



**Ninth International Conference
of Reformed Churches**

Proceedings

Jordan, Ontario, Canada

12-19 July 2017

Prayer Service

Immanuel United Reformed Church
United Reformed Churches in North America
4th Ave, Jordan Station, Ontario
7:30 p.m. Wednesday
12 July, 2017

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome	Rev. John Bouwers
Call to worship	
God's Greeting	
Singing: Psalm 122 (<i>Psalter Hymnal</i> 264)	
Prayer of Approach to God	
The Lord's Prayer	
The Apostles' Creed	
Singing: Psalm 72 (<i>Psalter Hymnal</i> 133)	
Reading of Holy Scripture: Colossians 1:1-23	Rev. Ray Sikkema
Sermon: Matthew 5:9 'Blessed are the peacemakers'	
Singing: 'A mighty fortress is our God'	
Prayer for the churches	Rev. Heon Soo Kim
Prayer for preaching and mission	Rev. Dr Rowland Ward
Prayer for the Lord's blessing on the conference	Rev. Dr Douw Breed
Singing: Doxology Psalm 150A <i>Trinity Psalter Hymnal</i>	
Benediction	Rev. John Bouwers



Session 1

Morning, Thursday

13 July, 2017

1. Opening

Rev. Richard Holst opened the ninth International Conference of Reformed Churches at 9:14 a.m. and welcomed all delegates, observers, and visitors, from all over the world, some for the first time at the ICRC.

Prayer.

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13.

Meditation: 'Inside a pastor's heart.' The welfare of the church at Thessalonica affected Paul's heart. The Christian ministry must be a reflection of Christ's love for his church. Notice in the text: 1. In Paul we see a deep sense of loss, because they were expelled so soon from their city; 'orphaned'; and frustration at being prevented from seeing them. 'Brothers, we are not professionals.' 2. What was his response? He sent Timothy there to teach them. 3. The effect of Timothy's report: it cheered Paul up immensely, that their faith was sound and they were persevering, and he gave thanks to God. As pastors, our greatest joy should be in seeing our brethren continuing in the faith.

2. Roll call

Rev. Ray Sikkema on behalf of the host church read out the names of the churches and their delegates. Delegates stood to be identified.

2.1 Member Churches and their delegates

1. African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC)

Rev. Daniel Kithongo (not present, arrived Thursday pm)

2. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP)

Rev. William (Bill) Barron

Rev. Heiko Burklin (departing Saturday)

3. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

Rev. Dr R. C. (Karlo) Janssen

Rev. Jack Moesker

Dr Jeff Temple

Rev. Carl Van Dam

4. Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (CRCI)

Rev. Yonson G. Dethan

5. Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRCN)

Rev. Laurens A. den Butter

Prof. Dr Arnold Huijgen

Rev. Dr William N. Middelkoop

Rev. Wim Wullschleger

6. **Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)**
Rev. Richard Holst (departing Tuesday)
Rev. Dr Peter J. Naylor
7. **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)**
Rev. Andrew Lucas (departing Tuesday)
8. **Free Church of Scotland (FCS)**
Rev. David D. Miller
Rev. Dr Jack Whytock (arriving Friday)
9. **Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCSC)**
Rev. Kenneth Macdonald
Rev. John Macleod
10. **Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA)**
Not represented
11. **Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)**
Rev. Henk Bergsma
Mr Connor Keuning
Rev. Cornelis Pronk
Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden
12. **Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)**
Rev. Dr Pieter Boon
13. **Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)**
Elder Jim Beeke (departing Saturday)
Prof. Joel Beeke (arriving on Monday)
14. **Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK)**
Rev. Heon Soo Kim
15. **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**
Elder Mark Bube
Rev. Dr Tony Curto
Elder David P. Nakhla
Rev. Jack W. Sawyer
16. **Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)**
Rev. Sjirk Bajema
Rev. Dr Rowland Ward (departing Monday)
17. **Presbyterian Church in Korea – Kosin (PCK)**
Rev. Aaron Bae
Prof. Paul Bae
Rev. Oh Hun Kwon (arriving later)
18. **Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI)**
Mr Pradeep Kumar
Rev. Samit Kumar Mishra

- 19. Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB)**
Elder Chris Boersema
- 20. Reformed Churches NTT in Indonesia (RCNTTI)**
Rev. Marianus T. Waang
Rev. Ismail Sarius
- 21. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN)**
Rev. Dr Melle H. Oosterhuis
Rev. J. M. van Leeuwen
- 22. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)**
Rev. Bruce Hoyt
Rev. Dirk Van Garderen
Rev. David Waldron
- 23. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)**
Rev. Dr Douw Breed
Rev. Dr H. P. Malan Van Rhyn
- 24. Reformed Churches of Spain (RCS)**
Rev. Jose Manuel Lopez Franco
- 25. Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)**
Rev. Travis Grassmid (arrived after roll call)
Rev. Dennis Luquette
- 26. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCInd)**
Rev. Hiralal Solanki
Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer
- 27. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCIr)**
Rev. Philip W. Dunwoody
Prof. W. David J. McKay (departed after Tuesday)
- 28. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)**
Rev. J. Bruce Martin
Rev. Scott Wilkinson
- 29. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)**
Rev. Ros Infimate
Rev. Dr Van Lalnghakthang Khawbung
- 30. Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC)**
Rev. Patrick Jok Wic
- 31. United Reformed Church in Congo (URCC)**
Rev. Ntita T. Abel (not present, no visa)
Rev. Mpuke B. Albert (not present, no visa)

32. United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

Rev. Richard Bout
Rev. Dr Dick Moes
Rev. Ray Sikkema
Rev. John Bouwers

2.2 Churches applying for membership and their delegates

1. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)

Rev. Reinier Noppers
Rev. Andrew Nugteren (arrived after roll call)

2. Presbyterian Church in Uganda (PCU)

Rev. Fred Kabenge
Elder James Yiga

2.3 Observer churches and their delegates

1. Reformed Presbyterian Church in Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE)

Rev. Imre Szoke

2. Presbyterian Church of Brazil (PCB)

Rev. Dr Davi Charles Gomes (attending July 17 – 19)

3. Reformed Presbyterian Churches of South India (RPCSI)

Rev. J.Y. Paulraj

2.4 Others

Mr Kyle Lodder – Treasurer – CanRC
Rev. Dr James Visscher – Secretary (Corresponding) – CanRC
Mrs Ria Nederveen (*Lux Mundi*)
Mr Ko Serier – Diaconal Committee member - RCN
Dr Derek W.H. Thomas – speaker – ARP (Monday)
Mr Rick Postma – Diaconal Committee member – FRCNA
Rev. Kevin Backus (Bible Presbyterian Church).

3. Administrative matter

Rev. Richard Holst informed the conference that the decision of Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to open all the offices to women members of the church was expected to come onto the agenda of the conference (which is a decision for the conference to take) and he explained the procedure that would be followed in that case.

4. Appointment of executive committee

Rev. Dr James Visscher presented the proposed executive committee:

Chairman:	Rev. Dick Moes
Vice-chairman:	Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer
Corresponding secretary:	Rev. Dr James Visscher
Recording secretary:	Rev. Dr Peter J. Naylor
Treasurer:	Mr Kyle Lodder
Co-ordinator:	Rev. Bruce Hoyt

The conference approved the appointment of the Executive Committee.

The conference expressed thanks to Rev. Richard Holst for chairing the last conference. Rev. Holst handed over the chairmanship to Rev. Dick Moes.

Rev. Cornelis Pronk prayed for the Lord's blessing on the executive committee in their work and upon the conference.

5. Daily Schedule

9:00-10:30	Morning session <i>Coffee break</i>
10:50-12:30	Morning session <i>Lunch break</i>
2:00-3:30	Afternoon session <i>Coffee break</i>
3:50-5:30	Afternoon session <i>Evening meal</i>
7:30-9:00	Evening session

The conference adopted the daily schedule.

6. Assistance to the conference

Members of the host church were present to assist the conference: Mim Sinke, Herb Sinke, and Melissa Tigchelaar. The conference thankfully accepted this help.

7. Report of the Corresponding Secretary

Rev. Dr James Visscher presented his report (available on the website).

He noted that some delegates could not attend this conference because they were not able to obtain visas. The conference was alerted to a potential obstacle to holding the next conference in India: the difficulty of obtaining visas to enter India.

The conference approved the report of the Corresponding Secretary.

8. New Constitution

The new Constitution had been presented and adopted in Wales 2013, subject to a vote of the member churches. Of the 32 member churches, 24 had approved the new Constitution and 2 had abstained.

The Chairman, Rev. Dick Moes, declared the new Constitution to be adopted and in force.

Recess 10:24 - 10:58.

9. Website committee report

Rev. Dr Karlo Janssen (convenor) noted that the Report had been circulated.

He drew attention to three matters:

1. The question whether the ICRC should have a magazine, that is, whether it should take over *Lux Mundi*. This is on the agenda.
2. The publication of the *Proceedings* of 1985, 1989, 1993 and 1997 on the website had not yet been accomplished.
3. Pages 2-3 contain general policies.

He reminded delegates that the website can only be as good as the information from member churches and he urged delegates to submit relevant items of interest to the Corresponding Secretary.

10. Amendments to the Regulations

The Regulations are available on the website.

The Corresponding Secretary presented three changes that needed to be made:

1. Amendment to IX.1.c.

That Regulation IX.1.c be amended to read as follows (additions underlined) –

c. The total assessment to each Member Church shall be determined by apportioning the total budget for the Conference for the next four years to each Member Church on the basis upon which the number of its baptized members – weighted by the per capita income of the nation in which such Member Church is located (to be ascertained from a standard recognized published index) – bears to the total number of baptized members of all Member Churches, subject to the following limitations: (1) the assessment to any Member Church shall not be less than an amount equal to fifty US dollars (\$50); (2) the assessment to any Member Church shall not exceed twenty-five percent of the total budget for the Conference.

Adopted.

2. Amendment to IV.2.c.1.

That Regulation IV.2.c.1 be amended to read as follows (removals struck through and additions underlined)–

The Recording Secretary shall (1) ~~maintain and~~ call the roll of Delegates at the commencement of ~~business each day~~ the meeting and note the arrival and departure times of any who did not attend the whole meeting.

Adopted.

3. Amendment to IV.2.c.4

That Regulation IV.2.c.4 be amended to read as follows (removals struck through and additions underlined)–

The Recording Secretary shall: (4) ~~arrange for the printing of the Proceedings of the meeting and for the distribution of copies of the Proceedings to each of the Member Churches~~ arrange the preparation of an electronic version of the Proceedings of the meeting and distribute it electronically to each of the Member Churches and to each member of the Co-ordinating Committee.

Adopted.

11. Appointment of Advisory Committees

The Chairman presented a list of proposed advisory committees with recommendations concerning members to be appointed to each committee.

Advisory Committee 1 - Credentials

Ray Sikkema, Hiralal Solanki, Richard Holst.

Advisory Committee 2 – Finance

Jack Moesker, Wim Wullschleger, Van Lalnghakthang, Kyle Lodder.

Advisory Committee 3 – Press Release

Bruce Martin, Sjirk Bajema, John Bouwers.

Advisory Committee 4 – ICRC 2021

Jeff Temple, Pieter Boon, Jack Sawyer, Samit Mishra.

Advisory Committee 5 – Applications for membership

From Presbyterian Church in Uganda and CRC Australia
Laurens den Butter, John Macleod, Marianus Waang.

Advisory Committee 6 – Membership Reports

Malan van Rhyn, Carl Van Dam, Ros Infimate.

Approved.

12. Appointment of Discussion Panel Members

Panel 1. Theological Education and Growing Future Leaders for the Reformed Faith

Pieter VanderMeyden (moderator), Douw Breed, Matthew Ebenezer, Arnold Huijgen, David McKay.

Approved.

Panel 2. Ministry of Mercy and the Reformed Faith

David Nakhla (moderator), Dirk van Garderen, Rick Postma, Joel Beeke, Chris Boersema.

Approved.

Panel 3. Bringing the Reformed Faith to Asia

Richard Bout (moderator), Mark Bube, Heon Soo Kim, Yonson Dethan, Jack Whytock.

Approved.

Panel 4. Future Direction of the ICRC

Bruce Hoyt (moderator), Karlo Janssen, Ray Sikkema, Hiralal Solanki, William Middelkoop.

Approved.

The Corresponding Secretary explained that this approach of having panel discussions was new for the ICRC. Previously discussion had been on the paper presented the previous evening. It was hoped that this new approach would be more profitable.

13. Closing

Rev. Dr Peter J. Naylor led closing devotions.

Singing: Psalm 130 (*Psalter Hymnal* 273).

Prayer.

Session 2

Afternoon, Thursday
13 July 2017

14. Opening

At 2:02 p.m. the Chairman called the meeting to order.
Rev. William Middelkoop led opening devotions.
Singing: Psalm 25 verses 1-2 (*Psalter Hymnal* 43)
Prayer.

15. Regional Conferences Committee Report

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward read the report.

The conference accepted the report.

Recommendation 2: that member churches * be encouraged to co-operate with World Reformed Fellowship churches where possible or practical. Amendment: *insert 'in planning regional conferences'.

Recommendation as amended: accepted; 2 abstentions.

Recommendation 3 – this ICRC approves allocation of \$15000 in the 2017-21 budget for assistance, applications to be submitted to and approved by the ICRC Executive on a strictly needs basis.

Accepted.

The Chairman thanked the committee for the report.

16. The Decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to open the offices of the church to women (1)

Rev. Dr Melle Oosterhuis presented an explanation of the decision of Synod Meppel (Appendix 1).

Opportunity was given for questions of clarification.

Recess 15:20-15:57

Further questions.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Dr Oosterhuis.

17. Closing

Rev. David Miller led closing devotions.
Reading: Psalm 67.
Singing: Psalm 116 (*Psalter Hymnal* 228)
Prayer.

The Chairman closed the session at 16:27.

Session 3

Evening, Thursday
13 July 2017

18. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 19:31.

Singing: Psalm 87 (*Psalter Hymnal*, 166)

Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1

19. Church Introductions

19.1 Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India

Rev. Dr Van Lalnghakthang Khawbung

Mr Chairman and Delegates of the ICRC, it is a joy to present the ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India. The Gospel came to the southern Manipur in 1910 and we have started the RPCNEI in 1979 because of Reformed Biblical principles and church government.

1. Year of establishment – 1979
2. Church statistics as of 2016: total membership 12,700; communicant members 8,700; organized congregations 97; Presbyteries 5; ministers 54; ruling elders 485; deacons (not ordained) 485; unorganized local churches 7.
3. Threefold focus of ministry:
 - a. Evangelism: church strengthening. We work towards self-supporting, self-governing. Thank God that the pastors are supported by the churches. Newly established churches are encouraged to be fully fledged local churches, considering numbers and performances. Most of our pastors are graduates of Presbyterian Theological Seminary (PTS Dehra Dun). We conduct church leaders training on different theological issues and general capacity building on a regular basis. We do draw resources, teachers from sister churches.
 - b. Mission, church planting. We have 5 mission fields, including Myanmar. We work with 11 different people groups. At present we have 54 missionaries working in the field. Missionaries are supported by the church members. We have 15 preaching centres. In 2017, up to April 2017, we have entered 4 new places where the gospel has never been heard, and the Lord has blessed us with 24 new believers. We are reaching close to Bangladesh, only 30 km away now.
 - c. Mercy Ministry (Development):
 - i. Child care, Relief, Education and Community Development. Child care: We have two orphanages, in Assam and Manipur. More than 1,000 orphans and underprivileged children have graduated from the two homes. We also engage in supporting children by running a tuition centre in remote villages.
 - ii. Relief: We respond to disasters in our regions, to flood, earthquake, fire, famine, and other man-made disasters.
 - iii. Education: We have 6 high schools and 22 middle schools in our region. Schools provide an opportunity to introduce Jesus to the children. They become a bridge for preaching the Gospel.
 - iv. Community Development: Our engagement in community development includes food and nutrition, security, environment, community health care, livelihood programme.

