

## Appendix to Article 1

### Opening Devotional Message by Rev. Dr. Dick Moes

#### If the Seventh Day of the Goal of God's Creation, then it is the Goal of all our Activity

*Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation (Gen. 2:1-3).*

How would you like to be a person where heaven and earth meet? Experience the life of heaven on earth. Do the life of heaven on earth as in heaven.

How would you like your congregation to experience and do this?

How would you like this conference to experience and do this? Reflect the glory of God on earth as in heaven. Give each other and the world an encounter with the presence of God: his perfect life of love in Christ through the Holy Spirit, as you interact with each other.

And see the seventh day of the week as a reminder to experience and do this. A reminder to be a person where heaven and earth meet. A congregation where heaven and earth meet. And a promise that one day this will be a reality? A new heaven and new earth where God will dwell with us and be all in all in creation and a new humanity.

Our text tells us that God created the seventh for this purpose. It comes at the end of God having created in six days. God subduing the chaos and disorder and bringing form in the formlessness. Pushing back the darkness with his marvelous light. Creating a dome in the midst of the watery mass. Creating land and vegetation. Then filling the forms. Light bearers for day and night. Birds for the air and fish for the water. Animals and people for the land.

Then God rested. He stopped creating forms in the formlessness and filling these forms because this was now all very good. And he rejoiced in what he had made. And God blessed the seventh day. In Genesis one, God blessed Adam and Eve because God wanted them to be fruitful. Accordingly, blessing the seventh day would mean that God wanted this day to be fruitful. And so, God made this day holy. He set it apart from the other six days and consecrated it for what it was meant to be fruitful for.

What does this tell us about the seventh day? The seventh day is the goal of God's creation. An invitation to enter God's rest and become those people where heaven and earth meet; who do the life of heaven on earth and enjoy all that God created. Forever! For our text mentions there was no morning and evening. Thus, entering into God's Sabbath rest is meant to last forever. This is why God created. This is why God rules the world. This is why God sustains the world. God is on a mission for his glory because he wants to be all in all in creation and humanity.

What this looks like is foreshadowed in the verses preceding and following our text. Adam is formed and placed in the garden to cultivate and take care of it as God's image and representative. Reflecting God's presence: his perfect life of love in the Son through the Holy Spirit. To extend the borders of Eden over the whole world (cf. fruitful and multiply). To spread God's glory over the whole earth. Billions of people reflecting God's presence. Doing the life of heaven on earth. Enjoying what God had created.

The seventh day is a reminder of this calling. The seventh day is also a promise that one day this will be a reality. God will be all in all in creation and humanity.

So, it should not surprise us that the seventh day becomes a sign of God's covenant with Israel. God's



commitment to secure and guarantee the success of his mission for his glory through Israel. I will be your God and you will be my people. Israel will be a people where heaven and earth meet. Doing the life of heaven on earth. Experiencing the life of heaven on earth. Giving each other and the nations an encounter with the presence of God.

Accordingly, the Sabbath was a weekly reminder to enter God's Sabbath rest. To be those people where heaven and earth meet. Do the life of heaven on earth. Giving each other and the nations an encounter with the presence of God by participating in the drama of God's mission for his glory.

What was true for the seventh day is also true for the first day of the week. A weekly reminder of who we are and why we are here. People called to live in the Sabbath rest of God. Enjoy the life of heaven on earth. Do the life of heaven on earth. More precisely, a weekly reminder to live in the Lord Jesus Christ, the embodiment of Israel and the Sabbath rest of God. The first instalment of the resurrection life of God's new creation breaking forth into this broken present.

With the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, we see just how glorious this promise of the Sabbath rest really is. The full instalment of the resurrection life of God's new creation. Not the restoration of the life of Eden, but the elevation of this life. In Eden, Adam could sin; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest, we can sin no more. In Eden, Adam could die; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest we can no longer die. In Eden, there was a sun and a moon; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest, there will be no sun or moon. The glory of God and the Lamb will be its light. We and creation will have reached the full measure of the fullness of God in Christ. Forever!

If the seventh day is the goal of creation, then the seventh day is also the goal of all our activity. Living in the Lord Jesus Christ and having the Lord Jesus Christ formed in us. Also, at this international conference.

And the seventh day is also the goal of our theological education. To be sure, the goal of theological education is broader than living in Christ and having the Lord Jesus Christ formed in us and our local congregations. But it is its ultimate goal.

This is also confirmed elsewhere in Scripture. All things are created in Christ, thru Christ, and for Christ (Col. 1:16). In the fullness of time, all things will be brought together and summed up in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10).

As someone once said: "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ . . . If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time."

May this conference contribute to this eschatological goal of God's future glory breaking forth into the present.

Dick Moes

## Appendix to article 6



### **The International Conference of Reformed Churches**

Secretary: The Rev. Dr. James Visscher

5734-191A Street,

Surrey, BC, Canada V3S 7M8

Tel: 1-604-576-2124

Email: [visscher.james5@gmail.com](mailto:visscher.james5@gmail.com)

Website: [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com)

**Report of the Corresponding Secretary to  
the 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the ICRC meeting from  
October 13 – 19, 2022 in  
Windhoek, Namibia**

Dear Brothers,

It is my privilege to report to you on my activities as Corresponding Secretary over the last five years.

Let me begin with some statistics. The current membership of the Conference stands at 34 member churches from every part of the world. Five churches are applying for membership. Two churches have sent observers.

This is now the 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the Conference since it was founded in 1982. The last General Meeting was held in Jordan, Ontario, Canada, from July 12 - 19, 2017 and was hosted by the United Reformed Churches in North America.

As many of you know this meeting was scheduled to be held in 2021; however, the rise and spread of COVID upset our plans. Many countries were shut down; borders were closed, and airplanes did not fly. You and I, as well as our churches, were grounded. And so was the ICRC. There was no way to hold the meeting in 2021 and so it was postponed to 2022.

In addition, this meeting was supposed to be held in India. Already when this location was suggested there were concerns about the issuing of visas, especially to citizens from African countries. Various meetings were held by brothers from our member churches in India with government officials and discussions were held; however, the government bureaucrats could not give us any assurances that if we held our general meeting in India visas would be issued to our African brothers. As a result, the Coordinating Committee met and had to make the regrettable decision not to go to India. Let us hope and pray that in due time doors will open for all and that it will become possible to meet in India.

Thankfully the Reformed Churches in South Africa stepped into the breach and especially two churches in Windhoek, Namibia, led by their pastors Paul de Bruyn and Henning Venter, informed us that they would be willing to act as local hosts on behalf of their federation. We wish to express our appreciation to these brothers and their members, and especially to br. Christo de Jager, one of their members who manages this Windhoek Country Club Resort where we are meeting. Christo has very much been my right-hand man in organizing this conference.

Every time a General Meeting is planned, the Coordinating Committee looks for a general theme, as suggested by the member churches. This time the theme has to do with theological education. We are thankful to our ICRC sub-Committee on Theological Education for recommending this theme and making suggestions about its execution. Both Dr. Douw Breed and Dr. Mohan Chako were found willing to present papers relating to this theme.

Our third speaker was supposed to be Dr. Arnold Huijgen of The Netherlands; however, for various reasons (which we respected), he felt the need to bow out at the last minute. It was suggested that Dr. Henk Van der Belt, a well-known Bavinck scholar, would be the ideal man to speak on his topic. He was approached and graciously accepted our invitation. Our thanks to him for accepting and to Rev. Laurens den Butter for acting as liaison.

While the time after a General Meeting is generally a quiet time and does not require much extra work on my part as the Corresponding Secretary, as another General Meeting approaches the tempo increases. A good part of this year 2022 has been spent writing to the member churches and inviting them to send delegates to this meeting. The vast majority of our member churches responded positively. One member church will be joining us online when and if that works. Another member church had difficulty appointing a delegation, even though financial assistance and encouragement was offered. At the time of writing this, one church is still working on sending a delegation. All in all, in spite of only recently saying "farewell" to COVID restrictions, you who are here today made a valiant effort to come and that is most appreciated.

With regard to visas, I am not aware of any delegate or observer being rejected for a visa to enter Namibia. The brothers from India and Indonesia, who had to apply for them, did so successfully. Thanks also to local pastor Paul DeBruyn for supplying the official letter of invitation.

For myself, I especially appreciate the fact that finally I am able to meet the many people I have connected with on the internet. My apologies if at times I bombarded you with emails.

In addition, to member church delegations we also welcome delegations from churches in Africa, Europe and India who are applying for membership. We also extend a hearty welcome to the observers who are present. Finally, we regret to inform you that the suspension of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands will need to be dealt with at some point in our agenda.

I might add that some discussion was held among members of the Co-Ordinating Committee about doing this kind of meeting online using Zoom, GoToMeeting, or some other internet platform, but we all agreed that it just would not be the same. There is great value in putting a face to a name, to conversing one on one or in a group, in onsite committee meetings and to being together for Christian fellowship. This venue is a valuable way to bring church leaders from member churches together to learn from one another about needs and challenges as well as to share concerns and burdens. May the Lord bless these coming days of conversation and fellowship together!

Looking down the road to our next General Meeting in 2026, the Lord willing, we are grateful that the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Koshin) has been found willing to act as host church. You might already want to give some thought to a possible theme or topics, as well as speakers, for that meeting.



With respect to the Co-Ordinating Committee, we may inform you that Rev, Bruce Hoyt, who has been the leader of our Co-Ordinating Committee for many years, has asked to be relieved of that task. We have accepted his resignation with regret and would like to thank him sincerely for so ably leading our meetings and giving wise guidance to the ICRC. We wish him every blessing as he moves further into retirement.

So, who is taking his place? None other than the very able Convenor of our Mission Committee, Elder Mark Bube. Thank you, brother, for your willingness to serve in this capacity.

In addition, to the departure of Rev. Bruce Hoyt I may mention that it is also time for me to retire as your Corresponding Secretary. From a purely human perspective I should not even be here. A month after the 2017 meeting I was diagnosed with a very serious heart condition. My doctor called me “a ticking timebomb,” so I was much relieved that the “bomb” did not go off during our Jordan meetings. Thankfully, the Lord spared my life and has given me a return to good health. Still, I did reach the age of 75 years last April and this means that it is time for someone younger to take over the reins. In this connection Dr. Karlo Janssen has been found willing to become Corresponding Secretary. His willingness to accept is much appreciated; however, it did need some incentive so I have agreed to assist him, health permitting, especially when it comes to the organization of the next General Meeting in 2026. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Corresponding Secretary for these past number of years. It has been a privilege indeed.

For the rest, it is great that you are all here. I have been praying for some time for blessed days of meeting. I am sure that many of you have been doing the same. May the Lord and King of the church, Jesus Christ, be gracious to us and bless richly this 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches.

In His Service,

James Visscher, Corresponding Secretary

Respectfully submitted on Sept. 29, 2022

## Appendix to article 7



# Publications Committee

Report to the ICRC 2022

April 11, 2022

Communication is vital to the Christian faith. Our Triune God is known as the God of the Word. The Son of God is even known as the Word of God who became flesh. The task of God's church in this world is to communicate the gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Father speaks the Word, the Son is the Word, the Spirit brings the Word. It is thus very appropriate for the ICRC to be served by a committee that facilitates communication among ICRC member churches and of ICRC member churches to the world, communication that may serve the proclamation of God's Kingdom.

At the ICRC 2013 a Website Committee was formally created to facilitate the operations of the ICRC. At the ICRC 2017 a proposal from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) to take over their magazine *Lux Mundi* was adopted, leading to the formation of a Magazine Committee. For the purposes of efficiency the Website Committee and Magazine Committee were combined to create a Publications Committee with two subcommittees, the Website Subcommittee and the Magazine Subcommittee. The Publications Committee was tasked with maintaining the website according to the mandate given at the ICRC 2013, to continue the work of publishing *Lux Mundi*, and to come with a proposal for a mandate for the Publication Committee and its subcommittees.

### ***1. MEMBERS & ADVISORS***

The ICRC 2017 appointed the following individuals to the Publication Committee:

Website Subcommittee:

Members: Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen (convenor), Rev. Dr. James Visscher, Mr. Frank Ezinga  
Webmaster: Mr. Martin Vanwoudenberg

Magazine Subcommittee:

Members: Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen (convenor), Rev. Dr. Hans Maris, Rev. Sjirk Bajema (secretary),  
Rev. Dr. Hiralal Solanki

Advisors: Mrs. Ria Nederveen, Rev. Lawr Khawbung, Mrs. Glenda Mathes

Ex officio: Rev. Dr. James Visscher

Layout: MinuteMan Printing in Chilliwack, Canada

The members of the Website Subcommittee and the magazine Subcommittee together formed the Publications Committee, with the Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen serving as its convenor.

Due to personal circumstances, the Rev. Dr. Hans Maris was not able to take up his role in the Committee. Various attempts have been made since 2017 to fill this vacancy with another individual in located in Europe, but this has not been fruitful. In early 2022 Mrs. Ria Nederveen and Glenda Mathes have requested to be considered retired from their roles as advisors to the Magazine Subcommittee.

### ***2. PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES***

The Publications Committee met once via video conferencing to discuss its mandates and policies. Further business of the Publications Committee was conducted via email.

### **FINANCES**

The only costs the Publications Committee has are those related to the website and the publication of *Lux Mundi*. These costs are sufficiently covered by budget allocation.

The ICRC 2017 made no budget allocation for in-person consultations. Such a budget is not required for the Website Subcommittee as all its members (and webmaster) live within 15 kilometres of each

other. It would be advisable to set such a budget for the Publications Committee as its membership is spread around the globe.

### **BUDGET REQUEST**

The Publications Committee is requesting a total of \$15,000 for its activities between 2022 and 2026, broken down as follows:

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Anticipated cost</b>
Consultations	\$ 6,500
Website maintenance	\$ 2,000
Publication <i>Lux Mundi</i>	\$ 6,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 15,000</b>

### **3. WEBSITE SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES – ICRCONLINE.COM**

The Website Subcommittee has not seen any need to meet formally in the past five years. The website continued to operate and serve the ICRC well.

Materials submitted for publication on the site by the Corresponding Secretary and ICRC Committees have been uploaded. Every new edition of *Lux Mundi* has been uploaded. Work on publishing ICRC proceedings is ongoing.

The webmaster, Mr. Martin Vanwoudenberg, continues to monitor what is going on with respect to the technical side of the website. The Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen is able to serve as administrator for the website, with the assistance of Mr. Frank Ezinga if required.

The coordinating committee meeting of 2020 determined there should be the option of having “...@icrconline.com” email addresses available to those who would like one. This is ready to go, but has not been made use of other than by the Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary.

### **4. MAGAZINE SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES – LUX MUNDI**

Since the 2017 ICRC most activities of the Magazine Subcommittee have been via email. The subcommittee members and its advisors have served as editors of the magazine *Lux Mundi*, with the Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen serving as editor-in-chief.

*Lux Mundi* is published online at [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com). One can access it by clicking on the PC logo in the banner (desktop only) or via the Resources menu. It is free accessible, a subscription is not required. Every new edition a notice is sent out to hundreds of contacts around the world. These contacts are encouraged to pass the word on. Thus, for example, in the Canadian Reformed Churches, an email is sent to the secretary of the CanRC interchurch relations committee, he then forwards the email to all the clerks of individual churches, and many of these clerks then forward the email on to their membership. In another setting, we understand that the link to each new edition is forward via WhatsApp, or the file is downloaded and forwarded via WhatsApp. As it is cheaper for someone to print the magazine on location than to print editions and mail them around the world, subscription to a print edition has not been encouraged. Currently just a handful of print editions are made each time, one of them being for archival purposed.

*Lux Mundi* is intended to be published once every three months. In 2018 and 2019 there were four editions. In 2020 and 2021 there were two editions, in both years one of these was a combined edition. In 2022 there has been one edition thus far.

There are two main reasons for fewer editions in 2020 and 2021. The first is that it was expected that a network of contacts around the world would feed publication material to the editors. This has not happened. Instead, editors have had to go out of their way to solicit materials and obtain permission to republish materials. A further reason is that the network has not materialized as originally envisaged, and that some of the editors were not able to serve as anticipated. Thus the operations of *Lux Mundi* will need to be reconsidered. The Coordinating Committee has indicated that this is an internal matter for the Publications Committee. This should have the attention of the Publications Committee after the appointment of members at the ICRC 2022.

Our regional contacts currently are: Chris Boersema (South America), Paul Bukenya (Africa), Lawr



Khawbung (South Asia), Sjik Bajema (Asia-Pacific). There are currently no regional contacts for North America and Europe.

Our ICRC committee liaisons are: Arjan de Visser (Missions Committee), Pieter Boon (Diaconal Committee), and Gerry Visscher (Theological Committee). For the Regional Conferences Committee the editor-in-chief will connect with whomever is organizing a regional conference. Materials such as press releases and articles have been coming regularly from the committee liaisons or via the committee liaisons as they are available.

The editor-in-chief has complimentary subscriptions to most of the denominational magazines of ICRC member churches and scours these for publishable materials. The ease of communicating with editors of these magazines about republishing materials (and getting them) varies from magazine to magazine. Some help from “insiders” in denominations has been very helpful and is much appreciated.

Delegates at the ICRC 2022 can expect the editor-in-chief to be in touch with them.

The costs for *Lux Mundi* to the ICRC is roughly \$400 per edition. The cooperation with the layout and printing company, MinuteMan in Chilliwack, BC, Canada has been excellent.

## **5. MANDATE PROPOSAL**

### **THE ICRC 2017 DECISION**

The ICRC 2017 decided the following (Proceedings article 36):

*Recommendation 1: to honour the request of the RCN to assume responsibility for Lux Mundi, expressing gratitude to the RCN for their labours in the past in this.*

*Adopted*

*Recommendation 2: to retain the name Lux Mundi.*

*Adopted.*

*Recommendation 3: to expand the function of Lux Mundi to include communications from ICRC committees, and make the Missions Newsletter part of Lux Mundi.*

*Adopted.*

*Recommendation 4: to continue publishing Lux Mundi as a quarterly, primarily in digital format.*

*Adopted.*

*Recommendation 5: to create a new Facilitating Committee to be known as the Publications Committee, which will consist of the members of the Website Subcommittee and the Magazine Subcommittee.*

*Adopted.*

*Recommendation 6: to leave it with the Publications Committee to determine how best to structure the running of Lux Mundi.*

*Amendment (Bruce Hoyt): The Publications Committee to bring a mandate to the ICRC 2021.*

*As amended: Adopted.*

*Recommendation 7: to appoint men to the following Publication committee positions: 1. a convenor; 2. three further members for the Magazine Subcommittee; 3. one further member for the Website Subcommittee.*

*Amendment (Arnold Huijgens): to include women in this committee.*

*As amended adopted (majority, not unanimous)*

*Recommendation 8: to approve a budget of \$6,000 for the Publications Committee.*

*Adopted.*

*Recommendation 9: that the Executive Committee nominate the individuals for appointment by the ICRC 2017.*

*Adopted.*

*An additional motion arising: that the Publications Committee draft a mandate for their work and propose it to the ICRC 2021.*

*Approved.*

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

The Publications Committee submits the mandate below for adoption by the ICRC 2022. Regarding



this proposal we present the following considerations:

1. Where matters pertaining to the website are concerned, the mandate is essentially identical to the one adopted by the ICRC 2013 and confirmed by the ICRC 2017.
2. The mandate has been modeled after the mandates of the Facilitating Committees of the ICRC.

**PROPOSED MANDATE FOR THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE:**

A. The ICRC shall be served by a facilitating committee to be known as the Publications Committee. The Publications Committee in turn will be served by a Website Subcommittee and a Magazine Subcommittee.

B. **The composition of these committees** shall be as follows:

1. **Publications Committee:** a convener, the Corresponding Secretary (ex officio) and the members of the two subcommittees
2. **Website Subcommittee:** the convener of the Publications Committee, the Corresponding Secretary (ex officio) and one further member. The webmaster serves as advisor to the Website Subcommittee.
3. **Magazine Subcommittee:** the convener of the Publications Committee and four further members representing, as much as possible, the different regions in the world and/or liaisons appointed by the facilitating committees and operating committees of the ICRC. The Corresponding Secretary serves as advisor to the Magazine Subcommittee. The Magazine Subcommittee shall function as the editorial board for the magazine and elect from its midst an editor-in-chief.
4. All three committees may be expanded with advisors by the ICRC or by the Publications Committee as deemed necessary.

C. **The purpose of the Publications Committee** is to facilitate the publication of materials from ICRC committees and member churches in keeping with the purposes of the ICRC (Constitution, III)

D. **The mandates for the Publications Committee** are as follows:

1. Via the Website Subcommittee:
  - a. Arrange for the construction and maintenance of a website for the Conference, which shall include a list of the ICRC Member Churches (with links to the Members' websites, where possible); copies of the Constitution, Regulations, and Informational Documents; copies of the Proceedings of previous meetings of the Conference (in a form suitable and appropriate for posting on the Internet); a list of the upcoming meeting dates and venues for the major assemblies of the Member Churches; materials for upcoming meetings of the Conference; information and materials regarding Regional Conferences, including the hosting Member Church, date, and venue of upcoming Regional Conferences; and other materials which the Website Subcommittee deems appropriate (bearing in mind the nature and extent of the Conference's authority, Constitution V).
  - b. Develop and implement policies for the operation of the Conference's website, including a job description for the position of Webmaster, and report such to the Publishing Committee.
  - c. Appoint a Webmaster to labor under its oversight.
2. Via the Magazine Subcommittee:
  - a. Publish a quarterly magazine and distribute this as efficiently and broadly as possible
  - b. To publish in this magazine:
    1. Articles from members in good standing of ICRC member churches; such articles shall be in line with the foundation and purposes of the ICRC
    2. Communications from ICRC committees
    3. Press releases of ICRC Regional Conferences
    4. Announcements regarding broadest assemblies of ICRC member churches
    5. Announcements from institutions (Missional, Diaconal, Theological) that are in line with the foundation and purposes of the ICRC
  - c. Develop and implement policies for the operation of the Conference's magazine and report



- such to the Publications Committee.
- d. Appoint a layout-editor to labor under its oversight.
  4. To facilitate further means of communication as need is felt and opportunity arises.
  5. To submit annual reports to the Coordinating Committee and a quadrennial report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next ICRC.
  6. To work within its allotted budget, keeping to the following:
    - a. The Publications Committee will submit a financial statement and a budget to each ICRC for the previous and upcoming four-year period.
    - b. The Publications Committee will submit an annual financial statement to the Coordinating Committee.
    - c. For costs that exceed those budgeted by more than 20%, the Publications Committee will seek the approval of the Executive Committee.

Our prayer is that the Lord will bless the ICRC as an instrument for the furtherance of His Kingdom in this world until our God and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, returns upon the clouds to usher in the era of perfection. May the Publications Committee serve the ICRC well in this endeavour.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Publications Committee,  
The Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen (convenor)



## Appendix to article 9

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES (ICRC) AFRICA REGION

## Virtual Conference Held on July 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Theme:** Theological Training, the Reformed, Mission and Diaconal Ministry in Africa

**Host:** Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)

### A. Attendance: Day One; Tuesday July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

1. Dr. Brian Debris – Mukhanyo Theological College.
2. Elder Fanuel Anyul - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
3. Elder Fred Kabenge – Presbyterian Church in Uganda [Secretary ICRC African Region, Coordinator Trinity Center for World Mission East & Central Africa Region, and Principal Trinity Biblical Institute, Kapchorwa Uganda].
4. Mr. Johan Plug – BBK General Secretary
5. Mr. Paul Senyego - ?
6. Mr. Peter Musyoka - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
7. Mr. Phinehas – Free Reformed Church of South Africa
8. Pastor Bob Kalyowa – Stated Clerk at the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Uganda
9. Pastor Deus Byebiroha – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
10. Pastor Francis Mayanja – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
11. Rev. Daniel Kithong - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya); [ICRC Africa Region Chairman].
12. Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei – Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
13. Rev. Joseph Mutemi - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
14. Rev. Naas Ferreira - ?
15. Rev. Syovo - ?
16. Tinashe Chengeta – City Presbytery Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)

### Schedule of the ICRC African Region Conference:

#### 1. Devotion: By Rev. Joseph Mutemi.

The meeting was commenced at 10:00am with a devotion being offered by Rev. Joseph Mutemi from Isa40:26-31 where he drew the participants' attention on the subject of "What God's Wants Us to do."

- 1.1. We should look up and see what God has done as we reflect on God's mightiness in all his creation. Even in times of difficulty like the Covid-19 pandemic that people are struggling through, there shouldn't be any complaint but put our hope and trust in God.
- 1.2. The natural tendency when going through tough moments is to begin asking the meaning of life, but before doing so, we should always look at the great works

for our encouragement and comfort.

- 1.3. The Lord is the everlasting God who neither faints nor grow weary. Those who hope in him will always have their strength renewed, shall neither faint, nor grow weary, but shall mount over all the challenges of life.

## 2. **Rev. Daniel Kithong (Chairman ICRC African Region)**

- 2.1. He began by giving his warm welcoming remarks, greeting all participants in name of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2.2. Expressed deep gratitude to God for the opportunity he had availed all ICRC member churches to have a virtual conference arrangement and be able to connect in the way they did despite the challenges the world was going through due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This particular conference had been scheduled for the year 2020, but due to the difficulties of the pandemic that prevailed by then, it had to be deferred to later date.
- 2.3. He also acknowledged all the tremendous efforts that had been made by the organizing committee to make the planned program a success, noting with thanks the positive response of that was received from the guest speaker to accept to be part of this crucial arrangement.
- 2.4. Participants who had managed to connect for the virtual conference were then humbly requested to make individual introductions as they also mention the respective churches or organizations they were representing in this virtual conference.

## 3. **Self-Introductions by the Participants**

- 3.1. All members in attendance during the first day of this virtual conference were given the opportunity to introduce themselves.
- 3.2. Among the churches represented during the conference was the Reformed Church of East Africa, the Free Reformed Church of South Africa, Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya), Presbyterian Church in Uganda, City Presbytery Blawayo (Zimbabwe), North-West University (South Africa), and Mukhanyo Theological College (South Africa).

## 4. **Presentation by Dr. Brian Debris**

- 4.1. After self-introduction by the various participants who have managed to connect for the conference, the moderator invited the first speaker to make his homily.
- 4.2. He began by introducing himself once again as coming from South Africa, and working with Mukhanyo Theological College, but was originally from Heritage Reformed Church in USA.
- 4.3. He also appreciated God deeply for opportunity he had accorded to the ICRC Africa Region member churches to converge for this conference, and have mutual encouragement to one another as members of Christ's body.
- 4.4. Dr. Brian Debris gave a presentation on the Biblical Purpose of Theological Training in Africa.
  - 4.4.1. What is the purpose of Theological Training? Why do you exist as a teaching institution? Or what is your vision / mission for theological training?

