

Ground: This is the amount previously approved by the synod of 1969 but left uncollected because no worker was on the field. —*Adopted*

2. Synod request the classical Home Mission committee of classis Cadillac in consultation with the Highland consistory to thoroughly study and review the Marion project to determine if there is sufficient potential in this field to warrant continued involvement of the board through the Grant-in-Aid.

Ground: The decision of the Board of Home Missions to phase out their support of this project by the end of 1971 would appear warranted in view of the apparent lack of growth, the close proximity of at least three other Christian Reformed churches, and the character of the grant-in-aid program as *temporary* help to the churches. —*Adopted*

3. Synod declare this to be its answer to Overture 27. —*Adopted*

III. THE LUKE SOCIETY, INC.

A. *Material:* Agenda Report 29. (See Supplement 29).

B. *Recommendations:*

1. Synod grant the privilege of the floor to Dr. Roger Hamstra, member of the Board of Directors, when their report is under consideration.

—*Adopted*

2. Synod place The Luke Society, Inc. on the approved list of non-denominational causes recommended for financial support.

Grounds:

a. The need for medical equipment at the Rehoboth Christian Hospital which the Luke Society operates at synod's behest.

b. The care of indigent patients at the Rehoboth Christian Hospital.

c. The development of a Medical Missionary Scholarship program to assist in staffing the Rehoboth Christian Hospital. —*Adopted*

3. Synod take grateful recognition of the fact that the Luke Society is investigating the formulation of new programs dealing with drug abuse, inner-city medical clinics, and rural medical programs, etc. —*Adopted*

4. Synod commend the Luke Society for its work. —*Adopted*
(Home Mission Matters continued in Art. 109).

ARTICLE 99

The advisory committee, *Ecumenical Matters*, cf. Arts. 65, 72, Rev. M. Doombos reporting, presents:

RELATIONS WITH THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND

A. *Materials:*

1. Report of Inter-Church Relations Committee; Agenda Report 23, III; and 23-A with Appendix. (See Supplements 23, 23-A).

2. Report of our fraternal delegate to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland; Agenda Report 40. (See Supplement 40).

3. Overture 6 from classis Grandville.

4. Overture 45 from the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church.

B. *Background:*

The synod of 1969 instructed the committee on Inter-Church Relations to consider "whether any of the changes which have occurred in the Gereformeerde Kerken (Synodaal) would warrant a change in our re-

lationship to these Churches and to advise the next synod of its findings" (Acts 1969, V, B, 2, p. 53).

The Inter-Church Committee reports "that it has serious reservations concerning reported developments in our sister-church in the Netherlands, especially with regard to the deviations as a result of the new hermeneutic, which are seemingly condoned." They recommend "that synod address a letter of admonition, in the spirit of a concerned sister-church, to the Gereformeerde Kerken, calling this fact to their attention." (See Supplements 23, 23-A).

The extensive report of our fraternal delegate to the synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, professor Martin Woudstra, gives a comprehensive picture of the theological situation in our sister church in the Netherlands. (See Supplement 40).

Classis Grandville overtures synod to seriously examine the advisability of continuing our sister-church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken. While the members of classis see danger in continuing this relationship because our pulpits are open to ministers of our sister church, they seem especially disturbed because the Gereformeerde Kerken have joined the World Council of Churches contrary to the requested advice of our synod of 1967.

The consistory of the Neerlandia Christian Reformed Church requests an alteration in our sister-church relationship with the Gereformeerde Kerken until such a time as the differences between the two denominations can be resolved. They see a danger in the fact that at present our pulpits are open to each other's ministers, that our ministers are eligible for calls from each other's churches, and that we accept each other's church membership certificates. Therefore they ask that our relationship be limited to correspondence, contacts through synodical committees, and the sending of fraternal delegates to major assemblies.

C. *Recommendations:*

1. That synod authorize the Inter-Church Relations Committee to continue its inquiry into and evaluation of recent theological trends in our sister church in the Netherlands and to advise the next synod whether or not such trends warrant a change in our relationship to these churches.

Grounds:

a. Our rules for church correspondence require that we take heed mutually lest there be deviation from Reformed principles in doctrine, worship, and discipline.

b. There is growing concern in our church about recent theological trends in our sister church in the Netherlands and about the effect of these trends on our relationship with these churches. —*Adopted*

2. That synod send the following letter, in the spirit of a concerned sister church, to the Gereformeerde Kerken.

Dear Brethren:

Greetings in Christ's name. As your sister church we wish to address to you certain questions and comments concerning recent theological developments in your communion. In so doing, we are concerned for you, that you may be faithful to the Reformed heritage the Lord has given you. We are

concerned for ourselves as well, since our sister-church relationship links our name to yours, and commits us to the free exchange of membership certificates and ministers. And we are concerned for that witness to the world which we share with each other.

