

**MINUTES OF THE REFORMED ECUMENICAL  
COUNCIL IN SESSION AT  
UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS  
12 – 26 JULY 2005**

**FRIDAY, July 15, 2005**

**First Session**

**ARTICLE 1: CONVENING THE ASSEMBLY**

1. Opening Remarks

The acting chairman, Evert Overeem welcomes all delegates and declares the meeting to be in session.

2. Presentation of Delegate Credentials

2.1 The General Secretary, Richard van Houten presents the list of Credentialed Delegates and Advisors to the assembly. The following were accepted as delegates and advisors from member churches:

Australia

**Christian Reformed Churches in Australia**

Henk De Waard – voting delegate  
Jonathan Vandenberg – non-voting delegate  
Bert Kuipers – Advisor

Botswana

**Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana**

Wilson Gonese – voting delegate  
Moses Bogatsu – non-voting delegate

Canada and USA

**Christian Reformed Church in North America**

Teresa Renkema – voting delegate  
Ralph Wigboldus – voting delegate  
Peter Borgdorff – voting delegate  
Bertha Mook – non-voting delegate

France

**Evangelical Reformed Church of France**

Antoine Schluchter – voting delegate  
Lionel Jauvert – Advisor

Greece

**Greek Evangelical Church**

Dimitrios Boukis – voting delegate  
Lorraine Kefalas – non-voting delegate

India

**Presbyterian Church of India**

Lalramliana Pachuau – voting delegate  
Renthlei Vanlalchhuanawma – voting delegate  
Lesting Nongphlang – voting delegate  
Iosterwell Iawphiniaw – voting delegate  
Tyingshainbha Mukhim – non-voting delegate  
Kim Malsawmkim – non-voting delegate

John Poithong – non-voting delegate  
Laldawngliana Fanai – Advisor

#### Indonesia

##### **Christian Church of Sumba**

Petrus Pandanga – voting delegate  
David Umbu Dingu – voting delegate

##### **Church of Toraja Mamasa**

Alexander Thomas – voting delegate  
Yohanis Tandung – voting delegate  
Obad Nego Depparinding – non-voting delegate  
Victor Paotonan – Advisor

##### **Indonesian Christian Church**

Lazarus Purwanta – voting delegate  
Augustines Kermite - voting delegate  
Jahja Sunarja - non-voting delegate  
Tabita Christiani – Advisor

##### **Javanese Christian Churches**

Kadarmanto Hardjowasito – voting delegate  
Sulendra Partoatmodjo – voting delegate  
Nugroho Adhi – voting delegate  
Pramudianto - non-voting delegate  
Eka Lasa Purwibawa – non-voting delegate  
Setyo Utomo – non-voting delegate

##### **Southern Part Sumatera Christian Church**

Nina Dewi – voting delegate

##### **Toraja Church**

Bernadus Randuk – voting delegate  
Tandi Roma Andilolo – voting delegate  
Musa Salusu – voting delegate  
Joram Paratte – voting delegate

#### Japan

##### **Reformed Church in Japan**

Yasunori Ichikawa – voting delegate  
Yoshikazu Makita – non-voting delegate  
Takayuki Ashida – Advisor

#### Kenya

##### **Reformed Church of East Africa**

Joseph Murupus – voting delegate  
Jonathan Kangogo – voting delegate  
Rebecca Koskei – non-voting delegate  
Japhether Kisaka – non-voting delegate

#### Malawi

##### **Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod**

Stoneham Sande – voting delegate  
Winston Kawale – voting delegate  
Vasco Kachipapa – Advisor

Mozambique

**Reformed Church in Mozambique**

David Ezala – voting delegate

Netherlands

**Protestant Church in the Netherlands**

Martha Frederiks – voting delegate  
Douwe Visser – voting delegate  
Jan-Gerd Heetderks – voting delegate  
Marloes Keller – voting delegate  
Ilona Fritz – non-voting delegate  
Annelies Bouwman – non-voting delegate  
Bert Boer – non-voting delegate  
Bas Plaisier – non-voting delegate  
Evert Overeem – Advisor  
Peter van Bruggen – Advisor

Nigeria

**Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ**

Ayuba Ango – voting delegate  
Simon Akyenyi – voting delegate

**Presbyterian Church of Nigeria**

Benebo Fubara-Manuel – voting delegate

**Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria**

Joseph Kukwen – voting delegate

Philippines

**Christian Reformed Church in the Philippines**

Ver Bernardino – voting delegate  
Heman Itona – Advisor

South Africa

**Dutch Reformed Church**

Kobus Gerber – voting delegate  
Coenie Burger – voting delegate  
Nelus Niemandt – voting delegate  
Ian Nell – non-voting delegate  
Louis Dressel – non-voting delegate  
Gideon Van der Watt – non-voting delegate  
Elsje Buchner – voting delegate  
Piet Meiring – Advisor

**Dutch Reformed Church in Africa**

Johannes Ramolahlehi – voting delegate  
Mochubi Lebone – voting delegate  
Sarel Corrie – non-voting delegate  
Adriaan Buhrmann – non-voting delegate  
Elizabeth Pico – Advisor

**Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika**

Christo van der Merwe – voting delegate  
Gabriel Van Wyk – voting delegate  
Johan Buitendag – voting delegate  
Etienne Fourie – non-voting delegate

Arie Kuiper – non-voting delegate

**Reformed Church in Africa**

Victor Pillay – voting delegate

Maniraj Sukdaven – non-voting delegate

Sri Lanka

**Dutch Reformed Church in Sri Lanka**

Charles Jansz – voting delegate

Denver Fernandopulle – non-voting delegate

Swaziland

**Swaziland Reformed Church**

Arnau van Wyngaard – voting delegate

Musa Shongwe – non-voting delegate

Uganda

**Christian Reformed Church of East Africa**

Paul Gudoyi – voting delegate

**Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda**

Wilberforce Wabulo – voting delegate

Paul Ssemwanga – non-voting delegate

Zambia

**Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Zambia Synod**

Martha Zgambo – voting delegate

Lloyd Ng'ambi – voting delegate

**Reformed Church in Zambia**

Rodgers Nkhuwa – voting delegate

Edwin Zulu – voting delegate

Zimbabwe

**Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Harare Synod**

Joseph Juma – voting delegate

**Reformed Church in Zimbabwe**

Enos Chomutiri – voting delegate

Austin Mandebvu – voting delegate

Chimbiso Mufumhi – non-voting delegate

3. Declaration of formal constitution of the Assembly

The chairperson calls for a motion to declare the assembly constituted. A motion is accepted unanimously, and the chairperson declares the assembly formally in session.

4. Affirmation of Basis and Purpose by delegates and advisors

The chairperson reads the Basis and Purpose of the REC (Articles II and III of the Constitution) to the assembly. All delegates and advisors rise to affirm their commitment to the Basis and Purpose.

5. Welcome to all others

Leaving it to the new moderator to officially welcome visitors and delegates from other organizations, the chair informally greets all of the above.

6. Ratification of New Members (Agenda pp. 4-5; Additional Agenda on Membership, D-2.

6.1 The Presbyterian Church of India

The assembly unanimously ratified the decision of the Executive Committee to admit the Presbyterian Church of India to membership in the REC.

6.2 The Toraja Church (Gereja Toraja)

The assembly unanimously ratifies the decision of the Executive Committee to admit the Toraja Church to membership in the REC.

6.3 The Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika)

6.3.1 The recommendation from the previous Executive Committee to ratify the membership of the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa was inadvertently omitted from the Agenda. The Chair proposed that the Assembly accept the following item as Agenda.

The Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika)

In January 2005, the Executive Committee approved the application of the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA) as a member of the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The NHKA is a denomination of 143,000 members, 306 congregations, and 468 ministers serving those churches. Originally, it is part of the Dutch colonial presence in South Africa, and traces its roots back to the Dutch colonies started in 1652. It came into existence as a separate entity in 1824, shortly after the British took over colonial rule. The NHKA subscribes to the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort and the Ecumenical Creeds.

**Recommendation: That the Assembly ratify the decision of the Executive Committee to admit the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa (Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika) to membership in the Reformed Ecumenical Council.**

The assembly agreed to accept the recommendation for membership of this church as part of the Agenda.

6.3.2 The assembly unanimously ratifies the decision of the Executive Committee to admit the Dutch Reformed Church of Africa to membership in the REC.

6.4 The Indonesian Christian Church (GKI)

A statement is received from the Indonesian Christian Church, informing the assembly of the unification between the Central Java Indonesian Church and the West Java Indonesian Church to become the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI). The GKI with 210,000 confessing members will now have three voting members in the assembly. Jahja Sunardja is now designated as voting delegate.

7. Election of Officers

7.1 The moderator is elected at the first ballot: Douwe Visser.

7.2 The vice-moderator is elected at the third ballot: Winston Kawale.

7.3 The first clerk is elected at the second ballot: Victor Pillay

7.4 The second clerk is elected at the second ballot: Lazarus Purwanto

7.5 The third clerk is elected at the third ballot: Nina Dewi

8. Transfer of the Chair to the New Moderator

The acting chairman transfers the chair to the new moderator, Douwe Visser. On behalf of the new executive committee he expresses his gratitude towards the assembly. After a word of prayer the assembly moves outside for a group photo to be taken.

**Monday, July 18, 2005**

**Second Session**

ARTICLE 2: ROLL CALL

The following person was seated:

Dominican Republic

**Christian Reformed Church in the Dominican Republic**

Julio Vilches Nunez – voting delegate

ARTICLE 3: OBSERVERS

The General Secretary welcomed the following observers:

South Africa

**Reformed Churches of South Africa**

Andries Le Roux Du Plooy - observer

Cornelis Johannes Smit - observer

Christoffel Bernadus Swanepoel - observer

Pakistan

**Presbyterian Church of Pakistan**

Maqsood Pervaiz Kamil - observer

ARTICLE 4: ANNOUNCEMENTS

The General Secretary made announcement as follows:

1. The agenda of July 18 at 1930-2100 was changed into plenary session on “Common Members of WARC and REC”. The talk about “The Takum, Nigeria, Peace Process” was moved to a later time.
2. The result of the offerings in the Opening Service is €349.47, which was given to Proande.

ARTICLE 5: RECESSED

**Monday, July 18, 2005**

**Third Session**

ARTICLE 6: ROLL CALL

The following persons were seated:

Canada and USA

**Christian Reformed Church in North America**

George Vandervelde – non-voting delegate

South Africa

**Dutch Reformed Church**

Pieter Johannes Strauss – voting delegate

The status of Elsje Buchner of the same church is changed to non-voting delegate.

ARTICLE 7: COMMON MEMBERSHIP OF REC AND WARC

The General Secretary reported about the informal discussion held on July 15 in the evening about the common membership of REC and WARC. Although the meeting had been open, it was specifically directed toward those members who were also members of the WARC. The Moderamen desired that the issues raised in that meeting be presented in an official session of the Assembly. The report then was followed by discussion on the matter.

After the discussion the Executive Committee proposed that the Assembly appointed a task force to assist the Executive Committee by giving guidelines and direction as to how the Executive Committee should deal with the matter. The task force group would convene and work during the assembly and should present its report first to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then should bring the report to assembly for final decision. The task force group consisted of:

Edwin Zulu	- Reformed Church in Zambia
Pieter Borgdorff	- Christian Reformed Church in North America
Hendrik de Waard	- Christian Reformed Churches in Australia
Yasunori Ichikawa	- Reformed Church in Japan
Bas Plaisier	- Protestant Church in The Netherlands

The proposal was approved.

#### ARTICLE 8: CHANGE OF BYLAWS

The Moderamen presented recommendation to change the Bylaws V,3 which originally read:

3. The Executive Committee shall be augmented with three advisors chosen by the Assembly who, in the absence of any Executive Committee member(s) shall be designated as replacement(s), the choice of the advisor(s) being left to the discretion of the Executive Committee.
  - a. The advisors shall receive the agenda for written comment and the minutes of Executive Committee.
  - b. The advisors in whose country the Executive Committee meets shall attend the meeting of the Executive Committee.
  - c. The Executive Committee is authorized, if the need arises, to ask all advisors to meet with them.

to be:

3. The Executive Committee shall be augmented with **four** advisors chosen by the Assembly who, in the absence of any Executive Committee member(s) shall be designated as replacement(s), the choice of the advisor(s) being left to the discretion of the Executive Committee.
  - a. The advisors shall receive the agenda for written comment and the minutes of Executive Committee.
  - b. The advisors in whose country the Executive Committee meets shall attend the meeting of the Executive Committee.
  - c. The Executive Committee is authorized, if the need arises, to ask **one or more advisor(s)** to meet with them ***without regard to the country where the Executive Committee plans to meet***

In the deliberation that followed, Henk De Waard proposed changing **four** into ***at least three***. The proposal was accepted by the Moderamen.

Then the motion to change Bylaws V,3, as amended, was carried.

#### ARTICLE 9: ADVISORS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Based on the new reading of Bylaws V,3 the Moderamen proposed that the Executive Committee should have four advisors. Three of them were:

Jacobus Johannes Gerber - Dutch Reformed Church

Benebo Fubara-Manuel - Presbyterian Church of Nigeria  
Antoine Schluchter - Evangelical Reformed Church of France

The proposal was approved.

The fourth person should be represented the Christian Reformed Church in North America, whose name should be decided upon at a later time.

#### ARTICLE 10: NEW AGENDA ITEM

The Protestant Church in The Netherlands submitted a short draft statement on Religious Pluralism for use by Advisory Committee 1. The Assembly accepted this statement as a new Agenda Item.

#### ARTICLE 11: RECESSED

The meeting was adjourned.

### **Tuesday, July 19, 2005 Fourth Session**

#### ARTICLE 12: ADVISORY COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

The Moderamen proposed the Advisory Committee Assignments as follow:

##### **Advisory Committee 1 – Religious Pluralism**

Coenraad W. Burger (Moderator)  
Martha Frediks (reporter)  
Antoine Schluchter  
Arie Cornelis Kuyper  
Austin Mandebvu  
Ayuba Ango Terry  
Charles Jansz  
David Umbu Dingu  
Hendrik De Waard  
Ilona Fritz  
Jahja Sunarja  
Japhether Muongolo Kisaka  
Obed Nego Depparinding  
Ralph Wigboldus  
S. Iosterwell Iawphniaw  
Sulendra Partoatmo djo  
Yoram Paratte

##### **Advisory Committee 2 – Church and State**

Kadarmanto Hardjowasito (Moderator)  
Dimitris Boukis (Reporter)  
Tandi Andilolo  
Annelies E. Bouwman-Meeuse  
Enos Chomutiri  
Sarel Johannes Corrie  
Benebo Fubara-Manuel  
Jacobus Johannes Gerber

Jan-Gerd Heetderks  
Joseph Murupus  
Yoshikazu Makita  
Bertha Mook  
Ian Nell  
Lalramliana Pachuau  
Victor Paotonan  
Stoneham Sande  
Musa Theophilus Shongwe  
Jean-Raymond Stauffacher  
Jacobus Christiaan van der Merwe  
Edwin Zulu

### **Advisory Committee 3 – Leadership**

Johan Buitendag (Moderator)  
Vanlalchhuanawma (Reporter)  
Bas Plaisier  
Cornelius Johannes Petrus Niemandt  
John Phoithong  
Joseph Juma  
Peter Borgdorff  
Pieter Johannes Strauss  
Setyo Utomo  
Wilson Gonese  
Yasunori Ichikawa

### **Advisory Committee 4 – Nurture & CYCN**

Louis Christie Dressel (Moderator)  
Jonathan Vandenberg (Reporter)  
Bernadus Randuk  
Chimbiso Mufumhi  
Denver Fernandopulle  
Etienne Gerhard Fourie  
Heman M. Itona  
Julio Vilches Nunez  
Keitumetse Elizabeth Pico  
Laldawngliana Fanai  
Lionel Jauvert  
Llyod Ng'ambi  
Lorriane Kefalas-Boukis  
Maniraj Sukdaven  
Moses Bogatsu  
Nkhuwa Rodgers  
Pramudianto  
Simon Sabo Akyenyi  
Tabita Christiani  
Takayuki Ashida  
Teresa Renkema  
Vasco Kachipapa  
Yohanis Tandung

### **Advisory Committee 5 – Mission/AIDS/Justice**

Arnau van Wyngaard (Moderator)

Marloes Keller (Reporter)  
Adrian Smuts Buhrmann  
Bert Kuipers  
David Ezala  
Gabriel M.J. van Wyk  
Gideon Van der Watt  
Kim Malsawmkim  
Martha Zgambo Allan  
Mochubi Joseph Lebone  
Nugroho Adhi  
Paul Ssemwanga  
Petrus Pandanga  
Pieter Gerhard Jacobus Meiring  
Rebecca Metto Koskei  
Tyngshainbha Mukhim  
Virgilio Bernardino

#### **Advisory Committee 6 – Worship/HC 8**

Jonathan Kangogo (Moderator)  
George Vandervelde (Reporter)  
Agustinus Kermite  
Alexander Thomas  
Bert Boer  
Eka Lasa Purwibawa  
Elsje Petronella Buchner  
Evert Overeem  
Joseph Ezekiel Kukwen  
Leonard Peter Jan van Bruggen  
Lesting Nongphlang  
Lyle Bierma  
Mohotsi Johannes Ramolahlehi  
Musa Salusu  
Paul Gudoyi  
Wilberforce Wabulo

The proposal was approved. Delegates were permitted to request changes to follow personal preferences from the Moderamen or General Secretary.

