US and the remainder in Canada. Total membership is 18,000, with 62 ministers of whom 9 are missionaries and 5 are professors. Mission work in Brazil has resulted in a sister-church relationship with a new federation there. Joint work with the RCNZ in Papua New Guinea has been valuable. Other strategic work occurs and is being investigated in Asia. Interest was expressed in the RCNZ's *Mission Policy Handbook*. Home mission work and Christian schooling are particular foci. The work of ARPA (Association for Reformed Political Action) has been of interest. Closer ecumenical relations are being pursued with the URCNA. Developments in the RCN are being monitored. The permissibility of sisters to participate in voting for office bearers continues to be a source of tension in the CanRC. A highlight has been the publication of the *Book of Praise* comprising the 150 Psalms as well as 85 hymns.

#### **106. Reply to the Fraternal Delegate of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (Art. 105, 107)**

Rev B E Hoyt responded to the address by Rev Witten.

#### **107. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 105, 110, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

*Synod decided:*

*To continue our sister-church relationship with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.*

#### **108. Address of the Observer of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 109, 110)**

Rev Richard Pot conveyed greetings from the FRCA (see Appendix 9: p. 1-53). The attendance of Rev P N Archbald at the latest synod was appreciated and helpful. It is apt that the FRCA's address follows that of the CanRC, as the FRCA make use of the CanRC *Book of Praise* and their seminary, they co-operate in missions together and ministers are often called from Canada to Australia. The FRCA comprises 16 churches and 4,500 members. Reassurance was given of a real desire for closer ecclesiastical relations, and acknowledgment that non-acceptance of the offer of sister-church relations has been an anomaly. However, the FRCA will need time to evaluate the nature of the RCNZ's new Ecumenical Fellowship relationship status.

#### **109. Reply to the Observer of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 108, 110)**

Rev P N Archbald responded to the address by Rev Pot.

## **110. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 108, 120, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To continue to offer a sister-church relationship to the FRCA.*
- 2. That the IRC meet with the FRCA deputies during the next inter-synodical period.*

## **111. Church Extension Committee (R12, O20, Art. 112)**

Rev A J O Holtslag led in prayer for Mr Derrick Watson, a former member of the committee, and now receiving hospice care.

Mr Martin de Ruiter presented the report.

*Synod decided:*

### **Vicariate Fund**

- 1. Not to levy a quota upon the churches till this fund falls below the \$60,000 cap.*

### **Needy Churches Fund**

- 2. To retain the minimum number of units at twenty (20).*
- 3. That the minimum annual contribution by each unit be \$2,500 in 2014.*
- 4. That the minimum annual contribution by each unit be adjusted annually using the average weekly wage index using 2014 as the base year (i.e. \$2,500).*

### **Building Fund**

- 5. That the CEC be able to offer interest-only repayment opportunities for up to three years in consultation with each applicant to the fund.*

### **Stipend**

- 6. That the minimum base stipend be adjusted annually using the average weekly wage index continuing to use 2009 as the base year (i.e. \$40,000).*
- 7. That the current seniority allowances remain as follows:*
  - a. For ministers who have served 2–5 years, 3% of the minimum base stipend*
  - b. For ministers who have served 6–10 years, 6% of the minimum base stipend*
  - c. For ministers who have served more than 10 years, 9% of the minimum base stipend.*

### **Allowances**

- 8. That for this inter-synodical period the non-taxable allowance continues to be \$2,623 p.a.*
- 9. That prior to each of the following synods, a survey of all churches be conducted to determine the minimum level of non-taxable allowance for the following subsequent inter-synodical period, excluding hospitality. This will be set at the level of the church that has the lowest level of actual reimbursement.*
- 10. That the reimbursing allowance for hospitality be separately set at each following synod.*
- 11. That CEC will continue to distribute any documents relating to church remuneration of ministers and tax implications as they are published.*

## **112. Ministers' Allowances and Remuneration (O20, R12, Art. 111)**

Rev M R Willemse presented Overture 20.

*Synod decided:*

*To mandate the CEC to investigate whether the current ministers' remuneration package with its various allowances can be replaced with a simple stipendiary package.*

## **113. Forms and Confessions Committees (R17, Art. 17, 100)**

Rev J H Rogers continued with the presentation of the reports of the advisory committee and the committee proper.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. In all the Forms for Baptism of Children of Believers, reword question 3 to read, "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 truth of the Christian faith and to lead \_\_\_\_\_ him/her by your example to follow Jesus Christ?"*
- 2. To approve the Liturgical Forms as presented by the committee and amended by synod.*
- 3. To discharge the committee with thanks (upon completion of the printing of the book).*

## **114. Sexual Abuse Guidelines Committees (R18, O12, O14, O18, Art. 59, 67, 102)**

Rev R J van Wichen continued with the presentation of the reports of the advisory committee and the committee proper.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To amend the last sentence of clause 3(i) to read: "This can be particularly challenging when someone who was guilty of abuse is released after having served a prison sentence and wishes to return to the church."*
- 2. To change the opening words of article 7(c) from "A repentant abuser" to "Someone who was guilty of abuse and has repented."*
- 3. To amend the last sentence of article 7(d) to read: "Nonetheless, as an act of Christian love, those guilty of abuse will be subject to the admonition and discipline of the church."*
- 4. To amend the first sentence of article 8(d) to read: "Both the one who committed the abuse, his victim and all involved should patiently trust God's timing for a full reconciliation."*
- 5. To amend the last sentence of article 8(d) to read "By God's grace, the one who was guilty of abuse and his victim may sit at the Lord's Table together, even while they may struggle to relate in other situations."*
- 6. To adopt the "Guidelines for Sessions Having to Deal with Sexual Abuse Against Children" as amended.*
- 7. To encourage sessions to become familiar with the guidelines.*
- 8. To make the guidelines available on the Internet and in printed format to our churches.*
- 9. To discharge the committee with thanks.*

## **115. Church Order Committee (R7, O17, Art. 30, 127, 129, 137)**

Rev A J O Holtslag presented the report.

It was agreed to recommit Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 to the committee.

Synod went into committee of the whole.

Synod came out of committee of the whole.

## **116. Closure of Afternoon Session**

Elder T Smilde read from 1 John 2:28–3:10, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 279 to be sung.

## **117. Opening of Evening Session**

Elder A Thomson read from Colossians 1:24–2:3, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 391 to be sung.

The moderator farewelled Rev Stefaans de Bruyn (Reformed Churches of South Africa) and Elder Marcel Bax (Free Reformed Churches of Australia).

The minutes of Wednesday 17 September were approved.

## **118. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Art. 119, 120)**

Rev Sjirk Bajema conveyed greetings from the PCEA (see Appendix 10: p. 1-56). There has been a strong *historical connection* with Reformed and Presbyterian having similar histories of splits and mergers within the Calvinist branch of the Reformation. The *local situation* with the PCEA is that they have ten ministers who serve in congregations that are ethnically diverse. In some local churches members have been largely drawn from other churches rather than having grown up in the PCEA. *Ecumenical clarification:* the CRCA have admitted the PCEA to their closest level of fellowship, however this has not been reciprocated by the PCEA who envisage a second-tier ecumenical relationship with the CRCA. The PCEA very much value their close ecumenical relationships—including that with the RCNZ—which are likened to the dew of Hermon, mentioned in Psalm 133, flowing across Israel.

## **119. Reply to the Fraternal Delegate of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (Art. 118, 120)**

Rev C D Wilson responded to the address by Rev Bajema.

## **120. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 118, 123, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

*Synod decided:*

*To continue our sister-church relationship with the PCEA.*

## **121. Address of the Fraternal Delegate of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 122, 123)**

Rev Geoff van Schie conveyed greetings from the CRCA (see Appendix 11: p. 1-60). There has been a history of a respectful, candid relationship in which difficult issues have been traversed. The new relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship is appropriate, but the deep bond of love and affection continues. Fraternal delegates of the CRCA and PCEA have had mutually beneficial meetings towards closer relations. Membership in the ICRC is being pursued. The CRCA is enjoying a time of peace. The CRCA's "Fourfold Task" vision has been receiving an increased focus. Rev van Schie indicated this will be his last RCNZ synod, DV, and he expressed his wish that, in the words of Philippians 2:15, the churches of the RCNZ may shine brilliantly as stars in this part of the universe.

## **122. Reply to the Fraternal Delegate of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 121, 123)**

Rev M R Willemse responded to the address by Rev van Schie.

### **123. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 26, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 121, 134, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel presented the part of the report pertaining to the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA).

*Synod decided:*

#### **CRCA**

1. *To continue the relationship of Ecumenical Fellowship with CRCA.*
2. *To inform the CRCA of the amended "Rules for Ecumenical Fellowship".*

Rev P N Archbald presented the part of the report pertaining to the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

*Synod decided:*

#### **GKSA**

3. *To express our concern to the GKSA at the way they dealt with the appeals surrounding the ordination of women at their 2012 Synod.*
4. *To inform the GKSA that if they continue to ordain women as deacons this may lead to our relationship being put under strain.*
5. *To charge the IRC to respond to the request of the GKSA Synod 2012 to demonstrate to them where their decision to ordain women to the office of deacon is contrary to the Scripture and the confessions.*

### **124. Orthodox Presbyterian Church Missions (Art. 118)**

Elder Mark Bube gave a moving and inspiring presentation drawing from experiences of missionaries and converts in Northern Africa and other locales. The goal of mission is worship. On Christ's return worship will continue, but the need for mission will cease. Mission work is a long-term endeavour. Several generations will be required to establish godly patterns of family and community behaviour. We can be encouraged at the strength of faith shown by our persecuted brethren but we need to keep them, and the efforts to reach those roundabout them, in prayer.

### **125. Closure of Evening Session**

Rev J H Rogers led in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters. He then read from John 15:15 and Zechariah 4:5–10a, called for *Sing to the Lord* 413 to be sung and led in prayer.

## Friday 19 September 2014

### 126. Opening of Morning Session

Rev D J van Garderen called for Psalm 103b:1–3 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung and read from Psalm 103:1–5. He reflected on ways in which the glory of what it means to be in Christ is wonderfully described in this psalm. Rev van Garderen then led in prayer and called for Psalm 103b:4–5 from *Sing to the Lord* to be sung.

The moderator called for *Sing to the Lord* 349:1, 4 to be sung to honour Elder L van Vliet on his birthday.

### 127. Church Order Committee (R7, O17, Art. 30, 115, 129, 137)

Rev A J O Holtslag continued with the presentation of the report.

It was agreed to recommit Recommendations 5 and 6 to the committee.

It was agreed to take no action with Recommendation 7.

*Synod decided:*

1. To replace the last bullet point under section f of the “Guidelines for Discipline of Those Who Resign” with the following:

“If a session intends that the announcement be understood as an excommunication, then the form for excommunication must be read out as well as any other statement.”