4. How do we promote the Reformed Faith? We have translated the Westminster Confession of Faith, Children's Catechism, Shorter Catechism and Heidelberg Catechism into our own tribal languages. We are now translating the Canons of Dort. Periodically we conduct Reformed Doctrine Training for pastors and elders of the church.
5. Fund raising for church mission support. Pastor and missionaries are supported by the local churches. Everyone is encouraged to be involved in mission support. We raise fund for mercy ministry, capacity building of pastors and church leaders. Most of the funds are from sister churches of the ICRC.

We preach the Christ crucified and our approach is holistic. Thank you.

Rev Dr Van Lalngakthang Khawbung, General Secretary.

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward prayed for the RPCNEI.

19.2 Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe

Rev. Imre Szoke

Dear Brothers and fellow Pastors, I bring you greetings from the synod and the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe, a small denomination located in Hungary and the neighboring countries, which ministers primarily to Hungarian-speaking people.

Some of you may not remember me, but 16 years ago I attended the ICRC in Philadelphia as an observer on behalf of our baby church, which then was just a network of a few church planters who started sowing the seeds of the Word of God. At that time we had just left behind the nominal and liberal state Reformed Church and launched into this great ministry from ground zero. Since then we had to face many difficulties along the way. In the beginning, we had no church members, no buildings or properties; we had to face financial struggles and – sad to mention – opposition from the state Reformed church. But the Lord was gracious to us, protected us and provided for our needs. Our church grew slowly and got strengthened day by day. More and more people were hearing about our work by various means, such as our websites or through street outreach activities.

So where are we now? After 16 years we have 16 men working in full-time ministry in our denomination. Some of them are serving in two churches, a so-called mother church and a church-plant. Right now we have churches and we are doing church planting work in over 25 locations in three countries: Hungary, the West of Romania and the South of Ukraine.

One major challenge for our church during these years was to fully organize our local congregations, including the training of ruling elders. In the last three years we ordained several ruling elders and we hope to have others in place in the close future. We are also working on a programme to train and ordain deacons in our congregations. We had to harmonize all these processes in the whole denomination. As you probably know it is one thing to plant a local church and it is something different to organize a denomination. Accordingly, along with the ordination of church officers it took us some time until we finalized our Book of Church Order.

Furthermore, we were able to establish our own theological training program for those who are called for ministry. Our seminary is called the Károlyi Gáspár Institute of Theology and Missions named after the man who translated the Bible into the Hungarian language in the 16th century. We have a two year long program for the ruling elder candidates and a four plus one year theological training for future pastors. At the moment we are working with three pastoral candidates in a distance education setting.

In the last few years we were able to translate and publish several good reformed books. We have a small publishing house called the Presbyterian Publishing. We have published over 20 titles from John Calvin, A. W. Pink, J. Gresham Machen, Jay Adam, Sinclair Ferguson, C. H. Spurgeon, James Montgomery Boice, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and others. We also translated and published the Westminster Confession and Both Catechisms into Hungarian for the first time. At the moment we are working on the translation of R. C. Sproul's The Holiness of God.

Our denomination has a quarterly published magazine entitled *The Narrow Way*. We write a part of the articles and translate the rest from leading reformed magazines.

Our church maintains three web pages. The first has the goal to present our denomination. The second is a huge collection of sermons from our pastors, and has already a few thousand sermons online. They can be listened to online, or downloaded. The third web site is for seekers and contains evangelistic articles. Finally, as a part of our ministry, we regularly organize several larger conferences throughout the year. Just to mention two of such events, we have the spring conference at Easter and the fall conference at Reformation Day. Also during the summer we have a variety of camps (evangelistic, youth, family, English-teaching, etc.) in the three countries where we are present.

We are especially thankful to our Lord for three major achievements. First, it is for the first time since the Reformation when a Reformed denomination has been formed in Hungary which has a professing membership and not a nominal one. Second, it is for the first time since the Reformation that a biblical and indeed Presbyterian church government is being organized – with qualified ruling elders replacing the present state model led by bishops. And third, it is the first time in Hungary to have a Reformed church which is getting closer and closer towards financial self-support and does not depend on state subsidies. Our Lord is indeed a great God and deserves all the praise for this!

Now, why am I here, dear brothers? First, because we wanted to let you know that there is a newly planted truly Reformed denomination in the heart of the secular and liberal Europe. Secondly, because we would like to apply for full membership into the ICRC. Thirdly, because we need your prayer support and missionaries if possible. If any of the sound denominations which are members of the ICRC have a desire or interest to send missionaries to Eastern Europe, we would be glad to work with them. Please consider this as a Macedonian call. We need partners and helpers in order to fulfill the great commission. And there is no better place to speak about our needs than in this big Reformed family. May the Lord bless you!

Rev. Dr Paul Bae prayed for the RPCCEE.

20. Presentation 1. A Brief Overview of Christian Missions in India

Rev. Solanki presented his paper to the conference. (This paper is available on the website.)

Questions and discussion.

21. Closing

Rev. Dr Arnold Huijgen led the closing devotions.

Singing: Jesus shall reign where'er the sun (*Psalter Hymnal* 399)

Prayer.

Closed at 20:57.

Session 4

Morning, Friday
14 July, 2017

22. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 9:04 a.m.

Rev. Daniel Kithongo had arrived and was welcomed.

Singing the doxology (*Psalter Hymnal* 493)

Reading: Acts 4:1-12

Meditation on '*Solus Christus*', Acts 4:12.

In the present culture there is no place for Christ's exclusive claim: everyone has his own perspective. At the Reformation, the battle was about the sufficiency of Christ. Rome advocated Christ plus the sacraments. It can also meet resistance in our own personal lives. How well do we 'know' our own guilt and corruption? How well do we know our need for the blood and Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ? The more we know it the more we will embrace Christ alone. The less we know it, the more we will resist it, not in theory, but in practice. We will seek our salvation elsewhere in addition to Christ. We need to continue to preach *Solus Christus*, as we see in Acts 4. Preaching Christ led to a crisis, as the Spirit convicted men of truth, righteousness and judgment. The authorities did not believe but many of the people did. God continues to place the case of Christ on their agenda. They must decide again the case! Peter gives three reasons. 1. The name of Jesus has been given. We cannot find salvation in a Jesus of our own imagination. God has given us Jesus. This was a problem to the Jews, and is to Rome. They are not accepting the Jesus given to them. It is also the problem in our culture. Knowledge is not accepted from above but from below, the theology of our imagination. 2. Only in the given name of Jesus is our salvation. Rescue from sin, and transformation into the image of God. Creation, and we, groan and wait – the only entry into the kingdom is rescue from sin. 3. There is a divine necessity to be saved by the name of Jesus. Stephen Welland's recent book, *In Christ Alone*: 1 there is a plan of redemption, and the Son is appointed in it, that must be fulfilled. 2. There is the requirement of obedience. Adam failed; Israel failed; we need a second Adam, a true Israelite, as our representative, our substitute to display the glory of God. 3. The problem of sin and forgiveness. God must punish sin; but he wants a family of human sons and daughters. The only way is to forgive sin. This goes into the nature of God. He cannot tolerate sin and he must satisfy himself. The Son satisfies God's justice by his obedient life and obedient death. We must be saved by the name of Jesus, given to us, there is salvation in no other name. We need to maintain this in our culture, over against Rome's sacramental theology, and in our own personal lives. God continues to place the Jesus case on the agenda of our lives daily, to bring us into the crisis of faith and repentance. How well are we acquainted with our sin and the need for Jesus? Amen.

Prayer.

Singing: O for a thousand tongues to sing (*Psalter Hymnal* 383)

The Corresponding Secretary reminded the conference that all reports from member churches are now due.

Information about the World Reformed Fellowship was made available by Matthew Ebenezer.

23. Report of the Theological Education Committee

Rev. Dr Melle Oosterhuis presented the report of the committee (which is on the website).

Rev. Pieter VanderMeyden presented the *Theological Education Directory* which the committee had prepared based on responses from 24 of our 32 member churches.

Discussion: whether and how much of this information should be made available on the internet? Concerns about security were raised, which would make it advisable to limit the directory to printed paper medium. That had to be balanced with the need to have helpful information available. It was suggested that the decision about what to make available be determined in consultation with the seminaries involved. There is a need to be sensitive. Churches should have the right to authorize what is made available.

This question was referred to the committee (with the request to reformulate recommendation 2). Approved.

After discussion of the other recommendations of the report the Chairman ruled that the report's recommendations be referred back to the committee for revision.

The Chairman expressed thanks for the work done.

Recess 10:27-10:52

24. Panel Discussion 1: 'Theological Education and Growing Future Leaders for the Reformed Faith'

Panel: Pieter VanderMeyden (moderator), Arnold Huijgen, David McKay, Douw Breed, Matthew Ebenezer.

1. The panel reflected on 2 Timothy 2:1-2, 'You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.'
2. With whom does the ultimate responsibility rest for theological training? Pastors, local churches, church federations, the theological departments of universities?

The importance of church oversight of seminaries. To whom are theological teachers accountable? It must be the synod or general assembly.

We need a group of highly qualified, faithful, Reformed men to accredit seminaries around the world.

3. What challenges has your denomination faced in cross-cultural training?

Students from under-developed countries who train in the West do not want to return home. They take time to adapt, including learning the language. Funding is a big problem. Appeal: in accepting students to ask for an undertaking to return to their home country (e.g. India).

4. Would you envisage any manner in which an ecumenical body like the ICRC could become involved in the provision of theological education for its member churches? and
5. Is there a way in which the ICRC can play a role in helping the churches in the area of hermeneutical challenges?

The most the ICRC can do is provide information about conferences that are happening around the globe.

Academics come under pressure and 'they change'. We need to think about ways to identify good academic conferences.

The churches of the Netherlands have come to India and provided a conference in the country.

6. Reformed theological education is now available via distance learning. In what way can the ICRC help member churches be involved in making available or recommending such distance learning?

The university at Potchefstroom in South Africa has about 40,000 distance learners. Reformed theology changes preaching and so churches are changing. It is easy to provide distance learning all over the world. It is easy to give the lectures from any place in the world. Take the university to the students. *E.g.* South Africa to Brazil.

Some aspects of training pastors is not possible through remote, distance learning. There needs to be face to face opportunity to consult with teachers and raise difficulties that could not be put online.

7. Good scientific articles are being published by Reformed academics which can be very helpful to pastors. Can the ICRC play a role in making the publications known to churches?

In academia, there is peer review, done through journals. But the journals hold copyright. There is a question, what is good? There is also the question of various languages. It is easier to recommend books than to publish articles online. It might be possible for churches, who know about a good article, to recommend it.

In India, they look for articles that are pastoral and practical, not just academic.

Questions from the floor.

8. What advice would you give to a church that neglects to establish its own seminary and chooses to leave it to academic organizations?

This should be raised within the church courts; there are churches that cannot afford it. But it leads to a weak ministry. It isn't the ICRC's job to tell churches how to conduct their theological training.

9. Can the examination of candidates for the ministry justifiably be entrusted to a church seminary as opposed to a presbytery or classis?

It is the task of the presbytery in the RPCIr; the college will report to the presbytery. In the CRCN it is a shared responsibility. In South Africa there are curators also, who are involved with the students and who make recommendations to the regional synods.

10. Theological training is also about formation of character. Where does mentoring and coaching come into the process?

In distance learning, we are often dealing with people who are already active in ministry. So we must operate flexibly with them.

In South Africa there are thousands of pastors who have no theological education. They cannot 'leave the field' and cannot afford to.

11. How should we recruit future professors?

In South Africa, we encourage strong students to study for a doctoral degree. The RPCIr is a smaller context, in which men are well known; they look out for suitable students but do not encourage men to do further study too quickly but would want to see a man in a pastoral charge first.

How to select? Who takes the initiative, the board of trustees, the broader assemblies?
CRCN: When a position is becoming available we are glad if we have two men to choose from. In Europe a Ph.D. is not enough now. Must have published articles and two books published. RPCI: do not have those requirements. In SA, those called must have experience as pastors.

The Chairman expressed thanks.

25. Closing

Rev. John Macleod led closing devotions.

Singing: 'O Lord, thou art my God and King', Psalm 145 (*Psalter Hymnal* 299 verses 1, 2, and 8).

Prayer

Closed at 12:28

Session 5

Afternoon, Friday
14 July 2017

26. Opening

The Chairman called the conference to order at 14.02.

Rev. Carl Van Dam led opening devotions.

Singing Psalm 84 (*Psalter Hymnal* 162)

Prayer

The Chairman announced that Rev. Dr Cornelis van Dam of the Canadian Reformed Churches was present, with credentials submitted, and he was recognized as alternate for Rev. Jack Moesker who was temporarily absent.

27. The Decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to open the offices of the church to women (2): letter from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Continuing from item 16.

27.1 Proposed: to put the OPC's letter on the agenda (Appendix 2).

Approved.

27.2 Rev. Dick Moes explained the parameters for this item. It is a procedural matter. It is not a debate about the ordination of women. One member church (RCN) is no longer in compliance with the Constitution. The OPC has come with a letter containing proposals. It is for them to explain their proposals. A vote will be taken on Monday.

27.3 Mark Bube presented the OPC Letter (dated 6 July, signed by A. Curto) with its proposals to the conference. The OPC presents this reluctantly as a matter of duty, in love, to call the RCN back to a faithful position. Mr Bube read out the relevant sections of the Constitution (referred to in the letter). Suspension would allow the RCN to send delegates but not to vote. Many member churches have spoken to the RCN and written to them. At Synod Meppel 2017, the RCN voted to open the offices to women (16-17 June) and this became final on 29 or 30 June. The OPC General Assembly had appointed the delegates to the ICRC as a commission of the Assembly (an exceptional measure, last used in 1988 with respect to the Reformed Ecumenical Synod). The mandate is on the front page of the letter.

27.4 Questions.

Will suspension allow delegates of the RCN to serve on committees?

Yes.

When did OPC first communicate its disagreement to the RCN?

At least from the time of RCN Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008.

When did OPC become aware of the grounds of the RCN decision?

10:00 a.m. 5 July.

27.5 Discussion

(Brief summaries of speakers' main points)

Rev. Dr Karlo Janssen (CanRC): I stand here with a very heavy heart. I served as a minister of the RCN for 10 years. Now I stand as a delegate of the CanRC. The CanRC Synod 2010 declared that 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and 1 Cor. 14 33-35 and Article 3 mean that only male communicant members may be called to the special offices. The CanRC agree with OPC that the RCN decision is contrary to Scripture and not in compliance with the Constitution and therefore the CanRC seconds the OPC motion.

Rev. Dr Cornelis Van Dam (CanRC) expressed concern over the upset in the Netherlands (there had been a gathering of some 600 RCN members on the previous day), and concern over reports of statements made by professors in the Netherlands. Even an unbelieving writer, Yuval Harari, in *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, page 275, says that this is not from the Bible. There is no biblical justification for the RCN decision: a tragedy is developing in the Netherlands.

