



# Lux Mundi

41:3 October 2022

*Jesus said: "I am the light of the world."* John 8:12



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Magazine published by the  
International Conference of  
Reformed Churches





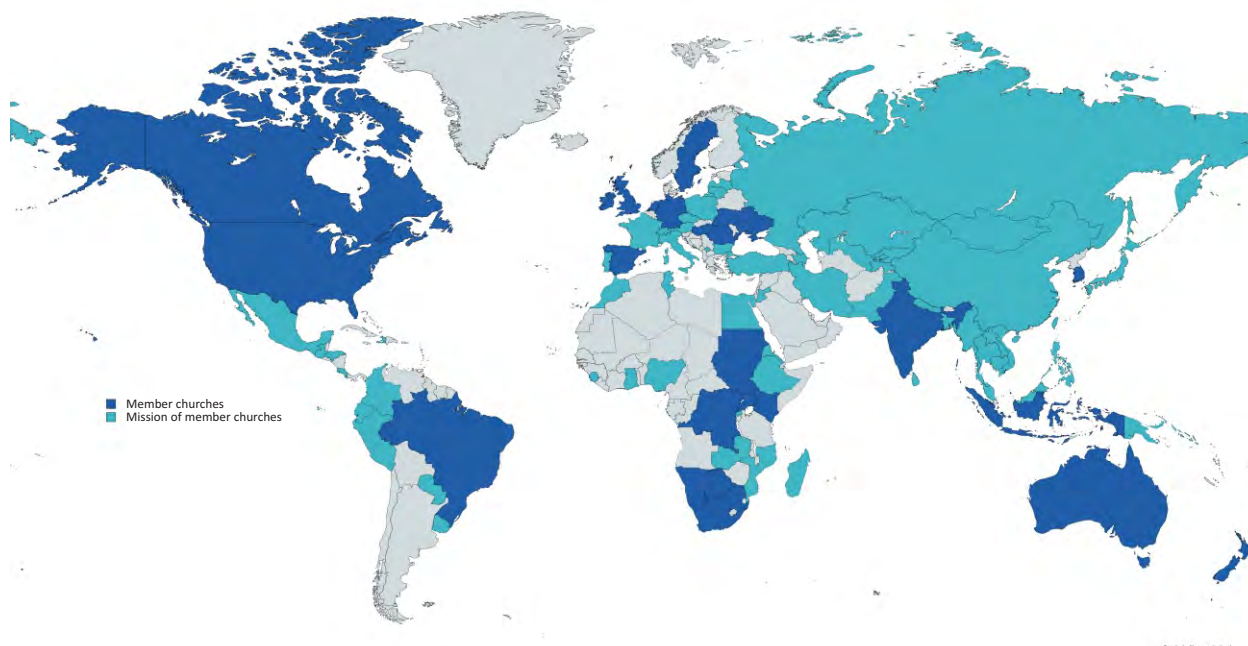
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*Karlo Janssen is minister with the Canadian Reformed Churches and an editor of Lux Mundi.*

## Blessings

Travel restrictions delayed it by a year, but the ICRC could finally be held. Some eighty delegates from some 40 churches made their way to Windhoek, Namibia. Most entered the country with ease, some with difficulty, some were denied entry, and some did not make it by reason of ill health. Considering the great distance, the obscurity of the location, the uncertainty surrounding international travel, the ICRC 2022 was a blessing to all, and will no doubt continue to be a blessing to churches worldwide. Elsewhere in the pages of this Lux Mundi you can read the press release. Photos in this and future editions will add colour to the picture. The plan is to publish devotional messages of this ICRC in future Lux Mundi editions. The papers are a bit too long for that. For those who can't wait, you can find it all, including the Proceedings, on the ICRC website: [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com).

Besides covering the ICRC 2022, this edition presents an overview of the broadest assemblies of three North American Presbyterian churches: the ARP, the OPC, and the RPCNA. We also present an introduction to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe, one of the ICRC's most recent members. There is an update on the Sudanese Reformed Churches. Finally, a report on mission work by the Reformed Churches in South Africa among the San people in the Kalahari, you may know them as the "bushmen". Be blessed as you read of the great works God is doing in expanding His Kingdom.



*Nations where ICRC member churches and their mission projects are located*



The logo combines the ICRC logo with the Lux Mundi monogram, an early Christian symbol combining the initials of Jesus Christ (in Greek I and X), referring to Him as the Light of the World (Lux Mundi).

Front cover picture: Members of the Sanveld Reformed Church in South Africa at a farm

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The digital version is published free of charge to readers. To receive notice of a new edition posted to the ICRC website, please register with [luxmundi@icrconline.com](mailto:luxmundi@icrconline.com), subject line "Lux Mundi digital registration". One is free to print and/or distribute the digital version. To receive a printed copy via mail, printing and postal fees will be charged. To receive a printed edition, please register with [luxmundi@icrconline.com](mailto:luxmundi@icrconline.com), subject line "Lux Mundi postal registration".

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## The Goal of All Our Activity is the Seventh Day

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

*Editor: the following devotional was presented at the opening of the ICRC 2022.*

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

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

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

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

Our text tells us that God created the seventh for this purpose. It comes at the end of God having created in six days.

God subduing the chaos and disorder and bringing form in the formlessness. Pushing back the darkness with his marvelous light. Creating a dome in the midst of the watery mass. Creating land and vegetation. Then filling the forms. Light bearers for day and night. Birds for the air and fish for the water. Animals and people for the land.

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

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

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

The seventh day is a reminder of this calling. The seventh day is also a promise that one day this will be a reality. God will be





all in all in creation and humanity.

So, it should not surprise us that the seventh day becomes a sign of God's covenant with Israel. God's commitment to secure and guarantee the success of his mission for his glory through Israel. I will be your God and you will be my people. Israel will be a people where heaven and earth meet. Doing the life of heaven on earth. Experiencing the life of heaven on earth. Giving each other and the nations an encounter with the presence of God.

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

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

With the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the first day of the week, we see just how glorious this promise of the Sabbath rest really is. The full instalment of the resurrection life of God's new creation. Not the restoration of

the life of Eden, but the elevation of this life. In Eden, Adam could sin; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest, we can sin no more. In Eden, Adam could die; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest we can no longer die. In Eden, there was a sun and a moon; in the fullness of God's Sabbath rest, there will be no sun or moon. The glory of God and the Lamb will be its light. We and creation will have reached the full measure of the fullness of God in Christ. Forever!

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

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

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

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

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





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## ICRC 2022 – Windhoek Namibia

The 10th quadrennial meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) took place from October 13 through October 18, 2022, at the Windhoek Country Club Resort in Windhoek, Namibia, hosted by the Reformed Churches in South Africa. This meeting was originally to take place in October 2021, but had been postponed due to global travel restrictions on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Basis

The basis of the ICRC is “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).” The purpose of the ICRC is:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
3. to facilitate and promote cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

### Membership

At its start the ICRC was composed of the following 34 Member Churches.

1. African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPK (Kenya))
2. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC (USA & Canada))
3. Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (CRCI (Indonesia))
4. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
5. Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRCN)
6. Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)
7. Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW)
8. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)
9. Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
10. Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCS-C)
11. Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA)
12. Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)

13. Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA)
14. Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC (USA & Canada))
15. Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)
16. Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea (KPCK)
17. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC (USA & Canada))
18. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
19. Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU)
20. Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI)
21. Reformed Church in the US (RCUS)
22. Reformed Churches in Brazil (RCB)
23. Reformed Churches in Indonesia (RCI (Indonesia))
24. Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)
25. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCN(I))
26. Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)
27. Reformed Churches of Spain (RCS)
28. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI (India))
29. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI (Ireland))
30. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
31. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)
32. Sudanese Reformed Church (SRC)
33. United Reformed Churches of Congo (URCC)
34. United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

For diverse reasons, the FCSA, PCEA, and RCS were not able to be present in person at this conference. Several delegates of churches in attendance were also unable to attend last minute, many for health reasons.

