II.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

Introduction

In heaven there will only be one Church. Though it is a "house of many mansions", there will be no divisions and no special rooms for different denominations. There is one Church of Jesus Christ, "purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). They are the elect of God, effectually called by the Father, washed in the blood of the Son and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. They are to be found in all denominations, sometimes in the most surprising of places. Every human denomination has defective beliefs and practices. Even the best of Churches have tares among the wheat.

Our Lord explained, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.13:47-50) Essentially, the kingdom is the Church of Christ.

The situation in Scotland and abroad is one which we have inherited from our fathers. We can be fatalistic and do nothing about it. We can simply wring our hands and say it is beyond our powers to help in any way. Men are sinners and they spoil everything they do. Even born-again Christians come short of God's standard and therefore all they are involved in is defective. But there are certain duties laid upon us. As individuals we are to mortify the flesh and strive after holiness. Further, as Churches we are to be constantly reforming and seeking to return more and more to the ideal set before us in the Word.

Christ has emphasised His desire that the Church should be one. In His High Priestly prayer He said the following, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:19-21). Christ prayed for Church unity and even used the Trinity as a model, adding, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:22-23).

Unity is vitally important but it is not a unity which involves serious compromise and ignores truth and morality. No Church of Christ should tolerate immorality or heresy in its midst. There must be a separation from blatant wickedness, from serious error in doctrine, and from the Antichrist. Yet there must be a burden and concern to express the unity for which Christ prayed. It is a unity in righteousness and truth.

Different denominations arise as a result of controversies in the history of the Churches. After separation both bodies evolve and change. As sinners we have pride in our own Church, cover our own faults, having difficulty identifying them, and find it easy to see the faults in others. Small matters of interpretation or practice which would never have led to a division in a Church in the first place can keep two bodies from uniting.

So what can we do? We can certainly try to appreciate what is good in other Churches. We can recognise them as Christian Churches. We can encourage them in their mission to serve the Lord. We can show love and appreciation, pray for them and wish them God's blessing.

We are thankful to have fraternal or brotherly relations with other Churches here in Scotland and also abroad. This Committee seek to foster these relations with similar Churches. We sometimes have opportunities to help, to encourage, to support and even occasionally to challenge sister Churches to be more faithful.

Ecumenical Bodies

Affinity

Our denomination continues to have an active role in the work of Affinity with Rev. Timothy McGlynn representing the FC(C) on the Council of Affinity. The wish of some to consider the possibility of Affinity morphing into The Gospel Coalition UK (TGC-UK) caused a stir last year. It has become clear that such a transformation is unlikely to occur as the role of Affinity is very different to that of TGC. While many of the Council members of Affinity are likely to play some part in the facilitation and eventual formation of a TGC-UK, the bodies will remain distinct from one another.

The biennial Affinity Theological Conference took place in Northampton under the title *Great God of Wonders* with the subtitle, *The God who is and the God who acts*. The subjects and speakers were as follows: *The Power and Personhood of God* by Mostyn Roberts; *Faith and Reason: Reflections on Belief in God* by Robert Letham; *The God of Unchanging Glory: From Nicaea to Hegel and Back* by Dr Thomas Brand; *The Weaknesses of Christ: Their Theological and Pastoral Significance* by Dr Stephen Duby; and *Plurality and Pretence* by Michael McClenahan. The 1700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea and the defeat of the Arian heresy added a historical backdrop to the subject of the doctrine of God.

In an article by Rev. Stephen Steele of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the Winter 2024 issue (Issue 87) of Affinity's *Foundations* magazine, he names a senior FC(C) minister and a Presbytery (USA) of the denomination. Dr D.J. Maclean, the editor of the magazine, in his introduction to this edition of Foundations, writes:

> *Stephen Steele continues his examination of historical views on the original text of scripture. He previously argued (Foundations 85 Winter 2023) that leading theologians around the time of the Westminster Assembly were not committed to word for word identification of the Textus Receptus with the original manuscripts of scripture. Building on this, Steele now turns his attention to the founding fathers of the Free Church of Scotland. Again, he seeks to demonstrate that they, far from viewing the Textus Receptus as sacrosanct, argued for the superiority of alternative readings of the original text… Any alternative understandings of the Free Church Fathers, or indeed any scholarly response to Steele's first article, would be most welcome in Foundations. Foundations is an academic journal committed to dialogue within the range of views permitted by the Affinity basis of faith. As an academic journal, one of Foundations' roles is to provide an avenue for dialogue on areas of doctrine where Affinity members hold differing perspectives.*

This article has come to the attention of the Committee and it may be that some individual may wish to contribute to *Foundations* on the ongoing discussion.