#### **ARTICLE 13: ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Moderator made announcements as follow:

1. The discussion about the Takum, Nigeria, Peace Process would be held on July 19 in the evening (19:30-21:00 session).
2. Review and Renew Consultations which was planned on July 20 in the morning session was cancelled.
3. Bible study on July 20 will continue until 09:30.
4. There would be a meeting of the Executive Committee with all moderators and reporters of Advisory Committees on July 20 at 09:30-10:00.
5. Two persons were assigned in organizing the cultural evening on July 22, that is Mercy de Ruiter and Maniraj Sukdaven.
6. The Moderator emphasized that the times of meals must be strictly observed.

#### **ARTICLE 14: GREETINGS**

Greetings were received from Andries Le Roux du Plooy from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA).

ARTICLE 15: RECESSED

The business meeting was adjourned and then the meeting was continued with the presentation and discussion about “Church and State”.

**Tuesday, July 19, 2005**  
**Fifth Session**

ARTICLE 16: ROLL CALL

The following person was seated:

France

**Evangelical Reformed Church of France**

Jean-Raymond Stauffacher - non-voting delegate

ARTICLE 17: GREETINGS

Ms. Thijn Thijnink, fraternal delegate of the Mennonite World Conference, brought greetings. She recounted the history noting that the Mennonites are the only Reformation tradition originating in the Netherlands, and offered greetings from the president, Nancy Heisey, and the secretary, Larry Miller.

ARTICLE 18: RECESSED

The meeting was adjourned.

**Wednesday, July 20, 2005**  
**Sixth Session**

ARTICLE 19: ROLL CALL

The following person was seated:

Canada and USA

**Christian Reformed Church in North America**

Lyle Bierma - non-voting delegate

ARTICLE 20: WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed Mgr. John A. Rodano from the Vatican and Rev. Pieter Koonen from the Utrecht Diocese of the Catholic Church.

ARTICLE 21: GREETINGS

Rev. Bert van Bokhoven brought fraternal greetings on behalf of the Reformed Mission League (GZB). He expressed their sharing of the working of mission around the world. The GZB is supported by about 400

congregations in the PKN, and collaborates with Kerkinactie, the main mission organization of PKN, and several REC members also.

ARTICLE 22: RECESSED

The meeting was adjourned.

**Thursday, July 21, 2005**  
**Seventh Session**

ARTICLE 23: VISA PROBLEM

1. The Moderator referred to the empty seats in the chapel this morning for the fourteen delegates who were denied visas. Most were from Nigeria. He noted that the PKN office and REC office worked very hard, and made every effort possible to obey the rules.
2. Benebo Fubara-Manuel from Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) spoke on behalf the Nigerians. He noted the frustration of not having a telephone call through, having to bribe officials to get an appointment. Simon Sabo Akyenyi spoke that the Embassy of the Netherlands would not accept Nigerian National Insurance. The phone message said to call back in 5 minutes, but that message was always repeated.
3. Evert Overeen reported on his office's frustration with the total impossibility to communicate with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Abuja.
4. The Moderator concluded that such action threatens the freedom of religion in this country, when international church leaders cannot meet together. He announced that it was the intention of the PKN office to send an official letter of protest to the Foreign Ministry of The Netherlands.

ARTICLE 24: ANNOUNCEMENT

The Moderator announced a card for David Engelhard would be on the lobby table for the delegates to sign.

ARTICLE 25: RECESSED

The meeting was adjourned.

**Friday, July 22, 2005**  
**Eighth Session**

ARTICLE 26: GREETINGS

The Assembly received greetings from Rev. Setri Nyomi, representing the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and from the Rev. Mgr. John Rodano, representing the Pontifical Institute for the Promotion of Christian Unity of the Catholic Church.

ARTICLE 27: MINUTES

The Second Clerk read the minutes of the First Session. The Assembly approved the minutes as amended.

ARTICLE 28: REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (PART ONE)

The First Clerk presented the report of the Executive Committee (AC 7.1) with the recommendations in this and following articles.

### Gratitude

The Moderamen wishes to note its sincere gratitude and appreciation to the members and advisors of the previous Executive Committee for all the work, sacrifices and contributions to the REC since the last Assembly. The Moderamen notes especially the family and personal situations of the three advisors.

Kadarmanto Hardjowasito , President  
Douwe Visser, Vice-President  
Pieter Potgieter, First Clerk  
Claire Elgersma, Second Clerk  
Nuhu Idzi, Third Clerk

Advisors:

Rev Conrad Chimkoka, who passed away 6 months ago.  
Dr David H Engelhard, who is presently very ill.  
Rev Kardina Anggraini, who lost her husband.

Rev Kadarmanto was asked to pray that the Lord's Word and presence bring comfort and strength to these families.

### ARTICLE 29: ADVISORS

The First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That Rev Calvin Bremer, the incoming Executive Director of Ministries of the CRCNA, be the fourth Advisor to the REC Executive.**

The recommendation was adopted.

Benebo Fubara-Manuel rose to indicate that, as there were no female advisors, he was withdrawing his name as an advisor to the Executive Committee.

### ARTICLE 30: THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA (*Agenda*, p. 5)

The First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That the Assembly notes with regret the decision of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to withdraw its membership from the REC.**

The recommendation was adopted.

### ARTICLE 31: CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE REC (*Agenda*, pp. 5, 23-24)

The issue of the membership application process comes up because the Executive Committee has wondered at times whether to admit every church that wishes to enter and that meets constitutional requirements. In practice the Executive Committee would follow these guidelines in addition to constitutional requirements.

The First Clerk listed the guidelines, with some emendations, as follows:

Guidelines of the criteria for membership in the REC that will be used by the Executive Committee:

1. An applicant church shall normally have at least 2,000 members
2. An applicant church shall have been organized at least five years, and shown some continuity in office-bearers and meetings.
3. An applicant church shall normally subscribe to a Reformed confession listed in our Basis, or shall give evidence of moving in that direction.
4. There shall be some personal contact between the Executive Committee of staff of the REC and the leaders of the applicant church.

5. There shall be serious consideration of neighboring REC member churches' opinions, although this shall not be definitive.
6. In case of an application from a 'separated' church, especially from one of our members, there shall be a serious attempt to heal the rift before receiving the new church.

Recommendation:

**That the Assembly accepts the use of these standards by the Executive Committee.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 32: WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE (*Agenda*, p. 12)

The First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That the next Executive committee continues to explore closer relations with the World Evangelical Alliance.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 33: VISIT TO THE SLAVERY MONUMENT

The President announced he will deliver a brief address to all the delegates during the visit to the Slavery Monument in Middleburg on Saturday afternoon, July 23. Martha Allan Zgambo of CCAP Zambia and the Moderator will lay a wreath at the monument to commemorate the Assembly's visit.

ARTICLE 34: THE REC ASSEMBLY 2009 (*Agenda*, p.17)

The First Clerk moved the following recommendations:

1. **That the REC accepts the invitation of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to call the next Assembly in South Africa.**
2. **That the REC encourages the DRC to include the other three member churches in South Africa to be part of the welcome and planning of the REC Assembly.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 35: EXECUTIVE STAFF OF THE REC (*Agenda*, p. 17)

The President declared that this session was a closed session, and the General Secretary was asked to leave along with all other guests. Then the First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That Richard van Houten be reappointed as general Secretary for another four-year term, or until the next Assembly.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 36: TREASURER (*Agenda*, p. 19)

The President declared that this session was an open session. Then the First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That the Assembly thanks Lester Ippel for his services as Treasurer, and that he be reappointed for another term of office to the next Assembly.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 37: RENEW AND REVIEW CONSULTATION (*Agenda*, p. 64)

The Executive Committee commends the General Secretary for the sterling work in these consultations. Then the First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

**That these consultations continue until the next Assembly.**

The recommendation was adopted.

#### ARTICLE 38: REC-WARC RELATIONSHIP

On the basis of the discussions at the Plenary Session on this issue, the Moderamen appointed a Task Group. The Moderamen wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the work done by the Task Group despite the limited time allowed to them. The Moderamen subsequently met with the task group and after discussions with them, forward the following submission to the Assembly.

#### **Background**

##### 1. Reasons for a Closer Relationship

- a) There already is a form of cooperation (i.e. Pentecostal Dialogue, Joint Steward Groups at the assemblies, and participation in MIU).
- b) 27 REC members already have joint membership
- c) There is local cooperation at the local and national levels between REC and WARC member churches.

##### 2. Advantages of a Closer Relationship

- a) The potential of better use of resources (programmatic, human and financial).
- b) Access for REC to a wider field of ecumenical contacts
- c) It would demonstrate REC's commitment to the unity of Reformed churches.
- d) To the degree that the REC is isolated from the broader church world, enhancing the relationship with WARC can diminish that isolation.
- e) An enhanced relationship with WARC would provide a larger platform for bearing testimony to confessional commitments.
- f) Since REC and WARC have complementary interests in values and ministry, a closer relationship makes sense.
- g) Additional REC member churches in WARC could strengthen the quality of confessional testimony.
- h) REC member churches would learn and benefit from what other WARC member churches can teach us.

##### 3. Advantages of REC Remaining Independent

- a) REC-member churches tend to be more open about their Reformed confessional basis and identity.
- b) REC's size fosters a greater spirit of relational intimacy and cohesion.
- c) Maintaining the REC as an independent ecumenical fellowship will make it more likely that most of the present member churches will remain, especially those who would not be comfortable joining another ecumenical fellowship like WARC. (It needs to be recognized that if REC does remain independent other member churches may decide that they no longer desire to be part of both WARC and REC.)
- d) A smaller ecumenical organization like REC is able to respond better to the individual needs of member churches.

##### 4. Possibilities for an Enhanced Relationship

- a) Incidental cooperation – as is now
- b) Project Cooperation and the sharing of personnel
- c) Affiliated relationship as an entity within WARC
- d) Merger

Then the First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

- A. **REC formally communicate to WARC its desire to engage in a meaningful conversation that might lead both organizations to a more intentionally closer relationship as already is demonstrated in present practice in incidental cooperation, project cooperation, and even the potential for sharing personnel.**
- B. **Upon receiving a positive response from WARC, the executive committee of REC be authorized to appoint a committee of four (4) persons with the mandate to explore, and if appropriate negotiate, an agreement with WARC that will enhance a formal relationship:**
  - 1. **That could move REC toward being an affiliated entity within WARC.**
  - 2. **That this relationship be one of intentional cooperation and interrelationship.**
  - 3. **That, at least at the general secretary and the executive committee level, there be regular consultation and collaboration.**
  - 4. **That, as much as is possible, REC and WARC function in a complementary and/or a possible joint manner.**
  - 5. **It is desirable that REC will continue to exist and retain its independence as an entity even within the framework of WARC.**
  - 6. **That such an agreement allows adequate space for member churches of REC who are not WARC-affiliated to participate in REC or REC/WARC activities without requiring WARC membership.**
  - 7. **That the committee of 4 REC representatives be composed as follows:**
    - a) **The general secretary of REC.**
    - b) **The President of the executive committee of REC.**
    - c) **A representative of an REC member-church that is also a member of WARC.**
    - d) **A representative of an REC member-church that is not presently a member of WARC.**
    - e) **It is suggested that this committee of 4 be joined by 4 WARC-appointed members to form one committee to develop a joint-proposal for initial consideration by the respective executive committees no later than December 2006.**
- C. **That the final decision on specific timelines, inter-office arrangements, financial details (if any), and organizational placement, be referred to the negotiating committee.**
- D. **That the expenses for the development of a proposal be respectively born by REC and WARC.**
- E. **That an extended\* executive committee of REC be convened at such a time as a proposal is ready for formal consideration subject to the following conditions:**
  - 1. **The proposal to be considered by an extended executive committee shall be received by each member church no later than 6 months before an extended executive committee is convened. No extended executive committee shall be convened later than 18 months prior to the next scheduled meeting of the REC Assembly.**
  - 2. **The proposal must, in the sole judgment of the REC executive committee, be within reasonable boundaries of the decisions of the Utrecht Assembly.**

**\*An extended executive committee means the executive committee itself, the advisors, and not less than three representatives of member churches.**
- F. **That the executive committee shall provide a full report with recommendations to the next assembly.**

The recommendations were adopted.

ARTICLE 39: YOUTH STAFF WORKER (*Supplementary Agenda*, pp. 1-4)

The Moderamen notes with gratitude and appreciation the work done by Rev Jim Lont. He had worked for the REC as a volunteer from 1980 to 1995 and a staff member from 1996 to 2005. The sterling work is certainly commended.

Then the First Clerk moved the following recommendation:

- 1. **That Rev Jim Lont's appointment is terminated on 31 December 2005.**

2. **That a Youth and Christian Nurture Worker/Secretary be appointed from outside the USA and Europe. The motivation for this recommendation is due to financial constraints, where our limited budget could only finance such an appointment.**
3. **Rev Jim Lont is to assist the General Secretary draw up a job description.**
4. **The REC Executive Committee will be the committee to select and appoint the candidate.**

The recommendations 1 and 3 were discussed in detail in a closed session. Recommendation 1 was amended as follows: **That Rev Jim Lont be granted honorable retirement on 31 December 2005.** This recommendation was adopted.

The Moderamen withdrew recommendation 3.

In open session, there was brief discussion of recommendations 2 and 4. The Moderamen decided to withdraw these recommendations and prepare revisions.

#### ARTICLE 40: REPORT OF THE YOUTH AND CHRISTIAN NURTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC-4)

The Reporter of the Committee, Jonathan Vandenberg, presented the report AC-4.

AC-4

#### **Youth and Christian Nurture Advisory committee**

**Moderator:** Louis Dressel.

**Reporter:** Jonathan Vandenberg.

#### **DISCUSSION FROM AGENDA**

(*Agenda*, pp. 105 – 107, and the *Supplemental Agenda*, pp. 2 – 4, 32 – 33)

#### **Children at Lord's Supper.** (*Agenda*, p. 106)

In response to a request from Assembly 2000 "that all member churches report at Utrecht 'how the recommendations on Baptized children at Lord's Supper have been implemented,' a discussion revealed:

1. That only a few of our denominations presently encourage it.
2. Although most churches do not specifically include children at the Lord's Supper, many have had (or have) as a point of discussion/decision since the 1996 report was adopted (Blue supplement, pages 32 – 33) and some have experimented with pleasing results.

Our advisory committee believes that it is important to continue to monitor this issue valuable to our ongoing Christian nurture discussions and to summarize the history of the study (1984 – 96) and to provide a full update on the experience of all (at least most) of our member churches, as requested. An upcoming issue of FOCUS will be devoted to this.

The committee appointed Teresa Renkema, Jonathan Vandenberg, Jim Lont and Louis Dressel as an editorial committee for the Youth and Christian Nurture Commission issues of *REC Focus*.

#### **Future Staffing for the REC.** (*Blue supplement, pages 2 - 4*)

Discussions on the Secretary for Youth and Christian nurture role were held. We went over the two suggestions in the supplemental agenda. There was a strong feeling that this position needs to remain in the REC, having been of great encouragement to those involved in youth work and significant towards the establishment of some of the ministries now in place in member denominations.

A summary of the discussions on the topic are:

- There was very little support for combining the position with WARC. It was felt that the role would be too big and difficult with divided loyalties and two office sites.
- It was felt that even if the role should take on some of the General Secretary's tasks it should retain the title of "Secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture." The position is essential to the REC as not only a development role but an advocacy role.
- The combination of some of the General Secretary's tasks should be very carefully assigned to be sure that the youth aspect of the role does not get pushed to one side.
- That it is critical for an overlap period to be held with Jim Lont and the new person to ensure a smooth and informed transition.

## **PLENARY**

### **Celebrating 25 Years of Youth Work in the REC**

The 25 years of 'youth nurture' in the REC was celebrated on an evening in the assembly. Two people (Lloyd Ng'ambi & Vasco Kachipapa) from member churches received certificates of accomplishment for their studies in the program for training them for leadership in Youth and Christian Nurture. This is from the REC and Reformed Bible College program.

The advisory committee has included the report that Jim presented to the assembly so the history can be officially recorded in the Acts of the assembly.

#### ***Word of Appreciation to Rev. James C. Lont.***

*The Youth and Christian nurture commission wishes to express gratitude to God for the work of Jim Lont throughout the 25 years.*

*Jim has ministered to us by crossing the boundaries of various cultures around the world, as well as by building relationships between the member churches.*

*The legacy he is leaving challenges us to continue and renew our efforts to nurture our covenant youth and integrate them into the full life and work of the church.*

*May God continue to bless Jim Lont as he phases out of the role of secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture.*

## **WORKSHOPS**

### **Youth Ministry Foundation or Phase**

This workshop was a presentation and discussion flowing out of Jonathan Vandenberg's article on youth ministry, 'a church foundation or phase'. Its basic thesis was that traditional youth ministry is in a state of redefinition as it is confronted with changing attitudes in youth and the societal landscape. It highlights post-modernity and some of the youth ministry approaches which do not meet the mark as the reason that traditional youth ministry faces the challenges it does. The paper reflects once more on our theological understanding of the covenant position of the child and draws connections between our theology and the needs of young people today. As a result, it encourages us to rethink our covenant praxis for today's times. For further background, please refer to the article in *REC Focus*, November 2004.

Discussion was held about how we very much would like to see even greater integration between generations in the life of the church. Some stories were told about the efforts that have been made.

The group discussed the need to continue to move beyond theory of integration into the church and ways that we can be more proactive at helping each other in achieving this. It was suggested that the theme of the next assembly for the Youth and Christian Nurture workshops be integration of youth into the church.

That being said, we also did acknowledge that this is taking place at a greater level than previously, which is encouraging to see. The meeting noted that it is essential for the local youth worker and denominational worker to

have a strong commitment to 'integration into the full life and work of the church' as a critical covenant principal in child and youth ministry.

### **New Efforts, Old Truth. – The Official Ecclesiastical Pedagogy of Its Covenant Youth.**

The workshops on the official ecclesiastical pedagogy of covenant youth were led by two key speakers, one from North America and the other from the Netherlands. Discussion concerning the importance of catechism teaching was held. It was noted that there were churches which had become lax in catechetical instruction who were now highlighting the need to return to it.

