

The  
Reformed Church  
in the  
United States

Abstract of the Minutes  
265<sup>th</sup> Synod

May 16-19, 2011  
Grace Reformed Church  
Mitchell, SD



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**DIRECTORY OF CONGREGATIONS 2011****ARKANSAS****BENTONVILLE, AR (479) 876-6649**

Grace RCUS, La Quinta Inn, 1001 SE Walton Blvd, Bentonville, AR 72712  
 Mail: 15 Kensington Drive, Bella Vista, AR 72715  
 Service Times: Worship: 10:00 a.m., Sun. Sch. 11:30; Prayer Service: 1p.m.  
 Pastor: Wesley Brice /Ginger  
 Web page: [www.gracereformednwa.org](http://www.gracereformednwa.org)

**CALIFORNIA****ANDERSON, CA (530) 365-6874**

Faith RCUS, 3291 Rupert Rd. (off Stingy Lane)  
 Mail: P.O. Box 902, Anderson, CA 96007  
 Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.  
 Pastor: Hank Bowen / Patty  
 Web page: [www.faithrcus.org](http://www.faithrcus.org) Fax: (530) 365-6874

**BAKERSFIELD, CA (661) 587-3676**

Grace RCUS, 420 Columbus Street, Bakersfield (north on Union Ave. to Columbus St., east on Columbus to the church).  
 Mail: 420 Columbus St., Bakersfield, CA 93305  
 Service Times: Worship 9:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:00 a.m.; and third Sunday at 6:30 p.m.  
 Pastor: Tracy Gruggett / Michelle; Pastor Emeritus: Lloyd Gross / Claire  
 Web page: [www.bakersfieldreformed.org](http://www.bakersfieldreformed.org)

**CHICO, CA (530) 345-2732**

Covenant RCUS, Meeting at 1877 Hooker Oak Ave. (Adventist Church Building: Turn east on East Ave., proceed to Hooker Oak Ave., turn right; proceed through first stop sign and turn left into church parking lot).  
 Mail: P.O. Box 1612, Chico, CA 95927-1612  
 Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.  
 Pastor: Gary Mancilas / Gloria  
 Web page: [www.reformedchico.org](http://www.reformedchico.org)

**GRASS VALLEY, CA (530) 273-4673**

Covenant RCUS, 407 W. Main St., Grass Valley, CA  
 Mail: 407 W. Main St., Grass Valley, CA 95945  
 Service Times: Worship 11:00 a.m.; Sunday: 9:30 a.m. - Bible Classes for all ages  
 Pastor: Dennis E. Roe / Julie  
 Assoc. Pastor: Jonathan Merica / Marsha  
 Web Page: [www.crcgv.org](http://www.crcgv.org) Fax: (530) 273-4673

**LA HABRA, CA (626) 820-9390**

Rehoboth Chapel RCUS, 501 S. Idaho, Suite 120, La Habra (Btn La Habra and Lambert.)  
 Mail: 17874 Crimson Crest Dr. Rowland Heights, CA 91748  
 Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:30 a.m.  
 Mission Pastor: Michael Voytek / Rebecca  
 Web page: [RehobothReformedChurch.com](http://RehobothReformedChurch.com) Fax: (562) 947-5958

**LANCASTER, CA - (Antelope Valley) (661) 940-4669**

Grace RCUS, 121 Carriage Lane Suite 111, Lancaster, CA 93534

Service Times: Worship 10:45 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:45 a.m.

Pastor: Scott Henry / Maria; Pastor Emeritus: Neale Riffert / Mary Elizabeth

Web page: [www.gracereformedchurch.net](http://www.gracereformedchurch.net)

**LODI, CA (209) 367-0552**

Providence RCUS, 245 E. Vine Street, Lodi

Mail: 245 E. Vine St., Lodi, CA 95240

Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Pastor: Vacant

Web page: [www.prclodi.com](http://www.prclodi.com)

**MODESTO, CA (209) 523-3220**

Trinity RCUS, 960 El Terino Ave., Modesto (Briggsmore east; right on Coffee, right on E. Fairmont 2 blocks.)

Mail: 960 El Terino Ave., Modesto, CA 95350

Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m.

Pastor: Thomas Mayville / Carolyn

Pastor Emeritus: Paul Treick / Karen

**SACRAMENTO, CA (916) 451-1190**

Covenant RCUS, 2020 16th Avenue, Sacramento (from Frwy 99 take 12th Ave/Sutterville Exit. Go west to Freeport Blvd., left to 16th Ave and left to 2020 16th Ave. From I-5 take Sutterville Exit, go east on Sutterville to Freeport, left on Freeport and right on 16th Ave. to 2020 16th Ave.)

Church Mailing Address: 2020 16th Ave., Sacramento, CA 95822

Service Times: Worship 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:45 a.m.

Pastor: Jim West / Elaine; Assoc. Pastors: Frank Walker /Christine; and Gil Baloy /Maricar

Web page: [www.covenantreformedchurch.org](http://www.covenantreformedchurch.org)

**SAN DIEGO, CA (619) 460-1321**

Covenant Chapel RCUS, 49 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., Chula Vista, CA (Take I-805 South. Go west on Hwy. 54. Get off at Highland Ave. Turn left at light on Highland Ave. Turn left on 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. We meet at the CVPOA Building on the left hand side.)

Mail: 757 Maria Ave., Spring Valley, CA 91977

Service Times: Worship 11 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 10 a.m.; Bible Study and Prayer Wed. 6:30 p.m.

Pastor: Gil Baloy / Maricar

Web page: [www.covenantrcus.org](http://www.covenantrcus.org)

**SHAFTER, CA (661) 746-6907**

Ebenezer RCUS, 235 James St, Shafter (next door to the City Library, Fire, and Police Depts)

Mail: 235 James St., Shafter, CA 93263

Worship Times: Worship 9:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:15 a.m.

Pastor: Paul Henderson / Tina; Pastor Emeritus: Vernon Pollema / Betty

**STOCKTON, CA (209) 470-7174**

Calvary Chapel RCUS, Clarion Inn, 4219 E. Waterloo Rd., Stockton, CA

Mail: P.O. Box 692426, Stockton, CA 95269

Service Times: Worship 11:00 a.m.; Sunday School: 10:00 a.m.

Pastor: Jonathan Merica / Marsha

Web page: [www.calvaryreformedchapel.com](http://www.calvaryreformedchapel.com) Fax: (209) 472-7941

**WILLOWS, CA (530) 934-2732**

Grace RCUS, 148 W. Sycamore St. (Exit Hwy 162; east 1 mile, right on Butte to Sycamore.)

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Mail: P.O. Box 225, Willows, CA 95988  
Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m.; Sun Bible Study - 6:30 p.m.  
Pastor: Eric Bristley / Kathleen

**YUBA CITY, CA (530) 755-2272**

First RCUS, 11 miles south of Yuba City on Highway 99; east on Wilson Road; north on Garden Highway. ½ mile north of Wilson road on Garden Highway.  
Mail: 9882 Garden Hwy., Yuba City, CA 95991  
Service Times: Worship 11:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Sam Powell / Susan; Pastor Emeritus: Gene Sawtelle / Sharon

**COLORADO**

**COLORADO SPRINGS, CO (719) 590-1477**

Trinity Covenant RCUS, Grace Presbyterian Church, 2511 N. Logan Ave.  
Mail: 6050 Del Paz Dr. Colorado Springs, CO 80918.  
Service Times: Worship: 11:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 1:00 p.m.  
Pastor: C.W. "Bud" Powell, Jr. / Penny  
Web page: [www.trinityrcus.com](http://www.trinityrcus.com)

**GREELEY, CO (970) 336-9927**

Grace RCUS, 1501 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Mail: 1505 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. Greeley, CO 80631.  
Service Times: Worship 11:00 a.m.  
Pastor: Jon Blair / Wendy  
Web page: [www.reformedgreeley.org](http://www.reformedgreeley.org)

**LIMON, CO (719) 775-8842.**

Providence RCUS, 725 Michigan Ave.  
Mail: P.O. Box 848, Limon, CO 80828.  
Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. sch. 11:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Matthew Powell / Andrea

**IOWA**

**GARNER, IA (641) 923-3060**

Peace RCUS, 1905 200<sup>th</sup> St., Garner, IA 50438 (3 miles south of Garner)  
Mail: 1905 200<sup>th</sup> St., Garner, IA 50438  
Service Times: Worship: 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Harvey Opp / Carol  
Web page: [www.peacereformedchurch.com](http://www.peacereformedchurch.com)

**MINNESOTA**

**GOLDEN VALLEY, MN (763) 417-9835**

Redeemer RCUS, 1300 Lilac Drive North, Golden Valley 55422  
Mail: 3101 Virginia Ave. N., Crystal, MN 55427  
Service Times: Worship: 10:15 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m. (Sept. - May)  
Pastor: James Sawtelle / Thelma  
Mission Pastor: Ryan Kron / Colleen  
Web page: [www.redeemercus.org](http://www.redeemercus.org)

**EDEN PRAIRIE, MN (612) 751-2096**

Emmaus Road Reformed Chapel. Meeting at Eden Lake Elementary School.  
Mail: 4208 Chowen Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55410  
Service times: Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sun. Sch. 9:15 a.m.  
Mission Pastor: Ryan Kron/ Colleen  
Web page: [www.emmausrcus.org](http://www.emmausrcus.org)

**HAMBURG, MN (952) 467-3878**

St. Paul's Evangelical RCUS, County Road 31  
Mail: 15480 County Road 31, Hamburg, MN 55339  
Service Times: Worship: 9:30 a.m., Bible Study & Sun. Sch. 8:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Dan Schnabel / Marie  
Web page: [www.stpaulsrcus.org](http://www.stpaulsrcus.org)

**MISSOURI****KANSAS CITY, MO (816) 420-9700**

Northland RCUS, 2901 NW Cookingham, Kansas City (Exit 40, I-435, North one mile)  
Mail: 2901 NW Cookingham, Kansas City, MO 64164  
Service Times: Worship: 9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:00 a.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Randall Klynsma / Julie  
Web page: [www.northlandreformed.org](http://www.northlandreformed.org) Fax: 816-420-9700 (call first)

**NEBRASKA****LINCOLN, NE (402) 477-7289**

St. John's RCUS, 1101 South 26<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln; Mail: 1101 South 26<sup>th</sup> St., Lincoln, NE 68502  
Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m. (Jul-Aug: 10AM); Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m. (except July-Aug)  
Pastor: Lee Johnson /Jenny Jo  
Web page: [www.stjohnsrcus.com](http://www.stjohnsrcus.com)

**SUTTON, NE (402) 773-4218**

Emmanuel RCUS, 110 S. Way Ave.  
Mail: P.O. Box 362, Sutton, NE 68979  
Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Joe Vusich / Gioia

**SUTTON, NE (402) 773-4330**

Hope RCUS, 311 E. Hickory  
Mail: P.O. Box 372, Sutton, NE 68979  
Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m.; Family Study 6:30 p.m. (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sun.)  
Pastor: Darrell Kingswood / Lori

**NORTH DAKOTA****ANAMOOSSE, ND (701) 839-9778**

Kassel RCUS, meeting at St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Anamoose, ND 58710  
Mail: P.O. Box 121, Butte, ND 58723  
Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:45 a.m.  
Pastor: Dale Clark / Sandra

**ASHLEY, ND (701) 288-3265**

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Salem RCUS, 209 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. SW, Ashley, ND  
Mail: P.O. Box 345, Ashley, ND 58413  
Service Times: Worship 9 a.m.  
Pastor: James Grossmann / Michelle

**MINOT, ND (701) 838-0605**

Harvest RCUS, Minot City Auditorium – Room 204  
Mail: P.O. Box 804, Minot, ND 58702  
Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:15 a.m.; Sunday Evening Study 6:30 p.m.  
Pastor: Phil Poe / Karen  
Web page: [harvestreformedchurch.org](http://harvestreformedchurch.org)

**OHIO**

**NAPOLEON, OH (419) 599-3106**

Peace RCUS, 638 Huddle Rd.  
Mail: 638 Huddle Rd., Napoleon, OH, 43545  
Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Steven Altman / Bianca

**PENNSYLVANIA**

**WAYMART, PA (570) 785-4012**

Heritage RCUS, Lower Level of Waymart Presbyterian, 200 Belmont St., Waymart, PA 18472  
Mail: 136 Grand Ave., Forest City, PA 18421  
Service Times: Worship: 10:30 a.m.; Bible Study 9:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Ron Potter / Sharon  
Web page: [www.heritagercus.org](http://www.heritagercus.org)

**SOUTH DAKOTA**

**ABERDEEN, SD (605) 225-6120**

First RCUS, 818 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE  
Mail: 1002 Diamond St., Aberdeen, SD 57401  
Service Times: Worship 9 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 10 a.m.  
Pastor: David Dawn / Colleen  
Web page: [aberdeenrcus.org](http://aberdeenrcus.org)

**EUREKA, SD (605) 284-2396**

Eureka RCUS, 310 F Ave.  
Mail: P.O. Box 456, Eureka, SD 57437  
Service Times: Worship 9 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 10:15 a.m.  
Pastor: Richard Stetler / Heidi;  
Fax: 605-284-2396

**HERRIED, SD (605) 437-2414**

First RCUS, 601 Main St. North  
Mail: P.O. Box 212, Herreid, SD 57632  
Service Times: Worship 10 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11 a.m.  
Pastor: Jimmy Hall / Stefani

**HOSMER, SD (701) 288-3265**

Hosmer RCUS, 201 West 5<sup>th</sup> St.

Mail: P.O. Box 345, Ashley, ND 58413

Service Times: Worship 11 a.m.

Pastor: James Grossmann / Michelle

**MENNO, SD (605) 387-2816**

Zion RCUS, 220 South Pine St.

Mail: P.O. Box 387, Menno, SD 57045

Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.

Pastor: Vacant

Web page: [www.zionreformedchurchrcus.com](http://www.zionreformedchurchrcus.com)

**MITCHELL, SD (605) 996-7439**

Grace RCUS, 1021 S. Davison

Mail: P.O. Box 252, Mitchell, SD 57301

Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m.

Pastor: Mike McGee / Jenny.

Web page: [www.gracereformed.com](http://www.gracereformed.com)

**PIERRE, SD (605) 945-1070**

Hope RCUS, 317 S. Garfield

Mail: 105 Lakeview Dr., Pierre, SD 57501

Service Times: Worship 9:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 10:45 a.m.

Pastor: Vacant.

Web page: [www.hopercus.com](http://www.hopercus.com)

**RAPID CITY, SD (605) 399-1711**

Grace RCUS, 5626 Haines Ave.

Mail: 5626 Haines Ave., Rapid City, SD 57701

Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:00 a.m. Bible Study 6:00 p.m.

Pastor: David Fagrey / Bonnie

Web page: [www.gracereformedrapidcity.com](http://www.gracereformedrapidcity.com)

**SIOUX FALLS, SD (605) 553-7971**

Trinity RCUS

Mail: 7301 S. Louise Ave; Sioux Falls, SD 57106

Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.

Pastor: Ron Morris / Sheri; Assoc. Pastor: Maynard Koerner / Marcia

Web page: [www.trinityrcus.org](http://www.trinityrcus.org)

**VERMILLION, SD (605) 624-4337**

Providence RCUS, 830 E. Madison

Mail: 830 E. Madison, Vermillion, SD 57069

Service Times: Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 9:30 a.m.

Pastor: Robert Grossmann / Polly

Web page: [www.providencereformed.com](http://www.providencereformed.com)

**WATERTOWN, SD 605-882-9704**

Covenant RCUS, 15 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE, Watertown, SD

Mail: 434 30<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Watertown, SD 57201

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Service Times: Worship 10 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:30 a.m.  
Pastor: Vacant  
Web page: [www.watertownrcus.org](http://www.watertownrcus.org)

## TEXAS

### **SHERMAN, TX (661-886-5503)**

Christ the King Reformed Chapel  
Mail: 122 Willow Ridge Circle, Sherman, TX 75092  
Mission Pastor: Rev. Neal Riffert / Elizabeth

## WISCONSIN

### **MANITOWOC, WI (920) 726-4940**

Salem Ebenezer RCUS, 6524 County Trunk C  
Mail: 6524 County Trunk C, Manitowoc, WI 54220  
Service Times: Worship 10:00 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 8:45 a.m.  
Pastor: Rev. Kyle Sorensen / Donielle  
Web page: [www.salemebenezer.org](http://www.salemebenezer.org)

## WYOMING

### **ROCK SPRINGS, WY(307) 362-5107**

Providence RCUS, 1007 9th St.  
Mail: 1007 9th St., Rock Springs, WY 82901.  
Service Times: Worship 10 a.m.; Sun. Sch. 11:30 a.m.  
Pastor George Horner / Mary Jo

## DIRECTORY OF DELEGATES Ministers

**Steve Altman (419) 356-2095**

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**Jon Blair (970) 336-9927**

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**Board of Trustees:** D. Clark, K. Lorenzen, T. Rott

**Christian Education:** J. Grossmann, J. Blair, J. Gochnauer (1yr); D. DeGroot, J. Jones, H. Hart, J. Vusich, C.W. Powell (2 yr); L. Johnson, R. Abbink, J. Fluck, D. Kingswood (3yr)

**Sub-Com.-Confer with Dordt:** R. Morris, D. Van Peurseem, H. Opp, E. Boers.

**Sub-Com.-Sun. Sch. Curriculum:** K. Sorensen, P. Treick, H. Hart, M. Reyna, N. Riffert, E. Bristley.

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**Editorial Advice:** D. Dawn, G. Van Holland (1yr); G. Horner, D. Roe (2yr); J. Merica, J. Connelly (3yr).

**Executive:** J. Sawtelle, D. Fagrey, T. Griess, R. Gallimore.

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**Ministerial Relief (MAF):** M. Fisher, S. Gross, R. Goehring, R. Schnabel.

**Publication and Promotion:** J. Hall, P. Henderson, G. Stewart (1yr); R. Klynsma, W. Haddock (2yr); S. Powell, J. Johnson, B. Tjeerdsma, G. Syms (3yr).

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**Develop eBooks:** G. Mancilas, J. Fluck, J. Jones, E. Bristley.

**Special Committee to Study “Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality”:** S. Powell, P. Poe, D. Kingswood, P. Henderson, R. Gallimore, S. Wilbur.

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### **Abstract of the Minutes of the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod Reformed Church in the United States**

#### **I. Services**

The 265<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States was hosted by the congregation of Grace Reformed Church, Mitchell, SD.

The Synod convened on Monday, May 16, 2011, with a 7:00 p.m. worship service conducted by Rev. Howard Hart. Rev. David Fagrey preached the sermon entitled “How to Suffer as Christians” from Romans 5:3-5.

On Wednesday evening a 7:00 p.m. worship service was conducted by Rev. Robert Grossmann. Rev. James Grossmann preached the sermon entitled “Following Christ’s Pattern of Humility” from Philippians 2:1-11.

Morning devotions were held at 10 a.m. The Tuesday morning devotion was conducted by Rev. Jon Blair who preached on Psalm 126. On Wednesday, Rev. Steve Altman preached on John 10:1-10. On Thursday, Rev. Jim West preached on Hebrews 13:5-6.

The closing devotion was conducted by Elder Spencer Gross who led the body in prayer.

The assembly paused for special prayer many times during the meeting for specific matters and needs of individuals during the meeting.

## II. Organization

Following the opening worship service on May 16, the President of the Executive Committee, Rev. Vernon Pollema, called the meeting to order. The Stated Clerk, Rev. Paul Treick read the roll which showed 43 ministers and 30 elder delegates present, a total of 73. The roll was called each morning. The closing roll call showed 39 ministers and 25 elders present.

The Bar of the House was set as the first 11 rows on either side of the aisle.

Tellers appointed for the meeting were: Rev. Randall Klynsma, Rev. Jimmy Hall, Elder Derrick Merkel, and Elder Albert Haller.

The President appointed Rev. Joe Vusich as reporter for the *Reformed Herald*.

Elections by ballot were held for men to serve in the following capacities, as follows:

President:	Rev. James Sawtelle
Vice President:	Rev. Frank Walker
Stated Clerk:	Rev. David Fagrey
Treasurer:	Elder Ted Griess
<i>Reformed Herald</i> Editor	Rev. Paul Treick

## III. Adoption of the Agenda, Order of the Day and Special Orders

The Agenda and the Order of the Day were adopted, with the following Special Orders: fraternal delegates and representatives of institutions would address the body on Tuesday after lunch, afternoon break, and supper at the call of the President. The address by Mr. Stacy Kooistra on legal guidelines for church discipline would be heard on Tuesday after supper from 6:00 PM – 6:45 PM.

## IV. Announcement of Standing Committees

The President announced the appointments to Standing Committees for this Synod.

## V. Presentation and Referral of Overtures, Permanent Committee Reports and Communications

The Permanent Committee Reports were sent out prior to the meeting. They were forwarded to their respective Standing Committees as per the Agenda. Overtures and communications previously sent to the Synod were given to the President who referred most of them to the relevant Standing Committees. Some reports (i.e. Archives, Board of Trustees, and Executive) were dealt with by direct presentation from the floor. The Permanent Committee reports are printed below and their recommendations are handled by the Standing Committee they are referred to.

### A. Archives Committee

The Archives committee received only the official copies of the minutes of the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod.

Mr. Matthew Davis and Mr. Robert Mettler, members of Ebenezer and attending Rehoboth Chapel have digitized the minutes of Synod from the reconstitution to the current clerk's term. The copy resides with the Archives.

The Archives will be moving, with the Chairman, to Gettysburg, PA. This brings up again the question; should a permanent home be found for these records. The committee asks the Synod for its advice as to whether a permanent place should be found or the records should stay with the Chairman.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Jay Fluck, Rev. Herman Van Stedum, Elder Greg Van Holland, Elder Robert Wegis*

### B. Board of Trustees

Dear Brothers in Christ,

Your Committee met over the phone once this year. There was no business before the committee and your committee brings no recommendations.

Sincerely in Christ, *Rev. L. Dale Clark, Elder Keith Lorentzen, Elder Tim Rott*

### C. Christian Education Committee (and Sub-Committees)

Your committee was given no mandates from the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod, and accordingly, our report consists of the reports of the two Sub-Committees of the Permanent Committee. The report of the Sub-Committee to Confer with Dordt College is attached. The report of the Sub-Committee on Sunday School Curriculum will be submitted separately.

Respectfully, *Rev. Jon Blair (Chairman), Rev. J. Grossmann, Rev. L. Johnson, Rev. D. Fagrey, Rev. H. Hart, Rev. C.W. Powell, Elder J. Cochnauer, Elder R. Abbink, Elder D. De Groot, Elder J.*

*To Confer with Dordt College*

Esteemed Brothers,

On Thursday, February 17, 2011, your committee met with Dr. Carl Zylstra, Dordt College President, Mr. Wes Fopma, Director of Alumni & Church Relations, and Mr. John Baas, Vice President for College Advancement. RCUS committee members present were Rev. Scott Henry, Rev. Ron Morris and Elder Dan Van Peurse. Rev. Harvey Opp, though not a committee member, was also present at the meeting. Your committee was cordially received by Dr. Zylstra, Mr. Fopma & Mr. Baas.

At this year's meeting, having no mandate from Synod, your committee mainly dialogued with Dr. Zylstra, Mr. Fopma and Mr. Baas about the issues discussed in last year's meeting, which are printed in the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod Abstract, and whether those certain issues have been resolved or are in the process of resolution.

**Dordt Professors' Agreement, Commitment & Submission to the Three Forms of Unity:** Dordt continues to require that their professors be members of a Reformed Church that submits to either the Three Forms of Unity or the Westminster Confession.

**Dordt Position on the Doctrine of Creation:** Dordt college does not have a stated position on the doctrine of creation. therefore professors are at liberty to hold a position other than 6 literal 24 hour days, with the exception of evolution, and still maintain professorship at Dordt.

**Chapel Service & Sunday Morning Worship:** Mr. Baas said attendance at chapel service has greatly improved this year primarily due to the fact that chapel is held once a week rather than twice a week as in previous years, and that chapel is conducted solely by Rev. Aaron Baart, who now serves fulltime as Dordt's Dean of Chapel.

Dr. Zylstra also said that he believes student attendance at worship service on the Lord's Day has improved this year, and Dordt's evening campus worship service, which is called GIFT (Growing in Faith Together), is regularly attended by 400-600 students.

**Concerns with Dordt Professors: Jason Lief, Assistant Professor of Theology.** Your committee has raised concerns about Prof. Lief since our 2008 meeting with Dordt College. Prof. Lief continues to be very supportive of N.T. Wright, and has also written some disturbing comments about his love for the theology of Karl Barth, which can be read at his blog (<http://liefism.blogspot.com/>). These disturbing comments were pointed out last year to Dr. Zylstra by your committee. However, at this year's meeting, Dr. Zylstra informed your committee that Prof. Lief is on a sabbatical this year and next year pursuing a doctorate degree, and he will not be teaching at Dordt during this time period.

**Bobbi Sutherland, Assistant Professor of History.** Prof. Sutherland has raised concerns by teaching that all the writings of the OT were written post-exilic. While she believes that the Pentateuch is "Mosaic material", she also believes the JEDP theory taught by Graf & Wellhausen. Dr. Zylstra informed your committee that they have pursued the issues raised with Prof. Sutherland, but he could not discuss the specifics of those discussions because they are a confidential personnel matter. However, Dr. Zylstra said we can be confident that the outcome of their discussions will be reflected in any future decision on whether or not to recommend reappointment. In addition, your committee is aware of the fact that the Executive Committee of Synod is in correspondence with Dr. Zylstra regarding this matter.

**Miscellaneous:**

- Dordt plans to include "Advanced Reformed Thought" into their core curriculum in at least three areas: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences & the Humanities. The curriculum was approved this year, and they're hoping to implement the new curriculum in the near future.
- Dordt has implemented a new major in the field of Construction Management.
- Dordt has completed the building of a new residence hall; this will relieve dorm overcrowding.
- Financial position is strong despite economy. The dollar amount given by Dordt Alumni increased substantially this year. It was reported that the number of Alumni who give to Dordt has declined, yet the amount of giving has increased.
- Tuition costs will increase approximately 5% a year over the next few years.
- Freshman enrollment was up this year (approx. 370) as opposed to last year. At present, Dordt has approximately 1375 students; 7 students are from the RCUS.

Lastly, Dr. Zylstra, Mr. Baas and Mr. Fopma, all expressed their desire to continue dialogue with the RCUS in hopes of resolving the issues raised by your committee last year at Synod. Their desire is to have the strongest possible relationship with the RCUS, and be placed back on the RCUS guidelines for giving as an institution worthy of financial support.

Committee Recommendation: That the RCUS continue to dialogue with Dordt College with the aim of resolving the issues that caused the RCUS to remove Dordt College from the Synodical Guidelines for giving at the 264<sup>th</sup> RCUS Synod.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Scott Henry, Rev. Ron Morris, Elder Dan Van Peurse and Elder Emil Broers*

### *Sunday School Curriculum Sub-Committee*

Brothers of the Synod of the RCUS,

Your Committee was given the following duty by Synod last year, “to investigate the feasibility of developing a curriculum based on the 2010 pedagogical approach and set forth a detailed plan to accomplish any such proposals.” According to Webster’s dictionary, “feasibility” is defined as “capable of being done or carried out successfully.” Since starting a new curriculum writing project is not a brand new concept for the RCUS, we can and must learn from our recent history in determining feasibility. The *Promise and Deliverance* curriculum took 5 years to write, then another 5 years until it was completely published in a digital format and used from beginning to end by any of our congregations. It seems fair, then, to expect that such a large and worthy project will take a long-range vision of a similar time period. God was pleased to give us 66 Bible books which reveal His Person and Work to us. Surely we can devote a few years to faithfully teaching God’s little lambs to read, understand, and apply each of those books.

#### **WHAT DID IT COST?**

The *Promise and Deliverance* curriculum costs were as follows, according to the Treasurer’s Reports of Synod.

1999 - \$1,000.  
2000- \$13,260 (\$12,000 split between two writers)  
2001- \$12,500 (\$12,000 for writers)  
2002- \$12,272 (\$12,000 for writers)  
2003- \$12,000 (for writers)  
2004- \$15,086 (writers, proofreaders)  
2004- \$1,000 (compilers/expense)  
2005- \$5,500 (compilers, proofreaders finally paid, etc.)  
2006- \$1,500  
2007- \$1,500  
2008- \$1,500  
TOTAL- \$77,118.

If the past project would have been published in print form, the costs would have been higher. When you add in the Publications Committee’s estimates from 8 years ago for book publications, the total would be another \$100,000 roughly. The price for selling these books had not been set. To use graphics and illustrations would add potentially another \$100,000 total for the entire curriculum. According to the conversations at the time with Great Commission Publications, a project like ours would easily run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. (Cf. 2003 *Abstract*, 47-50).

Because we have the benefits of living in a digital age, we did not need to publish the curriculum right away, except on CD’s, which each church could then print and assemble on their own. This also allows for any necessary revisions to come in before a more finalized product can be published in a workbook format. Many things can be self-published these days, and it is unlikely that costs for a project of our magnitude will have risen beyond our means. To turn a phrase, “where there is a will to follow God’s will, there is a way.”

#### **What would it cost now?**

In 2008, we approved \$5,000 per grade level for Rev. Riffert to implement required revisions to the P+D curriculum, which would total \$20,000 over the course of a few years of revision work. Originally, we were willing to pay \$6,000 per curriculum year to the authors. It seems reasonable to pay at least this much again. Proofreaders and compilers were also used, and given \$1,000 to \$1,500 for their labors, per curriculum year.

#### **WHO WILL DO IT?**

Your committee contacted four RCUS ministers and invited them to consider being a potential author of such a new venture. We gave these men the 2009 and 2010 reports of our Sunday School Committee to Synod, which includes the 2010 proposed revised pedagogical approach. We are thankful for the prayerful consideration that each of these men gave to the matter, and for the hours of personal conversation and correspondence in clarifying the matters at hand. As of this writing, one minister has declined, one has accepted, and two others have accepted, provided a mutually satisfying arrangement is made on the issue of copyright and royalties for the proposed project.

#### **HOW IT WILL BE DONE**

Since we do have authors at hand who are ready to write the curriculum (or in some cases are already writing curriculum which nearly meets our project design), we propose that it is feasible for the RCUS to proceed with creating an integrated Sunday School curriculum.

As always, to reach this goal we will have to commit as delegates and members of the RCUS to praying regularly that God would give wisdom to authors, editors, and proofreaders. We will also want to financially provide for the sacrifices of time and energy which these men will make.

In order to be most effective in this new endeavor, two things are vital. First, the lessons should be produced with regular oversight of the SS Curriculum committee. Second, the lessons should also be tested along the way in churches where committee members and authors are NOT teaching it. This may have contributed to some of the problems with past curriculum project. Once the feedback was received from the churches using it where the pastors and teachers did not as easily know the mind of the authors, difficulties for both teacher and student emerged. So, the curriculum would need to be used in BOTH the churches where the authors/proofreaders are, AND in other churches too.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That Synod adopt the 2010 revised pedagogical approach for its integrated Sunday School curriculum. [see pages 3-5 of this report] [SEE BELOW]
2. That Synod mandate the Subcommittee on Sunday School Curriculum to oversee the development of a curriculum based on this approach. Due consideration shall be given to the excellent materials completed thus far by previous RCUS curriculum authors and editors, lest their labors be in vain. Specific consideration shall be given to the findings of the 2010 Subcommittee report.
3. That Synod commission qualified and able RCUS members who can write this curriculum.
4. That the Standing Publications Committee propose a suitable contractual arrangement between the authors and the RCUS regarding copyright, royalty, and authority of revision.

