ACTS OF THE 2021 SYNOD

of the

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

ALBANY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

14 – 23 June 2021



Delegates to Synod Albany 2021

Back Row: Elder J Plug, Rev P Archbald (RCNZ), Rev AC Pol, Rev A Hagg, Elder W Pleiter, Elder J Lewis, Rev R Pot, Elder H Faas, Elder H Ballast, Rev D Poppe

Front Row: Elder P Witten, Elder S Thompson, Rev RD Anderson, Rev R Bredenhof, Rev H Alkema, Rev W Bredenhof, Elder B Veenendaal, Elder H van der Linde, Rev R Eikelboom



Officers of Synod

Elder B Veenendaal (First Clerk), Rev R Bredenhof (Vice-Chairman)
Rev H Alkema (Chairman), Rev W Bredenhof (Second Clerk)

GLOSSARY OF ECCLESIASTICAL ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Belgic Confession
BoP	Book of Praise
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CO	Church Order
DGK	De Gereformeerde Kerken
EPC	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
FERC	First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore
FRC	Free Reformed Church
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
GGRC	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis
GGRI	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia a.k.a. Reformed Churches in Indonesia
GGRI-T	Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
KPCK	Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea
OPC	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
RCN	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
SPC	Southern Presbyterian Church
URCNA	United Reformed Churches of North America

INDEX

Subject	Article #	Page #
Australian Book of Praise	114	86
Appeal Synod Bunbury Art 76-78	85	46
Canadian Reformed Churches	95	57
De Gereformeerde Kerken	68	36
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	102	75
First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore	94	55
Free Reformed Churches of South Africa	70	39
FRCA Website	49	24
Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia GGRI Theological College	97 98	60 63
Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland	68	36
Hymns: Appeals, Overture	37 81 89	19 45 50
Interchurch Relations	48	22
International Conference of Reformed Churches	105 112 113	79 83 84
Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea	71	41
Orthodox Presbyterian Church	67	32
Reformed Churches in Indonesia	97	60
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands	69	39
Reformed Churches of New Zealand	61	28
Southern Presbyterian Church	102	75
Training for the Ministry	101 App 2	65 148
United Reformed Churches of North America	96	59

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Article 1 -	Opening of Synod by Convening Church of FRC Albany	1
Article 2 -	Examination of Credentials	1
Article 3 -	Election of Officers	2
Article 4 -	Constitution of Synod	2
Article 5 -	Delegates' Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity	2
Article 6 -	Adjournment	3
Article 7 -	Re-opening	3
Article 8 -	Welcome to Overseas Visitor	3
Article 9 -	Late Agenda Item	3
Article 10 -	Adoption of Agenda	4
Article 11 -	Administrative Assistant	8
Article 12 -	Time Schedules	9
Article 13 -	Live Streaming	9
Article 14 -	Publishing of Acts	10
Article 15 -	Financial Advisory Committee	11
Article 16 -	Advisory Committees of Synod	11
Article 17 -	Overture by FRC Darling Downs re Synod 2018 not interacting with concerns	12
Article 18 -	General Secretary's Report	14
Article 19 -	Discussion Rounds	14
Article 20 -	Reopening	15
Article 21 -	Address of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand	15
Article 22 -	Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia	16
Article 23 -	Address of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church	16
Article 24 -	Discussion Rounds	16
Article 25 -	Adjournment	16

Article 26 - Reopening 16
Article 27 - Training for the Ministry 17
Article 28 - Committee work..... 17
Article 29 - Acts of Synod..... 17
Article 30 - Committee Proposals..... 17
Article 31 - Training for the Ministry 17
Article 32 - Appeals concerning Hymns in Australian Book of Praise..... 18
Article 33 - Reopening 18
Article 34 - Address of the Canadian Reformed Churches 18
Article 35 - Address of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea 18
Article 36 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis..... 19
Article 37 - Appeals concerning Hymns in Australian Book of Praise..... 19
Article 38 - Adjournment 19
Article 39 - Reopening 20
Article 40 - Appeals of Hymns of Australian Book of Praise..... 20
Article 41 - Committee work..... 20
Article 42 - Acts of Synod..... 20
Article 43 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78..... 20
Article 44 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church 21
Article 45 - Reopening 21
Article 46 - Address of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa..... 21
Article 47 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor 21
Article 48 - Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia 22

Article 49 - FRCA Website 24
Article 50 - De Gereformeerde Kerken and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland 26
Article 51 - Training for the Ministry 26
Article 52 - Adjournment 26
Article 53 - Reopening 27
Article 54 - Training for the Ministry 27
Article 55 - Singing of Children 27
Article 56 - Training for the Ministry 27
Article 57 - Contact with the EPC and SPC..... 27
Article 58 - International Conference of Reformed Churches..... 28
Article 59 - Acts of Synod..... 28
Article 60 - Committee work..... 28
Article 61 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand 28
Article 62 - Farewell..... 31
Article 63 - Committee work..... 31
Article 64 - Reopening 32
Article 65 - Address of the United Reformed Churches of North America..... 32
Article 66 - Address of the First Evangelical Church of Singapore..... 32
Article 67 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church 32
Article 68 - De Gereformeerde Kerken and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland 36
Article 69 - Reformed Churches in the Netherlands..... 39
Article 70 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.... 39
Article 71 - Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea..... 41
Article 72 - Adjournment 42
Article 73 - Reopening 43
Article 74 - Alternate 43
Article 75 - Synod Administrative Assistant..... 43
Article 76 - Study of Material..... 43

Article 77- Proposal regarding the format of the Acts of Synod 44
Article 78 - Appeals of Synod 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78 44
Article 79 - Committee work 44
Article 80 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78 44
Article 81 - Overture on Additional Hymns 45
Article 82 - Committee work 46
Article 83 - Reopening 46
Article 84 - Acts of Synod 46
Article 85 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78 46
Article 86 - Adjournment 50
Article 87 - Alternate 50
Article 88 - Reopening 50
Article 89 - Appeals concerning Hymns of Australian Book of Praise 50
Article 90 - International Conference of Reformed Churches 54
Article 91 - Training for the Ministry 54
Article 92 - Australian Book of Praise 54
Article 93 - Australian Book of Praise 55
Article 94 - First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore 55
Article 95 - Canadian Reformed Churches 57
Article 96 - United Reformed Churches of North America 59
Article 97 - The Reformed Churches in Indonesia 60
Article 98 - Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia – Theological Training 63
Article 99 - Committee work 65
Article 100 - Reopening 65

Article 101 - Training for the Ministry 65
Article 102 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Southern Presbyterian Church 75
Article 103 - Adjournment 78
Article 104 - Reopening 79
Article 105 - International Conference of Reformed Churches 79
Article 106 - Australian Book of Praise 80
Article 107 - Acts of Synod 80
Article 108 - Instructions from Churches 80
Article 109- Deputies Article 48 Church Order 80
Article 110 - Days of Prayer – Article 66 CO 81
Article 111 - Indexing Synod Decisions 81
Article 112 - International Conference of Reformed Churches 83
Article 113 - International Conference of Reformed Churches 84
Article 114 - Australian Book of Praise 86
Article 115 - Archives and Library of Synod 89
Article 116 - Deputies for Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities 91
Article 117 - Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry 91
Article 118 - Deputies for Venue and Infrastructure 92
Article 119- Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury 95
Article 120 - Deputy Appointments 95
Article 121- Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury 98
Article 122 - Appointment of Convening Church for the next Synod 100
Article 123 - Acts of Synod 101
Article 124 - Re-opening 101
Article 125 - Press Release 101
Article 126 - Censure according to Article 47 Church Order 101

Article 127 - Personal Questions..... 102
Article 128 - Closing Address 102
Article 129 - Closing 102
Appendix 1a: Meditation by Rev H Alkema, Chairman of the convening church of Albany..... 104
Appendix 1b: Opening Address by the Chairman of the convening church of Albany..... 110
Appendix 1c: Address by Rev P Archbald on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand 112
Appendix 1d: Address by Rev P Njuka on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI) 115
Appendix 1e: Address of Rev A Witten on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)..... 116
Appendix 1f: Address by Rev NakChoon Kim on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea ... 123
Appendix 1g: Address by Br S Dethan on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC). 125
Appendix 1h: Address of Rev J Bruintjes on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) 128
Appendix 1i: Address of Br CI Nguru and Br F Missa on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)..... 132
Appendix 1j: Address by Br G Swets on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)..... 136
Appendix 1k: Address of Pastor NT Chong of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC) 138
Appendix 1l: Closing address by Rev H Alkema, Chairman of Synod 2021..... 142

Appendix 2: Forms and Rules for Financial Aid – Training for the Ministry 148
Appendix 3: Amended Rules for Synods 163
Appendix 4: Financial actuals and budget..... 187
Appendix 5: Press Release – Synod Albany 2021 190
Appendix 6: Officers of Synod and Administrative Assistant 201

EVENING SESSION
Monday, 14 June 2021

Article 1 - Opening of Synod by Convening Church of FRC Albany

Synod is convened in the Free Reformed Church of Albany building. On behalf of the convening church, the chairman of Consistory, Rev H Alkema, invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 84:1 and 6, followed by the profession of faith by singing Hymn 1. He then leads in opening prayer.

Rev Alkema then reads from Ephesians 1:15-23 and delivers a meditation on this passage (refer Appendix 1a). He invites all present to sing Hymn 84, and leads in prayer to God for His blessing over the synod.

Rev Alkema extends a word of welcome and gives his opening address (refer Appendix 1b) and declares the 28th synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia opened. He invites all present to sing from Psalm 134, then invites the delegates to the synod table.

Article 2 - Examination of Credentials

The three classes had previously submitted the credentials of the delegates. Rev Alkema advises that the consistory of Albany has already examined the credentials and are satisfied with them. It is noted that all primi delegates are present as follows:

Classis Central
Rev RD Anderson
Rev R Eikelboom
Rev AC Pol
Br W Pleiter
Br H van der Linde
Br B Veenendaal

Classis North
Rev R Bredenhof
Rev W Bredenhof
Rev D Poppe
Br H Ballast
Br H Faas
Br S Thompson

Classis South
Rev H Alkema
Rev A Hagg
Rev R Pot
Br J Lewis
Br J Plug
Br P Witten

Article 3 - Election of Officers

The following officers are elected:

Chairman:	Rev H Alkema
Vice Chairman:	Rev R Bredenhof
First Clerk:	Br B Veenendaal
Second Clerk:	Rev W Bredenhof

Article 4 - Constitution of Synod

The chairman, Rev H Alkema, declares synod duly constituted.

Article 5 - Delegates' Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

The Chairman asks all delegates to rise to indicate their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. All delegates rise.

Article 6 - Adjournment

The Chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 135:1, leads in closing prayer and adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Tuesday, 15 June 2021

Article 7 - Re-opening

Rev D Poppe reads from Ephesians 6:10-20 and presents a short meditation. He then invites all present to sing Psalm 56:1, 4 and 5, and leads in prayer.

Article 8 - Welcome to Overseas Visitor

Due to COVID-19, overseas visitors are unable to attend in person at the synod, with the exception of Rev P Archbald from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. His credentials have been received and are read out. The Chairman welcomes Rev Archbald and he is granted privileges under Rules for Synod 6.1 as a delegate of a sister church.

Rev Archbald is requested to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. He does so.

Article 9 - Late Agenda Item

One appeal was received six days late from the Free Reformed Church of Armadale. Synod decides to accept this submission by way of special resolution on the grounds of exceptional circumstances (see Art 10 agenda Item 8.d.1).

ADOPTED

Article 10 - Adoption of Agenda

Synod's agenda is adopted as follows:

1. Opening by the Convening Church
2. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials
3. Election of Officers
4. Constitution of Synod
5. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
6. Adoption of Agenda
7. Adoption of Meeting Procedures
8. Incoming Correspondence
    a. Free Reformed Church of Albany
        1. Recommendation Sr K van Duyn as Administrative Assistant
        2. Recommendation FRC Darling Downs Synod 2024 Convening Church
    b. Free Reformed Church of Mount Nasura
        1. Appeal re application of Article 31 CO by Synod 2018 (Art 76,77,78)
        2. Appeal re Classis North decision re ICRC
        3. Overture re sister church relationship RCNZ
        4. Appeal re adoption of certain Hymns by Synod 2018
        5. Overture re Financing Australian Book of Praise
        6. Overture re DGK & GKN
        7. Overture re OPC
    c. Free Reformed Church of Darling Downs
        1. Appeal the decision of Synod 2018 to declare appeals by 3 members inadmissible (Art 76,77,78)

2. Appeal re Increasing Number of Hymns
3. Overture re Synod 2018 not Interacting with concerns.
4. Overture re EPC and SPC
5. Overture re OPC
6. Overture re RCNZ
7. Overture re Classis North decision re ICRC (incl Appendix)

d. Free Reformed Church of Armadale
   1. Appeal of Articles 76,77 and 78 of Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018
   2. Overture re DGK & GKN

e. Free Reformed Church of Mundijong
   1. Overture re DGK & GKN

f. Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott
   1. Overture re OPC
   2. Overture re DGK & GKN
   3. Overture re Training for the Ministry

g. Free Reformed Church of Southern River
   1. Overture re OPC

h. Free Reformed Church of Launceston
   1. Overture re FRC Mount Nasura Appeal re adoption of certain Hymns
   2. Overture re FRC Mount Nasura Appeal re Classis North proposal re ICRC
   3. Overture re OPC
   4. Overture re RCNZ & FRC Mount Nasura Overture re RCNZ

i. Free Reformed Church of Melville
   1. Overture re Overall Deputies' Report – Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia
   2. Overture re Training for the Ministry

j. Free Reformed Church of Bunbury
    1. Overture re Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise
    2. Overture re EPC and SPC
    3. Overture re Overall Deputies' Report – Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia
    4. Overture re Training for the Ministry

9. Instructions
10. Reports by Classes
    a. Classis Central
        1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod
        2. Sharing of decision made in regards to appeal it received re decision of Synod 2018 (Art 76,77,78) RCNZ
        3. Overture re Sister Churches URCNA
    b. Classis North
        1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod
        2. Proposal to send observers to ICRC Meetings
    c. Classis South West
        1. Credentials – Delegates to Synod
11. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies
    a. General Secretary's Report
    b. Deputies FRCA Website
    c. Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – outside Australia
        1. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
        2. The DGK and GKN
            i. Supplementary Report
        3. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
            i. Supplementary Report
        4. Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

i. Supplementary Report
5. First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)
6. Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
7. United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)
8. Orthodox Presbyterian Church
9. Reformed Churches of New Zealand
10. Report of deputies for the Indonesian Churches:
    i. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI)
    ii. The Calvinist Reformed Churches (GGRC)
    iii. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)
    iv. GGRI – Theological Training

d. Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise
    1. Supplementary Report
e. Deputies – Training for the Ministry
    1. Further Material – Regulations for the Financial Aid of Students
    2. Further Material – Financial Assistance for Theology Students
f. Committee for Contact with the EPC and SPC
g. Deputies Art 48 Church Order
h. Deputies for Church Order Article 66 Days of Prayer
i. Indexing Synod Decisions – Deputies' Report to FRCA Synod 2021
j. Deputies – Synod Archives – Reports to Synod Albany 2021

k. Report on Archives and Library of Synod
l. Nominating Authorities – Marriage Act 1961
m. Audit Deputies – Training for the Ministry
n. Inspection of Synod Archives
o. Deputies for Synod Venue and Infrastructure

12. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer
    a. FRC Darling Downs – Synod Treasury Review Report
13. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs
    a. Synod Treasurer – Report Synod Albany 2021
    b. Synod Treasurer – Budget and Actuals 2018-21
    c. Synod Treasurer – Draft Budget 2021-24
14. Appointment of Deputies
    a. Letter from a Church (Confidential – Delegates only)
15. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of the next Synod
16. Personal Questions
17. Adoption of Acts
18. Approval of Press Release
19. Closing of Synod

Article 11 - Administrative Assistant

At the recommendation of the convening church, synod decides to appoint Sr K van Duyn as administrative assistant to the First Clerk of Synod 2021.

ADOPTED

Article 12 - Time Schedules

Synod adopts the following time schedule:

9.00am	Session
10.30am	Break
10.45am	Session
12.15pm	Lunch
1.45pm	Session
3.15pm	Break
3.30pm	Session
5.00pm	Dinner
7.00pm	Session
9.00pm	Close

Article 13 - Live Streaming

I. Decision

Synod decides:

A. Not to make a general decision about live streaming all open sessions of synod at this time:

1. The Rules for Synods 7.4 imply that the right of admission to the audience of open sessions is for members of the FRCA and sister churches, so synod meetings are, in principle, not open to just anyone.
2. A change of this nature requires careful consideration of the implications for the work of synod, and should come from the churches.

B. For this synod:

1. Synod will only live stream the evening sessions.

2. The agenda is structured so that in the evening sessions synod listens to foreign delegates' addresses and any matters of interest as determined by the officers of synod.
3. The link for live stream will be sent to members of the FRCA and foreign delegates with the request that this not be publicised.

Grounds

1. While synod wishes to be transparent it also wants to exercise discretion about what discussions are publicly accessible.
2. Synod wishes to allow members of FRCA and sister churches to observe the work of synod.
3. The Rules for Synods 7.4 give members of the FRCA the opportunity to observe sessions of synod.

ADOPTED

Article 14 - Publishing of Acts

I. Decision:

1. To place the Acts of Synod on the internet after they are adopted, provided that matters of a personal nature will be excluded and, in matters relating to other churches, discretion will be used.
2. A daily agenda will also be published on the internet.

ADOPTED

Article 15 - Financial Advisory Committee

Synod decides to appoint as Financial Advisory Committee, according to Article 11.1 of the synod regulations, Br H van der Linde and Br H Faas.

Article 16 - Advisory Committees of Synod

The following advisory committees are appointed:

Committee 1 – OPC
Rev D Poppe (convenor)
Rev R Bredenhof
Br W Pleiter
Br H van der Linde

Committee 2 – Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018, RCNZ
Rev W Bredenhof (convenor)
Rev AC Pol
Br J Plug
Br B Veenendaal
Br P Witten

Committee 3 – DGK/GKN and Overall Interchurch Relations Committee Report
Rev R Eikelboom (convenor)
Rev R Pot
Br H Faas
Br S Thompson

Committee 4 – Theological Training
Rev RD Anderson (convenor)
Rev A Hagg
Br H Ballast
Br J Lewis

Further material will be forwarded to the committees as needed.

Article 17 - Overture by FRC Darling Downs re Synod 2018 not interacting with concerns

I. Material

Item 8(c)(3) – Overture from FRC Darling Downs for Synod Albany 'to make a decision that when concerns are raised from the Churches about a decision that has been proposed to Synod, that Synod interact with the concerns raised.' FRC Darling Downs provides the following grounds for its proposal:

1. When synod interacts specifically with the concerns raised, then the Church that raised them have something to work with as they consider synod's decisions. Synod's reasoning will either help allay their concerns, or give them reason for further appeal.
2. The Free Reformed Churches previously interacted more meaningfully with concerns raised in overtures from the Churches (eg, Synod Legana 2009 Art 17).
3. Our Canadian sister churches do this quite thoroughly (eg, Synod Edmonton 2019 Art 120 re GGRC, which interacts extensively with overtures received from the churches).

II. Admissibility

This overture is declared admissible as per CO Art 33.

III. Decision

Synod takes note of the concern raised by FRC Darling Downs.

Grounds

1. While the overture from FRC Darling Downs is not specific, it is clear from the context (and the attached appendix) that the matter refers to letters or overtures sent to synod from the churches in response to the Deputies' Reports. However, the status and nature of these overtures (provided by the churches) is for the information and consideration of synod.
2. Synod Bunbury 2018 Art 16 decided that, 'under the heading Material, the Acts shall also summarise the material considered'. By recording a summary of the overtures from the churches, synod asserts that any concerns raised, or feedback provided, by the churches was considered in its overall decision-making process.
3. While synod agrees that it may be helpful, in some circumstances, for a synod to record its interaction with a particular concern raised by the churches, synod does not agree that it ought to be mandated in every circumstance. The difference in approach by previous synods of the FRCA (and CanRC) affirms this.
4. Our synods' present practice for recording decisions only in the form of Decisions and Grounds is determined by Rules for Synod 7.8. This differs from the Canadian Reformed practice for recording decisions with detailed interaction of all the churches concerns by including Observations and Considerations (cf example cited by FRC Darling Downs in their Ground 3). FRC Darling Downs can propose a change to the

Rules for Synod via a proposal submitted according to Rules for Synods 12.

ADOPTED

Article 18 - General Secretary's Report

I. Material

Item 11.a – General Secretary's Report

II. Decision

Synod Albany discharges the deputy and reappoints a new deputy with a renewed mandate:

a. to distribute any pertinent mail to the deputies, and acknowledge correspondence not applicable to deputies, and if necessary, pass it on to the churches; and

b. to collate all Deputies' reports (apart from that of the Treasurer) and have them printed in an appropriate format. Deputies' reports are to be submitted, six months prior to the next synod, so that they can be printed and distributed to the churches as per the Rules for Synods.

ADOPTED

AFTERNOON SESSION
Tuesday, 15 June 2021

Article 19 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the following agenda items, which are then referred to the

nominated advisory committee to formulate proposed decisions:

- FRCA Website: Committee 1
- Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia: Committee 3
- De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN): Committee 3
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC): Committee 1
- Appeals against Synod 2018 decisions in Articles 76, 77 and 78: Committee 2. This discussion was continued in the evening session after the addresses from the foreign delegates (refer Article 24).

All the above submissions are declared admissible.

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 15 June 2021

Article 20 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to sing Psalm 32:1. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 21 - Address of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The chairman invites Rev P Archbald to present his address on behalf of the RNCZ (refer Appendix 1c).

Rev R Pot then responds to the address, after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in New Zealand.

Article 22 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia

The chairman invites Rev AC Pol to present a written address from Rev P Njuka on behalf of the GGRI (refer Appendix 1d), after which he leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in Indonesia.

Article 23 - Address of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

A video address is presented by Br M Bube on behalf of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Br W Pleiter then leads the meeting in prayer for this church bond and requests all present to sing Hymn 52:2 and 5.

Article 24 - Discussion Rounds

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the appeals against Synod 2018 decisions in Articles 76, 77 and 78.

Article 25 - Adjournment

The chairman reads Psalm 32 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 32:5 and adjourns synod.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 16 June 2021

Article 26 - Reopening

Rev R Pot reads Ephesians 3:14-21 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 103:1 and 2. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 27 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Training for the Ministry. The matter is then referred to Committee 4 to formulate proposals.

Article 28 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday, 16 June 2021

Article 29 - Acts of Synod

Articles 1-25 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 30 - Committee Proposals

Proposals from the advisory committees are received in relation to the FRCA Website, Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Training for the Ministry. Several rounds of discussion are held in relation to the proposals. These matters are given back to the committees for refining.

Article 31 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held regarding the remaining items of Training for the Ministry.

Article 32 - Appeals concerning Hymns in Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the appeals concerning hymns in the Australian Book of Praise.

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 16 June 2021

Article 33 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 145:1. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 34 - Address of the Canadian Reformed Churches

A recorded video address is presented by Rev A Witten on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (refer Appendix 1e), after which Rev W Bredenhof leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in Canada.

Article 35 - Address of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

A recorded video address is presented by Rev NakChoon Kim on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (refer Appendix 1f), after which Br B Veenendaal leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in Korea.