The advisory committee affirms the importance of the official teaching of the doctrinal basis of our churches and a biblical summary/theology of God, life and church.

We acknowledge that many churches are teaching the catechism less and less. This is due in many cases to lack of knowledge about effective teaching methods and learning styles. Our churches need to have a commitment to the teaching of doctrinal truths. We are sometimes too quick in desperation to throw out the old and say we need to do a 'new thing'. We need to be cautious in our strategy, as new efforts are maybe what needed to teach old truths.

Churches need to ask, what are the outcomes and what do we want to achieve with out catechetical education? We encourage churches to revisit their commitment to catechesis of the young giving specific attention to its educational approach.

While we strongly encourage the relevant catechism education in our churches, we reinforce the need for catechism teaching to remain in context of the wider more holistic ministry to youth. Catechism training alone cannot provide holistic faith nurture. The importance of the ministry in the home, the inclusion in the work and life of the churches as well as effective pastoral care and mentoring are some of the other considerations that are important for the effective nurture of the child.

### **Family Ministry**

A panel, consisting of delegates from the USA (& Canada), Japan, Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa, gave their views on the family. The REC Focus of September, 2003 *Mission of the Family* has articles in this regard.

### **UGANDA.**

The family, including the extended family, conveys moral values and the Christian faith to the children. Currently this has changed mainly because of urbanization. Children are often not raised by the family. Some parents do not teach the Bible or go to church, and the children follow their example. Working parents leave home early and come back late at night. Children are taken care of by neighbours. The church has taken over the role of parents in catechism and Christian schools.

### **JAPAN**

In Japan, people do not attend church as a family. The Christian community consists of only 1% of the population. Family issues are a serious problem. Less than half of the church members are men; therefore, a lot of women attend the church alone. Family worship is almost impossible because everyone is so busy, and parents often do not know how to go about doing it. The Japanese families need encouragement. Men are often converted to Christianity by their wives.

### **USA AND CANADA**

When we talk of the family, we need to have a historical background. There are changes. The definition of "family" in the REC-Journal, September 2003, page 4 is post-modern. The typical family usually consists of a blood line (or adoption) and includes more than one generation. In the past, we had a traditional family (this is still so in Africa and Asia). It changed into the nuclear family. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we experienced the breakdown of the family. Industrialization had an effect as people became more mobile. Therapy as a solution to family problems

became more normal. In the 1960's, mothers started to work outside the family home. This was the end of the nuclear family. Today we have the post-modern family. Now only about 17% of the population are in nuclear families. The divorce rate is increasing. Now there are a lot of single parent families. All of these developments have an impact on the children. There are experiences of family violence, cohabitation and sexual abuse. Same sex families are on the increase, with Canada allowing "marriage" between same sex partners. The Christian family is in a privileged position: living according to Christian values, having good relations, going to church and having the support of other Christians. These families are strong.

## **NIGERIA**

The father is the head of the family; he is also the teacher and leader. He has the task of enforcing discipline. The family is involved in worship.

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa there are different types of families: nuclear, extended, re-unified families, one parent families, and even child headed families. Both the divorce rate and unemployment are high. Many grannies support their grandchildren on their pension grant.

## **SUMMARY**

The Advisory committee:

- acknowledges that Jesus Christ has formed a new family, the extended Christian family, i.e. the church.
- acknowledges that change has taken place in family life
- affirms that, in the face of changes in family life and in the composition of families, churches are called to be more sensitive to this situation and offer pastoral help to and strengthen families, especially the children in families.

The workshops throughout the assembly were very well received and enjoyable. We are very thankful for the leadership in these workshops led by REC member churches' own people.

## **PRE-ASSEMBLY**

### **Christian Day Schooling**

Prior to the assembly, representatives from 27 member churches met in Hydepark, Doorn to share our efforts in Christian Day schooling. The stewards were also there to help and contribute. The planning committee of Don Oppewal, Dale Dielman, Paul, Mercy DeRuiter and Jim Lont were in attendance too.

The reason of this meeting was that we might consider the formative influence of the schooling on our children. This event was never done before, so was not only a remarkable, but also a three and a half day historic event.

Most stories note the influence of churches in the Netherlands, USA, and South Africa to spread the gospel and start mission schools in countries all over the world. The importance, effect, and impact of Christian education on persons who became leaders in various positions is also noted. However, it is also noted that the missionaries did not empower (enough) the local people to be independent. At the same time, local people did not take up the responsibility to develop the schools in their cultures. As a result, when the missionaries left, local people were not ready to take over the schools. Therefore, there is a need to equip and train people and teachers with leadership, managerial, and teaching skills.

Another challenge is the difficulty of funding Christian schools. Since running private school is very costly, the Church needs to find ways to cover the budget. Many stories highlight the lack of salaries for teachers, as well as the lack of providing standard buildings for Christian schools.

Some stories show that since the independence of some countries, the governments have changed the educational policy. This change of policy can become a great challenge for Christian schools.

It is also noted by some stories that parents and families sometimes do not take their responsibility to educate their children in the Christian faith. They just ask Christian schools to take the responsibility. In some cases the families are not involved in developing Christian schools.

Some stories noted the need for churches to reformulate the goals of each Christian school based on contextual theological foundations. This has also to do with vision, mission, strategy, as well as a possible model for a Christian school.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The REC keep children at the Lord's Supper item on the agenda since there are churches that are still in the process of working through the issue.**
- 2. Produce a Youth and Christian nurture 'Focus' with the theme 'Nurturing Children in the Covenant', focussing mostly on children at the Lord's Supper including case studies from member churches and resources available. This is for the purposes of updating the information and compiling neatly the material for permanent record.**
- 3. That the next REC focus on issues of Youth and Christian Nurture Issues be dedicated to Jim Lont, with also a few people writing some words of thanks for Jim's work in the commission.**
- 4. Youth and Nurture commission are committed to the 'essential need' for young people to be integrated into the life and ministry of the church. We recommend to the assembly that each member church delegate encourage their churches to continue to integrate young people into the life and work of the church and to share their stories locally and to encourage other churches to do so.**
- 5. The Youth and Nurture commission continue to observe and evaluate changes in family patterns in the cultures of the REC member denominations and note especially the need for ministries to youth who are troubled and even damaged by adverse family situations.**
- 6. REC develop on its website a database of online and paper materials, people and organisations available by member churches to be shared with one another. The data is to include schooling, church education, youth and family ministry, and training.**
- 7. That the materials and suggestions of the pre-assembly on Christian day schools should be submitted to a Task Group appointed by the Secretary for Youth and Christian nurture for further compilation and implementation. The Advisory Committee suggests that Mercy DeRuiter, Don Oppewal and Dale Dielman be asked to help and others be approached as needed in consultation with other CYCN members around the world.**

The Advisory Committee,  
Simon Sabo Akyenyi, Takayuki Ashida, Moses Mogatsu Bogatsu, Tabita Christiani, Louis Dressel, Denver Fernandopulle, Etienne Gerhard Fouris, Heman Itona, Lionel Jauvert, Lorraine Kefalas-Boukis, Chimbiso Mufumi, Lloyd Ng'ambi, Elizabeth Pico, Bernadus Randuk, Rodgers Nkhuwa, Maniraj Sukdaven, Julio Vilches Nunez, Jonathan Vandenberg, Teresa Renkema, Laldawangliana Fanai, Pramudianto, Yohanis Tandung

Observers. Mercy De Riuter. Ex Officio; Jim Lont.

The Reporter then moved recommendations 1-7 in the report.

All the recommendations were adopted.

#### ARTICLE 41: RECESS

The meeting was adjourned.

#### **Saturday, July 23, 2005 Ninth Session**

#### ARTICLE 42: WELCOME

The President warmly welcomed Prof. Dr. Klaas Runia and his wife who were present in this session.

#### ARTICLE 43: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE 6, HEIDELBERG CATECHISM AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

The Reporter, Paul Gudoyi, presented the following report.

#### **Advisory Committee 6**

#### **AC-6.1**

#### **1. On Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 80 Background**

##### **a. Background**

In response to objections raised within the Christian Reformed Church to the Heidelberg Catechism's strong condemnation of the mass, the CRC mandated a committee to clarify the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist. In addition, this committee considered the accuracy of the HC Q&A 80's presentation of the Catholic Mass and the appropriateness of the concluding repudiation of the Mass.

The **findings** of the CRC committee may be summarized as follows:

1. The Sacrifice of Christ (A<sup>1</sup>, A<sup>2</sup>, A<sup>3</sup>)<sup>1</sup>  
HC 80 contrasts Protestant teaching as honouring the once-for-all sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice (A1) to Catholic teaching as detracting from the sufficiency and finality of Christ's sacrifice because forgiveness occurs only by the daily offering of Christ by the priest (A<sup>2</sup>).  
This contrast is inaccurate, however, because the Catholic Church too affirms A<sup>1</sup> and understands the mass to be, not a repetition, but a sacramental re-enactment which makes present the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Therefore the conclusion that official Catholic teaching entails a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ does not follow.
2. The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (B<sup>1</sup>, B<sup>2</sup>, B<sup>3</sup>)  
HC 80 contrasts Protestant teaching as honouring the fact that we are grafted into Christ who is bodily in heaven, where he is to be worshiped, to Catholic teaching as locating Christ on earth, namely, in the consecrated bread and wine, where he is worshipped by Catholic believers.  
This contrast is inaccurate, however, because official Catholic teaching, too, affirms B<sup>1</sup>. Catholic teaching holds that the object of worship is not the consecrated bread and wine, but the ascended Christ, who graciously makes himself sacramentally present in and through these elements. Therefore, the conclusion concerning idolatry does not follow.
3. Implications regarding present day assessment of Reformational "mis-representation of the Mass"

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<sup>1</sup> "A" refers to the sections in HC80 that deal with the sacrifice of Christ, "B" to the sections that deal with the presence of Christ (see the designations and explanation on pages 383-384 of the *Agenda*).

- a. Statements such as HC 80 were composed in the highly charged polemical atmosphere of the sixteenth century. HC 80 was likely written in direct response to the scathing anathemas of Protestant Eucharistic teaching issued by the Council of Trent just months before the adoption of the HC. HC 80 became, there fore, a kind of Protestant counter- anathema (“accursed idolatry”).
- b. The Reformers were likely responding not simply to Catholic teaching regarding the mass but also to the practice of the mass in their own experience while they were still part of the Catholic Church. Practice does not always comport with teaching in the Roman Catholic Church in late-medieval Europe.
- c. The CRC report does not represent a change in its own understanding of the Lord’s Supper, only a change in the way we understand and represent Roman Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist - however much we still disagree with it.
4. The REC assembly also received as information the text of the footnote that was included in the eighties of 20th century in the Indonesian edition of the Heidelberg Catechism by Badan Penerbit Kristen in Jakarta. A translation of this text is attached to this report (Annex A).

**b. Recommendations:**

1. **that the REC receive with appreciation the findings clarifying official Roman Catholic teaching of the Eucharist as presented in the CRC report “Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist”, part 1, section I-IV.A (*Agenda*, pages 382-408) and part II, section I-III.A (*Agenda*, pages 410 - 418).**
2. **that the REC send the above mentioned findings to its member Churches for consideration and appropriate action, and invite its member Churches to send reports on the results to the REC. T**
3. **that the REC share the received reports with the member churches. T**
4. **that the Executive Committee inform the next REC Assembly about the results of the discussions in the member Churches.**
5. **that the REC contact WARC on bringing REC’s discussion on H.C. 80 to the attention of the member churches of WARC, especially those that have Heidelberg Catechism as a confessional basis.**

**2. On a process of discussion on the role and meaning of confessions in the life and work of the Churches**

**Recommendation:**

**That the REC initiate an exploration and discussion of the nature and meaning of being confessing and confessional churches.**

**Grounds :**

1. While the REC is a “confessionally-based” Council, the understanding and experience of being confessing and confessional churches vary widely.
2. Such exploration would facilitate mutual learning by and encouragement of member Churches to be living witnesses on the basis of the Reformed tradition.
3. The discussion re the Q&A 80 of H.C. has brought to light that there sometimes are significant discrepancies between confessional teaching and practice.

**3. On Worship**

**Background**

During the meetings of the REC Assembly 2005, we have worshiped together with brothers and sisters from many different lands and cultures. Many of the diverse gifts of prayer and song were offered to the Lord from different times and places. Three workshops were held on Reformed Worship, with significant discussion. And in the meetings of the Advisory Committee 6, members told several stories about issues facing their

congregations with respect to worship.

**On the basis of those experiences and discussion, we make the following** recommendations:

1. **That the REC Assembly 2005 acknowledge that there are significant issues in worship facing our churches that have resulted in a desire for a more clear understanding of the principles of worship from a Reformed perspective.**

Grounds:

- a) Some issues are intergenerational, where youth desire to worship God in a way different from their parents.
- b) Some issues arise between cultures, where the received worship traditions from missionaries come in one cultural form to different lands with other cultural forms, with respect to, for example, clothing and musical instruments.
- c) Some issues are within cultures between different religions, where patterns of worship to other gods may conflict with Christian worship.

2. **That the REC Assembly 2005 acknowledge the need for study of worship practices and ask the Executive Committee to take steps to establish a study group to deal with issues of worship and culture from a Reformed perspective. The study group would both gather information and provide a statement for consideration for REC and the member churches.**

The Study Group would be able to benefit from recent studies, including the book “Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Worldwide”, the result of an international consultation in 2001 at the John Knox Centre in Geneva in cooperation with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities”, a 1996 international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation’s Study Team on Worship and Culture.

Note: The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship stands ready to assist in making such a study group possible.

## **Annex A**

### **Text of the footnote to Q&A 80 H.C. in the Indonesian edition of the Heidelberg Catechism**

“This description of the Mass has been formulated as a reaction from circles of Protestants in the South of Germany in the year 1563 after the decisions of the Council of Trent where it says that all protestant Christians are “condemned” (anathema). This word “condemned” was not yet included in the first edition (January 1563), but was added in following editions after the word “condemned” came up in the Council as directed towards the protestant people.

In order to receive a more accurate and broader understanding of the meaning of the Mass or Eucharist, here follows the quotation from a informative paper of the Indonesian Bishop’s Conference (Konferensi Waligereja di Indonesia):

The Mass or Eucharist is a Sacrament of Thanksgiving. The essence of the Eucharist is the Prayer of Thanksgiving, that comes from Jewish tradition and refers to the new creation and salvation in Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection. Even though the salvation in Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection has the meaning of being “final”, which means that it cannot be repeated, in 1 Corinthians 11:23 and following verses and in Luke 22:19 and following it says that Christ asked his followers to commemorate (anamnesis) his giving of Himself at the cross and His resurrection that saves through the Eucharist.

The commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ forms an expression of faith that at present the Lord “really” and “visibly” continues to save us. In other words, the Eucharist expresses the belief that Christ continues to be present today in a visible way in the midst of His people in order to save us. This presence of Christ who saves us only because of the merit of His goodness of heart and His love, is not dependant on our good works or on the ceremonies we perform. So the Eucharist does not form a denial of the unique suffering and sacrifice of Christ, and

moreover is not an idolatry. The Eucharist is a real and visible expression of faith in God who is present and who saves real and visible people.”

Translated from Indonesian into English by Bert Boer as background material for discussion in the REC Assembly Utrecht

July 21, 2005

From Section 1 of the report, recommendation 1 was amended to read as follows and adopted:

- 1. That the REC receive with appreciation the findings clarifying official Roman Catholic teaching of the Eucharist as presented in the CRC report “Heidelberg Catechism Q. and A. 80 and the Roman Catholic Eucharist”, part 1, section I-IV.A (*Agenda*, pages 382-408) and part II, section I-III.A (*Agenda*, pages 410 - 418).**

Recommendations 2, 3 and 4 were adopted as presented above.

Recommendation 5 was amended following a discussion and a brief recess for the committee to rephrase the recommendation:

**5. That the REC requests the WARC:**

- a) **to bring REC’s discussion on H.C. 80 to the attention of the member churches of the WARC, especially those that have Heidelberg Catechism as a confessional basis**
- b) **to include the reformed understanding of the Lord’s Supper and the Roman Catholic understanding of the Eucharist in the dialogue between the WARC and the Roman Catholic Church with regard to official teaching and ecclesiastical statements from both sides in the past and at present.**

This recommendation was adopted.

From Section 2 of the report, the reporter presented the recommendation on a process of discussion on the role and meaning of confessions in the life and work of the churches:

**That the REC initiate an exploration and discussion of the nature and meaning of being confessing and confessional churches.**

The recommendation was adopted.

From Section 3 of the report, the reporter presented the two recommendations on worship.

- 1. That the REC Assembly 2005 acknowledge that there are significant issues in worship facing our churches that have resulted in a desire for a clearer understanding of the principles of worship from a Reformed perspective.**

**Grounds:**

- a. Some issues are intergenerational, where youth desire to worship God in a way different from their parents.
  - b. Some issues arise between cultures, where the received worship traditions from missionaries come in one cultural form to different lands with other cultural forms, with respect to, for example, clothing and musical instruments.
  - c. Some issues are within cultures between different religions, where patterns of worship to other gods may conflict with Christian worship.
- 2. That the REC Assembly 2005 acknowledge the need for study of worship practices and ask the Executive Committee to take steps to establish a study group to deal with issues of worship and culture from a Reformed perspective. The study group would both gather information and provide a statement for consideration for REC and the member churches.**

Note: The Study Group would be able to benefit from recent studies, including the book “Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Worldwide”, the result of an international consultation in 2001 at the John Knox Centre in Geneva in cooperation with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and the “Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture: Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities”, a 1996 international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation’s Study Team on Worship and Culture.

