

Report

**Deputies for Relations with
Churches Abroad (BBK) of the
Reformed Churches in The
Netherlands (RCN)**



General Synod of the Reformed Churches Goes 2020

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1. Summary

We would like to report on how we as BBK have carried out our task of representing our churches in foreign countries, and of informing our own churches about our church contacts in these foreign countries. It is a privilege to experience the world-wide scope of the church of Jesus Christ in our meetings with such churches. We were able to worship God together with brothers and sisters in all kinds of places in this world, and were able to encourage each other with His Word: truly a foretaste of a wonderful future to come!

The decisions of the General Synod (GS) Meppel 2017 concerning men and women in church offices ("MVEA") have had an enormous impact on our contacts during the last three years. The ICRC gathering, which was held shortly after the Synod decisions were made public, suspended our churches from membership. A considerable number of sister-churches and contact churches have expressed their disapproval or deep concern. Five churches have terminated their relationship with us; about ten sister-churches have suspended their relation with us or reduced it to a lower level, or they have announced that something like this will take place if the coming General Synod does not nullify the decisions in question.

We are thankful that we can mention a growing church contact. The relationship with the GKT, the "Gereja Kristus Tuhan," in Indonesia, has been strengthened. In the report of Section 4 it is explained why we recommend beginning a sister-church relation with the GKT.

In connection with the developments of the last period of time, we as deputies have thought about how we ought to give expression to contacts with foreign churches in the near future.

2. Assignment

The General Synod of Meppel 2017 gave us the following assignment:

1. The BBK deputies are to inform the churches and the church members in The Netherlands regarding Christ's work of gathering His church abroad, and communicate prayer and thanksgiving requests to the Dutch churches (including concrete situations).
2. They are to inform the foreign churches and church members about what is happening in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands, to make our relationship more meaningful.
3. They are to do their work making use of the BBK office and the facilities of DVN ("Verre Naasten").
4. They are to consult and work together with the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRC) and the CCS (Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad) of the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC).
5. They are to maintain contact with the Christian University of Applied Sciences in Zwolle (the "VIAA"), and the Theological University (seminary) in Kampen.
6. They are to formulate further proposals concerning participation in church networks, with regard to maintaining contacts and relations with different church federations.
7. They are to follow the General Regulation regarding beginning and maintaining relations with foreign churches.

Further we received the assignment to seek, in consultation with the deputies of sister-churches, to organize conferences concerning weighty themes and subjects which are of direct concern to us as churches.

3. Report concerning our activities

3.1. The organization of our work

In order to carry out our tasks properly, our body of deputies is divided into sections. Section 1 consists of the management team ("moderamen"). Section 2 has as its task publications and communication. Section 3 is charged with the contacts with churches in Europe (except for Spain and Portugal) and North America, section 4 maintains contacts with the churches in Asia and Australia, and section 5 has contacts with Spanish and Portuguese speaking churches and churches in Africa. We are fortunate to have had great support for our work from the "BBK office," that is, from Anja Mijnheer (till the beginning of 2019) and Joke de Haan (in the whole period reported on). They take care of dealing with the correspondence, record the minutes of meetings, make appointments, and they play a central role in the organization of the "foreign countries week": the week in which foreign delegates are present at our General Synod.

3.2. An overview of the reports

The "progress reports" regarding 2017 and 2018 are available via the link in appendix 1. In this report here we are building further on the information mentioned there.

In the following material of this report we report about the ICRC conference of 2017. Further, we report about our work section by section (the main points and the developments of the last year). After this there is information about the rest of our activities.

In a separate chapter we describe the reactions which have reached us as a result of the decisions of GS Meppel 2017, either by letter or by other means. After this we report about our internal reflections concerning the question: "Relations with churches abroad--how should we proceed?"

3.3. The ICRC conference of 2017

Shortly after GS Meppel 2017 had taken decisions about men and women in church offices ("MVEA"), the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) met in Jordan (Canada). As representatives of our churches, Dr. Melle Oosterhuis (moderator of the GS), BBK deputy Jan-Matthijs van Leeuwen, and Ria Nederveen as a member of the editorial team of the magazine Lux Mundi, were present. The conference decided to suspend the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (RCN) as a member of the ICRC, and to call the RCN to change its doctrine and practice. A proposal to not take any disciplinary measures as yet, did not gain a majority, by a large margin. The ICRC also made the decision to make our membership a subject of discussion at the next ICRC conference in 2021. The ground for this decision was that that by admitting women to the church offices, our churches were no longer in accord with the doctrine and practice of the basis of the ICRC. The decision was taken with 25 votes in favor, 4 against, and 2 abstentions.

Our churches were the ones which originally took the initiative to found the ICRC. Now the great majority (86%) of the ICRC churches have taken this decision, due to serious concern about the developments within the RCN. It is a true geological continental shift of the church landscape.

3.4. Section 2: Publicity and Communication

In the assignment given by the GS Ede 2014, BBK was instructed "to make the necessary preparations in order to make it possible, before the next coming ICRC conference, to have the ICRC take over Lux Mundi as its own publication." This transfer took place during the ICRC conference in 2017. This has meant a big change in the activities of Section 2.

After the deputy Marijke Blok's departure, ahead of schedule, her activities were carried out by the deputy Johan de Jong and, from the office, by Anja Mijnheer. When the scheduled departure of De

Jong takes place, and with the departure of Mijnheer, due to activities elsewhere, it will be necessary to see how the Publicity and Communication activities will be given shape. The fact that the Section has not been filled by new deputies is partly due to the circumstance that, by Lux Mundi being taken over by the ICRC, its activities have been substantially reduced. In the coming period we will have to see how the communication of the work of BBK can be carried out, if indeed it is necessary. We have attempted to explore new forms of communication in order to make the work of BBK known. The information on the website has been brought up to date to a large extent, also due to the AVG specifications (specified by BBK as a whole), and there are also more often news items or travel reports to be read there. We have not yet succeeded in making the content of the website available in English, in order to serve a broader group of those interested.

Next to this, there is cooperation with the editorial board of the magazine Naast (of DVN), so that contributions from BBK are regularly to be read there.

