

NEC TAMEN CONSUMEBATUR ♦ SUPREMO CONCÍLIO, CUIABÁ, 24 a 31 de JULHO de 2022

**COMISSÃO DE RELAÇÕES
INTER-ECLESIÁSTICAS
(CRIE/IPB) ♦ 2018-2022**

**RELATÓRIO QUADRIENAL
À XL REUNIÃO ORDINÁRIA
DO SUPREMO CONCÍLIO DA**



**IGREJA
PRESBITERIANA
DO BRASIL**

Revisado e
Aprovado

COMISSÃO DE RELAÇÕES INTER-ECLESIÁSTICAS (CRIE)

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LISTA DE NOMES, TRADUÇÕES E SIGLAS

Agência Presbiteriana de Missões Transculturais da IPB – **APMT**

Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken (Comissão de Relacionamento com Igrejas Estrangeiras da *Gereformeerde Kerken in Netherland [vrijgemaakt]*) – **BBK**

Centro Presbiteriano de Pós-graduação Andrew Jumper – **CPAJ**

Church of Scotland (Igreja da Escócia) – **COS**

Comissão de Relações Inter-Eclesiásticas da IPB – **CRIE**

Comissão Executiva do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – **CE-IPB**

Confraternidad Latinoamericana de Iglesias Reformadas – **CLIR**

Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Igreja Presbiteriana Evangélica, EUA) – **EPC**

Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland [vrijgemaakt] (Igrejas Reformadas na Holanda [libertadas]) – **GKV**

Grace Presbyterian Church (Igreja Presbiteriana da Graça – Nova Zelândia) – **GPC.**

Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana de México A. R. – **INPM**

Iglesia Presbiteriana de Chile – **IPCh**

Iglesia Presbiteriana en el Paraguay – **IPP**

Igreja Presbiteriana Conservadora do Brasil – **IPC**

Igreja Presbiteriana de Angola – **IPA**

Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique – **IPM**

Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – **IPB**

Igreja Presbiteriana Independente do Brasil – **IPIB**

Junta de Educação Teológica da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – **JET/IPB**

Junta Patrimonial Econômica e Financeira da IPB - **JPEF**

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (Igreja Presbiteriana Ortodoxa, EUA) – **OPC**

Plano Missionário Cooperativo da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – **PMC**

Presbyterian Church in America (Igreja Presbiteriana na América, EUA) – **PCA**

Presbyterian Church in Ireland (Igreja Presbiteriana na Irlanda)– **PCI**

Presbyterian Church of Australia (Igreja Presbiteriana na Austrália) – **PCAu**

Presbyterian Church of Canada (Igreja Presbiteriana do Canada) – **PCC**

Presbyterian Church of Korea [TongHap] (Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia) – **PCKt**

Presbyterian Church of Korea [HapTong] (Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia) – **PCKh**

Reformed Churches in South Africa (Gereformeerde Kerk Zuid Africa) – **RCSA / GKZA**

Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – **SC/IPB**

World Reformed Fellowship (Fraternidade Reformada Mundial) – **WRF** – (... -AL – América Latina)

Composição: No quadriênio 2018-2022, a Comissão de Relações Inter-Eclesiásticas (CRIE) do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (SC/IPB) foi composta pelos seguintes membros: Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, Pb. Francisco Solano Portela Neto, Pb. Adonias Costa da Silveira; e pelos membros natos: O Secretário Executivo, Rev. Juarez Marcondes Filho e o Presidente do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, Rev. Roberto Brasileiro Silva. Como suplentes, tivemos Rev. Flávio Américo Dantas de Carvalho (RN); Rev. Tarcízio José de Carvalho (MA); e o Pb. Cláudio Manoel Ferreira Martins (PR).

Atividades e a pandemia: O cumprimento das atividades da CRIE, neste período, foi grandemente restringido pelas circunstâncias advindas da pandemia (COVID-19), que assolou o mundo. Ainda assim, conseguimos realizar as visitas programadas até o ano de 2019, mais algumas nos anos seguintes e manter os contatos com diversas denominações e organismos, aprofundando relacionamentos eclesiais e construindo outros, procurando firmar a crescente reputação internacional da IPB, objetivando a Glória de Deus em suas interações. Dezesesseis (16) viagens de representação foram realizadas a igrejas e instituições no continente americano, na África, Europa, Ásia e Oceania – um número menor, quando comparado ao quadriênio anterior (30 viagens em 2014-2018). A CRIE recebeu e acompanhou 19 delegados de denominações estrangeiras no Supremo Concílio – 2018, e fez-se representada por delegados oficiais na Assembleia Geral e nas Reuniões da Diretoria da Fraternidade Reformada Mundial (WRF), realizadas na Indonésia, em 2019.

Destaques: Alegremo-nos em Deus não apenas nos aspectos intangíveis das relações com Igrejas reformadas ao redor do mundo, mas também com frutos concretos, dentre os quais apresentamos os seguintes **destaques (detalhes nas páginas seguintes e nos ANEXOS a este Relatório):**

- O posicionamento da IPB, feito por intermédio da CRIE, primeiramente, seguindo decisão do SC/IPB-2018 sobre a GKV (Igrejas Reformadas da Holanda – Libertadas), em função da adoção de ordenação feminina por aquela denominação. Subsequentemente ao SC/IPB-2018, por expediente à Bible Presbyterian Church, pela forma desastrada e desrespeitosa com que interpelaram decisões do SC/IPB-2018, levando, igualmente, a uma reformulação dos nossos relacionamentos para patamar inferior.
- O crescimento da respeitabilidade da IPB, como denominação que integra a liderança de ponta do segmento reformado do mundo evangélico, sendo a sua respeitabilidade alvo de diversos testemunhos recebidos nas interações que os membros da CRIE têm mantido em seus contatos oficiais e extraoficiais com várias denominações ao redor do mundo. A IPB é vista, hoje, como denominação que contribui de várias maneiras para o avanço do Reino, e não como um grupo do “terceiro mundo”, que comparece sempre com solicitações monetárias. Essa liderança já havia sido substanciada pela efetivação do Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes como executivo principal (CEO) da WRF – *World Reformed Fellowship*, da qual a IPB é membro fundador (juntamente com a PCA e a INPM – a Igreja Nacional Presbiteriana do México, em 1994). A WRF tem 73 membros denominacionais (em 30 países), 54 membros congregacionais (em 26 países), 114 membros organizacionais (em 30 países), e 374 membros individuais (em 53 países). Nessas quatro categorias a WRF abrange pelo menos 61 nações. Seu Conselho Deliberativo é composto de 32 membros, 6 dos quais são oficiais da IPB. Em fevereiro de 2020, o Rev. Davi Charles passou a dedicar-se à WRF em tempo integral.
- Essa influência tem sido sentida, em adição, pelos continuados convites e participações de ponta dos nossos teólogos como **palestrantes** em conferências internacionais de alto nível, entre as quais relacionamos as palestras proferidas pelo Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes. Em maio de 2019, ministrou

cursos e falou na formatura no Seminário Presbiteriano em Dehradun (Índia); em setembro de 2019, na Austrália (*Presbyterian Church of Australia – PCAu* – pregando nas igrejas: *Cornerstone Congregation* e *Drummoyne Presbyterian Church*) e proferindo palestra no *Christ College*, em Sydney. O Pb. Solano Portela pregou na *Warringah Christian Church* (PCAu), em setembro de 2019 e proferiu conferência em Queenstown, na Nova Zelândia, em outubro de 2019.

- Um crescente entendimento dos relacionamentos internacionais e ações de cooperação com a APMT, nos campos missionários. Exemplo disso foi a participação conjunta com APMT na visita à Nova Zelândia, em outubro de 2019, participando da Assembleia Geral da *Grace Presbyterian Church*, que enviou representantes ao SC/IPB-2018 e, nesta Assembleia Geral formalizou solicitação de aprofundamento do relacionamento com a IPB.
- A continuidade de **relações fraternas** formais (Nível 3) de âmbito denominacional que a IPB tem com as seguintes denominações: Igreja Presbiteriana na América (*Presbyterian Church in America – PCA* – EUA); Igreja Presbiteriana Evangélica (*Evangelical Presbyterian Church – EPC* – EUA); Igrejas Reformadas da África do Sul (**RCSA-GKZA**: *Reformed Churches in South Africa*); Igreja Nacional Presbiteriana do México (*Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana en Mexico – INPM*); Igreja Presbiteriana Ortodoxa (*Orthodox Presbyterian Church – OPC* – EUA). Além dessas o progresso no aprofundamento do relacionamento com a Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia – Hap-Tong (ou Hap-Dong – *Presbyterian Church of Korea – PCKh*).

Além desses aspectos de relacionamentos eclesiais, a CRIE procurou estruturar suas atividades, apresentando um planejamento detalhado de suas viagens à JPEF-IPB e à CE-IPB, a cada ano, obtendo aprovação prévia ao planejamento e, concretamente:

- Seguiu o delineado para as áreas de atividades da CRIE-IPB (vide pgs. 09 e 10)
- Manteve-se dentro dos parâmetros das diretrizes básicas para que as despesas relacionadas com as atividades da CRIE, cobertas pela Tesouraria da IPB, fossem restritas a:
 1. Passagens aéreas referentes aos percursos necessários ao atendimento dos eventos.
 2. Eventual aluguel de veículo, quando necessário ao deslocamento local.
 3. Despesas relacionadas com hospedagem e alimentação pessoal, quando não supridas pelos hospedeiros, ou quando em trânsito.
 4. Verba de representação, para pagamento de eventual refeição de cortesia com os hospedeiros ou visitados.
 5. Outras despesas razoáveis, devidamente justificadas, excluindo-se itens de uso pessoal.

As viagens programadas pela CRIE seguiram a prática geral de representatividade de pelo menos dois membros. Em alguns dos casos, foram aproveitadas datas nas quais alguns dos membros da CRIE já se encontravam nos países visitados, reduzindo assim os custos de passagens; ou duas ou mais visitas foram consolidadas em uma só viagem. Eventuais acompanhamentos, nas viagens, por cônjuges, foram objeto de despesas pessoais, pelo membro da CRIE, sem ônus à IPB.

Louvamos a Deus, agradecendo o privilégio que ele nos deu de servi-lo nesta função durante os últimos anos. Olhamos igualmente com gratidão pela forma como o bondoso Deus tem permitido que a influência da IPB se alastre por tantas terras, instituições e denominações. Durante este quadriênio 2018-2022, Deus nos ensinou muitas coisas: em meio às adversidades, barreiras, tribulações e vidas ceifadas, trazidas pela pandemia – a Igreja de Cristo continuou avançando. A IPB é parte desse avanço e a CRIE

é parte da IPB. Continuamos cheios de esperança para aquilo que Deus ainda há de fazer na nossa denominação e mediante a IPB em seu Reino.

Em oração pelas misericórdias divinas às nossas pessoas, ao nosso trabalho, à nossa denominação e ao nosso país, subscrevemo-nos, Em Cristo Jesus,



Davi Charles Gomes
Presidente da CRIE/IPB



Solano Portela
Secretário da CRIE/IPB

INTRODUÇÃO E APRESENTAÇÃO – ESTRUTURA E ÁREAS DE ATIVIDADES

2

Desde a CRIE 2006-2010 que houve uma percepção, entre os seus membros, da necessidade de fortalecimento nas suas áreas de abrangência, tanto no reengajamento com igrejas com as quais já existiam convênios firmados, como no fortalecimento e estabelecimento de novas relações estratégicas. Ações harmônicas com essa visão foram empreendidas pela CRIE 2010-2014, e, na sequência, pelas CRIE 2014-2018 e 2018-2022. Contatos com igrejas de grande afinidade doutrinária com a IPB foram renovados e visitas de representação para a solidificação de laços eclesiais produtivos foram intensificadas.

O propósito dessas “*quatro CRIEs*” tem sido o de reparar o distanciamento da IPB com algumas denominações com as quais já havia relacionamento, ou, ao menos, esfriamento das relações, mantendo-nos dentro dos parâmetros estabelecidos no Regimento Interno da CRIE (**ANEXO 01**).

A CRIE 2018-2022 continuou no trajeto e abordagem já incorporados nas CRIEs anteriores, sobre a natureza dos relacionamentos com denominações estrangeiras. Permanecemos deixando ao largo a antiga tendência de ver relacionamentos eclesiais da perspectiva **daquilo que se pode receber e substituímos essa postura pelo anseio de relações bilaterais caracterizadas pelo dar e receber**, apresentando **uma IPB sempre pronta a cooperar**. Continuamos constatando que a IPB, a cada ano, é crescentemente reconhecida como uma nova liderança que desponta nos círculos das igrejas reformadas em várias partes do mundo, especialmente entre as igrejas presbiterianas e reformadas de confissão mais conservadora e nas entidades internacionais de semelhante linha. Isso significa que nossa teologia e prática, tem encontrado eco internacional, comprovado, também, pelas cartas e solicitações de relacionamento eclesial que temos recebido. Procuramos, também, manter distância de alguns círculos caracteristicamente sectários, ainda que reformados em suas declarações teológicas e sem interações fraternas com círculos reconhecidamente liberais.

Foi dada continuidade a um relacionamento próximo com a *Evangelical Presbyterian Church* (EPC), que tem tantos laços históricos com a IPB, principalmente no apoio à formação de vários docentes do Centro Presbiteriano de Pós-graduação Andrew Jumper. Intensificamos os relacionamentos fraternos com a *Presbyterian Church in America* (PCA); e firmamos igual relacionamento (Nível 3) com a Igreja Nacional Presbiteriana do México (*Iglesia Nacional Presbiteriana en Mexico* – **INPM**); com a *Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (OPC), denominação com intensas ligações teológicas com a IPB e à qual está ligado o Seminário Presbiteriano Westminster, que formou vários dos nossos docentes do CPAJ; e com as Igrejas Reformadas na África do Sul (*Reformed Churches in South Africa, ou Gereformeerde Kerk Zuid Africa* – RCSA/GKZA), desenvolvendo intensas atividades bilaterais, teológicas e educacionais, nos dois países. Observamos com cuidado os desenvolvimentos doutrinários e as resoluções conciliares das Igrejas Reformadas Libertadas, da Holanda (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Netherland [Vrijgemaakt]* – GKV), pontuando sempre nossa posição e com admoestações fraternas, verificando, com tristeza, que apesar dos bons acordos de cooperação que mantemos com projetos de plantação de igrejas e no aspecto educacional um distanciamento e retrocesso no Relacionamento Fraternal com a GKV se apresentou como inevitável, por decisão do SC/IPB-2018, tratado com aquela denominação nos meses seguintes. Em paralelo, novos contatos e relacionamentos promissores foram feitos, entre esses anotamos o progresso no aprofundamento do relacionamento com a Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia – Hap-Tong (ou Hap-Dong – *Presbyterian Church of Korea* – **PCKh**).