2. That the “Guidelines for Ecclesiastical Assemblies in the Formal Adjudication of Written and Formal Charges” are adequate for use in our denomination.
3. To change the heading of Church Order Article 16 from “Leave of Absence” to “Temporary or Permanent Release from Service to a Congregation”.
4. To present Church Order Article 16 in the following format:

Temporary or Permanent Release from Service to a Congregation Article 16

1. A minister who for weighty reasons desires a temporary release from service to the congregation must have his application for release approved by his session, which continues to have supervision over him.
2. A minister who is not eligible for retirement or worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from service in a congregation through action initiated by himself or by his session. Such release shall be given only with the approval of presbytery, with concurring advice of the synodical examiners, and in accordance with synodical regulations.
  - a. The session shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of presbytery.
  - b. A minister of the Word who has been released from service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the presbytery, with the concurring advice of the synodical examiners, shall declare him to be released from ministerial office.

5. To remove the current “Rules for Presbytery” from the Office Bearers’ Handbook.

The Committee withdrew Recommendation 13.

*Synod decided:*

6. To ratify “Guidelines for Vicariate Training” (OBH, “Vicariate”, sections D & E, pp. 3-12 to 3-17) for use in our denomination.

7. *That long-service leave that is accrued by a minister while serving in a congregation of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia will continue to be recognised in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, notwithstanding the change in our ecclesiastical relationship effective from Synod 2011.*

### **128. Removing Rules for Presbytery and Session in the *Office Bearers' Handbook* (O3, R7, Art. 73)**

Rev C D Wilson presented Overture 3.

*Synod decided:*

*To eliminate the "Rules for Session Meetings", Section 2-37, found in the Office Bearers' Handbook.*

### **129. Dispute Resolution (O17, R7, Art. 30, 115, 127, 137)**

Elder C van der Meulen presented Overture 17.

The moderator charged the Wellington delegates with drafting a mandate, for Synod to approve, to commit the overture to the Church Order Committee.

### **130. Message of Loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen**

Rev J H Rogers presented a letter to Her Majesty the Queen (see Appendix 12: p. 1-62) which was approved by common consent.

### **131. Psalm and Hymn Selection Committee (R10, Art. 63)**

Rev J H Rogers presented a revision of Recommendation 2 of the Report for reconsideration.

*Synod decided:*

1. *Regarding the Sing to the Lord publication:*
  - a. *To charge the committee to prepare a reprint of the present book (2,000 copies) after investigation of different sizes, paper weights and other possible variations.*
  - b. *That the forms and confessions be included in the reprint if deemed practical.*
  - c. *To underwrite the printing cost up to \$15 per book.*
2. *To discharge the committee with gratitude expressed to them and the congregations of which they are members.*

### **132. Opening of Synod 2017 (O4)**

Elder F Braam presented Overture 4.

*Synod decided:*

*To begin Synod 2017 with a thanksgiving conference to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.*

### **133. Life (Indefinite Term) Office (O6)**

Rev C D Wilson presented Overture 6 which was defeated.

A motion to appoint a study committee to consider the question of life and fixed-term length of office was defeated.

### **134. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 138)**

Elder P van der Wel continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

*To continue our membership in the International Conference of Reformed Churches.*

### **135. Closure of Morning Session**

The moderator farewelled the Foxton delegates.

Elder P van Echten read from Revelation 22:7, 12–21, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 325 to be sung.

The moderator farewelled Rev Arend Witten (Canadian and American Reformed Churches) and Rev Geoff van Schie (Christian Reformed Churches of Australia).

### **136. Opening of Afternoon Session**

Elder F Braam read from Philippians 4:2–5 and Matthew 11:28–30, led in prayer and called for *Sing to the Lord* 394 to be sung.

The moderator thanked the catering team for the way in which they have kept the delegates wonderfully well fed.

The minutes of Thursday 18 and Friday 19 (morning session) September were approved.

### **137. Dispute Resolution (O17, R7, Art. 30, 115, 127, 129)**

*Synod decided:*

*To commit Overture 17 to the Church Order Committee with the following mandate.*

*Advise how Church Order Article 35 relates to the issues raised by Overture 17 especially “dealing with disputes or disagreements – including between a member and a session, a session and a presbytery, and a presbytery and a synod.”*

### **138. Interchurch Relations Committee (R19, Art. 15, 21, 32, 39, 42, 78, 81, 84, 107, 110, 120, 123, 134)**

Elder P van der Wel continued with the presentation of the report.

*Synod decided:*

- 1. To send a delegate to an OPC general assembly during the next inter-synodical period.*
- 2. To send a delegate to the next CanRC synod.*
- 3. To send a fraternal delegate to the next synod of the GKSA.*
- 4. To send a fraternal delegate to a PCEA synod during the next inter-synodical period.*

Rev D J van Garderen informed the Synod of two communications from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands which had come to light since the beginning of synod. The RCN intend to send three representatives to New Zealand to interact with the IRC.

*Synod decided:*

- 5. Barring unforeseen circumstances, to send a fraternal delegate to the next RCN general synod.*
- 6. To send two delegates to the next synod of the CRCA.*
- 7. To send up to three delegates to the 2017 ICRC to be held in Hamilton, Ontario.*
- 8. To send one delegate to the next synod of the FRCA.*

9. *To send a delegate to at least one presbytery of the PRCA annually during the inter-synodical period.*
10. *To approve funding of up to \$1,000 per year for the ongoing development and maintenance of the denominational website.*
11. *To place the website under the jurisdiction of the National Publication Committee.*

The Committee withdrew Recommendation 38.

*Synod decided:*

12. *To authorise the SIC to approve, on its behalf, the proposed changes to the ICRC constitution subject to the approval of the IRC and the three presbyteries.*

## **139. Synodical Appointments**

*Synod decided:*

*To make the following appointments.*

### **A. Standing Committee Appointments**

#### **Church Extension Committee**

Messrs Raymond Posthuma (c), Martin de Ruiter, Richard Maffey, Gerald Reinders

#### **Church Order Committee**

Revs Andre Holtslag (c), John Rogers, Daniel Wilson, Messrs Pieter van der Wel, Wim Stolte

#### **Emeritus Fund Trustees**

Messrs Colin Young (c), Martin Leenders, Jacob Ploeg, Wayne Kingham, Rev Michael Willemse, Mrs Sarah Bryant (administrator, but not a trustee)

#### **Interchurch Relations Committee**

Mr Pieter van der Wel (c), Revs David Waldron, Leo de Vos, Paul Archbald, Daniel Wilson, Andrew de Vries

#### **Overseas Mission Board**

Revs Peter Kloosterman (c), Hans Vaatstra, Robert van Wichen, Messrs John Kloeg, Henk Velvis, John Verbokkem, Dave Jochem, Don Petchell (NDC liaison), Mesdames Rosalind Cressy, Elise Stolte

#### **National Diaconate Committee**

Mr Graeme Posthuma (c), Rev Dirk van Garderen, Messrs Jacob Ploeg, Jonathan Termaat, Stephen van Garderen, Don Petchell, Mrs Susan Jones

#### **National Publishing Committee**

Messrs John Holtslag (c), Mark van der Zwaag, Mrs Nicola Wharekawa (secretary), Messrs Andrew Reinders (treasurer), Walter Walraven (editor), Dr Sally Davey (sub-editor)

#### **Faith in Focus Editorial Advisory Committee**

Revs Hans Vaatstra, Andrew de Vries, John Rogers

#### **Synodical Interim Committee**

Revs Peter Kloosterman (c), Robert van Wichen, Michael Willemse, Messrs John van Dyk, Pieter van der Wel (ex officio)

#### **Ministers and Wives' Conference Organising Committee**

South Island Presbytery ministers and their wives, Rev Erik Stolte (c)

#### **Hymnal Committee**

Rev John Rogers (c), Mesdames Lieda Brooks, Lois Hoyt, Elrike Hoyt (administrator)

Minutes

## **B. Study Committee Appointments**

### **Forms and Confessions Update Committee**

Revs John Haverland (c), Robert van Wichen, Leo de Vos, Mr Ed Havelaar, Dr Sally Davey  
(committee to be discharged when the book is printed)

## **C. Other Appointments**

### **Stated Clerk**

Mr Pieter van der Wel

### **Synodical Treasurer**

Mrs Alice Saathof

### **Deputies for Students to the Ministry**

Revs John Haverland (c), Michael Willemse, Andre Holtslag (alt.), Pieter van Huyssteen (alt.)

### **Synodical Archivist**

Mr Leen Vandenberg (until permanent archivist is appointed, churches to give suggestions to SIC)

### **Year Book Editor**

Miss Kathryn Kleinjan

### **Synodical Liaison to Calvinist Cadet Corps**

Mr Martin de Ruiter

### **Delegates to Sister Churches**

ICRC: Revs Dirk van Garderen, Bruce Hoyt  
Other appointments to be made by the IRC

### **Website Administrator**

Mr Dimitri Mucznik

## 140. Budget

Elder P Mulholland, on behalf of the Budget Committee, presented the budget for the inter-synodical period.

*Synod decided:*

*To adopt the synodical budget shown below for the years 2015–2018.*

Reformed Churches of New Zealand Synodical Budget for the four years ending 31 March 2018					
	Year ending 31 Mar 2015	Year ending 31 Mar 2016	Year ending 31 Mar 2017	Year ending 31 Mar 2018	Article
Archivist	200	200	200	200	16
Administration	100	100	100	100	22
Cadets & Gems	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	33
<i>Committees</i>					
Emeritus Fund	-	-	-	-	54
Forms & Confessions	31,000	-14,500	-15,000		113
Hymnal	500	30,000	- 15,000	-15,000	131
Interchurch Relations	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	138
<i>Conferences</i>					
Deacons	4,500			5,000	82
Ministers & Wives		11,000			14
Deputies for Students to the Min.	1,500	4,500	1,500	1,500	60
Stated Clerk Honorarium	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	18
Subscription – ICRC	200	200	200	200	134
Synod 2014 & 2017	30,000			30,000	5, 141
<i>Synod Delegates</i>					138
CanRC Synod			3,000		
CRCA Synod		2,100			
FRCA Synod	1,200			1,200	
GKSA Synod	5,000			5,000	
ICRC Asia-Pacific Regional			5,000		
ICRC 2017 in Hamilton, Ont.				5,000	
OPC General Assembly		3,000			
PCEA Synod			1,000		
PRCA Presbyteries		1,000			
RCN Synod			2,500		
URCNA Synod		-			
Synodical Examiners	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Website	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	138
Yearbook	600	600	600	600	15
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$84,300</b>	<b>\$47,700</b>	<b>-\$6,400</b>	<b>\$43,300</b>	
Acts of Synod 2014	2,500				
Emeritus Fund quota per minister	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	56
OMB quota	200,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	99
RTC recommended contribution	72,500	75,000	77,500	80,000	70
Vicariate quota	-	-	60,000	60,000	111
Stated Clerk print updates for <i>OBH</i>	1,000				18

## **141. Next Synod**

*Synod decided:*

*To accept the offer of the Reformed Church of Palmerston North to convene the next synod in September 2017, Lord willing.*

## **142. Retirements**

The moderator thanked Revs Dirk van Garderen and Bruce Hoyt for their many years of service to the churches and wished them God's blessing in their retirement.