International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)

The International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) provides a useful forum for contacts with reformed Churches throughout the world. Being probably the most conservative of the Churches connected with the ICRC, the FC(C) is able is able to remind the constituent members of the ongoing relevance of many of the principles which underlie the Scottish Reformation and show their abiding relevance today. The Conference's magazine, *Lux Mundi*, is produced electronically on a biannual basis and the download link is circulated around the Church. This provides information on member Churches as well as information on the work of the Conference Committees. Through the Conference, its publications and email requests for prayer and diaconal support, the ICRC helps in building relationships with other reformed Churches. Knowing what is happening elsewhere can also highlight dangers which are to be

avoided. The next quadrennial meeting of the ICRC is scheduled for mid-October 2026, to be hosted by the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea. The Committee have agreed to send one delegate to this Conference, the Clerk to the Committee.

European Conference of Reformed Churches (EuCRC)

The EuCRC held its latest conference at Yarnfield Park, England, in September 2024 on the theme of preaching. Rev. Timothy McGlynn, who is on the organizing Committee of the Conference, was one of the four speakers, and his address on "Preaching Christ from all the Scriptures" was well received. He was accompanied by Rev. Graeme Craig. While the lectures were useful, the main benefit of the meeting was the interaction with delegates from other Churches. A useful meeting was held between the Church's delegates and the CGKN representatives which helped greatly in gaining an understanding of their situation. As well as encouragement being given to the CGKN delegates, practical advice on the basis of experiences from the events surrounding 2000 was also offered. In addition, contact was also made with other Churches the Committee had been seeking to contact. It was also encouraging to hear, amongst other things, of small reformed Churches in Turkey and Switzerland.

United Kingdom

Associated Presbyterian Churches

Ongoing contacts with the APC are largely at a personal level, with various ministers assisting with supply and invitations to attend the School in Theology. The APC no longer have an Assembly as their brethren in Canada recently joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada. Thus, they no longer have a meeting at which they receive delegates. Their Scottish Presbytery continues and it is expected that they will send a delegate to the Assembly this year.

Church of England (Continuing)

Although from a somewhat different background to the FC(C), the Church has maintained links with the CoE(C) since 2000. Indeed, they were the first Church to send support and a delegate after the division of 2000. Rev. Philip Lievesley was well received last year and he is expected to return again this year.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales

Last year's delegate from the EPCEW, Rev. Stephen Dancer, who sadly passed away at the beginning of 2025, informed the Assembly of the difficulties they had been experiencing over the last few years. Several Congregations have left the EPCEW and this has continued into 2025. It appears that the issues are more to do with personality and Church order than theology. In particular, it appears that those who have left the EPCEW have embraced a form of Presbyterianism which sees the local Congregation and Session, as opposed to the Presbytery, as the radical Court of the Church. Given the weakness of Presbyterianism in England, this development is a cause of sadness to the Committee. The Committee had hoped to be able to send a delegate to their 2025 Presbytery meeting, but in the event this hope was not fulfilled.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland

Rev. Trevor Kirkland represented the Church at a Presbytery meeting of the EPCI in 2024. As well as contacts at the School in Theology, a delegate is expected to attend this year's Assembly.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

While links with the RPCI are maintained, these are mainly through the exchange of delegates. Contacts are also fostered through the School in Theology, preaching and personal interactions.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland

Apart from the exchange of delegates, there have been no formal or informal contacts between the Church and the RPCS in the last year. However, the Convener represented the Church at a recent RPCS Presbytery meeting.

Dutch Churches

Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland

When the CGKN Synod in 2022 reaffirmed their rejection of women in office in the Church, the event, rather than dealing with the question, became an occasion for those in favour of women office-bearers taking things into their own hands and ordaining women as Elders. Within a short time around 40 of the 181 Churches in the CGKN had rebelled against the Synod finding. This precipitated a crisis, as there seemed to be no clear way of dealing with the problem within the CGKN system of government, especially when whole Classes could not be relied on to act. (This is not helped by the fact that Dutch Reformed Churches view themselves as federations of Churches with the Congregation being the radical Court and the Classis a broader, though not superior Court!) It would appear that the roots of the difficulties are to be found in the adoption by some of a false hermeneutic which seeks to reinterpret Scripture in the light of contemporary culture. This has led to the embracing of the idea of women office-bearers and even the approval of homosexuality (including the opening of membership, office and blessings to homosexuals) by other Dutch Churches, such as the NGK, the denomination to which the former Liberated Churches belong. The fact that some CGKN jointly worship with NGK Churches appears to only have helped the spread of the poison of false hermeneutics and unscriptural practices.