### New Members

Applying for membership, and thus also represented at the Conference, were:

1. Anugraha Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bangalore, India (ARPCBI)
2. Evangelical Reformed Church in India (ERCI (India))
3. Reformed Churches The Netherlands (RCN)
4. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Africa (RPCA (Uganda))
5. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE (Hungary, Ukraine, Romania))

Admission for membership requires compliance of the church with the conditions described in the ICRC Constitution

and being sponsored by two member churches of the ICRC. All churches met these requirements.

## Membership Termination

At the ICRC 2017 the membership of the RCN(I) was suspended as its practice with respect to office bearers was no longer in agreement with the Basis of the ICRC. Upon direction of their broadest assemblies, the CanRC put forward a motion, which the OPC seconded, that the membership of the RCN(I) in the ICRC be terminated as the RCN(I) continued to be at odds with the Basis. Almost all member churches in good standing present at the ICRC 2022 voted in favour of the motion, one church abstained and no churches voted against the motion. The decision was taken with a heavy heart, as the RCN(I) has been instrumental in the formation and running of the ICRC since its beginnings in 1982.

With the termination of one Member Church and the admission of five Member Churches, the total number of Member Churches now is 38.

## Appointments

Appointed to the executive of the ICRC for the duration of ICRC 2022 were:

As Chairman, Rev. Dr. Douw Breed of the RCSA, the hosting church of ICRC 2022.

As Vice-Chairman, Dr. Aaron Bae of the KPCK, the designated hosting church for ICRC 2026.

As Corresponding Secretary, Rev. Dr. James Visscher of the CanRC.

As Recording Secretary, Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen of the CanRC (filling in for Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor of the EPCEW, who resigned from his position for health reasons in 2020)

As Treasurer, Mr. Kyle Lodder of the CanRC.

As Coordinator of Committees, Elder Mark Bube of the OPC.

For the period following the ICRC 2022, Rev. Dr. Karlo Janssen was appointed Corresponding Secretary and Rev. Dr. Albert Coetsee of the RCSA was appointed Recording Secretary.

## Devotions

A prayer service was held on the evening of October 12. Local pastor, Rev. Henning Venter, welcomed delegates and described the Reformed Churches in Namibia. Local pastor, Rev. Dr. Paul de Bruyn, preached on Ephesians 4:7-16, proclaiming how the mission of all, and thus also of church leadership, is to serve each other, how we are challenged by childishness in fulfilling this mission, and how in Christ we grow to maturity, so as to speak the truth in love.

On the morning of October 13, the outgoing Chairman, Rev. Dr. Dick Moes of the URCNA, led the opening devotions. His

message focused on Genesis 2:1-3, pointing out that our goal is the eternal Sabbath where heaven and earth meet, and thus our focus on earth should be to reflect God to one another, made possible in Christ.

Each day was begun with devotions led by a minister serving with the hosting church, the RCSA. Throughout each day God's praise was sung with songs chosen from the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and the Trinity Psalter-Hymnal.

## Papers and Panels

A core activity of the ICRC is the presentation of several papers centred around a theme. These papers are presented in the evening, followed by a panel discussion on the paper on the morning of the next Conference Day.

The theme for the ICRC 2022 was Theological Education. The following papers were presented:

“Seminaries: A Centre for Theological Education, Ministry Training or Spiritual Development” by Rev. Dr. Mohan Chacko, professor at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun, India.

“Models or Alternate Strategies for Ministry Training” by Rev. Dr. Douw Breed, emeritus minister of the RCS of Waterkloofrand in Pretoria and extra-ordinary researcher of the North-West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

“The Authority of the Scriptures in Diverse Situations and Ethical Contexts” by Rev. Dr. Henk van den Belt, professor of Theology at the Free University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Panelists discussions fielding questions from the floor served well to assist the member churches in equipping the saints for the ministry of mercy, for building up the body of Christ.

## Reports

The ICRC 2022 received the following reports with gratitude:

The Corresponding Secretary and the Treasurer;

The Theological Education Committee; the Diaconal Committee; the Missions Committee;

The Publications Committee responsible for the ICRC website and the publication of the quarterly *Lux Mundi*.

Following each report, opportunity for discussion was given. Some detailed attention was given to the functionality of *Lux Mundi*. The Diaconal Committee was given a more manageable mandate.

## Encouragement

Time was set aside each afternoon of the conference to allow delegations from churches to meet bilaterally or multilaterally. Thus churches could encourage one another,



strengthen their ties with one another, and become acquainted with each other.

## Hosting

The ICRC enjoyed the gracious hospitality of the Windhoek Country Club Resort and the two RCSA congregations in Windhoek. The Conference experienced warm and joyous fellowship with fellow delegates, observers, and other guests.

## Proceedings and Next ICRC

The Proceedings of the ICRC 2022, reports to the ICRC 2022, and papers presented to the ICRC 2022 will be published as soon as possible on the ICRC website: [www.icrconline.com](http://www.icrconline.com).

The next meeting of the ICRC is scheduled for mid October 2026, to be hosted by the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea.







**Author: Rev. Imre Szoke**

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## A Brief History and Presentation of the RPCCEE

*"Let them know that this is your hand; you, O LORD, have done it!"*

*(Psalm 109:27)*

In the second half of the 20th century many Christians in Western Europe and United States started praying for spiritual changes in the communist countries. Some tried to hasten this by smuggling Bibles, Christian books and tracts; others came in after the fall of the Iron Curtain as missionaries to help these nations recapture the faith once delivered to the saints.

### The Beginnings

One among many missionary endeavors targeting Eastern Europe was the establishment of a new Reformed theological seminary – called Károlyi Gáspár<sup>1</sup> Institute of Theology and Missions – by a small Presbyterian Mission<sup>2</sup> from the USA. This was originally located in Budapest, then later moved to Miskolc. Knowing that the Hungarians were historically affected by the Reformation, the vision was to help them return to the faith of their forefathers given the heavy influence of German liberal theology, nationalistic ideas and 40 years of communism. In the early stages this effort was welcomed by several evangelical pastors and organizations within the church. But one matter was not anticipated: the real, large scale spiritual condition of the historic Reformed church. It was believed that there will be a willingness to return to the Scriptures and Reformed Confessions. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Accreditation efforts went on for nearly five years, but finally in 1997 a Consultative Synod of the Reformed Church<sup>3</sup> decided to reject the Seminary on the grounds that “theologically it is not acceptable.” This automatically led to the exclusion of its graduated students from any ministry within the state Reformed church.

### Points of Confrontation

What were the main issues at stake? Or to put it differently: What was behind the decision of this Consultative Synod? It was the theological position articulated by the Seminary that was not liked by this Synod. During these five years, gradually it became clear that the church has major problems: it has nominal members; theological liberalism is rampant; it is ordaining women as ruling elders and pastors, it is sacrificing the truths of the Scriptures in the ecumenical movement (the

historic Reformed church is a member in the World Council of Churches), etc., to name just a few. Therefore, the Seminary stressed several pillars which were considered important: 1) The inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures. 2) The normative nature of the Reformed creeds.<sup>4</sup> 3) The relevance of the marks of the true church – given the unbiblical practice of the distribution of sacraments and the total lack of church discipline. 4) The unbiblical practice of ordination of women. 5) The need of abandoning church hierarchy and establishing a truly Presbyterian church government. 6) To do away with false ecumenism; especially having joint services with Roman Catholics and Unitarians. In essence, there was nothing new in these theological points, since all were in accordance with the historical Reformed teachings. But the state Reformed Church unfortunately was not ready (not for the first time in its history) for the slightest reformation. So the birth of our denomination is the result of a reformation effort within the state church, which has ultimately failed.