In connection with the (possible) future fusion with the NRC, and thereby BBK's merger with the CCS (the committee for relations with foreign churches of the NRC), the process of renewing BBK's name and logo has not yet taken place. Various plans of action will be developed by these two bodies in close consultation with each other.

3.5. Section 3: Europe and North America

West and North Europe

The period after GS Meppel 2017 has been characterized by difficult relationships with our sister-churches in West and North Europe. As a result of the decision of GS Meppel 2017 to open all church offices to sisters, a number of sister-churches have suspended their relations with the RCN. The following churches have taken this measure: the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Ireland) (EPCI); the Evangelical Church in England and Wales (EPCEW), to which the Evangelisk-Reformerta Kyrkan in Sverige (ERKS) in Sweden also belongs, and the Free Church of Scotland (continuing) (FCC). The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland has even definitively terminated the relation with the RCN. At the occasion of a BBK delegation's visit to the EPCI, that church promised to indicate what its difficulties are with the decisions regarding women in church office of the GS Meppel 2017.

Only the relation with the Free Church of Scotland (FCS) has remained unchanged. Hereby we must realize that the FCS is reviewing its own system of church relations. At this moment it is difficult to say what this means for the FCS's relation to the RCN.

If the GS Goes 2020 does not revoke the decision regarding women in church office, it's a good chance that that more sister-churches will sever their relation with the RCN.

Something new are our contacts with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (PCI). On the one hand, this church has women in church office, but, on the other hand, they are following a more orthodox path.

We would like to mention here that a BBK representative attended the so-called French Consultation, after a long absence. The French Consultation is a platform of Dutch participants coming from orthodox Reformed circles. From The Netherlands they seek to support Christians in the Francophone world.

Eastern and Southern Europe

The Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Westminster Bekenntnisses (ERKWB) in Austria and Switzerland is the only sister-church of the RCN on the continent of Europe. The congregations within the federation of the ERKWB have great difficulty with the decision of the RCN to admit sisters to all the church offices. On the urgent request of the BBK deputies, the ERKWB has not changed their relation to us, pending the outcome of the treatment of the requests to revoke the decision at the coming GS Goes 2020. As well, the relation with the Baltic Reformed Theological Society has not been changed, although the ministers who are involved with the seminary have great difficulty with the "women in church office" decision of the RCN.

The Evangelium Reformatum Egyház (ERE) in the west of Ukraine has made known that it no longer seeks to have a sister-church relation with the RCN. The ERE has been asked if it is willing to remain on the list of contact churches. An official answer to this question has not yet been received. In the meantime, the contact with the Ekklesia Church in Tirana (Albania) has become one with a special character. In the framework of the Groningen Mission, the RCN congregation of Bedum has reached an agreement with the Ekklesia Church to offer support in the area of spiritually building up the congregation. Rev. Marten de Vries has been appointed to give 30% of his time to work in Tirana. Further, in 2018, churches in Greece, Italy, and Croatia have been visited.

North America

Much has changed in the relations with churches in North America. The Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS) has ended its sister-church relation with the RCN, as is the case with the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). The contact church, the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) has similarly terminated the contact. The other contact church in North America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) has suspended the relation. The relation to the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) has, up till now, remained unchanged.

EuCRC

The decision of the ICRC to suspend the relation with the RCN has had consequences for the EuCRC. The RCN is no longer represented in the Convening Committee of this European branch of the ICRC. Drs. Jos Colijn has stepped down from his position as chairman, whereas Lucius de Graaff (treasurer) and Anja Mijnheer (BBK administrative assistant) still helped in preparing and running the EuCRC in England. The subject of the conference was *Caring for the Church of God*. The addresses were of mediocre quality, compared to the level of previous conferences. The Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (CRC) have promised to help give leadership in organizing the next coming European conference. On behalf of BBK, Section 3 will be taking inventory of the activities of the World Reformed Fellowship and see if this a promising international organization for the RCN to join.

How further?

If the GS Goes 2020 does not reverse the decision regarding "women in church office," a number of sister-churches will all terminate relations with the RCN. Does this mean that all contacts with these churches will be terminated, or is there still a possibility that they will want to be placed on the list of contact churches? This is a subject which will have to be investigated after the GS Goes 2020. A second subject which deserves attention is the relation to those churches in Europe with which contacts have been established, but which do not meet our criteria for starting a sister-church relationship. In line with BBK's general policy, we will attempt to establish and/or look for networks within which we can meet and encourage these, often small, churches.

3.6.1. Section 4: Oceania and Asia

Oceania

In Australia, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) terminated the sister-church relation with the RCN in 2018, with the decisions regarding "women in church office" as the most direct cause. There is at this moment little hope of being able to continue our contact with each other in another way. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) called the RCN in 2018 to reconsider the decisions regarding "women in church office." The PCEA has as yet not taken any further steps regarding our contacts with each other. The contacts in the period between our synods were actually quite few. In New Zealand the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) suspended their relations with us in 2017, due to the "women in church office" decisions, and are expected to terminate them in 2020.

Asia

There has been a lot of contact between The Netherlands, via the RSV's and DVN, with the Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (PFCCI), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI), the South Indian Reformed Churches (SIRC), and also the Reformed Presbyterian Federation (RPF)--a once in every two years conference which many of our contacts attend. Although a BBK visit could not yet be planned, due to agenda restraints, the contacts are good. The only thing we have heard is that the RPCNEI respects our choice regarding "women in church office," which they do call a difference in hermeneutics. We follow the contacts with the Isae Church of Bangladesh (ICB) at somewhat of a distance, through newsletters and emails. There are no special developments to be mentioned. Regarding Sri Lanka. The attacks which took place in that country prevented a planned visit to the Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (CRCSL) during Easter week of 2019. It was still possible to speak with Rev. Nelson of the CRCSL. That took place in Singapore. The contact is a warm one (since 2014 a sister-church relation), and will not be affected by the decisions of the GS 2017. The contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church Fellowship of Myanmar (RPCFM) are limited in scope, and are coordinated with DVN and the Hasselt RCN.