Respectfully Submitted, *Rev. Kyle Sorensen, Rev. Eric Bristley, Rev. Tracy Gruggett, Rev. Scott Henry, Elder Mark Reyna, Rev. Neale Riffert.*

1998 Synod Approved Pedagogical Approach	2010 Synod Revised Pedagogical Approach
<p>It is our recommendation that the four-volume work entitled Promise and Deliverance by S.G. DeGraaf be used as a teacher's guide for an integrated Sunday school curriculum for the whole family, and serve as the basic content of the curriculum. This four-volume work was written with the expressed intention of providing a guide for Sunday school teachers, so that the Bible stories might be taught in their proper covenantal context, and be conveyed to students as the self-revelation of the one true God who initiates and then faithfully fulfills his covenant in history through the mediator Jesus Christ. It is precisely because the covenantal understanding of Scripture is foundational to a life of true faith that this particular curriculum is being recommended for use in our congregations. The fact that every lesson of this curriculum has the covenant as its theme will serve to equip our covenant children with the mindset (worldview) that will direct them in a life of covenant keeping to the glory of God. Having this work as our basis will also spare a great deal of time and effort, making this proposed curriculum feasible.</p> <p>Why reinvent the wheel? DeGraaf's work provides a perfect example of the kind of approach to redemptive history that we want from a curriculum.</p>	<p>Because all Scripture is the inspired and inerrant Word of God it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Our teaching will focus on the Bible as the self-revelation of the Triune God who plans, promises and fulfills his covenant through the mediator Jesus Christ in the formation of His Kingdom. Because the covenantal understanding of Scripture is foundational to a life of true faith and obedience we believe that it is our responsibility as ministers of Christ to provide both teacher training and student curriculum that is faithful to the Word of God and our Reformed Confessions. Every lesson of this curriculum have God's eternal covenant at it core and the themes of the historical covenants to help equip our covenant children with the worldview that will direct them to live for the glory of God.</p>
<p><b>A.</b> As a denomination that self-consciously bears the name Reformed, we view all of life in the light of God's self-revelation, the Holy Scriptures.</p>	<p><b>A.</b> As a denomination that self-consciously bears the name Reformed, we view all of life in the light of God's self-revelation, the Holy Scriptures. For this reason our Bible curriculum must aim to help all members understand, interpret, and apply the totality of Scripture to their life and the world in which they live.</p>
<p><b>B.</b> We acknowledge that our children are of God's covenant and are therefore to be taught to know our covenant God in order that they might profess faith in Jesus Christ and live as his disciples.</p>	<p><b>B.</b> We acknowledge that our children are of God's covenant and are therefore to be taught to know our covenant God in order that they might profess faith in Jesus Christ and live as his disciples. For this reason our Bible curriculum must aim to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Prov. 22:6) and that from childhood they should "know the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15). Therefore we seek to impart a comprehensive understanding of the Bible in all of its diverse parts and unified wholeness.</p>
<p><b>C.</b> Our Sunday school curriculum is to be in service of parents implementing their God-given responsibility of nurturing and admonishing their covenant children in the Lord. Therefore, part of our curriculum will need to address the issue of parental involvement.</p>	<p><b>C.</b> Our Sunday school curriculum is to be of service to parents implementing their God-given responsibility of nurturing and admonishing their covenant children in the Lord. Therefore our curriculum will assist them in fulfilling their duty to impart biblical wisdom and instruction to their children.</p>
<p><b>D.</b> We acknowledge that we are training sinners and that our methods, in full dependence on the regenerating and renewing work of the Holy Spirit, must aim to overcome the effects of the sinful nature upon the learning process.</p>	<p><b>D.</b> We acknowledge that we are sinners who are training sinners. Therefore our methods must be in full dependence on the regenerating and renewing work of the Holy Spirit and we must be fervent in prayer as we seek to make disciples for Christ. Therefore we will teach students all that Christ has commanded us to believe and observe in the Old and New Testaments (Matt 28:19-20, Lk. 24:27, 32, 44-45). To this end we will also provide resources to train and guide teachers in their work.</p>
<p><b>E.</b> Our Sunday school curriculum must have as its educational objective a sweeping knowledge of the redemption that God accomplishes in history through the mediator Jesus Christ.</p>	<p><b>E.</b> Our Sunday school curriculum must have as its educational objective a sweeping knowledge of the redemption that God accomplishes in history through the mediator Jesus Christ. Since redemption has its roots in the eternal plan and covenant of God we seek to impart a knowledge of the infinite Triune God who "at various time and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in</p>

	these last days spoken to us by His Son.” (Heb 1:1–2) The threefold themes of Covenant, Mediator, and Kingdom are interwoven in Scripture to reveal the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.
<b>F.</b> The focus of every Sunday school lesson must be God's redemptive activities through the mediator Jesus Christ, as revealed by the particular Bible story being studied.	<b>F.</b> The focus of every Sunday school lesson must be God’s redemptive activities through the mediator Jesus Christ, as revealed by the particular Bible book or passage being studied. Each lesson will communicate the place and significance of biblical texts in the historical and covenantal context of Scripture as a whole. It will take into account the unity of God’s eternal covenant while explaining its progressive unfolding in the diversity of biblical literature and history. It will seek to orient all aspects of Biblical instruction to the various ways in which God has revealed His ways in the Covenant of Creation prior to the fall, the Covenant of Grace after the fall, the Noahic Covenant of Peace after the flood, the Abrahamic Covenant of Promise in the days of the Patriarchs, the Mosaic Covenant of Law at the founding of the nation of Israel, and the Davidic Covenant of the Kingdom as the basis of Messianic prophesy. All of these Old Testament “covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12, Rom. 9:4) build on each and culminate in the New Covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the final Prophet, Priest, and King.
<b>G.</b> Every lesson must remind our covenant children of their privileged standing before God as recipients of his covenant promise and (by way of application) of their responsibility to live in history as covenant keepers, as those who have been graciously called by God out of the world in order that they might glorify him by their lives of obedient thankfulness for the free gift of eternal life in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.	<b>G.</b> Every lesson must remind our covenant children of their privileged standing before God as members of the church. For this reason it is necessary to provide age-appropriate instruction in the Bible that incorporates practical application to their lives. Such application should not be moralistic in character but evangelical in accord with the Heidelberg Catechism as we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
<b>H.</b> Every lesson must demonstrate that it is the Bible that is the source of the doctrines that the children are taught from the Heidelberg catechism.	<b>H.</b> Every lesson must demonstrate that it is the Bible that is the source of the doctrines that the children are taught from the Heidelberg catechism. For this reason we will explain the doctrinal significance of each book and passage in the Bible so that students may learn God’s truth. We will integrate and correlate references to our Reformed Confessions so students will see that they properly present biblical teaching.
<b>I.</b> The Sunday school curriculum should serve to provide the broad knowledge of God's covenant redemption as the framework within which our covenant children may come to understand and thereby apply the doctrines of the Reformed faith.	<b>I.</b> The Sunday school curriculum should serve to provide the broad knowledge of God’s covenant redemption as the framework within which our covenant children may come to understand and thereby apply the doctrines of the Reformed faith. To this end we will not limit the significance of the Bible to a narrowly “religious” perspective but show students how the Biblical Worldview provides them with wisdom to interpret all of life and experience (Col. 2:3, 1 Cor. 2:6–16). In this way love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith is our goal of our instruction. (1 Tim. 1:5, James 1:21-27)

#### **D. Diaconal Committee**

Your committee addressed the following items over the course of the last year:

1. We received a note from Rev. Tom and Carolyn Mayville expressing the following: *Here is a check for the unused portion of Diaconal Aid Synod provided for us last year. Once again, we thank our Covenant God, and the Synod delegates, and you all for your generous support of us. We could not have managed to pay our bills last Spring without your help. God bless you for your work and labor of love.*

The unused portion of the Diaconal Aid totaling \$1,060 was submitted to the Synod Treasurer for the purpose of reimbursing the Diaconal Aid account and having monies available for the next need that might arise.

2. Your committee discussed the possibility of sending financial assistance to support the relief efforts in Japan. We were ready to present something to the churches of the RCUS when Rev. Randall Klynsma posted a letter and some information on this matter via the web group. Your committee took no further action because we were satisfied with the intention and procedure put forth by the officers of Northland Reformed Church in Kansas City, MO.

3. Your committee, based on the recommendation of the Standing Benevolent Committee of the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod was given the responsibility of overseeing the churches receiving benevolent aid and to report to Synod whether the benevolent policy adopted at the 2008 Synod is being fulfilled. As of the writing of this report, the following work has been performed:

a. Contact has been made with someone from each of the three churches that are receiving benevolent aid. These churches have submitted three year budgets to the Classes for the purpose of

submitting an overture to Synod requesting benevolent aid.

b. Written reports were not submitted to the Diaconal Committee outlining a church's plan for getting off aid, nor were they officially requested by the Committee.

c. Some questions have arisen concerning the history and parameters of benevolent aid being extended to the RCUS work in Colorado Springs; therefore, an informal request for information has been made to the Stated Clerk of South Central Classis for the purpose of learning more about this situation. Lord willing, the Clerk will have this information available at the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod and will be able to give this material to the Standing Benevolence Committee.

d. Concerning the RCUS works in Lancaster, CA and Anderson, CA, these congregations are receiving benevolent aid on both the Synodical and Classical level. They are dealing with financial shortfalls, requiring challenging financial decisions and various hardships. It is the opinion of the committee that due to these and other circumstances, the aid being given to the congregations in Lancaster and Anderson is appropriate at this time. We would also note that the period of time in which these congregations might become self-sufficient could be quite lengthy. Therefore, these congregations do not need to be challenged on self-sufficiency but rather on growth and expansion.

Based on these thoughts, your committee makes the following recommendations:

1. That \$1,060 of the benevolent aid given to Rev. and Mrs. Tom Mayville was returned to the Diaconal Aid Fund of the Synod of the RCUS, take note.
2. That those churches who desire to continue to provide support for relief efforts in Japan utilize the efforts put in place by Rev. Randall Klynsma and the Consistory of Northland Reformed Church, take note.
3. That the Consistories of Faith RCUS in Anderson, CA and Grace RCUS in Lancaster, CA be encouraged to redouble their efforts by prayerfully discussing, planning and implementing ideas for the purpose of reaching their respective areas with the gospel.
4. That the Consistories of Faith RCUS in Anderson, CA and Grace RCUS in Lancaster, CA provide a report to the Permanent Diaconal Committee of their discussions and implemented plans.
5. That the Clerk of Synod send a letter to the Consistories of Faith RCUS in Anderson, CA and Grace RCUS in Lancaster, CA noting the encouragements and responsibilities of Recommendations #3 and #4 of the Permanent Diaconal Committee report.

Respectfully Submitted, *Michael McGee, Steve Altman, Frank Walker, Jim West, Kenneth Armbruster, Robert Davis, Andy Gilman, Thomas Savage*

#### ***E. Editorial Advice Committee***

Your committee did not meet nor did it conduct any business this past Synodical year.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. David Dawn, Rev. Ron Morris, Rev. George Horner, Rev. Dennis Roe, Elder Jim Connelly, Elder Greg Van Holland*

#### ***F. Executive Committee***

Honorable Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States 265th Annual Session

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

During the course of this synodical year, your committee conferred numerous times by telephone and email and sent out three Executive Circulars with recommendations which were approved without dissent. Those actions are as follows:

**Recommendation 1.** *That the attached "Investment Policy and Spending Guidelines of the Ministerial Aid Fund, RCUS" be approved.* (The document was attached to the circular)

**Recommendation 2.** *We recommend the following order for services for the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod:*

*Monday Worship: 7 pm, May 16, 2011 – Rev. Howard Hart - Conducting  
Rev. David Fagrey - Preaching*

*Wednesday Worship: 7 pm, May 18, 2011 – Rev. Robert Grossmann - Conducting  
Rev. James Grossmann - Preaching*

*Morning Devotions:*

*Tuesday: 10 am, May 17, 2011 – Rev. Jon Blair*

*Wednesday: 10 am, May 18, 2011 – Rev. Steve Altman*

*Thursday : 10 am May 19, 2011 – Rev. Jim West*

*Thursday: Closing Devotion Elder from Grace RCUS, Mitchell, SD*

**Recommendation 3.** *We recommend that at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, May 17, Mr. Stacy Kooistra be given 30 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for questions, to address the Synod on legal guidelines for Church discipline, based on the Constitution of the RCUS.*

**Recommendation 4.** *We recommend that \$1200 be spent from FMC funds to help cover the expenses of the 2011 annual meeting of the United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines.*

Your committee was given the task of informing Dordt College of the action of Synod which suspended Dordt College from the list of approved colleges and from Guideline support, and to ask for a response from the Board of Trustees. There were initially several letters sent to Dr. Zylstra to elicit more information, which he gladly gave us. When in California, Dr. Zylstra met for a couple hours with Rev. Pollema and Rev. Treick and discussed the issues which were problematic to us, as well as the procedures for the approval, hiring, and dismissing of faculty members. Following these communications, a letter was addressed and sent to the Board of Trustees, asking for their response as requested by the Synod. The Board issued a response to our Synod at their April 28-29, 2011 meeting. As a part of our report we will provide the letter which our committee wrote to the Board, and their response. We are making no recommendations as a result of the letter, but present it to the Synod for their consideration.

The Synod asked the Executive Committee for a ruling on the matter of electing officers one year in advance, to begin their service at the following Synod (264<sup>th</sup> Abstract, pp. 89-90). It was the unanimous decision of our committee that we not make this change, and continue as we have in the past.

The Agenda that was sent out has taken into account the procedural changes adopted by last year's Synod.

A request came to the committee from the Consistory of Grace RCUS, Mitchell, to have Synod investigate the possibility of a group health insurance policy for pastors in the RCUS. It reads as follows: "The Consistory of Grace Reformed Church, Mitchell, SD, humbly overtures the Executive Committee of Synod to erect a special committee which will start the process of gathering and studying information in order to determine the feasibility of the Reformed Church in the United States participation in a group health insurance policy. The information explaining qualifications, restrictions and other details pertinent to such a policy is to be presented, D.V., to the special committee, if erected, at the meeting of Synod in Mitchell, SD."

Our committee did not feel that it had the authority to form this Special Committee for this meeting, but felt that the overture had merit. We determined that a Standing Committee could best discuss the merits of this with a possible view to forming a Special Committee to look into this and report back at the 266<sup>th</sup> Synod.

**Thus our recommendation to this Synod is as follows:** *"We recommend that the Standing Committee on Benevolences of the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod consider whether or how the Synod should pursue an RCUS Group Health Insurance."*

Finally, Rev. Vernon Pollema, by way of this report, is requesting that his name not be placed in nomination at this Synod for the office of President of the Synod, and would respectfully decline such a nomination.

Respectfully Submitted, *Rev. Jim Sawtelle, V. Pres. Rev. Vernon Pollema, Pres., Elder Roger Gallimore, Rev. Paul Treick, Clerk, Elder Ted Griess, Treas.*

Attached: Letter to Dordt College Board of Trustees and their response.

Mr. Randy Kroll  
1485 18<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW  
New Brighton, MN 55112

ATT: Administration and Board of Dordt College,  
RE: Concerns of the RCUS

Dear Brothers in Christ,

As you are no doubt already aware, the last Synod of the Reformed Church in the U. S., directed our Executive Committee to address some issues that were brought to our attention and are of great concern to us. These concerns focus on certain subject matter taught in the classrooms at Dordt College.

The RCUS has had a close relationship with Dordt from its inception — supporting it with prayers, finances, and students over the years. We have maintained a committee to confer with Dordt and report to the Synod each year. On your part, you have invited us to have conversations and conferences over various issues from time to time. We appreciate the openness We therefore come to you with a sense of familiarity and collegiality that allows for frankness out of brotherly love.

At our past Synod, as part of the consideration of the Standing Committee report on Education and Student Aid, the motion to support Dordt College was substituted with the following motion which was adopted: It was moved "to suspend Dordt College from the list of approved colleges, and that a letter of pastoral admonishment be sent by the Executive Committee of Synod to said institution, and that we request a response be made by the Board of Trustees, addressed to the the 265' Synod which is to convene at Grace Reformed Church, Mitchell, SD, on May 16,201 L" Therefore, this letter is being composed by the Executive Committee at the direction of the Synod.

Before we sent this letter to the Board, our committee felt that we should have more information as to the perceived problems and procedures for the hiring and dismissal of faculty members. Dr.

Zylstra was kind enough to meet with us personally and correspond with letters to address our questions. This was very helpful for our committee. He gave us a very detailed outline of how the hiring process is carried out and how oversight is maintained. What we still question at this point is how faculty members are removed when their teachings conflict with the creedal positions they agreed to at their hiring.

We agree that there is a certain amount of academic freedom allowed for professors as they continue to study their field. Our concern is that such freedom must remain within the bounds of the Reformed confessions upon which Dordt College was founded. It is also our concern that Dordt College maintain its commitment to the historic Reformed confessions as a conscious basis for instruction and a witness to the world. In brief, our concern is that Dordt College has some professors that are at odds with positions which we hold to be very crucial to a Reformed and biblical world-view.

The first of these is the matter of the length of the days of creation. We understand that this does not include a macro evolution (perhaps a micro-evolution). We reject both. We realize that there are differences on the length of the creation days among Reformed denominations, but the overriding issue for us is the matter of the hermeneutical approach that has to be employed to arrive at the conclusion of Dr. Jelsma as it was explained to us in our committee report. Does this extend to his understanding of Moses' description of the flood? This likewise raises the question of whether the Fall was a literal event with Satan speaking through a real serpent. Where does Moses' "cosmological understanding" change after the creation account from the literary to the literal? We believe Scripture must interpret science not vice versa.

The second matter discussed was in Prof. Jason Lief's class. As you may know, our Synod studied N. T. Wright's positions on the matter of justification a few years ago, and found his teachings on that subject to be unbiblical. In addition to the problems that might otherwise arise from this author, our greater concerns are this professor's positive view of Karl Barth, and his delight in "high church" liturgy such as practiced by the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches. As a professor of Theology, such views of theology, liturgy, and worship are clearly outside of the Reformed regulative principle of worship and are bound to have a deleterious impact on Dordt and its students.

The third matter we are addressing is the teaching of Prof. Bobbi Sutherland who espouses the JEDP theory of Graf and Wellhausen. We hold the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as defined in the Belgic Confession, Art. 4. There are serious hermeneutic problems that arise from form or source criticism that was, in large part, a basis for neo-orthodoxy. We appreciate the fact that some of the faculty are concerned by this and we hope the Trustees will also voice sufficient concern which would remove this teaching from the history course and any other course.

Since we believe these matters relate to the confessional integrity of Dordt College, we feel the Board in good conscience must address them.

We are therefore asking the Board of Trustees for a written response to our Synod to address: 1) Are these teachings considered by the Board to be in accord with the teachings of Dordt's creedal foundation?; 2) What, if anything, is being done at this time to address these individuals and remove these teachings from the classrooms?; and 3) What are the procedures in place, or needed, to monitor issues such as this when they are brought to your attention?

Our Synod will have to consider at its next meeting whether it will continue with the suspension of Dordt College as an approved college for our students. Your response will greatly help that discussion.

Our primary concern is for the spiritual life of our students who attend Dordt, as well as how Dordt is viewed by the evangelical community. We want Dordt College to be Reformed without apology or compromise. We want our students to have genuine growth through the clear and consistent instruction in the Reformed faith in all classes. Perhaps better boundaries need to be drawn on the academic freedom afforded to professors. We strongly feel that this liberty must be within the bounds of the Three Forms of Unity to which Dordt must remain committed.

We thank the board members for their cooperation in this. Please receive this correspondence in the spirit of brotherly love. Rest assured that we desire only what is pleasing to God and the best for Dordt College and its students.

In the Lord's service, Rev. Paul H. Treick Stated Clerk, RCUS. Other members of the Executive Committee include: Rev. Vernon Pollema, Rev. Jim Sawtelle, Elder Ted Griess, and Elder Roger Gallimore

Copies to Dr. Zylstra and the Board of Trustees.

Attached: The 2010 Report to our Synod

DORDT COLLEGE

April 2011

Rev. Paul H. Treick

Stated Clerk, RCUS

4005 Masterpiece Dr. Modesto, CA 95357

Dear Friends of Christian Higher Education.

The Board of Trustees of Dordt College is deeply appreciative of your bringing to our attention your concern that Dordt College remain faithful to a Reformed perspective on higher education. As a board, we are convinced that close ties with a supporting confessional community is essential to maintaining the biblical and Christ centered focus of our mission. Thank you again for having been strong partners in this effort for so many years.

We are especially grateful for the work over the years of the Committee for Contact with Dordt College. Discussions have been open and direct and always focused on helping Dordt College remain faithful to its calling and mission as a Reformed college.

Against that background we were also grateful for the courteous and careful way in which the Executive Committee has followed up on the decision of your Synod to bring some of these matters to attention.

You should know that we were distressed to know that your Synod had suspended your relationship with us but we are very thankful that your committee has given us this opportunity to respond.

We also want you to know that your letter has been reviewed carefully by our executive committee, a sub-committee of board members from various denominations, and our full board of trustees in session this April.

In addition, we are pleased that the Committee for Contact with Dordt College also has continued their work. We do believe that face to face interaction is the best for discussion of these matters and we are pleased that for the past two years, after that interaction, the committee has recommended continuation of our relationship.

Against that background, please allow us then to respond briefly to the three questions raised by the Executive Committee.

First, Dordt College is committed deeply to the biblical doctrine of creation. It is at the core of our educational philosophy. Indeed taking our starting point in creation and helping students understand the original design of God's world as illumined by scripture has always been and remains a true distinctive of Reformed higher education. We believe Dordt College is an outstanding example of this.

At the same time, you need to know that Dordt College has never required faculty to affirm what is sometimes referred to as "six 24 hour day creationism." Some of our faculty have and do affirm that perspective while others do not. Yet that God has created our world ex nihilo and has guided-its development by his providential hand is at the heart of what we affirm as the educational task of our college. For example, again this year, in some of our discussions as faculty and staff, it became clear that we need to reaffirm the special place assigned by God to the human race within creation. That is, of course a biblical given, but it is also critical to understanding the cultural mandate which plays such a foundational role in our educational philosophy.

Second, as a board we do ask each and every professor in their interviews with us to reflect on how their Reformed convictions shape their own field of study. We do not, as a college, affirm the positions of every author that a professor may ask students to read as part of their studies nor do we as a board necessarily endorse every writer that a professor may find stimulating in his or her scholarly reflection. We do however, examine and expect that every professor will not only teach within the Reformed confessions but that they also personally affirm those confessions.

Similarly, we expect faculty to teach that biblical principles should shape and regulate all human activities, certainly including our communal worship. But as you know there area wide range of views within the Reformed community as to how scriptural principles should shape our worship (including, for example, insisting on exclusive Psalmody or not celebrating Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas, and the like.)

Third, you can be sure that the board of trustees does not endorse the teaching of higher criticism as a legitimate form ofhermeneutics. We also are confident that our administrators take questions and/or criticism seriously and have, indeed, taken steps to assure themselves that our faculty do not, in fact, espouse the JEDP theory and are fully in agreement with the Belgic Confessions, including Article 4. It needs to be remembered that assigned course readings are intended to make students aware of a wide variety of theories and are in no way intended to advocate for or espouse theories that are unacceptable from a biblical, Reformed perspective.

Let us also respond to your second and third questions regarding the supervision by the board of our faculty.

As you mention in your letter, certainly we do want professors to have freedom in their teaching the same way pastors also need to have freedom in their preaching. However, we clearly affirm in our foundational documents that this freedom is within the bounds of the scripture as articulated in the confessions of the Reformed community. And so, just as pastors are continually in dialog with the elders of their congregation to ensure their freedom does not exceed its proper bounds, so our faculty are continually engaged in discussion with their colleagues, their deans, and the administration of the college. That is the first line of accountability.

At the same time the board of trustees also interviews each faculty member as to their faith, their Reformed conviction, and the application of that Reformed perspective to higher education and their own field of specialty in particular. This interview takes place before the person is appointed. It takes place again two years later after we have more experience with the person's teaching. And then it takes place again after eight years of employment before the professor is given an extended term contract.

Moreover, you should be aware that Dordt College does not have a traditional -tenure- policy. As a result, even after the extended term contract is given, the board reappoints each faculty member every three years. And at that time, the board asks the administration to report on the effectiveness and faithfulness of the professor — and the board has the opportunity to raise any additional items of concern that they would like addressed before the reappointment is given.

To summarize, a board committee interviews each professor before the first appointment, and then officially votes on reappointment every two years or three years thereafter, including face to face interviews on two additional occasions. And, in the meantime, we rely on the administration of the college to support, encourage and critique all faculty members — as to their biblical/confessional perspective as well as their academic integrity -- on a continual basis, seeking our assistance where necessary.

Finally, we believe we have one of the most vigorous faculty supervision and reappointment processes in place of which we are aware in Christian higher education. And, if we can be so bold, we believe that

this has resulted in Dordt College faculty being known worldwide for the energetic way in which their biblical and confessional convictions shape the academic excellence for which we are also rightly known.

What we want you to know is that we believe it is this kind of energetic and diligent interaction that we have experienced with the RCUS and others over the years that has been used by God to bring about the result for which we are so grateful today. That is why we would earnestly hope that we can continue that relationship in the future and that, if you have any additional concerns or suggestions, we will continue to have the opportunity to discuss them with you and thus benefit from your insights and wisdom as the coming years unfold.

Again, thank you for all the effort you have put into helping us become a more faithful college. May God bless both you and us as we continue to serve together in the future.

Do not hesitate to contact either our president or the chair of our board of trustees if there is additional assistance we can provide in advance of your synod's meeting.

Sincerely, Carl E. Zylstra, Beth TeGrotenhuis, Dordt College Board of Trustees

### ***G. Foreign Ministries Committee***

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

Your committee met in Sacramento on April 4th & 5th to discuss the work of the RCUS in foreign missions, review the previous year as well as plan for the upcoming year. We also met during the year through teleconferencing. As always your committee continues to thank God for the prayers and support of the congregations and individuals of the RCUS. Your prayers and support enable us as a denomination to obey Christ's command making disciples of all nations for His glory.

Your committee continues to operate through the year with subcommittees for the Congo (United Reformed Churches of the Congo -URCC) headed by Rev. Robert Grossmann, for Kenya ((Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya - RFCK) headed by Rev. Michael Voytek and for the Philippines headed by Rev. Gil Baloy (United Covenant Reformed Church Philippines - UCRCP). Other committees, which report to the FMC, include the Reformed Radio Administration Committee (with Rev. Neil Riffert, Rev. Paul Treick and Rev. Dan Schnabel) and the Congo Economic Development Committee (The officers of the consistory of Providence RCUS, Lodi California).

### **Congo:**

Rev. Bob Grossman has been in more or less constant contact with leading men in the three major areas where there are United Reformed Churches of the Congo congregations. These include Revs. Abel N'tita and Philippe N'Gandu in Kinshasa, Rev. Kalala Kabongo and Rev. Bankina in Mbuji-Mayi and Elder Mande Lenge in Lubumbashi. The Mbuji-Mayi and Lubumbashi groups have contact with churches at some distance in their general areas. The Democratic Republic is a large country, 2000 miles plus from North to South and about that far, East to West. Kinshasa, the capitol, is a large city of 10 million population on the western end and central (North to South) of the Congo, on the Congo river, and across the river from Brazzaville, which is the capitol of the Congolese Republic. Lubumbashi is a city of some millions, in the far South of the Congo, about 1500 miles from Kinshasa. Mbuji-Mayi is far to the East in the central (North to South) Congo, about 750 miles from Kinshasa. Churches in Kananga are related to the churches in Mbuji-Mayi. Since Rev. Grossman has been to the Congo twice, he knows many of the men in all three regions personally. They had gathered in Lubumbashi when Rev. Blair and Rev. Grossmann were there in 2004. The RCUS budgets funds for URCC churches in Kinshasa and Mbuji-Mayi but not yet for Lubumbashi because of the upset there. Nevertheless that situation has settled down a great deal and the URCC has several churches there. We have sent them some leftover support recently (\$850). We have budgeted \$6000 for support of ten Kinshasa churches (\$200 per quarter for each church), which has been sent, but there are now 12 active churches in Kinshasa. We also support the two ministers in Kinshasa with \$150 a month each. We support Rev. Kabongo (\$150 per month) and seven more ministers at \$100 per month in the Mbuji-Mayi and Kananga areas. We have just gotten solid information from Lubumbashi since the first of the year via Elder Mande Lenge, a dear friend and very competent man who at one time was treasurer for the Dutch mission in Lubumbashi.

### **KINSHASA**

There are 12 Churches, two founded by Abel N'tita when he was a "Responsible Elder," and while we had lost contact with Kinshasa during the civil war that tossed out Mr. M'butu, the dictator for many years. Abel was a college professor of Physics, is very capable and committed to the Reformed faith. He was ordained a "responsible Elder" by Rev. Paul Treick, Rev. Maynard Koerner and Rev. Aaron Kayayan in 1984. He studied down in Lubumbashi at the Dutch seminary and was subsequently ordained to the Christian ministry. He is often president, clerk or V.P. of their General Synod. Philippe N'Gandu is the Son of an ERCC minister who had been trained first as a Methodist but died several years ago. He is also a graduate of the Dutch Seminary. The elder Rev. N'Gandu met Rev. Blair & Rev. Grossmann in Kinshasa in 1998 and we integrated him and his group into the ERCC, with which they had been at odds for several years. Most of the leading Elders in the Kinshasa churches are known personally to us, several having been ordained by myself and Rev. Harvey Opp. They are a solid group. Jonas Mualaba is a self-promoter who would like to be a leader but is on the fringes. He did some translation work for us in 1998 and wanted immediately to be ordained an elder even though he was not a member of the then ERCC and really knew nothing about it.

The churches then in Kinshasa have solid leadership, are very much involved in URCC national government and work, and continue to grow. The radio ministry of Rev. Eric Kayayan is helpful to these French-speaking people for evangelism and building up in the faith. They are in expensive area to live and in a somewhat precarious city since overthrow movements usually attack the Capitol. Kinshasa has not been free from violence over the past ten years but seems pretty much at peace the last couple of years.

### **MBUJI-MAYI AND KANANGA**

This is also an older area of the Congolese church. Elder Bankina, was ordained in 1984 and subsequently in recent years graduated from the Dutch Seminary in Lubumbashi. Rev. Kabongo, the leading pastor in this area was trained in S. Africa and is very capable as a professor and church leader. Like all Africans, he has a tendency to take on to many leadership roles, but we have spoken to him about

that and he has responded favorably, also finding a Deacon to whom we might send funds, rather than himself. He has been very active in traveling the large area over to Kananga and around Mbuji-Mayi, and so has been instrumental in founding, helping, and leading churches in the whole east central Congo. He taught alongside the Dutch professors in Lubumbashi.

The churches in this area also seem by all reports to be doing well. Even a former “responsible Elder” who was cashiered by Rev. Aaron Kayayan in a not too proper manner has been talked into coming back into the URCC.

## **LUBUMBASHI**

The Lubumbashi church was also founded in 1984 by ordaining Rev. Kishimba Kasantika. It prospered with several Responsible Elders and another minister who like Kishimba had been trained in France, Rev. Illunga. These two became more and more at odds with the rest of the ERCC because they sought to run the church as dictators and were not content to allow the general Synod to truly oversee the church work. Several more ministers trained in S. Africa joined with them to form a Lubumbashi clique which sought to lock out the rest of the ministers and elders. Rev. Blair and Rev. Grossmann ran into this in 2004 when visiting in Lubumbashi. These ministers met with us as THE ERCC ministers while others who had graduated from the Dutch Seminary were not invited. We worked at resolving this matter but it ended with the General Synod removing Rev. Kishimba as a “legal representative” of the church to the government, to which Kishimba and Illunga responded by getting the government to appoint them a “representatives for life” of the ERCC. These ministers, Revs. Kishimba, Illunga, Banzi, Shimbi and Mbayo, continue as the ERCC in Lubumbashi. However several of the churches have left the ERCC and joined the URCC, which was formed by the churches in Mbuji-Mayi, Kinshasa and those faithful ones in Lubumbashi. Today the ERCC seems on the decline, even though they confiscated the Dutch compound, which can probably be rented out for \$3000 per month. Elder Mande Lenge has been in correspondence with us and has detailed the situation and the growing URCC churches in Lubumbashi. He traveled to Kinshasa at the beginning of March for a strategy session with the leaders from other churches of the URCC. There is evidently no danger to the URCC in Lubumbashi from the Kishimba group that continues as the ERCC, even though they have confiscated church properties from URCC congregations in the outlying districts from Lubumbashi.

## **THE OVERALL PICTURE**

The URCC then continues to grow and prosper in Kinshasa and Mbuji-Mayi and Kananga, and even in Lubumbashi. There is little doubt that our financial and prayer and moral support also encourage them greatly to continue in the Reformed faith. The Dutch have talked on occasion about restarting seminary work in the Congo, probably in Kinshasa, but to date we have not solid information that this might be in the offing. The URCC brethren have promised to inform us of this should it come to pass. Rev. Kabongo was at the GKN (Liberated) General Synod in the Netherlands.

## **Kenya & Uganda**

As many of you are well aware, there has been a major change in our relationship with the churches in Kenya. We will not attempt to recount the historical details but simply state that the churches of the Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya (RFCK) have fulfilled the requirements that we gave them concerning receiving RCUS funds and the churches of the Free Reformed Church of Kenya (FRCK) have not. The following is that list of requirements that we sent to both groups that an individual church must meet in order to be considered for financial assistance from the RCUS.

1. Church constitution and bylaws that has been ratified by the members.
2. “Memorial” with signatures of the members and officers that includes a commitment to be under the oversight of a classis.
3. List of officers (i.e. pastor, elders, and deacons) with indication as to whether they were elected by the congregation to this office or appointed to serve this church.
4. Documentation that a church bank account has been established with at least two signers to access funds. Also no pastors can be signers on a church account.
5. An income and expense report (contain specific categories and amounts) to provide transparency and accountability. This report will probably be modeled after the quarterly/annual reports to the classis and the RCUS as well as the foundation for the development of a three-year budget.

Since the churches of the RFCK have fulfilled our requirements, we have sent them a total of \$1,400 for the 2010-2011 synodical year and \$1,800 for the 2011-2012 synodical year. Attached you will find the name of the churches, as well as the signers and officers of each church. For the first time we have received an filled our Income & Expense Report that has been sent to each of the churches and the completed forms from the two churches who received funds during the 2010 calendar year. The following is a recent assessment of the state of the RFCK from Rev. Phil Proctor’s (via email February 24, 2011). For you information, the “Kenyan brothers” that he mentions refers to the students attending Knox Theological College in Mbale, Uganda.

“I spent a couple of hours with the Kenyan brothers this afternoon. Here is my summary: 1. RFCK – established as an entity in Kenya, and growing well. They’ve been having classis meetings every month, rotating amongst the congregations, and the report is that all is going on well. I asked about both Simon and Barton specifically – how are they doing, are their congregations solid, etc. and the response was “yes” - they are going on well.” I didn’t mention the email, but did suggest that I travel to Kenya from April 8th to April 11th to make a visit and report to you brothers. If there’s anything in particular that you would like me to communicate to them, let me know prior to that date. My impression of things, thus far, is that whoever the email came from, it’s a disaffected individual, as opposed to a correct assessment of facts “on the ground.” Still, a visit in April will be profitable. 2. I asked the brothers what the RFCK needs – what one request they would make. I was impressed by the answer. They need catechisms, hymn books, and Bibles. According to John Omoke, the old books were left with the FRCK as their property. Let me know what (if anything) you’d like me to do towards this request.”

Rev. Proctor traveled to Kenya on April 7th and as our eyes and ears on the ground. He was there from Friday until Sunday. Rev. Proctor’s trip went well. Rev. Proctor stated that he was “extremely impressed with the Classis....I think they’ve got the right focus – the gospel, as opposed to material progress. I also have the impression that they weren’t pulling the wool over my eyes with the congregations/members.” They met at the Omoringamu congregation and have planned to rotate the classis meeting among the six congregations. On this trip Rev. Proctor also visited four congregations and visited with their members as well as brought a brief message from the Scripture.

## **Philippines**

The United Covenant Reformed Church in the Philippines - (UCRCP) expressed its appreciation to the RCUS for its part in the formation of its newly formed Classis in an email dated May 3, 2010. As stated in last year’s abstract (2010 Synod Abstract, page 42), the UCRCP met on March 5-6, 2010, to organize its first Classis. That meeting was made possible by the amount of \$1704 budgeted by Synod in the previous year (2009 Synod Abstract, page 68). “Thank you for sending ministers who have faithfully taught and equipped us in the ministry and have been good models and mentors to our ministers and

elders.” The thank-you letter notes that there are now three organized congregations in the denomination. Recently Rev. Gil Baloy was informed by their liaison, Rev. Edwin Puzon, that a fourth congregation is preparing to organize, which is the one in Calauan, Laguna. Further explanation about this promising development may be read below.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Peace and unity, like truth, are like precious stones to be mined deep in the earth. We know the challenge here at home within our own denomination and in our inter-denominational relationships. It is no different abroad. This is vital for God’s work to move forward. When they are wanting, the work grinds almost to a halt. A liaison tries to keep the lines of communication flowing between parties. Sometimes, your “Philippines liaison” may be borrowed by the UCRCP to deal with a “third” party, such as the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches of North America. In the former case, an interested pastor and church in the Philippines was referred to the UCRCP by our Canadian brethren via the “RCUS connection.” In the latter case, the UCRCP requested Rev. Baloy to get in touch with the home church of the URC missionary, who happened at the time to be working in one of its mission congregations. Your servant tried to lead the brothers on both sides to understand and apply Matthew 18: 15-17 in the spirit of meekness to the situation at hand (RCUS Constitution Article 128).