### Early Stages: The Period of Church Planting

That is how, beginning with 1998, the graduates of the Seminary started their church planting work in three countries – Hungary, Western Romania (Transylvania) and Ukraine – primarily among Hungarian speaking people. These were groundbreaking years, with much labor and strong opposition from the old church. The burdens were enormous; everything was started from ground zero, since we had no members or buildings, and in many cases not even a core group to begin with. We had financial difficulties as well, since we relied only on a modest support from abroad. As for the methods: in most of the cases, the first step was just talking with people on the streets and inviting them to a house Bible study. In other cases we distributed hundreds of tracts in a neighborhood, or advertised public lectures on various topics in order to reach out to people. Then later we rented properties and started holding regular worship services – where possible. During these years, we developed a membership course and people started joining our churches. Step by step we grew to the point where we are now with 20 churches<sup>5</sup> and 16 pastors serving in three countries. As we are looking back to these pioneer years God's grace amazes us, since we had no exact blueprint of what to do and how to do it; we were inexperienced and

young. And Reformed church-planting had never been done before us in Hungary. However, the Lord blessed the work.

There are three major landmarks which were reached in premiere in the Hungarian lands since the time of the Reformation: a) a professing church membership, b) self-supporting churches (in most of the cases) and c) biblical church government. I know that these biblical parameters are obvious for most of you, but none of them were ever in place in the past centuries in our lands.

#### Organizing the Denomination

Since we had churches planted in three countries, a careful correlation and harmonization was needed. This process took us considerable time. Another major impediment was the selection, election and ordination of ruling elders and deacons. In the state church no attention was paid to the biblical qualifications of elders. Therefore, we did not want to ordain elders too quickly, just for the sake of having elders. So we had to wait a few years for mature men who would become officers in the churches. Meanwhile a Book of Church Order was elaborated and preparations were made for the organization of the denomination. To make a long story short: it took us over 20 years to plant these churches and we had to wait until 2018 to organize our two Presbyteries (one in Romania and one in Hungary/Ukraine) and have our first General Assembly in 2019. By God's grace we had our fifth General Assembly earlier this year.

#### Several Facets of the Work of Our Churches

At the moment we are involved in a variety of ministries with expanding possibilities:

- a. *Evangelism.* This is an ongoing ministry effort to reach out to the lost. The Hungarians are quite secularized<sup>6</sup>, with little interest in the Gospel, so we have to find ways to reach them. We organize evangelistic meetings and lectures, tracts distribution campaigns and we encourage friendship evangelism too. Apparently this last one proved to be the most efficient.
- b. *Camps and conferences.* We have a very strong camping program in these three countries – especially during the summers. These include camps for children, youths, families, and even for pastors. We also have special English camps, where we teach English using a biblical curriculum. Then we have regular conferences during the year: one conference at Easter and one at Reformation. In addition, we organize conferences for ladies and special



**Reformed  
presbyterian**  
Church of Central and Eastern Europe

theological conferences for pastors featuring guest speakers from abroad.

- c. *Publications.* Due to a lack of sound Reformed literature, back in 2002 we established our small Presbyterian Publishing House located in Miskolc. Our vision was – and still is – to translate authors who stick to the doctrines of grace and the historic Reformed Confessions and are relevant for today. During the last two decades, we managed to publish over 30 titles, covering a wide range of topics which we considered underrepresented. As a vanguard of this effort, we published Arthur Pink's *The Sovereignty of God* and John Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*. Then we translated the *Westminster Standards*. These were followed by books written by Marytn Lloyd-Jones, Jay Adams, Richard Bennett, C. H. Spurgeon, Bruce A. Ray, Tedd Tripp, James Montgomery Boice, Sinclair Ferguson, Jerry Bridges, David Murray and R. C. Sproul to name just a few.
- d. *Work with Gypsy people.* We have three churches (one in each country) which are involved with Gypsy people. This is a complex ministry, since they have so many needs. We found out that evangelism and the diaconical efforts must go hand in hand. For example, in Miskolc we have a program where we teach these Gypsy children practical skills, we offer help to fulfill their school responsibilities along with the teaching of the Bible.
- e. *Homeschooling.* Our church promoted homeschooling for those interested as well, since institutionalized Christian education is very poor in our countries. Unfortunately, this is not a success story, since two years ago – after 30 years of educational freedom – home schooling was banned in Hungary. Paradoxically, our pro-family government is very much against this form of education.





*RPCCEE and CanRC delegates to ICRC 2022*

- f. *Helping war refugees.* This is a more recent, quite demanding ministry for the churches which are affected by the influx of people. We are trying to assist both those who had to flee to Hungary and those who are stuck in Ukraine. It was very touching these months to see how many of you helped us in this effort. A special Committee of our church is directing this ministry, which will go on probably for a longer time.

### **One Noteworthy Peculiarity of Our Church**

Although we work primarily among ethnic Hungarians, in Transylvania (Western Romania) we have one Romanian congregation as well. For Transylvania this is something unique, since due to historic reasons the Romanian-Hungarian relations are sometimes tensioned. Thus, the ethnic barriers are very seldom crossed. But the Gospel is more powerful than these deep ethnic prejudices and offences. That is how our pastor there managed to plant a congregation with Romanian members to the amazement of many.

### **International Relations**

In the last two decades we were so focused on planting churches and organizing the denomination that there was no time left for establishing international relations. So we are trying to catch up now. In the last couple of years we sought relations with the larger body of Christ. We are in fraternal relations with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Ukraine and the EPCEW in United Kingdom. We are also in corresponding relations with the OPC and have some contacts with URCNA, Canadian Reformed and PCA churches. Finally, we are members in the World Reformed Fellowship and submitted our application to be members of the ICRC earlier

this year. Our church sent twice a delegate to the ICRC; once in 2001 (Philadelphia) and more recently in 2017 (Jordan).

### **Challenges We Face and Where Prayer is Needed**

- a. Although Hungary appears to be a safe haven for Christianity (at least from abroad), the situation on the terrain is more fragile. Laws can change quickly and evangelical Christianity could easily lose its relative freedom. Even now bureaucracy and other administrative matters are a heavy burden on us.
- b. We are in process of restructuring our theological program in cooperation with Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Please pray, since this is a big project and our human resources and time are limited. But this is a must, since in a decade or so we will need pastors to replace the older generation.
- c. Pray for the expansion of Gospel in the Hungarian lands. The former glory of the Reformed faith has also faded away. We rely on the Lord to turn His face upon us and use us for His glory. Pray also that we might be able to guard the spiritual vigor and purity of this small denomination.

<sup>1</sup>Károlyi Gáspár (1529-1592) was the man who translated for the first time the entire Bible into Hungarian.

<sup>2</sup>Westminster Biblical Missions, later Westminster Biblical World Mission; its field director was Dr. Robert Rapp.

<sup>3</sup>The church government of the historic Reformed church is quite unique. Elders play very little role in it; the pastors, but mostly the bishops have real power. This particular Consultative Synod was also dominated by the bishops of the various church districts.

<sup>4</sup>The Confessions of the historic Hungarian Reformed Church are the Heidelberg Catechism and The Second Helvetic Confession. Unfortunately, these are looked upon as historical documents, without having too much relevance in the everyday life of the church. Our denomination kept these Confessions to stress the continuity, but also adopted the Westminster Standards.

<sup>5</sup>Our local churches are small, the average attendance is around 35-45 people. This means that in some places we have just 20-35 people, in other places more (up to 55-60), the biggest church being the congregation in Budapest with nearly a 100 in attendance.