## **143. Closure of Synod**

The moderator, Rev Peter Kloosterman, read from Psalm 16:1–11 (NASB) and made closing remarks (see Appendix 13: p. 1-63).

The moderator thanked those who contributed to the running of synod: the audio-visual crew, the kitchen and dining room team, Elder John Koolaard who played the organ to accompany the singing, the organising committee and all others from the Reformed Churches of Bishopdale, Dovedale and Christchurch who helped.

The moderator called for *Sing to the Lord* 365 to be sung and led in prayer.

On behalf of the delegates Rev D A Waldron thanked the moderator for his work throughout the Synod.

The 28th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand closed at 4:00pm, Friday 19 September 2014.

## Appendix 1: Key to Abbreviations

ACCESS.....	Advanced Children's Christian Education Support Service	MESV .....	Modern English Study Version
ACT.....	Australian College of Theology	MOU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
adv .....	Advisor	MPH.....	Missions Policy Handbook
alt.....	Alternate	NASB.....	New American Standard Bible
ARPA .....	Assn for Reformed Political Action	NDC.....	National Diaconate Committee
Art .....	Article	NGK.....	Netherlands Reformed Churches ( <i>Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken</i> )
BBK.....	(RCN) Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad ( <i>Deputaten Betrekkende Buitenlandse Kerken</i> )	NGKSA .....	Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa ( <i>Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika</i> )
C .....	Communication	NHK.....	Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa ( <i>Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika</i> )
c.....	Convenor	NIV .....	New International Version
CanRC .....	Canadian and American Reformed Churches	NKJV .....	New King James Version
CCC&G .....	Calvinist Cadet Corps & Gems	NPC .....	National Publications Committee
CEC .....	Church Extension Committee	O .....	Overture
CECCA.....	(URCNA) Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad	OBH.....	Office Bearers' Handbook
CEF .....	Church in Ecclesiastical Fellowship	OMB .....	Overseas Mission Board
CEIR.....	(OPC) Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations	OPC .....	Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA)
CER .....	(CRCA) Committee for Ecumenical Relations	PCA .....	Presbyterian Church of Australia
CERCU.....	(URCNA) Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity	PCC.....	Pastoral Care Committee
CGKN.....	Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands( <i>Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> )	PCEA.....	Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
CO .....	Church Order	PDF.....	Portable Document Format
COC.....	Church Order Committee	PNG .....	Papua New Guinea
CPI.....	Consumer Price Index	PRCA.....	Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia
CRCA.....	Christian Reformed Churches of Australia	R .....	Report
CYF .....	Children, Youth and Family	RCBC.....	Reformed Churches Bible College
DV .....	<i>Deo volente</i> (Lord willing)	RCN .....	Reformed Churches of the Netherlands ( <i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i> )
EFT.....	Equivalent full time	RCNr.....	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Restored) ( <i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (hersteld)</i> )
ERC .....	Education Resource Centre	RCNZ.....	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
ESCT .....	Employer Superannuation Contribution Tax	RCPNG .....	Reformed Churches of Papua New Guinea
ESV .....	English Standard Version	RPCNA.....	Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
FBT .....	Fringe Benefit Tax	RES.....	Reformed Ecumenical Synod
FinF .....	<i>Faith in Focus</i>	RTC .....	Reformed Theological College
FPCA.....	Free Protestant Church in Argentina	SIC.....	Synodical Interim Committee
FRCA .....	Free Reformed Churches of Australia	StL .....	<i>Sing to the Lord</i>
GA .....	General Assembly	TNIV.....	Today's New International Version
GKSA.....	Reformed Churches in South Africa ( <i>Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika</i> )	TUK.....	Theological University of the Reformed Churches ( <i>Theologische Universiteit Kampen van de Gereformeerde Kerken</i> )
GPCNZ.....	Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand	URCC .....	United Reformed Churches of Congo
HCJB .....	Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings (radio call letters) (now Reach Beyond)	URCNA .....	United Reformed Churches of North America
ICRC .....	International Conference of Reformed Churches	WCF.....	Westminster Confession of Faith
IRC .....	Interchurch Relations Committee	WCRC .....	World Council of Reformed Churches
MARS.....	Mid-America Reformed Seminary		
MERF.....	Middle East Reformed Fellowship		

## **Appendix 2: Guide to Cover Photograph**

Front row (seated)..... Mr Mark Bube (OPC), Mr Fred Braam, Mr John Koolaard, Mr Jacob Ploeg, Mr Don Petchell, Rev Jack Sawyer (OPC), Mr John van Dyk, Rev Peter Kloosterman, Rev Michael Willemse, Rev Robert van Wichen, Mr Martin Brooks, Rev Dirk van Garderen, Mr Ken Stevenson (PRCA), Rev Ed Kastelein (PRCA)

Second row ..... Rev Arend Witten (CanRC), Rev Paul Archbald, Rev Hans Vaatstra, Mr Carl van der Meulen, Mr Ben McDonald, Rev David Waldron, Mr Peter Mulholland, Mr Paul van Echten, Mr Tjeerd Smilde, Rev Sjirk Bajema (PCEA), Mr Leen Vandenberg, Mr Wim Stolte, Mr Walter Walraven, Rev Daniel Wilson, Rev Alan Douma, Dr Murray Capill (RTC), Mr Doug Field (URCNA)

Third row ..... Rev Stefaans de Bruyn (GKSA), Rev Bruce Hoyt, Mr Leen van Vliet, Mr Peter Thomson, Mr Andrew Miller, Mr Henk Hemmes, Mr Raymond Posthuma, Rev John Rogers, Mr Arnold Kaijser, Rev Geoff van Schie (CRCA), Mr John Kloeg, Mr Ron Snoek, Mr Chris van Tonder, Mr Hans Snoek, Rev Reinier Noppers (CRCA)

Back row ..... Rev Pieter van Huyssteen, Rev Andrew de Vries, Mr Marcel Bax (FRCA), Rev Andre Holtslag, Mr Ewout Aarsen, Rev Richard Pot (FRCA), Rev Leo de Vos, Rev Erik Stolte, Mr Bruno Saathof, Mr Julian Dykman, Mr Graeme Posthuma, Mr Pieter van der Wel, Mr Daniel Flinn, Mr Roel Voschezang

### **Appendix 3: Fraternal Greetings from the Reformed Churches of South Africa**

Dear brothers and sisters in die Lord Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, I want to greet you in the words of Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

“... so that you may abound in hope”. When we read about the Christian hope in the Bible, we have to remember that it is not something that is uncertain. The Bible does not use the word “hope” in the same way that we use it, when for example, in South Africa we say: “I hope it will rain today.” In New Zealand maybe you will say: “I hope for sunshine today.”

No, the Christian hope is something that is very certain. It is the sure expectation that goes hand in hand with the promises of God. God does not make empty promises. The Christian hope reaches to the future, not because of uncertainty in regards to whether or not the promises of God will be fulfilled, but because it is not yet the time of the fulfilment. It is not yet the time of the fulfilment of the promise, and therefore I hope on it. Biblical hope has everything to do with the truthfulness of God. He is the true God and therefore I hope, therefore I know, that He will do as He promised.

This hope is certain, because it comes from God. “May the God of hope ...” God is the source, the origin of this hope. The Triune God is the God who gives hope. And the implication of this is clear. If you do not have God, you do not have this hope. If you do not believe in God through Jesus Christ, if Christ did not save you, you do not have hope and there is no hope for you. In Ephesians 2:12 we read about it. Paul reminded in particular the believers from the gentiles what they had been, before they come to faith. We read there: “remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” “... having no hope and without God in the world.” It means that the children of God are the only people who can really have hope.

The fact that we can “abound in hope” means that there are degrees of hope. You do not have the same amount of it all the time. We have to look to the Lord and keep looking to Him as the source of our hope. He is the God of hope. It is when we take our eyes away from God and look in other directions or to other sources for hope, it is then that we do not find the hope that we are looking for. Looking in other directions robed us of our hope and with this also of our joy and peace. The temptation is real to seek for hope in this world or in our circumstances as believers or in the challenges that we face or don't face as churches.

It is my sincere prayer that you as the Reformed Churches in New Zealand will keep looking to God as the source of your hope and that He will grant that you may abound in hope and that the Lord will strengthen you to proclaim His Gospel in a hopeless world. May you do so with joy and peace in the Lord.

I want to thank you on behalf of the Reformed Churches in South Africa for your invitation to send delegates to your synod.

Thank you for your hospitality here at synod and also where I had the privileged to stay with Paul and Carine Bakker. They took me into their home a week before synod and showed me more from your beautiful shores.

We also thank you for sending brother John Rogers as delegate to our synod in January 2012. Brother John is still a very familiar face at the synods of our churches. We really appreciate his participation and insights.

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I am still convinced that the New Zealand churches benefited more from our relationship in terms of members. There are not so many members of the RCNZ in the GKSA as it is the other way around.

May the Lord lead and guide you in your deliberations.

With this I greet you on behalf of the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Rev A.S.A. de Bruyn

## **Appendix 4: Address from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia**

Thank you Moderator, moderamen and brethren.

The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus in the Reformed Churches of NZ, together with the overseers and deacons. I have, as you will have noticed, taken some liberties with the text of Philippians chapter 1.

(I now will revert to the singular, for this is very personal for me.) Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

We bring you greetings from the PRCA. A small but faithful part of the Kingdom.

Why do we give this thanks? Both of us are confessional (1 Tim. 3:16). Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Both of us are evangelistic. Both of us are mission oriented—home missions and overseas missions.

We know you are a spiritual church—who else would commence a synodical prayer service coincident with kick-off time for a Blecks and Boks Rugby match? And not one mobile phone was seen in the church! And we are a spiritual church—we are willing to co-operate in allowing you to retain the Bledisloe Cup in return for dominating the Bleck Keps (cricket).

What do we want? A significant relationship with you.

In the words of Bro Pieter van Huysteen's synodical devotions this morning—a high level friendship just as Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God—the greatest gift is to strengthen and improve a friend's spiritual walk.

Unity as expressed by Bro Andrew de Vries on Saturday evening. A unity that is wonderful—not only are our two societies in confusion but so also are many of our so-called churches—take a look at this—here are two churches that work together—Kiwis and Kangaroos. A unity that is fragrant—a sweet smell bearing witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit. A unity like the dews of Hermon and the snows which flow down in refreshing streams to Israel and other lands.

A confessional/synodical level of unity is a necessary starting point. Ground roots relationship—with members—praying sharing caring feeling supporting.

So here is a brief overview of what is happening from a sample of congregations:

*Sutherland (Sydney)*

An email from Rome (Saturday 13th). A fellow elder writes:

I have just spoken to my daughter X and she said that her son Y came under deep conviction of sin following last Sunday's sermon. (Josh is about 20 years of age and has had a history of marijuana use, petty crime and not completing rehabilitation courses mandated by court magistrates.) He had had an extremely bad week and had had to move out of where he was renting. He felt that the preacher was speaking directly to him, and

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he talked with the minister there, confessing all his sins to this man, and hearing how the gospel could help him. It is very early days yet, but it does seem that he has been converted.