- 4.4.2. On the purpose of education, the world makes attempt to give an answer to this question: For the basic Outline, see Appendix 1.
- a) John Dewey views the purpose as giving the learners the things they need in order to develop in an orderly sequential way into members of society (John Dewey, "Individual Psychology and Education," *The Philosopher*, 12, 1934.)
  - b) For Arthur Foshay, the purpose to bring the people to as full a realization as possible of what it is to be a human being. (Arthur Foshay, "The Curriculum Matrix: Transcendence and Mathematics," *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 1991.)
  - c) While Martin Luther King Jr. perceive it as teaching one to think both intensively and critically. (Martin Luther King Jr., speech at Morehouse College, 1948.)
  - d) A common secular consensus see education as not having a single purpose, but serving multiple objectives whose relative importance of each being considered to be very personal. It is seen as intended to:
    - i. Cultivate a skilled and or effective work force.
    - ii. Serve social needs or contribute to the economy.
    - iii. Teach cultural literacy or develop the intellect.
    - iv. Promote a particular social or political system.
- 4.4.3. All the above submissions regarding the purpose of education are premised on secular standpoints.
- 4.4.4. The purpose and model of education are both related. For the church, the purpose of education is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. There are various available models of education, but that of Biblical disciple should to be adopted, though sometimes the general tendency to engage in cut and paste from other models.
- 4.4.5. What does scripture say about theological education and the model to be adopted? The model of theological education is influenced by the definition of its purpose: Theological education is intended:
- a) To prepare the saints for the work of ministry Eph4:12
  - b) For instruction, doing one's best to be an approved worker who has no need of being ashamed, but rightly divide the word of truth 1Tim2:15.
  - c) For mentorship, what we have heard must be entrusted to faithful men who will be qualified to teach others also 2Tim2:2. Mentorship shapes the way education is carried out.
  - d) For correction, this is clearly seen in the action of Pricilla and Aquila when they watched Apollos' doing the work of ministry and having realized the existing gaps in his service, took him aside and taught him a better approach to work of ministry Act 18:26.
- 4.4.6. How does this translate to the theological institutions?
- a) They train church leadership and members to equip all the believers for the work of ministry thus preparing them to fulfill the church's mission.
  - b) They support the church (local & global) in her mission to fulfill Christ's command of teaching all nations.
- 4.4.7. In the African context, how do we shape theological education according to the biblical model? What has been learnt must be preserved and passed on unaltered to faithful men who would be qualified to teach others also. 2Tim2:2. This purpose must be well guided by all faithful servants of God.



#### 4.4.8. What are the implications of theological education in Africa?

- a) Theological education must be more than an academic exercise. Two extremes must be avoided:
  - i. We should neither be anti-intellectual nor slaves to the idol of academia.
  - ii. Academics must be in submission to Christ, and must be viewed as a vital tool to accomplish God's purpose through the church.
- b) Theological Education is more than just knowledge and Critical thinking.
  - i. Theological education serves to teach one to think intensively and critically. Fair enough! But that's not the end of it all. Intelligence is not enough. As Martin Luther King noted, "intelligence and character is the goal of true education" (Martin Luther King Jr., 1948.) To divorce character from education is very dangerous. Education must be more than gaining knowledge.
  - ii. The focus of theological education is more inclusive than knowledge acquisition.
- c) Theological education is more than just skills development. We do not exist to:
  - i. Prepare students or workers for society;
  - ii. Train masses to solve the problem of illiteracy;
  - iii. Eliminate poverty and suffering;
  - iv. Reduce dangerous social concepts.

The ultimate goal of our existence is to train equip leaders in the church for the work of ministry.
- d) Theological education is more than just social transformation. How do we measure our success? It is more than transformation of society. It is reformation – this is the spiritual mission for spiritual battles into God's kingdom. It should therefore be borne in mind that:
  - i. Theological education is more than preservation of a particular culture;
  - ii. Its more than a promotion of a political agenda;

It is vital to know that we are engaged in a higher calling or a spiritual mission.

#### 4.4.9. The Mission of Education

- a) It is to serve the church in its mission to be witnesses of Christ in the world.
- b) Theological education is to be missional in the sense that it serves the church in its location context.

#### 4.4.10. Outcome of a Missional Purpose : How should educational ministries be aligned with God's vision and mission

- a) Missional Vision (Plans)
  - i. For many institutions this comes in mission statements.
  - ii. Our goal is participating in God's mission
    - Serving the training needs God's church
    - To train men to serve faithfully in God's mission.
- b) Missional Staff (People)

- i. Those who serve must be called by God, and are faithful to his word.
- ii. Must be called to serve the church whether full time, part time, or as support staff.
- c) Missional Courses (Programs)
  - i. Here the focus on the content of what we teach.
  - ii. This must be designed to create not merely scholars but pastors.
  - iii. The highest calling in the church is to be a man of God who leads his people faithfully to apply his word in their lives.
- d) Missional Students (Prophets)
 

It is not the number of people that matters, but the people who are ready to give their lives to the work of ministry is major issue here.
- e) Missional Piety (Prayers)
  - i. This is very essential in order to pursue the purpose for which God has called us.
  - ii. Intimate Knowledge Christ will always produce piety.

#### 4.4.11. Questions by Participants:

- a) How can we engage in training leaders who have a balanced life?
  - i. The trainers must be mentors who teach by examples.
  - ii. For example, all the lecturers at Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa are pastors who help to give a practical example to a pastor under training.
- b) Should bi-vocational training ever be encouraged?
 

The idea is okay depending on the context where one can have an additional skill to sustain himself most especially where the congregation does have the financial muscle to support him in the work of ministry.

## 5. **BBK General Secretary: Mr. Johan Plug**

- 5.1. It was a pleasure for him to be among speakers at the virtual conference of ICRC Africa Region.
- 5.2. He worked as General Secretary of the BBK who urged members of ICRC always to live for the praise of God regardless of whatever circumstance they may be going through.
- 5.3. He pointed out that BBK existed to share with the members as well as praise God with them.

## **B. Attendance: Day Two; Wednesday July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.**

- 1. Devison Telen Banda \_ Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
- 2. Dr. Brian Debris - Mukhanyo Theological College.
- 3. Dr. Flip Buys – Mukhanyo Theological College (South Africa)
- 4. Dr. Joseph Mutei - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 5. Elder David Kabaale – Secretariat Office Coordinator, Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- 6. Elder Fanuel Anyul - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 1) Elder Fred Kabenge – Elder Fred Kabenge – Presbyterian Church in Uganda [Secretary ICRC African Region, Coordinator Trinity Center for World Mission East & Central Africa Region, and Principal Trinity Biblical Institute, Kapchorwa Uganda].

7. Elder John Ssali – Academic Registrar / Quality Assurance Officer, Trinity Biblical Institute (Kapchorwa Uganda)
8. Mr. Matthijs Blok - Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
9. Mr. Mukiti Gideon -?
10. Mr. Naas Ferreira - ?
11. Mr. Nehemie Kwizera – Center Coordinator, Trinity Biblical Institute (Kigali Rwanda Training Center)
12. Mr. Tinanshe Chengeta – City Presbytery Blawayo (Zimbabwe)
13. Mrs. Merike Blok - Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
14. Pastor Francis Mayanja – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
15. Pastor Francis Owoyesigire – National Coordinator, Trinity Center for World Mission (Kapchorwa Uganda)
16. Pastor Marx Mbabaali – Librarian , Trinity Biblical Institute (Kapchorwa Uganda)
17. Pastor Milton Lipa – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
18. Mr. Phinehas - Free Reformed Church of South Africa
19. Pastor Bob Kalyowa – Stated Clerk at the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church in Uganda
20. Prof. Lameck Banda – Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
21. Rev. Daniel Kithong – Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya) [Chairman ICRC Africa Region].
22. Rev. Joseph Mutemi - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
23. Rev. Pete Musyoka – Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
24. Rev. Songok - ?

## **1. Business for Day Two; July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021: Moderated by Rev. Daniel Kithong.**

- 1.1. After the opening prayer and a few welcoming remarks to all the virtual participants, Rev. Daniel raised the question of where and when the next ICRC meeting would be held. Five optional places were proposed i.e. DRC Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa.
- 1.2. The final decision as to where the next conference would be held was left to the discretion of the brothers from Free Reformed Church in South Africa, and Mukhanyo Theological College to come up with a final decision.
- 1.3. The conference is supposed to be held every after four years, and members would as well agree to have after two years.

## **2. Devotion: By Rev Daniel Kithong**

- 2.1. Reading Text: Acts 1:5-11
- 2.2. Theme: Purpose for which ICRC exists
  - 2.2.1. Before his return to heaven, Jesus ordered the disciples to wait for the promise of the father.
  - 2.2.2. The mandate was intended to enable the disciples become empowered by the Holy Spirit.
  - 2.2.3. Without the Holy Spirit's empowerment we can't be clear about the task God has entrusted to us.
  - 2.2.4. The purpose, focus, and commitment as to why ICRC exists is to bring

sinner into the kingdom of God.

2.2.5. This can be accomplished through our collective efforts as we reach out to the lost world for Christ with the gospel of grace.

2.2.6. The devotion was concluded with a word of prayer.

### **3. Review of Previous Day's Presentation: This was presented by Elder Fanuel Anyul.**

#### **4. Presentation by Rev Thijs Blok & Mrs. Marike Blok – JMU**

4.1. Topic: Trends in Theological Education in Southern Africa (Zambia).

4.2. He began by acknowledging Dr Nico Mostert for availing much of what he was to share with the participants

4.3. In general, there was

4.3.1. Growing interest for good theological training and post graduate studies,

4.3.2. Declining numbers due to finances, access to resources of institutions and slower growth in churches sending students

4.3.3. Great need for accreditation premised on the general desire for quality by governments and theological networks to ensure that institutions are doing a good job.

4.3.4. The danger that exists is in the fact that there are many who making attempts to start house theological colleges, which is a big challenge given to what it normally takes to begin a decent and sound theological institution.

4.4. Knowledge transfer

4.4.1. There is rapid expansion of knowledge (internet), which has its challenges as well as opportunities besides the monopolies that buy and sell knowledge.

4.4.2. Developing the curriculum within a rapid expanding knowledge environment involves a lot of time consuming labor.

4.4.3. The internet as an unedited resource expose people to all kinds of knowledge whether good or bad.

4.5. Learning Patterns

4.5.1. People's learning patterns are changing with the introduction of e-learning and online courses

4.5.2. Open source learning is being introduced too.

4.5.3. Illegal selling of qualification on internet is also on the rise.

4.5.4. There is need for integrative theological education.

4.6. Funding

4.6.1. Donor funding is increasing becoming scarce

4.6.2. The financial situation of churches too is not improving.

4.6.3. Self-funding of graduate and post-graduate studies are on the increase.

#### **4.7. African Challenges I**

4.7.1. Rising poverty and increasing inequalities between the haves and have not.

4.7.2. There is an increase in the cost of higher education.

4.7.3. Student age is varying with more "older" candidates applying for ministry

training.

- 4.7.4. Interest in full time study that pushes ministry into becoming a part-time job.
- 4.7.5. People are studying according to affordability and convenience.

## **4.8. African Challenges II**

- 4.8.1. Rising poverty and increasing disparities between the haves and have not.
- 4.8.2. The church's own training is expensive and not sustainable.
- 4.8.3. Collaboration between denominations can reduce the cost
- 4.8.4. Ecumenical training will exclude confessional training and ministry formation
- 4.8.5. Confessional training and ministry formation is a denominational issue.

## **4.9. Suggestions**

- 4.9.1. Rethink the road to ministry;
  - a) The long road (more accessible for "older" students)
    - Enrolment in non-accredited programs as a start (confessional training/ministerial formation).
    - Progress into more formal learning (Certificate, Diploma, Bachelors) (ecumenical training)
  - b) The shorter road
    - Fulltime study (ecumenical training (university) and confessional training/ministerial formation (church own)
    - Second career candidates (already have a qualification and enter into a post graduate qualification in theology).
- 4.9.2. Rethinking the role of ministers
  - a) Different roles of ministry require different training.
  - b) Tent maker ministers require different qualifications and skill set.
- 4.9.3. Rethinking the role of the Curatorium in the guidance of students.  
Mentoring during ecumenical training and confessional training/ministerial formation.
- 4.9.4. Rethinking the role of internet

## **5. Integrative Theological Education: Research by Justo Mwale University.**

- 5.1. Research Findings:
  - 5.1.1. Need for a broader curriculum – stakeholders, and students requested for a broader and culturally relevant curriculum.
  - 5.1.2. The need for a broader curriculum was based upon:
    - a) Realities of "the fast changing social and religious context" – Students would need courses dealing with issues such as:
      - Demonology, exorcism, Pentecostalism etc.,
      - Conflict resolution, and poverty.
      - Entrepreneurship, this would look into things like mechanics, agriculture, carpentry, or tailoring etc.

- Gender issues
  - African literature, avoid over relying on foreign literature.
- b) The challenge felt by Graduates (active in ministry) of applying learning in complex community situations”
- 5.1.3. Engaging in relationship in vocational training
- a) Opportunities were revealed for church ministry and pastors who assist JMU in the assessment of students through reports.
  - b) A need for greater integration in pastoral skills development was requested by all stakeholders, church representatives, members of staff, and students.
- 5.1.4. Spiritual formation a core task
- a) JMU offers planned activities: chapel services, communal prayers, and daily devotions.
  - b) Students felt that academic excellence is prioritised at the expense of spirituality
  - c) **Emphasis:** no compromise on the theological basis and content and that the academic goals are still useful and helpful, but meanwhile they underline that spirituality is an unmet hunger.
- 5.1.5. Tensions of living in community/ the hidden curriculum
- a) This theme involving community life spoke to the “non-academic” methods or hidden curriculum where a significant amount of integration happens.
  - b) **Emphasis:** If what is taught in the classroom or the espoused values by the community are not lived out, students experience cognitive variance, and learning is not integrated.
  - c) This observation came out with significant frequency.
- 5.1.6. Summation
- a) Authentic theological education for Africa ought to be grounded in the context of African realities of the day;
  - b) Such education must be integrative and not a perpetuation of parallel lose connections.
  - c) Hereditary content-heavy courses impact on the integration of learning, as students become overwhelmed by academic learning and struggle to incorporate learning in all the different roles and activities.
  - d) Balance vocational Excellency and spiritual formation so as to address the *head, hands and the heart*.
- 5.1.7. Discussions
- a) Which of the mentioned trends in theological education in Africa do you recognize in your context and how do you respond to it?
  - b) Which suggestion could be helpful in your context?
  - c) Which one of the identified gaps in JMU theological education do you recognize in your own institution?
- 5.1.8. Comments from Dr. T. Band
- a) There is need for a broader curriculum for ministers not only to train them for ministry but also to have a life skill.
  - b) Collaboration is essential and hence the need to embrace it.
  - c) Learning to be inclusive is crucial even though there may not be



- agreement on each and everything.
- d) Pastors should not only emphasize spiritual formation, but must also be involved in the aspect of work.

## 6. Curriculum Interventions: By Prof. Lameck Banda

Main thrust: In order to address the disconnect, or fill the gaps in JMU's theological educational system, curricular interventions are inevitable for integration of spiritual formation in all courses and maximizing integrative learning in both formal and hidden curricula.

### 6.1. Underlying Principles For Curricular Integration:

- 6.1.1. Requires an integrative style based on a trinitarian-missional and communal conceptualization.
- 6.1.2. Includes the African values of holism, wisdom and respect.
- 6.1.3. *Holism*: The visible and the invisible reality should be united, three publics (church, academy and society), and integration of head, heart and hands.
- 6.1.4. *Wisdom*: Ability to handle issues in order to promote community life is crucial.
- 6.1.5. *Respect*: Gift of diplomacy and valuing of the roots where you are coming from.

### 6.2. Commitments Towards Curricular Integration:

#### 6.2.1. Short-Term Changes:

- a) Pursuing a contextually more appropriate curriculum by emphasizing African realities and skills for entrepreneurship.
- b) Fostering the interrelationship between theological disciplines by interdisciplinary thematic courses.

#### 6.2.2. Long-Term Changes:

- a) Shaping the being of the students by striking a balance between the head, the heart and the hands.
- b) Valuing unity in diversity in our relationship by considering minority voices.

### 6.3. Short-Term Curricular Interventions:

- 6.3.1. Integrative Practical Preaching: Practicing preaching every Monday by integrating all elements learnt in different disciplines in one sermon.
- 6.3.2. Angelology and Demonology: A unit in Systematic Theology 2 course which focuses on theological understanding of good and evil angels.
- 6.3.3. Entrepreneurship Course: Company visit experience and reflection from the existing literature.
- 6.3.4. HIV/AIDS Pandemic Course: Experiences of meeting with people living with HIV/AIDS and critical conversation with existing literature.
- 6.3.5. Interdisciplinary Thematic Course: Approaching a specific contextual contemporary topic by multiple lecturers and followed by interactive workshops.

### 6.4. Long-Term Curricular Interventions:

- 6.4.1. Integration: Striking a balance between the head, heart and hands.
- 6.4.2. Pastoral Supervision: Putting in place specified students' supervision and evaluation system that involves the African three-legged stool and emphasizing three aspects of knowledge, practice and the self.

- 6.4.3. Spiritual Formation: Creating space for formational rhythms such as quiet and reflectional times in isolation, and an opportunity to share from the inward.
- 6.4.4. Hidden curriculum: Creating space for minority voices while valuing unity in diversity by regular social interactions, meals of fellowship and Holy Communion celebrations.
- 6.4.5. Advocacy: Lobbying in churches and staff committees to deliberately make reservation of certain students and leadership positions for women and representatives of churches.

## **7. Integrative Theological Education: By Mrs. Marijke Blok**

- 7.1. What does it mean?
- 7.2. Theological education struggles with the question of how to prepare pastors for their multifaceted task in a fast changing environment.
- 7.3. Integration of Theological Disciplines
  - 7.3.1. Involves Biblical studies.
  - 7.3.2. Humanities and development studies.
  - 7.3.3. Systematic theological church history.
- 7.4. Integration of Theory and Praxis
  - Involves the how to of applying theology to the day to day life experiences. Praxis shapes theory.
- 7.5. Integration of Head, Heart and Hands
  - Combines knowledge, practice and self. The personality of a pastor is very crucial. Knowledge, action, and spiritual formation create stable and mature ministers.
- 7.6. Integration of theological disciplines
  - 7.6.1. Biblical studies
  - 7.6.2. Systematic theology and church history
  - 7.6.3. Practical theology and missiology
  - 7.6.4. Humanities and development studies.
- 7.7. Integration of Theory and Praxis
  - 7.7.1. Theory applied to praxis
  - 7.7.2. Praxis shapes the theory
  - 7.7.3. Theory, mutual interference, praxis.
- 7.8. Integration of knowledge, practice and self (Knowing, doing, and being).
  - 7.8.1. What you know (Head, academic excellence)
  - 7.8.2. How you act (Hands, vocational training)
  - 7.8.3. Who you are (Heart, Spiritual formation).
- 7.9. Questions for Discussion.
  - 7.9.1. Curricular interventions
    - How may JMU's curricular interventions on Integrative Theological Education enrich theological education in your context? Answers from participants:
    - a) By involving all stakeholders in the analysis of the curriculum.
    - b) It would be important to review the college curricular, and failure to review the curriculum would easily lead to the death of an institution.

- c) The institution should engage in refresher courses which can help to serve pastors and ministers.
- d) The curricular must focus on life-long learning.
- e) There is need to avoid being narrow minded, putting much emphasis on position rather character development.
- f) We should look into the issues of quality assurance as required by the government, pursue clear objectives and learning outcomes.
- g) Character formation, involving of stakeholders, having a life-long curriculum are all vital aspects.
- h) Any theological education that does not meet the needs of people is impotent
- i) Students must be trained holistically. The church expects a minister who would behave in Christ –like manner.
- j) The process of curriculum development must involve wider range of stakeholders who would provide all the necessary information.
- k) There need for broader network and collaboration with other likeminded institutions.
- l) In regard to character formation, it important to take into consideration the hidden curriculum, always avoiding dis-connect between what one teaches and what he or she does. Hidden curriculum is about how the teacher relate with the student.
- m) Curriculum must be engaged to address the challenges of Africa today.
- n) Relationship is important, there must be connectivity from one aspect of training to another.
- o) Africa needs mote people who are spiritually formed, respect the church, and shows no dichotomy between what they have learnt and what they have become.
- p) The future of theological education is blink if there is no collaboration, networking and sharing of resources.
- q) Recharging and reserving of minister is very crucial for the body of Christ.
- r) Arrogance must be avoided by ministers who should be keen on seek to be refreshed.
- s) Refresher courses for people who already graduated must always be put into perspective.
- t) Solving the tension between learning outcomes and government requirement will require engagement with boards of higher education in our respective countries. This tension must be managed creatively and with good dialogue. This creativity must be exhibited in the mutual collaborations among theological institutions.

#### 7.9.2. The need for integration

Think of the three meanings of integration: integration of theological disciplines, integration of theory and practice, and interplay of head, heart and hands. On which one would your theological institution improve? How would it do so? Please share your suggestions?

### **c. Attendance: Day Three, Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>, July 2021.**

- 1) Devison Telen Banda \_ Justo Mwale University (Zambia)

- 2) Dr. Brian Debris - Mukhanyo Theological College.
- 3) Dr. Flip Buys – Mukhanyo Theological College (South Africa)
- 4) Dr. Joseph Mutei - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 5) Elder David Kabaale – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- 6) Elder Fanuel Anyul - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 7) Elder Fred Kabenge – Presbyterian Church in Uganda [Secretary ICRC African Region, Coordinator Trinity Center for World Mission East & Central Africa Region, and Principal Trinity Biblical Institute, Kapchorwa Uganda].
- 8) Elder James Kabugo – Field officer, Trinity Center for World Mission for East and Central Africa
- 9) Elder John Ssali – Academic Registrar / Quality Assurance officer, Trinity Biblical Institute (Kapchorwa Uganda)
- 10) Mr. David Letting - ?
- 11) Mr. Matthijs Blok - Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
- 12) Mr. Mukiti Gideon -?
- 13) Mr. Naas Ferreira - ?
- 14) Mr. Nehemie Kwizera – Trinity Biblical Institute (Kigali Rwanda Training Center)
- 15) Mr. Phinehas - Free Reformed Church of South Africa
- 16) Mr. Tinanshe Chengeta – City Presbytery Blawayo (Zimbabwe)
- 17) Mrs. Merike Blok - Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
- 18) Pastor Bob Kalyowa – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- 19) Pastor Francis Mayanja – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- 20) Pastor Francis Owoyesigire – National Coordinator, Trinity Center for World Mission (TCWM)
- 21) Pastor Marx Mbabaali – Librarian, Trinity Biblical Institute (Kapchorwa Uganda)
- 22) Pastor Milton Lipa – Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- 23) Prof. Lameck Banda – Justo Mwale University (Zambia)
- 24) Rev. Daniel Kithong – Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya) [Chairman ICRC Africa Region].
- 25) Rev. Joseph Mutemi - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 26) Rev. Koimur - ?
- 27) Rev. Pete Musyoka – Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya)
- 28) Rev. Songok - ?

## **1. The Diaconal Ministry of the Church in Africa – By Dr. Joseph Mutei**

### **1.1. Introduction**

- 1.1.1. Missions is the heart beat of any church that seeks to identify with God's missio Dei'.
- 1.1.2. God is at work to transform the world through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and is seeking for those who would collaborators in this divine vineyard.
- 1.1.3. The African church is no exception and must creatively and prayerfully embrace the shifting paradigm of missions in Africa.
- 1.1.4. The church must do missions in 'bold humility (Bosch) and as 'prophetic dialogue' (Shroeder).

## **1.2. Mission is a Prophetic Dialogue**

- 1.2.1. Mission as dialogue is where one enters into mission with a profound openness to the place and to the people in which and among whom one works.
- 1.2.2. Max Warren's famous dictum, "when you come to another land, another people, take off your shoes, because the ground on which you are standing is holy.
- 1.2.3. Mission as dialogue is the ministry of presence and respect. It is a witness to the God who moves among us in dialogue, the word became flesh, communion in God-self who calls us to communion with our universe, and with one another 1Thes2:7-8.
- 1.2.4. Authentic mission also involves prophecy.
- 1.2.5. The basic motivation of mission must be to share the astounding, challenging, self-convicting, amazing good news about the God of Jesus Christ, and God's vision for the world.
- 1.2.6. The gospel must be the beautiful news we share around the world in general and in Africa in particular.
- 1.2.7. Engaging in mission is not simply for physical betterment of humanity, the increase of communications among Christians, or the development of one's personal depth, even though all these are worthwhile;
- 1.2.8. Mission is about the respectful, gentle dialogue, and yet faithful speaking forth in word and deeds of love revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.
- 1.2.9. Mission needs to be done both as dialogue and prophecy. We need to boldly proclaim the beautiful news of God's story in Jesus and God's vision for the world, but we need to do it the way God does it: with patience, with respect, in dialogue.

## **1.3. Balance between witness and proclamation.**

- 1.3.1. Preach always, if necessary use words (Francis of Assisi)
- 1.3.2. The deed, without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty.

## **1.4. Mission as reconciliation**

- 1.4.1. Africa like the rest of the world has experienced violence, tension between religions, terrorist threats, globalization, and displacement of people, deadly disease and pandemic.
- 1.4.2. The church's witness to and proclamation of the possibility of reconciliation may constitute a new way of conceiving the content of the church's missionary and diaconal task.
- 1.4.3. Human reconciliation and works of mercy is the work of God, a work of grace.
- 1.4.4. We have a duty to the victims of injustice, and violence, the victims of poverty and poor governance.
- 1.4.5. The church's mandate is to witness in its life and proclaim its fearless hope that God does heal, and that, through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, the barriers of hostility can be broken down, and those who are divided can be made one (Eph2:14).

- 1.4.6. To facilitate the recognition of God's gracious working in the midst of so much violence and tragedy, the needs to develop communities of honest, compassion, acceptance, and listening.
- 1.4.7. What do we see as today as the diaconal mandate within the mission of the church in such a broken continent? We must reflect on this from a reformed perspective.
- 1.4.8. We are aware that many denominations have already taken their stands on matters of reaching out to the needy, and poor in the continent, but what is the place of the reformed church on this matter?

## **1.5. Diakonia**

- 1.5.1. I came that they have life and have abundantly (Jn10:10; Luk4:16-21; Matt25:31-46).
- 1.5.2. Within the above text, you find the vision and practice of diakonia as the churches' embodiment of God's reign to come with its promise of eternal life, justice and peace and God's preferential option for the poor as theological and ethical criteria for the way forward.
- 1.5.3. Diakonia is thus an essential dimension of being church.
- 1.5.4. The dictionary of the ecumenical movement defines diakonia as the responsible service of the gospel by deed and words performed by Christian in response to the needs of people.
- 1.5.5. Diakonia is embodied practice of discipleship as we can see in the stories of the Acts of Apostles.
- 1.5.6. Diakonia always carries the marks of kenotic service and embodied practices for justice and peace among the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed.
- 1.5.7. Diakonia is thus an essential dimension of being the church.
- 1.5.8. It is the responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of the people.
- 1.5.9. A deacon, according to the New Testament is a servant.
- 1.5.10. Deacons are model servants appointed to a local church office.
- 1.5.11. They are deployed to assist the pastor or elders by protecting the church unity, organizing practical service, and meeting tangible needs.
- 1.5.12. Deacons - rightly defined and deployed are an irreplaceable gift to Christ's people. They are model servants excel in being attentive and responsive to tangible needs in the life of a church. In what ways do they serve? By assisting the elders, guarding the ministry of the word, organizing service, caring for the needy, protecting unity, mobilizing ministry, and more.
- 1.5.13. A church without effective deacons may exhibit signs of health for a while, but over time its health will suffer. We rob ourselves of the benefit of God's revealed wisdom when we either unduly elevate the role of deacons (say, to pseudo elders) or unduly reduce their role (say, to glorified janitors).

## **1.6. Diakonia in the Bible**

- 1.6.1. Biblically understood, deacons are a cavalry of servants, deputized to execute the elders' vision by coordinating various ministries.
- 1.6.2. When the deacons flourish, the whole congregation wins.
- 1.6.3. The NT actually says quite little about the diaconate apart from a passing



reference in Phil1:1; a list of qualifications in 1Tim3:8-13, and possible reference in Rom16.1, there are no explicit remarks on the office.

