

# REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

Proverbs 8:32

- Volume 21 - October 2016 -

## From the editor

October 2016

We gladly present to you the 21st magazine 'Reformed Continua'.

We are thankful to the Lord Who again made this possible. It is He Who continues to provide opportunities for this work, to let His Word be heard all over the world. The Lord will preserve His church to the end, we may know and experience this. We continue to trust in Him.

### Contents:

In this edition you will find four articles about our sister-church at Abbotsford.

These articles were written by M.R. Vermeer and were published earlier in *De Bazuin*.

We pray that the Magazine may continue to be well-received, that it may work to the up-building of the church and open eyes to the right vision on the church.

*Joh. Houweling, Bleiswijk*



# Our Sister Church in Abbotsford (1)

*M.R. Vermeer*

De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK, 'The Reformed Churches (restored)') have had a sister church relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) in Canada for well over five years now. The initial decision of this sister church relationship was, at the General Synod of Emmen 2009-2010, seen as 'a thankful moment in all of the work done by this General synod'. <sup>1)</sup>

In many churches worldwide there is a turning away from the Word of God through all kinds of false doctrine and errors. In this confusion and turning away from God, the LRCA has, as the only church worldwide, wholeheartedly recognized the Reformation of 2003 (in the Netherlands) as a work of the Lord. Thousands of kilometers away a church was recognized as being 'faithful in doctrine, worship and discipline to our God'. <sup>2)</sup>

There was an historic moment at the General Synod of Groningen 2014-2015: for the first time representatives of our sister church could be present at the synod! At this synod ample attention was given to our sister church relationship and it was decided to continue this relationship. It is therefore a good thing to give some attention to the LRCA in De Bazuin.

The LRCA came into being in 2007 through a liberation from the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC), a sister church of the GKv.

In the first place we will see what developments led to the necessity of the liberation from the CanRC, and in the second place explain the formation of the LRCA.

## *The Reformed overseas*

The CanRC came into being in 1950 as a typical Dutch 'immigration church' coming forth from the emigration wave after WW II. The 'liberated' reformed people overseas obviously came in an already Christianized North America, where from the beginning of the 18th century Presbyterianism (among others) had developed roots.

In the beginning of the 20th century a 'modernism - fundamentalism controversy' took place in the Presbyterian Church in the USA. The 'modernists' undermined the Bible as the Word of God; they denied

doctrines such as Christ's substitutive suffering and His bodily resurrection. This was strongly opposed and refuted by the 'fundamentalists' under the leadership of Prof. J Gresham Machen (1881-1937). In the General Assembly of 1933 (a sort of synod) he fought against the modernistic unbelief whereby also foreign mission work had been infected: he and others wanted to exclusively support missionaries who truthfully preached God's Word. The result was that he and other ministers were removed from office. Through this a church came into being in 1936 which we now know as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC).

## *Contact with the OPC*

In 1966 the CanRC decided to officially seek contact with the OPC; the synod considered that the OPC was Calvinistic in character and had definitely decided for orthodoxy and against modernism. <sup>3)</sup> At a number of synods during the years 1960-1970 several important differences (also called 'divergences') between the CanRC and the OPC came up:

1. The doctrine of the Westminster Standards (the confessions of the OPC) regarding especially the church, church government, assurance of faith and covenant which in parts deviate from the Three Forms of Unity.
2. The church government: the form of church government (a sort of church order) in the OPC expresses that the local churches are 'divisions' of the universal church; therefore, in the OPC the broader assemblies are seen as the 'higher' assemblies.
3. The rules for church correspondence of the CanRC were opposed by the OPC. The CanRC had, for instance, as a rule that (a) there must be oversight so that there are no deviations from the reformed confession in doctrine, liturgy, discipline and church government, and that (b) an account is given to the sister church when a relation is entered into with a third party. The OPC saw these rules as a restriction of their freedom and would rather take on a (less obligatory) relation of brotherly fellowship.
4. The OPC had church relations with the then synodical Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands and took part in the Gereformeerde Oecumenische Synode (GOS) (Reformed Ecumenical Synod). <sup>4)</sup>

