

Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford

C/O 2064 Emerson Street, Abbotsford, B.C., V2T 3H7

July 30, 2009

Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad
Gereformeerde Kerken Hersteld
C/O P. Drijfhout
Anwending 4
7861 BE Oosterhesselen
The Netherlands

Esteemed brothers:

We write to you in connection with our previous correspondence dated February 28, 2008, which was sent to the Gereformeerde Kerk Hersteld te Zwolle, the response we received from the consistory of this church dated April 14, 2008, and our reply to this letter dated April 24, 2008.

We understand that copies of the material we had sent to the Gereformeerde Hersteld te Zwolle were handed over to you. Since that time, in January 2009, we have also received an email from Br. P. Drijfhout containing two documents: an English translation of Article 25 of the Acts of General Synod Marienberg 2005-2006 and a brochure entitled "Do Not Take Away Words From This Prophecy." Br. Drijfhout has also acknowledged that the Deputies were indeed working with the material we sent.

While we are most grateful for the consideration you have given us thus far, we believe that it would be responsible for us to intensify our contacts, with the goal of being able to recognize each other as sister churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would appreciate additional information concerning any and all sister church relationships entered into or maintained by the Gereformeerde Kerken Hersteld. Can you also provide us with complete copies of the Acts of General Synods Marienberg (2005-2006) and Zwolle (2007-2008)? We realize that the Dutch version of these Acts may have to suffice until the English translation has been completed.

At the same time we believe that we need to provide you with additional information concerning our situation here in Canada. The following will serve to explain in greater detail the process we followed in coming to secession from the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. It is this information that we are in the process of bringing forward to the remaining Canadian Reformed Churches concerning this secession. In due time it is also our intention to bring this information forward to the Free Reformed Churches in Australia.

Our focus in Abbotsford has been the restoration of the broken unity that has occurred as a result of the Canadian Reformed consistory's acceptance of unscriptural general synod decisions. These unscriptural decisions have established ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and, on the same principles, with the United Reformed Churches (URC), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). In 2007, on a similar basis, the Canadian Reformed Churches have established ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of New Zealand (RCNZ) and the l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ).

We focus on the relationship that has been established with the OPC since this history so clearly illustrates the unscriptural character of all of the above general synod decisions.

Timeline of Appeal Process under Article 31 C.O.

Although appeals of general synod decisions regarding the relationship with the OPC have been dealt with by every general synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches since 1977, the following process of appeal was followed by the brothers who now constitute the consistory of the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford:

- 1) General Synod 2001 extended a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC (see Acts of General Synod Neerlandia 2001, Article 45).
- 2) In 2002, from within consistory, we presented an appeal of this General Synod decision to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford *"on the basis that it failed to consider decisions of previous General Synods and it conflicts with the Word of God and the Church Order."*
- 3) In 2003 the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford took over this appeal and sent it to General Synod 2004. A copy of the text of this appeal is attached as Appendix A.
- 4) If the consistory had not accepted our appeal, we would have been obligated to address classis, and, in the event of a rejection at classis, also the regional synod. However, because the consistory has the right to appeal general synod decisions directly to the next general synod, its taking over of our appeal and sending it to the next general synod had exempted us from these obligations.
- 5) General Synod 2004 denied the appeal but failed to do justice to the material that was presented to it (see Acts of General Synod Chatham 2004, Article 86).

- 6) In October 2005 we presented an appeal of this General Synod decision to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. In our appeal we requested that the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford liberate itself from the decisions contained in Article 45 of General Synod 2001 and Article 86 of General Synod 2004 and forward our appeal to General Synod 2007. A copy of the covering letter and the text of this appeal are attached as Appendix B and C.
- 7) In February 2006 the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford replied that it accepts the above General Synod decisions. However consistory does not point to any fault in the appeal it had previously taken over and sent to Synod 2004 and neither does it point to any fault in the material we have sent to it. A copy of the consistory's response is attached as Appendix D.
- 8) According to Article 33 C.O. "*Matters once decided upon may not be proposed again unless they are substantiated by new grounds.*" The consistory's unwillingness to continue in the position it had taken prior to General Synod 2004, without pointing out how this position is in error, is a serious breach of its pastoral duty (see also Articles 22 and 27 C.O.) as well as contrary to Article 33 C.O. At the same time, under Article 33 C.O., we have come to the realization that, except for the failure of previous general synods to properly consider the material that was presented to them, we had no new grounds to direct an appeal to Synod 2007.
- 9) On May 21, 2006 the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford admitted a member of the URC to the Lord's Supper without an attestation. As a result Br. John VanLaar, who had been duly elected and appointed to the office of elder, could not in good conscience participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Consequently, on June 11, 2009 the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford withdrew the appointment of Br. John VanLaar to the office of elder.
- 10) In October 2006 we addressed the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford regarding a secession that had occurred in Lynden, WA, in June 2006. This action was similar to what Br. J. DeHaas did in 1950 when he brought forward the 1944 Liberation to the ecclesiastical authorities in the Christian Reformed Church. Our support of this secession was also clearly evident from material that had been placed on the www.calltoreform.com website. But instead of honestly dealing with the material presented to it, the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, immediately after having celebrated the Lord's Supper and without there being any exhortations consistent with Article 66 C.O., publicly called upon us to "*repent of [our] divisive ways and to return to full communion with the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Church ...*"

