

**Day 3 — Morning Session  
Thursday, May 12, 2016**

**Article 36 – Opening**

The chairman noted all synod members were present. He read Acts 1:6-11, spoke some words and led in prayer, and had those present sing Hymn 45:1,2,3. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with. It was mentioned that the Rev. G. Horner, the RCUS fraternal delegate, had returned home. Newly arrived fraternal delegates and a fraternal observer were welcomed.

**Article 37 – Adoption of Acts**

Prepared articles of the *Acts* were corrected and adopted.

**Article 38 – Hamilton-Providence appeal**

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC (8.6.7.1) and a letter from br. A. Sikkema (8.6.7.2). The report was discussed. The committee took back the report for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

**Article 39 – Letter from J. & B. VanPopta**

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 5 presented a report on a letter from the Rev. J. and sr. B. VanPopta (8.1.5). The report was discussed. The committee took back the report for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

**Day 3 — Afternoon Session  
Thursday, May 12, 2016**

**Article 40 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members are present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

**Article 41 – Point of Order: Application CO 32**

A point of order was raised to discuss the executive's instruction on the application of CO 32 (see article 27 of these Acts). The executive's instruction was considered worded too strongly. The instruction was retracted. Members were advised to keep the spirit of CO 32 in mind in voting.

**Article 42 – Hamilton-Providence appeal**

Synod went into closed session.

Committee 4 presented draft 2 of a report on an appeal from the Hamilton-Providence CanRC (8.6.7.1) and a letter from br. A. Sikkema (8.6.7.2). The report was discussed. The committee took back the report for refinement.

Synod returned to open session.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.

**Day 3 — Evening Session  
Thursday, May 12, 2016**

**Article 43 – Reopening**

Synod reopened in plenary session. The chairman noted all synod members are present. Some housekeeping matters were dealt with.

**Article 44 – RPCNA – Fraternal Observer Address**

The chairman introduced the Rev. Bruce Backensto, observer at GS 2016 for the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). The Rev. Backensto addressed Synod, passing on greetings and, among others, expressing understanding for hesitancy in the CanRC with respect to entering into EF with the RCPNA. The (almost) full text of his address can be found in *Appendix #*.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. J. Poppe responded with appropriate words.

**Article 45 – Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC)**

**1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Flamborough (8.3.1.6), Smithville (8.3.1.3)

**2. Observations**

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 162) decided:
  - 2.1.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FCC under the adopted rules;
  - 2.1.2. To mandate the CRCA:
    - 2.1.2.1. To be available to assist the FCC and FCS in any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested;
    - 2.1.2.2. To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies.
    - 2.1.2.3. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
  - 2.2.1. Communication was maintained with the FCC via electronic mail;
  - 2.2.2. There are a number of congregations in the US and the church at Ottawa has contact with a very small FCC church in Smith Falls, ON;
  - 2.2.3. CRCA reports that as far as it can judge, the FCC is a church federation which is faithful to the Word of God.
- 2.3. The committee recommends:
  - 2.3.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FCC under the adopted rules;
  - 2.3.2. To mandate the CRCA:

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<sup>1</sup> It will have to be transcribed; the opening words were not recorded and the recording is not loud. So this line may have to be replaced with: As there is no record of his address, it is not included in these *Acts*.

- 2.5.2.1. To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies;
  - 2.5.2.2. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.
- 2.4 Reactions from the churches:
- 2.4.1 Abbotsford wonders if the church relationship with the FCC and FCS can be meaningful if you do not visit within a three-year period;
  - 2.4.2 Smithville requests to include a review of the annual reports of the Scottish Synods in the committee mandate.

### **3. Considerations**

- 3.1 From the CRCA report it is evident that as far as they can judge, the FCC are faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.2 EF should include review of the proceedings of the FCC General Assemblies and, if possible, visits. It is regrettable that the report to this Synod does not give evidence that the proceedings were reviewed.

### **4. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue EF with the FCC under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the CRCA:
  - 4.2.1. To continue personal contact with the FCC whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years;
  - 4.2.2. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCC congregations in North America.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 46 – Free Church of Scotland (FCS)**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (8.2.1)
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Abbotsford (8.3.1.1.13), Flamborough (8.3.1.6), Smithville (8.3.1.3).