### OPC a 'true church'

In 1977 the CanRC recognized the OPC as a 'true church' and offered her a temporary relationship of 'church contact'. This meant that both could receive each other's delegates at synod (without voting rights).<sup>5)</sup> It is striking how the synod of 1977 dealt with the above-mentioned differences. The synod of 1971 had as yet still judged that the difference in doctrine and church government were serious enough to remain a topic of discussion.<sup>6)</sup> In order then to recognize the OPC as a true church it was to be expected that in 1977 there should have been a rounding off of a profound evaluation of these differences. However, that did not take place; the synod decided, even when recognizing the OPC, they would still desire an ongoing discussion about the divergences in doctrine and church government.

An important factor in the decision in 1977 was that they received a letter from the OPC. This letter briefly discussed the differences in doctrine and church government and stated that there were no principle differences between the various confessions, creeds or rules for church government, but only a difference how they came about originally and a difference in emphasis. And although this letter had not been answered by the deputies of the CanRC, the synod of the CanRC considered 'it appears that the divergences are to be explained from the different origins' of the confessions and church government.<sup>7)</sup>

In addition, the Canadian synod took over a decision

from the Dutch General Synod Amersfoort-West 1967 that the Westminster Confession was 'a fully reformed confession'. Unfortunately, in Canada the content of this decision was at that time not put to the test.

A number of members and churches of the CanRC, had serious objections against the - according to their judgment - too hasty recognition of the OPC as a 'true church' and the newly developed temporary relationship of 'church contact'. Requests for revision against this decision were rejected by later synods. However, the deputies did receive the instruction to show, after the synod already made the decision, that the divergences in doctrine and church government were no hindrance in recognizing the OPC as a 'true church'.<sup>8)</sup>

In a following article D.V. we will consider the developments which led to the necessity for the liberation from the CanRC.

<sup>1)</sup> *Acta GS Emmen 2009*, art. 144.

<sup>2)</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 98.

<sup>3)</sup> *Acts GS Edmonton 1965*, art. 141.

<sup>4)</sup> *Acts GS New Westminster 1971*, Supplement V and *Acts GS Toronto 1974*, Appendix 5.

<sup>5)</sup> *Acts GS Coaldale 1977*, Art. 91.

<sup>6)</sup> *Acts GS New Westminster 1971*, art. 92.

<sup>7)</sup> *Acts GS Coaldale 1977*, art. 91, II, 3.

<sup>8)</sup> *Acts GS Smithville 1980*, art. 97 and 152; *Acts GS Cloverdale 1983*, art. 55; *Acts GS Burlington 1986*, art. 126.

## Our Sister Church in Abbotsford (2)

**M.R. Vermeer**

In this article we will discuss the developments which led to the necessity for liberation from the CanRC.

### *Ecclesiastical practice*

When having church contact with another church not only her confession and church government is of importance, but also her ecclesiastical practice (regarding preaching, administration of sacraments

and discipline). Through remarkable developments in the 1980's a better understanding came into being regarding the ecclesiastical practice in the OPC.

In these years a number of OPC members and churches came to the conviction, also through contact with the CanRC, that the reformed doctrine and practice on essential issues differed with Presbyterianism. For this reason they even freed themselves from the OPC and joined themselves to the CanRC. The classis of the CanRC which was

involved in this declared that these liberations were legitimate. And, bear in mind, that was after recognizing the OPC as a 'true church' in 1977!

What was then the ecclesiastical practice to which these OPC members objected?

We shall consider briefly two important points: the so-called 'confessional membership' and the 'open Lord's Supper table'.

### Confessional membership

In the OPC members are not bound to their own confession, the Westminster Standards (WS). In fact, even for ministers and elders this confession is non-binding as a sort of 'form of unity'. The latter are only bound to the essentials (so-called 'system of doctrine') whereby they may deviate from parts of the WS. <sup>1)</sup> Here we see a return of a point of conflict in the history of the church: is our subscription to of our confession 'insofar' (*quatenus*) or 'because' (*quia*) it agrees with the Word of God? A practical result of this is, for example, that if parents refuse baptism for their children (because they are against infant baptism) it is left to the local consistory to allow them to become members of the congregation or not. <sup>2)</sup>