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward (PCEA): There are two issues: 1. admission of sisters to office; 2. the hermeneutic involved. Not enough to refute the former unless we address the hermeneutical issues. There are matters about which Scripture is not clear. Confessions are consensus documents. There are differences among us: e.g. in covenant theology, exclusive psalmody, Lord's Day observance, creation days, etc. and we do not make these matters points of division. The issue is more complicated than just citing a couple of texts. Yes, the RCN is in breach of the Constitution. We must support point 1. But does it follow to suspend? Can we not give the RCN room to suspend their own membership? We haven't had time and we have to give a proper response. We do not resolve things by reference only to the confessions. Scripture is the final arbiter. The Westminster Confession forbids us to make synods and councils the rule of our faith, as do the three forms of unity. Appeal to Scripture against the confession does break the bond of communion. A wiser course is to accept 1, 3 and 4, but not 2. The RCN remains a Reformed Church. We respect them even though we have differences.

Rev. Dr Laurens Den Butter (CRCN): The case of women in office has been discussed for a long time in the CRCN, and also in the RCN. We, the CRCN, have problems with the decision made by the RCN, since our decision was clearly not to allow women in office. No doubt, the RCN is not in accord with the Basis of the ICRC and thus the proposal of the OPC is constitutionally grounded and unavoidable. However the decision made by the RCN is only two weeks old, and there is (according to Reformed Church Order) a period within which members and churches can appeal for the retraction or revision of this decision. That window of opportunity for appeal is still not closed. Furthermore, the gathering already mentioned of 600 people, shows that there is great concern within the RCN itself. Therefore we find that point 2 of the proposal is rather hasty.

We would propose a substitute motion for the 2nd point of the proposal:

'In view of the above described facts and circumstances, that the ICRC ask the RCN to reconsider their membership of the ICRC and give report to the 10th ICRC, and in the meantime, to call the RCN back to the Basis of the ICRC.'

The following was added:

'An alternative wording: The conference take note of the assurance of the RCN delegation that they will recommend to their synod the termination of the membership of the RCN on the grounds that the RCN are out of line with the ICRC Constitution, and conference also note the desire expressed that observer status might be granted on a mutually agreed basis.'

Rev. Dr Pieter Boon (FRCSA): We have a longstanding relation with the RCN, our mother church, and we regard them with gratitude. Letters from many sister churches were on the table at the Synod Meppel. I have read their report and nowhere do I find that they have taken the representations of

their sister churches to heart. They have ignored the many pages about exegetical, and hermeneutical matters. The RCN has just ‘ticked the box’ (that sister churches have been consulted) but paid no heed. Our representations are invisible in their decision and grounds, not just those made at Meppel 2017 but for a decade past: at Zwolle-Zuid, Hardewijk, and Ede. They have chosen to ignore the voice of sister-churches. They have already tested us by sending a female delegate to the synod in South Africa. The same *modus operandi* we see here. The RCN is aggravating the tension, not the OPC. I call on the ICRC churches to suspend the RCN. All avenues have been exhausted. A tough measure is needed now. It is about deviance from Reformed hermeneutic. Other matters will follow: e.g. homosexuals in office and at the Lord’s Table (the RCN merging with the NGK who already do the latter). We must not fail the members of the RCN who are disturbed. We face a choice: suspend the RCN or change the Constitution.

Rev. Dr Melle Oosterhuis (RCN): I expected the discussion to be more procedural. We fully agree that Synod Meppel’s decision brings us into conflict with the Constitution. OPC is formally correct. We do not have the authority to make the decision but we promise to bring to our Synod a proposal to withdraw from membership of the ICRC and to find a way to be involved in the activities of the ICRC which we value (remain an observer).

Rev. Jack Sawyer (OPC): In 1936 the OPC was born in the crucible of a struggle for the integrity of the Word of God against modernism. The Confession is the fruit of exegesis by our fathers. In the RES, the trumpet began to make an uncertain sounds – women in office, homophilia, etc. – and in the end we had the pain of withdrawing from the REC (1988). John Galbraith appealed to them to return to the Word of God. Dealings with the Christian Reformed Church in North America followed. But we faced the same issues with the CRC. After a decade of trying to talk, they walked away, and didn’t listen to us. Again John Galbraith appealed to them; and the same situation was then in NAPARC. Déjà vu! This is a history of an open Bible and an appeal to the Scripture. Understand the efforts that we have made. Our request does not just fall out of the sky. We truly say that we hope this will not be necessary. We take no joy in this. We are not ‘applying canon law,’ so to speak. We believe in *sola scriptura*.

Recess 15:27-15:54

Rev. Bruce Hoyt (RCNZ): We have been concerned about the direction of the RCN and the integrity of the ICRC, and about member churches that may be struggling with this issue, and about churches considering joining the ICRC. It is important to take an action that is clear. If we do not act in accord with the OPC’s request, we are sending a very weak message that it is not so important after all. The *sentiments* expressed here do not get published; the *actions* are published. The suggestion made by the RCN (that they will withdraw from membership) implies that they will not seriously consider rescinding their decision.

Rev. Richard Holst (EPCEW): We are a small church and we are here through our early contacts with the RCN, and we remember the strictness with which they examined us at the beginning of our sister-church relationship. We have 30 years of friendship and received practical expressions of love from the RCN. Nevertheless, we support the OPC position, and we believe that action must be taken now; we cannot do nothing. The EPCEW’s position has already been represented to two RCN synods on this matter. We are in no doubt that their position is unscriptural and it is not healthy to drive a wedge between Scripture and the Confession/Constitution. We, the EPCEW and the RCN, are now opposed to each other on the issue before the conference. As a conference we must suspend them, with the allowance that they may repent and turn again and embrace the biblical position.

Rev. Ray Sikkema (URCNA) (holding up the proposed amendment from the CRCN): Don’t go in this direction!

Rev. Daniel Kithongo (AEPC): This is a shock and a grief. When I am sick, I have to tell my doctor accurately what is wrong. The issue of the RCN goes deeper. With love comes discipline aimed at restoration. We must not fail the church at this time.

The Chairman asked delegates to take the matter away and consider it prayerfully. Vote on Monday.

28. The CRCA application for membership

Rev. Dr Laurens den Butter, for Advisory Committee 5 (Membership Applications): In 2013, the CRCA application was not accepted because of objections from the PCEA. Since then contacts between the PCEA and CRCA have been re-established and the issues resolved. Now the application is fully supported by the PCEA. The documents are in order: Church Order; Form of Subscription; withdrawal from WCC; letters of support of RCNZ and RCSA. All necessary documents are present and approved. We recommend acceptance of the CRCA's membership application and pray that it will be a blessing.

Motion to admit the CRCA.
All in favour.

The Chairman welcomed the CRCA into the membership of the ICRC. The delegates were invited to be seated.

29. Closing devotion

Rev. Henk Bergsma led closing devotions and prayed for the CRCA.
Singing: Psalm 43 (*Psalter Hymnal 77*)
Close at 16:26.

Session 6

Evening, Friday
14 July, 2017

30. Opening devotions

Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer, opened the evening session at 19:33.
Singing: 'The Church's one foundation' (*Psalter Hymnal* 398).
Reading: Job 19:21-29.
Prayer.

31. Church Introductions

31.1 Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church

Rev. Bill Barron introduced the ARPC.

Elder Jim Beeke prayed for the ARPC.

31.2 Reformed Churches in Indonesia

Rev. Marianus T. Waang introduced the RCI.

Rev. Heon Soo Kim prayed for the RCI.

32. Presentation 2: John Calvin's Preaching and the Book of Job

Rev. Richard Holst introduced the speaker, Rev. Dr Derek Thomas, who is currently a minister of the ARPC.

Rev. Dr Derek Thomas spoke on Calvin's preaching on the book of Job.

The Vice Chairman invited questions from the congregation.

33. Closing

Rev. Jack Sawyer led the closing devotions.
Singing: 'Saviour, again to thy dear name we raise' (*Psalter Hymnal* 326).
Prayer.
Closed at 21:33.

Session 7

Morning, Monday
17 July, 2017

34. Opening

The Chairman called the conference to order at 9:06.

Singing: 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' (*Psalter Hymnal* 493)

Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Meditation on Sola Gratia. In our culture, we have gift-giving: you carefully choose the recipient, worthy of it; and in the context of reciprocal relations, in the expectation of a return. John Barclay, in *Paul and the Gift*, mentions that this was popular in Paul's culture: the gods carefully chose worthy individuals or cities, and human beings followed the same pattern; they gave in the expectation of a return. Ephesians 2:1-10 is about 'grace', the normal word for 'gift'. Grace is central to Paul's teaching (the word used 100 times). Paul departs from the dominant view: grace is not for the worthy but those unfit to receive it: spiritually dead, in sin and transgressions, with a mind alienated from God, under Satan's control, and living to gratify the desires of the flesh; children of wrath, enemies of God. Corpses do not respond! It is *not by works* – we were totally bankrupt, no power to save ourselves. *But God!* This is completely counter-cultural; unmerited favour, grounded in the nature of God himself, the love of God. He created us to be his sons and daughters but we refused to be that; God continues to act as he is, and has pity, to rescue and transform, and recapitulate everything in his Son. He sent his Son. Calvin: look at the high priest's ephod – Israel was there in the high priest. He blesses them with every spiritual blessing in Christ; made alive in Christ, with the mind of Christ, one day to be raised bodily, to share and rule with Christ on the new earth, the final fulfilment of Psalm 8. All because of the great love of God, rich in mercy. We are seated with Christ, no longer ruled by the passions of the flesh, but we control the passions with Christ. No longer ruled by Satan. God created us for this – verse 10 – a reciprocal life of thankfulness, but that return is all of grace. Christian life is about putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and living in him – a life of grace from start to finish. Grace, the gift of Christ, our union with him, and we unworthy, unfit; unmerited, the kindness of God. In the coming ages there will be one great display of this grace. This understanding radically changed Paul (Phil. 3). This is good news for congregational life: grace welcomes everyone into the communion of the saints, all one in Christ, a counter-cultural community. 500 years of Reformation, a good time to rediscover sola gratia.

Prayer.

Singing: 'Amazing grace' (*Psalter Hymnal* 380).

Welcoming arriving delegates: Rev. Dr Jack Whytock and Rev. Dr Joel Beeke.

Greetings received from Rev. John Goris, RCNZ, Wellington, New Zealand, and from Rev. Dr Jos Colijn, chairman of the European Conference of Reformed Churches.

35. Diaconal Committee Report (1)

Rev. Dirk van Garderen introduced the committee's report. (The committee was established in Cardiff, 2013.)

Rev. Pieter Boon presented the body of the report (available on the website), highlighting some items.

The mandate of the committee needs to be amended. A new committee, with no budget, we received requests for help from day 1. But the ICRC is just a conference and it would not be proper for us to act as a diaconal body. Our proper function is to create a network for the churches. Our mandate should be 'networking'.

We received a protocol for disaster relief. We ask to be relieved of this mandate.

We are still seeking feedback from some of the member churches. The information is being put on a map (shown).

A draft of a directory of the member churches' diaconal work was distributed for review.
Questions (fielded by Dirk van Garderen)

How did the committee respond to the requests received?

It varied according to the kind of request. We were able to confer with one another about how the member churches would handle the needs.

There were no requests for disaster relief.

The Missions Committee (recommendation 3) is proposing that we ask the diaconal committee to include relief for persecuted Christians. Are you aware of this?

There has been no communication between the committees. We are aware of it from their report. We are reluctant to take it on.

Do you see your work as responding to disasters or concerned with ongoing diaconal ministry?
With the wider diaconal work.

The difficulty that information about help and efforts to aid are intercepted by corrupt authorities. Is there an effort to be careful not to publish information to those who are unfriendly?

Rick Postma (Canada, Word and Deed Ministry): the concern about information on the internet: we are only using paper.

The protocol is just one tool. Why set it aside without having another tool to replace it?

We suggest replacing it with agencies that are equipped within the member churches. They are better equipped to act quickly and decisively.

David Nakhla: there is a degree of expectation that the DC will handle needs. The DC does not want to give the impression that it is 'the place to go'. We never received any request fully in line with the protocol.

Conference Picture and Recess 10:28-11:04.

36. *Lux Mundi* Proposal

Rev. Dr Karlo Janssen presented his report.

The RCN has requested the ICRC to take over *Lux Mundi*. The ICRC is responding to this request.

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.

Conference expressed thanks to the committee and Mrs Ria Nederveen for her editorial work.

37. Diaconal Committee Report (2)

Recommendations in the report:

1. That funding, up to \$10,000, be provided to enable the DC to meet face-to-face at least once between conferences – preferably during one of the Regional Conferences.
2. That the organizers of Regional Conferences be encouraged to include at least one session with a diaconal focus, thus enabling member churches to work out ways and means of mutual instruction, encouragement, and support in this area.
3. That at least one session be set aside at each General Conference to enable the DC to present its report and recommendations and to enable the member churches to focus on their diaconal ministries and/or needs.

4. That the PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO MAJOR DISASTERS be set aside and that the DC establish a new protocol in line with the decisions of this conference.

Discussion of these proposals was postponed.

38. Panel 2 Discussion: Ministry of Mercy

David Nakhla (moderator), Dirk van Garderen, Rick Postma, Joel Beeke, Chris Boersema.

David Nakhla referred to a new book by Cornelis Van Dam presenting the rebirth of the office of deacon in the Reformation.

Questions and panel reflection:

1. Can you offer ways that the ministry of mercy of our churches ought to reflect our Reformed heritage? What is characteristic about the ministry of mercy as carried out by a Reformed church?

What is poverty? The root of poverty is sin.

Our work is not normal in the world. Jesus commanded us to love our enemy, to reach out to the poor and afflicted is essentially a Christian thing.

The office of deacon has been poorly understood and applied within our churches.

All Christians are 'deacons' and we have Deacons in office. Can you distinguish between the two?

In principle we have all things in common: deacons must seek resources in the church, to motivate and to direct resources within the congregation; and it can happen within the federation.

When we fail in this ministry, there is a failure of the church: it is the hand of the church moving to work.

It is personal, local, but there are occasions when we come together.

2. I assume that we all agree that the ministry of the Word ought to accompany the ministry of mercy: word and deed. Can you suggest ways that this should and should not look?

We see the person as a whole, not just physical but also spiritual.

Perhaps we can use the Word to probe beneath the surface. Why does the need exist?

Preaching addresses the causes that lie beneath the need. Sinful lifestyles give rise to needs.

In the digital age, we hear what is happening around the world. Diaconal work must start at home if you want to keep the connection between word and deed. We need to re-set our thinking. When you start helping the other side of the world to people you don't know, you detach word and deed.

3. Many books have come out in recent years seeking to address concern about 'dependency' that often comes out of well-meaning ministry to the poor. Can you suggest any guidelines how we might balance extending generosity without creating unhealthy dependency?

There is a lot of compassion in the West, a concern for the well-being of others. That doesn't exist in some other cultures. But often what is well-intended is not the right answer. Thomas Chalmers said we need to be 'soft-hearted but hard-headed.' A key question to a need abroad is, 'How much can you do yourself?' and then when they face a shortfall in resources, there is an opportunity to step in. There should always be an aim to decrease our help.

Giving money can create difficulties for the receiving church. Some examples were given from the work in Brazil.

Missionaries from western churches sometimes want to do too much and they undermine the responsibilities that belong to the local church. Many examples in Africa.

