

## Minutes - 2005

### Prayer Service

Evening, Wednesday  
12 October 2005

#### Worship service

Rev Tebogo Mogale led a worship service for the opening of the sixth meeting of the ICRC. After welcoming everyone and making necessary announcements, he opened the service with the words, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8) and the salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The congregation sang Psalm 100:1-4. Rev Mogale led in prayer. The congregation then sang a form of the Apostles' Creed. Rev Mogale invited Rev Keith Kleijn to read and preach. Rev Kleijn read Acts 15:1-35 and preached on Acts 15:1-21. The theme of his address was: "Through the Jerusalem meeting God safeguards the unity and catholicity of the church." First, he described the controversy which had arisen in the church at Antioch following the conversion of the Gentiles: what was under attack was nothing less than the work of Christ, the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith apart from works, and the unity of the church. Second, he considered the discussion at the Jerusalem meeting: the matter had already been decided by the work and word of God and the only yoke to be placed on the Gentiles was the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:28-30). Third, he expounded the resolution of the problem, which honoured the work of God among the Gentiles, on one hand avoiding legalism, but on the other hand, giving four rules, which should be understood against the background of pagan idolatry. The message of these rules was: do not return to idolatry. Both legalism and idolatry threaten the Lordship of Christ. Rev Kleijn closed his address with an application to the present time: the unspiritual air of modern idolatry, the idols of self, money and pleasure (2 Timothy 3:1-5). The message: we need to remind one another of our one foundation in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures. The congregation then responded with the singing of the hymn, "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord." Rev Kleijn led in prayer. The congregation sang the final hymn, Psalm 134. Rev Kleijn pronounced the benediction.

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### Session 1

Morning, Thursday  
13 October, 2005

#### 1. Opening

Rev Keith Kleijn, representing the host church, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), opened the session at 9:03 a.m. reading Ephesians 2:11-22. He then addressed the delegates with some remarks from the passage read. The session then sang Psalm 87. Rev Kleijn led in prayer. He welcomed the brothers and sisters to the 'Jacaranda City.'

#### 2. Roll Call

On behalf of the convening church, Rev Kleijn reported on the credentials of delegates.

## 2.1 Member Churches and their delegates

### ***Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)***

Rev John H Dawson (USA)- voting  
Rev Dr Jack Whytock (Canada) - voting

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

Henk Hoogstra - voting  
Rev Cornelius Van Spronsen - voting

### ***Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (CGKN)***

Rev Bort de Graaf - voting  
Prof Dr H G L Peels - voting  
Prof Dr J W Maris - advisory  
Rev H Last - advisory

### ***Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)***

Rev C Richard H Holst - voting  
Rev Dr Peter J Naylor - voting

### ***Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)***

Rev Norman Reid - voting

### ***Free Church of Central India (FCCI)***

Rev David John - voting  
Mr Pradeep Kumar - voting

### ***Free Church of Scotland (FCS)***

Rev James Maciver - voting  
Rev Alex J Macdonald - voting  
Rev Fergus A J Macdonald - advisory  
Rev David A Robertson - advisory

### ***Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA)***

Rev Bryce Taho - voting

### ***Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika) (VGKSA)***

Rev Cees Kleijn - voting  
Rev Tebogo Mogale - voting  
Rev P G Boon - alternate

### ***Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)***

Rev G R Procee - voting  
Rev W Wüllschleger - voting

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

Rev Thomas E Tyson - voting  
Rev Dr George W Knight III - voting  
Rev Jack J Peterson - advisory  
Mr Mark T Bube - advisory

### ***Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)***

Rev George Ball - voting

### ***Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (PCK(K))***

Rev Paul G H Bae - voting  
Rev Tae Jun - voting

**Reformed Churches in Indonesia - NTT  
(Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia NTT (GGRI))**

Rev Pila Njuka - voting

**Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)  
(Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)) (GKN(v))**

Prof Gert Kwakkel - voting

Rev Rutger ter Beek - voting

**Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)**

Rev Bruce Hoyt - voting

Rev John Goris - voting

**Reformed Churches in the United States (RCUS)**

Rev George Syms - voting

Rev Paul H Treick - voting

**Calvinist Reformed Churches (was Pilgrim Reformed Churches)  
(Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia NTT) (GGRC)  
(formerly called Gereja Gereja Reformasi Musyafir NTT)**

Rev Yonson G Dethan - voting

Rev Yahya Teti - voting

**Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI)**

Prof David McKay

Rev Edward McCollum - voting

**Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)**

Rev Bruce Parnell (USA) - voting

**Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)**

Rev Lalnghatlien Songate - voting

Rev Edwin Darsanglur - voting

**United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)**

Rev Raymond Sikkema - voting

Rev Dennis W Royall - voting

Credentials had been received from all churches, except for the following: CGKN, EPCI, FCSA, FRCNA, OPC, PCK(K), RCNZ, RPCNA. Subsequently handed in.

**2.2 Observers (Churches that have applied for membership)**

**Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCS(C))**

Rev Maurice Roberts

Rev John Macleod

Rev David S Fraser

Rev John J Murray

**Confessing Reformed Church in Congo  
(Église Réformée Confessante au Congo) (ERCC)**

Rev Ngoy Nsenga

Rev Muamba Beya

Rev Jonas C Mualaba (observer)

**Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)**

Rev Ben Fourie  
Rev Neels Smit  
Rev Henk Stoker  
Rev Flip Buys

**Reformed Churches of Spain  
(Iglesias Reformadas de España) (IRES)**

Rev Francisco Gomez

**United Reformed Churches in Myanmar (URCM)**

Rev Moses Ngunhlei Thang  
Elder San He Luai

Rev Dr Antiev of the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv (NKST) asked where his church appeared in the list, since it had applied for membership. Rev Kleijn explained that documentation in support of the application had not been received and so the conference was not able to deal with the application and the church had been listed as a visitor. It was agreed that the position would be considered by the executive committee.

**2.3 Visitors**

Rev Kleijn also welcomed visitors to the conference:

**Evangelical Reformed Church in Sweden (ERCS)**

Rev David Bergmark

**Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church (ERPC)**

Rev Melaku Solomon

**Heritage Reformed Congregations in North America (HRCNA)**

Rev Brian A De Vries  
Dr Arthur Miskin

**Independent Reformed Church, Korea (IRCK)**

Rev Heon Soo Kim  
Rev Byoung Kil Chung

**Mehrete Yesus (Compassion of Jesus) Evangelical Presbyterian  
Church in Eritrea (MYEPCE)**

Rev Zecharias Abraham – arriving later in the morning

**Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv  
Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan (NKST)**

Rev Dr Mbanongon Kurugh Antiev

**Reformed Church in Japan**

Rev Yasuhiro Hakamata

**The Reformed Churches of South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod)**

Rev Mbualheni Silas Nefefe  
Rev Albert Mutavhatsindi

Others not representing a church

Rev Dr A J De Visser

Rev Dr L J Joosse (IRTT/DVN Missions Committee)

Gerard Ter Horst (Nederlands Dagblad)

## **2.4 Delegates not yet seen**

Rev Lalnghatlien Songate, Rev Edwin Darsanglur of RPCNEI had not yet arrived.

## **3. The Executive Committee**

Rev Jack J Peterson introduced the recommendations from the interim committee.

### *1. The Corresponding Secretary*

*After ICRC 2001, Rev M Van Beveren resigned from being Corresponding Secretary. Rev C Van Spronsen had already been nominated as an alternate. Therefore the Interim Committee asked him to take up this duty. We propose that the conference confirm the appointment of Rev C Van Spronsen as the Corresponding Secretary.*

### *2. Recording Secretary*

*ICRC 2001 appointed Rev Dr Peter Naylor as Recording Secretary and Karlo Janssen served the committee as an assistant secretary. After ICRC 2001, Karlo Janssen retired from that position and Dr Naylor took up that work, combining both roles. We propose that the conference confirm Rev Dr Peter Naylor as Recording Secretary (and this will include the tasks of the assistant secretary).*

Elected to the executive committee were:

Chairman: Rev Bort de Graaf (CGKN)

Vice-chairman: Rev Bruce Hoyt (RCNZ)

Corresponding Secretary: Rev Cornelius Van Spronsen (CanRC)

Recording Secretary: Rev Dr Peter J Naylor (EPCEW)

Treasurer: Henk Berends (CanRC)

Rev Jack Peterson passed chairmanship of the meeting to Rev Bort de Graaf.

## **4. Expression of thanks**

The chairman began with expression of thanks: to the host church for all its preparations for the conference; to the conference for giving its mandate to the Interim Committee; to the resigning chairman, Rev Jack Peterson, for his work on behalf of the conference through the years from 1997 (Seoul) to 2005 (Pretoria).

## **5. The Theme of the Conference**

The chairman explained the theme of the conference. In 2001, Advisory Committee 6 had complained that topics were too theoretical and asked that the next conference should try to show the relevance of reformed theology to the churches in their different cultural settings. The committee had attempted to do this. The result was this central theme, "the Lordship of Christ," considered in three concentric circles: the believer, the church, and the world. The last conference had also requested more opportunity for discussion and that there should be small discussion groups. This is why the programme includes three workshops.

## **6. Programme and Daily Timetable**

The programme and daily timetable were presented to the conference.

## 6.1 Programme

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Wednesday		Registration	Opening Prayer Service
Thursday	Opening devotions Roll Call (credentials) Appointment of Executive Appointment of Advisory Committees Theme introduced <b>Paper 1. The Lordship of Christ in the Life of the Believer. Prof A J de Visser</b>	Plenary discussion Committee time	Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Friday	Opening devotions <b>Paper 2. The Lordship of Christ in the Church. Prof J W Maris</b> Plenary discussion Photo	Committee time	Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Saturday	Opening devotions Committee reports	Committee time Closing devotions	
Monday	Opening devotions <b>Paper 3. The Lordship of Christ proclaimed in the world. Rev David A Robertson and Rev Yonson Dethan</b> Plenary discussion	Workshops 1, 2, 3	Plenary discussion Closing devotions
Tuesday	Day out		
Wednesday	Opening devotions Workshops 1, 2, 3 Committee time	Workshops 1, 2, 3 Final reports	Closing session

The papers would be presented in the church.