### Open Lord's Supper table

In our churches it is a rule that only confessional members or guests with an attestation from their consistory can be admitted to the Lord's Supper table (Art. 61 C.O., Book of Praise). However, in the OPC guests from 'other evangelical churches' also may be admitted to the Lord's Supper table and this participation is only accompanied by a verbal warning to partake of the Lord's Supper 'with discernment'. This manner of allowing admittance to the Lord's Supper was, according to the judgment of the members of the OPC who liberated themselves in 1985, in violation with the keys of the kingdom which has been entrusted to the office bearers in the church (Matt. 16:16-18, Matt. 18:15-20, John 20:21-23). The admittance to the Lord's Supper table, according to their view, is an exercise of church discipline as key of the kingdom of heaven. (H.C. Q. & A. 85). <sup>3)</sup>

### Denominationalism

According to these liberated OPC members, the root of this ecclesiastical practice lies not in another view of the sacrament, but in a deviant view of the church: the so-called denominationalism. They point to the fact that, regardless of the original aim

of the authors, the Westminster Confession (WC) speaks about '*more or less pure churches*'. <sup>4)</sup>

In the adapted version of the Westminster Confession used by the OPC, mention is also made of the task of the State to protect the churches '*(...)without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the others (...)*'. <sup>5)</sup> In this way the true church is seen as a plurality of denominations.

How broadly this is seen is evident from the fact that members of 'other evangelical churches' are admitted to the Lord's Supper table. Among them are also remonstrants, baptists, and evangelicals. <sup>6)</sup>

In the 90's a number of CanRC synods determined that 'confessional membership' and the practice of an 'open Lord's Supper table' were issues by which there could not be a sister church relationship with the OPC. <sup>7)</sup>

A number of churches and members of the CanRC remained seriously concerned about recognizing the OPC as a 'true church' in 1977. Not only were the differences in doctrine and church government evaluated afterwards (see earlier article), but at the initial decision making these differences in *ecclesiastical practice* had not at all been considered.

### OPC, RCUS, URCNA...

In the 1990's the CanRC also came into closer contact with other churches of which we will mention two: the *Reformed Churches in the United States* (RCUS) and the *United Reformed Churches of North America* (URCNA).

The RCUS is a reformed church originating from Germany which subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity. The CanRC synod of 1998 decided that it could not yet enter into a sister church relationship with the RCUS due to its Lord's Supper practice (comparable to the OPC !), Sabbath observance (for instance one worship service per Sunday, unnecessary work on Sunday, restaurant visit on Sunday) and church concept. <sup>8)</sup>

The URCNA also subscribes to the Three Forms of Unity. These churches came into being in 1996 when they split off from the 'synodical' reformed churches in North America (Christian Reformed Church) because of liberal developments in these churches (women in office and evolution theory). Also in the URCNA guests can be admitted to the Lord's Supper table without an attestation. <sup>9)</sup> Contact with the URCNA would in the end, because

of its size (20,000 members) and geographical position (several churches in Canada) in practice have the most influence on the CanRC.

### *Synod Neerlandia 2001*

The CanRC General Synod of Neerlandia in 2001 decided to establish a sister church relationship with the OPC and the RCUS as well as with the URCNA. Could these sister church relationships be established because the practice in the aforementioned churches had changed?

No, nothing had been changed. They were satisfied with the standpoint that there must be supervision of the Lord's Supper table (although this clearly differs from the 'practice'). As far as the RCUS was concerned the decisive factor was that they also accepted the Articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession.<sup>10)</sup> The actual ecclesiastical practice in these churches, which concerned the three marks of the church, was not considered and was therefore no longer an obstruction to a sister church relation.

With the URCNA, not only was a sister church relationship established, but steps were also taken in the direction of complete unification. In a so-called continuing 'phase of ecclesiastical union' local consistories could recognize agreement in fundamental issues and make proposals for continuing federative unification. After an agreement to a

form of merger, complete unification could then take place<sup>11)</sup>.

In a following article we will explain D.V. the establishment of the LRCA.

<sup>1)</sup> *OPC Form of Government XXII*, 13. Source: <http://www.opc.org/BCO/FG.html> (10-2-2016).

