

# *Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford*

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

October 23, 2009

The Consistory  
Canadian Reformed Church at Anytown  
P.O. Box # or Street Address  
Anytown, Anyprovince  
Postal Code

Esteemed brothers:

We write to you as consistory of the Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford, B.C., Canada, which was instituted on December 9, 2007. We are comprised of members who have seceded from the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, B.C., Canada at the conclusion of a process of appeal under the provisions of Article 31 of the Church Order.

Our purpose in writing to you is to restore the broken unity that has occurred as a result of the 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 similar principles, the General Synod has also established ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church of New Zealand (RCNZ) and the l'Eglise Reformee du Quebec (ERQ), but rejected as schismatic a legitimate secession that resulted in the formation of the Gereformeerde Kerken Hersteld (GKH) in The Netherlands.

We focus on the relationship that has been established with the OPC since this history 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 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 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 van Laar, 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. van Laar 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 by Rev. B. Hofford and others. This secession had occurred as a result of acceptance and implementation of General Synod decisions establishing and maintaining ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC. The General Synods had ignored judgments by Classis Ontario South in 1986 and 1987 that the OPC should be called to repent and that the Tri-County Reformed Church had rightfully separated from the OPC. Our 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](http://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 van Laar was placed under church discipline for publicly maintaining the same position on the [www.calltoreform.com](http://www.calltoreform.com) website.
- 12) The local issues that we refer to in (9), (10) and (11) above were the logical consequence of the 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*."

### **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, with a cover letter, to the consistory of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. However, to date, no response has been received. A copy of this document is attached as Appendix H.

For further information regarding this secession see the website [www.calltoreform.com](http://www.calltoreform.com). Further details, including copies of the relevant letters to the congregation and the supporting correspondence with consistories and

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

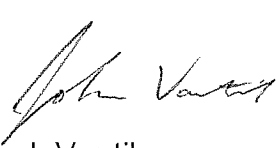
In order to restore the unity that has been broken, as a result of accepting the yoke of unscriptural general synod decisions establishing ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC and others, we beseech you to do the following:

- 1) Carefully consider the material we have sent to you, together with the relevant General Synod decisions, 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, please direct them to us.
- 2) If, after examination of the above material, you believe that the secession that has occurred in Abbotsford has not been accomplished in faithfulness to Scripture, the Three Forms of Unity or the Church Order, to clearly explain to us on this basis how we have erred. We then ask you to explain to us what further steps we are required to take.
- 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, we call upon you to liberate yourself from these unscriptural ecclesiastical relationships. We call upon you to return to a Scriptural unity, on the basis of the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order of Dort, as was done in the 1944 Act of Liberation or Return. Then we also ask you to recognize us as the legitimate continuation of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford. If you are able to do this then we are able to recognize you as a sister church of our Lord Jesus Christ and we wish to discuss with you how our relationship 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 in Canada, the United States, and throughout the world.

Yours in Christ,

  
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