- 11) On January 17, 2007, Br. Richard VanLaar was placed under church discipline for publicly maintaining the same position on the www.calltoreform.com website.
- 12) The local issues that we refer to in (9), (10) and (11) above were the logical consequence of the relationships of ecclesiastical fellowship that had previously been extended. The issues involved in these relationships did not come under appeal in 2004 for the first time, but had already been appealed to every general synod since the OPC was declared a true church in 1977. We had only to deal with the highest authority in the church – the consistory – which we continued to do until they finally said to one of us, in their letter of May 31, 2007, that it considers the matter "*finished*."

If you believe that after examination of the above documents, together with the relevant general synod decisions, that we are deficient in our confessional or church orderly position, please point that out to us on the basis of Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity or the Church Order. In this case we request that you explain to us what further steps we are required to take.

Secession and Return

You will note that Article 31 of the Church Order states that "*whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.*" At the very beginning of the appeal process (see point (2) above) it was indicated that the matter under appeal was indeed "*in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.*"

The refusal of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford to deal any further with the issues and concerns that were brought forward and its subsequent implementation of and participation in these unscriptural decisions, necessitated further steps. As indicated in their book Decently and in Good Order, (see page 63) Prof. K. Deddens and Rev. G. VanRongen state that "*After one has gone the full 'ecclesiastical way' ... one has either to except the latest decision as yet - which does not create any insurmountable difficulties **whenever it is not a matter of conscience** - or he has to 'liberate' himself from the binding decision.*" Upon completion of the appeal process under Article 31 C.O. the following steps were taken.

- 1) On July 17, 2007 concerned members of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford addressed all communicant members of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, calling on them to liberate themselves from the unscriptural decisions and to join with us in restoring the Church of Christ in Abbotsford. A copy of this letter is attached as Appendix E.

- 2) On September 3, 2007 the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford issued a letter to those who had seceded requesting reconsideration of the matters that lead to the letter of secession dated July 17, 2007. An annotated version of the consistory's letter is attached as Appendix F.
- 3) On September 28, 2007 those who seceded sent a response to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. A copy of this response is attached as Appendix G.
- 4) On October 15, 2007 the above response was officially received by the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford but declared inadmissible, despite the fact that this consistory specifically requested a response.
- 5) On December 9, 2007 the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford was officially instituted with the ordination of three elders.
- 6) On February 28, 2008 an Act of Secession and Return was finalized and sent to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. A copy of this document is attached as Appendix H.

For further information regarding this secession see the website www.calltoreform.com. Further details, including copies of relevant letters to the congregation and the supporting correspondence with consistories and general synod are accessible through the "Librum," - "Correspondence with the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford" page on this website. We also refer you to a copy of an editorial (available through the "Editorials" page of the website) dated July 28, 2007 entitled "Maintaining the Reformed Confessions," which provides a summary of the situation in Abbotsford.

Requests

In accordance with our objective to restore the unity that has been broken as a result of accepting the unscriptural general synod decisions establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC and others, we beseech you to do the following:

- 1) Carefully consider the material we have sent to you to determine whether or not we have acted in faithfulness to the Three Forms of Unity and to the accepted Church Order, as we have agreed to do. If you have any questions concerning the course of action we have taken, we would be pleased to deal with them.

- 2) If you believe that the secession that has occurred in Abbotsford has not been accomplished in faithfulness to the Three Forms of Unity or the Church Order, to clearly explain to us wherein we erred.
- 3) If you believe that the secession that has occurred in Abbotsford has been accomplished in faithfulness to the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order, to indicate this to us by recognizing us as the legitimate continuation of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford.
- 4) It is our hope that you desire a Scriptural unity that is based only on the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort, as was done in the 1944 Act of Liberation or Return. If we are able to recognize each other on this basis, we wish to discuss with you how our relationship as sister churches should proceed.

We wish you strength and wisdom from the Holy Spirit as you study this matter and we pray that together we may work for the restoration of the unity of His Church throughout the world.

We look forward to your further communication.

Yours in Christ,

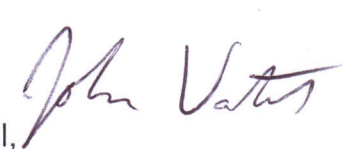
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cc: Gereformeerde Kerk Hersteld te Zwolle