We are concerned for soundness of doctrine in our sister communion. In keeping with the agreement we have made with each other it is proper that we should communicate that concern to you. While we recognize that there is some latitude in the interpretation of doctrinal and theological questions, we have a ready point of reference in the Reformed Confessions and in the Formula of Subscription by which we bind ourselves to support and maintain those confessions.

We recognize the fact that the confessions are open to amendment in the light of God's Word. This, we agree, is to be done by way of gravamen and mutual agreement among the churches of a given communion. In this respect, we would simply remind you that if a church makes alterations in one of its creeds or redefines the binding character of the creeds, contact ought to be made with those sister churches which subscribe to the same creeds. While the sister-church relation remains, what you do affects us.

We are also concerned with other questions which have not been the subject of gravamen proceedings. We are not in a position either to pass judgment or to render definitive advice on the questions. At this moment we would only ask you, our sister church, to consider seriously and prayerfully whether you are harboring within your ministry views which contradict or call into question basic emphases of the confessions.

These are matters of concern to us not only because they have affected our sister church, but because similar questions are part and parcel of the theological climate in which we ourselves are living. It is particularly important that nothing shall becloud that view of Scripture which is integral to Reformed theology. We believe without question all things contained in the sacred and canonical writings. This, we have always held together with you, is the spring from which all the points of doctrine in the confessions flow.

We recognize the complexity of the problems with which modern theological research deals in this area. As you may know, we have appointed a committee on Biblical Authority which is studying the problem involved in the recent theological developments mentioned above. This committee will report to next year's synod. However, in view of the clear creedal commitment which both you and we have made, and in view of the far-reaching consequences which a deviation on this score might lead to, we would seriously lay before you these questions: (1) Are the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland satisfied that theological positions which question the historicity of Adam and the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts are in harmony with the confessions, and compatible with subscription to them? (2) Are the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland prepared to take disciplinary action, if necessary, to ensure that the subscription to the creeds does not become a dead letter?

We urge you in love to deal seriously with this matter. We respectfully request you to respond to our communication, and to indicate to us the steps which are being taken to preserve the purity and unity of the Reformed community and its witness to the world. Your fraternal delegates to our synods have repeatedly assured us in recent years that it is your concern to discover what it means to be a church in our day. We can only endorse this objective and wish you well in such a search. In fact, we would join you in it, in the hope that we might learn from each other. But if in the process of seeking we should lose the power of the Word of God, we would

have done irreparable damage both to ourselves and to the world in which we are to witness to the mighty acts of God.

With Christian greetings,
Sincerely yours,

—*Adopted*

3. That synod declare this to be its answer to overture 6 and 45.

—*Adopted*

(Ecumenical Matters continued in Art. 167).

ARTICLE 100

The advisory committee, *Church Order I*, cf. Art. 45, Rev. J. C. Medendorp reporting, presents:

I. NATURE AND EXTENT OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

A. *Material*: Agenda Report 16. (See Supplement 16).

B. *Recommendation*: That synod take note of the work of the committee on the Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority and assure the committee of its continuing interest and prayers as it continues with its study and drafts its report.

—*Adopted*

(See Art. 171, VII, F, for committee personnel).

II. COMMITTEE ON BIBLE TRANSLATION

A. *Material*: Agenda Report 27 (See Supplement 27).

B. *Recommendation*: That Synod take note of the work of the committee on Bible Translation and assure the committee of its continuing interest and prayers as it continues with its study and drafts its report. (See Art. 171, VII, F, for committee personnel).

—*Adopted*

III. ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY VIA ARTICLE 7 OF THE CHURCH ORDER

A. *Material*: Agenda Report 4 (See Supplement 4).

B. *Observations*:

1. The Reformed Churches have always emphasized the need for a thorough theological training for its ministers of the Word and Sacraments. The completion of a satisfactory theological training shall be required for admission to the ministry of the Word. (Art. 6a)

2. Exceptional gifts must be present in the case of those who do not follow the normal way into the ministry. Yet, these exceptional gifts are not sufficient reason, *by themselves*, to warrant ordination to the ministry.

3. The issue of 'need' or 'urgent need' has given rise to differences of opinion. We believe that the need must be judged in the context of the whole denomination. The very fact that the synodical deputies are to be present at the examinations reveal the denominational character of the need.

C. *Recommendations*:

1. That Synod declare Article 7 inoperative for the ministry in the church while a Reformed theological training is available.

Grounds:

a. The emphasis should be placed on a well trained ministry.

b. "Urgent need" for other than well-trained ministers is impossible to establish while our own Theological Seminary is available for the training of ministers.