Article 36 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis

Rev D Poppe reads an address from Br S Dethan on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (refer Appendix 1g), after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

Article 37 - Appeals concerning Hymns in Australian Book of Praise

I. Material

Item 8.h.1 – Overture from FRC Launceston re FRC Mount Nasura's appeal re adoption of certain Hymns.

II. Admissibility

A proposal was tabled to declare the overture of FRC Launceston inadmissible since it interacts with an appeal tabled at this synod.

DEFEATED

The chairman rules that FRC Launceston is not directly involved in this proposal (CO Art 32). The ruling is challenged, a vote takes place, and the ruling is upheld.

A number of rounds of discussion are held on the appeals concerning hymns in the Australian Book of Praise and the matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 38 - Adjournment

Rev R Bredenhof reads Colossians 3:12-17 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 26 and synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION
Thursday, 17 June 2021

Article 39 - Reopening

Br S Thompson reads Psalm 111 and invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 111:1, 2 and 5. He then leads in prayer and the chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 40 - Appeals of Hymns of Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in response to questions from the advisory committee.

Article 41 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Thursday, 17 June 2021

Article 42 - Acts of Synod

Articles 26-38 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 43 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the appeals and overtures received in relation to Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78, and the matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 44 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' recommendations regarding the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the matter is referred to an advisory committee.

EVENING SESSION
Thursday, 17 June 2021

Article 45 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 52:1 and 2. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 46 - Address of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

A recorded video address is presented by Rev J Bruintjes on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (refer Appendix 1h), after which Rev A Hagg leads the meeting in prayer for the sister churches in South Africa.

Article 47 - Address of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor

A recorded video address is presented by Br CI Nguru and Br F Missa on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia - Timor (refer Appendix 1i), after which Rev RD Anderson leads the meeting in prayer for the churches in Timor.

Article 48 - Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia

I. Material

Item 11.c – Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia.

Item 8.i.1 – Overture from FRC Melville re Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia.

Item 8.j.3 – Overture from FRC Bunbury re Overall Deputies' Report for Interchurch Relations – Outside Australia.

1. Deputies propose that guidelines be adopted regarding with whom, how and when we have sister-church relations. They indicate that the development of these guidelines will require input from the churches.
2. FRC Bunbury supports this recommendation of deputies and the notion of concentrating on churches that are physically closer.
3. FRC Melville supports this recommendation of deputies and proposes considering the merits of pursuing and maintaining ecclesiastical contact with churches where a sister church relation is not immediately feasible.

II. Admissibility

All of the items are declared admissible.

III. Decision

Synod decides:

1. To maintain the current arrangement of having one deputyship for interchurch relations outside

of Australia as per Art 111 of Synod Bunbury 2018.

2. To thank the deputies for their work, discharge them and mandate the new deputies to:
   a. develop and propose to synod guidelines with whom, how, and when to establish sister church relationships. These guidelines ought to be in line with Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession and Article 46 of the Church Order. This process ought to take into consideration previous synods' decisions and guiding principles;
   b. as part of this, give attention to the question whether it can ever be legitimate or beneficial to have two sister churches in one country including cases when those two churches are unable to find unity;
   c. consider the merits of an alternate form of ecclesiastical contact with churches of Reformed confession with whom a sister church relationship is not immediately feasible;
   d. seek input regarding the manner in which we maintain relationships with other churches from both the churches of the FRCA as well as our sister churches; and
   e. report to the churches, if possible, 15 months before the next synod, to enable adequate time for the churches to interact with deputies about this, and to enable deputies to present a final report with recommended guidelines 6 months before the next synod.

Grounds

1. Deputies included such a proposal in their report, and several churches have indicated their support.
2. Decisions about interchurch relations made by major assemblies in the past have not been consistent.
3. Deputies have requested advice on how to deal with three federations in Indonesia, while FRC Bunbury suggested that the question is relevant for our interaction with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Southern Presbyterian Church. This is also relevant for our interaction with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
4. The development of these guidelines requires the input of the churches, and a 15-month consultation period provides a thorough mechanism for that to happen.

ADOPTED

Article 49 - FRCA Website

I. Material

Item 11.b – Report from Website Committee

II. Decision

1. To thank the committee for their work, discharge them and appoint new deputies.
2. To approve the Website Committee budget of $1,200 for the period 2021-2024.

3. To appoint a website administrator as part of the committee for a three-year term to manage the technical aspects of the running of the FRCA site.
4. To appoint an additional member to the committee for a three-year term to regularly update the news feed and other information as required.
5. To accept and approve the staging site (https://frcastaging.frca.org.au/) and approve that it replace and relocate to the current site (https://www.frca.org.au/).
6. To mandate the committee to:
    a. to maintain and keep current the content on the FRCA website and the associated technical functions;
    b. to set up an email address to be included in the church year book for news and content updates;
    c. to invite the churches to send news items and press releases to the website committee for inclusion on the FRCA website;
    d. to investigate options around improvements to email hosting;
    e. to investigate and implement improved Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) in the interests of promoting the churches in the local and wider community;
    f. to investigate the possibility of social media integration including guidelines for management; and
    g. to serve Synod 2024 with a report of their activities, a financial statement, a

proposed budget, and any recommendations regarding additional content or functionality.

Grounds

1. The churches will be well-served by a regularly updated website.
2. A presence on the internet is valuable for the promotion of our churches in the local and wider community.

ADOPTED

Article 50 - De Gereformeerde Kerken and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' proposals relating to the DGK and the GKN, and the matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 51 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Advisory Committee's proposed amendments to the deputies' proposal regarding Training for the Ministry, and then given back to the advisory committee for refining.

Article 52 - Adjournment

Rev P Archbald reads Revelation 3:14-22 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 138:1 and 2 and synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION
Friday, 18 June 2021

Article 53 - Reopening

Br H van der Linde reads Psalm 33 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 33:1. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 54 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the advisory committee's proposals relating to the Training for the Ministry.

Article 55 - Singing of Children

The John Calvin Primary School student choir attend to sing two songs for the delegates. They are thanked for their beautiful contribution.

Article 56 - Training for the Ministry

A number of further rounds of discussion are held in relation to the advisory committee's proposals relating to the Training for the Ministry and the material is sent back to the advisory committee to assemble a complete final proposal.

Article 57 - Contact with the EPC and SPC

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the deputies' report relating to the Contact with the EPC and SPC,

together with several submissions received. The matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 58 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the proposal of Classis North to send an observer to the next ICRC meeting, together with submissions received from FRC Mount Nasura, FRC Darling Downs and FRC Launceston. The matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 59 - Acts of Synod

Articles 39-52 of the Acts are discussed and returned for editing.

Article 60 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Friday, 18 June 2021

Article 61 - Reformed Churches of New Zealand

I. Materials

Item 11.c.9 – Deputies' Report

Item 8.b.3 – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura to instruct deputies to (a) impress upon the RCNZ our conviction that a relationship with them will be untenable if their relationship with the CRCA continues; and (b) urge the RCNZ to promote CRTS to their prospective theological students.

Item 8.c.6 – Overture from FRC Darling Downs to instruct deputies to (a) monitor the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA; (b) encourage the RCNZ to be consequential in light of the concerns mentioned to Synod Baldivis 2015.
Item 8.h.4 – Overture from FRC Launceston – FRC Launceston does not support FRC Mount Nasura's overture on the ground that there is no evidence that the RCNZ is negatively affected by their relationship with the CRCA or the Reformed Theological College.

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the RCNZ under the established rules.
2. Thank deputies and reappoint them with the following mandate:
    a. monitor developments within the RCNZ for mutual benefit according to the established 'Rules for Sister Church Relations', and maintain the contact necessary in exercising the relationship according to the rules;
    b. continue to monitor and report on the efforts being undertaken by the Emeritus Fund of the Free Reformed Churches to address the discrepancies between the emeritus funds of our two church federations with a view to removing the obstacles faced in calling each other's ministers;

c. meet with the RCNZ's Interchurch Relations Committee during the inter-synodical period subject to finances;
d. send two delegates to attend the next synod of the RCNZ, subject to invitation and finances;
e. invite up to two delegates from the RCNZ to attend our next synod; and
f. report to the next synod with recommendations.

Grounds

1. As the RCNZ were unable to hold their planned synod in 2020 due to the COVID-19 virus, there was no visit by deputies. However, deputies were able to have some contact via other means and report that the RCNZ give evidence of a love for the gospel, ongoing faithfulness to God's Word, and commitment to the Reformed faith. No evidence has been presented of any deviation or unfaithfulness in this respect.
2. Part of a sister church relationship includes the privilege of calling one another's ministers, and if there are practical difficulties that prohibit this due to different models being used for the support of retired ministers, real efforts should be made to remove these obstacles in the proper way.
3. There is no need to repeat the specific mandates to continue to monitor the RCNZ's relationship of ecumenical fellowship with the CRCA and to

continue to encourage the RCNZ to be diligent in their approach to theological education since:

a. the RCNZ have demonstrated evidence of faithfulness in these areas over the past nine years which is attested by deputies' reports to Synod 2021 and to previous synods; and
b. the rules for sister church relations provide an adequate mechanism for assisting, encouraging and exhorting all sister churches in any areas of concern.

ADOPTED

Article 62 - Farewell

Rev P Archbald expresses his appreciation for the invitation, fellowship and hospitality extended to him during his time in Albany.

Synod expresses thankfulness that he could be present, especially as he was the only foreign delegate present due to the travel restrictions brought about by COVID-19.

Article 63 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Friday, 18 June 2021

Article 64 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 77:1 and 3. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 65 - Address of the United Reformed Churches of North America

Br P Witten reads an address from Br G Swets on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America (refer Appendix 1j), after which he leads the meeting in prayer for these churches.

Article 66 - Address of the First Evangelical Church of Singapore

A recorded video address is presented by Pastor NT Chong on behalf of the First Evangelical Church of Singapore (refer Appendix 1k), after which Rev R Bredenhof leads the meeting in prayer for the sister church in Singapore.

Article 67 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church

I. Materials

Item 11.c.8 – Deputies' Report

Item 8.b.7 – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura re OPC – FRC Mount Nasura observes 'that the deputies would need to do more with their mandate to investigate the OPC to provide synod and the Australian bond of

churches with a thorough understanding of the OPC to enable synod to come to an informed decision on any relationship with the OPC.' FRC Mount Nasura requests that, should Synod 2021 pursue any kind of relationship with the OPC, it first mandate 'new deputies to investigate the OPC against the requirements of Art 29 BC, including identifying, setting out and addressing the differences so synod can have a thorough understanding of the OPC.'

Item 8.c.5 – Overture from FRC Darling Downs re OPC – FRC Darling Downs recommends synod 'not to pursue a sister church relationship with the OPC' and not to provide the deputies with a renewed mandate. They cite lack of manpower, and suggest that 'distance as well as historical background do not make pursuit of a sister church relations an important matter.' FRC Darling Downs also expresses concern that some of the differences in practise regarding Fencing of the Lord's Table and Confessional membership 'would potentially cause unrest' in our churches.

Item 8.f.1 – Overture from FRC Kelmscott re OPC – FRC Kelmscott supports the recommendation of deputies 'not to pursue a sister church relationship with the OPC at this time.' They consider 'it is better to wait with any further proposed progress in the relationship till [the proposed] guidelines have been made clearer.'

Item 8.g.1 – Overture FRC Southern River re OPC – FRC Southern River supports the recommendation of deputies 'not to pursue a sister church relationship with the OPC at this time.' Their support 'is based on the understanding that this is not a final decision on the future sister church relationship with the OPC, but that this decision be made after Synod 2024.' They also

support deputies' recommendation to develop and propose guidelines which are in line with Article 46 of the Church Order and believe we should wait for these guidelines prior to moving forward with a relationship with the OPC.

Item 8.h.3 – Overture from FRC Launceston re OPC – FRC Launceston interacts with some of the comments of the churches (as above) and does not find them persuasive. Further they recognise that the mandate of deputies has not been completed and that further investigations of the OPC are required.

Item 8.i.1 – Overture from FRC Melville – FRC Melville supports investigating another level of ecclesiastical relationship and considers that this may be helpful in regard to the OPC.

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Express thanks to God for the Reformed witness evident in the OPC throughout its history, its constant repudiation of theological liberalism, its commitment to being confessionally Reformed, and its commitment to the authority and truth of the holy Scriptures.
2. Acknowledge the concerns mentioned by the deputies and of some of the churches, particularly in regards to the differences in church polity and practice of the OPC.
3. Acknowledge the desire of some of the churches to pursue further ecumenical relations with the OPC.

4. Take note that synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines for interchurch relations, which will have implications for any future decisions about a relationship with the OPC.
5. Discharge deputies, thank them for their work, and appoint new deputies to maintain ecclesiastical contact with the following mandate to:
    a. maintain contact with the OPC via its Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR);
    b. further investigate the differences in church polity and practice of the OPC;
    c. send one delegate to a General Assembly of the OPC during the next inter synodical period, subject to available finances;
    d. invite the OPC to send a fraternal delegate to our next synod in 2024 DV; and
    e. submit a report six months prior to the next synod.

Grounds

1. The OPC is a confessionally Reformed federation that lives up to its commitment to the Reformed faith and has a history of standing valiantly for the inerrant truth of God's Word.
2. Prior to developing any ecclesiastical relationship, the churches require further information about the OPC, including differences in church polity and practice.
3. Deputies for Interchurch Relations have been mandated to develop and propose guidelines

concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to develop this relationship.

4. The OPC has invited the FRCA to send a fraternal observer to a future General Assembly. The previous mandate to attend a General Assembly of the OPC in the past three years could not be completed due to unforeseen restrictions as a result of a global pandemic. There is still value in sending a delegate, in order to become better acquainted with the OPC, and to have opportunity to personally introduce them to the FRCA.
5. The OPC has already shown evidence of a desire to establish contact with the FRCA by authorising the invitation of an FRCA observer to a future General Assembly, and by the attendance of a member of the CEIR at Synod Bunbury 2018. Inviting an observer to our next synod confirms our desire for contact, and gives the OPC opportunity to become better acquainted with us.

ADOPTED

Article 68 - De Gereformeerde Kerken and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland

I. Materials

Item 11.c.2 – Deputies' Report
Item 11.c.2.i – Supplementary report from Deputies for Interchurch Relations 24 May 2021 – anticipating

proposals at their respective upcoming synods for DGK and GKN to decide in principle to unite.

Item 8.b.6 – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura – to instruct deputies to monitor developments and investigate marks of the true church.

Item 8.d.2 – Overture from FRC Armadale – to instruct deputies to continue contact with a view to developing a sister church relationship.

Item 8.e.1 – Overture from FRC Mundijong – (a) suggesting that deputies encourage DGK and GKN to work towards unity with each other; (b) supporting continued contact with a view to developing a sister church relationship once that unity has been realised; (c) mandating deputies to encourage DGK to remove the potential obstacle of LRCA.

Item 8.f.2 – Overture from FRC Kelmscott – (a) supporting deputies' recommendation to encourage DGK and GKN to work towards unity with each other; (b) supporting continued contact with a view to developing a sister church relationship.

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Express thankfulness to God for positive developments towards unity of the DGK and GKN.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. continue contact with these two federations of churches;

b. encourage them to continue to work towards a united federation;
c. encourage the DGK to sever its sister church relationship with the LRCA;
d. confirm that the DGK/GKN have the marks of the true church;
e. subject to the outcome of this contact, work towards entering a sister church relationship;
f. keep the churches informed of developments;
g. send one or two delegates to their respective synods subject to available finances;
h. invite a delegate(s) from DGK/GKN to our next synod; and
i. submit a report six months prior to the next synod.

Grounds

1. Past synods have noted that both the DGK and GKN profess to be faithful churches in every aspect of Reformed doctrine (Synod Bunbury Article 75) and there is no evidence to the contrary.
2. We recognise that the members of these two church federations have remained faithful by rejecting the unbiblical direction of the RCN.
3. Both the DGK and the GKN have requested sister church relations with us.
4. Although these churches are geographically distant, their historical backgrounds are similar to ours. Deputies for Interchurch Relations have

been mandated to develop and propose guidelines concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to develop this relationship.

5. Our deputies now report that the DGK are reviewing their relationship with the LRCA (Deputies' Report, page 30).

ADOPTED

Article 69 - Reformed Churches in the Netherlands

I. Material

Item 11.c.1 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

That synod with thanks discharges deputies with respect to their mandate concerning the RCN.

Ground

Delegates have faithfully discharged their mandate respecting termination of the sister church relationship with the RCN.

ADOPTED

Article 70 - Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

I. Materials

Item 11.c.3 – Deputies' Report
Item 11.c.3.i – Supplementary Report

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Continue sister relations with the FRCSA according to the established rules.
2. Appoint the Deputies' Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided and report to the next synod.
3. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
    b. send two delegates to the next FRCSA synod when it is convened, subject to available finances;
    c. coordinate responses to any requests for support from Deputies Curators of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa and to involve the local congregations of the FRCA as appropriate; and
    d. keep the members of the FRCA informed regarding the support provided, both directly to consistories as well as to the broader membership via Una Sancta.

Grounds

1. The FRCSA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Visits to South Africa have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
3. Our South African churches, in addition to their own contributions, request ongoing financial

support for theological training. Such support should be coordinated, the churches kept informed and financial accountability maintained.

ADOPTED

Article 71 - Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

I. Material

Item 11.c.4 – Deputies' Report
Item 11.c.4.i – Supplementary Report

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Continue sister-church relations with the KPCK according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
    b. send two delegates to the KPCK General Assembly in 2022, subject to available finances;
    c. continue contact with the KPCK mission undertaken locally in Australia, offering support where feasible and appropriate;
    d. discuss with the KPCK deputies our desire to coordinate with them as they engage in mission activities in Australia; and

e. submit a report six months prior to the next synod.

Grounds

1. The Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea shows faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions.
2. Contact with mission work of the KPCK in our locality is a meaningful way to mutually assist and encourage one another in keeping with the Rules for Exercising Sister Church Relations.
3. It is brotherly for sister-churches to inform us when they are doing mission work in our nation, also so we can support and encourage them prayerfully and perhaps otherwise.

ADOPTED

Article 72 - Adjournment

The chairman farewells Br H Ballast, who will be leaving synod after today.

Rev RD Anderson reads Philippians 2:1-4 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 101:1 and synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION
Monday, 21 June 2021

Article 73 - Reopening

Br B Veenendaal reads Ephesians 2:11-22 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 103:4 & 9. The chairman reopens the meeting with all delegates present.

Article 74 - Alternate

Br W Visser takes the place of Br H Ballast as alternate. The chairman asks Br W Visser to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Br W Visser rises.

He is appointed to Committee 4.

Article 75 - Synod Administrative Assistant

Due to unforeseen circumstances Sr K van Duyn was unable to arrive at Synod. By way of special resolution, Br B de Vos, apparently keen-a (Kina), is appointed to fill in until she returns. She arrives at 10.00am.

Article 76 - Study of Material

Opportunity is given for delegates to study committee proposals.

Article 77- Proposal regarding the format of the Acts of Synod

Several rounds of discussion are held regarding whether or not all proposals and amendments are included in the Acts.

It is agreed that synod will take the approach used in the Acts from 2018, and so will only include all final proposals, whether adopted or defeated.

Article 78 - Appeals of Synod 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78

A number of rounds of discussion are held on the advisory committee's proposals in relation to the appeals against Synod 2018 decisions in Articles 76, 77 and 78.

Article 79 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Monday, 21 June 2021

Article 80 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78

A number of rounds of discussion are held on the advisory committee's proposals in relation to the Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78.

Article 81 - Overture on Additional Hymns

I. Material

Item 8.c.2 – Letter from FRC Darling Downs – FRC Darling Downs requests synod to judge that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in approving additional hymns without interacting with their concerns about increasing the number of hymns.

II. Admissibility

The letter is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Judge that Synod Bunbury 2018 did not err in approving additional hymns without expressly interacting with the overture of FRC Darling Downs.
2. Note the concerns of FRC Darling Downs with reference to increasing the number of hymns, and to affirm the importance of the singing of Psalms in the worship services.

Grounds

1. The overture of FRC Darling Downs to Synod Bunbury 2018 was listed in the Material of Article 60 (Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018). Synod Bunbury 2018 Art 16 decided that, 'under the heading Material, the Acts shall also summarise the material considered'. By recording a summary of the overtures from the churches, synod asserts that any concerns raised, or feedback provided, by the churches was considered in its overall decision-making process.

2. FRC Darling Downs does not substantiate their claim with any new grounds (CO Art 33).

ADOPTED

Article 82 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Monday, 21 June 2021

Article 83 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 92:1. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 84 - Acts of Synod

Articles 39-52 of the Acts are adopted with minor changes.

Articles 53-72 of the Acts are adopted with minor changes.

Article 85 - Appeals of Synod Bunbury 2018 Articles 76, 77 and 78

I. Material

Item 8.b.1 – Appeal from FRC Mount Nasura – FRC Mount Nasura appeals articles 76-78 of Synod Bunbury 2018. FRC Mount Nasura argues that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in declaring inadmissible three individual appeals regarding our sister-church relationship with the RCNZ.

Item 8.c.1 – Appeal from FRC Darling Downs – FRC Darling Downs appeals articles 76-78 of Synod Bunbury 2018. FRC Darling Downs argues that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in declaring inadmissible three individual appeals regarding our sister church relationship with the RCNZ.

Item 8.d.1 – Appeal from FRC Armadale – FRC Armadale appeals articles 76-78 of Synod Bunbury 2018. FRC Armadale argues that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in declaring inadmissible three individual appeals regarding our sister-church relationship with the RCNZ.

Item 10.a.2 – Letter from Classis Central 8 and 14 May 2020. This classis informs Synod Albany 2021 of a decision made to grant the appeal of Br and Sr W Amoraal against a decision of the consistory of FRC Armadale to accept articles 76-78 of Synod Bunbury 2018.

II. Admissibility

All the material is declared admissible.

III. Decision

1. Take note of the letter from Classis Central 8 and 14 May 2020.
2. Deny the appeals of FRC Mount Nasura, FRC Darling Downs, and FRC Armadale.
3. Acknowledge that varying interpretations of our Church Order regarding the individual's right to appeal to synods exist in our churches. Synod thus decides to ask the churches to bring a proposal to change the Church Order to the next synod in the church orderly way if they hold that an individual should have the right to appeal to

synod directly regarding matters of the churches in common.

Grounds

1. A synod is not a permanent legal body, but rather a deliberative assembly which only exists when it is meeting. Therefore, while precedent may have some value, it is not binding upon synods. Synod Bunbury 2018 was thus correct to state that "admissibility must be governed by reference to the Church Order, not historical precedent."
2. Our Church Order does not grant the right of appeal to any and every member of an FRCA congregation with respect to any and every synod decision, nor does it grant a right to request revision of such decisions.
3. Individuals are not members of the FRCA federation, but rather members of local FRCA congregations. An individual's right to appeal (CO Article 31) exists first within that local context.
4. CO Article 31 Church Order not only grants a right of appeal to individuals who have "been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly," it also describes the general process individuals are to follow, which is appealing from minor assembly to major assembly. For an individual the minor assembly is his consistory – this is where the individual must begin the appeal process. Therefore, Synod Bunbury 2018 was correct to judge that "individuals who wish to interact with decisions of synod should begin by addressing their consistories. The local consistory, if they concur with the concerns, may direct an appeal

to synod. If the local consistory does not take over the individual's appeal, he can appeal the local consistory's decision to classis and thus begin the appeal process in accordance with Article 31 of the Church Order."