The contacts with the Reformed Church of Japan (RCJ) are limited in scope, but warm. Our decisions regarding "women in church office" run parallel with the results of developments within the RCJ. In Korea our contacts with the Kosin Presbyterian Church (KPCCK) are, since 1969, when we began our sister-church relation, frequent, warm, and good. Nevertheless, the GS 2017 decisions of the RCN were unexpected and glaring (they use the term "shocking"). They are awaiting the developments at the ICRC2021. It is not unimaginable that the KPCCK will terminate the sister-church relation in 2021 or 2022. The contacts with the Presbyterian Church of Korea-Hapshin (PCKH) are limited but warm. We differ concerning "women in church office." The same is true of the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK). This church, too, is seriously concerned about the direction of the RCN. The decisions regarding "women in church office" are a clear example of this dangerous direction, in their judgment. In Singapore, we were able to visit the First Evangelical Reformed Church (FERC) (the last time in 2018). The contacts are good. Our contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (RPCT) are limited in scope, but warm. These churches do not accept our decisions regarding "women in church office," but respectfully accept our choice, and, at least for the time being, have not taken any measures regarding our relations.

In the Philippines, we visited the Christian Reformed Church of The Philippines (CRCP), the youngest sister-church of the RCN (since 2017). The latter church is a warm sister in the Lord, with mutual encouragement and being able to learn from each other. Although the CRCP does not agree with our decisions regarding "women in church office," they respect our choice, and the relationship will not be changed.

In Indonesia, the sister-church relation with the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI)--for the time being still distinct as national and regional federations (GGRI-KalBar, GGRI-NTT, and GGRI-Papua)--is still in the process of development. Because no synods have been held in the past years, no visits have been brought to the GGRI. Lord willing, visits will be brought in July and December, 2019. With respect to both the relation with the GGRI, and the contact with the GKT, there is good cooperation with the RSV Indonesia Mission | DVN. During the past period, there has been little contact with the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC, NTT).

3.6.2. Growth in the relation with the GKT

For the past few years a very promising and increasingly close contact has been established between the RCN and the *Gereja Kristus Tuhan* (GKT; the Church of Christ the Lord) in Indonesia (especially East Java). This church would very much like to have a relation with the RCN, and therefore invited BBK in 2017 to visit their once in two years general synod. BBK asked Rev. Henk Venema, together with Rev. Kees Haak, to attend part of the synod for an initial meeting with one another to get

acquainted. BBK was invited again to attend the synod in 2019. BBK | Section 4 reacted positively to this invitation, and sent the deputies Johannes Veldhuizen en Rev. Henk Venema, now for a much more extended visit, with the intention of getting to know these churches better and to be able to learn from one another. In addition to both deputies visiting the synod, they had the opportunity to visit several congregations. They also visited the campus for theological education of the GKT, the STT "Alètheia" (STTA). Further, they were able to visit two Christian schools, which are run by the GKT, the *Sekolah Kristen Alètheia* (SKA; the Alètheia Christian Schools). Wherever they were guests, they were able to have talks with ministers, teachers, and church members (including young people) of the GKT. Our enthusiasm about this church, which we had already in 2017, has become even greater. The GKT is a church which is fully committed to living according to God's Word, and which in all kinds of ways is making this concrete in their church life and in society.

1. The existing contacts

In fact the RCN have for many years had different forms of contact with the GKT

- * through **DVN**: brother Henk Oostra has regularly been teaching as a guest lecturer at the STTA (Ceria!-course, the art of storytelling). DVN is supporting special education at a new location of a SKA in the city of Probolinggo (for pupils with limitations; practically unique in Indonesia), is helping with the training of TLT-trainers (*Timothy Leadership Training*) and with setting up mission work of the GKT in East Kalimantan. A delegation of SKA teachers (men and women) was in The Netherlands in the Spring of 2018 for an orientation regarding Christian, and more specifically, Reformed education.
- * through **LITINDO**: the writers involved in the literature project LITINDO, which was supervised by the Groningen Missionary Deputies (GZD), and now supervised by the FRCA congregation of Mundijong, Australia, presented the books which have been published for theological education, among which the STTA; the books received and continue to receive a positive reception there, and are on the required reading list. LITINDO and GKT are both also involved with the *LokNas KH*, the catechism education conferences which till now have been held four times already in Indonesia for churches which accept and really do use the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) as a confession. They help each other with material for catechism education, preaching, and meditations. Just as LITINDO (the translation of W. Verboom, *Liefdeslied uit Heidebelg (Love song from Heidelberg)*) and Momentum (translation of G.I. Williamson, *Heidelberg Catechism--A Study Guide*), the GKT has brought out a commentary on the HC and a collection of HC meditations.
- * via the **International Courses** of the Theological University (TU) in Kampen, the VIAA (Christian University of Applied Sciences in Zwolle), and DVN for foreign theologians: two teachers of the STTA, Rev. Markus Dominggus and Rev. Kornelius Setiawan (moderator of the synod), took part in one of these courses a couple of years ago. Further, Rev. Linus Baito, one of the lecturers at the STTA, took a course in 2019. At that time they also got acquainted with different RCN congregations, and visited the TU Kampen.
- * via **Rev. Kees Haak**, who since his retirement from the TU Kampen, and after a period of teaching in South Korea, now lives and works in Malang. First he taught for a few years at the SAAT, another theological institute, but starting in 2020 he's going to be teaching at the STTA.

2. Contacts between the GKT and the GGRI

There are also growing contacts between the GGRI, the sister-church of the RCN which came into existence through the missionary activity of the RCN, and the GKT. This began with personal contacts and meeting as church representatives through a number of so-called catechism education

conferences, which were held in Indonesia around the celebration of 450 years since the appearance of the HC (2013) and 500 years since the start of the Reformation (2017). These contacts were strengthened as well through the TLT trainings which we have mentioned earlier, for example. It has been particularly Rev. Madah Biha of the GGRI NTT who has expressed appreciation for the GKT and the STTA (it is striking that his son is studying at the moment at the STTA). As well, the lecturers of the STTR, the theological institute for the GGRI on Sumba, have expressed appreciation for the GKT. Further, Rev. Yan Wambaw of the GGRI Papua has had regular contact with the lecturers of the STTA, who he met a few years ago at the International Course in The Netherlands. The latter has thus also been a place where contacts have originated between those taking the course from the GKT and the GGRI.