- 1.6.4. Christians have long seen precedent for deacons in Acts6:1-7, where Luke reports on the Jerusalem congregation. It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to deacon tables... But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to deaconing the word (Act6:2,4).
  - 1.6.5. Do the apostles lack concern for the welfare of the vulnerable?
  - 1.6.6. Are they elevating “spiritual” ministry above “practical” ministry
  - 1.6.7. Or perhaps not recognizing the latter as real ministry at all.
  - 1.6.8. By prioritizing scripture and prayer, the apostles are choosing to stay focused on the whole church’s spiritual welfare, even as they affirm the Helenists’ physical needs
  - 1.6.9. They recognized a fundamental truth” a church whose ministers are chained to the tyranny of the urgent which often shows up in “tangible problems” is a church removing its heart to strengthen its arm.
  - 1.6.10. It’s a kind of slow –motion suicide.
  - 1.6.11. This strategic division of labor was a sign of the strength in the first church, and its signals strength in the churches today. Pastors (or deacons, for that matter) who try to do everything end up doing a disservice to everyone.
- 1.7. **Qualifications of deacons.** The apostle Paul outlines qualifications for the office of the deacon 1Tim3:8-13.

## **1.8. Diakonia Duties**

- 1.8.1. Spotting and meeting tangible needs
- 1.8.2. Protecting and promoting church unity.
- 1.8.3. Serving and supporting the ministry of elders
- 1.8.4. Exhibiting within the church and before the world the exemplary moral authority of sympathy, witness and service after the example of Jesus Christ.
- 1.8.5. Care for God’s people in crisis
- 1.8.6. Challenge structures and conditions within the church and within the wider society, which keep persons and groups powerless and voiceless.
- 1.8.7. Become liturgical representatives of the church’s presence in the world and the world’s presence in the church.
- 1.8.8. Develop new forms of leadership at every level of church, community and governing body life.

## **1.9. Diakonia in the Pandemic**

- 1.9.1. From the Church’s experience of responding to the emergency and epidemic situations, we know that there are three key roles the church can play in such times to promote preparedness and resilience
  - a) To give hope and combat fear with accurate information and encouragement through faith
  - b) To keep the worshipping and wider community connected, if necessary via messages, phones and online in case of quarantine and disruption.
  - c) To show God’s compassion and care to those affected in our communities,

remembering that those already most vulnerable will be most affected.

## **1.10. Conclusion**

- 1.10.1. The Reformed churches in Africa have to rethink their engagement with mission such a time as this
- 1.10.2. The contemporary context of mission would require paradigm shift in the way we see as our ministerial mandate.
- 1.10.3. Diakonia must be re-mainstreamed in the church's ministry to help in mitigating the many social economic needs surrounding the church.
- 1.10.4. There is an opportunity to restore the diaconal ministry during the pandemic and join Christ in serving the vulnerable and marginalized in society.
- 1.10.5. Shalom

## Appendix to article 13

Disclaimer: Convictions presented in a paper are not necessarily held or endorsed by the ICRC.

### **Seminaries: Centres for Theological Education, Ministry Training or Spiritual Formation? An Integrated Approach**

**Mohan Chacko**

#### ***Introduction***

I understand the topic of this paper to be a clarification of the mission and vocation of theological institutions or seminaries. What are they called to do as training institutions? What should be their focus? Are they primarily academic institutions, professional schools or discipleship centres? These questions obviously are linked with our understanding of the ministry of the church. What is the role of the church in preparing theologically-trained leaders for its ministries? Concerns are expressed in various quarters that seminaries are failing to produce leaders that meet the needs of the church's ministry. Some have even called for the abolition of seminaries as they exist today. What can be done to make realistic corrections in the programs we offer in our theological institutions? Do we need to revisit the basic structure of our seminaries in order to produce the desired results? In the first part of this paper, we will explore the development of theological education in history to see how the present emphases emerged. Then we will look at the roles of academics, ministry skills development and spiritual formation in theological education today, and seek ways to integrate them.

It is appropriate to note at the very beginning that there is much diversity today with regard to the understanding and practice of what can be called theological education. Theory and practice of theological education vary from institution to institution and from country to country. The contexts in which we train leaders for the church are so diverse that it is impossible to think in terms of a universal model. Institutions vary in their philosophy of education, goals (outcomes) and strategies. Inevitably, the observations in this paper will reflect my own experience as a theological educator in India during the last forty years.

To think that training pastors for existing churches is the only task of theological education will be a mistake. Children, women and the laity, not just potential pastors, need to benefit from this ministry of "equipping the saints". Ministry training is for the people of God because ministry is for the people of God (Eph 4:11-12). Theological training of pastors is a subset of the total training enterprise of the church.

Theological training need not be even for ordained "church ministry" because there is a need for lay people to be taught how to be salt and light in the world. We recognise that bearing witness to the Kingdom of God is not limited to church activities. God's people need to think and act theologically even in their "secular" vocations. However, this is an area beyond our consideration today.

There is also diversity with regard to the types of ministries for which seminaries or theological institutions train students. Not all seminary graduates end up doing pastoral ministry. Many find

themselves in parachurch organisations, relief work and other institutions of service, specialised ministries such as counselling, worship leading, education, music ministry, etc. Without doubt, these are also needed ministries in the wider Christian context. It is important to keep this fact in mind as one particular approach or curriculum may not be suitable for all.

In spite of this diversity in approaches, a case can be made for specialised leadership training for the church. The Lord himself gave special attention to the training of the Twelve, equipping them for effective service in the Kingdom. The Pastoral Epistles list the qualifications of those who would be elders in the church. Though theological education takes place at various levels and through various agencies, we will concentrate on those who consider church ministry as their primary calling.

### ***Historical Approaches to Theological Education***

To meet these diverse situations and goals, a variety of approaches and institutions have emerged in history.

During the early medieval period, priests were trained in monasteries or cathedral schools. But such education was not primarily focused on the training of pastors. It was part of the catechetical training of the church. One of the unique characteristics of this system was the direct involvement of the church in theological education.

The cathedral schools were forerunners of the university. Around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the university system began to replace the cathedral schools and monastic models of theological education. Even the emergence of the university did not particularly aid in the preparation of pastors. The main purpose of the universities was not to prepare pastors but to facilitate contemplation of truth. The education they offered consisted of a broad curriculum of liberal arts. The universities maintained a more critical distance with the church unlike the cathedral schools, which functioned under the direct authority of the church. Most pastors especially in poorer and rural communities were not university graduates or could not afford university education.<sup>1</sup> Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the distance between the academy and the parish increased, and there was much ignorance among the clergy.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Reformation, the university model had declined as an arrangement for training pastors, and the emphasis was more on the *liturgical* duties of the priests than on the *didactic*.<sup>3</sup>

The Reformation reversed this trend and made formal education a requirement for ordination. “Ideally, at the end of the Reformation period, pastoral education included a liberal arts background, knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, a thorough knowledge of the biblical doctrine based on careful exegesis, an understanding of history, and the ability to preach and teach. Even when a candidate for the ministry received little or no university training, he was expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of biblical doctrine, an evangelical spirit, and the ability to communicate scriptural truth simply and clearly.”<sup>4</sup> In Calvin’s Geneva, students were expected to perform pastoral responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> Justo Gonzalez, *The History of Theological Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Gonzalez, *The History of Theological Education*, 61.

<sup>3</sup> John M. Brenner, “Educating Pastors at the Time of the Reformation,” <https://mlc-wels.edu/alumni/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/02/Educating-Pastors-at-the-Time-of-the-Reformation-Corrected.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Brenner, “Educating Pastors at the Time of the Reformation.”

along with their studies. It was a wholistic education.

An educated ministry is a hallmark of the Reformed tradition. The Heidelberg Catechism in its exposition on the Fourth Commandment (Q. 103) asserts that maintenance of “the ministry of the gospel and the schools” – referring to theological education – is part of the requirement of keeping the Sabbath day holy. The idea seems to be that for the church to follow the fourth commandment today it needs trained ministers to lead the church in its corporate worship life. This emphasis on an educated ministry is something that can be traced to the Reformation and particularly to the efforts of the great Reformer, John Calvin.

Preparation for ministry was not exclusively a study of the Bible, but a wider classical education. Ursinus's commentary (catechetical lectures) on HC 103, cited above, reads: "*The maintenance of schools may be embraced under this part of the honor which is due to the ministry; for unless the arts and sciences be taught, men can neither become properly qualified to teach, nor can the purity of doctrine be preserved and defended against the assaults of heretics. . . . So there is a contempt of the ministry of the church . . . when schools are not maintained and supported, when learning is neglected . . .*"<sup>5</sup> The idea seems to be that proper observation of the fourth commandment requires ministers who are equipped with a broad foundation of knowledge.

This emphasis persisted in the following centuries. The fundamental preparation for ministry in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was a classical education, which included the study of Scripture and divine things.<sup>6</sup> Ministerial formation was closely related to university education. Holiness or piety was achieved by the study of texts. Love for and understanding of these texts was considered identical to piety.<sup>7</sup>

The first seminary was established only in 1563 by the Council of Trent for clerical training in the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> The word “seminary”, from Latin *seminarium*, means a seed bed, a place where a plant is grown or developed. The term was not always associated with theological education for ministry, but also applied to preparatory schools and colleges, especially for women.

The curriculum of modern seminaries goes back to the university system. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of a theological encyclopaedia developed consisting of sacred literature, dogmatics, ecclesiastical history, and practical theology. The four-fold system was an adaptation to the new understanding of the university rather than to changes in the ministerial character. The system remained in place while the contents has changed from a general knowledge of the humanistic learning to specialized study of religion in disciplines, some of which were only remotely related to the work of the minister.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 570-1. (Emphasis added. I am indebted to Dr. Lyle D. Bierma of Calvin Theological Seminary for this quotation.)

<sup>6</sup> Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Hough, Jr. and Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/opinion/it-s-time-rethink-our-assumptions-about-where-theological-education-happens>

<sup>9</sup> Hough, Jr. and Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, 8.

### ***Church Involvement and Academic Freedom***

Involvement of the church in theological education varies in different models. In one model, theological education is undertaken directly by the church. Senior and educated pastors mentor ministerial candidates, thus eliminating the need for seminaries. Denominational seminaries, owned and operated directly by the church, is a variation of the same principle of direct involvement in theological education. The church exercises more or less direct control over the administration and operation of the institution – such as appointment of teachers, and perhaps even the teaching of subjects. Then there are also ecumenical seminaries, operated by inter-denominational Boards. In such situations, the control by the church is less direct. Another model is where the Seminary operates independently of the church altogether such as in the case of some universities. Such institutions are not church-controlled, but have varying levels of association with the church, at least as far as intake of students and budget are concerned.

Understandings of how and how much the church is to be involved in theological education vary. The tendency to make theological education church-oriented or even church-centred is a present trend in theological education. The ICAA (International Council of Accrediting Agencies, now ICETE, International Council of Evangelical Theological Education) “Manifesto” (1983) stresses this aspect when it says: “Our theological programs must become manifestly of the church, through the church, and for the church.”<sup>10</sup> Throughout history and at the present time, there are those who have felt that the church should take hold of ministerial education, and should bring it more directly under its control.<sup>11</sup> There are several reasons for this call for church orientation of theological education. For too long churches and theological institutions have been going their independent and separate ways. As a result, there is a chasm between the two. Churches complain that theological institutions are not training candidates for ministry, while theological educators see churches as too pragmatic, outdated and traditional.

Emphasis on church orientation in theological education can be positive or negative. Responsiveness to the church and its needs keeps theological education contextually relevant. When the needs of the church are overlooked or ignored, theological education becomes largely irrelevant.

On the other hand, church orientation may easily turn into an unhealthy church-centredness. Many traditional churches have no concept of mission to speak of, and their outlook is narrow-minded and parochial. Following the lead of such churches, training for ministry can simply become maintenance-oriented rather than mission-oriented; the emphasis will be on maintaining the status quo. Training for ministry, in some sense, has to be broader than equipping candidates for a traditional church-centred ministry.

Oversight of the church in theological education also raises the question of academic freedom. Academic freedom is the principle that the studying and teaching of any subject should not be controlled by the views and doctrines of the sponsoring body. This is a crucial issue where theology is one of the

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<sup>10</sup> The full text of the “Manifesto” and the history of its evaluation can be found in Robert W. Ferris, *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change* (Wheaton, IL: n.p., 1990), 141.

<sup>11</sup> In 1972, John Frame proposed that seminaries be replaced by church-based communities where teachers and students live together in learning and doing ministry. John M. Frame, “Proposal for a New Seminary” <http://frame-poythress.org/proposal-for-a-new-seminary/>

faculties among many others, such as in universities. Some argue that academic freedom is integral to a university, and theology department should not claim exemptions. If theology is an academic discipline, it should be treated like any other discipline, according to them.<sup>12</sup> Even the faculties of institutions not affiliated to a university have claimed this principle of academic freedom to defend their disagreement with the sponsoring bodies.

On the other hand, those who favour church-sponsored theological education would argue that the training institutions exist for the church, and ought simply to teach what the church believes. Undue importance given to academic freedom can seriously affect the purpose of existence and calling of a theological institution. Church involvement and supervision of theological education by the church are helpful in keeping the seminaries grounded in practical realities and straight in their doctrines.

Excessive oversight and control by the church also has its negative consequences. Keeping seminaries subservient to the church gives the impression that the church is not in need of critique and correction. The institution simply becomes a place to confirm the church's theology. Does the seminary have a role in provoking, even challenging, the thinking of the church towards greater theological maturity? Who will provide this critique if the seminaries are fully under the control of the church?

Mutual accountability, rather than control by church or institution, may be the answer to this dilemma.

### ***Academic Formation***

It may be observed that the academic element receives the highest priority in theological education at the seminary. Academic study – mastering of text books, writing assignments, taking examinations – receives priority in the everyday work of teachers and students at seminaries. Theological seminaries are recognised as academic institutions, and academics consist primarily or even exclusively of intellectual, theoretical or cognitive learning.

Academic emphasis in theological education can be seen also in the requirement of classical education prior to or as part of seminary studies. Classical learning is considered essential for teaching and defending the truths of Scripture. The net result sometimes is an overemphasis of academic work in preparation for ministry.

There are several reasons for this academic emphasis. The antecedents of contemporary theological education are in the university model, where theology was a (highly respected) science. Through the years, this tradition of theology as academic work has been carried forward in seminaries.

To a great extent, the bias towards academics in theological education is due to the fact that

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<sup>12</sup> Schubert M. Ogden, "Theology in the University: The Question of Integrity," in *Theology and the University: Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.*, David Ray Griffin and Joseph C. Hough, Jr., eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 73. So also Gordon D. Kauffman, "Critical Theology as a University Discipline," in *Theology and the University: Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.*, David Ray Griffin and Joseph C. Hough, Jr., eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 36. He questions whether authoritarian theology has any place in the university. Critical theology is one that questions its own basic presuppositions, rather than one that claims authority as being dogmatic.



theological training is done by theologians or academic experts in various fields rather than by practitioners (pastors/missionaries/counsellors). Ideally, teachers at theological seminaries would be scholars or subject experts with pastoral or other ministerial experience. But this is not always possible, especially in the context of younger churches where there is a scarcity of scholars with ministry experience. So the seminaries end up taking as teachers those with higher degrees but with little or no ministry background. Scholars tend to produce other scholars, and those who top their studies are not necessarily people most suited for ministry but those who are able to master facts and analyse issues rationally.

How shall we assess this academic emphasis in our institutions? Some see the academic model as irredeemable. John Frame proposes that “we dump the academic model once and for all – degrees, accreditation, tenure, the works. ... The academic machinery is simply incapable of measuring the things that really matter ...”<sup>13</sup> Spiritual maturity and ministerial skills are what is essential in theological training, according to him.

Abandoning the academic model altogether is a counterproductive strategy. Emphasis on academics is important in today’s context because many students entering seminaries are not as thorough in the knowledge of Scripture and church traditions as was the case in the past. This is especially true in the seminaries of younger churches where many of the beginners are rather recent converts with little or no church background. Lack of religious knowledge, including the knowledge of Scripture, is perhaps a problem even in the traditionally-Christian, western countries.<sup>14</sup> Thus academic emphasis is not to be looked down upon in theological education.

A greater emphasis on academics during seminary training is perhaps justifiable because the seminary has the facilities and environment for theoretical learning – library, faculty, etc. The question is not whether there should be emphasis on academics, but on *what sort* of academics, and how it is to be integrated with other aspects of theological education.

The simple extension of the university mentality into the Seminary can produce tensions. The critical and detached way in which the professor deals with the text is not suitable for the pastor who must preach the Scripture as the authoritative word. Some students may be able to bridge this gap between the scholarly method of the academy and the practical approach of the church, but most are not.<sup>15</sup> Chances are that the theoretical orientation acquired during one’s student days will continue to dominate in his ministry days. His sermons will look more like research papers rather than spiritual messages of practical benefit to the congregation. Maturity and spiritual development of the congregation will become less important as goals than intellectual knowledge.

It may be questioned whether a pastor needs to have a broad-based, classical education to minister God’s Word today. Especially for students in non-western contexts, is knowledge of European languages and philosophies of the past essential for the ministry of the gospel? Or, we may ask, “what

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<sup>13</sup> John M. Frame, “Proposal for a New Seminary”. He does recognise the need for academic instruction in certain subjects.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 165.

<sup>15</sup> Hough, Jr. and Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, 96.

is the benefit of a broad-based curriculum as part or pre-requisite of theological education?” Certainly, we have examples from the past, particularly of the Reformers like Calvin, who excelled in humanistic learning. Their learning certainly did not impede their effective ministry. In fact, it only enhanced their ministry by being able to speak a more intelligent word to their audiences. Translating this to our present situation, we may say that a pastor needs to be educated as broadly as possible, but in *relevant* knowledge. The question is not whether broader knowledge is necessary, but what is useful to speak to our culture. While philosophies and knowledge of the past are helpful in understanding our theological traditions and formulations better, it is my contention that more emphasis should be given to the *contemporary context* of ministry than to classical knowledge. A candidate for ministry must be familiar with issues in science, history, knowledge of resurgent religions and contemporary culture so that he may speak and apply God’s Word to his hearers. Education should be relevant to the context and time. A pastor must be able to understand and apply the message of the gospel to the issues of his day – postcolonialism, Marxism, feminism, climate change, evolutionary biology or critical race theory.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

Spiritual formation refers to a student’s total personal development, which includes areas such as character formation, emotional adjustment, personality development, social interaction, relationship with God and people, etc. In the list of qualifications given in the Pastoral Epistles, the emphasis is “not on what the pastor can do, but who the pastor is.”<sup>16</sup> Cultivating and nurturing a personal relationship with God is at the centre of spiritual formation.

The emphasis on spiritual formation as part of theological education varies from institution to institution. As a rule, in those institutions with a higher emphasis on academics, attention given to spiritual development is less.<sup>17</sup> Many limit spiritual activities to a daily or weekly chapel service. Space is not provided in the daily schedule for contemplation, reflection, fellowship, prayer and other exercises that nurture the souls of students and shape their character. The development of these areas is left to the student himself or to his local church, without any guidance from the seminary.

In the academic context of universities, especially in the west, “spirituality is sometimes looked upon with some suspicion; it is regarded as unscientific or as belonging only to a private area of life ...”<sup>18</sup> The separation of scientific theology from spirituality and the view that spirituality is a private matter having no implications for public life “prevent theological education from becoming a holistic process.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jordan Michael Vale, “The Healthy Pastor: A Holistic Approach to Pastoral Training,” A Thesis Submitted to Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, 24.

<https://cdn.rts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/201406-Vale-Jordan.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Banks suggests four steps to restore the element of spiritual formation lost in many Protestant schools: restructuring of the curriculum to include the moral dimension of the ministry; the values inherent in this kind of instruction must be considered morally and educationally crucial; the faculty must set an example; and, the institutional culture of the school should agree with the basic moral values it wishes the students to develop. Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 27.

<sup>18</sup> “The Iona Document on Spiritual Formation,” *Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education*, eds. Samuel Amirtham and Robin Pryor (WCC Programme on Theological Education, 1989?), 150.

<sup>19</sup> “The Iona Document on Spiritual Formation,” 150. Present theological education, dominated by academic concerns, and having created a dichotomy between theory and practice, is not equipped to prepare students for servant leadership in the church, says Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 26.

Even in seminaries that value spiritual growth, there is a tendency to overlook spiritual activities because of academic pressures. Many students struggle with their academic work, and find it hard to meet the deadlines and standards set by the teacher. The temptation such students face is to neglect their devotional life. Spiritual activities such as devotional life are usually (and perhaps justifiably) not graded, whereas academic performance is standardised, quantified and well-defined. When an activity is not graded in an academic setting, the tendency is to neglect it or to fulfil it nominally without investment of much time or effort. While students ought not to be graded for their spirituality (because one's relationship to God is not fully revealed to us), spiritual and ethical maturity must be assessed in some form as a requirement for graduation.

Having said this, we should not consider academic emphasis an enemy of spiritual formation. Students should be encouraged to lead a balanced life. Pursuit of spiritual development in the midst of a busy academic life can be a good preparation for a balanced life along with a busy ministry.

Further, there is an academic dimension in spiritual formation that consists of exposing false spiritualities. In our teaching we need to reveal the false spirituality of heretical positions and liberal theologies. Scholarly study of Scriptures and proper pursuit of theology are integral to spiritual formation.

The alleged dichotomy between academics and spirituality is a false one, and is contrary to Scripture and our Reformed tradition. Study of the law in the Bible was considered an act of worship.<sup>20</sup> It led to action and a deeper, stronger spiritual life. Teaching occupies a central place in pastoral ministry, and if so, we must understand that "intellectual work is in fact spiritual work and that it is central to being a pastor."<sup>21</sup>

Instead, spirituality should be integrated into the academic curriculum and the planning of each course. Some courses are more pre-disposed to spiritual formation than others. Seminary curriculum should include courses on spirituality such as prayer and discipleship. And these courses must be approached not merely from an intellectual, theoretical perspective. Exercises that contribute to the student's personal, spiritual development must be emphasised in such courses.

Spiritual formation, however, must not be restricted to such courses on spirituality. It must be a concern in all the courses offered at the Seminary. A student studying Christology or Church History must also reflect, as part of that course, on the spiritual implications of the subject. Studying about the deity of Christ must not be done in class apart from worshipping Christ. Students should be given opportunities for reflecting on practical realities that would make his academic study spiritually meaningful.

Even the classroom can be a model for spiritual formation. How the teacher conducts himself

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<sup>20</sup> The International Council on Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) in its standards on doctoral research rightly affirms: Research and gaining wisdom is one dimension of what it means to love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. <https://icete.info/resources/the-beirut-benchmarks/>

<sup>21</sup> Jerry L. Sumney, "Do Not Be Conformed to This Age: Biblical Understandings of Ministerial Leadership," in *Practical Wisdom on Theological Teaching and Learning*, ed. Malcolm L. Walford (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 139.

in relation to the students sets an example, and promotes how a pastor as spiritual leader should relate to the congregation. The superior attitude assumed by the teacher can be a hindrance to growth in humility. This may be a greater problem in Asian and African seminaries where traditionally the teacher is held in high honour.

One of the dangers of the development of spirituality on campus is the tendency towards legalism. Participation in spiritual activities, with good intention, is made compulsory for students, but students participate in them not willingly but out of compulsion. Voluntary attendance at spiritual exercises such as chapel service (along with admonition of delinquents) may be the solution to this problem. Opportunities should be given to the students to develop a yearning for spiritual exercises instead of spirituality being forced upon them.

Similarly, character formation can become a matter of external conformity to a set of rules rather than a biblical pursuit of holiness. Many seminaries have a set of detailed rules to regulate ethical conduct. Strict enforcement of rules of behaviour is intended as a method of developing discipline and promoting godliness. However, the danger in this method is of a works-based rather than grace-based approach to spirituality.<sup>22</sup> External conformity to a set of rules without a corresponding internal change of the heart can be a consequence of this approach. Seminaries, therefore, ought to seek a more positive approach to developing the character of students. Instead of controlling students through elaborate rules and extensive policing (a common problem in Asia), emphasis should be on mentoring.<sup>23</sup> Students must be given opportunities to apply Christian wisdom in ethical choices, and even freedom to make wrong choices. It is through such choices that students mature spiritually and learn to conform to Christ. Perhaps the application of rules can be enforced in a graduated way – junior students monitored more strictly, while policing is relaxed for senior students, allowing them the freedom to make their own choices.

Community life is another aspect of spiritual development in theological institutions. Christian spirituality is not merely individualistic. It has communal aspects. Many seminaries today, recognising this dimension, are designed for community living. Students are expected to live and worship together on campus. (There are challenges facing community life, especially in the west, where because of economic necessities, students have to live off campus and find part time work. There is a positive aspect in this model also.) Even where it is not possible for students to live together, having structures such as fellowship groups or care groups can help promote community and sharing.

Leaving one's family and occupation to live in a community with other learners or disciples is a biblical and historical pattern. It exemplifies the single-mindedness required in pursuing the kingdom of God, and provides opportunities to learn from one another. Yet there are also dangers in this pattern. One of the dangers is the development of an escapist spirituality, the view that students should be kept from the harsh realities of the world and contamination of ideas from outside. Life on campus becomes secluded and sheltered, and spirituality becomes "other-worldly" and artificial. Lack of interaction with social issues and people of other faiths results in an unhealthy spirituality. The formation in the

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<sup>22</sup> Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Mohan Raj, *A Guide to an Integrated Approach to Theological Education* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2008), 111-2.

“seedbed” makes it difficult to be transplanted in the world.<sup>24</sup> We ought not lose sight of the fact that we are preparing students for ministry *in the world*. It is advisable that at least in their senior year, students are required to live in the society among (or with) poor people and people of other faiths and ethnic backgrounds, and experience life outside the campus.<sup>25</sup>

### **Ministerial Formation**

If the purpose of theological education is “training for ministry,” it is essential that students are given practical, ministerial training. The ICAA Manifesto recognizes this important truth when it says:

Our programs must seek and expect achievement in the practical skills of Christian leadership. ... We must incorporate into our educational arrangements and requirements a guided practical field experience in precisely those skills which the student will need to employ in service after completion of the program. We must provide adequately supervised and monitored opportunities for practical vocational field experiences....<sup>26</sup>

There has been sometimes an unspoken and mistaken assumption that if a student can excel in Bible knowledge and classical theology, practical skills will follow naturally. There is a preference for theory in our educational systems, and it is sometimes expected that the theological graduate will “pick up” the needed ministerial skills along the way.<sup>27</sup> With this assumption, the seminary curriculum is loaded with courses in Bible and systematic theology while courses emphasising ministry skill development are reduced to a minimum. Cultivating ministerial skills was not done intentionally.

The goal of theological education Jesus provided, on the other hand, was clearly focused on producing “fishers of men” (Mk . 1:17). “It was an educational programme with a specifically *vocational* intent.”<sup>28</sup>

In reaction to this academic overemphasis, more recently there developed in theological education an emphasis on skill development and ministry preparation. “Theological Education in the context of the developing countries is primarily ministry oriented and it cannot afford the luxury of being treated purely as an academic science as in the Universities of the West,” says a theological educator

<sup>24</sup> Gonzalez, *The History of Theological Education*, 122-3.

<sup>25</sup> Gnana Robinson, who was at one time Principal of Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, India, describes its four-year curriculum in terms of Orientation, Exposure, Involvement and Integration. During the first year, the students live on campus and participate fully in the life of the institution. In the second year, the students live outside in the slums and villages, where they are exposed to the living realities of ordinary people. An internship is planned for the third year, during which time students are given opportunities to discover their own resources for ministry. The final year of studies focuses on integration through interdisciplinary courses, where students reflect on and integrate their experience with their learning. Gnana Robinson, *A Journey Through Theological Education* (Madras: CLS, 1989), 61-63.

<sup>26</sup> *Manifesto*, 144.

<sup>27</sup> Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: EDCOT Press, 2006), says North American educators “tend to equate service with simple practicality... that theory relates to real scholarship, and that practices are simply skills.” 289. Paul Mohan Raj observes: “Sometimes educators feel that there is no need to cultivate certain familiar skills, such as everyday decision-making or problem solving.” *A Guide to an Integrated Approach to Theological Education*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Keith Ferdinando, “Jesus, the Theological Educator,” *Themelios* 38/3

“<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/jesus-the-theological-educator/>”

from India.<sup>29</sup> This commendable shift, however, has given rise to the tendency to reduce or abandon the classical curriculum, biblical studies and systematic theology.