5. Contrary to FRC Mount Nasura's statement, minor assemblies do at times deal with interchurch relationships, particularly as these matters proceed to discussion at synod via the church orderly way.
6. Contrary to FRC Armadale's assertion, the procedure stated by Synod Bunbury 2018 does not unjustifiably complicate or deny efforts of individuals to interact gainfully with synod decisions. Rather it serves both individuals and the churches by allowing such interactions to be scrutinised by consistories and classes before being submitted to a synod. This procedure can serve to highlight poorly formulated submissions so they can be rectified.
7. Historically, there have been varying interpretations regarding Article 31, with Church Order commentators differing on whether an individual member has the right to appeal directly to a synod. While the position that was adopted by Synod Bunbury 2018 is not the only approach to the question, its decision was helpful in providing some clarity to the churches about the process of appealing. However, more clarity may be beneficial and that can only be provided by a well-considered proposal to change the Church Order.

ADOPTED

Article 86 - Adjournment

Rev W Bredenhof reads 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 81:1, 2 and 7 and synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION
Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Article 87 - Alternate

Br I 't Hart as alternate takes the place of Rev A Hagg. The chairman asks Br I 't Hart to rise to indicate his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Br I 't Hart rises.

Article 88 - Reopening

Br P Witten reads Matthew 12:22-30 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 74:12 and 13. The chairman reopens the meeting with all delegates present.

Article 89 - Appeals concerning Hymns of Australian Book of Praise

I. Material

Item 8.b.4 –Appeal from FRC Mount Nasura – FRC Mount Nasura requests synod to judge that Synod Bunbury 2018 erred in approving 8 of the 19 new hymns in the Book of Praise, namely Hymns 9, 10, 30, 33, 57, 75, 79 and 81.

Item 8.h.1 – Overture from Launceston – FRC Launceston interacts with the content of FRC Mount Nasura's appeal and argues in favour of the hymns.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Synod decides to:

1. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections regarding Hymns 33, 57 and 79 are inadmissible.
2. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objection about the unbiblical character of the phrase 'world without end' in Hymn 9 is not valid.
3. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objection about the unnecessary duplication of Hymn 10 and Psalm 72 is not valid.
4. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the ambiguous language of Hymn 30 are not valid.
5. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the lyrics and tune of Hymn 75 are unsubstantiated.
6. judge that FRC Mount Nasura's objections about the lyrics of Hymn 81 are not proven.
7. remind the churches to forward any concerns about the psalms and hymns of the *Book of Praise* to the Standing Committee for their evaluation.

Grounds

1. While it may have been helpful to the churches for synod to consider each hymn individually, this was not the approach of Synod 2018. However,

FRC Mount Nasura's overture to Synod 2018 was listed in the Material of Article 60 (Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018). Synod Bunbury 2018 Art 16 decided that 'under the heading Material, the Acts shall also summarise the material considered'. By recording a summary of the overtures from the churches, synod asserts that any concerns raised, or feedback provided, by the churches was considered in its overall decision-making process. Thus, comparing the FRC Mount Nasura overture to Synod Bunbury 2018, with the appeal presented to Synod 2021, it is clear that many of their concerns about the new hymns were previously considered. In relation to Hymns 33, 57 and 79, FRC Mount Nasura does not substantiate their claims with any significant new grounds.

2. The language 'world without end' in Hymn 9 comes from Scripture in the King James Version of Isaiah 45:17 and Ephesians 3:21. The phrase does not suggest that the world in its present form will endure forever, but it is a poetic expansion of the hymn's previous phrase 'and ever shall be.' The same phrase is sometimes translated as 'forever and ever.'
3. Basing a hymn on a small portion of a Psalm, as Hymn 10 does with Psalm 72, can do justice to the content of the inspired text; for example, see Hymn 46, which is based on Psalm 72:8-19, and Hymn 54, which is based on Psalm 90:1-6.
4. FRC Mount Nasura considers some of the language of Hymn 30 ambiguous, such as 'Christ Jesus lay in death's strong bands,' and 'it was a

strange and dreadful strife.' However, these lines—when considered in the context of the entire hymn—celebrate the meaning of Christ's victory over the power of death (1 Cor 15:54-57). When He died, Christ commended His spirit to the Father, but His body was laid in the grave; thus, it is legitimate for verse 1 to speak of Christ 'laying in death's strong bands.' When verse 2 says it was a 'strange and dreadful strife,' this is a reference to the 'mystery' of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:51).

5. FRC Mount Nasura asserts but does not prove that the language of Hymn 75 fails to be soundly biblical. Likewise, FRC Mount Nasura expresses a subjective opinion about this tune's lack of dignity and majesty.

6. Although FRC Mount Nasura questions various phrases in Hymn 81, it is incumbent on them to prove that these phrases are unbiblical. Furthermore, it is legitimate for verse 2 to say, 'assist me to proclaim through all the earth abroad the honours of your name,' because this is the task attributed to the church and to all believers in Acts 8:4, Colossians 4:5-6, and 1 Peter 2:9. The statement in verse 3 regarding the name of Jesus bringing 'health' can be understood in a figurative way, in line with Psalm 103:3 and Exodus 15:26. When verse 6 alludes to the miraculous healing of those who are physically handicapped, this is poetic language referring to how Christ breaks the power of sin (see Hymn 81:4). The reference to 'the church in heaven' in verse 7 can be understood with reference to

Hebrews 12:22-23 which speaks of 'the heavenly Jerusalem … the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,' and Revelation 6:9-10, where John sees under the altar the souls of those who had been slain.

7. The Standing Committee has been mandated to receive feedback from the churches regarding the contents of the *Australian Book of Praise*.

ADOPTED

Article 90 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the proposal from Classis North and the appeal from FRC Mount Nasura regarding the International Conference of Reformed Churches. The matter is referred back to an advisory committee.

Article 91 - Training for the Ministry

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Advisory Committee's amended proposal regarding the Training for the Ministry. The matter is referred back to an advisory committee.

Article 92 - Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' proposals regarding the Australian Book of Praise.

AFTERNOON SESSION
Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Article 93 - Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Deputies' proposals regarding the Australian Book of Praise. The matter is referred to an advisory committee.

Article 94 - First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

I. Material

Item 11.c.5 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Continue the sister church relationship with the FERC of Singapore according to the established rules.
2. Continue to accept the agreement made which addresses the unique way that a sister church relationship with a single church can function:
   a. it is not always feasible, nor is it always necessary, to attend each other's meetings;
   b. when the FERC is deliberating important matters such as (1) external relationships with other churches, (2) doctrinal and (3) liturgical issues, the FERC will inform the FRCA;
   c. the FERC will send a copy of its annual reports;

d. the FERC will update the FRCA on any important issues every 6 months if needed; and
e. the FERC will invite delegates when there is a special event in the Church.

3. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. visit the FERC of Singapore two times in the next inter-synodical period to continue to strengthen our relationship, subject to finances;
   b. give timely reports concerning the FERC of Singapore to members of the FRCA;
   c. promote increased familiarisation of the memberships of the FRCA and the FERC by way of exchange speakers where the opportunity arises, and good communication concerning events that might be of interest for one another's members to attend and participate in;
   d. offer assistance to the FERC of Singapore where requested and feasible; and
   e. invite delegates of the FERC of Singapore to our next synod.

Grounds

1. The FERC of Singapore gives evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God.
2. The existing rules for exercising sister relations do not prohibit a sister church relationship with a single church, but there are elements in the

exercise of this relationship that need to reflect its unique aspects.

3. The FERC of Singapore is a single congregation, has an official bond with only one other church, and may be able to benefit from assistance from time to time, and from the resources the Lord has given us.
4. Visits to Singapore and their visits to us have proven beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

ADOPTED

Article 95 - Canadian Reformed Churches

I. Material

Item 11.c.6 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules.
2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
   a. monitor developments within the CanRC for mutual benefit according to the established rules and keep the churches informed;
   b. monitor and report to synod on developments within the CanRC in relation to areas of discussion about church polity and liturgy as mentioned in the deputies' report;

c. stay informed on the developments concerning the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA; and
d. send two delegates to the next CanRC General Synod scheduled for May 2022 in Guelph-Emmanuel CanRC (Ontario), subject to finances.

Grounds

1. The Canadian Reformed Churches give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.
2. Deputies have identified areas of ongoing discussion within the CanRC that relate to church polity and liturgy, and rule #2 for sister church relations requires mutual care for each other in these areas.
3. We need to foster mutual understanding and support regarding matters that our respective federations face, including their sister church relations in North America.
4. We value our bond with the Canadian Reformed Churches and the personal contact at the synodical level, which reinforces our contact with them.

ADOPTED

Article 96 - United Reformed Churches of North America

I. Materials

Item 11.c.7 – Deputies' Report
Item 10.a.3 – Overture from Classis Central re Sister Churches URCNA.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Acknowledge the report submitted by the Deputies and thank them for their work.
2. Continue to liaise with the URCNA with a view to determining whether to establish a sister church relationship.
3. Take note that synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines which may have implications for any future decisions about a relationship with the URCNA.
4. Refer grounds submitted by Classis Central to Deputies for Interchurch Relations for consideration when developing these guidelines.
5. Discharge the deputies and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. stay informed and monitor the discussions between the CanRC and the URCNA;
    b. continue discussions with the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) of the URCNA;
    c. if invited, send one delegate to URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) Ontario in 2022, subject to finances;

d. submit a report six months prior to the next synod; and
e. extend an invitation to the URCNA to send an observer to the next synod.

Grounds

1. Due to circumstances beyond the control of deputies, the mandate issued by Synod Bunbury 2018 could not be completed.
2. Discussion between the CanRC and URCNA will resume in 2022, following a six-year moratorium issued by Synod Wyoming 2016.
3. Deputies for Interchurch Relations have been mandated to develop and propose guidelines concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to progress our relationship with the URCNA.
4. Deputies were unable to attend the URCNA Synod Wellandport (Redeemer) 2020.
5. The grounds cited by Synod Bunbury 2018 (Acts, Art 63, Grounds 1, 2 and 3) remain valid.

ADOPTED

Article 97 - The Reformed Churches in Indonesia

I. Material

Item 11.c.10 – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Continue sister relations with the GGRI according to the established rules.

2. Thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. maintain the sister church relations according to the adopted rules;
    b. send two delegates to the next GGRI regional and national synods subject to available finances;
    c. continue to offer assistance in improving the Reformed character of the GGRI and addressing existing concerns by the current means of theological training support and seminars, subject to available resources;
    d. encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-Timor;
    e. continue contact with the GGRC, to visit their synods subject to available finances, and to help them wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches;
    f. continue contact with the GGRI-Timor; and
    g. as yet report to the churches with a clearer picture of the GGRI-Kalimantan Barat and GGRI-Papua, focusing on and confirming their Reformed character.

Grounds

1. The GGRI churches give evidence of continual striving for faithfulness to the Word of God, maintaining the Reformed Confessions and Church Order.

2. Our rules for sister church relations indicate that the churches need to mutually care for each other so that they do not depart from the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy. Troubling aspects of the church polity and liturgy in the GGRI have been identified and discussed with the leaders in the GGRI. The deputies indicate that there is a desire to address these concerns and it is important that we continue to encourage them in these matters and offer them help wherever possible.
3. The seminars as organised over the past few years in cooperation with the deputies of the GGRI have been well received and are a valuable means which deputies can offer to assist the GGRI in improving the Reformed character of these churches.
4. Our visits to Indonesia and their visits to us have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.
5. The Indonesian churches request ongoing financial support for their theological seminary as they continue on a road to self-sustainability. Until such time that this support is no longer required, such support should be coordinated, the churches kept informed, and financial accountability maintained.
6. Because of ongoing contacts between the GGRI, the GGRC and GGRI-Timor, it serves the best interests of our ecclesiastical relations with the GGRI also to maintain contacts with these two other church groups in Indonesia.

7. Some information has been received about the GGRI-Kalimantan Barat and GGRI-Papua but this is not sufficient to come with a good report and create a clearer picture.

ADOPTED

Article 98 - Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia – Theological Training

I. Material

Item 11.c.10.iv – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Mandate deputies to:
   a. continue to support theological training for the GGRI and make funds available for this cause, following the Guidelines for Deputies found in Article 86 of the Acts of Synod 2003. In addition, submit a budget, proposed assessment, financial reports, and annual auditor's reports to the local churches and Synod 2024;
   b. provide funds for the renovation of the buildings in Waimarang as needed and redirect the remainder of the funds collected for a new campus to the running of the seminary;
   c. find capable members and appoint them in a committee which functions under the responsibility of the deputies, to manage the support for the seminary of the GGRI in Waimarang;

d. encourage the deputies for the training for the ministry at STT-GGRI (Sumba) to continue to seek the assistance of an external advisor in the person of Rev A Van Delden; and

e. financially support the ministers already invited to come to Australia to study English and familiarise themselves with the FRCA for three months, and thereafter no longer to invite brothers to come to Australia for this purpose.

Grounds

1. The financial support for this theological training ought to be managed with detailed attention to reporting and accountability, as well as due consideration for best practices related to avoiding long-term dependency.
2. Since the regional synod in NTT decided to move the seminary back to the existing buildings in Waimarang, there is no longer a need to keep the funds collected for a new campus and these funds can be redirected to the renovation of the existing buildings in Waimarang, and what is left, can be used to decrease the financial support requested from the churches.
3. No churches have indicated that they are able to take over the responsibility for the support of the seminary. Mandating deputies to appoint a special committee for this task allows them to find qualified members for this committee and to exercise proper oversight, while deputies can

focus on their main task to maintain the sister church relationships.

4. The usefulness of inviting students or ministers to come to Australia is limited. Commitments made should be kept, but thereafter there is no clear need to continue to invite others.
5. The GGRI have appointed Rev Van Delden as an external advisor and can be encouraged to make good use of him. This has also proven to be beneficial for the deputies to maintain good contact with the seminary in Sumba.

ADOPTED

Article 99 - Committee work

Synod breaks for committee work.

EVENING SESSION
Tuesday, 22 June 2021

Article 100 - Reopening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 84:1. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 101 - Training for the Ministry

I. Admissibility

All the materials for each Part below are deemed admissible.

Part 1: Australian Reformed Theological Training

II. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' Report (pp 127-138)

Item 8.i.2 – Overture from FRC Melville – support shown for continuing a feasibility study to work towards a CRTS Australian affiliate but cautioning against implementing a levy on the churches at this time. A request that the deputies complete their mandate with regards to Synod Bunbury Art 80 "to continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by Synod Bunbury 2018 as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time, as outlined in ground 1".

Item 8.f.3 – Overture from FRC Kelmscott – recommend that the feasibility study into an Australian affiliate of the CRTS be discontinued for a period of three years to allow the board and senate of the CRTS to focus on other matters. Disagreement with the introduction of a levy with regards to motivation and stewardship.

Item 8.j.4 – Overture FRC Bunbury – pointing out concerns that the deputies' mandate from Synod Bunbury 2018 (Art 80) has not been completed, thus making evaluation of the Deputies' proposal (Deputies' Reports, p. 155) difficult. Requesting that any new mandate for Deputies Training for the Ministry include those mandates from Synod Bunbury 2018 that were not completed:

b) solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community;

c) continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by the churches as reasons for not

establishing our own theological seminary at this time as outlined in ground 1; and

e) consult with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of an Australian theological seminary as described above.

III. Decision

Synod decides to thank the deputies for their work, discharge them, and to appoint new deputies with a mandate to:

1. continue discussion with CRTS to explore the feasibility of a CRTS Australian affiliate and, assuming a positive outcome, to develop a plan and report to the next synod with recommendations towards implementation. Discussions will need to include (but are not limited to) working towards agreements regarding:
   - a responsible timeline;
   - governance;
   - financing and infrastructure;
   - faculty; and
   - ATS Accreditation requirements;
2. engage a consultant to advise on the development of a CRTS Australian affiliate within the TEQSA regulatory framework;
3. introduce an additional levy to the regular assessments towards the implementation of a CRTS Australian affiliate in the medium term:
   - $3.00 pcm for 2022, $6.00 pcm for 2023, $9.00 pcm for 2024;

4. present a report to the churches, if possible, 12 months before the next synod to enable adequate time for a written evaluation from the churches to be collated by the deputies and presented to synod;
5. communicate with our sister churches, and other churches in Australia and the Asia Pacific region with whom local FRCs have contact, regarding the potential benefits of a CRTS Australian affiliate;
6. solicit the churches' input regarding an Australian theological seminary that could serve the wider Reformed community (eg. office bearer training);
7. continue to monitor the factors that have been identified by the churches as reasons for not establishing our own theological seminary at this time, as outlined in Acts of Synod Bunbury Art 80 Ground 1; and
8. continue to oversee the Library and the Library Fund.

Grounds

1. The COVID-19 pandemic, the obstacles in international travel, and increasing secularisation and anti-Christian sentiment in Australia show that the need to develop possibilities for local training of ministers has become urgent.
2. A CRTS Australian affiliate appears at the moment to be the only viable option for the FRCA to offer accredited Reformed seminary training in Australia. Further discussion with the CRTS Board of Governors, as well as further investigation into the TEQSA regulatory framework is required.

3. The desire to have Australian based theological training in the future also requires a commitment from the churches to start accumulating funds for the implementation of this project.
4. The churches need to be engaged in this process.
5. Although FRC Kelmscott's assessment of the situation at CRTS is noted, in developing a model deputies will be dealing with the Board of Governors, not the faculty.
6. A library is an integral component of a theological seminary. Should the churches approve any plans for the establishment of a theological seminary, the current collection and the funds that have been saved would provide a substantial contribution towards the establishment of a library.
7. With the benefit of extensive input from the churches, Synod Bunbury 2018 identified the matters mandated in 5, 6, and 7 as important factors to consider before making any decision about an Australian seminary. These aspects of the mandate given by Synod Bunbury 2018 have not yet been completed or reported on.

Part 2: Contact with the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary

IV. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (pp 139-143)

V. Decision

Synod decides to mandate new deputies to:

1. continue to assess and collect monies from the churches at a rate of $90 per communicant member;
2. continue to oversee the Hamilton Theological fund;
3. continue to arrange a guest lecturer from CRTS every three years, subject to finances;
4. continue to arrange a deputy to attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governors meeting in the next inter-synodical period, subject to finances;
5. continue to arrange the financial matters associated with hosting a conference every inter-synodical period;
6. approve the proposed refund regarding loss of income of $1,180 to the deputies;
7. approve the proposed budget for the 2021-2024 period, namely $14,000 consisting of:
    a. $7,500 for a guest lecturer from the CRTS;
    b. $4,000 for a deputy to represent FRCA and attend the CRTS convocation and Board of Governor's meeting in the next inter-synodical period; and
    c. $2,500 for the promotion of the ministry of the gospel amongst young men through means of a conference held during the next inter-synodical period;
8. maintain contact with CRTS and to express appreciation for the work undertaken by the CRTS across all fronts;
9. continue to be as closely involved as is practically possible in the work of the Board of Governors of CRTS;

10. convey congratulatory messages and words of support and encouragement on special occasions such as the annual convocation;
11. monitor the effectiveness of the Pastoral Training Program (PTP) of CRTS within the Australian churches by seeking feedback from the ministers and students participating in this program;
12. collect and disburse funds for the PTP in accordance with the Australian adaptation of the Guidelines for the PTP; and reimburse students taking the PTP in Australia, at an increased level to match Canadian churches' level of support;
13. continue participation in the CRTS ad hoc Distance Education Committee; and
14. promote the CRTS within the FRCA.

Grounds

1. The proposed annual contribution of $90 per communicant member matches the Acts of Synod Bunbury 2018, Art 90 contribution currently paid by the Canadian churches, which are the criteria that deputies were mandated to use to determine this figure (Acts of Synod Baldivis, Art 93, VIII.12.1.a).
2. It is beneficial for the Australian churches to keep close contact with the seminary where our students study.

Part 3: Contact with other Churches

VI. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (p 143)

VII. Decision

Synod instruct new deputies to, wherever reasonably possible and meaningful, establish and maintain contact with sister churches in relation to theological training.

Grounds

It is good for the FRCA to keep up-to-date with activities regarding theological training among all our sister churches and in particular with CRTS.

Part 4: Needy Student Fund

VIII. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' reports (pp 143-145), Appendix (pp 172-184)

Item 11.e – Further Deputies' Material (pp 1-2)

Item 8.i.2 – Overture FRC Melville requesting that financial aid not be characterised as `loan' and that repayment not be required; and to be more circumspect with respect to the level of detail included in financial reports.

IX. Decision

1. Task new deputies to continue to levy the churches and oversee the Needy Student Fund for the support of theological students.
2. Approve the following regulations and forms relating to the financial aid for theological students.

Refer to Appendix 2 for the adopted regulations and forms.

Grounds

The proposed Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students:

1. are more up-to-date and in line with current expectations;
2. read as a coherent document;
3. provide clarity surrounding students who become ministers in a sister church of the Canadian Reformed Churches;
4. provide clarity for the expectations of families of theological students;
5. provide assurances for students that repayments of financial aid are not required when students, in good faith, pursue theological training; and
6. provide a transparent process for preparing and applying for financial aid.

Part 5: Promoting ministerial study and supporting prospective and current students

X. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (pp 146-147)

XI. Decision

Synod charge new deputies to:

1. promote the study for ministry among young men in whatever way possible; and
2. meet periodically with prospective and current theological students to provide encouragement and support and to have good oversight over their education.

Grounds

1. We have agreed in CO Art 18, "The churches shall strive to ensure that there are students of theology."
2. It is essential to actively foster and promote the work of ministry among young men so that the churches and mission fields can continue to be well supplied with ministers of the gospel.

Part 6: FRCA Vicariate Model

XII. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' report (pp 147-149)
Item 8.i.2 – Overture from FRC Melville – expressing reservations on developing a vicariate model based on that of the RCNZ.

XIII. Decision

Synod decides to mandate new deputies to develop guidelines for a voluntary vicariate program (including financial arrangements) to be presented to Synod 2024 for implementation beginning in 2025.

Ground

1. A vicariate system would be both advantageous and feasible for the FRCA and its seminary students. Advantages would include:
    a. giving students further opportunities for training and growth;
    b. providing the churches further opportunities to develop and evaluate men regarding their suitability for the ministry; and

c. bringing FRCA seminary graduates back to the FRCA, where there is more likelihood that they would serve our churches.

Part 7: Number of deputies

XIV. Material

Item 11.e – Deputies' Report (p 158)

XV. Decision

Synod appoints one additional deputy to the Deputies Training for the Ministry.

Grounds

An extra deputy is needed for assisting and supporting the treasury work associated with their mandate.

ADOPTED

Article 102 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church and Southern Presbyterian Church

I. Material

Item 11.f – Deputies' Report

Item 8.c.4 – Overture FRC Darling Downs proposing that synod (a) withhold the declaration that both the EPC and the SPC are true churches; (b) withhold the declaration that Synod Launceston 1985 Art 67 has no bearing on the matter. Further, that synod reappoint deputies with a mandate to (i) complete their investigation of the EPC and the SPC as given by Synod Bunbury 2018 as well as several other areas of concern, and to report back respecting the feasibility of further

ecumenical contact; and (ii) encourage reconciliation between the EPC and the SPC.