Three unchurched have been attending and one has applied for membership, professing faith. Another covenant child, with long term indifference to the Gospel is sitting again under the Word, with a converted wife. Our evening service has been transferred as an outreach to a new demographic where we believe there are needy. (This is a pattern with most other congregations.)

### *Adelaide:*

After a seven year vacancy (how Biblical is that?) the pulpit has been filled by Rev Duane Fowler from the USA. He came from PC America then led his congregation to the EPC which as a denomination decided to ordain women—at which point he wanted to lead his congregation to the OPC but the congregation resisted this as one move too many. Blessing has followed his installation at Adelaide with new attendees. And commencement of a Sunday evening service (once a month at this stage).

### *Missions*

#### 1. Vanuatu—the PRCV (an independent sister Presbytery).

A missionary linguist went to the New Hebrides in 1969 into a village which had only just emerged from cannibalism. Due to God's grace and mercy, people were converted, an indigenous church—self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating—the PRC of Vanuatu was formed. And translations of the Scriptures have been made in the Big Nambas, Tanna and Iririki languages. There are three congregations.

#### 2. Fiji

There is one congregation, ruled by two indigenous elders, associated with the PRCA Presbytery.

#### 3. Australian Aboriginal

Rev Jonathon Wright works in association with AIM (Rev Trevor Leggott), based in Camooweal, Queensland. It is a slow and often challenging work, but he has been privileged to be associated with a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in revival in the Sandover Highway region—people converted, eager to hear the Word, leaving their old ways and living anew.

### *John Knox Theological College*

Currently we have two students for the ministry—one completing right now, and one who has commenced this year.

Our contacts with the RCNZ and New Zealand go way back.

In 1966 four members of Sutherland Presbyterian Church toured New Zealand encouraging Presbyterians disaffected because of the nascent liberalism sponsored by Sir Lloyd Geering in the PCNZ. (Christ's bones are still in the earth of Palestine etc.) The "Famous Four" included Bruce Gillard (later a minister in the RCNZ and CRCA) and Ed Kastelein who is present at this Synod and is the previous minister of the PRCA Adelaide.

Don Petchell was a foundation member of the Sutherland PRC when we separated from the Presbyterian Church of Australia because of its own liberalism. On return to Auckland with Jenny, his Australian wife, Don returned to the RCNZ. Unfortunately, due to our insularity and isolation we regarded him as going to a "second best". I want to put on record again my shame and apology in holding this patronizing and erroneous view. And I am glad that our merciful God has delivered the PRCA from the strident arrogance of its early years.

We appreciate that sister relationships are taking up a lot of your time, and causing some concern. In respect of a sister relationship, what can the PRCA offer you?

- Orthodoxy in theology.
- Submission to Scripture.
- Commitment to God-honouring worship (though there will be differences between us (even as you have some differences within).
- Opportunities for co-operation in missions, training and evangelism.
- Opportunities to send your unwanted ministers to our vacant pulpits!
- A body of “honest brokers” who can give an independent analysis in cases of discipline if it should be deemed appropriate.
- A sounding board for discussion of policies for alternate views of policy—as was contributed by Rev Ed Kastelein today regarding missionary furlough policy.
- Even differences in practices can be beneficial as we shine the light on our own ways to see if the other’s ways are Scriptural or beneficial, or both—e.g., your concerns about PRCA ruling elders preaching their own sermons could be a useful basis for discussing our concerns about the RCNZ application of parity of the eldership. We are heartened to see your Synod discussion paper on lifetime eldership versus defined-term eldership.
- Above all friendship in the Gospel. I am here, doing this presentation, because of friendship. In 1995 family history interests brought me to Christchurch and on a Sunday to my first ever worship, in the RCNZ, at Dovedale. I was late and there was one vacant seat into which I scuttled, only to realize it was a family seat which belonged to a little girl who was on the floor, colouring in. Nevertheless the family accommodated me. I was impressed with how easily the worship and exposition fitted with me, and when the family invited me home for lunch despite the mother’s concerns about a “messy house”, and the little girl adopted me as a stand-in grandpa, I was totally impressed.

So I want the essence of this friendship to continue at the formal level of a sister relationship.

Might I also add that the OPC delegates have invited us to talk with them here about a sister relationship with them and we plan (DV) to have them engage in formal discussions at one of our next Presbyteries.

Brethren, the PRCA prayer for you is, as we were reminded tonight, from Ephesians 6:13—put on the full armour of God, so that ... you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Presbyterian Reformed Church Australia  
Ken Stevenson  
Rev Ed Kastelein

## **Appendix 5: Fraternal Greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America**

Moderator and brethren,

It is my great privilege to stand before you and greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and address you on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America. As we contend, both here and in North America, with a culture that is increasingly unified and intentional in its hostility to the gospel of our Saviour, how true ring the words of the Psalmist: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." In your offices as pastors, elders and shepherds may you always be a sweet aroma as you represent the voice of our great Prophet, the compassion of our great Priest, and the authority of our great King!

On June 3, 2014, just a few weeks past, the ninth Synod of the URCNA was convened in Visalia, California. Two delegates each represented our 115 churches as we worked diligently through a 372-page agenda. That agenda contained matters that were for the most part routine and comparatively little that was in any manner contentious. We are thankful for the peace that the Lord has given to our federation and its churches. Significant time and effort were devoted to the furtherance of ecumenical relationships with churches outside of our federation.

While we understand that it was not possible at Synod Visalia 2014, it would have been our privilege to have hosted a delegate from among you. It had been our privilege two years ago at Synod Nyack 2012 to have the attendance of Rev Leo de Vos and his detailed report is attached to Report 19 of the Interchurch Relations Committee. As Rev. de Vos notes, the URCNA has two committees dealing with ecumenical relationships. They include CERCU (Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity) and CECCA (Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad.) CERCU's purview is churches in North America and CECCA's is churches in all other parts of the world. I serve on both committees.

At Visalia, Synod accepted the recommendations of CECCA that our federation enter in to Ecumenical Fellowship (Phase II) with the United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC) and that it enter into Ecumenical Contact (Phase I) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia (ERCLAT) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW).

Relationships with numerous other denominations and federations, including our excellent and productive relationship with Reformed Churches of New Zealand continue uninterrupted and we are humbly grateful for them.

You here in Christchurch have been most generous in your hospitality to us and we are eager to reciprocate whenever you can send representatives to any of our broader assemblies. While we can learn much from reports, we can learn much more by spending time with each other and interacting face to face. Each of our federations experiences limitations and we should never minimize the challenges that they can present. Hence, we understand why you were not able to send a delegate. While the Lord in His providence did not open a way for you to be among us in 2014, we pray that a day may come when we can host you and bless you as you have blessed us.

It can be inferred from reading its report that the Interchurch Relations Committee is operated within a structure that standardizes its work. We would encourage you in this. Our own CECCA has objective standards that it follows in seeking out and establishing ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. As I alluded to a moment ago we have two phases in our ecumenical relations that are meant to reflect an ongoing maturation of each relationship. I encourage you to continue to wrestle with this matter. We, like you, do not believe in unity at all cost. We believe in a unity and ecumenicity that is rooted in our common confession as Reformed churches. It is our confessional commitment and subscription that brings us close to each other. We hope that this will always be the

case. When it is, much good results as iron cannot sharpen iron if it never touches. We are glad that in Christ we can be iron to you and you to us.

Finally, thank you again for having me here as your guest and as I conclude will you indulge me in an anecdotal observation? A tour book that I consulted before coming to New Zealand contains this statement: “Kiwis don’t tend to be religious with two thirds lightly following one of the four main Christian religions (Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican.)” Obviously, the writer of that comment failed to visit any of the Reformed churches in this beautiful county. Had he done so he would have readily observed that there is nothing light in your dedication to our Lord and His Gospel. May you, His heralds, continue to be faithful in your task as you urgently proclaim the good news of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! And may He, the Captain of our Salvation, be honoured in all that you and we do and say, to the praise of His name.

Respectfully submitted,

Elder Douglas L. Field  
Fraternal Delegate (URCNA)

## **Appendix 6: Fraternal Greetings from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church**

Mr. Moderator, Fathers and Brothers, Dearly Beloved in the Lord—

It is my sincere pleasure to bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from your brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America. Together we share that firm commitment to the whole counsel of the Word of God, as summarized in our commonly held Reformed Standards. Looking around the Synod, we see many whom we have come to know as good friends and brothers in Christ. And we want to thank you for sending the Rev Leo de Vos as your fraternal delegate to our 2012 General Assembly. Lord willing, at our General Assembly in 2016, we are planning to celebrate God's faithfulness to His people on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of our founding.

While we in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church have had our own share of challenges and difficulties, we continue to rejoice in God's blessings upon us. At the end of 2013, our total membership was just over 30,000, and the total number of our congregations, all of which are located in the United States, Puerto Rico, or southern Ontario (Canada), reached 322 (269 organized congregations and 53 unorganized mission works) in 17 presbyteries. We had 534 ministers, 1,106 ruling elders, and 870 deacons.

Significant decisions by our general assembly since your last triennial Synod in 2011 have included:

- (2011) We offered thanksgiving to our Lord as we reflected upon His grace and mercy to us over the past 75 years; and authorized our own Psalter-Hymnal Special Committee to work with its counterpart in the URCNA with a view to producing a joint OPC/URCNA Psalter-Hymnal;
- (2012) We met concurrently with the second Diaconal Summit for all OPC deacons;
- (2013) We received, with thanksgiving to the Lord, the final reports from two different special committees that were established by previous general assemblies to visit two troubled presbyteries;
- (2014) In response to an overture for one our presbyteries, we established a committee to study "whether and in which particular senses the concept of the Mosaic Covenant as a republication of the Adamic Covenant is consistent with the doctrinal system taught in [our] confessional standards"; and sent a letter to the General Assembly of the Reformed Church in Japan to plead with our brothers not to adopt their study committee's recommendations to open the ruling and teaching offices in the church to those whom the Scriptures bar from performing the functions of such offices.

Our Committee on Christian Education continues to publish the denominational news magazine, *New Horizons*, which was reformatted in January 2014, and *Ordained Servant: A Journal for Church Officers*, which is now in its twenty-first year. Our website, OPC.ORG, averaged more than 50,000 unique visitors per month and received more than ten million hits last year (including more than 100,000 from China). The Committee also organizes an annual "Timothy Conference" to identify and encourage young men, ages 16–21, with apparent gifts for the gospel ministry; the "Shiloh Institute" to recruit able men, ages 21 through first-year seminarian, for ministry in the OPC; and the Ministerial Training Institute to assist in maintaining and enhancing the quality of ministerial service in the OPC. Last year, the Committee also provided assistance to sixteen summer and eighteen year-long internships. In cooperation with the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), we operate Great Commission Publications, which produces Sunday school materials and other Reformed literature.