The recommendations were adopted.

#### ARTICLE 44: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CLERICAL AND LAY LEADERSHIP

The Reporter of the Committee, Peter Borgdorff, presented the report and the Assembly discussed it in detail.

### CLERICAL and LAY LEADERSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE 3

AC-3.1

#### I. Materials

- *Clerical and Lay Leadership* (Agenda pages 281-379)
- The Report of the General Secretary Appendix C – Library and Textbook Exchange (LAT) (Agenda pages 84-86)
- Commission on Theological Education and Interchange (CTEI) Report to the Assembly (Agenda pages 101-102)
- Workshop report on Theological Training – 14 July 2005.

#### II. Background and Synopsis of the Study Committee Report

The genesis of the *Clerical and Lay Leadership* report emerged from the work of the Commission on Theological Education and Interchange (CTEI) (Cf. Agenda 2005, pages 101-102). Initially, in 2000, the office of the secretariat prepared a survey instrument through which REC member churches were requested to identify current leadership practices with reference to ordained ministers and lay members. Subsequently, several persons were asked to provide a brief historical survey on leadership development, and to try to reduce the survey among member churches to some narrative conclusions.

Jurie J. Van Wyk, Rian Venter and Pieter Theron (all three associated with the Mwale Theological College in Zambia) have submitted a valuable report for REC consideration. The overview provided by the study committee report not only identifies current practices among REC member churches, but also provides a framework for further reflection and discussion on the important subject of leadership in and for the church. This REC ought to express its profound appreciation and gratitude for the contribution of these three brothers.

The advisory committee reviewed the empirical data of the survey results; took note of the descriptive differing roles of ministers and believers (pg. 293); assessed the paradigm shifts in leadership in the post-modern context; developed the concept of servant leadership; and discussed how all of this impacts theological education.

The advisory committee decided to provide a synopsis of the study committee’s report only to help the assembly focus on the most important leadership issues facing the church today. Not all of the authors’ observations and recommendations that are scattered throughout the report are included, of course. To fully contextualize this summary REC members are encouraged to read the full report in greater depth. The advisory committee approached the study committee’s report through a four-track review:

- 1) Reviewing survey results (the survey was conducted prior to the appointment of the authors’ work).
- 2) Taking note of the biblical theology underlying the needed paradigm shift.

- 3) Assessing the paradigm shift of change and developing the concept of servant leadership.
- 4) Discussing how all this impacts theological education.

The advisory committee deemed it helpful to call the assembly's attention to the following concerning the survey results:

- A total of 42 responses were received representing mostly congregational and denominational and some regional practices.
- The ordained ministers are mostly involved in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the teaching ministry, and leading worship. Some ministers are also involved in administrative tasks such as chairing important committees, administering congregational life, and denominationally in positions such as a general secretary or an equivalent function.
- Some lay members of the church are involved in leading worship, providing for an educational ministry, leading youth ministries, and some administrative positions.
- Leadership training for elders, deacons, youth leaders, if offered at all is mostly done at the congregational level. However, the need for different and better leadership-training materials for all the ministry functions is clearly evident.
- Some functions, such as political involvement, are judged by most to fall outside of the limits of ordained clergy.
- While there are local, regional, and even denominational differences among REC member churches, the survey also showed substantial similarities.
- The detailed data of the survey are adequately summarized in the Agenda 2005 (pages 283-286) and is not included here.

### III. Observations and Analysis

The advisory committee believes that the survey asks more questions about functions performed and by whom than it asks about leadership. It's not clear that a definition of leadership was provided for the respondents, but the responses summary suggests that the identification of tasks performed by ordained clergy and lay members was a primary focus. Leadership and the performance of even important tasks are not the same thing. Tasks are functions that need to be done, and one can survey who actually performs them. Leadership is more closely related to why and how such tasks are performed. Leadership is about principles of purpose, values, and underlying motives. Leadership also has a lot to do with the style employed and whether the desired result is achieved.

In addition, the following is observed:

- The issue of, and concern for, effective leadership in the REC member churches is wide-spread.
- It is the advisory committee's judgment that the information gathered is interesting, and in some ways helpful, but incomplete in terms of the desired result. After all, the focus is on the church, her functions and need for leadership, and it is fair to ask whether the leadership presently exercised in fact "builds up God's people for the work of ministry" (Ephesians 4).
- More work and discerning reflection is needed to develop the concept of "principled leadership," the kind that the Holy Scriptures teach and calls God's people to emulate. Let it suffice to say that there are additional discussion questions that need to be asked. Questions, perhaps, that focus less on functions performed and more on what it is that makes one a leader. In the final analysis, leadership is heavily dependent on a relationship that must emerge between leader and follower. It needs to be a relationship of trust and reciprocity that is marked by elevating (spiritually equipping) both the follower and the leader.

Although there are not many references specifically to "office" in the Bible, it is, however, clear that the emphasis is on *service*. The concept of office is therefore a functional matter in the Bible. It is clear that in the midst of believers there are some that received gifts to perform certain ministries. It is thus wrong to distinguish between charismatic and non-charismatic ministries. The Holy Spirit gives these ministries in order to build up the body of Christ. With this one and only source of ministries, one can say that out of the apostolic centre follows all the work of the church. The diversity of ministers vests in Christ and the continuation thereof in the apostles.

An important contribution of the Reformation was the centralization of the Word (and Spirit) and the subsequent tenant of the *Sola Scriptura* as the norm of all theology. One of the important results of this was the **general Priesthood of the believer**, which, in contrast to the other offices, was a lifetime commitment. Unfortunately the office of general **Priesthood** was rather neglected since Bucer. The churches after the Reformation rather followed the line of Christ → offices → church, instead of Christ → church → offices. What is important thus, is that we have to establish a view of the offices which is rooted in ecclesiology.

*Emphasis on this will lead to a new understanding of leadership.*

In many areas of the world we are aware that we are in the throes of unprecedented changes, both locally at the community level and on a global scale. We have moved from an era of comfortable, continuous and incremental change to discomfoting and sometimes chaotic change. We need to learn how to exegete our cultural context. A truly incarnational ministry requires *critical* contextualization. The gospel of Christ relates to any culture in a complex manner. Some elements it will affirm as evidence of common grace. Other elements are cultural aspirations that can only be realized by the transforming impact of the gospel. And there are destructive elements in every culture from which we will need to be delivered.

In this process we recognize some of the emerging changes in society from:

- Autonomous reason to a radical critique of reason.
- A progressive evolutionary history to a de-totalized history accompanied by a intense awareness of diversities.
- A Euro-centric approach to a poli-centric approach.
- Certainty building on firm foundations to a post-foundational approach which regards knowledge as unstable and tentative.
- Seeing truth as final and absolute to pluralism and a relational approach to truth.

As churches, we are made aware almost daily, that the three mindsets: traditional, modern and postmodern are alive and well within our societies. We have to function as interpreters and mediators in the midst of misunderstanding and culture wars.

These changes should lead to an acknowledgement of the following regarding a growing understanding of leadership:

- Leadership is not the function of a single person or the pastor/minister alone - leadership must be shared and requires facilitation of participation, cooperation and collaboration. This conviction is firmly embedded in the **Priesthood** of all believers.
- Relevant organizational culture focuses the task of a leader on: developing a mutual mission/purpose; building a shared vision; identifying and developing shared core values and believes; building community; and empowering others.
- Leadership requires character and spirituality with a special focus on humility, integrity and trust.
- Leadership requires envisioning, creativity, innovation and willingness to take risks.
- Leaders should be life-long learners and reflective practitioners.

The study committee's report responds to these challenges with a trinitarian orientation regarding leadership where:

- Leadership oriented on God the Father as Creator is ecologically sensitive, non-dichotomous and non-sectarian.
- Leadership grounded in Christ as Messiah means emptying oneself and not shying away from sacrificial service.
- Leadership based on the Spirit is dynamic, charismatic and creative.
- Leadership is missionally directed and grounded in the *Missio Trinitatis*.
- Leadership is eschatologically motivated by the vision of the Kingdom of God.

The REC ought to affirm the importance of service and servant leadership build on the example of Jesus Christ. Servant Leaders:

- Humble themselves and wait for God to exalt them.
- Follow Jesus rather than seek a position.
- Give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others.
- Risk serving because they trust that God is in control of their lives.
- Share their responsibilities and authority with others to meet the greater need.
- Multiply their leadership by empowering others

Servant leadership grows out of a relationship with Jesus, is building on the truth of the Word and nourished by genuine community of believers.

The Advisory Committee identified six requirements for theological education, which can also serve as an agenda.

- We need an ecclesiology that “fits the day.”
- We need to train ordained pastors who are able and responsible to train leadership in congregations themselves.
- We need to further explore the possibilities theological seminaries have in lay training.
- Practical training and pastoral exposure need to be more integrated in theological training.
- Forms of mentoring in the first period of ordained ministry should be stimulated.
- Theological staff should preferably have experience as ministers in the congregations themselves.
- The report did a thorough study of the “context” in which theological training takes place by:
  - Defining a pluralistic society – a good exposition of pluralism.
  - Giving a list of the training facilities available to REC member churches.
  - Reflecting on training for the ministry.
  - Reflecting on the role of other faiths in theological training – particularly where Christians are a minority.
  - More study and reflection needs to be done in different areas.

#### IV. Recommendations

1. That the REC-Utrecht Assembly receive the *Clerical and Lay Leadership* report as information with thanks and appreciation, and recommend it to REC member churches for study and reflection.
2. That the REC-Utrecht Assembly take favourably cognizance of the following statements of the report:
  - a. In the Old Testament, there are several positions mentioned as in some way official, namely: *parent, priest, judge, king, prophet, sage and elder*.
  - b. Many ministries and gifts are mentioned in the New Testament including: *apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors and overseers*.
  - c. *Ordination* is not mentioned in the Bible, although there are appointments, sometimes with the laying on of hands.
  - d. Administrations of the sacraments do not appear to have been limited to any specific office in the New Testament church.
  - e. There is no indication in the New Testament of a distinction between those who minister full-time and those who minister part-time.
  - f. Scripture provides no basis for a distinction between charismatic and non-charismatic ministries.
  - g. The ministry of all believers is a lifetime commitment. However, whether special ministries are also lifetime is an open question.
  - h. The Reformers believed that for the sake of the Word a reformation of ministry was necessary.
  - i. In presenting the office as an instrument of Christ, the Reformers had to deal with **challenges from three sides**: against the Medieval Church that set the Word aside, against the spiritualist

radicals that threatened to lose the Word because they negated the value of official proclamation of it, and against the city authority that threatened to become a new limiting force to the freedom of the Word.

- j. The Reformed **doctrine on the office shows much diversity**. The hierarchical approach of the medieval office theology is answered with a fanning out of official tasks in distinguishable offices.
  - k. In the Reformed tradition **the functions of the church are defined as teaching, government and care**. Offices take up the responsibility. Despite an essential unity difference in emphasis on the various offices is apparent. To Calvin the ministry of the Word and sacraments were central. From this follows a differentiation of offices: the pastor, teacher, elder and deacon. Beza's emphasis is on government in the elder's office from where follows the differentiation into pastor, elder and deacon.
  - l. The **ecclesiastical office is a gift of God to the church**. God instituted the official proclamation as the means whereby salvation enters the church. Without official proclamation there can be no church. The preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments – the marks of the church – require *official* proclamation and official administration of the sacraments.
  - m. **Ministers of the Word are neither representatives nor delegates of the fellowship of faith**. The ministry of the Word does not arise from the fellowship of faith but is fundamentally given from above. For this reason no office can be claimed by anybody, but can only be received in calling and election. This *ministerium*, the ministry of the Word which requires a special calling and an ordination, must fundamentally be distinguished from the *sacerdotium* of all believers, a priestly commission valid for all believers.
  - n. **The elders received an increasingly more important role in the government of the church**. This came because all ecclesiastical functions/ministries were concentrated in government. The managerial vacuum was a result of the falling away of civil government involvement and was replaced by elected persons from the congregation.
  - o. All along, **little or no attention was paid to the office of the deacon**, which is surprising in the light the constant threat of destructive poverty.
  - p. The twentieth century witnessed a tension between ontological and functional conceptualizations of the office, between the essence of the office and its functions. **Increased focus on the function of the offices has changed our view of our leadership**.
  - q. **The priesthood of believers barely played a role in Reformed formalization of ministry after Bucer**. The connection between the offices as gifts of Christ to the church and the gifts of the Spirit as equipment to the fellowship of faith was not developed. In consequence besides the comprehensively developed line Christ-office-church, the line Christ-church office is hardly touched. This imbalance may explain the constant threat of clericalism within Reformed churches with the official roles.
  - r. **The little formal attention the priesthood of believers received was connected to the election of office-bearers** and even this was qualified. When the congregations were seen as mature, and that especially on factual state of affairs, the authority given to the congregation increased.
  - s. When we think about Reformed offices and the Reformed conviction on the **Priesthood** of all believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are not examining effective or professional ministry alone. **Our view of office derives from our view of the Church**. Further reflection on Reformed ministry also requires input from all the resources of the tradition, including the whole of the Bible.  
(REC Agenda 2005, pages 363-365)
3. That the REC-Utrecht Assembly, while emphasizing the importance of the official offices of the church, urge its member-churches to:
- a. Affirm a commitment to the biblical principle of the **priesthood of all believers**,
  - b. Be open to a new understanding of leadership in the context of today's pluralistic society,
  - c. Raise the church's prophetic voice in interpreting and modelling the meaning of biblical servant leadership in the midst of traditional, modern and post-modern mindsets within our global society,
  - d. Develop the practice of servant leadership in their churches as insights grow concerning effective and appropriate leadership in present and future time.

Johan Buitendag – Chairman  
Peter Borgdorff - Reporter

The recommendations 1 and 2 were adopted as presented. Recommendation 3 was adopted after changing the word *emphasizing* to *recognizing*.

#### ARTICLE 45: ANNOUNCEMENT

The President announced that the Committee of Four on REC-WARC Relationship will consist of:

Douwe Visser – President  
Richard van Houten – General Secretary  
Antoine Schluchter – Evangelical Reformed Church of France  
Jacobus Johannes Gerber – Dutch Reformed Church

#### ARTICLE 46: RECESS

The Assembly was adjourned.

**Monday, July 25, 2005**  
**Tenth Session**

#### ARTICLE 47: WORDS OF THANKS

The President expressed words of thanks to the Bible study group leaders and the worship team for their wonderful contributions to the spirit of the Assembly.

#### ARTICLE 48: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND STATE

The Reporters of the Committee, Sarel Corrie, Bertha Mook and Jan-Gerd Heetderks, presented the report

**AC-2.1**

##### **1. Biblical Foundation – Kingdom of God (Rom. 13)**

According to the Reformed Church's understanding of the Biblical teaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, both church and state have roles in society which should be complementary.

The role of the church in public life is to enhance or challenge the sense of justice that prevails in society. This is part of its Biblical prophetic task. The church should also advocate a sense of human worth and dignity in society based on the premise that humans are created in the image of God.

Therefore, in every society the church should act as a witness of the Kingdom of God and should call on the State as a public institution to:

1. maintain justice and equality in public life.
2. seek to be just and consistent in its use of power, nationally and internationally.
3. protect all rights of the people and hold that minorities have the same rights as majorities.
4. respect the sovereignty and integrity of each and every national state. It should reject the will of any "super state/ power" to impose its directives about international law, and disputes and conventions on other

nations/peoples. Peaceful means should be applied to solve international disputes and the use of force should be avoided as much as possible.

5. allow the church to make contributions and express its views on issues of public life.

Last but not least, for the sake of the Kingdom of God on Earth all churches should uphold their role in society as part of their task to witness the Kingdom of God. All churches worldwide should exercise their calling to the utmost. Also, as Christians dispersed in various societal institutions we should fulfill our ministry in our particular context.

## **2. Church Law - Reform Catechism**

According to the Reformed Creeds and church polity all Reformed Churches should be an active partner to the state.

All Reformed Churches should also be a confessing and whenever is needed, a protesting social partner in all societies and countries.

The Reformed Church is called to:

1. preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ
2. live for & serve the Triune God, the church and society with a free conscience according to His Word
3. remind 'the State' that none should be disadvantaged because of their beliefs, race, gender, sexual orientation, language, and/or culture.
4. initiate and facilitate dialogue between religious organizations and the 'State'.
5. stand up whenever it sees that the 'State' acts unjustly, violates or is inconsistent with the application of the "laws of the Country".

## **3. Peace and War.**

The core issues of the Reform position on "Peace and War" are justice and the recognition of the universal human rights.

The church must be a consistent prophetic voice for justice to all. Christians need to live exemplary lives in illustrating and expressing justice and incorporating the universal human rights in their churches as well as in their personal and collective lives.

We hold that there is no just war, for warfare has deep and destructive consequences to all involved, 'winners' as well as 'losers'. There are cases of blatant violation of human rights. Avenues of dialogue and negotiation should be followed and exhausted. When all efforts to mediate at national and international negotiation have failed, the global community has to interfere responsibly.

Part of the prophetic voice of the church is to unmask and challenge the various powers (i.e. political, economic and religious) which have invested interests in the production of warfare. Even though many national states are not guiltless, several states at regions of the world are destroyed through the involvement of powers and nations external to them.

Faced with the paradox of war and peace, we say no to war and pursue peace as commanded by God (Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:18).

**We recommend that the plenary adopt this statement as policy document to be distributed to the member churches of the REC.**

After lengthy discussion, the report was referred back to committee for revision.

## ARTICLE 49: WORDS OF THANKS

The President expressed words of thanks to the stewards.

## ARTICLE 50: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

The Reporter of the Committee, Martha Frederiks, presented the report, and the Assembly discussed it thoroughly.