Example of help after tsunami in Sri Lanka: built 100 homes. India refused to accept any aid from abroad. But people were dying. Many missionaries tried to counsel them, not to help them, but to win them over. A vulnerable time. That is not the time to tell the gospel; there is time later.

See 61.

Other questions not considered were: 4. What tools are used in your churches for the training of the diaconate? 5. How does the ICRC as well as other mission organizations do diaconal work and respect the local deacons and their work? 6. How do Christians in the West engage in mercy ministry in the developing world in such a way that gives indigenous ownership? 7. What are some models of diaconal ministry from the Reformed heritage that could be recaptured in our churches today?

The Chairman expressed thanks to David Nakhla for moderating.

39. Closing

Rev. Ros Infimate led closing devotions.

Singing: 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah' (*Psalter Hymnal* 407)

Prayer.

12:30

Session 8

Afternoon, Monday
17 July 2017

40. Opening

The Chairman called the conference to order 14:01.

Rev. Andrew Lucas led opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 119 (*Psalter Hymnal* 252)

Prayer.

41. The Decision of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to open the offices of the church to women (3): OPC Motion

The OPC letter (Appendix 2) contains four proposals:

That, with regard to the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) in the ICRC, the Conference:

1. Declare that the RCN – having recently acted to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture – is in its doctrine and/or practice no longer in agreement with the Basis of the Conference (cf. *Constitution* Article IV.4);
2. Pursuant to Article IV.4 of the *Constitution* of the ICRC, suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, effective immediately;
3. Encourage the RCN to reconsider the action of Synod Meppel 2017 in this matter and to restore the doctrine and/or practice of the RCN to be in agreement with the Basis of the Conference; and
4. In the event that, by the time of the 10th (2021) Meeting of the ICRC, the RCN continues to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture, the status of the membership of the RCN in the ICRC be placed on the Agenda for that Meeting.

It was decided to divide the question: first to deal with 1, 3 and 4 above; and thereafter with 2. Votes will be taken by secret ballot.

Discussion of 1, 3 and 4.

Rev. Heon Soo Kim (ICRK). I studied in the Netherlands in 2001. Women in office is not the only issue; there has been a long process of dilution. If the preaching is weakened, the churches cannot but be influenced by the world. I offer two more grounds in support of the OPC proposals. 1. Weak brothers may rely on the RCN's decision as their guide; the OPC's approach will help us. 2. The RCN has overlooked some relevant textual material, for example, 1 Cor. 11, that a woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head 'because of the angels', which is admittedly a difficult reference. In our worship we call on the heavenly host to worship the Lord.

Rev. Dr Douw Breed (RCSA). The RCN has said it is worrisome that we want them to reconsider on the grounds of our Basis. They feel sure that they have the Word of God as their back up. Since 1988, we struggled with this matter and in 2015 we decided not to admit women to the offices. In point 3, we encourage the RCN to reconsider. We can do this from another angle: in Romans 14-15, Paul calls

on the strong to consider the weak and not act for their sake. We may not do it because of what it will mean to the conservative brothers. Think about it, brothers. What will it mean for the weaker brothers in your churches and also here?

Rev. Daniel Kithongo (AEPIC). We are at a crucial moment. The hermeneutical aspect needs to be dealt with thoroughly. Who can do this? The ICRC is the body to which churches will look for a decision. But Jesus tells us how many times to forgive. Let us give them more time. That would not be compromise. A quick judgment will have unforeseen consequences.

Rev. David Miller (FCS). The FCS was one of the founder members of the ICRC with the RCN. I have been commissioned to express disapproval of any churches in ICRC agreeing to the ordination of women to eldership or ministry of the Word. I strongly encourage the RCN to reconsider. This is not news to them. In April, at Synod Meppel, we expressed our view.

Prof. David McKay (RPCI). We echo David Miller's comments. The RPCI is also a founding member. We established the ICRC to stand against the theological decline in other denominations. We are deeply concerned by changes in the RCN. Opportunity was given at Synod to discuss it in two long sessions. It was striking that the voice of all overseas churches was one: not to follow this course. It is disappointing that, despite that, the Synod went ahead and took this step. We have concern about the hermeneutic and fears for the future: other serious changes in doctrine and practice will follow. We urge the brothers to reconsider the decision that they have made. The Synod of the RPCI determined that, should this step be taken, we would consider our fraternal relations severed.

Rev. Dr Pieter VanderMeyden (FRCNA). Have any of our discussions resulted in an assurance that the RCN would seriously reconsider its course? No.

Rev. Yonson Dethan (CRCI). I also urge the RCN to reconsider, and to call for a special synod for this purpose.

Rev. Jack Moesker (CanRC). It is sad to be at this point, discussing the RCN's membership of the ICRC. Since 2008, the CanRC has discussed the question of women in office, and the interpretation of the Bible. Our Synod of 2010 formed a subcommittee for relations with churches in Netherlands. In 2013 we sent a letter of admonition. It was part of our discussions at their last synod 2017. We were well received but it had no effect.

Vote by secret ballot.

Explanation of the rules that apply to this ballot. 31 member churches are present. Each church has one vote. The motion requires a two-third majority to be passed, which is 21. If a church abstains, it reduces the denominator (31). For example, if 10 abstain, 21 is the new total number and two-thirds is 14. Whether the RCN votes is a matter for them. A yes vote is a vote in favour of proposals 1, 3, 4. A no vote is a vote not in favour of 1, 3 and 4.

The result of the secret ballot on proposals 1, 3 and 4:

Yes (in favour) 28. NO (against) 1. Abstentions 2.
Proposals 1, 3 and 4 are carried.

Discussion of Motion 2 and the substitute motion presented by the CRCN.

Rev. Dr Laurens den Butter (CRCN) presented the CRCN's substitute motion, which was seconded. In 1998, the CRCN studied Scripture and concluded that it was not biblical to open the offices of elder and minister to women. We are in full agreement with the OPC: only men are eligible as office bearers. The RCN has moved away from the Basis of the Conference. We must call the church to

account, and if they do not return they cannot remain a member. But *at this moment in time* we prefer a different approach: it is about timing and brotherliness. Synodical decisions are subject to requests for revision. Synod Meppel has caused commotion and unrest at home. A request for revision is possible. 1, 3 and 4 sends a clear message. But 2 is a symbolic statement to others, not to the RCN. Did all delegates study the grounds of the RCN decision properly? Is this brotherly to suspend even before we listen to each other? They have promised to return to their Synod and reconsider membership. Sign of brotherly trust to give them time to do so. If we approve of 2, it only excludes them from voting tomorrow. It has little practical effect. It is only a symbolic statement to other members.

Rev. Scott Wilkinson (RPCNA). I agree, it should be handled in a brotherly way. In the RCN explanation, points 5-7 say that their Synod has concluded that Scripture gives every reason for women to be elders and ministers. But the exegesis is too disputed. Paul called Timothy to be a workman who rightly handled the Word of truth, with no need to be ashamed (2 Tim. 2:15). In the RCN now, many members are having their guts torn out over this issue. The Synod ought to be ashamed of how they are handling the word of truth. 1. Their exegesis is terrible. 2. It has caused division and schism in the church. We are unified by confessions which we believe are faithful. They should not compare the Reformed Confessions with Roman Catholic magisterium. 3. The hermeneutic behind it calls plain Scripture into dispute and they want continually to examine it as if they are the final authority. Brotherly love according to 2 Thessalonians is this: if anyone does not obey, do not associate with him, that he may be ashamed, but do not count him as an enemy but warn him as a brother.

Rev. David Waldron (RCNZ) against the substitute motion. The timing is short and challenging. One of the key purposes of the ICRC is a Reformed testimony to the world. There is no wider Reformed gathering. What we say gives a message to the world. This is not termination, only suspension, to give a four year period. We are not acting hastily.

Rev. Ray Sikkema (URCNA) against the substitute motion and for the OPC proposal 2.

‘Dear brothers in the Lord, Let me begin by saying to you that it gives me no pleasure to address these words to you. As a matter of fact, I do so with a heavy, burdened heart. Brothers, there are a number of points I want to underscore, as follows:

1. Mr Chairman, I want to say clearly and forthrightly that I speak in favour of point two of the OPC’s proposal which asks that we, “Pursuant to Article IV.4 of the *Constitution* of the ICRC, suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, effective immediately.” This means that (by implication) I speak against the amendment which is being proposed by the RCN. Permit me to explain my reasons: Mr Chairman, it is being said that the OPC proposal, namely that the ICRC “suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, effective immediately” is to act with undue and with unwarranted haste. After all, it is said, the RCN took this action only about two weeks ago; surely, it is said, we should give them more time to reflect on the implications of that action, of that decision. Mr Chairman, that is both an erroneous line of reasoning, and it is a very misleading line of reasoning. A. It is an erroneous line of reasoning because it ignores the fact that this matter was on the agenda of the RCN on a number of occasions - for at least ten years, possibly more. Throughout that time, many member-churches of the ICRC sought to address the RCN on precisely this matter, including the URCNA, urging them, pleading with them, not to do what now in fact they have done. Those member churches of the ICRC set forth solid, faithful-to-the-Scripture “arguments”, in which they set forth why such action would be (why it is) contrary to the Scriptural revelation. I note for the record that what the RCN delegates to the ICRC themselves refer to as “The Final Report of the Deputies Male/Female and Office – *Serving Together*”, that Report is in fact dated January 11, 2016. That gave any and all interested churches the possibility to know precisely what was being proposed to the RCN Synod, which concluded its meetings in June of 2017, almost a year and a half later! As you know, the OPC has stated publicly (and explained precisely) that it wrote its analysis of and its response to that Report (and the actions of the RCN taken with respect to it) after such action was

taken, not before. It can, therefore, not be argued with integrity that there has not been enough time to know precisely what was being proposed by the RCN. Though it is true that “*requests for revision of the decision can be made*”, it is a fact also that the churches can proceed forthwith to act on the decision “as made”. After all, that decision is at present “*the official position*” of the RCN on the matter of the Ordination of Women. B. It is also a misleading “*line of reasoning*”, Mr Chairman, because it proceeds from the assumption that the RCN is now, as it were, caught by surprise, as though it could not possibly have known that anything like facing “*suspension from ICRC membership*” could possibly be coming upon them. I believe, Mr Chairman, that the Dutch are very astute. They knew (yes, they know very well) what the Constitution of the ICRC sets forth in Article IV.4. Surely, it was not a mystery to them that the ICRC Constitution requires the immediate suspension of the membership of any church that decides to disregard what is clearly set forth in the Constitution. However, the RCN Synod believed (when they took their decision to open all Ecclesiastical Offices to Women) that they were (that they have a right to be) what the Dutch speak of as being “*Onder en boven de wet*” – an expression used by the Dutch to characterize a person who believes that he cannot be held to what the law, Rules of Procedure, or, in this case, the Constitution clearly sets forth. Such a person wants the right to be a law unto himself! I want to remind you, brothers, of what the Rev. Dr Melle Oosterhuis said in defence of the RCN action this past Thursday. You will recall that he spoke in glowing terms of *Sola Scriptura*, as embraced by the churches of the Reformation. In that context he pointed out that a Document such as the Constitution of the ICRC cannot possibly be appealed to as somehow having authority over or above the authority of Scripture. Mr Chairman, permit me, in that context, to point out two things, as follows: 1. That comment leaves no doubt that he (the BBK, and the Synod of the RCN) he knew exactly what the Constitution of the ICRC says! Moreover, a jurist would say, ignorance of the law is no defence. 2. More importantly in an ecclesiastical context, surely the RCN knows the ecclesiastical, that is, the Church-orderly way a Church must proceed if it is believed (by that Church, or by that Federation) that an agreed-to document is in error. Mr Chairman, they know very well that, if and when that is the case, you don’t first act in violation of the Document in question, hoping thereafter to persuade *the* member-churches of the alleged biblical correctness of your action. Instead, you must present an Overture wherein you set forth the reason(s) for changing the wording of the document in question (in this case Article IV.4 of the Constitution). Then, if and when you can persuade the membership of the correctness of your proposal, then the affected Article will be changed. However, if the Overture requesting a change is rejected, the Article in question remains “as is”. And, Mr Chairman, if any Church were thereafter nevertheless to act in violation of the agreed- to document, such action may then indeed be spoken of as “an act of arrogance” on the part of the violating Church (“we know better than all the other member churches what it is the Bible says”, in this case on the ordination of women); but it certainly does not speak of a loving respect (by that violating church) for the other ICRC member-churches. That is serious! 3. The indisputable fact is: the ICRC member churches have agreed to the biblical correctness of what it is the Constitution says in Article IV.4. And the fact is: the RCN did (but does no longer!) agree with that confessional statement. By so declaring its rejection of that Article, the RCN has *placed itself* outside of membership in the ICRC.

2. When it is proposed, as by the CRCN, that the ICRC “ask the RCN to reconsider their membership in the ICRC”, when they have not in fact been *suspended*, then what is being proposed places the onus on the RCN to act on its membership in the ICRC, thereby, enabling or permitting the ICRC to forgo its responsibility to act when a member church is in clear violation of the Constitution. Brothers, that may not be! As is true of parents in the home (and indeed of elders in the congregation) so it is true also of the ICRC as a conference of churches: we must dare to discipline! Such (as you well know) such is the clear teaching of the Word of our God. Only so can we be “peacemakers” and not become “peace breakers.” Let me say, additionally therefore, not only that the onus is on us to communicate clearly and in unmistakable language that we understand what our Constitution requires, namely: that we act forthrightly on what it is we say in and by “the Constitution” – this: the ICRC must “suspend” immediately any and all who have departed from the

agreed-to “Constitution”. But also we must say clearly and forthrightly that the ICRC stands ready and is eager to receive back into the fellowship of the ICRC any and all who sincerely repent of the action they took which led to their suspension. As some of you may know, the Lord has entrusted seven children, 37 grandchildren and 89 great-grandchildren, to me and to my wife of 61 years, a wonderful blessing to be sure, but also an awesome responsibility! I have said, and I continue to say to them, “We must dare to discipline!” Oh yes, that is an awesome responsibility, which at times can be heart-rending, but it is also a responsibility which, if exercised in faithful obedience to God’s Word, will surely be blessed of the Lord! Such is his Word of promise to parents; such is also his Word of promise to the church, and to the ICRC today. Brothers, we (as member-churches of the ICRC, who hurt so deeply for our departing brothers, the RCN), may pray for the Lord’s blessing upon our act of discipline which requires that we (in faithfulness to the word of promise which we spoke to each other) must now act to suspend the RCN immediately. Yes, we may ask that the Lord bless the decision we must now make, in faithfulness to the word which we have spoken and also to the RCN, by leading them to repentance. So the ICRC will effectively communicate to the RCN our sincere hope and prayer that they return to the basis of the ICRC – thereby returning to a joyful, meaningful, and unto-blessing-for-us-all fellowship and labour in the Church and Kingdom our Lord. May our faithful God grant it for Jesus’ sake. Such, brothers, is my prayer. I conclude, Mr Chairman, by urging us to vote in support of the OPC proposal, that we, “Pursuant to Article IV.4 of the Constitution of the ICRC, suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, effective immediately.” Thank you.

Recess 15:29-15:54

The Chairman acknowledged the arrival of Rev. Davi Charles Gomez of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

The Chairman asked men who speak to limit themselves to 5 minutes and to avoid *ad hominem* arguments.

Rev. Bruce Martin (RPCNA). The substitute motion is out of order. The Constitution applies whenever the conference concludes the member church is no longer in agreement with its Basis. We have just determined that. We must go to suspension or termination.