<sup>6</sup>It is estimated that less than 2% of the population in Hungary has evangelical beliefs or attends a faithful church.

## Sudanese Reformed Churches - 2022

### 1. First SRC Secondary School

One of SRC key strategic goals is to influence the sphere of education through Reformed witness. Joyfully, in May 2022 SRC has started Bethel Secondary School (BSS) in Mangateen Juba with three classes (Senior 1-3) and ten volunteer teachers from SRC congregations in Juba. It is the first secondary (high) school of its kind to be

initiated and started by SRC in her mission. BSS has so far enrolled 103 students. It is registered by Central Equatoria State Ministry of Education as faith-based school. With great acknowledgement the venture has been made possible with financial backing and supportive favor from Word and Deed. Three classrooms are now under construction. BSS is temporally using the uncompleted Synod office in Juba, and it will move to its new building once the construction is completed.

### 2. Reformed Mutual partnership

Through International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), SRC has connected to Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). Both denominations are members of ICRC. It is worth mentioning that some of the purposes of ICRC is to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the gospel missionary mandate and to present a Reformed testimony to the world. Encouraging cooperation between OPC and SRC is being practically realized. OPC is laboring in mission field in Uganda while SRC is laboring in South Sudan and Sudan. In February 2022 Rev. Charles Jackson, Principal of Knox School of Theology, Mbale Uganda, Rev. James Folkerts

**Author: Rev. Patrick Jok**

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OPC missionary in Karamojong area of Northern Uganda, Andrew Ojullo a South Sudanese who teaches at Knox and David Philip Nakhla OPC General Secretary for Diaconal Ministries at OPC Headquarters USA came for the second time to Juba to enhance and boost the reciprocal cooperation and fraternal relationship that began in 2021.

Between 16th -21st February 2022 the OPC team was in Juba on mission. They conducted two leadership trainings one in the IDPs camp Jebel and the other one at Bethel SRC Mangateen. The leadership training at Bethel brought together SRC pastors/evangelists/elders from Malakal, Bentiu, Wau and Aweil. The training has been a great teaching experience and fellowship. With this profound meaningful cooperation in the mission fields, OPC Mission Uganda has pledged to sponsor four (4) SRC prospective students at Knox School of Theology, Mbale Uganda. Reciprocally, Rev. Patrick Jok from SRC was invited by OPC Uganda mission to attend and speak at Uganda Pastoral Conference conducted on 29th May 2022 at Mable, Uganda. It is SRC prayers that the GOOD LORD will continue to bless OPC and SRC ecclesiastical relationships in HIS vineyard in Uganda, South Sudan, and Sudan.

### 3. Norris' Encounter with his trainees

Rev. Rob Norris is a Teaching Pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Maryland Washington DC, and Chairman of World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) Board. He was connected to SRC by Rev. Flip Buy of Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) two years before the independence of South Sudan. He has been passionate to train and equip future Christian leaders for the church in South Sudan and Sudan. Despite turmoil and instability in South Sudan which have been impeding his vision, he has trained two SRC leaders at Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC), South Africa, that is Stephen Andrew and Deng Akol. After successful completion of their studies, they came back to South Sudan. Deng is now a Pastor of Grace Sudanese Reformed Church Khor Wulyang Juba, Finance Secretary of SRC Juba Classis, and Inspector of Synod Education Department while Stephen is Assistant Pastor at Bethel SRC Mangateen Juba, Executive Secretary of SRC Juba Classis, and Synod Mission Secretary.

To check his labor Rob came to Juba between 20th – 23rd May 2022 where he met face-to-face the two pastors that he has sponsored in their training at MTC. It was a great excitement for







*Participants of Leadership Training at Bethel, Juba conducted in partnership with OPC*

him to see that the ones that he has sponsored and trained have come back home to promote Reformed faith.

In his meeting with SRC Juba Classis members, the members conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Norris and Fourth Presbyterian Church in supporting SRC leadership development. Deeply joyful, Rev. Norris has pledged to sponsor two new SRC prospective students at MTC. Hopefully, the two SRC prospective students will be enrolled at MTC 2023 intake.

#### **4. First Decent Toilet Facility**

In March 2022 South Sudan Red Cross formally opened four stances toilet facility built for Bethel Primary School, Mangateen Juba. It was opened and handed over to SRC by Deputy General Secretary of South Sudan Red Cross. It is the first decent toilet facility SRC could own in three decades of her labor. Rev. Kewy Ismail, Chairman of Juba Classis and Pastor of Tree of Life SRC Gueri South in Juba, communicated SRC family joyful appreciation and thankfulness to South Sudan Red Cross for having supported SRC with a new toilet facility. He affirms that the toilet will be used well for the welfare of the school and Bethel congregation.

#### **5. Greater Sudan Situations Update Sudan**

Sudan's three decades serving President Omar al-Bashir was toppled by popular uprising in April 2019. He was replaced by Army General Abdel Fattah Burhan, as head of the state. In August 2019 the military and civil leaders signed a power sharing agreement intended to make election in three years. Abdel Fattah became the president of sovereign council meanwhile Abdalla

Hamdok the Prime Minister under a power-sharing agreement. Unfortunately, military-civilian relations did not go well that led to the resignation of Hamdok amid political deadlocks. Consequently, Sudan pro-democracy movement denounced the agreement and protests have started again with intensity stressing that power be handed over to civilian government and military back to the barracks. Daily protests are still prevalent in Khartoum and other major towns of Sudan.

The deadlocks of the political agreement on returning to a transitional path between the military and civilian has led to political instability, economic collapse, humanitarian crisis, and insecurity in the country. The combined effects including the global supply shocks has already created disastrous impact. Attempted dialogues between political parties, coalitions, prominent leaders, and military are not yet yielding any fruits.

In the absence of political solution, crime, lawlessness, intercommunal conflicts, looting, burning villages, destruction, displacement, and lands grasping are rising. The risk of a new outbreak of violence all over the country is looming high. The future looks dim.

Sudan Humanitarian Highlights based on UN records, March 2022:

- 11.7 million Sudanese facing severe food insecure.
- 1.3 million refugees.
- 3.3 million internal displaced persons (IDPs) caused by communal conflicts in Dar Fur and Southern Blue Nile.

### South Sudan

South Sudan became independent on July 9, 2011. Renewed conflicts in December 2013 and July 2016 have worsened the economic and humanitarian situations. Living conditions continue to be impacted by violence and displacement. Public expenditures on key social sectors including health, education, water and sanitation, and agriculture and rural development are very limited and completely non-existent in some areas. High poverty is being reinforced by ongoing intercommunal conflict, displacement, and floods.

The signing of a revitalized peace agreement in September 2018 and subsequent formation of Government in February 2020 have contributed to recovery and peacebuilding in Juba and some state capitals. However, the country continues to face risk of these gains being reversed, with increasing incidents of subnational violence in 2021 and early 2022, flooding, the COVID-19 pandemic, and external shocks. The humanitarian situation is already dire.

Based on UN assessment, the unprecedented floods (May-November 2021) the most devastating since 1960s have affected 9 out of 10 states of South Sudan, impacting 1.2 million people and displacing more than 300,000 people. Areas flooded during 2021 in Unity and Upper Nile remained flooded throughout the dry season. With rainy season the worse is expected.

Since the start of the Ukraine crisis, increased global fuel prices, depreciation of the local currency and obstacles to trade, combined with seasonal factors, have led to an increase in fuel and food prices in South Sudan.

Thus, South Sudan still suffers from fragility, economic stagnation, and instability.

Humanitarian Snapshots based on UN records February 2022

- 8.9 million people need humanitarian assistance.
- 4 million people remain displaced and affected by the humanitarian crisis.
- 1.6 million Internal Displaced persons (IDPs). The IDPs do not have adequate access to safe water and sanitation infrastructure and healthcare services, with a high level of food insecurity.
- 2.2 million refugees in six South Sudan neighboring countries. Women and children continue to be the most affected.