3. The identity of the GKT

What is the GKT? The abbreviation "GKT" stands for *Gereja Kristus Tuhan*: the Church of Christ the Lord (earlier: *Gereja Kristen Tiongkok*, the Chinese Christian Church). Most of the approximately 8,000 confessing members of this church have a Chinese background. They belong to the prosperous class of society. The GKT is financially independent. Most of the congregations are to be found in East Java, but there are also a few congregations on Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa (Rev. Markus Dominggus comes originally from West Sumba, grew up in Sumbawa, and is now active in Malang). The GKT has its center in Malang/Lawang. Next to the synod office, the theological institute, the STT *Alètheia* is located there as well.

The GKT presents itself in different documents. First in its identity document *Apa, Mengapa, dan Bagaimana Menjadi Reformed, Perynyataan Identitas Gereja Kruistus Tuhan* (What, why, and how Reformed. Identity declaration of the GKT). The GKT goes further with this explanation of its identity in the series *Mengenal GKT* (getting to know the GKT), the first three parts of which have appeared: 1) concerning the mission and objectives of the GKT, 2) concerning the ecclesiology and the management of the GKT, 3) concerning church services, more particularly, the liturgy of the GKT. There is also a church order (which is being currently revised), and a handbook (with profile and statistics).

All these documents show clearly that the GKT desires to be a Reformational, more particularly, Reformed church. The GKT seeks to build further on the basis of Calvin's Reformation. The GKT holds firmly to the confession that the Bible is God's Word, and adheres to the HC and the Belgic Confession, as well as the three ecumenical creeds. But in fact the GKT values all the confessions of the time of the Reformation (for example, in the identity document the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession are mentioned). The GKT wants to remain up to date, on the basis of Scripture and Confession. Immediate areas of central concern are spirituality, discipleship, sanctification, and mission, which all lead to an internally and externally active Christian life. The GKT accepts infant baptism, and has male and female church officers.

During the discussions at the synods where our Dutch visitors were present, where all the local churches were represented by their delegates, it was evident that the GKT wants to continue to hold fast to the teaching of the Bible. Much time was made free for reflection and open discussion. It seemed indeed that such reflection and open discussion was considered more important than focusing on and making decisions about reports (the congregations had generally already discussed the reports ahead of time; at the synod, all that was needed was one round of discussion, and then the voting). At both synods which were visited the theme of discipleship was central: how do I give concrete shape to my being a disciple of Christ, in my daily life, in the congregation, and in society (remember in this connection that Indonesia is the largest Moslem country in the world). The committee appointed by the synod to reflect about "Dogma" has taken and is taking steps to ensure

that this theme of discipleship is worked out in pastoral care and the spiritual building up of the congregations.

4. Results of discussion and a proposal

There are naturally differences between the GKT and the RCN. The culture and the context of the GKT are quite different from that of the RCN. Regarding doctrine and convictions (regarding spirituality, sanctification, spiritually equipping church members), there is unity, while in their being concretely worked out, there are differences. The GKT, with its permanent synod administration, is moderately hierarchical in structure. This administration, however, does not dictate policy in the GKT, but carries out the decisions of synod, and provides the churches with all kinds of material, such as concerning the GKT's identity. All the congregations are directly involved with the work of synod via delegated representatives. The GKT has ministers, evangelists, and deacons, but no elders. From the church order, which contains detailed specifications, it is clear, however, that the deacons do the work of elders as well as of deacons, but in an integrated way. However, that which binds us together is much, much more than that which divides us. The BBK representatives saw clearly that the GKT is a Scripturally sound and confessional church of the Jesus Christ. The teaching which is given at the STTA, and the Bible teaching at the SKA, is Scriptural. To summarize, it is a living, faithful church of Christ in breadth and depth.

The GKT is keen to have the contact with the RCN be intensified. The GKT does not make a distinction between a contact church and a sister-church. From our side, a closer connection means that we enter into a sister-church relationship. Our proposal is to officially decide to do so.

3.7. Section 5. Africa, Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries

General

In the past few years, the decisions of the synod of Meppel regarding "women in church office," have had an unmistakable impact on our work. For some of our sister-churches, it is a very sensitive subject. We have always tried to carry on a calm discussion with them about it. We listened to complaints, gave explanations, and asked for patience. From our side we always tried to take a positive approach, and emphasized that, as far as we are concerned, a difference in opinion and practice doesn't have to be an obstacle in our relationship.

Next to this problem, there are (happily) also sister-churches for whom the issue is less sensitive. We were able to continue to build on our church relationship in a peaceful way. Just as in the previous period, we always sought to work together with DVN. For the relations we have together with DVN, we have always made it a point to weigh whether our contribution in such cooperative relations are meaningful from our side.

Countries

Benin ERCB

The Benin committee of the churches of Gouda and Waddinxveen maintains the relations with these churches.

Brazil IPB

This church decided in 2018 to reduce the sister-church relationship to a church contact. Because this step was on the agenda in 2018, we accepted the invitation to attend this synod. Originally we intended to visit the 2019 synod. Our presence was constructive for our relationship. This is important, moreover, because there is contact between Andrew Jumper Theological faculty and the Theological University (seminary) in Kampen.

Brazil IRB

This church is considering terminating the relationship, but will make a decision after the RCN synod in 2020. They have written a letter expressing serious concern to the synod.

Congo URCC

We visited the synod in 2018. In spite of difficult circumstances, there is a positive élan visible in these churches. In maintaining our relations we work closely together with the Utrecht Mission/DVN.

Kenya AEPC en RCEA

We didn't visit these churches. However, the RCN church of South Zwolle has intensive contact with them.

Nigeria NKST

It is difficult to get in contact with the general secretary of this church. DVN has decided to stop trying to get in contact with him. Regarding the future, it remains unclear if we ought to try to have a sister-church relation with them. It has been, till now, impossible to give any kind of shape to our relationship.