The 2024 CGKN Synod, which began meeting in November and has had three sessions of meetings to date, has been unable to resolve the crisis. Initially there was a proposal to "ring fence" the rebellious Congregations in their own Classes, which would not be allowed to send delegates to their Synod, but this was withdrawn. All appeals against the 2022 Synod ruling were decisively rejected at the Synod meeting in January, as were the pleas of those advocating women in office to wait until a study on hermeneutics was published. At the same meeting all the overseas delegates spoke firmly of the need to maintain Biblical principles and deal with the problem. Rev. Graeme Craig, representing the FC(C), gave a brief history lesson on the devastating effects of liberalism in Scotland due to the loss of the authority of Scripture and warned the Synod that unless the matter was dealt with, the Netherlands would soon become a spiritual wasteland as Scotland is today. His remarks were well received and were an encouragement to many of the conservative brethren within the CGKN.

When the Synod met at the end of March there was a proposal to separate into two groups, which would enable the conservative Churches to have no responsibility for the actions of the others. This was not to be a formal split but two groups under one umbrella with various shared interests. Although this proposal gained around 62% support in the Synod, it was not enough to change the Constitution of the CGKN. In the event, the Synod agreed to close the meeting "conditionally" and that it would only open again under certain conditions, including "that the deviated Churches must indicate in large numbers that they will return within the framework of synodal decisions taken". At the time of writing it appears to many that a split is inevitable. It is unclear if the Synod will meet again in June or what is to happen.

Whilst a division in the Lord's cause never appears helpful, the brethren in the CGKN have been reminded that if a split does occur, those adhering to Scripture and seeking to faithfully uphold constitutional Synod decisions will not be the ones to blame. It is to be hoped that those who advocate the biblical position of the rejection of women in office may be enabled to stand firm and that the witness of the CGKN to biblical truth may be maintained.

The Committee, especially through their Clerk, maintain a watchful brief on the situation and encourage the brethren to remember the CGKN in prayer.

Gereformeerde Kerken (GK)

The Gereformeerde Kerken (Hersteld) in the Nertherlands (DGKN) or The Reformed Churches (Restored) in the Netherlands united with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) on the 4th October 2024 to form the Gereformeerde Kerken (Reformed Churches). Both of the uniting Churches had their origin in the

Liberated Churches but separated from them due to modernising influences within it. The united body, which has a membership of around 3000 souls uses a Bible translation based on the Masoretic Text and the Textus Receptus and mainly Psalms are used in sung praise. The DGKN have appreciated contact with the Committee, most recently at the EuCRC meeting in September 2024, and a proposal was expected to come before the Synod in October to maintain contact with the FC(C). It is hoped that opportunities will arise for more discussion in the future and that this will lead to the formalising of relations between our respective Churches. The GKN were admitted to the ICRC in 2022.

Gereformeerde Gemeenten (GG)

Following personal contacts with ministers of the GG, and then a letter from the Committee seeking to establish a relationship with the GG, the Convener and Clerk of the Committee had a useful meeting with two representatives of the GG in December 2024. The wide-ranging discussion allowed opportunity for a better understanding of the respective positions, challenges and encouragements that both Churches face. The GG are a conservative, confessional denomination holding to the three Forms of Unity with around 110,000 baptised and confessing members. In some of their Congregations there can be a reluctance among many of the people to partake of the Lord's Supper and lack of assurance can also be a big problem. In many ways, parallels can be seen with the situation in parts of the Highlands of Scotland 100 years ago, but, whereas in the Highlands there was always a clear Christ-centred and gospel-offer emphasis in the preaching week by week, this does not always appear to be the case in some Congregations of the GG. They have a shortage of Ministers with around 60 ministers in Charges. Around 60 Congregations are vacant. In public worship they sing only Psalms and use the Dutch equivalent of the AV, the Statenvertaling. The GG Committee are due to report to their Synod in September 2025 on the matter of a relationship with the FC(C) and the Committee await the outcome of their discussions.

Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK)

The HHK or Restored Reformed Church is a large Dutch Church, which has 118 Congregations and around 60,000 members. It is a conservative, confessional denomination, which emerged when the Dutch Reformed Church merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The HHK was formed over issues concerning the Confession and ethics. After some difficulties in maintaining contact with the HHK, the Committee were pleased to hear of contact between representatives of the FC(C) and the HHK at the recent EuCRC meeting. Subsequently, the Committee were informed that the HHK are in the process of making decisions regarding international contacts and a response to the FC(C) approach will be given in due course.

Other European Churches

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central & Eastern Europe

The Committee made first contact with the RPCCEE in 2023 after their admission to the ICRC and informal contacts at the 2022 ICRC meeting. They were also present at the EuCRC meeting in September 2024. Although no firm progress has been made, it is expected that there will be more openings for contacts in the coming year which may lead to a close relationship with this confessional Church based in Hungary, Romania and Ukraine, who adhere to the Westminster Confession of Faith but also to the Heidelberg Confession and Second Helvetic Confession for historical reasons.

North American Churches

Canadian Reformed Churches (CRC)

The CanRef, a daughter Church of the GKN(v), was instrumental in the ICRC's attempts to call their mother Church back to a Scriptural position regarding women in office in the Church. For this they are to be commended. There has been little contact with the CRC over the last year, but this does not mean that such relationships are unimportant. A delegate was present from the CRC at the 2023 General Assembly. It had been hoped that it might have been possible to send a delegate to the CanRef Synod which was due to be held in British Columbia in May, had there been someone supplying Nobleford, Alberta, who was available, but sadly this was not the case.

Free Reformed Churches of North America

The Assembly welcomed a delegate from the FRCNA in 2023. Most contacts with the FRCNA are maintained through the Presbytery of the USA who occasionally have men from the FRCNA preaching within their Congregations. They are like-minded in outlook and practice to our own Church. The Committee were saddened to hear of the recent passing of Mr Connor Keuning who often represented the FRCNA at the Assembly.

Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC)

The HRC are very similar to the FRCNA, though they come from a different background within the Dutch Churches. There is close co-operation between them, including the holding of Synods in the same place and at the same time. In 2023 they were represented at the General Assembly.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

The Committee are concerned to maintain close connections with the OPC and intend to send Mr Randall Taylor, St Louis, as a delegate to their Assembly in June 2025. Like many of the American Presbyterian churches, they subscribe to the system of doctrine of the Confession as opposed to the whole doctrine of the Confession. This leads to an unhelpful theological and practical breadth amongst office-bearers. In recent years a number of issues have caused concern, and having delegates at their Assembly who can observe proceedings, as well as encourage a more consistent doctrinal and conservative position, is helpful. The Committee relies heavily on those members who are based in the USA for understanding the situation in North America generally and with individual denominations in particular.

Presbyterian Reformed Church (USA)

The PRC, begun as an indigenous American Church, had its roots in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. They appear to have a similar constitutional basis to our own Church, having the same views on worship and the Civil magistrate as the FC(C), both of which are uncommon in North America. Over the last year there has been more contact, with the Principal Clerk attending the PRC Presbytery meeting in Stockton last May. In addition, a Zoom meeting between the Ecumenical Relations Committees of both Churches proved useful. It is also expected that Rev. Romesh Prakashpalan will attend this year's PRC Presbytery in New Jersey, USA. Such contacts help to strengthen the bonds of fellowship and may eventually lead to closer ties.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)

The RPCNA has become two Churches, with their Canadian brethren forming the RPCC. The Committee have had no formal links with the RPCC, and over the past year have had little contact with the RPCNA, except on a personal basis. They do, however, value their links with the RPCNA and their commitment to exclusive Psalmody.

United Reformed Churches of North America

It had been hoped to send a delegate to the URCNA Synod meeting in California in June 2024, but logistics meant that this was not possible. Meanwhile, contacts continue on a personal basis.

Australian Churches

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

The PCEA has its roots in the response of colonial Presbyterians in Australia to the events of the Disruption of 1843. Thus, the PCEA is the only Church to have what is essentially an almost identical background and constitution to the Free Church. The General Assembly enacted the Federal Relations Act with the PCEA in 1952, and this Act *inter alia* provides mutual eligibility of Ministers and allows the Churches to send and receive corresponding Members to their respective highest Courts.