#### **2. Observations**

- 2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 161) decided:
  - 2.1.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FCS under the adopted rules;
  - 2.1.2. To mandate the CRCA:
    - 2.1.2.1. To be available to assist the FCS and FCC in any efforts at reconciliation and reunion, should that be requested;
    - 2.1.2.2. To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their

- assemblies.
- 2.1.2.3. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.
- 2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:
- 2.2.1. Communication was maintained with the FCS with electronic mail.
  - 2.2.2. There is a congregation of the FCS in Livonia, Detroit, Michigan and there are six congregations in PEI.
  - 2.2.3. CRCA reports that as far as it can judge, the FCS is a church federation which is faithful to the Word of God.
- 2.3. The committee recommends:
- 2.3.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FCS under the adopted rules;
  - 2.3.2. To mandate the CRCA:
    - 2.3.2.1. To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to leave it in the freedom of the CRCA to send delegates to their assemblies.
    - 2.3.2.2. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.
- 2.4 Reactions from the churches:
- 2.4.1 Abbotsford wonders if the church relationship with the FCC and FCS can be meaningful if you do not visit within a three-year period;
  - 2.4.2 Smithville requests to include a review of the annual reports of the Scottish Synods in the committee mandate.

### **3. Considerations**

- 3.1 From the CRCA report it is evident that as far as they can judge, the FCS are faithful churches of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.2 EF should include review of the proceedings of the FCS General Assemblies, and, if possible, visits. It is regrettable that the report to this Synod does not give evidence that the proceedings were reviewed.

### **4. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

- 4.1 To continue EF with the FCS under the adopted rules;
- 4.2 To mandate the CRCA:
  - 4.2.1. To continue personal contact with the FCS whenever that is feasible (e.g., at meetings of the ICRC, mutual presence at assemblies of sister churches) and to send a delegation to their assemblies at least once every three years.
  - 4.2.2. To encourage the congregations to seek out and strengthen ties with local FCS congregations in North America.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 47 – Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 Report of Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) (8.2.1)

1.2 Letter from the Flamborough CanRC (8.3.1.6)

## **2. Observations**

2.1 GS 2013 (Art. 132) decided:

2.1.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FRCSA under the adopted rules;

2.1.2. To recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued financial assistance, to help them support the needy churches in the federation and to assist them with their extensive mission work and relief efforts among the disadvantaged and sick in South Africa;

2.1.3. To mandate the Board of Governors of our Theological College to investigate together with the FRCSA if there are possibilities to set up a form of long distance learning for the first year of theological training, with the use of facilitators in South Africa;

2.1.4. To send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA if possible.

2.2 From the CRCA report, the following:

2.2.1. The 2014 Synod of the FRCSA decided to send a letter to the Synod of the RCN to encourage them to remain faithful to the reformed teaching;

2.2.2. The same synod decided not to establish sister church relationship with the DGK (De Gereformeerde Kerken);

2.2.3. The synod also decided to establish clear admission guidelines for new theological students;

2.2.4. Even though the FRCSA mission church plants require significant support, the FRCSA has asked the CanRC to scale back the contributions in an effort to become more independently sustainable;

2.2.5 The FRCSA propose that the debate on reformed hermeneutics be continued between themselves and the CanRC with a view to coming to a clear mutual statement.

2.3. The committee recommends:

2.3.1. To continue the relationship of EF with the FRCSA;

2.3.2. To mandate the CRCA to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA if possible.

2.4 Flamborough suggests to specify that the delegation be one person only.

## **3. Considerations**

3.1 It is evident that the FRCSA continue to be a faithful church of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with the rules for EF.

3.2 The establishing of guidelines for admission of new theological students is evidence of the FRCSA's attention to the training for the ministry.

3.3 We are thankful that under the new admission requirements FRCSA students will be expected to attend the CRTS.

3.4 With thankfulness it is noted that the FRCSA mission church plants are trying to become more independently sustainable, and therefore the CanRC contribution can be scaled back.

## **4. Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

4.1 To continue EF with the FRCSA;

- 4.2 To mandate the CRCA to send a delegation to the next synod of the FRCSA;
- 4.3 To encourage the CRTS to support the FRCSA in the training of their theological students, because of the unique circumstances of the FRCSA theological training program.

## **ADOPTED**

### **Article 48 – FCC – Letter of Greeting**

The chairman read a letter of greeting sent via email by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC), expressing gratitude for our relationship of EF. Regret was expressed at being unable to attend synod in person. The full text of the letter can be found in *Appendix #. A* letter will be sent in response.

### **Article 49 – Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) – General**

#### **1. Material**

- 1.1 The Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) - General
- 1.2 Letters from the following CanRC: Carman West, 8.3.2.1, Cloverdale, 8.3.2.3, Fergus-North, 8.3.2.6, Smithville, 8.3.2.7, Fergus-Maranatha, 8.3.2.9, Hamilton-Blessings 8.3.2.11, Lynden, 8.3.2.15, Lincoln-Vineyard 8.3.2.19, Toronto-Bethel, 8.3.2.21
- 1.3 Letter from CCCNA, February 10, 2016 re: appointment of committee members, 8.2.4.1
- 1.4 Letter from CCCNA, May 2, 2016 re: appointment of committee members, 9.2