Uganda PCU

We visited these churches in 2019, together with the Utrecht Mission/DVN. It is a warm and heartfelt relationship. We work closely together with the Utrecht/DVN to help maintain our relationship.

Portugal, ICPdP

We have not had any contact with this church for many years. During the last years there was one moment of contact. Eventually it did not prove fruitful. For the time being it seems that there will not be any possibilities of giving shape to this relationship.

Spain, IRE

We have visited these churches yearly. Until now we have done so in cooperation with "Support the Brotherhood in Spain" (SBS); the last time we visited we did it in cooperation with DVN. Most recently, the Groningen Mission has taken over the work of SBS. The visits were always warm and heartfelt.

Venezuela, IRV

Only sporadic contact was possible with these churches. DVN did bring a visit. In 2018 several ministers came to The Netherlands, and we spoke with them.

South Africa, VGKSA

We visited their synod in 2017. Trust in the RCN has disappeared because of the decisions of the synod of Meppel. There is a lot of sadness about the "women in church office" decision. They sense another use of Scripture involved. There is also distrust of the Theological University (seminary) in Kampen.

We did our best to have a mediating role, seeking to hold us together. The sister-church relation has not been terminated, but attestations of church membership are no longer accepted without a personal conversation about one's faith.

South Africa, GKSA

We visited their synod in 2018. The contacts went well, warm and heartfelt.

3.8. Contact with the deputies for relations with foreign churches of the CRC (Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands) and the NRC (Netherlands Reformed Churches)

CRC

On January 15, 2018, the deputies of BBK and the DBK (the deputies of the CRC) met to inform one another and to coordinate our activities with each other as much as possible. Of course the matter of our position within the ICRC, after our being suspended as a member, was discussed; as well, we talked about the fact that the proposed trajectory involving the uniting of the CRC seminary in Apeldoorn (the TUA) and the RCN seminary in Kampen (the TUK) in a Reformed Theological University (GTU) was broken off. We informed them of our efforts to organize a conference on hermeneutics (see point 3.12 in this report). Further, representatives of the NRC were present at the next meeting, held on July 1, 2019. At that meeting, the developments in the three Dutch churches touching their contacts with foreign churches were discussed, and, as well, possible consequences in the wake of maintaining the "women in church office" decision, and the proposed fusion of the RCN and the NRC.

NRC

The contacts with the deputies of the NRC ("CCS") for relations with foreign churches began to take shape in the period since the synod of Meppel 2017. We consulted with each other, informing each other of developments. The NRC has a limited number of contacts with foreign churches, and the content of these contacts differs according to the foreign church involved. The RCN has a relationship ("sister-church" or "contact") with many more churches than the NRC has. We agree with each other that at this moment there is no need to formalize a closer cooperation about everything involved. In light of developments leading to a proposed fusion of the two church federations, we agreed that it would be good to involve each other as much as possible in the relationships with diverse sister-churches, or at least inform each other about such contacts. For example, this would be true in the contacts which BBK has with foreign churches, in which the RCN's relation to the NRC is mentioned, or asking the NRC to be present through representatives when foreign visitors to The Netherlands are welcomed.

We see as our important points of cooperation, at the moment, especially that we try to coordinate our efforts, make use of each other's networks, and have the freedom to ask each other to represent one another in contacts with foreign churches. In order to start the closer cooperation between our two committees of deputies, we have begun to attend each other's (section) gatherings, in order to get an idea of what's happening. An important area that needs attention in the coming period is the need to coordinate our finances with each other. The costs which BBK and CCS run up are now very different from each other.

3.9. Consultation with DVN

We have consultation with DVN by means of a DVN contact person who has regularly been present at the section meetings, and in a few cases a trip to a foreign country was made together with a DVN representative.

Sometimes there was consultation between the managing team of DVN and members of BBK section 1. That consultation often had to do with clarifying what our different responsibilities were. This remains a thorny issue. BBK deputies represent, officially, the RCN, and report to the GS on their activities. For DVN, the relation to the RCN is channeled more through the RSV's (regional church mission projects) and the LSV (the country-wide cooperating organization). For foreign contacts this distinction is often not clear.

The policy of BBK with respect to traveling to churches which DVN also has contact with, is that we try to coordinate with each other about what our objectives are, and we try to see if it would be

good for one of us from BBK to travel to the church involved. The contacts with foreign churches are so diverse, that it is difficult to formulate a rule about such things.

3.10. Contact with the TUK (seminary in Kampen) and the VIAA (Christian University in Zwolle)

The contacts with the TUK and the VIAA involved exchanging information by telephone and by email.

3.11. Consultation with Yachad

Our consultation with YACHAD, a cooperative organization for preaching the Gospel to the Jewish people, involved the question as to whether it would be good to keep up contact with them as a task of BBK. In practice over the last years, none of our sections have had consultation with YACHAD. It is obvious that we should remove Yachad (as a Dutch organization) from our list of foreign contacts. Naturally Yachad can contact us (BBK) when they think that that's desirable, and when there are new possibilities of contact with one or more churches in Israel.

3.12. A conference about hermeneutics?

One of our tasks as BBK is that, in our consultation with representatives of our sister-churches, we strive to organize conferences about important themes and subjects which are relevant to us as churches. In April, 2018, we asked a number of foreign churches if they would be interested in organizing with us a conference about hermeneutics. We said that it is not our intention to have an academic discussion, but to have talks at a church level about the way we deal with the authority of Gods Word in connection with the questions of our age. We named explicitly the subjects of "women in church office" and homosexuality. The idea was to hear from each other how churches arrived at their decisions about these subjects, and what we can learn from each other. You can find more information about our proposal in appendix 2.

Up until now we have not received enough positive responses in order to jointly organize such a conference.

We are still waiting for a reaction from Korea (the KPCK) and from America (the PCA), to whom we presented the idea of supporting the organization of such a conference. Further, we are considering the possibility of asking some of the foreign representatives at the "foreign churches week" at the coming synod about their reactions to such an idea.