## 6.2 Daily Timetable

The following arrangement was proposed:

09:00 – 10:30	Conference
10:30 – 11:00	Recess
11:00 – 11:45	Conference

11:45 – 2:00 p.m.	Recess for lunch
2:00 – 3:30	Conference
3:30 – 4:00	Recess
4:00 – 5:15	Conference
5:15 – 7:30	Recess for dinner
7:30 – 9:00	Conference
9:00	Tea/coffee

The programme and daily timetable were approved by the meeting.

## **7. Advisory Committees**

The Interim Committee's nomination of eleven advisory committees was presented and comments of delegates received.

## **8. Recess**

The conference went into recess at 10:15.

## **9. Announcements and welcome**

The conference reconvened at 11:05.

The chairman welcomed the delegates of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod), Rev Silas Nefefe and Rev Albert Mutavhatsindi. They are applying for membership and are observers in this conference.

## **10. Paper 1: “the Lordship of Christ in the life of the believer” by Professor A J de Visser**

Professor A J de Visser, Professor of Church History and Practical Theology, Canadian Reformed Theological College, Hamilton, delivered his paper.

The chairman thanked Prof de Visser for his paper.

## **11. Closing**

Rev Bruce Hoyt, the vice-chairman, read Revelation 5:9-14 and led in prayer. The session closed at 12:18 p.m.

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## Session 2

Afternoon, Thursday  
13 October 2005

### 12. Opening

At 2:04 p.m. the chairman called the meeting to order.

### 13. Proposals of the Executive Committee

The chairman introduced two recommendations from the Interim Committee.

#### 13.1 Letter to the churches

It was proposed that: the interim committee will write a letter to the member churches informing them of the outcome of the conference, its major conclusions or any consensus reached.

It was noted that this letter will be put to the conference before being sent out.

This proposal was accepted by the conference.

#### 13.2 Rules for the conduct of debate

It was proposed that:

*the Interim Committee will write a letter to the member churches informing them of the outcome of the conference, its major conclusions or any consensus reached.*

It was noted that this letter will be put to the conference before being sent out.

This proposal was accepted by the conference.

### 14. Advisory Committees

A revised list of advisory committees was presented.

#### 1. **Membership of the IRES (Spain) and of the ERCC (Congo)**

Rev Raymond Sikkema (convenor), Rev Alex J Macdonald, Dr Paul G H Bae.

#### 2. **Membership of the GKSA**

Dr George Knight III (convenor), Rev Norman Reid, Rev George Ball, Rev Dennis W Royall.

#### 3. **Membership of the URCM**

Rev Rutger ter Beek (convenor), Rev Tae Jun, Rev John Dawson.

#### 4. **Membership of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)**

Prof J W Maris (convenor), Rev C Richard H Holst, Rev Keith Kleijn.

#### 5. **Finance**

Rev James Maciver (convenor), Rev George Syms.

#### 6. **Press Release**

Mr Mark T Bube (convenor), Rev John Goris.

## **7. Constitution and Regulations**

*to deal with Agenda Item 7: 2 (email of OPC); and Item 8 : 1 and 3 c.*

Rev Paul H Treick (convenor), Ds H Last, Rev Edward McCollum.

## **8. Regional Conferences**

*to deal with Agenda Item 8: 2 and 3 d. i and ii.*

Prof. David W McKay (convenor), Mr Henk Hoogstra, Rev Bryce Taho.

## **9. Theological Education**

*to deal with Agenda Item 8: 3 a.*

Rev Thomas E Tyson (convenor), Rev J Whytock, Rev B Parnell.

## **10. ICRC 2009**

Rev Bruce Hoyt (convenor), Prof Dr G Kwakkel, Rev Jack J Peterson.

## **11. Mission**

*and to deal with Agenda Item 8 : 3 b.*

Prof H G L Peels (convenor), Rev David A Robertson, Henk A Berends.

It was noted that committees 8 and 11 may meet together to discuss any areas of overlap for regional conferences and mission conferences.

This was accepted.

## **15. Introduction of Churches**

The Corresponding Secretary introduced the committee's proposals for the introduction of churches:

*1. Churches who introduced themselves last time will not be invited to do so again unless there are special developments that we should hear about (5 minutes).*

*2. Member churches who wish to give an update should speak to the Chairman.*

*3. Those who have applied for membership will be expected to give an introduction (time limit 15 minutes).*

*4. Visitors who have reason to address the assembly should approach the chairman beforehand who will consult with the Interim Committee.*

These proposals were accepted.

## **16. Discussion of paper 1**

The discussion covered the following areas. 1. The difference between law keeping and legalism: that legalism regards law keeping as contributing to a person's salvation. 2. The way to avoid the danger of legalism, for example, in observance of the Lord's Day: that our obedience must spring from faith and union with Christ and must be motivated by a concern for the glory of God. 3. The way in which a certain kind of preaching may produce legalism, and what should not be missing in preaching: (a) that we must preach the whole counsel of God and the whole biblical Christ; (b) that we must have a true view of man's fallen condition; (c) that we must declare the true nature of conversion, that in Christ we are a new creation; and (d) the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit. 4. Ministers must not only preach the Word but live it, giving the flock a personal example of living with Christ as Lord. 5. The danger of seeing a problem in the congregation and addressing that particular failing was noted: it is dangerous to do that, and wiser to recognize the underlying cause. 6. The question of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament was raised and the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:24.

## **17. Introduction of Rajesh Kumar**

The vice chairman invited Mr Rajesh Kumar to introduce himself. Mr Kumar was born in North India of a non-Christian family and was converted to Christ. He is now a theological student at Potchefstroom (University of North West Africa),

taking his masters' degree. He expects that the GKSA will send him back as a missionary to his home town of Varanasi in the heart of a Hindu area. He asked to be remembered in prayer.

## **18. Recess**

The conference recessed at 3:22 p.m.

## **19. The Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv (NKST): Advisory Committee 12**

The chairman called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

The chairman informed the meeting that the executive committee had nominated a committee to look into the questions that had arisen in connection with the application for membership from the NKST. The committee for this would be: Rev C Van Spronsen (convenor), Rev Dr Joesse, Rev Sikkema, Rev Maciver and Rev Syms. This was accepted.

## **20. Programme for the evening**

The chairman presented the following revised arrangements for the evening session:

Church reports from the GKSA and URCM

Committee time

Closing devotions.

This was accepted by the meeting.

## **21. Closing**

Rev Bruce Parnell read 1 Peter 3:17-20 and prayed.

The chairman closed the session at 5:38 p.m.

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## Session 3

Evening, Thursday  
13 October 2005

### 22. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 7:23 p.m.

### 23. Introduction of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA)

Prof. Dr. Dries Le Roux du Plooy introduced the GKSA. He noted that delegates of the GKSA had attended the ICRC in the past and their application for membership inevitably came from that. He outlined the history of the GKSA. Dutch reformed people holding the Three Forms of Unity arrived in South Africa in 1652. In 1688, they were strengthened by the arrival of French Huguenots fleeing persecution. After the British annexed the Cape (first in 1795 and for the second time in 1806), they sent Scottish ministers to South Africa. The Cape Government then named the church the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). In 1852, however, they established an independent government and church, the Hervormde Kerk (HK). A secession in 1859 gave rise to the present GKSA, holding the Three Forms of Unity and the Order of Dordt. They sing Psalms and rhymed versions of parts of Scripture. They preach from the Heidelberg Catechism on Sunday afternoons. They have their own theological school at Potchefstroom. In 1951, the FRCSA was formed and the GKSA has good relations with the FRCSA. For a century, they have been working for unity with the DRC and HK but have not succeeded. They regard unity as their goal and view their application for membership of the ICRC in that light. Prof du Plooy thanked the executive committee and wished the conference God's insight, light from His Word and Spirit, in particular in dealing with their application for membership.

The chairman thanked Prof du Plooy for his words.

### 24. Introduction of the United Reformed Churches in Myanmar (URCM)

Rev Moses Ngubhlei Thang introduced the URCM. Rev Thang expressed thanks to the churches sponsoring the URCM's application for membership, the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRC) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI). He thanked the ICRC for assistance to enable him to attend the conference. Myanmar (formerly Burma) has 52 million people divided into more than one hundred ethnic groups. It is still a poor country. Christianity was introduced in 1813 by an American missionary, Adoniram Judson. The last missionary left Myanmar in 1966. At present, Theravada Buddhism is dominant; Islam, Hinduism, and Animism, are also present. Christianity is a minority faith and there is a mixture of denominations. Rev Thang began to introduce the reformed faith in 1993 (under the name, the Urban and Rural Ministry among Slums). There are now 1,803 believers in eighteen local churches plus three preaching stations, served by eighteen ordained pastors, six pastors in training, 33 elders, and 55 deacons. They held their first synod in 1995 and chose the name, United Reformed Churches in Myanmar. They hold the Three Forms of Unity, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Ecumenical Creeds. They have their own church order, 112 articles, which preserves the autonomy of local churches. They sing Psalms and hymns. They are engaged in mission and works of compassion. In 1998, they commenced their own theological training. Rev Thang told the conference how difficult it was to present the reformed faith in Myanmar because it is regarded as a cult. On 26 February, 2005, his own church building and the seminary was burned down in a fire caused by an electrical fault. He said: "We love the reformed faith, we work hard, and serve the Lord. Please pray for us and come and help us: this is a call from Myanmar."

The chairman thanked Rev Thang.

### 25. Recess for committee time

The conference went into recess at 8:06 p.m. for committee work

### 26. Closing devotions

The conference reconvened at 8:54 p.m.

The chairman read John 17:1-3 and spoke about it. Christ has power to give everlasting life. In his 'high priestly' prayer, Christ shows what is in his heart: burning love for God, the desire to do the Father's will, and concern for his disciples. We lost everlasting life in paradise. Since then, man has searched for it but none has found it. Jesus Christ regains it for us through dying. In order to save us, he must have absolute authority over all flesh (i.e., all people). His authority extends even over the enemies of his church. This is a precious promise especially in this time of secularization, when many leave the church. We can't keep them. But we have this precious promise: Christ's authority is over all flesh. What is this eternal life? It is that we shall never die but it is more, that we also know God. The Old Testament Hebrew root, *yādaʿ* "to know," signifies an intimate relationship. Psalm 25:14 speaks of this: "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Do we know the Lord in this way? Do we have this close companionship? We enter into it by praying and reading the Bible. So we have a foretaste of everlasting life, the inheritance of all true believers. We may suffer much in this present life, but our sufferings will never destroy our eternal life. We are safe. The chairman led in prayer. The meeting sang Psalm 23. The chairman closed the session at 9:07 p.m.