When the emphasis is on skills or functions without theological reflection, ministry competency actually suffers. As Richard Mouw has pointed out, ministry training is not just about skill development. These practical courses need solid theological footing in the Bible, systematics and church history. “The distrust of the intellect ... has often led us into an unreflective pragmatism.”<sup>30</sup> Albert Mohler also warns of the danger of “marginalization” of theology in favour of pragmatism. “Evangelicals are certain that theological seminaries are to train ministers; they are uncertain that serious theological engagement is necessary – or even helpful – for this purpose.”<sup>31</sup> The church needs practitioners, but those who are able to think theologically.

A shift away from classical theology is seen also in the replacement of courses in systematic theology with various contextual and liberation theologies such as feminist, *minjung*, *dalit*, black, womanist, heritagist, etc. These courses also have a practical dimension as they address concrete situations in the society and engagement with one’s culture. Theological education would be centred on contemporary practical issues such as racism, ecological crisis, sexism, etc.<sup>32</sup>

The main impact of contextualisation in theological education has been the adoption of the action-reflection method. The emphasis in these contextual theologies has been on *praxis*, priority given to concrete action towards liberation, followed by theological reflection. The focus would be on reflection on concrete practice. In the past, theological education was considered “a linear process, in which the movement went from theory to practice, from academy to church. But today it is commonly held that the learning process is like a circle, or rather like a spiral, so that theory and practice, action and reflection, have a constant and reciprocal relation. ... practice affects the manner in which we see, understand and develop theory, shaping the questions we ask and the methods we follow, while theory constantly has an impact on practice and modifies it.”<sup>33</sup>

How shall we assess the impact of contextualisation on theological education? While we recognise that traditional theology sometimes has the tendency to ask questions irrelevant to the context, lowering the emphasis on systematic theology, or even its elimination, in the curriculum is dangerous. Proper reflection is not possible without adequate emphasis on theology. When we limit our theological inquiry to the narrow limits of political liberation, our understanding of God will be curtailed. Also to be critiqued, is the use of Marxist and other such ideologies as tools in contextual theologies.

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<sup>29</sup> Gnana Robinson, *A Journey Through Theological Education*, 117.

<sup>30</sup> Richard J. Mouw, “Challenge of Evangelical Theological Education,” in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, eds. D.G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 288-9.

<sup>31</sup> R. Albert Mohler, “Thinking of the Future: Evangelical Theological Education in a New Age,” in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, eds. D.G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 279.

<sup>32</sup> Hough and Cobb advocate the relativization, if not elimination, of the classical theological disciplines, points out Don S. Browning and David Polk, “Introduction,” *The Education of the Practical Theologian: Responses to Joseph Hough and John Cobb’s Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), xii.

<sup>33</sup> Gonzalez, *The History of Theological Education*, 126. “If learning is a sort of spiral, in every course or academic activity there must be a practical dimension that is not a mere application of what had been learned but also a determining factor in what and how professors teach and students learn.” 127.



However, the spiral method is not without its advantages. Action-reflection-action spiral keeps theological education grounded in the realities of life and ministry. The natural tendency of the students, especially of those coming without prior ministry experience, is to pursue a theoretical trajectory in his learning. He is unacquainted or uninterested in practical issues arising from the field of ministry. Learning tends to be abstract rather than concrete. The result is a disconnect between studies and ministry. When priority in learning is given to practical involvement, the study of theology becomes less of an ivory-tower exercise.

Plurality and a variety of religious experiences and claims form the religious context that needs to be addressed in theological education. Similarly, one cannot overlook the numerous social issues confronting the church today. The question is whether theological institutions ought to give practical training for the students in these areas as well in addition to the traditional ministries of preaching, teaching and pastoralia.

### ***Towards Integration***

In this section, we shall reflect on practical steps to integrate the three elements of theological education – academic formation, spiritual formation, and ministry formation. We see these elements integrated in the ministry of the Lord in training the twelve.<sup>34</sup> He taught them not only by words but also by example and demonstration. He gave them opportunities to learn by doing (and even fail).

Efforts towards integration in the seminary should start with curriculum planning by the Faculty. Traditionally, “curriculum” is limited to academics. Non-academic activities are listed as extra-curricular or co-curricular. In an integrated approach, curriculum is more than just academics, and includes all that happens deliberately to produce disciples and servants of God.<sup>35</sup> Some balance should be sought in the curriculum for courses with academic, spiritual and ministerial emphasis. The balance in the curriculum as a whole should be applied to the syllabus of each course. While recognising that every subject (course) will lean primarily towards one or another element, ask if the development of each subject provides for all three – the acquisition of attitude, skills and knowledge (spiritual, ministerial and academic). Ideally, all three factors should be present in the course outcome (aims and objectives) of every subject.

It is appropriate that academics receive a certain priority in the seminary’s daily schedule. As pointed out above, drastically reducing the academic emphasis in theological education will be counterproductive. However, the curriculum should be pruned to ensure that the learning imparted is practical and useful. A conscious effort must be made to produce pastors (or practitioners) instead of scholars. Excessive academic load can be shed by reducing requirements in extensive knowledge of languages including advanced levels of Greek and Hebrew, in the basic theological degree. The pastoral degree should be seen as a terminal degree rather than as a stepping stone for higher studies. Perhaps a different track could be devised for potential scholars or as part of higher degrees (such as a teaching

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<sup>34</sup> See Keith Ferdinando, “Jesus, the Theological Educator,” *Themelios* 38/3 for a discussion of Jesus’ training of the disciples.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/jesus-the-theological-educator/>

<sup>35</sup> Raj, *A Guide to an Integrated Approach to Theological Education*, 19.



degree). This step will provide space in the seminary curriculum for courses in contemporary culture, and other relevant issues for ministerial candidates. Reduction in the academic load will also help in giving space in the educational program for daily worship, reflection, prayer, character formation, skill development and other such important ingredients of theological education.

Spiritual formation needs to be integrated with academics. This can be done by offering courses that have a spiritual orientation. Exercises in such courses could include reading spiritual classics, reflection of one's own growth in grace through journaling, and setting time aside in the course work for prayer and meditation. Even in courses in other subjects such as theology or history, learning strategies (assignments) should include exercises with a spiritual dimension. They should not be ruled out as non-academic. For example, a class on Christology could begin with a time of worship and reflection on some aspect of Christ's life and ministry from the Bible, singing of a related chorus, and prayer led by a student. This would help not only spiritual maturing but also the development of ministerial skills. A class on mission could include regular presentations on current issues in mission, prayers for missionaries, and other such exercises that could be graded and made part of the course work.

Ministerial formation should be given due importance in the training of ministerial candidates. This could be done through the inclusion of adequate ministry-oriented courses (practical theology) in the curriculum as well as requirement of ministry participation while a student. It is ideal if the latter could be done in the context of an actual congregation or ministry rather than in an artificial setting.<sup>36</sup> Longer periods of supervised ministry such as mentoring programs, internships, apprenticeships, etc. should be planned as part of theological education.<sup>37</sup>

Development of ministerial skills of students should be integrated into the academic curriculum. Either through field work assignments or as part of the academic program, students should be given exposure to the religious and social realities of one's context. Visits to non-Christian places of worship and dialogue with leaders of other religions could be incorporated in the program. Opportunities to experience acts of worship and other ceremonies will enrich a person's understanding of another faith. At least on a selected basis, arrangements could be made for students to live with non-Christian families for short periods. There should be no hesitation in a course on religion or evangelism to expect the students to go out and meet and witness to people of other faiths. Verbatims of such interviews could be graded as part of the course evaluation. Where practical assignments in real ministry situations are not possible, a case study approach can be employed so that assignments do not become abstract and unrelated to life. A real life or imagined practical situation could be assigned to the student to give concrete and integrated problem-solving. Project-based learning is another useful approach in developing ministry skills.

Skill development in preaching, counselling, evangelism, teaching, worship leading and other ministries should be a regular part of the training program of the ministerial candidate. Participation in

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<sup>36</sup> "The growing desire to have a stronger interconnection between the seminary and the church, and between study and practice, is well based." Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 126.

<sup>37</sup> Nathan Chiroma, "Mentoring and the Ministerial Formation of Seminary Students," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3/1 (2017): 51-68.

these requirements should be followed by theological reflection on the ministry performed: How relevant was his academic learning to ministry participation? Was there a gap between the classroom and the field? How does the student evaluate existing ministry activities theologically? Such reflection should be part of the ongoing training of the ministerial candidate.

### ***Conclusion***

The seminary model emerged out of a long history of experimentation in theological education, and is now the most commonly used model to prepare leaders for ministry. It is prone to many dangers such as an overemphasis on academics and a tendency to be abstract. Non-academic aspects of theological education such as spiritual formation and ministry skills development are sometimes neglected or are not properly integrated into the curriculum.

In spite of these deficiencies, the seminary model can be redeemed through a careful restructuring of its academic emphasis. There should be a deliberate reorientation of its goal to produce pastors rather than theologians. In academics, there should be a shift from classical knowledge to contemporary context. Spiritual formation and ministerial skill development must be integrated into the aims and objectives of each course.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Which aspect of theological education – academic, spiritual, ministerial – is more emphasised in our seminaries?
2. How would you describe the ideal relationship between the church and the seminary?
3. Should we abandon the seminary model and seek a new model of theological education?
4. What other course correction may be necessary to redeem the seminary model of theological education?
5. Is there too much academic emphasis in our theological institutions? If so, how can we go about rectifying it?
6. Should spiritual maturity of the candidates be a concern of the seminary? Or, is it better to let the church handle it?
7. Should priority in theological education be given to developing vocational skills?
8. What other steps can be introduced to integrate the three dimensions of theological education?

# Appendix to article 15

## Devotional Message by Rev. Dr. Albert Coetsee

### DEUTERONOMY 3:23-29

#### 1. PRAYER

#### 2. SCRIPTURE READING

<u>Scripture reading:</u>	Deuteronomy 3:23-29
<u>Focus:</u>	Deuteronomy 3:24
<u>Theme:</u>	<i>The Lord is incomparable!</i>

#### 3. DEVOTION

Deuteronomy 3 is surely one of the most moving passages in Scripture. Here we hear how Moses ... the leader of the Israelites for the past 40 years ... at the ripe old age of 120 ... begs the Lord to allow him to enter the Promised Land. We can almost see the events before our eyes: An old man; years of faithful service behind him; this in the midst of very difficult circumstances and a difficult people; and he begs; his words are full of reverence and humility... And this is followed by the unfavourable answer of the Lord. Moses' request is not answered. He will not enter the Promised Land.

But there's more to Deuteronomy 3. Although it deals with Moses' request and the Lord's answer, the passage is primarily about who the Lord is... what He is doing ... and how we should respond to this. Listen once more: Deuteronomy 3 is primarily about who the Lord is... what He is doing ... and how we should respond to this.

We can summarise who the Lord is according to our passage in a single sentence: He is incomparable! There is no one like Him. He is unique; He is in a class of his own. As we listen to the exposition of our passage, we'll come back to this thought time and again: The Lord is incomparable!

The first reference to this is found in Moses' opening words. He states:

#### **THE LORD IS GREAT AND MIGHTY AND ABLE TO DO ALL THINGS (Deut 3:24)**

Moses begins his prayer with praise. He states in verse 24: "O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours".

Moses' praise consists of amazement at the Lord's attributes. He is great and mighty ... and his "works" and "mighty deeds" testify to that. More than that, the Lord is unique. Moses compares the Lord to the so-called gods of the nations around Israel and asks: Can one of them do what the Lord has done? The implied answer, of course, is "no". Moses even makes his field of inquiry as big as the universe itself. Can any god "in heaven" or "on earth" do such things? Could any god anywhere do such a thing? Not at all. The Lord is unique.

The uniqueness of the Lord is a fact that is emphasized throughout Deuteronomy. This is also a major theme in Isaiah, and we find this confession in many Psalms. The Lord alone is God ... and consequently, we should love and serve Him alone with all our heart and soul and strength and mind.

But Moses praise in verse 24 goes even further. He says: “O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand”. You have only begun. Moses is convinced that what he saw of the Lord is only the beginning. These words are absolutely striking if we keep in mind who is speaking here:

- The one speaking here is Moses. The leader-prophet-lawgiver of the people of Israel. A man who has been in active service for forty years. Someone with whom the Lord spoke face to face like a man with his friend (Ex 33:11). Someone who saw the Lord from behind (Ex 33:23). If there is one person who, humanly speaking, could have known the Lord the “best”, it is Moses.
- Think about all the events that Moses saw. He saw the Lord’s appearance in the burning bush; the ten plagues; the pillars of cloud and fire; the manna and quails; the water from the rock; the ten commandments on Mount Sinai, accompanied by smoke and fire and thunder; the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle; the various plagues which the Lord unleashed among his own people because of their rebellion; the judgment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram; the victories over King Og and King Bashan... The list can go on and on. Think about everything Moses has seen. And now he says: “O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand”

If there is one thing we need to hear from these words, it’s this: The Lord is much bigger and more powerful than we often think. Too easily we think too little of Him. He is capable of anything. He is God – and He alone! He made all things, takes care of all things, and directs all things according to his will. He can do infinitely more than we can ever pray or think (Eph 3:20). Take to heart: The Lord is great and mighty and capable of all things...

But ... isn’t it wonderful to realize that Moses’ words in Deuteronomy 3 were absolutely spot on? Moses is convinced that he has only seen the beginning of the Lord’s greatness and power. And that was indeed the case. After Moses, the Lord showed his greatness and power with the entry of the Promised Land; and then in the time of the judges, followed by the monarchy in Israel ... eventually in the exile, and the return ... and finally, in the fullness of time, in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ we see the greatness and power of the Lord par excellence. Moses indeed only saw the beginning; the climax of God’s greatness and power is seen in Christ.

And at the same time we know that there is another climax that lies ahead: the consummation of all things with the return of Christ. Of this we are certain. As a church we are patiently waiting for this. And in this period between Christ’s coming and second coming, the Spirit reminds us of what Christ taught us. He reminds us of the greatness of our Saviour, and He guides us to become more and more what we already are in Christ. The Spirit makes us long for that day, and He enables us to pray with the church of all ages: “Come Lord, and come soon”. What a glorious future – and what a wonderful comfort.

The second aspect of the Lord’s incomparability that is emphasized in our passage, is found

in verse 25 and 26:

**THE LORD IS HOLY (Deut 3:25-26)**

We hear this in Moses' request to enter the Promised Land, and the Lord's answer.

In verse 25 Moses prays: "Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon". Earlier, in Numbers 20, the Lord had forbidden Moses to enter the Promised Land. At the waters of Meribah, Moses disobeyed the Lord by not speaking to the rock, but hitting it. Moses and Aaron did not uphold the Lord as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel. Their punishment is that they will not lead the people into the Promised Land.

Moses' great desire is to enter and see the promised land. From experience Moses also knew that the Lord sometimes relents from the punishment He announced based on a sincere intercessory prayer (Ex 32:11-14; Num 14:13-14). This is what Moses hopes for in his prayer.

But the Lord's answer is different than Moses hoped. Just imagine how the words of Deuteronomy 3:26 must have struck Moses: "But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me". The Lord became angry with Moses, and didn't hear his prayer.

The exact reason for the Lord's refusal is not stated in the text. Many commentators have attempted to deduce the exact reason. One possibility is that Moses is still blaming the people for his sin. He states that the Lord was angry with me "because of you". What is clear is that Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land, because the Lord had decided so ... and Moses had to accept it. The Lord forbids him to speak of the matter again.

What is very clear is that from this passage and Scripture as a whole is that the Lord is holy. He is perfect and sinless and set apart, exalted above his creation. Complete reverence and obedience are due to Him. Even Moses, the great and important leader-legislator-prophet, is not merely forgiven his sins. When it comes to worship and obedience, Moses is a human being just like us. He too must bear the consequences of his actions. Ultimately, he too needs a Saviour, which calls for the coming and ministry of Christ.

The third aspect of the Lord's incomparability that is emphasized in our passage is

**THE LORD IS MERCIFUL (Deut 3:27)**

We hear this in the Lord's words that follow. Verse 27: "Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and look at it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan".

Moses requested two things: to enter the Promised Land and to see it. The Lord did not answer Moses' first request ... but the second one He did. Moses will not enter the Promised Land, but he may see it. He can do this by climbing to the top of Mount Pisgah and looking to the west and north and south and east.

The holy Lord is still merciful. The Lord did not have to do this. In his holiness He could have decided that Moses will not enter nor see the promised land. But He doesn't. He allows this part of Moses' request. This links on to what we hear in so many passages of Scriptures, and

therefore also confess on our confessions: The Lord is completely just... but also merciful.

The Lord answered Moses' prayer, but differently than he hoped. In a certain sense there is a striking parallel between Moses' prayer in Deuteronomy 3 and Paul's prayer in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul repeatedly asked the Lord for something, but his prayer was heard differently than he hoped. The thorn in his flesh was not removed. The Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Or think of our Lord Jesus Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. This prayer was also answered differently by his Father. It was God's will that Christ should drink the cup of suffering – all for the sake of his great plan, and our salvation.

If the Lord answers your prayers differently than you think or hope, do not view it as a sign of his anger or indifference. On the contrary. He is fulfilling his great plan. He is merciful. Trust in his will.

The fourth aspect of the Lord's incomparability, which is emphasized in our passage, links on to this:

#### **THE LORD IS FULFILLING HIS PLAN (Deut 3:28)**

In verse 28 the Lord gives Moses instructions regarding Joshua: "But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see".

Joshua would lead the people into the Promised Land. The Lord's plan for his people to enter the Promised Land continues. It is only the instrument or agent that changes. Joshua will do it, not Moses.

This is a very important principle that we should take to heart. We are but instruments in the hand of the Lord. At the end of the day, it is *his will* and *his great plan* that should and will be fulfilled.

There are several examples of this in Scripture. Think of Elijah who had to anoint Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:19-21). Think of the apostles who appointed someone in the place of Judas as an apostle (Acts 1:15-26). Think of Paul who equipped elders on his missionary journeys, and his correspondence with younger pastors (Acts 14:23; 1-2 Tim; Tit). The work in God's kingdom continues. The only "Person" who had no successor is Christ. He did not need a successor, because his work was perfect and complete. But the work that you and I do in God's church and kingdom will – if the Lord Jesus does not come in our time – always have successors. But what a comfort! What a calling! I may know that God's plan is being carried out - and He will consummate this on the great day of Christ's return. By God's grace I am part of this! The Holy Spirit guides me in the work I do for the Lord, so that it extends to his glory, to the building up of his church, and to the expansion of his kingdom. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, fulfil your calling. Do what the Lord has assigned you to do ... knowing that you are part of God's bigger plan.

To conclude:

#### **CONCLUSION**



Throughout Deuteronomy 3:23-29 we hear: The Lord is incomparable!

- He is great and mighty: Confess it!
- He is holy: Honour Him!
- He is merciful: Trust in his will!
- He is carrying out his plan: Fulfil your calling!

To our incomparable Triune God all the glory. Amen.

#### **4. PRAYER**



# Appendix to article 16

## REPORT OF ICRC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO ICRC NAMIBIA 2022

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May 24, 2022

Rather than reviewing the various meetings held during the last five years, this Report will attempt to look at the various mandates given to the ICRC Theological Education Committee (hereafter TEC) and determine the degree of progress made on them.

ICRC Wales (2013) gave members of the TEC the following mandate:

*That the Conference establish a Theological Education Committee, consisting of five members (with two alternates), to assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in the theological education of their ministers, with a mandate to:*

*a. Arrange for a consultation among representatives of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned programs of theological education for their ministers, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in theological education among the Member Churches.*

*b. Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by both Member Church and nation) the institutions of theological education that are operated (or approved) by the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the ICRC Member Churches through the ICRC website and presentation to the next meeting of the Conference.*

*c. Help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on theological education topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself.*

*d. Gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches regarding their policies for the preparation of men for the gospel ministry, including their operation (or approval) of seminaries and other programs of theological education, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.*

*e. Develop a list of qualified men (names, areas of special competence, and contact information) who are willing and might be able to serve as short-term theological instructors;*

*f. Send a report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next*



ICRC.

*g. Propose a budget for the following four years to the next ICRC.*

Each of these seven points will be discussed below.

## A. CONSULTATION

*a. Arrange for a consultation among representatives of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned programs of theological education for their ministers, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in theological education among the Member Churches (Wales, 2013).*

In discussing how this recommendation might be implemented, the TEC came to an early conclusion that the best way for such a consultation of seminaries to happen would be for an ICRC conference to be dedicated to this theme and therefore recommended to the Executive Committee back in 2018 that the next ICRC conference have Theological Education as its overriding theme (see minutes TEC, November 3 2018 cf. letter of November 24 2018 to Executive Committee). The Executive Committee agreed and made arrangements to this effect for 2021. Covid-19 postponed this to 2022.

In the meantime, the TEC, recognizing that the next full ICRC conference was still years away, considered organizing an earlier meeting of seminary representatives for consultation and discussion in the interim and in preparation for the next full ICRC meeting. All the necessary arrangements (housing, invitations, agenda, etc) were made for this gathering to be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, in August 2020. However, Covid- 19 also made this impossible because of the difficulty of travel and the entrance requirements into the USA.

Instead of a regular meeting with physical representation, **an online meeting was held by means of Zoom on August 25, 2020.** At this meeting 16 seminaries were represented. Discussions took place on the following topics:

- a. Assisting each other. Much of this had to do with the challenges of online teaching; some smaller seminaries would also welcome others to teach some courses for them; some seminaries, especially in the majority world, mentioned the need for physical books.
- b. An online forum. A proposal was made to attempt to facilitate an online forum where matters of mutual interest could be discussed according to categories and interests.
- c. Topics for future discussion. This reflected the need to hear from seminaries about what they would like to have discussed at the future ICRC gatherings, especially if the TEC manages to hold extra consultations alongside the regular conference.

Immediately after this gathering, the TEC met to define some “takeaways” from this meeting. It was agreed that explorations will be made re a forum, online library resources, availability of professors to teach, and topics for the next ICRC.

Allow us to relate some of the results that ensued from these decisions and discussions.

- a. **A Forum.** The TEC had thought that it would be beneficial to set up an online forum for the purpose of discussion in the various disciplines and areas (e.g., presidents, academic officers, areas of theological expertise). We discovered that the ICRC already had a format for this through its website ([www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com)>forum); considerable time and effort was spent in setting this up in a way that might be mutually beneficial. Through some testing by the committee and some initial usage of this forum, it was discovered that the format of the forum was too outdated and cumbersome for its users and it was abandoned. Instead, there was an attempt to start up something similar via google groups for those interested in the NT field, with the intent of branching out into other areas later. However, the response to the message that went out to those in the NT field was so minimal that this discussion group never got off the ground. We had expected that this kind of thing would be of interest especially to smaller more isolated seminaries, but the results did not indicate this at all. It is of course possible that the response was muted because suddenly everyone’s extra attention and effort was focused on the new challenges that Covid-19 presented to them. ***It would a good thing to discuss at Namibia 2022 whether there is the need for such a forum and the willingness to participate.*** This could increase consultation among the seminaries at many levels, if there is a need to do so. If there is an interest, consideration will have to be given to finding a more modern and user-friendly forum format.
- b. **Libraries – Library Committee.** As the August 2020 meeting had indicated some need for assistance with respect to library resources, the TEC asked three librarians (Margaret Alkema, CRTS Hamilton; Hester Lombard, Potchefstroom; and G. D. Harmanny, TU Kampen, to serve as a committee that would examine the question of the availability of resources. However, when they received back information from ICRC seminaries, they discovered that most had quite adequate resources available. In any case, the three of them continue to be available to help any ICRC seminary with library concerns. They can be reached at [malkema@crtscas.ac.za](mailto:malkema@crtscas.ac.za); [Hester.Lombard@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Hester.Lombard@nwu.ac.za) and [gdharmanny@tukampen.nl](mailto:gdharmanny@tukampen.nl) (or [library@tukampen.nl](mailto:library@tukampen.nl)).
- c. **Seminary Representatives.** In connection with this mandate, the TEC consulted beforehand with the churches to receive a list of the seminaries that are used and approved by ICRC churches, and received the churches’ permissions to contact these seminaries directly. With a view to increasing consultation between TEC and these ICRC seminaries, TEC then asked each seminary to designate one person as a representative for the purpose of all communications between TEC and that respective seminary.
- d. **Newsletter.** And in a similar vein, a newsletter was started in the summer of 2021 in order to increase communication between TEC and the seminaries – also with a

view to preparations for Namibia 2022. Initially and somewhat naively, we thought about sending out such a newsletter monthly but that proved unrealistic because of the minimal amount of news to share. Thus far, only a few newsletters have gone out. The flow of information is perhaps also somewhat curtailed because of the extra demands that Covid has placed on everyone's agendas and time. Information from the respective seminaries is received from the seminary representatives and the newsletter in turn is distributed to the seminaries, their faculties and staff, by means of the seminary representatives.

## B. DIRECTORY OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

*b. Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by both Member Church and nation) the institutions of theological education that are operated (or approved) by the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the ICRC Member Churches through the ICRC website and presentation to the next meeting of the Conference (Wales, 2013).*

It should be noted that a copy of the Directory of Theological Institutions, produced by our former secretary, Rev. Pieter Vander Meyden, was made available at ICRC Jordan 2017.

ICRC Jordan also agreed to the following policy regarding this publication.

“That the ICRC decide that the Theological Education Committee (TEC) be guided by the following **Publications Policy** for Theological Education Information:

(1) Prior to publication all information will be sent back to the relevant theological training officials (office or committee) of the ICRC member church to review so as to ensure that it is correct, up to date, and whether any sensitive information should be excluded.

(2) If the denomination reports that they direct, endorse, support or make use of a specific theological seminary, that fact will be published, but not any links or email addresses of that seminary or its faculty; only the contacts (website, email, mail address, phone) of the church office or person responsible for communication about the denomination's theological education will be published.

(3) The ICRC-TEC website directory will not list the names or contact addresses of persons involved in ministerial training. Only through personal contact with the church office or person responsible for communication about the denomination's ministry training policy will it be possible to obtain further information about the seminary used, or the specific instructors involved in the training of their students.

(4) However, a more complete and updated hard copy of this information will be published every 4 years and distributed at each world conference.” (*ICRC-2017 Proceedings, page 38*)

This policy has been followed with respect to the publication of the directory. It should be noted, however, that in order to update the directory an electronic copy has been circulated

to the seminaries so that they could make their corrections/updates re their particular data. Should members of the ICRC or others wish for an electronic copy, this could be made available if ICRC Namibia concurs.

The directory was updated with a view to the conference that was planned for Grand Rapids in 2020, although it was never printed at that time, as the conference only took place by way of Zoom (see above). The electronic copy circulated again in 2022 so that ICRC Namibia could be presented with a 2022 edition of the Directory.

## **C. PROVIDE PAPERS ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

*(5) Help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on theological education topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself (Wales, 2013).*

With a view to this mandate, the TEC did write to the Co-ordinator of Theological Conferences a number of times (2018, 2021) to ascertain whether help was needed in this regard. While no response was ever received, it should be noted that very few regional conferences actually happened because of difficulties related to Covid-19.

At the same time, one can wonder whether this mandate is realistic. While the TEC has considerable expertise available, given the men making up the committee, it is not as if we have a large repertoire of such papers readily at hand. While TEC would certainly be willing to attempt to be helpful in any respect, it is not as if these are easily at our disposal.