Rev. Baloy took a trip to the Philippines, at his own expense, in September to accompany his mother-in-law to her family in Manila. Previously Rev. Baloy’s family has often assisted in a variety of ways that decreased the RCUS expenses while traveling there. This trip afforded Rev. Baloy a wonderful opportunity to preach the gospel to the Enriquez clan at a family gathering on the Lord’s Day. After that he went to Cagayan de Oro and engaged in street preaching and tract evangelism with several of the men of Jireh Reformed Church. Rev. Baloy and others dropped in on a sick member and relative of Pastor Lapiz in a local hospital. There has also been some traveling from the Philippines and the ministers there. In January 2011, Rev. Vic Bernales traveled to California to be the guest speaker at the “Mission-Fest” of the URCNA church in Chino where he formerly interned. On one Lord’s Day, Vic preached as well at Sacramento Covenant Reformed Church and Grace Reformed Church in Modesto.

Here is an important reminder to donors: “Because direct contributions to foreign missions works may have unintended consequences, the churches and the members are encouraged to make contribution through the Foreign Missions Committee and keep the committee informed of any direct contributions” (Standing Missions Committee Recommendation #13, 2009 Synod Abstract, page 68). The following are gifts given to the UCRCP in 2010-2011.

1. A gift of appreciation of \$208 from Rev. and Mrs. Gil Baloy for “Papa Tony” for safely chauffeuring the RCUS pastors to their various destinations on Luzon over the past six years. Papa Tony’s services were free through the courtesy of his employers Mr. and Mrs. Raul Enriquez; dated February 2010.
2. A gift of \$900 from Providence RCUS in Limon, CO, via the RCUS Treasurer and Gil Baloy to the Consistory of UCRCP San Carlos, Pangasinan, in order to help sponsor “scholar students” at the private school of the Puzons in Las Pinas, Metro Manila; dated March 2010.
3. A gift of \$230 from Covenant RCUS in San Diego, CA, to the Consistory of UCRCP San Carlos, Pangasinan, for diaconal assistance; dated May 10, 2010.
4. An anonymous gift of \$200 from a member of Covenant RCUS in San Diego, CA, for airfare for two UCRCP pastors to travel to Davao City for the ordination service of Vic Bernales; dated August 2010.
5. An anonymous gift of \$200 from a member of Covenant RCUS in San Diego, CA, for diaconal assistance for Las Pinas UCRCP; dated September 2010.
6. A gift of \$500 from Surrey Canadian Reformed Church via Western Union to Edwin Puzon for the purposes of assistance for renovation of the Laguna Church’s worship area (\$350) and for evangelism of Davao Covenant Reformed Church (\$150); dated December 2010.
7. An anonymous gift of \$450 from a member of Covenant RCUS in Sacramento, CA, sent to the Consistory of UCRCP San Carlos, Pangasinan, for diaconal assistance for Davao UCRCP; dated December 2010.
8. An love gift of \$100 from Rev. & Mrs. Gil Baloy to Kim Lapiz, the eldest son of Rev. Remegio Lapiz, of the Jireh Reformed Church in Cagayan de Oro. He requested financial assistance for a family to whom he ministers the Word whose house burned down; dated December 2010.
9. A gift of \$500 from Peace RCUS in Garner, IA, sent to the Consistory of UCRCP San Carlos, Pangasinan, for denomination-building assistance for the UCRCP; dated February 2011.
10. A gift of \$900 from Providence RCUS in Limon, CO, through the RCUS Treasurer and Gil Baloy via Western Union to Rev. Edwin Puzon, in order to help sponsor “scholar students” at the private school of the Puzons in Las Pinas, Metro Manila; dated April 2011.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. We request that the RCUS establish a formal relationship to support and encourage the Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya (R.F.C.K.)
2. That the budget be adopted as follows:

#### **Congo:**

Elder-pastor support \$14,400 (same as last year)  
 Kinshasa aid \$13,200 (increase \$1,600 to help support 2 more churches)  
 Building and Diaconal aid \$400 (decrease \$1,600)

#### **Kenya:**

Church Support \$6,000 (\$5,000 decrease)  
 Building & diaconal aid \$2,000 (used for economic development)  
 Student/ministry expenses & travel \$5,400 (same as last year)

**Reformed Faith and Life (French):** \$17,000 (same)

#### **Committee Expenses:**

Travel to Africa \$3,000 (increase \$1,000)

Travel to Europe \$1,000 (same)  
Travel in USA \$ 3,000 (same)

**Total:** 65,400 (decrease \$5,000)

3. That the Synod continue to encourage the support of the Congo Economic fund. Note: There are still many needs. In 6 Years over \$55,000 has been used for projects which greatly benefited a number of people. The projects included agricultural activities such as purchasing seed, livestock and also the purchase of sewing machines in order to assist people to become more self-sufficient.
4. That the money the RCUS budgeted (\$15,000 last year) to assist Rev. Phil Proctor (O.P.C.) with the purchase of a reliable vehicle be given to the O.P.C. in order to support the training of men at Knox Theological College. Note: Currently Rev. Proctor's plans changed and they are moving back stateside.
5. That the pastors of the RCUS prayerfully consider serving as a long term missionary in Uganda.
6. That the pastors of the RCUS prayerfully consider teaching a three week class in Uganda at Knox Theological College in Mbale. Note: For the short term missionary we would provide for the travel and living expenses for this from the committee's budgeted funds.
7. We request that the RCUS establish a formal relationship to support and encourage the U.C.R.C.P.
8. That the RCUS budget \$2058 for the UCRCP's Classis meeting for 2012. Note: Last year our Synod budgeted \$1700 for their quarterly meetings, which is comparable to the \$1704 budgeted the previous year for the same (Recommendation #6, 2010 Synod Abstract, page 95). The original request underestimated the true costs involved. We continue to challenge the leaders to teach their members the importance of giving in order for them to be able to take "ownership" of their churches. To provide for other government meetings that may come up, the leaders are endeavoring to set aside a portion of the offerings which they call the "Tithe of Tithes."
9. That the RCUS budget \$3,000 for a future trip to the Philippines to meet with and hold conferences with the UCRCP. Note: same as last year.
10. That the RCUS budget \$2000 for outreach expenses covering gas and travel expenses for the pastors of the UCRCP. Note: Decrease of \$400. This is to assist two of the poorest congregations of Las Pinas & Laguna.

Respectfully submitted, *Dan Schnabel (Chairman), Gil Baloy (Philippines Subcommittee), Robert Grossman (Congo Subcommittee), Albert Haller, Wayne Lingenfelter, Ted Schiefflen, Doug Schlegel, and Michael Voytek (Kenya Subcommittee).*

#### **H. Home Missions Committee**

The Synod Home Missions Committee met at La Habra, CA on April 7-8, 2011. Committee members present were: Revs. Harvey Opp, Richard Stetler, and Joe Vusich; Elders Loren Huber, Jeff Jones, and John Bender. There is no minister from Western Classis currently on the committee, nor an elder from Covenant East Classis. Home Missionaries present were Revs. Wesley Brice, Gary Mancilas, Jay Fluck, and Ryan Kron.

#### **Mission Reports:**

##### **Grace Reformed Chapel, Northwest AR.**

Rev. Wesley Brice reports that the past year has been one of blessing even in the face of trial. He underwent chemo-therapy for Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, but is very thankful to report that the cancer is gone. Although weakened, he was able to fill the pulpit continuously, except for one Sunday. The congregation has been blessed in that several young men, and two retired couples have become regular attenders in 2010. One of these is a retired minister and his wife, who have recently become members. Sadly, one communicant was erased under discipline in 2010. However, they also rejoiced to have their first confirmations, of two young people. The adult Sunday School class has studied church history, and is now studying the Belgic Confession, as an occasion for preparing visitors for membership. Mr. Bobby Duncan continues to serve as an elder for the work. They continue to have a second meeting on the Lord's Day, as a "prayer and praise service". They see the Lord's answers, regarding member's health issues, and in the new people who are attending. In the Classis visitation, the people uniformly expressed confidence in Rev. Brice, and gratitude that they are hearing the word of God through his ministry. It was encouraging that the couple who joined wanted a confessional church with oversight of its members. The membership at this time is 20 communicants and 2 unconfirmed, although one family still included, moved to CA in 2010. The offerings continue to be quite good for the size of the work. Along with other mission works, they were blessed to have received a \$5,000 anonymous gift, enabling them to complete the year 'in the black'. Also, last month was one of their best financially, so that they were able to put another \$5,000 into their building fund. The steering committee and the Garner Consistory agreed to a 5% reduction of original support from both Classis and Synod in the next year.

##### **Redeemer RCUS Mission, Minneapolis area, MN.**

In 2009, Synod approved the proposed Minneapolis area work, to be undertaken by Redeemer RCUS. The funding required for a metropolitan work was set at \$40,000 from Synod, in addition to \$30,000 to come from Covenant East Classis, for the first year. The Redeemer congregation has also contributed \$10,000 for the first year, and intends to continue that pattern. After the years of planning, this work began in earnest last fall, when Rev. Ryan Kron was licensed by Classis, and arrived on the field at the end of October. A Minneapolis native, he had previously served in the URCNA, in Boise, ID, and had

worked as a summer student at Redeemer RCUS. With the work as a mission of Redeemer, Rev. Kron was approved as the mission work pastor, to be working along with Rev. Jim Sawtelle. They currently alternate preaching in the two services of Redeemer, each Lord's Day. The plan is to develop a core group of 10 families committed to the work, before separate services begin, hoping to start such in 2011. To that end, a study is being held, using the book, *The God Who is There*, by D.A. Carson. At the beginning of this month, there were 5 families making up the core group. Three of those families are members of Redeemer. The other two families are from a PCA congregation, which recently closed, in Farmington, MN, to the south. With that closing, there are no NAPARC churches in the suburbs, south of I-494. The location foreseen for the foundation of the work, at this point, is Eden Prairie, in that south metro area. Possible places to rent for services, are being investigated. Flyers and internet ads are utilized, and a web site is being developed. They also currently spread news of the church plant at [www.emmausroadreformed.blogspot.com](http://www.emmausroadreformed.blogspot.com). The Redeemer congregation is excited about this work. And the prayers of the denomination are requested for it.

#### **Rehoboth Reformed Chapel, La Habra, CA.**

Rev. Jay Fluck reported that there has been some painful conflict over the past year, with two families leaving, one of which is off the roll, which is currently 32 communicants and 18 baptized members. The attendance fell from an average of 53 in January 2010 to 43 in December. The 11 regular visitors have continued to attend, and a new family of eight has begun attending. It is recognized that there are growing pains in the maturing of a congregation. However, Rev. Fluck stated that the work is still not ready for formal organization. He wrote that: "The congregation still looks inordinately to me to accomplish the work of our body. We need our people to take a greater share in carrying the load. We need more men prepared to dedicate themselves to the task of serving in the offices." La Habra currently has one active elder on site, and added a deacon this year. They are now in a better position financially, since the downturn in the economy in 2009. For although the offerings in 2010 were lower, there was increased support from Classis, Synod, and Ebenezer RCUS. Along with the RCUS Day of Prayer offering, they ended the year with funds in their account. Reductions in giving from the three outside sources are being proposed for the next year. Providentially, they may be released before too long, from their 5 year lease, with its set increases. For the landlord now intends to use their meeting space to put in a full medical lab. In the current market, it is possible for the congregation to find a rent reduced by \$1,000 per month. After serving La Habra for over 12 years, Rev. Fluck determined to take the call, approved by Covenant East Classis, which he received from Sovereign Grace Church, Gettysburg, PA, which will hopefully enter the RCUS within the next 3 years. He is to be leaving for PA the first of June. Prayers are requested for La Habra, for a short transition between pastors.

#### **Covenant RCUS, Chico, CA.**

Rev. Gary Mancilas presented a report stating that the consistory and the congregation remain committed to the work. They believe they are carrying out their responsibilities as a church. They continue to use various means of outreach, such as a radio program, and a free half-hour public television broadcast of Rev. Mancilas' sermons. Through those means and the church web-site, a family learned of the church, and became members in September. The television broadcast will, however, be discontinued in June, since the college sponsoring the public broadcasts is cutting costs. Mid-week activities include a study for an evangelism training program. The communicant membership is one less than last year, with 2 received, but 3 removed, for a total of 22. There was however an increase of 5 unconfirmed, for a total of 7. Rev. Mancilas preached a series of messages regarding prayer and fasting, that the officers desired. A major concern remains the financial viability of the congregation. The economic climate has effected the members' support negatively. The total giving toward Classis and Synod guidelines appears to be less than half of the set amounts. In seeking to balance the church budget for 2011, "the Consistory reluctantly projected a decrease in the pastor's house allowance by \$440 a month, beginning April 2011, and a salary increase was not budgeted." Thankfully, the Mancilas' landlord agreed to a reduced rent that will cover most of the shortfall. Diaconal aid was also requested of Classis, in the fall, to cover the Mancilas' health insurance. This was granted, and half of the amount requested for 2011 was also approved. The congregation remains on the 10% annual reductions from Classis and Synod Missions support, as the Classis established in 2008. The SHMC proposes two actions to help this situation: that the Day of Prayer offering be designated for rental costs of Covenant RCUS, and that the Western Classis Missions Committee be asked to confer with the Consistory regarding Rev. Mancilas' IRA and health insurance, which have not been funded in the church budget. It is envisioned that alternatives will be proposed.

#### **Committee Work:**

1. The Classes Missions Committee Reports were reviewed and questions about such were then raised, and in meeting with the missionaries. The committee also had good discussion time with the missionaries present, and offered prayer for each work. All the mission works greatly appreciate the prayers and financial support of the denomination, which enable their labors to continue! We noted that due to a schedule conflict the visitation with the Chico consistory did not include an occasion to meet with "a majority of the members of the work", as called for in the Home Missions Manual. The other visitations were so conducted. The 3-5 year plan for the mission endeavors of each classis was reviewed. For instance, it was specified by Western Classis that its first priority to existing works, and the targeting of one metropolitan work at a time, coincide in the Los Angeles metro area. The establishment of the La Habra congregation as a "mother church" able to plant "daughter churches" is the goal. It was also noted that each Classis has at least one mission work that is not receiving Synod support, some supported by individual churches, as in Western Classis. New possibilities are also commonly considered, which we want to encourage.

2. Last year, Northern Plains Classis approved a weekly Bible study to be held in Dickinson, ND, which is a city that is "experiencing economic and population growth, as a result of the oil and gas boom in that region of the state." Its population increased by 2,000 to about 18,000 in the 2,010 census. The study was advertised and begun in June, and has continued each week ever since. There are 2 thoroughly reformed families committed to the work. Three other individuals, and recently a family of 9, have been attending. Those attending are speaking to others who have expressed interest, as well. Therefore, a proposal was approved at the March meeting of Classis: "That a missionary be sent to Dickinson, ND to conduct Lord's Day services, Bible studies, and promote the work to the community."

Since Northern Plains is our smallest Classis, with under 500 communicants, the proposal was that a missionary would need to do outside work, and that Classis and Synod support would be a total of \$22,200

toward his first year's income. For Classis to provide \$10,000 required a \$20 guideline increase, which was approved, bringing their missions guideline to \$60. (Watertown, SD also receives missions support.) With the rising population at Dickinson, it has been seen that rental housing would be between \$1,000 - \$1500 per month. Your committee therefore believes the missionary would need to have outside employment that was full-time. We do not believe that would make for a feasible mission effort. Yet, we think this is a work to be pursued now, while it is growing in numbers.

We noted in 2009 that Synod would need to consider support for a work in a smaller population area, considering the possibilities for Northern Plains Classis. Also, considering the need of support for a missionary, we propose that Synod fund the vast majority of such, with that level of support committed for one year, and to be reevaluated thereafter. Although we propose an amount of \$48,000 for that first year, as a trial, we believe \$24,000 of that amount should come from currently set aside funds for new works, which total approximately \$145,000. We do not propose additional money to be set aside for unforeseen works at this time, considering the funds available. Our recommendations will also involve monthly amounts to come in line with the new fiscal year of Synod, starting July 1st each year.

#### **Annual Day of Prayer and Missions Offering:**

As a reminder, the Annual Day of Prayer for Missions is the second Sunday of September. The 2010 debt reduction offering, was designated to help defray rental costs of Rehoboth Chapel, La Habra, CA. We believe the 2011 offering should be designated to help defray rental costs of Covenant RCUS, Chico, CA.

#### **Recommendations** - The SHMC recommends the following to the 265th Synod of the RCUS:

1. That Covenant RCUS, Chico, CA continue to receive \$1,085 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$930 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$155 per month, 10% of the 2008 base year amount.]
2. That the Western Classis Missions Committee be asked to confer with the Chico Consistory regarding their 3 year budget pertaining to Rev. Mancilas' IRA and health insurance, as these are to be provided for a missions pastor, and to propose alternatives for said support.
3. That Rehoboth Reformed Chapel, La Habra, CA continue to receive \$1,042 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$843 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$199 per month.]
4. That the churches of the RCUS be encouraged to recommend Rehoboth Chapel to their members when they are vacationing in the Los Angeles area or when sending their children to one of the many colleges and universities found there. [This was a recommendation of Western Classis.] Take Note.
5. That Grace Reformed Chapel of NW Arkansas continue to receive \$480 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$420 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$60 monthly.]
6. That the Metro Minneapolis work continue to receive \$3333 monthly through June 2012 from existing set aside funds.
7. That Synod provide \$4,000 per month for a missionary to Dickinson, ND, through June 2012, to start when a man begins full-time ministry. Half of this amount is to come from existing set aside funds. [Grounds: To do missions, Northern Plains Classis needs particular help more than other Classes, considering its population base, as recognized by Synod previously. Their missions guideline increased \$20, up to \$60 per communicant, to help fund this work. Half of this Synod support for Dickinson would come from existing set aside funds. This commitment from Synod is understood to be through June 2012, and to be reevaluated at the 2012 Synod.]
8. That the 2011 Day of Prayer offering be designated to help defray rental costs of Covenant RCUS, Chico, CA.
9. That \$5,000 be budgeted for committee expenses.
10. That the Classes' overtures for missions funding be based on the Synodical fiscal year. [Grounds: Any funding changes will occur July 1st each year.]
11. That the wording of section II. Paragraph 8 of The Home Missions Manual, be amended to read: "The Home Mission fiscal year will run from July 1 to June 30 of the following year, to correspond with the fiscal year of Synod."
12. The 2012 fiscal year Home Missions budget, if approved as recommended, would be \$122,212. [It is understood that \$64,000, for Metro Minneapolis and Dickinson, will come from current set aside funds, leaving approximately \$75,000 for unforeseen works in fiscal year 2013. This will require a 2011 guideline of approximately \$19. For reference, the 2009 missions guideline was \$27.30.] Take Note.

Respectfully Submitted, *Rev. Harvey Opp (Chairman), Rev. Joe Vusich, Rev. Richard Stetler, Elders John Bender, Jeff Jones, and Loren Huber.*

#### ***I. Interchurch Relations Committee***

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren:

Your Committee conducted its business by telephone, e-mail and sub-committee meetings. One item mandated to this Committee by the 2010 Synod of the RCUS will be found below under the United Reformed Churches of North America. The following is the report of the Permanent Committee together with its budget and three recommendations.

Relations with Churches in North America

#### **Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC):**

The Canadian Reformed Churches met as a General Synod in Burlington, ON May 11-26th, 2010. The Rev. Jonathan Merica and the Rev. Lee Johnson represented the RCUS at that Synod for several days. Their report follows:

It was an honor for Rev. Lee Johnson and Rev. Jonathan Merica to serve as RCUS fraternal delegates to the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches which convened at Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Your delegates attended only the first week of Synod to accommodate our return to the United States to attend the RCUS Synod which convened May 17-20, 2010 at Shafter, CA. Rev. Jonathan Merica brought fraternal greetings to the Synod of the Canadian Churches.

Rev. Gijsbert Nederveen the host pastor of the of the Canadian Reformed Churches' Synod called the meeting to order on May 11, 2010. Pastor Nederveen read from Psalm 93, giving thoughts for meditation, and then he led in prayer. A warm welcome was given to all present. Greetings were extended to all the delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches, as well as to all the visiting fraternal delegates in attendance.

The business of Synod was divided among five Advisory Committees of Synod. Committee 1 addressed the business of The Committee for Church Unity (CCU) and Appeals. Committee 2 addressed matters for The Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA), Pastoral Training Program, Official Website, Bible Translation, and Appeals. Committee 3 was assigned all business pertaining to the Book of Praise, and Appeals. Committee 4 was assigned business pertaining to the Theological College, Theological Training Subcommittee, Women's Voting, and Appeals. Committee 5 addressed on matters pertaining to The Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA), Appointment of Professors, General Appointments, Address Church, Archive Church, Churches Appointed to Proclaim Day of Prayer, General Fund Church, and Miscellaneous Items.

Periodically at the Synod meeting, there were scheduled times (according to the Agenda) which called for "plenary sessions" when all the committees dismissed, and the delegates gathered as a Synod to consider adopting recommendations proposed by the committees. Much of the time at Synod was spent in the convening of committees, so that the "plenary sessions" would be more prepared to discuss the recommendations presented by the committees. Your servants endeavored to attend as many committee meetings as possible to become familiar with the items of business coming before the Synod.

We were particularly interested in matters regarding the Reformed Church in the United States. The Canadian Reformed Churches Synod's recommendation to the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America (CCCNA) concerning the RCUS was as follows:

- 4.1. To thank the CCCNA for its work in our relationship with the RCUS.
- 4.2. To mandate the CCCNA as follows:
  - 4.2.1 To continue the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the RCUS under the adopted rules.
  - 4.2.2. To endeavor to meet at least once a year to discuss matters of mutual concern and edification.
  - 4.2.3 To share more detailed information with the churches about the nature and the development of its dialogue with the RCUS.

The Synod addressed the question of entering into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA (The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America). On the grounds that the RPCNA ordains women to the office of Deacon, the Canadian Reformed Churches decided not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RPCNA. They asserted that I Timothy 3:8-12 clearly disqualifies women from the office of Deacon.

Synod decided to adopt the name "The Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary" as the operational name for "The Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches." Regarding the Seminary position of professor of Old Testament at the Seminary, Synod approved the retirement of Dr. Van Dam and expressed deep gratitude for his thirty years of faithful and diligent service to the College and the Churches as professor of Old Testament, and directed the Board of Governors to appoint Dr. Jannes Smith of Albany, Australia as professor of Old Testament. The Board appointed Dr. Jason P. Van Vliet as professor of Dogmatology.

At the Canadian Reformed Churches Synod Meeting, there was much discussion in committee as well in the address made by the URCNA fraternal delegate about organic union between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). For now, the Canadian Reformed Churches are committed "to continuing Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the URCNA under the adopted rules, and to declare that as the Canadian Reformed Churches, they are still committed to the goal of federative unity between their churches and to ask the URCNA whether they are still committed to this goal." In working toward organic unity there were face-to-face talks at the Synod with the URCNA delegates. A number of issues have to be resolved regarding theological education of students for the ministry, a Common Songbook, Liturgical Forms, and a Joint Church Order.

The Canadian Reformed Churches generally hold to the male communicant voting in their Federation. At the Synod a majority proposal was presented for a vote which would have maintained the current practice of male communicant member voting. The majority proposal was defeated. The final decision was 1) To affirm that the church offices of minister, elder, and deacon are open only to male communicant members, and 2) that the consistory with the deacons of each congregation will determine "the arrangement for the election of office bearers" whether to include women as voting communicant members.

The Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches adopted changes to Synodical guidelines which would affect how churches shall submit materials to Synod. "For all matters of the churches in common, individual churches may address proposals or other significant submissions directly to general synod with the requirement that all such submissions are sent also to each church in the federation no later than

six months prior to general synod. Since matters of the agenda of general synod involve the churches in common, it would be appropriate for regional synods to distribute copies of adopted overtures to all the churches in the federation no later than five months prior to the convening of a general synod" ("Press Release of Burlington, May 11-26, 2010").

Regarding issues with the Reformed Church in the Netherlands (RCN) Synod erected a sub-committee to investigate further, some matters of grave concern in the sister churches in the Netherlands. The concerns involve "1) Synod Zwolle of the RCN (who) did not demand that Dr. Harinck, a professor associated with the Theological University in Kampen, to retract his controversial remarks; 2) The Theological University did not exercise greater care in the case of the appointment of Dr. Paas as lecturer; Synod considered these matters to be of such a serious nature that the RCN be urged to deal with these matters as yet. Furthermore, the Committee was mandated; 3) To express and discuss our grave concerns about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning in the RCN; 4) to pay special attention to the upcoming report on the role of women in the church" ("Press Release of Burlington, May 11-26, 2010").

In compliance with a number of Canadian Reformed Churches' request to test the new "Book of Praise," it was decided to publish a provisional edition of a final and complete "Book of Praise" and then present the final revision for adoption at the Synod of 2013.

Synod gave The Committee for Bible Translations a mandate 1) "To thoroughly evaluate the updated NIV translation when it is released in 2010 and to produce and send a report to the churches within nine months of the release date; 2) To investigate the feasibility of obtaining access to the printing rights of the 1984 edition of the NIV; 3) To investigate further whether the ESV or the NKJV or the NASB could become the recommended translation for the churches; 4) To investigate the possibility and feasibility of publishing an ecclesiastically-produced and owned Bible translation with the cooperation of English-speaking churches which are members of NAPARC and/or ICRC. ("Press Release of Burlington, May 11-26, 2010").

It was a privilege to serve as the RCUS fraternal delegates at the Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches which convened at Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Let us remember to pray for our fraternal brethren as they serve the Lord in the building of Christ's kingdom.

In addition to the above delegation to the CanRC Synod, on November 16th of 2010, in conjunction with NAPARC, a sub committee consisting of Rev. Maynard Koerner, Elder John Heerema, Rev. Jonathan Merica and Rev. Ron Potter met with the CanRC delegation to NAPARC Rev. Eric Kampen, Rev. Peter Holtvluwer, Dr. Riemer Faber and Mr. Jacob Kuik. This meeting is held annually and is mandated by the Synod of the CanRC to its ecumenical committee for contact with churches in North America.

Items discussed were: (1) The decision of the CanRC Synod 2010 to continue in sister relations with the RCUS and to meet annually as subcommittees. (2) Ways in which our fraternal relationship can be enhanced to make our relationship more concrete for the members of both our churches such as regional conferences and the printing of speeches from these conferences in our respective magazines. Several possible topics were discussed such as catechetical preaching etc. (3) The mandate given to the CanRC Bible translation committee to explore with NAPARC and the ICRC interest in producing an ecclesiastically controlled bible translation. (4) The position of the RCUS regarding women voting in congregational meetings in light of the recent change in the CanRC. The RCUS expressed its concern regarding this change in the CanRC. (5) Admission to the Lord's Table. Members of the RCUS planning to visit a CanRC church are encouraged to bring an attestation from their Spiritual Council as to their membership standing to facilitate admission to the Lord's Supper in the CanRC. (6) A joint sub-committee meeting is scheduled in conjunction with NAPARC 2011.

Your Committee observes that no action was taken on item #2 since neither committee had a mandate from its Synod regarding this item. It is expected that the Committee for Contact with Churches in North America of the CanRC will take some initiative here as it reflects further on its mandate from General Synod 2010.

The next General Synod of the CanRC will be held in Carman, MB, Canada, in May of 2013.

### **Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)**

The OPC held its 77th General Assembly July 7-14, 2010. The Rev. Michael Voytek was delegated to this GA. His report follows:

Your servant had the privilege of serving as the RCUS fraternal delegate to the Seventy-Seventh General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which convened July 7-14, 2010 in Palos Heights, Illinois on the campus of Trinity Christian College. The meeting was called to order by Rev. Bill Shisko, the Moderator of the 76th General Assembly. Each year the assembly elects a new moderator, with this year's honor being given to the Rev. Alan Pontier. I found this helpful as I have known Rev. Pontier for a number of years and he extended the right hand of fellowship when I arrived on Thursday evening, July 8th. The lodging and meals were wonderful and the fellowship was sweet.

I was able to attend the meetings of the assembly until it adjourned on Tuesday, July 13th. I was well received by the delegates and was given the opportunity to address the body on behalf of the RCUS. My address included a brief history of the RCUS and our interactions with and appreciation of their help over the years. It included the positive influence of OPC ministers on our denomination as we were attempting to "find our feet" after the departure of most of the church in the 1930's and 1940's, the mutual support and encouragement in the interaction with other denominations (i.e. NAPARC and IRC), and the cooperative efforts in the work of foreign missions, especially the oversight and support of the Rev. Thomas Mayville at Knox Theological College in Uganda, Africa. Next came a word of exhortation from 1 John 5:21 (Little children, keep yourselves from idols) on the temptations of being an "American Church." Finally, I ended with a word of encouragement concerning personal observations of the OPC as to its faithfulness to the Lord and his truth.

Items of interest from the meeting:

1. It was "a quiet General Assembly." This how the Rev. Alan Strange summarized the proceedings of the meeting in his article in the OPC New Horizon magazine (September 2010). There were no controversial matters that resulted in agitation or heated debates.
2. The Stated Clerk reported that the revisions to their Directory for the Public Worship of God was approved by 13 of the 16 presbyteries. This process took over 20 years to complete and finally went into effect on January 1st of 2011. Also of note, the same Stated Clerk, the Rev. Donald Duff, retired after 18 years in that office. He was given a rousing, standing ovation.
3. Two complaints were received from the Presbytery of New Jersey concerning jurisdictional and disciplinary action of a church session. These matters were handled very well and a special committee was erected of members from that Presbytery to help in resolving the difficulties that still existed.
4. The other issue that took significant time to resolve came from the report of the Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel. In particular it had to do with the request of the Department of Defense sent to all the churches that provide chaplains for the military concerning the "Potential Repeal of the Current Military Policy Prohibiting Homosexual Behavior" (i.e. Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy). Following a long discussion about the matter, the delegates voted to send a letter of response. It should be noted that there was a recommendation presented to the last year's General Assembly to write to President Obama concerning this matter but it was not passed. The reasoning was that the church had not been asked for this input by the civil magistrate. The following is an excerpt from this letter (the full letter is available at [http://opc.org/GA/Dept\\_of\\_Defense\\_letter.html](http://opc.org/GA/Dept_of_Defense_letter.html)).

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is gravely concerned over the potential repeal of 10 U.S.C. 8654 that governs the service of homosexual individuals in our military. Therefore, we are grateful for your desire to consider carefully the moral implications of your approving sexual practices that God has explicitly condemned. We are concerned that the repeal of the current law may go so far as to force our currently serving chaplains to choose between violating their ordination vows and resigning from the military. They have affirmatively answered the following question in their ordination: "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" Thus, OPC chaplains preach and counsel from the Scriptures because they are convinced that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We are concerned that other members of the OPC who are serving in the Armed Forces may also be coerced to teach and enforce a policy that explicitly violates the Word of God. When they took their membership vows in an Orthodox Presbyterian Church they answered "Yes" to this question: "Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?"

Several Bible passages forthrightly state God's condemnation of homosexual behavior. From the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Romans 1:18-33 in the New Testament historically and prophetically describes how the wrath of God is revealed against people who, by their own sinful behavior, suppress the truth about the one true God and how the moral disintegration of society follows. In the consequent moral disintegration in human society, the acceptance of homosexuality is a prominent symptom: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature: and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

Your servant was warmly received by our brothers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and greatly enjoyed his time among them. May the Lord bless our mutual labors in the gospel as we promote the glory of God and His Kingdom.

Your Committee would also observe also that its Chairman is in frequent contact with a member of the OPC Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations for the purpose of exchanging information relative to Interchurch Relations of common concern.

The next scheduled General Assembly of the OPC will be held June 8-14th, 2010 at the Sandy Coe Conference Center in North East Maryland. This is the 78th general Assembly of the OPC and is celebrating 75 years of the Lord's gracious dealings with the OPC. Your Committee expects to have a delegate from the RCUS present.

### **Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA)**

The Rev. Ron Potter was delegated to the RPCNA Synod. His report follows:

The 2010 Synod of the RPCNA was held June 21-25, 2010 on the campus of Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA. Your delegate and his wife were very cordially received by our brethren in the RPCNA, adequately housed and provided for and your delegate was given the opportunity to address the body on behalf of the RCUS. No official privilege of the floor was given. In the address noticeably absent was the notorious bell used to signal the end of the allotted time for a delegate to speak. I was warned of "the bell", expected it, and was disappointed to find it replaced with the hand signals of the secretary of the Interchurch Relations Committee indicating time remaining. As long as you could keep him out of view one became less conscious of time constraints. The problem was that the signaler was very adept at getting your attention and keeping you with in time constraints.

Your delegate was able to be present at the Synod through the morning of the 24th and had to leave for a preaching engagement in Gettysburg, PA. The Synod adjourned a noon on the 24th so delegates could

travel to the 200th anniversary celebration of the RPCNA Seminary in Pittsburg which included a tour and dinner at the Heinz History Museum in Pittsburgh with the keynote speakers Dr. Derek Thomas and Dr. Sinclair Ferguson. The Seminary graduated its largest class (23) ever in 2010. The Synod reconvened on the 25th in the morning to wind up its business. Your delegate was therefore present for most of the pertinent business of the Synod.

Two rather unique actions were noted by your delegate while attending the Synod. The first was the practice of time being given for Presbyteries to meet. On one afternoon the Synod was adjourned at 3:00 PM to permit these meetings. The second action noted was that on several occasions flower arrangements were presented by colleagues and others to the newly elected moderator, Dr. Jerry O'Neill who is also President of their Seminary. I was unable to find out what the exact significance of these presentations were. It appeared to me to be simple gestures of love and gratefulness for the moderator's service to the Church.

The Synod opened on the evening of the 21st with a singing, sermon and prayer of consecration. Singing involved the use of the new Psalter: The Book of Psalms for Worship recently published by Crown and Covenant Publications. There appeared to this observer some difficulty with new Psalm tunes introduced into this publication. After the roll call there was the introduction of first time Elders and Ministers together with a brief verbal biography of each which your delegate found helpful. The Clerk drew attention to servants of the church who had passed into glory in the past Synodical year and memorials were read for each of 4 Pastors. This was followed by personal anecdotes relative to these men and by a memorial prayer.