Item 8.j.2 – Overture FRC Bunbury proposing (a) that synod withhold the declaration that "both the EPC and the SPC give evidence of being true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ" until it is sufficiently substantiated, and areas such as doctrinal commitment of communicant members, and the EPC's position on the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology are investigated; and (b) the need for consistency in interchurch relations which implies that the FRCA first need to make a clear decision about with whom, how, and when to establish sister church relations, especially in cases such as churches in close proximity.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Acknowledge the report submitted by deputies, thank them for their work, and discharge them.
2. Appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. continue discussions with the EPC regarding the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. Discussions should specifically focus on:
        i. the doctrinal points of the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology;
        ii. the doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the EPC;

iii. the level of unity desired and how that unity ought to be expressed in our ecumenical contact;

b. continue discussions with the SPC regarding the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. Discussion should specifically focus on:
   i. the doctrinal commitment of communicant members of the SPC;
   ii. the level of unity desired and how that unity ought to be expressed in our ecumenical contact; and

c. submit a report six months prior to the next synod.

3. Take note that synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines for interchurch relations, which will have implications for any future decisions about a relationship with the EPC and SPC, including the relevance of Synod Launceston 1985 Art 67.

Grounds

1. While synod gratefully takes note of the judgement expressed by the committee that "both the EPC and SPC give evidence of being true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ," several churches suggest that more discussion is required to substantiate this judgement.
2. Deputies report that in order for ecumenical relationship with the EPC to advance, discussion is needed with the EPC about the well-meant offer of the gospel and conditionality in covenant theology to determine whether and to what

degree diversity on these points can be accommodated in an ecumenical relationship between the EPC and the FRCA.

3. Deputies report that further discussion is needed with both the EPC and SPC about the question of confessional membership, to determine what sorts of disagreements with the confessional standards would be tolerated for communicant members.
4. Deputies for Interchurch Relations have been mandated to develop and propose guidelines concerning interchurch relations, and these guidelines could provide further direction for how to develop these relationships.
5. Because of the close proximity of the churches in Tasmania, a desire for closer ecumenical contact should be expressed by all churches involved.

ADOPTED

Article 103 - Adjournment

The chairman advises synod that Rev W Bredenhof will depart after tonight as he is required back in Tasmania by Friday. It is agreed that for the short remaining duration of synod, an alternate is not required.

Rev R Eikelboom reads Psalm 4 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 4:2 and 3 and synod is adjourned.

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, 23 June 2021

Article 104 - Reopening

The chairman reads Psalm 121 and leads in prayer. He invites all present to stand and sing Psalm 121:1 and 4. The chairman reopens the meeting.

Article 105 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the ICRC including which delegates may vote on the appeal of FRC Mount Nasura.

I. Decision

Delegates who are members of FRC Mount Nasura may not vote on the appeal from FRC Mount Nasura against the decision of Classis North November 2020.

Ground

CO Article 32 provides that delegates shall have a vote in all matters except those in which their churches are directly involved.

ADOPTED

The matter is referred back to the advisory committee for refining.

Article 106 - Australian Book of Praise

A number of rounds of discussion are held in relation to the Australian Book of Praise. The matter is then referred back to the advisory committee for refining.

Article 107 - Acts of Synod

Articles 26-38 of the Acts are discussed and returned for editing.

Articles 39-52 of the Acts are adopted in their amended form.

Articles 73-86 of the Acts are adopted.

Article 108 - Instructions from Churches

Synod notes that there are no instructions from the Churches.

Article 109 - Deputies Article 48 Church Order

I. Material

Item 11.g – Report of Deputies Art 48 CO (pp 220-221)

II. Decision

1. Receive the report and discharge deputies from their task.
2. Note with gratitude the assistance given to classis South West (30 October 2020) in relation to the examination of Candidate K Dekker.
3. Appoint new deputies to assist the classes according to Art 48 CO, with one deputy and one alternate from each classical region, according to

the manner decided by Synod Armadale 2012, Decision 3 (Art 110, p 80-81).

ADOPTED

Article 110 - Days of Prayer – Article 66 CO

I. Material

Item 13(p) – Report of Deputies CO 66 (p 222) – FRC Launceston called a day of prayer for 29 March 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic, which has impacted the way of life in Australia and throughout the world. The deputies note that there was no feedback from the churches.

II. Decision

1. Accept the Deputies' report.
2. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
3. Re-appoint FRC Launceston as Deputies CO 66 for the next three-year period.

ADOPTED

Article 111 - Indexing Synod Decisions

I. Material

Item 11.i – Deputies' Report

II. Decision

1. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. Appoint deputies with the mandate to:

a. collate the decisions of Synod Albany 2021 as they relate to articles of the Church Order and:
   i. publish these decisions on the official web page of the FRCA;
   ii. place one bound paper copy in the archives after the decisions of Synod Albany 2021 have been indexed;
b. ensure that all the published Acts of the FRCA synods continue to be available on the FRCA website (without password protection, in searchable pdf format);
c. ensure a copy of the Church Order is available on the FRCA website; and
d. continue to update and publish the ecclesiastical documents currently on the FRCA website (eg. Ecclesiastical Ordinances, Rules for Synods, Guidelines for Church Visits, Rules for Exercising Sister Church Relations).

Grounds

1. The churches are well served by the ongoing collation of synod decisions as they relate to the various articles of the Church Order.
2. The Acts of Synod are of widespread interest both within our churches as well as our sister churches.
3. All information presented in the published Acts of Synod are generated in open session.

ADOPTED

AFTERNOON SESSION
Wednesday, 23 June 2021

Article 112 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

I. Material

Item 8.b.2 – Appeal from FRC Mount Nasura – appeal against the decision of Classis North, requesting synod not to mandate the Deputies for Interchurch Relations to accept invitations to the ICRC. FRC Mount Nasura argues that the classis proposal fails to engage with the reasons why the FRCA withdrew their membership from the ICRC. FRC Mount Nasura contends that membership within the ICRC promotes denominationalism and pluriformity by promoting cooperation before becoming sister churches. FRC Mount Nasura expresses concern that the sending of observers will lead to the FRCA becoming members of the ICRC.

Item 8.h.2 – Letter from FRC Launceston interacting with the appeal from FRC Mount Nasura, giving their support to send observers to the ICRC.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Deny the appeal of FRC Mount Nasura.

Grounds

1. FRC Mount Nasura does not prove that accepting invitations as observers to the ICRC is against the Word of God and/or the Church Order.
2. The concerns expressed by FRC Mount Nasura about past decisions in the FRCA regarding the ICRC are relevant and worthy of consideration should an overture for membership in the ICRC be proposed by the churches.

ADOPTED

The delegates from FRC Mount Nasura abstained from voting.

Article 113 - International Conference of Reformed Churches

I. Material

Item 10.b.2 – Proposal from Classis North – Classis North proposes that Deputies for Interchurch Relations be mandated to accept invitations to send observers to ICRC conferences.

Item 8.b.2 – Appeal from FRC Mount Nasura – appeal against the decision of Classis North, requesting synod not to mandate the Deputies for Interchurch Relations to accept invitations to the ICRC. FRC Mount Nasura argues that the classis proposal fails to engage with the reasons why the FRCA withdrew their membership from the ICRC. FRC Mount Nasura contends that membership within the ICRC promotes denominationalism and pluriformity by promoting cooperation before becoming sister churches. FRC Mount Nasura expresses concern that the sending of

observers will lead to the FRCA becoming members of the ICRC. Synod Albany 2021 has denied this appeal.

Item 8.c.7 – Overture from FRC Darling Downs – FRC Darling Downs requests synod not to send observers to the ICRC, in view of past concerns among the FRCA congregations, shortage of manpower to fulfil the mandate, and lack of unity with all churches at the conference (e.g CRCA, PCEA).

Item 8.h.2 – Overture from FRC Launceston – FRC Launceston interacts with the appeal from FRC Mount Nasura, voicing their support to send observers to the ICRC.

Item 8.i.1 – Overture from FRC Melville – FRC Melville supports re-engaging with the ICRC. However, they also see merit in reflecting on what has been said by our synods in the past, and where appropriate, to engage with matters that were left unresolved. They also suggest that input from the churches would be valuable.

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

Not to accede to the proposal of Classis North.

Grounds

1. Prior to re-engaging with the ICRC, there is merit in reflecting on what has been said by our synods in the past and, where appropriate, to address matters that were left unresolved.
2. Even though the proposal from Classis North is limited to involvement in the ICRC as observers rather than as members, one of the grounds

provided by Classis North mentions the possibility of reconsidering membership. This is the aspect that some of the churches have expressed concerns about.

3. Further input from the churches would be valuable, prior to making a decision to re-engage with the ICRC.
4. Synod has mandated Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop guidelines which may have implications for FRCA engagement with the ICRC. The consultation process around guidelines will give churches a further opportunity to provide input.

ADOPTED

Article 114 - Australian Book of Praise

I. Material

Item 11.d – Deputies' Report (pp 121-126)

Item 11.d.1 – Supplementary Report – Outlines financial details regarding the Australian Book of Praise, as well as various suggested changes to the Book of Praise of which they are keeping track.

Item 8.b.5 – Overture from FRC Mount Nasura – re Financing Australian Book of Praise. They request Premier Printing to act as the publisher of the Book of Praise, and request Pro Ecclesia to become the Australian distributors.

Item 8.j.1 – Overture from FRC Bunbury – re Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise. They express concern that the Standing Committee may have omitted changes made by Synod Albany 1987 Art 100.

II. Admissibility

All the materials are deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Take note that the reinsertion of the words "only-begotten Son" in various places in the Book of Praise as identified by the church of Bunbury and mandated by Synod Bunbury 2018 has already been implemented in the 2014 printing of the Book of Praise.
2. Appoint an additional member with skills in bookkeeping and administration to the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise to take responsibility for stock.
3. Thank the deputies for all the work they have done leading up to the printing of the first edition of the *Australian Book of Praise*, a significant moment in the history of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and to discharge deputies.
4. Appoint new deputies as members of the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise with the following mandate to:
    a. express the gratitude of the FRCA to the brothers W Helder, G van Popta and W Gortemaker for their contribution to the *Australian Book of Praise*;
    b. receive feedback from the churches regarding the contents and appearance of the *Australian Book of Praise*;
    c. record corrections and possible improvements for reprints and revisions;
    d. maintain good contact with the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book

of Praise of the Canadian Reformed Churches;

e. clarify with the copyright-holders under what conditions we might be allowed to make modifications to the *Australian Book of Praise*;

f. monitor quantities available for distribution and authorise new print runs when necessary;

g. maintain contact with Pro Ecclesia Bookshop regarding the distribution and sales of the electronic versions;

h. deal with all financial matters relating to the *Australian Book of Praise* via a separate bank account controlled by Deputies;

i. assess the churches as necessary and arrange for repayment for the loans made by the FRC Darling Downs, FRC Rockingham and any other churches that might wish to be reimbursed; and

j. assess the churches as necessary to arrange financing for future print runs at the appropriate time.

IV. Grounds

1. While not explicitly mentioned by deputies, it is good for the churches to be aware that the aspect of the mandate raised by the FRC Bunbury is complete.
2. The Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise requested an additional member to deal with financial matters relating to the *Australian Book of Praise*.

3. It is appropriate that the Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise oversees copyright, printing, distribution and financing for the *Australian Book of Praise*.
4. The Standing Committee for the Australian Book of Praise is responsible for communicating with FRCA churches, the Standing Committee in Canada and those who contribute.
5. Deputies are responsible for publishing the *Australian Book of Praise* and it promotes decency and good order for the financial aspects of that to be controlled via a separate bank account.

ADOPTED

Article 115 - Archives and Library of Synod

I. Material

Item 11.j – Deputies' Report (pp 225-135)

Item 11.k – Report on Archives and Library of Synod, together with the Synod Archives Review 2020. This comprehensive review recommends revisions to the relevant Rules for Synods as well as recommending that Synod 2021 instructs all past and present deputies to forward all 'missing' relevant materials to the Synod Archivist. It is the responsibility of deputies to determine what materials are deemed relevant for storage in the archives.

Item 11.n – FRC Byford – Inspection of Synod Archives (p 239). The archives were found to be complete and in good order. FRC Byford provides the additional observation:

"May it be noted that there are many public documents that are now many decades old, some even handwritten. If it is the intention to digitise these items in the archives at some point in the future, consideration could be given to entrusting the originals into the care of the FRC Historical Society for preservation."

II. Admissibility

All the material is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. Accept the report on the Archives and Library of Synod and to thank the archivist br L Vermeulen for diligently maintaining the records of synod.
2. Adopt the recommendations from FRC Mount Nasura to change the Rules for Synods in relation to CO Art 49 by adding rule 6, 9 and 10 and amending article 3.2 and article 10 including three minor amendments made by synod, as highlighted in the Deputies' Report, pp 233-235.
3. Request all deputies to forward any available material relevant to the archives, not previously submitted and by 31st December 2021.
4. Pass on the observation received from FRC Byford to the Deputies for consideration.
5. To thank the deputies for completing the inspection of the Archives and Library of Synod and accept their report on the matter, and to discharge deputies.

Refer to Appendix 3 for the amended Rules for Synods.

Grounds

1. The revised rules will ensure that the appropriate material is archived in a safe and orderly manner.
2. Article 10 of the Rules for Synods requests deputies to submit relevant copies of all correspondence, minutes, and records of other work done.

ADOPTED

Article 116 - Deputies for Marriage Act – Nominating Authorities

I. Material

Item 11.l – Deputies' Report re *Marriage Act 1961* (pp 236-237)

II. Decision

1. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
2. Appoint new deputies officially designated as the *Nominating Authorities* to discharge duties under the *Marriage Act 1961*.

ADOPTED

Article 117 - Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry

I. Material

Item 11.m – Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry

II. Decision

1. Accept the report from Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry.

2. Thank the deputies for their work and discharge them.
3. Appoint new Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry.

ADOPTED

Article 118 - Deputies for Venue and Infrastructure

I. Material

Deputies' Report (received at synod)

II. Decision

1. To thank the deputies for the work done and discharge them.
2. To appoint new deputies with the mandate to:
    a. liaise with the next convening church in a timely fashion regarding:
        i. requirements for synod venue;
        ii. developing and maintaining, in consultation with the current convening church, a synod hosting handbook, and reporting on this to the next synod;
        iii. continuing to maintain a synod hosting handbook, and pass on the handbook to the convening church when it is appointed;
        iv. maintaining contact with synod committees in their deliberations and preparations for synod;
        v. being closely involved with the Venue Subcommittee and

answering any logistical queries they may have;

vi. requesting that synod committees re-evaluate and update the handbook if necessary and pass it back to the deputies;

vii. arranging storage and setup of synod table and associated hardware;

b. provide and operate an audio system which includes the ability for delegates and audience to follow the discussion clearly;

c. provide and maintain a computer system for delegates which:

i. is easy to use with email and browsing capabilities;

ii. has central data storage;

iii. has convenient printing capability;

iv. has secure internal email facilities;

v. has data and email backup;

vi. includes a data projector for the audience to follow the discussions and also project the Psalm or Hymn that will be sung if required;

d. be prepared for the eventuality that synod may require the "live streaming" technology;

e. be prepared for the eventuality that synod may use "video call" meetings with overseas delegates not able to attend the next synod;

f. work closely with convening committees and coordinate the audio-visual/computer matters of synod venue preparations;
g. liaise with the convening church prior to synod for an electronic copy – not scanned – of all reports and agenda items so that the agenda can be setup with links to the relevant documents, and to make this available when delegates log on to the "Synod Server";
h. be available and able to assist at all synod sessions;
i. provide full computer and sound support; and
j. submit a report to the next synod 6 months in advance, and a supplementary report during synod.

Grounds

1. Synod must be able to do its work smoothly through the provision of technical equipment that allows:
   a. delegates to clearly understand each other;
   b. the audience, local and remote, to follow the discussion;
   c. flexibility to expand and contract as the number of delegates changes; and
   d. the computer system to service synod with an enhanced method of distributing proposals and the like quickly and efficiently.

2. The role of the Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue has been of great benefit in enhancing the smooth preparation and operation of synod.

ADOPTED

Article 119 - Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury

The Financial Advisory Committee presents its report, which is discussed. The material is referred back to the Financial Advisory Committee.

EVENING SESSION
Wednesday, 23 June 2021

Article 120 - Deputy Appointments

I. Materials

Proposal for Deputy Appointments from Officers of Synod.
Item 14.a – Letter from a Church (Confidential – Delegates only).

II. Admissibility

All the materials are deemed admissible.

III. Decision

In closed session, synod makes the following deputy appointments:

General Secretary
Br J den Boer
Alternate: Br W Amoraal

Website Committee	Year Appointed
Br L Vermeulen	2018 (convenor)
Sr B Mulder	2018
Br Winston ‘t Hart	2021 (Website administrator)
Rev W Bredenhof	2021
Alternate: Sr Justine Berkelaar	

Deputies for Interchurch Relations – outside Australia

Rev S ‘t Hart	2012 (convenor)
Br E DeHaan	2014
Rev H Alkema	2015 (Albany)
Rev A Hagg	2015
Br P Witten	2015 (Albany)
Br C Mulder	2018 (Tasmania)
Rev A Souman	2018
Br H Terpstra	2018
Br B Veenendaal	2018
Br John Bruning (snr)	2021
Rev K Dekker	2021 (Albany)
Br R Groenewold	2021 (Tasmania)
Rev AC Pol	2021
Alternates: Br Sam Groenewold	
Br G Numan	

Standing Committee for the Book of Praise

Rev C Vermeulen	2012 (convenor)
Rev R Eikelboom	2018
Br Rob Eikelboom	2018
Sr G Plug	2018
Br Harm Van Dijk	2021

Training for the Ministry

Rev D Poppe	2015 (convenor)
Br B Huizinga	2015
Rev R Bredenhof	2018
Rev W Bredenhof	2018
Br A Terpstra	2018
Br W Pleiter	2021

Alternate: Br Rob Eikelboom

Contact with the EPC/SPC

Launceston/Legana: Rev W Bredenhof (convenor)

Church Order Art 48

Classis Central

Rev RD Anderson

Alternate: Rev R Eikelboom

Classis Southwest

Rev A Hagg

Alternate: Rev H Alkema

Classis North

Rev A Souman

Alternate: Rev S ‘t Hart

Days of Prayer

FRC Launceston

Indexing of Synod Decisions

Br J Numan

Br W Spyker

Synod Archive
FRC Mount Nasura

Marriage Act Deputies
Br H Faas
Br W Spyker

Synod Venue and Infrastructure
Br E 't Hart
Br Alan Vanderwal
Alternates: Br Adrian Vanderwal
Br Darren Brouwer

Synod Treasurer
Br Robert Dekker
Alternate: Br A Bonker

Audit Deputies for Training for the Ministry
FRC Southern River

Inspection of Archives
FRC Darling Downs

Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury
FRC Byford

ADOPTED

Article 121 - Audit Deputies for Synod Treasury

I. Material
Item 12.a – FRC Darling Downs - Synod Treasury Review Report

Item 13.a – Synod Treasurer – Report Synod Albany 2021
Item 13.b – Synod Treasurer – Budget and Actuals 2018-21
Item 13.c – Synod Treasurer – Draft Budget 2021-24
Advisory Committee report (received at Synod)

II. Decision

1. Accept the Synod Treasurer's Report, including the Budget and Actuals 2018-21 and Draft Budget 2021-24 (refer Appendix 4).
2. Accept the Synod Treasury Review Report.
3. Thank the Synod Treasurer for the work done and discharge him.
4. Appoint a new Synod Treasurer, with a mandate in accordance with Rule 11.2 of the Rules for Synods.
5. Thank Deputies Audit for Synod Treasurer for their work, and appoint new Deputies Audit for Synod Treasurer.
6. Approve the rate of $246 per day as the rate of reimbursement for claims of loss of income by Deputies and Delegates.
7. Approve the rate of 72 cents per kilometre as the rate for reimbursement of vehicle travel costs.
8. Approve the amended draft budget, including the cost sharing arrangements presented by the Financial Advisory Committee with their report.
9. Authorise the Synod Treasurer to collect from the churches the amount of $18 per communicant member for the next inter-synodical period of 2021 to 2024 (being an average of $6 per

communicant member per year), with the liberty to vary this amount if required.

10. To mandate the Deputies Auditor for Synod Treasurer to audit the financial records of the support provided to the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa and report to the next synod for the years 2018 to 2021 and 2021 to 2024. This report will also include an audit of their books from 2018 to 2021 since this audit was not performed.

ADOPTED

Article 122 - Appointment of Convening Church for the next Synod

I. Material

Item 8.a.2 – Proposal from the convening church of FRC Albany recommending FRC Darling Downs as the next convening church for synod.

II. Admissibility

The letter is deemed admissible.

III. Decision

1. That Synod 2024 be convened by FRC Darling Downs.
2. Take note that the convening church is to liaise with the Deputies for Infrastructure and Venue regarding various practical matters.

Grounds

1. FRC Darling Downs has not yet held a synod.

2. Metro churches have not hosted the last two synods.
3. The brothers of FRC Darling Downs have been contacted and agree to this proposal.

ADOPTED

Article 123 - Acts of Synod

Articles 26-38 of the Acts are adopted.

Articles 87-103 of the Acts are adopted.

Articles 104-119 of the Acts are adopted. The First Clerk will organise for the remaining acts to be reviewed.

Article 124 - Re-opening

The chairman invites all present to stand and sing Psalm Hymn 77:1 and 3. For the benefit of the audience, he explains what has been achieved during the sessions today.

Article 125 - Press Release

The press release is adopted with minor amendments (refer Appendix 5).

Article 126 - Censure according to Article 47 Church Order

The chairman states that there is no need for censure in this sitting of synod.

Article 127 - Personal Questions

The delegates are given the opportunity for general questions. No questions are asked.

Article 128 - Closing Address

The chairman delivers his closing address (refer Appendix 1l).

Article 129 - Closing

The vice-chairman compliments the chairman on the way that he steered the synod boat, his patience and his willingness to allow each delegate to have his say.

The chairman reads 2 Peter 3:13-18 and leads in prayer. He then invites all present to stand and sing Hymn 16:1 and 5 and declares Synod Albany 2021 officially closed.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1a: Meditation by Rev H Alkema, Chairman of the convening church of Albany

Dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is quite fitting that we began this evening with praising the Lord, for also in the matter of opening a Synod it is God's holy Name that we want to exalt and glorify. How delightful it is to lift up our voices together and worship the Lord of all the earth and the Lord of our hearts! We are also privileged to be able to open Scripture, which is for us a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. God's Word is indispensable in showing us the way forward. The openings of the past few Synods focused on the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3) as well as godly wisdom (Proverbs 3:5,6) which we confess is found in God's Word. Both of those topics ultimately direct us as God's people to where we should always be focused, namely on the Lord Jesus Christ. In Lord's Day 21 we find these elements connected to Christ's work, for we confess that it is the Son of God who 'out of the whole human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself, *by His Spirit and Word*, in the unity of the true faith, a church chosen to everlasting life." The church must always be centered on the Great Shepherd of the flock. That is why also this evening, at the beginning of another Synod, we may focus our attention on our Saviour.

I think it is worth emphasizing that there must be a continual *intentionality* in our effort to focus on Christ. We have to be alert. Time and time again we can so easily stray in our thoughts, words, and actions. Even at a time like this, on the cusp of another Synod, when we deal with matters concerning the church, we can inadvertently stray from that laser-like

focus. At a Synod, for example, we can speak about *our* federation, *our* churches, *our* sister church relationships, *our* church polity, *our* decisions, and a multitude of other aspects to church life. In this we acknowledge our role and the call we have received to be busy as believers and churches, to take seriously the aspects of church life that need to be addressed and decided upon. It is good that we work diligently through the matters that are placed before us. Yet the church is not *ours*; it belongs to the One who bought it with His precious blood. It belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is His church. We must fix our thoughts on Him.