The presence of Rev. Robin Tso as a Corresponding Commissioner at last year's Assembly, together with a number of retired FC(C) ministers supplying St. George's, Sydney, shows that bonds between the FC(C)

and the PCEA have been strengthened. Indeed, earlier this year, the Principal of the Seminary had a useful meeting with the PCEA's Training of the Ministry Committee who were interested in investigating how the FC(C) Seminary could possibly assist them in the training of their divinity students. At the time of writing the outcome of this meeting is unknown, but the fact that such an enquiry should be made is to be welcomed as a token that the PCEA is now following a more conservative trajectory than it has done for some time.

The PCEA have been affected in recent years by an increasing number of vacancies and a lack of men training for the Ministry. At present, five of their eleven Congregations are vacant. This should be a matter of concern and prayer. Thankfully, on a more positive note, it appears that with the changes in outlook and personnel within the PCEA, the divisions which had arisen amongst the more conservative Presbyterians are now beginning to heal. It is the prayer of the Committee that this would continue to the strengthening of the Church in Australia.

Australian Free Church

Rev. John Nelson of the Australian Free Church has been a frequent visitor to the Assembly over the past 25 years. The AFC is a small Church which arose following a dispute in the PCEA, and the Committee are thankful to note that there appears to be significant progress in restoring fellowship between these Churches. The Committee's hope and prayer is that the Lord may open the way for them to come together.

Southern Presbyterian Church

The Southern Presbyterian Church, based in Tasmania, is very similar to the FC(C). Indeed, this small denomination currently has two former FC(C) Ministers engaged in ministry in that Church. The Committee are pleased to note that relations with the PCEA are strengthening, and they look forward to further developments. Given the small size of this Church and the geographical distance, it is difficult to maintain relations except on a personal level.

African Churches

Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Africa (GKSA)

Over the years the Church has maintained contact with the GKSA. Although some time ago their Synod resisted the temptation to follow modern culture as opposed to Scripture, and open the office of Minister or Elder in the GKSA to women, it appears that the same spirit of rebellion which has been evident in the CGKN has also manifested itself in the GKSA. This is causing problems and the Committee received a communication from the GKSA asking how such problems would be tackled amongst ourselves. Given that the GKSA form of Church government follows the Dutch Reformed as opposed to the Scottish Presbyterian model, it is difficult for the Committee to give any meaningful procedural advice. However, the Committee believe that, as was done with the CGKN in 2023, the Assembly should write to the GKSA Synod warning them of the error of allowing women in office as contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture, pointing out the danger of tolerating such practices, and the hermeneutic underlying it, and calling them to faithfully adhere to Biblical practice and discipline. Such a letter is included in the proposed Deliverance. In addition, the Committee believe that someone should be sent to the next GKSA Synod due to be held in early 2026 so that due representation can be made and the more conservative element in the GKSA encouraged to maintain a faithful stand against error.

Other Churches

Over the years the Committee have maintained contact with a variety of churches, including the Maranatha Bible Presbyterian Church, Singapore, and the Pilgrim Covenant Church, Singapore. There is little to report other than that contacts continue on a personal basis.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

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

2. The General Assembly thank Rev. Timothy McGlynn for his ongoing work on the Council of Affinity;

3. The General Assembly note that the next meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches is due to take place in South Korea in October 2026 and approve the sending of one delegate to the Conference, namely, Rev. Graeme Craig, Clerk to the Committee;

4. The General Assembly thank Rev. Timothy McGlynn and Rev. Graeme Craig for attending the recent meeting of the European Conference of Reformed Churches and note that the meeting provided a useful forum for meeting with brethren from other Churches;

5. The General Assembly note the ongoing contacts with the Associated Presbyterian Churches;

6. The General Assembly, being grateful for the ongoing relationship with the Church of England (Continuing) and their support since 2000, look forward to welcoming a representative from them at the Assembly;

7. The General Assembly learn with concern of the recent difficulties within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England & Wales and note that these appear to surround issues of personality and Church order as opposed to doctrine; nevertheless they grieve with their brethren in the EPCEW over the weakening of the cause of confessional Presbyterianism south of the border, encourage them to maintain a robust Presbyterianism with the Presbytery as the radical Court of the Church, as that which follows the outworking of the principles of Church government in Scripture, and is, therefore, best designed by the King and Head of the Church for her security and welfare, and assure them of the Church's prayerful concern for them in their current situation;