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## Session 4

**Morning, Friday  
14 October 2005**

### **27. Opening**

The chairman opened the session at 9:08 a.m.

He read John 17:4-8 and spoke particularly about verse 5: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me." This is partly a reference to his reward. Christ is also requesting that his suffering on the cross will glorify him before the eyes of the world. Those who see him suffer will see the love and power and glory of God – the power of attracting sinners to himself. The spotlight of heaven will shine on Christ on the cross. We should always pray that God will glorify his Son in us when we experience times of suffering, for example when we need an operation in hospital or when we are persecuted. The world will see in us something of the love and power and glory of Christ. Sometimes our words cannot reach men but our conduct in suffering can. Let us also pray that God may be glorified when we preach and not we ourselves. This is a great danger for popular preachers. That will not convert men, only impress them. We don't need glorified preachers, only that the Son of God should be glorified. In Galatians 3:1, Paul speaks of Christ portrayed to the Galatians. Preaching is painting Christ in all his glory before the eyes of the hearers. Calvin wrote: "When the church has painters such as these, she no longer needs the dead images of wood and stone, she no longer requires pictures, both of which, unquestionably, were first admitted to Christian temples when the pastors had become dumb and been converted into mere idols, or when they uttered a few words from the pulpit in such a cold and careless manner, that the power and efficacy of the ministry were utterly extinguished." The chairman then led in prayer. The meeting sang part of Psalm 89.

### **28. Approval of minutes (sessions 1 and 2)**

The corrected minutes for sessions 1 and 2 (items 1-21) were approved by the conference.

### **29. Paper 2: "the Lordship of Christ in the Church" by Professor J W Maris**

Prof Maris presented his paper to the conference.

The chairman thanked Prof Maris for his paper.

### **30. Discussion of paper 2**

The discussion covered the following areas. 1. Understanding the significance of the word order in Ephesians 3:21, "to him be glory in the church and in Jesus Christ". Why not the reverse? We should not deduce too much from the order. 2. The order in which we should view the threefold office of Christ – prophet, priest, and king. 3. How the kingship of Christ over his people can be reconciled with discipline exercised over the Lord's Supper by the elders of the church, particularly when they forbid someone from partaking at the table. The elders have responsibility for the administration of the Lord's Supper and this is not inconsistent with the headship of Christ. 4. Should we think of the unity in terms of the church visible or invisible? When the New Testament addresses the church, it is always as it exists in its concrete reality. Although it is difficult to know where the church of Christ is, when there are so many denominations, we ought to look for the churches where the Word of God is preached and the fruit of the Spirit is evident. We too easily separate from one another and are content to remain apart. The unity of the church should be a burden for us and high on the church's agenda. (Continued at item 38.)

### **31. Recess**

The conference went into recess at 10:22 a.m.

### **32. Introduction of the Confessing Reformed Church in Congo (ERCC)**

The chairman reconvened the meeting at 11:03 a.m.

Rev Ngoy Nsenga thanked the sponsoring churches, the RCUS and GKN(V). By God's grace, his church was born through the radio ministry of Rev A R Kayayan of the Christian Reformed Churches in the USA. Listeners began to meet.

In 1981, they sent two young men for training in Aix-en-Provence. In 1984, their first minister was ordained by Rev Paul H Treick and Rev Kayayan. The churches in the Netherlands gave support, the DVN sending the first Dutch missionary to them. Six men were trained at Potchefstrom. The ERCC holds the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt, the French Confession, and the ecumenical creeds. They submit to the authority of Scripture. They have sister church relations with the RCUS, the GKN(V) and the GKSA. At present there are 250 congregations, 22 trained men and nine candidates. These are spread over four of the eleven provinces of the Congo. Their congregations are very poor and cannot support their ministers. In 1995, the GKN(V) opened a seminary in Congo and there are 15 students at the moment. The ERCC needs more ministers and the means to support them. It needs buildings. It wants to reach the remaining seven provinces of Congo and fulfil the great commission among its 200 tribes, and even go to other countries. Membership of the ICRC would be a way for us to help each other to work in the field of the Lord.

Chairman thanked Rev Nsenga for his introduction and expressed his desire that the Lord's blessing would be upon the ERCC.

### **33. Introduction of the Reformed Churches of Spain (IRE)**

Rev Francisco Gomez brought the bad news that although Spain was a first world country, its protestant church was a third world church, in terms of spiritual poverty. But it was his joy to be a representative of the IRE at the conference. He thanked the Corresponding Secretary for guiding the church through correspondence over three years. He thanked the EPCEW and the GKN(V) for sponsoring them for membership of the ICRC. There had been exchange visits with both churches. The IRE has seven congregations and one mission point. Spain is a mission field. There are very few evangelical believers there and most are dispensationalist and Arminian. The European Reformation of the sixteenth century started well in Spain, and from it they have a Bible translation and a translation of Calvin's *Institutes*. The reformed monk who translated the Bible had to flee abroad because of persecution by the Roman Catholic Church. If it had not been for the Inquisition, all Spain would have been protestant in a few years. But, in God's wisdom, it was not their time. The testimony of God's Word was forbidden. King Philip said that he preferred to reign over a desert than over a country inhabited by heretics. So Spain experienced three centuries of complete silence. They are therefore a young church without the traditions of other European churches. In 1868, there was a second reformation, a time of evangelization. But the period of the Franco dictatorship (1936-75) was again a difficult time for the church. Since 1978, the new constitution of Spain gave liberty to them to be a church and to preach the gospel. In 1992, they were recognized by the state. They know how small they are: only 300 people in a population of 40 million. But, in the words of Ecclesiastes, this is a time to gather stones. The churches of the ICRC are the natural family of the IRE.

### **34. Devotions**

Rev Tom Tyson read Psalm 46 and emphasized verse 4: there is a river! What is this? There was no river in Judah, especially not in Mount Zion. The river is referred to in Ezekiel 47:1, 8-9. We today are glad to know of that river. It flowed into the Congo, and much fish live there. It has even flowed into Spain; also into the USA where there is a lot of salt (i.e., evil). We are representatives of the fruit of that river. Hallelujah! Amen. Rev Tyson led in prayer.

### **35. Recess**

The conference recessed at 11:37 a.m. for the official photographs, lunch and committee time.

### **36. Closing**

The conference did not sit during the afternoon but was convened at 5:15 p.m. for closing of session 4. Rev Richard Holst read Psalm 133 and led in prayer. The session was closed at 5:30 p.m.

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## Session 5

Evening, Friday  
14 October 2005

### 37. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 7:32 p.m. The recording secretary took status reports from convenors of advisory committees.

### 38. Discussion of Paper 2 continued

The continued discussion covered the following matters. 1. Whether the ICRC churches could unite and how they could work together. The fact that we are one body should influence us more than it does. There is the sinfulness of 'dividedness'. We need to take home a practical outcome for our churches, perhaps beginning with regional co-operation. 2. Are we reading John 17:11 correctly as a mandate for the church? Does God hear this prayer only when we obey or despite our disobedience? It should have an effect on us. We cannot read John 17 selectively: choosing unity and neglecting truth. 3. What is unity? Are there levels of unity? If there is only organizational unity, it is not spiritual and can heaven be glad of that? But we cannot be satisfied with spiritual unity without organizational expression. 4. Who is it that puts all enemies under Christ's feet? Not simply Christ Himself but also God the Father, according to Psalms 2 and 110 and 1 Corinthians 15:27. Similarly God raised Christ, even though he took his life again. The importance of Trinitarian thinking was noted. The mutual glorification of Father and Son has implications for the Christian life. The fact that Satan and the powers of darkness are defeated supplies us with comfort and hope. 5. We partake of Christ's victory through faith. 6. Christ is a majestic king and yet a servant. Here we rise to the highest truths of the gospel. At the very moment that Christ washed the disciples feet (John 13), we see that our Lord has so much power and influence over the hearts of his disciples. He is master of the situation. What majesty! We see Christ going in the way of humiliation: we must learn this reality. 7. The preacher is not important in himself and must not seek to be glorified before the people. This is not a contradiction of Scriptures which stress the importance of preaching. The preacher is only important as he holds forth the light: without the Word of God, he is nothing. 8. Is there any biblical warrant for national churches? It was noted that certain charismatic churches are strengthened by having worldwide networks that disregard national boundaries. The churches should consider forming regional churches, such as, "The Free Reformed Church of Europe." There may be practical reasons for churches observing national boundaries but this does not justify national/st divisions. 9. The synthesis of Christ's majesty with his cross has practical consequences for strategy in outreach. Concentrate on the gospel. 10. How should we participate in Christ's triumph? Do we stand still and believe it or must we participate in it? Both – by faith. There is no contradiction. We must believe that the Lord will conquer; and we must fight the good fight of faith, especially the struggle of our own hearts against sin and all that divides us from Christ and his victory. This is the narrow path, following Christ. Satan's plan is to estrange us from simple devotion to Christ (2 Corinthians 11). 11. A higher and lower level of the church's identity had been presented. Christ our head is our identity; historical human factors shape our identity. In practice, it seems that the human factors dominate. Some churches are kept apart by cultural, ethnic, linguistic factors but in some cases, churches which have the same doctrinal standards, no linguistic or cultural differences, remain apart. At what point are we living a lie and show a serious lack of a sense of catholicity? Sometimes the things that keep us divided are minor: the war over Bible translation; something trivial about clothing. When a church defines its identity or is named by reference to a minor thing, even such as an article of clothing (a stocking), something is seriously wrong.

The chairman thanked Prof Maris.