This focus on Christ is also evident in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, which we read from this evening. At the beginning of our reading, in verse 15, we read about the faith of the believers *in the Lord Jesus*. The saints knew that their hope was found in Christ alone and this is what Paul gave thanks to God in prayer for. Yet, in referring to the Lord Jesus here, Paul does not bring in a new emphasis, for Christ has already been central to all he has written. Consider how he begins this letter: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

There is much to be said about the Lord Jesus, for Scripture repeatedly points to Him and His work. Yet I would like to highlight one element in particular that Paul encourages the believers with, and that is found in verses 22 and 23: *And He put all things under His feet.* This speaks of the *pre-eminence* of Christ. Jesus is the King, and He reigns supreme! He has been given a position unlike any other, and has absolute power and authority. Let that sink in for a moment: Jesus reigns supreme. Let me ask you: how does this impact our

lives? Does the supremacy of Christ mean something to you personally? Does it make a difference in our congregations, and in our federation? That there must be a meaningful connection between the supremacy of Christ and God's people is also found in what follows: *and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

How aware are we that God the Father has put all things under the authority of the Lord Jesus? For Paul, this was something that God had graciously revealed to him, for he had no inkling of this himself. It took the intervention of the Lord Jesus Himself from heaven. Paul, when named Saul, had been given authority from the chief priests to bind all believers who were disciples of the Lord Jesus. He delighted in this task, and breathed murderous threats against the church. Yet Jesus spoke from on high with power and authority, stopping Saul in his tracks. Against the authority of the ascended Lord, Saul could only respond: '*Lord, what do you want me to do?* (Acts 9:6). So when Paul speaks of the King of glory ruling from on high, he also spoke from an awareness that had impacted his life.

This glorious knowledge is what Paul also wanted for the saints. He knew it was important, and that is why he prays for them. Look at what we find in verse 17: *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.* It's a prayer that God would graciously reveal Himself to His children. This revelation, says Paul, is about *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened* (v.18). In the original language it speaks about the 'eyes of the *heart*'. Scripture describes the heart as the core of our being: the origin and

center of our thought and emotion. What Paul wants is that believers would be enlightened with a heart of faith, also in the matter of Christ's supremacy.

What is this knowledge supposed to *do* for God's people? It must in the first place humble us. We are in the service of the King! We are to know our place as humble servants, regardless of the role that we have been given. We are all privileged to serve our ascended Lord with the three-fold office of prophets, priest and kings. Others have been granted the privilege of serving as office bearers or perhaps delegates to Synod. In this there is an element of serving as the 'watchmen' described in Ezekiel 33, being aware of potential dangers and threats. Yet we are not the ultimate guardians of the church. None of us are indispensable, and the well-being of the church is not the result of our intelligence or diligence. Christ Himself is the Head of His church.

Secondly, the supremacy of Christ should also highlight for us the call to faithful obedience to His Word. Those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord – as we did this evening with our confession of faith – must also acknowledge His authority. We must listen to the instruction of His Word, as the body listens to the instructions given by the mind. The Head of the Church is to direct the body of believers in all things. At times, we see with sadness in our congregations that there are those who refuse to bow before the authority of Christ. The Word of God does not rule their lives, and Jesus Christ is not the Lord of their hearts. It is their own priorities and opinions that matter most. We may also note with sadness the influence that a worldly, godless culture can have on entire church federations. Three years ago we severed a bond with a longstanding sister church that was very dear to us, for we saw

a steadfast refusal to obey the instruction of Jesus Christ in His Word. We must never compromise in the matter of obedience to the Word of the King. We must listen to what He says.

Yet there is one further aspect to the supremacy of Jesus Christ that I would like to emphasise, and that is the *confidence* we may place in our Saviour. He rules with great power! When Paul wrote to the believers about his prayer for the eyes of their heart being enlightened, he mentioned three things. The first of these was that they might *know what is the hope of His calling.* That knowledge provides encouragement. The second was that the believers might know *the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* That knowledge sparks a delightful wonder for believers. Yet these two elements led to one last prayer point which receives the most emphasis and explanation: *the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.* The phrasing used here by Paul is intended to awe his readers. That is also the intention of the Holy Spirit towards us today.

God's power is displayed in raising Christ from the dead, seating Him at the right hand of the Father and putting all things under His feet. What a comfort that should be for us! We confess that the church has always been under attack. Satan rages against the church, and seeks to suppress the truth. The powers of this world conspire against the Lord (Psalm 2) and do not want to acknowledge Christ as Lord. Believers are persecuted in violent ways in many places today, but even in the West we are seeing with increased clarity how forces opposed to the gospel are becoming more vocal, how new laws are making life for God's children more restrictive, and how the truth of God's Word is increasingly mocked and

vilified. When you're young, you can so easily see the church as a constant part of your life: a permanent fixture that will always endure. As you get older, you begin to see how vulnerable the church is in so many ways: threats not only from the outside, but also within. How the bond of peace and unity can be threatened and how sin within our hearts and lives can cause so much damage. We are in ourselves so weak and fragile. At times we may wonder, when we look at the world and when we look amongst ourselves: how can the church survive and remain faithful to the Lord? Then, brothers and sisters, we are to turn to our Lord and Saviour with gratitude and praise, confessing that our strength is in Him alone. The eyes of our heart must look on high to Christ in faith. We may confess, with the prophet Isaiah: *Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD, the LORD is my strength and song, He also has become my salvation* (Isaiah 12:2).

We have a mighty Saviour who reigns supreme! We may serve Him in humble dependence, knowing that the Father has put all things under His feet. His power will sustain us. His strength will uphold us. He will perfect and complete the work He has begun in us. That is the perspective we may have as God's people, as churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, as those who may serve the Lord at this Synod. Our hope is in Him alone! Paul closes his prayer for the saints by describing the church as the body of Christ, *the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* Christ fills His church in the most special way through His Spirit, His grace and His gifts. In the end, brothers and sisters, we may confess that in our Lord and Saviour we have all we need. May our hope be in Christ alone, who is our all in all.

AMEN.

Appendix 1b: Opening Address by the Chairman of the convening church of Albany

Delegates to synod, overseas delegate and visitors, dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ:

On behalf of the convening church of Albany it is my pleasure to give a word of welcome at the beginning of Synod Albany 2021. It's been twenty-one years since there was a Synod convened in this church building, and at that time it was not the Free Reformed Church of Albany that was hosting Synod, but our neighbouring church of West Albany, who were in the process of constructing their church building. The last time the congregation of Albany hosted a Synod was 1987, so it's been a long time coming. Perhaps some of the older members of our congregations will remember that Synod.

Much has changed since 1987, both within our local church, as well as within the federation. Much *can* change, also in ways that we least expect. When we were assigned the role of the hosting church at Synod Bunbury in 2018, there were certainly expectations of how our preparations would unfold. Yet no one could possibly have anticipated the events of the past 16 months or so: a worldwide pandemic that has greatly altered life around the world. It has also impacted church life for God's people. The Lord has blessed us richly here in Australia with a relatively short period of lockdowns and, although there have been brief instances in which our worship has been restricted, for the most part we have been able to continue to worship God together. What a rich blessing that is! In our sister churches the effects of COVID-19 have been far more pronounced, and as a result there have been significant

challenges. It has not been easy for God's people to stay united without being able to worship freely together.

And so this will in some ways be a different type of Synod than what we have experienced in the recent past. As a relatively small federation, our sister church relationships form a significant part of our deliberations, and the absence of almost all the foreign delegates in person is unfortunate. Having said that, we have received either written or recorded video correspondence (or both) from a number of churches: our sisters churches of the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI), the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA), the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), as well as the First Evangelical Church of Singapore (FERC). We have also received greetings from the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) as well as the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC) and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T).

Yet we have been blessed with the presence of one foreign delegate, Rev Paul Archbald from our sister church in New Zealand (RCNZ). We're thankful that with the travel bubble that exists between our two countries it is possible for you to be with us. Rev Archbald has been at many of our past Synods, and once again, brother, we are thankful to have you in our midst: you are most welcome.

There is one other element that I would like to mention, and that is the work that has been done in the congregation to prepare for this event. We do the work in the service of the King, and in that respect we have done it gladly. Yet I may also emphasise that it has been delightful not only to participate in

this work, but also to see the hand of the Lord at work in our midst. The core group of organisers met quite a number of times over the past few years, and started early on. Yet as the date for Synod came closer, there were so many more people who got involved, not only from our congregation of Albany, but also our neighbouring congregation of West Albany as well. That was beautiful to see! There were unexpected contributions and efforts from many people, and also in this way it was so encouraging to work through all that was needed to get ready.

It is our hope and prayer that the Lord would be pleased with these efforts. It is also our hope and prayer that the Lord would be pleased to work through those who labour during this Synod as helpers and also as delegates. I urge you, delegates, to do your utmost in your labours over the next few days, working diligently and faithfully to the best of your abilities. You may know that we will pray for the Lord to bless your work here at this Synod.

And so on behalf of the Free Reformed Church of Albany I declare the 28th Synod of the Free Reformed Church of Australia opened. May the Lord bless these proceedings to His glory and honour!

Appendix 1c: Address by Rev P Archbald on behalf of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Greetings from the RCNZ.

Every time I think this will be my last time as a fraternal delegate to your synod – but here I am again. I suppose

volunteering has something to do with that. That's a measure of the fact that I enjoy visiting your synods and hold your churches in high regard.

I guess I don't need to tell you that the last year has been a strange one in many ways. Due to COVID 19, synods have been delayed, and few overseas delegates are able to visit the synods of sister-churches. Thankfully, Australia and New Zealand have their "bubble," so I have been able to make it here for this meeting.

I think that, on the whole, our churches came through the period of lockdown quite well. I don't think we lost many members because of it. Certainly, in our congregation, it was a day of rejoicing when we could lawfully meet again for public worship. I hope that your churches have also come through this time well.

We have enjoyed having your delegates at our synods over the last few years, as well as the meetings between your deputies and our inter-church relations committee. One of the things that our committee remarked on after our last meeting in Melbourne, was the openness and candour with which we could interact. Such candour is difficult to maintain when there are tensions between federations, or when there are matters you want to keep from each other. We aim for transparency, and we believe you do too.

The rapport between our two federations is also seen in the work in Port Moresby. A number of our ministers have been involved in short-term teaching there over the last few years. They have appreciated the men from the FRCA and from the Canadian Reformed Churches who teach there. In fact, our OMB is so appreciative, that they have asked me to pass on

thanks to you for this work – both of the Board and the staff in PNG.

As you would be aware, the Reformed Church of Silverstream has seconded Rev. Hans Vaatstra to assist with this work in a mid-term capacity. He has indicated a desire to work in PNG for at least a couple of years. Meanwhile, we will continue to look for another suitable man to replace him when the time comes.

Your Deputies have underscored the importance of trying to work out an equitable way of providing for retired ministers who have served in both our federations – especially in the situation where the last call was to New Zealand. Since a number of our churches have shown an interest in calling FRCA ministers, this is a situation that we are keen to have resolved if we can find a mutually agreeable solution.

Judging by the number of responses from the churches in regard of the report on the RCNZ, it appears that the relationship between our churches is still something of a hot topic. It is not our desire to be the occasion for any internal unrest in your churches. We hope and pray that you can find a good degree of unity on the matter of this inter-church relationship.

It is our prayer also that the Lord will bring good from the decisions you make at this synod; and that your decisions will be pleasing in His sight. We hope that He will bless your churches richly.

Appendix 1d: Address by Rev P Njuka on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia (GGRI)

Waingapu 12 June 2021

Fraternal greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ:

In relation to the letter of information sent by the FRCA, the contents of which informed us of the forthcoming National Synod in Australia, we would like to convey the following:

1. We convey our wish that the proceedings of Synod may go well, from its beginning on 14 July, 2021, to its completion. May the various matters discussed at Synod lead to the development and edification of the church of our Lord, and may the decisions reached agree with the Word of God and the Church Order.

2. We express our gratitude and thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ because of His love, which till now has enabled us as sister federations to have a strong relationship. This is evident in the area of cooperation in the spread of the gospel,[1] the Reading Room[2], and the theological college.

3. We give thanks to all the brotherhood in Australia, who because of the love of our Lord continue to financially

[1] Translator's note (AvD):This is a reference to Rockingham/Baldivis support of mission work in the GGRI-NTT.

[2] Translator's Note (AvD): This is a reference to Mundijong's project of a library/bookstore where good Christian literature is available for free reading, or for purchase.

support the teaching and studying at the Theological College of the Reformed Churches of Indonesia. Up to this present time, the Theological College is functioning well in Waimarang.

4. We request the Australian brotherhood to prayerfully support the churches in Sumba which are still affected by COVID-19, because of which more than 40 persons have already died. Furthermore, in April East Sumba was struck with floods and fierce winds which resulted in the destruction of a few church buildings and homes of congregational members.

These are the matters which we wish to convey to the Synod of the FRCA. Finally, we wish the proceedings of Synod to prosper. May the Lord bless us all.

Deputies for Fraternal Relations GGRI-NTT
Pdt. Pila Njuka M.Div.

Appendix 1e: Address of Rev A Witten on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)

Esteemed brothers,

On behalf of your brothers and sisters in the Canadian Reformed Churches I pass on heartfelt greetings to you. Although we are not able to visit your assembly in person, we are thankful through these means to express our best wishes for your work as churches.

We address you today from a situation of crisis in Canada. You are aware of the health crisis playing out globally and how Canada and our churches have been particularly affected. In our churches we have had loved ones who have become sick and who have died from this virus. The functioning of the communion of saints in caring for one another has been greatly hindered by restrictions prohibiting in person gatherings. Full corporate worship has not been permitted for over a year. Churches and consistories work hard to try to mitigate that. Zoom meetings, livestream services, smaller gatherings, even services in parked cars are common among our churches. But these efforts, we have learned, cannot replace the regular gathering of God's people in corporate worship. Many suffer through loneliness and mental health concerns. As Churches we have struggled to agree on what is the appropriate way to respond to our government's restrictions. Some advocate compliance, others argue that we must disobey our government. At times this has led to conflict and disharmony between brothers and sisters in the churches.

We share this to solicit your prayers for the welfare of Christ's church in Canada. We have found ourselves humbled. We have been prodded to greater faithfulness in our testimony to our civil leaders. We have learned greater patience and grace with one another. We must sing with the Psalmist from Psalm 46,

> *God is our strength, our shield our tower; he will defend us by his power. In times of trouble he is near; with him as help, we will not fear. Though earth may shake in great commotion and mountains plunge into the ocean, though roaring seas make mountains quake his people he will not forsake.*

It is heartening to know that there is a place in this world, a little corner tucked in at the bottom of the globe where life for people is normal: Albany. There you are gathering as Synod of the Free Reformed Church in Australia. You are now our oldest sister church. For decades our cooperation has been wonderfully close. Our assemblies have consistently demonstrated the value that we place on this relationship. That was clearly expressed again by Synod Edmonton when they instructed our committee for relations with churches abroad, to invite your deputyships to seek direct contact with the corresponding CanRC committees such as the committee for the Book of Praise, Committee on Bible Translations, and indeed any area of mutual interest that we have as churches.

Theological education:

For decades the cause of training young men for gospel ministry has drawn us close together. Many Australian men have travelled to Canada and Canadians to Australia. Of the ministers serving in the Canadian Reformed Churches, I could count 13 who are either Australians or have lived in Australia. The prayers of the Australian churches, the students from Australia, and the financial support of the churches has helped the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary to thrive as an institution. We too are a relatively small federation and the involvement of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia is valuable. Synod Edmonton expressed thankfulness and appreciation for your ongoing support for and interest in the Theological Seminary. We are grateful also for the assistance of Dr Reuben Bredenhof following the serious injury of Professor VanRaalte this winter.

Synod Edmonton decided to encourage the Board of Governors and Senate of CRTS to continue contact with your deputyship with respect to your desire to have the first year available in Australia and to establish a regional seminary in Australia in the medium to long term. Your deputies' report shows that these discussions are taking place. May the Lord continue to guide you as you make plans and look ahead to fulfilling the need of your churches and churches in your region, to have faithful, well-trained ministers of the gospel.

Book of Praise

The *Book of Praise* is another area where for some decades we have worked together as churches. We congratulate you with the recommendation of your deputies to publish an *Australian Book of Praise*. We are thankful that there has been and remains good contact between our respective committees. May this effort be a blessing for the Australian Churches as you worship the Lord.

Our Synod Edmonton instructed the Standing Committee for the book of Praise to evaluate and recommend additional Hymns and new melodies for some of the Psalms. Presently we are trialing these new hymns in our churches. This work is reflective of a desire in the CanRC for additional hymns to be able to be used in worship for our churches. Regional Synod East (RSE) adopted an overture to the next General Synod to remove the limit of 100 hymns for inclusion in the Book of Praise. At the same time, there are overtures from two separate Classis, to change our Church Order, to make explicit the principal place that the singing of the 150 Psalms ought to have in our churches. Like your present meeting, our next

Synod will set the direction for the Book of Praise in the years to come.

Mutual Assistance

Part of our responsibility as sister churches is to assist one another not only in practical matters like Theological education and Books of Praise, but as our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship state also "assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline, and liturgy, and be watchful for deviations." We understand that it is from this sense of responsibility that Synod Bunbury mandated your deputies to "monitor developments within the CanRC in relation to the Blessings Christian Church". We commend your deputies for their careful reporting. You summarise the discussions and decisions as they have been made public in the press releases of major assemblies and in the pages of our Clarion magazine. As your deputies demonstrate this is part of a broader discussion and movement taking place within our federation, born from a desire to grow in effectiveness in sharing the gospel within our own local communities. While there is nothing we need add to your deputies' report, we can affirm that matters of concern and differences in interpretation of our church order continue to be dealt with at our major assemblies. Synod Guelph 2022, for example, will receive an appeal concerning guest ministers from non-sister churches preaching on CanRC pulpits. As your sister church we welcome your ongoing attention and assistance as we seek to remain faithful to Scripture as summarized in our Reformed confessions.

Inter-church relations

Your deputies rightly identify the close relationship that we enjoy with the United Reformed Churches as being a significant matter for our churches. We continue to be committed moving toward a fuller relationship federatively with the United Reformed Churches. It is our hope that any hinderances toward organic union may be dealt with. But this has required patience. Nevertheless, at the local level in Canada there has been a warm and productive cooperation between Canadian Reformed and United Reformed Churches. Young people frequently marry members of the URC, we work together in reformed education, political action, care for those with special needs and enjoy pulpit exchanges. As our close sister church your increased knowledge and involvement with these churches is appropriate and helpful.

Our committee for relations with churches in North America was mandated to continue contact and dialogue with the Free Reformed Churches of North America and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian churches. These two federations have churches nearby Canadian Reformed Churches. We continue to benefit from our relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). There are fewer OPC's in Canada, so local involvement is less robust. But when Synod Edmonton mandated our committee to make a thorough study on how we exercise inter-church relations, it asked for consideration of the rules currently used in the OPC. We have been able to learn from this larger and older church federation. Our committee has made a comprehensive report for Synod Guelph 2022. In particular, we are evaluating the positive and negatives of maintaining different types of relationships, as

opposed to our current practice of only one official category of relationship (sister church/ecclesiastical fellowship).

We continue to enjoy Ecclesiastical relations with a static group of overseas sister churches. No new additional relationships with overseas churches are on the immediate horizon. Our involvement in the International Conference of Reformed Churches has helped us to maintain contact with these sister churches. We are thankful to witness your diligent work with our sister church in Indonesia. Your geographical proximity places you in a position to enjoy a closer relationship with our Indonesian brothers and sisters. Synod Edmonton mandated our committee to work in consultation and cooperation with the FRCA in encouraging and supporting the Indonesian churches. We are grateful for and welcome the sharing of information, observations and advice as we seek to be a blessing to Christ's church in that country.

Like Synod Bunbury, our Synod Edmonton took the sad decision to discontinue the relationship with our sister churches in the Netherlands. We pray for reformation and do actively seek contact with any faithful reformed federations in that country.

Closing

As churches in Canada we live in a society which is increasingly departing from the standards of God's word. In the last year the Canadian government expanded access to euthanasia, in a way that is very concerning. There is also legislation which criminalizes biblical counselling for individuals who are struggling with their gender identity. For the first time we must face the possibility that the pastoral care that office bearers offer to members is a criminal act. As Christians we

feel pressure living and working in this context. Particularly through the pandemic our government's reach into our lives has grown very long. Being told when to worship, when go to school, and how many people we can have in our homes, has brought home the power our government has in our lives.

We do live in a period of crisis. Earlier I quoted Psalm 46, "the earth may shake in great commotion and mountains plunge into the ocean…" But we also sing, "He in her midst his place has taken; therefore she never will be shaken. The LORD will to her help appear when he at break of day draws near."

The Lord is our refuge. We are called to be soberminded and watchful. We are thankful that we can support one another as churches in the call to be faithful. We are thankful that there is a place in the world where things are normal, Albany. More precisely where the *norms* of God's word guide your lives.

May God grant you wisdom as you meet and take decisions for the benefit of the churches in Australia.

Rev. Arend Witten

Appendix 1f: Address by Rev NakChoon Kim on behalf of the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

My dear brothers and sisters of the Free Reformed Church of Australia.

I bid your grace and peace from the Triune God whom we share. During our General Assembly two years ago, your

denomination sent Reverend Hank Terpstra and elder Bert Veenendaal with whom we were able to share fellowship within our Lord.

Though we are unable to meet in person and share fellowship due to the pandemic, I'm glad that I can at least send you this video. I offer my prayer and thanks to God who has protected your church and members during the pandemic times. Although we haven't been in contact often since we believe the Bible is the revealed word of God and we build the church accordingly your presence alone has been a great comfort.

Our denomination has slightly less members. As of January 2021, we have 412,000 members. As we have planted new churches to spread the word of God the number of churches is up to 2110. With less people have been attending church, the pandemic is taking a toll on many of our members' faith. I pray that the Lord will give your church and ours the strength of continue worshipping and spreading the word of God even in these difficult times.

Even more frightening than the pandemic, secularism seeks to challenge the church's holiness. We're going through the same challenges that your country once had to endure. The ruling party is advocating for legislation to punish those who publicly proclaim that homosexuality is a sin. They're trying to grant homosexual couples legal status by introducing the concept of a "diverse form of family." The Koshin denomination has started a movement with other denominations to oppose this law. We ask that you pray so that we can have an effective response.

We also think it's unfortunate the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands incorrectly interpreted the Bible's teachings on

the matter of women in office. We hoped the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands might return to a purely Biblical position.

Even if this difficult time when it's hard to congregate together, I hope our churches can worship God as we faithfully depend on God's word and the Spirit and work for his kingdom.

I pray that God may grant you, your churches, and your families' prosperity.

On behalf of the KPCK as the Koshin General Assembly representative I, the Chair of the committee members, Kim NakChoon deliver this message to you.

Thank you

Appendix 1g: Address by Br S Dethan on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC)

Dear Brothers

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia, we thank you for your invitation to attend your General Synod. Much to our regret, we have to inform you that we cannot come due to the COVID-19.

We were glad to have your Delegates (Rev. A. Souman; Br. Eric Heerema and Br. Andrew Heerema) to our recent General Synod in Korlok in August 2019.