## **D. DOCUMENTS FROM MEMBER CHURCHES**

*(6) Gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches regarding their policies for the preparation of men for the gospel ministry, including their operation (or approval) of seminaries and other programs of theological education, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.*

As a result of this mandate, the TEC has had at its disposal since 2018 the documents mentioned in the following list:



Name	Date modified	Type	Size
000 - HOW TO VIEW THESE DOCUMENTS	2017-04-19 5:41 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	32 KB
CanRC -CRTS Seminary Legal CONSTITUTION	2016-11-22 5:05 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	135 KB
EPC- IreInd -paper-ROLE OF CREEDS-Sid Garland 2009	2016-08-01 10:09	Adobe Acrobat Document	488 KB
FCSC - Free Ch Scot-Cont - Seminary HANDBOOK-2015	2016-11-21 10:50	Adobe Acrobat Document	1,862 KB
FRCNA - Theol Ed Com -MANDATE for Training	2016-08-01 10:15	Adobe Acrobat Document	125 KB
FRCNA - PROFILE and Outcome Theol Training	2016-12-08 3:58 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	111 KB
HRC - Theol Student ADMISSION Process re Cons -TSC	2016-12-07 2:50 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	238 KB
HRC -PRTS- Puritan Ref Theol Seminary - BYLAWS	2016-12-06 3:27 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	252 KB
RCN-Lib - GKN-V - MISSION - VISION of T U Kampen	2016-08-01 10:23	Adobe Acrobat Document	126 KB
RCN-Lib - GKN-V-DUTCH Statuut TUKampen -CONSTITUTION	2017-04-19 5:26 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	281 KB
RCNZ - MEMORANDUM of Underst - w RefThCol -Geelong Aus	2017-04-19 1:22 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	134 KB
RCUS -Chr Ed Com - Student EVALUATION Guide	2016-08-01 10:29	Adobe Acrobat Document	219 KB
RPCNA -RPTS-Ref Pres Theol Sem - CONSTITUTION-2014	2016-12-08 7:48 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	74 KB
RPCNEI - HR Policy Final Synod Edition 2012	2017-03-04 10:57	Adobe Acrobat Document	412 KB
URCNA - Ch Ord Append 1-Thorough Refmd Theol Edn	2016-12-10 3:19 PM	Adobe Acrobat Document	11 KB
z - ICRC - IDEAS for SHARING THEOL- RESOURCES	2017-04-25 10:10	Adobe Acrobat Document	288 KB

It should be noted that the documents themselves are mostly bylaws, constitutions, and policies of the respective seminaries. It is somewhat challenging to fulfil this mandate, according to which we are to study and report on the study of these documents, as these documents, though important, are not exactly riveting or upbuilding. It was not exactly clear to us what the purpose of such a study might be.

After much deliberation however we did come up with the following statements as a simple summary of principles agreed upon in the above documents. It is supplied below.

***WHAT MAKES A SOLID REFORMED SEMINARY ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD?***

**1. Commitments**

- a. Instructors will live and teach according to that which is fully in harmony with the Word of God
- b. Instructors will live and teach in accord with a set of Reformed confessions

**2. SUBJECT MATTER**

- a. The instruction will include the following subjects
  - i. Re the Old and New Testaments: textual criticism, original languages, hermeneutics, canonicity, background, content, exegesis
  - ii. Re church doctrine: discussion of most of the loci of dogmatics, reformed confessions, ethics, and the history of their development
  - iii. Re pastoral readiness: homiletics, poimenics, catechetics, liturgics, church history, church polity, missiology
  - iv. Re missiology, on the home-front and abroad



- b. While the highest academic standards (including the Bible's original languages) should be maintained with respect to the M.Div., it is acknowledged that it is possible for some to be trained to preach and serve with alternate degrees provided they have a strong commitment to the Reformed confessions.

### **3. ASPECTS OF MINISTERIAL TRAINING**

- a. The seminary training should incorporate the following aspects as much as possible
  - i. Pastoral Training: internships which expose the students to the practical aspects of ministerial life.
  - ii. Cultural Awareness: students should be exposed not only to ancient cultures but also to the nature of the culture in which he will serve
  - iii. Spiritual Formation: a program in which the professors and/or experienced pastors ascertain that candidates for ministry grow suitably in aspects of spirituality, maturity, and leadership abilities. (Minutes, TEC, February 4, 2020).

## **E. THEOLOGICAL INSTRUCTORS**

*(7) Develop a list of qualified men (names, areas of special competence, and contact information) who are willing and might be able to serve as short-term theological instructors;*

While time and attention was paid to this mandate and a list of minimum requirements for theological instructors was drafted (minutes TEC, April 2019), to actually compile such a list proved to be quite a challenge. To a certain degree, such a list is available by means of the ICRC Directory of Theological Institutions from which one can glean information regarding persons in the disciplines required. But the real challenge of this mandate is the fact that there are too many variables involved with respect to making such a list. Whether or not a person would consider themselves available to serve in these capacities would depend on a great number of factors (discipline required, time of year, area of the world, health of instructor, travel possibilities, coverage of travel and time costs, etc.). The results of our work indicate this to be a goal that is too challenging to reach. Would people actually volunteer their names for such a list when there would be so many unknowns?

Instead, the TEC is proposing a new mandate to address this challenge. The mandate is that the TEC communicate with ICRC TEC seminary representatives on a regular basis to ascertain upcoming course and professorial needs (with logistical details) and to communicate these needs to other seminaries. The Newsletter may help facilitate this process.



## F. OTHER MATTERS

### ***CONSTITUTION OF THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE***

ICRC Jordan 2017 re-appointed the following persons to the TEC: Douw Breed (convenor), Pieter VanderMeyden, Jim Beeke, Melle Oosterhuis, Richard Holst, Matthew Ebenezer. At this gathering, Tony Curto was appointed as a member of the committee, and Gerhard Visscher as advisor.

However, in September 2018 brother Rev. Richard Holst submitted his resignation as a member of the committee, and in November 2019, Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden resigned as secretary and as member of the TEC. Especially the work of Rev. VanderMeyden should be noted as he spent countless hours as secretary and as the collator and editor of the first Directory. As a result, Rev. Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher became the secretary. It should be noted the Gerhard Visscher was appointed by Jordan 2017 as an advisor but has served as a regular member.

### ***BUDGET TEC***

From our correspondence with the ICRC treasurer, we learned that our budget for the period since Jordan ICRC 2017 was \$15,000 USD. Of that money, we incurred expenses of \$6679 USD. The lower expenditure was no doubt due to the impact of Covid and the way it curtailed our activities. As we do hope, in the next number of years, to arrange meetings with the seminary representatives in connection with Mandate A, we would again suggest that the same figure of \$15,000 USD for the next three years would be appropriate.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS TO ICRC NAMIBIA 2022***

The TEC hopes and expects that at Namibia 2022, along with a vigorous discussion about the nature of theological education in today's world, there will be a robust discussion about ways in which the TEC can contribute to the well-being of theological education and the desired interaction between seminaries. We would appreciate hearing, for instance, to what degree there is a desire for such things as a newsletter and/or a forum. Are such things considered valuable or do they only contribute to more work for people who are already too busy? We are certainly willing to do whatever it is that Namibia desires to put to the fore.

In addition, the TEC recommends to ICRC Namibia 2022 the following mandates going forward:

1. That Mandate A re Consultation continue to have the attention of TEC:
  - a. Arrange for a consultation among representatives of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned programs of*

*theological education for their ministers, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in theological education among the Member Churches.*

2. That Mandate B re the ICRC Seminary Directory continue to have the attention of TEC:  
*b. Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by both Member Church and nation) the institutions of theological education that are operated (or approved) by the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the ICRC Member Churches through the ICRC website and presentation to the next meeting of the Conference.*
3. That, regarding Mandate E, re a list of qualified instructors, the TEC communicate with the ICRC TEC seminary representatives on a regular basis to ascertain upcoming course and professorial needs (with logistical details) and to communicate such needs to other seminaries.
4. That, in connection with Mandate G, the ICRC agree to a budget of \$15,000 USD for the work of the Theological Education Committee.
5. That it be noted that all present members of the TEC are willing to serve on the committee again, and that Gerhard H. Visscher, if reappointed, should be appointed as a regular member rather than as an advisor.
6. That thanksgiving be expressed for the considerable labours of Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden as past secretary of the Theological Education Committee.

With thankfulness to the God of all grace who makes all things

possible, For the ICRC Theological Education Committee,  
Gerhard H. Visscher

James Beeke (Canada)  
Dr. Douw Breed, chairman (South Africa)  
Dr. L. Anthony Curto (USA)  
Dr. Matthew Ebenezer (India)  
Dr. Melle Oosterhuis, (Netherlands)  
Dr. Gerhard H. Visscher, secretary (Canada)

## Appendix to article 19

### Application of the Anugraha (Grace) Reformed Presbyterian Churches (ARPC) in India (Bangalore)

Advisory Committee to consider the application for new members to India was composed of: Patrick Jok, Reinier Noppers & Travis Grassmid

A brief note, the representatives for the two denominations (one a federation) believed that the information had been submitted to the clerk the requisite six months prior to the convening of ICRC, per our constitution; We did not have sustaining document to that effect, however the committee feels it to be best to proceed with the judgment of charity and assume that they did.

**Anugraha (Grace) Reformed Presbyterian Churches (ARPC)** (They are in Bangalore, India)

**Brief Summary:** Your committee met with the one representative of the ARPC, Rev. Edwin P. Singh. The meeting was pleasant, and informative. We closed the meeting in prayer.

The ARPC was established in 2008.

The ARPC subscribes without exception to the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg catechism and Canons of Dordt) and to the Westminster Confession of Faith, both larger and shorter catechisms.

They confess the three great ecumenical creeds (Athanasian, Apostles and Nicene)

The ARPC has a finely crafted church order.

They report 13 organized churches and 9 yet unorganized; with 18 ministers ordained to serve.

There are 1003 communicant members, and a total of 1,123 baptized members.

ARPC is a member of Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship (RPF) and are not members of any organization which would be in conflict with the stated purposes of ICRC.

The ARPC has received glowing recommendations from both the Presbyterian Free Church and from the Nav Jeevan Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India.

In answer to the question of why the ARPC would like to join the ICRC we were told in part, "We want to be a part of the larger body of the church." We find this to be very encouraging and commendable.

**Recommendation:** Your advisory committee whole heartedly recommends "That the application for membership of the Anugraha Reformed Presbyterian Churches be approved."

Respectfully submitted,  
Travis Grassmid  
Patrick Jok  
Reinier Noppers

## Appendix to article 21

### Membership Application of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe

#### Advisory Committee #5

*Re: Application to become member of the ICRC by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe*

To the ICRC Windhoek 2022

We as Advisory Committee #5 have met with the delegates of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe, Rev Szoke and Rev Bagoly, in connection with their application to become members of the ICRC. They have at present 20 congregations, 16 pastors. The congregations are located in Hungary, Ukraine and Romania. Worship services are held in Hungarian and Romanian.

In our meeting we focused on the prerequisites stipulated in the Regulations of the ICRC Constitution:

ICRC Regulations X.3

First, "Applications for membership in the Conference shall be sponsored by at least two Member Churches".

This has been met, since the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales have officially sponsored their application.

Second, these sponsoring churches must have ongoing first-hand knowledge of the ministry and life of the applicant Church.

In this regard, there is ongoing attendance of each other's general assemblies / synods. There are other ongoing contacts between these churches too.

Third, any member Church in the same country as the applicant shall also be consulted.

In this regard, the ICRC has no member churches in Hungary, Romania, or Ukraine.

The fourth prerequisite asks the sponsoring churches to attest to the official standards of the applying church and whether they are upheld.

To this we as advisory committee can give feedback that the official standards of the applying church are the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Second Helvetic Confession. The sponsoring churches attest that these confessions are living documents in these churches in Hungary, Romania and Ukraine, and in line with this, that the Scriptures are preached and lived and therefore a living faith and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ is visible.

And lastly, during the previous ICRC in Jordan, Canada in 2017, the RPCCEE have already sent an observer to the Conference.

To conclude, as Advisory Committee we strongly advise the Conference to welcome the RPCCEE as official member of the ICRC.

Respectfully submitted,

Pieter Boon; Samit Mishra; Gerald Procee

## Appendix to article 23

### Membership Application from the Reformed Presbyterian Church Africa in Uganda.

The Advisory Committee to consider the application for the Reformed Presbyterian Church Africa (Uganda) was composed of: Ge Dryer, Patrick Malphrus, and Robert Tarullo.

#### **Reformed Presbyterian Church Africa (Uganda)**

**Brief Summary:** Your committee met with the two representatives of the RPCA, the Rev. Richard Tusiime and the Rev. Robert Magonga. The meeting was pleasant, and informative. We closed the meeting in prayer. In addition to the representatives of the applying church, the committee met with the Rev. L. Anthony Curto and the representatives of the Presbyterian Church in Uganda, a sponsor church, the Rev. Fred Kabenge, the Rev. David Kabaale, the Rev. Bob Gad Kalyowa, and the Rev. Patrick Bukenya.

The committee was very much encouraged by these meetings.

The RPCA was established in 2006.

The RPCA subscribes to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

The RPCA uses the *Book of Church Order* consisting of the "Form of Government," "Rules of Discipline," and "The Directory for the Worship of God." Additionally, there is an introduction that includes a "Historical Note"

They report 8 churches in two presbyteries with 10-12 ministers serving.

There are approximately 290 members (a breakdown of communicant and non-communicant members was not available)

RPCA is not a member of any other ecumenical associations.

The RPCA received recommendations and sponsorship from both the Presbyterian Church in Uganda and the United Reformed Church in Congo.

**Recommendation:** Your advisory committee recommends "That the application for membership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church Africa (Uganda) be approved."

Respectfully submitted,

Ge Dryer  
Patrick Malphrus, Convener  
Robert Tarullo, Secretary



## **Appendix to article 24**

Disclaimer: Convictions presented in a paper are not necessarily held or endorsed by the ICRC.

Paper to be released in the course of November 2022

## Appendix to article 26

### Devotional Message by Rev. Henning Venter

#### Revelation 18

In this letter to the 7 churches, Jesus teaches His universal Church about the impact of His authority on both heaven and earth.

Because this letter is addressed to the church, the church has not only the right but also the obligation to understand it and teach it as Jesus intended.

It means that, as the church we should read it with Jesus's own meaning in mind: it is a letter of hope in very difficult times of persecution and growing animosity against God's children. Yes, for times like we live in right now.

William Hendriksen puts it so eloquently: "To them (God's children) is given the assurance that God sees their tears; their prayers are influential in world affairs and their death is precious in His sight. Their final victory is assured; their blood will be avenged; their Christ lives and reigns for ever and for ever. He governs the world in the interest of His Church."

Revelation is meant to strengthen believers, because the end is made known, triumph is an undeniable fact.

With this firmly in mind, let's read chapter 18.

The phrase "After this" directs our attention to chapter 17.

In chapter 17 an angel shows John the enemy of the Lam and His people called the beast, and riding on the beast, a prostitute with the name Babylon.

For the purpose of understanding our text, we need to clarify the symbolic meaning of Babylon.

Babylon is in it's heart like a woman who sells her body for pleasure and money.

But Babylon also has a historic meaning, namely that metropolis that is spoken of in the prophets, the city that prospered in its earthly wealth by destroying other nations.

A city of kings that declared themselves god's, where God's own people were humiliated and had to become part of a system where people from different cultures were controlled by commerce, wealth, sexual immorality etc.

Thirdly it represents all ages past, present and future, that adheres to this philosophy that the greatest goal in life is to have earthly pleasure and prosperity in opposition to the will of God.

Now enters a gloriously bright angel from heaven that with a mighty voice full of authority calls out: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"

All who hear this call, including the church of today, should nod the head in acknowledgement, because this has been prophesied from the beginning.

Babylon did not stand a chance; she has always been in die crosshairs of our Commander and Chief for rejecting Him as King.

And as was prophesied by Isiah and Jeremiah, she has become a place where only the worst of the worst and unclean keeps.

As if to remind everyone why this is happening, the angel highlights that she led nations astray by satisfying their fleshly needs for sex and luxury.

We will do well not to try and identify this kind of godlessness to a certain group of people or city, but to recognise it as a way of living that is becoming all too common in our own time, as in times before.

It is a temptation that pulls at deep roots of sin in us as well.

Because of this we hear another voice in vers 4, and this time the authority is overwhelming because it is God Himself calling:

"Come out of her, my people!"



This is one of two places where the people of God are mentioned in chapter 18.

It shows us that God is concerned for those that belong to Him, and that He is merciful.

This is a final warning, and again, this warning is not only to take serious at the end, but now, because Babylon's fate has always been certain.

The reason is clear in verse 5: "God has remembered her iniquities."

It reminds us that God is a jealous God who remembers the sins of the fathers for those who do not love Him.

To some this might look vengeful, but for those who understand that this King has always called people back to Himself, it shows His righteousness in finally bringing the godless to justice.

God is faithful, as He saves those He has chosen before creation, so He will finally judge those who rejected Him.

This Godly justice is best explained in the next verses as Babylon is paid back for her terrible deeds. For glorifying herself and living in luxury from the profits of her evil deeds, she will be paid back with torment and mourning.

Because she hails herself as queen, her destruction will come swiftly, in a single day!

There will be no doubt that she has been judged by the only true King of heaven and earth.

Once mighty, in allegiance with all of God's enemies, the old sin of wanting to be my own ruler, is finally crushed.

But the reality of the fall of all man's desires to enjoy life in abundance without God, is further demonstrated as John sees how all those who loved Babylon is gutted with sorrow at the finality of her fall.

The first group is the kings of the earth, rulers who were not guided by the will of God, but by their own corrupt desire for power and wealth.

They will stand far off in fear of the finality: For in a single hour your judgement has come.

They have no hope, no victory.

Second is the merchants, who will weep, because together with their beloved Babylon their markets have also fallen.

Nothing is spared.

No more money is to be made from minerals, plants, spices, animals, and yes even other humans.

But they too will stand far off and shake in their fine clothes because "in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste."

They have no hope! They have no victory.

Thirdly, the shipmasters will cry as they remember her beauty and the good luxurious life she provided for them.

They too will stand far off as they wonder how they could have lost everything in a single hour.

They have no hope, no victory.

And amidst these hopeless cries, the voice of God is heard again in verse 20, and again He is speaking to His people:

"Rejoice over her!"

May the contrast not be lost on us brothers.

We will not stand far off and cry because of the fall of Babylon.

No, God's command is that the heavens, all the saints, apostles and prophets must rejoice!

Everyone that belongs to God must rejoice because even though we do not deserve it, the Good Shepherd shows us what the feast at His table is all about: "God has given judgement for you against her."

Remember Psalm 23: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows."

Do you realise brothers, even though it is all about His honour, He did it for you and me.

Yes, so that we might have hope, and victory in Him. This rejoicing continues in chapter 19 when the heavens react first.

And just to put a final nail in the coffin of Babylon but also to snuff out the last flicker of hope for those whose lives depended on her, another mighty angel appears and throws a millstone into the sea, symbolising the fate of Babylon.

She will be no more; her music will be heard no more; her crafts will be seen no more; her light will be enjoyed no more.

No more weddings; no more great merchants; no more deceiving sorcery.

No more!

It is as if the oxygen was sucked out of her.

In verse 24 it is the turn of God's people to remember, to remember the blood of the prophets and saints who have been slain in faith.

It was not for nothing! Unlike Babylon they will once again live, they will hear heavenly music, they will have the light of God always guiding them, they will have an everlasting feast with the bridegroom!

Their hope will bear fruit, and they will have victory.

Beloved, may we really be filled with hope because of this passage.

We are quick to forget. We forget the true meaning of life, the meaning of worship, the meaning of the Kingdom.

When trouble and hardships come, we tend to think too small. Why me? Why this? How long?

In this passage we are reminded that God remembers, and that what happens on earth, is judged in heaven.

We are reminded that what believers pray for on earth, is heard in heaven.

We are also reminded that God doesn't act on a whim or an emotion but according to His steadfast will.

We are reminded to take God at His word, for so many prophecies and promises come to fruition in this declaration of judgment for those who fall into the trap of self-worship, who live for worldly luxury, peace and belonging.

But for those who continually puts to death their idols, and "comes out of Babylon", and turns away from the fascinating, beautiful and deadly prostitute, this is also a mighty declaration of hope and victory.

Brothers, let us never think ourselves exempt from the temptations of luxury and prosperity away from God.

She is pretty in the comforts of more books, better computers, nicer schools, larger congregations, less conflict because of easy, soothing messages.

Let us also come out brothers, lest we become part of the plague instead of warning and standing against it.

Let's first start with the kings, and merchants and shipmasters that lives in us, confess and slaughter them at the feet of the Lamb.

This might even be more difficult for us to do, than to face those who oppose Christ.

And remember that when we do this, our blood might be part of the blood found inside Babylon because we were slain in service of the Lamb.

But only then will we stand far off from every human device, government or power that opposed God, and not cry at the finality of their judgement, but rejoice in the righteousness of God.

Take heart brothers, there is hope and victory for the people of God, and until Jesus comes again, let's take up the cross, and teach the people everything that He taught us.

As long as God is calling people out of Babylon, there is hope for them as well.

Our work is urgent, for judgement will happen quickly, and it will be final!

# **Appendix to article 29**

## **Diaconal Committee**

### **Report to the**

### **International Conference of Reformed Churches to be convened from October 12-19, 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia**

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Appendix 1: Press Release Face-to-Face Meeting

Appendix 2: Press Release to Regional Conferences, requesting that diaconal matters become a standard point on their agenda

Appendix 3: Call for Mutual Help - Covid-19 Pandemic

Appendix 4: Diaconal Resources and Material

# Introduction

Esteemed brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior. Herewith the report of the Diaconal Committee of the ICRC. It has been both a daunting responsibility as well as a great privilege to work together as a committee on your behalf.

The report that follows highlights our activities since the last Conference and in particular our considered opinion on the best way ahead in the development and outworking of diaconal ministry locally, nationally, and internationally. The members of the committee, several of whom have specialized in developing diaconal ministry, believe that the new mandate is a realistic and positive way ahead.

We present our report to you for your careful and prayerful consideration.

## 1 Members

Australasia: Dirk van Garderen (chairman)

Asia: Aaron Bae

Africa: Pieter Boon (secretary & liaison for Lux Mundi)

Europe: Gé Drayer & Ko Serier

North America: David Nakhla & Rick Postma

South America: Chris Boersema

## 2 Meetings:

### ONLINE:

We met online on the following dates:

2017: Nov 1

2018: Feb 22, May 3, Sep 6, Dec 6

2019: Apr 4, Apr 25, Dec 10

2020: May 19, Aug 25, Oct 13, Dec 1

2021: Feb 2, May 17, Jun 16, Sep 1, Dec 1

2022: March 2

We decided in principle to strive to meet quarterly.

### IN PERSON:

2019: July 8-12 in Voorthuizen, The Netherlands

For a Press Release on this very valuable face-to-face meeting, see [Appendix 1](#)

### 3 Mandate:

#### **ICRC MANDATE TO THE DIACONAL COMMITTEE**

- 1 Arrange for a consultation among representatives of the diaconal agencies of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned work, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in ministries of mercy among the Member Churches.
- 2 Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by both Member Church and nation) the ministry projects of mercy of the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the diaconal agencies of the ICRC Member Churches and presentation to the next meeting of the Conference.
- 3 Publish (in a format suitable for republication in the Member Churches' own media) an ICRC Diaconal Newsletter, on a periodic basis for the benefit of the Churches, diaconal agencies, and/or the inter-church relations committees. This Newsletter should include descriptions of opportunities for diaconal project participation pending in the Member Churches, and articles intended to promote interest in Reformed ministries of mercy. When appropriate, articles from the Newsletter may also be posted on the ICRC website.
- 4 Help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on diaconal topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself.
- 5 Gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches regarding their ministries of mercy vision, policies, programs, or projects, including the training of deacons and diaconal methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.
- 6 In response to the request of a Member Church in case of a major disaster, identify entities connected with Member Churches, working in the area and/or responding to the disaster and provide contact information.
- 7 Develop and maintain a list of diaconal contact representatives for each Member Church. Each representative will be responsible for disseminating ICRC diaconal information and materials to their respective churches and for gathering and transmitting to the Diaconal Committee the relevant information from their respective churches necessary for the accomplishment of 1-6 above.

## 4 Proposed (attainable) New Mandate

(In connection with Mandates 1-7)

During the face-to-face meeting in the Netherlands in 2019, we brainstormed about the feasibility of the mandates that our committee have received from the ICRC. Our joint conclusion was that the mandates cannot be fulfilled properly by a few volunteers, who have – apart from their membership of this committee – full time ministries. In view of this reality, we endeavored to ‘downsize’ the mandates into what would be more realistic in the current circumstances.

In this regard we formulated a *Purpose, Vision and New Mandates*, which we ask the next ICRC general conference to consider and hopefully approve:

**Purpose of the Diaconal Committee:** To encourage and facilitate access to Biblical resources and networking among ICRC member churches, so that they can each develop their own fully orbed diaconal ministry as well as to seek opportunities to cooperate in carrying it out.

**Vision of the Diaconal Committee:** ICRC Member Churches each fulfilling their fully orbed diaconal ministry as prescribed in God’s Word and cooperating where possible.

**Mandate of the Diaconal Committee:**

1. Work towards a **common understanding** of what a fully orbed Reformed diaconal ministry ought to look like, confer with ICRC member churches on such an understanding, and challenge them to pursue establishing such ministry in their churches.
2. Encourage and facilitate **networking** among representatives of the diaconal agencies/ministries of the ICRC member churches for the purposes of exchanging information on the work of deacons locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible cooperation in ministries of mercy among the member churches.
3. **Bring focus to the diaconal ministry at ICRC conferences** by employing various formats (presentation of papers, round-table discussions, information table, video presentation, etc.) to encourage networking and present material that has been collected and/or developed.
4. In response to the request of a member church in case of a **major disaster**, identify entities connected with member churches, working in the area and/or responding to the disaster and provide contact information. This committee serves to facilitate networking and does not serve as a source or channel of funding for member churches.

Based on this, we also mapped out a **work plan** until the next ICRC general meeting. To mention a

few:

Ad Mandate 1:

- Elicit feedback on the Diaconal Ministry description from the member churches, as well as theological professors.
- Speaking on regional conferences on what Diaconal Ministry is.
- Carrying out a limited survey of all member churches as for their diaconal ministries.
- Identifying educational resources in various formats and recommend them to the churches.

Ad Mandate 2:

- Create and maintain contact info for diaconal representatives of member churches.
- Produce and maintain a booklet with information on diaconal ministries of member churches.
- Visit diaconal representatives and offices of member churches.
- Enable access for deacons of all member churches to identified resources.

Ad Mandate 3:

- Encourage diaconal representatives to attend regional conferences.
- Speak about the work of the Diaconal Committee at regional and general conferences.
- Facilitate an information table or other medium for interaction at ICRC conferences.

### SUB-COMMITTEES

Since our face-to-face meeting in July 2019, we have subdivided the work on the mandates in three subcommittees, each sub-committee located in more or less the same time zone.

- Sub-committee 1: Chris Boersema, David Nakhla, Rick Postma
- Sub-committee 2: Gé Drayer, Ko Serier, Pieter Boon
- Sub-committee 3: Aaron Bae, Dirk van Garderen

## **5 Diaconal Ministry – What It Is**

*(In connection with Mandates 3-5)*

As the Diaconal Committee, with the help of some advisors, we compiled the following statement, outlining the essence of what diaconal ministry should be according to the Word of God, as professed and practiced in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition. This statement may serve churches and deacons to mirror and compare their own diaconal ministry with this statement, assisting them to analyze where they can improve and strengthen their own ministry.

Reformed and Presbyterian churches, following Calvin, reinstated the office of the deacon alongside that of ruling and teaching elders. However, the task of deacons and the diaconate is often poorly understood and applied in our churches. The Diaconal Committee of the



International Conference of Reformed Churches has therefore prepared a statement entitled 'The Diaconal Ministry of the Church' in order to clarify and encourage discussion on this vital ministry.

We would urge local church courts and church members to receive and study this document accordingly.

