

The United Reformed Churches in North America
Synod Niagara 2022
Press Release #3
Wednesday, October 19, 2022

To begin its work at 8 A.M., Synod was called to order and Rev. James Sinke read from Genesis 28:10-22. He led in prayer and called the assembly to sing TPH #33:1,2.

Throughout the day, several fraternal delegates brought greetings from their churches, including Elder Marty Scott from the Reformed Church in the United States, Rev. Bruce Backensto from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and Dr. Pete Witten from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. These are joyful expressions of unity and brotherly cooperation in the gospel.

With gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the progress made in our relationship with churches abroad, Synod decided to move into *Ecumenical Fellowship* (Phase II) with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Latvia, the Reformed Church of Indonesia, and the Presbyterian Church of East Australia. These decisions will require the ratification of the churches.

Synod also decided to move into *Ecumenical Contact* (Phase I) with the Free Church of Scotland, the Sudanese Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches in Australia, the Christian Reformed Churches in Australia, and the Evangelical Reformed Church in India. Revs. Ameet Mohan and Anup Hiwale from the Evangelical Reformed Church in India then addressed Synod to recount their history of God's wonderful grace of growth among the churches, and His comfort through the sorrow of persecution – to God be the glory!

A study committee was established to provide pastoral advice to the churches on the degree to which viewing or hearing worship via broadcast is participation in corporate worship, and to use the Scriptures, our Confessions, and the Church Order to answer important questions about the broadcasting of worship.

Synod decided to amend Article 47 of the Church Order, "The Church's Mission Calling," so that the churches will seek the advice of classis in the sending and removing missionaries from a field. It also decided to amend Articles 55 and 56 of the Church Order so that the steps of church discipline are more clearly outlined. These decisions will also require the ratification of the churches. Overtures to amend the longer Form 1 for the Lord's Supper were not approved.

The URCNA website (urcna.org) will be redeveloped according to several general design principles that were adopted by Synod, indices of synodical decisions will be added to the website, and the Stated Clerk will be curating a list of pulpit vacancies in the URCNA. Synod requested the Joint Venture Board that oversees the *Trinity Psalter Hymnal* to facilitate the choral recording of the Psalms in order to assist the use of the TPH in the churches, our homes, and elsewhere.

The Missions Coordinator of the URCNA, Rev. Rich Bout, addressed Synod to provide a brief update on his work of helping the churches in their mission calling. His work includes the distribution of timely information about the blessings and needs of specific mission works, cultivating relationships with churches and assemblies beyond the URCNA and parachurch organizations, and providing counsel, pulpit supply, and training. He urged the churches to pray that the Lord would raise up a generation of missionaries for domestic and foreign fields, and to pray for our missionaries as they face intensifying pressures in their work. He highlighted the Cross-Cultural Missions Training (*ccmtmissions.com*), a concentrated month of training for 18-25 year old men and women scheduled for the spring of 2023.

For a good portion of the afternoon, the delegates were dismissed to their Advisory Committees so that their work could be completed and reports could be finalized.

Following the supper meal, a special evening focused on the mission works being done in the URCNA. Twenty-five missionaries and church planters gave presentations of God's work in various fields, and the evening was filled with prayer and rejoicing for the grace of the King who sends his witnesses to the nations.