Durante o quadriênio 2018-2022 ficamos mais convencidos que servimos a causa do Reino de Deus quando desenvolvemos as relações inter-eclesiais da IPB, cuidando e fortalecendo essas, cumprindo também a competência constitucional do Supremo Concílio: “colaborar, no que julgar oportuno, com entidades eclesiais, dentro ou fora do país, para o desenvolvimento do reino de Deus, desde que não seja ferida a ortodoxia presbiteriana” (CI-IPB, Cap. V, seção 5ª, artigo 97: “m”). Acreditamos que esse é um dos verdadeiros alvos cruciais de uma compreensão bíblica e reformada das relações com outras partes fiéis do corpo de Cristo. Registramos com apreço a aprovação dos relatórios da CRIE para os anos de 2018, 2019 e 2020 pela Comissão Executiva do Supremo Concílio, bem como de nossas contas pela

JPEF da IPB. Obedecendo à nova determinação oriunda do SC/IPB, que visa uma racionalização das análises e eliminação de redundâncias, apresentamos agora, em 2022, este Relatório Quadrienal ao XL Supremo Concílio/IPB-2022, pela via de sua Secretaria Executiva, conforme explicitado na convocação ao SC/IPB-2022.

Submetemos, portanto, este nosso relatório, em humilde dependência de Deus, plenamente conscientes do quanto ainda há por se fazer. Certos de que, mediante a maravilhosa graça de Cristo, algum fruto precioso há de resultar de nossos esforços, ainda que falhos, suplicamos a sua aprovação e atenção às recomendações aqui contidas, que, **pedimos, devem ser formalmente explicitadas nas resoluções do nosso Concílio Maior.**



Davi Charles Gomes
Presidente da CRIE/IPB



Solano Portela
Secretário da CRIE/IPB

1. COMPOSIÇÃO:

São membros da CRIE eleitos pelo XXXIX SC/IPB: Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, Pb. Adonias Costa da Silveira e Pb. Francisco Solano Portela Neto; e os membros natos: Rev. Juarez Marcondes Filho e Rev. Roberto Brasileiro Silva, respectivamente, Secretário Executivo e Presidente do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil. Segue a composição da CRIE, indicando os respectivos cargos da diretoria eleita para o biênio 2018-2020 e reeleita para o biênio 2020-2022:

1.1. MEMBROS NATOS E INDICADOS PELO SUPREMO CONCÍLIO 2018:



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles
Gomes - Presidente



Rev. Roberto Brasileiro Silva
Presidente do Supremo
Concílio da
Igreja Presbiteriana
do Brasil – Membro Nato e
Vice-Presidente



Pb. Solano Portela
Secretário



Pb. Dr. Adonias Costa
da Silveira



Rev. Juarez Marcondes Filho
Secretário Executivo
Da IPB – Membro Nato

1.2 SUPLENTES:

Rev. Flávio Américo Dantas de Carvalho (RN)

Rev. Tarcízio José de Carvalho (MA)

Pb. Cláudio Manoel Ferreira Martins (PR)

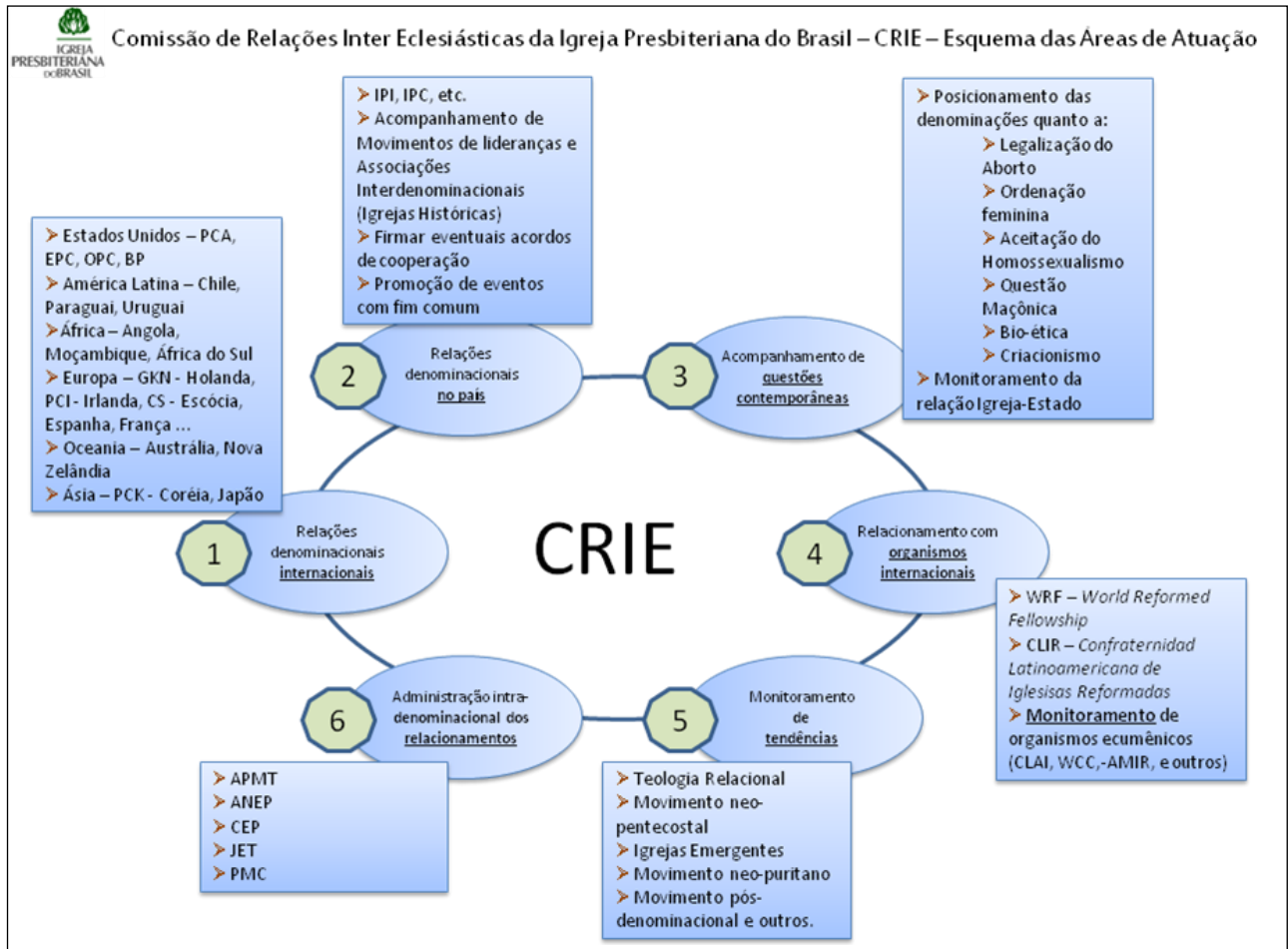
2. ÁREAS DE ATUAÇÃO DA CRIE:

DEFINIÇÕES E DIAGRAMA:

A CRIE, considerando o seu regimento e o escopo de suas atividades definidas pelo Supremo Concílio da IPB em diversos documentos, considera que sua atuação compreende seis áreas:

1. **Relações denominacionais internacionais.**
2. **Relações denominacionais no país.**
3. **Acompanhamento de questões contemporâneas.**
4. **Relacionamentos com organismos internacionais.**
5. **Monitoramento de tendências.**
6. **Administração intra-denominacional dos relacionamentos.**

Tais áreas são diagramadas abaixo e essa esquematização sempre compôs e integrou nossos relatórios às Comissões Executivas do SC/IPB, a cada ano:



A atuação em algumas dessas áreas ainda merece desenvolvimento adicional. A CRIE necessita, também, a elaboração de um site de Relacionamentos Eclesiásticos da IPB, ou de páginas abrigadas no site da IPB, que contenham informações relacionadas com as áreas acima, em várias línguas, sendo básicas o português, inglês e espanhol, algo que poderá ser realizado pela CRIE 2022-2026.

ATIVIDADES DA CRIE DURANTE O QUADRIÊNIO 2018/2022

3

Nesta seção, apresentamos nossas atividades principais neste quadriênio 2018/2022, sequencialmente, ano a ano. Cientes de que a CRIE é uma Comissão com poucos membros, procuramos tratar da maioria dos assuntos por comunicação eletrônica, evitando, concomitantemente, gastos de deslocamento e dificuldades de agendamento nas sacrificadas agendas do presidente do Supremo Concílio da IPB e do Secretário Executivo da denominação. Ainda assim, assuntos mais urgentes foram presencialmente tratados entre o presidente e o secretário e, paralelamente veiculados aos demais membros, de tal forma que os contatos e correspondências inter-eclesiais se processaram sem solução de continuidade. A prática da CRIE em anos pré COVID-19 projetava o encontro em 2 a 3 reuniões plenárias presenciais a cada ano, planos esses, obviamente modificados pela conjuntura instalada pela pandemia. Seguem registros pertinentes a cada ano.

2018

3.1.1 **DESTAQUES:** Considerando a realização do XXXIX Supremo Concílio da IPB, as representações e reuniões foram em número mais reduzido. A maioria das despesas foi realizada com delegados estrangeiros convidados ao SC. Destacamos alguns pontos e decisões de nossas interações em 2018. A eleição da diretoria da CRIE foi realizada dentro do período do SC/IPB-2018, conforme dados já colocados na página 09 deste relatório.

- **Participação em Concílios Maiores de Denominações:** – Conforme dados mais específicos colocados no item 3, deste Relatório, a CRIE enviou representantes a 4 concílios maiores, ou Assembleias Gerais de denominações, ou Instituições, com as quais temos relacionamentos: ao Sínodo Geral das Igrejas Reformadas na África do SUL (GKSA/RCSA), em janeiro; à Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), em junho; à Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana (Hap Tong), em setembro; e à Assembleia Geral da Confederación Latinoamericana de Iglésias Reformadas (CLIR), em outubro.
- **Resposta a Consultas:** A CRIE foi acionada algumas vezes para elucidar relacionamentos inter-eclesiais, por órgãos ou autarquias da IPB, no sentido de manter uma uniformidade de bases doutrinárias em eventuais parcerias. Por exemplo, em janeiro de 2018 respondeu consulta da JURET-NO/NE, copiando a JET, sobre qual denominação, na Coreia, a IPB mantinha relacionamento (é a Hap Tong), uma vez que uma igreja coreana (a Tong Hap) oferecia parceria com o Seminário Presbiteriano do Nordeste (Teresina, PI). Em setembro, voltou ao mesmo assunto, reafirmando a mesma posição e orientações anteriormente prestadas. Em 26 de agosto enviou resposta à consulta realizada pela denominação irmã PCA sobre o Rev. Pedro Lino, que atualmente colabora com a Igreja Christ The King, em Boston, Estados Unidos.
- **Pedidos de Relacionamentos:** A CRIE respondeu a diversos pedidos de parceria de denominações, dando andamento àqueles que teriam possibilidade de se constituir vínculos mais sólidos. Entre as solicitações recebidas, registramos a da Aashish Presbyterian Ministries (NEPAL – janeiro de 2018); a da Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Nova Zelândia), em agosto de 2018.
- **Correspondências.** Entre as principais correspondências emitidas pela CRIE em 2018, temos as cartas-convite enviadas aos delegados do estrangeiro de diversas denominações, das quais, responderam positivamente os relacionados no ponto seguinte. A CRIE emitiu, também, uma resposta às Igrejas Reformadas na Holanda – Libertadas (GKV), que através de seu braço de

relacionamento ecumênico (BBK) convidou (**ANEXO 2**) a IPB, em maio, para participação de uma “Conferência Hermenêutica Internacional”, e até para sediá-la, para discutir ordenação feminina e outros assuntos contemporâneos, como o homossexualismo – a CRIE declinou do convite pelas razões expressas no **ANEXO 3**. Em agosto de 2018, a CRIE enviou carta-resposta à correspondência da Bible Presbyterian Church (**ANEXOS 4 a 7**), divulgada em mídia social, esclarecendo a posição da IPB e refutando ataques indevidos. Foram enviadas cartas de agradecimento às denominações irmãs, pelo envio de delegados ao Supremo Concílio, entre as quais anexamos a enviada à OPC, como amostra (**ANEXO 8**). Em novembro de 2018 a secretaria da CRIE escreveu diversas cartas e fez “a ponte” entre pastores da **OPC** e igrejas locais da IPB em Guarapuava, no sentido de auxiliar um imigrante haitiano que se encontrava em dificuldades, naquela região.

- **Convidados à XXXIX Reunião do Supremo Concílio da IPB – 2018.** Os seguintes convidados estrangeiros estiveram presentes à reunião do Supremo Concílio 2018. Estes 18 convidados foram devidamente recepcionados pelos membros da CRIE e por voluntários que se colocaram à disposição para acompanhá-los durante o Concílio. Todos apresentaram suas saudações e indicaram o agradecimento e satisfação pela oportunidade. A CRIE cobriu apenas o deslocamento do representante do Timor Leste, Rev. Carlos Marçal. A IPB concedeu alojamento e alimentação a todos, durante os dias das reuniões.