<sup>2)</sup> OPC General Assembly Paper, *Refusing to Present Children for Baptism*. Source: [http://www.opc.org/GA/refuse\\_bapt.html](http://www.opc.org/GA/refuse_bapt.html) (10-2-2016).

<sup>3)</sup> B.R. Hofford, "*The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and Open Communion*", 23 February 2004. Source: <http://www.calltoreform.com/> (12-2-2016).

<sup>4)</sup> B.R. Hofford, "*Open Communion in the OPC*" (London, Ontario: Inter League Publication Board, 1990). Source: <http://www.reformedcontinua.nl/> (12-2-2016).

<sup>5)</sup> Westminster Confession, XXIII, 3. Source: [http://www.opc.org/wcf.html#Chapter\\_23](http://www.opc.org/wcf.html#Chapter_23) (10-2-2016).

<sup>6)</sup> K. Kok, "*PRESBYTERIAN OR REFORMED?*", <http://spindleworks.com/library/kok/presorref.htm#10>.

<sup>7)</sup> *Acts GS Lincoln 1992*, art. 72; *Acts GS Abbotsford 1998*, art. 106; *Acts GS Fergus 1998*, art. 130.

<sup>8)</sup> *Acts GS Fergus 1998*, art. 51.

<sup>9)</sup> *Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America Sixth Edition (corrected)*, 2012, art. 45. Source: [https://www.urchna.org/1651/file\\_retrieve/23868](https://www.urchna.org/1651/file_retrieve/23868).

<sup>10)</sup> *Acts GS Neerlandia 2001*, art. 45 (OPC) and 59 (RCUS).

<sup>11)</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 73 and Appendix 2.3.

## Our Sister Church in Abbotsford (3)

### *M.R. Vermeer*

In this article we will continue with the coming into being of the *Liberated Reformed Church at Abbotsford* (LRCA).

### *Marks of the church*

In our own country we have seen how in a church-orderly way for instance: '*one sentence in an old sermon*' about the hallowing of the Sabbath (as one of the ministers in the GKv disdainfully called it) revealed a background of decline.<sup>1)</sup> By binding the churches to the so-called 'freedom' to regard Sunday rest no longer a commandment of God,

false doctrine and errors were permitted. Through this the marks of the church were at stake.

Were the issues in the Canadian Reformed churches just about 'a couple of decisions regarding a few sister church relationships' or did these decisions affect the marks of the church?

On their path to liberation from the CanRC, our brothers in Abbotsford came to the realization that the decisions concerning sister church relationships meant that *in the CanRC itself* false doctrines and errors were permitted. When ministers of the OPC and the URCNA are permitted to lead worship



services in the CanRC, the pulpits in the CanRC are opened to their doctrine.

When members of the OPC - a church where there is no personal binding to the confession - ('confessional membership'), see previous article - or members of the URCNA are admitted to the Lord's Supper table in the CanRC, then it can no longer be determined that only members are admitted who are healthy in doctrine and walk of life. Even those who adhere to a baptistic and evangelical line of thought can be Lord's Supper participants since they are welcome as members in the OPC.

And when the practice of an 'open Lord's Supper table' is no longer regarded as an issue that concerns the confession (although it was decided by CanRC synods in the '90s still to be a confessional issue) it proved that a more 'open' Lord's Supper table is acceptable in the CanRC when several local Canadian Reformed churches allowed guests to partake in the Lord's Supper without attestations.

Our brothers in Abbotsford therefore considered that the decisions regarding sister church relationships affect the keys of the Kingdom of heaven (Lord's Day 31) and the marks of the church (Belg. Conf., Art.29), since the doctrine and the administration of the sacraments are at stake here.

### Overall deformation

Could one say that there was a broad deformation in the Canadian Reformed Churches?

The concerned brothers in Abbotsford (and other places) asked this question and had to answer it in the affirmative.

In the first place, the brothers at Abbotsford affirmed that 'sister church relationships' (an improper term for this situation because Art. 50 of the Church Order (Book of Praise) deals with foreign churches!)(a) have been established *in the same country*. In a considerable number of places there is a geographical overlap especially with the URCNA. For that reason there is evidence of a great influence in the Canadian churches because of regular pulpit exchange and guests partaking in the Lord Supper table, etc.