### 39. Introduction to the Evangelical Reformed Church in Sweden (ERCS)

Mr David Bergmark introduced the ERCS. Sweden was predominantly Lutheran. It surprises many people to hear that there is a reformed church there. Until 1850, it would have been against the law of the country. Sweden was a forgotten country. Its population of around nine million is socialist and places its faith in the government. Feminism is a popular religion. Mr Bergmark explained that he was brought to the reformed faith in the United States and, in 2000, he returned to Sweden with a small group with the desire to see a reformed church there. They are a congregation of around 30. Next month, he is to be ordained in the United States as a pastor of the Swedish church. Sweden needs reformed leaders. There are pockets of believers but no pastors. They also need literature in Swedish. He is glad to be in discussion with the EPCEW.

#### **40. Introduction to the Mehrete Yesus (Compassion of Jesus) Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Eritrea (MYEPCE)**

Rev Zecharias Abraham brought greetings from the Compassion of Jesus Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Eritrea. He wished to update the conference on developments since he spoke to it in 2001. At that time, the MYEPCE hoped to open a Bible School in Eritrea. Three years ago, the Bible School opened. Last week, thirteen students graduated and one was ordained an elder. He wanted the conference to share their joy at this first blessing from the Lord. He requested the prayers of the reformed churches.

Chairman thanked Rev Abraham for his update and gave an undertaking that the conference would pray for them.

#### **41. Introduction to the Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church (ERPC)**

Rev Melaku Solomon introduced the ERPC. He explained how he had learned the gospel from evangelical Christians and how he and some friends came to reformed convictions through reading Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. Missionaries of the OPC came to Ethiopia seven years ago and helped to start a church there. Now there are seven preaching centres and they have seen people converted from Islam and Roman Catholicism. They have over 1,000 members, two ordained pastors, five elders, and 35 candidates for eldership. Recently they started a Newsletter, introducing the reformed faith, which they circulate among the evangelical community, and they like it. They hope to have their own Bible College. The ERPC is registered with the government and, apart from some persecution from Muslims, they are doing well.

The chairman thanked Rev Solomon and expressed his hope that his first visit to the ICRC would be both interesting and a spiritual experience and that he would return to Ethiopia encouraged by fellowship in the gospel.

#### **42. Closing**

Rev John Goris read 1 Timothy 6:11-16 and commented. In the pastoral letters, the apostle Paul speaks of the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Against that background, he calls Timothy to take his stand in this world. The church was threatened. Paul calls Timothy to make a good confession, which Christ himself did. Timothy should be motivated by Christ's glorious appearing to fight the good fight of faith and to serve the Lord in his church. We too should be driven, motivated by the prospect of that glorious appearing. That Lord, we shall see! Rev Goris led the meeting in prayer, particularly praying for the persecuted church throughout the world. The meeting sang Psalm 145. The chairman closed the session at 9:16 p.m.

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## Session 6

**Morning, Saturday  
15 October 2005**

### **43. Opening**

The chairman opened the session at 9:04 a.m. The conference sang the hymn, "I will sing of my Redeemer and His wondrous love for me." The chairman read John 17:9-14 and spoke about Christ's theme, "Keep my disciples." They are his precious property, given to him by the Father. This is the deepest reason why they were converted. Now Christ is leaving them. It was not a contradiction of John 3:16 that he prayed only for his own. There is a contrast between the believers, who are so weak, and the wicked world which is strong. What can the wicked world do against believers that are so protected? When we love the Word, the world often hates us. When that happens, remember that high priestly prayer. The true church has a place in this world, and, more important, a place in the prayer of our Mediator and in the heart of God. The chairman led in prayer, particularly for a family in the church of Rev Fourie whose house was robbed and their housekeeper murdered. The meeting sang Psalm 121.

### **44. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of Sessions 3 and 4 (items 22-35) were approved.

### **45. Corresponding Secretary's Report**

Rev C Van Spronsen presented his report.

The chairman thanked the Corresponding Secretary and invited questions. Prof Kwakkel mentioned the BBK's experience that when a church is undergoing persecution it is wise not to publish their contact information on the web site.

It was agreed to write a letter of thanks to Rev J C Janssen and Rev M van Beveren for their past services to the conference.

The Corresponding Secretary's report was accepted by the meeting.

The chairman expressed the appreciation of the conference to the new Corresponding Secretary for the work done, and that the Lord would bless him in the time to come.

### **46. Correspondence Received**

The Corresponding Secretary read correspondence received:

- 1 Greetings from the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches' Fellowship in Myanmar (email dated October 12).
- 2 Letter with greetings from the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary) who were unable to send a delegate.
- 3 Yousaf Younis, Islamabad in Pakistan, who was unable to obtain a visa (email 30 September).
- 4 Letter from Ely Presbyterian Church in Cardiff expressing regret that they could not send delegates. Rev C Kleijn passed on the greetings of Rev G Van Rongen who had been chairman of the constituent assembly, who expressed disappointment that his church is not represented at the conference.

### **47. Advisory Committee 8: Regional Conferences**

The chairman read the report. He invited the convenor of the committee, Prof David McKay, to answer questions on it. He indicated that the report was intended to be taken as an encouragement to the churches to proceed to make their own regional arrangements.

It was agreed to defer acceptance of the report until the meeting deals with the report of the advisory committee 11 on mission. (See minute 73.)

#### **48. Advisory Committee 2: GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg)**

The chairman read the first report with the correction that the sponsor is CGKN not GKN(v).

The secretary of the committee, Rev Royall, took questions. The conference requested that a delegate of the GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg) introduce his church.

#### **49. Recess**

The conference recessed at 10:20 a.m.

#### **50. Introduction of the GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg)**

The meeting reconvened at 11:03 a.m. Rev Silas Nefefe introduced the GKSA Synod Soutpansberg. He expressed thanks for the opportunity to address the conference. We came into existence by the mission work of the GKSA and the CGKN. From 1910 to 1962 we were a mission church. In 1963, the black churches had their own synod due to apartheid. Most of our members are Venda, Tsonga and Sothos. We were members of the REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council) but we left because we were not happy with developments contrary to the authority of Scripture. We accept the Three Forms of Unity. We have a theological seminary and an institute for Christian higher education, and we have a focus on community development work, especially dealing with HIV/AIDS. We have relations with GKSA (Synod Potchefstroom), the GKSA (Synod Midland), and with the GKN(v). We have had contacts with the OPC and had asked them to sponsor us but there was a communication breakdown. Our churches are small, about nine congregations, and have few pastors, but we are very strong in reformed faith and seek fellowship with true reformed churches. We are struggling with poverty and with the legacy of apartheid. Through prayer, God will help us to break down the barriers we are facing.

#### **51. Advisory Committee 2: GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg) (continued)**

The GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg) has no intention to ordain women at this time. The question whether it was in fact separate from the GKSA (Synod Potchefstroom) could not be ascertained with certainty. It was decided that the committee should speak with the delegates of both churches and report the position accurately. Acceptance of the report was deferred for that.

#### **52. Advisory Committee 2: GKSA**

Rev Royall read the second part of the committee's report.

The chairman invited questions.

It was noted that the GKSA had resigned from the REC some time ago. Concern was expressed: the issue of admitting women to office was a current debate in the GKSA; and the GKSA have sister-church relations with the Christian Reformed Churches of North America (CRCNA). Difficulties were expressed with the formulation of the advisory committee's recommendation: this conference cannot commit the ICRC 2009; to admit a church with such conditions some believed to be wrong; and the reference to "an overwhelming majority" was subjective.

The chairman invited Rev Neels Smit of the GKSA to give additional information. He affirmed the GKSA's unconditional acceptance of the authority of Scripture, which can be seen from its published minutes of synod. The next synod will carefully decide the issue of women in the eldership and ministry on the basis of Scripture and the Three Forms of Unity. The GKSA does not have a history of severing relations with other churches, except for the GKN in 1976, which was preceded by more than a decade of discussion and severe fraternal admonition. They are involved in continuing discussion with the CRCNA along the lines of Matthew 18. He did not think that a body such as the ICRC should demand action while churches are still in discussion. Rev Ben Fourie said that the GKSA had 420 congregations in every province of South Africa. They had already attended the ICRC twice. He pleaded that the conference should judge the GKSA according to the ICRC's Constitution according to what it is now, not what it might become. They gladly accepted the admonition of the conference. They had suffered isolation and wished to be accepted. The issue of women in office had been on the GKSA's agenda for nineteen years already. The main question was the hermeneutical approach that they adopt.

The chairman thanked the two delegates for their remarks.

### **53. Closing**

Rev Dr George Knight III led in prayer for illumination and read 1 Corinthians 1:2-3. He commented that Paul uses almost identical words to every church as does Peter in both his letters, John in one letter and Revelation. Grace here means the enabling grace of God's salvation. 2 Corinthians 9:8, which is repetitive: grace abounding and sufficient. We are not yet glorified, yet God's grace is with us even now. His peace (tranquillity) is also given to us (comparing John 14:27). Therefore may we live enabled by the God of all grace, today and every day. Dr Knight led in prayer. The meeting sang a hymn.

Recess 12:09 p.m.

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## Session 7

Afternoon, Saturday  
15 October 2005

### 54. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 2:07 p.m.

### 55. Advisory Committee 2: GKSA and GKSA (Synod Soutpansberg) (continued)

#### 55.1 Synod Soutpansberg

Rev Royall reported that the GKSA delegates have clarified that the Soutpansberg Synod is formally one with them, in that no formal act of separation ever took place, but de facto they are a separate body. They wish it were not the case but they agree that they should be treated as a separate body. The government and discipline is separate. It reflects the history in South Africa. They also use different languages.

Rev Royall, for the committee, put forward an amendment to their recommendations: that we delete the words “agree to grant membership of the Synod Soutpansberg” and replace with “encourage Synod Soutpansberg to apply for membership”; and delete “with the following condition etc (to the end of A).”

The amended recommendations were unanimously approved.

#### 55.2 GKSA

Rev Dr Knight pointed out that Rev Smit had reassured the meeting that the GKSA would act according to Scripture and confession but had not said what he hoped the result would be. He also expressed his view that the ICRC's Constitution's condition for membership that churches should not be members of the World Council of Churches or any other similar organization (Minutes 2001, page 264) communicates a perspective: we should not have relations with churches going in a direction contrary to our own, because of the impact that may have on us.

Opinion was divided. One view, following the committee's, was to exercise caution and defer membership until the outcome of the GKSA's synod in 2006 be known. The other view was that the GKSA should be granted membership, because it does satisfy the requirements of the Constitution at the present time, without adding unconstitutional conditions. This way of supplementing the Constitution in an *ad hoc* manner was dangerous and to be avoided: it would result in a legalistic morass.