Our Committee on Foreign Missions presently sends missionaries to China (where we are grateful for the labours of Miss Hyojung Lee from your Wellington congregation), Eritrea (when it pleases the

Lord to allow us to return), Ethiopia, Haiti, Japan, Quebec, Uganda (where the Rev Paul Archbald helped us out last year, and next month the Rev John Rogers is scheduled to come and help us out at Knox Theological College in Mbale), Ukraine, and Uruguay. Over the past few years, we have also enjoyed the privilege of rubbing shoulders with missionaries from the CanRC, HRC, IPB, IRCK, KAPC, PCA, RCSA, RPCNA, URCNA—and you all!—on the foreign fields.

And we continue to wait upon the Lord for an opportunity to resume our labors in Eritrea, where 2,000–3,000 of our Christian brothers and sisters currently languish in prison for the sake of Christ—many of whom are being beaten and kept in closed shipping containers in the hot desert sun, and some have died. In fact, it was just three years ago, while I was attending your last Synod in Bucklands Beach . . . . In China we are responding to requests from networks of house churches that have come to Reformed convictions and now desire to organize themselves biblically and to regularize their ordinations; one indigenous presbytery has already been organized.

And among the Karimojong in northeastern Uganda, we are seeing a first generation of Bible teachers beginning to emerge.

Presently, the OPC has Ecclesiastical Fellowship with sixteen churches (including the RCNZ), and Corresponding Relations with nine churches. The OPC is actively involved as one of the twelve member churches of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), and one of the thirty-two member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC).

We give thanks to our Lord for bringing our two churches so closely together for more than half a century. We love you. We pray for you. We continue to rejoice in the fellowship that we have in Christ. Let me close with these words from our Lord that are inscribed on the tombstone of one of our martyred missionaries: “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” Rev. 2:10.

Thank you and may God’s peace be with you.

Presented by Mark T. Bube  
Member of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations  
General Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions  
Bishopdale, September 2014

## **Appendix 7: Address from the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand**

Greetings to our brothers and sisters from Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. We want to thank you for sending delegates to our assemblies and for inviting us to attend this assembly. In Galatians 2 Paul says he went up to Jerusalem “and set before them the gospel he preached among the gentiles.” It was the same Gospel that Peter, James, and John were preaching who received Paul with warm fellowship. It is a joy coming to your assembly, fellowship with your pastors, hearing your messages because it is the same gospel that we hold so dear. Like John Calvin said, “the gospel is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life. It is received only when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affection of the heart.” In a country which has almost entirely lost the proclamation of the glory and supremacy of Christ over all things, we at GPC greatly appreciate our brothers in the Reformed church who cherish and proclaim the same Christ.

Grace Presbyterian Church is very young compared to the Reformed church only being in existence 10 years. There are strengths and weaknesses with being so newly formed. We have realized to grow we must be committed to evangelism and church planting. Currently we have five church plants. Most of these church plants have not been lead by young guys just out of seminary but the older more experienced pastors who have left very comfortable churches and salaries to start new and challenging works. This has been very encouraging for many of us to watch. We have great diversity in our leadership having pastors with Maori and Samoan backgrounds, pastors from New Zealand, Wales, America, South Africa, Australia and Korea. At the same time we are seeing more and more young men who are being trained for ministry and less of a need to bring in loud and obnoxious American pastors like myself.

Being so young we also have our challenges, like finances. Currently we have six or seven churches without pastors and some of these are unable to support a minister. We still have a great deal of work to do in procedures such as uniformity in our internships and ordination examinations. As a denomination we still have many challenges in front of us.

Moving forward we welcome more church-to-church, minister-to-minister relationships with our brothers at the Reformed Church. We are very open to do joint conferences, camps and pulpit exchanges. Here in Christchurch we are very excited about a summer work training in ministry project, where 7–10 of our students will live and work on (Bishopdale elder) Steve Sterne’s farm and to be disciplined and mentored by him. We also hope they can be a great support to the Rangiora church plant. We look forward to partnering with you more in proclaiming the greatness of our God in New Zealand.

## **Appendix 8: Fraternal Greetings from the Canadian and American Reformed Churches**

Esteemed brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches I bring you greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are thankful to receive an invitation to join you at this Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. It is our prayer that this synod will be blessed in all its deliberations and decisions for the benefit of Christ's church here.

We are living in the last days, before the return of our Lord. In his word our Lord has told us that there will be terrible times in the last days,

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—" (2 Tim. 3:2-4).

The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Tim 4:3-4).

How encouraging that here, the Lord Jesus is gathering defending and preserving his church, in humble submission to his word.

We are thankful that we have been able to have a sister-church relationship with you, now for seven years. And that we may support one another in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith, in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy.

Since CanRCs met with you last in 2008, we have continued to experience the blessing of the Lord. I would like to begin by sharing some of the blessings and the challenges that we face and then summarize some of the decisions of our recent assembly, Synod Carmen 2013.

We are federation of 55 churches, four in the United States, the rest in Canada, with a total membership of around 18,000 members. The churches are blessed with 62 ministers in active service. Of these 9 serve as missionaries or evangelists, and five are professors at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). A number of retired ministers and professors continue to serve the churches as well, in preaching, speaking and writing.

We are blessed to live in a country where God's people can gather and worship in freedom each week and where we can still openly practise our faith. The ministry of the gospel in preaching and teaching may continue and the sacraments are administered. The young people, and those new to the Christian faith receive catechetical instruction. I can tell you many things about our churches but these things, which perhaps we assume about each other, are really fundamental. Through these means the Lord continues to gather and mature his church.

As churches we continue to be active in overseas mission work. In Brazil, after four decades of mission work, there is a growing federation of Reformed churches. We have now the role of sister church coming along side these young churches. We are able to help particularly in the area of theological education with their seminary, and office bearer training. The Lord keeps opening up doors for the gospel in Brazil and we are thankful to be a part of that.

The same can be said for the work of mission in Papua New Guinea. To you we would like to express our thankfulness that we have been able to cooperate together in the mission work in Port Moresby at

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the Reformed Bible College. PNG is a country where the need for the gospel is great, where many live in superstition and darkness. How important it is that we together as sister churches are able to put our shoulders to the wheel and push so that the light of the gospel may shine in that country. Rev and Mrs Douma may the Lord give you strength and commitment to continue with this work.

Some CanRC also cooperate with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia to do work in China. A certain CanRC missionary and number of CanRC pastors travel overseas to teach house leaders in a number of cities in China. Because of the great demand an online Bible College was set up to train leaders. The desire for the gospel is great, but more recently the Chinese government has begun to systematically break down the churches- literally and metaphorically. But the work carries on, indeed much more could be done, but the limitation is men who can speak and read mandarin, who have been trained in Reformed Theology.

CanRCs are also active in mission in West Timor and new fields are being sought in the Philippines and Mexico.

There is great need also in our own country as Canadian society grows more secular. Under the blessing of the Lord, the churches have been able to be active in home mission. In the city of Hamilton there is a mission church that focuses particularly the very poor in the core of that city. Among Chinese immigrants in Vancouver, a small Chinese Reformed Church has been established. Other efforts focus on native people, areas close college campuses and other immigrant groups.

When I say, we in this report you need to understand that each mission work is under the authority of a local church. We do not have a federational board, or mission committee. A local church sends a missionary, supervises the work and usually cooperates with other churches in its area for financial support. But there is the challenge that comes with that. Without a centralized organization there can be some unnecessary duplication. In connection with that I received with interest the comprehensive Overseas Mission Board guidelines you have recently developed. Among us efforts have been made to redress reduplication by establishing a Canadian Reformed Mission Association. This is a voluntary association of all the boards from the churches, together with poverty relief organizations, who meet regularly to share information, discuss projects and pass along advice and expertise. In this way it is hoped that we can maintain the involvement of the local church and steward best the talents and resources the Lord has given.

Moving on from mission work to other aspects of our church life. One thing characteristic of many CanRCs is the establishment of reformed day schools. Parents from the church form associations that run reformed schools for the instruction of the covenant children. God's word and our reformed world view impact all of life, and in this way children can be taught also at school to integrate their Reformed faith into all areas of learning. The Lord has blessed this work so that where ever it is feasible, this has been done. In isolated areas some of these schools are quite small (my son has six children in his class) but other schools are large. In some provinces there is no government funding, and it is done with great financial sacrifice as parents seek to fulfil the baptismal promises they have made.

Like New Zealand, Christianity is being pushed more to the margins of public life. And yet as Christians we are called to respect and honour our government and also witness to our elected officials. If left ourselves often little happens in this area. In recent years an organization called, the Association for Reformed Political Action, ([www.arpacanada.ca](http://www.arpacanada.ca)) has been established to help us in this. This organization is designed stimulate and equip Reformed Christians to be a light to our government and judicial system. They give speeches in our communities, issue regular email bulletins, meet with politicians and help local groups to speak out against euthanasia, abortion, and ill-conceived laws. And the Lord has blessed this. They have been on interviewed on television, written pieces for national newspapers, and have been granted intervener status on cases before the Supreme Court of Canada. What is heartening is that we've see particularly young people in our churches showing leadership here.

Having shared something of the character of our churches, I'll give an update on some of the latest decisions from our General Synod in 2014 in Carmen Manitoba. It was a significant year for the Canadian Reformed Theological seminary, in Hamilton Ontario. Our general synod appointed a fifth professor, Rev Dr Ted van Raalte as the Professor Ecclesiology (church history, church polity and apologetics). The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary is owned and responsible to the churches at general synod. The professors are appointed by the churches at our synod, and what is taught there is overseen by synodically appointed board of governors. We see this as one way of fulfilling the mandate given by the Apostle Paul to Timothy, as a minister of the Church in Ephesus.

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).

This seminary has being a blessing to our churches, and General Synod Carmen asked our committee to invite the Reformed Churches of New Zealand to become acquainted with the college in Hamilton. Currently there is a total of 19 students studying at the seminary in our four-year master of divinity program. As the baby boomers have been retiring we are thankful that there is new generation trained by the church to take their place.

At General Synod attention was also paid to our ecumenical relationships. For some years now we have been working to come to federative unity with our sister church the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). As local churches this has been a very fruitful relationship. We enjoy pulpit exchanges, conferences, schooling and caring of the disabled together. However there are areas where there are many URCNA churches but no CanRC. There we are less known and at times less trusted. So there is still work needs to be done here. Synod Carmen 2013 decided to re-appoint its coordinators for church unity and instructed them to continue merger talks with the URCNA. One could say that the Reformed Churches in New Zealand are a pattern for us to follow. That we may be believers with diverse histories but be united on the basis of Reformed confessions and a commonly adopted church order.

We also continue to enjoy a fruitful relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA). We are able to cooperate in many ways: the training for the ministry, mission work, reformed education and calling of each other's ministers. You have been in close contact with them for many years. We would encourage you to continue patiently with this work and to keep seeking ways to support one another.

