

INTERDENOMINATIONAL MATTERS

Chair: Rev. Kornelis DeKoning
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I. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee

A. *Materials*

1. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Report, including Appendix A, pp. 285-99
2. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee Supplement
3. Board of Trustees Report (section II, A, 17), pp. 29-30

B. *Privilege of the floor*: Dr. Steven R. Timmermans and Dr. Peter Borgdorff

C. *Recommendations*

1. That synod express its gratitude to Dr. Roels for serving the cause of ecumenicity for the CRC.
2. That synod designate the United Reformed Church in the Congo as a church in dialogue with the CRC.
3. That synod designate the Sudanese Reformed Churches as a church in dialogue with the CRC.
4. That synod note that the EIRC has learned through feedback from ecumenical partners of the problematic nature of the category designated as Ecumenical Faith Declaration.
5. That synod note the decision of Synod 2012 regarding the Belhar Confession and encourage the churches to study and incorporate its themes into their discipling and liturgical ministries.

Grounds:

- a. The lack of attention by churches to the Belhar Confession and the need for further study of the Belhar's themes and incorporation into the discipleship and liturgical life of the CRC call for synod's reaffirmation.
 - b. The importance of Synod 2012's decision deserves to be emphasized by a subsequent synod.
6. That synod instruct the Board of Trustees to ensure that denominational Ministry Support Services, Faith Formation Ministries, and Worship Ministries provide consultative Belhar Confession assistance to congregations and make related materials available through their service, marketing efforts, and web-based access.

Grounds:

- a. The listed entities within the denominational offices are in the best position to assist the churches with consultation, advice, and creative ideas for use of the Belhar Confession in the discipleship and liturgical ministries of the church.
 - b. Marketing and web access decisions fall within the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees.
 - c. Effective marketing and web access options enable congregations to obtain these materials more readily.
7. That synod approve of the CRC's affiliation with the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

Grounds:

- a. Membership would provide sufficient compatibility and benefits, despite the fact that within the WRF there is diversity of thought about biblical interpretation.
 - b. As the CRC's ecumenical charter states, "The CRC does not need to endorse every position taken by an ecumenical partner. Rather, the present understanding in ecumenical circles is that churches learn from each other and discuss differing perspectives. Ecumenical relationship can be built on common interests and commitments to the ministry of the gospel and the mission to which that gospel calls the whole church."
8. That synod note the "*Resolution on the Relationship between the RCA and the CRCNA*" (2014) and encourage the churches to incorporate its themes into their joint ministries.
9. That synod express its gratitude to Dr. Peter Borgdorff for his contributions in the name of ecumenicity.

II. Interfaith dialogue

A. Background

The goal of interfaith dialogue is to foster better understanding between persons of different faiths and to enhance the channels of communication that build community cooperation and peace-making. Synod 2009 said, "While the Christian church should never lose its confession that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and should joyfully proclaim that there is no other name given under heaven by which people may be saved, interfaith dialogue must not be a pretext for evangelism.

However, it is hoped that when people of other faiths have an accurate understanding of Christian teachings and values and get to know Christian people, they will be intrigued by the Christian worldview and testimony and begin a journey that leads to true reconciliation with God."

In this light, synod provided an interfaith expansion to the EIRC mandate while instructing that the interfaith mandate "should be maintained as a document distinct from the Ecumenical Charter."

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the interfaith mandate component of the EIRC's work as separate and distinct, requiring a subcommittee of the EIRC to pursue the following four responsibilities provided by Synod 2010:
 - a. Compile resources for the CRC that will guide interfaith encounters.
 - b. Monitor and facilitate the interfaith encounters that come through ecumenical activities and within the context of the ministries of the CRC.
 - c. Provide advice and perspectives for the CRC as requested.
 - d. When appropriate and opportune, represent the CRC in interfaith dialogues.
2. That synod approve the protocol that the EIRC shall ensure that it maintains a standing subcommittee of at least four persons (one or more members of the EIRC and two non-EIRC members, one of whom shall be administrative staff) that pursues the mandate and reports to the EIRC on its activities and accomplishments.

III. Response to Overture 4: Add a New Subsection to Church Order Article 38 regarding Multiaffiliated Churches

A. Materials: Overture 4, pp. 420-23

B. Background

Recognizing and celebrating the unifying achievement of the Pillar Church and the joint efforts of Classis Holland of the CRC and the Holland Classis of the RCA, we are grateful for their desire to extend the benefits of these efforts to the whole denomination.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod accede to Overture 4 with the following amendments to the wording of the proposed Church Order Article 38-h and its Supplement:
 - a. Add "with the concurrence of the synodical deputies" to the end of the proposed Church Order Article 38-h.
 - b. Substitute the phrase "Church Order/Constitution" for the word "constitution" wherever referenced in the proposed Supplement, Article 38-h.
2. That synod consider the change of the Church Order Article non-substantial in nature, thus not requiring proposal to a subsequent synod for adoption.

Ground: The proposed Article 38-h has many similarities to Article 38-g.