## ***THE DIACONAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH***

### **OLD TESTAMENT**

Already in the Old Testament the Lord impressed upon his people Israel the obligation to show mercy to the needy. God repeatedly commanded that the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow might eat within their towns and be filled (Deut. 16:11,14). In the old dispensation the needy and suffering were protected and provided for by God's fatherly love (Deut. 24:19-21; 26:12,13; 27:19). His ordinances taught the covenant people to imitate that love as beloved children. We read many times that God's old covenantal people had to show mercy, especially towards the sick, lonely, poor, foreigners, and strangers. God's people of the Old Testament also had to be a diaconal people (Isaiah 58:6-7; Micah 6:8).

### **CHRIST'S EXAMPLE**

The Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us the Father (John 14:9), came into the world to serve (Mark 10:45). In his mercy he fed the hungry, healed the sick, and showed compassion to the afflicted (Matt. 4:23,24). Thus he gave an example, that his church should do likewise (John 13:15, 12:26; Matt. 20:26, 23:11, 25:42-46; Mark 9:35, 10:43; Luke 6:36, 10:25-37, 22:26-27). The ministry of mercy, as assigned to the deacons, proceeds, therefore, from this love of our Savior (1 John 3:16-24).

### **THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

After the example of her Lord, the first Christian congregation took care that no one in her midst suffered want (Acts 2:45). To each was distributed according to need (Acts 4:32-37). The office of deacon is a new office Christ gave to his church (Acts 6.1-7). With it he ensures that his liberation from the powers of sin and death manifests itself in everyday life. He ensures that mutual care is given in his congregation in the face of challenges like illness, loneliness, poverty, and old age, in line with his own example when he was on earth.

### **THE PURPOSE OF DIACONAL MINISTRY**

The reality of the new covenant helps us to understand a little why Christ instituted the diaconal office. It is a gift of Christ for an era in which Christ's church consists of converts from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9). It is the task of the deacons to ensure that the congregation functions like a harmonious family, taking loving care of each other's needs. So the Lord calls on us to show hospitality, generosity, and mercy, so that the weak and needy may share abundantly in the joy of God's people (2 Cor. 9:12-15). No one in the congregation of Christ may live uncomforted under the pressure of sickness, loneliness, old age, poverty, and the like. It is therefore the responsibility of the deacons to see to the good progress of this service of charity in the church. They shall acquaint themselves with existing needs and difficulties and exhort the members of Christ's body to show mercy. They shall gather and manage the offerings and distribute them in Christ's name, according to need. They are called to encourage, comfort, and

exhort with the Word of God those who receive the gifts of Christ's love. In this way God's children will increase in love to one another and to all men.

### **SCOPE**

The scope of the deacons' ministry is not limited to the church. The apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia: "let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10) Deacons are called to help equip the church to fulfil this ministry also in the world. Through the ages the church has demonstrated Christ's ministry of love in the world. The early church reached out to the sick during epidemics and to those orphaned and abandoned. Missionaries not only preached the gospel, but also demonstrated it by giving medical care, educating the illiterate, and teaching trades to the poor. In the past deacons often stood at the cradle of institutions like hospitals, homes for the elderly and for those with physical or mental disabilities. In Church history, when believers ministered to the needy around them in both Word and deed (Col. 3:17) the Lord has saved many. Ministering to temporal needs can, and with God's blessing should, become a wonderful means of ministering to eternal needs as well.

### **TASK**

Those called to the special diaconal office are to spearhead the church in the ministry of love, as Christ taught us. This ministry starts in the church towards fellow believers, yet also radiates into the world. In this ministry something of God's future purpose and plan becomes visible in this broken world. In its diaconal ministry, the church works out Christ's plan to demonstrate and restore God's righteousness, mercy, and peace in this world (Rom. 12:9-21). Deacons are called to lead and equip the members of Christ's church in this ministry of love (Rom. 12:6-8). This ministry already reveals the basic principles of the future recreated world, the kingdom of God, where there will be no more loneliness, poverty, aging, imprisonment, illness, disabilities, or refugees (Ps. 72:12-19; Ps. 146). With this ministry of love, Christians are called to labor for the coming of his kingdom in this still broken world.

### **DIACONAL MINISTRY**

It is thus evident that the task of the deacon is not limited to the collection and distribution of funds, maintaining church property, or being a stepping-stone towards eldership. Scripture indicates that

diaconal ministry includes much more (1 Tim. 3:8-13). A deacon ought to be:

- A man of prayer: he prays with and for those to whom he ministers.
- A watchman: he is vigilant in identifying needs at the one hand and God-given gifts and resources at the other. He seeks out ways to comfort and restore.
- A coordinator: he promotes and facilitates cooperation where necessary, especially in times of need or disaster.
- A bridge-builder: he knows how to establish, maintain, and build contacts and connect people.
- A protector: He upholds and protects the vulnerable, and bears burdens.
- A helper: He offers a listening ear, he looks for solutions for those in need, he is quick to help.
- A trainer and motivator: he trains, encourages, and motivates the congregation in its diaconal ministry in the church and the world.

It is our hope and prayer that this statement will encourage and strengthen the diaconal ministry in our churches for the glory of God.

## **6 Regional Conferences**

*(In connection with Mandates 1 and 4)*

As the Diaconal Committee we wrote to all ICRC Regional Conferences, requesting that diaconal affairs become a standard point on each regional conference agenda. In the last years this practice has begun to materialize, although it was significantly hampered by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

We sent a Press Release to all regional conferences in this regard (see [Appendix 2](#))

Members of the Diaconal Committee began to attend some of the regional conferences, amongst others:

- European Regional Conference Yarnfield, England, 2018
- Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, South Korea
- Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, Melbourne Australia 2019
- NAPARC Conferences, North America, Annually

## **7 Networking regarding Global Disasters and Refugee Crises**

*(In connection with Mandate 6)*

In line with our mandate, we as the Diaconal Committee assisted to network between ICRC churches, deacons, and para-church organizations in regard to the following:

- 1 Civil War in South Sudan
- 2 Refugee Crisis Syria & Turkey
- 3 Explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2020
- 4 Covid-19 Pandemic, 2020 onward
- 5 War in Ukraine (2022)

Churches, organizations, and individuals were connected. In some cases, press releases were also posted on the ICRC website.

## 8 Questionnaires

(In connection with Mandates 2, 4, and 5)

In fulfilling our mandates, we sent out a questionnaire to the ICRC member denominations a few times:

### 1 Covid-19 Pandemic Survey in 2020

- The survey confirmed that within ICRC churches there were / are also many fatalities, in line with the rest of society.
- The survey indicated how surprisingly similar churches in different countries reacted to the impact of the pandemic and lockdown measures, in order to continue with their worship.
- The survey pointed out that churches in developing-world countries, especially Kenya, India, and Indonesia, were hit very hard by lockdown measures due to Covid-19. In this regard an article was published in Lux Mundi, asking for mutual help. See [Appendix 3](#)

### 2 Questionnaire Diaconal Resources and Networking

- This questionnaire gathered information from the churches regarding their diaconal ministry. This information is incorporated in the booklet *Diaconal Ministries of the Churches affiliated to the ICRC*. Updated copies will be disseminated during the next ICRC conference.
- This questionnaire also garnered information about material and resources on the diaconal office and the ministry of mercy of the church of Christ. In [Appendix 4](#) you will find a document with extensive resources in this regard, subdivided in the following genres:
  - Books & Articles
  - Magazines
  - Presentations
  - Policies & Forms
  - Websites

The aim of this document is to give access to deacons and churches to a wide variety of resources and material, to further equip them in the ministry of mercy, as well as to stimulate networking between ICRC deacons and churches.

The response rate we received on the questionnaires was about 50%.

## **9 Brochure on Diaconal Outreach by ICRC Denominations**

*(In connection with Mandates 2 and 7)*

A hard copy was handed out to all delegates during the ICRC Jordan 2017. Because of sensitive information, the brochure is not disseminated electronically. It contains information on diaconal outreach both domestic and abroad by all ICRC denominations, with contact information. During the upcoming conference, DV in Namibia in October 12-19, 2022, an updated brochure will be disseminated.

At present the Diaconal Committee is still considering the possibilities of creating a platform on the internet that is safe at the one hand, yet also easily accessible to member churches on the other. Any suggestions will be appreciated.

## **10 Finances & Budget**

The ICRC Jordan 2017 has allocated a budget of US \$ 12,000 to the Diaconal Committee. This budget was used to defray the costs of the face-to-face meeting:

- Paying flight tickets for members to travel to our face-to-face meeting in the Netherlands in 2019. Each member was asked to seek reimbursement from the ICRC treasurer, Kyle Lodder ([kyle.lodder@gmail.com](mailto:kyle.lodder@gmail.com)).
- The ICRC treasurer also paid an amount to Ko Serier and Gé Drayer, to arrange accommodation and meals for this face-to-face meeting in the Netherlands.

For the Diaconal Committee to function well, they need to be able to all be present at the international conference once every 4 years, as well as be able to have one face-to-face meeting in between international conferences. They also need to have at least one representative at each of the regional conferences. The financial implications of this are that those members must be reimbursed when travelling to these events. Sometimes their own church denominations can assist, but often not. We therefore request that a budget of (US) \$ 25,000 be allocated to the Diaconal Committee for the 4-year period following ICRC Namibia 2022.

## **11 Farewell**

Our chairman, Rev Dirk van Garderen, has requested not to be reappointed after ICRC Windhoek 2022. This is not good news for us as a committee. His friendliness and wisdom were so evident in his role as chairman. At the same time, we understand that so far, he has not experienced much of a retired life. We thank the Lord for the gift we received in him, for all the years that he served as a member of the committee as well as in the capacity of chairman. May the Lord still grant him many healthy and happy years together with his wife and loved ones.

We also have to say farewell to Br Ko Serier. Although the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands were suspended, the ICRC Jordan 2017 has made clear that their members could still be

involved in committees. In this regard, Ko Serier indicated that he was willing to continue to serve but requested that he be replaced by a successor at the next ICRC. We express our sincere thanks to Ko Serier. The Diaconal Committee would recommend that he be replaced by Gé Drayer, also from the Netherlands. The last 5 years Ko still attended all the meetings, and we deeply appreciate his involvement and advice throughout all these years. We wish him and his wife and family the Lord's ongoing blessings for the future.

## **12 Decisions to be taken by the ICRC regarding the Diaconal Committee:**

The ICRC Windhoek 2022 decides:

- 1 to take note with gratitude of the activities of the Diaconal Committee
- 2 to approve the proposed *Purpose, Vision and New Mandate* of the Diaconal Committee
- 3 to (re)appoint as members:
  - Australasia: new member to be appointed
  - Asia Pacific: Aaron Bae
  - Africa: Pieter Boon
  - Europe: Gé Drayer
  - North America: David Nakhla & Rick Postma
  - South America: Chris Boersema
- 4 to, according to the proposed budget, allocate an amount of (US) \$ 25,000 for the period until the next general conference.

## **Conclusion**

It is the Diaconal Committee's heartfelt prayer and desire that the God of all grace would enable the diaconal ministries of the member churches of the ICRC to be strengthened, encouraged, and utilized both at home and abroad for the praise of his glory.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **A Separate and Unique Office given by Christ**

#### ***PRESS RELEASE***

#### **DIACONAL COMMITTEE OF THE ICRC**

Face-to-Face Meeting, 8-12 July 2019, in Voorthuizen, Netherlands

#### **INTRODUCTION**

From all corners of the earth we arrived, one after the other, in the picturesque Dutch village of Voorthuizen. Here between meadows and forests the *Diaconal Committee* of the ICRC had its first face-to-face meeting. Instituted in 2013 by the ICRC Wales, it is the youngest of the committees, and as it is normal to childhood, it first had to learn to find its feet. From the day of its inception, there were big expectations among member churches as for the Diaconal Committee and its role. Almost from day 1 we started receiving requests for help. The ICRC gave us an elaborate mandate which, if to be fulfilled, would require one or more full-timers at least.

Speaking of our mandate, this was therefore the main agenda point for our first face-to-face meeting. We brainstormed on what could be an attainable mandate for a committee consisting of volunteers, and how we are to proceed to coordinate, stimulate and invigorate the diaconal ministry of all the ICRC member churches. In order to arrive at a shared vision, purpose and mandate, it was mandatory of course to develop a common understanding of what the diaconal ministry, which Christ gave to his church, actually entails. Drawing from a lecture of Gé Drayer presented to the European Conference of Reformed Churches held in 2018 in England, we compiled the following:

#### **THE DIACONAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

Many believe that the task of the deacon is limited to the collection and distribution of funds, but Scripture indicates that diaconal ministry includes much more. There are at least seven or eight areas of diaconal ministry according to Scripture. Christ's church is called amongst others to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick and those in prison or held captive, and comfort those who mourn. The deacons are called to spearhead and enable the church to strive to restore this world in accordance with God's purpose and plan. In its diaconal ministry Christ's church works out Christ's plan to demonstrate and restore God's justice and righteousness in this world.

Diaconal ministry is about addressing spiritual, social, material and physical needs of the marginalized, the poor, the sick and the needy – inside and outside the church, at home and abroad. This includes, amongst others, a focus on debt and financial needs, loneliness, aging, imprisonment, physical and mental illness, people with disabilities and refugees. We are called as churches to identify these diaconal needs and develop a strategy to become involved.

Through the ages there has often been a lack of clarity about the role and office of the deacons in our churches. Hence diaconal ministry has often been seen as limited to receiving offerings, helping



the needy in the church only, maintaining the church property and a steppingstone towards eldership.

God's Word reveals that their task involves much more. The office of deacon is a separate and unique calling instituted by Christ for his church. It is multi-faceted and virtually impossible to reduce to a fixed list or job description. A deeper and more comprehensive description of the deacon's role being:

- A man of prayer: he prays with and for those to whom he ministers.
- Vigilant: he is vigilant in identifying needs, God-given gifts and resources.
- Coordinator: he promotes and/or facilitates cooperation where necessary, especially in times of need and disaster both in a personal and communal way.
- Bridge-builder: he knows how to establish, maintain and build contacts and connect people.
- Helper: he offers help where no one else does, a listening ear; looks for solutions for those in need, protects the vulnerable, and bears burdens.
- Initiator: he strives to take initiatives, creates awareness of diaconal needs.
- Trainer/Motivator: he trains, encourages and motivates others to contribute.
- Watchman: he identifies those who are suffering spiritually and physically and seeks out ways to comfort and restore.

### NEW PROPOSED MANDATE

Our week together resulted in an adapted mandate, which we hope to propose for adoption to the next ICRC. In addition, we also outlined a work plan based on the proposed new mandate. In this Press Release we also serve you with these drafts: *purpose, vision, mandate, and work plan*. We value any feedback very much and you are most welcome to send it to our secretary.

**Purpose of Diaconal Committee:** To encourage and facilitate access to Biblical resources and networking among ICRC member churches so that they can each develop their own fully-orbed diaconal ministry as well as to seek opportunities to cooperate in carrying it out.

**Vision of Diaconal Committee:** ICRC Member Churches each fulfilling their fully orbed diaconal ministry as prescribed in God's Word and cooperating together where possible.

### MANDATE OF DIACONAL COMMITTEE:

1. Work towards a common understanding of what a fully-orbed Reformed diaconal ministry ought to look like, confer with ICRC member churches on such an understanding, and challenge them to pursue establishing such ministry in their churches.
2. Encourage and facilitate networking among representatives of the diaconal agencies/ministries of the ICRC member churches for the purposes of exchanging information on the work of deacons locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible cooperation in ministries of mercy among the member churches.

3. Bring focus to the diaconal ministry at ICRC conferences by employing various formats (presentation of papers, round-table discussions, information table, video presentation, etc.) to encourage networking and present material that has been collected and/or developed.
4. In response to the request of a member church in case of a major disaster, identify entities connected with member churches, working in the area and/or responding to the disaster and provide contact information. This committee serves to facilitate networking and does not serve as a source or channel of funding for member churches.

Based on this, we also mapped out a **work plan** until the next ICRC in 2021. To mention a few:

Ad Mandate 1:

- Elicit feedback on the Diaconal Ministry description from the member churches, as well as theological professors.
- Speaking on regional conferences on what Diaconal Ministry is.
- Carrying out a limited survey of all member churches as for their diaconal ministries.
- Identifying educational resources in various formats and recommend them to the churches.

Ad Mandate 2:

- Create and maintain contact info for diaconal representatives of member churches.
- Produce and maintain a booklet with information on diaconal ministries of member churches.
- Visit diaconal representatives and offices of member churches.
- Enable access for deacons of all member churches to identified resources.

Ad Mandate 3:

- Encourage diaconal representatives to attend regional conferences.
- Speak about the work of the Diaconal Committee at regional and general conferences.
- Facilitate an information table or other medium for interaction at ICRC conferences.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

During our stay, we also used the opportunity to visit the diaconal offices of the two current ICRC member churches in the Netherlands. In short, these are well organized and efficient offices, with impressive experience in stimulating their churches to execute their fully-orbed diaconal ministry. Although they may not be in need of help from an ICRC diaconal committee, these visits brought to our attention the need of many other ICRC member churches, especially the smaller denominations. We also realized afresh the strength of a body such as the ICRC Diaconal Committee, representing churches from both the global north and south, and functioning on an equal footing. When it comes to the diaconal ministry which Christ had given his church, there is still a huge and terrific task awaiting us, and how lovely would it be when a day may come that all ICRC member churches, from the north and the south, east and west, will cooperate together in this Christ given calling.

Meeting in the Netherlands also confronted us with the accelerating rate of secularization in this part of the world, which had been a stronghold for the Reformed faith during past centuries, and how this also affects the churches.

For a committee with members from all continents of the world (except Antarctica), used only to meet with Skype at a time when everyone is awake, it was an eye opener to have this face-to-face

meeting. It was wonderful to spend a whole midweek together face-to-face. It was a privilege indeed to discover things about each other, that Skype could never reveal, to mention but a few:

- That the roots of our chairman Dirk van Garderen, who came from the other side of the globe all the way from the southern island of New Zealand, are in fact a few kilometers from Voorthuizen, in the village of Garderen, and that they have some very good ice cream there.
- The excellent cooking of Brazilian Chris Boersema.
- The humor of OPC'er David Nakhla.
- That the straightforward uncompromising Canadian Rick Postma is actually a very nice guy.
- That it is a fact indeed that the Dutch are the organizers and planners of the world, and that Ko Serier and Gé Drayer are no exception to this.
- That the ever-smiling Korean Aaron Bae's friendliness is most sincere indeed.
- That although Pieter Boon is from South Africa, he was well informed about what the Dutch are best in, using the opportunity to buy an e-bike for his wife, which everyone had to test drive of course.

The week was concluded, expressing much appreciation to our chairman, Dirk van Garderen, and his successful efforts to steer us towards reaching the goal we had set ourselves for the week. We parted ways, each to his corner of the world, after giving thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for the week, and prayerfully entrusting each other to the protection of our providential Father in heaven.

On behalf of the Diaconal Committee of the ICRC,  
Dr. P.G. Boon  
Secretary

## **Appendix 2:**

Press Release to Regional Conferences, requesting that diaconal matters become a standard point on their agenda

### **THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORM**



#### **Diaconal Committee (DC)**

April 11th, 2018

#### **TO: REGIONAL CONFERENCES OF THE ICRC AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES**

We greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

With this Press Release we kindly ask your cooperation in regards to the involvement of the Diaconal Committee of the ICRC in the Regional Conferences.

The Diaconal Committee has been appointed by the ICRC mainly to provide a network for member churches on diaconal matters. We are guided by the principle found in Galatians 6:10: *“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

In the past a perception existed that churches with diaconal needs could come to the DC, who would then reach out to them on behalf of the ICRC. This was not correct, and it has been explained on the ICRC Jordan 2017. The DC doesn't have a budget of its own for diaconal needs in the ICRC family. Neither does it have the manpower to investigate and approve incoming requests for assistance. All members of the DC are volunteers, each with his own full time ministry. The purpose of the DC is rather to be a networking body, assisting churches to come into contact with other member churches, or parachurch organisations working on behalf of member churches.

In order to fulfill this networking function properly, DC needs to be in contact with the member churches. In this regard the ICRC Jordan 2017 has stressed that diaconal matters should become a standard agenda point on the meetings of the regional conferences, as it is also on the international conference's agenda.



With this press release we want to call on all regional conference representatives and those involved in organizing the regional conferences, to communicate in time with us, and to make sure that the DC can explain its role during the regional conference, so that we as DC can start assisting churches to network amongst each other with regards to diaconal matters.

The Diaconal Committee consists of members from each continent:

The Rev. Dr. Aaron Bae (South Korea)	<a href="mailto:aaroneebae@yahoo.com">aaroneebae@yahoo.com</a>	
Mr. Chris Boersema (Brazil)	<a href="mailto:chrisboersema@gmail.com">chrisboersema@gmail.com</a>	
The Rev. Dr. Pieter Boon (South Africa)	<a href="mailto:famgpgboon@gmail.com">famgpgboon@gmail.com</a>	Secretary of DC
Mr. David Nakhla (United States of America)	<a href="mailto:david.nakhla@opc.org">david.nakhla@opc.org</a>	
Mr. Rick Postma (Canada)	<a href="mailto:publicrelations@wordanddeed.org">publicrelations@wordanddeed.org</a>	
Drs. Ko Serier (Netherlands)	<a href="mailto:k.serier@zonnet.nl">k.serier@zonnet.nl</a>	
The Rev. Dirk van Garderen (New Zealand)	<a href="mailto:dirkjvg@gmail.com">dirkjvg@gmail.com</a>	Convenor of DC

You are most welcome to make contact with the DC member in your region.

We look forward to your response, as well as a good relationship in future, which will glorify our God also in the way the churches fulfill their diaconal calling.

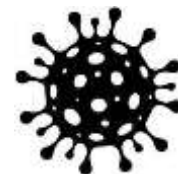
With brotherly greetings,

Dr. P.G. Boon  
Secretary Diaconal Committee of the ICRC

### **Appendix 3:**

## **Call for Mutual Help**

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC**



Never before have churches of the *International Conference of Reformed Churches* experienced such a disruptive year! Probably no single member church can recall a time in which church buildings stood empty for months on end. Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic, combined with the reactions of governments across the globe, deeply impacted on church life. In the country where I live, South Africa, worship services in church buildings were not allowed since April 2020, and since July 2020 only services with a maximum of 50 people were allowed, lasting until the now, when I am writing this article (end of August), and it will probably continue for some more months. Restrictive measures such as these in South Africa were no exception. I haven't heard of a country where an ICRC federation is located, where this was not the case.

These extremely invasive measures of governments into church life were met with mixed reactions. Some sympathized, acknowledging that it was necessary to flatten the curve of the Covid-19 infections, yet at the other hand conspiracy theories about governments trying to silence the churches, were also rife.

Fortunately in these times the Lord provided many technical solutions, making it possible that in most cases worship services could continue, using for example livestreaming on the internet, or pre-recording the services. Church life could also continue to a certain extent, making use of internet platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp, Facebook and the like.

In May-July 2020 the Diaconal Committee conducted a survey among ICRC member churches, in order to find out how everyone was coping. These were a few of the findings:

- Yes, there were deaths because of Covid-19, especially among the elderly and those with other medical conditions. In Scotland, for example, one of the retired ministers passed on due to Covid-19.
- In general the fatalities in the churches were / are comparable to the average in each country among the population at large. Church members are fully part of their society.
- Most churches managed to continue with worship services, although in digital format. Many ministers started recording daily or weekly devotions for their members to watch or listen. Not seldom did these devotions focus on passages about epidemics and natural disasters in the Bible, the Mosaic legislation on leprosy, the way Jesus treated lepers and the like.



- Indeed, neither Covid-19 nor government restrictions could silence the Gospel! Some churches reported that thanks to their activities on internet, more non-members could be reached with the Gospel than before.
- In all countries Covid-19 caused an economic recession, also impacting on the churches. Many churches reported job losses among their members, or decreased job opportunities. However, it was also reported more than once that with the increased threat of poverty, there was also an increased willingness among church members to give for causes both inside and outside the churches. Covid-19 indeed precipitated Christian compassion to come to the fore more than usually. We sincerely thank the Lord, from whom all blessings come, for this!
- Especially in the poorer (third world) countries, Covid-19 caused huge economic damage. Apart from many members losing their income, some ICRC federations in these countries reported that in the months of lockdown they lost most of their usual collections, with the consequence that many of their pastors lost their livelihood. Whereas in first world countries churches reported a switch to inking their financial contributions and collections via electronic means (such as SnapScan), these options are often not yet available in the third world.

At this stage, all the restrictive measures have most probably saved many lives, yet at the other hand these same measures had many other negative consequences across continents.

First, we yearn for the day that church services at full capacity will be legal again! Although the internet, computer and mobile phone technology proved extremely helpful to maintain the community of saints, every believer who truly loves the Lord and his church, realizes that this is not as it was meant to be.

Second, the restrictive measures also caused huge economic damage, also to churches, and mostly in the third world. Especially with regards to this last point, the Diaconal Committee would like to call on all ICRC churches to reach out to one another. As a Diaconal Committee our role is not to distribute funds, but to network. In this regard we would like to ask your compassionate attention especially to those ICRC churches in Kenya, India and Indonesia. If you haven't established personal bonds with these churches yet, you are welcome to make use of the following ICRC federations or trusted organizations supported by ICRC churches, in order to channel your financial contributions to these severely stricken federations:

Country	Help via	Contact Person
India	Organisation Word & Deed	Rick Postma, email: <a href="mailto:publicrelations@wordanddeed.org">publicrelations@wordanddeed.org</a>
Indonesia	Organisation <a href="http://kerkenhelfenkerken.nl">kerkenhelfenkerken.nl</a>	Janneke de Vries, email: <a href="mailto:J.deVries@verreanaasten.nl">J.deVries@verreanaasten.nl</a>
Kenya	Orthodox Presbyterian Church Disaster Response	David Nakhla, email: <a href="mailto:david.nakhla@opc.org">david.nakhla@opc.org</a>





For more feedback on the survey, per continent, please visit <https://www.icrconline.com/>  
It is important to note that the whole situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic is very fluid. The survey only offers a “snapshot” of the situation halfway the year 2020.

On behalf of the Diaconal Committee of  
the ICRC Dr. P.G. Boon  
Secretary

## **Appendix 4:**

### **DIACONAL RESOURCES AND MATERIAL**

*Diaconal Committee of the ICRC*

This document offers an overview of diaconal resources and material, produced by the ICRC churches. The intention is that, as far as possible, this material will be made available via the ICRC website. It should be emphasized that this is a working document, and that hopefully many more titles will be added in future. Any additional proposals will be appreciated and can be sent to the secretary, PG Boon: [fampgboon@gmail.com](mailto:fampgboon@gmail.com)

# Appendix to Article 31



## **International Conference of Reformed Churches Financial Report – Summary of documents included November 22, 2022**

- 1) ICRC Financial Report 2022, from the Treasurer
- 2) Letter from brothers regarding review of the financial records
- 3) Statement of Receipts and Disbursements
- 4) Statement of Financial Position
- 5) Operating Budget for years 2023 through 2026
- 6) Assessments for years 2023 through 2026



**International Conference of Reformed Churches  
Financial Report  
October 17, 2022**

Esteemed Members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches,

It is my sincere privilege to present to you the Treasurer's report regarding the financial matters related to the operations of the ICRC over the past five years, from 2018 through 2022.

We can first take note that the financial records have been examined by two highly qualified brothers of a member church. Both brothers are certified public accountants with much experience in the field of accounting.

The 2017 ICRC conference adopted a \$155,000 USD budget for this current period which included a budgeted net deficit of \$41,700. We budgeted for the deficit to utilize some excess funds in our bank account which was primarily caused by a near \$100,000 budget surplus from the Jordan, Ontario conference. The conference was accomplished quite inexpensively by using billets and the host church's facilities as a conference venue.