Another significant matter from General Synod Carmen was that a letter was sent to our sister church, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). Therein we expressed concerns about a number of developments relating to hermeneutics, the role of women in the church, and their relations with other Reformed churches in the Netherlands. In January of this year a conference was held in Hamilton at our Seminary to help increase dialogue on these subjects. A number of professors came from the Netherlands, and from our sister churches in North America and Australia to discuss principles of interpretation of Scripture and how they apply to the role of women in the church. It was honest discussion and the tone was at time sharp and but by all reports it helped to clear the air and understand one another better. The churches in the Netherlands did much for Canadian and New Zealand reformed churches, some 60 years ago when we were young and immature in a foreign land. We and you now have obligation to them in their time of need, as they live in a very secular land.

One struggle that we are currently having among ourselves as churches is about voting for office bearers. Whether it is appropriate and biblical for sisters in the congregation to participate in voting for the election of office bearers. In the past in the Canadian Reformed churches only male communicant members may vote. In 2010 our general synod decided to leave it up to local churches to decide. However Synod Carmen 2013 sided with appellants and reversed that decision. This matter has been vigorously debated at our assemblies and in church periodicals. And it is a source of unrest that we will continue to struggle with.

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One highlight of our general Synod is the completion of new book of praise for congregational worship. Our *Book of Praise* is comprised of the 150 Psalms from the Old Testament 85 hymns. We have been working for some years at freshly translating many of the 150 Psalms, and we are pleased with the result. Our congregations can sing the 150 Psalms in a harmony with gusto. And it is our hope that this *Book of Praise* may help a new generation to worship our Lord with joy.

By now it is plain to you that we have much in common. That we are family to each other. We have one God and Father one lord one faith one baptism, and we are called to one and the same hope in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. As Reformed churches both in New Zealand and North America, we are so busy with many of the same things in service of our Lord. We experience many of the same challenges in remaining faithful. But we also share the same beautiful promises of our God that he continues to gather, defend and preserve his church by his word and Spirit. So I would like to leave you with the same charge that Paul gave to Timothy,

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Tim. 4:2–5).

May that charge, motivate you as office bearers to continue the work of the Lord in this country, for the benefit of his people and for his glory.

Rev Arend Witten

On behalf of the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches

## Appendix 9: Address from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Dear brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ; Mr Moderator, synod delegates and guests:

On behalf of my fellow deputies from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we thank you for the privilege and opportunity to be in your midst to attend your synod. After the humbling of the Wallabies at the hands of the All Blacks at the end of last month, you would think that Australians would hardly dare step on New Zealand soil. But as G.K. Chesterton wrote, *“Humility is the mother of giants. One sees great things from the valley.”* Perhaps from such a position we are better equipped to listen and learn from you, also at your synod, as we have been doing this week.

My fellow deputy br. Marcel Bax and I are grateful for your kind invitation, warm hospitality, and the Christian fellowship that we have already been able to enjoy with you. In your invitation, and also in the presence of your delegate Rev Paul Archbald at our last synod which was much appreciated and very helpful to us in understanding you, we see evidence of a spiritual bond that we share, which lies in our common confession of the doctrine of God’s Word as summarized in the Reformed confessions, and in our common commitment to serve Jesus Christ as Head of the Church, in obedience to His will as revealed in the inspired Scriptures. We trust that you also see our attendance here as recognition of this same spiritual bond from our side, and a desire to see it grow and come to greater expression.

It seems fitting that our fraternal delegate speaks following the Canadian Reformed fraternal delegate, because in many respects we are like their little brother. We use the same Book of Praise, we send our men to their seminary, and many of them end up serving as ministers in their churches, and their churches are the chief hunting ground for most of our ministers. Just to illustrate with a personal example: the Canadian Reformed delegate Rev Witten spent numerous years in his youth growing up in the Free Reformed Church of Albany; I myself spent the first 12 years of my ministry in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Presently our federation consists of 16 churches, the majority being in W.A., comprising around 4500 members. I won’t elaborate on all the details about our churches, because you’ve heard these from our fraternal delegates to you many times over the years, and I trust that the delegates of synod are familiar with the history of our relationship. Instead I’ll restrict myself to some words of greeting, and then address one matter of importance. As an additional reason for humility on our part, I should mention that our last synod did appoint four new deputies for contact with you, so while our churches have a quite lengthy history of contact, we personally presently are rookies in this role.

On behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, we do bring you heartfelt Christian greetings. And together with our greetings comes the sincere prayer that the Lord will bless your labours in His kingdom, including the work of your synod. In the Belgic Confession Art 27 we testify of our conviction that there is one catholic or universal church, which *“is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world. Yet it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.”* This creedal statement is not an empty dogmatic statement of orthodoxy, but it expresses a living reality about the work of our Saviour Jesus Christ, in redeeming sinners in grace, and gathering them by His Word and Spirit worldwide. Ultimately it is His work that we gratefully acknowledge and witness in you.

But while our confession about Christ’s catholic church gathering work gives us great comfort and encouragement, we also recognize that this work lays an obligation on us. This includes the responsibility to make ecclesiastical relationships a meaningful reality, so that unity in faith is not merely theoretical but comes to practical expression. As Australians and New Zealanders, we may have our friendly rivalries on the sports fields from time to time. But in the final analysis, we acknowledge that despite our minor geographic and cultural differences, we share a common rivalry against the spiritual forces of evil, and we serve a common coach and Lord. We are busy in the same

cause, which seeks the honour and glory of our King Jesus Christ, through faithful service of His people, submission to His Word, and the advancement of His kingdom. As churches we are united in our struggle for the truth and for faithfulness in doctrine and conduct. Our people in the FRCA face temptations to compromise just as yours do, and our perseverance and victory can be only be found just as yours—by relying on God’s grace and His Spirit. It is our conviction that the Scriptures indicate that mutual brotherly assistance in this struggle against worldly secularism and theological liberalism can be a rich blessing, and is furthermore even a Biblical demand. I don’t know much about the finer points of rugby, but I do know that teamwork is essential. The same can be said of ecclesiastical relations, and we sincerely covet being able to bring this to the next level by means of a sister church relationship.

A desire for sister church relationship between RCNZ and FRCA was already expressed by Synod Kelmescott 1996, so what has just been said might seem like the repetition of an old refrain, especially given that the RCNZ has offered the FRCA a sister church relationship already for some time. The question could rightly be asked whether the FRCA even wants to be on the same team. However, by our presence and words here today, we want to explicitly affirm our desire for this relationship, and to also acknowledge that there have been significant developments in recent years towards this becoming a reality, should God grant it. At the risk of repetition, most of you will be aware that your Synods acknowledged the FRCA as true churches already in the mid 1990s, and our Synods reciprocated this acknowledgement in 2000 and 2003, but for us your sister church relationship with the CRCA was an impediment for us to enter into a sister church relationship. We acknowledged then and acknowledge again now that it is an anomaly to recognize you as true and faithful churches without entering into a sister church relationship, which you have offered to us. Such an anomaly makes us uncomfortable, and so it should. It motivates us to move forward, as stated by our most recent synod: *“Therefore there is urgency to remedy the present anomaly of recognising a church to be true and faithful without a sister-church relationship.”*

You have been very patient with us, because we have also needed time to come to an understanding and consensus about this matter ourselves (e.g. Synod 2003, Art 72). We hope that your longsuffering is not exhausted, particularly at an important juncture now that your relationship with the CRCA is changing. Our most recent synod in 2012 noted this change, but at that point we did not have a clear picture of what the new relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship entailed and how it differs from your previous sister church relationship, in part because the rules for this new relationship were provisional, and in part because what may be clear to you is not immediately apparent to us, being somewhat distant. Perhaps Chesterton would advise us to spend more time in your New Zealand valleys in order to see more clearly! At any rate, as deputies, part of our mandate was to come to a clearer understanding of this matter, with the hope that we could bring a favourable report to our next synod, and a positive recommendation to accept your offer of a sister church relationship. We sincerely hope that the decisions of your present synod will help us clearly see that you are being consequential in your relationship with the CRCA, and that these changes are more than just a matter of removing mutual accountability while retaining mutual privileges. In 2003 our synod made the observation that *“The RCNZ maintains this relationship in a Scriptural manner”* (Synod 2003, Ground 3). We encourage you to continue to deal with this in a faithful manner.

We also recognize that changing the contours of a relationship that involves a sister that you have walked alongside closely for much of your history is not easy. As you know, we are facing hard questions like these ourselves in our relationship with our sister the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. This also occupied a significant amount of our attention at our last synod, and resulted in our synod writing a lengthy and weighty letter of admonition to them, expressing our concerns, especially in the area of hermeneutics. The FRCA isn’t exactly renowned for haste, although perhaps we are noted for caution; but this does mean that while we don’t make sister church relations lightly, we don’t break them lightly.

Even though it may appear that our approach to you is one of hesitation, we hope that you will see in our most recent synod decision concerning the RCNZ much enthusiasm. We whole-heartedly concur with the observation of your official delegate to our synod that the FRCA synod *“made it clear that*

*the aim is not to find new impediments or a justification for not entering a sister-relationship”* (p. 4-231) and that the decision of our synod is to be read positively rather than negatively. We appreciate that this decision has been cited in full in Appendix 10 of the Interchurch Relations Committee Report (pp. 4-233 & 4-234), but I want to highlight that our synod explicitly confirmed what was stated by previous synods, namely *“to recognize that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to express our continued resolve to work towards the goal of a sister church relationship, and thereby bring our unity in faith to practical and visible expression.”*

Additionally our synod also decided to *“continue to encourage our local churches to exercise practical support and interaction wherever possible in areas that are not reserved for relationships between sister churches.”* We are grateful for the ways this is happening, and hope it will increase. Already we cooperate together in mission work in PNG as we heard last night from Rev Douma and from the OMB this morning; in recent years our membership has been enriched by a growing contingent of former RCNZ members who have joined us after moving to W.A. As evidence of our resolve to make the goal of a sister church relationship a reality, please observe that the most recent FRCA synod increased the number of deputies for contact with you from two to four, gave them expanded mandate, which included an instruction to have more meetings with your committee, attend your synods upon invitation, and allocated a larger budget to facilitate this.

Our synods have previously decided to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches which are geographically closer to us (Synod 1990, Art 58), as you are, and it was this conviction that led our last synod to conclude that it *“requires allocating a certain measure of priority and resources to our growing relationship with the RCNZ.”* (Synod 2012, Art 89) In rugby terms, we realize that it makes sense for us to be passing to the guys around us, rather than making plays with guys far across the field. As evidence of our earnestness, we sent four men to Victoria at the end of last year to meet with your Interchurch Relations Committee, and we were able to enjoy a lengthy and positive combined meeting with them. We also appreciated their recommendations concerning adjusted rules for “ecumenical fellowship”.

Brothers, we hope that these decisions give you some assurance that we are moving forward and closer. It would be a great blessing if following your synod, that our synod is finally able to accept your offer of sister church relations. Given how much we share theologically, confessionally, historically, culturally, and geographically, we recognize the value and benefit of a meaningful sister church relationship.