Secondly, our concerned brothers have pointed out, for example, that the 'open Lord's Supper table' could be seen as an 'isolated' subject, but that therein lies another doctrine about the church:

- pluriformity of the church which is not in agreement

with what Art.28 and 29 of the Belg. Conf. teach about the church;

- the absence of a confession as a form of unity, and the absence of the binding to the confession;
- encroachment on church discipline. <sup>2)</sup>

Decisive was whether church decisions were according to the Word of God. And, additionally, whether the deviations are fundamental (in the course of which the marks of the church have been compromised) and whether everything has been attempted in the church orderly way to bring repentance.

### Return

In their liberation the concerned brothers were convinced to have followed a way of faithfulness to the Scriptures and confession. It was not about judging churches such as the OPC, URCNA or other churches as 'not being of God'; *'Again, we are definitely not saying this. [The CanRC] have not properly tested the spirits to determine if churches like the URC and the RCUS are truly "of God"'* <sup>3)</sup>

For the brothers in Abbotsford the critical question was not whether these churches honored some or even many 'good viewpoints'. But the question was: can these churches in confession and practice be distinguished, diligently and with great carefulness, as true churches according to Art. 29 of the Belg. Conf.? The brothers at Abbotsford judged that in the CanRC this Scriptural testing had not taken place sufficiently. They saw their liberation as a return to the Scriptures and confession, also regarding the church.

### The ecclesiastical way

The liberation of the brothers in Abbotsford cannot be understood without having observed this background of deformation which our brothers at Abbotsford did notice in the Canadian churches. In the previous articles we have already seen that the development regarding the sister church relationships have a lengthy history in the Canadian churches. In the magazine *Reformed Polemics*, members of the Canadian Reformed Churches have also warned, from 1994-2004, against the development with regards to the sister church relationships. In our own well-known magazine *Reformanda* the affinity between both magazines has been pointed out, both having to deal with developments originating 'out of the same spirit'. <sup>4)</sup>

Nevertheless, developments in the church are, as such, never a reason for secession or liberation.

The LORD is, after all, merciful and gracious and He forgives transgressions and sin (Ex. 34: 6,7). The question is: will the church legitimize sin, and not turn back from it?

Therefore, the questions were: was this all about sins which have been documented in decisions? And: have these decisions sufficiently been appealed in the church orderly way?

The brothers in Abbotsford were convinced that this was the case and that against the *background* of this broader deformation, *grounds* for liberation emerged.

### Liberation

Since the 1980's appeals have been sent to every synod against decisions such as the recognition of the OPC as a true church in 1977, and church relationships with other churches, etc. At the CanRC General Synod Chatham 2004 a number of requests for revision were submitted against the decisions made by General Synod 2001 pertaining to sister church relationships. In fact, even the Canadian Reformed church of Abbotsford also still submitted a revision request! However, all requests for revision were denied with the result that the ecclesiastical way had come to an end. <sup>5)</sup>

Nevertheless, the concerned brothers in Abbotsford still continued sounding the call to reformation to the end. They did that by calling on the consistory not to ratify the synod decisions in which their request for revision was denied.

However, the consistory of the CanRC of Abbotsford had abandoned her former request for revision to General Synod 2004 and gave notice to the concerned brothers that it had by then accepted this decision of synod.

When a brother in the CanRC of Abbotsford, because of his public call to reformation among others via the web site [www.calltoreform.com](http://www.calltoreform.com), was placed under discipline and other concerned members were faced with the prospect of being placed under discipline, the brothers and sisters liberated themselves. That's how the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford came about in 2007.

The actual events, the lengthy struggle of the brothers and sisters in Abbotsford, their way to the major assemblies and the unjust exercise of discipline you will find extensively recorded in the Acts of the General Synod of Emmen 2009-2010, Report 2 of the Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad (appendix

IX, nl. pgs. 110-122 with the Act of Liberation and the questions asked by our deputies to the LRCA), and in the Acts of General Synod Groningen 2014-2015, and the committee report (pg. 330-342). Here you will also find the grounds of the liberation of the LRCA further explained. To receive a good understanding one could use these reports.