8. The General Assembly note the ongoing contacts with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland;

9. The General Assembly note their ongoing relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland;

10. The General Assembly note the ongoing contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland;

11. The General Assembly note with concern the report that the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland continue to struggle to deal with the problem of responding to the fact that in over 20% of their Congregations there has been the ordination of women to office contrary to the decision of the 2022 CGKN Synod. While thankful that the recent Synod decisively rejected all appeals against this decision, and that it was indicated that there was a need to return to adherence to Synod decisions, the General Assembly remain concerned that, thus far, proposals to deal with the matter appear to seek to maintain a semblance of unity in the face of defiance of the Synod and do not clearly indicate to those involved that where there is such open defiance of lawful decisions by the Synod, the embracing of a false and dangerous hermeneutic and open rejection of clear scriptural teaching, those who maintain such things cannot remain a part of the Federation. The General Assembly call all their brethren in the CGKN to reject the aforementioned errors and encourage all those who are seeking to maintain a testimony to Biblical principles and faithful hermeneutics within the CGKN to maintain their testimony to truth whatever the price, as that which is most glorifying to God and for the welfare of the Lord's cause in the Netherlands;

12. The General Assembly note the ongoing contacts made between the Committee and the Gereformeerde Kerken and look forward to links between them and the Church being strengthened;

13. The General Assembly note the contacts made with the Gereformeerde Gemeenten and await their response with interest;

14. The General Assembly note the ongoing contacts made between the Committee and the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK), and look forward to links with them being strengthened;

15. The General Assembly encourage the Committee to pursue the formalising of a relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central & Eastern Europe;

16. The General Assembly note the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches and regret that this year they were unable to send a delegate to their Synod;

17. The General Assembly appreciate the ongoing contacts with the Free Reformed Churches in North America and pray the Lord will bless their labours for Him;

18. The General Assembly are grateful for the ongoing contacts with the Heritage Reformed Congregations and pray God's blessing on their work and witness;

19. The General Assembly note the ongoing relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and commend the Committee for seeking to have a representative present at their Assembly so that the Church might be a positive influence on them;

20. The General Assembly note that there have been ongoing contacts with the Presbyterian Reformed Church (USA) and pray that these may lead to a closer bond of fellowship in the future;

21. The General Assembly note that the RPCNA has established a separate sister Church in Canada, and are thankful for their commitment to exclusive psalmody in the Public Worship of God;

22. The General Assembly value the ongoing relationship with the United Reformed Churches of North America;

23. The General Assembly are thankful for their relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and, noting the manpower difficulties they are facing, pray that the Lord of the Harvest would raise up for them labourers for the work of the Ministry;

24. The General Assembly are encouraged to note that there has been a strengthening of bonds between the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and both the Australian Free Church and the Southern Presbyterian Church, and pray that this may continue further in coming years;

25. The General Assembly, noting with concern the developments in the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika with a number of Churches ordaining women to office as Elders, resolve to send a delegate to their next Synod meeting due to be held in 2026; furthermore, they resolve out of brotherly concern to write to the Synod in the following terms:

> The General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) express their appreciation of the relationship they have had with the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika over many years. They are concerned to learn of the difficulties being confronted by the GKSA in that a number of Congregations have ordained women as Elders contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture and as affirmed by decisions of Synod. They urge the Synod to remain firm in their adherence to the Biblical teaching that while women were created equal to men as being made in the image

of God, Genesis 1:27, and are equally saved by grace through Christ, Galatians 3:28, yet this equality does not imply an identity in everything, but rather, both in nature and in the Church, there are differing roles, and that while the role of women in the Church is to be valued and respected, that the offices in the Church are not open to women, 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 1 Corinthians11:1ff; 14:34. They warn that the adoption or tolerance of any false hermeneutic which would seek to set aside the instructions of Scripture and fit in with the spirit of the age is not only offensive to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Prophet and King and Head of the Church, but will sooner or later lead to the adoption or toleration of other sins and, ultimately, the loss of the Gospel itself.

The Assembly know all too well the difficulties and pain that standing for truth and righteousness can bring, and that it may bring with it the spectre of division. However, the Assembly respectfully remind the GKSA that the key to true unity is to maintain unity in the truth and to deal with those whose departure from the truth is the following of a divisive course. Without this there is no real unity and it can only lead to further departures from the truth in other areas, for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

The General Assembly assure the GKSA of their continued prayers for them in these difficulties;

26. The General Assembly thank the Committee for maintaining contact with a variety of Churches and for the important work of expressing the catholicity of the visible Church and being an encourager of like-minded Churches throughout the world.