It is our prayer that the Head of the Church would continue to be active among His churches in New Zealand and in Australia, and that we may pursue His glory with faithfulness, zeal, and conviction, and without compromise. May God bless your work as synod, and we commend your churches into the Lord’s care, with this prayer for both you and us from Philippians:

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9–10).

Rev Richard Pot (18 September 2014)

## **Appendix 10: Fraternal Greetings from the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia**

Dear brethren

I bring the warm greetings of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. May the Lord bless you as you are gathered together in the meeting of your widest assembly.

We warmly appreciate the sister-church relationship we have with you, or, as we say in our language, the Mutual Eligibility that we share together.

As our relationship with you is quite a recent one, and as we have only had the one delegate visit you six years ago, I would like to speak of where we have come from and also where we are now. So I lay before you 'A Historical Connection,' 'A Local Situation' and 'An Ecumenical Clarification.'

### *A Historical Connection*

Historically our connection as brethren together in the Lord goes back to the beginning of Genesis. There God gives his promise regarding the calling out of a people unto himself.

But more closely in history we see the Reformation as a common point in the close communion we share together. It was the work of God's Spirit through the reformers—and the Calvinist reformers in particular—that was the cause for the formation of Reformed Churches throughout Europe and the United Kingdom.

While the name 'Reformed' was used on the continent in Scotland the term Presbyterian was used to describe those churches of Calvinist persuasion. And there was quite close interaction initially between these folk. One only needs to consider the seminal influence John Calvin in Geneva had on such a one as John Knox.

This close contact continued through the time of the Synod of Dordt in 1618–19 and to the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s.

Over the 18th and 19th centuries this contact diminished somewhat. Mind you what was happening within the Dutch Reformed Churches and the Scottish Presbyterian Churches presents a similar picture. Here let me show you! [Charts shown comparing Dutch Reformed Church splits and unions with Scottish Presbyterian splits and unions—a very similar pattern!]

In the late 20th Century contact and interaction increased. This was particularly through the daughter churches in the former British colonies—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America!—and the formation of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

In Australia the Sydney & Melbourne PCEA churches helped out the fledgling Reformed Churches. The first RCA Synod was held in the rooms of the St. Kilda PCEA in 1952. The RTC became a place where Reformed and exclusive psalmist Presbyterian students mixed. A number of those who went through the College up until a decade ago would certainly recall John Cromarty!

Following concerns of principle with the RES, which became the REC, the PCEA in 1985 became an inaugural member of the International Conference of Reformed Churches. It was soon after this that the RCNZ also left the REC for the same reasons. Contact developed through the ICRC and face-to-face meetings. There were also folk from the RCNZ who became members or adherents of the PCEA.

This has all developed to the situation that we have come to at this time—you see, now the PCEA is your closest sister-church!

### *A Local Situation*

Let me now speak to 'A Local Situation.' The PCEA is the oldest Presbyterian denomination in Australia formed in 1846. Over the years, like the Church in Scotland, it has had its ups and downs. Various uniting situations with other Presbyterian bodies have greatly diminished the size of the denomination. Presently there are some 14 congregations or mission posts distributed down the eastern seaboard of Australia and in Tasmania. Serving our churches are ten serving ministers, three emeritus ministers, two missionary ministers and a missionary couple, one licentiate, and one student for ministry.

The make-up of these congregations varies. There are the older congregations found in Sydney, further north in New South Wales, and in Geelong. We have had two congregations join us—one out of another exclusive-psalmody denomination and one from an independent psalm singing reformed fellowship. And in the major cities—Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane—there have been new works commenced. We realise that with the increasing urbanisation of our nation this is a direction we need to increasingly go.

It would be relevant to add here that two of these new works have large ethnic components—in Mulgrave, Melbourne, there is a Sudanese Nuer congregation; and in Mt. Druitt, Sydney, there is a congregation with a majority Tongan membership.

The situation of the congregation I serve in Narre Warren, Melbourne, is one of these newer works. It was a group begun with several families in the late 1980s in a community centre. Because of the resources within the denomination a church building was constructed in Narre Warren, close to the Monash freeway in a rapidly growing suburban area of Melbourne. This suburban growth has continued at an ever-increasing rate, particularly in the city of Casey.

Over the years there have been ebbs and flows in our membership, particularly with the commencement of a Reformed-Presbyterian congregation in Frankston a decade ago. That was a disruptive break in our fellowship but in the last six years we have steadily grown. The attendance at church, in the various Bible studies and financially has grown very encouragingly.

The make-up of our congregation is quite different than what you would find in the average RCNZ congregation. No one in our congregation was brought up in the PCEA. Our folk come from a variety of denominational backgrounds—from Reformed and mainline Presbyterian churches right through to Baptist, Church of Christ, and Pentecostal churches. Ethnically we have Aussies, Kiwis, Dutchies, English, Irish, Hungarian, Indian, Filipino, and Samoan.

Because of the distinctives in our public worship we are quite different than the other Christian denominations around us. In fact, it is because of our simple and spiritual worship, and warm fellowship, that most of these folk have joined us. Among them are some four or five former church organists!

What we find is that many who visit us don't return. Since we're called a Presbyterian Church and the only Presbyterian church in quite a wide suburban area local people and others do pop in and out. But there are those who do continue on. They tell us they appreciate the faithful exposition of God's Word. While they would love the singing of the old hymns as the churches they come from no longer use them they find the psalms with the old familiar tunes very edifying.

Coming from ministry in Reformed churches this is quite a change. And yet I am doing exactly what I was before—preaching, teaching, visiting. While there are no family connections within the church the congregation itself acts as a congregation. There is an encouraging concern shown for all in our congregation by many.

What I am also continuing to do is edit a denominational magazine. As was mentioned in one of your reports, I cut my denominational editing teeth on *Faith in Focus* and have continued with the PCEA's magazine, *The Presbyterian Banner*. This is freely available every month by PDF on a complimentary

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email basis. If you would like to receive a copy by email let me know. It also goes up on our website before the beginning of each month, and back issues are available there.

We very much look forward to continue our close sister relationship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. We look forward to even more ministers crossing over the ditch to us, but also I pray that it might mean some traffic the other way. One of your vacant churches recently contacted us regarding ministers who might be interested, and while none was found ready one man did indicate he could open to this in the future, and there may well be others also.

From our perspective we need good healthy sister-church relationships. Mind you, they are not always easy to find, but when you have one you need to use it and develop it—especially where it is geographically close. In situations like student training and internships we also can look to working together.

### *An Ecumenical Clarification*

I turn now to the third aspect—‘An Ecumenical Clarification.’

As some of you may know, the CRCA are seeking a formal fraternal relationship with us. From their side, since they have been founded, they have treated the PCEA on the level of a church in the closest ecclesiastical fellowship. From our side we have never formalised relations with them, also due to issues that have come up in the past. These are outlined in the PCEA Handbook, which is found on our website. With a number of these issues having changed or disappeared we are in the process of considering their request for a formal relationship.

In our process of considering their request, as one of the ICR Committee, I have been asked to look at how those Presbyterian and Reformed churches closest to us regard the CRCA. So I will be conveying back to our Committee the decisions you have made regarding your relationship with the CRCA.

It would be helpful at this point to state the levels of our relationship with other churches. We have three levels.

The first is entitled ‘Churches With Whom We Have Established Mutual Eligibility.’ This is the equivalent of a sister-church relationship wherein there is an acceptance of each other’s members, ministers being able to be called without the full examination that goes with other situations, and so on.

The second level is entitled, ‘Churches With Whom We Have Fraternal Relations.’ In this category are found presently the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Southern Presbyterian Church—both exclusive-psalmist denominations. This is a situation where our Synod encourages pulpit exchange or supply to assist in getting to know each other and thus progress closer relations.

The third level is simply entitled, ‘Other Churches.’ This presently is the relationship we have with the CRCA, the PRCA, the FRCA, the PCA, and the EPC.

With the CRCA request to formalise a relationship with us it would be a formalisation on the second level—‘Churches With Whom We Have Fraternal Relations.’ It would not be a sister-church relationship.

While we are encouraged by this development from the CRCA it caught a number of us by surprise. If you read your deputies report to the last CRCA Synod it noted that the CRCA “Synod accepted the CER’s recommendation to *maintain loose, unstructured contact* with the three Presbyterian denominations (PCA, PCEA and RPC).” (Reports 4-222.)

This motivation may well have changed due to the CRCA’s application to join the ICRC. On our part, we do not interact with the CRCA in a meaningful way, apart from one vacant congregation using CRCA ministers and students to provide supply.

I hope these comments help clarify any confusion on this.

In closing I would refer to the words of Psalm 133, which was preached on the opening service of Synod on Saturday night. There in verse 3 we saw that the dew of Hermon falling on Mount Zion spoke of the unity of God's people from the very north the very south. This also involved the union of many tribes in Israel—a situation that was later drastically changed.

But, just think, in Christ people from every race and nations are being brought together into spiritual Israel! What we are doing here with delegates from all over the world, is demonstrating that unity. Though different in slight ways, we are one in the confession of the true Christian faith.

Now I would also like to present the Moderator with a copy of a recent history of our denomination by Rowland Ward, *The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia 1846–2013*, as a token of our appreciation for the fellowship we have. Also I present a copy to your Convenor for the Interchurch Relations Committee.

Rev Sjirk Bajema

PCEA Delegate Speech to RCNZ Synod, Bishopdale, Christchurch, New Zealand

September 13–19, 2014

## **Appendix 11: Fraternal Greetings from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia**

Dear Moderator, moderamen, delegates and visitors

Once again it is a great privilege to extend to you warm and fraternal greetings from your brothers and sisters in the CRCA in the name of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ our Saviour and reigning Lord.

For myself, this synod in Christchurch has brought me full circle as to my walking alongside of you. It was twelve years ago in Christchurch I attended my first synod of the RCNZ being the chairman of the SIC and thereby, at that time, automatically a member of the CER. As I recall, and some at that gathering may remember this, there was no time for me to get adjusted to the role and it was in the very deep end of the pool in which I found myself.

The highlight of that synod for me was when Rev Michael Flinn returned after a lunchtime discussion with me that had been preceded by a tense close to the morning session. At the end of that session in which I had outlined some CRCA history as to issues of concern to the RCNZ, Michael declared it 'was not cricket'. Right after lunch he asked for the floor and declared to the synod that he and I had enjoyed an open and cordial discussion and had begun 'to play cricket'.

From my perspective that was the start of a very open, honest and always cordial discussion as to the way ahead to improve the relationship between the CRCA and the RCNZ. It has not always been easy, especially as new matters of concern arose just when it looked like we had everything sorted out, yet it was always cordial, friendly and respectful.

Over years and many synods on both sides of the ditch, one by one, our churches have worked through matters of concern. The CER is taking to the next CRCA synod one last matter raised by your committee as to how we install these deaconesses ... ordination or installation/commissioning..