### **Committee on Religious Pluralism (1) AC 1**

Materials:

Report on Religious Pluralism (Agenda)

Statement on Religious Pluralism of the PCN

Reports from the workshops on religious pluralism during the Assembly

### ***Christian Witness amidst Religious Pluralism***

In 1992 and 1996 respectively, the REC issued clear statements on its understanding of Christian mission and the uniqueness of Christ. These statements were made against the background of the world-wide phenomenon of religious pluralism. Though these statements were very helpful and answered a number of questions, we the REC member churches, have realised that our exploration of the reality of religious pluralism has been far from complete. To have a clear theological position on the uniqueness of Christ is one thing. How we witness to that in day to day life-situations of religious pluralism is another matter. The fact is that many REC church members live with people of other faiths on a daily basis. Hence, churches are called to reflect anew on the question of how to relate to and witness to people of other faiths. The main focus of this document will be on this question: *How do Christians encounter the reality of religious pluralism, with all its challenges, and how can they credibly live out their faith in Christ in these situations?*

In this document we use the term 'religious pluralism' for the sociological reality of living in a multi-religious society.

### ***Different Facets of Religious Pluralism***

We observe that the contexts of religious pluralism in which the REC member churches live, differ greatly and have various facets. We acknowledge that the contexts of religious pluralism, referred to below, should not be seen as three distinct models, but as stages on a continuum. We also observe that in the course of time contexts can be subject to change. The guidelines mentioned below intend to be guidelines, and in no way want to impede the guidance of the Holy Spirit on appropriate responses to specific contexts.

- There are contexts in which people of different religious traditions live harmoniously together and where there are possibilities for cooperation in public life, for constructive encounters and open witness to the Gospel.
- There are also contexts, which in the past were harmonious but in which growing tensions now occur. In some cases, this has caused a general deterioration of relationships between the communities. In other cases, we see a more diverse response. Some people engaged in encounters are strengthened in their determination to build bridges; with others these tensions lead to a confirmation of their negative perceptions and/or a reinforcement of existing prejudices.
- There are also contexts in which the relationships between people of different faiths are openly hostile and sometimes even violent. The reality is that some of the REC member churches have to function in very difficult and oppressive circumstances. In such situations public witness to Christ is very hard. Often this coincides with situations in which the Christian community forms a small minority.

Needless to say, these different contexts call for different forms of Christian witness. Sensitivity to the possibilities in each of these situations and a prayerful discernment of God's will and way for our Christian witness is vital.

We signal that apart from the setting of the individual contexts in which the REC member churches work, relationships between the different faith communities are also influenced by global events and developments. We see a growing tendency in most religious traditions towards fundamentalism, even militant fundamentalism. We also observe a fear for the increase of violent confrontations between some adherents of the different religious communities.

As REC churches we are called upon to resist this build up of negative mutual perceptions and the escalation of suspicion, to help dismantle prejudices and to contribute positively towards maintaining good relationships and building peace.

#### *Biblical-Theological Reflection on relating to People of other Faiths*

The multi-religiousness of the societies we live in also confronts us with a series of theological questions. The REC document *The Unique Person and Work of Christ* makes two clear points: On the one hand it states that ‘Scripture emphasises that Christ has come once and for all. His incarnation is the very center of history. It is the “crucial divine intervention.” (Visser ‘t Hooft, *No other name*: 97) Therefore, there can be no other saviors. (See also Romans 6:10, Hebrews 7:27 and 9:28).’<sup>1</sup> Yet the document also very clearly indicates that this unique revelation of God in Christ, does not deny that there can be knowledge of God in other religious traditions. To the question: ‘Does God also speak and deal with people in other ways than through an explicit knowledge of Christ?’ an affirmative answer is given: ‘...we know that God was present in some sense among (...) people who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ.’ Also: ‘The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of men and women long before any of God’s human agents bring the saving message of good news in Jesus Christ.’<sup>2</sup> This is often referred to as common grace. The Dutch missiologist J.H. Bavinck calls this phenomenon God’s manifestation - his speechless speech - in creation and history.<sup>3</sup> As we are reminded in Acts 14:17, ‘Yet He has not left Himself without testimony...’

Having considered what the Bible says about other religions, we discovered anew that in the Bible the emphasis is on encounters and relationships, and not primarily on the comparison of systems of thought. It deals with how we think about and relate to people who believe differently than we do. Truth in the Bible is first of all about a Person we need to meet: Jesus Christ. The Bible urges us towards encounters, encounters with God through Christ and encounters with other people.

Having been met by Christ and having been changed through this experience, we are now called upon to look at other people with the eyes of Christ. The Bible tells us that *all* people are created in the image of God, *all* are His and *all* are loved by Him. We know that God’s concern is not only for Israel and the church, but for the whole of His creation. His heart goes out to *all humanity*: He so loved the *world* that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16)<sup>4</sup> This implies that we acknowledge the dignity of every human being, treat all people with deep respect and be willing to care for them, in the way Christ cared for us.

#### *The Missionary Calling of the Church amidst Religious Pluralism*

What then is the missionary calling of the church within the context of religious pluralism? The mission of the church (*missio ecclesiae*) is participation in God’s mission (*missio Dei*). Since we believe that God in Christ has reached out to the whole world, we as faithful disciples of Christ want to follow in his footsteps by loving all of humanity as He does: fellow Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus etc., proclaiming the good news of Christ to all. It is this love of Christ which urges us on (2 Cor. 5:14).

The way in which we as REC churches seek to carry out this missionary calling depends on the context in which each church is called to witness. This will be a multi-dimensional task. Witness according to our understanding is an holistic testimony to God in Christ, in words, deeds and presence.

- The context of harmonious relationships allows for a wide range of opportunities for witness. Direct and clear evangelism, challenging people to radically reorient their lives, should be pursued.<sup>5</sup> Dialogue also should have a prominent place. In today’s ever-changing religious climate harmonious relationships can never be taken for

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<sup>1</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, (1995), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Bavinck, *Religieus Besef en Christelijk Geloof*, Kok: Kampen 1949, 163.

<sup>4</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigmshifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll 1997, 420.

granted but should be nurtured with great care. One way in which this is realised, occurs when people of different faiths cooperate in the public domain for good government and for a just and peaceful society.

- In the context of growing estrangement the witness to Christ will have to include ways of dispelling the tension and intentional efforts towards mutual understanding, both on the community level and on an individual basis. Interreligious dialogue is one way to witness to Christ. It can help us to break through the caricatures we have made of each other and to see real faces – people’s hopes, pains and stories. Listening to the faith stories of others, and having an opportunity to tell our own stories might also help dispel the distortions we have of one another’s faiths and break away from thinking in categories of ‘them’ and ‘us’.
- In the context of open hostility, verbal witness is often very difficult and dialogue at times virtually impossible. While we keep on looking and praying for opportunities for verbal witness and dialogue, we acknowledge that this context might require yet other forms of witness to Christ such as Christian service (diakonia) or Christian presence.<sup>6</sup> By ‘Christian presence’ we mean being present among people with the hope and intention that our lives be understood as witness to the love of Christ.

In all these contexts we as churches seek to fulfil our calling in balancing on the one hand the sincere conviction that ‘Christ is the only way, the unique way of salvation’<sup>7</sup> and on the other hand the belief ‘that God has a history with all people.’<sup>8</sup> Balancing these two concepts, should however in no way impede or discourage our missionary mandate to proclaim: ‘We implore you on Christ’s behalf: be reconciled to God’ (2 Cor 5:20).

### Concluding Remarks

In our religiously pluralistic world, we as churches are called to witness to Christ. This is our task, our challenge, but also our joy. In the great variety of contexts in which we live, we seek to give a sincere and intelligible testimony of the hope that lives within us, but we want to do it with respect and gentleness (1 Peter 3:15): in ‘bold humility’ and ‘humble boldness’.<sup>9</sup>

In all this we want to remember that we are not called to win arguments or vindicate *our* faith but as ambassadors of Christ to meet and journey with *people*. Our prayer is that what people hear from us, see in us and experience from us along the journey may be a worthy testimony to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

### **Recommendations**

1. **That the Assembly adopt this statement on Christian Witness amidst Religious Pluralism and make it available to all member churches**
2. **That the churches take seriously the guidelines on religious ceremonies as passed by the Assembly of 2000**
3. **That the Assembly recommend to the Executive Committee to complete the unfulfilled mandate of 2000 regarding the study of contextualisation and inculturation (amongst which the attitude of Christians towards ancestor veneration).**
4. **That the REC Assembly mandates the Executive Committee to appoint a working committee on Dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The working committee is asked to advise the next Assembly of REC on the theological implications and practical possibilities of this dialogue. The mandate could consist of**
  - **Re-reading the Reformed sources on this subject, as well as the wider sources**

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<sup>6</sup> Traditionally four forms of dialogue are distinguished: dialogue of life, dialogue of joint social action, intellectual dialogue and dialogue of the spirit (See REC Agenda, The Netherlands 2005, 132/133). *The Unique Person and Work of Christ* indicates that also within the Reformed tradition there is room for interreligious cooperation for reconciliation and peace. See page 3.

<sup>7</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 489.

- **Gathering experiences and narratives from the contexts and countries we represent**
  - **Providing the Assembly with historical and theoretical insights as well as practical guidelines for Christian-Muslim Dialogue.**
5. **That the REC assembly mandates the Executive Committee to appoint a working committee to do a similar study on the possibilities and implications of a Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

After discussion of both the text and the recommendations, the Assembly asked the Committee to revise the report in line with the discussion.

ARTICLE 51: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MISSION PARTNERSHIP – ECONOMIC JUSTICE – HIV/AIDS

The Reporter of the Committee, Marloes Keller, presented the report.

Mission Partnership

**Committee on Mission Partnerships - Economic Justice - HIV/AIDS AC-5.1**

**Topic: Mission Partnerships**

*Material:*

Reports from the plenary and Interest Groups on Mission Partnerships

**PARTNER-RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Partner-relationships are very important for member churches of the REC. It is an expression of the unity of the church and enrichment for the churches participating in a partnership. There exists a wide variety of partner-relationships between churches belonging to REC. Some member churches have no significant relationships and desperately seek them. Many younger churches experience their relationship as dysfunctional (for instance paternalistic or dependency).
2. Partnership should be characterized by a relationship of mutuality, reciprocity and real fellowship. Partnership should not be focusing on projects that might be terminated after a short period, but on a long-lasting relationship of fellowship and cooperation.
3. All churches are called to take part in the one mission of God (Missio Dei) and in fellowship (koinonia) with one another. This should also be based on a consistent understanding of the mission of the Tri-une God (Missio Trinitatis Dei) – characterized by mutuality, cooperation, respect, relationship, unity and love. Without ‘Mission in unity and unity in mission’, an authentic testimony to the unity of the body of Christ and His love for the world (John 17) is impossible.
4. Partner-relationship is sharing in:
  - common projects (Phil 1:5 – the spreading of the gospel)
  - the gifts to the church (1 Cor 12:7 – *charismatoi*; 1 Peter 4:10)
  - material resources (2 Cor 8 and 9 – striving to equality and sacrificial sharing in resources)
  - suffering (1 Cor 12:26 – deep participation in the brokenness of the body)
  - the dependence on and responsibility for God’s creation (Ps 24:1)
  - the same theological tradition (Reformed) and the understanding of our calling as churches
5. Partner-relationships should be based on the following values (principles):

- striving for equality / no domination
- a common understanding of our Christian calling
- mutual trust, integrity, accountability and transparency
- mature relationship and real fellowship; not only focusing on achieving results
- good stewardship, shared responsibility, respectful and long standing relationships
- continuous striving for 'unity in the body of Christ'

**Recommendations:**

1. **That the executive committee as a matter of urgent priority discuss partner-relationships during their “review and renew consultations” and encourage healthy and mature partner-relationships.**
2. **That the executive committee creates an effective network (including a data base) in order to facilitate partner-relationships between REC-members.**
3. **That partner-relationship should be a priority on the agenda of the REC up to the next assembly.**
4. **The commission of Mission and Diakonia is mandated to do further research and publish articles on this subject.**

The recommendations were adopted.

ARTICLE 52: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The reporter presented AC 5.2

**Committee on Mission Partnerships - Economic Justice - HIV/AIDS AC-5.2**

**Report 1.2**

**Topic: Mission Economic Justice**

**ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

We take note of all the relevant documents presented to this REC on economic justice. We realize that because of lack of time and a comprehensive report, we are not in the position to analyze these fully at this time.

**Recommendations**

We therefore recommend the following:

1. To affirm the Micah Challenge as presented to the REC in the Supplemental Agenda, May 13, 2005
2. To commend the Micah challenge to member churches for study and appropriate action
3. To mandate the commission of Mission and Diakonia to prepare for the next assembly a careful study on economic justice using the documents presented to this REC on economic justice as a starting point.

This study should include issues that flow from globalization, migrant labor, development and sustainability, HIV/Aids and poverty, debt relief, economic systems, accountability, good governance, integrity of creation and consumerism.

After having discussed this part of the report, the Assembly referred it back to the committee to rephrase recommendation 3.

ARTICLE 53: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HIV/AIDS

The reporter presented AC 5.3

**PREAMBLE**

This document is the outcome of three workshops held during the assembly of the Reformed Ecumenical Council from 12 - 25 July 2005 in Utrecht in the Netherlands. During the workshops, each focussing on HIV/AIDS, three main topics were introduced by Dr Arnau van Wyngaard, namely:

*Towards a Theology of HIV/AIDS,*

*The Social Circumstances Conducive to the Spreading of HIV/AIDS,* and

*The Social Consequences of HIV/AIDS.*

This led to further discussions within smaller groups which eventually led to the formulation of this document.

Most Christian churches, along with many other governmental, non-governmental and religious organisations have realised that a response is needed to the challenge of HIV/AIDS, a disease which is threatening not only to depopulate many countries – mostly the poorest countries in the world – but which is also causing the dehumanisation of millions of children, women and men, breaking up families as well as destroying the economy within households, within communities and ultimately within entire countries. Despite the horror of this disease, many Christians and churches reacted with compassion and love, bringing hope to the dying and those left behind after death had taken its toll.

However, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has also exposed severe faults within many Christian churches. As those suffering from HIV/AIDS called for help, many, following the example of the priest and the Levite in Luke 10, “passed by on the other side.” Many, while professing their faith in Jesus Christ, still believe that a distinction should be made between *them* (with HIV/AIDS) and *us* (without HIV/AIDS). As the pandemic increases in momentum, we realise that the accusation against the people of Israel, because of their neglect of the widows and the orphans (Malachi 3:5), is also directed to the church of today, calling us to repentance as we equally neglect those most in need of care.

This document is not intended solely as a theological discussion on the responsibility of the church towards HIV/AIDS. This document is a call to action. There may still be time to do something, but time is running out. For millions of people all over the world, it may already be too late...

The churches have strengths, they have credibility, and they are grounded in communities. This offers them the opportunity to make a real difference in combating HIV/AIDS. To respond to this challenge, the churches must be transformed in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis, in order that they may become a force for transformation – bringing healing, hope, and accompaniment to all affected by HIV/AIDS.

*Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to  
HIV/AIDS in Africa, Nairobi, 2001*

## INTRODUCTION

In our reflection on one of the greatest disasters to strike the earth – the pandemic of HIV/AIDS – the REC not only came under a clear impression of the many facets of this problem, but also realised that we, as representatives of Jesus Christ, stand guilty before God, our fellow believers and the world due to our inability to raise a prophetic voice while there had still been time to make a difference, against the problem of HIV/AIDS, the different circumstances leading up to the uncontrolled spreading of the disease as well as the social circumstances which inevitably follow once someone has been diagnosed as HIV-positive. As we humbly and with great shame confess our guilt, we nevertheless acknowledge that the Lord has taught us that we need to move beyond the confession of our guilt in order to facilitate change within the community and world within which we live, by sharing faith, love and hope to all people, regardless of whom they are. This we believe to be the way in which our Lord would expect us to address this problem.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, considered to be the first document of what is known to us today as the New Testament, starts with the following words: "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by FAITH, your labour prompted by LOVE, and your endurance inspired by HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3 – NIV). A few years later, Paul writes another letter, incorporating within it one of the greatest love poems ever written, which ends with the words: "And now these three remain: FAITH, HOPE and LOVE" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Following the example of the Apostle Paul, who started the New Testament with the concepts of faith, love and hope, we therefore wish to take up the responsibility towards all those *infected with or affected by* HIV/AIDS, by allowing them to experience the works done because of our faith, by enveloping them with our love and by inspiring them with hope when all feels hopeless.

This document does not call for uniformity. The earth houses many realities, and what works in one place may not work in another. What it does attempt to achieve is a realistic initiative which will make it possible for church leaders and their congregations to speak honestly about HIV and AIDS, and to act practically in response to it.