### 6. Wietse Groenveld from the Netherlands

Wietse Groenveld is a Deacon of Ede congregation in the Netherlands. He came to Juba on mission with ZOA South Sudan. ZOA is an International NGO serving in South Sudan. While in Juba he came accompanied by one of ZOA staff to attend Bethel Sunday worship service. This is his second visit to Bethel congregation in Juba. His visit and fellowship were appreciated. It is worth mentioning that Ede congregation is sponsoring two SRC students at Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) and one of them is hoped to finish his studies by end of this year.

### 7. Resonate Team in Juba

COVID19 has dramatically reduced travels and face-to-face meetings across the globe. With some rules being soften, two Resonate Eastern Africa Team came to Juba between 20th – 25th May 2022 to visit SRC. They are Mr. Jonny Kabiswa, Resonate Partnership Coordinator Manager and Mr. Otineo Oguok, a leader of Nairobi Transformation Ministry. They came to explore the possibility of reviving the partnership that existed between SRC and Resonate which came to standstill because of COVID19 pandemic. While in Juba they visited some SRC congregations and IDPs camp. They also met some SRC Juba Classis members and attended Bethel congregational worship service. The visit was welcome and appreciated.

### 8. Bibles Distribution

Despite all the situations in South Sudan and Sudan, Sudanese Reformed Church continues to grow steadily. One of her limitations in her labor is lack of bibles so that people can read God's word for themselves. Hence, SRC has proposed Bibles Distribution Project for 2022 to bring hope, comfort, peace, and strength that come through the light of God's word in scripture.



Rev. Charles Jackson and Rev. Patrick at Knox, Mbale, Uganda



In response and with passionate kindness Word & Deed has donated some fund toward SRC bibles distribution project. The number of beneficiaries of bibles distribution project is 370 adults. Each of (370) adults have received a bible in nine (9) different areas of South Sudan. The bibles are in English and Arabic versions plus five (5) indigenous languages (Dinka, Nuer, Bhari, Shilluk and Azandi).

#### 9. Wau Church Plant

Wau church plant is an initiative of Rock of Life Sudanese Reformed Church Apada Aweil. The church plant has been named Mercy Sudanese Reformed Church, Wau. Evangelist Santino Malong was sent to Wau in November 2021 with support from Juba Classis. Rev. Patrick Jok visited the church plant in February 2022. His visit was a great encouragement to the newly converted members of Mercy. Mercy SRC is still in her early stage of growth and lack a lot of things including land. The members worship under a tree in one of the



*Mercy SRC Wau during Sunday worship service houses of the new converts. They need encouragement and prayer support so that they may grow in the Lord.*

#### 10. Justin and Daniela's Farewell

Justin Lus came to South Sudan to work with Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Justin joined Bethel Sudanese Reformed Church in 2012. Daniella Lus also joined Bethel when she got married to Justin. They were committed and active members of Bethel. They had contributed with their God's given gifts to Bethel congregational growth. In early 2021 they moved to Grace Sudanese Reformed Church, Khor Wulyang where they became members till the date of their departure to Canada.

Before their departure Bethel and Grace organized a humble farewell party to appreciate their faith and to

entrust them to God's caring hands as they go back home after many years of service in South Sudan. The farewell party was a colorful fellowship and blessing to all. One of the SRC elders commented, "Justin and Daniela, your faith has encouraged us. Go back home but we will miss you and you will always be remembered".

#### 11. SRC Flood Emergency Response

Combination of severe flooding, high levels of food insecurity, diseases, economic crisis, and portraited violence continue to drive people's humanitarian needs in South Sudan. In August – November 2021 South Sudan has experienced unprecedented floods. Heavy rains have caused rivers to overflow their dikes and banks, flooding vast areas and settlements across the country. This flooding has caused widespread devastation to livelihoods, submerging schools, health facilities and thousands of houses, and displacing families.

The most affected hard-hit areas were Jonglei, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Warrap and Central Equatoria.

With prompt generous response, Word and Deed donated some fund to provide some essential household items such plastic sheet, mosquito nets and basic food items to most affected areas in South Sudan.

With the fund donated by Word and Deed, SRC targeted the most affected areas of South Sudan that is Bentiu, Bor and Malakal. 128 households (780 individuals) in Bentiu, Bor and Malakal were provided with cash vouchers to provide them with plastic sheets, mosquito nets, basic food items and female dignity kids.



*A widow received plastic sheet, mosquito nets, and food items at Malakal IDP camp*

The whole project was carried out and completed between months of February to April 2022. The impact of the project for the beneficiaries is reflected in the food security stabilizes in the intended areas. 128 households had their immediate risks to health reduced and the psychosocial impacts of the flood have been lessened.

### 12. SRC Schools Feeding Program

After opening two schools in Juba, SRC has observed that many children come to schools without food or money to buy food. Due to dire humanitarian situation and worsening economy, many families are not able to provide enough feeding to their kids while in school. Because of lack of enough feeding many pupils in the schools have little physical strength to cope up with their learning during school hours. Therefore, SRC has developed a project to provide some feeding for the pupils during school's hours.

Hunger and malnutrition are serious risks to children's health and education. SRC schools feeding program has been introduced to provide a daily hot meal to pupils. The overall aim is to provide daily hot meal to 450 pupils at Bethel Primary School and 400 pupils at Grace Primary School. Each child will have a plate of rice or maize flour with beans or lentil per a day. The nursery pupils will have a rice with milk once a week.

Through the School Feeding Program carried out in partnership with WORD &

DEED, SRC has been supporting 850 pupils with school meal five times a week totally to 22 days a month. Having food at school every day for every child makes better nutrition, health, and readiness to learning. The whole project is scheduled to run for a period of one (1) year as from 1st May 2022 – 30th April 2023.

### 13. Prayer Requests

1. For peace to return to South Sudan and Sudan.

2. Promotion of Reformed faith in Sudan and South Sudan including salvation of souls, spiritual revival, discipleship, and success of eleven church plants in South Sudan and one in Nuba Mountain in Sudan in 2022.
3. Relief assistance to most vulnerable particularly in IDPs camps in Juba, Malakal, Bor, Bentiu, Aweil and Wau where SRC labors.
4. Leadership development of SRC future leaders including those who are studying at Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) South Africa, and Nile Theological College (NTC) Juba, South Sudan, and for the Lord to call more labors to HIS vineyard in Sudan/South Sudan.
5. Needed infrastructures: completion of SRC Synod office in Juba, construction of multi training center, Gudele Juba, and construction of mission house in Juba to accommodate serving pastors.
6. Safety of SRC pastors and evangelists laboring in areas of high risk and hostility.
7. Reopening and rebuilding of eight churches destroyed during the conflicts of 2013/2016 five in Juba plus Immanuel in Malakal, Hope in Bentiu, and Redeemer in Bor.
8. Starting of fund-generating projects to increase sustainability and self-sufficiency. If funds are available SRC is hoping to build four shops in Juba before the end of 2022.
9. SRC Strategic Plan 2018-2028 may come to pass.
10. Provision of one (1) mission vehicle to keep the mission moving forward.
11. Initiating and establishing of Gospel Radio ministry.
12. Two missionaries to serve with SRC in the areas of leadership development and education.