The outcome of the activities over the past five years was that we have a net surplus of approximately \$13,000. There are two primary reasons for the surplus. First, we collected five years of assessments in this four-year budget cycle. Second, international COVID travel restrictions resulted in a reduced number of in-person committee meetings and regional conferences meaning less travel expenses were paid.

The pandemic resulted in a one-year delay to the international conference. This caused an unusual outcome different from what we typically have with the four-year budget and new assessments approved at a conference held a year ago. The executive committee made the decision to continue the same assessment this year as had been done in the prior four years. We thought this approach was better to avoid a further spike in assessments if we skipped a year of assessment. So again, the financial statements presented include the actual and projected activity for the past *five* years ending December 31, 2022.

The amounts assessed to the member churches the past five years has been nearly entirely received. We are very thankful to the member churches who promptly send payment once the assessment letters have been issued each year. We are still hopeful to collect the remaining amounts outstanding yet. We encourage these federations to get current on their outstanding amounts as soon as possible.

The cash balances remain at a healthy figure, as shown on our Statement of Financial Position. This excess balance has been taken into consideration in developing the proposed budget for the next four years.

We give thanks to the Lord that the Treasury is solvent and we are more than able to pay our obligations, even during some turbulent economic times these past few years. With this being said, assessments will be increased for each member church to make up the gap left by removing the assessment to the RCN.

Thank you to the Executive Committee for their assistance these past years, and particularly to the Secretary, Rev. Dr. J. Visscher for his excellent support. It's been a pleasure to work with him, and he will be missed.



In closing, we are grateful to the Lord who has provided again so richly the resources to allow us to carry out the activities of the ICRC. May the Lord be praised and glorified in all of our endeavors, as we trust Him to provide us with the financial needs going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Lodder  
Treasurer for the ICRC

June 20, 2022

To the members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches:

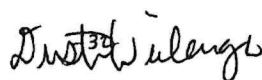
We the undersigned met with brother Kyle Lodder on June 8, 2022 to take a look at the financial records of the ICRC.

We found them to be well organized and noted no issues.

Sincerely,



Kevin Van Delden, CPA



Dustin Wielenga

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**  
**STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS**  
**JANUARY 1, 2018 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022**  
**(REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)**

	Budget	Actual and projected through 12/31/2022	Difference	Percentage of Budget
<b>Receipts</b>				
Assessment receipts	\$ 155,000	\$ 194,809	\$ 39,809	125.7%
Interest income	\$ -	\$ 80	\$ 80	
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$ 155,000</b>	<b>\$ 194,889</b>	<b>\$ 39,889</b>	<b>125.7%</b>
<b>Disbursements</b>				
Accommodations/provisions	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,404	\$ 404	100.4%
Administration	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ (1,500)	0.0%
Admin. costs Conference Expenses	\$ 2,000	\$ 223	\$ (1,777)	11.1%
Bank Charges	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,838	\$ 838	141.9%
Diaconal	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,837	\$ 837	107.0%
Executive Committee	\$ 12,000	\$ 13,570	\$ 1,570	113.1%
Honorarium & Travel Speakers	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,562	\$ (1,438)	79.5%
Mailings /Postage	\$ 200	\$ 112	\$ (88)	55.9%
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ (1,000)	0.0%
Mission Committee	\$ 18,500	\$ 25,199	\$ 6,699	136.2%
Publishing Committee	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,757	\$ (243)	95.9%
Regional Conferences Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 5,310	\$ (9,690)	35.4%
Theological Education Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 8,483	\$ (6,517)	56.6%
Travel Assistance	\$ 14,000	\$ 11,677	\$ (2,323)	83.4%
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$ 196,700</b>	<b>\$ 181,972</b>	<b>\$ (14,728)</b>	<b>92.5%</b>
<b>Net Surplus/ (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (41,700)</b>	<b>\$ 12,917</b>	<b>\$ 54,617</b>	<b>-31.0%</b>

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**AS OF NOVEMBER 22, 2022**  
**(REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)**

Assets	
Cash - Peoples USD Account	\$ 78,505
Cash - HSBC CAD Account	\$ 15,983
Cash - HSBC USD Account	\$ 17,754
Total Cash	<u>\$ 112,242</u>
Accounts Receivable	<u>\$ 292</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 112,534</u></u>
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$ -
Net Assets	<u>\$ 112,534</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>\$ 112,534</u></u>



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES**  
**OPERATING BUDGET**  
**YEARS 2023 - 2026**  
**(REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)**

	<b>NAMIBIA CONFERENCE</b>		<b>OPERATING BUDGET</b>
	<b>YEARS 2018 - 2022</b>		<b>YEARS 2023-2026</b>
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Receipts			
Assessment receipts	\$ 155,000	\$ 194,809	\$ 155,000
Interest income	\$ -	\$ 80	\$ -
Total Receipts	<u>\$ 155,000</u>	<u>\$ 194,889</u>	<u>\$ 155,000</u>
Disbursements			
Accommodations/provisions	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,404	\$ 85,000
Administration	\$ 1,500	\$ -	\$ -
Admin. costs Conference Expenses	\$ 2,000	\$ 223	\$ 1,000
Bank Charges	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,838	\$ 2,600
Diaconal	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,837	\$ 25,000
Executive Committee, and administration	\$ 12,000	\$ 13,570	\$ 12,000
Honorarium & Travel Speakers	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,562	\$ 7,000
Mailings /Postage	\$ 200	\$ 112	\$ 200
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000
Mission Committee	\$ 18,500	\$ 25,199	\$ 18,500
Publishing Committee	\$ 6,000	\$ 5,757	\$ 15,000
Regional Conferences Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 5,310	\$ 10,000
Theological Education Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 8,483	\$ 15,000
Travel Assistance	\$ 14,000	\$ 11,677	\$ 14,000
Total Disbursements	<u>\$ 196,700</u>	<u>\$ 181,972</u>	<u>\$ 206,800</u>
Net Surplus/ (Deficit)	<u>\$ (41,700)</u>	<u>\$ 12,917</u>	<u>\$ (51,800) *</u>

\* Deficit budget is funded with excess cash in the bank due to surplus funds carrying forward from previous conferences



## Appendix to article 35

### Membership Application of the Reformed Churches The Netherlands

Note: The English acronym is RCN, the Dutch acronym is GKN.

#### Advisory Committee #5

*Re: Application to become member of the ICRC by the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Reformed Churches Netherlands)*

To the ICRC Windhoek 2022

As Advisory Committee #5 we have met with the delegate of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Reformed Churches Netherlands), Br Jaap Vreugdenhil, in connection with their application to become a member of the ICRC. They have at present 11 congregations and 6 preaching points and in total about 1500 members. There have 7 active pastors and 7 retired. The congregations are located in the north, south, east and west of the Netherlands. They do not have their own theological seminary but send their students to the Theological University in Apeldoorn, the training institute of the CGK, which is an ICRC member church. After this, students complete their studies with an in house plus programme offered by a few GKN pastors.

In our meeting we focused on the prerequisites stipulated in the Regulations of the ICRC Constitution:

ICRC Regulations X.3

First, "Applications for membership in the Conference shall be sponsored by at least two Member Churches".

In the first place, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church has officially sponsored their application.

In the second place, the Free Reformed Churches in Canada also sponsor their application.

This means that this first prerequisite has been met.

Second, these sponsoring churches must have ongoing first-hand knowledge of the ministry and life of the applicant Church.

From the side of the OPC, their communications indicate that they do have first-hand knowledge of the applicant federation.

From the side of the FRC Canada, they know these churches and their background and their confessional status. In the past there were contacts to and fro. They have the same historical roots and are thankful for the GKN's application for membership. This will open the doors for them to enjoy and intensify the bonds with orthodox Reformed and Presbyterian federations worldwide, which will be of great benefit to them.

Third, any member Church in the same country as the applicant shall also be consulted.

In 2021 the GKN approached the CGK and bilateral deliberations were started. Although the CGK has not yet reached the stage to act as a sponsor to the GKN's application for ICRC membership, nevertheless they do not object against the GKN becoming an ICRC member, would other federations sponsor them.

From the side of the CGK there is a strong encouragement that the GKN should work towards unity with another federation that has seceded from the Reformed Churches (Liberated) for the same reasons.

As advisory committee, we had a joint meeting with the GKN representatives as well as the CGK delegates. Regarding this call from the CGK, the GKN representative, br Vreugdenhil, informed us that his federation has started the process of unification with the DGK. The synods of both federations have decided that they must become one in the near future. Br Vreugdenhil also informed us that the DGK has no objections against the GKN application to becoming a member of the ICRC.

The fourth prerequisite asks the sponsoring churches to attest to the official standards of the applying church and whether they are upheld.

To this we as advisory committee can give feedback that the official standards of the applying church



are the Three Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity. The sponsoring churches attest that these confessions are living documents in these churches, and in line with this, that the Scriptures are preached and lived and therefore a living faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are visible.

And lastly, there is the question whether the GKN has attended previous conferences as observers. They haven't attended the ICRC Jordan 2017. However, they did attend the European ICRC conference in 2018 in England, where they received a warm welcome.

Adding to this, to date they have received requests from other ICRC member churches to intensify contacts with them.

To conclude, as advisory committee we advise the Conference to welcome the GKN as a member of the ICRC.

Respectfully submitted,

Pieter Boon; Samit Mishra; Gerald Procee

## Appendix to article 36

Disclaimer: Convictions presented in a paper are not necessarily held or endorsed by the ICRC.

### The Authority of the Scriptures in Diverse Situations and Ethical Contexts

International Conference of Reformed Churches

Windhoek Namibia, October 2022

By Rev. Dr. Henk van den Belt

Scripture is the infallible word of God. The omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth is speaking to us. This requires first and foremost an attitude of reverence and awe, of the fear of the Lord. Scripture itself says that we should tremble. Do we? Especially as theologians and ministers who deal with scripture 'professionally' we tend to instrumentalize Scripture and forget to listen to the voice of our Shepard and follow him.

Scripture offers such a clear picture of Christ, our beloved Saviour. Can we look at Scripture like we looked at the small photograph of our girlfriend in our wallet's years ago and maybe even just kiss it...

Without that attitude any orthodox doctrine of Scripture will be empty and useless.

#### The authority of Scripture

Much can be said about the authority of Scripture, but today I want to underline that this is a Spiritual authority. In his "last words," King David claimed to be anointed by the God of Jacob: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). The prophets spoke with authority, aware of their divine calling. They may not have always mentioned the Spirit as source of their authority as explicitly as Micah, who claimed to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord to confront the people of Israel with their transgressions and sins (Mic. 3:8), nevertheless they were aware that their prophetic work was spiritual in nature.

John Calvin used the Greek adjective *autopistos* for the authority of the Bible. The prefix *auto-* denotes "by itself" or "of itself"; the adjective *pistos* is derived from *pistis*, meaning "faith" or "trust". When something is *autopistos*, it is to be trusted or believed "because of itself" or "in itself". The term originates from ancient geometry, used for axioms, that were "self-convincing" because their demonstration was both unnecessary and impossible.

Calvin introduced the term in the final edition of the *Institutes* (1559): "Let this therefore stand: those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught, truly find rest in Scripture. It is indeed *autopistos*; it should not be submitted to demonstration by proofs. Still it owes the certainty that it deserves among us to the testimony of the Spirit." Thus a Spiritual understanding of Scriptural authority is essential for Reformed theology.

Ponder on it for a moment. The saving deeds of the God of Israel and the Father of Jesus Christ, such as the exodus and the resurrection, are proclaimed by prophets and apostles. Their oral proclamation has been written down in original documents. These documents were collected and edited by the final redactors of the books of the Old and New Testaments. The manuscripts have been copied and transmitted by the church from generation to generation. Finally these texts are translated and the message of these texts is proclaimed in the present context. The process might be vulnerable, but the Spirit rules over it from the beginning to the end. When the witness of the Spirit makes the witness of Scripture resonate in the heart, we as it were are made eye and ear witnesses of the mighty deeds of God, the underlying historical facts of salvation history. 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' Yes, I was there, because Christ crucified has been painted before my eyes by the preaching of the Gospel. Even though we might differ on some issues, due to a different understanding and interpretation of Scripture, this is what we have in common.

The question I was asked to address is how the Scriptures are to be understood, interpreted and

applied in different times and different cultures. That is a rather broad question... Indeed, Scripture's authority is always the same and indeed our 'context' is always the same too: we are sinners... But, let's avoid this primary reaction to the theme and try not only to reaffirm what we all know but also to face some difficulties with regards to the authority of Scripture. It would be easier for me to just say what I think you all want to hear, but I believe that it is more helpful – and a task of academic theology as well – sometimes to place some difficult questions and issues on the table, not to undermine the authority of Scripture, but to understand it better.

Therefore I thought it would be most helpful to try to answer two related questions, one is more analytical and the other more normative: 1) Why do Christians who confess to agree on the authority of Scripture differ, and, 2) how much difference is allowed?

I will try to deal with both questions together in a threefold manner: 1) From the approach of Scripture itself and especially from its Spiritual unity. 2) From the relationship between Scripture and what we call general or universal revelation, and 3) From the relationship between the Gospel and the diversity of cultural situations in which Scripture is understood, interpreted and applied.

### **1. The unity of the Scriptures**

If we analyse why Christians that adhere to the authority of Scripture can hold different and mutually exclusive positions, this often is a matter of a different approach of the whole of Scripture, you might call it the hermeneutical lens, in which the Spiritual unity of Scripture is always at stake.

Some Christians have an extrabiblical lens, for Roman Catholicism that is ultimately the authority of the church as an institution. The Roman Catholic Church cannot really be reformed from the Word of God, because of the belief that the Spirit leads the church infallibly. So the church can only reformulate it's doctrines slightly, but not really change them. This is the sad Babylonian captivity, codified by the Council of Trent.

The explicit liberal view of Scripture also has an external hermeneutical lens, namely the presupposition that excludes divine revelation and interprets Scripture as a human account of the divine. If you take that position, God can never speak through his Word, because you exclude that beforehand. Of course it is possible to read the Bible as any other ancient book, but it is not the way Scripture presents itself.

There is also a form of what I – for the sake of simplicity – label as soft- or light-Liberalism – just as you might have a Coca-cola-light. This hermeneutics certainly does not deny the authority of Scripture, nor does I see the Bible as a merely human response to the divine, but it tends to emphasize certain trends in Scripture at the cost of others. If the biblical command to love your neighbour as yourself is taken as the hermeneutical lens for every command, that will lead to a different ethics than if you see the ten commandments as the expression of God's holy character. In the first case it is very unmerciful to require celibacy of homosexuals, while in the second case is the only option. This is also an external lens in the sense that the interpreter of Scripture chooses which texts – and often these are 'nice' texts about God and us – are the key to the interpretation of the rest.

The right way to approach Scripture is not from the outside but from the inside. I mostly say that we should not take Scripture literally – though I don't object at taking it as literally as possible – but that we take it as it presents itself to us. Then we can take the different genres into account. We place particular texts in the whole account of salvation history, of which the most important aspects are: creation, the fall and God's gracious response to it, the revelation of His covenant in its subsequent administrations and, the coming of the Son of God to reconcile lost sinners with the Father by his cross and resurrection, the application of it by the Holy Spirit and the coming of the kingdom of God in the day of glory.

Historically, the gospel of salvation as outlined in the epistle of Romans is the hermeneutical lens of the Reformation. Without being able to do justice to them, Anabaptists for instance, emphasise the Sermon on the Mount as the key to the understanding of the gospel, which leads to a different view of the relationship between justification and sanctification and of practical matters like serving in the army and taking an oath. A difference in approach between the Lutheran and the Reformed confessions lies in the Lutheran application of the structure of Law and Gospel to the Old and New Testaments and in the Reformed appreciation of the Old Testament as an account of the God of Israel who deals with his

people in the subsequent phases of salvation history. To give one more example the Baptists, even if they are Reformed, think differently of the covenant as a basis for infant baptism. Given the high view of the authority of Scripture that Christians have in common, if they differ it often has to do with the different approaches of Scripture and especially of the keys to the unity of Scripture.

If we turn to the normative part of the question, how do we assess these differences, there are two extremes. One excludes all diversity and the other embraces it. On the one hand one could say that if anyone wants to be saved, he or she 'ought to be baptized only once without ever repeating it.' Taken literally this would mean that we won't meet Baptists in heaven. And it is sad to say that the author of our *Belgic Confession*, Guido de Bres, from which I just quoted believed that there was no hope at all for Anabaptists even if they were burned at the stake.

The other extreme says that it both the Baptist exclusion of infant baptism and the paedobaptist insistence on infant baptism can be true, which presupposes a very postmodern view of truth as something relative to the circumstances.

The only solution seems to be that we heartily disagree with each other, but still try to understand why other Christians interpret the Bible differently. That often does not have to do with disrespect for the authority of Scripture – and therefore we should be careful not to conclude that too quickly – but with a different approach of the unity of Scripture, say a difference in hermeneutics. So we believe that our Baptist brothers and sisters one day will see how much they have erred... But we also have to accept the fact that they believe that one day we will see how much we have erred...

There are different ways in which the Scriptural data are weighed and explained, especially in ethical issues. The only way to deal with this is a strict adherence to anything Scripture as a whole teaches and at the same time a certain openness to listen to others who – given the common confession of the authority of Scripture – draw different conclusions from Scripture.

It is possible from Scripture to defend slavery, but we now – hopefully all of us – interpret the Bible in a way that does not defend slavery. There are also issues on which we can agree to disagree, the so called *adiaphora*, the real problem is, of course that we all agree that there are things on which we are allowed to disagree, but that we disagree about which things we are allowed to disagree on. This makes it very difficult to draw very strict general lines in answer to the second more normative question how much difference is allowed. Let me give two examples.

In my view of the unity of the church it is wrong to split off from the one church of Christ unless it becomes impossible to bear witness to the truth there. The Belgic Confession says that there are only two churches, one true and one false, and that you all have to join that one true church unless it has become false. This is why I am a member of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, a merge in 2004 of the historical Dutch church of the Reformation, de Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland originating in the Afscheiding, the Secession and the Doleantie of Abraham Kuyper, and the Lutheran churches. According to the rules of the ICRC this is a very bad church with tolerance of liberalism, too little discipline and women in the office. So to put it bluntly, in your view I am in error and in my view some of your churches should not even exist... Hopefully there is some room for Christian liberty here and we should be willing to listen carefully and ask each other how our positions relate to the holiness and apostolicity of the church on the one hand and to the unity and catholicity on the other.

Second, I even would argue that there is some room to differ on the issue of women in the office. Not because there are women in my church that preach and teach more faithfully than many men, but because you can also weigh the diversity of the Scriptural witnesses in a sense that allows for women in the office. Everything seems to depend on the definition. Not of a woman, though even that is under discussion nowadays, but of the office. Before you get so worried that you can't listen anymore, I object to women in teaching or ruling offices. Still, the conclusion that no woman in any case is not allowed to say anything in a church service, seems to be just as contrary to Scripture as the conclusion that all the offices should be open for women. Perhaps the function of a deaconess could be reconsidered in this discussion.

In any case it would be helpful to be more aware of underlying hermeneutical issues and choices and to reconsider Christian liberty. Otherwise your churches will easily become sectarian in a self-sufficient

isolation. We just need each other too much in our secularizing context. In the meantime, we should be willing to remain on speaking terms, literally, without relativizing the truth in a postmodern way and without losing sight of the essential salvation historical perspective on Scripture which is characteristic for the Reformed position.

## **2. The relationship between Scripture and universal revelation**

What sometimes makes the situation more complicated is the relationship between Scripture and universal revelation or general knowledge. What would you think of a pastor saying to the congregation: ‘We do not know how remote the period of the creation of this globe may be—certainly many millions of years before the time of Adam. Our planet has passed through various stages of existence, and different kinds of creatures have lived on its surface, all of which have been fashioned by God.’ You might not expect that, but it is a quote from one of Spurgeon’s sermons. I won’t go into the details of the gap-theory etc, nor into the views of men like Charles Hodge, Benjamin B. Warfield and James Orr. I don’t say that you have to agree with them either, but – at least historically Reformed theology is not per se identical with the view of a creation in 6 days of 24 hours, 6.000 years ago. This has to do with the fundamental idea of the unity of God’s mouth and his hand.

In my view, we should be careful with statements that suggest that everything is clear regarding such issues. According to Wilhelmus à Brakel people that thought that the sun stands still and the earth turns are people whose heads are spinning too much. [...] Scripture says that the earth is fixed. Period. Given the fact that heliocentric cosmology has the best papers to explain the motions in our solar system. As a result, we have come to read certain biblical texts as expressions of everyday language - the sun rises and the sun sets - rather than as scientific information.

With regards to difficult moral issues such as the biblical relationship between men and women and our attitude regarding homosexuality, but also issues like racism and slavery, the question is not only what Scripture literally means, nor even how that relates to culture then and culture now, but who we deal with the insights gained from our general knowledge regarding human beings. Taking into account what we now know about human sexuality does not lead to a different conclusion regarding homosexual relationships, but it should make us milder in our attitude towards those who are born with this sexual orientation.

As for the answer to the normative side of the question, on the one hand the interpretation of universal revelation – and I say interpretation on purpose – should not contradict the clear meaning of Scripture as long as we take the text as it presents itself to us. Whereas young-earth creationists take Genesis as literally as possible as an historical account of what happened, others allow for a less strict reading, not in the first place because ‘science’ demands this, but because the way in which the text presents itself seems to suggest that there is more at stake than a literal description of what has happened.

The fundamental unity between the universal revelation in creation, history and conscience and the particular revelation in Christ and in the Word of God is essential for Reformed theology because of the holiness of God and the unity of truth.

The Christian faith should not be disconnected from general knowledge. Revelation in Scripture may be the glasses through which we look at the book of nature, but what we see through those glasses also helps determine our understanding of Scripture.

All our ordinary knowledge ultimately rests in divine revelation. Our knowledge of chemistry, biology, and psychology is ultimately the re-thinking of thoughts that God has revealed in creation (Herman Bavinck). The knowledge of God’s universal revelation should never come to rule over Scripture, but it does play a part in understanding Scripture.

God’s hand and God’s mouth cannot contradict each other though there may be a tension between our understanding of God’s verbal and nonverbal communication. The light of the Word and the light in the world come from the same source. “In Your light we see the light...”

## **3. The relationship between Scripture and diverse cultural situations**

A third and final answer to our dual question relates to the interaction between the original cultural



context of the Bible and the historical contexts in which the Bible is interpreted.

The books of the Bible originated in a particular culture and time. There is a difference between the Old Testament and New Testament contexts. What is said in the Old Testament about the theocratic role of government, does not apply to the Roman Empire.

In addition, there is a great difference between the contexts in which the Bible is read, not only in a historical sense but also in the global church. We tend to condemn Moses' action against the Egyptian. We see his anger as an uncontrolled passion. Christians who themselves face oppression and violence, however, might find it hard to imagine the Israelites reacting so negatively when someone from the establishment finally stands up for them.

Was Moses' anger right or wrong? We must be careful to draw ethical conclusions from Scripture when the text of the Bible does not do so. In this case, Stephen's explanation of the history is at odds with our Western intuitions. Moses "thought that his brethren would understand that God would give them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand" (Acts 7:25).

The interaction between the cultural contexts in which Scripture originated and those in which Scripture is read is the most complicated part of the hermeneutical process. Very simply summarized, however, it still boils down to this: if we are to understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us now, we must first know what the prophet Jeremiah intended to say to Israel and what the apostle Paul intended to say to the church at Rome. The intention of the human author, but especially the message of God through that author in the original situation is normative.

The application we make today should not be at odds with that. The New Testament guidelines for marriage were liberating in the context of the time. A woman is not part of the property of her husband, but she is his body. In sexuality, the woman rules over the man's body just as much as the man rules over the woman's body. If these texts are used in later cultural contexts to legitimize oppression, then apparently something has gone wrong in the hermeneutic process.

The diversity of contexts might also be helpful to avoid blind spots with regards to the authority of Scripture. We all know what H. Richard Niebuhr said about the social gospel: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross." Still the authority of Scripture also has something to say about equality. I didn't feel very comfortable on the farm last Saturday seeing the difference in between the farmer's house and the huts where the San-people live. But then I realized that I am part of the same system. The distance between my nice house in the Netherlands and Africa is only a bit larger. Do we too easily avoid what Scripture says about the rich and the kingdom of heaven, while we subscribe to a strict doctrine of Scriptural authority. What does the Spirit say to us when we are confronted with poverty?

Sometimes our choices with regards to the authority of Scripture seem to be arbitrary. Take the apostolic command – found five times in the New Testament - to greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, 1 Thess. 5:26 and 1 Pet. 5:14). If I would do that literally on Sunday, the whole Dutch Reformed circle would know it on Monday or Tuesday. Happily, the annotations of the Dutch Statenvertaling say, "That is, with a kiss of peace and brotherhood, with which the faithful, according to the custom of those countries and times, used to greet one another."

The commentary goes even further on the prohibition against men praying with their heads covered (1 Corinthians 11). The uncovering of the head was then a sign of power and dominion, but now, by contrast, "those who have power over others shall keep their heads covered. [...] But in all these things we must always look at the practice in diverse times and countries, and at what is fair and edifying in them."

Such examples already make clear that the influence of one's own context on the understanding and especially on the application of biblical precepts is not limited to what has been called "the new hermeneutics".

Turning to the normative question how much difference with regards to context should be allowed in the body of Christ, we first of all should be aware of the fact that even our awareness of the cultural situation is culturally determined. Before the Enlightenment, there was much less awareness in Western

culture of the concrete historical and cultural situatedness of the authoritative texts of Scripture and tradition. In a variety of non-Western cultures, that awareness plays a much lesser role than in our culture. Hermeneutics is perhaps primarily a (post-)modern Western hobby, and a (post)modern Western problem. It should not be an export-article.

Still, most complicated part of the issue of contextuality is how the general understanding of Scripture relates to the philosophical presuppositions in a given context.

The pre-modern approach of the biblical text during the Reformation was characterized by a combination of biblical humanism and the scholastic terminology of Christian Aristotelianism. The Reformation wanted to go back to the sources and still some theological issues are coloured by philosophical presuppositions, for instance the view of God as *actus purus*, the idea of an impassionate God or the relationship between God as the primary and humans as the secondary causes of free human actions.

The Enlightenment made an epistemological turn to the human subject. Theology had to reinvent itself in relation – and often also in opposition to – this new philosophy. A Brakel's rejection of the heliocentric cosmology was part of the broader rejection of Cartesian philosophy.

In the modern context it was easier than now to define the boundaries between orthodoxy and liberalism. The starting point is either reason (liberalism) or Scripture (orthodoxy).

The reason why there is so much confusion among evangelicals nowadays again is because of a new philosophical context, the so called 'linguistic turn' in philosophy. It is the conviction that language no longer is an expression of our knowledge and corresponds to reality, but that language itself constructs reality. When reading texts, including sacred texts, each reader, through his or her own presuppositions, inserts his or her own opinion into the text.

During the past decades, an important hermeneutical development has taken place among many evangelicals worldwide. This development can be characterized as a moderate application of postmodern language philosophy to the understanding and interpretation of Scripture.

Evangelicals who integrate this turn generally reject the relativistic consequences of postmodern philosophy, but still they want to relate to it in a positive way. Take for instance the huge popularity of the speech-act theory and the idea that we are to play out the final stage of God's salvation historical drama. It is an attractive way to replace the modern propositional view of revelation by a moderate postmodern understanding of revelation as a continual act of God without having to take over the relativism of postmodernism.

But I wonder whether the price tag of this approach is sufficiently taken into account. Is the post-modern turn to language as constitutive for reality not per se incompatible with the essence of Christian revelation and of truth as a correspondence between fact and thought, or in Augustinian terminology, between *res* and *signum*.