The conference went into recess at 3:31 p.m.

### 56. Welcome to arriving delegates

The conference reconvened at 4:15 p.m.

The Corresponding Secretary announced the arrival of Rev Lalnghatlien Songate and Rev Edwin Darsanglur of the RPCNEI, and Mrs Vallerie Ellen Doe from the Bethel World Outreach Ministries in the Ivory Coast. He welcomed them all.

### 57. Advisory Committee 2: GKSA (continued)

The chairman re-opened the discussion. The committee's motion was read.

Rev G R Procee proposed an amendment:

*that 1. in paragraph 2, we delete “agree to consider” (which had originally been “agree to grant”) and read instead, “encourages the GKSA to re-apply in 2009”; and that we delete “with the following conditions”; 2. we delete “overwhelmingly” in A; and 3. that we delete B.*

Committee supports amendments.  
The amendment was accepted: 21 in favour; 16 against.

The amended motion was put before the meeting.

An alternative motion was put by the delegates of the FCS and the CGKN:

*that, 1. the ICRC agrees to grant membership to the GKSA; and 2. the ICRC exhorts the GKSA in its discussions about women in office and relationships with the CRCNA to settle these matters in a biblical and harmonious way.*

Vote on the amended motion of the advisory committee: 11 in favour; 25 against.  
The chairman declared that the motion had failed.

The alternative motion was put to the meeting.

An amendment, proposed by Rev Tom Tyson, seconded by Rev George Syms:

*that we delete the exhortation.*

Vote on the amendment: 5 in favour.  
The chairman declared that the amendment had failed.

There was a brief recess for delegations to discuss their vote on the motion. Since this is a vote about membership, each delegation is entitled to one vote.

A vote on the proposal was taken: in favour 21; against 1. The motion was carried.

The chairman said that this was 'an important moment'. He read Psalm 133. He welcomed the GKSA brothers. He commented that this had not been an acceptance without a word. It had been a heavy meeting because the conference was struggling to do what was right. They did not intend to keep the GKSA outside but to hold them inside and give them the fuel to remain reformed. The exhortation had been added to give the GKSA delegates a hand when they returned to their churches. His prayer was that the Lord would guide the GKSA's synod so that at the next ICRC we might come together and be excited over their decisions. He expressed the desire that God would bless them and their churches in all their ministry and all the work that they are doing.

Rev Smit responded. It was a precious moment for the GKSA. They hold the ICRC in high esteem. He thanked the committee for its hard work, brotherly kindness in handling the situation. They would go back to the GKSA encouraged by the ICRC's expectation of them that they will maintain our common faith. We have the same God and the same faith.

## **58. Closing devotions**

Rev Wüllschleger read John 10:14-18. The Good Shepherd was fully in control of all that happened to him. He laid down his life. This is encouragement for us. Verse 16 speaks of his other sheep that are not of this fold, meaning the Gentiles who would enter after Pentecost. We are those. When Christ says that he must bring them, he does not mean that he is reluctant: he does this with all readiness and love. So we are one flock in our head. We should prepare for the Lord's Day by focusing on our head. Rev Wüllschleger led in prayer. The meeting sang Psalm 67.

The chairman closed the session at 5:17 p.m.

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## Session 8

**Morning, Monday  
17 October 2005**

### 59. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 9:07 a.m. The meeting sang Psalm 84. The chairman read John 17:15-19 and spoke about the text. The theme is: "Sanctify them in Thy truth." Christ left the disciples in a wicked world. He could not take them out of the world because of his love for the world (John 3:16) and because he had other sheep (John 10:16). They are the means to bring the other sheep. Therefore he has another request: sanctification through the truth, his Word. The source of strength to continue to preach and evangelize is the holy Word. As a source of sanctification, it must be read and studied in our churches. In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian arrived at the town of Vanity. The way to the celestial city lies through this and whoever wants to avoid it must go out of the world. We have a mission in the world (*missio Dei*). But there is a danger of becoming worldly minded and accommodating the message to the world. We must resist that. We are in this world but we are not at home here. The chairman prayed. The meeting sang Psalm 119.

The chairman indicated that there was a lot of business to be handled during the remaining days. He presented a revised programme.

The chairman welcomed Rev Dr Douw Breed of the GKSA.

### 60. Paper 3: "The Lordship of Christ proclaimed in the world," by Rev David A Robertson and Rev Yonson Dethan

Rev Yonson Dethan and Rev David Robertson presented their papers. Rev Robertson invited Miss Valerie Doe to sing to the conference.

The chairman thanked Rev Dethan and Rev Robertson for their papers.

### 61. Recess

The meeting went into recess at 10:50 a.m.

### 62. Approval of minutes (session 5)

The chairman reconvened the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

The conference approved the minutes of the closing of session 4 and session 5 (items 36-42).

### 63. Discussion of paper 3

63.1 Discussion of the paper by Rev Yonson Dethan included the following subjects. 1. Practical help for persecuted Christians. 2. The way in which western churches should view Islam and Muslims. 3. Christians are weakened by internal fighting; we have a duty to strengthen the church.

63.2 Discussion of Rev David Robertson's paper included the following subjects. 1. Again, how to approach Muslims: be radical but not aggressive. The example of Paul in Acts 17 was cited. Muslims are not all the same and they are not the enemy but in need of salvation. 2. How best to help the poor. 3. Whether our worship style should adopt contemporary forms or be counter-cultural. Rev Robertson suggested some topics to be considered for the next ICRC: how to preach contemporary Calvinism; our response to the poor and AIDS; analysis of what is happening in the church at the moment – globalization, the 'emergent church'.

Members of the conference made suggestions about what was desirable in the ICRC. 1. The need to be effective in our relationships: to know one another's circumstances and to pray for one another. 2. That the conference should send out a message that would echo around the globe on the topics of: poverty (according to a UN report, the biggest problem in the world); HIV/AIDS and extramarital relations; the profaning of the Lord's name; crime and violence. 3. That the conference

should consider John 4:23, what it means to worship in Spirit and in truth. 4. That the ICRC should set up a unit to monitor persecution and to keep the churches informed. These suggestions were referred to the executive committee.

#### **64. Close**

The chairman expressed appreciation to both speakers and for the discussion.

Rev George Syms read 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 and drew attention to Paul's words, "of first importance." The gospel cuts through all cultures, because it is the power of God to salvation. We must renew our faith in the gospel rather than our own programmes and ideas. He led in prayer. The chairman closed the session at 12:38 p.m.

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## Session 9

Afternoon, Monday  
17 October 2005

### 65. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 1:38 p.m.

### 66. Workshops

The vice-chairman allocated conference delegates to their three workshops. The first workshops took place until 3:30 p.m.

### 67. Discussion (continued)

The chairman reconvened the plenary session at 4:03 p.m. The chairman congratulated Rev Ruud ter Beek on the news of the birth of his fourth grandchild, Welmoed Anna.

The GKSA delegates wanted to put some motions to the conference. They were requested to submit them to the executive committee for the next conference. Rev Procee also gave notice that he wished to make a proposal.

### 68. Reports of Missions Committee and Advisory Committee 11: Mission

The chairman of Missions Committee, Rev John Goris, presented his report.

Mr Mark Bube introduced the booklet, *ICRC Missions Committee 2005 Mission Field Survey*, which represents four years' work. He drew attention to the statement on the inside cover, restricting use of the material without prior permission, especially on the internet. He pleaded with the delegates to urge their church's contact person to update the committee regularly.

Rev David Robertson, secretary of Advisory Committee 11 introduced the committee report. He thanked the members of the committee for their wisdom and insight. He presented the recommendations of the committee.

#### 1. The World Reformed Fellowship.

*(a) We recommend that the Interim Committee should make contact with the WRF to investigate the desirability and possibility of co-operating in Mission. (b – amended) We recommend that the Interim Committee make contact with the WRF.*

Overwhelmingly accepted (six opposed).

#### 2. Regional Conferences.

*We recommend that if such conferences are to go ahead they should be combined with the regional mission conferences, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources. It was noted that this is in harmony with the recommendations of Advisory Committee 8.*

Accepted unanimously.

#### 3. The request of GKN(v) for a small committee to promote and coordinate the exchange for diaconal and missionary projects and volunteers between the member churches.

*We recommend that this request for a small committee be refused. The establishment of another committee is not necessary. However we acknowledge that there is a need for better communication and more information about what the constituent churches of the ICRC are already doing or intend to do especially in major disaster areas. Greater use of the Internet and other media could be considered. We recommend that this matter be passed to the Missions Committee.*

Accepted.

4(a) Committee Membership.

*We recommend the following:*

*(i) Once someone is appointed to the committee they could remain on the committee even if they move from one area to another or one member church to another.*

*(ii) The committee should be appointed at each ICRC.*

*(iii) The membership of the committee should consist of at least one person from each of Australasia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. There should also be included representatives from each of the different reformed traditions, Reformed, Presbyterian and new churches.*

*(iv) That the committee be no more than twelve and no less than six members. Recommendations for the new committee should be sent by the Missions committee before each ICRC, in time to be sent out with the conference papers.*

*(v) Any member is eligible for reappointment no more than twice (thus being able to serve a maximum of twelve years).*

*(vi) The Missions committee may appoint advisors.*

Accepted.

4(b) The current committee (this ICRC) only.

*We recommend that:*

*(i) the convenor, Rev J Goris, be re-appointed.*

*(ii) the Corresponding Secretary of the Interim Committee be an ex officio member.*

*(iii) there be members from each of the regions as follows*

- Europe – Calum Ferguson (Scotland); Dr L J Joosse (Netherlands)*
- Africa – A representative from the Congo (subject to them being accepted as members of the ICRC); Prof Dereck Mashau (South Africa)*
- Australasia – Yonson Dethan (Indonesia); Dr Bae (Korea)*
- The Americas – Mark Bube (USA), Ken Herfst (Guatemala), Rev R Sikkema (Canada)*

*(iv) The Missions Committee should appoint its own secretary.*

*(v) If someone is unable to take up their post or needs to be replaced, the Missions committee may suggest to the Interim Committee a suitable replacement.*

Accepted.