The Synod began its docketed business in earnest on Tuesday the 22nd. Among its more significant actions were the following:

1. New Psalter: In 2009 a new Psalter entitled: The Book of Psalms for Worship was introduced to the congregations of the RPCNA. This was the work of a Synodically appointed revision committee which proceeded with publication and distribution without the requirement of Synod approval. Problems became apparent in several tunes when translating Hebrew poetry into English meter required some "padding." Though this is often necessary it became objectionable in 5 tunes. Though the general reception of the new Psalter is good and the Psalter is in use in most congregations and in use in the RPC in Australia and will form the basis for a new ARP Psalter in production, it was deemed by the Synod that subsequent printings with exclude these problematic tunes.
2. Bread and Wine: A lengthy and sometimes passionate discussion took place on the floor of Synod over a study committee's report on the Contents of the Cup in the Lord's Supper. The Stated Clerk of the RPCNA summarized this study and ensuing discussion in his report to NAPARC and I herein quote him: "The RPCNA has wrestled for more than a century with interpretations of the proper use of alcohol. For many years, office bearers were required to abstain from the sale and use of alcoholic beverages. That requirement was removed more than a decade ago. There are some, however, who maintain that Scripture prohibits all such usage of alcohol so in recent years the issue re-surfaced in regard to the Lord's Supper. While alcoholic wine was typically used in our congregations in the early part of the 19th century, grape juice had become the standard used in the communion cup. In the past decade some congregations began to use alcoholic wine and some made use of the split cup. A committee was formed to study this and related issues. The conclusion of the committee is that since Scripture uses only the generic terms of 'cup' and 'the fruit of the vine' that the emphasis is not on the beverage in the cup but in its unity among the partakers of the cup; similarly for the bread. A large majority of the members of Synod seemed to agree with the committee regarding the contents of the cup but showed less agreement on how the unity should be expressed in each session's oversight of the elements. The committee report was not adopted but was included in the Minutes of Synod for information." Your delegate observes that the discussion largely came down to the oversight of the split cup (both wine and grape juice) by a local session. The split cup would appear to defeat the unity of the sacrament and if so how does this play out when the emphasis in the sacrament is to be in the unity manifest by the partakers as the study committee argued for? I was personally not impressed with the work of the committee. It did not appear to be exegetically thorough. One comment from the floor by a delegate is perhaps indicative of the future of this discussion: "It may take a generation of two for this to work out." An ensuing motion to put a 5 year moratorium on the discussion of alcohol in the Court of the Church was defeated.
3. Directory of Worship: The new Directory for Worship adopted by the Synod in 2009 was ratified by 2/3 of the Sessions and a majority of the Elders so it is now the law and order of the Church for the RPCNA.
4. "Don't Ask Don't Tell": Currently the RPCNA has four military chaplains in active service for whom it had concerns with the pending removal of DADT which is now a fact. The Synod received a report from the Presbyterian and Reformed Joint Commission on Chaplains and Military personnel (PRJCCMP) on whose commission it has representation. A recommendation brought to Synod by its members on the PRJCCMP sought to petition the appropriate civil authorities to leave in place the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy and supporting laws relating to sexual behavior in the Armed Forces. This was supported by Synod and a letter was sent to the President of the United States, Secretary of defense Gates and others to that effect. What your delegate found interesting was the fact that some Presbyterian denominations, on the basis of the Westminster Confession of Faith, do not believe they are warranted to address the civil magistrate on a matter of concern unless asked. The RPCNA has no such scruples.
5. Paper on sexuality: Out of concern for the various sexual orientation issues that permeate our culture contrary to the Word of God and the Confessions of the Church, the Great Lakes – Gulf Presbytery overture the Synod to erect a study committee to provide a statement of position on sexual orientation in modern terminology. As a resource for the Synod a committee of the Great lakes-Gulf Classis prepared a 40 paper study paper entitled Contemporary Perspectives on Sexual Orientation: A Theological and Pastoral Analysis. This paper was very well done and thoroughly researched. The Synod agreed with the overture and a study committee was erected. Your delegate, believing that the resource paper would be of help to our own study committee sought and was granted permission by the Clerk of the RPCNA to pass it on to the RCUS committee on sexuality.
6. Statistics: Currently the RPCNA has a total of 91 organized congregations and mission works.
7. Missions: The RPCNA Global Mission Board has three centers of work on the mission field: Cyprus, Sudan and Japan.
8. Fraternal Relations: The RPCNA maintains fraternal relations with a number of churches. The Canadian Reformed Churches and the United Reformed Churches of North America who were both considering fraternal relations with the RPCNA have backed away because of the practice of the RPCNA to ordain deaconesses. The CanRC advised the RPCNA Synod of this by letter and the URCNA advised the RPCNA of this through their observer who was present and called upon the RPCNA to re-think their practice in light of scripture.

The next scheduled Synod of the PRCNA is June 27th – July 1st, 2011 at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, Indiana. Your committee expects to have a delegate present for this Synod.

### **United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)**

The triennial Synod of the URCNA was held in London, ON July 26-30, 2010. The Rev. Vern Pollema and the Rev. Maynard Koerner attended this Synod as delegates from the RCUS.

Your Committee notes that it received the following mandate from the 264th Synod of the RCUS (Abstract 2010 p. 93, recommendation #3 of the Standing Ecumenical Committee): That Synod instruct its delegation to the Synod London 2010 of the United Reformed Churches of North America to affirm and defend the RCUS position on confessional church membership. To this end excerpts of the address of Rev. Pollema to Synod London relative to this mandate appears next, to be followed by the report of the delegation to Synod London.

Address to URCNA Synod London 2010: “On behalf of Rev. Maynard Koerner and myself, I want to thank you for the wonderful accommodations you have provided as well as for your time and this opportunity to address the body. . . . I am delighted to be here and to bring you fraternal greetings from the RCUS....

First of all, I want to commend the Committee On Federal Vision and Justification for its excellent report, subject always, of course, to correction and improvement. It is a report that should serve your congregations well. We are called to be “watchmen upon the walls of Zion” (cf. Isa. 62:6; Jer. 6:17). That means we must be constantly alert and ready to defend the flock against Satan’s attempts to infiltrate and destroy the church through error and false doctrine. We must remember the apostle Paul’s farewell warning to the Ephesian elders, a warning much too often over-looked: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves (cf. I Tim. 1:3,7,19,20; 6:3-5) men will rise up, speaking perverse [i.e., twisted] things to draw away disciples after themselves. Therefore watch” (Acts 20:28-31). Watchfulness requires of us a careful exposition and application of the Scriptures and our confessions to expose error and false doctrine. Whether that is called pastoral advice or a position paper, we do not believe it is extra-confessional. Therefore we urge you to adopt the report as an “application of confessional teaching to a contemporary controversy” (p. 436). We are, at the same time, most thankful that you are adding your voice to the defense of such a crucial doctrine of the Reformed faith.

There is just one question I would raise with regard to this report. It is somewhat personal but has also been a subject of debate within the RCUS. Does a biblical, orthodox, Reformed view of justification and adherence to the TFU require belief in a covenant of works?

We also want to encourage you in regard to the report on the Level of Doctrinal Commitment, to adopt Position #2, Membership Access upon Full Assent, and reject Position #1, Membership Access with Stipulations. Covenant Theology is considered the hallmark of the Reformed faith. Many use Covenant Theology and Reformed Theology interchangeably. We would caution you not to diminish or slight covenant theology for the purpose of accommodating those who are either ignorant or antagonistic toward this vital understanding of the Reformed faith. We are both surprised and troubled by the historical references used as precedent in Position #1 that would place infant baptism, the sign and seal of the covenant, among the “non-fundamentals of the faith and points of doctrine that do not affect the foundation of salvation” (p. 406-407). We also question, in this report, whether “tolerance” and “patience” can be used as synonyms (p. 406-407, 413-414). We support confessional subscription (belief) for communicant membership which we believe is also implied (and so understood by the majority in your federation) in your form for Public Profession of Faith, question #1: “Do you heartily believe the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments, and in the articles of the Christian faith and taught in this Christian church, to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation, and do you promise by the grace of God steadfastly to continue in the profession (Form 2 states the necessity of believing ‘the confessions of this church’)” (p. 427)?...

### **Report on URCNA Synod London 2010**

The 7th Synod of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) met from July 27-30, 2010, on the campus of the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada hosted by the Cornerstone URC, London, Ontario.

Your fraternal delegates, Rev Maynard Koerner and I were housed in the college dormitory (akin to a suite with separate sleeping quarters) where the dining hall and kitchen were also located. The meals were served cafeteria style with a variety of food choices. It was all very convenient and delicious. The building where the business sessions were held required about a ten minute walk, providing some exercise both before and after meals. Perhaps you think it remarkable that food and accommodations be mentioned so early in this report, but they deserve comment; now on to substantive matters.

The opening roll call indicated 180 men from 98 out of a total of 108 churches. One of the first orders of business was the ratification of four new churches of which one was the Covenant Reformed Church of Carbondale, PA. The election of officers resulted in the Rev. Ralph Pontier serving as chairman, a position he has held before. There was an opening worship service on Monday evening and each business session was opened and closed with singing from either the old Psalter Hymnal or the new proposed Psalter & Hymnbook, scripture reading and prayer.

My first impression was the size of this body and the number of delegates. Over the years the URCNA has experienced considerable growth, mainly through the addition of groups continuing to leave the CRC. Adding to the size, were numerous representatives from various denominations, institutions and mission endeavors at home and abroad. Much of this results from their church polity and seeing themselves as a federation of churches where mission outreach and support of various Reformed institutions and causes is carried on by one or more local congregations, rather than by the denomination. Consequently a lot of time is devoted to hearing from these various representatives who are present to report on their work and solicit continued and wider support from individual congregations. That they are aware of how

time-consuming and inadequate this has become is addressed by a recommendation from one of their Pre-Advice Committees (Standing in our parlance): “That a study committee be appointed to develop a proposed set of federational mission policies and guidelines including the possibility of developing a mission’s coordinator position.” The following grounds are revealing as well: “a. The URCNA has realized substantial growth in the scope of domestic and foreign mission activities of its member congregations and classes; b. While the URCNA stands as one in spirit and truth, there exists among many of our member congregations, missionaries and church planters a sense of standing alone.”

There is an effort to limit the time given to all the representatives and their addresses by the use of a traffic signal device that flashes green, yellow and red, which many, including myself, violated. I have given a copy of my address to the ICR.

There were a number of things addressed by this Synod which are, I believe, of special interest to the RCUS.

I will begin with ecumenical matters. First and foremost there appears to be an impasse with regard to progress toward organic union with the Canadian (American) Reformed Churches. This became quite apparent from impassioned speeches on the floor in opposition to union as well as reports of uncertainty among the churches, especially in the U.S. It also became apparent in discussions whether to continue/encourage the work of various committees dealing with theological education (independent or denominational seminaries) a proposed joint church order, a common songbook (Psalter only or one including Hymns). There was a last minute communication from The General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches meeting in Burlington, Ontario, May, 2010, that was quite positive about continuing and promoting progress toward organic union. To this delegate, zeal for organic union appeared to be more one-sided while the URCNA was sensing more difficulties and opposition toward such union. Other ecumenical matters: Approved the motion to enter into Phase Two with the Reformed Church of Quebec; now consider all NAPARC denominations (churches) to be at least in Phase One of their three phase process; entered into Ecclesiastical Fellowship (the highest level of ecumenical relations with churches abroad) with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand; chose to remain in Phase One (Ecumenical Contact) with the Reformed Churches of South Africa, a cause of great disappointment to the delegate from the RCSA; to remain in Phase One with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated); to enter into Phase One with the United Reformed Church of the Congo (Fraternal observer, Rev. Kabongo, brought greetings and explained how the Reformed doctrine came to the Congo by means of the radio ministry of Rev. Aaron Kayayan and, later, the RCUS. He related the history of the URCC and described the culture in which they labor, urging the delegates to remember them and their labors in prayer.); to enter into Phase One with the Calvinistic Reformed Church in Indonesia.

The Committee to Study the Level of Doctrinal Commitment presented two positions: #1-Membership Access with Stipulations; #2-Membership Access upon Full Assent. This resulted in majority and minority reports from the Advisory (Pre Advice) Committee to which it was referred. (Rev. Koerner and I chose to sit in and hear this committee debate the issue.) After hearing both reports, of which, I believe, the majority report (Membership upon Full Assent) was, by far, the stronger, the Synod punted by choosing to commit the matter back to the Study Committee for further clarification.

With regard to the report of the Synodical Study Committee on the Federal Vision and Justification, the Synod urged all officers to repudiate Federal Vision teaching where it is not in harmony with the TFU, listing nine specific articles of the Confessions and affirmed a list of fifteen teachings from Scripture and the TFU. The Synod’s decisions (extra confessional statements?) were adopted without dissent and will be sent to all the consistories of the URCNA for study, as well as to those denominations with whom the URCNA has ecumenical relations.

The Synod also devoted some time to changing their rules/methods for admitting churches, ministers and officers seeking admission from outside the federation and to a process for more uniform examinations among the Classes.

I will conclude with this item which I believe you will find as interesting as I did. By their own admission that they are a relatively young federation and still developing synodical procedures, a set of definitions was presented to distinguish various types of actions that are taken by the Synod. They are: (1) Doctrinal Affirmations: A Doctrinal Affirmation is an interpretation of the Confessions on a specific point in their teaching which serves the churches by guiding us back to the Confessions and giving clarification in response to doctrinal questions and should be received by the churches with respect, submission, and should not be directly or indirectly contradicted in preaching or in writing. (2) Pastoral Advice: Pastoral Advice is the application of the Scriptures and the Confessions in response to particular circumstances in the churches and expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care and should be received with reverence and respect. It would be unwise to contradict or disregard Pastoral Advice in preaching or writing. (3) Study Committee Reports: A Study Committee Report is the response of a Study Committee to the mandate given it by Synod and, if received by Synod, serves to recommend action by Synod on the basis of grounds. If these recommended actions call for Synod to adopt Doctrinal Affirmations or to provide Pastoral Advice, these actions should be clearly identified and distinguished as such. (4) Synodical Judgement: A Synodical Judgement is the answer of Synod to an appeal. A Synodical Judgement either sustains or denies an appeal on the basis of specified grounds determined to be valid or invalid and should be received by the appellants with respect and submission, and shall be considered settled and binding, unless proven to be in conflict with the Word of God or the Church Order.

Note the absence of the words “extra confessional statements” or “positions” in the above definitions. There does appear to be semantics at play here, but as admitted, they are young and developing. Nonetheless, they remain skittish about such things. This was again evident in the hesitancy of joining with the OPC in adopting a position that would support the freedom of military chaplains to speak out against homosexuality, which eventually they did. The above set of definitions was committed to the Synodical Rules Committee.

The next Synod of the URCNA is scheduled in Nyack, NY, June 11-15, 2012. This will be a biennial Synod rather than a triennial Synod.

Relations with other Churches

### **North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC).**

The 36th annual meeting of NAPARC took place November 16-17, 2010 in Pompton Plains, NJ, hosted by the Free Reformed Churches of North America. Attending as delegates from the RCUS were the Rev. Jonathan Merica, Elder John Heerema, Rev. Maynard Koerner and Rev. Ron Potter.

The 12 member churches represented were: the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC); the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC); the Eglise reformee du Quebec (ERQ), the Free reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA), the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC); the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC); the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA); the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PRC); the Reformed Church in the U.S. (RCUS); the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA); and the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). In all 36 delegates represented these church bodies. Observer churches invited were the Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin); the Bible Presbyterian Church and the Protestant Reformed Church. Only the Protestant Reformed Church had delegates present.

Elections for officers returned Rev. Maynard Koerner to the office of Treasurer and Rev. Ron Potter to the office of Secretary. Rev. Bart Elshout of the FRCNA was elected as Chairman and Rev. John Bouwers of the URCNA was elected as vice-Chairman. Rev. Potter also serves as advisory member of the NAPARC Web Site Committee.

The reports of the various churches were read and interacted with. These are available from the Chairman of your committee upon request. It was noted that two NAPARC Churches, the PCA and the RPCNA sent letters to the President of the United States and other military authorities objecting to the removal of the Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy by the Administration and in fact the entire removal of the military policy forbidding homosexuals to serve in the military. The Clerk of the PCA, Rev. Roy Taylor, the writer of the original PCA letter, humorously reported that the White House response to the PCA, which was a form letter response, was addressed to a Mr. Brown. Brown, it turns out is the name of the street on which the PCA administrative offices are located! The OPC responded to an inquiry from the Department of Defense regarding how the removal of DADT will affect their chaplains.

One of the things that NAPARC has been working on in recent years is upgrading its Web Site so as to put it to use as a vehicle to publicize NAPARC Minutes, to facilitate interchurch communication in the areas of Christian Education, Missions and Interchurch relations and as well to provide a means for churches to post information of interest to other member churches. Whereas formerly copies of Minutes of past NAPARC meetings were only available through the Secretary, these have now been digitized by the Web Site Committee and are available for perusal or download at [www.naparc.org](http://www.naparc.org). They are searchable as well. As time permits the supporting documents for these Minutes will also be posted on the NAPARC Web Site. Links to all the member churches of NAPARC are also on the site. The Web Servant, Mr. Mark Bube (OPC) presented an electronic tour of the Web Site during the NAPARC meeting. It is expected that not only will this upgraded and re-vamped Web Site facilitate interchurch communication but also facilitate making contact with a NAPARC church by those travelling or on vacation.

In 2009 a Committee of Review (COR) consisting of representatives of 6 member churches was established by NAPARC and given the mandate of reviewing the Constitution, goals, activities and meetings of NAPARC. In essence this Committee of Review was charged with reviewing the purpose and function of NAPARC and to bring recommendations. The Committee was not able to complete its work by the 2010 meeting and was therefore continued. The COR did, in its 2101 report, recommend that Dr. Robert Godfrey be invited to the 2011 meeting of NAPARC to bring an address on the theme of an article he wrote several years ago entitled: A Reformed Dream. Not all the members of NAPARC were enthusiastic about that idea. The RCUS and a few other churches voted against it but there were sufficient votes for it to prevail.

The COR also recommended that the terminus for the 2011 meeting be set back from 12 noon to 3:00 PM to perm it sufficient time on the agenda to discuss the following two propositions: 1. That we should continue to hold out before one another the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice, and 2. That this remain a basic objective of NAPARC. The topic for discussion is in essence a discussion of part of the Basis of the Council which was adopted at its beginning.

The next meeting of NAPARC is scheduled to be held in Atlanta, GA, November 15-16, 2011 and will be hosted by the PCA. Your Committee plans to have a delegation present.

Respectfully, Rev. Ron Potter

Relations with Churches Abroad

### **Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). (RCN)**

Your Committee has been concerned with perceived developments in the RCN Liberated and has been monitoring developments. A paucity of first-hand information has hindered your committee. Information from other sources was pieced together by a subcommittee consisting of Rev. Jonathan Merica and Elder John Heerema. In order to confirm our findings relative to this earlier information and to ascertain if other churches who are in a fraternal relationship with the RCN or who are considering a relationship with the RCN are finding the same things we are, your committee called for a joint meeting with the CANRC and the OPC the evening before NAPARC 2010 convened in Pompton Plains NJ. The CanRC and the RCUS are, of the three invitees, the only two churches in actual fraternal relations with the RCN. The OPC is in a corresponding relationship, and in light of present developments, not moving forward with fraternal relations. The URCNA, who at Synod London determined to remain in Phase I with the

RCN for the same reasons as the OPC, found out about our proposed meeting and asked to be invited to the NJ meeting. Thus three of four fraternal churches sat at the table together with us to discuss the situation in the Netherlands. The following constitutes the minutes of that meeting:

Minutes of Joint Meeting re: RCN (aka GKNv): In attendance were: From the RCUS: John Heerema , Maynard Koerner, Jonathan Merica, Ron Potter; From the OPC: Mark Bube, Anthony Curto, George Knight, Jack Peterson, Jack Sawyer; From the CanRC: Jake Kuik, Gerard Nordeman; From the URCNA: William Boekestein, John Bouwers, Casey Freswick, Al Korvemaker.

Ron Potter functioned as chairman and Gerard Nordeman was asked to function as secretary.

The meeting was opened by br. John Heerema with the reading of Josh. 1: 7-9 and prayer. He introduced the purpose of the meeting, explaining the concerns the RCUS and its GKNv subcommittee have concerning developments in the GKNv. Br. Heerema elaborated on several situations in the GKNv and how recent synods have dealt with these matters, including those listed on the agenda namely, Sunday Rest, Divorce and remarriage, Homosexuality, Church Unity, Hermeneutics.

Brs. Mark Bube and Tony Curto commented on a recent visit to the Netherlands and their meeting with the BBK. The GKNv had offered the OPC a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The OPC has as yet not accepted this offer due to concerns similar and in line with those of the RCUS outlined above.

Br. Gerard Nordeman reported on a growing concern among the Canadian Reformed Churches regarding the GKNv that led Synod Burlington 2010 to appoint a subcommittee specifically mandated to continue the contact with the GKNv and to investigate the worrying developments of the last number of years in the Netherlands. This committee was also mandated to establish contact with the churches that recently left the GKNv and have federated as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Restored (RCR).

From the reports a common and shared concern became evident. The GKNv is on a path not consistent with Reformed orthodoxy. It was suggested that this is due to a diminished sense for required discipline in the church. An even more evident cause appears to be the introduction of new hermeneutics affecting the interpretation of Scripture, and the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. It was further remarked that it appears that the “new Hermeneutics” are driven by relevant developments in the GKNv on Hermeneutics which raise concerns among a number of delegates. It was agreed that we can only address the GKNv about our concerns using their own documents and public statements, and we need to provide Biblical answers. It is further agreed that a common approach is desirable, but not a joint approach in our relations with the GKNv.

Several suggestions were brought forward and deliberated upon. It is important that we as sister churches, or churches in corresponding relationships, ought to be forthright with the GKNv and in a loving and brotherly way insist on pointing out our concerns. A letter could be written by each church federation informing the BBK the need to have an opportunity to mention all concerns in an open meeting. It is also deemed advisable that at Synod Harderwijk 2011, after the greetings have been delivered, the delegates of the various “foreign” churches meet to exchange thoughts on the reaction from the GKNv, and ask for a combined meeting with the BBK if deemed necessary. It is suggested that after Synod Harderwijk has been concluded, each church write the BBK with pertinent feedback on the decisions made.

Br. Mark Bube led in closing prayer and the meeting was adjourned.

In accordance with the above your Committee did write the BBK (their interchurch relations committee) as follows:

Letter to the BBK:

Rev. Dr. Melle Oosterhuis,  
Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad,  
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,  
Monday, January 17, 2011

Dear Dr. Oosterhuis:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ the great head of the Church.

Thank you for your recent communication (January 2011) to the delegates from the RCUS, Rev. Koerner and Rev. Sawtelle, regarding their pending visit to the Netherlands to attend the week on foreign relations with the RCN. The RCUS is anticipating being present with you through its delegation. Regrettably, because of a time conflict with our own Synod and your last Synod, we were unable to have delegates from the RCUS present. Our present delegation is therefore anticipating spending quality time with the deputies of the BBK so as to further our fraternal/sister relationship.

As a prelude to that meeting I want to refresh the BBK of the basis under which the RCUS entered into a relationship with the RCN 20 years ago (Synod, April 2-5, 1991). This is as follows: (1) Agree to take heed to one another's doctrine, liturgy and church government, that there be no deviations from the Holy Scriptures or from the Reformed Confessions. (2) Will exchange delegates at one another's assemblies

or general synods and invite them to participate as advisors. (3) Will inform one another of the decisions taken at their assemblies or general synods by exchanging minutes or at least by forwarding decisions which are relevant to the churches concerned. (4) Will inform one another in case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature. The denomination concerned will notify the other denomination of these changes so that consultations can take place if considered necessary. (5) Will inform one another regarding new relationships with third parties and membership in ecumenical organizations.

In anticipation of furthering our fraternal / sister relationship, I remain, Yours in His Service, Rev. Ron Potter Chairman IRC of the RCUS

The present situation in the RCN (aka GKNv): Rev. Jim Sawtelle and Rev. Maynard Koerner will be representing the RCUS at the foreign visitors week of the RCN Synod beginning March 28th, 2011. As of this writing some no documents relative to matters before the Synod of the RCN have been translated into English but not all the information to inform a discussion is available. Our delegation will be hindered from studying some these documents beforehand and formulating a response. Moreover the Synod of the RCN requires the address of delegates to be written out and handed in prior to their actual addresses to the Synod thus precluding some last minute additions if documents do become available. The best we are left with is investigating issues from available documents, on the field, in discussion with the deputies of the BBK and the awaiting of the final published documents of the Synod which does not end for several months. Your Committee expects to have whatever information it can glean through its delegation published as an addendum to this report and send to our Synodical delegates as soon as possible in later April.

Churches in the Congo and Kenya. Interaction with these brethren is done through the Permanent Foreign Missions Committee of Synod and not through Interchurch Relations.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). The next meeting of the ICRC is scheduled for Wales in 2013 to be hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales.

### **Proposed Budget**

Your Committee proposes the following budget for Synodical year 2011-12. Please note that this budget includes set aside amounts for travel to the ICRC in 2013. It also includes an amount for a committee meeting which has not been needed for the past several years.

-Delegation to NAPARC Nov . 2011, Atlanta, GA (includes sub-committee meetings w. fraternal churches)	\$2000
-Delegate to the OPC GA June, 2011, Sandy Cove, Maryland	600
-Delegate to the RPCNA Synod June, 2011, Marion, Indiana	600
-Delegation to the ICRC 2013 (Set aside)	1,000
-Interchurch Relations Committee Meeting (if needed)	3,000
-Interchurch Relations Committee misc. expenses	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7, 500</b>

Recommendation #1: That the proposed budget be adopted.

Recommendation #2: That Synod pay the housing expenses for invited fraternal delegates to our Synod in cases where hotel/motel housing is required by the host church.

Grounds: (1) It is the practice of fraternal churches inviting fraternal delegates from the RCUS to house our delegates, at their own expense, in dorms or hotel /motel accommodations. (2) The practice in the RCUS is increasingly to make use of hotel /motel accommodations to house delegates to our Synod and since we invite fraternal churches to send delegates we ought to assume the expense of their accommodations when a hotel/motel is used by the host congregation.

Recommendation #3: That in accordance with our adopted rules for fraternal relations the Stated Clerk of Synod advise fraternal churches of changes in or additions to confessions, church order, or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature.

Grounds: The adopted rules for fraternal relations (abstract 1992, p. 88, Standing Ecumenical 3.4) require the following: In establishing fraternal relations with another denomination, the RCUS stipulates that both denominations: . . . (4) will inform one another in case of changes in or additions to confessions, church order, or liturgical forms if these are of a doctrinal nature. The denomination concerned will notify the other denomination of these changes so that consultations can take place if considered necessary.

Respectfully Submitted: *Rev. Ron Potter, Chairman. Rev. Jonathan Merica, Elder John Heerema, Rev. Jim Sawtelle, Rev. Maynard Koerner, Rev. Mike McGee, Rev. Wes Brice, Elder Fred Hofmann, Elder David Helseth, Elder Earl VanHouten.*

**Report on RCN Synod Harderwijk 2011 By Jim Sawtelle and Maynard Koerner**

The Reformed Church in the Netherlands (RCN) Synod Harderwijk 2011 convened in January and will run through June. Delegates for all foreign churches in ecclesiastical relationship with the RCN were invited to the synod during the week of March 28-April 2. This is the so-called “Foreign delegates week” and was hosted by the committee whose task it is to maintain ecclesiastical relationships with foreign churches, the BBK. The BBK is made up of a number of men and women designated as “deputies,” and are ably chaired by a man familiar to a number of us, br. Klaas Wezeman.

All foreign delegates were housed in a resort just outside of Harderwijk. We ate all meals together and gathered for several meetings on March 29, 30. In this way we were able to meet with one another and get to know each other and the BBK deputies prior to the synod meetings themselves.

A number of study reports are before the Synod this year, including the report of the Committee for Man/Woman, the Committee for Diaconal Ministries, the Committee on Church Unity and its report on discussions with the Netherlands Reformed Church (NGK). One other committee was tasked by a previous synod to begin work on reviewing the Church Order. This committee is not bringing recommendations to the synod this year, but the Interchurch Relations Committee will be interested in the work of this committee in the years to come, since as sister churches we are to inform one another on changes to church orders, among other things. Each of the reports mentioned have been translated into English and are on the RCN official web site. In this way your delegates were able to be somewhat prepared for our time in the Netherlands.

## Overview

Sunday, March 27. Rev. Maynard Koerner was invited to preach in the RCN congregation in Haren, NL. He brought a message from Hebrews 4:12, entitled “The Living Word”. It was well received. Mr. Klaas Wezeman, who is an elder in this congregation, and his wife hosted the Koerners for the weekend.

On Tuesday, March 29, the BBK provided delegates with an overview Agenda of Synod Harderwijk. In addition to the reports mentioned above, we were informed that this synod would deal with advice on matters of Marriage and Divorce referred to synod from various consistories and classes. Synod will also discuss sexual abuse issues with an eye to advising the churches on preventative measures with regard to it. The Theological University in Kampen (TUK), the RCN’s official “seminary,” will also be discussed. In particular, discussions will revolve around the funding of the University, its future viability, and perhaps the idea of partnering with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk and their Theological University in Apledoorn.

The BBK also reviewed its proposed decisions for the synod to act upon. Of interest to us is that they proposed ending the offer of sister church relationship to the OPC, and place the OPC on the list of contact churches with the hope that the OPC will take the initiative to establish sister church relationship in the future. As you will note from another place in the Interchurch Relations Report, the OPC has refused the offer of sister church relationship with the RCN due to concerns over the denomination’s reformed character. The BBK proposed entering into new sister church relationships with four denominations, including the United Reformed Church of the Congo. They also proposed ending the sister church relationship with the ERCC, yet placed the denomination on the list of contact churches. All of these proposals prevailed at the synod meetings later in the week.

On Tuesday afternoon, the BBK introduced us to the committee chairmen of two committees, the Committee on Church Unity, and the Committee on Man/Woman. The committee chairmen provided overviews of their respective reports, and provided opportunities for delegates to ask questions. The question period was at times difficult to conduct due to language and translation issues, though the translators did an admirable job. Another complicating factor about the question period for delegates was that the BBK does not speak for synod, per se, nor does it defend the synod’s decisions and reports. The BBK also made a decision not to enter into debates nor entertain debatable questions and comments from the foreign delegates. They asked us to save all opinions we might have about the content of the reports for the floor of synod, or for private discussions with the committee. Their concern was to avoid a sort of “parallel synod” or mini-synod atmosphere. Nevertheless, the overviews provided and the question periods did allow your delegates to get some of our questions answered about the reports, their contents and why various committees were appointed.

On Tuesday evening, the Dutch organization De Verre Naasten (Our Distant Neighbours) introduced its work and provided time for delegates to hear from each other as to what kinds of activities they are involved in the area of mission work. We were divided into small groups from our region, the Americas. A delegate from the Presbyterian Church in Brazil related how over some 28 years, the small mission work he began with had now multiplied into over two hundred congregations in that same city.

On Wednesday, March 30, we were transported to the city of Kampen and treated to lectures presented by members of the Theological University. The lectures covered aspects of hermeneutics. Because a number of foreign sister churches have expressed the concern that a new hermeneutic has been influential among the RCN for the last number of years, the TUK wanted to make every effort to demonstrate that their hermeneutic approach is reformed and based on the foundation of those who have come before them at the TUK. After each presentation delegates were given opportunities to ask questions of professors. During breaks we were also able to have discussions with professors. The professors were very open and interactive. They made no effort to evade questions. After the lectures, our hosts took us on a dinner boat cruise on the river for a nice meal, scenic view of the country side, and opportunities to talk to faculty and board members of the TUK, and members of the BBK. This was a very informative time in which many questions on our side were answered, and some more questions raised. It was also a very enjoyable dinner and cruise.

On Thursday and Friday, March 31, April 1, Synod sessions were convened and delegates were welcomed and invited to privileges of the floor during discussions. Proceedings were translated into English to which we could listen on headsets. Any comments English speaking delegates made had to be translated into Dutch. This required going to a microphone in the front of the assembly and speaking a sentence at a time while a translator spoke in Dutch to the delegates. Though this is an unavoidable issue, I think the process probably made foreign delegates hesitant to speak more to the issues during the proceedings. It was of interest to note also that various members of the press were present at the synod meetings.

On the days we were present the agenda included the presentation of the report on the Committee of Church Unity, and the report of the BBK, including the subsequent establishment of the proposed new sister church relationships. We also heard the addresses of each sister church that asked to bring greetings to the synod (not all asked to make addresses). The addresses had to be submitted well in advance of arrival so they could be translated into Dutch and broadcast on a “beamer” so the synod delegates could follow the address. A time limit of ten minutes was suggested for each address. The address of your delegates was too long for that time frame, since we not only wanted to bring greetings, but also had a number of questions and concerns we wanted to raise. The chairman asked us to shorten the address, to which request we complied. We note that a number of churches ignored the ten minute limit. All was not lost for the raising of our concerns, however, for we had already by this point had a number of our questions in the address answered, and were able to meet with BBK deputies for a private discussion on Friday (please read the address attached to this report for the concerns and questions we discussed). Aside from the specific greetings they had to bring, it was striking to hear that most of the sister churches expressed similar concerns and questions for the RCN.

On Friday the report on the Committee for Church Unity (CCU) was discussed. The procedures for debate among the RCN are much different than ours. The chairman asks for a list of delegates that want to speak to the issue. He then invites each one to speak. After all have spoken, the chairman of the committee responds to the delegates’ comments briefly. Another round of questions may then be called for. Another group asks for the floor. And so forth. Thus, debate is not back and forth as ours is, and at times a question raised, or comments made are not well addressed by the committee chairman, in this observer’s opinion.

In order to set the stage for the report by the CCU, some background information is in order. The Netherlands Reformed Church (NGK), is a group that broke away from the RCN in the 1960s. Talks with the NGK have been going on for several years. The overall interest in talks with this denomination is motivated by the RCN’s principle to seek to become as united as possible with various confessional churches in the Netherlands, especially those with whom the RCN shares a common history. The NGK is a more liberal church than the RCN, having already opened the offices of the church to women, and in the process of discussing the place of homosexuals in the church. At the same time, the NGK has recently shown a new openness to confessional binding, or subscription. It is the hope of the RCN that they can be of a reforming influence on the NGK.

The CCU had been instructed by Synod Zwolle in 2008 to discuss the issues of women in office with the NGK, who have only quite recently opened all the offices to women. However, the report related that talks with the NGK were on adherence to the confessions with respect to the issues of baptism, one does not have to hold to infant baptism in order to be an officer, the Lord’s Supper, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and Hermeneutics. Curiously, the report says the two committees found that they have much agreement on the issues in question. We especially took note of this so-called agreement and sought the floor during the debate. We asked how it could be that the RCN could have much in common with the hermeneutical approach of the NGK and yet have a completely different stance on women in office, infant baptism, etc? We asked if in the opinion of the committee there can be two totally opposite conclusions from Scripture on the issue of women in office and yet both be valid. This was a concern that many of the foreign delegates shared in our days together, and also seemed to be a question on the minds of a number of RCN delegates. The CCU’s answer to our question was “no”, but yet they still insisted that the committees were in agreement. They believe they can influence the NGK to a biblical position on various issues. They also believe it is important that the RCN study the issue of the place of men/women in the church in order to help the NGK in this area, as well as answer questions of their own members on this subject.