No.	Nome	Denominação
1	Rev. Kye Hun, Chon	Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
2	Rev. Sang-don, Lee	Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
3	Pb. Giyoung Seo	Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
4	Pb. Soo Yong Choi	Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
5	Rev. Jong Gu Lim	Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
6	Rev. Young Tyu Ko	IPB/Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia – Hap Tong
7	Rev. Dhruva Adhikari	Igreja Presbiteriana no Nepal
8	Rev. Mahendra Bhattarai	Igreja Presbiteriana no Nepal
9	Rev. Richard Eyre	Igreja Presbiteriana da Nova Zelândia – Grace
10	Rev. David John Bayne	Igreja Presbiteriana da Nova Zelândia – Grace
11	Rev. João Petrecelli	Missionário Presbiteriano na Nova Zelândia
12	Rev. Jack Sawyer	Orthodox Presbyterian Church
13	Rev. Robert Norris	World Reformed Fellowship – WRF
14	Rev. Dean Weaver	Evangelical Presbyterian Church
15	Rev. Carlos Marçal	Igreja Presbiteriana no Timor Leste
16	Rev. Farouk Badeel Hammo	Igreja Presbiteriana no Iraque
17	Rev. Antonio Bento	Igreja Presbiteriana de Angola
18	Rev. Theodore Havinga	Igrejas Reformadas da Holanda – Libertadas
19	Rev. Pieter Koenraad Meijer	Igrejas Reformadas da Holanda – Libertadas

Além dos integrantes da CRIE, os voluntários que acompanharam esses visitantes, e traduziram para eles, foram: Rev. Valdeci da Silva Santos, Rev. Jonatas Abdias de Macedo, Rev. Enoch Nascimento, Rev. Ronaldo Vasconcelos, Pb. Everton Nascimento; Sras. Elizabeth Zekveld Portela e Sunamita Nascimento.

- **Visita Recebida.** Além das visitas dos Delegados ao Supremo Concílio 2018, acima delineadas, recebemos a visita do Rev. David Burke, da Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCAu), de 04 a 09 de novembro de 2018. Além de contatos com a CRIE, ele visitou a Casa Editora Presbiteriana, a APMT e diversas Igrejas da IPB.
- **Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão (PCI)** – em 08.09.2018 a CRIE/IPB recebeu convite para participação na Assembleia Geral da PCJ, em 23 e 24 de novembro de 2018. Por medida de economia, solicitamos ao Rev. Daniel Gomes, que se encontra em missão ao Japão, pela APMT, para que fossemos representados naquela ocasião importante de uma denominação que tem acolhido os nossos missionários de maneira tão fraterna.

3.1.2 **REPRESENTAÇÕES E VIAGENS 2018 (4)**

Em função do Supremo Concílio da IPB – 2018, as viagens de representação da CRIE foram reduzidas, dando-se prioridade ao convite e recepção aos delegados estrangeiros para a reunião do Supremo Concílio. Ainda assim, ocorreram as seguintes viagens:

- **09 a 11 de janeiro** – Participação do Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes no Sínodo Geral das Igrejas Reformadas da África do Sul, em Potchefstroom, como representante da IPB. Na ocasião, o Rev. Davi Charles pode testemunhar que a denominação manteve firme as resoluções passadas de rejeitar a ordenação feminina, sendo que a IPB, conforme relatórios anteriores da CRIE, teve papel preponderante nessas decisões, através de depoimentos e documentos apresentados a essa denominação coirmã.
- **09 a 12 de junho** – Participação da Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), em Wheaton, Illinois, EUA, com representação da CRIE-IPB pelo Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes e Pb. Solano Portela.
- **09 a 13 de setembro** – Participação na Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana (Hap Tong), em Seul, Coréia do Sul. Estiveram na Assembleia o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Rev. Augustus Lopes Nicodemus, vice-presidente do Supremo Concílio da IPB, em função da impossibilidade de ida do Rev. Roberto Brasileiro, como originalmente planejado.
- **29 de outubro a 01 de novembro** – Representação da CRIE/IPB na Assembleia Geral da CLIR (Confederação Latino-Americana de Igreja Reformadas), pelo Rev. Augustus Nicodemus, vice-presidente do Supremo Concílio da IPB, devido à impossibilidade de enviar outro representante da CRIE, e aproveitando que o Rev. Augustus estava convidado a pregar o sermão de abertura neste evento, que foi realizado na Cidade do México.

3.1.3 **CONTAS DA CRIE – 2018.**

Na CE-SC/IPB, 2019 foram examinadas as contas da CRIE, pela JPEF, e aprovadas. A JPEF também aprovou o orçamento para 2019 no valor de R\$213.000,00.

2019

- 3.2.1 **DESTAQUES:** A CRIE deu andamento às suas obrigações de manter e iniciar relacionamentos inter-eclesiais, de interesse da IPB. Continuou visando a economia de despesas de viagem e tratou da maioria das questões por correio eletrônico. Destacamos alguns pontos e decisões de nossas interações em 2019:

- **Participação em Concílios Maiores de Denominações:** A CRIE enviou representantes a 5 concílios maiores, ou Assembleias Gerais de denominações, ou Instituições, com as quais temos relacionamentos: à Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), de 5 a 9 de junho; à Assembleia Geral da (EPC), de 18 a 21 de junho; à Assembleia Geral da Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), de 25 a 28 de junho – todas essas nos Estados Unidos da América do Norte. À Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana (Hap Tong), em 24 a 26 de setembro, em Seul; e à Assembleia Geral da Grace Presbyterian Church (GPCNZ) da Nova Zelândia, de 7 a 9 de outubro. A CRIE recebeu convite para participação na Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão (PCJ), em 23 e 24 de novembro de 2018. Mais uma vez, foi feita a solicitação ao Rev. Daniel Gomes, que se encontra em missão ao Japão, pela APMT, para que a CRIE/IPB fosse representada naquela ocasião.
- **Assembleia Geral da *World Reformed Fellowship* e em eventos desta Fraternidade, da qual a IPB faz parte:** Três representantes da CRIE/IPB estiveram em Jakarta, Indonésia, de 7 a 12 de agosto de 2019, na AGO da WRF, realizada concomitantemente com conferências que também contaram com participação de representantes da IPB. De 28 de setembro a 02 de outubro de 2019, diversas reuniões relacionadas com a WRF foram realizadas na cidade de Sydney, Austrália, com a participação de 2 representantes da CRIE/IPB, culminando com uma conferência realizada pelo presidente da CRIE, naquela cidade.
- **Reuniões Próprias da Comissão e com outros órgãos da IPB** – A CRIE realizou reuniões virtuais e trocas de e-mails entre seus membros para tratar de assuntos de menor peso, ao longo de 2019. Duas reuniões presenciais foram realizadas em 2019. A primeira, em 12.03.2019, onde foi revisada e validada a pauta de ações para 2019, além de definições relacionadas com correspondências que deveriam ser emitidas para denominações do relacionamento da IPB. A segunda, em 31.07.2019, na qual, além das decisões de praxe no meio do ano, recebeu representantes da Igreja Presbiteriana do Chile, para ouvir gravame contra a I. P. de Pinheiros, assunto que é tratado mais à frente, neste relatório, quando descrevermos o relacionamento com o Igreja Presbiteriana do Chile. Em **27.06.2019**, representantes da CRIE reuniram-se com a **APMT** e **JET**, seguindo determinação da CE/SC-2019, para tratar da “*Proposta de Filosofia de Trabalho e Plantação de Igrejas Autóctones*”, em Campinas, SP – o pronunciamento da CRIE/IPB foi enviado à CE-SC/IPB-2020 (**ANEXO 29**).
- **Pedido de parceria/relacionamento oficial de denominação.** Especificamente, registramos o ofício da Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (Nova Zelândia), como decisão de sua AGO supracitada (**ANEXO 09**), solicitando o estabelecimento de Relacionamento Correspondente (Nível 2), que foi encaminhado à CE-SC/IPB-2020.
- **Correspondências relevantes emitidas e recebidas.** (1) Carta-convite de igreja Presbiteriana na Nova Zelândia (Grace Presbyterian Church), de 01.02.2019 (**ANEXO 10**), para participação na Assembleia Geral, a ocorrer em outubro de 2019. (2) Cópia de carta da Igreja Presbiteriana Conservadora endereçada à Secretaria Executiva da IPB, datada de 16.04.2019 (**ANEXO 11**), anexando carta prévia de 04.03.2018, ao SC/IPB-2018, com reclamações contra a Igreja Presbiteriana de Pinheiros, encarecendo resposta. Estas cartas foram referidas ao Secretário Executivo da IPB, que deu seguimento ao assunto pelos canais devidos. (3) Carta recebida do Presbitério de Pinheiros, datada de 05.06.2019 (**ANEXO 12**), informando à CRIE/IPB sobre o recebimento da Igreja Presbiteriana Cristo Mi Pastor, nesse Presbitério, após a separação desta Igreja da denominação – Igreja Presbiteriana do Chile, em 02.12.2018 (Assunto tratado na seção 6, item 2 deste relatório, abaixo). (4) Carta da Igreja Presbiteriana do Chile (IPC), em 31.07.2019, com reclamações contra o Presbitério de Pinheiros, exatamente sobre o assunto prévio, apresentando contrarrazões às cartas que estavam sendo circuladas, oriundas da Igreja Cristo Mi Pastor. Esta correspondência também foi passada às mãos do Secretário Executivo da IPB, por ser matéria que deveria ser tratada na CE-SC/IPB-2020, por estar sob a égide da egrégia Comissão Executiva (A CE-2020 foi cancelada em 23.04.2020 em função da situação crescente de contágio do COVID-19). (5) Carta da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão (IPJ), de

11.07.2019, convidando para a Assembleia Geral da denominação (**ANEXO 13**). (6) Considerando o convite recebido (**ANEXO 14**) das Igrejas Reformadas da Holanda – Libertadas (GKv), para participação no Sínodo Geral, cujas reuniões para delegados estrangeiros ocorreriam no início de 2020 (07 a 11 de janeiro) a CRIE-IPB, a CRIE emitiu uma carta em 20.12.2019 (**ANEXO 15**), confirmando a ida do Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, e fazendo referência ao momento delicado de relacionamento entre a IPB e a GKv (mais detalhes na seção onde descrevemos o *status* do relacionamento com esta denominação, mais à frente, neste relatório).

- **Nota triste de pesar:** Em 14 de agosto de 2019 recebemos a triste notícia que o Rev. Jack Sawyer, da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), que havia estado no Supremo Concílio IPB-2018, apoiador e incentivador perene da IPB, na qualidade de Secretário Executivo da CEIR (a CRIE da OPC), e que sempre recebeu todos os representantes da IPB com grande deferência e amor cristão, se suicidara naquela mesma data. Havíamos estranhado não o encontrar na AGO da OPC, dois meses antes (Pbs. Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela). Ele atravessava um quadro depressivo intenso, mas a notícia pegou todos da CRIE de surpresa e parece ser mais uma ocorrência nesta estranha tendência de suicídio de pastores, que vem assolando o mundo evangélico. O Rev. Jack Sawyer era pastor da Pineville Presbyterian Church (OPC), na cidade de mesmo nome, no estado da Louisiana. Deixou esposa e dois filhos casados.

3.2.2 **REPRESENTAÇÕES E VIAGENS EM 2019 (9):**

Em 2019 foram realizadas as viagens a seguir relacionadas, muitas dessas programadas em anos anteriores, mas cuja realização não havia sido possível:

- **06 a 12 de maio** – Participação do Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes na ministração de cursos e na formatura do Seminário Presbiteriano em Dehradun, na Índia, representando a IPB. Nossa denominação tem mantido contato com esta Instituição Teológica de Ensino há vários anos e tanto ela, como seus Diretores, Revs. Hirale Solanki e Mathew Ebenezer, são membros da World Reformed Fellowship. São irmãos que fazem um grande trabalho para o Reino, nesse país, onde os cristãos não chegam a 2% da população, e precisam desse apoio docente e de comunhão cristã.
- **05 a 09 de junho** – Participação da Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), em Dallas, Texas, EUA, com representação da CRIE-IPB pelos Pbs. Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela.
- **18 a 21 de junho** – Participação da Assembleia Geral da Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), em Dallas, Texas, EUA, com representação da CRIE-IPB pelo Rev. Davi Charles Gomes. O Rev. Roberto Brasileiro, inicialmente programado a se fazer presente, não pode realizar a viagem na data especificada.
- **25 a 28 de junho** – Participação da Assembleia Geral da Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), em Denver, Colorado, EUA, com representação da CRIE-IPB pelos Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, conjugando a viagem com a representação acima (à EPC).
- **05 a 12 de agosto** – Participação da Assembleia Geral da World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), em Jakarta, Indonésia, com representação da CRIE-IPB pelo Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e pelos Pbs. Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela. Ressalte-se que esta Assembleia Geral ocorreu em paralelo a uma Conferência Internacional, denominada “Stormy Seas” (Mares Revoltos), que analisou a situação da igreja nos dias sombrios da atualidade. Entre os palestrantes internacionais, destaque para os Drs. Davi Charles Gomes e Mauro Meister, do Centro Presbiteriano de Pós-Graduação Andrew Jumper, ressaltando o papel internacional da IPB.
- **24 a 26 de setembro** – Participação na Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana Coreana (Hap Tong), em Seul, Coreia do Sul. Representando a CRIE/IPB, viajaram os Revs. Roberto Brasileiro e Davi Charles Gomes. A Comissão Executiva-2020 foi solicitada a se pronunciar sobre a denominação, mas ela foi cancelada em 23.04.2020 em função da situação crescente de contágio do COVID-19.