As I said, returning to Christchurch is for myself the completion of a circle. We give thanks for the finalisation of the shape of the CEF category of relationship, which while not as close as a sister church relationship, is one in which our churches respectfully have agreed to recognise each other acknowledging that, yes there are differences, yet in Christ we are united in our unshakeable commitment to Scripture and our firm stand on the four Reformed Confessions we share. Our prayer in the CRCA is that we can go forward in Christ's name, each in our respective culture and fields of service in the Kingdom, to the glory of God which the Shorter Catechism so nicely sums up is our 'chief end in life'.

The CRCA in this synod wishes to register our heartfelt thanks to the RCNZ for its sponsorship of our application to membership of the ICRC. We also noted with great appreciation the strong efforts made to support us at the ICRC meeting when our application for full membership was contested especially by the PCEA. As a lone delegate, the comfort and support extended toward me by your delegates was both helpful to myself personally and much appreciated. We did fail in our application by one vote when one of our sponsor churches was not present to cast its vote, yet this proved to be a blessing in disguise.

With much joy I am able to report the CER of the CRCA had a very frank and open meeting with the Inter Church Relations Committee of the PCEA in Melbourne at the end of last year. This led to a joint letter being distributed to both churches indicating that points of concern of the PCEA had been addressed and clarified. In May this year I was very warmly received at the Synod of the PCEA held in Wauchope NSW. Their ecumenical report indicated a desire now to move towards positive support of a future application for membership of the CRCA at the next meeting of the ICRC in 2017.

Furthermore, I read to you the PCEA recommendation unanimously agreed upon as to the future relationship with the CRCA ... *“The Synod desires to formalise our relationship with the CRCA. Toward that end, and with a view to ensuring a stable and satisfactory outcome, we resolve to appoint a delegate (or delegates) to attend the upcoming CRCA Synod planned to be held in Gosnells, Western Australia, from 18th to 23rd May 2015.”*

Over the years the CER has appreciated the honest and constructive reports of your IRC and the report to this synod follows that pattern of good work. To that end, with such a detailed report before you there is no need in this address to go over ground already well covered as to how things are going with us ‘across the ditch’.

What we do share with you at this time is the blessing of peace in our churches since our last synod, highlighted by the return of one minister who had previously felt the need to stand down because he believed concerns he had were not being taken seriously.

This time of peace has allowed us to focus further on the missional task of our churches within Australia via the Fourfold Task. We are delighted to share with you that as a result of this focus, we now have eleven church plants, five of which are in Western Australia. This includes one rural and remote community mission in the Wheatbelt east of Perth which has this year taken delivery of a Cessna 172 aircraft to realise the vision of bringing the Gospel to remote towns and their schools.

It was interesting to note here in your gathering the repeated reference to a refocusing of your ecumenical relationships so that they are not just ‘on paper’ bonds but do have a practical edge. The CRCA has mandated its ecumenical committee to do likewise and so far this has been broached with the CRCNA by our delegate who attended their synod in June this year, as well as with the CGKN who spoke to us in the same terms at the ICRC meeting. Furthermore, requests for new relationships received from around the world are being assessed in the same way and where possible, churches with ICRC membership, or applying for such membership, are being advised that we wish from now on to exercise such relationships through the ICRC rather than on a bilateral level.

As I finish up I note the circle spoken of earlier, has also been completed in that I have come to this synod as the new Ecumenical Secretary of the CRCA, Rev Henk de Waard having retired at our synod in May 2012. Having taken on that role the focus of my work has shifted to the ICRC and it has become necessary to adjust my involvement in various ecumenical relationships. To that end I have needed to hand over the New Zealand ‘desk’ to Revs Reinier Noppers and Leo Douma. I do so feeling the work I began twelve years ago has now been completed.

I leave this synod with thanksgiving for the way we have been able to work in a godly and constructive way. Yes, sin played its part as we all are children of Adam and had to deal with those inevitable frustrations that come with any relationship worth having. Yet in His abounding grace, the Lord has overcome our weaknesses and enabled us to hold on to each other when at times it may have felt easier to let go.

As I close this greeting, on a personal note I leave you with this word from Scripture.. Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Phil. 2:12-15). It is as we hold out the word of life that we shine like stars in the universe. The prayer of the CRCA is that the RCNZ in this country may shine brilliantly as you hold out the word of life.

Rev Geoff van Schie  
*Ecumenical Secretary of the CRCA*  
 Thursday, September 18th 2014

## Appendix 12: Message to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

### Reformed Churches of New Zealand

*Synodical Interim Committee*

Rev P Kloosterman  
Rev R J van Wichen  
Elder J D van Dyk  
Rev M R Willemse

*Stated Clerk*

P van der Wel  
PO Box 15-129  
Hamilton 3243  
New Zealand

19 September 2014

28th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand  
Convened in Bishopdale, Christchurch, New Zealand

### **Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II**

Buckingham Palace  
London

On behalf of the 28th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand held in Bishopdale from 15 to 19 September 2011, we write to express our loyalty to you, our Queen.

We wish also to express our appreciation for the commitment you have shown to your coronation vows for 61 years and for the dignity and cheerfulness with which you perform your office. In a world of increasing faithlessness, coarseness and hopelessness, that is a wonderful example to us all and we pray God may use it to encourage your people. We also wish to thank you for the clear testimony you give in your Christmas messages to the Christian faith, the only and the certain hope of the world. Please continue thus to defend the faith and uphold the honour of God, our ultimate sovereign and Lord.

As does the whole Commonwealth—maybe the whole world!—we rejoice with the royal family in the birth of a new heir to the throne last year. May his parents be enabled by God to bring him up in the fear, knowledge and love of the Lord.

For ourselves, we continue to strive to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in a nation in which godlessness and consequent immorality and violence seem to grow by the day. That such horrible sins as abortion, prostitution and same-sex marriage are legal in this country grieves us deeply. Please continue to pray for those who rule in your name. Please continue to pray for us and all Christians that we may be zealous for the Gospel to the glory of God and the highest welfare of mankind.

We pray that God would continue to guide and bless you in your calling and, further, that you and your whole family would experience much blessing but especially that all would know and rejoice in “every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:3).

On behalf of the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand,

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman, Rev P Kloosterman

\_\_\_\_\_ Clerk, Elder P van der Wel

cc The Governor-General, His Excellency Lieutenant General The Right Honourable Sir Jerry Mateparae  
Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John Key

## Appendix 13: Moderator's Closing Address

One of things that came to mind as Rev Andrew de Vries was exhorting us when we began our meetings together was the oil flowing down over Aaron's head, and then Psalm 133 draws attention to the hem of the garment—the oil makes it all the way down to the feet. And here we are as the assembly of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and we are at the hem of the garment. We share in Christ's anointing as prophet, priest and king. As this psalm points us to the work of Jesus Christ, it is a real privilege to see again how we have been blessed with the anointing of Christ to this calling, to this work, that we have been called to.

There are a couple of verses here to which I would like to draw our attention. Particularly verse 2, "I said to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good besides you.'" Notice that the two "Lord's" here are different. One is entirely capitalised, it is Yahweh; the other is Lord with an initial capital letter, that is Adonai or master. "I said to Jehovah, 'You are my master. You are the one who leads me.'" But then the psalmist says the Lord is not a harsh taskmaster: "I have no good besides you".

Here we are at the hem of the garment, looking at the head. We look at our Lord, we look at our God, and we say "You are the master, we have no good besides you." We are right here on the cusp of heaven spiritually, looking at our God, and we have no good besides him. Is that not the joy of what we have experienced in the unity and the fellowship we could have here at the assembly? That God has worked among us in Jesus Christ that we could be here together. We might be tempted to stay here and to revel in that, and to rejoice in that goodness, the goodness of God that he has shown to us. We are thankful for that.

There have been many good things that this synod has demonstrated. The good opportunities we have had to hear from fraternal delegates, both in New Zealand and further afield, from around the globe, exhorting us and encouraging us to look to Christ. To follow him, to be light and to seek the light in the midst of darkness. That is good. We have no good besides these exhortations from our God. That we hear from brothers and from sister churches that care for us. It is good to sit here and to listen. It is good to hear the discussion on the floor.

Speaking with some of the delegates who have come to the assembly, the tenor of those discussions: that everyone speaks evenly, not getting upset. The fun that we could have, the jokes that we could share together, the laughter that we could enjoy. But also when it came to very serious matters, to deal graciously, kindly and lovingly with one another. That too is the goodness that we receive from God.

We look at these things and we are forced to look up and to say, "Yes, in the light of all that, God is still our greatest good." We get closer to that when we hear the devotions. It has been impressive to hear the devotions. I have certainly enjoyed hearing particularly the elders as they have read through the Word, as they have encouraged us, as they have directed us, and to see again how God is working among us.

The singing. Can you imagine what it is going to be like when we hear the loudness and the harmony and the beauty of the singing that is going to come, and to think what it is going to be like in the presence of God and all the angels, and how much louder and more glorious and more splendid it is going to be? And we say, "Yes, that is good. There are so many good things we can enjoy because of who our God is." Because we can say, we can confess, we can say to the Lord, to Jehovah, the one true God, "You are our master. We are your servants. We are here as your servants."

Then, interestingly, as we are basking in the splendour of how good our God is, I find it a bit jarring that David takes us to this intimate place of his soul. Then he looks up, in verse 3, "As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight." And as the jarring reality of going home, back to church, back to the daily grind, going back to those brothers and sisters whom we have to counsel, whom we have to encourage, whom we have to contest with, whom we have to deal with, whom David recognised he needed to deal with, he looked up at heaven but then he was able to look out and say, "You know what? I look at all your people, all the saints, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight."

That is the privilege we have to go home. To relate some of the goodness that we have experienced, of God, but also to encourage God's people: "You are the saints. You are the majestic ones." It is worth

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serving God in this way at synod. Wearing ourselves out so that we see God's majesty in his church which we serve.

So we have many things to rejoice in. God has blessed our assembly. We can also recognise that here is the way that we are seeking to show and to display and to rejoice in the majesty of our God amongst his people. Our purpose here has not simply been to rub shoulders and to encourage one another, but to recognise and pray that these decisions that we have made, the discussions that we have had, will serve to the glorification of God amongst his saints. What a privilege this has been.

I am humbled that you have allowed me to direct you as moderator. It has been a privilege. I am very grateful for the fellow moderamen who have assisted me with this. They have been doing an enormous amount of work. It has been tremendous to see them working, to work with them, and I do want to express my gratitude to them. Thank you brothers. You have done a spectacular job. The synod has moved very well. We have gotten through matters that we needed to get through.

I would also like to thank you [delegates] for the way you have put up with me and my American accent, and my sense of humour—you have laughed at some of the things I have tried to make funny. You have also worked very well together. So you have made it easy to moderate. I am thankful for that. It has certainly been a privilege to be able to be here.

As we go home, I would also like to thank the fraternal delegates who remain. Farewell to you also. Thank you for coming. Thank you for sharing with us in this. It has been a privilege to hear from you. We are heartened by your presence and we trust that you will take our hearty greetings back to those who know us and who care for us. We can also thank God for his people who have been praying for us, who have been sustaining us that we too can relate to them how good God is towards us.