Rev. Pieter Boon (FRCSA) against the substitute motion. It is brotherly to suspend. That is the character of suspension: it is something that can be done immediately, unlike deposition. With reference to Ground 1 of CRCN substitute motion: in fact, there was a motion on the floor of the RCN Synod Meppel only in principle to approve women in office but to delay implementation; this motion to postpone action was turned down. Synod Meppel chose to allow it to have immediate effect. I appreciate the good intentions of the substitute motion, but it comes too late. The execution of the Synod’s decision will happen in the short term. There will be congregations that do not ratify it. At the next ICRC they will be in an irreversible position.

Chris Boersema (RCB). Beloved brothers in our Lord Jesus, I speak to you here in name of the Reformed Churches of Brazil. May the Holy Spirit grant me wisdom in my words. As a way of introduction, I should say that although the Reformed Churches in Brazil as a federation organised only 17 years ago, our relationship and connections with the RCN go back to the 1960s, when these Dutch churches first sent missionaries to Brazil. Our sister churches in the Netherlands have contributed significantly and with real, sacrificial brotherly love to the foundations of the Reformed Churches in Brazil for half a century, and even to this day. So we thank the Lord for these brothers and sisters. But now I speak with a very heavy heart on this matter. I speak against the substitute motion, and am strongly in favour of the original motion. There have been plenty of speeches in support of the OPC motion, and well laying out the grounds for that support. So right now I will only make some comments about the four points stated as the basis for the substitute motion.

1. On point 1: I don't see what church orderly procedure of the RCN has not yet been completed. The decision is made, and for all we know is final and done. It is not now a time for our churches to evaluate whether our decision was correct, makes sense, can be implemented, should be reconsidered, etc. The RCN has made their decision.
2. On point 2: to state that "not all member churches of the ICRC were able to study the underlying grounds of this decision" in other words means that there are possibly valid grounds to be considered as to why a church might make such a decision against the infallible Word of God. No brothers, there is nothing here for us to consider as possible valid grounds for this decision.
3. On point 3: if the RCN, or her delegates, realize that they should reconsider their membership in the ICRC, but have been studying this matter for many years, they should have done the right thing already and brought such a request, to withdraw their membership, to this ICRC meeting.
4. On point 4 I will just say this: I don't believe we make decisions according to how effective they will be. We make decisions according to what is the right thing to do. To vote in favour of the original motion is the right thing to do according to our constitution, and according to the Word of God. May our dear brothers of the RCN not only reconsider their decision, but may they repent and humbly seek the Lord in prayer, so that the Holy Spirit might open their eyes and reveal the full truth of God's powerful Word. Thank you.

Rev. John Macleod (FCSC) *against the substitute motion.* I attended Synod Ede and sister church messages were clear: if you go ahead there will be a breach. Synod Meppel brought back the same thing and the sister churches spoke again. This has not come out of the blue. The RCN has heard the views of sister churches and knew what the result would be. The RCN have in effect suspended themselves by their decision. I was distressed to find on social media this morning that there are pictures of ourselves and pressure is being applied for us to make a certain decision.

Rev. Andrew Lucas (EPCI) *against the substitute motion.* The EPCI appreciates its relationship with the RCN. We have followed developments with concern. We have expressed our concerns at the last three Synods. The same message has come from the sister churches. This is not a knee-jerk reaction, but based on thorough reflection on the Word of God. Have the RCN listened? Has there been any change at all? No. Their decision has been a long time coming, despite concern within and without the RCN. 1. The amendment does not reflect what has happened for 10 years. 2. It does not send a clear message 3. It is contrary to the new Constitution which we have approved. 4. It fails to support those within the RCN who share concerns. I urge you to reject the substitute motion and adopt the OPC proposal 2.

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward (PCEA). The PCEA has been a member since 1985. We have no controversy about women in office. We are not persuaded of it. But the question is not quite as easy as some brothers think. (I suggested holding off the new Constitution until after the matter was heard. The new Constitution was accepted.) In the OPC letter, the hermeneutical question is not addressed, nor the RCN's direction. You should be ready to change your mind in a debate like this. Synod Meppel will meet again in November. And we must recognize that there may be more light to be brought from the Word of God. It is not adequate to resort to the confessions and not to go back to the Scriptures. We must look at their exegesis. Clarity of Scripture is not an argument. 'This is my body': the surface meaning is not the true meaning. I am open to look again at the texts that appear to restrict the offices to men. Maybe the current climate of feminism could awaken us to matters we have not addressed. Do not act with undue haste. Give them 12 months or to the end of the year. They promise to raise it in their Synod. A more moderate and wiser course is to give time.

Rev. Tony Curto (OPC) *against the substitute motion.* In essence it says nothing different from what we have passed in point 3. We don't want them just to reconsider *their membership*. We want the RCN is to reconsider *their actions and decisions that are out of accord with the Scriptures*. Timing? We have been dealing with this for a number of years. Have we acted quickly enough? Many in our

churches have been affected in this time. Their lives have been tried, not only in the RCN. The hurt that this 'back and forth' has caused! Church members are hurt, families are being divided, and they ask us to make a decision, a clear statement that the RCN is out of accord with the sister churches of the ICRC. The integrity and testimony of the ICRC is at stake. We are able to make a statement to the world as an expression of the body of Christ. The substitute does not give the clarity of the original motion. We know what is taking place. We do not consider the RCN to be in good standing in the ICRC.

Rev. Ray Sikkema (URCNA). I used language that the CRCN found offensive – 'their line of reasoning was erroneous and misleading' and the word 'integrity'. I was not speaking about them, but about their argument – not cogent! Not a personal attack. I did not intend to offend you. I would gladly apologize wholeheartedly.

Rev. Jack Moesker (CanRC). I agree with Rev. Dr Curto. I disagree with the substitute. We want them to reconsider their decision, not their membership in the ICRC. If we don't act, we seem afraid to take the bull by the horns, and we 'pass the decision' to them.

Vote by secret ballot on the substitute motion

The question: Should the CRCN motion replace the OPC motion? Yes is a vote in favour of the substitute motion. No is a vote against it and takes us back to the OPC proposal 2. This vote requires over 50 %.

Result:

Yes 8; no 21; abstentions 2.

The substitute motion of the CRCN is defeated.

Original motion of the OPC.

Discussion

Vote by secret ballot

A yes vote is a vote in favour of suspending the RCN's membership. A no vote is a vote not in favour of suspending the RCN's membership. Result:

Yes 25; no 4; abstentions 2. This is 86.2% in favour.

The Chairman led the conference in prayer.

He also welcomed brother Davi Charles Gomez.

Close 17:00

Session 9

Evening, Monday
17 July, 2017

42. Opening

The Chairman opened the evening session at 19:35.

Singing: Psalm 67 (*Psalter Hymnal* 121).

Reading: Acts 17:22-34.

Prayer.

43. Church introductions

43.1 The Reformed Churches of Spain

Rev. Manuel Franco introduced the RCS.

Rev. Ray Sikkema prayed for the RCS.

43.2 Bible Presbyterian Church

Rev. Kevin Backus introduced Bible Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Kenneth Macdonald prayed for Bible Presbyterian Church.

44. Presentation 3. Bringing the Reformed Faith to India

Rev. Bruce Martin introduced speaker, Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer.

Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer presented his paper and took questions.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer for his presentation.

Singing: *Psalter Hymnal* 462.

Rev. Philip Dunwoody closed in prayer.

Session 10

Morning, Tuesday
18 July, 2017

45. Opening

Chairman called order at 9:00.

Ray and Chris Sikkema give thanks to God for 61 years of marriage today.
Richard and Tegwen Holst mark 50 years of marriage on 2 August.
Henk Berends is ill with cancer. We shall pray for him.

Singing: 'Glory be to the Father' (*Psalter Hymnal* 492).

Reading: Romans 3:21-26.

Meditation on Sola Fide. The Bible begins and ends with God, who has life in himself, sharing his life with us. The Trinitarian God. In the beginning God created (Gen. 1; John 1). We see this in Eden: God breathes the breath of life into Adam. He walks in the garden. Man sharing in intimate fellowship with God. The new heavens and the new earth, holy city, no tears, death or crying. The most profound delight is the satisfaction of God's presence with his people. In between, God promises to be present with his people even when they turn from him. He gives us that life in Jesus Christ. You see it in the tabernacle. His dwelling with us comes to a climax in the incarnation – Immanuel, God with us. The consummation is in the marriage feast of the Lamb.

How is this goal of glory possible? What is the ground? Especially as it is reserved for the righteous and we are unrighteous. The answer lies in the sacrifice of the Son, foreshadowed with the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement – not behind the veil. God satisfies his own justice; and this is how he can declare you and me righteous. He pronounces us righteous. He doesn't reckon sin to us but imputes the righteousness of Christ to us and makes enjoyment of his presence possible. He does that through faith alone. Not faith formed by love, no works, faith alone, as the instrument that unites us to Christ. It trusts in Christ for a right standing with God – embraces Christ – puts on the Lord Jesus Christ. This faith is a gift of God; it is the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He believed for us, the pioneer. Therefore we have peace with God. The sacrifice changes God's attitude to us: from wrath to peace – not truce but definitive peace through Jesus. The once for all sacrifice; raised for our justification. He pleads our cause. We daily enter God's presence, as accepted children of God. We stand in this grace. Guilty people cannot stand before God and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. God shares his life with us which is our salvation. Entry into the salvation is by being justified by faith alone. Two metaphors: the goal of a marriage is to live together as husband and wife. What grounds? The legal declaration. Adoption: the goal of adoption is that the child and parents live together; a legal declaration makes it possible. Foretaste: the church is a temple, our bodies are temples in which God's Spirit dwells. That's why God's love is poured out into our hearts. Prayer.

Singing: 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds' (*Psalter Hymnal* 384).

46. Missions Committee Report

Mark Bube presented the report (available on the website).

ICRC Missions Committee 2017 *Mission Field Survey* had been circulated. Reminder: not to be published on the internet.

We were not able to publish a Missions Newsletter.

Questions.

Recommendation 1: That the Committee, consisting of five members (with two alternates), be continued with the mandate in Part III, above.

Approved.

Recommendation 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 two days each).

Approved.

Recommendation 3: That the responsibilities for disseminating information regarding opportunities to assist persecuted Christians and their families, 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), be transferred to the Diaconal Committee at a mutually agreeable time, and that at such time the PROTOCOL be amended by replacing the words “Missions Committee” with the words “Diaconal Committee” each time they appear in the PROTOCOL.

Deferred; no vote taken.

The Chairman expressed thanks for the report.

47. Theological Education Committee: Revised Report

Pieter VanderMeyden presented the new recommendations and there was some discussion for clarification.

Recommendation 1. 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.

Approved.

Recommendation 2. That the ICRC instruct the TEC to publish information (subject to the above restrictions) regarding ways in which member churches can help each other, with regard to, among other things: (1) their distance learning programmes; (2) their theological education resources that can be of help; (3) credible academic theological conferences of which they may make use.

Approved.

Recommendation 3. In view of the TEC vacancies, that the conference appoint as committee member Rev. Richard Holst, and as alternate/advisor Mr Jim Beeke.

Noted and referred to the executive.

Douw Breed. Many other things the panel discussion brought out. Our advice is that the whole of the tenth ICRC is about theological training.

The Chairman expressed thanks for the work done.

48. Membership Reports Committee

Malan van Rhyn presented the results of the questionnaire to churches collecting information about the churches. He noted that the prayer requests of the churches were of the same kind: most churches asked for prayer for missions, unity, internal church life, secularization.

On mission fields of the member churches and their suggestions of topics for the conference:

Malan Van Rhyn reported on Africa.

Carl Van Dam reported on the North American churches.

Ros Infimate reported on Asia.

We have vast resources. You can use the information.

The Chairman thanked the committee.

Recess (delayed) 10:36-11:00

49. Future of the ICRC: request for questions for the panel

Bruce Hoyt: The ICRC has been functioning for over 30 years. The future of the ICRC is to be discussed. What direction should we take? Please give me questions for the panel discussion.

50. Advisory Committee 5: Applications for membership

Rev. Dr Laurens den Butter presented the committee's report on the Presbyterian Church of Uganda's application for membership of the PCU.

The PCU was founded in 1979 and now has 3,500 members in 30 churches and 22 mission stations. It is organized into 6 presbyteries. There are 22 ordained ministers. The Church has had extensive correspondence with the Corresponding Secretary. It has made its documentation available (Westminster Confession and Catechisms, a Statement of Beliefs, of the five Solas of the Reformation and the five 5 points of Calvinism, material for instructing the young, its Book of Order, a statement of its distinctives, and an introduction to the PCU).

It has received two letters of support, one from the RCN and one from the AEPC. It has support from the URC Congo and the OPC. The OPC was not able to endorse the application due to lack of information, but encouraged the PCU to apply and is in favour.

We recommend acceptance of the application of the PCU for membership of the ICRC.

Adopted.

Rev. Fred Kabenge and Elder James Yiga stood. The Chairman officially welcomed the PCU. Mark Bube prayed. All the delegates of the conference one by one greeted the two brothers of the PCU.

The Chairman also congratulated Rev. Dr Cornelis Pronk that he and his wife celebrate their 58th wedding anniversary today.

51. Discussion Panel 3. Bringing the Reformed Faith to Asia

Richard Bout (moderator), Mark Bube, Heon Soo Kim, Yonson Dethan, Jack Whytock, Rev. Dr Van Lalngakhang Khawbung.

1. What is the nature and focus of your work?

Each panel member explained his work.

2. What ideologies and cultural norms hinder the gospel where you work?

Panel members spoke about hindrances from governments, cultures, and other religions. There is a global phenomenon: that you should respect your indigenous culture and not accept western things. There is also the materialism of the West which is adopted in some places, materialism which creates no need for God.

3. How does persecution and opposition to the gospel both help and hinder your work?

Discussed. Noted: There are not many cheap confessions when naming the name of Christ could cost you everything. We learn lessons in persecution and are purified through it. It is for God's glory. It leads us to pray more.

4. What are the specific ways in which your church is involved in evangelism and church planting?

Education. English language classes. Friendships. Literature (photocopying) is for the next generation. The internet. Our key aims: establish the worship of God; cast the net to bring them in. Encourage members to have a missional mind. Leadership training (we train elders because we cannot afford pastors in every congregation).

Concern expressed for the Korean situation: theological education is shallow and there are ministers who cannot prepare their own sermons.

Persecution: Helps us to love our enemies. Anti-conversion law in our state.

Richard Holst and Andrew Lucas left the conference.

52. Close

Rev. Pradeep Kumar led the closing devotions.

Singing: Psalm 133 (*Psalter Hymnal* 278).

Prayer.

12:35

There was no afternoon session. Time was given for committees to meet.

Session 11

Evening, Tuesday
18 July, 2017

53. Opening

Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer opened the evening session at 19:30.

Singing: Psalm 43 (*Psalter Hymnal* 79).

Prayer.

54. Church introduction: the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

Rev. Dr Davi Charles Gomez introduced the PCB.

It was planted by a Southern Presbyterian minister in 1859. The church has approximately 1 million members. It is organized in 86 synods and 345 presbyteries, 6,000 congregations, with 5,000 pastors, 900 or so evangelists and 1,300 missionaries. The congregations have around 12,000 elders and 18,000 deacons. A few decades ago the church faced some difficult choices and it almost went the way of its mother church. But it has been brought back to a biblical position through preaching and theological education. It has 9 seminaries and one graduate school. God has blessed the church at a time when the country faces political and moral challenges. God has allowed them to be a witness.