- **24 de setembro a 04 de outubro** – Austrália: Esta viagem concretizou visita e contatos de representação, que vinham sendo programados há anos, mas sempre adiados, às duas denominações australianas: a PCAu (Presbyterian Church in Australia) e a WPC (Westminster Presbyterian Church). Representaram a CRIE/IPB o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Pb. Solano Portela. O Pb. Solano chegou antes e pregou na Warringah Christian Church (PCAu), encontrou-se com brasileiros que estão adorando nas igrejas presbiterianas. O Rev. Davi Charles, ainda se encontrava na Coreia, na AGO da Igreja Hap Tong, e veio de lá para Sydney no dia 27 de setembro. Foi realizada uma visita oficial ao Rev. Robert Benn, ex-moderador da PCAu e integrante do Conselho Deliberativo da WRF, que se encontra batalhando um grave caso de câncer, já alastrado a diversos órgãos – visita essa que foi muito apreciada, demonstrando o espírito de solidariedade da IPB. O Rev. Davi Charles pregou nas igrejas Cornerstone Congregation e na Drummoyne Presbyterian Church, em Sydney e proferiu palestra nas conferências anuais do Christ College – o seminário da PCAu, e que tem servido, também, a WPC. O Pb. Solano encontrou-se com representantes da WPC, em Sydney (Richard Goodrich e James Jung), designados pelo Moderador da WPC, Simon Bruchem, que já esteve na CE-SC/IPB-2013. O Rev. Simon reside na **sede** da denominação, em Perth (a 3.934 Km de Sydney, onde estavam os representantes da CRIE). Na sequência, várias reuniões relacionadas com a WRF foram realizadas: além de com a PCAu, no Moore Theological College (Anglicano, com Simon Gillham e Malcolm Richards, que lideram as relações externas) e com o Arcebispo Anglicano Glenn Davies – um expoente conservador no seio do anglicanismo, terminando com uma reunião no tradicional Sydney Missionary and Bible College (interdenominacional, fundado em 1916).
- **06 a 11 de outubro** – Nova Zelândia: Da Austrália o Pb. Solano Portela foi à Nova Zelândia, cumprindo, lá, uma agenda tripla: (1) Encontro com o Rev. João Petreceli, em Auckland, interagindo sobre a situação da Igreja Presbiteriana do Nepal (Aashishi Presbyterian Fellowship), presidida pelo Dr. Mahendra Bhattarai, que esteve conosco no SC/IPB-2018. O Rev. Petreceli tem prestado assistência na organização e docência do Instituto Bíblico em Katmandu, coordenando a ida de vários dos nossos missionários da região para ensinarem módulos de duas semanas, naquela inóspita região. (2) A seguir, seguiu para a cidade de Dunedin, no outro extremo da Nova Zelândia, atendendo o convite dos Revs. Richard Eyre e David Bayne (ANEXO 02), respectivamente, moderador e Secretário Executivo da denominação Grace Presbyterian Church (GPC). Estes, também estiveram em nosso SC/IPB-2018. Nessa Assembleia encontramos o Rev. Marcos Agripino (APMT), lá também a convite. Nela apresentamos a IPB e, posteriormente, a GPC votou enviar ofício à IPB (ANEXO 09), solicitando o estabelecimento de Relações Correspondentes (Nível 2), ofício este que a CRIE submeteu à CE/SC-IPB-2020, para deliberação, emitindo o seu parecer favorável. De Dunedin, fomos de carro até a cidade de Queenstown, onde encontramos o nosso missionário Cláudio Gonçalves, que dá continuidade a um trabalho iniciado pelo Rev. Petreceli, junto a jovens da comunidade brasileira da região. O Rev. Cláudio ministra em uma Igreja Presbiteriana local (Presbyterian Church of New Zealand – PCNZ). Ele havia agendado conosco uma palestra para os jovens brasileiros. Encontramos um grupo extremamente interessado na fé reformada, com excelente formação básica teológica – um esforço, realmente, admirável. Para diminuir os custos desta viagem, o Pb. Solano Portela, partiu dos Estados Unidos, retornando para o mesmo local, onde estava em viagem coberta pela Associação Internacional de Escolas Cristãs, e o Rev. Davi Charles, consolidou a viagem à Coreia, com a sua passagem pela Austrália.
- **21 a 24 de novembro** – Japão: Estava programada a ida do Rev. Juarez Marcondes Filho à 104ª Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão, atendendo a convite (ANEXOS 05), representando à CRIE/IPB, nestas datas. No entanto, compromissos de última hora impediram a viagem e, mais uma vez, recorreremos ao nosso missionário Rev. Daniel Charles Gomes para que representasse a denominação.

3.2.3 **CONTAS DA CRIE – 2019.** A JPEF examinou e aprovou as contas da CRIE e também aprovou o orçamento para 2020 no valor aproximado (pela conversão em dólar) de

R\$190.000,00. Isso seria homologado na CE-SC/IPB, 2020, cancelada em 23.04.2020 em função da situação crescente de contágio do COVID-19.

2020

- 3.3.1 **O ANO DE 2020 EM SÍNTESE:** O vírus COVID-19, detectado em novembro/dezembro de 2019, na China, espalhou-se por praticamente todo o mundo e em 2020, atingiu proporções pandêmicas comparáveis às grandes infecções do passado, como a Gripe Espanhola de janeiro de 1918 a dezembro de 1920, que teve três ondas e dizimou cerca de 100 milhões de pessoas, no mundo e, no Brasil, 35 mil mortes oficiais registradas. A pandemia do COVID-19 subverteu planos institucionais, empresariais, governamentais e eclesiais, inclusive o planejamento da CRIE para 2020, **levando ao cancelamento da CE-SC/IPB-2020, em 23 de abril do 2020.** Toda essa conjuntura levou os cristãos, a nossa denominação e aquelas com as quais mantemos relacionamentos a sermos lembrados de nossa fragilidade, do “socorro bem presente nas tribulações”, que é Deus, em sua fortaleza (Sl 46.1). Constatamos a soberania de Deus em todas as áreas e, mesmo que não entendamos seus planos, tem sido um aprendizado de submissão e confiança àquele que é o Senhor e Salvador de nossas vidas – Cristo Jesus! Aprendemos, também a exercer flexibilidade em nossos planos e ações.
- 3.3.2 **DESTAQUES:** Dentro dessa conjuntura, a CRIE ainda apresentou os seguintes pontos a registrar:
- **Convites/Participação em Concílios Maiores de Denominações e correspondências** – Recebemos diversos convites para participações nos concílios maiores de denominações do relacionamento da IPB, no entanto, com a progressão da epidemia alguns eventos além dos meses iniciais do ano, foram sendo adiados ou cancelados e a CRIE, se correspondeu e interagiu em diversas ocasiões com essas denominações, ou instituição:
 - **GKv:** Convite do Rev. Theodore Havinga, representando a BBK da GKv (A “CRIE” da Igrejas Reformadas (Libertadas) para participação no Sínodo Geral da Denominação, a se realizar de 7 a 11 de janeiro de 2020 na cidade de Elspeet. A CRIE se fez representar pelo Rev. Davi Charles Gomes na “Semana Internacional”, que lidou com a questão da redução do relacionamento da IPB com a GKv, de denominação fraterna (Nível 3), para denominação correspondente (Nível 2), pelas razões já aludidas em relatórios anteriores (ordenação feminina e uma visão hermeneuticamente equivocada de contextualização que leva a denominação já a vislumbrar possível aceitação de políticas de gênero, em futuro próximo) aprovada pelo SC/IPB-2018 e comunicada por carta que integrou o Relatório da CRIE sobre o ano de 2019. O Sínodo Geral desta denominação, que ocorre a cada 3 anos, costuma durar de 6 a 8 meses. As reuniões subseqüentes à “Semana Internacional” foram interrompidas/adiadas várias vezes, em função da pandemia, e só foram retomadas, conforme correspondência recebida, em 05.09.2020.
 - **GKV e a ordenação feminina** – Além do convite acima relacionado, recebemos correspondência desta denominação, agora em Relacionamento Correspondente (Nível 2), acusando o recebimento de nossa comunicação na qual “expressamos nossas preocupações com as decisões tomadas no Sínodo de 2017” (**ANEXO 16**). Na seqüência, esses irmãos anexam o documento resultante de várias discussões do Sínodo Geral 2020, denominado “Relatório do Comitê do Sínodo para Consideração das Solicitações de Revisão sobre as Decisões Relacionadas com Homens e Mulheres como Oficiais Eclesiais”. Tem o subtítulo de “Sirvam uns aos outros com sinceridade de coração”. Trata-se de um documento de 73 páginas, que segue como **ANEXO 17** a este relatório. A diretoria da CRIE examinou o documento e constatou que, apesar da linguagem pacífica e conciliatória, tanto da carta à IPB como do Relatório, não há qualquer mudança significativa nas posições anteriormente assumidas. Por essa razão,

escrevemos carta tão somente registrando o recebimento e indicando que continuaremos em oração pela GKv, uma vez que a posição da IPB já foi sobejamente especificada nas cartas anteriores, e pela presença e palavra dos nossos representantes a, pelo menos, quatro Sínodos Gerais daquela denominação (2011, 2014, 2017, 2020).

- **WRF.** Reunião do Conselho Deliberativo da World Reformed Fellowship. Estava programada para maio de 2020, no entanto todos os voos para a Coreia foram suspensos, já em fevereiro de 2020, e essa reunião foi cancelada.
- **OPC.** Convite do Secretário Executivo da OPC, Rev. Hank Belfield, para a Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church a se realizar de 3 a 5 de junho de 2020, na cidade de St. Davids, Pennsylvania. Nossos planos eram de enviar o Pb. Adonias como representante. Como tantos outros eventos, essa Assembleia Geral também foi cancelada (correspondência de 21.05.2020) e o próprio Pb. Adonias já julgava prudente, em e-mail de 14.03.2020, que os planos de viagem fossem sobrestados.
- **Solicitação de incremento do relacionamento eclesialístico com a *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE)*:** Esta denominação já mantinha contato com a IPB via APMT, há alguns anos, e o contato se estendeu à CRIE, desde que seu representante Rev. Attila Szasz se fez presente ao Supremo Concílio/IPB-2018. A CRIE recebeu correspondência, dando sequência a esses contatos, solicitando o aprofundamento do relacionamento (**ANEXO 18**). Considerando que já é matéria de fato o Relacionamento Ecumênico (Nível 1), a CRIE propôs à CE/IPB-2021 a aprovação do passo seguinte, que é relacionamento correspondente – Nível 2 (**ANEXO 19**), considerando não somente a aderência dessa denominação à doutrina reformada, mas o já existente contato com a APMT e o conseqüente apoio a missionários nossos da base Europa. Com o cancelamento da CE-2020, a matéria foi sobrestada até a apreciação da CE-2021 tendo sido aprovado o Relatório da CRIE com a citada progressão (vide **ANEXOS 30 e 31**).
- **Convite da Igreja Hapdong (ou Hap-Tong)** – Em 23.12.2020 a CRIE Recebeu comunicação (**ANEXO 20**) desta denominação correspondente (relacionamento em progressão para o Nível 3, que está sendo submetido ao SC/IPB-2022), informando que, em função da pandemia, a sua 105ª Assembleia Geral havia sido realizada em um dia, apenas, via Zoom, subdividida, 36 encontros de menor porte. Neste mesmo expediente o presidente da CRIE da denominação, Rev. Kim Jung-Ho, informa sobre a 106ª Assembleia Geral, projetada para 13 a 17 de setembro de 2021, seria realizada na cidade Ulsan Metropolitan City. Representantes da IPB foram convidados para se fazerem presentes. Reciprocamente, solicitaram os dados da nossa próxima “Assembleia Geral” (SC/IPB), para que pudessem se programar no envio de representantes, uma vez convidados. Estes irmãos foram posicionados de forma geral sobre o mês do SC/IPB 2022 (**ANEXO 21**), e os contatos tiveram andamento (vide **ANEXO 32**), para sintonia fina dos detalhes.
- **RCSA** – Igrejas Reformadas da África do Sul. Essa denominação fraterna enviou correspondência (**ANEXO 22**) datada de 23.11.2020 explanando a situação da pandemia COVID-19 no país e, além desse flagelo, a seca terrível que assola o continente africano, solicitando doações. Esse recebimento da carta (que deve ter sido enviada a todas as denominações fraternas) ocorreu exatamente na ascensão da curva do Brasil na “Terceira Onda” da pandemia, que somente vem se agravando desde então. Respondemos então agradecendo (**ANEXO 23**), mas indicando que todos os nossos recursos assistenciais estavam sendo canalizados para as necessidades internas, que eram (e continuam a ser) intensas e até acima de nossa capacidade de aliviar (especialmente na medida em que o Brasil tornou-se o epicentro mundial da pandemia). Ainda sobre a RCSA, recebemos e-mail do Rev. Albert Coetse, informando que ele é, doravante, o contato da CRIE deles (*Deputies Ecumenicity*) com as igrejas da América do Sul. Desta forma, substituiria o querido irmão Rev. Douw Breed, que abriu todos os nossos contatos e relacionamentos com esta denominação, desde 2010 (posteriormente, recebemos informação que o Rev. Douw Breed deverá vir ao Brasil em julho de 2022).

3.3.3. **REFORMULAÇÃO DA PROGRAMAÇÃO DE VIAGENS E O ORÇAMENTO DA CRIE PARA 2020:**

No final de março de 2020 já estávamos a caminho do ápice da “primeira onda” da pandemia. A CRIE decidiu se antecipar e reformular toda a programação apresentada em seu relatório de 2019, para 2020, e oficiou à JPEF/Tesouraria, em 23.03.2020, via e-mail, que decidiu cancelar suas viagens internacionais de contatos com outras denominações projetadas para o ano de 2020. Isso reduziu o orçamento projetado em torno de 50% do que constava no relatório enviado à CE-SC/IPB. Mantivemos, como despesas de 2020, apenas as viagens já realizadas no início do ano (Holanda e Estados Unidos), pelo Rev. Davi Charles; os compromissos denominacionais para com a WRF – que também enfrenta necessidades em escala global; e alguma eventual viagem projetada para o final do ano (nenhuma se realizou), relacionada com tais contatos institucionais, se Deus, em sua misericórdia, decidisse nos agradecer com uma certa normalidade após o ápice da calamidade que ainda se faz presente no mundo.

No cômputo final, a viagem aos Estados Unidos do Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, foi custeada pela WRF e não houve despesas à IPB. No final do ano de 2020 a Pandemia adentrou a “segunda onda” e as viagens internacionais continuaram bloqueadas. Registramos que a contribuição da IPB à WRF para o ano de 2020 (US\$10 mil) necessita ainda ser realizada.