Here we send you our recent General Synod decision in connection with your church:

ARTICLE 31
ASSOCIATED WITH
AUSTRALIAN FREE REFORMED CHURCHES (FRCA)

1. The Synod decided to:

    1.1 Give mandate to the Deputies of Relationship with Churches Abroad to write a letter of thanks for FRCA for the decision of their synod in Bunbury 2018 which keeps in contact with GGRCI and visits the GGRCI synod.

    1.2 Give mandate to the Deputies of Relationship with Churches Abroad to write letters of thanks for the advice from the FRCA Deputies to encourage GGRCI to adhere to the Reformation teaching and to use the confessions, in particular the Heidelberg Catechism, in the congregations while at the same time taking steps to increase the unity and integrity of the churches in Indonesia.

    1.3 The Synod decided to seek to improve the reformed character within the GGRCI with the help of the FRCA, URC and CanRC.

Let us close our greeting letter with the Word of God from Ephesians 4:11-16 New International Version (NIV):

> *"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."*

May the Lord our Triune God give you all wisdom and things you all need in this General Synod of yours that you can make all wise and Biblical decisions in order to build up the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and glorify the name of our Triune God forever and ever.

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of CCRA of the GGRCI
Soleman Dethan
Secretary

Appendix 1h: Address of Rev J Bruintjes on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA)

Brothers, delegates of Synod, assembled guests, on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa I bring you heartfelt greetings in the exalted name of our Lord Jesus Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is name, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things for the church, which is his body the fullness of him who fill all in all (Ephesians 1:21-23)." What a promise, and what a comfort! Particularly in these times where the world is in turmoil, economies are shut and opened again, a pandemic confronts us all with the reality of death, and church services are restricted, we may know that He reigns in perfect peace over all things for the Church, which is his body. Indeed, we may believe all this is for the strengthening of his church which continues to assault the very gates of hell! In terms of physical space, we, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA) share the same hemisphere even though we are an ocean apart. But in terms of faith, we are family. Sharing one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, and one God and Father. And from the beginning there has been a blessed familial unity between our churches. We praise the Lord for that! This unity has only grown much deeper over the last number of years as we have stood together for the authority of God's word against a rise in a cultural hermeneutic of Scripture in the Dutch churches. The more we learn about each other the more we have come to appreciate the spiritual bond of faith which we share. There are also direct family times as many members have moved there due to the unrest

and uncertainty in South Africa. And although we are unable to make it in person, we are grateful that we have been invited to address you in this way. There are many ways in which our unity in faith has borne fruit in working together on several fronts.

Theological Education

To begin with, a matter close to our hearts that we have been thinking and praying about much in the last few years, theological education. The harvest is ready, but the workers are few! As a small federation we have always struggled with finding out what the best way is to equip our students for the ministry. Over the last few years we have worked more and more closely with CRTS. This focus on theological education has also motivated more to consider the ministry (7 young men no less). We continue to also observe the developments there closely in pursuing your own theological training.

Mission Work

The work of training up ministers is so vital because the African continent and South Africa is ripe for the Gospel. More and more people are looking for the pure preaching of the gospel, and we as churches are also growing more and more in living out the gospel of our king in a society that has in general turned its back on God. In a country with an extremely high employment rate and rampant poverty, people are broken and poor, and in need of the hope of the gospel. As we embark on this mission to reach South Africa, one of the challenges that we are currently experiencing is that as the mission work continues to expand the funding continues to decrease. The Dutch churches, who previously supported upwards of 95% of the mission work, have decided to cut their funding in half by

2024. This has posed a significant challenge to the churches as we look for support elsewhere. This has also come as a blessing, as the churches locally have taken greater responsibility for the mission work, and we have had to deepen our reliance on our Heavenly Father, trusting that he will provide. It has also been a blessing in that it has forced us to think about how we can do sustainable missions in south Africa. We hope this will also open new doors to new partnership with sister churches around the world. Please keep this also in your prayers.

Relations with Churches Abroad

We also share a common heritage with the Netherlands. The FRCSA is involved in the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). In July of 2017 year, this conference was held in Jordan, Ontario. The sad note of the conference was sounded when the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands was suspended because of the decision by their General Synod to admit women to the office of deacon, elder and pastor, contrary to the clear teachings of Holy Scripture, putting it at odds with the ICRC constitution. Attending this conference provides us with an opportunity to meet with delegates of those churches with whom we have sister church relationship. Because of the size of our federation, and the manpower available to us, we have decided to focus much of our efforts to strengthen the bonds which we already have, particularly with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, The Canadian Reformed Churches. Our relationship with the Reformed churches in the Netherlands has been under severe strain over the last decade, and as you will see in the acts of synod, it has come to near breaking point. Indeed it seems as if a split - a breaking point is

inevitable. The heart of the problem as we see it is not first the fact that they have opened all offices to women, but that they have opened the Word of God up to all kinds of subjective interpretations. This is a matter of deep sadness for the FRSCA because for so many years we called ministers from TU Kampen, and so many our members have family living in Holland. Unlike our brothers and sisters in Australia and North America, we share a similar language and heritage with the Dutch. We encourage you to read the deliberations, the decisions and the grounds in this decision. On the other hand, we continue to be deeply grateful for their support, and they have expressed that our differences will not affect the support. We have also made it clear that when it comes to the truth of God's word, we will not let their level of support in any way influence our decision on whether to break or continue our relationship.

Relations with Churches in Africa

We are also excited to be a part of ICRC Africa, where we wish to work more with churches and federations that are closer to home. The African churches have much to contribute to the community of faith globally, and by the grace of God, are one of the fastest growing continents when it comes to Christianity. Locally there has also been an effort to work more with the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA), who are also members of the ICRC. We are thankful that on a local basis there have been pulpit exchanges, although nationally not much has taken place. We look forward to continuing our discussions with them both locally and nationally.

Closing

I would like to end with the words from the author of Hebrews: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works!" Indeed, He who promised is faithful! May God himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant you the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of truth and love to guide you in all your deliberations, so that each decision you make may be blessed, and serve in furthering the kingdom of Jesus Christ, until he comes again! Again, we value your relationship deeply, and rejoice in God that we share this common faith and love with you. To him be all the glory for ever and ever. Thank you.

Appendix 1i: Address of Br CI Nguru and Br F Missa on behalf of the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Indonesia – Timor (GGRI-T)

To the Synod of Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Esteemed brothers,

On behalf of the Gereja – Gereja Reformed Indonesia Timor (GGRI – Timor), we like to extend warm greetings to you. I am Chris Nguru, brother Ficthor Missa, we both are elders and currently serve on the Relationship Abroad Committee as deputy of GGRI – TIMOR. We do deeply thank you for your invitation to your synod.

We feel a strong bond was established when we visited your previous synod. This bond was further strengthened through visits from Australia to the GGRI –Timor.

Speaking in numbers, we are but a small denomination comprising of 9 churches, a number of mission posts and several Bible study groups. We are thankful to note that membership continues to grow; currently we have approximately 1200 members. Even though we are small in numbers yet we pray that God continue to give strength that we are not lacking in love and faith but that we continue to have the zeal to further God's kingdom in Indonesia.

As many Indonesian Islands, we have been suffering from many calamities over the past few years. In 2019 one area of our classis was hit by a bushfire which destroyed many homes and farms; after that the African Swine Flu nearly wiped out all pigs. COVID-19 struck early 2020 and although not that many people got infected with the virus in comparison to other parts of Indonesia, the economical impact especially is felt until today. Currently we are trying to recover from Cyclone Seroja which left a path of destruction, homes, farms, power supply and also STAKRI's building, the Girls dormitory at New Hope and the Sahabat Radio Station were severely damaged. Yet despite all the disasters we have gone through, we continue to trust in the Lord – with the words of Lord's Day 10 we confess that:

> "Leaf and Blade,
> rain and drought,
> fruitful and barren years,
> food and drink,
> health and sickness,
> riches and poverty,
> indeed, all things,
> come to us not by chance
> but by His Fatherly hand.

GGRI-Timor – like many other Reformed Churches who are actively promoting the Reformed Confessions, face the attacks of Satan. However, we may report to you that as much as Satan tries to stop the work of our God, we continue to stand in serving of Him and hold on to the truth as we confess in our confessions.

One of the problems that we face is the developments in the Dutch churches. As you may know that the developments in the Dutch Churches play a big role in the Indonesian Churches; many of our books in STAKRI'S library are written by our Dutch missionaries. Their footsteps are clear in our lives and the lives of so many young people. On many occasions, we have to explain that we do not have any relationship with the Dutch Churches – where many of the authors came from. We receive a lot of ridicule, as if we are smarter than the 'white people', assuring us that one day we will also follow the path the Dutch Churches have taken. We continue to assure those that this will not be the case.

Therefore, in our last synod the matter of the relationship with Dutch churches were also discussed. On this matter we relied so much on your report and synod decision. So, we thank you also for your report regarding the developments and the decision regarding Dutch churches (GKV churches). After reading your synod report and the Canadian Reformed Churches Synod report regarding Dutch churches (GKV churches) – we come to conclusion that the step that you have taken is biblical and that you have done thorough studies, warned them accordingly and therefore we stand by the decision that you have taken.

We have decided to not have any relationship with the Dutch churches until the matter is been resolved. This was not an easy decision, for we have many personal relationships with individual leaders in this federation. We understand also that this decision will have consequences in other church relationships in Indonesia. We pray that the Lord will give wisdom and patience in all of this.

As we said previously that we feel very close to you even, therefore in our our last synod, we had decided to have contact with you with the view of having an ecclesiastical fellowship with you. We pray that you may consider this. We understand that we need to follow the procedure of your standard of ecclesiastical fellowship, we therefore appreciate to have more contact with you regarding this either via email or visits.

Brothers, it is our sincere desire and prayer that our Triune God will guide you in your meetings and decisions you will make. May Our Heavenly Father guide you through His spirit that you may come to decisions that are pleasing to God that His Kingdom may continue to flourish. We pray that the Lord will continue to give you patience and wisdom especially in this time of uncertainty. To him be all the glory and honor!

Thank you and see you next time;

On behalf of GGRI – Timor

Sincerely,

Elder Chris Imanuel Nguru
Elder Fichtor Missa
Deputies of Church relationship of GGRI Timor

Appendix 1j: Address by Br G Swets on behalf of the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA)

Greetings to you dear brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the invitation to your upcoming synod on June 24th at Albany. Travel restrictions will prevent in person attendance of fraternal delegates this year. Accordingly, we are pleased to send this letter of fraternal greeting.

As I recall the time I spent with you at Synod Bunbury 2018 at Southern River, and the great time of fellowship we shared along with the wonderful hospitality I was shown, I was looking forward to developing a deeper relationship. I am saddened that we will not be able to attend your synod. It has been something we have been planning since our last visit.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created significant disruptions here as it has in Australia. The activities of the URCNA's broader assemblies have been affected. The convening of Synod has been postponed twice and is now scheduled for the summer of 2022. Meetings of several classes have been canceled or conducted with limited agendas and in-person participation. Likewise, all meetings of CECCA have been curtailed.

We have you continually in our prayers as you spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in Australia. We will uphold your Synod and your individual congregations before the Throne of Grace and will ask God's blessings on all of its activities and proceedings both spiritual and administrative. We will pray for you as you deliberate the issues that are before you and continue the work on your Australian Book of

Praise and the challenges of "Training for Ministry" that are before you.

I wish I could deliver this in person, but I would like to inform you that CECCA proposes at our next synod that the URCNA enters into Ecumenical Contact (Phase 1) with the FRCA. We are hopeful that this proposal will be received favorably at Synod Albany and we eagerly await your response. We regret that we are not able to visit you this year, but we hope that you will invite us to your next Synod. We will make every effort to attend and be with you face to face at that time. We also ask that you extend the mandate of the deputies to attend our Synod next year and the following Synods that we may hold prior to your next Synod.

We ask that you pray for us as we continue to dedicate ourselves to preaching the Christ-centered gospel, to administering the sacraments, conducting church discipline when necessary, catechizing our youth and to educating our laity. We will pray for you as you do likewise.

May God bless you and your Synod.

Gerald Swets

For the Committee on Ecumenical Relations with Churches Abroad
Schererville, IN

Appendix 1k: Address of Pastor NT Chong of the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)

Dear Brothers in the Lord in the Free Reformed Church of Australia,

On behalf of First Evangelical Reformed Church, I would like to extend our warm greetings and Christian love to you at Synod Albany 2021.

We thank God for that in these days of great falling away from our historic Christian and Reformed faith, that he has established you in the grace of the Lord (Hebrews 13:9). We pray that you will continue to live out the gospel with joy, being overwhelmed by the knowledge that our debt to Christ can never be repaid.

We pray that we all will continue to bear His reproach outside the camp (Hebrews 13:13), and be faithful witnesses of the gospel, that God will be pleased to use us in the winning of souls to his kingdom.

We thank God for the like faith we share in Christ and pray that our love and unity would be deepened as we fellowship with each other (Psalm 133), despite the distance and these unprecedented times in our age.

Let me give an update of how the Lord has been working in our midst:

1. Additional Minister

As you may know, Pastor Wes Bredenhof assisted us in our colloquium with Pastor Mark Chen.

Having determined our oneness in doctrine, faith, and practice, we extended a call to Ptr Mark in March 2020. He started the ministry of the Word with us in July via electronic means during our national lockdown and returned from Perth to be with us physically since October 2020.

We are thankful for this, as the teaching ministry has been bolstered in our 3 Lord's Day services.

This has reduced the need to call upon our ruling elders to preach.

We want to again express our thanks to the FRCA for graciously helping us in the past, by supplying ministers to fill our pulpit.

2. Catechism preaching at our Evening service

This has only been done once through when Pastor Chong became the Minister and for a number of reasons had stopped till the beginning of this year.

We have been learning how to preach through it, using different formats of preaching exegetically through a passage and preaching catechistically through the questions.

3. Our ministerial student

Jonathan Yap will be leaving with his family to the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in August, where he will complete his studies. We pray that when he returns, God-

willing, being called, he will join with us in the ministry of the Word.

4. Covenant Grace Church, Penang

Our sister church in Penang is still without a Pastor. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the church would gather and join us in worship at least twice a month through our live-streaming, while their Elder would bring the Word for the other Lord's Days of the month. In that way, they could also participate in the Holy Communion with us.

5. Corresponding relationships

With our contact with Dr Joel Beeke, our contact committee has started a corresponding relationship with the Heritage Reformed Church.

Similarly, our Contact Committee has been corresponding with the United Reformed Church of Myanmar. The pandemic has made it difficult for us to carry out our planned medical mission trip to them. Additionally, the military coup has added to their trials.

We are grateful that, through our deacons, we have been able to meet some of their needs. Please join together with us to pray for them in their trying circumstances.

6. There are a number of very encouraging developments during this pandemic time

Firstly, we have had many visitors who have joined us. They have found our church through our live-stream services and through the invitation of their friends.

Our current pre-membership class has nearly 20 people, including some of our non-communicants.

Secondly, the Pastoral Ward System which was implemented in 2019 just before our national lockdown has been most useful in scheduling members back to physical worship, which has had to be conducted in limited numbers, even until today. This has allowed us to shepherd the flock and keep in touch with them despite not having every member in church at the same time.

Thirdly, we have been increasing our evangelism and Mission efforts. We have been writing and printing of tracts which are distributed to residential units around the church and beyond.

We have increased the number of gospel meetings this year. We have also made use of certain Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism which teach the gospel more overtly for our gospel meetings.

We also have a class conducted for unbelievers so they would understand the gospel clearly.

Through Covenant Grace Church, we have contact with and support a couple that does outreach to a certain unreached majority people group in Malaysia. We invite you to labor in prayer for these gospel endeavors.

Do continue to pray for us as we do for you. We hope that God will, in mercy, for the sake of His church bring this pandemic to an end, so we may be able to visit you and renew our fellowship. Until then, may the Lord bless you all richly in the work of the gospel, to present every man perfect in Christ. May the Lord bless you with a fruitful synod meeting.

In the Lord

Pastor Chong Nam Tuck
On behalf of the Session of the First Evangelical Reformed Church, Singapore

Appendix 1l: Closing address by Rev H Alkema, Chairman of Synod 2021

June 23rd, 2021

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We begin with reading a very short passage from Scripture: Psalm 34:15*a* – *The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.* This morning we opened with Psalm 121, a testimony to where the eyes of a Christian are to look for help. But with this short phrase from Psalm 34, we read of the gaze of the Lord from on high. In this psalm David recalls God's deliverance in the face of great opposition, and also with an understanding of this context Peter quotes this verse in his letter. It's a beautiful and comforting statement of God's protection for His children. Yet it also has a sense of God's continual blessing: He cares for those He watches over.

Now that Synod Albany 2021 is near completion, we can see how the eyes of the Lord were turned towards us in grace and love. This was evident even before synod began. Perhaps I may share that as organizing committee here in Albany we were blessed by the Lord, who moved our plans and arrangements forward in a timely fashion. The Lord looked favourably upon our efforts, and in His grace He also gave to

us a sense of enjoyment in this task. We were able not only to work together, but also to incorporate the talents and gifts of so many other members in the congregations of Albany and West Albany. It was a delight to see how many people made beautiful contributions!

Speaking on behalf of the delegates to Synod, I can attest to how well organized this synod was by the hosting church. We are grateful for all that has been done to make our stay quite comfortable. A lot of persistent, diligent work went into ensuring that everything ran smoothly. No doubt this work was done in the service of the King, but as beneficiaries we want at the same time to express our gratitude. To those who organized for the documentation to be in such good order, for the arrangements of accommodations and transportation, for the provision of food and refreshments, for the delightful social activities and outings, for the set-up in the church, and much more we offer a heartfelt thank you. You were all a wonderful blessing to us!

During the proceedings of Synod we may also note how the eyes of the Lord were upon us, and how He graciously provided. The Lord was good to us all in giving strength and endurance. Speaking briefly on a personal note, I would imagine that for any chairman the prospect of shepherding 17 brothers through a lengthy process of decision-making would be quite daunting; it certainly was for me. Yet each day again I received strength for the task, as well as encouragement and support from the brothers. Your cooperation was a tremendous comfort and blessing to me. It's a rich experience to get to know brothers at Synod, and to realise that together – with all our differences in abilities, areas of expertise, and

viewpoints – we may work together to serve the Lord and His people.

On behalf of all the delegates, I would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of Brs. Eric 't Hart and Alan Vanderwal with the cooperation of the local tech wizards. The technical arrangements for the delegates at our FRCA Synods are the best I have seen at any synod, and we are well served by the brothers. We may also note with great appreciation the work done by Sr. Kina van Duyn. At synod after synod she works diligently, faithfully and fearlessly among the brothers, even if at times we forget our place and accidently request that she leave for closed session. Her grace in this and many other aspects of how we work (not least with myself as chairman) is much appreciated.

I should also speak to the support I have received from the officers of synod. It's a privilege to be chosen to one of these roles, and I've been grateful for the work done by the brothers. Rev. Wes Bredenhof provided valuable input in the discussions we had as officers of synod, and I'm sure his creative energy after synod will be put to good effect with the letters and matters of correspondence that a second clerk is tasked to attend to. I was well aware of Br. Bert Veenendaal's abilities with the deputy work we have laboured together in the last few years, but also at synod he performed well in the matter of the acts: reprising a role he had at a past synod when he was the only delegate to arrive with the computer. I'm also very thankful for the help and support of Rev. Reuben Bredenhof, not only as vice-chairman but also as a dear friend of many years. His wisdom and input gently (and calmly) offered at numerous times these past days were a real blessing to me. His work in the arrangement of the greetings

and addresses, as well as the preparation of the press release were excellent. Thank you, brother!

We can be very grateful for the way in which the Lord allowed our discussions and decisions to proceed. There were matters that required particularly careful consideration. We wanted to ensure that our decisions were formulated wisely so that they would honour the Lord and serve the churches well. I think more specifically of attention we gave to the matter of appeals, to the possible structure of sister church relationships, as well as the consideration of the road forward with theological education here in Australia. We were able to confirm sister church relationships with the churches of the CanRC, RCNZ, FRCSA, FERC, GGRI, KPCK, and think about how best to approach our future relationship with the OPC, URCNA, EPC/SPC, DGK, GKN, GGRC, and GGRI-Timor.

There were also milestones, both joyful and sad. It was a sad moment when we received the report in connection with the concluding mandate of the deputies with respect to our former sister church, the RCN. We may still pray that the Lord work repentance and a change of heart in the members of these churches. On the other hand, it was wonderful to officially acknowledge the production of the Australian Book of Praise. May it serve our churches well for many years to come!

When I look back at these past number of days, there are some specific events that spring to mind. We were blessed with many instances in which students from the John Calvin School came to sit and watch the proceedings. What I found most remarkable was the testimony of both students and teachers alike who shared a genuine interest both in watching what we

were discussing and also the manner in which this was discussed. The singing of the John Calvin students at synod was also beautiful to witness and was a real highlight. We will also likely remember the storm that hit Albany during synod. When so many homes in the area were without power, the Lord allowed our proceedings to continue. For the first time ever, a synod decided to live stream the evening sessions, and by all accounts this was well received. We will see if future synods decide to continue with this practice.

Brothers, let me share that I loved working with all of you, including those who had to leave early. Some were at a synod for the first time, while for others it may have been the last time. Work at Synod can be very demanding. It takes prolonged periods of social engagement and interaction. It takes a persistent attention to detail as well as the ability to evaluate the arguments presented by others. It takes courage to participate. It takes humility to listen. Yet in so many ways I saw all those qualities in all of you. May the King of the church accept our labour to His glory.

Let me close with these words. I emphasised in the opening devotion to Synod that while we are privileged to belong to God's church, it is not our church, but His. I noted that while we have a responsibility as God's people, as office bearers and also as delegates to Synod to be vigilant and watchful, we are not the guardians of the church; the Lord Jesus is. This truth rings true when a deliberative body brings its work to a close. Synod will soon be over, and with it our immediate involvement in the decision-making process. We may hope and pray that these decisions will be a blessing to God's people and will honour the Name of the Lord, but they are after all decisions made at a moment in time. Our tired eyes and

limited attention will move on to other matters. Yet *the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.* That is the perspective – and also comfort – that we may have as we move forward. Our efforts here come to a close, but the care of the King of the church never ends. Our work has been taxing, but we have an awesome Saviour who never tires or wanes. H is eyes will remain on His church and His people. *The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.* That should give us both confidence and encouragement as we move forward, for in His sight we are cherished and loved. He will lead us forward until one day our eyes will meet His directly. Then we will know the perfect love and care of the Lord for all eternity, with a joy that will never be taken away from us. May that day quickly come!

Appendix 2: Forms and Rules for Financial Aid – Training for the Ministry

APPLICATION FORM FOR FINANCIAL AID

WHO SHOULD USE THIS FORM?

This form is to be used by students who meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2 of the *Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students* and who require financial aid from the Deputies for Training for Ministry.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please enter the following personal information:

Name _____

Church _____

UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATIONS

Prior to making application for financial aid the student should have read and understood their obligations and responsibilities outlined in the Regulations, also pertaining to the preparation of this application.

In order to make this application all following questions should be answered in the affirmative.