4. Reactions of sister-churches and contact churches to the synod decisions of the GS Meppel

4.1. An overview

Here follows an overview of all our sister-churches with a short description of their reactions to the "women in church office" decision of the GS Meppel 2017:

Overview of sister-churches and contact churches with reactions to the "women in church office" decision	status
African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya) (AEPC)	
Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)	terminated
Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines (CRCP)	concerned, no reason to end relation
Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (CRCSL)	concerned, no reason to end relation
Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Ireland) (EPC)	suspended

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (EPCEW) including the Evangelisk-Reformerta Kyrkan in Sverige (ERKS) (Sweden) (EPCEW)	suspended
Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Westminster Bekenntnisses (ERK-WB) (Austria and Switzerland);	concerned, reason to end relation
Free Church of Scotland (continuing) (FCC)	suspended
Free Church of Scotland (FCS)	
Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)	terminated
Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA)	
Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC) (Indonesia);	
Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-NTT/GGRI KalBar/GGRI Papua)	
Iglesia Reformada en Venezuela (IRV)	concerned
Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB)	relation reduced to lower level
Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)	concerned warning, reason to end relation
Kosin Presbyterian Church of Korea (KPCK)	concerned
Nongu u Kristu u i Ser u shar Tar (Nigeria) (NKST)	
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)	
Presbyterian Church in Uganda (PCU)	
Presbyterian Free Church Council (Kalimpong, India) (PFCC)	
Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (PFC(CI))	
Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)	concerned
Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)	terminated
Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya) (RCEA)	
Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)	suspended
Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland (RPCI)	terminated
Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI)	
Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)	concerned, no reason to end relation
Reformed Presbyterian Church Taiwan (RPCT)	
United Reformed Church in the Congo (URCC)	
Vrije Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Africa (VGKSA)	suspended

Contact churches:	
Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary (Latvia)	
Église Réformée Confessante au Bénin (ERCB)	
Église Réformée Confessante au Congo (ERCC)	
Union Nationale des Églises Protestantes Réformées Évangéliques de France (UNEPREF)	
Evangelical Reformed Churches of Russia (ERCR)	
Evangelium Reformatum Egyhaz (ERE) (Ukraine)	decision to withdraw request to have sister-church relation
First Evangelical Reformed Church van Singapore (FERC)	
Hungarian Reformed Churches (HGK)	
Isa-E Church in Bangladesh (ICB)	
Iglesias Reformadas de España (IRE);	concerned
Igreja Cristã Presbiteriana de Portugal (ICPP)	
Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)	
Minsk Reformed Church (Belarus)	
Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)	suspended
Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)	
United Reformed Church in North America (URCNA)	terminated
Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin) (PCK (Hapshin))	
Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Dehra Dun, India) (PTS)	
Protestantska Reformirana Krscanska Ckrva (PRKC) (Croatia)	
Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship in Myanmar (RPCFM)	
South Indian Reformed Churches (SIRC)	
Ukraine Evangelical Reformed (or Presbyterian) Church (Ukraine)	

4.2. Written reactions

We have collected the reactions which reached us as a result of the decision of the GS Meppel 2017 about "women in church office," and which are addressed to the coming General Synod.

We have now put all these reactions together in one volume, and, with a presentation letter, sent them to the coming General Assembly. You can find this letter of presentation in appendix 3.

In the letter of presentation we have included a summary of the written reactions, so you can quickly get oriented to the contents. Due to the importance of these reactions, and due to the

consequences which the decisions about this subject to be taken by the coming GS, we now quote from a part of the conclusion of the letter:

"We see it as our task, as the BBK deputies, to ask the synod to give close attention to these reactions. In the contacts with the foreign churches we try to convey to them that we maintain relations with each other in order to praise God together, serve each other by offering advice and prayers, but also in order to learn from each other.

The foreign churches are asking us to take to heart what they have written us. This appeal has also been expressed by the great majority of the ICRC churches. We hear from them that they are praying for us that we would remain faithful to that which God's Word, they are convinced, says clearly about this issue. When so many allies in faith address us with such great earnestness, we certainly are called to take these appeals very seriously as we consider our response.

We have heard the complaint from foreign churches that they have certainly been able to communicate their convictions, both in writing and orally, but that in the decisions of the GS 2017 there is no mention of what has been done with these communications.

It is the responsibility of the General Synod to weigh the reactions of the foreign sister-churches and contact churches. What does the phrase "learning from each other" really mean, a phrase which we have always expressed as being important?

Our churches are being asked to reverse the decisions made. In the eyes of our foreign sister-churches, it would be an important gesture if a decision was made, one way or another, to take a breather, and create some time for reflection, including in the contacts with our sister-churches.

The churches which have taken the trouble to write us hope to receive a reaction from the General Synod in which it is evident that that which they have written has been taken to heart.

5. How should we proceed? Relations with the foreign churches and the work of the BBK deputies

Developments since Meppel 2017

The decisions of our General Synod 2017 concerning "women in church office," and the reactions to them from the ICRC and a great number of sister-churches, have brought us into a new situation. We are in the process of losing the great majority of our foreign sister-churches as sister-churches. Only a change of direction of our churches can bring a change to this development. At this moment we have no reason to think that the latter will take place. As RCN churches we are in the midst of a process of change. What does this mean with regard to giving shape to our relations with churches abroad in the coming period?

Reactions from sister-churches

As BBK deputies, we see clearly that various sister-churches are very disappointed with the RCN, particularly because of the "women in church office" decisions. The question has been presented to us: how valuable is your contact with us, if you don't pay any heed to our warnings?

The synod of Meppel gave the foreign representatives the opportunity of expressing themselves on the floor of the synod. Their voices were certainly heard. And letters arrived which were read and considered, as well. But in the text describing the decisions of the GS, nothing is to be found regarding these responses. And the speed with which changes have been introduced has prompted the foreign churches to ask: how much weight does the advice of so many sister-churches really carry?

As sister-churches we say to each other that we want to learn from each other. We have now been hearing repeatedly in our contacts with the foreign churches that they have not really experienced a willingness on our part to learn from each other.

What does it mean for us when a sister-church breaks off their relation with us?

A number of foreign churches have already terminated their sister-church relation with us. We must be aware of the fact that maintaining the decisions by the coming synod will give even more churches reason to take the same step. What are the consequences for us?