2021

3.4.1 **O ANO DE 2021 EM SÍNTESE:** A pandemia, que dava a impressão de estar sob controle no final de 2020 (decréscimo no número de casos a partir de 21.12.2020), **persistiu durante todo o ano de 2021**. Experimentamos a segunda onda (**pico** em 23.06.2021 – 76 mil novos casos). A terceira onda, com a nova cepa *Ômicron*, começou no final do ano, prolongando-se por 2022 (pulando de 1,5 mil casos diários em 19.12.2021 para o pico de 205 mil em 29.01.2022 – em apenas um mês). A segunda onda foi a mais severa em termos de mortes. Considerando os anos de 2020 e 2021 o Brasil contabilizou mais de 650 mil, e no mundo, em torno de 9 milhões – sabendo-se que os registros são inferiores à realidade. Nesse contexto as atividades da CRIE foram consideravelmente reduzidas, ainda que continuamos desenvolvendo contatos virtuais. A IPB teve condição de realizar a sua Comissão Executiva, apreciando os dois relatórios da CRIE (2019 e 2020). Inicialmente projetada para 15 a 19 de março de 2021, foi adiada e realizada em 08 a 11 de junho de 2021. As atividades e viagens da CRIE ficaram muito reduzidas neste ano atípico, à semelhança do que já havia ocorrido em 2020.

3.4.2 **DESTAQUES:**

- **19.03.2021:** Reunião via Zoom para aprovação do Relatório da CRIE para o ano de 2020 (para a CE-SC/IPB-2021) e verificação de pendências eventualmente não tratadas pela CE, em função do cancelamento em 2020. Foram discutidas algumas viagens projetadas, mas sempre na expectativa de mudança do contexto da pandemia.
- **22.09.2021:** Realizamos “reunião” via e-mail para apreciar e aprovar correspondência enviada a GKV (Holanda), que segue como **ANEXO 24**.
- **21.12.2021:** “Reunião” realizada por e-mail para aprovar o texto das cartas-convites enviadas às denominações do relacionamento da IPB, para a reunião do SC/IPB-2022, em julho de 2022 (**Vide ANEXO 21**). Houve aprovação, também, dos critérios do convite (a IPB providencia a hospedagem e alimentação, mas as passagens de ida e volta ao local de origem correm por conta dos convidados que decidirem se fazer presente. Exceção é feita por eventual decisão da presidência/mesa do SC/IPB de subsidiar algum delegado estrangeiro de país carente).

3.4.3 REPRESENTAÇÕES E VIAGENS 2021 (1)

- **OPC** – O presidente da CRIE, Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes fez viagem particular para os Estados Unidos (custeada pelo próprio) em 03.08.2021, mas aproveitou para fazer contato com Doug Clawson e Mark Bube, da Comissão de Relações Ecumênicas da OPC (CEIR), no dia 14 de setembro. Registre-se que no dia 21 de agosto o Rev. Davi foi hospitalizado em caráter de emergência com um quadro severo de problema gastrovascular e permaneceu internado por semanas, sendo alvo de nossas orações. Pela misericórdia de Deus, ele recuperou-se totalmente, após vários procedimentos.

3.4.4 REPRESENTAÇÕES E VIAGENS PROGRAMADAS PARA 2022

1. **08 a 14 de junho** – Participação na Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church (**OPC**), em St. Davis, Pennsylvania, EUA (*Eastern University*), com representação da CRIE-IPB pelo Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes.
2. **21 a 24 de junho** – Participação na 49ª Assembleia Geral da Presbyterian Church in America (**PCA**), no Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex, em Birmingham, Alabama. Representação da CRIE-IPB pelos Revs. Roberto Brasileiro e Dr. Davi Charles Gomes, conjugando com a viagem anterior.*
3. **21 a 24 de junho** – Participação na 42ª Assembleia Geral da Evangelical Presbyterian Church (**EPC**), na Ward Church, em Northville, Michigan. Representação da CRIE-IPB pelo Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes, conjugando com a viagem anterior.*
4. **Agosto ou setembro** – Visita à Igreja Presbiteriana do Nepal (*Aashish Presbyterian Ministries-Nepal*). Representantes a serem confirmados de acordo com a indicação da CRIE 2022-2026, a ser nomeada pelo SC/IPB-2022.
5. **12 a 17 de setembro** – Participação na Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia (Hap-Tong) por representantes a serem confirmados de acordo com a indicação da CRIE 2022-2026, a ser nomeada pelo SC/IPB-2022.
6. **21 a 26 de novembro** – Participação na Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão (JPC) por representantes a serem confirmados de acordo com a indicação da CRIE 2022-2026, a ser nomeada pelo SC/IPB-2022.

* Considerando a coincidência de datas será definido, no mês de abril ou maio de 2022, se a representação será parcial, em ambas, ou se priorizaremos uma dessas duas denominações.

3.4.5 ORÇAMENTO PARA 2022

A CRIE está apresentando à JPEF orçamento, perfazendo o total de R\$311.840,00, para as atividades projetadas para o ano de 2022, valor necessário em função da presença de delegados estrangeiros no SC/IPB-2022. Estimamos, para a JPEF, que as despesas de responsabilidade da CRIE, relacionadas com esses visitantes, será da ordem de R\$112.000,00 (não incluso a hospedagem com eventuais delegados). Nas cartas convites, especificamos o limite de dois delegados por denominação ou instituição e que a IPB, salvo raras exceções, não cobrirá os gastos com deslocamentos desses delegados, da origem até Cuiabá, onde ocorrerá o SC/IPB-2022.

As passagens e despesas são convertidas pelo câmbio turismo, mais a incidência de IOF. Infelizmente o câmbio teve aumento substancial nestes últimos 4 anos (em 2018 calculávamos o valor do dólar a R\$3,80). O dólar vs. o REAL em 2022 está na casa dos R\$5,30 + IOF = R\$5,60, valor que estamos considerando nessas projeções para 2022:

Item	Projeção orçamentária para 2022 (US\$ e R\$)	
	US\$	R\$
1. Viagens, hospedagens e despesas correlatas:	US\$19.400	R\$108.640
2. Material de expediente:	-	R\$ 3.000
3. Literatura e publicações:	-	R\$ 6.000
4. Serviços prestados por terceiros (inclui as do SC/IPB-2022)	-	R\$15.000
5. Despesas com convidados ao Supremo Concílio 2022, excetuando os de responsabilidade da APMT e a hospedagem e refeições no Concílio:	US\$20.000	R\$112.000
6. Despesas com eventos e participação em associações e fraternidades (WRF, CLIR, etc.), anuidades e outras contribuições.	US\$12.000	R\$67.200
7. Total (distribuído nos meses de janeiro a dezembro):		R\$311.840

3.4.6 PROGRAMAÇÃO DE REPRESENTANTES INTERNACIONAIS CONVIDADOS AO SUPREMO CONCÍLIO 2022:

As seguintes denominações ou Instituições internacionais estão sendo convidadas pela CRIE, a enviar delegados para o SC/IPB-2022. **Esta relação pode ser aumentada dependendo dos convites emitidos pela APMT:**

1. I.P. da Coréia: (Hap Thong)
2. PCA – Presbyterian Church in America
3. EPC – Evangelical Presbyterian Church
4. GPC – Grace Presbyterian Church (New Zealand)
5. PCJ – Presbyterian Church of Japan
6. RCSA – Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)
7. GKV – Reformed Churches – Liberated (Holanda)
8. RPCCEE – Reformed Presbyterian Churches of Eastern Europe
9. WRF – World Reformed Fellowship
10. WPCA – Westminster Presbyterian Church of Australia
11. PCAu – Presbyterian Church of Australia

STATUS DOS RELACIONAMENTOS COM DENOMINAÇÕES E ORGANIZAÇÕES

De acordo com as últimas decisões do Supremo Concílio, e ações desenvolvidas nos anos de 2018 a 2022, nesta seção apresentamos o status atual das denominações com as quais interagimos (pendendo ações adicionais que possam ser tomadas por este SC/IPB-2022 (vide “Proposta”, na p.38):

RESUMO:

- **NÍVEL 1 – CONTATO ECUMÊNICO OU IGREJAS RELACIONADAS** (Igrejas reformadas com as quais a IPB mantém relações iniciais e diálogo ou com as quais são estabelecidos acordos e parcerias de cooperação em trabalho específico, geralmente, através de suas agências missionárias ou outros órgãos internos. Esta relação é caracterizada por encontros formais e informais, com possível envio de observadores aos encontros dos respectivos concílios maiores e o estabelecimento de vias de contato e comunicação. Fase preliminar para o estabelecimento de laços maiores. Nível de aprovação – pela própria CRIE, com comunicação posterior à CE-SC/IPB):

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRÁLIA – PCAU E

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA – WPCA

AASHISH PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRIES (APM – NEPAL)

IGLÉSIA PRESBITERIANA DE CHILE – IPCH

IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE MOÇAMBIQUE – IPM

IGLÉSIA PRESBITERIANA EN PARAGUAY – IPP

- **NÍVEL 2 – RELACIONAMENTO CORRESPONDENTE** (Igrejas que, após os contatos iniciais, identificam-se e reconhecem-se mutuamente em termos confessionais, e em termos de alvos e ministério, o bastante para desejarem aprofundar o relacionamento com vistas à comunhão plena. Esta fase é caracterizada por encontros formais, intercâmbio de delegados correspondentes nas reuniões dos concílios maiores, cooperações em ministérios e projetos, acordos de cooperação, consultas quanto a questões maiores e intercâmbio de atas dos concílios superiores, dos anuários e outros documentos denominacionais. Fase que antecede o reconhecimento mútuo como “igrejas irmãs”. A entrada neste nível de relacionamento depende da aprovação da Comissão Executiva do Supremo Concílio da IPB, apreciando recomendação da CRIE, com posterior informação ao Supremo Concílio, em sua reunião quadrienal):

IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE ANGOLA – IPA

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN KOREA (HAPDONG OU HAP TONG) – PCKH

GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND (VRIJGEMAAKT) – GKV

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – NEW ZEALAND (GPC)

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (RPCCEE).

- **NÍVEL 3 – IGREJAS IRMÃS, RELAÇÕES FRATERNAS OU COMUNHÃO ECLESIASTICA PLENA** (Fase em que igrejas ou denominações reformadas que já passaram pelos anteriores dois passos de relacionamento, concluem, em seus concílios maiores, ser apropriado o estabelecimento de relações eclesiais plenas e celebram oficialmente a completa comunhão eclesial. Nesta fase, há total reconhecimento mútuo nos âmbitos confessional, ministerial e administrativo, ainda que sejam reconhecidas diferenças menores. Esta comunhão é caracterizada pelo intercâmbio de delegados fraternos nas reuniões maiores, pelo intercâmbio de ministros, pelo recebimento e emissão de cartas de transferência de membros e ministros, pelas ações estratégicas conjuntas, por consultas mútuas quanto a questões principais, pelo intercâmbio de atas dos concílios superiores, dos anuários e outros documentos denominacionais e por amplos acordos de cooperação. A entrada no nível 3 de relacionamento depende da aprovação do Supremo Concílio, apreciando recomendação da CRIE):

IGLÉSIA NACIONAL PRESBITERIANA DE MÉXICO – INPM

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – EPC

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA – PCA

ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – OPC

REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA – RCSA

- **INSTITUIÇÕES E ORGANISMOS - ORGANIZAÇÕES DAS QUAIS PARTICIPAMOS:**

CONFRATERNIDAD LATINOAMERICANA DE IGLESIAS REFORMADAS – CLIR

WORLD REFORMED FELLOWSHIP – WRF E WRF-AL (AMÉRICA LATINA)

IGREJAS EM SITUAÇÃO ESPECIAL OU COM RELACIONAMENTO DESCONTINUADO:

O Relatório Quadrienal da CRIE 2014-2018, aprovado pelo Supremo Concílio da IPB/2018, definiu a descontinuidade de esforços futuros de contatos com essas denominações: CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – **COS**; UNITING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA – **UPCSA**; PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA – **PCC**; PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND – **PCI**, devendo, a CRIE, procurar relacionamentos com denominações mais conservadoras nesses países.

BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – BPC – Avanços de relacionamento sobrestados.

HISTÓRICO E SITUAÇÃO DETALHADA:

RELACIONAMENTO NÍVEL 1 –

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRÁLIA – PCAU E WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA – WPCA

A IPB possui acordo com a PCAu desde 1991, mas os contatos ficaram dormentes por vários anos. Em 2010 a CRIE retomou os contatos com essa igreja. Em abril de 2012 foram concretizados os planos previamente acordados de aprofundamento dos contatos com a PCAu, aproveitando a ocasião da reunião anual do Conselho Diretor da World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), em Sydney, Austrália. Ali estiveram o presidente da CRIE, Rev. Davi Gomes, e o presidente do SC-IPB, Rev. Roberto Brasileiro Silva que mantiveram reuniões com representantes da PCAu. Em paralelo foram realizados contatos com representantes da

Westminster Presbyterian Church of Australia (WPCA), que visitaram a CE/IPB-2012, com vistas a relacionamento mais próximo com a IPB. Essas duas denominações, mesmo se constituindo em denominações independentes, têm um sólido testemunho e fidelidade às Escrituras. Várias correspondências foram trocadas, principalmente com a WPCA, na pessoa do Rev. Simon van Bruchem, que visitou nossa Comissão Executiva. A IPB tem um ministro ordenado na Austrália, o Rev. Wilson Fernandes, que trabalha, há vários anos com a PCAu. Recentemente a IPB aprofundou os contatos com a PCAu, na pessoa do Rev. Robert Benn, que presidia a Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas da denominação, e principalmente em função do seu envolvimento com a WRF (semelhante ao da IPB). Houve a possibilidade para que a IPB fosse representada na Assembleia Geral da PCAu, em setembro de 2016, em Sydney, para aprofundamento dos laços, mas a viagem não pode ser realizada. Registre-se que a PCAu tem um excelente projeto de apoio missionário às atividades de evangelização do Timor Leste, inclusive com interação com os nossos missionários naquele país. Em 21.02.2017 a CRIE recebeu e-mail do Representante para Relacionamentos Inter-eclésiásticos da WPC, Rev. Simon van Bruchem. Ele lamentou que os relacionamentos não tenham progredido entre as duas denominações. Indica que adiamos já duas vezes visitas projetadas (2015 e 2016), e que vários brasileiros têm passado por suas igrejas. O Rev. Simon escreveu sobre suas esperanças de que a WPC e a IPB possam ter um ministério conjunto, no futuro.