It seemed that the delegates of synod were not very happy with the CCU report. Some wondered why the committee had not discussed the issue of women in the church, and why they chose the issues they did discuss. Delegates were concerned about the talks with the NGK because on the local level, there is a growing cooperation with the NGK and the RCN. There is some concern that the churches don’t seem to be waiting for synod to lead the way in ecumenical progress. There was also the question of whether the report would be adopted, or simply used for information. At present we are not certain as to what the synod will do with the report since the session concluded without resolution at that point.

On Friday afternoon, April 1, your delegates met with two members of the BBK to clarify some questions we had, and underscore a concern or two from the address we presented at synod. The issues we clarified with the BBK are as follows: 1) The report on Men/Women will not be finalized at this synod. To date, the committee has held some public forums, commissioned the TUK to provide a survey of the Scriptures on the relevant data regarding men and women in the church. The TUK asked Ms. Miriam van Klinken to do the study, which is written in Dutch (we have a copy on order through the BBK). The title of the work is called, “Als Vrouwen in De Kerk.” According to the deputies, the book draws no definite conclusions or recommendations. The findings of the committee’s work were presented in a public forum a week before we arrived in the Netherlands. 2) We have been assured that neither the JEDP, or “source critical” methods of understanding the OT Scriptures are used in the TUK. This question arose as result of the publication written by an OT professor. 3) The deputies assured us that it is not an accepted practice that women are invited to read sermons in worship services, as had been inferred by many of us from one study report. 4) We expressed concern for the direction of the TUK in terms of the hermeneutical methods we heard them employ during their presentations on Wednesday. So, while some questions and concerns we had going into Kampen were addressed, others concerns were raised by the presentations. 5) We underscored our hope that the synod would not open the offices of the church, deacon, elder or minister to women, as we are convinced this would be unbiblical.

On Saturday, April 2, your delegates traveled to Amsterdam. We intended to attend the Ooster Park Church (RCN), but were not able to make the connection for travel for that morning as we were some distance from the church. We did make it for the afternoon service time which the church’s web site showed as starting at 5 pm. However, no one ever showed up for services. Interestingly, a banner on the front of the church advertised that the congregation is starting an “Alpha Course” in an effort to introduce the neighborhood to Christianity. One theme we continually heard in the Netherlands among the RCN people we talked to is that the culture in the Netherlands is very secular. Our time in Amsterdam underscored that fact in spades!

Finally, we want to make special mention of the fact that the hospitality we received everywhere we went while among the RCN was outstanding. The BBK made every effort to make us comfortable and meet our needs. They provided access for communication with them. They served us with kindness, patience, and love. The host church of Harderwijk also well supplied us with excellent service and food. We

want to express our gratitude for this service.

## Comments

We found many RCN ministers, elders, and members to love the biblical faith, the gospel, and the reformed tradition. There is much support for and labor put into taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. There is a great deal of thought and energy being put into how to bring the gospel to the Netherlands, beyond the churches of the RCN. If one could judge a church on the sister church relations they have established over the years up to and including this year's synod, we would have to give them high praise. We were impressed by the unity of the foreign delegates as to a strong commitment to the authority of Scripture, God glorifying worship, adherence to the confessions and biblical church government. With perhaps one exception, the foreign delegates all expressed their concerns for the direction of the RCN in terms of their studies on women in the church offices and hermeneutical trends. As one foreign delegate put it in his address to synod, "such unity of concern [over women in office and hermeneutics] has to tell you something must be amiss."

A number of synod delegates expressed their own concerns over the direction of the synod. They were also thankful for the strong stands many of the foreign sister churches made in addressing the synod. It is difficult to tell how representative that concern is among the ministers and elders there.

BBK deputies, and a number of synod delegates also insisted that the concerns we have expressed should not be alleged against all of the congregations and church members, or even most. They ask us to judge them on the basis of their official actions and not on anecdotal statements and actions of various members of their denomination. They insisted that there is not a trend among the churches in general toward women in office. One minister we talked to was rather adamant against, and even offended by the notion that these issues are characteristic of the RCN. They seemed genuinely confused as to why we think we see what we see; while we think what we see ought to be obvious to them. We will all need to be humble, careful, without arrogance, willing to listen, honest and forthright in speech. The BBK also asked us, as a sister church, to address our concerns about the RCN through them, with specific arguments based on published reports—not generalities, and with biblical and confessional grounds. They also urged us to seek clarifications on concerns we may have, rather than assume we have our facts straight. They assure us that they will make sure that any concerns so expressed get into the hands of the appropriate parties. All of this seems proper and reasonable.

## Evaluation

With respect to the report on the role of women in the church, it is hard to say what sort of an impact was made by the foreign delegates. At present all that we can do is wait and see what the committees of synod delegates dealing with this matter come up with. No doubt we should be prepared to discuss this matter further, if need be, in the future.

What concerns us about the committee reports and the presentations by professors is the inordinately large role that sociology/culture studies appear to play. It seems as if undue weight and importance is being given to sociological theories, models, and evaluations. This is a matter of concern since the Church is to be shaped and governed by the Word of God and not by the social sciences.

## Conclusion

We believe that the Interchurch Relations Committee needs to keep a close eye on developments in the RCN. Specifically there is a need to monitor and come to a better understanding of their approach to hermeneutics. It has been suggested that a conference on hermeneutics be organized which would involve ministers and professors of sister churches with the professors at Kampen. In addition we will need to give special attention to the report on the role of women in the church, (including deacons) and to discussions currently taking place between the RCN and the Netherlands Reformed Churches.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. James Sawtelle, Rev. Maynard Koerner.*

## **Address to the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands By Delegates from the Reformed Church in the United States**

Mr. Chairman, Members of General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,

It is an honor to be among you today and to bring you greetings and best wishes from your brothers and sisters in the US, the Reformed Church in the US.

Sometimes people in the churches wonder if there is really any practical benefit from sister church relations with churches in foreign lands. Well, let me begin my address by giving you a sense of the ways in which I personally, and also many in our churches, have profited over the years from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (RCN). While in seminary, I was introduced to the writings of scholars such as K Schilder, B. Holwerda, MB Van't Veer, as well as men who could be considered to be more contemporary, J Douma, J van Bruggen, C Trimp. Probably half of our active ministers have been influenced by the above mentioned scholars, to our great benefit and to the benefit of the churches.

We have been blessed to receive your delegates at our synod meetings over the years, and to meet and interact with members of the RCN at ICRC meetings. We greatly appreciate and praise God for the efforts of your missionaries and teachers who have labored in the Congo among your and our sister churches there. We have enjoyed fellowship of a number of members from RCN churches in our worship services,

and have even received into membership some of your members who have immigrated to the US. I have the great privilege of being the pastor of a man who was called to faith in Jesus Christ and received by profession of faith and baptized under the ministry of your congregation in Vlaardingen. Though he is Dutch and we are American, it was a great joy for him and us to be at home together in one church. We both recognized each other as having a common faith in doctrine and life, and rejoice in worshipping the true God together. While these are only anecdotal examples of the blessings of sister church relations, we are convinced these examples of how we have been influenced by the RCN serve to express something of the blessings of sister church relations with the RCN.

I would now like to tell you a bit about the RCUS and North American church life. Rev. Maynard Koerner and I, as delegates from the RCUS, reflect well something of the face of our churches. Rev. Koerner is a life-long member of the RCUS. His covenantal roots go down deep over many generations in the German Reformed Church. But while there are still many with his story, it is more and more common to hear the story of that of my parents and me. My father and mother are first generation Christians, having been converted to faith in Jesus Christ in their teens. They were initially Baptists, and my father became a Baptist minister. The Lord led him to embrace the Reformed tradition and covenant theology, and I will never forget the Sunday my father baptized me and three of my siblings when I was five years of age. What I am saying is that the RCUS is a mosaic of ethnic Germans, as well as brothers and sisters who come from recent unbelief or from other faith traditions who have now embraced the Reformed tradition. Twenty of our forty three organized congregations have been started in the last twenty years, some are still financially supported mission congregations, and we have, in addition, two new mission works in their beginning stages, one of which the congregation I serve in Minneapolis, MN is sponsoring. We are going through the transition of being largely comprised of rural churches in farming communities to being mostly city churches. The rural populations are shrinking rapidly, and as a result a number of our churches in the last twenty years have closed or merged together in order to be able to support a pastor.

In addition to involvement in mission works in the US, we are privileged to be involved in nurturing the developing churches in Kenya among the Kisi tribes and the Congo, and more recently in the Philippines. We contribute support for and help oversee the work of the Reverend Eric Kayayan and the Reformed Faith and Life (French) radio broadcast to French speaking Africa, France, Madagascar, the Caribbean, and Quebec, Canada. Rev. Kayayan is associate pastor of Reitvallei Reformed Church in South Africa (RCSA).

While the RCUS does not have a denominational seminary, two of our churches, in cooperation with their respective classes, oversee seminaries in Sacramento, CA and Sioux Falls, SD. We also support and commend students to study at Mid America Reformed Seminary, Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and New Geneva Theological Seminary.

In the next few years we face the challenge of seeing a number of our ministers retiring from active ministry. We are praying fervently that our Lord would raise up young men for the ministry of the Word from among our churches.

The citizens of the US are becoming increasingly hardened into a secular mindset. The number of un-churched people is a rapidly growing segment of the population. Relativism and tolerance for every idea is the order of the day, while certainty of the Truth is met with hostility or contempt. Materialism, individualism, and an insatiable desire to be entertained seem to be the preoccupation of most, in the face of which Christianity seems irrelevant. The tolerance for, if not outright acceptance of the practice of homosexuality is the prevailing attitude of the emerging generation.

The churches of the US have been invaded by these spirits of the age. The historic mainline churches in the land have accommodated to these spirits in most respects, even to the point of accepting as members in good standing homosexual couples in committed relationships and the ordination of homosexuals of both genders. Many evangelical churches have tapped into the entertainment spirit of the age as an effort to retain members and to win the lost. As a result, worship has become increasingly entertainment oriented. The spirit of individualism has been accommodated to by offering worship services on Saturday evening, or multiple service offerings on Sundays as well as Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Fridays seem to be the only "sacred evening" on which churches won't offer worship opportunities. Even in confessional reformed and presbyterian churches we feel the spirit of individualism in that people commonly leave churches over any and every reason and go to other churches they feel fit them better at the moment. This same individualistic spirit is seen in the fact that even professing Christians divorce their spouses at roughly the same rate as the unbelieving population.

Such is the context in which we live and worship and witness; such are the temptations with which we ourselves must wrestle. As you can see, America desperately needs the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. We do not believe our labor in the Lord is in vain, for the risen Christ is King! We rejoice that the gospel is not chained, but is lively and powerful, the power of God unto salvation for those who are being saved. Please pray for us as we labor to bring the message of our all-sufficient Savior to a world enslaved in sin, as we once were ourselves.

Brothers and sisters of the RCN, we also understand that many of the same spirits of the age in the US are also the context in which you must hold the faith of Jesus Christ. While we don't presume to understand your society and culture as you do, we understand that our challenges are similar. All around us we see churches surrendering their principles and practices due to the pressure to be culturally relevant. Of course, as churches we need to be sensitive to and aware of the surrounding culture, but when the demands of culture clash with the Word of God, we need to speak prophetically, and with boldness from God's Word. Our common wisdom, strength, comfort and peace is He who is a "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

As you have no doubt gleaned from this address, we are indeed very small in comparison to you. But we count it a privilege to share an ecclesiastic bond of fellowship with you as our brothers. As such, we wish to take our commitment to that bond seriously. This involves being open and honest with one another, listening to one another, bearing one another's burdens, and in love and humility encouraging and even admonishing one another.

In that spirit, our recent synod has encouraged us as delegates to come to you and also discuss with you some concerns, which we have conveyed to the deputies of the BBK.

The concerns we relate to you in this address arise first of all out of reports before your 2011 synod. With regard to your unity discussion with the NGK, we find it confusing to see how you continue to pursue

unity talks with churches that open the offices of the church to women, a position that is currently still rejected by your federation, as well as by your sister churches around the world. Perhaps we misunderstand your intention. We are thankful that at present you have broached your concerns to these churches about their position; and yet, you report that you have much agreement with them in hermeneutical approach. We wonder how such can be the case? Our concerns about such talks with the NGK are only heightened by the fact that you are considering two reports on the matter of the place of men and women in the church, both in exploring the question of redefining and/or opening the office of deacon to women, and considering the question of whether or not women might also serve in the offices of elder and minister. While we understand that your studies are still in process, thus far, we have discerned no new reasoning by you on the basis of Scripture to warrant consideration of opening the offices to men and women alike. We are convinced that the unity of the testimony of Christ's church is at stake here. How can two sister churches confess the infallibility, clarity and authority of Scripture, while holding to opposite conclusions of Scripture on such a question as the teaching on who may be ordained to the offices of the church? Affirming that both views are equally valid would imply a view of Scripture which undermines its clarity and authority. We urge you to stand with your sister churches in affirming the biblical and historical understanding that the offices of the church are to be occupied by men. Not because men are superior in godliness or intellect or physical capacity—they are not—but because this is the teaching of the inspired Word of God.

A different concern, but one that needs to be mentioned, has to do with the Theological University in Kampen (TUK). Our concerns have to do with matters involving methods employed by some professors in hermeneutics. We wonder if there has been any significant interaction with some of the publications in recent years by men now appointed as professors. In these publications, these men use hermeneutical methods that leave the authority and clarity of Scripture in doubt. Another professor of the TU has publically stated his views on homosexuality and women in the offices of the church in such a way as to raise grave concerns among us. And while this matter was dealt with by you already, it is our understanding that the professor in question has not been required to publically retract these statements. The fact that he has not retracted the statements publically and yet remains a teacher in the TU is deeply troubling to us. Especially so since the TU is tasked to make a study of Scripture on the issue of men and women in the church.

Finally, it is of great concern to us that the fruit of the above mentioned issues has begun to cause no small amount of unrest to the RCN. We note the sad news of the churches that recently left the RCN and have federated as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Restored (RCR). We are concerned for the unity and of the churches. It is painful to see this division. As delegates from the Reformed Church in the US, we would urge you to continue to join with us, as well as with your other sister churches abroad and with the member churches of the International Conference of Reformed Churches around the world, as we seek to bear witness of Christ and His light giving Word to a dark world that suppresses the truth in unrighteousness. Such a witness is grounded in the Word of God and is bold in its defense of the Truth. Such a united and prophetic witness is desperately needed in the culture of our day.

Brothers, we pray for you as we ask you to pray for us in the challenging and difficult times in which we live. We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head and King of the church, may bless your discussions and deliberations in such a way that they glorify Him, build up your churches and promote your bond with faithful churches everywhere.

Thank you, *James Sawtelle, Maynard Koerner*

#### ***J. Ministerial Aid Fund Committee***

Your committee this past year completed last year's Synod request to compile and develop a formal investment guideline document for use by the denomination and MAF committee. The use of this document is intended for use in advising and directing financial institutions in the management of funds for the Ministerial Aid Fund. The document was sent to the Executive Committee and approved via "Executive Circular" through Synod churches of the RCUS. Approval of this document now creates parameters for consolidation of funds and management of these funds within one financial institution.

All compiled accounts of the Ministerial Aid Fund currently total \$1,106,451.35.

The committee is now in process of identifying and narrowing down to (4) four firms "Requests for Proposal" to manage the funds and /or monies in the most effective and prudent manner in achieving "Investment Guideline" returns. These four institutions upon evaluation of their proposals will be narrowed down to (2) financial institutions for face-to-face in-depth discussions and review of their proposals. Final selection of a financial institution/investment manager to assist in the management of these funds should be completed by middle 2011. Current accounts will then be placed with the chosen investment manager.

Authorization of fund flows in and out of the account will be limited to the RCUS Synod Treasurer and members of the Executive Committee of the RCUS. Counsel and guidance for management of funds with the selected financial Institution will continue through the MAF Committee.

Respectfully submitted, *Mark B. Fisher, Raymond Schnabel, Ralph Goehring, Spencer Gross*

#### ***K. Publications and Promotions***

Your committee met by email throughout the year, conferred by phone and Skype, and met on February 15th in Willows. The members that could not make the trip joined the conference by Skype.

Rev. Bowen expressed his desire to step down as chairman of the PPPC; Rev. Sam Powell was elected to serve as current chairman.

Synod commissioned PPPC to print a new edition of the Three Forms of Unity, using the changes authorized at the 264th Synod. The changes were submitted to Olive Tree Publications in September, 2010, and we are waiting on the final draft.

The committee is eager to avail itself of modern technology. Digital printing is a system of publication that prints books as needed, instead of in large batches. For print runs of under 10,000 copies, it is far more economical than traditional printing. Using a company such as CreateSpace.com has several advantages: First, the publications are printed as ordered, and edits and updates are easily done, including changes in the pricing, so there are no large inventories of outdated material. Large inventories are no longer necessary. Second, the publications can be purchased from Amazon.com, making them easily available to anyone who needs them. Third, there is no need for initial outlays of cash, since the books are not printed until they are purchased. CreateSpace makes professional layout artists and editors available for a modest fee (starting at \$299.00), if so desired. Fourth, we set our own price and the royalties are sent to the treasurer. There is a minimum cost for each book (to cover the publisher's fees) and anything above that is our share.

The PPPC believes that these royalties could be used for editing and publishing future works, which would eliminate the need for subsidization from Synod.

The committee has submitted a new edition of the Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States to test this new proposal. Copies of the Constitution can be ordered from amazon.com for 4.99 per copy. This new edition does not contain the sample forms in the back. The PPPC believes that Synod would be better served by making the forms available for download on our website. Rev. Matt Powell, the chairman of the website committee, has informed the PPPC that this is feasible.

If digital printing through CreateSpace proves successful, the PPPC would be interested in making the books which are owned by Synod available for printing in the same manner. The Synod owns the copyright of many works by Good, Ursinas, Thelemann, etc., that are now available electronically. These could easily be submitted to CreateSpace for publication and sale. Royalties could then be applied to future publication work. Other possibilities would include position papers, creeds and workbooks.

As soon as the PPPC receives the final draft of the Three Forms of Unity, it wishes to use CreateSpace to make them available to all who wish to order them. If Synod wishes to order copies to be printed the traditional way and stored in the book depository, we will need the authorization to do so.

The PPPC discussed the printing, cost and distribution of the Reformed Herald. It is currently examining if there are efficient and economical alternatives that could be explored. The PPPC expects to have recommendations for the 266th Synod. Reverend Treick has expressed his willingness to continue to serve as the Reformed Herald Editor.

Outdated membership lists continue to be a significant source of financial bleeding. The PPPC wishes to encourage each church to compare their subscription list (sent by email in March, 2011) to their actual membership list, and correct as necessary. If you did not receive this subscription list, please notify the subscription editor, Rev. Frank Walker.

Many works which have been published by the Synod are not accessible in a digital format. If these were ever put in digital format, the copies are either lost or their whereabouts unknown. The PPPC would recommend that a back-up copy of any of the works of the RCUS (creeds, constitutions, position papers, etc.) be kept in the possession of the committee. Whenever a paper is adopted, a creed is edited, the constitution is updated, etc., digital copies should be sent to the committee chairman. The chairman would then burn the copy onto a CD-Rom or other appropriate digital storage so that they are always accessible and available, even in the case of a computer crash. Whenever amendments or updates are needed, edits could be done on the existing format, rather than the necessity of starting over. This would also enable pastors and elders to have easy access to any of the published works in the RCUS, since they would all be in a central location.

The PPPC makes the following recommendations:

1. That Rev. Paul Treick be nominated to serve as the Reformed Herald editor.
2. That 500.00 be budgeted for expenses incurred by the editor of the Reformed Herald.
3. That Olive Tree Publications be compensated at a rate of \$35.00 per hour limited to layout work done to publish the Reformed Herald.
4. That the Permanent Publications and Promotions Committee be authorized to publish in print form the works of which the RCUS owns the copyright, with the following understandings:
  - a. The RCUS will continue to hold the copyright.
  - b. There will be no request for funds from the Synod of the RCUS, with the exception of funds for layout or editing, if needed.
  - c. These printed works will be offered for sale on Amazon (or other distributors, as the PPPC Committee may determine, at a price determined by the committee).
  - d. Any royalties produced by the publication of these works will be sent to the Synod treasurer, and used to finance further publication projects.
5. That \$2,000 dollars be set aside for the layout and editing of future works, if needed.
6. That the following practice be adopted by Synod: that the Chairman of the Permanent Publications and Promotions Committee keep in his possession a backup digital copy of all the published works owned by the Reformed Church in the United States.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Sam Powell, Jess Johnson, Brent Tjeerdsma, Rev. Hank Bowen, Rev. Paul Henderson, Greh Stewart, Rev. Randall Klynsma, Rev. William Haddock.*

### **Website Sub-Committee**

The committee met throughout the year via email and telephone. The committee chair also assisted in maintaining the web site and responding to various requests for information through the web site. The committee discussed the future of the web site and the purpose and direction of the web site. In particular, we desired to gain a better understanding of what kind of material we wanted to post on the website. Two basic directions were considered. On the one hand, the web site could be a content-rich site providing a great many different kinds of Reformed resources to any who might be interested, with many different articles on many different subjects. On the other hand, the web site could serve a primarily utilitarian purpose, identifying the RCUS' creeds and standards, and providing accurate location and contact information for the churches and ministers of the denomination. The first option has the benefit of providing more information and making greater use of the website, but has the drawback of requiring more maintenance and making the site more confusing and difficult to navigate, as well as the challenge of ensuring that everything that is posted accurately reflects the position of the RCUS. Because of these drawbacks, the committee agreed that the RCUS web site should be utilitarian in purpose, identifying the denomination in basic terms, providing information regarding our creeds and standards, and providing needed contact information for churches and ministers.

Additionally, we discussed the future of the web site's maintenance and hosting. The committee decided that Olive Tree Communications had proven unable to provide an acceptable level of service and responsiveness in the past year, and therefore decided to pursue new bids for the hosting, development and maintenance of the web site.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. That only materials officially published by the Synod of the RCUS should be published to the RCUS web site.
2. That the web site committee be authorized to solicit bids for the hosting, maintenance and development of the web site, and to accept whatever bid the committee finds most acceptable, and that Olive Tree Communications continue to be paid for hosting expenses at the current rate for the web site until a new provider can be hired.
3. That the budget for the web site be set at \$4000 for the next Synodical year, to cover hosting and maintenance expenses.

Respectfully, *Matt Powell, Chair, Frank Walker, Jim Drewes.*

#### ***L. Develop eBooks***

The Permanent Committee to Develop eBooks submits this report of its labors to the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States.

This past Synodical year, the committee carried out its business satisfactorily by phone and e-mail. The Synod delegated the following work to the committee:

Commissioned by the 262nd Synod: In keeping with recommendation 12 of the Abstract of the 262nd Synod, page 80, "That the annual publication of the Reformed Herald and printed RCUS Abstracts of the Minutes of Synod be electronically upgraded annually and be developed with the built-in features and functionalities of searching globally across all the indexed issues," the committee commissioned Rev. Eric Bristley to upgrade the eReformed Herald and eRCUS Abstracts of Synod Collection.

Rev Bristley informed the committee that the upgrades will include the current issues to the eReformed Herald and eRCUS Abstracts of Synod Collection DVD disk and will be made available at the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod and to the RCUS Book Depository for inventory.

The eReformed Herald and eRCUS Abstracts of Synod Collection DVD disk is set at a one-time cost of \$20.00; thereafter, free annual upgrades of current issues will be made available for RCUS members at the RCUS Book Depository.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Gary Mancilas, Rev. Eric Bristley, Rev. Jay Fluck, Elder Jeff Jones.*

### **VI. Welcome and Seating of Fraternal Delegates: Welcome of Visitors**

The President welcomed fraternal delegates, observers, representatives of institutions, visiting elders, and others as they arrived. Fraternal delegates and visiting elders were seated within the Bar of the House and given the privilege of the floor. Delegate elders who were attending their first meeting were introduced and welcomed.

Fraternal delegates included: Rev. Tom Tyson, fraternal delegate of the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; Rev. Ralph Pontier, fraternal delegate of the Synod the United Reformed Churches in North America; and Rev. Joe Poppe, of the Canadian Reformed Churches. These delegates addressed the body as a Special Order of the Day on May 17. (See XII)

Institutional representatives were welcomed and later addressed the body. (See XII).

### **VII. Welcome of New Ministers**

The President welcomed two new ministers: Rev. Jimmy Hall, pastor of First RCUS, Herried, SD; and Rev. Ryan Kron, Home Missions Pastor of Redeemer RCUS, Golden Valley, MN.

### VIII. Welcome of New Churches

There were no new churches received this year.

### IX. Reports of Officers

#### A. *President's Report on the State of the Church*

Esteemed Brethren:

Excerpts from the reports of the Presidents of the Executive Committees of the Classes (cf. The Constitution of the RCUS, Art. 111), moving from the West to the East, provide us with a panoramic view of the state (temporal & spiritual condition) of the Reformed Church in the United States:

**Western Classis:** “After reading your reports, your President notes some severe congregational afflictions, especially for pastors. These afflictions are both spiritual and physical. Thus the morale of some of our men is at ebb tide. Also, some of our churches continue to bleed red ink. Yet, in other churches there are, perhaps, moderate improvements in their financial situations. This is in marked contrast to last year, when it seemed that most of us were hemorrhaging.”

“The greatest need of the Western Classis concerns filling the two ministerial positions at Lancaster and Rehoboth Chapel. As you know, in the past it has been difficult to allure men outside of the Golden State to relocate here. Thus, virtually all of our empty pulpits over the past few years have been occupied by Californians.” [Ed. Note: Since this report was given, both positions have been filled, again with present or former Californians.]

“The second issue is an important footnote to the Special Meeting of Classis concerning ministerial deposition. Although the procedure and result of the meeting was God-glorifying and all the issues were resolved in a Christ-centered way, it was clear that there was some confusion as to how much authority a Spiritual Council has over a minister of Classis. The problem was complicated by the fact that a few years ago Synod voted that all ministers become members of their local congregations. Yet the Constitution reads as if the Classis alone has authority over its ministers. Certainly, a Spiritual Council cannot depose a minister (Article 120), but this raises the question as to whether the selfsame Council has the authority to debar a minister from the Lord’s Supper. I remind you that when a minister becomes a member of a church, he becomes subject to the 4th membership vow, promising that if he ‘should be found delinquent in doctrine or in life to heed its discipline,’ that is, the discipline of the Spiritual Council of the congregation. . . .”

“One thing is certain: the administration of discipline had a healthy effect upon us ministers and elders. I think that the result of the Special Classis Meeting resulted in an increased ‘fear of God’ (cf. Acts 5:5, 11). Our action should cause us to hate sin with a holy passion. How can we save others, if we ourselves are in sin? God surely will not bless our congregations if we are physicians who need to heal ourselves. With regard to heart-purity, let us hear the Apostle Paul: ‘Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery...’ (Rom. 2:22)? Your President is reminded of a letter sent by Robert Murray McCheyne in 1840 to the Rev. Dan Edwards who was ordained to be a missionary to the Jews: ‘I trust you will have a pleasant and profitable time in Germany. I know you will apply hard to German; but do not forget the culture of the inner man, --I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God’s sword—His instrument,—I trust a chosen vessel unto Him and bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.’ Let us diligently attend to the culture of our hearts!”

**South Central Classis:** “As I write this report, the world around us seems to be in a state of turmoil. Major earthquakes, wars, unrest across the Arab world and economic difficulties are all around us. But it is from times such as these that we gain great comfort from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and assurance in God’s providence.” [As President Morris takes what he calls a “tour of the congregations,” this year, from the east to the west, some of the “stops” were:]

“At Trinity Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, SD, things are going well. We have visitors on a regular basis and our auditorium is usually pretty full. We built on to our building and added classrooms, offices and a library which is being used by Heidelberg Theological Seminary. HTS began having classes at our facility last fall and that seems to have been a good move for the seminary. “

“The Greeley, CO and Vermillion, SD congregations are now self-supporting and no longer receiving mission support. The Limon, CO congregation is receiving mission funding from Classis, but has already requested a reduction in support.”

“Last October, the missions committee flew to Sherman, TX where the Rev. Neale Riffert has been working with a group of believers. The work appears to be doing well and the missions committee has requested mission support of \$1500 per month for that work.”

“The Rapid City congregation has indicated a desire to start a work in Scotts Bluff, NE. There is a Bible study going on there and the congregation in Rapid City is seeking to discern God’s will about what to do next. . . . In the past, our Classis has had a Regional Home Missionary who could oversee some mission works. It worked well in the past and perhaps it is time to reconsider that program.”

“All in all, it was a relatively quiet year in the South Central Classis. We are seeing signs of growth in many of the congregations. Let us pray that the Lord would continue to help us grow and to give us wisdom that we might bring the gospel and plant churches in our Classis.”

**Northern Plains Classis:** “We begin by considering the state of our membership. Looking at the statistics, our communicant membership has dropped again this year from 479 to 460, a loss of about 4%. . . . In 2009 there were four students confirmed, but in 2010 there was not a single person confirmed. . . . We have 264 families and 523 baptized members. That means the average family had 1.8 members. Therefore, we must have a large number of single members in our churches—both very young and very senior.”

“I believe the numbers show that we have an aging membership with fewer families with two parents and children. If this is true, there is only one alternative for our Classis, and that is evangelization. . . . Unless we have an infusion of new members, our membership will continue to decline.”

“The Watertown, SD congregation receives financial assistance from Classis. For 2011 they are requesting a reduction of \$1600 over 2010. This is a positive sign that the congregation is supporting seriously this work. This is real encouragement.” “Potentially, the most significant matter to be considered will be our attempt to establish a mission work in Dickinson, ND. The classical Home Missions Committee has recommended that we employ a home missionary in that town. Their report details the attendance at the Bible studies held there, and which would become the core group for a mission work. The questions Classis needs to ponder include the following: Is the core group described in the Missions report sufficient to justify hiring a missionary? Can the Classis sustain the additional financial commitment?”

“This report has sought to detail the state of the Classis as we begin our 2011 spring meeting. We look back and see the good hand of God prospering us this past year. Let us be in prayer that the Lord will guide us unto His will as we chart our future.”

**Covenant East Classis:** “As I read the parochial reports . . . the words of the apostle John came to mind: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (III Jn. 4). The churches of Classis are indeed walking in the truth and this is an occasion for great joy when it comes time for the annual report to Classis on the State of the Church.”

“The parochial reports reveal that the churches of Classis are spiritually healthy and growing in grace. This does not mean that they are without their struggles from time to time, especially when it comes to the application of discipline to erring members, and the fallout from that, to attempting to reclaim those whose love for Christ has grown cold and who resist the entreaties of family members or their overseers. But it does mean that these disciplinary or reclaiming efforts are engaged in according to the truth of God’s Word, thus reflecting on the faithfulness of our churches to the third mark of a true church (BC #29). This is a ground for great joy!”

“According to the reports . . . the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed by His called servants both in the formal worship services of the churches, the youth activities, the various gender related Bible studies, the Sunday School classes and in various mid-week Bible studies and prayer meetings, thus evidencing the first mark of a true church. What also characterizes these reports is the joy our ministers have in ministering the Word . . . even in the midst of personal struggles with health or the death of a family member or the personal injuries of family members that can so distract a minister.”

“The reports reveal an earnest, prayerful desire to beseech the LORD for the needs of the church, but also that He will add to the church such as are being saved. We have not drifted into thinking that we can build the church apart from the grace of God. The dependence of our churches upon the Lord’s blessings for their provision and growth and not upon the novel pop techniques again illustrate the desire to walk in the truth for without Him we can do nothing.”

“Increasingly over the years the CEC has developed a healthy home mission’s consciousness. This does not appear to be abating any time soon. At present we have home mission works in Bentonville, AR, in Waymart, PA and at present, a beginning work in the Minneapolis, MN area. In addition, the Executive Committee has been in contact with a family in SC and a representative of a small group in Richmond, KY who have shown interest in the RCUS. . . . The Executive Committee . . . has also been working with Sovereign Grace Church in Gettysburg, PA, who four years ago, began to show interest in the RCUS. . . . The recent call of Rev. J. Fluck to be their pastor and thus to labor outside the bounds of Classis, has taken the possible union of Sovereign Grace Church to the RCUS to a higher level.”

Some additional comments on the State of the Church: A comparison of membership and financial statistics shows the following: Communicant Members this Year and Total Receipts compared to last year indicate a decrease of -1% and -4% respectively. Giving to Synod Guidelines and Giving to Classis Guidelines this year compared to last year indicate a difference of -13% and +10% respectively. Giving to Synod per Communicant Member and the Giving to Classis per Communicant Member last year as compared to this year indicates a difference of -1% and +14% respectively. Although overall giving decreased slightly, the increase in giving to the Classes and the decrease of giving to the Synod is a move in the right direction. One other statistic of note is the 22% increase in the number of confirmations. However, that is more than offset by the decrease in the number of members received by Letter of Transfer and Profession of Faith, -23% and -5% respectively.

The immediately preceding figures point to the need for missions and church growth. In that respect, references to new works in the Presidents’ Reports above and the Permanent Home Missions Committee Report are encouraging. Let us redouble our commitment to support these works and those already in existence in prayer as well as with our tithes and offerings.

This Synod will see a number of changes this year with regard to how it conducts its business and we will see how those changes work for us. For some, these changes were long over-due. For others (perhaps

mostly the older generation), change is questionable, if not difficult. As a member of that older generation, permit me to offer a word of caution or a brotherly admonition. Change should come care-fully and in some cases, not at all. We must give due honor and respect to the traditions of our fathers, especially as they have come down to us through the Constitution, the Directory of Worship and the Rules of Order. To the one who will assume the office of President, I give this reminder: “He shall preserve order, guard against any violation of the Constitution of the Church and the Rules of Order, and endeavor to conduct all business to a speedy and proper conclusion” (The Rules of Order--Duties of the President, #9). (Speaking of violations, how about Standing Rule #13!)

Other matters of concern coming before Synod which touch upon the state of the church: The Executive Committee Report includes the letter we were assigned to write to the Dordt Board of Trustees about a number of concerns brought to the attention of last year’s Synod by the permanent Christian Education Committee and its Sub-Committee to Confer with Dordt College, resulting in the suspension of Dordt College from the list of approved colleges and from Guideline support. Also included, is the requested letter of response from the Dordt Board of Trustees to this year’s Synod. These items will need to be referred to the Standing Education & Student Aid Committee for review and action.