In a following article D.V. we will continue to go further into the development of the LRCA.

<sup>1)</sup> Hereby is meant the sermon by Rev. D. Ophoff in the city of Nieuwegein in The Netherlands in 1996 in which the Sunday rest is named as a human ordinance. Citation in: P.van Gulp, 'Some voices about the call to reformation', *Reformanda*, nr. 13-3 (2003), p. 24.

<sup>2)</sup> See [www.calltoreform.com/Questions.htm](http://www.calltoreform.com/Questions.htm), v&a 13 and 14.

<sup>3)</sup> See [www.calltoreform.com/Questions.htm](http://www.calltoreform.com/Questions.htm), v&a 3.

<sup>4)</sup> P.van Gulp, 'Reformed polemics', *Reformanda*, nr. 12-44 (2002), pp. 537-538.

<sup>5)</sup> *Acts General Synod Chatham 2004*, art. 86, 96, and 97.



*Pictures taken during Church Day 2016*

# Our Sister Church in Abbotsford (4)

M.R. Vermeer

In this article an additional number of issues with regards to our sister church in Abbotsford will be discussed.

## Call to reformation in Canada

The LRCA's call to reformation did not only go out to the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, but it also confronted all the local Canadian Reformed Churches with a letter. In this letter the LRCA explained the ecclesiastical way it had taken and in addition it made known the Act of Liberation. <sup>1)</sup> All the churches were requested to study the material which was sent to them and to give a reaction. A few positive reactions were received but for the most part no reaction or a rejection was received.

Also in other ways the LRCA has continued to place the call to reformation in the Canadian churches. In 2010 discussions were held with concerned brothers and sisters in the Fraser Valley, the region where Abbotsford is located; in 2010 and 2013 information evenings were held for concerned CanRC members. <sup>2)</sup>

The LRCA also approached the CanRC General Synod of Carmen 2013 with an explanation of her liberation, as well as a call to reformation. This call to reformation was declared inadmissible, as well as an appeal to General Synod 2016 of Dunnville. <sup>3)</sup>

We will take a look at a number of developments which took place after 2007 in order to better understand the background of the existence of our sister church, namely continuing ecclesiastical union and the influence of the so-called *North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council* (NAPARC). These matters were also mentioned in the letter from our deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad (DGK) to the CanRC General Synod of Carmen 2013. <sup>4)</sup>

## Church Unity

In the second article we saw that the URCNA is the sister church which in practice has the most influence in the Canadian Reformed Church. The URCNA decided in 2007 that she rejects the 'errors' of those who teach:

*"... that all baptized persons are in the covenant of grace in such a way that there is no distinction between those who have only an outward relation to*

*the covenant of grace by baptism and those who are united to Christ by grace through faith alone".* <sup>5)</sup>

In this statement the doctrine of an inner and an outer covenant is displayed which also played an important part in the liberation of 1944.

This points to one of the divergences which is being accepted by the CanRC within the sister church relationships. This was expressed by one of the professors of the CanRC as follows:

*"We do not feel pressure to become one with the OPC; so why do we exert pressure when it comes to the URCNA? (...) Be content to continue to preach on each other's pulpit and exchange attestations. (...) Let us press on together because regardless of the names of our federation, we are one."* <sup>6)</sup>

## NAPARC

In the previous article we saw that the brothers at Abbotsford found that also within the Canadian Reformed Churches itself the Lord's Supper table received a more 'open' character for instance by allowing guests, after they gave a self-testimony, to partake in the Lord's Supper. The brothers noticed thereby that those guests did not only come from sister churches but also from other Reformed churches or Presbyterian churches who were members of NAPARC or of the *International Conference of Reformed Churches* (ICRC). <sup>7)</sup>

NAPARC functions as a consultative council and her statutes demands that only those churches may become members who maintain '*the marks of the true church*' (pure preaching of the Word, Administration of the Sacraments, discipline). <sup>8)</sup>

In its guidelines it requires that churches may not accept, without question, members from other NAPARC churches and that no mission work be performed in each other's 'area' in order that member churches "*(...) build the Church of Jesus Christ rather than their own denominations (...)*". <sup>9)</sup>

There are also member churches with an 'experiential' character in NAPARC like the *Free Reformed Churches of North America* (a sister church of the CGK in the Netherlands) and the *Heritage Reformed Congregations* (a break-away church from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands).