Em 2019, finalmente, a adiada visita foi realizada à PCAu (Presbyterian Church in Australia) e à WPC (Westminster Presbyterian Church). Representaram a CRIE/IPB o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Pb. Solano Portela. Além de pregações em 3 igrejas (o Pb. Solano Portela na Warringah Christian Church e o Rev. Davi Charles nas igrejas Cornerstone Congregation e na Drummoyne Presbyterian Church, em Sydney), laços foram estreitados em várias reuniões e convite estendido para que a IPB se fizesse presente na próxima Assembleia Geral da denominação. Contribuição foi dada ao Christ College – o seminário da PCAu, e que tem servido, também, a WPC. Quanto à WPC, o Pb. Solano encontrou-se com representantes dessa denominação, em Sydney (Revs. Richard Goodrich e James Jung), designados pelo Moderador da WPC, Simon Bruchem, que já esteve na CE-SC/IPB-2013. O Rev. Simon reside na sede da denominação, em Perth (a 3.934 Km de Sydney). Convite foi emitido a esta denominação para que enviem representantes para o SC/IPB-2022.

AASHISH PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRIES – APM (NEPAL)

Em julho de 2018, a IPB recebeu em seu XXXIX Supremo Concílio, em Águas de Lindoia, a visita do Rev. Mahendra Battarai, acompanhado do Rev. Dhruba Adhikari. Esses irmãos desejam estabelecer relações mais profundas com a IPB. Na realidade, a IPB tem estado presente na denominação, com pastores seus colaborando com o Instituto Bíblico Teológico que treina os pastores e obreiros locais. Visitas àquele país, sem ônus à IPB, têm sido feitas pelo Rev. João Petreceli (organizador do Instituto Bíblico, junto com o Rev. Mahendra Battarai) e professores que já deram aulas lá, igualmente sem ônus à IPB foram: Missionários Daniel Gomes (do Japão) e David Portela (do Camboja), e o Rev. Emílio Garófalo (Brasília). A CRIE continua a monitorar as atividades com esta denominação, mas ainda não emitiu recomendação de relações correspondentes (Nível 2) à CE ou SC/IPB.

IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DO CHILE – IPCH

O último acordo com a IPC foi estabelecido pela CE-SC/IPB-91. Em 2006 a IPCH recebeu da CRIE minuta de um novo acordo, o qual não foi celebrado até 2022. Foram mantidos os canais de comunicação e os contatos com a IPCH, ainda que não tenha sido firmado, até o presente momento, um acordo formal. Houve uma visita, em de 27 de outubro a 3 de novembro de 2011, pelos Pbs. Solano Portela e Eliézer Arantes, com líderes daquela denominação, bem como com

os pastores da IPB que servem naquele país. A CRIE manteve contato constante com o Rev. Leandro Pinheiro, que serviu àquela denominação, e hoje pastoreia uma igreja em Boston, nos Estados Unidos. O Pb. Solano Portela esteve em contato com a denominação em abril de 2014, pois houve reunião da Diretoria da WRF-AL, naquele país. Recebemos dois representantes da IPCH na reunião do Supremo Concílio da IPB, em julho de 2014. Desde 2015 vários pastores e professores nossos aceitaram convites para ministrar nessa denominação, mas a CRIE não aprofundou qualquer relacionamento oficial.

Em 2019 (começando no final de 2018) vários eventos tanto estremeceram o relacionamento com a IPB como, paradoxalmente, trouxeram um contato oficial maior com a denominação. Referimo-nos à saída da *Igreja Presbiteriana Cristo Mi Pastor* da denominação. Esta igreja, pastoreada por pastor da IPB – o Rev. Danillo Scarpelli Dourado, era uma das mais importantes da IPCH. Em meio a uma situação complicada, onde acusações de liberalismo não tratado, no seio da IPCH, foram levantadas, seguidas de contestação dessas acusações pelos dirigentes da denominação, que veementemente reclamaram do Presbitério de Pinheiros por ter recebido a igreja dissidente da IPCH (ANEXO 12). A CRIE/IPB recebeu documentos de ambos os lados, que já vinham circulando por mídia social e blogs, e foi solicitada a receber representantes da IPCH em sua reunião de 31.07.2019. Compareceram os Revs. Daniel Vazquez, moderador da Assembleia Geral, e Jonathan Muñoz, Secretário Executivo daquela denominação. A CRIE entendeu que essa questão, envolvendo ações de um Presbitério da IPB e uma denominação no exterior, deveria ser tratada e definida pela Comissão Executiva do SC/IPB, ou pelo próprio SC-2022, e assim oficiou à CE-SC/IPB-2020. Nesse sentido, as movimentações de relacionamento com esta denominação se encontram em observação, aguardando pronunciamentos mais definitivos da parte da IPB.

IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE MOÇAMBIQUE – IPM

A CRIE visitou a IPM em 2007 e recebeu a visita do Sr. presidente do Sínodo Geral da IPM nas celebrações do Sesquicentenário. Atendendo à determinação do SC/IPB-2010, a CRIE deu prosseguimento aos contatos, procurando firmar os caminhos para uma influência teológica positiva da parte da IPB, especialmente nas áreas de missões e de educação teológica, em conjunto com a APMT. A CRIE tem procurado tomar ciência das diversas delegações que têm visitado aquela Igreja, formada dentro de organismos internos da IPB, no intuito de cumprir sua responsabilidade regimental, mas a diversidade dessas comitivas e contatos não tem permitido a ciência prévia ou centralização de informações. Convidamos representante para o SC/IPB-2014, mas ele não conseguiu o visto brasileiro. Registramos a realidade de nossa presença missionária naquele país e o desejo constante dessa denominação em uma maior aproximação. A CRIE recebeu em 27.10.2017 carta-convite para se fazer presente na reunião do seu Sínodo Anual, mas isso não foi possível. Convidamos mais uma vez representante para o nosso Supremo Concílio 2018, mas também essa visita não se concretizou. **Desde 2018 que a CRIE vem monitorando a situação e dará passos, na medida do possível, para um relacionamento maior com a IPM, ouvindo a APMT e os relacionamentos dos nossos missionários naquele país.**

IGLESIA PRESBITERIANA EN PARAGUAY - IPP

Esta denominação tem um longo histórico com a IPB, sendo filha de seu trabalho missionário naquele país. Atualmente se constitui em denominação organizada e autônoma. Alguns missionários nossos trabalham com eles na capacidade de pastores da denominação. Em função do histórico e ainda da situação presente, a CRIE avaliou que os contatos eclesiais, que agora começam a ser estabelecidos em nível denominacional mediados pela CRIE, continuem sendo suplementados e entrelaçados com a APMT, especialmente no que diz respeito ao atendimento de necessidades e projetos de cunho missionário. Nesse sentido, cartas de solicitações recebidas da amada Igreja, foram encaminhadas à Assembleia Geral da APMT para avaliação e resposta.

Em 2012, contamos com a participação de representantes dessa Igreja em nossa CE/SC-IPB e em 2014 com a visita destes ao SC/IPB-2014. Não houve contatos maiores desde 2015. **A CRIE precisa, ainda, aferir a situação dessa denominação, para poder delinear passos futuros.**

DENOMINAÇÃO EM SITUAÇÃO ESPECIAL: BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – BPC

A *Bible Presbyterian Church* (BPC) começou conjuntamente com a Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), mas seguiu rumo próprio, em 1937, e foi o berço de vários pastores e teólogos reformados, incluindo-se entre estes, o conhecido Rev. Francis Schaeffer. A CRIE decidiu realizar contatos iniciais, regatando essa afinidade doutrinário-histórica, fazendo-se presente ao Concílio Maior da BPC (Sínodo Geral), em agosto de 2011, na cidade de Tacoma, Washington, Estados Unidos. Na ocasião, a IPB foi representada pelo Rev. Ludgero Morais e pelo Presb. Solano Portela. Algumas possibilidades de colaboração foram exploradas, especialmente no campo missionário. A BPC decidiu, posteriormente, enviar um missionário para o nordeste do Brasil, Rev. Doug Leaman, que chegou a exercer um ministério abençoado no SPN, como capelão, bem como atuou como professor visitante do CPAJ, em São Paulo e no IBEL, ensinando sua especialidade, que é aconselhamento bíblico. A BPC mantém o Western Reformed Seminary (WRF), instituição de pequeno porte, mas firme em suas doutrinas, o que aparentava tornar viável algumas possíveis ações de intercâmbio. A BPC chegou a expressar gratidão por nossas visitas, enviando representantes às nossas Comissões Executivas, e ao Supremo Concílio 2014. Em 2013, quando da Prisão do nosso missionário José Dilson, no Senegal, a Bible Presbyterian Church esteve entre as denominações que abraçaram a nossa causa, em intercessão e ação. A BPC fez divulgação entre suas Igrejas, conclamando orações e realizando até um contato com membros do Senado norte-americano, por membros que tinham essa via de acesso. Apresentamos nossos agradecimentos disso, por carta, àqueles irmãos. O Sínodo Geral da BPC, seu maior Concílio, realizado em agosto de 2014, votou oficial à IPB a solicitação de estabelecimento de Relacionamento Correspondente (Nível 2). No Relatório de 2015, da CRIE à CE/SC - 2016 o ofício da BPC foi anexado. Considerada a aprovação do Relatório, a CRIE oficiou à BPC a aceitação à solicitação.

Teve início, a partir daí, algumas mudanças no relacionamento eclesial. Representantes da BPC foram convidados, mas não vieram à CE de 2017 e ao Supremo Concílio da IPB/2018. Infelizmente, mesmo sem estar presente em 2018, a denominação decidiu dar ouvidos a pastores da IPB (que atuam na BPC, ou interagem com a denominação), de mente cismática, que se apressaram a alimentar informações não-oficiais e a distorcer resoluções e debates ainda em andamento. Nesse sentido, tomou posição sobre o documento 118 da CE/SC-2017 (**Relatório da Comissão Permanente de Interpretação da Pergunta 158 do Catecismo Maior**), encaminhado ao SC-2018, que assegurou que “oficiais e candidatos ao sagrado ministério estão incluídos na resposta à pergunta 158/C.M, sob a supervisão do pastor (art.31, alínea “d” da CI/IPB) [ou seja, podem pregar]; e que declarou “que, **em casos excepcionais, ou seja, na ausência de oficiais**, e sob a autorização do pastor (art.31, alínea “d” da CI/IPB), é permitido às mulheres pregar”. **Desconsiderando** que a Resolução do Supremo Concílio também, **proibiu** “que os púlpitos da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil sejam ocupados por mulheres ordenadas a qualquer ofício em outras denominações”; bem como, **reafirmou** “decisões anteriores do SC/IPB que proíbem a ordenação de mulheres aos ofícios da IPB”; a **BPC firmou um documento-carta** contra a IPB, fazendo referências a debates do plenário e à resolução.

Para agravar a questão, pastores da denominação (que tinha status de Correspondente – Nível 2) e diversos membros da própria IPB, promoveram a tradução para o português e disseminaram por rede social essa carta, **antes que chegasse ao conhecimento da CRIE**, ou da liderança da IPB, causando diversos questionamentos ao redor do país. A CRIE só recebeu a carta por e-mail oficial de 07.08.2018, ainda assim, anexando uma **MINUTA** da carta (*Todos os documentos, mencionados nessa atualização, foram anexados ao Relatório da CRIE para a CE/IPB-2019*). A CRIE

apreciou a questão e, unanimemente, decidiu responder às acusações da BPC. Para não utilizar dos mesmos meios (mídia social), a CRIE franqueou a resposta àqueles pastores que inquiriram a respeito. A CRIE decidiu, também, em 2018, sobrestar o relacionamento com a BPC até que houvesse reconhecimento de procedimento indevido, bem como do reconhecimento de que a IPB continua doutrinariamente firme, sem os questionamentos levantados nas cartas e textos circulados.

Até o presente (2022) a CRIE não recebeu qualquer documento adicional, no entanto, teve notícias de que o Sínodo Geral da denominação, realizado em Lakeland, Florida (e com alguns brasileiros participando), em agosto de 2019, discutiu bastante a IPB e que teria havido decisão de quebra de relacionamentos, mas, repetimos, sem qualquer documento oficial que respalde essa notícia. De qualquer maneira, mantendo o curso da postura previamente adotada, pela postura denominacional, instigada por alguns, a CRIE solicitou à CE/SC-2020, o rebaixamento do nível de relacionamento com esta denominação, de “Correspondente” (Nível 2), para “Ecumênico” (Nível 1), sobrestando quaisquer avanços. Em paralelo, a CRIE enviou àquela mesma CE uma solicitação de para que houvesse uma definição com relação a ministros da IPB que mantêm dupla afiliação denominacional, não raramente com posturas críticas à IPB (ANEXO 26).

Considerando o silêncio formal dessa denominação e mediante informações de que já haviam tomado decisões unilaterais com relação à IPB, a CRIE está solicitando a este SC/IPB-2022 o término dos relacionamentos em qualquer nível com a BPC (vide “Proposta”, na p. 38).