Rev. Dr Douw Breed prayed for the PCB.

55. Presentation 4: Reformed Piety: Covenantal and Experimental

Rev. Dr Cornelis Pronk introduced the speaker, Rev. Dr Joel Beeke.

Rev. Dr Joel Beeke read Psalm 103:17-22 and Romans 11:33-12:2, prayed, presented his paper, and took questions.

Singing: 'O Jesus, joy of loving hearts' (*Psalter Hymnal* 422).

Rev. Andrew Nugteren closed in prayer.

Close 21:35.

Session 12

Morning, Wednesday
19 July, 2017

56. Opening

The Chairman opened the session at 9:00.

Singing: Psalm 150 (*Psalter Hymnal* 310).

Reading: 2 Timothy 3.

Meditation on *Sola Scriptura*.

The goal is participation in the life of God, the life of piety, of sanctification. The entry is by justification by faith. We have a foretaste: Christ in us, the hope of glory.

What is the primary means that God uses to draw us into his life? The Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17), that we may be equipped for every good work. The means to the end of doing good works, the means to a life of piety, the means of sanctification, is the Holy Scriptures. They function in four ways: 1. They teach us. We need to learn how to be sanctified, how to live pious lives, participate in the life of God. By nature 'we are like bleary eyed old men' (Calvin's description). Scriptures function like a pair of spectacles to enable us to see. The essence is loving God and our neighbour. The Ten Commandments and all the many commandments of the Word are summed up in how to love as God loves, as Christ loves. Joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit, we have the privilege of being his eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. Jesus was the ultimate 'man of God'. 2. They also reprove, or convict us. By nature we are 'curved in on ourselves'. We love ourselves more than we love God and our neighbour. The Spirit uses Scripture to expose this. For example, David and Bathsheba: Nathan brings the Word of God convicting him. The written Word of God does the same. For example, Peter on the Day of Pentecost: The Jews were curved in on themselves and they crucified the Lord. Peter exposes it and the Spirit convicts them. The Word does the same to you and me. We need this. The people mentioned in 2 Tim. 3 needed this: their love grows cold, and they are lovers of themselves. 3. They correct us, the positive side of reproof: they place us on the right path. See this in Psalm 51. And in Acts 2, note the question, 'What must we do?' The answer is the path: Repent and believe and you will receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit. 4. The Scriptures train us in righteousness. They show us God's good order of life, by pointing us to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our passive and active righteousness (for forgiveness and for sanctification). They train us to put on this righteousness by living in Christ by faith, maturing in that. He is our entry into a life of godliness, and the source of our participation in the life of God. Joined to him by faith we receive grace upon grace.

Why are the Scriptures able to do this? Because they are inspired by the God who has life in himself and who wants us to share in his life by the Spirit. All Scripture is God-breathed. Each book has the Breath of God. This Breath moved the authors to write what they did, infallibly – the mystery of inspiration, of providence, of concursus. This makes the Scriptures clear; they become a lamp for our feet, a light for our path. This makes the Scriptures sufficient. Our final authority. And they are efficient, to make us fit for every good work. It is no longer I that lives, but Christ in me. 2017, 500 years since 1517: this is a good time to reflect on the solas of the Reformation: solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, sola scriptura – all to the glory of God: soli Deo Gloria!

Prayer.

Singing: 'How firm a foundation' (*Psalter Hymnal* 411).

57. Minutes

Approve the substance of Sessions 1-8.

Adopted.

58. Diaconal Committee

Outstanding matter from item 35.

Rev. Pieter Boon.

Brochure distributed with thanks for the contributions of the churches. Not to go onto the internet; hard copy only.

Recommendations of the Committee presented and discussed.

From item 37 amended:

1. That funding, up to \$12,000, be provided to enable the Diaconal Committee to meet face-to-face at least once between conferences – preferably during one of the Regional Conferences.

Adopted.

2. That the organizers of Regional Conferences be encouraged to include at least one session with a diaconal focus, thus enabling member churches to work out ways and means of mutual instruction, encouragement, and support in this area.

Adopted.

3. That at least one session be set aside at each General Conference to enable the Diaconal Committee to present its report and recommendations and to enable the member churches to focus on their diaconal ministries and/or needs.

Adopted.

4. That the PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO MAJOR DISASTERS be set aside and that the DC establish a new protocol in line with the decisions of this conference, being: Major disasters: in response to the request of a Member Church, identify entities, connected with Member Churches, working in the area and / or responding to the disaster and provide contact information.

Adopted.

Chairman thanked the committee for their work.

59. Treasurer's Report

Rev. Jack Moesker introduced the new treasurer, Mr Kyle Lodder, who has replaced Mr Henk Berends who was with the ICRC from the beginning and who is now suffering with cancer.

Mr Kyle Lodder presented his report (Appendix 3).

1. ICRC Financial Report 2017.
2. Letter regarding review of the financial statements (not part of Appendix 3).
3. Statement of Receipts and Disbursements.
4. Statement of Financial Position.
5. Proposed Budget for 2018-2021.
6. Proposed Assessments for 2018-2021.

Questions and discussion of the report.

Clarification: each member church can send up to 4 delegates, 2 voting and 2 advisors, but the conference will bear the cost of accommodation of only 2 delegates. If a church sends 4, it must bear the cost of 2.

Are suspended members obliged to pay? Yes. They still are members. But there is the possibility that it will result in a larger deficit.

Douw Breed: the theological education committee is expanded. We need to have \$15,000 in line with other committees.

The conference approved the Budget.

The Chairman thanked the treasurer and the finance committee for the work done.

60. Free Church in Southern Africa

The Corresponding Secretary informed the conference that this is the third conference at which the FCSA has not been represented. He had not been able to get a response to his many communications. Hence, their membership is up for review. But he would like to give them more time, considering the difficulties of their situation. He asked for a motion to that effect.

Motion: the conference finds that there are good and sufficient grounds, with reference to Article IV.5, to postpone action on the membership of the Free Church in Southern Africa for one more meeting.

Approved.

Rev. Dr Douw Breed suggested the establishment of a commission to look into this. The conference requested Rev. Pieter Boon and Rev. Jack Whytock to make contact with the FCSA and report back to the conference (via the executive committee).

Recess 10:24-10:50

61. Panel 2 Discussion: Ministry of Mercy (2)

Three CRCN delegates, Rev. Laurens A. den Butter, Prof. Dr Arnold Huijgen, Rev. Wim Wullschleger, left the conference.

Rev. David Nakhla moderated a continued panel discussion on questions not covered before.

Panel question 4. What tools are used in your churches for the training of diaconate? Deacons' conference (e.g. every three years). This is an area of need in most continents.

Questions and comments from the floor included: 1. Any advice on moving a congregation towards having a biblical office of the deacon? 2. Rev. Dr James Visscher and Rev. Lawrence Bilkes have edited a magazine *Diakonia* for 20 years and are making material available on a website. 3. The relevance of diaconate in the west (kinds of needs). 4. The model of Thomas Chalmers. 5. Care is needed not to create 'rice Christians'; however, as the missionary sees so much need, is it difficult to resist? What advice to missionaries? 6. Promoting the communion of saints. Deacons should visit every church member to ask, How are you using your God-given gifts to serve other people in the church? Everyone in the church has a diaconal task. This must be inculcated from the start. Loneliness is part of the need. When there is a project, a need in the third world, we contribute a dollar for every dollar

that they themselves collect: creates ownership, and guards against the idea that the West owes us. We don't solve things with money.

62. Panel Discussion 4: Future of the ICRC

Panel: Bruce Hoyt (moderator), Karlo Janssen, Hiralal Solanki, William Middelkoop, Pieter Boon (instead of Ray Sikkema).

The ICRC purposes:

- 1 and 5 we do by being here;
- 2, 3 and 4 need attention.

Members of the panel reflected on some questions put by the moderator.

1. ICRC now has 34 members, many for more than 20 years. What are the practical benefits of your membership in the ICRC?

Rev. Dr Karlo Janssen: The CanRC has been helped to come out of its isolation. Local inter-church relations. Finding speakers for occasions. Mission field co-operation. Churches learn from one another and communicate with one another.

Rev. William Middelkoop: The first benefit is in principle, from Eph. 3:18 – to comprehend with all the saints the love of Christ etc. The first purpose is to help one another to glorify God. Our latest synod determined to start new mission projects in Europe. In this we are using our relations with the EPCI and are starting there with them. In Holland we face some financial problems, and small churches struggle to pay a pastor. A study committee will look at how to manage this in future. One task is to contact churches in the EuCRC who also manage this problem.

Rev. Hiralal Solanki: It has opened for us inter-church relations and we hope for more co-operation.

Rev. Pieter Boon: It prevents isolation and opens our eyes to Presbyterian branch of Reformed tradition. From Africa, there is an increasing diaspora of peoples. It helps us to connect with this.

2. How well do you think we are doing 2, 3, and 4?

There was a consensus that there is much to do to improve on what has been done so far but also that we are on the right path. However, the average church member has little idea what the ICRC is about. We have not done purpose 4. The ICRC has enabled churches (e.g., the CRCN) to change their relations with other churches. We must be careful not to build too large an organization here: respect the limits, we are still a conference.

We have a mandate to invite other churches that could become members, for example, the Reformed Churches of Quebec and the Hungarian Church. Use personal contacts.

Questions and comments from the floor. 1. Its confessional nature is a strength of this conference. Inviting is a lot easier than 'uninviting'! Exercise caution when inviting. We count on member churches to nurture new churches and be wise to guard the confessional basis. 2. Some of our federations have ministers from the other tradition (Reformed / Presbyterian). We haven't yet seen a union result. 3. The study of common problems and panel discussions are good. 4. Maintaining awareness of the conference in the four year intervals would be a good thing. Church introductions are valuable. Lux Mundi can be a valuable way of doing this. Standing for Christ is hard; it helps to have common cause and be aware of it through Lux Mundi etc. Protection from isolation is needed: in church history heresies arose in isolated situations. What is there to encourage inter-church

relations in the period in between conferences? Regional conferences, the website...there are means but they must be used. Churches need other churches. Can we live-stream parts of this conference? Be careful not to move in a too academic direction. Lectures should be pastoral, at the level of church members. 5. We should emphasize training of ministers and elders. 6. To what extent could the ICRC be a forum where confessional matters could be discussed or debated? Sometimes we deal with matters in a procedural way, rather than substantive. How to correct this? 7. We need to know if problems faced in say Europe are relevant to churches in the East, or Africa. And we are a conference, not a synod. We must avoid making things difficult for one another. It will be helpful to everyone to discuss issues: we can learn, but not bind. The churches in the West live under pressure on gender issues; but it's different in the 'majority world.'

Rev. Bruce Hoyt thanked the panel.

63. Closing

Rev. Dennis Luquette led closing devotions.

Singing: 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah' (*Psalter Hymnal* 407)

Prayed.

Closed at 12:34.

Session 13

Afternoon, Wednesday
19 July, 2017

64. Opening devotions

The Chairman called the conference to order at 14:02.

Rev. Samit Mishra led opening devotions.

Singing: Psalm 72 (*Psalter Hymnal* 134 verses 1-4).

Prayer.

The conference expressed thanks to host church members, Mim and Herb Sinke, Melissa Tigchelaar, and Hannah Bouwers, who looked after the needs of the conference so well.

Attention was drawn to an error in the directory produced by the Diaconal Committee: page 27, add the details of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

Some delegates have left.

The RCN delegation has left: but Rev. Dr Melle Oosterhuis wanted to say that he was sorry for the misery that they put us through. He stressed that after the suspension the fellowship was warm and they were thankful for the love shown to them.

Minutes. The practice is for the executive to examine the minutes that the conference is unable to pass because they are not available until after the conference has closed.

65. ICRC Committee Appointments

Presented:

Co-ordinating Committee

Bruce Hoyt, Matthew Ebenezer, Peter Naylor, Kyle Lodder, Mark Bube, Karlo Janssen, Dirk van Garderen, James Sawtelle, Douw Breed, Dick Moes, James Visscher.

Diaconal Committee

Dirk van Garderen (convenor), Rick Postma, David Nakhla, Pieter Boon, Ko Serier, Chris Boersema, Aaron Bae.

Missions Committee

Mark Bube (convenor), Arjan de Visser, David Miller, Van Lalngkhakthang, Yonson Dethan, (alternates: Patrick Wic, Pieter Meijer).

Publications Committee

Website section: Karlo Janssen (convenor), Frank Ezinga.

Lux Mundi section: Sjirk Bajema, Hiralal Solanki, Hans Maris, (advisors: Ria Nederveen, Lawr Khawbung, Glenda Mathes).

Theological Education Committee

Douw Breed (convenor), Pieter VanderMeyden, Jim Beeke, Melle Oosterhuis, Richard Holst, Matthew Ebenezer, Tony Curto, (advisor Gerhard Visscher).

Regional Conferences Committee

Africa Region: Daniel Kithongo
 Asia-Pacific Region: Reinier Noppers
 European Region: Han Schenau
 North American Region: James Sawtelle
 South American Region: Elias Barbosa da Silva

These men try to facilitate the regional conferences, to encourage the regional churches to call conferences.

66. Committee for the ICRC 2021

Dr Jeff Temple presented the committee report. The desire of the committee is to hold the next ICRC in India. There are potential obstacles. We have asked our Indian brothers to investigate and report to the co-ordinating committee by 1 September 2018. We are asking the CRCA to act as a back-up host.

Questions and comments

If a letter is obtained in one year's time, can we be sure it will hold good for three years later (November 2021)? No assurances can be given; but it is hoped so, if the government does not change. It may not be possible to get a letter for 2021 at all.

Easier and less risk to go for Australia, but the easy path is not always the best to take. There can be substantial benefits in going to India.

If the government authorizes the conference, the plan is to locate in a hotel close to the airport. If not authorized, delegates could stay in the hotel but the conference would have to meet in another place.

Approved.

The Chairman thanked the committee for its work.

Topics and speakers.

We asked the Indian brothers to suggest a topic relevant to their own context. The OPC supplied a list of suggestions re hermeneutics and biblical authority, the offices of the church (regarded as relevant), gender.

Douw Breed: the theological education committee suggested that the conference be on this.

The pressure on the west is coming to the majority world. We can fortify them in advance.

The rise of secularism.

We do not decide on a topic here. We canvass for ideas and the co-ordinating committee works with those to reach a decision.

67. Press Release

Bruce Martin introduced the Press Release:

The ninth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches was held in Jordan, Ontario, Canada, from July 12-19, 2017, in the facilities of the Immanuel United Reformed Church and the Heritage Christian School. It was a blessed time of fellowship with one another as delegates and with our hosts, which not only included the calling Immanuel United Reformed Church of Jordan, and her local sister churches, but also regional church members of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), Free Reformed Churches (FRCNA), Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), and Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC). The welcome was warm and generous, and a great opportunity to see and experience the Lord's work in this part of his vineyard.

Following the beginning of the meeting with a Prayer Service held under the auspices of the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) on Wednesday evening, July 12, we were able to work our way steadily through the schedule, capably led by the Chairman, the Rev. Dick Moes.

It was our brother Moes, who, throughout the meeting, in light of the 500th year since the nailing of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, focused on four of the Reformational Solas – Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, and Sola Scriptura in the morning devotions.