We can not imagine that, from our side, the relations will remain the same. Although we deplore the break and we, from our side, believe that we can remain sister-churches, in spite of difference of opinion about this subject, we are faced with the fact that our formal commitment to close fellowship as Reformed churches has been terminated. Whether or not contact remains is a question of looking at our relations with churches one by one; we must simply do this on an individual basis, and come to an agreement about what is best for the future. The consequence of terminating our sister-church relation is that our working together in one group as faith allies, who support each other in remaining Reformed churches, and together praising God, and celebrating our common unity, will all come to an end.

We can not imagine that nothing will change from our side. After breaking off a sister-church relation, the general policy that brothers and sisters from that church federation are welcome to celebrate the Lord's Supper with us, and that their ministers can lead services in our churches, is no longer in force. It will still always be possible, it is true, for a local church to decide to admit guests from that church federation to attend the Lord's Supper. As well, a local church can ask a foreign minister from a church with which we have no sister-church relation, to lead a service.

It is very questionable whether we will be able to keep on participating in a network of contacts with churches which have terminated their relations with us. How could we really function in such a network, when participating churches regard us as a church federation which is in the process of departing from the Reformed faith, and which will not listen to appeals to return to being faithful to Scripture and the Confessions? It is extremely difficult to cooperate without such trust. It will also be true for this kind of contact that it will only become clear in the course of time what has really changed.

Questions about the shape of a sister-church relationship

Our Church Order (E70.2) formulates, in broad strokes, what a sister-church relation consists of: mutual acceptance of one another's members and ministers. This means concretely that members of sister-churches are welcome to participate in the sacraments, and that ministers of such churches may lead services.

In practice the sister-church relation means that we inform each other about church developments; that we regularly visit each other's synod meetings, and, if asked, advise each other. At such times of meeting one another we celebrate our mutual unity by praising God together.

At this level, too, changes are taking place.

In the RCN, the practice of admitting guests to the Lord's Supper has become more generous. Whoever is visiting from another place or country can be admitted to the Lord's Supper, even when the church of which the visitor is a member is not a sister-church. Saying "Yes" to a number of questions (which are not everywhere the same in the RCN), is often sufficient.

As well, when there is a special relationship with a visiting minister from a foreign church, it is possible for an RCN church council to allow him to lead a service, even when his own church federation is not a sister-church of ours.

These changes bring with them the new situation that the difference between a sister-church and a contact church is losing relevance. The sister-church relation still remains a formal acknowledgement that we are close together as churches with a Reformed confession. But the question arises: how important will this be in the future regarding giving shape to our contacts?

How should we proceed?

As BBK deputies we would like to propose that we don't attempt to already concretely specify what new paths should be followed. Our churches are changing, and therefore another way of dealing with relationships is called for. Foreign churches, as well, will want to have their own consultations about the question concerning what kind of relation with us could possibly be maintained. Developments in the area of mission demand our attention. Perhaps in the future we'll have to be searching for ways of cooperating appropriate for the partner we're working with, and not simply be faced with choosing between either a contact church or a sister-church relation. Here in Europe, where we live, it would be helpful to be open to possibilities of beginning new contacts or intensify existing ones. The Church Order offers sufficient room to work in this way. The general policy (either a sister-church relation or a church contact) has a coloring which perhaps is no longer exactly applicable to new developments. It would be good for us as BBK deputies, in the coming period, to have the opportunity of reflecting more deeply about these issues.

Consequences for our committee (BBK)

If the GS Goes chooses to continue on the path which Meppel has chosen, as far as "women in church office" is concerned, that will have consequences for the work of our committee, BBK. The present number of sister-church relations will possibly be reduced by more than half. That means: less visiting of synods (back and forth), and less work of maintaining our relations.

In order to participate in networks, much less manpower is necessary than for visiting synods. There will be no more participation in the ICRC or the EuCRC. However, new perspectives are also beginning to emerge. There are foreign churches which, in spite of differences about "women in church office," still would like to have us contact with us. In Europe, for example, contact with the Hungarian Reformed Church (which also has female church office bearers) would be easier.

Finding the people to be in BBK, and financing the committee, will have to be adapted. If we put more effort into possible European partners, we'll have to come to the conclusion that few sister-church relations are left. Time will be needed to get a good picture of the changes involved, and to get some clarity about how we want to give shape to the relations. It is not our expectation that we'll need to think about taking new, radical steps directly.

6. Proposals regarding decisions to be made

We propose that the GS take the following decisions:

1. With regards to the *Gereja Kristus Tuhan* (GKT) in Indonesia:

To begin a sister-church relation with this church federation.

Grounds:

- 1) We have gotten to know the GKT as a faithful and dedicated church of Christ, that lives out of the truth of the Bible as the Word of God.
- 2) The GKT accepts the Reformed confessions and is making a genuine effort to be a Reformed church in doctrine and life.
- 3) For a number of years, already, there have been diverse forms of contact between the GKT and the RCN.

2. With respect to expressed concerns:

That the GS Goes give appropriate attention to the reactions of the sister-churches and the contact churches regarding the decisions of GS Meppel concerning "women in church office."

Grounds:

Sister-churches and contact churches have made known their deep concerns about these decisions. According to our own regulations concerning how we exercise our sister-church relations (Acta Meppel 2017, appendix 5-3, art. 2.3a), we must help each other as much as possible in maintaining, defending, and promoting the Reformed confession, according to the Scripture, in doctrine, church government, discipline, and church services.

It is the task of the GS itself to answer the objections which have been raised. The rule is that if a sister-church has an objection to a synod decision concerning doctrine, church government, discipline, or church service liturgy, they are to directly address the General Synod with the objection (see the General Regulation, mentioned, art. 2.4).

3. With regard to terminated relations:

3.1. To take cognizance, with deep sadness, of the news that a number of sister-churches have terminated, suspended, or reduced to a lower level their relation with our churches.