RELACIONAMENTO NÍVEL 2 –

IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE ANGOLA – IPA

A IPB possui acordo com a IPA desde 1987, tendo recebido várias visitas de seus líderes. Há interesse por parte da IPB e da IPA de contínuos esforços de cooperação. A IPA está especialmente interessada em continuar recebendo auxílio da IPB na área de educação teológica. Seminários da IPB e o Centro Presbiteriano de Pós Graduação Andrew Jumper têm enviado professores para ensinar módulos nos cursos de teologia dessa denominação. Alunos têm sido recebidos em nossos seminários para serem treinados. A CRIE tem trabalhado em conjunto com a APMT para desenvolver projetos para auxílio a esta igreja parceira tanto na área da educação teológica como em outras áreas importantes. Nos últimos anos continuamos a ter a presença constante de vários líderes da denominação, no Brasil, bem como a participação do Rev. Antônio Musaquí em cursos do Andrew Jumper, e em Conferências da Fé Reformada, promovidas por igrejas da IPB, no Brasil. Algumas das solicitações recebidas, relacionadas com o envio de verbas foram apreciadas pela CRIE e remetidas à Assembleia Geral da APMT. A IPA enviou representantes aos SC/IPB-2014 e 2018. **Seu presidente, Rev. Antonio Bento, tem visitado frequentemente o Brasil e pregado em diversas igrejas de nossa denominação, no entanto, a CRIE-IPB, até este SC/IPB-2022, ainda não definiu a progressão do relacionamento desta denominação para o Nível 3.**

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – NEW ZEALAND – GPC

Em julho de 2018, a IPB recebeu em seu XXXIX Supremo Concílio, em Águas de Lindoia, a visita dos Revs. Richard Eyre e David Bayne, respectivamente, Moderador e Secretário Executivo da Grace Presbyterian Church, denominação que se separou da Igreja Presbiteriana da Nova Zelândia (PCNZ), por verificar o liberalismo teológico alastrado, sem oposição, na PCNZ. Observaram todo o andamento, os debates e a recepção às suas pessoas e voltaram encorajados a estreitar os laços com a IPB. Esses laços, de certa maneira, já existiam informalmente, em função do trabalho do Rev. João

Petreceli naquele país. Quando da presença deles entre nós, aprofundaram os contatos, igualmente, com a APMT. A denominação necessita de “trabalhadores na seara” e tem aberto os braços para pastores brasileiros. No início de 2019 a CRIE recebeu correspondência (ANEXO 10), da Grace Presbyterian Church – Nova Zelândia, convidando para participação na Assembleia Geral da denominação (07 a 11.10.2019). Correspondência análoga foi recebida pela APMT. Nelas, havia a indicação de que pretendiam adentrar um relacionamento formal com a IPB. Nesse sentido, foi realizada uma visita conjunta à Austrália e, desta feita, abrangendo a Nova Zelândia, em outubro de 2019. A APMT também enviou o seu representante, o Rev. Marcos Agripino. AGO da denominação realizou-se na cidade de Dunedin. O Pb. Solano Portela apresentou a IPB (histórico e dados) e a GPC votou enviar ofício à IPB (ANEXO 09), solicitando o estabelecimento de Relações Correspondentes (Nível 2). Esse ofício integrou o Relatório da CRIE enviado a CE-SC/IPB-2020. Tendo sido aprovado o Relatório, o respectivo relacionamento foi comunicado (ANEXO 29) e os representantes convidados para o SC/IPB-2022.

A CRIE está propondo a este SC/IPB-2022 que aprove um convite para o relacionamento pleno (Nível 3 – Igreja Irmã) com a GPC da Nova Zelândia (vide “Proposta”, na p.38)

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA (HAPDONG OU HAP THONG) – PCKh

A Presbyterian Church in Korea, também conhecida como Hapdong Presbyterian Church, é uma das muitas denominações presbiterianas naquele país. Ela é o braço conservador do presbiterianismo, liderado pelo Rev. John Oh, pastor da Sarang Community Church em Seul, Coréia do Sul. Esta Igreja Sarang (“amor ágape”) tem cerca de 60.000 membros e a frequência dominical, em oito cultos, é de quase 50.000 pessoas. A CRIE tem mantido correspondências e contatos com a PCKh e contou com a visita do presidente da Assembleia Geral desta igreja (com quem assinou protocolo de intenções em 1997, baseado em acordo prévio – SC-90-041) à XXXVII RO-SC/IPB, em Curitiba, em 2010. Seguindo a determinação do SC, na Resolução 15, a CRIE enviou representantes à Assembleia da PCKh, em outubro de 2011. A Sarang Community Church em Seul, também foi visitada pelos Revs. Roberto Brasileiro e Davi Charles Gomes em 2013, em suas novas e amplas instalações. O Pb. Solano Portela, aproveitando viagem de serviço àquele país, também visitou essa igreja em novembro de 2014. O Rev. John Oh esteve e pregou no SC/IPB-2014. A CRIE continuou trabalhando para a intensificação do relacionamento e a possibilidade de entrar em Relacionamento Correspondente (nível 2) com a PCKh. Em 2017 os contatos mais concretos foram aprofundados e a CRIE enviou uma série de informações para a Assembleia Geral deles, para que laços fraternos fossem objetivados. No Supremo Concílio da IPB/2018, tivemos a visita de uma delegação da PCKh, liderada pelo atual presidente, Rev. Kye-hun, Chon. Nessa ocasião, em 26 de julho de 2018, foi firmado um documento: “Memorando de Entendimento entre a Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil e a Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia”. Em setembro de 2018, a CRIE/IPB se fez representar na Assembleia Geral dessa denominação e, igualmente, em setembro de 2019, pelos Revs. Roberto Brasileiro e Davi Charles Gomes. A CRIE/IPB, ao ter o seu relatório aprovado pela Comissão Executiva – 2019, recebeu por inferência o relacionamento correspondente oficiado àquela CE-SC/IPB-2019 (ANEXO 27), com a PCKh.

Considerando todos os contatos prévios (vide anexos 21 e 32) e afinidades com esta denominação, a CRIE está propondo a este SC/IPB-2022 que aprove o relacionamento pleno (Nível 3 – Igreja Irmã) com a PCKh (vide “Proposta”, na p.38)

GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND (VRIJGEMAAKT) – GKV

A IPB mantém acordo de cooperação missionária com a GKV desde 1997 (CE-97-043). Após um período de esfriamento das relações, a liderança do SC/IPB iniciou passos para uma

reaproximação. O processo teve prosseguimento durante o quadriênio 2006-2010. Em 2009 teve como fruto a celebração de novo convênio para a plantação de igrejas no sul do Brasil, além do recebimento da oferta à IPB do status oficial de “igreja irmã” (relacionamento fraterno, ou, fraternal relations), emitido pelo sínodo geral da GKV em 2008. O SC/IPB-2010 deu o próximo passo, aceitando esse relacionamento. A CRIE consolidou esses laços e a IPB foi representada no Concílio Maior dessa denominação, que ocorreu no final de março e início de abril de 2011 pelos Revs Davi Gomes e Ludgero Moraes e pelo Pb. Solano Portela. Em 2012 existiram visitas ao Brasil e de docentes do CPAJ à Universidade de Kampen. Como o Sínodo Geral seria em 2014, não programamos visita àquela denominação em 2013.

Os contatos na área educacional com o CPAJ da IPB e entre nossas agências missionárias (PMC) continuaram com considerável intensidade. O Convênio com a IPB para plantação de igrejas no Rio Grande do Sul foi renovado, com intermediação da CRIE e atuação do Rev. Jedeias Gomes; a CRIE recebeu relatório do CPAJ, sobre a formalização e oficialização de Convênio de Cooperação Institucional entre o CPAJ e Universidade Teológica de Kampen. Em adição, professores do CPAJ visitaram a Instituição Acadêmica, em Kampen, e igrejas daquela denominação, bem como recebemos dois de seus professores, no Brasil. A CRIE continuou acompanhando as pressões teológicas recebidas por aqueles irmãos, sempre os encorajando à aderência total às Escrituras. Fomos encorajados por testemunhos de fidelidade encontrado em contatos posteriores, com alguns daqueles irmãos e enviamos representantes ao Sínodo Geral (março 2014): Pbs. Solano Portela e Eliézer Arantes. A GKV foi convidada a enviar representantes ao SC/IPB-2014, mas decidiu não os enviar, por questões orçamentárias.

Em 2015 a GKV continuou cooperando com os esforços da IPB, na região sul do Brasil e recebeu vários pastores nossos, na Holanda. Em abril de 2016, a CRIE recebeu representantes da Comissão Inter-Eclesiástica da denominação (BBK), nas pessoas do Rev. Theodoro Havinga e do Pb. Alexandre Pedro (originariamente de Angola). No final de 2016, a CRIE recebeu novo convite para enviar representantes ao Concílio maior da denominação, que ocorreu de 03 a 08 de abril de 2017. Naquela ocasião, permaneceu como item de preocupação as pressões constantes, nessa denominação, para introdução da ordenação feminina. Infelizmente, isso se comprovou, tanto no desenrolar do Sínodo Geral 2017, como nas decisões subsequentes, e a ordenação feminina foi aprovada, apesar de inúmeros pronunciamentos e apelos de denominações coirmãs, que ficaram sem eco.

Esse fato levou a CRIE a trazer perante o Supremo Concílio IPB/2018 a recomendação de retroação, quanto ao grau de relacionamento, do nível 3 (Relacionamento Pleno – Igreja Irmã), para nível 2 (Relacionamento Correspondente). Contribui também, para esse parecer, um convite recebido no mês de maio de 2018, da BBK (a Comissão Inter-elesiástica dessa denominação), para que a IPB participasse ou promovesse conjuntamente uma conferência sobre a questão de Mulheres Oficiais, e outras questões contemporâneas, como as questões de gênero (“discussão dos textos bíblicos sobre homossexualidade”). A CRIE respondeu declinando, e já avisando aqueles irmãos que estaria recomendando ao Supremo Concílio 2018 a retroação do relacionamento, o que foi devidamente aprovado, em julho de 2018, na Resolução em que o SC aprova o Relatório da CRIE, situação que muito lamentamos.

Em dezembro de 2019 a CRIE recebeu uma publicação (Spring Letter) da BBK (**ANEXO 28**), que faz referência aos efeitos das decisões adotadas pela GKV. Dessa publicação, extraímos o seguinte parágrafo (traduzido):

Muitas denominações fraternas [da GKV] estão preocupadas com as decisões tomadas pelo Sínodo Geral realizado na cidade de Meppel. Até este momento, três igrejas fraternas cortaram o relacionamento conosco, em função dessas decisões, e sete outras suspenderam o relacionamento, ou fizeram a imposição de condições adicionais [ao relacionamento], ou rebaixaram o nível de relacionamento. Sabemos que essas denominações nos acompanham com preocupação sincera e que também observam com expectativa quais serão as decisões do próximo Sínodo Geral.

Em 2019, a CRIE/IPB recebeu convite da GKV – BBK para enviar representante(s) ao Sínodo Geral da denominação, na reunião específica para delegados internacionais, a se realizar em janeiro de 2020. A CRIE confirmou a ida do Rev. Davi Charles Gomes por uma correspondência (ANEXO 15) que também reafirmava as decisões passadas do SC/IPB-2018. Destacamos os seguintes parágrafos (traduzidos) desta correspondência:

Como seus delegados devem ter relatado, o nosso Supremo Concílio ficou extremamente preocupado com relação à decisão do Sínodo Geral realizado em Meppel, aprovando o oficialato feminino de presbíteros, diáconos e ministros, mesmo que esta decisão tenha sido delegada às Igrejas individuais, sobre como e quando deverão iniciar a prática. Nós [IPB] emitimos a nossa opinião sobre esta questão diversas vezes, no desenrolar desta discussão, em Sínodos anteriores, tanto em encontros pessoais, como também formalmente em reuniões e por meio de cartas. Nosso entendimento dos textos bíblicos pertinentes à questão e a lealdade que prestamos à interpretação que a Confissão de Fé de Westminster faz dessa prática, nos levam a restringir a liderança eclesial ao sexo masculino. Em nenhum momento consideramos isso uma diminuição do papel da mulher na igreja, mas trata-se de uma simples aderência às diretrizes que foram estabelecidas pelo próprio Deus a quem servimos.

Como consequência de sua decisão, nosso Supremo Concílio sentiu-se compelido a modificar o status do nosso relacionamento, de “Fraterno”, ou “Pleno” (Nível 3), para “Relacionamento Correspondente”. Enquanto isso, continuaremos a orar pela GKV e interceder perante o Trono da Graça, que os irmãos serão movidos pelo Espírito para rever esta decisão, que pode abrir a porta a tantas outras práticas contemporâneas encontradas no mundo evangélico, que pode dar a falsa impressão de estarmos “sintonizados” com os tempos, mas que degrada a nossa próxima aderência à Palavra de Deus.

Após essas comunicações, e mesmo com o conteúdo firme delas, o relacionamento continuou bom, ainda que em nível menor, ficando evidente, para nós, que existe um desconforto da parte de muitos, dentro da própria denominação GKV, quanto aos rumos hermenêuticos tomados para legitimar posições “politicamente corretas” aos nossos dias. Nesse sentido, continuaremos tentando influenciar e convidamos representantes da denominação para o SC/IPB-2022.

RELACIONAMENTO NÍVEL 3 – IGREJAS IRMÃS, RELAÇÕES FRATERNAS OU COMUNHÃO ECLESIAL PLENA:

IGLESIA NACIONAL PRESBITERIANA DE MÉXICO A. R. – INPM

Os contatos com a INPM datam de 2001. O Rev. Ludgero Bonilha Moraes, em visita realizada no ano de 2006, encorajou a CRIE a procurar o estreitamento de laços com essa igreja. É uma denominação de aproximadamente 2,8 milhões de membros, com características teológicas não díspares com as da IPB e uma vitalidade que tem causado um crescimento extraordinário nos últimos anos. Uma igreja de recursos limitados, apesar de seu tamanho, ela tem grande carência de pastores (em muitas regiões a média é de 1 pastor para cada 2 igrejas), de publicações, de “*know how*” organizacional, além da área de educação teológica. A CRIE recebeu representante da INPM em sua CE-2007. Foi realizado contato em 2011 para discutir uma possível cooperação da IPB para auxiliar os irmãos da INPM quanto às suas necessidades na área de educação, tanto nas escolas e universidade, que mantêm, como na área teológica pós-graduada. Contatos estão em andamento, entre a INPM e o Mackenzie (Sistema Mackenzie de Ensino) e com o Centro Presbiteriano de Pós-Graduação Andrew Jumper (CPAJ), para acordos cooperativos. A Assembleia Geral da INPM em 2012 votou unanimemente o convite à IPB para relacionamento fraterno (nível 3), que foi encaminhado ao SC/IPB-2014. Representantes da INPM visitaram o Brasil em duas ocasiões, em 2012, e foram ativos na formação e administração da Regional América Latina da WRF, sendo o Rev. Danny Ramirez o seu presidente e o Pb. Solano Portela o vice-presidente. Representantes da INPM estiveram presentes na CE/IPB-2013 e no SC/IPB-2014. Uma semana antes do SC/IPB-2014 o Rev. Roberto Brasileiro e o Rev. Davi Charles

Gomes estiveram presentes à Assembleia Geral da INPM. Em cumprimento à Resolução VI, do SC/IPB-2014, a CRIE formalizou a aceitação ao relacionamento fraterno com a INPM. Em 2015 a CRIE continuou monitorando a denominação, que tem tomado posição firme, especialmente com relação à posição bíblica sobre sexualidade e as chamadas “políticas de gênero”, que têm desviado inúmeras Igrejas. Em 2016, os contatos repetidos continuaram e escolas daquela denominação utilizaram os primeiros livros, traduzidos e adaptados para a realidade do México, do Sistema Mackenzie de Ensino.