Please answer the following questions:	Yes	No
I have read the *Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students*		
I understand my obligations and responsibilities as outlined in the Regulations		
I meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2		
In consultation with the consistory of my local church I have prepared a projected annual expense budget		
I have explored all possible sources of funding as outlined in Article 5		
I have prepared/procured all agreement documentation (if applicable) from relevant parties for this application as outlined in Article 6		

DETAILS OF REQUESTED FINANCIAL AID

As per Article 7 of the Regulations, the deputies need to be provided with accurate information regarding the student's annual source(s) of funding.

Please complete the information below. This information should tally with the budgets and other documents provided. If not applicable enter N/A. If zero enter $0.

Annual budget (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	$
Expected annual budget (for subsequent year(s))	AUD / CAD	$
Financial aid provided by family (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	$
Financial aid provided by local church (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	$
Financial aid requested from deputies (for upcoming year)	AUD / CAD	**$**

PAYMENT SCHEDULE & DETAILS

As per Article 12, indicate a payment schedule that is convenient to your circumstances.

Frequency of payment (e.g. monthly, quarterly, etc.)	
Preferred date of first payment	
Name of Bank	
Account Name	
Account Number	
Bank State Branch (BSB)	

OTHER INFORMATION Please provide other information that you deem relevant to your application.

CERTIFICATION

This application needs to be signed by the applicant and also needs to be co-signed **EITHER** by a representative of the consistory of the supporting church (if the student is receiving financial aid from the sending church) **OR** by another office bearer.

As applicant and witness, we hereby declare that the information provided in this application, to the best of my knowledge, is correct and complete.

Student's Name _____

Student's Signature _____ **Date** _____

As witness, I am a (select):

☐ Representative of the consistory of the supporting church

☐ Office bearer

Witness Name _____

(either supporting church consistory representative or another office bearer)

Witness Signature _____ **Date** _____

(either supporting church consistory representative or another office bearer)

Please attach the following documents to this application:

1. Any Agreement documents, as applicable to this application
2. Projected Annual Expense Budget
3. Any other documentation you deem relevant to this application

AGREEMENT FORM

This agreement is made between the Deputies for Training for Ministry of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the student (named below), whereby both parties agree to the terms as outlined in Article 12 of the *Regulations for the Financial Aid of Theological Students*, and the following payment schedule:

Annual payment
(Choose $CAD, if applicable) AUD / CAD $ _____

Payment frequency _____

Preferred date of first payment ____ / ____ / ____

Annual payment ($AUD)
(Determined by deputies based on exchange rate, if applicable) AUD $ _____

Payment per period ($AUD)
(Determined by deputies based on exchange rate, if applicable) AUD $ _____

Student (name printed in full) _____

Student Signature _____

Date of Agreement ____ / ____ / ____

Witness (name) _____ (Signature) _____

Rev D Poppe
Chairman, Deputies Training for Ministry
(signature)

Date ____ / ____ / ____

B Huizinga
Treasurer, Needy Students Fund
(signature)

Date ____ / ____ / ____

RULES FOR THE FUND FOR THE SUPPORT OF NEEDY STUDENTS

ELIGIBILITY

Article 1 Eligibility

Financial aid will be provided only to students who satisfy all the eligibility criteria as outlined in Article 2 of these regulations.

Article 2 Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for financial aid, the student must:

1. originally be a confessing member of one of the churches of FRCA;

2. have the intention of becoming a minister within the FRCA or within a sister federation;

3. have made satisfactory progress in their undergraduate courses (usually a Bachelor of Arts degree);

4. be accepted and enrolled in an approved theological seminary;

5. be committed to undertake full-time studies at the approved seminary;

6. demonstrate a genuine financial need. See Article 5 for further information.

FINANCIAL AID

Article 3 Support from Deputies for Training for Ministry

Students who apply for financial aid for their theological studies may be supported by the Needy Students Fund (NSF) operated by the deputies for Training for the Ministry, mandated by the FRCA.

Article 4 Typical Expenses

The NSF provides financial aid for (but not limited to) the following typical expenses:

1. tuition fees;
2. study books;
3. living expenses;
4. clothing;
5. fares;
6. health insurance;
7. incidental expenses;
8. on-going expenses.

Article 5 Potential Sources of Funding

In order to assist deputies in determining whether a student has a genuine financial need, it is important that the student

explore, in this order, the following potential sources of funding before applying for financial aid from the deputies:

1. the student themselves (eg. savings);

2. the student's family (eg. parents, in-laws, siblings and others). While the student's family ought not to be placed under undue pressure, they should be given the opportunity and privilege of supporting the student;

3. the student's church (eg. an annual contribution).

The above potential sources of funding should be explored in the order given above; namely student first, student's family second and the students church third.

If any of these three funding sources are enough to meet a student's annual expenses, then the deputies would not be called upon to provide financial aid.

However, if there is a significant shortfall from these first three funding sources, then financial aid can be sought from the deputies.

Article 6 Seeking Financial Aid

Once the student has decided that financial aid is required from the deputies the student must complete an Application Form for Financial Aid.

As part of this application, the student must:

1. procure agreement documents from relevant parties (eg. family, consistory) indicating the agreed level of financial aid from sources other than deputies;

2. present to their local consistory for approval, a projected annual expense budget;

3. request their local consistory to approve, co-sign and forward to deputies the Application Form for Financial Assistance.

Agreement documents need to clearly state the amount of financial aid committed and should be signed and dated by the relevant parties.

Article 7 Determination of Financial Aid

Once the deputies receive this application (as per Article 6), the deputies will then determine the final amount of financial aid.

As part of this determination, the deputies should consider the income of financial support from all other sources and may also consult with the approved college or seminary.

The deputies will then enter into an official Agreement with the student. For further details about this Agreement, see Terms of Agreement (Article 10 – 12).

Article 8 Payment of Financial Aid

The deputies will come to an agreement with the student as to the most convenient mode and frequency of payment. The details of the payment schedule will be part of the Agreement.

Article 9 Exemption from NSF Levy

The deputies, when assessing the churches, must consider the financial commitment which the local churches have assumed with respect to the support of needy students. In such cases, churches that have assumed a financial commitment for a needy student will be exempt from the annual NSF levy.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

Article 10 Commencement of Agreement

Once an Application Form for Financial Aid has been lodged and the Agreement Form has been duly completed, the agreement is in effect.

This agreement is made between the Deputies for Training for Ministry and the student requesting financial aid.

Article 11 Cessation of Agreement

If the student in good faith pursues theological training with the intention of entering the ministry of the gospel, he will not be required to repay the financial aid.[3]

The Agreement ceases and the student will not receive any more funds when any of the following occurs:

1. the student terminates his studies before completion;

3 To act in good faith is honest intent to act without taking an unfair advantage.

2. the student decides not to become a minister;

3. the student does not, within two years of completing his studies, make himself available for call by one of the churches mentioned in Article 2.2;

4. the student has not received a call after a period of twelve months has lapsed after their preparatory examination;

5. the student does not accept a call extended to him;

6. the student, having accepted a call, withdraws and does not accept another call;

7. the student ceases to be a member either by their withdrawal or excommunication.

If at any point it becomes evident that the student is not acting in good faith, he may be required to repay any provided financial aid or any outstanding amount thereof and the Agreement will cease.

Article 12 Terms of the Agreement

The terms of the Agreement are:

1. financial aid will be given only for the duration of the theological course;

2. details of payments and a payment schedule will be included in the Agreement;

3. the student agrees to adhere to his obligations as outlined in Article 13;

4. the deputies agree to adhere to their obligations as outlined in Article 15;

5. that upon the request of the student the deputies shall annually assess if financial aid can be made available to assist in financing the student;

6. financial aid will end at the time when the student has completed his studies and ecclesiastical examinations and becomes the responsibility of a church;

7. that financial aid will end if, after twelve months after his preparatory examination, the student has not received a call from a church;

8. the student declares himself to be in debt for the interest free financial aid provided by the deputies administering the NSF on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia;

9. the student is bound by the stipulations of Article 11;

10. repayment of the financial aid provided will be waived, and the Agreement dissolved once the student is ordained as minister of one of the churches mentioned in Article 2.2, at the rate of two years of financial aid for every year of ministry;

11. in case of financial hardship when immediate repayment in full would be too difficult, deputies may consider a request for repayment in instalments.

OBLIGATIONS

Article 13 Obligations of the Student

For the duration of the Agreement, the student is obliged to:

1. annually submit a budget of expenditure outlining and substantiating the financial aid required for the next year;

2. at any time, inform deputies of any substantial changes in his financial position in either income or assets, as this may affect the amount of financial aid given in subsequent years;

3. keep the deputies informed about his study progress at the seminary;

4. inform the deputies as soon as possible if, for whatever reason, the student desires to end his studies.

Article 14 Obligations of the Supporting Church

Once a supporting church has ascertained that the student wishes to pursue theological studies, the supporting church is obliged to:

1. help the student in determining an annual projected expense budget, especially in relation to possible sources of funding (see Article 5);

2. approve the annual projected expense budget;

3. aid the student in completing the Application Form for Financial Aid and forwarding relevant material to the deputies as part of this application;

4. honour any financial commitment under the Agreement, if applicable;

5. maintain good contact with the student, once studies have commenced.

Article 15 Obligations of Deputies

During the period leading up to the student applying for financial aid as well as for duration of the Agreement, the deputies are obliged to:

1. ensure that the student is given the *Rules and Regulations for Financial Aid for Theological Students* including, at the appropriate time, the *Application Form for Financial Aid* and the *Agreement Form*;

2. ensure that the student understands the contents of these documents;

3. keep good contact with the student during the student's study at the seminary;

4. report to the next synod financial aid being given.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Article 16 Exceptional and Special Circumstances

During the Agreement there may arise exceptional or special circumstances.

By their very nature, these circumstances are unpredictable. Thus, while not every circumstance can be covered, some of the known exceptional and/or special circumstances which may occur and the action that applies are as follows:

1. students who are not eligible for government support for tertiary education may receive financial aid only in exceptional circumstances;

2. students who need to complete extra studies, after having obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian university and before being admitted to the seminary, may be financially supported by the deputies for that time of study;

3. if the student fails to make satisfactory progress, and desires to continue with his studies, the student may request a continuation of financial aid, if required. The deputies will consider this request only if the seminary senate support the continuation of the student's studies;

4. any request for a continuation of financial aid, following further failures to make satisfactory progress, can only considered by the deputies if it can be ascertained that the failure was due to exceptional circumstances;

5. in the unusual situation where it is clear that too high a level of financial aid was given in the past, then the total sum of excess money must be repaid in full;

6. the obligation to repay financial aid may be waived in cases of sickness, death or other exceptional circumstances.

AUTHORITY

Article 17 Lack of Provision

In any case where these Regulations do not make provision, deputies have the authority to decide.

Article 18 Disputes

In cases of disputes, the home church's classis shall adjudicate.

Appendix 3: Amended Rules for Synods

Rules for Synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia

as adopted by Synod 1998, Acts Article 65, and amended in accordance with Article 42 of Acts 2000, Articles 12, 90, and 91 of Acts 2003, Articles 75, 90, and 117 of Acts 2012, Article 16 of Acts 2018 and Article 114 of Acts 2021.

1. CONVENING CHURCH

Every synod shall appoint a church to convene the next synod. The tasks of the convening church are:

1.1. Give at least six months' written notice to all the churches and all synodical deputyships of synod's meeting place, commencement, date and time.

This notification shall further:

a. invite the churches to submit by a date four months prior to the commencement of synod, any new items of business for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;

b. invite the churches to submit, by a date three weeks prior to the commencement of synod, any other material for inclusion on the Final Draft Agenda;

c. invite the deputyships to submit their reports for inclusion on the Provisional Draft Agenda;

d. invite the treasurer and auditing Church to submit their reports three months prior to the commencement of Synod; and

e. state the postal address for receipt of submissions.

1.2. Receive all material submitted, clearly date mark each item, and place it on the Draft Agenda, listing the order of business as follows – or as near thereto as practicable:

a. Opening by the Convening Church

b. Signing of the Attendance List and Examination of Credentials

c. Election of Officers

d. Constitution of Synod

e. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

f. Adoption of the Agenda

g. Adoption of Meeting Procedures

h. Incoming Correspondence

i. Instructions

j. Reports by Classes

k. Reports of Deputies and discharge of Deputies

l. Audit of the books of the Treasurer and discharge of Treasurer

m. Calculation of the percentages of the churches' share of synod costs

n. Appointment of Deputies

o. Appointment of Convening Church, and place and time of the next Synod

p. Personal questions

q. Adoption of Acts

r. Approval of Press Release

s. Closing of Synod

1.3. After the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda, provide each of the churches access to an electronic copy of the document at least three months before synod commences.

1.4. As soon as classes have appointed delegates to Synod:

a. provide each of the delegates and each of the alternates access to an electronic copy of the Provisional Draft Agenda;

b. provide one unbound and unfolded printed copy to each of the delegates and alternates who desire one; and

c. as further material becomes available, provide access to an electronic copy to each of the delegates and alternates.

1.5. After the closing date for the Final Draft Agenda:

a. provide each of the churches, with minimum delay, access to electronic copies of the Final Draft Agenda, together with access to electronic copy of all material received after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda; and

b. provide one unbound and unfolded printed copy to each of the delegates and alternates who desire one.

Confidential matters must be provided to delegates and alternates only.

1.6. Arrange meeting accommodation for synod and its committees; any necessary sound amplification; all administrative support facilities; and refreshments and meals. Also, recommend to Synod a qualified administrative assistant to the Clerk (see Rule 3.2).

1.7. Prepare and submit to synod a recommendation for the appointment of the next convening church. Here the convening church shall seek to

improve the rotation between the different geographic areas in which the churches are located, provided however that over an extended period of time the churches shall still have equal turns in convening and hosting synod.

1.8. At the opening of synod, place on synod's table one bound copy of the Final Draft Agenda together with loose inserts of copies of all items received after its closing date, open synod in a Christian manner; examine the credentials of the delegates and report its findings; conduct the election of synod's officers; hand over control to the elected chairman; and inform him on what other arrangements have been made for the conduct of synod.

1.9. The convening church shall:

a. submit to the treasurer (wherever possible) all invoices and receipts of expenditure for which they are claiming reimbursement

b. only authorize expenditure for payment or reimbursement that relates to their mandate in the preparations for synod

Note: In the case of an extra-ordinary synod, the times and conditions specified in this section shall, to the extent that it is practical to do so, be observed.

2. DELEGATES

In choosing delegates for synod, the minor assemblies shall observe the following rules:

2.1. An elder may be appointed if no minister is available; and a deacon may be appointed if no elder is available.

2.2. Every classis shall delegate three ministers and three elders. These delegates shall be chosen from as many different churches as possible.

3. OFFICERS OF SYNOD

3.1. Synod shall elect a chairman, a vice-chairman, a first clerk, and a second clerk, who collectively shall be known as the officers of synod.

3.2. The vice-chairman shall assist the other officers of synod where needed and shall prepare the Press Release of synod.

The first clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. He shall have responsibility for Synod's administration facilities and ensure the timely distribution of materials to the delegates. An assistant recommended by the convening church (see Rules 1.6) shall be appointed to record the Acts of Synod during the open sessions. At the conclusion of Synod he shall be responsible for printing and distributing these Acts.

The second clerk shall prepare all outward correspondence. He shall forward all material submitted to Synod, all correspondence, reports, available speeches, as well as all outgoing correspondence, in hardcopy and softcopy format, appropriately indexed for the Synod Archivist.

3.3. Every synod shall decide whether its chairman and first clerk will be appointed to an advisory committee.

3.4. The officers of synod shall prepare and submit written proposals on:

a. the number and composition of advisory committees, subject to the provisions of Rule 4 of the *Rules for Synods*; the nominations for committee chairman, and the agenda items to be dealt with by each committee;

b. the attendance and participation of any adviser or visitor, subject to the provisions of Rules 5 and 6 of the *Rules for Synods*;

c. the time schedules for meeting;

d. the order in which the agenda items shall be dealt with;

e. nominations for deputies' appointments.

4. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

4.1. A committee shall have from three to five members and be chaired by the person appointed by synod.

4.2. Unless it has good grounds to believe that a matter can be finalised by a straightforward recommendation, a committee shall submit a written report for consideration by synod. In the case of a substantial matter a committee may first distribute to synod's delegates a provisional report with draft conclusions and recommendations, with the request for written comments by a certain date and time, and thereafter submit a final report to synod.

5. ADVISERS

5.1. Synod may resolve to admit for the purpose of giving advice, to a full session or advisory committee, any minister from the bond of churches who has not been delegated to synod, as well as any communicant member from the bond of churches with particular skills or expertise required by synod.

An adviser shall confine his activities in the meeting to giving advice only at the request from the chairman. He shall vacate his place in the meeting after having concluded his advice, and the meeting shall not commence debate until the adviser has done so.

6. VISITORS

Synod shall recognise visitors from other churches, and grant privileges accordingly, as follows:

6.1. Delegates from sister churches will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the particular sister relation; and sit as advisory members in synod's open sessions and advisory committees where they may give advice when they request, or are requested, to do so.

6.2. Delegates from churches with whom we have temporary ecclesiastical contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the temporary ecclesiastical contact; to speak in synod's open session when they request, or are requested, to do so on matters specifically pertaining to the temporary ecclesiastical contact; and to sit as advisory members in the advisory committee(s) that deal with the temporary ecclesiastical contact, where they may give advice when they request, or are requested, to do so.

6.3. Delegates from churches with whom we have official contact will be allowed to address synod in open session for the purpose of passing on greetings and information concerning the contact.

6.4. Delegates from churches who desire to establish contact with our churches will be allowed admission to the audience of synod.

All delegates so received will be offered normal Christian hospitality, such as lodging and meals.

6.5. Visitors delegated by other churches must be male in order to be accorded the privileges outlines in Rules 6.1 through 6.4.

7. GENERAL PROCEDURES

7.1. After synod has been constituted the chairman shall request the delegates and any advisers then present to rise; and by that action those rising shall be held to reaffirm their agreement with the Word of God and the Confessions. This reaffirmation shall also be required from any person attending for the first time as substitute for another delegate.

7.2. In adopting its Agenda, synod shall examine the status of each item that was not included in the Provisional Draft Agenda; and any such item that is found to contain new matter(s) - this being an item that should have been in the hands of the churches three months prior to the commencement of synod - shall not be taken into consideration by synod.

Synod shall not add any item to the Final Draft Agenda except by special resolution and then only on the grounds of exceptional circumstances.

The Final Draft Agenda as adopted shall become synod's Agenda, to which nothing shall be added.

7.3. The admissibility of an agenda item shall be decided at the time when the item is scheduled for consideration. Submissions not from the churches, except those allowed by the Church Order, shall be received for information only and require no acknowledgment.

All proposals (from the churches and including those of deputies) that are admissible must be tabled and decided upon.

7.4. Members of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia, or of any of its sister churches, shall have the right of admission to the audience of all open sessions.

7.5. The daily closing of synod with prayer shall be by synod's members in alphabetical order of surnames.

7.6. Other than in matters of personal nature, or when otherwise decided by special resolution, synod shall not meet in closed session. Admission to a closed session shall normally be restricted to synod members.

7.7. Synod members shall have free access to any advisory committee's meeting but not speak except at the invitation of the chairman, and then only in an advisory capacity.

The admissibility of proposals must be decided upon with appropriate grounds and recorded in the Acts.

7.8. The Acts of the proceedings of each day shall if possible be presented for adoption at the beginning of the following sitting day.

They shall record all matters of substance under the headings MATERIAL (and ADMISSIBILITY, if applicable), DECISION(S) and GROUNDS. Proposals declared in the affirmative shall be recorded as ADOPTED. Proposals declared in the negative shall be recorded as DEFEATED.

They shall not record any details of the vote or ballot, nor any names of the movers and seconders of proposals, motions and amendments.

Under the heading MATERIAL, the Acts shall also summarise the material considered.

8. RULES FOR DEBATE

8.1. Any discussion relating to the introduction of a proposal or motion shall be kept to a minimum and be restricted to procedure and matter-of-fact issues. It shall not include argumentation in support of, or in opposition to, the substance of a proposal or motion except in the wording or the framing thereof.

8.2. No proposal, motion or amendment shall be debated, put to the vote or adopted unless it has

been seconded; provided however that the chairman, upon a proposal or motion being moved, may ask the meeting if any delegate opposes it.

If no delegate registers opposition the chairman may declare the proposal or motion carried without debate and without taking a vote.

8.3. A delegate wishing to submit an original proposal, motion or amendment shall, if required by the chairman, put the proposal, motion or amendment in writing.

8.4. Synod may decide to conduct debate on a particular matter in more than one round. In this situation the provisions of these Rules shall apply to each round, provided however that

a. in the first round a speaker shall not interact with earlier speakers in that round;

b. in the second and following rounds a speaker shall not repeat what he said in earlier rounds;

c. in the final round no new matters shall be brought up.

8.5. No speaker shall speak more than once in each round of the debate on the same question, except by way of explanation, or in reply upon any original proposal or motion of which he was the mover, or

in reply as the mover of any amendment then before the chair.

8.6. A speaker shall at all times address the chairman.

8.7. Any delegate may, by way of raising a point of order, direct the attention of the chairman to any infraction of the Rules for Debate.

8.8. A speaker shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, in which event he shall refrain from speaking until the point of order has been heard and decided.

8.9. A delegate who was the mover of a proposal, motion or amendment shall, at the conclusion of the speeches of all the other delegates who chose to speak on the matter, have the right of reply. A delegate speaking in reply shall not introduce any new matter but shall strictly confine himself to answering previous speakers.

8.10. The following motion may be received when a proposal (or motion) is being debated: "That the proposal (or motion) be amended". In this situation attention must be given to the following points:

a. every amendment shall be relevant to the proposal or motion on which it is moved and must substantially support the nature and intent of that proposal or motion.

b. only one amendment shall be discussed at a time. As often as an amendment is defeated, another amendment may be moved before the original motion is put to the vote.

c. in speaking to an amendment a speaker may give notice of his intention to move a further amendment.

d. where an amendment is adopted, the original motion as amended shall for all purposes of subsequent debate be treated as an original motion.

9. VOTING

9.1. When to vote

Wherever possible, decisions shall be made unanimously; and on matters of principle the chairman shall call for a vote only after every reasonable effort to obtain a consensus has been made.

9.2. How to vote

In taking the vote on any proposal, motion or amendment, the chairman shall ask those in favour to indicate such by show of hands; and he may do so as often as is necessary to enable him to form and declare his opinion as to whether the affirmative or negative has the majority.

9.3. Declaring the result of a vote

A motion or proposal shall be declared 'adopted' by simple majority vote. If the number of votes in favour is equal to the number of votes against, the proposal or motion shall be declared 'defeated'.

9.4. Voting on persons

Questions concerning persons, except on appointments proposed by the officers with the prior consent of synod, shall be decided by secret ballot.

9.5. Counting Rules

a. Ballot papers incorrectly filled in and ballot papers left blank shall be declared invalid.

b. Those who receive the largest number of votes shall be declared elected, provided that this number is not less than one-half of the number of valid votes cast.

c. If there is no result after two free ballots, any subsequent choice shall be restricted to the candidates who received the most votes in the previous ballot. If a ballot results in a tied vote another ballot shall be conducted, and if this results in a further tied vote the decision shall be made by lot after calling upon the Name of the LORD.

10. DEPUTIES

Synod shall appoint its deputies in closed session and provide them with clearly defined written instructions to which deputies shall strictly adhere. Deputies shall submit a written report on their activities. Unless otherwise instructed, they shall submit their report in time for inclusion in the Provisional Draft Agenda.