4(c) ICRC.

*We recommend: that one speaker/session at each ICRC be proposed by the Missions Committee.*

Accepted.

4(d) The Missions Report.

*We recommend that:*

*the whole missions report, together with this finding of the ICRC be sent to [the mission committee of] each member church of the ICRC with particular attention being drawn to section 3:1 and 3:2. The committee believe that each member of the ICRC needs to reflect on the changing situation in the world and the issues raised by this report. However there are some areas of the report that we would wish to highlight.*

*(i) On Uniformity – page 1. We recognise that there is a biblical (reformed perspective) and approach. However we would reject the necessity of uniformity, realising that biblical principles can be applied in different ways in different cultures.*

*(ii) On Directions – Page 5.3. We welcome the fact that the Missions Committee desire to examine Reformed Missions in the 21st century. However we believe that there is a danger in suggesting that the ICRC would 'give clear directions.' It is not the purpose of the ICRC to direct but rather to stimulate and encourage.*

*(iii) The Survey – Page 3.2.2. We commend the Committee and especially Mark Bube for producing the survey of missions work in the ICRC churches. We recommend that this booklet should be sent to all the constituent churches of the ICRC. We were however disappointed that 'not all the churches provided the necessary information' and recommend that all member churches co-operate fully in the future production of this most valuable resource.*

*(iv) Meetings of the Missions Committee – We recommend that the committee should meet either immediately prior to, or after, each ICRC. We recommend that the other main meeting of the Missions Committee should be in between conferences. Other meetings may be held as necessary. However we would suggest that any extra meetings need not be done face to face.*

*(v) The Interim Committee – In order to facilitate greater consultation between the Missions Committee and the Interim Committee we recommend that the convenor of the Missions Committee should be an ex officio member of the Interim Committee.*

Accepted.

4(e) Proposed Mandate.

*(i) To gather and distribute a booklet summarising (both by church and field) the mission works of the ICRC member churches. This should be prepared in time for each ICRC.*

*(ii) To gather and to study the relevant documents from the member churches regarding their mission vision, policies, programs or projects, including the training of missionaries and mission methodologies, and to report on its study of these documents, as appropriate.*

*(iii) To help provide a relevant agenda in relation to mission for the Regional Conferences. To help provide and facilitate arrangements for papers on mission topics of mutual interest to be used during the Regional Conferences and/or the ICRC itself.*

*(iv) To publish (in a format suitable for republication in the member churches' own media) an ICRC Missions Newsletter, on a regular basis, as appropriate, for the benefit of the churches, mission agencies and/or the inter-church relations committees. This newsletter should include descriptions of opportunities for missionary service and/or mission project participation pending in the member churches, and articles intended to promote interest in Reformed missions. This information, if appropriate, should also be produced on the ICRC website.*

*(v) To develop and maintain a list of mission contact representatives for each member church. Each representative will be responsible for disseminating ICRC missions information and materials to their respective churches and for gathering and transmitting to the Missions Committee the relevant information from their respective churches necessary for the accomplishment of (i)-(iv) above.*

*(vi) To send a report to the Corresponding Secretary at least six months before the next ICRC.*

*(vii) To propose a budget for the following four years to the next ICRC.*

It was noted that the task of mission to the Jews has not been identified separately but should be regarded as included within the general points.

It was also noted that helping churches suffering under persecution is not part of the Mission Committee's remit.  
Accepted

4(f) Budget.  
Accepted.

Chairman thanked Mission Committee and Advisory Committee 11.

## **69. Closing**

Rev George Ball read Hebrews 13:1-8. He drew attention to verse 3, "remember the prisoners as if chained with them," reminding the delegates that we have committed ourselves to do this, and to verses 7 and 8. He concluded his remarks with verses 20-21 and led in prayer. The chairman closed the session at 5:34 p.m.

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## Session 10

Evening, Monday  
17 October 2005

### 70. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 7:03 p.m.

### 71. Relief for the persecuted church

Rev G R Procee presented a motion to the meeting regarding assistance to Christians undergoing persecution. It was decided to defer a decision on this motion until Wednesday to allow time for consideration (minute 83).

### 72. Advisory Committee 1: the Reformed Churches of Spain (Iglesias Reformadas de España) (IRE) and the Reformed Church in Congo (Eglise Réformée Confessante au Congo) (ERCC)

#### 72.1 The Reformed Churches of Spain (Iglesias Reformadas de España) (IRE)

Rev R Sikkema reported the committee's findings. The IRE's confessional documents are in order (Westminster Confession of Faith, Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dordt). The sponsoring churches are the GKN(v) and the EPCEW. The GKN(v) has met yearly with the IRE since 1989. Both sponsors have had on field contact with the IRE. It is reformed in doctrine and Presbyterian in government.

*We recommend that the ICRC welcome the IRE into its membership.*

Accepted unanimously (23 churches voted).

The chairman welcomed the IRE as a member church: "May God bless you and may you keep fellowship with our churches."

Rev Gomez expressed his gladness that the IRE was now a member church.

#### 72.2 Confessing Reformed Church in Congo (Église Réformée Confessante au Congo) (ERCC)

Rev Sikkema reported to the meeting. The ERCC has been remarkably fruitful in evangelism. Their method is to reach family, then friends, then neighbours, and then strangers. They have experienced phenomenal growth. Their confessions are in order: the Three Forms of Unity and the Creeds. The RUCS has known them from their beginning in 1984. The GKN(v) has been in a sister-church relationship with the ERCC since 1990. Their letter of support is not yet on file but we have been assured that it is on its way to us.

*We recommend that the ICRC welcome the ERCC into its membership.*

Accepted unanimously (24 churches voted).

The chairman welcomed the ERCC as a fully accepted member church not only here also in our hearts.

Rev Jonas C Mualaba, with sister Vallerie from Ivory Coast, sang a hymn to praise God ("Tika Tokosanzola") in Lingala, the language of the capital Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

1. Tika tokosanzola, NKOLO na boboto be:  
*Njambi ekoumela, ngolu mpe mawa na Ye.*
2. Akotanisaka moi, mpo na bato awa nse:
3. Nkolo akoleisaka, biso ne biloko be:
4. Kati pe na mpasi be, Ye atiki biso te:
5. Wana mpe totamboli, akobatela be:
6. Boye tokosanjola, nkolo na boboto be:

He gave the translation:

1. Let us praise, the Lord full of justice:  
*It is true, His grace and mercy will last forever.*
2. He raises the sun, for all people on earth:
3. The Lord feeds us, with all kinds of food:
4. In the midst of difficulties, he does not abandon us:
5. When we are away from home, he protects us:
6. So let's praise, the Lord full of justice:

All delegates greeted the new members.

The chairman expressed the gladness that the conference had received two new members, one in Africa and one in Europe. He read Psalm 133.

### **73. Advisory Committee 8: Regional Conferences**

Rev David McKay spoke about the report. It had already been presented but a decision had been deferred pending the report of the advisory committee on mission (minute 47).  
The report of advisory committee 8 was accepted.

### **74. Advisory Committee 9: Theological Education**

Rev Tom Tyson presented the report and proposed its acceptance.

An amendment was made: "and to give this task to a commissioner for compilation." Moved Hoyt; seconded Peels. The amendment was accepted.

Noted: the Interim Committee will appoint the commissioner.

The amended proposal was accepted.

### **75. Advisory Committee 7: Constitution and Regulations**

Rev Paul Treick (convenor) presented the report.

75.1 Regarding Agenda Item 7:2 – Email from the OPC regarding Guidelines for Committees of the ICRC. (*re Changes to Regulations, Articles IV and V*):

1. *Your committee recommends no change to Article IV, 1.*

2. *Your committee recommends additions to Article IV, following #2 as follows:*

3. The Committee members may also invite other people to address the committee in areas of their knowledge or competence. Each advisor must be invited by a vote of the committee before being extended an invitation. A person so invited shall limit his participation to the time of his presentation and related discussion, unless otherwise permitted by the committee.

4. Recommendations should be considered and voted on during the meeting of the committee. Any draft of a report not adopted in the meeting which is left to be drawn up by the secretary or other member(s) must be distributed to all the members for their vote and response. Any part of the report not agreed to by a majority of the members of the committee shall be excluded, unless there is a minority report.

3. *The previous #3 is now #5.*

Accepted.

75.2 Regarding Agenda 8:1 – proposal from ICRC 2001 to amend Constitution Article IV, 1, a:

1. *Your committee recommends the proposed amendment from 2001, which reads as follows and which replaces Art. IV, 1, a:*

1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which:

a. adhere and are faithful to one or more of the confessional standards stated in the Basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards, OR, adhere and are faithful to Reformed Confessions which are equivalent in content to the Confessions listed in the Basis (Art. 2), and which confession (or confessions) shall be proposed to be added to Article II of the Constitution.

A vote was deferred to the last conference day in order to give time for consideration. It was indicated that the form of the recommendation is not constitutionally correct. According to the Constitution, the recommendation needs to be proposed *to the member churches*, not voted on by the delegates of member churches. The Constitution may be amended only by a two thirds majority of the member churches (page 264 of the 2001 *Proceedings*).

75.3 Regarding Agenda Item 8:3, i. and ii., the sending out of a draft agenda by the Corresponding Secretary prior to the meetings:

1. *Your committee recommends that no change be made in the Instructions to the Corresponding Secretary.*

Accepted (one vote against).

The chairman thanked Rev Paul Treick and the advisory committee.

## **76. Advisory Committee 4: the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)**

Prof Maris introduced the report with some preliminary remarks. It gave the committee no joy to consider this application because it is made on account of the split in the Free Church. He emphasized that the meeting should be aware of clear boundaries. The ICRC does not want to be part of the Scottish conflict. Details of the problem should not be raised in this meeting.

76.1 The proposal from the OPC:

*The ICRC decide:*

1. *That the OPC proposal be accepted in part, to wit:*

*“That in the light of the instruction of Scripture –*

*“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more the things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to you shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?... Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.” (1 Corinthians 6:2-5, 7b-8)*

*– and bearing in mind that one of the purposes of the ICRC is “to present a Reformed testimony to the world” (Constitution, Article III.5), the ICRC encourage both the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC) to be reconciled with each other, and that, in the event that organic reunion is not soon effected, to settle their conflicting claims with regard to church properties and assets ....”*

2. *To express appreciation to the OPC about their christian concern with the conflict between brothers, but also to inform the OPC that at the moment the ICRC does not see a realistic possibility to fulfil the intention of the second part of the OPC proposal.*

Accepted (1 against).