It was a joy to receive into the membership of the ICRC the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) and the Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU) after reports from sponsoring denominations and consideration by the Membership Committee. We look forward to a fruitful work together with them. Already the CRCA is involved with the Presbyterian Church in Eastern Australia (PCEA) in hosting the 2019 Asia-Pacific Regional Conference due to be held in Australia.

It was with much sadness, however, that the Conference suspended the membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN), as it was deemed that they have broken with Article IV.4 of the Constitution in their recent synodical decision to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture. This took up much time in the meeting as there was much discussion and various options considered. A number spoke of the blessed help the RCN have been in the past to their federations and so this involved an extra heaviness of heart. Yet it was quite clear that the view of the RCN is not the view of any of the other churches in the ICRC, and certainly was not the view of any of those, apart from the RCN, who spoke at our meeting. Please pray for our brethren there, that the Lord in his grace would turn them in repentance to his Word and so be able to join fully with us once more.

The various Committee Reports brought out the Lord's blessing upon the member churches and service to him in various spheres – Theological Education, Diaconal, and Missions. A new Committee set up is the Publications Committee which takes in the new ICRC magazine – *Lux Mundi* – and the current website. In connection with these different aspects of ICRC work there were four very well received and helpful panel discussions on theological education and growing future leaders for the Reformed faith, the ministry of mercy and the Reformed faith, bringing the Reformed faith to Asia, and on the future direction of the ICRC.

There was also much time given for bilateral and multilateral meetings among the member delegations. It was also a blessing to have a number of observer churches present.

Financially the ICRC is very healthy with an excess from the past four-year period. It was felt prudent to retain such a balance and continue to receive membership assessment payments to meet the actual costs for the next four-year period.

A highlight of the meetings were the evening addresses, given respectively by the Rev. Hiralal Solanki on 'A Brief Overview of Christian Mission in India', the Rev. Dr Derek Thomas on John Calvin's preaching on the Book of Job, Dr Matthew Ebenezer on 'Bringing the Reformed Faith to India', and Dr Joel Beeke on 'Reformed Piety: Covenantal and Experiential.' (Note: These will be made available on the Internet.) There was also a valuable time of discussion on these occasions where we were joined by many from the local Reformed churches.

We were well provided for – physically and spiritually. We leave refreshed in the precious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and looking confidently for future worship and service of him, praying the Head of the church to keep us faithful to his Word.

Discussion.

Recess 3:23-3:53

Adopted.

68. Committee Appointments again

The list of committee appointments was re-presented.

Two men had been nominated for the Regional Conference Committee from the Asia-Pacific region (Rev. Dr Rowland Ward and Rev. Reinier Noppers). A ballot was taken and Rev. Reinier Noppers was chosen.

Approved.

69. Credentials Committee

Rev Ray Sikkema reported that all credentials are in order.

70. Closing

Rev. Jack Moesker led closing devotions.
Singing: Psalm 84 12 first three stanzas
Prayer.

The Chairman closed the session at 16:10.

Session 14

Evening, Wednesday
19 July, 2017

71. Closing of the Ninth ICRC

Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer opened the session at 19:30.

Reading Psalm 100.

Singing: Psalm 23 (*Psalter Hymnal* 38).

Prayer.

Rev. John Bouwers introduced two musical groups: a string quartet and some singers led by Heon Soo Kim of the IRCK; and a group of young musicians and singers from Immanuel Church. These performed some musical items.

Rev. Dr Mathew Ebenezer introduced Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun. He expressed the Conference's gratitude to the Lord for all things, and then thanks to the following: to the URCNA churches especially Immanuel; to Rev. and Mrs John Bouwers; to all the host families; to the Recording Secretary, Chairman, Coordinator, Treasurer and Corresponding Secretary.

The Corresponding Secretary expressed thanks to the local organizing committee, Martin Venema, Al Brouwer, Andre Langendoen, Melissa Tigchelaar, Herb and Mim Sinke, and Rev. John Bouwers. He presented the gift of a wall clock to commemorate the hosting of the ninth ICRC. Rev. John Bouwers presented to the Chairman a much coveted blue 'ICRC' T-shirt.

The Chairman thanked Rev. Dr Matthew Ebenezer for his work.

Singing: 'Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing' (*Psalter Hymnal* 325).

Prayer.

The Chairman closed the ninth International Conference of Reformed Churches at 20:35.

Appendix 1

Presentation to the conference of
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
General Synod, Meppel 2017.
Decisions of Synod in relation to Male/Female in Office

Authorized translation – Draft

Materials

1. Preliminary Report of Deputies Male/ Female and Office – *The Sore Points* (08-07-2016);
2. Final Report of Deputies Male/Female and Office – *Serving Together* (01-11-2016);
3. Letter from GK Brunssum-Treebeek (23-12-2016), indicating it is pleased with the report *Serving Together*, and expressing heartfelt agreement with draft decision 4;
4. Letter from GK Sint Jansklooster-Kadoelen (13-01-2017), interacting with the report *Serving Together*: taking the starting point in the creation of man and women is good; however, only the man was created in the image of God, not the woman; the ‘four layers’ model is incorrect; it is desirable that women are optimally deployed in the church, but that the differences between man and woman are not glossed over;
5. Letter from GK Kantens (23-01-2017), interacting with the report *Samen Dienen*: the manner in which chapter 2 gives attention to the historical contours provides valuable insights; however, it seems that the concept of equality between man and woman figures too prominently; chapter 3 seems to aim at providing room for women within the current structures of the office; broadening the office of deacons and (later) opening the office of deacons to women would be a good option; this matter ought not to be left in the freedom of the churches;
6. Letter from GK Bussum-Huizen (24-01-2107), providing an analysis of the report *Samen Dienen*: the report arrives at a different stance concerning the position of women in the congregation than has hitherto been taught in the churches; its discussion concerning the texts requiring women to be silent is too sketchy;
7. Letter from GK Emmeloord (26-01-2017), requesting that Synod limits itself to a declaration that ‘women in office’ is not in conflict with the Word of God, and that it leaves till the next Synod a decision to actually open the offices to sisters.
8. Supplementary report of Deputies Male/Female in Office’ (31-01-2017): supplement to chapter 5 of the report *Samen Dienen*
9. Letter from the Canadian Reformed Church (24-10-2017), interacting with chapter 2 of the report *Samen Dienen*: the manner in which the ‘four layers’ are described shows that ‘culture’ has determined the direction of the report; it is clear from I Corinthians 14:33b-35 and I Timothy 2:11-14 that the Bible leaves no grounds for the ordination of women; the report does not offer a clear description of what the Bible means with ‘prophesying’; man and women have equal value, but according to Ephesians 5:22 women are to recognize the authority of their husband, and in this context the reference to I Corinthians 7:4b is inappropriate; the report falls short in failing to pay attention to I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6;
10. Letter from GK Capelle a/d IJssel-Noord (10-02-2017): asserting that the report *Samen Dienen* fails to do justice to the Word of God: in Chapter 2 the deputies wrongly state that Paul’s interpretation of Genesis 1-3 is not to be regarded as normative; hence, the deputies have not done proper justice to the ‘line of authority’; in Chapter 3 the difference between the ruling office and all kinds of service within the church has been watered down;
11. Letter from GK Spakenburg-Noord (24-01-2017): requesting not to go beyond decisions-in-principle at this stage, and only implementing these decisions if the next Synod agrees to do so with a great majority;

12. Letter from GK Veenendaal-Oost (27-01-2017): asserting that the line the Bible gives concerning leadership of the congregation points to the man's role; in its view, insufficient weight has been given to the fact that at the Fall it was Adam who bore ultimate responsibility, and that Jesus appointed 12 male disciples; expressing objections against the deputies' reformulation of their mandate; and making a plea for option e., possibly to be extended by opening the office of deacons to sisters;
13. Letter from Deputies BBK (Deputies for relations with churches abroad)(15-05-2017): Advice not to proceed further at this point than the conclusion that in the light of Scripture it can be justified to open the offices to sisters, and to leave the decision to actually open the offices to the General Synod of 2020 at the earliest;
14. From the VGKSA (22-05-2017): written response to questions sent by the Synod Committee *M/F and Office*: under the influence of the 'new hermeneutic', present-day culture has become dominant in the report *Samen Dienen*; Genesis 3:16 is in itself not a curse; rather, the curse lies in the manner in which it functions after the Fall; hence, it is an artifice for the report to place this text in the after-the-Fall layer.

Decision 1:

To discharge the Deputies *Male/Female and Office*

Ground:

The Deputies Male/Female and Office have properly carried out the mandate given to them by the General Synod of Ede.

Decision 2:

To encourage the churches:

- a. to make grateful use, in instruction, pastorate and diaconate, of all the gifts that the Lord gives to both men and women.
- b. to make careful arrangements with regard to the appointment of men and women in various kinds of service that do not belong to the offices

Grounds:

1. Next to men, women are also active at all levels in the congregation, without having been ordained to the office of minister, elder or deacon. They participate in the liturgy, in catechesis, and in committees and other positions (sometimes those of leadership). In recent years, this participation has become increasingly intensive, and that is a good thing.
2. Those who, serving in a special office, bear broad responsibility for the congregation must believe that they are called to this office, possess the necessary gifts, and by means of election and ordination are authorized by Jesus Christ to dedicate themselves to this task. This affords protection, both to the office-bearer and to the congregation. This protection is also important in relation to positions of service that do not belong to the offices.

Decision 3:

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds to provide ample room for the deployment of the gifts of women in task areas such as preaching, instruction, pastorate and diaconate.

Grounds:

1. Under the Old Covenant, men fulfilled all the regular offices in the church, those of prophet, priest and king. They were anointed to these offices, as a sign of having been appointed to and equipped for them. It was also men who served in numerous extraordinary functions of leadership in the church, such as the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua and the Judges. Finally, men fulfilled the roles of elders in the community. The few exceptional cases where women occupied leadership (Deborah, Judges 4:4; Miriam, Micah 6:4) or prophetic roles (Deborah, Judges 4:4; Hannah, I Samuel 2:1-10; Huldah, II Kings 22:14; Mary, Luke 1:46-55; Anna, Luke 2:36), confirms this rule under the Old Covenant.

2. At the same time, in the story of the Old Covenant, the pivotal roles are portrayed that women have fulfilled among God's people in the course of the history of salvation (Eve, Genesis 3:15; Sarah, Genesis 17:15,16; Tamar, Genesis 38:13ff; Jochebed, Exodus 1:22-2:10; Rahab, Joshua 2:2-7; Deborah, Judges 4 and 5; Ruth, Ruth 1:16,17; Esther, Esther 4:15,16; Mary, Luke 1:38). We also read the story of the woman in Revelation 12:1-6, who courageously endured the threats of the dragon. This story stands in stark contrast to the failures of men (Abraham, Genesis 12:12,13; Genesis 20:2; Judah, Genesis 38:24; Aaron, Exodus 32:2-6; Eli, I Samuel 1:14; David, II Samuel 11 and 12; Solomon, I Kings 11:1-8). In Matthew 1:17 the Lord reviews this history, holding it up as a mirror to the male leaders of the church of that time and of all ages, and as a warning to them.
3. Among those who lived under the Old Covenant, there was a yearning for the coming of the New. The New Testament reveals the fulfilment of that longing. In the coming of the God's unique Anointed One, our Lord Jesus Christ, thanks to his official ministry, and thanks to the anointing with his Spirit, God's people might truly be what they since the covenant of Mount Sinai had already been called, a 'royal priesthood' (Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9). For all of His people, His coming is at the same time the coming of and the anointing with the Spirit of prophecy (Acts 1:8,14 and 2:4), for which Moses had been hoping (Numbers 11:29), and of which the prophets spoke (Joel 3:1,2). It is the perspective of their freedom in Christ, in which there is no longer any difference between male and female (Galatians 3:28). All will be prophets, priests and kings. In the New Covenant, the law carved in stone, the law of commandments and regulations, has been set aside (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ephesians 2:15-17; II Corinthians 3:6) because it, also and especially in relation to the ordering of the Old Testament offices, had proved to be ineffective (Hebrews 8:8) and declared to be obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). The New Covenant, characterized by equality, has replaced it. All will know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest. (Jeremiah 31:34; Acts 2:17,18; I John 2:20,27).
4. For the Christian church, this revelation of the Old and New Testament gives cause for continuing reflection. Throughout the ages, until Christ's return, the church will have to critically examine itself: the ordering of its church life, the functions that according to Scripture are to be carried out in it, the roles that all its members, male and female, from the least to the greatest, are to fulfil in it. In this way it will be continually exhorted, with a view to the organization of the offices, to critically examine its own understanding of Scripture.
5. In response to this calling, Synod has come to the conclusion that the witness of Scripture gives the congregation every reason to allow men and women to serve equally in all prophetic, priestly and royal tasks in the church, tasks which their shared name as Christians addresses equally (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 12).
6. Synod has further come to the conclusion that those places in which Scripture speaks of an apostolic command to keep silent, or a prohibition against women teaching or exercising authority, do not, in themselves, supply indisputable grounds to categorically exclude, in our time and circumstances, women from teaching and ruling offices in the church, since the exegesis of these texts is too greatly in dispute.
7. Within these offices, next to this equality there will also be distinctiveness, and men and women are called to mutual acceptance of each other in the place and manner in which they serve, in accordance with the various and distinctive talents they have been given.

Decision 4:

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of mercy and therefore to the office of deacon.

Grounds:

1. According to the testimony of Scripture, in apostolic times women shared in the office of the deacons (I Timothy 3:11, 5:9), and they too were called 'deacons' (Romans 16:1-2).
2. The office of deaconess was also known in the early Christian church. In a number of Reformed churches this office still continues.

Decision 5:

To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of oversight, pastorate and instruction, and therefore to the office of elder.

Grounds:

1. Women such as Miriam and Deborah portray women in the Old Testament who, in collaboration with men, acted as rulers and judges.
2. They could also be called to this service by God Himself, as is evident from Micah 6:4, where the Lord teaches Israel: "I sent before you ... Miriam".
3. While the New Testament refers to men as elders, older women are also called to exemplary and pastoral tasks (Titus 2:3-5).
4. Paul's reference to Junia and her husband Andronicus as highly regarded apostles (Romans 16:7), and to other married couples as his fellow workers (Romans 16:3), and his mention of married couples and of a brother and sister, at whose home a church meets (Romans 16:5, 15), create the impression that men and women, from a position of equality, together gave leadership in Christ's congregations.

Decision 6:

- a. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, that next to men, women also, who have received the necessary gifts, may be given permission to preach; and hence to delete the word 'male' from Article 1 of the general regulations governing permission to preach.
- b. To declare that there are Scriptural grounds, next to men, also to call women to the ministry of preaching and instruction, and therefore to the office of minister.

Grounds:

1. The Old Testament already makes mention of prophetesses (Exodus 15:20, 21; Judges 4:4-7; II Kings 22:14), or of prophetic activity by women (I Samuel 2:1-10). In the New Testament also, already before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we read about prophetic activity by women. We note Mary and her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55). We also read of Anna, who prophesied together with Simeon on the occasion of the infant Jesus' presentation in the temple, and who served the Lord day night and day in the temple (Luke 2:36-38).
2. The fulfilment of the promise of Pentecost (Joel 3:1-2; Acts 2:17-18) is that sons and daughters, young and old, will share in the gift of prophecy. The New Testament displays that reality. On the day of Pentecost the apostles, together with other disciples, among whom possibly women (Acts 1:14), anointed by the Holy Spirit, acted as Jesus' witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:4-8). Other places, too, make mention of women who prophesied (Acts 21:8; I Corinthians 11:4-5).
3. The meaning of Scripture is that "*the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*" (I Corinthians 14:3). This manner of prophesying applies to both men and women.
4. New Testament prophecy, as to its content, has always been understood within the Reformed tradition as the explanation of Holy Scripture, and a Spirit-guided application to the present day, specifically in the preaching.
5. While there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the precise interpretation of the apostolic command to 'be silent', comparative examination of I Corinthians 14:34 and I Corinthians 11:5 and 14:26 shows that in any case this prescription cannot be understood as an absolute prohibition to speak (or preach) in the worship service.