## FAITH

### A. THE NECESSITY OF A THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HIV/AIDS

**We admit** that we as church have for too long indulged ourselves in the luxury of denying that HIV/AIDS is our problem

**We believe that:**

1. There are times when the world is faced with a crisis which has the potential for such devastating consequences throughout the world, that it becomes necessary for the church to respond to that crisis, not only practically, but also theologically
2. We can no longer speak relevantly about the church without also speaking about HIV/AIDS

Failure to probe the theological significance of this moment will be not only a missed opportunity but also irresponsible. Just as the entire Christian world has been and continues to be mobilized in programmes meant to combat racism, sexism, economic exploitation and cultural arrogance, we now need theologies that will help us deal with the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

*Tinyiko Maluleke: Towards an HIV/AIDS-Sensitive Curriculum*

## **B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIV/AIDS AND SIN**

**We admit** that we as church have at times laid a much too direct link between HIV/AIDS and sin, giving the impression that those with HIV/AIDS are greater sinners than others, without keeping in mind that many of those who are today HIV-positive got the virus innocently

### **We believe that:**

1. AIDS should not be considered as judgement of God upon sinners
2. A person's HIV status, whether it is positive or negative, gives no indication of that person's moral choices
3. As in many other aspects of life as recorded in the Bible as well as in our own daily lives, certain choices which are made may have undesirable consequences
4. The consequences may affect those who sinned, but usually many other people are also affected by these consequences and these consequences may even be felt over more than one generation
5. AIDS can be seen as evidence of the fallen nature of creation in the sense that everyone and everything is tainted with imperfection
6. When people are aware of their HIV-positive status and nevertheless continue with a lifestyle which can transmit the virus to others, this can clearly be considered as contradictory to God's will
7. Regardless of who had been infected with HIV/AIDS and how they got it, the Bible clearly states that there is forgiveness of all sin (1 John 1:9) and that Jesus had come for all those who realise that they need Him (Matthew 9:12)

At the World AIDS Day celebration in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Bujumbura in 1995, the priest said, in the course of his sermon, "We must have compassion for people with AIDS because they have sinned and because they are suffering for it now". At that point something propelled Jeanne Gapiya to rise from her pew and walk up to the front of the church. "I have HIV", she declared, "and I am a faithful wife. Who are you to say that I have sinned, or that you have not? We are all sinners, which is just as well, because it is for us that Jesus came."

*Janet Brown & Jurgens Hendriks: The AIDS Fulcrum:  
The Church In Africa Seesawing Between Alienation,  
Estrangement, Prejudice And Love, 2004*

## **C. SEX**

**We admit** that we as church have often neglected to speak clearly about sexual matters, as though this is a sin to be ashamed of

### **We believe that:**

1. Sex was given by God, not only with the aim of bringing forth children, but also for the mutual enjoyment of those taking part in it
2. This becomes true, more than anywhere else, within a loving, caring and permanent relationship between a man and a woman
3. Sex and sexuality is something which Christians may and should celebrate without shame
4. In order to understand and celebrate our sexuality, a new understanding in the light of Scripture is needed, on our entire body as part of God's creation

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Psalm 8*

#### **D. SEX EDUCATION**

**We admit** that we as church have missed many opportunities to teach those children entrusted to us about the gift of sexuality

**We believe that:**

1. The church has the responsibility to speak to our members, young and old, about sexual-related topics
2. When speaking about sexual matters, the aim should not be to only give information, nor only to warn against pre- and extra-marital sexual relations, but also to increase in people their awe of God, who created human beings in such a wonderful way
3. There are many ways in which HIV/AIDS can be prevented, of which abstinence from sexual relations outside marriage and faithfulness to a single partner are the two preferable options

...if sound moral decisions are required of people, an environment conducive to making such decisions is necessary, an environment in which openness to honest sharing of experiences and concerns is promoted and the integrity of people and their relationships is affirmed. Apart from such an environment, the vulnerability of marginalized groups to high-risk behaviour is greatly increased.”

*World Council of Churches: Facing AIDS : The Challenge, the Churches' Response, 2002*

## **E. POVERTY**

**We admit** that we as church have for too long ignored the effects of extreme poverty on more than 50% of the world's population, particularly as the HIV/AIDS pandemic seems to be thriving within these poor communities

### **We believe that:**

1. The HIV/AIDS pandemic will never be effectively opposed while the social circumstances under which many people are living are stimulating the spreading of this disease
2. Many people, men but more especially women, are caught up in a situation where they have no other choice than to sell their bodies in order to earn money with which to feed their children and other family members
3. While the church can never approve of people engaging in prostitution, this practice cannot be condemned without also making earnest with the problem of poverty forcing many people to go to these lengths to earn money
4. As the gap between the rich and the poor is steadily growing, the church needs to address the problem of economic injustice
5. Although migrant labour has helped to enrich many, the devastating effects that it has upon many families and communities also need to be addressed by the church

If you want to spread a sexually transmitted disease, you'd take thousands of young men away from their families, isolate them in single-sex hostels, and give them easy access to alcohol and commercial sex. Then, to spread the disease around the country, you'd send them home every once in a while to their wives and girlfriends. And that's basically the system we have with the mines.

*Bertil Egerö, Mikael Hammar skjöld & Lise Munck: AIDS: The Challenge of this Century: Prevention, care and impact mitigation.*

## LOVE

### A. STIGMATISATION

**We admit** that we as church have often stigmatised those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, making it difficult for people to openly declare their HIV status and causing them to experience rejection while they were most in need of love and compassion

**We believe that:**

1. Stigmatisation of and discrimination against any person, regardless of who and what they are, is a sin in the eyes of the Lord
2. Stigmatisation is a reality of which we have to take note and against which we have to make a stand
3. God is often revealed in the Bible as the God of the marginalised (Psalm 146:7; Luke 1:53)
4. Following the example of Jesus Christ, instead of stigmatising those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, we should embrace and support them, as He did with the lepers (Mark 1:41)

It is now common knowledge that in HIV/AIDS, it is not the condition itself that hurts most (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death), but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV positive people have to deal with.

*Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa, Nairobi, 2001*

### B. CARING

**We admit** that we as church have not done enough to take care of those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS

**We believe that:**

1. Each congregation has the God-given obligation to become involved with the HIV/AIDS pandemic
2. Congregations within communities or countries which are privileged not to be severely affected by HIV/AIDS, need to take hands with congregations within less fortunate areas to assist them by every means possible to reach out to those in need of care
3. The care given to the suffering should be administered in such a way that the dignity of those being cared for as well as the dignity of the community within which they reside are maintained
4. Antiretrovirals should be readily available to any person who has HIV/AIDS and who wishes to have a more productive life
5. Churches in more affluent countries should assist those in poorer countries to gain greater access to antiretrovirals

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

*Matthew 25:34-40*

### **C. WOMEN**

**We admit** that we as church have for too long been silent on the sexual abuse of women and violence against women

**We believe that:**

1. The church needs to speak out against violence and sexual abuse directed towards women, not only through the hands of strangers, but also through the hands of their spouses, often resulting in domestic rape
2. Cultural taboos which often lead to women being forced to have unprotected sex and thus resulting in them getting the HI virus, need to be addressed
3. Men need to be educated to enable them to reject myths such as that sex with a virgin will cure a man of HIV/AIDS
4. Special plans should be made to support women, who seem to be carrying an even greater burden than men due to the larger number of females infected with HIV/AIDS as well as the extra burden of caring for family members with HIV/AIDS

If I refuse to accept his advances, he can get physical and several times he has hurt me. A number of times he has hit me when I have refused to have sex with him because I know that he was with someone else. It feels as though I am being raped. It is very difficult to protect myself in this situation and I fear for myself.

Other women verbalized their agreement with her concerns, 'What can you do if he is going to beat you and demand that you have sex with him? Even if there is AIDS these days you just have to accept your fate and continue to sleep with him because he beats you. He says I am his wife and can do this with me whenever it pleases him'

*Janet Brown: HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance, 2004*

#### **D. WIDOWS AND ORPHANS**

**We admit** that we as church have often been side-tracked from a true and faultless religion, acceptable to God our Father, which is defined in James 1:27 as looking after orphans and widows in their distress

**We believe that:**

1. The caring of orphans and widows are the responsibility of the church
2. Orphans need to be educated if we want to see their circumstances improve. Where the education of orphans are being neglected for whatever reason, the church needs to take up that responsibility
3. Widows need to be empowered in many ways, which includes the learning of skills to enable them to receive a sustainable income as well as the knowledge of basic human rights which can help to protect them from exploitation
4. Widows need to receive holistic support on the physical, social and spiritual terrains to enable them to function fully as human beings after the agony of caring for their dying husbands, often over a long period of time and then having to cope with the death of their husbands
5. Those people taking care of dying family members or friends should be assisted by the church through a proper home based care program
6. Church members should be taught how to have empathy with the suffering instead of only having sympathy for them
7. The church needs to address some of the traditional beliefs that affect widows, such as the sexual cleansing of widows after the death of her husband

AIDS also manipulates Care into exhausting Noluthando and MamaDina. MamaDina starts dragging her feet during her visits to her daughter and her merry songs dry up. She cries quietly where Dina can't see her. Her burden of care is becoming unbearable. She seems incapable of really helping Dina as the bedsores and the pain are getting worse every day. Perhaps a hospice will be able to take care of Dina properly. MamaDina feels so tired. The mere thought of her younger children and Dina's daughter at home fills her heart with devastation. Care has become a heavy burden. She fakes a weak smile when Dina looks up at her. Noluthando thinks about her childhood dreams of studying engineering and starts blaming Care for shattering her dreams. She feels old and ugly. She opens a drawer and stacks away her make-up.

She no longer jumps up at night to help her sister when she falls off the bed because of the tricks of Stigma and Discrimination. She doesn't have the strength to clean the soiled bedding. She wishes her uncle who lives in the matchbox house would help her, but he obeys the rules of Patriarchy, who prohibits a man from doing a woman's work and caring is after all a women's job. She draws the curtains in her sister's room and wishes that her sister would die.

*Sunette Pienaar: The Untold Stories of Women in Historically Disadvantaged Communities, Infected and/or Affected by HIV/AIDS, about Care and/or the Lack of Care, 2003*

## **HOPE**

**We admit** that we as church have caused those, most in need of hope, to lose hope, instead of giving them hope, often because our definition of hope was confined only to the life after death

### **We believe that:**

1. Hope is built not only through words but even more so through our actions
2. Hope cannot be built in a climate tainted with stigmatisation and discrimination
3. Hope will be built if the church clearly states that HIV/AIDS is its problem so that those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS do not have to carry this burden on their own anymore
4. Hope has at its essence the conviction that our life does not end with death, but that death is merely the doorway to a new life. While this message needs to be proclaimed, it should not be done at the expense of a meaningful life here on earth
5. True hope will be built where those who are suffering from HIV/AIDS are surrounded with love, care and compassion of fellow-believers and where those who are dying are assured that the relatives of the deceased will also be cared for after the death of the HIV/AIDS sufferer

*The church owes the world hope* – for both this and the ultimate, new world. Because the church knows that she is a commissioned witness of the coming new order, she has to erect signs of the Kingdom already. Because she knows that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her, she can risk the impossible. Because she heard God saying: ‘Behold! I am making all things new!’ (Rev. 21:5), she can already begin something new. Nothing may remain unaffected. The suggestion that things might stay as they are, is the very antithesis of the gospel. It is nothing less than a denial of Christ’s resurrection and of the inauguration of the New Age.

Someone who knows that God will one day wipe away all tears, cannot with resignation accept the tears of those who suffer and are oppressed now. If we believe that one day all disease will vanish, we cannot but begin to anticipate here and now the victory over disease in individuals and communities. We believe in God not because we despair of the present and future; rather we believe in the present and future of both man and the world because we believe in God. Precisely because we hope for the eternal and ultimate things, we also hope for the temporary and the provisional.

*David Bosch: Witness to the World, 1980*

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The REC wants to urge all of its members to treat the problem of HIV/AIDS with the greatest possible earnestness and urgency**
- 2. The REC requests its member churches to use the report on HIV/AIDS as a working document within their own churches in order to stimulate greater involvement in the HIV/AIDS pandemic**
- 3. The REC encourages those member churches, not yet significantly affected by HIV/AIDS, to seek methods of supporting other churches where the disease is more rampant**
- 4. The REC is requested to investigate the possibility of establishing a post aimed at doing further research about HIV/AIDS, passing on such information to all members of the REC and coordinating projects done by member churches of the REC in order to establish relations between churches busy with HIV/AIDS projects and churches which are able to assist them in these projects. Should it not be possible to create such a post immediately, then the REC is requested to find ways in which these aims could be met in the interim**

Arnau van Wyngaard (Moderator)

Marloes Keller (Reporter)

Nugroho Adhi

Virgilio Bernardino

Adriaan Bührmann

David Ezala

Rebecca Koskei

Bert Kuipers

Mochubi Lebone  
Kim Malsawmkim  
Petrus Pandanga  
Paul Ssemwanga  
Gideon van der Watt  
Gabriël van Wyk  
Martha Zgambo

After discussing this report, the Assembly referred the report back to the Committee for revision.

#### ARTICLE 54: RECESS

The Assembly was adjourned for lunch.

#### ARTICLE 55: RECONVENED

The Assembly was reconvened for further session.

#### ARTICLE 56: WORDS OF THANKS

The President expressed words of thanks to:

1. REC staff, Richard van Houten and Jim Lont, Gail Tuit and Carolyn Coke
2. The Preparation Committee of the REC Utrecht Assembly.

#### ARTICLE 57: THE MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Moderamen moved that the Executive Committee be authorized to adopt the minutes of the Assembly.

The motion is carried.

#### ARTICLE 58: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CHURCH AND STATE

The reporter of the Committee presented the revised report of the Committee on Church and State.

### **Church and State            AC – 2.1**

#### **References :**

- *Reconciling all things to himself: reflections on the kingdom of God, the church & the state's role in plural societies* (Agenda pp. 171-212).
- *Church, State and our confessions* (Agenda pp. 213-236).
- *Prologue to peace and War* (Agenda pp. 236-260).
- Additional information on reconciliation from the Hendrik Kraemer Institute on page 4.

#### **I.            Church and State and the Kingdom of God**

According to the Reformed Church's understanding of the Biblical teaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth, both church and state have roles in society that should be complementary.

The role of the church in public life is to enhance or challenge the sense of justice that prevails in society. This is part of its Biblical prophetic task. The church should also advocate a sense of human worth and dignity in society based on the premise that humans are created in the image of God.

Therefore, in every society the church should act as a witness to the Kingdom of God and should call on the state as a public institution to :

1. Maintain justice and equity in public life.
2. Seek to be just and consistent in its use of power, nationally and internationally.
3. Protect all rights of the people and see to it that minorities have the same rights as majorities.
4. Respect the sovereignty and integrity of each and every national state. It should reject the will of any state or power to impose its directives regarding international law, disputes and conventions on other nations/peoples. Peaceful means should be applied to solve international disputes and the use of military force should be avoided as much as possible.
5. Allow the church to make contributions and express its views on issues of public life.

Last but not least, for the sake of the Kingdom of God on earth, all churches should uphold their role in society as part of their task to witness to the Kingdom of God. All churches worldwide should exercise their calling to the utmost. Also, as Christians dispersed in various societal institutions, we should fulfill our ministry in our particular context.

## **II. The Task of the Church**

According to the Reformed Creeds and church polity, all Reformed Churches should be an active partner with the state.

All Reformed Churches should also be a confessing and, whenever is needed, a protesting social partner in all societies and countries.

The Reformed Church is called to :

1. Preach the Gospel of Jesus-Christ.
2. Live for and serve the Triune God, in the church and in society, with a free conscience according to His word.
3. Remind the state that nobody should be disadvantaged because of their beliefs, race, gender, sexual orientation, language or culture.
4. Initiate and facilitate dialogue between religious organizations and the state.
5. Stand up whenever it sees that the state acts unjustly, violates or is inconsistent with the application of its laws.

## **III. Peace and War**

The core issues of the Reformed position on war and peace are justice and the recognition of universal human rights. But as a reconciled and reconciling community, the church has also received Christ's blessing and calling to be peace makers. Therefore, the church should foster reconciliation in situations of tension and conflict.

The church must be a consistent prophetic voice for justice to all. Christians need to live exemplary lives in illustrating and expressing justice and incorporating the universal human rights in their churches as well as in their personal and collective lives.

We hold that warfare has deep and destructive consequences to all involved, winners as well as losers. In cases of violation of human rights, avenues of dialogue and negotiation should be followed and exhausted. When all efforts to mediate national and international negotiations have failed, the global community has to intervene responsibly. Military means should only be used as a last resort.

Part of the prophetic voice of the church is to unmask and challenge the various powers (i.e. ideological, political, economic and religious) which have vested interests in the promotion of warfare, or even terrorism. Even though many national states are not guiltless, several states and regions of the world are destroyed through the involvement of powers and nations external to them.

Faced with the paradox of war and peace, we say no to war and pursue peace as commanded by God (Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:18).

In the light of the above, the concept of just war in our Reformed tradition has to be reconsidered and redefined.

**Recommendation :**

**We recommend that the plenary receive this statement as a working document for further study by a committee appointed by the executive committee and that the REC member churches be consulted on these issues.**

The recommendation was adopted.

**ARTICLE 59: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

The reporter of the Committee presented the revised report of the Committee on Religious Pluralism [Changes in the text are in bold type, just before “Concluding Remarks”. The former recommendations 3, 4 and 5 are replaced by a single recommendation 3.]

**Committee on Religious Pluralism (1) AC 1**

**Topic: Religious Pluralism**

Materials:

Report on Religious Pluralism (Agenda)

Statement on Religious Pluralism of the PCN

Reports from the workshops on religious pluralism during the Assembly

***Christian Witness amidst Religious Pluralism***

In 1992 and 1996 respectively, the REC issued clear statements on its understanding of Christian mission and the uniqueness of Christ. These statements were made against the background of the world-wide phenomenon of religious pluralism. Though these statements were very helpful and answered a number of questions, we the REC member churches, have realised that our exploration of the reality of religious pluralism has been far from complete. To have a clear theological position on the uniqueness of Christ is one thing. How we witness to that in day to day life-situations of religious pluralism is another matter. The fact is that many REC church members live with people

of other faiths on a daily basis. Hence, churches are called to reflect anew on the question of how to relate to and witness to people of other faiths. The main focus of this document will be on this question: *How do Christians encounter the reality of religious pluralism, with all its challenges, and how can they credibly live out their faith in Christ in these situations?*

In this document we use the term ‘religious pluralism’ for the sociological reality of living in a multi-religious society.