The Sunday School Curriculum Sub-Committee of the Christian Education Committee is recommending that Synod move forward with developing an integrated Sunday School curriculum based on the 2010 revised pedagogical approach.

The Foreign Missions Committee reports that what are now the United Reformed Churches of the Congo (URCC), as opposed to the Evangelical Reformed Confessing Church (ERCC), continue to grow and prosper and the Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya (RFCK), as opposed to the Free Reformed Church of Kenya (FRCK), is now receiving our financial support. The United Covenant Reformed Church of the Philippines (UCRCP) has formed its first classis consisting of three organized congregations with the possibility of a fourth, and is seeking a formal relationship with us.

The Interchurch Relations Committee includes the report of the delegation to Synod London 2010 of the United Reformed Churches of North America where major reports concerning Justification & the Federal Vision and the pro and con of reception of believers into communicant membership without requiring the parents to present their un-baptized children for the sign and seal of the covenant, were presented. The underlying issue of the latter was that of confessional church membership. Another report is that of the delegation to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, Liberated (GKNv) with some answers to the worrisome developments within that sister denomination the last number of years. Because of these developments, the OPC and URCNA have refrained from entering into closer ties with this denomination.

The Ministerial Aid Fund (MAF) has now surpassed the one million dollar mark. A decision will need to be made as to what to do with the amount in excess of the one million.

The Special Committee to Study the Belgic Confession, Article 9 and specifically the wording of the phrase, “the Holy Spirit appeared in the shape of a dove,” has presented a very thorough report with the resultant wise and excellent recommendation to simply replace the phrase at issue with the Biblical text itself. The only question: Why the text of Luke 3:22 as opposed to that of the other Gospels?

What is the state of the Church? Of the RCUS? Contrary to Mr. Harold Camping, the Church is alive and well, and continues to exist both as an organism and an organization. Christ has ascended into heaven to “there appear as the Head of His Church, by whom the Father governs all things” (HC #50). His Bride, the Church, continues to eagerly await His coming, when He “shall take me with all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory” (HC #52). Again, contrary to Mr. Camping, I don’t know when this will happen. However, this I know. Until then, Christ will continue to care for and build His Church. Her marks, i.e., the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of discipline will continue “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her” (Matt. 16:18).

Finally, allow me a point of personal privilege. I am most grateful for the privilege and honor of serving you in this office and for the respect and confidence placed in me over the years. The love and communion of this brotherhood is precious and a foretaste of that which will endure throughout eternity. I conclude with a quote from my first President’s State of the Church Report in 1980 after having received the gavel from the late and beloved Norman Hoeflinger in 1979. I believe it is as applicable now as then: “How distinctively Reformed should we be? . . . Like the Reformers of all ages, we must go back to the Scriptures as our only rule and authority. May we never be divided in our evaluation of the Bible and as a confessional church, may our confession (s) never become a dead letter to us. May our preaching and teaching be based on the whole of the Bible and may our distinctiveness never go beyond the confines of Scripture. So may our distinctiveness be a worthwhile distinctiveness, ever realizing that although no human interpretation of Christianity can lay claim to perfection, consistent Reformed and Calvinistic theology is Christianity in its purest and most nearly perfect expression. Let us always test the spirits, steadfastly refusing to detract even a little from our Reformed heritage, “earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to all the saints” (Jude 3), confident that where that faith is preached and taught, the Lord will build a strong and healthy church.”

Respectfully submitted, Vernon Pollema

### ***B. Stated Clerk’s Report (and Necrology)***

In accordance with the requirements of this office, your clerk has preserved the minutes of the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod with all supporting documents. An Abstract of the actions of Synod, including reports was prepared and published in accord with Standing Rule 10. Copies of this Abstract and a Directory of Congregations (1,670 Abstracts and 1,283 Directories of Congregations) were distributed to all ministers and congregations of Synod, as well as to all churches with which we maintain fraternal relations. The Index of Positions and Resolutions included in the Abstract was updated.

I would encourage all churches to look again at the number of Abstracts and Directories that are actually needed for their congregations and inform the clerk if there is a change needed for this year’s Abstract. It becomes costly to print and mail, if they are not all needed. In some cases more or fewer may be needed. Lawson Printing in Defiance, OH, has been doing this for a number of years. They are good to work

with, but it does take them quite long to get the product distributed.

The minutes and all supporting documents were scanned and saved on CD in Adobe pdf format. All Eureka Classis and Synod Minutes from 1983 through 2010 were saved on two separate external hard drives. One is kept by the clerk and one was sent to the chairman of the Synod Archives Committee. Hard paper copies are also saved, but are stored with the clerk in a fireproof file cabinet.

The Synod will need to decide where the Archives will be stored following the move of Rev. Fluck. There needs to be a safe and dry place to store the paper records as well. It is not a problem to forward the files for the hard drive storage, but there are also other records that need storage.

I did not receive any letter from the IRS concerning a tax due bill of \$15.00+. We do not file with the IRS, since we are non-profit organization without employees, so we will have to see if we hear from them in the future. On the matter of the list of congregations that fall under our group exemption, I was told that it was not necessary to file this annually unless there is an addition or deletion of a congregation. Since there were none this year, no filing was made. For information, our Federal Identification Number is 51-0202914 and the RCUS's Group Exemption number is 2092.

Not all the Classes information was sent to me on time this year. If one is late the compilation is delayed. Once again, it is very helpful if all committees and others making reports could send these to the clerk in digital word-processing format as opposed to just a pdf. file, so I would not have to retype or scan them. Please do remember to have a copy signed by a majority of the committee members for the Clerk to put into the records. With emailing reports this is often being neglected.

I sent invitations to all churches with which we have fraternal relations and to institutions that we support, to attend this year's Synod meeting. The new time for bringing addresses (Tuesday) was also noted. In addition, according to the new procedures we adopted last year, only two institutions were invited to send speakers for a five minute presentation. This year we invited Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and Covenant College. I have not heard back from Covenant College as to their attendance this year. Next year this should be rotated to include two other institutions that we support. I also invited all the supported institutions to come with displays to be set up at the Synod if they desire.

Four Necrologies that I have received accompany this report.

Finally, I do not wish to continue to serve as Stated Clerk of Synod next year, so I would respectfully decline a nomination for that office. I have spoken to some individuals that would be able and might be willing to provide this service in the future. I have enjoyed the work and hope I have done a satisfactory job, but the workload seems to increase with each passing year, or I am just getting slower. I have been serving as a Classis or Synod clerk now for 21 years and feel that it is time to turn this task over to someone else.

Thank you all for your cooperation during the past year.  
Sincerely in Christ, Paul H. Treick, Stated Clerk of the RCUS

## NECROLOGIES

**Elder Edward Peter William Treick** (1909-2010) was born on February 17, 1909, in the town of Newton, Wisconsin, at the same home where he lived all his life, and where he died. He was the oldest of three children of the late Ernst Henry and Hulda (Vriesen) Treick. He received the covenant sign of baptism on March 28, 1909, and professed his faith and was confirmed in April, 1924. He married the former Erna Rodewald on June 13, 1936, in Newton. She preceded him in death on March 29, 2002. He was a life-long member of Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church. He was in the fourth generation of Treicks, who were charter members after arriving from Germany.

Edward was a dairy farmer on the Treick homestead, active in the church choir, and served the church as an elder and in a number of capacities during his lifetime. On September 13, 2010, at the age of 101 years, it pleased Almighty God in His all-wise providence to suddenly call him to his everlasting rest with his Lord.

Edward leaves to mourn his death, three sons and daughters-in-law: Edward F. (Barbara) Treick, Tuscon, AZ; Rev. Donald W. (Myrene) Treick, Lookout Mountain, GA.; Rev. Paul H. (Karen) Treick, Modesto, CA; nine grandchildren; eleven great-grandchildren; two brothers-in-law: Alfred Hardrath, and Ray Goeke of Manitowoc. Nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends also survive. He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Erna, two sisters. Hildegarde Siemers; Ruth Hardrath; other brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Edward was a very private individual with a deep and abiding faith. In addition to spending several hours each day in Bible and devotional reading, he ended that day with a 30 minute verbal prayer, always in German, remembering the special needs of every family and church member.

Psalm 116 tells us that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" and by that we are all comforted.

**Elder Lloyd L. Waack** (1935-2010) was born March 1, 1935, in Manitowoc, son of the late Erhardt and Ruth Pleuss Waack. He attended schools in Manitowoc and graduated with the class of 1953 from Lincoln High School.

On June 2, 1956, he married the former Janet Voss at Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church, Newton. Lloyd was employed at the Manitowoc Company as a journeyman machinist for many years until his retirement in 1997.

Lloyd was a member of Salem Ebenezer Reformed Church, a Church Elder and a former member of the Consistory. He was a 50-year member of the Manitowoc Marine Band, Golden K, and is a former member of the Elroy Berkholtz, Carl Laack and the Die Tiroler Musikanten bands.

Lloyd L. Waack, at the age of 75, died peacefully on Aug. 13, 2010, surrounded by his family. One Scripture he found comfort in during his final years was Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ, Who strengthens me."

Survivors include his wife of 54 years, Janet Waack, Manitowoc; three children and their spouses: Lori and Steve Ball, Appleton; Keith and Patti Waack, Two Rivers, Jennifer and Patrick Pankratz, Manitowoc; six grandchildren: Stephanie Ball, Appleton; Ben Waack, Manitowoc; Zackary and Olivia Waack, Two Rivers; Lindsey and Ryan Pankratz, Manitowoc; two great-grandchildren: Caden and Jersie Pankratz, Manitowoc; two brothers: Leroy and Leonard Brouchoud, Manitowoc; two sisters and one brother-in-law: Mildred Fisher, Grafton; Marie (Francis) Sprang, Manitowoc; two sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law: Ruth (Russ) Truettner, Appleton; Robert (Pat) Voss, Manitowoc; nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends also survive. Lloyd was preceded in death by his parents: one sister-in-law and two brothers-in-law: Margaret Brouchoud, Bill Fisher and Bill Voss.

**Elder Frank Byron Krivohlavek**, 82, passed from this life into the presence of his faithful Saviour Jesus Christ on July 13, 2010, at Grass Valley, California. Frank was born on August 26, 1927, in San Jose, California. He grew up in northern California as one of three siblings. His early education was in a one room school house. His beloved teacher there instilled in him a life-long love for education and learning. Eventually his family moved to the San Francisco Bay area where he finished high school. During World War II he joined the U.S. Maritime Service in which he served until 1945. Following his Maritime service he married Bobbie J. Jones of Richmond, California. God blessed them with a long and happy marriage until her death in 1996. They had one child, Paulette, who unexpectedly preceded Frank in death in 2001. Paulette was a world renowned doll maker producing dolls for the United States White House and for the Disney Corporation.

Frank was an alumnus of the University of California, Berkeley. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry in 1950. He was employed by the FMC Corporation until his retirement in 1976. He enjoyed a colorful career managing chemical plants throughout the United States and traveling abroad to work with fellow industrial chemists in Germany. A highlight of his professional career was designing and overseeing the complete construction, opening, and operation of a soda ash chemical plant near Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

In 1992, Frank was converted to Christ by watching late night Christian television. He was powerfully convicted that he was lost and in need of Christ as His Savior. He joined a local Christian Reformed Church in Vacaville, California and became a serious student of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith.

After his wife's death in 1996, Frank moved to Grass Valley where the Lord led him to Covenant Reformed Church. He was a founding member of this congregation where he served as an active elder for almost thirteen years.

His wisdom, his love, and his practical advice were great gifts to this fledgling congregation.

Frank was an avid golfer and member of the United States Golf Association, the Northern California Golf Association, and the local Alta Sierra Country Club. At the Country Club he participated in a weekly Bible study. It was through a contact at this Bible study that he learned of a property available that led to Covenant Reformed Church purchasing its first and present building in downtown Grass Valley.

Frank loved people and enjoyed having a lot of friends. He was known and respected by all for his patience, kindness, and compassion. Although he had only one daughter, he was a father figure to many people. He was a man known for his steadfast faith in Christ which never wavered. He was always ready and generous with kind words of encouragement to others, even during the last few days of his life.

Frank's last words to his pastor, Dennis Roe, were, "I am ready for whatever the Lord wants to do."

Covenant Reformed Church at Grass Valley humbly and heartily gives thanks to the Lord for this "good and faithful servant" of Christ.

**Elder Cornelis "Case" Van Egmond** (1951-2010) was born on April 14, 1951 in Modesto, California to Gerardus and Cornelia Van Egmond, the eldest of four children. He was raised in Galt, California on his father's dairy. He was a faithful, loving family man, a devout Christian, and a hardworking dairyman. He owned and operated Sited Oak Dairy with his wife Marie and family for 32 years. Case loved the dairy industry. He was an integral part in the founding of Pacific Gold Milk Producers where he humbly accepted the role of President.

Case was Christ-like in many ways. He was a man of integrity who attempted to apply the Bible to all areas of life. He deeply loved his wife and children and chose to establish a dairy so that he could be close to home and raise his family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He was an active member of Providence Reformed Church, Lodi, CA, where he served faithfully as a deacon and later as an elder for many years. He was a wise counselor and even a father figure to both church members as well as to those outside the church. He had a heartfelt love for everyone he met and a great concern for the lost. He was quick to minister the gospel or give counsel at any time, day or night. Furthermore, he was instant in prayer whenever the need arose. The church militant lost a great servant and example when Case went home.

to be with his Heavenly Father on June 7, 2010 at the age of 59.

Elder Van Egmond is survived by his beautiful, caring wife of 38 years, Marie Van Egmond, and his loving children, Nellie, Gerald (Annette), Greg, Jeannie, and Cornelia "Lia", and three grandchildren, Lynn, Sarah, and Casey. He is also survived by his brother, Bill (Diane) Van Egmond; and sisters, Nellie Borges and Geri (Steve) Brumm; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his mother, Cornelia Van Egmond and followed by his father, Gerardus Van Egmond who passed into glory on December 26, 2010.

"His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Matthew 25:21

### **C. Treasurer's Report**

Esteemed Brothers:

Enclosed you should find treasurer's reports for the time period from February 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011. As you may recall, the 264<sup>th</sup> Synod changed the fiscal year so that it now runs from July 1 to June 30. This report still begins on February 1, 2010, so that it starts where the 2009/2010 report left off. Our cash balance decreased by \$8,808.74 to \$488,109.86 as of March 31, 2011. This cash balance includes \$10,000 which was received from the Eugene Mehlhaf Estate and is shown on the Profit & Loss Statement as other assets. The \$10,000 was received without any specific direction, so I will be asking Synod to give me direction as to how this money is to be applied.

The various church loans are shown on the report entitled "Loans Receivable". Since last year the building loan made to the church in Limon, Colorado has been paid off and the other churches with loans continue to make regular payments.

This year the special day of prayer offering went to La Habra, California. The offerings which went through Synod amounted to \$9,306.47.

The amount paid to the Ministerial Aid Fund to be invested was \$23,401.50. These funds were initially received from the Arthur Mehlhaf Estate. Last year I was directed to forward those funds to the Ministerial Aid fund. Guideline payments received for the Ministerial Aid Fund were in the amount of \$15,722.01. The MAF committee has recommended that I request this Synod for direction on how to invest those funds. The Ministerial Aid Fund increased by \$103,951.54 to \$1,106,451.35. The MAF committee has also recommended that this Synod provide input into when and what amount of these funds should be used for Ministerial Relief.

During the year the RCUS received \$50,000 from an anonymous donor with a request that it be distributed equally to ten specific churches. They are shown on page 2 of the Profit & Loss statement under Home Missions-exp and explain why some of the mission churches received more than was budgeted last year, and why there are distributions to various others that are not a part of the Home Missions budget.

You will note also on page 2 of the Profit & Loss statement that \$6,000 was forwarded to Rev. Thomas Mayville for diaconal aid. After the end of this report \$2191 of that aid was returned by Rev. Mayville.

The Profit & Loss statement would seem to indicate a discrepancy between the income and distribution to New Geneva Seminary during 2010/2011. Through some miscommunication the distribution for 2009/2010 was never cashed. The earlier check was voided and a new check was issued for both 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

Historically the reports you receive from me would have been audited. This year they are not. Generally an audit would be for the fiscal year, and since the fiscal year will not have been completed by the time we meet, I have chosen to present to you these reports and would recommend that after June 30, 2011 that a complete audit be done and that it then be mailed to each church.

Admittedly, the change in fiscal year has resulted in some unforeseen consequences. Grace RCUS in Greeley had been scheduled to come off of the Home Missions budget as of February 1, 2011. The action by last year's Synod would seemingly have resulted in that church continuing to receive Home Missions funds until June 30, 2011. I discussed this with the Treasurer of Grace and we decided that no Synod funds would be delivered to Grace after January 31, 2011. We felt that if this Synod believes that action is in error, it can simply direct me to pay to Grace those five months of payments.

There are other issues that have arisen regarding this change in fiscal year that I have chosen not to address in this report for fear of it becoming too voluminous. I have chosen to simply list those Standing Rules and Treasurer's Procedures that need to be reviewed and possibly revised by this Synod under Recommendations below.

I want to again thank Reverend Pollema and Clayton Greiman for reviewing my records and for your patience with me during the last year.

### **Recommendations:**

1. That Synod direct how it wants the \$10,000 received from the Eugene Mehlhaf Estate applied.
2. That Synod direct the treasurer as to how it desires the funds received from guideline payments for the Ministerial Aid Fund to be invested.
3. That Synod provide additional direction as to when and based on what formula it wants funds in the MAF to be withdrawn and used to pay for Ministerial Relief.
4. That in light of the change of the fiscal year of Synod that Standing Rules 1, 2, 6, and 7 be reviewed and revised as necessary.
5. That in light of the change of the fiscal year of Synod that Treasurer's Procedure Manual clauses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, and 18 be reviewed and revised as necessary.
6. That the treasurer be directed to have his books audited as soon after June 30, 2011 as is practical and to have those reports then forward to each of the churches.
7. That Synod provide to the treasurer direction as to whether or not to pay Grace RCUS in Greeley, Co an additional five months of Home Missions support.
8. That Synod provide to the treasurer direction as to what, if any, additional reports it would like to see at next year's meeting.

In Christ's service, *Ted S. Griess, Synod Treasurer*

## STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Cash Basis	1/31/2010	3/31/2011
Current Assets		
Cash	\$0.00	\$0.00
Checking	\$496,918.60	\$488,109.86
Other Assets		
Notes	\$102,857.14	\$85,992.70
Total Assets	\$599,775.74	\$574,102.56

## LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES

Liabilities	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fund Balances	\$599,775.74	\$574,102.56
Total Liab. & Fund Balances	\$599,775.74	\$574,102.56

## FUND BALANCES as of 3-31-11

	Beginning Bal.	Income	Expenses	Ending Bal.
Building Fund	\$68,074.86	17,989.76	0	\$86,064.62
Deficit Reduction	\$426.92	0	0	\$426.92
Diaconal	\$10,136.02	5,111.85	6,000	\$9,247.87
Dordt College	\$0.00	203.24	203.24	0
Foreign Ministries	\$90,153.28	125,056.87	98,311.03	\$116,899.12
Benevolence	\$1,156.18	47,417.43	45,863.00	\$2,710.61
Reformed Herald	(\$21,097.78)	25,724	30,620.05	(\$25,993.83)
Publications	\$84,993.21	26,153.03	4,165.55	\$106,980.69
Home Missions	\$173,649.47	102,151.58	132,379.23	\$143,421.82
Hope Haven	\$0.00	8,891.76	8,868.59	\$23.17
MERF	\$0.00	5,558.71	5,535.54	\$23.17
Ministerial Aid	\$0.00	15,722.01		\$15,722.01
Ministerial Relief	(\$13,582.30)	220,572.30	258,500.00	(\$51,510.00)
Seminaries	\$4,672.54	19,061.56	23,618.46	\$115.64
Student Aid	\$8,315.43	125.32	3,000.00	\$5,440.75
Dues	\$70,105.31	42,900.33	45,654.84	\$67,350.80
Other Assets	\$102,857.14	10,000	26,864.44	\$85,992.70
Unallocated Income	\$24,588.00		13,401.50	\$11,186.50
Total	\$604,448.28			\$574,102.56

LOANS RECEIVABLE

	Beginning Bal	Principle	Interest	Ending Bal
Grass Valley	\$6,193.47	3,618.10	147.31	\$2,575.37
Rock Springs	\$14,138.81	3,435.52	380.78	\$10,703.29
Limon	\$1,126.01	1,126.01	7.01	\$0.00
Modesto	\$32,398.85	6,112.81	211.11	\$26,286.04
Aberdeen	\$50,000	3,572.00	1500	\$46,428.00
				\$85,992.70

PROFIT & LOSS SUMMARIES

(Feb. 2010 through March 2011)

INCOME

Benevolence	\$47,417.43
Building Fund	17,989.76
Diaconal	5,111.85
Dordt College	203.24
Dues	42,900.33
Foreign Ministries	125,056.87
Home Missions	102,151.58
Hope Haven	8,891.76
MERF	5,558.71
Ministerial Aid	15,722.01
Ministerial Relief	220,572.30
Publications	51,877.03
Seminaries	19,061.56
Student Aid	125.32
Unallocated	-23,401.50
TOTAL	649,238.25

EXPENSES

Benevolence	45,863.00
Diaconal	6,000.00
Dordt College	203.24
Dues	45,654.84
Foreign Ministries	98,311.03
Home Missions	132,379.23
Hope Haven	8,868.59
MERF	5,535.54
Ministerial Relief	258,500.00
Publications	34,785.60
Seminaries	23,618.46
Student Aid	3,000.00
TOTAL	662,719.53
Net Income	-13,481.28

## MINISTERIAL AID FUND

Certificates of Deposit	
Dakota Bank	\$239,327.90
Wells Fargo	\$103,514.54
Total CD Value	\$342,842.44
Mutual Fund Accounts	
American Funds	\$604,624.67
Vanguard Funds	\$158,984.24
Total Mutual Funds	\$763,608.91
TOTAL MAF FUNDS	\$1,106,451.35

**X. Membership and Financial Statistics**

The report of the Membership and Financial Statistics was adopted and is printed in the appendix of this Abstract.

**XI. Reports from RCUS Fraternal Delegates**

All reports are included in the Interchurch Relations Committee report in this Abstract.

**XII. Addresses by Delegates from other Reformed Churches, Institutional Representatives**

Rev. Tom Tyson, fraternal delegate from the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, brought fraternal greetings to the assembly on behalf of the OPC. Rev. Ralph Pontier, fraternal delegate from the United Reformed Churches in North America brought fraternal greetings to the assembly on behalf of the URCNA. Rev. Joe Poppe, fraternal delegate of the Canadian Reformed Churches, brought fraternal greetings to the assembly on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Dr. Joseph Pipa, President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, addressed the body on behalf of the seminary.

Mr. Virgil Tinklenberg addressed the body regarding the work of ITEM – International Theological Education Ministries.

**XIII. Reports of Board Members and Liaisons*****Mid-America Reformed Seminary***

Esteemed Brethren:

It has been an honor to serve as the RCUS representative on the Board of Mid-America Reformed Seminary. I have completed my first three-year term, and as is customary, will stand for nomination to another term.

Although I was unable to attend last week, the seminary graduated four men this year at the 26th commencement exercises. Mid-America continues, I believe, to faithfully train men for the gospel ministry in service to the church. The total student body numbers around twenty men enrolled in Master of Divinity and Master of Theological Studies degree programs. In addition to its five-year accreditation with The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the Seminary is thankful for another milestone reached this year, having been fully-accredited with the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS) for a period of ten years. The Seminary is also grateful that the overall financial condition has improved over last year.

As secretary of the Faculty Development Committee, much of my time was involved in the search for a new professor in New Testament Studies, in light of Dr. Kloosterman's decision to discontinue his work as full-time professor as of December 31, 2010. After an extensive search, and upon a unanimous vote of the Board, Mr. Marcus Miniger was appointed to that position at the Instructor level as of January 1, 2011. He has since completed his doctoral studies at Westminster Theological Seminary, and has been ordained as a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Although I don't have liberty to speak as to all the details of the process, I would be happy to try to answer any questions delegates might have.

A new Alumni Council was begun in 2010 for the purpose of promoting a unified fellowship for communication, promotion, and support of the Seminary through prayer, student recruitment, financial giving, and godly representation. I heartily encourage my fellow Mid-America alumni in the RCUS to participate in this organization as it develops further.

From my perspective, I am greatly encouraged about the future of the Seminary, as it continues to remain faithful to Scripture and to the Reformed Confessions, as well as to its mission in serving the Reformed community, and is worthy of our whole-hearted continued support.

Recommendation: That the guideline for Mid-America Reformed Seminary continue at \$2.00 per communicant member.  
Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted, Jon Blair

***Dordt College***

Esteemed Brethren,

I attended my first Dordt College Board of Trustees meeting in April 2010, right before last year's Synod meeting. When I learned of Synod's actions to suspend Dordt from the list of approved colleges and send a letter of pastoral admonishment to the College, I thought that being a Dordt board member may be more interesting for me than I'd anticipated!

You have already or will receive copies of the correspondence to and from the Dordt Board regarding these matters, and I will add only a couple of comments related to this subject. I understand at some point the RCUS and individual churches and families may decide to discontinue their support of institutions, but I regret to see the RCUS terminate its connection to the college and presumably thereby with it the counsel, input and accountability it provides Dordt. I am thankful for the work that the Sub-Committee to Confer with Dordt College has done recently and over the years in maintaining a dialogue with the college. I can affirm that as the April 2011 letter states the Board and administration appreciate this relationship and input, and frankly would like to see more churches take a more active approach as the RCUS has done.

Dordt's President Zylstra announced at our April 2011 meeting that that he will step down after the 2011-12 academic year. Dr. Zylstra, who has served as president since 1996, is Dordt's third president. The Board is beginning the search process for a new president. Obviously this is a critical task for the Board and step for the college, as the president plays a key role in leading the college and its faculty and staff, and in interacting with the college's constituency.

The Board continues a discussion it has been engaged in for several years about the governance of the college, including the "ownership" of the college by its constituency and the engagement of that constituency in ways that it continues to "own" the college's mission. I anticipate that the Board will continue to consider these issues for some time and not make any changes too quickly.

The Board continues to be active in the interview process of faculty, and has affirmed the current practice of regular faculty and upper level administrative interviews at various stages of service. Dordt's tuition continues to increase at approximately 5% per year, similar to other private colleges and those that are similar to Dordt. Interestingly over the past 10 years the average actual out of pocket cost of education for students has been relatively flat given the increase in government aid/tax benefits and institutional support/scholarships. This cannot and will not continue in the future so Dordt like the rest of the market will have to adjust in the coming years.

Respectfully submitted, Jay Kroese

***Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary***

We arrived 2 days early and drove down over Charleston to enjoy the flavor of the deep south. And when I say flavor, if you are ever in Charleston you must order anything bar-b-qued. But enough of that, I do consider it a privilege to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

As Dr. Pipa pointed out I am only able to attend one board meeting a year do to the fact that their board meets at the same time as our Synod. God blessed the Seminary with a great end of year income in 2009. All the bills were paid in full and also \$120,000 principle was paid on the mortgage.

I have received reports for the board meeting this year and noted that there are 58 registered Enrollment of Students as of May 3, 2011. Should note that three of the students are audit only

Out of the above 58 students 2 are foreign so there is also an foreign missions outreach at Greenville Seminary. As for the coming year, Dr. Pipa informed me that there are 11 new students already approved and 12 new students still in process for approval.

Of the resident student body there are presently 7 foreign countries represented and another 3 in the distance program (that is including the higher degree program).

Currently there are six full-time professors, one part-time, and six regular adjuncts. In the reports provided it was noted that our Media Director, Jeff Downs continues to do a good job in the outreach activities of the Seminary.

What I personally appreciate is that the Seminary that holds carefully to the historic truths of the Reformed faith. And I would point out that throughout the discussions amongst the members of the board it has become quite evident that this is a real concern of the Board membership.

Being one of the new kids on the block I have thus far been careful to listen and to observe but hope that in the future I will be able to make some contribution to the school in behalf of the Synod.

I remain your servant in Christ, Wes Brice

***Hope Haven***

Rev. Ron Morris gave an oral report.

***Radio Administration Committee***

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

The work of the Reformed Radio Administration Committee (RRAC) which oversees the production of *Reformed Faith and Life – French* (RFL) radio broadcast remains active in promoting and guiding the work of bringing the Gospel to the lost. We are in our twelfth year of this radio mission enterprise. The target areas are in various places where the French language is understood. This is primarily in French-speaking Africa, France, Madagascar, the Carribean, and Quebec, Canada. The Lord continues to bless this work as it reaches new listeners daily and builds up the saints in some very remote areas of the world.

The RRAC met on Tuesday, September 28, 2010, at the Lynwood URC in Lynwood, IL. The ladies of the church graciously supplied a lunch for us. Committee members from the RCUS in attendance were Rev. Neale Riffert and Rev. Paul Treick. Rev. Eric Kayayan, associate pastor of Rietvallei Reformed Church in South Africa, was present to meet with the committee which was composed of URCNA and RCUS representatives.

Eric reports that he has about 500 programs available and is re-recording some for technical reasons. The series for children also continues on a regular basis (150 programs produced thus far). Rev. Kayayan reports that a series of short programs (3-4 minutes) has grown to about 30. These are for use at FM stations in France.

TransWorld Radio still supplies the technical support for recording (paid by RFL in Pretoria, SA) while the RRAC pays for airtime. FEBA radio is also paid for from RRAC funds.

This past year Rev. Kayayan traveled extensively on side trips to promote the work of Reformed Faith and Life radio. He attended the EuCRC conference in March and was allowed to speak of RFL there. He has been seeking cooperation for this ministry also in Ireland and Scotland.

The programs run regularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo thanks to cooperation of the CREED center in Kinshasa. The church which takes responsibility for this broadcast pays the station directly, so this cost is not seen in the RRAC budget. A congregation in Pretoria is seeking to take responsibility for a broadcast n to Kivu region (Kindu, East of the DRC). It is hoped the more broadcasts can be sent to Mali (predominantly Muslim) as funds are available.

Rev. Kayayan reports, "For 12 years we have been distributing all over Africa books written and published by my father, the late Rev. A. R. Kayayan. Quite a few of them were reprinted in 2002. Several titles are currently out of print and need to be made available again. In particular the volume on Reformed Confessions of faith needs attention. It is still very much in demand. Also, I have produced enough material in terms of radio programs to be able to publish another book myself. However putting it together is a long and delicate process. Besides, it would require a special budget."

Financially, the work of Reformed Faith and Life is always a struggle, yet by the grace of God we are able to continue the work and not cut back on any broadcasts. Greater support would mean that more air time could be purchased in some regions, but we have not increased our expense budget for the coming year. TransWorld Radio assists in the production of the programs and FEBA Radio is one of the broadcast partners that has been reestablished.

The support in North America is primarily from the RCUS and URCNA (in the U. S. and Canada). The Rietvallei Church has also given good financial support in this work. The total budget for the entire work remains at about \$95,000 of which \$72,000 is expected to come from North America. Our Foreign Ministries Committee has a proposed budget of \$17,000 in this year's report, which is badly needed. Financial support from Canada has been increasing. Many of our congregations have also sent money directly to RRAC to support various projects, and this is very much needed and appreciated. Frankly, the RRAC runs on a month to month financial basis, with very little balance (sometimes negative) at the end of each month.

We extend our sympathy to Rev. Kayayan whose mother, Carmen, also went to be with the Lord this past year. He was able to be with her in Michigan just before her passing. This summer, Rev. Kayayan will be visiting with his sister in Grand Rapids, taking his daughter along. For that reason, he will not be coming for the Fall meeting of RRAC. It was decided that this year the committee would not meet together in Lynwood, Indiana, as in the past. We will try to do our work over the internet this year (Skype or just emails).

We are very blessed to have Rev. Eric Kayayan as a committed Reformed broadcaster to the French-speaking world. He has worked faithfully and sacrificially to produce a variety of programs for broadcast. It is rare and a great opportunity to have a Reformed radio broadcast that is able to reach millions in the French-speaking world. The ministry to the Islamic regions is very important at this time. The response, mostly by email, from listeners continues. There is follow-up with more published programs and material as it is available.

To learn more about the work of RFL, check out the Website at [www.foi-vie.org.za](http://www.foi-vie.org.za). We would urge everyone to give their support to our portion of the RFL budget, and remember this work in prayer in your congregations. If you are looking for a specific program for your congregation to support, you may contact Rev. Kayayan.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Paul Treick, Rev. Neale Riffert, Rev. Dan Schnabel.*

### ***Reformed Herald - Editor's Report***

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

Another year has passed as Editor of the *Reformed Herald*. The concept of this publication is that it go to every family in the RCUS to be instructive and informative. I hope we are encouraging all members to read it.

We try to run as much congregational news as possible since our congregations are wide-spread, and we need to know how to pray for other congregation's joys and needs. However, these news items have been few. Pictures to accompany the news is always welcome. We could use more information on conferences, special service, youth camps, etc., that are held by congregations.

Our printing is still done in Canada at Premier Printing. They have a new set-up person recently, and hope that they will adapt to the job they have done in the past. In addition to the set-up, printing, and slow mail service, there are other reasons for the tardiness of some issues of the Herald – at times it is the workload of the Editor, and at times there are no articles sent for print.

This year I sent out a list of requested articles several times to remind the authors. I was hoping to run a better series on the lives and needs of our young people. Some articles were published, but a number were never submitted. I understand that everyone already has a heavy workload, and would just encourage authors to try to get good material for printing. We have been running a series on the creeds of the church along with some historical accounts. Some of these assignments were not submitted, but I hope that we can continue with these.

I had one suggestion that I am interested in for the next year. It was pointed out that not everyone knows our ministers anymore. We have new ministers and new members who don't know the older ones. It was suggested that we run a short article introducing the pastors giving background and family information. A picture to accompany these would be a good addition. Perhaps the Editorial Committee would like to give some suggestions on this as well.

We publish the President's Report and Classis reports for the various classes. It would be good if these were sent to the editor in a more timely fashion.

I trust that each congregation has looked over its mailing list this past year. If not, please do, and make sure that your congregation sends in the funds per subscription received by your members.

Again, I am grateful for the contributions received, and would ask that when you submit material, please take out all unnecessary formatting. It is a very time-consuming task to change these to a format that can be published. We **never** use underlining; sometimes *italics* and rarely ALL-CAPITALS. To see the format for Bible quotations, please refer to a previous issue.