Decision 7:

To leave room to the local churches to determine for themselves whether, if so in what manner, and when they want to act in line with these decisions.

Grounds:

1. It is for each church to consider how the gifts given to its members are to be deployed, in order to bring the congregation further on the road to the kingdom of God.

2. Each church ought to follow its own process of reflection, and come to its own decision if, if so in what manner, and when they will take action in line with these decisions.

Decision 8:

To encourage the churches to engage in further reflection as to how justice can be done to the differences between men and women in the execution of tasks and offices in the congregation.

Grounds:

1. The Bible speaks about both the equal value and position of man and woman, and the distinctive place God has given them within it, in marriage and in the congregation. In our present-day culture, which is strongly oriented towards equality, this aspect deserves special attention.
2. The Bible repeatedly sounds warnings that man and women ought not to intrude into each others place, nor lord it over each other (I Peter 3:7, 4:15, 5:3; I Timothy 2:8-15; I Corinthians 14:34-35; III John:9).

Decision 9:

To send the decisions concerning *Male/Female and Office* to sister churches abroad.

Ground:

A number of sister churches abroad have responded in writing to the reports of Deputies, and/or participated in discussion of these reports during the days allocated to relations with churches abroad at the Synod.

Decision 10:

To appoint *Deputies Male/Female in the church*, with the following instructions:

1. To explain and provide further information concerning the shared service of men and women in the local churches and the classes;
2. To gather and develop material that will serve the process of reflection in the local churches and the classes;
3. To provide advice and guidance at points of difficulty regarding the decisions that have been taken (in collaboration with the Deputies for Church Polity);
4. To provide advice in relation to the ordination of men and women to tasks that belong, and do not belong, to the offices (co-ordinated with the Deputies for worship services);
5. To make an inventory of the manner in which the local churches and the classes deal with the decisions that have been taken (in collaboration with the *Practijkcentrum*).

Grounds:

1. The decisions that have been taken call for careful communication with the churches
2. There is already a great deal of material available in the form of reports to Synods of 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017. However, it is good to develop a coherent package of materials for the benefit of the churches.
3. The decisions that have been taken regarding the joint service of men and women have a sizeable impact, and will be received in quite different ways. That is why it is beneficial for the churches to be able to turn to a single address to obtain advice in relation to these decisions.
4. Now that it is in the freedom of the churches whether and to how to take action in line with these decisions, it will be beneficial to gain an overview of the manner in which the churches respond to them.
5. An insight into what lives within the churches in relation to these decisions may assist determining whether, in the longer term, the offices need to be described or organized differently.

Decision 11:

To allocate a budget of € 20.500 in total to the Deputies *Male/Female in the church*.

Appendix 2

Letter of a Commission of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to the Conference regarding the Decisions of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) in General Synod Meppel, 2017

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church
 The Commission of the General Assembly
 The Rev. Dr L. Anthony Curto, Chairman
 53 Milford Church Road
 Taylors, SC 29687 USA
 EMAIL: curto.1@opc.org

VIA EMAIL ATTACHMENT

July 6, 2017

The Rev. Dr James Visscher, Corresponding Secretary
 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
 5734 – 191A Street
 Surrey, BC V3S 7M8
 CANADA

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. We regret having to write you at this late hour, but the recent decision by Synod Meppel 2017 of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) to open the special offices of minister and ruling elder to women, contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture, would seem to require us to do so.

We begin by officially informing you that, to satisfy the requirements of Article IV.4 of the *Constitution* of the ICRC, the 84th (2017) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (which was dissolved before the adoption of the relevant actions by Synod Meppel 2017), adopted the following:

That, in the event the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Meppel 2017 (“the RCN”) determines, before the conclusion of the 9th (2017) Meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (“the ICRC”), which is scheduled to meet in Jordan, Ontario, on July 12–19, 2017, to open the special offices of minister of the Word of God and/or ruling elder to persons who are biblically disqualified from such offices, the 84th (2017) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, pursuant to *Form of Government* XII.3, constitute the four duly elected OPC delegates to that meeting of the ICRC a Commission of this Assembly until the next (85th [2018]) General Assembly, to act on behalf of and with the full power of the General Assembly on any and all matters pertaining to the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, including the authority to propose to the 9th (2017) Meeting of the ICRC, as the Commission deems appropriate, that the RCN be suspended, pursuant to Article IV.4 of the *Constitution* of the ICRC, from membership in the ICRC.

Ground:

While we pray that implementation of the proposed recommendation is unnecessary, given present circumstances, the recommendation represents a reasonable and prudent action to protect the integrity of the ICRC, which plays a vital role in the structure of our own ecclesiastical relationships.

Accordingly, I am now writing you on behalf of the Commission of the OPC General Assembly, which having been duly constituted, now proposes to the Conference:

- A. That the Agenda for the upcoming 9th (2017) Meeting of the ICRC be amended by adding an item regarding the membership, including the status thereof, of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) in the ICRC.
- B. That, with regard to the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN) in the ICRC, the Conference:
 1. Declare that the RCN—having recently acted to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture—is in its doctrine and/or practice no longer in agreement with the Basis of the Conference (*cf. Constitution, Article IV.4*);
 2. Pursuant to Article IV.4 of the *Constitution* of the ICRC, suspend the membership of the RCN in the ICRC, effective immediately;
 3. Encourage the RCN to reconsider the action of Synod Meppel 2017 in this matter and to restore the doctrine and/or practice of the RCN to be in agreement with the Basis of the Conference; and
 4. In the event that, by the time of the 10th (2021) Meeting of the ICRC, the RCN continues to permit the ordination of persons to the offices of minister and ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture, the status of the membership of the RCN in the ICRC be placed on the Agenda for that Meeting.

We pray that the Holy Spirit, working by and with the Word, will guide the ICRC in its deliberations later this month, to the end that Christ might be honored in all things. Thank you, and may our gracious Lord continue to use your labors for His own glory and the increase of His kingdom.

Your servants in Christ,
/s/ L. Anthony Curto
L. Anthony Curto, Chairman
FOR THE COMMISSION OF THE OPC GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Cc: The Rev. Dr M. Oosterhuis, BBK General Secretary

Appendix 3

Financial Report July 6, 2017

Esteemed Members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches,
It is my sincere privilege to present to you a report on the financial matters of the ICRC, in regards to the years 2014 through 2017.

As the governing regulations of the ICRC have been revised, it is worthwhile to revisit the duties of the Treasurer and the stipulations regarding the finances for the organization.

The Treasurer's duties are spelled out in Article 4 of the Regulations, and are as follows:

1. keep full and accurate accounts of receipts into and disbursements from the Treasury in books belonging to the Conference;
2. receive and disburse the funds of the Treasury in accordance with the policies and directions of the Conference (*Regulations, 9*);
3. deposit all funds of the Treasury in the name and to the credit of the Conference in insured or other accounts as may be designated by the Conference;
4. execute documents as required or authorized by the Conference (or the Coordinating Committee);
5. monitor the funds of the Treasury and alert the Coordinating Committee to significant deteriorations in the Conference's financial condition that might undermine the Conference's ability to meet its financial obligations;
6. submit periodic reports to the Coordinating Committee, as he deems appropriate or is requested by the Executive Committee;
7. submit an annual financial report to the Coordinating Committee summarizing: all receipts and disbursements, deposits and withdrawals from the Treasury, and the Conference's assets (including bank accounts and investments, and interest/dividends earned thereupon);
8. where he is unsure regarding the discharge of any of the above responsibilities, he may seek the advice of the Executive Committee, under whose oversight he serves.

The management of the finances are stipulated in Article 9 of the Regulations, as follows:

The Conference shall establish a Treasury, into which all assessments and other receipts shall be deposited, and out of which, all expenses of the Conference shall be paid or reimbursed in accordance with the actions and policies of the Conference.

1. Assessments
 - a. Each meeting of the Conference shall approve a budget for the Conference for the next four years.
 - b. Before each meeting of the Conference, each Member Church is requested to inform the Corresponding Secretary of the number of its baptized members, as of the close of the calendar year immediately preceding such meeting.
 - c. The total assessment to each Member Church shall be determined by apportioning the total budget for the Conference for the next four years to each Member Church on the basis upon which the number of its baptized members—weighted by the per capita income of the nation in which such Member Church is located (to be ascertained from a standard recognized

published index)—bears to the total number of baptized members of all Member Churches, subject to the following limitations:

- i. The assessment to any Member Church shall not be less than an amount equal to fifty U.S. dollars (\$50);
 - ii. The assessment to any Member Church shall not exceed twenty-five percent of the total budget for the Conference.
- d. A Member Church's total assessment for the four-year budget should be paid in four equal annual installments.

2. Conference Meeting Expenses

- a. The Treasury shall bear the following expenses:
 - (1) all food consumed by Delegates, Official Observers, Other Guests, and their spouses at the meetings of the Conference;
 - (2) accommodations for up to two Delegates per Member Church;
 - (3) upon the advice of the Executive Committee, travel costs for up to one delegate for those Member Churches that are unable to bear that cost;
 - (4) costs of travel and accommodations, plus a nominal honorarium, for the speakers.
- b. Unless the Conference determines otherwise with respect to a particular request for payment or reimbursement, the Treasury shall not bear any of the following expenses:
 - (1) travel costs to attend the meeting of the Conference;
 - (2) except for food consumed at the meetings of the Conference, any of the expenses of Official Observers or Other Guests (or their spouses), or of spouses of Delegates.

3. Other Expenses. The Treasury shall also bear the expenses for:

- (1) all honoraria approved by the Conference;
- (2) meetings of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee;
- (3) meetings of Operating Committees, Facilitating Committees, and Study Committees;
- (4) conducting Special Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.), but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (5) if upon the advice of the Coordinating Committee, conducting Regional Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel,

meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.)—
but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;

(6) other items included in the budget approved by the Conference.

The financial records have been examined by two highly qualified brothers of a member church. The conference in 2013 adopted a budget of \$155,000 USD. We note with gratitude to the Lord, that the Treasury is solvent and we are more than able to pay our obligations. In fact, the ICRC has a significant surplus in the current budget.

The amounts assessed to the member churches the past four years has been nearly entirely received. In fact, our incomings were in excess of the \$155,000 budgeted since we received additional assessed amounts from a returning member church which we weren't planning on during the budgeting process.

We are very thankful to the member churches for promptly sending payment once the assessment letters have been issued each year. There is only a minimal amount of outstanding assessments due from member federations which we hope to collect yet.

Further reason for the surplus is due to less amounts spent compared to what was budgeted for. There are cost savings in most expense categories.

The additional cash in the bank from the budget surplus is taken into account in the proposed budget for the next four years.

The financial statements presented include the actual and projected activity for the past four years ending December 31, 2017.

I thank the Executive Committee for their assistance these past four years, and particularly to the Secretary, Rev. Dr J. Visscher for his excellent support. It's been a pleasure to work with him. I also express appreciation for the support of the former Treasurer, Br H. Berends, for his support and guidance in the transition of the Treasurer duties.

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 the ICRC's work.

With Christian Greetings,

Kyle Lodder, Treasurer
July 6, 2017

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
FOUR YEARS FROM JANUARY 1, 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2017
(REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)

	Budget	Actual, including projected through 12/31/17
Receipts		
Assessment receipts	\$ 155,000	\$ 163,411
Interest income	\$ -	\$ 102
Total Receipts	<u>\$ 155,000</u>	<u>\$ 163,513</u>
Disbursements		
Accommodations/provisions	\$ 35,000	\$ 11,380
Administration	\$ 3,000	\$ 102
Bank Charges	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,608
Honorarium & Travel Speakers	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,866
Mailings /Postage	\$ 1,000	\$ 101
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,000	\$ -
Admin. costs Conference Expenses	\$ 3,000	\$ -
Mission Meetings	\$ 29,000	\$ 11,110
Coordinating Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 230
Executive Committee	\$ 12,000	\$ 9,007
The Theological Education Committee	\$ 8,000	\$ 2,470
The Website Committee	\$ 4,000	\$ -
Regional Conferences Committee	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Diaconal	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,129
News Letters	\$ 4,000	\$ -
Proceedings / Publishings	\$ 3,000	\$ -
Travel Assistance	\$ 13,500	\$ 10,959
Travel Costs Committees	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Web Maintenance	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,127
Regional Conferences - Travel for needy	\$ -	\$ 4,390
Total Disbursements	<u>\$ 155,000</u>	<u>\$ 61,479</u>
Net Surplus/ (Deficit)	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 102,034</u>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
 PROJECTED AT DECEMBER 31, 2017
 (REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)

Assets	
Cash - HSBC CAD Account	\$ 74,086
Cash - HSBC USD Account	\$ 30,428
Total Cash	<u>\$ 104,514</u>
Accounts Receivable	<u>\$ 712</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 105,226</u></u>
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	<u>\$ 2,737</u>
Net Assets	<u>\$ 102,489</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>\$ 105,226</u></u>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES
BUDGET
YEARS 2018 - 2021
(REPORTED IN US DOLLARS)

	JORDAN CONFERENCE		BUDGET
	YEARS 2014 - 2017		YEARS 2018 - 2021
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Receipts			
Assessment receipts	\$ 155,000	\$ 163,411	\$ 155,000
Interest income	\$ -	\$ 102	\$ -
Total Receipts	<u>\$ 155,000</u>	<u>\$ 163,513</u>	<u>\$ 155,000</u>
Disbursements			
Accommodations/provisions	\$ 35,000	\$ 11,380	\$ 90,000
Administration	\$ 3,000	\$ 102	\$ 1,500
Admin. costs Conference Expenses	\$ 3,000	\$ -	\$ 2,000
Bank Charges	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,608	\$ 2,000
Coordinating Committee	\$ 15,000	\$ 230	\$ 500
Diaconal	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,129	\$ 12,000
Executive Committee	\$ 12,000	\$ 9,007	\$ 12,000
Honorarium & Travel Speakers	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,866	\$ 7,000
Mailings /Postage	\$ 1,000	\$ 101	\$ 200
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000
Mission Committee	\$ 29,000	\$ 11,110	\$ 18,500
News Letters	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ -
Proceedings / Publishings	\$ 3,000	\$ -	\$ -
Publishing Committee	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000
Regional Conferences Committee	\$ 5,000	\$ 4,390	\$ 15,000
Theological Education Committee	\$ 8,000	\$ 2,470	\$ 15,000
Travel Assistance	\$ 13,500	\$ 10,959	\$ 14,000
Travel Costs Committees	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ -
Website Committee	\$ 4,000	\$ -	\$ -
Web Maintenance	\$ 3,000	\$ 1,127	\$ -
Total Disbursements	<u>\$ 155,000</u>	<u>\$ 61,479</u>	<u>\$ 196,700</u>
Net Surplus/ (Deficit)	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 102,034</u>	<u>\$ (41,700)</u>