#### *Different Facets of Religious Pluralism*

We observe that the contexts of religious pluralism in which the REC member churches live, differ greatly and have various facets. We acknowledge that the contexts of religious pluralism, referred to below, should not be seen as three distinct models, but as stages on a continuum. We also observe that in the course of time contexts can be subject to change. The guidelines mentioned below intend to be guidelines, and in no way want to impede the guidance of the Holy Spirit on appropriate responses to specific contexts.

- There are contexts in which people of different religious traditions live harmoniously together and where there are possibilities for cooperation in public life, for constructive encounters and open witness to the Gospel.
- There are also contexts, which in the past were harmonious but in which growing tensions now occur. In some cases, this has caused a general deterioration of relationships between the communities. In other cases, we see a more diverse response. Some people engaged in encounters are strengthened in their determination to build bridges; with others these tensions lead to a confirmation of their negative perceptions and/or a reinforcement of existing prejudices.
- There are also contexts in which the relationships between people of different faiths are openly hostile and sometimes even violent. The reality is that some of the REC member churches have to function in very difficult and oppressive circumstances. In such situations public witness to Christ is very hard. Often this coincides with situations in which the Christian community forms a small minority.

Needless to say, these different contexts call for different forms of Christian witness. Sensitivity to the possibilities in each of these situations and a prayerful discernment of God’s will and way for our Christian witness is vital.

We signal that apart from the setting of the individual contexts in which the REC member churches work, relationships between the different faith communities are also influenced by global events and developments. We see a growing tendency in most religious traditions towards fundamentalism, even militant fundamentalism. We also observe a fear for the increase of violent confrontations between some adherents of the different religious communities.

As REC churches we are called upon to resist this build up of negative mutual perceptions and the escalation of suspicion, to help dismantle prejudices and to contribute positively towards maintaining good relationships and building peace.

#### *Biblical-Theological Reflection on relating to People of other Faiths*

The multi-religiousness of the societies we live in also confronts us with a series of theological questions. The REC document *The Unique Person and Work of Christ* makes two clear points: On the one hand it states that ‘Scripture emphasises that Christ has come once and for all. His incarnation is the very center of history. It is the “crucial divine intervention.” (Visser ‘t Hooft, *No other name*: 97) Therefore, there can be no other saviors. (See also Romans 6:10, Hebrews 7:27 and 9:28).’<sup>1</sup> Yet the document also very clearly indicates that this unique revelation of God in Christ, does not deny that there can be knowledge of God in other religious traditions. To the question: ‘Does God also speak and deal with people in other ways than through an explicit knowledge of Christ?’ an affirmative answer is given: ‘...we know that God was present in some sense among (...) people who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ.’ Also: ‘The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of men and women long before any of God’s human agents bring the saving message of good news in Jesus Christ.’<sup>2</sup> This is often referred to as common grace. The Dutch missiologist J.H. Bavinck calls this phenomenon God’s manifestation - his speechless speech - in creation and history.<sup>3</sup> As we are reminded in Acts 14:17, ‘Yet He has not left Himself without testimony...’

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<sup>1</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, (1995), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> J.H. Bavinck, *Religieus Besef en Christelijk Geloof*, Kok: Kampen 1949, 163.

Having considered what the Bible says about other religions, we discovered anew that in the Bible the emphasis is on encounters and relationships, and not primarily on the comparison of systems of thought. It deals with how we think about and relate to people who believe differently than we do. Truth in the Bible is first of all about a Person we need to meet: Jesus Christ. The Bible urges us towards encounters, encounters with God through Christ and encounters with other people.

Having been met by Christ and having been changed through this experience, we are now called upon to look at other people with the eyes of Christ. The Bible tells us that *all* people are created in the image of God, *all* are His and *all* are loved by Him. We know that God's concern is not only for Israel and the church, but for the whole of His creation. His heart goes out to *all humanity*: He so loved the *world* that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16)<sup>4</sup> This implies that we acknowledge the dignity of every human being, treat all people with deep respect and be willing to care for them, in the way Christ cared for us.

### The Missionary Calling of the Church amidst Religious Pluralism

What then is the missionary calling of the church within the context of religious pluralism? The mission of the church (*missio ecclesiae*) is participation in God's mission (*missio Dei*). Since we believe that God in Christ has reached out to the whole world, we as faithful disciples of Christ want to follow in his footsteps by loving all of humanity as He does: fellow Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus etc., proclaiming the good news of Christ to all. It is this love of Christ which urges us on (2 Cor. 5:14).

The way in which we as REC churches seek to carry out this missionary calling depends on the context in which each church is called to witness. This will be a multi-dimensional task. Witness according to our understanding is an holistic testimony to God in Christ, in words, deeds and presence.

- The context of harmonious relationships allows for a wide range of opportunities for witness. Direct and clear evangelism, challenging people to radically reorient their lives, should be pursued.<sup>5</sup> Dialogue also should have a prominent place. In today's ever-changing religious climate harmonious relationships can never be taken for granted but should be nurtured with great care. One way in which this is realised, occurs when people of different faiths cooperate in the public domain for good government and for a just and peaceful society.
- In the context of growing estrangement the witness to Christ will have to include ways of dispelling the tension and intentional efforts towards mutual understanding, both on the community level and on an individual basis. Interreligious dialogue is one way to witness to Christ. It can help us to break through the caricatures we have made of each other and to see real faces – people's hopes, pains and stories. Listening to the faith stories of others, and having an opportunity to tell our own stories might also help dispel the distortions we have of one another's faiths and break away from thinking in categories of 'them' and 'us'.
- In the context of open hostility, verbal witness is often very difficult and dialogue at times virtually impossible. While we keep on looking and praying for opportunities for verbal witness and dialogue, we acknowledge that this context might require yet other forms of witness to Christ such as Christian service (*diakonia*) or Christian presence.<sup>6</sup> By 'Christian presence' we mean being present among people with the hope and intention that our lives be understood as witness to the love of Christ.

**In all these contexts we as churches seek to fulfil our calling, convinced that Christ is the only way, the unique way of salvation and convinced that in Him God is reconciling the world to Himself. We implore all on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:16-20, Eph. 2:7-10, Rom. 8: 12-27 and Col. 1:15-20).**

### Concluding Remarks

In our religiously pluralistic world, we as churches are called to witness to Christ. This is our task, our challenge, but also our joy. In the great variety of contexts in which we live, we seek to give a sincere and intelligible testimony of

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<sup>4</sup> *The Unique Person and Work of Christ*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigmshifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll 1997, 420.

<sup>6</sup> Traditionally four forms of dialogue are distinguished: dialogue of life, dialogue of joint social action, intellectual dialogue and dialogue of the spirit (See REC Agenda, The Netherlands 2005, 132/133). *The Unique Person and Work of Christ* indicates that also within the Reformed tradition there is room for interreligious cooperation for reconciliation and peace. See page 3.

the hope that lives within us, but we want to do it with respect and gentleness (1 Peter 3:15): in ‘bold humility’ and ‘humble boldness’.<sup>7</sup>

In all this we want to remember that we are not called to win arguments or vindicate *our* faith but as ambassadors of Christ to meet and journey with *people*. Our prayer is that what people hear from us, see in us and experience from us along the journey may be a worthy testimony to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. That the Assembly adopt this statement on Christian Witness amidst Religious Pluralism and make it available to all member churches**
- 2. That the churches take seriously the guidelines on religious ceremonies as passed by the Assembly of 2000**
- 3. That the Assembly recommend to the Executive Committee to appoint a working committee on interreligious dialogue, giving priority to the topic of Christian Muslim dialogue**

Benebo Fubara-Manuel moved an amendment:

**to delete two sentences near the end of the first paragraph under “Biblical Theological Reflection . . .” that read: “This is often referred to as common grace. The Dutch missiologist J.H. Bavinck calls this phenomenon God’s manifestati on - his speechless speech - in creation and history.”**

The amendment was defeated.

The recommendations were adopted.

Benebo Fubara-Manuel requested that his negative vote be noted.

#### **ARTICLE 60: REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MISSION PARTNERSHIP – ECONOMIC JUSTICE – HIV/AIDS**

The reporter of the Committee presented the revised reports. On Economic Justice, the committee presented a revision of the recommendations as follows (cf. Article 52)

#### **Recommendations**

- 1. To affirm the Micah Challenge as presented to the REC in the Supplemental Agenda, May 13, 2005**
- 2. To commend the Micah challenge to member churches for study and appropriate action**
- 3. To mandate the commission of Mission and Diakonia to prepare for the next assembly a careful report on economic justice using the documents presented to this REC on economic justice, especially the 2004 WARC statement “Covenanting for justice in the Economy and the Earth” as a starting point.**

**This study should include issues that flow from globalization, migrant labor, development and sustainability, HIV/Aids and poverty, debt relief, economic systems, accountability, good governance, integrity of creation and consumerism.**

The recommendations were adopted.

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<sup>7</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 489.

## ARTICLE 61: REVISIONS OF 'TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HIV/AIDS'

The reporter presented a revised version of AC 5.3, with new recommendations. The full revised text is as follows:

### **TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HIV/AIDS**                      **AC-5.3**

#### **PREAMBLE**

This document is the outcome of three workshops held during the assembly of the Reformed Ecumenical Council from 12 - 25 July 2005 in Utrecht in the Netherlands. During the workshops, each focussing on HIV/AIDS, three main topics were introduced by Dr Arnau van Wyngaard, namely:

*Towards a Theology of HIV/AIDS,*

*The Social Circumstances Conducive to the Spreading of HIV/AIDS, and*

*The Social Consequences of HIV/AIDS.*

This led to further discussions within smaller groups which eventually led to the formulation of this document.

Most Christian churches, along with many other governmental, non-governmental and religious organisations have realised that a response is needed to the challenge of HIV/AIDS, a disease which is threatening not only to depopulate many countries – mostly the poorest countries in the world – but which is also causing the dehumanisation of millions of children, women and men, breaking up families as well as destroying the economy within households, within communities and ultimately within entire countries. Despite the horror of this disease, many Christians and churches reacted with compassion and love, bringing hope to the dying and those left behind after death had taken its toll.

However, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has also exposed severe faults within many Christian churches. As those suffering from HIV/AIDS called for help, many, following the example of the priest and the Levite in Luke 10, “passed by on the other side.” Many, while professing their faith in Jesus Christ, still believe that a distinction should be made between *them* (with HIV/AIDS) and *us* (without HIV/AIDS). As the pandemic increases in momentum, we realise that the accusation against the people of Israel, because of their neglect of the widows and the orphans (Malachi 3:5), is also directed to the church of today, calling us to repentance as we equally neglect those most in need of care.

This document is not intended solely as a theological discussion on the responsibility of the church towards HIV/AIDS. This document is a call to action. There may still be time to do something, but time is running out. For millions of people all over the world, it may already be too late...

The churches have strengths, they have credibility, and they are grounded in communities. This offers them the opportunity to make a real difference in combating HIV/AIDS. To respond to this challenge, the churches must be transformed in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis, in order that they may become a force for transformation – bringing healing, hope, and accompaniment to all affected by HIV/AIDS.

*Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to  
HIV/AIDS in Africa, Nairobi, 2001*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In our reflection on one of the greatest disasters to strike the earth – the pandemic of HIV/AIDS – the REC not only came under a clear impression of the many facets of this problem, but also realised that we, as representatives of Jesus Christ, stand guilty before God, our fellow believers and the world due to our inability to raise a prophetic voice while there had still been time to make a difference, against the problem of HIV/AIDS, the different circumstances leading up to the uncontrolled spreading of the disease as well as the social circumstances which inevitably follow once someone has been diagnosed as HIV-positive. As we humbly and with great shame confess our guilt, we nevertheless acknowledge that the Lord has taught us that we need to move beyond the confession of our guilt in order to facilitate change within the community and world within which we live, by sharing faith, love and hope to all people, regardless of whom they are. This we believe to be the way in which our Lord would expect us to address this problem.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, considered to be the first document of what is known to us today as the New Testament, starts with the following words: "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by FAITH, your labour prompted by LOVE, and your endurance inspired by HOPE in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3 – NIV). A few years later, Paul writes another letter, incorporating within it one of the greatest love poems ever written, which ends with the words: "And now these three remain: FAITH, HOPE and LOVE" (1 Corinthians 13:13). Following the example of the Apostle Paul, who started the New Testament with the concepts of faith, love and hope, we therefore wish to take up the responsibility towards all those *infected with or affected by* HIV/AIDS, by allowing them to experience the works done because of our faith, by enveloping them with our love and by inspiring them with hope when all feels hopeless.

This document does not call for uniformity. The earth houses many realities, and what works in one place may not work in another. What it does attempt to achieve is a realistic initiative which will make it possible for church leaders and their congregations to speak honestly about HIV and AIDS, and to act practically in response to it.

## **FAITH**

### **A. THE NECESSITY OF A THEOLOGY OF HOPE IN A TIME OF HIV/AIDS**

**We admit** that we as church have for too long indulged ourselves in the luxury of denying that HIV/AIDS is our problem

**We believe that:**

1. There are times when the world is faced with a crisis which has the potential for such devastating consequences throughout the world, that it becomes necessary for the church to respond to that crisis, not only practically, but also theologically
2. We can no longer speak relevantly about the church without also speaking about HIV/AIDS

Failure to probe the theological significance of this moment will be not only a missed opportunity but also irresponsible. Just as the entire Christian world has been and continues to be mobilized in programmes meant to combat racism, sexism, economic exploitation and cultural arrogance, we now need theologies that will help us deal with the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

*Tinyiko Maluleke: Towards an  
HIV/AIDS-Sensitive Curriculum*

## **B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIV/AIDS AND SIN**

**We admit** that we as church have at times laid a much too direct link between HIV/AIDS and sin, giving the impression that those with HIV/AIDS are greater sinners than others, without keeping in mind that many of those who are today HIV-positive got the virus innocently

### **We believe that:**

1. AIDS should not be considered as judgement of God upon sinners
2. A person's HIV status, whether it is positive or negative, gives no indication of that person's moral choices
3. As in many other aspects of life as recorded in the Bible as well as in our own daily lives, certain choices which are made may have undesirable consequences
4. The consequences may affect those who sinned, but usually many other people are also affected by these consequences and these consequences may even be felt over more than one generation
5. AIDS can be seen as evidence of the fallen nature of creation in the sense that everyone and everything is tainted with imperfection
6. When people are aware of their HIV-positive status and nevertheless continue with a lifestyle which can transmit the virus to others, this can clearly be considered as contradictory to God's will
7. Regardless of who had been infected with HIV/AIDS and how they got it, the Bible clearly states that there is forgiveness of all sin (1 John 1:9) and that Jesus had come for all those who realise that they need Him (Matthew 9:12)

At the World AIDS Day celebration in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Bujumbura in 1995, the priest said, in the course of his sermon, “We must have compassion for people with AIDS because they have sinned and because they are suffering for it now”. At that point something propelled Jeanne Gapiya to rise from her pew and walk up to the front of the church. “I have HIV”, she declared, “and I am a faithful wife. Who are you to say that I have sinned, or that you have not? We are all sinners, which is just as well, because it is for us that Jesus came.”

*Janet Brown & Jurgens Hendriks: The AIDS Fulcrum: The Church In Africa Seesawing Between Alienation, Estrangement, Prejudice And Love, 2004*

### C. SEX

**We admit** that we as church have often neglected to speak clearly about sexual matters, as though this is a sin to be ashamed of

**We believe that:**

1. Sex was given by God, not only with the aim of bringing forth children, but also for the mutual enjoyment of those taking part in it, according to the will of God.
2. This becomes true, more than anywhere else, within a loving, caring and permanent relationship between a man and a woman
3. Sex and sexuality is something which Christians may and should celebrate without shame
4. In order to understand and celebrate our sexuality, a new understanding in the light of Scripture is needed, on our entire body as part of God’s creation

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Psalm 8*

### D. SEX EDUCATION

**We admit** that we as church have missed many opportunities to teach those children entrusted to us about the gift of sexuality

**We believe that:**

1. The church has the responsibility to speak to our members, young and old, about sexual-related topics
2. When speaking about sexual matters, the aim should not be to only give information, nor only to warn against pre- and extra-marital sexual relations, but also to increase in people their awe of God, who created human beings in such a wonderful way.
3. There are many ways in which HIV/AIDS can be prevented, of which abstinence from sexual relations outside marriage and faithfulness to a single partner are the two preferable options.

...if sound moral decisions are required of people, an environment conducive to making such decisions is necessary, an environment in which openness to honest sharing of experiences and concerns is promoted and the integrity of people and their relationships is affirmed. Apart from such an environment, the vulnerability of marginalized groups to high-risk behaviour is greatly increased.”

*World Council of Churches: Facing AIDS : The Challenge, the Churches' Response, 2002*

## **E. POVERTY**

**We admit** that we as church have for too long ignored the effects of extreme poverty on more than 50% of the world's population, particularly as the HIV/AIDS pandemic seems to be thriving within these poor communities

### **We believe that:**

1. The HIV/AIDS pandemic will never be effectively opposed while the social circumstances under which many people are living are stimulating the spreading of this disease
2. Many people, men but more especially women, are caught up in a situation where they have no other choice than to sell their bodies in order to earn money with which to feed their children and other family members
3. While the church can never approve of people engaging in prostitution, this practice cannot be condemned without also making earnest with the problem of poverty forcing many people to go to these lengths to earn money
4. As the gap between the rich and the poor is steadily growing, the church needs to address the problem of economic injustice
5. Although migrant labour has helped to enrich many, the devastating effects that it has upon many families and communities also need to be addressed by the church

If you want to spread a sexually transmitted disease, you'd take thousands of young men away from their families, isolate them in single-sex hostels, and give them easy access to alcohol and commercial sex. Then, to spread the disease around the country, you'd send them home every once in a while to their wives and girlfriends. And that's basically the system we have with the mines.