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## Fun, Fellowship, and Intermission

### The 218th General Synod of the ARP Church

If last year's General Synod of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was a Thornwellian Revolution (and it was, and the spirit of it continued this year as more bureaucracy was cleaned out) probably the best way to describe our meeting the past few days is:

#### Wait Until Next Year

As most of you know my role for the Synod is to serve as our Bill Clerk. That office is a hold over from decades past when communication was slow and more paper shuffling was needed. Now I mostly assist the Principal Clerk in keeping track of motions from the floor, the success/failure of recommendations from committee reports, and to notify the Moderator when there remains no more business on the table. Mostly though I sit behind the Reading Clerk and keep him company. :)

This year's General Synod will probably be most remembered for our return to Bonclarken after a four-year absence. In 2019 we had a concurrent Synod with our RPCNA brethren in Pittsburgh (Beaver Falls more specifically, and at Geneva College even more so). Due to the lockdowns of Comrade Cooper we were forced to meet both in 2020 and 2021 at 1st Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina. It was a blessing to be up North in June, and we were fed excellently in the Capital. However, Bonclarken is home. Will always be home, and is the place where we belong. There were threats of thunderstorms, but outside the downpour during the afternoon preaching (sorry Rev. Drew Goodman) it was mostly dry for the week.

On that front the sermons were excellent, I want to especially give thanks to Rev. Howard Wheeler for his exquisite exposition of Luke 21:7-19. You can always tell when the minister has your attention because you don't pay any mind to the time. I was personally moved and blessed by it. We also this year had presentations from missionaries and church planters that followed the preaching. Also as is the usual the Psalm singing this year (and hymns) was robust and great in power. Click the link for our closing vocals. There is something wonderful about hearing men giving their all to praise the Lord Jesus! The food was good as well.

Now, we'll get into the stuff y'all who read this actually want to know about.

#### What business was done.

....well....not much.

As noted above the theme of this year's Synod may have been "advancing the gospel", but it certainly was not "receive completed reports from special committees". We heard the reading clerk say something similar to "...the special committee on [insert name here] has requested another year" about six times. Restructuring, Deaconesses, Presbytery Bounds, Freemasonry, et al are all coming in 2023. We better schedule Synod for the whole week of June 5-9 next year.

Outside of that there were a couple disappointing moments. First was the move not to at least consider the Memorial (our version of an overture PCA folks) from Tennessee-Alabama Presbytery on the use of wine in the Lord's Supper at Synod. Now, I am not the world's biggest fan of having Communion at all at Synod, not sure it belongs in a court/business meeting, and am also aware that it would have undoubtedly been referred to a special committee for study, but I do wish that it would have had the chance to be referred. Personally, I hope they bring it back next year.

The second was the woeful discussion over women in worship, and who can authoritatively read the word of God in the worship of the Church. Strawmen about random bible verses referenced in a missions report abounded. We even had some Quakerism break out. Hopefully a lot of our Synod does some remedial reading on the doctrine of ordination and the Larger Catechism this next year.

But, we continued to get good news on the retirement front. The deficit is almost completely gone and the SCONAR mess is almost behind us. Be in continued prayer. More good news on the further solidifying of the Biblical reformation at Erskine College was received with gladness. Go Flying Fleet! All in all Synod is never bad, because the ARP is the ARP and I'd rather be in a space capsule with Joy Behar than not be ARP. Plus the Flat Rock Bakery just hits.

Y'all be blessed.

By His Strength,  
Rev. Benjamin Glaser

## General Assembly of the OPC, 2022

On June 8, the Eighty-Eighth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church convened on the campus of Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania. It marked the first time in thirty-six years for the assembly to meet in the Philadelphia area, the Fifty-Third (1986) General Assembly having met on the same campus. The assembly elected Mr. David Nakhla, ruling elder at Calvary OPC, Glenside, Pennsylvania, as moderator. In leading up to the assembly, Mr. Nakhla had visited Eastern Europe as the OPC Disaster Response Coordinator (see July New Horizons) and participated in the Diaconal Summit in Chicago (see pages 3–5). His servant leadership was acknowledged by the assembly in the election, and with his steady hand and patient demeanor he proved to be a wise choice.

This was particularly evident when the assembly reconvened in the early afternoon of June 9 and Mr. Nakhla as moderator was called upon to make a sobering announcement. Earlier that morning, representatives of the Conferencing Office of Eastern University informed the Committee on General Assembly Arrangements that they had received reports from students and staff of four incidents of racially disparaging interactions with individuals associated with the OPC's general assembly. After describing what had been reported, Mr. Nakhla informed the assembly that Eastern University had stated that any further

reported incidents would bring about the immediate removal of the assembly from the campus. Mr. Nakhla then announced that the assembly would stay in recess for the rest of the afternoon, requested that the commissioners commit themselves to a season of prayer, and encouraged any with knowledge of the incidents to come forward.

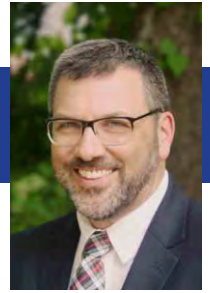
The next day, during the morning session, the assembly passed the following statement of regret and sorrow without dissent.

*The 88th (2022) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church hereby expresses to the faculty, staff, and students of Eastern University its grief, sorrow, and disgust regarding four recent incidents of racial disparagement reported being made by some present at our Assembly. There is no place in the church for such conduct.*

*The church seeks to magnify and honor Christ as the Creator of every human being, each one reflecting dignity and value as the image of God. Therefore, in accordance with God's Word and the two great laws of love, we repudiate and condemn all sins of racism, hatred, and prejudice, as transgressions against our Holy God, who calls us to love and honor all people. In keeping with the law of God and the right order of the church for Christ's honor, we resolve to deal directly and biblically with any such sins of hatred committed by members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. In keeping with the gospel, we resolve to*

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Danny Olinger is a minister with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.





*offer our assistance to Eastern University to confront offender(s) and to seek reconciliation.*

The Committee on Arrangements then met with the Eastern University conference staff during lunch, expressed the assembly's sorrow and regret for the incidents, and read the statement the assembly had adopted. Eastern was thankful for the seriousness with which the assembly took this matter, along with the assembly's wholehearted and swift response. They considered the matter closed as long as no further incidents occurred.

Four days later, on the concluding day of the assembly, Mr. Nakhla updated the body about the incidents regarding reported racism on the campus. The first two incidents were confirmed to be an inappropriate attempt at humor by a commissioner.

Mr. Nakhla then reported that the person responsible for the reported third incident and most egregious statement was determined not to be an OPC commissioner, since, according to Eastern University, the one reported to have used the offensive language had not been seen on the campus since the incident. The final incident was due to a commissioner's confusion as to whether an area of the cafeteria was self-serve or not.

Said Hank Belfield, Stated Clerk, after the closing of the assembly, "We all have been humbled and dismayed by these incidents. But we give thanks to God for the resolution that was reached with members of the EU community before our assembly adjourned, as well as the opportunity it gives us to reflect and learn from the experience." Belfield also asked for prayer for the "ongoing efforts being made to work toward personal reconciliation with those individuals who were hurt."

Mr. Nakhla expressed his thanksgiving for the faithful and diligent labor of the members of the Committee on Arrangements, who "striv[ed] tirelessly to seek to restore the trust that was lost in the midst of reports of hurtful conduct and speech. The Lord blessed those efforts with favor and appreciation from our hosts, who were encouraged to see the OPC take the allegations so seriously and strive for answers and reconciliation where possible." Nakhla also praised God for his grace to him personally—"I have never before in my life learned of so many people praying for me and felt buoyed by those prayers in a supernatural way." He rejoiced "to see the assembly rally together toward the cause of restoring the honor of Christ and the dignity of his image-bearers in the midst of such circumstances."

#### **Report from the Statistician**

When the assembly did take up its business, there was



*Moderator David Nakhla*

sobriety, but there was also the shared confidence that Jesus Christ was with his church and would lead his church. Among the first reports was that of the Statistician, Mr. Luke Brown. The report revealed that much had changed in the OPC during the thirty-six years between visits to Eastern University. In 1986, the OPC had 18,183 members on its rolls in 195 churches and chapels located in 10 presbyteries. In the providence of God, in 2022 the OPC has grown to 32,255 members on its rolls in 334 churches and mission works in 17 presbyteries.