### **Back to the Reformation**

Rather than fighting against postmodernism with modern 'weapons' I think that we might learn a lot from the pre-modern approach of Scripture, characterized by the awe for the God who speaks to us in his holy and infallible Word. So perhaps we should try to go back to the Reformation. Let me make this more concrete in some concluding remarks:

According to the Refomation, Scripture is the first principle and ultimate norm for all theology. This helps us to relativize the contextual differences among Christians. There is far more in Scripture that unites them than what divides them culturally. Therefore, the voice of the church of all ages and places is important and might lead to a careful suspicion about radical and rapid changes.

Secondly, according to the Reformation, Scripture is the living and powerful Word of God, it should not be cast into one cultural leave alone philosophical form.

Thirdly, the sovereign Spirit binds himself to the Word. The same Spirit has led the church in these different historical contexts and leads the worldwide body of Christ today in a diversity of contexts. Nevertheless, the Spirit, who has spoken through the prophets, guides them all in accordance with the one and only Word of God, that is, by the Scriptures that testify of Christ. The Spirit will not lead the church in a direction opposite from Scripture.

Finally, if the Spirit-breathed Word begs for a spiritual and clear explanation, the appeal to the



intention of the author in the original cultural context or to the ongoing guidance of the Spirit in the history of the church may never lead to ambiguous interpretations that contradict the message of the historical-grammatical meaning of Scripture.

Therefore, we should always start theologically with the confession that the same Spirit who inspired the authors of the Bible is given to the church in all these different historical and cultural contexts to lead the church through the Word into the whole truth. In other words, we should approach hermeneutics pneumatologically and understand the different interpretations of Scripture as forms in which the Spirit leads the church into all truth. The norm of this guidance through the Spirit is always the Spirit-breathed Word of God.

## Appendix to article 38

### Devotional message of Rev. Dr. Heinrich Zwemstra

**Sermon:** 2 Peter 3:1-13

**Text Verses:** 2 Peter 3:8,9

**Theme:** *Christ is coming; He is calling His children to repentance!*

#### Introduction

Dear Brothers, in the second last verse of the Bible, in Revelation 22:20, Jesus says: "Surely I come quickly." But why did 2000 years pass since His first coming? Generations come and generations go. The world is full of despair and sin.

Since Jesus' ascension there were a lot of disasters, hunger and diseases. And throughout the ages the church was persecuted in many ways. Throughout the ages the church cries out: Maranata, come Lord Jesus!

God speaks to us, and He assures us: Christ is coming again! And He calls us to abide and to persevere. While we are waiting for the second coming of Christ God is calling people to repentance.

#### 1. Christ is coming

It is important that we take note how the apostle Peter addresses the readers. He calls them beloved, and this expression is repeated 4 times in chapter 3. The expression shows the intimate relationship between the apostle and the readers. He really cares for them. And this is also the way God addresses his children. He calls us beloved because he really loves us and cares about our well-being.

Peter also gives the purpose of this epistle in chapter 3 verse 1:

*"This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder."*

Yes, in 2 Peter God is encouraging us by reminding us of the promises of the return of Jesus Christ.

In the first chapter Peter has reminded the believers of the precious faith they have been given. Through faith in Jesus Christ they are righteous before God. And in chapter 1 he also reminded them of their calling to godliness because of their wonderful salvation.

In the second chapter Peter has reminded them to be careful for false teachers among them. These false teachers try to exploit the believers and are full of greed. They follow their own sinful desires and despise authority. In short: The lives of the false teachers are characterized by wickedness and worldliness.

But that is not all. Not only are the lives of the false teachers wicked, but also their teaching. They are bold and arrogant, and they try to justify their sinful deeds.

Today we must also be careful for false teachers. We must be careful for those whose lives and teaching are contrary to the word of God.

In the third chapter Peter now reminds the believers of the second coming of Christ, and he warns them against scoffers that will come in the last days. In verses 3 and 4 we read:

*"knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'"*

The "last days" is the time between the first coming of Christ and His second coming. Like the first readers of 2 Peter we are also living in the last days. And in the last days believers are warned against scoffers. A scoffer is someone who follows his own will and mocks with God's will. From the context we can make the conclusion that the scoffers were the false teachers in chapter 2 who followed their own sinful desires.

In the last days God is constantly reminding us about the truths of the second coming of Christ. But why is it necessary that we must be reminded of these truths? God knows that we have a bad memory, and therefore we need to be reminded. It is easy for believers to “get accustomed to God’s truth”. The Holy Spirit gave us the truth of the Word, but often we take this for granted and become complacent. We need to be reminded regularly so that we are awake!

Because God’s Word is true, we must pay attention to it and take its message serious. The teaching and preaching of God’s Word must not lull us to sleep, but rather is it must awaken us to godly lives and to proclaim the gospel to those who are not saved (Rom. 13:11-14).

In verse 2, Peter makes it clear that the second coming of Christ is not only something which the apostles teach. The prophets taught it and so did our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter stresses the unity of the Word of God. When scoffers deny the coming of Christ, they are denying the truth of the prophetic books, the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels and the writing of the Apostles.

The scoffers who deny the second coming says:

*“For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

Fathers refer to the first generation of Christians. Peter wrote this letter just before his death (**cf. 1:14**) in (A.D.) 68. At that time many of the first generation Christians passed away. The argument of the scoffers is: To the first generation Christians the promise was given that Christ will come again. But now many of them died without the fulfillment of that promise. No, they say, the world will continue as it is.

Also today many scoffers deny the second coming of Christ. In the secular world in which we live many people deliberately ignore this truth and even mock with it. Maybe you have personally experienced mocking because you are holding onto this truth. But these scoffers must not discourage us. In 2 Peter 3 the Holy Spirit is reminding us that we can expect scoffing and he encourages us to remain faithful.

Peter gives evidence which scoffers deliberately ignore. Today it is also amazing how many people ignore certain information.

Peter shows two events in history to prove his point:

1. God’s work at creation (verse 5);
2. The flood in Noah’s day (verse 6).

God created the heavens and the earth by His word. The phrase “and God said” occurs nine times in Genesis 1. God spoke and everything just happened. With his Word God also sustains his creation. He did not wind up his creation like and clock to run on its own. No, God is in control and he can intervene when He wants to.

Peter shows that in the past God did intervene in His creation. Just like the scoffers, the people living at the time of the flood thought that everything is calm and nothing would change. But, suddenly everything changed, and the wicked world perished by water. Only Noah and his family were saved.

Peter’s argument is clear: With His Word God created everything and with his Word He is keeping his creation in place. With his Word he can also change things anytime. In the past he has sent rain when He wanted to. In the future – when Christ comes – He will judge and purify his creation with fire (Belgic Confession, Article 37).

We have seen so far that Christ is coming again. That is clear from God’s Word and His Word is certain.

Someone may ask: But why is it taking so long? The scoffers argue that it is taking so long because there is no second coming of Christ?!

## **2. God is calling His children to repentance**

In human terms 2000 years may feel and look long, but verse 8 gives us God’s perspective of time:

*“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”*

Peter is here referring to Psalm 90:4:

*“For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.”*

God is eternal and He is not limited to time the way we are. As a matter of fact, God is the creator of time and He uses time perfectly. When we study the works of God it is clear that He is never in a hurry, and He is never late.

God is not limited to time, but He uses time perfectly to accomplish his purposes. After the fall He didn't send the Savior immediately, but he waited till the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4).

Scoffers do not understand that God is eternal, nor do they understand His mercy. Why is God allowing time before the return of Christ and the coming of the Day of the Lord? It is not because He is unable or unwilling to act. He is not off schedule! Nobody has the right to decide when God must act and how he must act. God is sovereign in all things and does not need the counsel of sinful man (Rom. 11:33-36).

God delays the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment because He is patient. He is giving time for the salvation of sinners. In verse 15 (of 2 Peter) we read: *"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation..."*

God brought salvation through Jesus Christ. He became man and with His life on earth, and His suffering on the cross he paid the price for our sins. Because of our sins we deserved to be eternally condemned, but in God's wonderful grace Jesus took our iniquity on Him.

After Jesus died for our sins he rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven and gave the Holy Spirit to His church. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit is calling people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The time we are living in is indeed a time of God's grace. In his patience God is giving time for the proclamation of the gospel so that people repent. Not everyone one who hears gospel repent... But his children... God wants His chosen children to come to Him so that the number of the elect can come to fullness.

God calls us, His church, to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. It is not our responsibility to decide who God's children are. They are throughout this world. Our calling is to bring the gospel to them.

The second part of verse 9 needs our attention. It reads:

*"...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

[The Lord is] *"...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*

Does this mean that all people are saved?

When we look at other parts of the Bible we see that God is not saving all people. I can quote many passages, but I will quote 2:

John. 6:36: *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."*

Matt. 20:28: *"even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

So, God does not save all people; we see that from other parts of the Bible. The "all" is not all people.

The meaning of "all" is determined by the context in which the words are found. For example, when a teacher is getting ready to start a class and asks his students: "Are all here?", he is not asking if every living person on earth is present in the room! Rather he is referring to all the students enrolled in the class.

2 Peter shows us that that Peter is writing to a specific group and not to all of mankind. In 2 Peter 1 verse 1 Peter identifies the readers as those who *"have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."* And in chapter 3 verse 1 Peter says: *"This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved..."*

So Peter is writing to the believers in. The "all" (of verse 9) that God wishing not to perish must be limited to the same group he is writing to. Christ's second coming has been delayed so that all of the believers (God's children) can be saved. God is not willing that any of his children should perish, but that all of them come to repentance.

Dear friends. Christ is coming again! Do you live in the expectation of His coming? And do you have



the desire to be united with your savior? We can and must live with the expectation that Christ is coming, and while we wait continue our calling.

Parents who are expecting a child are excited about the birth of the child. But they do not want their baby to be born earlier, because it will be bad for the baby. While they are waiting they are preparing everything so that when the baby comes everything is ready.

Let us live with excitement for the coming of our Savior. We know that He will come at the right time. While we are waiting we must prepare and work for His coming. A Christian always keeps his eyes on the horizon for the coming of Christ, but at the same time he continues his daily work faithfully.

### **Close**

As a closure I want to refer to the words of Jesus in Matt. 25:45-51. The faithful and wise servant is the one who is faithfully doing his work when his Lord is coming again. Let us be encouraged by the Word of God that Christ is coming again and continue to cry out with the true church of all ages – Maranatha; Come Lord Jesus!. And while we are waiting we must continue our calling to preach the gospel. Let us pray that God will enable us in this through His Word and Holy Spirit.

AMEN



## Appendix to article 41

### REPORT OF THE ICRC MISSIONS COMMITTEE

TO THE  
10TH (2022) MEETING OF THE ICRC  
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

*Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44–49)*

#### I. MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS

The 9th (2017) Meeting of the ICRC established a Missions Committee, consisting of five members (with two alternates) to assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in missions, as follows:

- Mr. Mark T. Bube (convener, OPC)
- The Rev. Yonson Dethan (CRCI)
- The Rev. Dr. Arjan de Visser (CanRC)
- The Rev. Van Lalngakthang (RPCNEI)
- The Rev. David Miller (FCS)
- The Rev. Pieter Meijer (RCN - alternate)
- The Rev. Patrick Wic (SRC – alternate)

Mr. Bube served as chairman and Dr. De Visser was elected secretary. In November 2017, Mr. Meijer informed the Committee that due to health reasons he would not be able to accept his appointment as an alternate member of the Committee. After consulting with the Corresponding Secretary about the appointment of a replacement, the Committee invited the Rev. Dirk Boersma (FRCSA), a former member of the Committee, to fill the vacancy. Mr. Boersma accepted the appointment and was added to the Committee on May 8, 2018. During 2019 Mr. Miller was not able to participate in Committee work due to poor health, and in 2020 he informed the Committee that he would no longer be able to serve as a member of the Committee. We are thankful that the two alternate members (Messrs. Boersma and Wic) were able to participate in the work of the Committee, although Mr. Wic missed some meetings due to poor internet connection in South Sudan. With regard to future appointments to the Missions Committee, the Committee believes it is helpful to the work of the Committee to appoint brothers who already have experience in the world missions labors of their Member Churches.

The Committee met in person on September 18–20, 2018, and is planning to meet a second time in person on September 20–23, 2022, both meetings in conjunction with the joint consultation of





the representatives of the World Missions Agencies (WMA) of the Member Churches of the

ICRC and of NAPARC. The Committee also met thirteen times by GoToMeeting™ or Zoom™ video conference (0800 Eastern Time seemed to work best)—

- 2017: November 27
- 2018: May 11, November 26
- 2019: August 8
- 2020: January 16, June 11, September 17
- 2021: February 9, June 1, October 15
- 2022: January 19, March 31, June 2.

Copies of the *Minutes* of all fifteen of the Committee's meetings were sent to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator.

## **II. EXECUTION OF THE MANDATE**

To assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in missions, the 9th (2017) Meeting of the ICRC assigned the following mandate to the Missions Committee.

**Arrange for a consultation among representatives of the world missions agencies the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned work, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in mission among the Member Churches.**

On September 18-20, 2018,<sup>1</sup> representatives from the WMA of fifteen ICRC Member Churches (AEPC, ARPC, CanRC, CRCI, FSC, FRCNA, FRCSA, HRC, OPC, PCEA, PCU, RPCNA, RPCNEI, SRC, URCNA) met together with the WMA representatives from three NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council)<sup>2</sup> member churches that are not members of the ICRC (KAPC, PCA, PresRC) for joint consultation in the OPC's Administration Offices in Willow Grove, PA, USA. Mr. Bube served as the chairman; the Dr. de Visser served as the secretary.

During the two-day<sup>3</sup> joint consultation, each of the WMA representatives presented an overview of his church's/federation's world missions labors, with a particular emphasis on potential opportunities for working together with missionaries from other Member Churches, followed by a time of prayer for that church's work. Differences in approach and challenges encountered on

<sup>1</sup> This was the third such world missions consultation in the history of the ICRC; the first took place in May 2011 and the second in September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Website: <http://www.naparc.org>. The Committee notes that the consultation of WMA representatives of the NAPARC member churches gathers annually, usually in Willow Grove on the third Tuesday–Wednesday of September, and that representatives of the WMAs of the ICRC Member Churches who happen to be in North America at the time are welcome to attend and participate.

<sup>3</sup> The consultation convened at 1:00 p.m. on the Tuesday and adjourned at 12:45 p.m. on Thursday.



the mission field were freely discussed. And as requested, several of the participants provided copies of their mission policy documents for the Committee's further study.<sup>4</sup>

Among the topics discussed were:

- Ways to encourage each other in ministry in [a restricted access country]
- Pastoral care of missionaries
- Security concerns in the use of the Internet
- Different views of the Church's mission
- Ministry to refugees (particularly in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa)
- Dependency issues in meeting diaconal needs.

A redacted copy of the Agenda for the Consultation is attached.

The sessions were productive and the fellowship was sweet. At the conclusion of the consultation, several WMA representatives indicated that they found the consultation to be both informative and encouraging, and expressed a desire that future consultations be expanded to three days.<sup>5</sup> Follow-up comments from several of the participants included:

- Greetings to you all, it truly was a time of blessing – the unity of purpose, and such a purpose... it was a privilege to share in it with you.
- I am very thankful for the great spirit in which everyone contributed to the consultation. I enjoyed it very much as an upbuilding and encouraging meeting.
- Brothers, It was a great blessing to fellowship with you.

The next joint ICRC and NAPARC<sup>6</sup> WMA joint consultation was originally scheduled for September 2021. While the NAPARC joint WMA–DMA consultations were able to resume in 2021, with even the brothers from Canada being able to participate in person, international air travel was then still problematic, so the next joint ICRC and NAPARC WMA–DMA joint consultation was postponed to September 20–23, 2022,<sup>7</sup> in the OPC's Administration Offices in Willow Grove, PA, USA, with Mr. Bube as the chairman and Dr. de Visser as the secretary. Topics scheduled for discussion include—

- Dependency issues on the mission field
- Planning for going into and transitioning out of a mission work, in combination with training godly leaders
- Pastoral care for missionaries and their families
- Ministries in regions that have undergone significant political and/or religious upheaval in recent years (e.g., Eastern Europe [Ukraine], India and Pakistan, and northeast Africa [South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia]).

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<sup>4</sup> See discussion of the task of gathering and studying these mission policy documents at II.5, below.

<sup>5</sup> This would also be a better stewardship of the travel funds to attend the consultation, especially for those traveling from another continent.

<sup>6</sup> The NAPARC WMA consultation meets in person annually (except for 2020, when the consultation had to be canceled due to the pandemic), and in recent years, has included representatives of the NAPARC member churches' Diaconal Ministries Agencies (DMA) in a joint consultation, to the benefit of all.

<sup>7</sup> The consultation is planned to convene at 1:00 p.m. on the Tuesday and to adjourn at noon p.m. on the Friday.

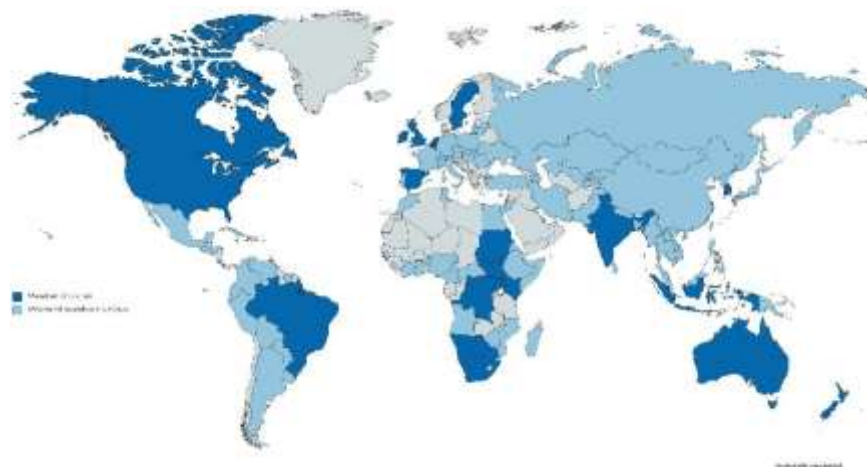
Your Committee is planning to bring a brief report on this joint ICRC and NAPARC WMA–DMA consultation to the 10th (2022) Meeting of the ICRC the following month.

**Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by Member Church and field) the mission works of the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the world missions agencies of the ICRC Member Churches and presentation to the next**

The Committee has made arrangements for the survey of the mission works of the ICRC Members Churches to be conducted in May–July 2022, with a view to distributing the results in booklet form to the next meeting of the Conference in October 2022. Readers of the booklet are reminded that the booklet contains sensitive information, and that, to protect the safety of the Member Churches’ missionaries (and those with whom they work), no information contained in the booklet should be published or posted on the Internet without the express consent of the appropriate mission agency of the Member Church.

**Arrange for the periodic submission of articles on Reformed missions suitable inclusion in an online ICRC magazine, which might include descriptions of opportunities for missionary service and/or mission project participation pending in the Member Churches, and articles intended to promote interest in Reformed missions. When appropriate, such**

The Committee facilitated the publication of several articles on mission topics in *Lux Mundi*, such as a report on the 2018 consultation of representatives of world missions agencies, reports on mission projects of member churches, and experiences of global missionaries. The October 2020 issue of *Lux Mundi* included the following map showing nations where ICRC Member Churches and their mission projects are located (based on the 2017 Mission Field Survey data):



**Help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on mission topics of interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC**

Since the last meeting of the Conference, the Committee has collected a list of mission topics, which have been passed along to the committee for regional conferences. The list includes:

- Administration of the sacraments to those in polygamous relationships
- Ministry to Islam
- Witchcraft
- Engaging the prosperity gospel and materialism.

**Gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, including the training of missionaries and mission methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as**

As of the date of this report, the Committee has received copies of mission policy documents from fourteen ICRC Member Churches: ARPC, CRCN, FCS, FRCNA, HRC, OPC, PCKK, PFCI, RCN, RCNZ, RCUS, RPCNA, RPCNEI, and URCNA—and two more from NAPARC

member churches: PCA, PresRC. A subcommittee continues the work of cataloging the topics discussed in each.

Copies of the mission policy documents are presently being stored in the Committee's folder on Dropbox™. Some of these documents contain sensitive information (e.g., names and locations of particular missionaries laboring in “restricted access” countries) and were furnished to the Committee with the understanding that they would not be openly disseminated or posted on an Internet website. There is much of value in these documents that would be helpful to the Member Churches seeking to develop, improve, or strengthen their own mission work, and the Committee is studying ways to make these documents available to appropriate representatives of the ICRC Member Churches' world missions agencies without compromising the operational security of those on the ground.

**Disseminate to the Member Churches, pursuant to the PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING OPPORTUNITIES TO ASSIST PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS (*Proceedings of the ICRC, October 16–22, 2009, Christchurch, New Zealand, Article 71, pages 59–60 and 85–87*), information regarding opportunities to assist persecuted Christians and their families, especially among those who profess the Reformed faith, and to designate a Missions Committee representative for the purpose of implementing the PROTOCOL.**

The PROTOCOL was distributed to the updated list of ICRC Mission Contact Representatives by email on December 13, 2017, and Mr. Bube was designated as the Committee's representative for the purpose of implementing the PROTOCOL.



**Develop and maintain a list of mission contact representatives for each Church. Each representative will be responsible for disseminating ICRC missions information and materials to their respective churches and for gathering and transmitting to the Missions Committee the relevant information from their respective churches necessary for the accomplishment of (1)–(6) above.**

The Committee continues to develop and maintain this list for the convenience of the Member Churches, and to include it the quadrennial Mission Field Survey booklet to be presented to the next meeting of the ICRC.

**Continue contacts with the Mission and Evangelism Commission of the Reformed**

Members of the Committee have continued informal contact with the International Director of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) and a member of the Committee is planning to attend the 6th General Assembly of the WRF, which is scheduled for October 27–30, 2022, in Orlando, FL, USA, as an observer.

**9. Send a report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next ICRC.**

This is the requested report. Your Committee apologizes for the lateness of its submission. A significant part of the Committee’s work is tied to the timing of the quadrennial meeting of the ICRC and the date of the 10th Meeting of the ICRC was not finalized until March 22, 2022.

**10. Propose a budget for the following four years to the next ICRC.**

Regardless of whether the WMA Consultation (around which the Committee schedules its in- person meetings) occurs every three years or every four years, there would be the expense of only one such Consultation in the 2023–2026 budget cycle. Taking note of the significant increase in the cost of international airfares, the Committee proposes the following budget for the Committee for 2023–2026:

In-person meeting expenses:	
In conjunction with the WMA Consultation in 2025	\$ 17,00
0 Other operating expenses:	
Contact with WRF Mission and Evangelism Commission	\$ 1,000
Printing survey booklet	\$ 400
Miscellaneous	100
Sub-total	<u>\$ 500</u>
Total Proposed Budget	<u><u>\$ 18,500</u></u>

### **III. SUGGESTED MANDATE FOR NEXT FOUR YEARS**

That the Conference continue the Missions Committee to assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in missions, with a mandate to:

- a. Arrange for consultations among representatives of the world missions agencies of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned work, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multi-lateral cooperation in mission among the Member Churches.
- b. Gather information regarding and distribute a booklet summarizing (by both Member Church and field) the mission works of the ICRC Member Churches for distribution to the world missions agencies of the ICRC Member Churches and presentation to the next meeting of the Conference.
- c. Arrange for the periodic submission of articles on Reformed missions suitable for inclusion in an online ICRC magazine, which might include descriptions of opportunities for missionary service and/or mission project participation pending in the Member Churches, and articles intended to promote interest in Reformed missions. When appropriate, such articles may also be posted on the ICRC website.
- d. Help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on mission topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself.
- e. Gather and study the relevant documents from the Member Churches regarding their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, including the training of missionaries and mission methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.
- f. Disseminate to the Member Churches, pursuant to the PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO OPPORTUNITIES TO ASSIST PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS (*Proceedings of the ICRC*, October 16–22, 2009, Christchurch, New Zealand, Article 71, pages 59–60 and 85–87), information regarding opportunities to assist persecuted Christians and their families, especially among those who profess the Reformed faith, and to designate a Missions Committee representative for the purpose of implementing the PROTOCOL.
- g. Develop and maintain a list of mission contact representatives for each Member Church. Each representative will be responsible for disseminating ICRC missions information and materials to their respective churches and for gathering and transmitting to the Missions Committee the relevant information from their respective churches necessary for the accomplishment of (a)–(f) above.
- h. Continue contact with the Mission and Evangelism Commission of the World Reformed Fellowship.
- i. Send a report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next ICRC.
- j. Propose a budget for the following four years to the next ICRC.

### **IV. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Committee, consisting of five members (with two alternates), be continued with the mandate in Part III, above.



2. That Regulation VI.2 be suspended, in part, so as to allow the Missions Committee to meet in person at the time of the consultation of the representatives of the world mission agencies of the Member Churches every three years (for three days each).

Although, like almost all of you, our labors were hindered by the restrictions brought on the pandemic over the past couple of years, the members of the Missions Committee are grateful to the Lord to report that, by His grace, we were able to fulfill almost all of our mandate. We are thankful for the opportunity to serve Christ's church worldwide, and for your prayers on our behalf.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arjan de Visser,  
Secretary  
FOR THE ICRC MISSIONS COMMITTEE

June 2, 2022

Attachment





**ICRC MISSIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEMBER  
CHURCHES' AND OF THE NAPARC MEMBER  
CHURCHES' WORLD MISSIONS AGENCIES  
607 N Easton Road, Bldg E  
Willow Grove, PA • September 18-20, 2018**

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

**FROM THE ICRC 2017 MANDATE TO THE ICRC MISSIONS COMMITTEE:**

a. Arrange for consultations among representatives of the world missions agencies of the ICRC Member Churches for the purposes of exchanging information on current and planned work, discussing issues of mutual concern, and exploring ways for possible bi- or multilateral cooperation in mission among the Member Churches.

1. Convene at the OPC office on Tuesday, September 18, at 1:00 p.m.
2. Scripture reading and prayer
3. Communications
4. Adoption of agenda (with orders of the day)

*TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 –*

2:45 p.m.- 3:00 p.m. Break  
 4:45 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. Break  
 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
 Recess for dinner 9:00 p.m.  
 Evening recess

*WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 –*

9:00 a.m. Reconvene  
 10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. Break  
 12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Recess for lunch  
 2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Break  
 4:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Break  
 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Recess for dinner  
 9:00 p.m. Evening recess

*THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 –*

9:00 a.m. Reconvene  
 10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.  
 Break Not later than  
 noon Adjourn

5. Overview of WMA policy manuals/ documents (*Boersma*)
6. Agency reports and prayer (up to 15 minutes each)
  - a. ICRC Member Churches

AEPC	FCSA	RCUS	RPCNEI
ARPC	FRCNA	RCI	SRC





CanRC	FRCSA	RCN	URCC
CRCA	HRC	RCB	URCNA
CRCI	IRCK	RCNZ	
CRCN	OPC	RCSA	
EPCEW	PCKK	RCS	
EPCI	PCEA	RPCInd	
FCS	PCU	RPCI	
FCC	PFCI	RPCNA	

- b. NAPARC (only) Member Churches
  - ERQ
  - KAPC
  - KPCA
  - PCA
  - PresRC
- 7. Discussion items (*suggested discussion leaders*)
  - a. Ways to encourage each other in ministry in [redacted] (*Bube*)
  - b. Different views of the Church's mission (*de Visser*)
  - c. Ministry to refugees in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa (*Nakhla*)
  - d. Dependency issues in meeting diaconal needs (*Postma*)
  - e. Pastoral care of missionaries
  - f. Security concerns in the use of the Internet
  - g. Possible opportunities for joint projects
  - h. Planning for going into and transitioning out of a mission work
  - i. Ministry to Islam
- 8. Miscellaneous business
- 9. Next meeting
- 10. Adjourn with prayer, no later than Thursday, September 20, at noon.

**WMA Consultation Participants are requested to bring with them:**

- Digital copy of your WMA's policy manual; and
- One or two articles on your mission works that might be suitable for publication in *Lux Mundi*.