*Bertil Egerö, Mikael Hammarskjöld & Lise Munck: AIDS: The Challenge of this Century: Prevention, care and impact mitigation.*

## LOVE

### A. STIGMATISATION

**We admit** that we as church have often stigmatised those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, making it difficult for people to openly declare their HIV status and causing them to experience rejection while they were most in need of love and compassion

**We believe that:**

1. Stigmatisation of and discrimination against any person, regardless of who and what they are, is a sin in the eyes of the Lord
2. Stigmatisation is a reality of which we have to take note and against which we have to make a stand
3. God is often revealed in the Bible as the God of the marginalised (Psalm 146:7; Luke 1:53)
4. Following the example of Jesus Christ, instead of stigmatising those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, we should embrace and support them, as He did with the lepers (Mark 1:41)

It is now common knowledge that in HIV/AIDS, it is not the condition itself that hurts most (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death), but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV positive people have to deal with.

*Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa, Nairobi, 2001*

### B. CARING

**We admit** that we as church have not done enough to take care of those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS

**We believe that:**

1. Each congregation has the God-given obligation to become involved with the HIV/AIDS pandemic
2. Congregations within communities or countries which are privileged not to be severely affected by HIV/AIDS, need to take hands with congregations within less fortunate areas to assist them by every means possible to reach out to those in need of care
3. The care given to the suffering should be administered in such a way that the dignity of those being cared for as well as the dignity of the community within which they reside are maintained
4. This pastoral care should not be restricted only to the innocent victims of HIV/AIDS, but also to those who are so angered by their own HIV-positive status that they deliberately infect innocent people with the virus
5. Antiretrovirals should be readily available to any person who has HIV/AIDS and who wishes to have a more productive life
6. Churches in more affluent countries should assist those in poorer countries to gain greater access to antiretrovirals.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

*Matthew 25:34-40*

### **C. WOMEN**

**We admit** that we as church have for too long been silent on the sexual abuse of women and violence against women

**We believe that:**

1. The church needs to speak out against violence and sexual abuse directed towards women, not only through the hands of strangers, but also through the hands of their spouses, often resulting in domestic rape
2. Cultural taboos which often lead to women being forced to have unprotected sex and thus resulting in them getting the HI virus, need to be addressed
3. Men need to be educated to enable them to reject myths such as that sex with a virgin will cure a man of HIV/AIDS
4. Special plans should be made to support women, who seem to be carrying an even greater burden than men due to the larger number of females infected with HIV/AIDS as well as the extra burden of caring for family members with HIV/AIDS

If I refuse to accept his advances, he can get physical and several times he has hurt me. A number of times he has hit me when I have refused to have sex with him because I know that he was with someone else. It feels as though I am being raped. It is very difficult to protect myself in this situation and I fear for myself.

Other women verbalized their agreement with her concerns, 'What can you do if he is going to beat you and demand that you have sex with him? Even if there is AIDS these days you just have to accept your fate and continue to sleep with him because he beats you. He says I am his wife and can do this with me whenever it pleases him'

*Janet Brown: HIV/AIDS Alienation: Between Prejudice and Acceptance, 2004*

## **D. WIDOWS AND ORPHANS**

**We admit** that we as church have often been sidetracked from a true and faultless religion, acceptable to God our Father, which is defined in James 1:27 as looking after orphans and widows in their distress

### **We believe that:**

1. The caring of orphans and widows are the responsibility of the church
2. Orphans need to be educated if we want to see their circumstances improve. Where the education of orphans are being neglected for whatever reason, the church needs to take up that responsibility
3. Widows need to be empowered in many ways, which includes the learning of skills to enable them to receive a sustainable income as well as the knowledge of basic human rights which can help to protect them from exploitation
4. Widows need to receive holistic support on the physical, social and spiritual terrains to enable them to function fully as human beings after the agony of caring for their dying husbands, often over a long period of time and then having to cope with the death of their husbands
5. Those people taking care of dying family members or friends should be assisted by the church through a proper home based care program
6. Church members should be taught how to have empathy with the suffering instead of only having sympathy for them
7. The church needs to address some of the traditional beliefs that affect widows, such as the sexual cleansing of widows after the death of her husband

AIDS also manipulates Care into exhausting Noluthando and MamaDina. MamaDina starts dragging her feet during her visits to her daughter and her merry songs dry up. She cries quietly where Dina can't see her. Her burden of care is becoming unbearable. She seems incapable of really helping Dina as the bedsores and the pain are getting worse every day. Perhaps a hospice will be able to take care of Dina properly. MamaDina feels so tired. The mere thought of her younger children and Dina's daughter at home fills her heart with devastation. Care has become a heavy burden. She fakes a weak smile when Dina looks up at her. Noluthando thinks about her childhood dreams of studying engineering and starts blaming Care for shattering her dreams. She feels old and ugly. She opens a drawer and stacks away her make-up.

She no longer jumps up at night to help her sister when she falls off the bed because of the tricks of Stigma and Discrimination. She doesn't have the strength to clean the soiled bedding. She wishes her uncle who lives in the matchbox house would help her, but he obeys the rules of Patriarchy, who prohibits a man from doing a woman's work and caring is after all a women's job. She draws the curtains in her sister's room and wishes that her sister would die.

*Sunette Pienaar: The Untold Stories of Women in Historically Disadvantaged Communities, Infected and/or Affected by HIV/AIDS, about Care and/or the Lack of Care, 2003*

**We admit** that we as church have caused those, most in need of hope, to lose hope, instead of giving them hope, often because our definition of hope was confined only to the life after death

**We believe that:**

1. Hope is built not only through words but even more so through our actions
2. Hope cannot be built in a climate tainted with stigmatisation and discrimination
3. Hope will be built if the church clearly states that HIV/AIDS is its problem so that those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS do not have to carry this burden on their own anymore
4. Hope has at its essence the conviction that our life does not end with death, but that death is merely the doorway to a new life. While this message needs to be proclaimed, it should not be done at the expense of a meaningful life here on earth
5. True hope will be built where those who are suffering from HIV/AIDS are surrounded with love, care and compassion of fellow-believers and where those who are dying are assured that the relatives of the deceased will also be cared for after the death of the HIV/AIDS sufferer.

*The church owes the world hope – for both this and the ultimate, new world. Because the church knows that she is a commissioned witness of the coming new order, she has to erect signs of the Kingdom already. Because she knows that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her, she can risk the impossible. Because she heard God saying: ‘Behold! I am making all things new!’ (Rev. 21:5), she can already begin something new. Nothing may remain unaffected. The suggestion that things might stay as they are, is the very antithesis of the gospel. It is nothing less than a denial of Christ’s resurrection and of the inauguration of the New Age.*

Someone who knows that God will one day wipe away all tears, cannot with resignation accept the tears of those who suffer and are oppressed now. If we believe that one day all disease will vanish, we cannot but begin to anticipate here and now the victory over disease in individuals and communities. We believe in God not because we despair of the present and future; rather we believe in the present and future of both man and the world because we believe in God. Precisely because we hope for the eternal and ultimate things, we also hope for the temporary and the provisional.

*David Bosch: Witness to the World, 1980*

**RECOMMENDATIONS :**

1. **The REC wants to urge all of its members to treat the problem of HIV/AIDS with the greatest possible earnestness and urgency**
2. **The REC requests its member churches to use the report on HIV/AIDS as a working document within their own churches in order to stimulate greater involvement in the HIV/AIDS pandemic**
3. **The REC encourages those member churches, not yet significantly affected by HIV/AIDS, to seek methods of supporting other churches where the disease is more rampant**

- 4. The REC is requested to investigate the possibility of establishing a post aimed at doing further research about HIV/AIDS, passing on such information to all members of the REC and coordinating projects done by member churches of the REC in order to establish relations between churches busy with HIV/AIDS projects and churches which are able to assist them in these projects. Should it not be possible to create such a post immediately, then the REC is requested to find ways in which these aims could be met in the interim**

Arnau van Wyngaard (Moderator)

Marloes Keller (Reporter)

Nugroho Adhi

Virgilio Bernardino

Adriaan Bührmann

David Ezala

Rebecca Koskei

Bert Kuipers

Mochubi Lebone

Kim Malsawmkim

Petrus Pandanga

Paul Ssemwanga

Gideon van der Watt

Gabriël van Wyk

Martha Zgambo

After some discussion about the wording of several sections, the recommendations were adopted, with the understanding that as a “working document”, revisions could be incorporated later.

Benebo Fubara-Manuel requested that his negative vote be recorded.

#### ARTICLE 62: THE MEETING OF THE REC CORPORATION MEMBERS

The meeting recessed to conduct the meeting of the members of the REC Corporation. The Agenda was presented by the Moderamen in Document D-6.

1. The Minutes of the last meeting of the REC Corporation Members, July 26, 2000 we re approved as read.

2. Election of officers.

The following were elected by acclamation:

President: Douwe Visser

Vice-President: Winston Kawale

Secretary: Victor Pillay

Treasurer: Lester Ippel

General Secretary: Richard van Houten

3. Election of Board of Trustees.

The following were elected as trustees of the REC Corporation:

President: Douwe Visser

Vice-President: Winston Kawale  
Secretary: Victor Pillay  
Treasurer: Lester Ippel  
General Secretary: Richard van Houten  
Member: Lazarus Purwanto  
Member: Nina Dewi

4. Financial Reports

The meeting accepts the financial reports for the years 2000-2004.

5. The Acts of the Council

The meeting agrees to incorporate the *Acts of the Council*, which is the record of the proceedings of the 2005 Assembly, into the record of the Corporation.

6. The meeting is closed

The Assembly of the REC resumes.

ARTICLE 63: REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The First Clerk presented the second part of report of the Executive Committee as follows:

**Secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture**

The Assembly has received EC Report L.4 in the Supplemental Agenda. In it there were envisioned two options for the continuation of the Youth and Christian Nurture Ministry.

The Moderamen now believes there should be a new direction. Because of the decisions made about a process with the WARC and the advice of Advisory Committee 4, we do not think we should explore the option of joint staffing now. We are also reluctant to create an Associate General Secretary position. As the report of Advisory Committee 4 has stated, there is also a strong desire to keep the title Secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture, or if it is not kept, then tasks need to be carefully assigned to ensure continuation.

Therefore the Moderamen presents here a recommendation that replaces the two options in EC Report L.4. We want to ensure continuation of the ministry that has developed under Rev. Jim Lont, both in his fifteen years as the chair of the CYCN and the nine years he has served as Secretary for the CYCN. We give thanks for his energetic and persistent work to encourage and strengthen the youth and nurture ministries of our member churches.

We keep, however, the desire mentioned in L.4 that our staff include more than just North Americans. With 70% of our membership from churches in the South, we hope that a staff person from that area will help reflect the character of the REC. We hope that we can find a suitable person from outside North America and Europe who could work within his or her home country. Moving a foreign staff person into our US office would involve considerable extra costs, and the expenses would probably be less for a new person to work from his or her own country, but the cost is not our primary reason for seeking a person from this part of our membership.

Then there is the issue of transition. This Assembly has decided to grant honorable retirement to Jim Lont on December 31, 2005. It would be helpful for the Youth and Christian Nurture ministry, however, for some continuation of the work he is doing until a new person is appointed. The ministry would suffer without continuity on several projects.

The moderamen substitutes the following for its earlier recommendations in AC 7.1, 12.2-4.

Recommendations:

1. **That Rev. Jim Lont be granted the title of Secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture Emeritus, beginning January 1, 2006.**
2. **That the Executive Committee search for and appoint a new Secretary for Youth and Christian Nurture if possible by 2007 or before. The Executive Committee shall prepare a job description to try to ensure continuity in the ministry. Preference should be given to candidates from outside North America and Europe.**

The recommendations were adopted.

#### ARTICLE 64: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROMOTION OF THE REC (*Agenda*, p. 69)

The REC needs to have an understanding how it operates and how it could function in meeting its goals. Reformulations of the vision and mission, in line with the ones accepted earlier, have been necessary for good communication from the REC office, and further minor adjustments may need to be made.

Recommendation:

**That the Assembly accept the direction of the working definition of the Vision and Mission for the REC as stated by the General Secretary in the Agenda on Page 70.**

This recommendation is adopted.

#### ARTICLE 65: CONSTITUTIONAL REVISIONS

The General Secretary's report, Agenda p. 71 ff., pointed out that the Assemblies of the Reformed Ecumenical Council have changed much in the last decades, but those parts of the Constitution pertaining to the Assembly have not changed much at all. At this Assembly, we experienced some frustration with the election process, although we know that most election processes do have some frustrations about them.

In practice, we would like to have some regional balances and gender balances in our officers and committees. However, this value is not expressed in our constitution.

There is also frustration with the planning and financing of the Assemblies on the part of the Secretariat. Because of the old structures of delegate allocation to our members, the system of voting delegates, non-voting delegates and advisors, it is difficult to predict how many people will attend an Assembly until the very last moments. We need a new system of delegate selection. However, since delegate allocation is constitutionally prescribed, we could not change that for the next Assembly unless the members agree to allow the Executive Committee to suspend this part of our constitution, that is, Article VI, 2-5 and 7.

There are no rules about the financing of the Assemblies, but we operate on the precedent that the REC pays for all expenses except travel for all delegates and advisors from member churches, and offers travel subsidies to some members who need it. This, too, has financial implications that can be seen in the financial reports.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Executive Committee propose some wording in the Constitution that will reflect values of regional and gender balance to the next Assembly.**
2. **That the Executive Committee propose a reform of the voting system, changes that could be adopted prior to the election of officers at the next Assembly.**
3. **That the Executive Committee propose**
  - a) **a new way of allocating delegates to Assemblies**
  - b) **submit these proposals to the members at least two years before the next Assembly, and**
  - c) **if no serious objections to this system are received within six months, to authorize the next Assembly to be constituted in this way, thus suspending the relevant articles about delegations in the constitution, Article VI. The constitutional changes will be formally presented during the Assembly itself.**
4. **That the Executive Committee examine the way the REC Assembly is financed and present any proposed revisions as soon as possible to the member churches.**

The recommendations were adopted.

#### ARTICLE 66: MEMBERSHIP

Although our constitution is very careful about the terms under which members may be suspended or expelled from the REC, there is no account of inactive members. What could be done with members who contribute in no way, neither financially or by way of participation? Perhaps it is time to consider another way.

Recommendation:

**That the Executive Committee prepare a constitutional revision so that members who do not participate in any way for two consecutive Assemblies may be terminated for inaction at the third Assembly.**

The recommendation adopted.

ARTICLE 67: FINANCIAL REPORTS (*Agenda and Supplemental Agenda, Treasurer's Reports*)

The General Secretary has prepared a report of the cumulative giving of our member churches for the years 2000-2005 (D-5). We note with gratitude that 38 of our 39 member churches have contributed something in the last five years. Naturally, the contributions listed there for 2005 are only partial and will be reported in full with the 2005 Financial Report next year.

The moderamen notes that many members do not contribute regularly but make up multiple years of contributions in the months before the Assembly. For the smooth running of the REC and of your own churches, we urge our members to make plans and budgets that include a contribution to the REC every year.

We also note that contributions from members have declined in the last decade while costs have risen. Although member contributions still pay for most of our core operations, they have gradually fallen as a percentage of our total costs.

Recommendation:

**That the Assembly accept the Annual Financial Reports for 2000-2004.**

The recommendation was adopted.

ARTICLE 68: BUDGET

We present a proposed budget in D-8. These numbers represent estimated averages over the next four years. In some years, some costs will be less, and annual adjustments will be made by the Executive Committee.

REFORMED ECUMENICAL COUNCIL										
Budget per Annum 2006-2009										
			Gen Op		LAT		LDN		YCN	Totals
Income										
1	Members' Fees		135,000							135000
2	Gifts/Grants*		80,000		7,500		6,000		42,000	135500
3	School-funded orders				12,000					12000
4	Other		7,500				500		4,500	12500
5	<b>Total Income</b>		<b>222500</b>		<b>19500</b>		<b>6500</b>		<b>46500</b>	<b>295000</b>
Expenses										
6	Commissions									0
		Executive	20,000							
		Youth leaders						4,000		
		REC-WARC	5000							
7	Assembly		40,000							40000
8	Office		50,000					6,000		56000

		Review & Renew						4,000				
9		Grants				7,500		2,500		3,500		13500
10		School-funded orders				12,000						12000
11		Fund Raising		2,500								2500
12		Travel		8,000						8,000		16000
13		Payroll			97,000							97000
14		General Secretary	47,800									
15		Youth Secretary								25,000		25000
16		Clerical	41,000									
17		Benefits	1,600									
18		Taxes	6,600									
19		<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>222500</b>			<b>19500</b>		<b>6,500</b>		<b>46500</b>	<b>295000</b>
		*Gift and grant income is variable										

Recommendations:

1. **That the Assembly accept the Budget in D-8.**
2. **That the Executive Committee is authorized to make adjustments to the budget, in particular to increase (or decrease) the budget to account for inflation or changes in staffing.**

The recommendations adopted.

#### ARTICLE 69: ADVISOR TO THE EXECUTIVE

The President announced that Benebo Fubara-Manuel, after meeting with the Moderamen, had withdrawn his objections to serving as an advisor to the Executive Committee (cf. Article 28). The President explained that the Moderamen had indeed sought a woman to help the Executive, but it had several conditions to meet, and the Moderamen did not have enough choices to make it possible. In that light, the Moderator encouraged the member churches to delegate more women to the next Assembly to ensure that clear choices may be available.

#### ARTICLE 70: WORDS OF THANKS

The Vice-President moved to give a special appreciation to the President for his effective leadership during the Assembly.

The motion was carried.

#### ARTICLE 71: CLOSING

The business session of the Assembly was closed with a prayer by Peter Borgdorff. The closing service of the Assembly was to be held at the Pniel Church at 19:30.