Once again I am thankful for the work of Rev. Eric Bristley who has done a great job with design and is a big help to the editor. Rev. Frank Walker also faithfully updates the address list and sends it to the company in Canada that places the addresses on each issue. Any updates on subscriptions should be sent directly to him.

I have indicated to the Publications Committee that I would be willing to serve as Editor for the next year, if that is the will of the Synod. I may have a little more time next year than in the past.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Paul Treick

## **XIV. Special Committee Reports**

[Unless otherwise noted, recommendations of the committees were adopted]

### ***A. To Study Belgic Confession, article 9***

Esteemed Fathers and Brothers,

The mandate of your Committee was to study the Belgic Confession, Article 9, with reference to the wording “and the Holy Spirit appeared in the shape of a dove” (See 2010 Abstract of the Minutes of Synod, page 17). We understand this mandate to be to study whether this wording has enough Biblical support to require the subscription of our church officers. To put the question another way: Is it certain that the bodily shape that descended on Christ was that of a dove, or could it have been another shape?

This question is particularly important for two reasons. First, the majority opinion of exegetes and commentators is decisively in favor of the Holy Spirit assuming the appearance of a dove at Christ’s baptism. However, your committee is at a loss to find any commentator who gives a defense or analysis of this position. And second, the ordination vows of church officers in the RCUS require that “all the articles and points of doctrine” in our confessions “are in complete and accurate agreement with the Word of God.” Therefore, it is your committee’s belief that we must not bind any officer to a point concerning which there may be a legitimate difference of interpretation.

The committee would also like to thank those who responded to our request for your thoughts. The suggestions we received were very helpful.

### QUESTIONS NOT AT ISSUE

1. This is not a Second Commandment issue. God appears in several “theophanies” throughout Scripture, as, for example, three men visiting Abraham, or a single person visiting Samson’s parents. This does not mean that God Himself has a human form or may be imaged by us under a human form. The same thing is true of the “bodily appearance” of the Holy Spirit at Christ’s baptism. The use of doves to symbolize the Holy Spirit remains a violation of the Second Commandment. The Southern Presbyterian theologian Robert Dabney makes this point on page 362 of his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*.
2. The issue is not whether there was a bodily appearance that was visible to the human eye of those who witnessed Christ’s baptism, at least to John the Baptist. John’s own testimony in the Gospel of John makes this clear (see verses 33–34).
3. The Greek text and its wording are not at issue. Indeed there is uniformity in the phrasing of each of the occurrences of the phrase “descending upon Him as a dove,” with the exception of the addition of “bodily appearance” in Luke 3:22, which the Belgic Confession paraphrases rather than quotes. Here is the wording from the Gospels, using the 2005 edition of the Robinson-Pierpont Majority Textform (with the pertinent words in bold):
  - a. Καὶ βαπτισθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέβη εὐθὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ ἰδοὺ, ἀνεώχθησαν αὐτῷ οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδεν **τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν** καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπ’ αὐτόν (Matt. 3:16).
  - b. Καὶ εὐθέως ἀναβαίνων ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος, εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ **τὸ πνεῦμα ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον ἐπ’ αὐτόν** (Mark 1:10).
  - c. καὶ **καταβῆναι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον σωματικῶ εἶδει ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν** ἐπ’ αὐτόν, καὶ φωνὴν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ γενέσθαι, λέγουσαν, Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα (Luke 3:22).
  - d. Καὶ ἐμαρτύρησεν Ἰωάννης λέγων ὅτι Τεθέαμαι **τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ περιστερὰν** ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν (John 1:32).

### HISTORICAL STUDIES

#### TEXT OF THE CONFESSION

1. The text of the Belgic Confession going back to its earliest available copies, and including the original French text, uses the phrase “the Holy Spirit (Ghost) being present in the shape (form) of a dove” (*le Saint-Esprit apparaît en forme de colombe*) There is no doubt that this is the phrase original to the Confession.
2. The phrase itself has several antecedents in the writings of the early Church Fathers, as follows:
  - a. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue 88*) first described the Spirit’s descent much as we have it in the Gospels, viz., “the Holy Ghost lighted on Him like a dove” (ὡς περιστερὰν τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐπιπτῆναι ἐπ’

αὐτὸν). A few sentences later, he paraphrased the account using a descriptive genitive, viz., “lighted on Him in the form of a dove” (ἐν εἶδει περιστερᾶς ἐπέπτη αὐτῷ).

- b. Normally, Justin’s testimony would carry considerable weight, since his native language was the Koine Greek of the New Testament. However, he also reported that “a fire was kindled in the Jordan” when Jesus stepped into the water. This detail does not come from the Gospels, but from one of several apocryphal works.
  - i. In *de Baptismo Haereticorum*, Cyprian mentioned an apocryphal book called *Praedicatio Petri* that describes a fire above the water at Christ’s baptism.
  - ii. However, a more likely source was the Ebionite Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is only preserved in fragments in the writings of Epiphanius, a fourth-century bishop of Salamis. According to Epiphanius’ *Panarion* 30.3, this apocryphal work also says that John saw the Holy Spirit “in the form of a dove” (ἐν εἶδει περιστερᾶς).
  - iii. With Justin’s apparent use of non-canonical material, it’s possible that his understanding of the Spirit’s descent was derived more from these sources than from Scripture.
- c. Clement of Alexandria commented on Luke 3:22 as follows: “God here assumed the ‘likeness’ not of a man, but ‘of a dove,’ because He wished, by a new apparition of the Spirit in the likeness of a dove, to declare His simplicity and majesty” (*Fragments*).
- d. In his apologetic work against Celsus, Origen mentioned the Spirit’s descent at Christ’s baptism on two separate occasions.
  - i. In 1.40, he noted with disapproval that Celsus “attacks the account of the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the baptism” (φανέντος ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐν εἶδει περιστερᾶς).
  - ii. In 1.43, he observed that Celsus’ argument against a Jew who “disbelieves the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove” (τῷ περὶ τοῦ εἴδους τῆς περιστερᾶς φάσματι τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος) would have been more convincing if he had kept in mind that the Jew accepted the writings of the prophets, which contain things more incredible than “the narrative of the appearance of the dove” (τῆς περὶ τοῦ εἴδους τῆς περιστερᾶς ἱστορίας).
  - iii. But, again, can we take Origen’s interpretation at face value? His inclination to allegorize, supplement and replace the details of Scripture based on his own understanding calls this into question. Even more problematic is the fact that the references above employ, at least in some points, *ad hominem* argumentation, which may or may not reflect his own opinions.
- e. Tertullian, an early Latin Father, was even more extreme in his view than the Greek Fathers. He argued that the Gospel of John “declares that the Spirit descended in the body of a dove” (*spiritum columbae corpore lapsum*), and that “He was as truly a dove as He was also a spirit; nor did He destroy His own proper substance by the assumption of an extraneous substance” (*tam vere erat et columba quam et spiritus, nec interfecerat substantiam propriam assumpta substantia extranea*).
- f. Augustine was by far the most prolific writer on this topic. Consider the following:
  - i. From Letter 169
    1. “... the Holy Spirit is seen in the bodily form of a dove ...” (2.5)
    2. “...neither the voice of the Father, nor the body and soul of the Son, nor the dove of the Holy Spirit, was produced in any other way than by the combined operation of the Trinity” (2.6).
    3. “Neither was that form of a dove made indissolubly one with the person of the Holy Spirit ...” (2.7).
    4. “As for the sound of the voice, however, and the bodily form of a dove, and the cloven tongues which sat upon each of them, these, like the terrible wonders wrought at Sinai, and like the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, were produced only as symbols, and vanished when this purpose had been served” (2.9).
    5. “We do not, therefore, need to inquire how the bodily form of the dove appeared to the eye, just as we do not need to inquire how the voice of a bodily form capable of speech was made to fall upon the ear” (3.10).
  - ii. In the *City of God*, he commented on John 1:32 as follows: “The Holy Spirit was given to Him, and was manifested, as the evangelist testifies, in the form of a dove” (20.30.4).
  - iii. From his work on the Trinity:
    1. He denied that “this Trinity [i.e., the whole Trinity] descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized” (1.4.7).

2. "...none except the Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove.... the very same Trinity itself wrought that form of a dove, in which the Holy Spirit only appeared" (1.5.8).
  3. "For in due time a certain outward appearance of the creature was wrought, wherein the Holy Spirit might be visibly shown; whether when He descended upon the Lord Himself in a bodily shape as a dove, or when, ten days having past since His ascension, on the day of Pentecost a sound came suddenly from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues like as of fire were seen upon them, and it sat upon each of them. This operation, visibly exhibited, and presented to mortal eyes, is called the sending of the Holy Spirit; not that His very substance appeared, in which He himself also is invisible and unchangeable, like the Father and the Son, but that the hearts of men, touched by things seen outwardly, might be turned from the manifestation in time of Him as coming to His hidden eternity as ever present" (2.5.10).
  4. See also 2.6.11; 2.7.13; 2.9.15; 2.10.18; 3.1.4; 3.11.27; 4.21.30; 4:20.31; and 15.26.46.
3. Since Guido de Bres had the French (Gallican) Confession of 1559 before him as he wrote the Belgic Confession (as is universally agreed and shown by the order of Articles and the exact wording of several of them), it is interesting to note that the French Confession does not include this phrase, and indeed lacks an article that, like Article 9 of the Belgic, is designed to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from Scripture. Thus one would conclude that the phrase "the Holy Spirit being present in the shape of a dove" is original with de Bres for inclusion in a Confession, though it has other antecedents.
  4. The only other Reformed confession that attributes a dove-like appearance to the Holy Spirit is the Second Helvetic, which says in its third chapter that "the Holy Spirit also appeared in the form of a dove (John 1:32)" (*Adparebat et Spiritus Sanctus in specie columbæ*).

#### COMMENTARIES ON LUKE 3:22 AND JOHN 1:32

1. The notion that the Holy Spirit assumed a dove-like appearance is common throughout the church. It has been the opinion of commentators like John Calvin (see especially his commentary on the synoptic Gospels); Matthew Henry, Albert Barnes, Matthew Poole, David Brown, H.D.M. Spence, Marvin Vincent, I. Howard Marshall, William Hendriksen, Leon Morris, John Nolland, and A.T. Robertson. Even the Reformation Study Bible contains the following somewhat speculative comment: "The Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove reminds us of the Spirit's creative activity in Gen. 1:2 and may point to the beginning of the new creation through the ministry of Jesus."
2. Several theologians of note also hold this opinion, including Louis Berkhof, Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, R.C. Sproul, Gerhardus Vos, and Wilhelmus à Brakel.
3. However, the opinion that the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove is by no means universal. Consider the following:
  - a. The Puritan John Gill was not at all convinced that the bodily appearance was that of a dove. He wrote in his *Exposition of the Whole Bible*:
    - i. "The descent of him was in a 'bodily shape,' as Luke says in Luke 3:22, either in the shape of a dove, which is a very fit emblem of the Spirit of God who descended, and the fruits thereof, such as simplicity, meekness, love and also of the dove-like innocence, humility, and affection of Christ, on whom he lighted; or it was in some other visible form, not expressed, which pretty much resembled the hovering and lighting of a dove upon anything: for it does not necessarily follow from any of the accounts the Evangelists give of this matter, that the holy Spirit assumed, or appeared in, the form of a dove; only that his visible descent and lighting on Christ was ὡσεὶ περιστερᾶν, as a dove descends, hovers and lights; which does not necessarily design the form of the creature, but the manner of its motion" (on Matt. 3:16).
    - ii. "... like a dove upon him; either in the form of a dove, or this corporeal form, whatever it was, descended and hovered on him as a dove does" (on Luke 3:22).
    - iii. However, in his commentary on Mark 1:10, he expressed himself more favorably toward a dove-like appearance of the Spirit based on the fact that Mark used a different word order than Matthew. He wrote, "The position of these words here, is a little different from that in Matthew 3:16; there it is, 'the Spirit of God descending like a dove'; which seems rather to point out the manner of his descent, than the form in which he descended: here it is put, 'the Spirit like a dove descending on him'; which seems rather to incline to such a sense, that the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, as well as descended like one; and both may be designed, and indeed the latter follows upon the former."
  - b. John Wesley, though hardly a Calvinist, but nevertheless no slouch in understanding the Greek language (men who matriculated at Oxford during the 1700s were required to master Greek and Latin before applying) says of the bodily appearance, "St. Luke adds, in a bodily form—Probably in a glorious appearance of fire, perhaps in the shape of a dove, descending with a hovering motion, till it rested upon him" (on Matt. 3:16). This shows a sensitivity to the possibility that the Gospel writers may have been describing the manner of the Spirit's descent rather than his appearance to the eye.

- c. In his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew in the *New American Commentary* series, Craig L. Blomberg agreed, although he also added some unnecessary speculation: “First, the Holy Spirit descends ‘like’ a dove, which suggests that no actual bird appeared but that some visible manifestation of the Spirit led observers to recognize that God was revealing himself through those attributes regularly associated with a dove—e.g., superintending over creation (cf. Gen 1:2), offering peace (as in Gen 8:10), gentleness in contrast to the judgment of vv. 7–12, or as ‘the loving character of divine life itself’” (*in loc.*).
  - d. Likewise, Barclay M. Newman wrote, “One commentator, on the basis of Luke’s interpretation (Luke 3:22: ‘in bodily form like a dove’), states that the phrase *like a dove* ‘must mean like a dove in appearance.’ However, on the basis of the Greek text, it is more appropriate to connect the phrase *like a dove* with the participle *descending*. In this case the meaning is ‘descending in the way that a dove descends.’ Regardless of the Lukan interpretation, we are here translating the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew’s concern is different from that of Luke, and it is extremely doubtful if anyone would ever have thought to interpret his words in this manner, had it not been for the Lukan parallel. The phrase can be translated ‘Coming down in the way a dove does’ or ‘Coming down on him the way a dove flies down’” (*Matthew, in loc.*).
4. What this shows, of course, is that in the history of commentary, there is not complete unanimity that the appearance was that of a dove.
5. Thus, the widespread conclusion that the bodily shape that appeared at Christ’s baptism was that of a dove is based on circumstantial inference, a legitimate form of hermeneutic, but in this case not a necessary inference.

#### GRAMMATICAL EXEGESIS OF THE PASSAGES

1. Word Usage. Each of the occurrences of the description of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ in the four Gospels uses the same language, with the addition of “bodily appearance” in Luke, as noted above. Since it is highly unlikely that Luke and Mark were eyewitnesses of Christ’s baptism, it would seem that this verbal description of what happened at the time of Christ’s baptism was common among Christians by AD 70, by which time all of the New Testament books were undoubtedly written (see John A.T. Robinson’s, *Redating the New Testament*, for a validation of the conservative Bible-believer’s views on this issue).
- a. In every case the word that relates the Holy Spirit to a dove is the comparative particle ὡσεῖ. Even in the three cases where the Eclectic Text has ὡς instead of ὡσεῖ (Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; and John 1:32), the meaning is virtually the same, since ὡσεῖ is derived from ὡς (from the relative pronoun ὅς) and εἰ. Thus, ὡσεῖ literally means “as if” or “as it were.” In that regard, it is somewhat more emphatic than ὡς.
    - i. Major lexicons and grammars identify several uses for ὡς. Most of the uses cited are adverbial (introducing purpose, result or temporal clauses, etc.), although, as with adverbs in general, it can also be used in other constructions. In Matthew 15:28, for example, the phrase ὡς θέλεις is used substantively as the subject of the verb γενηθήτω (see BAGD for additional examples). However, the most common use of ὡς by far is to compare the manner of action, i.e., one action takes place in the same manner as another action.
    - ii. Lexicons and grammars also agree that ὡσεῖ retains the full force of its constituent parts. This means that, while “as a dove in manner” and “as a dove in appearance” are both possible interpretations of the baptismal narratives, both being adverbial, the former is more likely, retaining the expected meaning of ὡς.
  - b. It is also significant that each of the four Gospels, according to the Majority Text, uses ὡσεῖ, instead of ὡς. This significance lies in the fact that the former occurs infrequently compared to the latter. The 2005 Robinson-Pierpont text has ὡς 499 times, but ὡσεῖ only 31 times. The numbers are only slightly different in the Hodges-Farstad Majority Text, which has ὡς 494 times and ὡσεῖ 29 times. This suggests that each of the Gospel writers purposely chose the less common word because it was slightly more emphatic.
    - i. Of the 31 times that ὡσεῖ appears in the Robinson-Pierpont Text, sixteen are used to express approximate numbers, times or distances. In these cases it is translated “about,” as in “about five thousand.” This leaves fifteen non-numerical uses of ὡσεῖ, of which five (or one-third) describe the descent of the Holy Spirit at Christ’s baptism (the four Gospels) and on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3).
    - ii. The use of ὡσεῖ, and no other word, to relate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ makes it even more likely that it’s the manner of descent that is similar to that of a dove, and not his appearance.

- iii. Interestingly, ὡσεὶ is even less common in the Eclectic Text, which shows that it was gradually being replaced with the more common ὡς. The former occurs a mere 21 times in the UBS4/NA27 Text, while the latter appears 504 times. This makes its consistent use in the baptismal narratives stand out even more.
2. There are very good ways to make it clear in Greek that the bodily form that appeared at Christ's baptism was that of a dove, if that had been in fact what the Gospel writers wanted to say. They could have used the word ὄμιος or a descriptive genitive (as we saw with the Greek Fathers cited above). But this is not what we find in any of these Scriptures. Usage favors ὡσεὶ expressing the manner of the Spirit's descent, not the Spirit's appearance while descending. However, this is not something that we can be absolutely dogmatic about. There is a principle here that needs to be observed, "The Bible does not say what its words do not say." Therefore, neither view should be confessionally binding on church officers.
3. The fact that the passages besides Luke 3:22, which is the one place the phrase "in a bodily appearance" occurs can state the same truth, that the Holy Spirit descended as a dove, without mentioning a "bodily appearance" only serves to strengthen the conclusion that the shape of the bodily appearance is not at all essential to our understanding of what happened.
4. This is not at all to deny that a bodily appearance did appear, it most certainly did, but for us to conclude that that appearance was most certainly that of a dove is simply not in the text itself.
5. The difficulty of concluding anything in particular about the shape of the Spirit's "bodily appearance" that would exclude other possible shapes can be illustrated by using the same words in a completely different context, e.g., "Under the control of a skilled crane operator, the boxcar descended physically like a dove and rested on the tracks."

#### **THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. God may and does use any bodily appearance He wishes when He reveals Himself in what we call a "theophany." So He may well have used a dove as a theophany of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless the text of Scripture simply does not support this conclusion but only that some bodily form or other did appear. Indeed, noting the uniformity of expression used in the texts before us, one might conclude that God purposely avoided telling us what the form looked like. Perhaps, so that "we might have no earthly thought of the heavenly majesty of God," as the Heidelberg puts it.
2. It's also possible, though far from certain, that the "bodily appearance" that descended on Christ at his baptism was fire, since that's how the Holy Spirit manifested himself at Pentecost. Two factors suggest this might have been the case. Consider the following:
  - a. John prophesies that Christ would "baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." It would thus be fitting that Christ Himself would be baptized with the appearance of fire, and it would fit well with what happened on Pentecost, thus confirming that disciples were indeed experiencing that John prophesied, and what Jesus Himself promised them in Acts 1:4–5, as the fulfillment of John's prophecy.
  - b. This would also explain the apocryphal accounts of fire appearing in, on or above the water at Christ's baptism, as noted earlier.
3. The fact that the Holy Spirit or His character is nowhere else in Scripture described as being like a dove also weighs against concluding that His appearance at Christ's baptism was necessarily in the form of a dove.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

1. That while the position that the "bodily appearance" that visibly descended upon Christ was that of a dove is certainly not anti-scriptural, and may even well be the case, it is going beyond Scripture to hold that it is required by the text itself, or is the only possible understanding of it.
2. That the position that the "bodily appearance" descending of Christ was likely that of a flame or tongue of fire, or even some other form, is not anti-scriptural either, because the text itself does not make only one possible conclusion necessary.

3. Perhaps the best approach would be to reserve judgment and not define the “bodily appearance” at all (as the statement in the Belgic Confession does), but to say what the Bible says and leave it at that. Your committee believes that the ASV (1901) has the best translation of Luke 3:22. Its use of a comma after “form” highlights the adverbial meaning of “as a dove” without requiring any particular interpretation (“as a dove in manner” versus “as a dove in appearance”).
  - a. This enables the Church to require a confession of the deity of the Holy Spirit without requiring the adoption of only one possible interpretation of the proof text.
  - b. It also follows the lead of our brethren in the Canadian/American Reformed Churches in their version of the Belgic Confession.
  - c. It makes Article 9 of the Belgic Confession more consistent with Article 7, which warns against considering the “writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God.” Our confession needs to reflect the teaching of Scripture and nothing else.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Synod of the RCUS, with concurrence of the Classes, amend our text of the Belgic Confession by replacing the words “and the Holy Spirit appeared in the shape of a dove,” with the Biblical text itself, “and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove,” from the American Standard Version of the Bible. [DEFEATED]

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Robert Grossmann, Rev. Jim Sawtelle, Rev. Frank Walker, Elder James Ochsner, Elder David Helseth.*

#### ***B. To Study “Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality”***

Esteemed Fathers and Brethren,

Your committee was commissioned to write a paper for consideration at the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod, entitled "Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality". The paper is to be didactic and is to accomplish three goals: 1) To teach the biblical support and blessings of the teaching of godly sexual morality; 2) to set biblical morality over against the abominations of homosexuality, adultery and man-centered views of sexuality, so that it can be used to teach biblical morality to our own people and to our culture; and 3) to provide biblical requirements for the use of human sexuality in the midst of and to the improvement of culture.

The committee has divided this paper into four sections. 1) Sexuality as created by God. 2) Sexuality after the fall as corrupted by sin; 3). Sexuality redeemed in Christ. The fourth section is a polemic against un-biblical and abominable views taught primarily by professing Christians, such as Jack Rogers, Helmut Theilicke, and David G. Myers, among others. This section deals with certain passages under dispute, such as Gen. 19, Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9; Lev. 18:22 and others.

The committee exchanged emails and communicated on the phone throughout the year. It has digested a great deal material, much of it indigestible. A large portion of this paper is finished, but, unfortunately, it is not ready for presentation at this time. The committee begs your forgiveness, and humbly requests another year to complete this project.

Notes and rough drafts are available if any delegate to Synod wishes to see the work. Suggestions and critiques would be welcome.

Recommendation 1: That the Committee to Study, "Promoting a Biblical Sexual Morality" be continued, and report back to the 266<sup>th</sup> Synod.

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Sam Powell (chairman), Rev. Darrell Kingswood, Rev. Phil Poe, Rev. Thomas Mayville, Elder Roger Gallimore, Elder Steve Wilbur.*

#### **V. Standing Committee Reports**

[The committee recommendations appear below in their final form, whether amended or not. The recommendations were adopted unless otherwise noted]

##### ***A. Benevolence Committee***

1. That \$1,060 of the benevolent aid given to Rev. and Mrs. Tom Mayville was returned to the Diaconal Aid Fund of the Synod of the RCUS [Take note].
2. That those churches who desire to continue to provide support for relief efforts in Japan utilize the efforts put in place by the Consistory of Northland Reformed Church in Kansas City, MO [Take note].
3. That Synod grant benevolent aid on behalf of Mrs. Amy Stevens in the amount of \$1,300 per month for the next Synodical year. (This is a \$100 increase from the previous year.).
4. That Synod grant benevolent aid on behalf of Rev. Ron Potter in the amount of \$450 per month for the next Synodical year to assist with life insurance, medical insurance and medical costs.

5. That Synod grant benevolent aid on behalf of Rev. Ron Potter in the amount of \$400 per month, effective from May 2011 to April 2012, to assist with monthly expenses due to his inability to work as a result of his current illness.
6. That the Permanent Diaconal Committee research information and make recommendations to the 266<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS addressing how our congregations, Classes and Synod can best address the growing health care costs of ministers.
7. That Synod grant benevolent aid to Trinity Covenant RCUS of Colorado Springs, CO in the amount of \$725 per month for the next Synodical year.
8. That South Central Classis investigate and report to the 266<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS whether the aid that Trinity Covenant RCUS, Colorado Springs, CO meets the guidelines for benevolent aid as adopted at the 2008 Synod. (This guideline is found on pg. 75-76 of the 2008 Abstract.).
9. That Synod grant benevolent aid for Grace RCUS, Lancaster, CA in the amount of \$325 per month for the next Synodical year. (This amount is a reduction of \$58 per month from the previous year.).
10. That Synod grant benevolent aid for Faith RCUS, Anderson, CA in the amount of \$500 per month for the next Synodical year. (This amount is the same amount as the previous year.).
11. [Defeated] That the Consistories of Faith RCUS, Anderson, CA, and Grace RCUS, Lancaster, CA be encouraged to redouble their efforts by prayerfully discussing, planning and implementing ideas for the purpose of reaching their respective areas with the gospel.
12. That the Consistories of Faith RCUS, Anderson, CA and Grace RCUS, Lancaster, CA provide a report to the permanent Diaconal Committee of their discussions and implemented ideas.
13. That the Permanent Diaconal Committee communicate directly to the Consistories of Faith RCUS, Anderson, CA and Grace RCUS, Lancaster, CA, noting the encouragements and responsibilities of Recommendation #11 and #12 of this report.

### ***B. Ministerial Aid***

We present the following recommendations:

1. That the above requests for Ministerial Aid be approved. (see the following table)

Rev. & Mrs. Chester Ploeger	\$1,400.00	\$16,600.00
Mrs. Joan Vance	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Mrs. Marie Stuebbe	\$1,200.00	\$14,400.00
Mrs. Vivian Stuebbe	\$1,200.00	\$14,400.00
Mrs. Marjorie Duckett	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Mrs. Betty Sander	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Rev. & Mrs. Gene Sawtelle	\$1,600.00	\$19,200.00
Rev. & Mrs. Neale Riffert	\$1,800.00	\$21,600.00
Rev. & Mrs. Vernon Pollema	\$850.00	\$10,200.00
Rev. & Mrs. Paul Treick	\$1,200.00	\$14,400.00
Mrs. Kay Savage	\$1,000.00	\$12,000.00
Rev. & Mrs. Howard Hart	\$1,550.00	\$18,600.00
Mrs. Phyllis Grossmann	\$1,200.00	\$14,400.00
Rev. & Mrs. Herman Van Stedum	\$1,500.00	\$18,000.00
Mrs. Virginia Hoeflinger	\$1,500.00	\$18,000.00
Mrs. Lena Jones	\$1,200.00	\$14,400.00
	\$20,200.00	\$242,400.00

2. Regarding the report of the Permanent Ministerial Aid Fund: Take note.
3. Regarding #2 of the Treasurer's Report: That the \$15,722.01 be transferred to the Ministerial Relief Fund.
4. Regarding #3 from the Treasurer's Report: That \$15,000 be made available from the Ministerial Aid Fund for use by the Ministerial Relief Fund, and that the remainder of the budget for the Ministerial Relief Fund (\$211,678) be covered by the guideline.

### ***C. Ecumenical Committee***

1. That the proposed budget in the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee (IRC) report of \$7,500 total expenses be adopted.
2. That Synod pay the housing expenses for invited fraternal delegates to our Synod in cases where hotel/motel housing is required by the host church.

3. That in accordance with our adopted rules for fraternal relations, the Stated Clerk of Synod advise fraternal churches of changes in or additions to confessions, church order, or liturgical forms, if these are of a doctrinal nature.
4. That the Synod direct the IRC to communicate immediately our concerns to the BBK.
5. That the Synod direct the IRC to draft a letter to be approved by next year's Synod to be sent to the GKNv.

#### ***D. Education and Student Aid Committee***

1. That student aid for the 2011-2012 academic year be granted to Mr. Schwichtenberg to attend Heidelberg Theological Seminary as follows: \$4800 tuition and \$400 books.
2. That the Sunday school curriculum sub-committee's report be recommitted in order to clarify the objectives, method and approach of a new curriculum; to assess feasibility and expected cost versus need and expected use; to re-evaluate materials that RCUS men have produced and are producing; and to develop a policy regarding copyright, royalty and right of revision; and to report to the 266th Synod.
3. That the RCUS through its executive committee of Synod continue to correspond with Dordt College's board of trustees regarding issues that caused the RCUS to suspend Dordt College from the list of approved colleges.

#### ***E. Judicial Committee***

1. From Overture 26 by South Central Classis regarding the deposition from the ministry of Mr. Dan Rogers [Take note].
2. From Overture 4 by Covenant East Classis proposing the establishment of a Committee to receive proposals for revisions to the RCUS Constitution and/or Directory of Worship: That Synod not accede to this request [Take note].
3. From Overture 33 by the Western Classis regarding revision of Synodical Standing Rule 5: That Synod's Standing Rule 5 be amended by replacing it with the following: *The Treasurer shall reimburse travel on behalf of Synod at forty-five cents (\$0.45) per mile per vehicle. Public transportation costs and rental car fees for the delegate shall be reimbursed at full cost. (Delegates are exhorted to exercise good stewardship in the use of Synod's funds and to not abuse this provision).*
4. [Defeated] That Synod's Standing Rule 6 be deleted, and that the numbering of the standing rules be adjusted accordingly.
5. [Defeated] That Synod amend Article 70 of the RCUS Constitution by placing a period after the word *discipline* and deleting the words *except in the case of a minister of the Word*.
6. From Recommendation 4 of the Treasurer's Report regarding review and revision of Synod's Standing Rules 1, 2, 6 and 7 in light of the new fiscal year of Synod: That the words *thirty-first* in Standing Rule 1 be replaced with the word *thirtieth*.
7. That the words *for the calendar year* be inserted between the words *Classes* and *shall* in Standing Rule 2.
8. That Synod instruct its Treasurer to pay those cited in Standing Rule 7 for seventeen months of labor for the Synodical year ending June 30, 2011.
9. That Synodical Standing Rule 6 be amended by deleting the last sentence.

#### ***F. Missions Committee***

1. That Covenant RCUS, Chico, CA continue to receive \$1,085 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$930 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$155 per month, 10% of the 2008 base year amount.]
2. That the Western Classis Missions Committee be asked to confer with the Chico Consistory regarding their 3 year budget pertaining to Rev. Mancilas' IRA and health insurance, as these are to be provided for a missions pastor, and to propose alternatives for said support.
3. That Rehoboth Reformed Chapel, La Habra, CA continue to receive \$1,042 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$843 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$199 per month.]
4. That the churches of the RCUS be encouraged to recommend Rehoboth Chapel to their members when they are vacationing in the Los Angeles area or when sending their children to one of the many colleges and universities found there [Take note].
5. That Grace Reformed Chapel of NW Arkansas continue to receive \$480 monthly through January 2012, and receive \$420 monthly from February through June 2012. [A reduction of \$60 monthly.]
6. That the Metro Minneapolis work continue to receive \$3333 monthly through June 2012 from existing set aside funds.
7. That Synod make available \$4000 per month for a missionary to Dickinson, ND, through June 2012, to start when a man begins full-time work in Dickinson. This support to begin contingent on approval of this work by the Home Missions Committee of the Northern Plains Classis and the Synodical Permanent Home Missions Committee. Half of this amount is to come from previously set aside funds.
8. That the 2011 Day of Prayer offering be divided equally to help with rental costs at Chico, CA, and LaHabra, CA, RCUS congregations.
9. That \$5,000 be budgeted for committee expenses [Take note].
10. That Synod overture the Classes to request home mission fundings be based on the Synodical fiscal year.
11. That the wording of section II, paragraph 8 of the Home Missions Manual be amended to read: "The Synodical Home Mission fiscal year will run from July 1 to June 30 of the following year."
12. The 2012 fiscal year Home Missions budget, if approved as recommended, would be \$122,212 [It is understood that \$64,000, for Metro Minneapolis and Dickinson, will come from current set aside funds, leaving approximately \$75,000 for unforeseen works in fiscal year 2013. This will require a 2012 guideline of approximately \$19. For reference, the 2009 missions guideline was \$27.30] [Take note].
13. On Recommendation #1 of the Foreign Missions Committee report: That the matter of establishment of fraternal relations with the Reformed Fellowship Church of Kenya (RFCK) be referred to the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee for following of the usual procedures for establishing such relationship.
14. That the budget be adopted as follows:

**Congo:**

Elder-pastor support \$14,400 (same as last year)  
 Kinshasa aid \$13,200 (increase \$1,600 to help support 2 more churches)  
 Building and Diaconal aid \$400 (decrease \$1,600)

**Kenya:**

Church Support \$6,000 (\$5,000 decrease)  
 Building & diaconal aid \$2,000 (used for economic development)  
 Student/ministry expenses & travel \$5,400 (same as last year)

**Reformed Faith and Life (French):** \$17,000 (same)

**Committee Expenses:**

Travel to Africa \$3,000 (increase \$1,000)  
 Travel to Europe \$1,000 (same)  
 Travel in USA \$ 3,000 (same)

**Total:** 65,400 (decrease \$5,000)

15. That the Synod continue to encourage the support of the Congo Economic fund. Note: There are still many needs. In 6 Years over \$55,000 has been used for projects which greatly benefited a number of people. The projects included agricultural activities such as purchasing seed, livestock and also the purchase of sewing machines in order to assist people to become more self-sufficient.
16. That the money the RCUS budgeted (\$15,000 last year) to assist Rev. Phil Proctor (OPC) with the purchase of a reliable vehicle be given to the OPC in order to support the training of men at Knox Theological College. Note: Currently Rev. Proctor's plans changed and they are moving back stateside.
17. That the pastors of the RCUS prayerfully consider serving as a long term missionary in Uganda.
18. On Recommendation #6 of the PFMC report: That the matter of establishment of fraternal relations with the U.C.R.C.P. of the Philippines be referred to the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee for following of the normal procedures for establishing such relations.
19. We request that the RCUS establish a formal relationship to support and encourage the U.C.R.C.P.
20. That the RCUS budget \$2058 for the UCRCP's Classis meeting for 2012. Note: Last year our Synod budgeted \$1700 for their quarterly meetings, which is comparable to the \$1704 budgeted the previous year for the same (Recommendation #6, 2010 Synod Abstract, page 95). The original request underestimated the true costs involved. We continue to challenge the leaders to teach their members the importance of giving in order for them to be able to take "ownership" of their churches. To provide for other government meetings that may come up, the leaders are endeavoring to set aside a portion of the offerings which they call the "Tithe of Tithes."
21. That the RCUS budget \$3,000 for a future trip to the Philippines to meet with and hold conferences with the UCRCP. Note: same as last year
22. That Synod take note of the overtures 6, 7, 36, and 37, from the South Central, Covenant East and Western Classis requesting funding of home mission works through fiscal 2012. Handling these requests will be the normal business of the 2012 Synod [Take note].
23. The Synod take note of the overture 27 from the South Central Classis requesting re-instatement of the "missionary-at-large" program [Take note].
24. That since funds that would have been paid to the Greeley mission work with the change of the Fiscal Year are not needed by that church, these funds be retained in the Home Mission Fund.
25. That the matter of formalizing fraternal relations with the United Reformed Churches of the Congo be referred to the Permanent Interchurch Relations Committee for the implementation of the usual procedures for such relations.
26. That Synod refer the matter of adopting ITEM as an approved benevolence to the permanent FMC.
27. That Synod adopt the UCRCP as a mission of the RCUS.
28. [From the floor] That Synod discontinue relations with the ERCC.