The change was even more drastic in regard to the make-up of the assemblies. In 1986, commissioners Lawrence Eyres, Everett DeVelde, Edward Kellogg, Robert Graham, David Neilands, Robert Vining, Henry Coray, Dwight Poundstone, and John Galbraith had either studied under J. Gresham Machen at Westminster Seminary or joined with him in 1936 as founding members of the Presbyterian Church of America (later renamed the Orthodox Presbyterian Church). Now, in 2022, approximately a third of the commissioners had been ordained during the past decade. Twenty-six commissioners were attending their first assembly.

#### **Recognition of Service**

But what had not changed was the presence of a particular servant-leader in the church, Mr. Mark Bube. In 1986, Mr. Bube, then a ruling elder at First OPC in Portland, Oregon, was a second-time commissioner to the assembly. Four years later, he would be called to serve as the General Secretary of the Committee on Foreign Missions, a position that he held with distinction until his retirement at this assembly. On Saturday, the assembly recognized Mr. Bube's service, and that of his wife of forty-nine years, Kathleen, with a video tribute from OPC missionaries past and present expressing their thanksgiving for the Bubes' service. Mr. Douglas Clawson, the new General Secretary, declared that no adequate words could express his thanksgiving and love for Mr. Bube: "On the one hand, we have stayed in some dismal

places, eaten nearly inedible food, been sick with viruses, and had our freedom and lives threatened together. On the other hand, we have witnessed together the power of Christ to raise the dead, transform lives, and use his church to reveal his glory.” OPC missionary L. Anthony Curto said of his friend, “In April 1993, I sat down by Mark to eat a peanut butter sandwich in Tijuana, Mexico. In just a few short moments my ministry would take a turn I did not anticipate, and a relationship developed that I have thanked the Lord for continuously ever since.” The “turn” was Mr. Curto heading to Uganda in 1995. Once there, he testified that the Lord used Mr. Bube to mentor, guide, counsel, push, and encourage him through his years of labor, even to the point that he would sit for hours under the phone tree in Karamoja, the only place that he could get a signal, so that he could talk to his beloved brother in the Lord.

During the assembly, praise to the living God was also given for the service of Mr. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. Mr. Bube read an appreciation for Mr. Gaffin passed by the Committee on Foreign Missions in light of Mr. Gaffin's fifty-two years of consecutive service (1969–2021) on that committee. Mr. Danny Olinger, on behalf of the Committee for the Historian, then narrated a picture and home movie tribute to Mr. Gaffin's service. Mr. John Mahaffy, who served with Mr. Gaffin for thirty-nine years on the Committee on Foreign Missions, said, “Dr. Gaffin invariably moderated meetings of the Committee with an even hand. He was always careful to hear any minority while keeping the Committee on task through its agenda. He modeled servant leadership. But what was central in his leadership was the conviction that the church be faithful in serving the risen Lord.”

#### Ecumenical Relationships

Ecumenically, the assembly invited the Sudanese Reformed Church and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN—Reformed Churches Netherlands) to enter into a relationship of Corresponding Relations. Presently, the Sudanese Reformed Church has about 6,000 members in 16 congregations and 18 preaching stations. The 14 congregations of the Reformed Churches Netherlands have around 1,400 members.

United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) fraternal delegate Mr. Brian Lee, pastor of Christ Reformed in Washington, DC, stated that the URCNA's affection for the OPC is wide, deep, and growing. Citing the joint production by the URCNA and OPC of the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, he declared that singing together from the same songbook is a great benefit for the common mission of the two churches. Illustrating the point, he said that when his teenage daughter gets to the point of leaving home, “if there is no URC nearby I pray that she would seek next a faithful

OPC congregation, and stay within the Reformed family of our churches. Should she do so, I think that singing out of the songbook she grew up with will help keep her in this fold of confessionally Reformed Christianity.” He also said that the URCNA Synod, which met concurrently with the General Assembly in 2018 in Wheaton, Illinois, would be delighted to do so again. He encouraged the ecumenical committees of the respective churches to work together to that end, perhaps as soon as 2024.

#### Considering Overtures and Other Business

On the Lord's Day morning of June 12, commissioners worshiped in local OPC congregations. That evening, a worship service conducted by the session of Calvary OPC, Glenside, was held for the assembly. Calvary pastor J. Mark Sallade preached on Acts 8:26–40, “Jesus Gathers the Outcasts.”

On Monday morning, the assembly entered into debate regarding Overture 1, which sought the amending of membership and baptismal vows. The assembly divided the question and passed the amending of the second membership vow and the adding of a new third vow. The new vow, if approved by a majority of the presbyteries, would read, “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God the Son come in the flesh, who for us and for our salvation lived and died, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come again to judge the living and the dead?” The assembly did not pass the amendment to the baptismal vow.

The assembly then moved to consideration of Overture 2. In response, the assembly formed a Special Committee to Help Equip Officers to Protect the Flock, which was tasked with the duty to collect, study, and develop resources to equip the officers of the church to protect members from sexual predators and domestic violence.

On Tuesday, the assembly hurried to complete its business in a timely manner. This included approval of standing committee records, the sustaining of an appeal of complaint, the presentation and consideration of another appeal, the approval of the general assembly operating budget for 2023, multiple elections, the continuing of the Special Committee on Updating the Language of the Doctrinal Standards, and a resolution of thanks. It was also announced in closing that the Eighty-Ninth (2023) General Assembly would be held at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, starting on June 7 and ending no later than noon on June 13.





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## RPCNA Synod 2022

The 190th annual synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA) met on the campus of Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) in Marion, Indiana. Rev. Bruce Parnell (Stillwater, OK) began with preaching on “taking up the cross,” encouraging the court to not trivialize the message, but to make self-denial the mark of your Christian life. Each morning began with excellent preaching from Romesh Prakashpalan (Dallas), Kyle Sims (ARP fraternal delegate from SC) and Matt Kingswood (Russell, ON). The court then was introduced to first time delegates; seventeen ruling elders and eight pastors were introduced. Bill Edgar was able to introduce his son, Alex, and Russ Pulliam was able to introduce his son David. This highlights the covenantal nature of Christ's church. Following introductions, the court elected this year's officers: Harry Metzger: moderator; John McFarland and Andrew Barnes would serve as clerk and assistant clerk.

Several items were accomplished at synod right away. One congregation transferred presbyteries (Durham, NC). A letter was received from the Great Lakes Gulf concerning an “injustice and wrong” of giving credentials to a former minister while a trial was impending. A committee was formed to study a proper response to abuse in the church with the view of an oversight board.

Several of our church's boards and agencies were heard from: Home Mission, Global Mission, and church planting committees in other parts of the world (South America, East Asia, etc). The Global Mission board recommended several changes to their by-laws, and these were sent back to them for further consultation. The court also heard from Geneva College, RP Seminary, The RP Home, and other committees and agencies. Geneva College reported that a-cappella Psalm singing and preaching highlight their weekly chapel services as well as the college seeking to promote Sabbath keeping on their campus. President Troup also highlighted the fact that the whole curriculum is “driven by” the mediatorial kingship of Christ.

Much of this year's time dealt with complaints. Although some may consider it a “waste of synod's time,” this is a real part of the work of a higher court: “It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same...” (Westminster Confession, 31.3).

### Considering Complaints

The complaints dealt primarily with two categories this year. The first category had to do with responses to Covid regulations and freedoms. The second set of complaints dealt with the Synod Judicial Commission (SJC) that was set up to investigate the pastoral response to a sexual abuse case in one of our Indiana congregations. It is important to note that this SJC was NOT investigating the sexual abuse, but investigating the pastoral/shepherding response to the sexual abuse.