#### **2. Observations**

- 2.1 GS 2013, renewing the mandate given by GS 2010, gave the CCCNA this general mandate:
  - 2.1.1 To continue contact with all those churches in the Americas with which we have Ecclesiastical Fellowship (EF) according to the adopted rules, and in accordance with the mandates described in decisions taken by synod with respect to the churches with which we have ongoing relationship;
  - 2.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in the Americas;
  - 2.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests made to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in the Americas;
  - 2.1.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next General Synod, and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the General Synod.
- 2.2 The CCCNA maintained its Subcommittees East and West. Subcommittee West was responsible for contacts with the RCUS, RPCNA and NAPARC. Subcommittee East was responsible for contacts with the ERQ and OPC. At least two members of each subcommittee attended NAPARC in 2013, 2014 and 2015.
- 2.3 The CCCNA asks that the Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, Rev. E. Kampen, and br. C. Poppe be discharged from the committee and thanked for their years of service to the churches as members of the CCCNA.
- 2.4 The CCCNA asks that it not be required to pursue outstanding matters of difference with particular churches with whom we have already established ecclesiastical fellowship. The committee asks that, if Synod asks the CCCNA to pursue outstanding matters of difference, the purpose and goal of having such discussions should be clearly spelled out in the mandate.

- 2.5 The CCCNA recommends that the mandate, as stated by GS 2010, be renewed, for the CCCNA until 2019.
- 2.6 Carman West, Hamilton-Blessings and Toronto-Bethel concur with the concern of the CCCNA that ongoing discussion of outstanding matters threatens progress in the EF relationships we have or desire to build.
- 2.7 Cloverdale suggests that the questions used by the OPC in their ecclesiastical contacts also be considered for use by our committee in their contact with churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship.
- 2.8 Cloverdale cautions the committee about the manner of its reporting. The mandate of the committee is given by Synod and not by 'a small number of churches' (3.1 of the CCCNA Report).
- 2.9 Fergus-North, Fergus-Maranatha, and Smithville disagree with the request of the CCCNA to remove specific questions of outstanding differences from the mandate of the committee in regard to churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship. These issues of difference need to be explored further.
- 2.10 Lynden expresses concern about the amount of time and resources spent on the fulfilment of the mandate of this committee. Lynden urges Synod to be sober about the requirement for and benefits of committing time and effort to the maintenance of current relationships and the exploring of new relationships.
- 2.11 Lynden alleges that the rules of EF have not been applied consistently in our relationships with other churches. If we stop discussing outstanding differences with other churches, when those differences are not resolved, we are acting inconsistently.
- 2.12 The CCCNA recommends that the mandate of GS 2010 be continued until 2019.

### **3. Considerations**

- 3.1 The CCCNA carried out its mandate diligently.
- 3.2 Rule 1 of Ecclesiastical Fellowship states that 'the churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defense and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations.' Within this context there is always room for brotherly discussion about differences in matters of doctrine and practice.
- 3.3 When we enter into EF we accept each other as faithful churches without qualifications. Differences that were noted and discussed prior to EF, but which did not hinder entering into EF, do not require resolution. It is incorrect to speak of 'outstanding' differences. The word 'outstanding' implies a need for resolution. Bringing up these issues repeatedly, without proper proof of necessity, is potentially damaging to sister-church relationships. Discussion of these issues may take place naturally in the course of EF, but a specific mandate, identifying particular issues, need not be given.
- 3.4 If a synod asks the CCCNA to pursue specific matters of difference, the purpose and goal of having such discussions should be clearly spelled out in the mandate.
- 3.5 The questions used by the OPC in their relationships with other churches capture the spirit of humility and service that ought to characterize relationships between churches.
- 3.6 Lynden has raised a concern about the proper use of resources. However, Lynden did not make a specific proposal. The CCCNA was able to do meaningful work on behalf of the churches while spending the churches' resources wisely.
- 3.7 Cloverdale's concern about the manner of reporting is valid. The mandate of the committee is given by a synod, not by a small number of churches.

#### **4 Recommendations**

That Synod decide:

4.1 To mandate the CCCNA:

4.1.1 To continue contact with all those churches in North America with which we have EF according to the adopted rules and in accordance with the mandates described in decisions taken by synod with respect to the churches with which we have ongoing relationships;

4.1.2 To investigate diligently all the requests received for entering into EF in North America;

4.1.3 To respond, if possible and feasible, to specific requests to attend assemblies, synods, or meetings of other churches in North America;

4.1.4 To report on its findings with suitable recommendations to the next general synod and to present to the churches a report of its work six months prior to the convening of the next general synod.

4.2 To discharge Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, Rev. E. Kampen, and br. C. Poppe from the CCCNA and to thank them for their years of service to the churches as members of this committee.

4.3 To recommend the questions of the CEIR of the OPC for the consideration and usage of the committee at its discretion.

#### **ADOPTED**

#### **Article 50 - Closing Devotions and Adjournment**

Br. L. Jagt read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18, spoke some words, had those present sing Hymn 83:1,2 and led in prayer.

Synod was adjourned for committee work.