The sister-church relation has been terminated by:

- the Canadian Reformed Churches
- the Free Reformed Churches of Australia
- the Reformed Churches in the United States
- the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The sister-church relation has been suspended by:

- the Evangelical Presbyterian in Ireland
- the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales
- the Free Church of Scotland Continuing
- the Reformed Churches of New Zealand
- the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

The sister-church relation has been reduced to the relation of church contact by:

- the Presbyterian Church of Brazil

3.2. To seek possibilities of remaining in contact with churches which have terminated or suspended their relation with the RCN, or are going to take such a decision, and thereby to build on what binds us together.

4. With regard to maintaining sister-church relations:

4.1. In accordance with the General Regulation for Beginning and Maintaining Relations (as described in art. 1 and 2), to keep exercising contact with the following sister-churches, according to the agreements made with each church federation individually, in order to learn from each other, support each other, and together praise the name of Christ:

1. African Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Kenya) (AEPC)
2. Christian Reformed Church of the Philippines (CRCP)
3. Christian Reformed Church of Sri Lanka (CRCSL)
4. Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Westminster Bekenntnisses (ERK-WB) (Austria and Switzerland)
5. Free Church of Scotland (FCS)

6. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA)
7. Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis (GGRC) (Indonesia)
8. Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia (GGRI-NTT, GGRI, KalBar, GGRI Papua)
9. Iglesia Reformada en Venezuela (IRV)
10. Igrejas Reformadas do Brasil (IRB)
11. Kosin Presbyterian Church (KPCK)
12. Nongu u Kristu u i Ser u shar Tar (Nigeria) (NKST)
13. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
14. Presbyterian Church of Uganda (PCU)
15. Presbyterian Free Church Council (Kalimpong, India) (PFCC)
16. Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (PFC(CI))
17. Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)
18. Reformed Church of East Africa (Kenya) (RCEA)
19. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI)
20. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)
21. Reformed Presbyterian Church Taiwan (RPCT)
22. United Reformed Church in the Congo (URCC)

4.2. To consult with and wait for further decisions from the churches which have suspended sister-church relations.

5. Regarding church contacts:

5.1. In accordance with the General Regulation for Beginning and Maintaining Relations with Churches (as described in art. 1 and 3), to keep on maintaining contact with the the following churches, according to the agreements made with each church individually, in order to learn from each other, support each other, and together praise the name of Christ:

1. Baltic Reformed Theological Seminary and the Reformed fellowships in the Baltic states (BRTS)
2. Église Réformée Confessante au Bénin (ERCB)
3. Église Réformée Confessante au Congo (ERCC)
4. Union Nationale des Églises Protestantes Réformées Évangéliques de France (UNEPREF)
5. Evangelical Reformed Churches of Russia (ERCR)
6. First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERC)
7. Hungarian Reformed Churches (HGK) and other Reformed groups (Hungarian speaking areas);
8. Isa-E Church in Bangladesh (ICB)
9. Iglesias Reformadas de España (IRE)
10. Igreja Cristã Presbiteriana de Portugal (ICPP)
11. Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK)
12. Minsk Reformed Church (Belarus)
13. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), via Mission to the World
14. Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapshin) (PCK (Hapshin))
15. Presbyterian Theological Seminary (Dehra Dun, India) (PTS)
16. Protestantska Reformirana Krscanska Ckrva (PRKC)(Croatia)
17. Reformed Presbyterian Fellowship in Myanmar (RPCFM)
18. South Indian Reformed Churches (SIRC)
19. Ukraine Evangelical Reformed (or Presbyterian) Church

5.2. As much as possible continue contact with

1. Evangelium Reformatum Egyhaz (ERE) (Ukraine)

The ERE has withdrawn its request to have a sister-church relation.

2. Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) (USA) .

The OPC has suspended the contact relation.

6. Regarding participation in networks of Christian churches:

In accordance with the General Regulation for Beginning and Maintaining Relations with Churches (as described in art. 1 and 4), to keep on looking for possibilities of having contact with churches worldwide, by organizing or visiting conferences or network meetings; in doing this, making use of the network of the ICRC as much as possible, and especially looking for possibilities of networks within the European region.

7. Regarding organizations and institutions:

To look for contacts and ways of cooperating with organizations within the RCN which are devoted to church federations or congregations abroad, such as Yachad, SSRO, and Fundament.

8. Regarding cooperation with the NRC:

In the coming years to continue the cooperation with the deputies of the NRC (CCS), and as much as possible work together in having contact with foreign churches. This is in line with the growing closer together of the two federations.

9. Regarding cooperation with the CRC:

To continue the cooperation with the CRC (DBK), by informing each other of developments and by coordinating activities with each other as much as possible.

10. To relieve the BBK deputies of their duties.

11. To appoint BBK deputies again, and reduce their number to twelve. This is because of the developments in the relations with foreign churches as well as the increasing cooperation with the CCS.

12. To assign the BBK deputies the following tasks:

1. the deputies are to keep the churches and church members in The Netherlands informed about the way Christ is gathering His church abroad, and appeal to them for prayer and thanksgiving (including about concrete situations);
2. they are to help foreign churches be aware of what is happening in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands;
3. they are to do their work making use of the BBK office and the facilities of DVN;
4. they are to consult and work together with the deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands;
5. they are to work together with the CCS (Committee for Contacts with Foreign Churches) of the Netherlands Reformed Churches, and coordinate the development of functioning as one committee in the future when, as expected, the two federations become one;
6. they are to report to the following General Synod about changes in the relations with foreign churches, and indicate what the consequences are for the work of the BBK deputies;
7. they are to maintain contact with the Christian University of Applied Sciences, the "VIAA" in Zwolle and the Theological University (seminary) in Kampen;
8. they are to formulate further proposals concerning participation in church networks, regarding maintaining contacts and relations with individual church federations;
9. they are to act in accordance with the General Regulation for beginning and maintaining

relations with churches abroad.

13. To make € 239,725 available for the use of the BBK deputies to carry out their tasks.

Grounds:

Due to the reduction in the number of foreign relations and the appointment of fewer BBK deputies, the costs for the period of 2021-2023 can be budgeted at around € 55,000 lower than the amount for the period 2018-2020.

In this way the appeal of the F&B deputies to lower the budget by 20%, compared to the period 2018-2020, can be met.