**G. Minutes of Classes Committee**

1. Your committee commends the stated clerks of the Classes for their diligent labors, and finds that the clarity of the Classes' minutes has generally improved in recent years [Take note].
2. That the Synod Clerk include the following in the list of "Guidelines for the Minutes of Classes Committee: (a) That a complete index precede the minutes proper – listing all pages on which each agenda item or report is taken up; (b) That every listing of a document within the minutes proper shall have a page or item number by which to locate such in the documents section; (c) That a tab divider and a table of contents precede the documents section, indicating the page location of each document; (d) That procedures recorded in the minutes shall be reviewed for consistency regarding the receiving of reports, according to the practice of each classis.
3. A solid metal post or ring binder is to be preferred for ease of viewing minutes and protecting the edge of the papers [Take note].
4. That the minutes of the Northern Plains Classis be approved with the following exceptions, that should be corrected: (a) Information regarding the President and Treasurer is missing at the end of the June 2010 minutes; (b) The report on page 37 of the 2011 minutes needs signatures.
5. That the minutes of the South Central Classis be approved with the following exceptions, which should be corrected: (a) There is no table of contents for the documents section of the 2011 minutes; (b) On page 7, following a recess, there is no indication of the time that Classis re-convened; (c) Signatures are needed on items 7-14, 16-17, 19-21, 43-45, 51, and overtures 3-4, 9-11.
6. That the minutes of Western Classis be approved with the following exceptions: On numerous occasions, reports were simply received if there were no recommendations passed, instead of adopting the

reports.

7. That the minutes of the Covenant East Classis be approved with the following exception: On page 2 of the fall 2010 minutes, a motion was made and seconded to sustain the licensure exam of Rev. Kron. It is not recorded that the motion carried, but his call was approved.

8. Although reports and overtures are commonly sent electronically in our day, all delegates of the Classes should sign the original documents at the Classes meetings [Take note].

#### ***H. Publications Committee***

1. That Rev. Paul Treick be nominated to serve as the Reformed Herald Editor. He was elected by secret ballot.

2. That \$500 be budgeted for expenses incurred by the editor of the Reformed Herald

3. That Olive Tree Publications be compensated at a rate of \$35 per hour limited to layout work done to publish the Reformed Herald.

4. That the Permanent Publications and Promotions Committee be authorized to publish in print form the works of which the RCUS owns the copyright, with the following understandings: (a) The RCUS will continue to hold copyright; (b) There will be no request for funds from the Synod of the RCUS, with the exception of funds for layout, editing, if needed; (c) These printed works will be offered for sale on Amazon (or other distributors, as the PPPC may determine, at a price determined by the Committee); (d) Any royalties produced by the publication of these works will be sent to the Synod treasurer, and used to finance further publication projects.

5. That \$2000 be set aside for the layout and editing of future works, if needed [Take note].

6. That the following practice be adopted by Synod: that the Chairman of the Permanent Publications and Promotions Committee keep in his possession a backup digital copy of all published works owned by the Reformed Church in the United States.

7. That only materials officially published or approved by the Synod of the RCUS should be published to the RCUS website; that the Website Committee be authorized to solicit bids for the hosting, maintenance and development of the web site, and to accept whatever bid the Committee finds most acceptable, and that Olive Tree Communications continue to be paid for the web site until a new provider can be hired.

8. That the budget for the web site be set at \$4000 for the next Synodical year, to cover hosting and maintenance expenses.

9. That the RCUS archive collection be moved to the Grace Reformed Church building in Willows, CA and that a proper climate controlled room be constructed on site, as the Consistory determines, to store it , and that Synod authorize up to \$5500 for this project (moving and construction).

10. The Reformed Herald and eRCUS Abstracts of Synod Collection DVD disk is set at a one-time cost of \$20; thereafter, free annual upgrades of current issues will be made available for RCUS members at the RCUS Book Depository. Disks are being handed out at this Synod [Take note].

11. That churches review their Reformed Herald subscription lists and submit changes to Rev. Frank Walker [Take note].

#### ***I. Finances Committee***

1. That reimbursement for travel expenses in the amount of \$472.30 be granted to Elder John Heerema.

2. That reimbursement for travel expenses in the amount of \$461.30 be granted to Rev. Ron Potter.

3. That the monies of the loan to Grace Reformed Church of Greely, CO approved by Synod in 2010 may still be accessed without a new overture [Take note].

4. That reimbursement be granted in the amount \$251.72 to the Covenant Reformed Church of Chico, CA for motel accommodations cost during the 265<sup>th</sup> of Synod.

5. That Synod pay travel expenses to the 265<sup>th</sup> Session Synod in the amount of \$23,997.61. [Bowen moved to suspend standing rule 6 to pay Ted Schieffelin's travel expenses. Seconded and carried by two-thirds]

6. That \$2000 be available to the Synodical clerk for the purpose of purchasing a new computer, printer, and software to be used for clerk business.

7. That the church treasures be reminded that the guidelines to be paid through June 30 of 2011 are to be paid at the 2010/2011 rate and that the 2011/12 rates apply to July 1, 2011 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012 [Take note].

8. That the report of the Treasurer be adopted.

9. That the guideline for New Geneva Theological Seminary, Greenville Theological Seminary, Heidelberg Theological Seminary, Mid America Reformed Theological Seminary, Hope Haven, and MERF, each be set at \$2.00 per communicant member.

10. From Recommendation 1 of the treasurer's report that the \$10,000 received from the Eugene Mehlhaf Estate be applied to the Ministerial Relief Fund.

11. From Recommendation 5 of the treasurer's report, that all references to "January 31" be changed to read "by the end of the fiscal year."

12. From Recommendation 5 of the treasurer's report: that the requirement that the auditor's report be sent out before May 1 be deleted.

13. From Recommendation 6 of the treasurer's report: That the treasurer be directed to submit synod's financial records to an outside review as soon after June 30<sup>th</sup>, as practical each year, and to have those reports then circulated.

14. That the Synod Dues and Guidelines be approved as follows:

[See the beginning of this Abstract, page 18]

#### ***J. Excuses Committee***

1. That the requests for excuse from all sessions of Synod be granted for the following delegates: Rev. Phillip Poe, Rev. Dennis Roe, Rev. Ron Potter; Primaries Elders: Greg Born, Fred Hoffmann, Vern Ochsner, Raymond Jung, Mark Reyna and Ken Bowen; Secundus Elders: John Heerema, Justin Goehring, Joe Gross and Leroy Neifer.
2. That the requests for excuse for part of the session of Synod be granted to the following delegates: Rev. Scott Henry, Elder Ron Medinger, Elder Michael Burbach, Ralph Kusler, and Lyle Dewald.
3. That the requests for excuse from Rev. Dale Clark, Elder Jim Snyder and Elder Keith Lorentzen do not meet the criteria for the granting of excuse from Synod as adopted by the 261<sup>st</sup> Synod meeting and, as such, that these requests for excuse not be granted.
4. That the request from Rev. Matt Powell and Elder Ted Schieffelin to be excused from all sessions of Synod after 10:00 AM on Thursday not be granted in light of the absence of no extraordinary reason for leaving (Standing Rule 6 allows travel only when all sessions are attended or properly excused).
5. That it should be noted that Harvest RCUS in Minot, ND; Kassel RCUS in Anamoose, ND; and Grace RCUS in Lancaster, CA were not represented at the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS. Furthermore it should be noted that the following congregations were not represented by an elder delegate: Hosmer RCUS in Hosmer, SD; First RCUS in Herried, SD; Immanuel RCUS in Sutton, NE; Grace RCUS in Willows, CA; and Trinity RCUS in Modesto, CA [Take note].

#### ***K. Nominations Committee***

The Permanent and Special Committee nominations which were adopted are printed in the Summary Information page at the beginning of this Abstract.

#### ***L. Minutes of Synod Committee***

Your committee received the draft minutes from the stated clerk, made revisions and returned them to the clerk, who distributed the revised minutes to the body, and were approved.

### **XVI. Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business**

#### ***A. Expression of Appreciation***

“The delegates of the 265<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS express their deep and heartfelt gratitude to the congregation of Grace Reformed Church, Mitchell, SD. Your single-minded devotion to serving Christ and providing for our needs is a wonderful example of the communion of the saints and makes all look forward to that day when we and all God’s people will enjoy endless fellowship with our Savior and one another in heavenly glory. Your meals were great, and your hospitality unexcelled! We praise God for your work of faith and labor of love. To Him be all the glory.”

#### ***B. Adoption of the Stated Clerk’s Report, and Executive Committee Report***

All these reports were adopted by the Synod.

### **XVII. Adjournment**

#### ***A. Minutes of Synod Report***

The report was already received.

#### ***B. Roll Call***

The closing roll showed 39 ministers and 25 elders present, a total of 64.

#### ***C. Motion to Adjourn***

The 265<sup>th</sup> Synod of the RCUS was adjourned to the 266<sup>th</sup> Synod to begin on May 21, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at Grace Reformed Church, Rapid City, SD.

#### ***D. Closing Service***

1. *Devotions:* Elder Spencer Gross from Grace RCUS, Mitchell, SD, led in the closing devotion.

2. *Apostles’ Creed, Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Doxology:* The President led the assembly in the recitation of the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. He pronounced the Benediction and led in the singing of the Doxology.

The meeting of the Synod was concluded at 4:00 p.m., May 19, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Rev. David P. Fagrey*, Stated Clerk

**APPENDIX**  
Standing Rules of Synod  
Index of positions and Resolutions  
Membership and Financial Statistics  
General Information

**Standing Rules**

[The Standing Rules of Synod were adopted in 1986 and amended in the bracketed years.]

1. The fiscal year of the Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States shall run from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. The synodical dues shall be due on the first of June and are to be paid not later than the thirtieth of June of the current fiscal year. [1991, 2010, 2011]
2. The statistics of the Classes for the calendar year shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of Synod two weeks before the session of Synod. [2011]
3. The writ of certification for delegate elders shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk two weeks before the session of Synod.
4. Any member may move to have the Standing Rules read at the second session of Synod. Passage of the motion shall require a second and a simple majority vote.
5. The Treasurer shall reimburse travel on behalf of Synod at forty-five cents (\$0.45) per mile per vehicle. Public transportation costs and rental car fees for the delegate shall be reimbursed at full cost. (Delegates are exhorted to exercise good stewardship in the use of Synod's funds and to not abuse this provision). [2005, 2008, 2011]
6. Travel reimbursement shall be paid only those delegates to Synod whose congregations have paid the synodical dues in full to the Synod Treasurer, and those delegates who have ended all sessions of

Synod or have been properly excused by Synod. [2008, 2011]

7. The President of Synod shall receive four hundred fifty dollars (\$450), the Stated Clerk shall receive one thousand dollars (\$1,000), and the Treasurer one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for the synodical year. An amount equal to 10 percent of the Stated Clerk's honorarium will be available for the Stated Clerk to use for secretarial help. The Editor of the Reformed Herald shall receive one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500), the Book Depository Manager shall receive three hundred dollars (\$300), and the Subscription Manager shall receive five hundred dollars (\$500) for the fiscal year of Synod. [1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2007]

8. The monies sent to the Synod Treasurer shall be made out in check form to the REFORMED CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES and shall be designated for which fund and how much. for each fund.

9. The Stated Clerk of Synod shall prepare an abstract of the synodical minutes, including a cumulative index of resolutions and positions taken by Synod, and shall publish the same. Each Stated Clerk of Classic shall prepare an abstract of classical minutes and shall send one copy to each minister, elder delegate and congregation of Synod. [1987, 1989, 1990]

10. The Synod shall have Permanent Committees as follows:

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Archives            | B. Board of Trustees         |
| C. Christian Education | D. Home Missions             |
| E. Diaconal Ministries | F. Interchurch Relations     |
| G. Editorial Advice    | H. Ministerial Relief        |
| I. Executive           | J. Publications & Promotions |
| K. Foreign Ministries  | L. Develop eBooks            |

and the Standing Committee on Nominations each year is to nominate men to serve on these committees. [1989, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2007]

11. The complete Synod statistics shall be duplicated by the Stated Clerk each year at the Synod's expense.

12. Nominations for all officers of Synod and the editor of the Reformed Herald shall be made by secret ballot. All names appearing on the nominating ballot shall be candidates, and if there is not an election on the first ballot, only the names with the two highest totals of votes shall be candidates until there is an election. [1997]

13. The reports and recommendations of the Permanent and Special Committees of Synod shall be completed and submitted to the Consistories of all the churches and the Treasurer of Synod no later than April 1". Reports may be emailed to consistories with known email addresses; otherwise, they must be mailed by regular mail. The only committee exempt from this requirement is Home Missions, which shall submit its report at least three weeks in advance of Synod. Excuses for this requirement are to be made only on written request to the Executive Committee of Synod by the chairman of the committee involved by April 1". All reports, overtures and correspondence must be submitted on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, and all reports must be signed by a majority of the committee members. [1992, 2000, 2004]

14. The services of Synod shall be prepared by the Executive Committee, and these proposed services shall be circularized before Synod.

15. Students for the ministry of the Reformed Church in the United States shall be urged by Synod to attend only such seminaries which are listed as institutions worthy of receiving benevolent monies from the Reformed Church in the United States. Only students who attend institutions so listed shall be eligible for student aid while preparing for the Christian ministry. Each student receiving student aid must affirm his commitment to pursuing ordination in the RCVS each year before receiving student aid. His affirmation must be signed, dated, witnessed and sent to the Stated Clerk of Synod, who will forward a copy of the same to the chairman of the Candidates and Credentials Committee of the student's Classis. [2001]

16. It shall be the practice of the Reformed Church in the United States to require each candidate for the ministry to complete an eight-month internship before his ordination exam. This internship shall be spent with a pastor who has served at least five years in the Reformed Church in the United States. The pastor shall provide a written evaluation of the candidate to the Candidate and Credentials Committee. During this internship particular emphasis shall be placed on learning the peculiarities and practices of the Reformed Church in the United States. This internship requirement may be fulfilled either before or after the candidate has received a call or is licensed. [1995]

17. Overtures sent to the Stated Clerk of Synod four weeks in advance of Synod shall be circularized, but overtures may be submitted to Synod at any time. [ 1998, 2004, 2010]

18. The spring meeting of the Classes shall be held at least one month before the annual meeting of Synod. [1987]

19. The annual session of Synod shall begin each year on the evening of the third Monday of May unless Ascension Day occurs in that week, in which case it shall begin on the evening of the second Monday in May, and shall meet each day until all business regularly brought before it has been disposed. The Order of the Day of Synod shall provide for a service of worship on Monday evening and for committee work on Tuesday evening. [1992, 1998]

20. The Executive Committee of Synod is charged with overseeing contact with groups expressing interest in the RCUS, and with developing materials that will facilitate uniform presentations to such groups. [1997, 2000]

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Membership and Financial Statistics 2010		No. of Elders	No. of Deacons	Comm. Memb. Last Yr.	Rec'd by Confirmation	Rec'd by Letter	Rec'd by Prof.	Total Rec'd	Tot. Old/New Memb.	Lost by Dismissal
<b>COVENANT EAST CLASSIS</b>										
Bentonville, AR	Grace (w/Garner)	1	0	17	2	0	0	0	19	0
Garner, IA	Peace (incl AR)	4	3	118	2	0	0	2	120	6
Golden Valley, MN	Redeemer	4	4	100	5	2	7	14	114	2
Hamburg, MN	St Paul's	3	3	211	4	0	0	4	215	2
Waymart, PA	(w/ Napoleon)	0	0	17	0	0	3	3	20	0
Kansas City, MO	Northland	3	4	52	6	1	1	8	60	2

Manitowoc, WI	Salem Ebenezer	4	3	204	1	0	0	1	205	0
Napoleon, OH	Peace (incl. PA)	3	3	70	2	0	4	6	76	2
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>NORTHERN PLAINS CLASSIS</b>										
Aberdeen, SD	First	3	3	110	0	1	3	4	114	5
Anamoose, ND	Kassle	1	1	24	0	0	0	0	24	2
Ashley, ND	Salem	3	3	44	0	0	0	0	44	0
Eureka	Eureka	3	3	159	0	1	0	1	160	1
Herried, SD	First	2	2	49	0	4	0	4	53	2
Hosmer, SD	Hosmer	2	2	23	0	2	0	2	25	0
Minot, ND	Harvest	1	1	22	0	0	2	2	24	0
Pierre, SD	Hope	2	0	29	0	0	0	0	29	3
Watertown, SD	Covenant	2	0	19	0	0	0	0	19	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>SOUTH CENTRAL CLASSIS</b>										
Col Spr., CO	Trinity Cov.	2	2	41	0	14	1	15	56	6
Greeley, CO	Grace	3	3	54	3	3	2	8	62	5
Limon, CO	Providence	3	3	39	1	1	2	4	43	0
Lincoln, NE	St. John's	4	4	98	1	0	2	3	101	4
Menno, SD	Zion	4	4	161	3	2	1	6	167	0
Mitchell, SD	Grace (w/Sherman, TX)	3	2	69	0	0	0	0	69	4
Rapid City, SD	Grace	2	2	63	3	4	4	11	74	3
Rock Spr., WY	Providence	3	2	36	0	4	1	5	41	0
Sioux Falls, SD	Trinity	5	5	139	1	2	4	7	146	0
Sutton, NE	Emmanuel	3	3	121	0	6	0	6	127	1
Sutton, NE	Hope	4	4	207	0	0	0	0	207	4
Vermillion, SD	Providence	2	1	23	0	0	0	0	23	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1116</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>WESTERN CLASSIS</b>										
Anderson, CA	Faith	1	2	26	0	0	0	0	26	0
Bakersfield, CA	Grace	3	4	129	0	2	5	7	136	0
Chico, CA	Covenant	2	1	23	0	0	2	2	25	2
Grass Valley, CA	Covenant (Incl Stkn)	1	0	43	3	1	1	5	48	6
<i>La Habra, CA</i>	<i>Rehoboth w/Shafter</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>2</i>
Lancaster, CA	Grace	2	2	32	0	0	4	4	36	6
Lodi, CA	Providence	2	3	50	0	0	0	0	50	3
Modesto, CA	Trinity	4	3	63	4	4	0	8	71	2
Sacramento, CA	Covenant (Incl S.D.)	6	7	159	2	3	4	9	168	6
<i>S. Diego, CA</i>	<i>Covenant w/Sac</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Stockton, CA</i>	<i>Cabary w/Gr. Valley</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>0</i>
Shafter, CA	Ebenezer (Incl La Hab)	5	6	105	0	0	0	0	105	2
Willows, CA	Grace	2	3	32	0	3	0	3	35	0
Yuba City, CA	First	3	2	49	0	0	4	4	53	1
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>753</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>TOTALS THIS YEAR</b>		<b>109</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>2,996</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>3,151</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>TOTALS LAST YEAR</b>		<b>108</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>3,027</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE</b>		<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>1%</b>

Congregations in italics are included for their mission congregations, but are included in their overseeing church's figures

Lost by Erasure or Discipline	Lost by Death	Total Lost	Comm. Memb. This Yr.	Unconfirmed Memb.	Total Baptized Members	No. of Families	No. of children in S.S.	Adult Baptisms	Infant Baptisms	Total Baptisms	No. Rec'ng Lord's Supper	Times Lds Supper Served
<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>6</i>
3	2	11	109	18	127	59	12	0	0	0	103	10
1	0	3	111	72	183	50	68	0	6	6	111	6
0	2	4	211	29	240	130	22	0	4	4	191	9
<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>12</i>
2	0	4	56	24	80	22	24	0	0	0	60	6

2	7	9	196	26	222	119	13	0	2	2	180	4
0	1	3	73	19	92	37	11	1	2	3	71	18
<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>53</b>
0	1	6	108	21	129	57	18	0	1	1	89	4
0	1	3	21	1	22	13	0	0	0	0	19	3
0	0	0	44	1	45	27	0	0	1	1	33	4
0	6	7	153	9	162	89	3	0	1	1	131	4
1	0	3	50	11	61	27	12	0	0	0	27	3
0	2	2	23	0	23	16	0	0	0	0	14	4
7	0	7	17	9	26	10	7	0	0	0	17	7
0	1	4	25	5	30	16	5	0	0	0	22	6
0	0	0	19	6	25	9	6	0	0	0	19	6
<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>41</b>
5	0	11	45	24	68	21	26	1	7	8	42	12
0	0	5	57	21	78	32	14	0	1	1	52	5
1	0	1	42	22	64	17	17	0	3	3	42	12
0	0	4	97	31	128	53	27	0	1	1	81	6
7	4	11	156	25	181	79	19	0	1	1	149	4
0	0	4	75	25	100	29	17	0	1	1	60	6
3	0	6	68	38	106	34	24	0	3	3	60	6
3	0	3	38	15	53	22	8	0	0	0	39	11
5	0	5	141	73	214	71	68	0	3	3	130	6
4	1	6	121	26	147	74	18	0	1	1	107	6
17	2	23	184	50	234	96	36	0	2	2	148	6
1	0	1	22	13	35	12	9	0	1	1	23	4
<b>46</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>1046</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>1408</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>84</b>
1	0	1	24	4	29	15	0	0	0	0	26	12
0	1	1	135	51	186	62	41	2	2	4	90	4
1	0	3	22	7	29	11	0	0	4	4	21	12
1	1	8	40	14	54	25	16	0	1	1	40	14
0	0	2	29	20	49	18	19	0	1	1	29	12
0	0	6	30	14	44	17	10	0	2	2	25	4
6	2	11	39	10	49	23	3	0	0	0	44	12
7	0	9	62	15	77	30	19	1	3	4	39	4
6	0	12	156	55	211	77	49	0	4	4	156	12
1	0	1	16	4	20	10	4	0	0	0	16	12
0	0	0	11	4	15	7	4	0	7	0	11	2
1	1	4	101	24	125	55	19	0	1	1	104	4
0	0	0	35	13	48	15	9	0	0	0	35	12
0	0	1	52	13	65	26	12	0	1	1	53	11
<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>696</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>85</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>2,958</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>3,792</b>	<b>1,577</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>2,673</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>88</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>2,997</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>3,822</b>	<b>1,584</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>2,721</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>-3%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>2%</b>

Membership and Financial Statistics 2010			Receipts from Reg. Offerings	Receipts from Spec. Offerings	Receipts from other Sources	Total Receipts	Giving to Synod Guidelines	Giving to Classis Guidelines	Giving to Non-Guide-line Causes	Giving to Non-RCUS
<b>COVENANT EAST CLASSIS</b>										
Bentonville, AR	Grace (w/Garner)		44,730	0	21,163	65,893	3,230	1,289	0	0
Garner, IA	Peace (incl AR)		164,600	8,365	27,100	200,065	26,836	8,339	4,737	5,494
Golden Valley, MN	Redeemer		243,981	11,782	6,250	262,013	19,180	7,000	3,293	4,086
Hamburg, MN	St Paul's		161,852	0	17,562	179,414	40,090	14,770	1,402	2,190
Waymart, PA	(w/Napoleon)		28,730	0	11,050	39,780	1,000	2,000	0	0
Kansas City, MO	Northland		167,673	9,822	0	177,495	10,330	3,782	9,610	4,003
Manitowoc, WI	Salem Ebenezer		165,146	0	11,192	176,338	40,362	14,280	0	8,300

Napoleon, OH	Peace (incl. PA)	154,566	2,645	13,674	170,885	13,930	4,900	3,070	5,170
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>1,057,818</b>	<b>32,614</b>	<b>75,778</b>	<b>1,166,210</b>	<b>150,728</b>	<b>53,091</b>	<b>22,112</b>	<b>29,243</b>
<b>NORTHERN PLAINS CLASSIS</b>									
Aberdeen, SD	First	88,688	4,225	31,568	124,481	21,872	5,500	0	0
Anamoose, ND	Kassle	25,736	0	1,871	27,607	4,848	1,200	0	0
Ashley, ND	Salem	24,801	13,535	28,826	67,162	4,860	2,200	325	100
Eureka	Eureka	102,982	424	882	104,288	21,000	7,950	127	297
Herried, SD	First	39,637	6,173	3,353	49,163	1,850	2,400	0	0
Hosmer, SD	Hosmer	5,777	232	9,787	15,796	444	1,100	0	232
Minot, ND	Harvest	30,459	1,500	204	32,163	552	716	0	0
Pierre, SD	Hope	38,192	5,951	0	44,143	1,943	1,450	31	43
Watertown, SD	Covenant	35,380	0	19,193	54,573	4,198	950	162	335
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>391,652</b>	<b>32,040</b>	<b>95,684</b>	<b>519,376</b>	<b>61,567</b>	<b>23,466</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>1,007</b>
<b>SOUTH CENTRAL CLASSIS</b>									
Col Spr., CO	Trinity Cov.	68,852	0	9,862	78,714	7,790	2,513	0	0
Greeley, CO	Grace	107,771	0	14,146	121,917	10,836	3,310	0	0
Limon, CO	Providence	66,015	1,600	33,151	100,766	6,981	2,390	900	600
Lincoln, NE	St. John's	64,647	8,236	3,659	101,494	18,620	7,337	315	707
Menno, SD	Zion	116,323	18,806	2,500	137,629	30,590	7,588	20,670	0
Mitchell, SD	Grace	95,709	7,124	4,653	107,486	13,110	4,229	809	2,697
Rapid City, SD	Grace	165,715	0	0	165,715	12,474	3,862	6,000	0
Rock Spr., WY	Providence	74,206	190	0	74,396	7,645	1,838	190	0
Sioux Falls, SD	Trinity	255,667	13,788	1,866	271,321	27,733	8,241	2,003	8,965
Sutton, NE	Emmanuel	90,319	33,263	600	124,182	23,930	5,703	0	1,404
Sutton, NE	Hope	162,941	25,315	1,089	189,345	41,058	12,691	0	15,651
Vermillion, SD	Providence	73,610	7,880	11,977	93,466	4,586	1,410	5,794	174
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>1,341,775</b>	<b>116,202</b>	<b>83,593</b>	<b>1,566,438</b>	<b>205,353</b>	<b>61,112</b>	<b>36,681</b>	<b>30,198</b>
<b>WESTERN CLASSIS</b>									
Anderson, CA	Faith	53,350	0	12,000	65,350	1,050	2,184	0	0
Bakersfield, CA	Grace	226,705	14,053	18,807	259,565	27,415	20,215	4,820	4,820
Chico, CA	Covenant	37,395	2,774	42,077	82,246	1,291	1,303	180	0
Grass Valley, CA	Covenant (Incl S'kn)	107,522	25,931	600	108,122	1,160	1,537	0	20,765
La Habra, CA	<i>Rehoboth w/Shafter</i>	<i>94,289</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>65,640</i>	<i>159,929</i>	<i>4,902</i>	<i>3,456</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>4,630</i>
Lancaster, CA	Grace	78,669	9,060	14,022	91,752	0	4,608	0	0
Lodi, CA	Providence	69,294	2,872	508	72,674	5,250	3,250	0	539
Modesto, CA	Trinity	105,199	1,630	0	106,829	11,000	9,544	1,630	195
Sacramento, CA	Covenant (Incl S. D. & Seminary)	297,802	83,760	158,430	539,992	31,668	22,896	3,198	12,802
S. Diego, CA	Covenant w/Sac	<i>29,731</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>19,871</i>	<i>49,602</i>	<i>3,410</i>	<i>2,448</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>1,755</i>
Stockton, CA	<i>Calvary w/Gr Valley</i>	<i>24,009</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>429</i>	<i>24,438</i>	<i>644</i>	<i>502</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>305</i>
Shafter, CA	Ebenezer (Incl La Hab)	248,865	5,969	58,686	314,520	20,976	15,120	2,224	9,020
Willows, CA	Grace	88,345	75	507	88,927	6,152	4,608	0	0
Yuba City, CA	First	104,217	4,180	0	108,397	9,221	7,056	1,911	0
<b>Subtotal</b>		<b>1,417,363</b>	<b>150,304</b>	<b>305,637</b>	<b>1,838,374</b>	<b>115,183</b>	<b>92,321</b>	<b>13,963</b>	<b>48,141</b>
<b>TOTALS THIS YEAR</b>		<b>4,208,608</b>	<b>331,160</b>	<b>560,602</b>	<b>5,090,398</b>	<b>532,831</b>	<b>229,990</b>	<b>73,401</b>	<b>108,589</b>
<b>TOTALS LAST YEAR</b>		<b>4,018,783</b>	<b>410,476</b>	<b>871,691</b>	<b>5,301,465</b>	<b>604,574</b>	<b>207,016</b>	<b>67,721</b>	<b>81,214</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE</b>		<b>5%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>-36%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-12%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>34%</b>

Congregations in italics are included for their mission congregations, but are included in their overseeing church's figures

Other Expenses	Total Expenses	Value of Church Building	Value of Church Parsonage	Improvements on church property	Present Property Debts	Debt Payments Past Year	Giving to Synod per Com. Mbr.	Giving to Classis per Com. Mbr.	Giving to RCUS per Com. Mbr.
62,940	67,459	0	0	0	0	0	190	76	266
151,049	196,475	750,000	125,000	7,772	0	0	227	71	338
192,263	225,822	850,000	200,000	8,190	348,185	31,320	192	70	295
103,583	162,055	1,000,000	280,000	13,000	0	0	190	70	267
31,289	34,289	0	0	0	0	0	39	118	176
181,265	208,990	1,500,000	0	9,959	230,222	67,386	199	73	456
100,164	163,106	800,000	200,000	0	0	0	198	70	268

122,088	149,158	275,000	0	0	0	0	199	70	313
<b>850,412</b>	<b>1,105,386</b>	<b>5,175,000</b>	<b>805,000</b>	<b>38,921</b>	<b>578,407</b>	<b>98,706</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>325</b>
96,921	124,293	350,000	N/A	3,050	46,428	25,572	199	50	249
20,320	26,368	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	202	50	252
63,350	70,835	24,900	38,000	34,720	0	0	110	50	168
73,499	102,873	250,000	100,000	3,188	0	0	132	50	183
41,113	45,363	40,000	42,000	13,000	0	0	38	49	87
13,898	15,674	25,000	N/A	0	0	0	19	48	67
37,776	39,044	N/A	250,000	0	0	0	25	33	58
39,324	42,792	110,000	90,000	12,316	0	7,359	67	50	118
47,033	52,678	N/A	150,000	0	0	0	221	50	279
<b>433,234</b>	<b>519,920</b>	<b>799,900</b>	<b>670,000</b>	<b>66,274</b>	<b>46,428</b>	<b>32,931</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>162</b>
54,150	64,453	0	0	0	0	0	190	61	251
119,701	133,847	192,000	158,000	0	0	10,090	201	61	262
80,697	91,568	40,000	0	0	0	1,454	179	61	263
61,978	88,957	110,000	99,100	0	0	0	190	75	268
98,473	157,321	500,000	75,000	15,823	0	0	196	49	377
83,584	104,429	275,000	155,225	0	49,549	1,320	190	61	253
134,015	156,351	515,000	185,000	0	0	40,579	198	61	340
77,832	87,505	200,000	incl.	7,411	13,000	3,251	213	52	269
155,800	202,742	1,000,000	0	568,908	277,104	27,570	200	59	273
84,417	115,454	522,000	157,000	5,332	0	0	198	47	245
117,674	187,074	800,000	80,000	20,849	0	0	198	61	260
56,212	68,176	300,000	125,000	0	0	0	199	61	504
<b>1,124,533</b>	<b>1,457,877</b>	<b>4,454,000</b>	<b>1,894,325</b>	<b>618,323</b>	<b>339,663</b>	<b>84,264</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>297</b>
60,011	63,245	400,000	N/A	0	0	0	42	87	129
153,437	210,707	600,000	250,000	8,000	0	0	213	157	407
76,900	79,674	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	56	57	121
90,851	130,332	624,700	N/A	1,667	43,118	8,757	73	61	134
<i>141,001</i>	<i>154,389</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>283</i>
91,045	95,653	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	144	144
72,199	81,238	251,787	N/A	0	0	0	105	65	170
75,843	98,212	350,000	N/A	688	26,000	7,299	174	151	351
508,881	579,445	317,189	N/A	0	0	0	199	144	363
<i>47,933</i>	<i>55,796</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>339</i>
<i>21,391</i>	<i>22,845</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>115</i>
255,014	302,354	1,000,000	250,000	0	0	0	200	144	365
57,331	68,091	550,000	N/A	4,250	0	0	192	144	336
73,921	92,109	226,000	165,000	18,215	18,595	10,355	188	144	371
<b>1,515,493</b>	<b>1,801,060</b>	<b>4,319,676</b>	<b>665,000</b>	<b>32,820</b>	<b>87,713</b>	<b>26,411</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>3,923,612</b>	<b>4,884,443</b>	<b>14,748,576</b>	<b>3,174,325</b>	<b>756,338</b>	<b>1,092,201</b>	<b>242,312</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>4,094,533</b>	<b>5,067,480</b>	<b>13,890,503</b>	<b>3,136,325</b>	<b>560,995</b>	<b>961,953</b>	<b>237,504</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>-4%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>-10%</b>

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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Publications of the RCUS

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**Churches in Fraternal Relationship**

Canadian and American Reformed Churches

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

United Reformed Churches in North America

Member: North American Reformed and Presbyterian Council

Member: International Conference of Reformed Churches

**Colleges Listed as Worthy of Support**

Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA

**Seminaries Listed as Worthy of Support**

Mid-America Reformed Seminary, Dyer, IN

New Geneva Theological Seminary, Colorado Springs, CO

Heidelberg Theological Seminary, Vermillion, SD

Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Greenville, NC

City Seminary of Sacramento, Sacramento, CA

**Benevolences Listed as Worthy of Support**

Diaconal committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

*Faith and Word* Ministries

Hope Haven, Rock Valley, IA

Radio Administration Committee (French)

Middle East Reformed Fellowship

**Reformed Church in the U. S. Website**

[www.rcus.org](http://www.rcus.org)

Reformed Herald Online - [reformedherald.org](http://reformedherald.org)