The Canadian Reformed Churches became a member of NAPARC in 2008 and has maintained this position although it was appealed to the General Synod of 2010 and 2013. <sup>10)</sup>



### Call to reformation in Australia

In her Act of Liberation and Return the LRCA declared:

*"(...) that we wish to exercise fellowship with all true Reformed believers and that we wish to unite with every assembly that is founded on God's infallible Word at whatever place God has brought them together".*

She has therefore also sent out a request to the reformed churches in Australia, the *Free Reformed Churches of Australia* (FRCA), to examine her liberation and to recognize her as a true church. <sup>11)</sup>

These FRCA churches are closely connected with the Canadian Reformed churches because of the similarity in language and (immigration) cultural background. Even though three of the FRCA churches had requested an investigation of the LRCA liberation, these requests were denied by the Australian synod. One of the grounds for this denial was that the LRCA came into being because of the objections against the sister church relationships of the CanRC, while the FRCA especially *"... had voiced no objections against these sister church relations"*. <sup>12)</sup>

### Call to reformation in The Netherlands.

The CanRC was confronted for the first time with the 'new liberation' in 2004 at the General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Chatham. At that time the magazine *Reformanda* paid attention to how this matter was dealt with at synod, where in a speech by Rev. R.C. Janssen, deputy of the GKv (now minister in the Abbotsford CanRC), a *"suggestive accusation of sin against the ninth commandment"* could be observed by which the Canadian churches would have been influenced. <sup>13)</sup>

Between 2004 - 2007 the CanRC deputies for foreign churches had received a translation of the Acts of our General Synod Mariënberg 2005-2006. Several controversial synod decisions of the GKv were studied by these deputies; however, they nevertheless came to the conclusion that the GKv was still a faithful church. <sup>14)</sup>

The General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches of Smithers in 2007 concurred with this decision and stated that the liberation of our churches had to be seen as a schism. <sup>15)</sup>

The LRCA rejected this decision of the CanRC in her *"Act of Secession and Return"*. In 2009

she made a request to the DGK to make a study of their liberation and recognize them as true church. In order to make a responsible decision, General Synod Emmen 2009-2010 considered it to be important to investigate the reformed character of the LRCA during a visit. <sup>16)</sup> After an additional study by deputies BBK a sister-church relationship was entered into.

### Sister church relationship with the DGK.

Meanwhile the LRCA is a small but faithful and committed congregation in which some growth can be noticed. Although the younger and middle-aged generation do not always have the command of the Dutch language (or their knowledge of the language is limited to words like 'stroomwafel' and 'drop'), there is a great deal of involvement with the weal and woe of her 'large' Dutch sister church.

Twice a year, since 2010, one of our ministers leads the worship services and administers the sacraments in the LRCA. Once every three years a kind of 'church visitation' is held by Deputies Contact with Churches Abroad. These deputies reported with thankfulness to the synod Groningen 2014-2015 *"... that this church has remained faithful to the Scriptures and the reformed confession. They also maintain the Church Order of Dort as much as possible. The sister church relationship is strong and good"*. <sup>17)</sup>

Classis South-West of our churches has been appointed an authority for appeals, in order that the ecclesiastical way for our sister church can function as best as can.

### From east to west.

In these four articles about our sister church we have tried to give, as well as can, a factual description of the developments which have led to the liberation of the LRCA.

Let our prayer be that our churches and the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford may remain faithful in order to serve the Lord:

*"From sea to sea He has dominion  
wherever people may be found,  
They shall from east to west  
bring Him the honor,  
And praise for Him shall there abound"*.