### Covid Related Complaints

The first Covid-related complaint was against the Atlantic Presbytery for not allowing their ministers to write religious exemption letters exempting members from Covid vaccinations. This complaint came from the Hazelton congregation. Although the presbytery had removed this requirement against exemption letters, the synod voted against the Atlantic Presbytery saying that it is within the right of ministers to write religious exemption letters and “The actions of Atlantic Presbytery were in opposition to the Westminster Confession 20.2-4 and Reformed Presbyterian Testimony 4.8, 20.4-5, and 26.5,8.” Essentially, this action was against applications of Christian liberty.

The second Covid-related complaint was against the State College session and the Presbytery of the Alleghenies (POA). This complaint was because State College was not requiring masking during the height of state-imposed Covid restrictions. The synod voted in favor of State College Church and the POA. Although not all agreed with the way these votes went, the synod did uphold Christian liberty, an essential teaching of Presbyterianism.

### SJC Related Complaints

The second set of complaints were related to the Synod Judicial Commission (SJC) and their judicial actions against the former pastor of the Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church. Between Synod 2021 and 2022, the SJC spent over 10,000 man hours investigating the shepherding and pastoral responses to the sexual abuse (again, they were never tasked with investigating the abuse itself).

Several complainants against the SJC were concerned with various issues from the investigation and trial, including the accusation that the SJC proceeded unjustly, that the trial of Mr. Olivetti was “publicly” live-streamed, the investigators were biased, that a professional investigation ought to have occurred, a request to “annul” the results of the trial, and

even against the fact that Mr. Olivetti is currently suspended from privileges of the Lord's Table. Each complainant was able to present their case, the SJC would respond, and then there was a time of debate and questions and answers. The hearing and answering complaints was approximately 1/3 of our time in session. The votes on the complaints related to the SJC and Immanuel Church were: Olivetti complaint 1 was not sustained 109 to 14. Olivetti complaint 2 was not sustained 117 to 9. The Faris complaint was not sustained 120 to 13. The Bloomington session complaint was not sustained 114 to 16. The Riepe complaint was not sustained 125 to 1. The Dillon complaint was not sustained 89 to 40. The Dillon complaint (asking for Mr. Olivetti's Table privileges to restored) was clearly most persuasive, but failed to persuade a majority of the synod. Although the church heard of much division over this matter, the synod was clear and united in supporting the work of the SJC.

Several men dissented from the actions, registering their names (and some their reasons) for being against the actions of the synod. These were difficult deliberations, but the Spirit of God gave us one voice and it was very, very clear that the synod loves these men from Immanuel Church, the victims and their families, and seeks to see them restored. Several restoration commissions were established to help shepherd this hurting congregation following a very difficult season in the life of their church. May Christ speak comfort clearly to them and restore, renew, and revive them following this dark season. The Prophet Isaiah said, "A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth."

#### Other Items

A discussion on prison inmate church membership resulted in allowing church membership for inmates as long as they may be baptized (unless already) and sessions can provide oversight.

A well-written paper on the nature of the covenant of communicant membership was returned to the authors. This paper sought to identify whether our membership queries were oaths or vows. Many who spoke did not appreciate rooting the queries in the inter-Trinitarian relationship. That paper will come back next year.

A discussion about Zoom trials, which allows for some videoconferencing in trials when "not reasonably feasible." This decision will have to go down in overture, requiring the sessions to agree with this decision. Vital Churches spoke of pastoral "burn out" and the need for pastors to take their

vacations and an occasional sabbatical. One person rightly noted that sabbaticals are historically for academic work (such as writing). Speaking of writing, Crown and Covenant reported on the difficulties of procuring materials for publishing. Several new books are coming out this year, and it seems that Daniel Howe's (Providence, RI) book on the Lord's Day is quite spectacular.

#### The Reformed Presbytery of Canada

The Reformed Presbytery of Canada was formed and a commissioning service sent them forth to preach the Gospel in the Dominion of Canada. The moderator was emotional as several congregations and mission churches were set apart to form their own national church. The moderators of presbyteries as well as the presidents of boards and institutions gave them the right hand of fellowship and then Psalm 72 (the national motto of Canada) was sung as the men went forward.

Other highlights are too many to write. The times of prayer and singing were rich and powerful. The fraternal delegates. The good finances and sacrificial giving of the churches. The unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace were quite evident. Difficult things have been done and will be done—but the glory of Christ remains central to all that we have sought to do. Hopefully this year will provide some healing from our struggles and we can look back on this synod being reminded that God is ever gracious to us and his love is evident among the brethren.

Republished from:

<https://gentlereformation.com/2022/06/25/what-happened-at-synod-2022/>



*Rev. Dr. Visscher thanking Mr. Christo de Jager of the hosting facilities*



## Mission to the San People

The following newsletter, dating to February 2022, gives an impression of the mission project which many ICRC delegates visited on Saturday, October 15, 2022.



It has been almost eight years since Rev Maferika Jeremia Moletsane started working at the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) Sanveld in Namibia in the Omaheke region.

### Congregation

Reverend Maferika Jeremia Moletsane is currently responsible for all the spiritual work and welfare of the Sanveld congregation, which includes members in **Drimiopsis**, **Aroeheb** (Farm), **Kroonster** (Farm), and **Sonop** (Farm), **Chimo** (Farm), **Good Hope-Wes** (Farm), **Ritchlyn** (Farm), **Herberg** (Farm), **Siegfeld** (Farm), **Hakon** (Farm), and **Wagam-bitjie** (Farm).

Reverend Maferika Jeremia Moletsane preaches in all preaching points mentioned above; once every Sunday at Drimiopsis and once a month at the other preaching points (Farms). He also does house visits, catechism classes and Bible studies on a weekly basis.

### Projects

For the past 8 years GK Sanveld has been involved in different projects, both in the church and the community of Drimiopsis:

1. **Survive your Life skills for youth:** Up to date we have trained 105 youths with the Survive Your Life skills course, and it is our vision to train all our youth in the community of Drimiopsis and the surrounding areas.

**Author: Rev. Jeremia Moletsane**

*Jeremia Moletsane is a minister with the Reformed Churches in Namibia.*



2. **Sanveld Kindergarten:** We thank God for your support on this project, we have been growing from strength to strength. At the moment we have registered 60 kids for the year 2022. 90% are of the San people and 10% Herero and Damara Nama.
3. **Girls Club:** We have 25 Girls ages 10 to 19 in the Club. They have started with the Survive Your Life course and a leadership skills course. They also started with a programme:
4. **Sewing Project:** We are humbly proud of the fact that we managed to raise funds for our church with this project. We also managed to create jobs for three sisters of our church. Now they are able to put bread





on the table for their children and we hope this project will move forward in helping more members of our church because of the severe poverty. Our products are labelled Sanbags.

5. **Bible Translation project:** GK Sanveld is involved in the second Bible translation project for the !Xung (Ju/'hoan) people of the Omaheke region after the first one of Rev. Flip van der Westhuizen. At the moment 30 stories have been recorded, checked (Consultant) and approved. These materials are available on "Global Recording Network" website.



### 1.3 Challenges:

Due to the effects of Covid-19 it is difficult to carry on with our work, because our congregation is very small and 90% of our members are unemployed while 10% works at the farms. The church does not have enough funds of its own to look after the minister and his family. This makes it difficult for the minister to continue with his work and to look after the projects inside the church and in the community as efficiently as he would like. We really need help.

### Conclusion

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your prayers and the consideration to help. May the good Lord bless you all.

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*Rev. Jeremia introducing a San Bible translator to ICRC delegates*