If a supplementary report is found necessary, it shall present only relevant information that has come to notice after the closing date for the Provisional Draft Agenda. Deputies must make available at synod for referral and consultation, copies of all correspondence, minutes, and records of other work done. They should also submit to the Archives all materials that are deemed relevant to be stored for future reference.

11. TREASURER and FINANCE

11.1. Every Synod shall appoint (at least) 2 delegates for the duration of Synod to form the Financial Advisory Committee with the following mandate:

a. monitor the draft budget as the Synod proceeds by including any impacts of Synod's decisions,

b. after necessary amendments, present the draft budget, including cost sharing arrangements, to Synod,

c. liaise with the Synod Treasurer as necessary, and

d. present recommendations to Synod based on the Treasury and Audit Reports.

11.2. The Synod Treasurer shall:

a. be responsible for the synod finances as approved by the Synod;

b. send accounts to the churches for their contribution to treasury funds in accordance with the cost sharing arrangements approved by Synod. Churches shall be invoiced once per year during the period between Synods;

c. collect and bank the monies received from the churches;

d. pay all accounts that have been properly documented and authorized by the convening church; Synod Deputies and Delegates (authorized by Classes) including:

i. reimbursement of loss of income claimed by Deputies or Delegates at the rate approved by Synod; and

ii. reimbursement of vehicle travel costs based on the rate approved by Synod;

e. keep Synod funds in interest bearing saving account(s) and/or cheque accounts and invest any temporary surplus funds in an authorised trustee investment or banking

institution; keep account records, setting out accurately all disbursements and receipts and balances of funds held;

f. submit records of accounts to the Synod Treasury Auditors;

g. when requested by Deputies, provide Deputies with a statement showing progressive expenditure against their budget allocation;

h. draw up a draft budget of estimated expenditure for the next Synod by:

   i. estimating the expenditure for Synod delegates to travel to Synod, any loss of income and any likely incidentals expenditure;

   ii. requesting the Deputies to provide an estimate of expenditure for the next Synod period at least 2 months before Synod;

   iii. requesting the convening church to provide an estimate of the cost to host the Synod at least 2 months before Synod commences. The Treasurer can provide assistance in determining estimates based on previous Synods;

iv. using previous expenditure details to estimate future expenditure;

v. recommending a rate of reimbursement for claims for loss of income by Deputies and Delegates, based on the rate adopted by previous Synods and adjusted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index for All Groups for the previous Synod period. (See: http://www.abs.qov.au/AU5STATSIabs@nsf/Latestproducts/64O1.OMain%20Features6Dec%202008?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6401.0&issue=Dec%202008&num=&view=); and

vi. recommending a rate for reimbursement of vehicle travel costs;

vii. including an allowance in the budget to cover the cost of the next Synod in order to have funds available to pay for the next Synod;

i. draw up a draft cost sharing arrangement. Cost sharing shall be based on a total annual contribution by all the Churches which is equal to the total budget divided by the number of Years between Synods. Each Church will be invoiced a percentage of the annual contribution based on the number of

confessing members of that church as recorded in the Church Yearbook(s) for that year. When a new church is instituted part of the way through a year, costs shall be proportioned pro rata between the new Church and the "mother" Church; and

j. submit the draft budget to the convening Church one month before the commencement of Synod.

11.3. The deputies shall:

a. only incur expenses which are for matters included in their mandate; in the event of increased costs which would impact on their mandate, deputies shall submit the request to the treasurer with substantiation;

b. inform treasurer of upcoming large expenses at least one month before they occur.

c. When making a claim, deputies shall:

i. submit to the treasurer (wherever possible) all invoices and receipts of expenditure for which they are claiming reimbursement,

ii. when claiming loss of income shall submit the request including the dates for which the claim is made,

iii. obtain verification from fellow deputies to affirm the legitimacy of all expenses;

d. inform the Treasurer of budget items for the next three years, and to do so six months prior to the commencement of the next synod

11.4. The synod delegates:

a. shall submit to the treasurer (wherever possible) all invoices and receipts of expenditure for which they are claiming reimbursement; and

b. when claiming loss of income, shall submit the request to the Treasurer including the dates for which the claim is made.

11.5. Upon receipt and adoption of a satisfactory audit report, synod shall discharge the treasurer.

12. RULES FOR SYNODS

a. These *Rules for Synods* are the rules by which the Synods of The Free Reformed Churches of Australia are conducted. They shall not be changed except by adoption in Synod of a proposal submitted by one of the churches.

b. If any provision in these *Rules for Synods* is found to conflict with the Church Order, the latter shall prevail.

RULES FOR SYNOD ARCHIVIST

Instructions for the archivist

1. The church council of the church keeping the Archives is in charge of the Archives of Synod.

2. The church council will appoint an archivist.

3. The archivist reports to the church council on the contents and condition of the Archives; and who has received or seen items, and the items involved.

4. The church council reports to Synod.

5. The archivist shall carefully store everything, using files which will be placed in the filing cabinet, taking care that everything is clearly catalogued.

6. Background and reference material shall be stored in a fire-resistant storage cupboard.

7. Access to items in the general archives requires permission of the church keeping the archives. Access to items in the secret archives requires permission of two churches, or of Synod.

8. Original documents shall not be lent out, but the archivist shall supply photocopies instead. The name of the inquirer, the title of the document and the date shall be recorded.

9. All matters pertaining to the secret sections shall be segregated from the general archives and be placed in a separate section of the archives (Kelmscott 1983, Art. 106 sub 2).

10. All archives shall be kept in envelopes which are sealed by the auditors. Where archives are accessed according to the rules, the opened envelopes shall be resealed at the next audit (Armadale 1990, Art. 126).

(Albany 1975, Art. 53; re-stated Kelmscott 1983, Art. 114 and 112; amended Bedfordale 1992, Art. 52 and Albany 2021, Art. 114)

Appendix 4: Financial actuals and budget

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA				
SYNOD TREASURY BUDGET & ACTUALS				
FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2018 TO 31 MARCH 2021				
	BUDGET 2018-21		ACTUALS 2018-21	
INCOME				
GST Refunds (earlier years)		0		1390.00
GST Rounding		0		-0.79
Contributions from Churches		60000		65003.00
Interest - Savings		800		690.59
Interest - Working Account		100		41.97
TOTAL INCOME		**60900**		**67124.77**
EXPENDITURE				
Deputy Expenses:				
- Canadian Ref Churches (x2)	6000		4695.49	
- Kosin Presb Church Korea (x2)	3000		2441.21	
- United Ref Churches North America (x1)	3000		0.00	
- Ref Churches New Zealand (x2)	5000		1722.69	
- Free Ref Churches South Africa (x2)	4000		0.00	
- Orthodox Presb Church (x1)	3000		0.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia	5000		3379.49	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore	3000		2148.35	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore (prior Synod)			1036.99	
- RCN/DGK/GKN	4500		4526.29	
- Deputies Article 48	4000		788.18	
- Standing C'tee Aust Book of Praise	15000		0.00	
- Training for Ministry - Timothy Conference			1664.74	
- Training for Ministry - Loss of Income				
- Training for Ministry - Guest Lecturer	} 7500		6102.17	
- Training for Ministry - Deputy to CRTS (x1)			2095.11	
		63000		30600.71
Web Hosting		2000		770.18
Synod Albany Costs:				
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	3500		600.00	
- Infrastructure & Venue	8650			
- Travel Reimbursement	2500			
- Postage	500		89.00	
- Printing (net of reimbursement)	6000			
		21150		689.00

Appendix 4: Financial actuals and budget

Synod Bunbury Costs:				
- Printing & Publishing	1500		4707.54	
- Venue & Infrastructure	2000		6388.91	
- Loss of Income	0		2360.00	
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	0		2500.00	
- Travel	300		771.88	
- Catering	1100		271.76	
		4900		17000.09
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**91050**		**49059.98**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT		**-30150**		**18064.79**
CASH AT BANK RECONCILIATION				
Opening Balances 1 April 2018		50088		50088.03
Surplus/Deficit as above		-30150		18064.79
Closing Balances 31 March 2021		19938		**68152.82**
REPRESENTED BY:				
GST Refund Owing				9.00
Westpac Community Solutions One Account				23447.49
Westpac Business Cash Reserve Account				44696.33
CASH AT BANK 31-03-2021				**68152.82**

FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA				
SYNOD TREASURY BUDGET				
FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2021 TO 31 MARCH 2024				
	ACTUALS 2018-21		**BUDGET 2021-24**	
INCOME				
GST Refunds (earlier years)		1390.00		0.00
GST Rounding		-0.79		0.00
Contributions from Churches (over 3 years)	$23/CFM	65003.00	$18/CFM	54000.00
Interest - Savings		690.59		20.00
Interest - Working Account		41.97		0.00
TOTAL INCOME		**67124.77**		**54020.00**
EXPENDITURE				
Deputy Expenses:				
- Canadian Ref Churches (x2)	4695.49		6000.00	
- Kosin Presb Church Korea (x2)	2441.21		3000.00	
- United Ref Churches North America (x1)	0.00		3000.00	
- Ref Churches New Zealand (x2)	1722.69		5000.00	
- Free Ref Churches South Africa (x2)	0.00		4000.00	
- Orthodox Presb Church (x1)	0.00		3000.00	
- Ref Churches of Indonesia	3379.49		5000.00	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore	2148.35		3000.00	
- First Evangelical Ref Church Singapore (prior Syno	1036.99		0.00	
- RCN/DGK/GKN	4526.29		4500.00	

- Deputies Article 48	788.18		1000.00	
- Standing C'tee Aust Book of Praise (2018 allocatio	0.00		15000.00	
- Standing C'tee Aust Book of Praise	0.00		0.00	
- Training for Ministry - Promotion of the Ministry	1664.74		2500.00	
- Training for Ministry - Loss of Income	0.00		1180.00	
- Training for Ministry - Guest Lecturer	6102.17		7500.00	
- Training for Ministry - Deputy to CRTS (x1)	2095.11		4000.00	
		30600.71		67680.00
Web Hosting		770.18		1200.00
Synod Albany Costs:				
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	600.00		3000.00	
- Loss of Income - Delegates			2500.00	
- Infrastructure/Catering etc - Albany			3500.00	
- Infrastructure & Venue (Deputies)			8650.00	
- Travel Reimbursement			3000.00	
- Postage	89.00		500.00	
- Printing (net of reimbursement)			4000.00	
		689.00		25150.00
Synod Bunbury Costs:				
- Printing & Publishing	4707.54		0.00	
- Venue & Infrastructure	6388.91		0.00	
- Loss of Income	2360.00		0.00	
- Admin/Clerk Assistant	2500.00		0.00	
- Travel	771.88		0.00	
- Catering	271.76		0.00	
		17000.09		0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**49059.98**		**94030.00**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT		**18064.79**		**-40010.00**
CASH AT BANK RECONCILIATION				
Opening Balances 1 April 2021				68152.82
Surplus/Deficit as above				-40010.00
Closing Balances 31 March 2024				**28142.82**

Appendix 5: Press Release – Synod Albany 2021

Opening of Synod

It was a dark and stormy night in Albany, Western Australia, when eighteen delegates and many observers came together for the official opening of Synod 2021. After months of preparation by the hosting congregation of FRC Albany, the 14th of June had finally arrived. On behalf of the convening church, Rev H Alkema led a prayer service which centered on the rich words of Ephesians 1:15-23. He expressed the hope that delegates and churches alike would maintain a clear focus on Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God. Because Christ sits at God's right hand as the triumphant Saviour and mighty King, we have every reason to trust in Him and obey His word, even during the tumultuous days of world history. We prayed for the Lord's favour to rest upon synod, asking that He would grant the delegates a full measure of wisdom and faithfulness to address the many items on the agenda.

Delegates and Officers

After welcoming all those present, Rev Alkema confirmed that the credentials of the delegates had been found to be in good order. All the primary delegates from the three classes were present:

Classis North:	*Classis Central:*	*Classis South West:*
Rev R Bredenhof	Rev RD Anderson	Rev H Alkema
Rev W Bredenhof	Rev R Eikelboom	Rev R Pot
Rev D Poppe	Rev AC Pol	Rev A Hagg
Elder H Ballast	Elder W Pleiter	Elder JB Lewis
Elder H Faas	Elder H van der Linde	Elder J Plug
Elder S Thompson	Elder B Veenendaal	Elder P Witten

The convening church then conducted a series of votes to select the four men who would serve synod as officers. Rev Alkema was elected as chairman, Rev R Bredenhof as vice-chairman, Elder B Veenendaal as first clerk, and Rev W Bredenhof as second clerk. Synod was grateful to appoint Sr. K van Duyn as an administrative assistant for the duration of the meeting. The chairman declared synod to be duly constituted, after which the delegates rose to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity. Rev Alkema then closed the evening in prayer and adjourned synod for the evening, giving an opportunity for everyone present to enjoy a time of fellowship.

Australian Version of the Canadian Book of Praise

In the days leading up to synod, it was exciting to hear that a container with the long-awaited copies of the very first edition of the *Australian Book of Praise* was approaching the port in Fremantle and was now patiently waiting to clear customs. Synod 2018 had approved the publication of an Australian version of the familiar *Book of Praise*. This version would use the ESV translation of the Bible, include the FRCA version of the Church Order, and incorporate various small changes to the creeds, confessions, and liturgical forms. The standing committee for the *Book of Praise* had arranged with Premier Printing of Manitoba, Canada, to print the new book. Once the books are in hand, the deputies for the *Book of Praise* will be busy distributing them for use in the churches. May these songbooks serve the churches well for many years in our worship of the triune God.

Foreign delegates

Due to the ongoing restrictions on travel, most overseas visitors were unable to attend synod in person. We instead received written or recorded greetings from our sister churches as well as from some other churches with whom we have contact. After each of the addresses, the delegates spent time in prayer for these church federations, thanking God for the goodness and grace that He shows to our brothers and sisters in many places around the globe. A regular theme in these messages was the tension and difficulties that our sister churches have faced in the last year due to the severe effects of the pandemic on church life. We prayed for the Lord's mercy and His gift of perseverance, that Christ's people may continue to place their hope in Him.

As will be seen further, synod devoted much attention to the topic of sister church relations. Our churches pursue these relationships in the spirit of Christ's prayer for the unity of all His believers, and in the recognition that we share a common faith and hope with many around this world. Nonetheless, this has always been a matter that generates a lot of discussion in our congregations and at our broader assemblies. For instance, questions are asked about whether it is legitimate to have two sister churches in one country, or if there is merit in an 'alternate' form of ecclesiastical contact when a sister church relationship is not feasible. In this connection, synod mandated the Deputies for Interchurch Relations to develop and propose a set of guidelines which may provide consistency and clarity in these relationships.

Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea

By a huge margin, our largest sister church is the Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK), which numbers around 410,000 members. In his video address to synod, Rev Nakchoon Kim noted that the membership of the KPCK has actually declined significantly in recent years. Korea's declining birth rate and increasing secularization were cited as key factors in this decline. Still, we were grateful to hear that our brothers and sisters in Korea strive to remain faithful to the Word of God and the confessions. Synod took note of the presence of a KPCK mission church in the Perth area, and deputies were mandated to have contact and seek to assist them where possible.

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The only overseas visitor whom synod was able to welcome in person was Rev P Archbald from our sister churches, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). It was a blessing to enjoy fellowship with our brother and to discuss together the challenges and joys experienced by our two church federations. From him and the deputies, synod could hear about the present status of church life in our sister federation. Synod was grateful to note that the RCNZ continues to be vigilant in their relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Since our sister relationship with the RCNZ began in 2015, it has been pleasing to see how the connection between us continues to grow and mature.

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

The First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC) is unique among our sister churches in being a single-church

federation. This has presented challenges to the FERC, and in the past they have sought support from our churches in requesting ministers to teach and preach in their midst. In his recorded address, Pastor Chong Nam Tuck of the FERC spoke of how God has been blessing their ministries of mercy, teaching, and mission. If it is possible, deputies will seek to visit Singapore in order to offer assistance where it is requested and feasible. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless the relationship with our small sister in Singapore.

Website

It goes without saying that almost everyone relies on the Internet as a source of current information. For this reason, synod mandated the Committee for the Website to activate a thoroughly revamped website for the FRCA at www.frca.org.au. It will be an online space where news and information can be shared with church members, and it will also provide opportunity for people from the local and wider community to learn more about the FRCA and the glorious gospel of Christ which we proclaim.

Reformed Churches in Indonesia

Our geographically closest sister church lies to the north, the Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRI). Synod thankfully received written greetings from Rev Pila Njuka of the GGRI. We continue to seek ways to assist the GGRI in developing their Reformed character, such as through conducting seminars and giving support in theological training. Synod also decided to provide funds for the renovation of the seminary buildings in Waimarang. There are two other federations in Indonesia with whom we have ongoing contact, the Calvinist Reformed Churches of Indonesia (GGRC) and the Reformed

Churches in Indonesia-Timor (GGRI-T). Synod received greetings from both federations, via a letter from Rev Soleman Dethan of the GGRC and from Brothers C Nguru and F Missa of the GGRI-T. Deputies were tasked to encourage the GGRI in their efforts to work towards federative unity with the GGRC and the GGRI-T, and we pray that God will continue to care for all of these believers.

Interpreting Article 31

On synod's table were three appeals against a decision of Synod Bunbury concerning the right of an individual church member to appeal synod decisions which deal with the 'churches in common.' This matter is described in Article 31 of the Church Order. At issue is whether an individual may appeal such a decision directly to synod, or whether he needs to follow the ecclesiastical route: namely, interacting first with his consistory, then classis, and finally synod. Synod decided to deny these appeals, but acknowledged that historically there have been varying interpretations about whether an individual can in fact appeal directly to synod. The decision of Synod Bunbury on this matter sought to provide clarity on this process for the churches. If the churches desire more explicit direction on this question, they may propose a change to the Church Order.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church & Southern Presbyterian Church

For some years there has been contact between the Free Reformed Churches in Tasmania and both the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) as well as the Southern Presbyterian Church (SPC). Synod 2018 had mandated deputies to investigate the EPC and the SPC and report back

to the next synod concerning the feasibility of further ecumenical contact. After hearing the report of the deputies, synod decided to mandate them to continue investigating some of the differences in theological emphasis and church practice in these two federations.

Canadian Reformed Churches

The connections between the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) and FRCA are strong and deep. This was also evident around the table of synod, where a majority of the delegates were either Canadian or have lived in Canada for extended periods of time. In his video address to synod, Rev A Witten affirmed the close ties that are experienced by the members of our federations in many ways. Perhaps foremost is through the work of the seminary in Hamilton (CRTS), an institution which God continues to use to bring great blessing to our churches. Synod took note of the ongoing and at times difficult conversations in the CanRC regarding elements of church polity and liturgy, and observed that these are developments with which we should keep up to date through the deputies. We commend our brothers and sisters in Canada to the care of the Lord.

Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

A brief report but one received with sadness concerned the visit that the Deputies for Interchurch Relations made to the Netherlands in 2019. They went to convey the decision made by Synod Bunbury to terminate the relationship between the FRCA and the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN). The serious calls for the RCN to repent from their unbiblical direction have not been heeded, but we pray that God may yet grant them the grace of repentance.

Training for the Ministry

Faith comes through hearing the Word, so it is fitting that we place a priority not only on preaching but also preparing men to do this vital work. Our appreciation for CRTS is strong, and the churches continue to contribute generously toward its support. At the same time, our previous synod recognised that there is interest in the idea of establishing an Australian theological seminary in the medium to long term. Since 2015, deputies have been busy investigating the possibility of establishing a seminary in Australia, and they will continue to do so in the coming years. While it is a massive undertaking, both the urgency and the possibilities of an Australian seminary have been underlined in the last couple of years by travel restrictions and the rapid adoption of online learning. In relation to CRTS, deputies will continue to promote the work of the seminary in a variety of ways.

Because we want to make it possible for young men to study for the ministry, the churches seek to support them financially. In this connection, synod adopted new and clearer guidelines for the support of needy students. The deputies were also tasked to develop guidelines for a vicariate (ministry internship) model of training. The vicariate model would see recent FRCA graduates from the seminary be given the opportunity to spend a full year working in a congregation under the guidance of a seasoned pastor in Australia. Such an experience would help to train and develop men for the future work of gospel ministry.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) is familiar to some of our members as a confessionally Reformed federation which

is based largely in the United States. Synod Bunbury had mandated deputies to establish contact with the OPC and to report back about these churches. After considering the deputies' report, synod decided to gather more information about aspects of church polity and practice in the OPC. Synod also watched a video greeting from Br Mark Bube of the OPC. As we get to know these churches, we thank God for their Reformed witness and commitment to the truth of the Scriptures.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

For many years we have enjoyed a relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (FRCSA). It was encouraging to listen to the recorded greetings from Rev Johan Bruintjes of this federation. In his address, he outlined some of the blessings as well as the challenges that are faced by the FRCSA. Arrangements with CRTS have been put into place for distance education in South Africa, and this has proven helpful. As churches we are glad to have the opportunity to provide financial support for their theological training. It is our hope and prayer that the Lord will continue to uphold the churches of the FRCSA.

United Reformed Churches of North America

A close 'sister' of the Canadian Reformed Churches is the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA). Because of their close ties with the CanRC, we have been aware of the URCNA for some time now. Our previous synod tasked deputies to take up contact with the URCNA and to gather more information about them. Written greetings from Brother G Swets of the URCNA were gratefully received at synod. The activity of getting acquainted with this federation

will continue in the future with a view to possibly developing a sister church relationship.

International Conference of Reformed Churches

Synod considered a proposal from one of the classes to send observers to meetings of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). During its deliberations on this matter, synod noted that this issue has been discussed extensively by our churches in the past. Synod decided that prior to re-engaging with the ICRC, there is merit in reflecting on what has been said by previous synods about this topic, and addressing any matters that were left unresolved.

The DGK & GKN

There are two church federations in the Netherlands which have arisen in the last couple of decades as the RCN has followed an unbiblical direction. These small federations are De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN). Synod received encouraging news about these churches' efforts to move towards unity. The deputies for Interchurch Relations will continue to monitor developments in both the DGK and the GKN, and work towards entering a sister church relationship.

Closing of Synod

For seven full days of deliberating and discussing, the delegates were busy with the agenda of synod. It was tiring and trying, but we were well-supported by God with everything needful. The brothers regularly took time to read Scripture, to sing praises together, and to pray for God's strength and wisdom. We did this in the humble recognition

that apart from the Lord's good gifts, synod's work would be in vain. The delegates were well-supported in other ways too, particularly through the community of believers—not only the congregation of Albany, but also her sister in West Albany. Delegates were grateful for all their outstanding efforts in organization and preparation. It was also heartening that during the daytime sessions, we often had visitors from the John Calvin School (just next door) attending as keen observers of the muddling machinations of synod.

In his concluding comments on the evening of 23 June, Rev Alkema as synod chairman expressed gratitude for how the delegates were able to work in a congenial and cooperative manner. By the grace of God, we could address many issues together. Sin and weakness stain all our work—also at synod—but we humbly commit our labours to the Lord. We ask for His blessing and favour so that all the decisions would be for the benefit of the church and to the glory of Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God and our Saviour.

Rev Reuben Bredenhof
Vice-chairman of Synod 2021

Appendix 6: Officers of Synod and Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant plays a key role in supporting synods and particularly the first clerks in their responsibility of recording and publishing the acts. Given her expertise over the past seven synods, the dedication and talents of Sr. Kina van Duyn are duly acknowledged and very much appreciated.