## 76.2 Application for membership

Rev Fergus Macdonald questioned the competence of the motion. The FCC is taking the FCS to the civil courts, contrary to the Scriptures. Consequently, if the ICRC were to accept the FCC, it would contravene Article II of the Constitution.

The question of identity was raised. Is the FCC claiming to be the FCS? Its application to the ICRC was as a separate church, but in the civil courts it was alleged that the FCC represents itself as the FCS.

In making its recommendation, the advisory committee was working with the premise that the FCC is a separate church and, further, that the FCC would desist from taking action in the civil courts, pending the OPC's negotiation of reconciliation or a settlement. Rev Tom Tyson reported that the General Assembly of the OPC determined to sponsor the FCC as a separate church.

Rev George Ball asked the meeting to consider the wisdom of accepting the FCC at this particular time, when they are pursuing the FCS, a founding member church, in the civil courts. He wished the ICRC to ask the brethren in FCC to walk away from their appeal to the civil courts, to drop it. It was unscriptural. If they do that, then the situation will be different for this conference. It is not proper to admit the FCC now because it would be seen as endorsing their action.

The chairman ruled that the discussion should stop and be resumed on Wednesday.

## **77. Close**

Rev David John and Mr Pradeep Kumar sang Psalm 100 in Hindi. Rev John read Luke 17:1-17. He spoke of our gratitude for our salvation through Christ's blood as the motivation for serving Christ as our Master and obeying His commands. The meeting sang Psalm 123 and Rev Jack Peterson led in prayer.

The chairman closed the session at 9:55 p.m.

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## Session 11

### Morning, Wednesday 19 October 2005

#### 78. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 8:32 a.m.

Rev Royall read Psalm 87 and made three comments. First, here we have the wonder of God's grace (verses 1-3). The Lord loves Zion. Then we have the work of the gospel (verses 4-6), reaching out into other nations, worldwide. Finally, we see the wonder of Zion, where the throne of God is – the streams of God refresh her. He read Isaiah 54:1ff. The meeting sang Psalm 87. Rev Royall led in prayer.

#### 79. Approval of minutes (sessions 6-8)

The minutes of sessions 6-8 (minutes 43-64) were adopted.

#### 80. Workshops

The chairman welcomed Prof J H van Wyk of the GKSA.

The second workshop took place (9:00 – 10:00 a.m.).

#### 81. Advisory Committee 4: the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (continued)

The chairman welcomed Professor A du Plooy and Rev C Swanepoel of GKSA.

Rev Maurice Roberts of FCC was invited to speak. He read a statement of apology: "We sincerely regret any offence inadvertently caused by the document made available to the ICRC conference. We felt it was essential that the ICRC should have this information so that you in the ICRC might be able to understand why we have come into the position we are in." He was concerned to say that their motivation in their actions of five or six years earlier was love for the church and the desire for a clear conscience. They had sought to be led only by the Word of God and to put Jesus Christ before their own concerns.

The chairman thanked Rev Roberts.

Prof Maris presented an updated report from the advisory committee. They desired to do justice to both parties in a complicated conflict. He strongly maintained the policy not to be involved in the details of the conflict. It was now necessary to state that, in the conflict between the FCS and FCC, action was being taken in the civil courts. He clarified a statement he had made earlier: he had said that the FCS was willing to accept the FCC as a true and separate church on condition that their court action be stopped. But clarity did not yet exist and the proposal given could not be maintained as it is.

Revised proposal:

The ICRC declare that no church may be accepted as a member of the ICRC whilst it is engaged in taking a member church to a civil court on a matter of church discipline.

Amendment: to delete "on a matter of church discipline"

Recess 10:32 a.m.

#### 82. Update Report from the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK)

The chairman reconvened at 11:07. He welcomed the children of the John Calvin School, who were present to observe a part of the meeting.

Rev Heon Soo Kim explained why the IRCK was independent. Independent signified free from overseas support, and from domestic politics. He referred to the introductory leaflet for the IRCK. During the Japanese occupation, Christians were forced to worship at Shinto shrines and to worship the emperor, in churches and at the beginning of school days. Churches and schools were closed for disobedience. The General Assembly submitted to this in 1938. The ICRK did not. He spoke about the ICRK's interest in hymnology. The IRCK shared the hymn traditions of many of the churches of the ICRC but it was also developing its own material. Recently the IRCK had translated 70 psalms into Korean. The ICRK hoped to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the member churches.

The chairman thanked Rev Heon Soo Kim.

### **83. Assistance to persecuted believers and their families**

Mr Mark Bube presented a recommendation.

*That the mandate of the Missions Committee be amended by:*

1. inserting a new paragraph (v), as follows:

(v) To designate one of its members to be responsible to disseminate to the member churches, through their mission contact representatives, opportunities to assist, through a fund established by an appropriate body of a member church, persecuted Christians and their families, especially among those who profess the Reformed faith. Such information might be quite sensitive and should be handled carefully and discreetly by all involved in the effort to provide such assistance; and unless advised to the contrary, no information regarding such assistance should be posted on the internet.

2. renumbering the succeeding paragraphs accordingly, and

3. correcting the reference at the end of (newly renumbered) item (vi) to read "the accomplishment of (i)–(v) above."

Rev G Procee withdrew his earlier motion (minute 71).

The new proposal was discussed. 1. The need for an account to be given to the churches that help. 2. The way in which the new task fitted the mandate of the Mission Committee. 3. A consultation process was anticipated within the Mission Committee.

Accepted.

Mark Bube read Hebrews 10:32-39.

### **84. The children of the John Calvin School**

The headmaster of the school gave an introduction. He said that the experience of worshipping on the previous Sunday evening with the delegates in a language that they do not normally use was a thrill. God's children are all over the world. Now we meet in Pretoria; one day in the new Jerusalem. It was a privilege to offer the facilities of the school. As a farewell, the school sang the national anthem and the school song.

The chairman thanked the school.

### **85. Advisory Committee 12: the Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tiv (NKST)**

Rev C Van Spronsen, convenor, presented the report. He offered clarification that the REC was going in a different direction from ICRC and membership of it was incompatible with ICRC.

The recommendations were accepted unanimously (See Advisory Committee 12 Report).

Rev Dr Antiev expressed his heartfelt appreciation for his reception and said that he would take it back to his home church.

### **86. Advisory Committee 3: the United Reformed Church of Myanmar (URCM)**

Rev R ter Beek, convenor, presented the report.

Rev Hoyt spoke of his visits to Myanmar. The churches are very young and show a tendency to divide. The RCNZ wish to encourage but felt it unwise to sponsor the application at this time.

The apparent contradictions within the report were questioned: unanswered questions; caution urged; weakness in the sponsorship. The meeting is urged to act without solid ground. For the committee, the desire to support outweighed the concerns felt. The unanswered questions about the situation had to do with other bodies (the 'constellation' of reformed churches) and were not directly in the control of the URCM. The 'caution' was that at the next ICRC further applications from Myanmar might come from other groups. The committee did not think the questions about the situation need further investigation by the ICRC. The solid grounds are: there is an application; there are two sponsors; their confessions are in order.

### **87. Closing**

Rev Yonson Dethan led the meeting in the singing of an Indonesian hymn. He read Matthew 28:16-20. He drew encouragement from the authority of Christ and the power of God. He is with us. Psalm 121: he never sleeps. 1 Corinthians 3: the Holy Spirit dwells in us. A second Indonesian Hymn. Prayer.

The chairman closed the session at 12:50 p.m.

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## Session 12

Afternoon, Wednesday  
19 October 2005

### 88. Opening

The chairman opened the session at 1:38 pm.

### 89. Advisory Committee 3: the United Reformed Church of Myanmar (URCM) (continued)

Rev Edwin Darsanglur of the RPCNEI gave detailed information about the URCM. There had been several delegations to and from Myanmar since 2003. In 2004, the RPCNEI received positive reports from its delegates. The URCM held to the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession. They had begun to support their own ministers, although at a minimal level, so that the ministers were permitted to supplement their support by working. There is fragmentation. Several churches call themselves reformed but they are not all reformed in nature. There are several languages in use. Two other reformed churches share the same language as the URCM.

Rev N Smit moved an amendment:

*to omit the two sentences: "This gives encouragement, but still your committee urges caution. Although we still have questions about the URCM, it seems that these questions cannot be answered at this meeting."*

This was accepted.

Concern was expressed: the RCNZ and URCNA had reasons for declining to sponsor the application. The GGRC's sponsorship was unsatisfactory because it was based on documents only.

Vote on the amended motion (each church one vote): 11 in favour; 11 against; 3 abstentions.  
The amended motion failed because a two-thirds majority is required for acceptance.

Rev Tom Tyson proposed, Prof Kwakkel seconded:

*that we thank the URCM for their application and encourage them to continue to pursue membership in the ICRC but that consideration of their application be taken up by ICRC 2009 to allow more time for the concerns of the RCNZ and RCUS to be addressed.*

Rev David Robertson proposed, Rev N Smit seconded, an alternative motion:

*that we encourage the URCM to reapply in 2009.*

This proposal was carried (3 opposed). Therefore the previous proposal failed.

There was a brief discussion about sponsorship. Although the Constitution does not state it explicitly, it is wise to bear in mind that sponsorship should be based on first-hand knowledge, not merely paperwork.

The chairman commented that it was a disappointing moment for the URCM but he emphasized that none of the member churches was against their membership. "We want to embrace you as soon as possible." He underlined this in order to encourage the URCM. They should feel themselves to be brothers and sisters connected with us.

Rev Thang expressed his sadness that the URCM could not be accepted now. He said that they would wait until 2009 but asked the delegates to consider carefully. He asked how it could be demanded that the URCM unite with other churches that do not have the same church order. This was not required of the European churches. He also noted that the URCM had sister-church relations with GGRC.

## 90. Advisory Committee 4: the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (continued)

Rev Richard Holst asked the conference to disregard all previous motions from the committee. A last one was being put before the conference.

