

# THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

## PRESS RELEASE

The Seventh meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was held in Christchurch, New Zealand, from October 15 to 22, 2009. A prayer service preceded the official meeting. This service was under the leadership of the Rev. John Goris. The Rev. Dirk van Garderen delivered a fitting sermon on the second beatitude (Matthew 5:4). Several brothers from different parts of the world thanked the Lord for the preparations, the upcoming sessions and the results of the gathering.

The Conference was held during the day at the Holiday Inn in the centre of the city and in the evening at the Bishopdale Church. This church is part of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand and together this federation and its members in the Christchurch area took exemplary care of the needs of the delegates. Their keen organizational skills, their appetizing meals and their warm hospitality will long be remembered with fondness.

The Conference opened with words of greetings from the hosting church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Upon the recommendation of the Interim Committee, the Executive was appointed. It was composed of the Rev. Bruce Hoyt (RCNZ) as Chairman, the Rev. Richard Holst (EPCEW) as Vice-chairman, the Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen (CanRC) as Corresponding Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor (EPCEW) as Recording Secretary and Mr. Henk Berends (CanRC) as Treasurer. The Rev. Bort de Graaf (CGKN), the retiring Chairman, was thanked for his services to the Conference over the past four years.

## Member Churches

When the Conference opened it consisted of the following members:

- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (**ARPC**)
- Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia NTT) (**CRCI**, *was GGRC*)
- Canadian Reformed Churches (**CanRC**)
- Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland) (**CRCN**, *was CGKN*)
- Confessing Reformed Church in Congo (Eglise Reformee Confessante au Congo) (**CRCC**, *was ERCC*)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (**EPCEW**)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (**EPCI**)
- Free Church of Scotland (**FCS**)
- Free Church in Southern Africa (**FCSA**)
- Free Reformed Churches of North America (**FRCNA**)

- Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika) (**FRCSA**, *was VGKSA*)
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (**OPC**)
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (**PCEA**)
- Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (**PCKK**)
- Presbyterian Free Church of India (**PFCI**) previously called the Free Church of Central India
- Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT (Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia NTT) (**RCI**, *was GGRI*)
- Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland - vrijgemaakt) (**RCN**, *was GKN(v)*)
- Reformed Churches in New Zealand (**RCNZ**)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa (**RCSA**, *was GKSA*)
- Reformed Churches of Spain (Iglesias Reformadas de Espana) (**RCS**, *was IRE*)
- Reformed Church in the Unites States (**RCUS**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (**RPCIre**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (**RPCNA**)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (**RPCNEI**)
- United Reformed Churches in North America (**URCNA**)

### **New Member Churches**

During the Conference the following churches were received as new members:

- the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (**FCC**);
- the Independent Reformed Church in Korea (**IRCK**);
- the Heritage Reformed Congregations (**HRC**);
- the Reformed Churches of Brazil (Igrejas Reformadas de Brasil) (**RCB**, *was IRB*);
- the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (**RPCInd**).

### **Papers**

The theme of the Conference was “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith.” This theme was explored by means of four papers. Each paper was delivered in the evening at the Bishopdale Church in order that the members of that church and neighbouring churches could also be present. Discussion followed and the next day it continued at the Holiday Inn in a number of workshops and a plenary session.

The first paper was delivered by Dr. George W. Knight III (OPC) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Charismatic Movement.” Dr. Knight began by analyzing four episodes in the book of Acts (Acts 2: 1 – 41; 8: 4 – 25; 10: 1 – 11: 18; 19: 1 – 7) related to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He went on to deal with the filling and fulfillment of the Spirit, paying special attention to the gifts of prophecy, signs and wonders, speaking in tongues and healing. He also made some suggestions about how to interact with those deemed to be “charismatics”.

The second paper was delivered by Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman (URCNA) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life.” Dr. Kloosterman first described the nature of the challenge that individualism poses for the church and the Christian faith. He then moved on to a diagnosis of the matter identifying a number of causes relating to a loss of transcendence, evangelicalism and the psychologizing of the self. Finally, he outlined a response to the problem that related to the church’s worship and confession.

The third paper was delivered by the Rev. Frank van Dalen (ARPC) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge from Islam.” The Rev. Van Dalen gave an update on the work that his churches are doing in Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. He spoke about Muslim distinctives and also gave numerous suggestions as to how to minister to them.

The fourth paper was delivered by Dr. Mohan Chacko (RPCInd) and had as title: “The Vitality of the Reformed Faith: Facing the Challenge of the Asian Context.” Dr. Chacko opened his address by identifying three challenges facing the churches in the Asian-Pacific region: the charismatic movement, individualism and Islam. He then proceeded to delineate four paradigms in relation to Pentecostalism. This in turn was followed by an examination of individualism. It was concluded by a number of observations on Asian missions.

## **Introductions**

A number of churches applied for membership in the ICRC. They introduced themselves during the meeting.

Other churches sent observers or visitors to the Conference, several of which introduced themselves or updated the meeting on current work: the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand and the Reformed Church in Japan.

## **Missions**

The missionary mandate of the church has had the attention of the member churches of the ICRC since its inception. The 2009 meeting was no different.

The Mission Committee presented its report and it highlighted the fact that regional mission conferences are growing in number. These conferences were held in Europe (2007 and 2008), Africa (2008), and Asia-Pacific (2008). A newsletter has been published on a more or less regular basis. Contact was also made with the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) and more contact will be pursued.

Furthermore, it was decided to arrange a meeting of representatives of the world mission agencies of the ICRC member churches to exchange information and explore ways for possible multilateral cooperation. Information (names, qualifications, areas of expertise and contact details) will be compiled on short-term theological teachers in order that member churches may be made aware of existing resources and be able to make use of

them. Protocols on how members may deal with major disasters and persecuted Christians were adopted.

### **Other Significant Actions**

It was decided to accept a proposal from one of the churches to appoint a Committee to review all aspects of the Conference. A proposed amendment to the Constitution was also passed along to the Review Committee for its study and evaluation.

### **Budgetary Matters**

An income and expense statement was received and adopted. It showed that the Conference spent \$136,638.09 (USD) from 2006 - 2009. A four year budget for 2010 - 2013 in the amount of \$140,000.00 (USD), or \$35,000.00 per annum, was adopted.

### **Next Meeting of the Conference**

The next meeting is scheduled, the Lord willing, for September of 2013 in Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom, hosted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales (**EPCEW**).

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