

II. REPORT

OF THE COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is always relevant and worthwhile to look back to previous Reports to the General Assembly and the Report which was presented to the General Assembly thirty years ago makes interesting reading. Much has changed in the intervening years, both at home and abroad but the need then for fellowship in the gospel with those of like mind has certainly not lessened. If anything, the days in which we live, days of concerted and sustained attacks on our Christian faith and values, make that fellowship all the more important and refreshing.

Throughout the past year the Committee has sought to foster and further our ecumenical relations in a manner appropriate to each circumstance and with an eye to mutual edification within the body of Christ.

ECUMENICAL BODIES

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

The ICRC last met in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2009 and on that occasion we were once again recognised as full members of ICRC. Such is the speed with which our lives are passing that the next meeting of the ICRC is now drawing near, being scheduled for 28 August to 4 September 2013 in Cardiff. On this occasion it will be hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales.

European Conference of Reformed Churches (EuCRC)

This Conference is held every two years. and by the time the General Assembly meets the gathering, on this occasion in the Ukraine, will have come and gone. The Committee appointed Rev. W. B. Scott as our representative. We are grateful to him for undertaking this task on our behalf and we look forward to his report of the meeting.

Affinity

We are grateful to Rev. Timothy McGlynn who continues as the representative of our Church on the Affinity Council. Mr McGlynn is firmly of the opinion that we can continue to fulfil a very important rôle within this organisation, presenting and promoting the rich heritage of experimental Calvinism which we have received from those who went before us.

UNITED KINGDOM

Scotland

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The General Assembly of 2011 noted that a communication had been sent to the Free Presbyterian Synod which was meeting that same week. The Committee received the Synod's response and the Convener and Clerk were appointed to respond.

The Associated Presbyterian Churches were represented at our General Assembly of 2011 by Rev. John Ross, Edinburgh and the Moderator of our 2010 General Assembly, Rev. David Fraser, was invited to attend their annual meeting in Inverness on 11th May 2011.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This past year has been one of change and development within the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. As a body they share, with ourselves, in that glorious heritage of the reformed faith and in days when such matters are counted as of little consequence we are thankful for their clear commitment to the regulative principle. As in previous years the Committee have invited

a representative from this Church to attend as a delegate to the 2012 General Assembly. A recent communication from the Reformed Presbyterian Church has still to be brought before the Ecumenical Relations Committee.

Ireland

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland maintain their decision not to resume formal relations with us or with the FCS but an invitation to send a delegate to our Assembly has again been issued .

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland was represented at the 2011 General Assembly by Rev. Gareth Burke. It was a particular pleasure for members of Assembly to be able to renew fellowship with Mr Burke.

England and Wales

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales was represented at the 2011 General Assembly by Rev. Bill Schweitzer. A representative from our Church attends their Presbytery every other year. Minutes of their Presbytery meetings and copies of their denominational magazine are regularly received by us.

The Church of England (Continuing) were unable to send a representative to the last General Assembly but a letter of greetings had been forward. We are sent a copy of their denominational magazine.

The Free Church of England (Evangelical Connexion) were also unable to be represented at the Assembly of 2011 but again a letter of greeting had been forward and a letter of thanks has been received for the communication of Assembly Findings. We are also sent a copy of their denominational magazine.

EUROPE

The Netherlands

The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN) have granted full sister-church relationship to the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). We are grateful that they and the Gerformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) kindly agreed to assist in seeking negotiation with the Residual Free Church. Any failure in this matter does not lie in any lack of willingness on the part of our Dutch brethren in assisting to facilitate such discussions.

The Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) (GKNV) known commonly as the Liberated Churches also kindly agreed, as noted above, to assist in proposed discussions. In that connection Rev. Maurice Roberts is due the thanks of the Assembly for his representations at the Synod of the GKNV.

Hersteld (Nederlandse) Hervormde Kerk The Assembly of 2011 directed the Committee to continue discussions with the Hersteld (Nederlandse) Hervormde Kerk and contact has continued during the past year. We are thankful for the readiness of this denomination to continue our tentative contacts with one another and pray that through this we may be able to encourage each other in the things of the Gospel.

NORTH AMERICA

Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC) We had looked forward to having Dr Arthur Miskin as representative at the 2011 General Assembly. Sadly Dr Miskin took unwell and was unable to be present. The HRC held their annual Synod meeting on Thursday 29th March 2012. The Committee asked Rev. Maurice Roberts who was visiting North America at the time to represent them at the Synod and Mr Roberts will give in a report to the Assembly.

The Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA) The FRCNA were represented at the 2011 Assembly by Rev. Jerold Lewis and Mr Connor Keuning They brought fraternal greetings and Mr Lewis gave a

warm devotional address on the subject of *Casting Crowns* on the Thursday morning. Rev. Bert Pohl represented our denomination at their Synod meeting.

Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC) The Committee are glad to report the resumption of relationships with this Church on a formal basis. A letter of greeting was forward at the 2011 Assembly.

Reformed Presbyterian Churches of North America (RPCNA) Sadly we were unable, for practical reasons, to accept an invitation to the RPCNA Synod of 2011 but we continue to be thankful for their prayerful interest in our work and witness.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) Whilst a recent exchange of delegates has not proved possible we are glad to be able to exchange letters of greeting.

United Reformed Churches of North America (URC) Members of Assembly will recall that the possibility of establishing contact with this Church was raised by Rev. David Fraser. Mr. Fraser visited their Synod as our representative in October 2010. Formal contact has now been established and the Committee have requested Rev. Warren Gardner to represent us at their Synod meeting in Nyack, New York in June 2012.

AUSTRALIA

Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia We continue in brotherly contact with this denomination. Rev. Gerald Kastelein represented their Church at the 2011 General Assembly and we are thankful for the opportunity such visits afford for discussions and mutual understanding.

Free Church of Australia A letter of greeting was forwarded by this Church to the 2011 General Assembly.

Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia A letter of greeting was forwarded by this Church to the 2011 General Assembly.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Sri Lanka

During the past year our links with and prayerful interest in Sri Lanka have greatly increased following the ordination and appointment of Rev. Parthee Shanmugam. Mr Shanmugam returned to Sri Lanka towards the end of last year. In December, Rev. William Macleod went across to Sri Lanka and officiated at Parthee's wedding and also undertook an extensive speaking schedule. Other matters relating to Sri Lanka have still to be considered by the Committee.

NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Trinitarian Bible Society

The year 2011 marked the 400th anniversary of the publishing of the Authorised Version of Scripture. A number of events were held throughout the United Kingdom at which recognition was given to the special influence that this translation has had on our nation. At the 2011 General Assembly we also marked this important anniversary with a special address by Mr D.P. Rowland of the TBS.

MURDO A.N. MACLEOD, *Convener*

ALLAN MURRAY, *Vice-Convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive the Report of the Committee on Ecumenical Relations and thank the Committee, especially the Convener;

2. The General Assembly look forward to the forthcoming meeting of the ICRC in 2013;
3. The General Assembly record their thanks to Rev. W.B. Scott for attending the recent meeting of the EuCRC in Ukraine;
4. The General Assembly thank Rev. Timothy McGlynn for representing the Church on the Council of AFFINITY;
5. The General Assembly note that the finding of the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, communicated to the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) is being responded to by the Ecumenical Relations Committee;
6. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Associated Presbyterian Churches;
7. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland;
8. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales;
9. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Church of England (Continuing);
10. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Free Church of England (Evangelical Connexion);
11. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (CGKN);
12. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt) (GKNV);
13. The General Assembly note with approval their contacts with the Hersteld (Nederlandse) Hervormde Kerk (HHK) and look forward to a fuller response when the HHK have had due opportunity to consider the issues involved in establishing ongoing contact with the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing);
14. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC);
15. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA);
16. The General Assembly note with gratitude the regularisation of their relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC);
17. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA);
18. The General Assembly note with gratitude the decision of the Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) to give formal status to the relationship with our Church;
19. The General Assembly note with gratitude the contacts made with the United Reformed Churches of North America;

20. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia;
21. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Free Church of Australia;
22. The General Assembly note with gratitude their relationship with the Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia;
23. The General Assembly note developments in the ecclesiastical situation in Sri Lanka;
24. The General Assembly rejoice in the recent marriage of Rev Parthee Shanmugam and commend him and his wife to the prayers of the Church;
25. The General Assembly note with thankfulness the events which were held during 2011 to mark the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures, and look forward to the visit of the representative from the Trinitarian Bible Society;
26. The General Assembly commend the work of the Committee to the prayerful interest of the Church.