(Free translation of the Dutch rhymed version of Psalm 72:4)

- 1) See [www.lrcabbotford.com](http://www.lrcabbotford.com) under 'Official Docs', letter of October 23, 2009 to all Canadian churches.
- 2) See the reports from the deputies of the Relations of Foreign Churches in the *Acts GS Hasselt 2011-2012*, Appendix 6, pg. 374 a.f. and the *Acts GS Groningen 2014-2015*, article R.12, pg. 203.
- 3) The consideration of the CanRC Synod was that this appeal did not come from out of a local CanRC church of the federation or from a sister church, see *Acts GS Carman 2013*, art. 62 and *Acts GS Dunnville 2016*, art. 53.
- 4) *Acts GS Groningen 2014-2015*, article R.12, pgs. 234 - 243.
- 5) *Acts GS URCNA Schererville 2007*, art. 72. For the remarks of deputies of the Relations of Foreign Churches, see *Acts GS Emmen 2009-2010* Appendix IX, pg. 105 a.f.
- 6) J. Visscher, "Let's just be friends for now: a personal assessment of the new CanRC-URC Relationship", *Clarion*, 59-18 (2011), pgs.203-208.
- 7) See R.T. van Laar, "Do or Die", *Reformed Continua*, Vol. 5 (2011), pgs. 36-38.
- 8) See "Constitution of the North American Presbyterian

and Reformed Council", art. VI.2. Source: [www.naparc.org/documents/cb/](http://www.naparc.org/documents/cb/) (28-5-2016).

- 9) The so-called "Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations" and the "Golden Rule Comity Agreement". Source: [www.naparc.org/documents/informational-documents/](http://www.naparc.org/documents/informational-documents/) (28-5-2016).
- 10) *Acts GS Smithers 2007*, art. 140; *Acts GS Burlington*, art. 43, 44 and 52; *Acts GS Carman 2013*, art. 77 and 109.
- 11) See [www.lrcabbotsford.com](http://www.lrcabbotsford.com), under "Official Docs", letter of May 3, 2012 to the *GS Armadale 2012*.
- 12) *Acts GS Armadale 2012*, art. 59.
- 13) P. van Gorp, "The Call to Reformation in Canada", *Reformanda*, nr. 14 - 18 (2004), pgs. 204 - 206.
- 14) See "Report to GS Smithers 2007" by the Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches, pgs. 36 - 67. Source: [www.canrc.org/?assembly=56](http://www.canrc.org/?assembly=56) (28-5-2016).
- 15) *Acts GS Smithers 2007*, art. 143. About this see P. Drijfhout, "The answer from the Canadian churches", *Gereformeerd Kerkblad De Bazuin*, Volume 1, number 39, 40, 41 and 45.
- 16) *Acta GS Emmen 2009-2010*, art. 97, decision 1.
- 17) *Acta GS Groningen 2014-2015*, article R.12, pg. 203.

# REFORMED CONTINUA

Magazine of The Reformed Churches (restored) of The Netherlands

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## Magazine details

Subscription is free of charge, and can be obtained by adding your e-mail-address to our mail-list on the following website:

[www.reformedcontinua.nl](http://www.reformedcontinua.nl)

Via this website you can also unsubscribe.

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This magazine is issued by the 'Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad' and is distributed automatically via the website:

[www.reformedcontinua.nl](http://www.reformedcontinua.nl)

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# From the churches

by Joh. Houweling

1. In June 2015 the building of the new church of DGK Berkel & Rodenrijs/Bergschenhoek was commenced. The church building is now nearing completion and will be officially opened on 29 October 2016, D.V.

This church will then also receive a new name: De Gereformeerde Kerk (hersteld) at Lansingerland. The reason for this change of name is because the new church building is situated in Bleiswijk and the municipalities of Berkel & Rodenrijs, Bergschenhoek and Bleiswijk have merged and together they now form the municipality of LANSINGERLAND.

2. On 24 September 2016 another Church Day was held in Zwolle and it was well attended by young and old. The topic for the day was: "To the honour of God - Psalms and music."

3. On 30 September 2016 the students' society 'Virtute Dei' held their meeting, with as topic: the Canadian Reformed Churches.

4. The Training for the Ministry once again has a new student who has now commenced his training.



*Pictures taken during Church Day 2016*



*Front view of the new church building at Bleiswijk*

[\*Click on this line to find information on internet about all the local churches\*](#)