Prof Maris presented the revised motion, that:

1. *The ICRC does not accept the application for membership of the FCC at this time.*
2. *The ICRC urges the FCC as Christian brothers to cease from civil action against their brothers in the FCS.*
3. *The ICRC urges both the FCC and the FCS to seek biblical ways of reconciliation.*
4. *The ICRC encourages the FCC to attend our conference as observers.*
5. *The ICRC will be most willing to receive a new application from the FCC when there is no longer any civil case between the churches.*

### Grounds

1. *The FCC is currently engaged in civil action against the FCS. No church should be accepted as a member of the ICRC whilst it is taking a member church to a civil court on a matter of church discipline, for the following reasons:*

*(a) Taking a member church to court is contrary to the foundations of the ICRC in that it contradicts the teaching of Scripture to which we are bound. 1 Corinthians 6:6-7: "But instead one brother goes to law against another – and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?"*

*(b) It is contrary to the stated purpose of the ICRC, namely,*

- (i) to express and promote the unity of the faith that the member churches have in Christ;*
- (ii) to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;*
- (iii) to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfilment of the missionary and other mandates;*
- (iv) to present a Reformed testimony to the world.*

2. *Reconciliation is something that all Christians should seek.*

Prof Maris referred to the question, "If the FCC is admonished, then why not admonish the FCS?" There is a technical difference: the FCS is already a member church and the conference is not considering their actions. However, to be fair, this point should be in our minds. He emphasized that the FCC should abstain from civil action. If they said that they would refrain from it, the advisory committee would immediately change their recommendation.

Prof D McKay addressed the meeting: He had spent many hours considering this problem and he had met both sides. He had always counselled caution, that they should proceed slowly and seek reconciliation. In the RPCI, there had been sympathy with the FCC at its origins but news that a civil court case was being pursued was met by many with dismay. The news of the appeal had been received in disbelief. On behalf of the church that Prof McKay represented, he had to exhort the FCC to desist from this course of action. It was harmful, damaging, and causing distress.

Rev Procee stated that this is a test case whether we seriously believe in the Lordship of Christ. He noted that the FCC and the FCS were both engaging in actions before the civil courts, yet one is a member and one is not accepted. He commended the advisory committee for its painstaking work. He wanted both parties to express their intention to refrain from legal proceedings against each other, so that both, as they are reformed churches, could be accepted as members.

Rev Maurice Roberts asked whether, if the FCC desists from legal action, the FCS would undertake to cease from all legal action locally and centrally. If so, the delegates would exert themselves energetically to bring that about in the FCC.

Prof Maris invited the FCS to respond. Rev Alex Macdonald said that the FCS had already given that commitment in a meeting for mediation (with a professional mediator). If the FCC drop the court case, the FCS would ensure that there were no further legal proceedings. The only action that the FCS has instituted is a local matter regarding the manse of Rev Roberts.

Rev Roberts thanked Rev Alex Macdonald. He undertook to make strong representations to the FCC courts that his offer be taken up. He wanted to make it clear that he was not motivated by the desire to safeguard the house in which he lived.

Prof Maris stated that they had reached an important moment. He asked if Rev Roberts' words were to be taken on behalf of the whole delegation.

Rev Fergus Macdonald said that Rev Alex Macdonald was representing the position of the General Assembly of the FCS and that their position had been communicated to the General Assembly of the FCC and had been turned down.

Rev John Macleod would not support Rev Roberts because the FCS's offer had been conditional.

Prof Maris then presented the advisory committee's proposal as it stood. He said that they were positive about the FCC but could not reach the outcome that they wanted. There was misery and pity because on both sides are brothers and sisters.

The chairman took a vote:

Recommendation 1: 22 for; 2 abstained; 1 church's delegates were absent.

Recommendations 2-5: carried.

Prof Maris stressed again that the meeting felt very sad at this result. We had hoped to accept the FCC and we still do hope for that. But we could not succeed in reaching that point. Our hope and prayer is that the FCC will believe that we are sincere in wanting them to be part of our community and that they would settle the matters of conflict.

The chairman invited the FCC to react. Rev Fraser said that he was sad at the outcome. They had become accustomed to facing injustice. The FCC was in this position for the sake of truth and righteousness and a clear conscience. He asked the ICRC to examine what it has done. He referred to Ezekiel 11. He reminded the conference of his past involvement. He referred back to ICRC 2001 Minutes 32 and 34. The FCC accepted that arrangement because they understood that they would be accepted as members in 2005. Now they felt that obstacles were being placed before them to keep them out even though their papers were in order. The conference had asked them to conform to 1 Corinthians 6:6,7. The text applies to brothers, not churches. The church in Scotland has often had to go to the civil magistrate to protect itself. The civil magistrate has been appointed under Christ's headship, for that purpose. In 1900, the church survived by going to court. They saw their action as being obedient to Christ. The FCS offer was conditional, not unequivocal. He believed that the ICRC was acting unjustly in accepting one party and refusing the other. He feared that the enemies of the FCC would make much of this rejection.

The chairman responded. He understood that Rev Fraser wanted to say what was on his heart. He underlined the words of Prof Maris.

At 3:25 p.m., there was a recess. Some delegates were leaving the conference. The chairman expressed the hope that God would keep them safe in their journey home.

## **91. Advisory Committee 10: ICRC 2009**

The chairman reconvened the meeting at 4:04 p.m.

Rev Bruce Hoyt presented the report.

Recommendations 1-9 were accepted.

## **92. Advisory Committee 7: Constitution and Regulations**

Refined recommendation. (Note. The same question was now being brought back before the churches for a second time.)

*Regarding Agenda 8:1 – proposal from ICRC 2001 to amend Constitution Article IV. 1. a:*

*1. Your committee recommends that the following constitutional amendment be proposed to the member churches, replacing Article IV.1.a of the Constitution of the ICRC. The vote of member churches will be reported to the Corresponding Secretary that it may be placed on the Agenda of the 2009 ICRC Meeting.*

*1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which:a. adhere and are faithful to one or more of the confessional standards stated in the Basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards, or adhere and are faithful to Reformed Confessions which are equivalent in content to the Confessions listed in the Basis (Art. 2), and which Confession (or Confessions) shall be proposed to be added to Article II of the Constitution.*

The recommendation was accepted.

### **93. Advisory Committee 5: Finance**

Rev James Maciver presented the report.

It was accepted.

The chairman discharged the treasurer for the period 2001-05.

### **94. The Treasurer's Report**

The treasurer presented his report, the budget for 2009 and the basis for assessment. Rev N Smit indicated that the number of members for the GKSA was shown incorrectly as 130,000: it was more like 90,000. He explained that the figure of 130,000, which the treasurer had taken from their brochure, included the members of the churches of the Midland and Soutpansberg Synods. The conference accepted the treasurer's report.

### **95. Advisory Committee 6: Press Release**

After a brief recess to allow delegates time to read it, Mr Mark Bube presented the Press Release. Several refinements were offered. The Press Release was agreed by the meeting. Mr Bube was requested to email the final copy to all the churches.

### **96. Closing**

The chairman offered a welcome to two local missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin), Rev Chun and Rev So, who were visiting the conference in its late stages.

Rev Bruce Hoyt read Psalm 145:1-9. He reflected on God's grace to us as sinners. He led in prayer.

The chairman closed the session at 5:18 p.m.

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## Session 13

### Evening, Wednesday 19 October 2005

#### 97. Opening

The chairman opened the last session at 7:00 p.m. He asked the meeting if he had missed any points on the agenda. None were indicated. A motion was presented to cancel the final workshop. This was accepted.

#### 98. Letter to the churches

The chairman requested the permission of the meeting for the Interim Committee to complete the preparation of the Letter to the Churches, which is to contain the main conclusions from the topics studied. This was agreed.

He noted that, as usual, the Interim Committee will approve the last minutes.

#### 99. Expressions of thanks

Chairman expressed thanks: first to the congregation in Rietfontein; then to those who worked in the office and at the helpdesk, Martin and Louise Ros and their helpers; Harry Bijker and his sons, who set up the internet and skype facilities and gave technical support; to Carla de Jong, Elaine Bron and the Ladies Committee for meals, refreshments and organizing the outing; to Marga Kruger for her photography; to Hilko Lubbinge and the drivers; to the John Calvin School and the Free Reformed Church of Pretoria for use of the facilities; to all other volunteers who did work behind the scenes; and to all delegates and members of advisory committees. He thanked Rev Cornelius Van Spronsen, Corresponding Secretary, Rev Dr Peter Naylor, Recording Secretary, Rev Bruce Hoyt, vice-chairman, and Mr Henk Berends, treasurer, for their work.

Rev Bruce Hoyt then thanked Rev Bort de Graaf for the calm and effective manner in which he fulfilled his duties as the chairman of this conference.

#### 100. Closing devotions

The conference sang the hymn, "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord," verses 2, 4 and 5. The chairman read John 17:20-26 and spoke about its precious lesson of unity. More than denominational or ecclesiastical unity, it is spiritual unity: with all our differences, we love, accept, serve and pray for one another. Christ points us to his unity with the Father, their mystic union. Ours is not exactly the same but there is a resemblance in that it consists of unconditional love. Our problem is that we lack oneness with the triune God. The more we humble ourselves before God, the more we shall be one. There is a glorious purpose in this, that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son. When we present a common front, we exert great influence on the world. We must yearn for peace but not at the expense of truth. The last section of John 17 is the climax: we shall be with Christ (as promised in John 14:3) to behold his glory. The vision of God in Christ is the climax of salvation. This is the transporting bliss that all true believers will experience at the end, and it will be truly great and wonderful. Why does Christ reveal this to us? So that we might not despair in this world. Our future, the *visio Dei*, begins here in this world and reaches fulness in heaven. Some have tried to attain that by a mystical way. The result of this mistake is that they forget the world and their task in it. But it is not right to think that the vision of God belongs exclusively to the end. We experience a foretaste of that unity with God through the Word, prayer and sacraments. Be encouraged to fulfil our task. Go forward, pray, preach, work, until we see God's glory in Christ, when we shall all be one. The chairman led in prayer. The meeting sang the hymn, "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun."

At 7:34 p.m., the chairman declared the sixth ICRC in Pretoria, South Africa, closed.