Em 2019 houve convite para participação na AGO da INPM e planos de viagem, mas foram cancelados de última hora, por impossibilidade do Rev. Roberto Brasileiro se fazer presente ao evento, ao qual iria com o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes. Obviamente contatos maiores foram impedidos pela pandemia COVID-19 (2020-2022), mas representantes dessa denominação estão sendo convidados para o SC/IPB-2022.

EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – EPC

O acordo de cooperação entre a IPB e a EPC data do SC 1986. Durante a década de 90 esse relacionamento foi crucial para o estabelecimento de uma pujante tradição de educação teológica pós-graduada na IPB. Neste âmbito, houve uma primeira fase, na qual foram estabelecidas as bases do projeto de educação pós-graduada. Ainda nessa fase a EPC possibilitou a formação de vários doutores brasileiros nos EUA que pudessem continuar o projeto de pós-graduação teológica no Brasil. Entre 1999 e 2001 surgia a possibilidade de uma segunda fase na parceria, uma fase final relacionada à educação teológica e ao Centro Presbiteriano de Pós-Graduação Andrew Jumper, mas essa segunda fase não chegou a se concretizar. No quadriênio 2006-2010 os contatos entre a IPB e a EPC foram intensos e o espírito de cooperação é muito forte. Continuamos estreitando os laços dessa denominação que tem recebido inúmeras congregações que saem da PCUSA, em fuga do liberalismo teológico, situação intensificada a partir de janeiro de 2012, quando diversas igrejas saíram “em bloco” da PCUSA, motivadas especificamente pelas recentes definições denominacionais da PCUSA relacionadas com a aceitação do homossexualismo e ordenação de homossexuais. A CRIE tem enviado representantes às Assembleias Gerais da denominação. Em 2013, a EPC enviou convite por escrito solicitando que o presidente da CRIE estivesse presente, porque está em andamento uma reestruturação do seu *modus operandi* para relações inter-eclesiais – processo esse que recebeu contribuição significativa do presidente da CRIE, nos contatos realizados nestes últimos anos. No entanto, por questões de agenda, a representação foi realizada pelo Rev. Ludgero Morais e pelo Pb. Eliézer Arantes. O Moderador, Rev. Jeffrey Jeremiah, foi convidado oficial da IPB ao SC/IPB-2014, trazendo a ministração da Palavra, em alguns dos trabalhos devocionais do nosso Concílio. A CRIE se fez representar na Assembleia Geral dessa denominação em 2015 pelo Rev. Juarez Marcondes Fo. e pelo Pb. Solano Portela, da qual extraímos muito proveito sobre a forma bem-organizada de condução dos trabalhos. Foi percebido, igualmente, que devotam grande respeito pela IPB. Em 2016 o presidente da CRIE, Rev. Davi Charles Gomes, foi convidado a pregar na abertura da Assembleia Geral dessa denominação, em 23.06.2016, mensagem que teve grande repercussão e que ampliou ainda mais a influência internacional da IPB.

Observações adicionais sobre a EPC, sobre situações que devem ser monitoradas de perto pela CRIE e que têm sido levadas ao conhecimento da IPB: A EPC foi fundada em 1981 por igrejas que saíram da PCUSA preocupadas com os rumos liberais da denominação, já naquela década, há pouco mais de 35 anos. Com a movimentação para aprovação da ordenação de homossexuais pela PCUSA, o êxodo de igrejas para a EPC foi incrementado, e em 2012, uma nova denominação, a ECO (*Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians*) foi estabelecida, recebendo também esse fluxo migratório da PCUSA. A ECO tem quase 300 igrejas (89 recebidas somente de 2015 para 2016) e cerca de 120 mil membros. Menos conservadora do que a EPC (a ECO aceita a Confissão de Fé de 1967, da PCUSA), essa denominação continua recebendo igrejas da PCUSA.

A EPC tinha, em 2006, 182 igrejas. Em 2016 registrava 587 igrejas e cerca de 370 mil membros. 380 dessas igrejas vieram no período de 2010 a 2016. A maioria dessas igrejas foram oriundas da PCUSA e 27 destas foram agregadas de 2015 para 2016. Nesse meio tempo, a PCUSA continuou a declinar. De 1 milhão e 700 mil de membros nominais, há cinco anos, está reduzida a 1 milhão e 200 mil, havendo até dúvida se esses dados expressam a realidade da membresia da denominação. Em um ano (2018) a PCUSA perdeu 187 igrejas e cerca de 95 mil membros. A preocupação nossa é no sentido de que esse fluxo migratório venha a dar o tom à EPC. Alguém já se referiu a essas igrejas que têm deixado a PCUSA a igrejas “PCUSA-sem-gays”, ou seja, não aceitam a quebra desta última barreira, mas doutrinariamente podem ser tão liberais como antes. A EPC estava se movimentando em direções mais conservadoras. Havia uma moratória *de facto* em ordenação feminina, por quase dez anos, mas essa questão ficou para trás, pois todas as igrejas da PCUSA vieram com suas pastoras e presbíteras a integrar os quadros da EPC e, certamente, agora são maioria nos concílios. A CRIE expressou preocupação, com relação a essa situação e continuou monitorando, para aferir os passos de relacionamento denominacionais que devem ser sugeridos ao nosso Concílio Maior. **Para este SC/IPB-2022, a CRIE ainda não está emitindo nenhuma recomendação.**

Em 2019 a IPB participou da Assembleia Geral da EPC, na pessoa do Rev. Davi Charles Gomes. Semelhantemente às demais denominações norte-americanas, Assembleias Gerais foram suspensas em função da pandemia COVID-19, mas foram retomadas em 2021 e a próxima projetada para 2022 (21 a 24 de junho). Estamos convidando um representante da EPC para o SC/IPB-2022.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA – PCA

A CE 96, do SC/IPB, estabeleceu um acordo de cooperação com a *Mission to the World* (MTW) da PCA. O acordo previa cooperação nas áreas de 1) implantação de igrejas, 2) missões e 3) educação teológica. A CRIE trabalhou no sentido de fortalecer os laços com esta igreja, tendo sido a IPB convidada a entrar em Relacionamento Correspondente (*corresponding relations*) com esta igreja. Tal relacionamento, além de seu caráter histórico, foi sem precedente, pois a IPB foi a primeira denominação de país fora da América do Norte a receber proposta de relacionamento conciliar abrangente. O SC/IPB-2010 aprovou um passo além, ou seja, o estabelecimento de relacionamento fraterno com a PCA. A CRIE formalizou essa determinação e, em cumprimento aos anseios do SC/IPB, tem enviado representantes para participação nas Assembleias Gerais da denominação. Em 2011 os representantes foram o Rev. Roberto Brasileiro e o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes; em 2012, o Rev. Ludgero Moraes; e em 2013, o Rev. Davi Gomes. A PCA foi denominação convidada para participar do SC/IPB-2014, tendo enviado o seu moderador. Em junho de 2015 o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Presb. Solano Portela, aproveitando que já se encontravam nos Estados Unidos para a Assembleia Geral da OPC, no estado de Iowa, dirigiram até Chattanooga, no Tennessee, para representarem a IPB na Assembleia Geral da PCA. Em 2016, o Rev. Davi Charles conjugou a presença na Assembleia da EPC, com a representação na PCA.

Observações adicionais sobre a PCA, sobre situações que devem ser monitoradas de perto pela CRIE e que devem ser levadas ao conhecimento da IPB: A PCA continua sendo um conglomerado de várias persuasões e correntes. Uma das razões por que a PCA deixou a PCUSA, há 40 anos, foi a questão da ordenação feminina. Na Assembleia Geral da PCA, também em junho de 2016, o plenário votou a formação de uma Comissão que reabriu a questão. Essa comissão, constituída por sete pessoas examinou as bases bíblicas e teológicas referentes à ordenação, inicialmente para o ofício do diaconato e relatou à Assembleia Geral de 2017. A expectativa era a de que fossem sugeridas eventuais mudanças constitucionais, pois, nesse meio tempo, as igrejas da PCA foram “encorajadas a promover a participação de mulheres em ministérios apropriados”. No entanto, a Assembleia Geral de 2017 não realizou qualquer mudança no *status quo* e a denominação continua a não ordenar mulheres ao oficialato (nem ao

ministério). Em fevereiro de 2017 o conhecido Rev. Tim Keller renunciou ao pastorado da Igreja *Redeemer*, na cidade de Nova York. Conforme informações obtidas, tem se dedicado exclusivamente ao plantio de igrejas. A PCA conta com cerca de 400 mil membros em 1.600 igrejas e 400 congregações. Neste quadriênio houve um acréscimo de cerca de 50 igrejas.

O ano de 2019 marcou a aposentadoria, para cuidar da esposa que está com Alzheimer, do Secretário Executivo da PCA, Roy Taylor, que atuou durante mais de 20 anos, sendo substituído pelo Rev. Brian Chapel. O Rev. Davi Charles conjugou a presença na Assembleia da EPC de 2019 com a representação na PCA e esta foi a última Assembleia antes da pandemia COVID 19. Em 2022 realizarão Assembleia Geral no mês de junho (21 a 24), e estamos convidando representantes para o SC/IPB-2022.

ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – OPC

A OPC é uma pequena, mas antiga, denominação presbiteriana dos EUA fundada em 1929. Ela permanece uma igreja conservadora, mas que tem procurado distanciar-se da caracterização de fundamentalismo. Ainda que a IPB já possua entendimentos com a EPC e a PCA (igrejas mais parecidas com a IPB), o Supremo Concílio 2010 considerou importante responder positivamente ao convite para Relacionamento Correspondente. Isso permitiu a ambas as denominações a clareza necessária para decidir futuramente a conveniência de um relacionamento ainda mais estreito (relacionamento fraterno). A CRIE tem enviado representantes aos Sínodos Gerais (concílios maiores) desta denominação e recebido visitas, em reciprocidade, de seus representantes. Relacionado com a OPC está o *Westminster Theological Seminary*, que formou vários dos nossos doutores do CPAJ e com o qual o CPAJ procurou desenvolver um programa conjunto de Ph.D. Além disso, muitos eruditos da OPC têm escrito livros importantíssimos que substanciam a base doutrinária de nossa denominação e vários que têm sido publicados pela Casa Editora Presbiteriana. Certamente, temos muito a reconhecer e a agradecer a maneira pela qual Deus tem capacitado esses servos. Registramos, também, a fidalguia, transparência e apreço com a qual nossos delegados têm sido recebidos no Concílio Maior da OPC, bem como o interesse demonstrado em intercessão a Deus por causas nossas, como a do nosso missionário José Dilson – que foi encarcerado no Senegal. A cooperação já existente e a harmonia doutrinária e prática entre as nossas denominações fizeram com que os laços fossem estreitados ainda mais em 2014. Continuamos incentivando o estabelecimento de ampla cooperação entre a AMPT e Agência Missionária da OPC, especialmente nos esforços missionários que desenvolvemos conjuntamente no Uruguai. Recebemos representantes da OPC no SC/IPB-2014. Foi proposto e aprovado pelo SC/IPB-2014, com a aprovação do Relatório Quadrienal da CRIE, o estreitamento dos laços para o Nível 3 – Relações Fraternas. Com base nessa aprovação, a Assembleia Geral da OPC, de 2015, à qual estiveram presentes o Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Presb. Solano Portela deliberou o relacionamento fraterno. Esta votação foi por unanimidade e contou com uma verdadeira ovação do plenário que muito nos emocionou. Em 2016, infelizmente, não foi possível a participação no Concílio Maior dessa denominação coirmã, mas em 2017 os Pbs. Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela representaram a CRIE-IPB em sua Assembleia Geral. O Pb. Adonias apresentou relatório da viagem do qual extraímos essa observação, que captura bem o sentimento fraterno com a OPC:

... registramos o grande apreço, a gentileza e a transparência como fomos recebidos, tratados e hospedados por aquele Magno Concílio da OPC. Trata-se aquela denominação de uma igreja presbiteriana relativamente antiga e pequena, que permanece numa linha conservadora, sem, no que pudemos perceber, adotar uma característica fundamentalista, com princípios bastante semelhantes ao perfil da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil.

Vale destacar, ainda, o que pudemos notar claramente, o interesse e o apreço que demonstram pela nossa Igreja, inclusive com a intercessão a Deus em favor de nossas causas aqui no Brasil. Em todas as oportunidades, éramos solicitados a comentar sobre os vários aspectos das atividades e do desenvolvimento da IPB, bem como, de forma geral, da Igreja Evangélica no Brasil.

No nosso entendimento, trata-se a OPC de uma Igreja que merece todo o nosso esforço, não apenas para manter, mas para ampliar e intensificar o relacionamento fraterno com aquela denominação coirmã.

O Pb. Solano Portela e o Rev. Davi Gomes, participaram da Assembleia Geral da OPC, em junho de 2018. Em julho de 2018, recebemos, com alegria, o Rev. Jack Sawyer em nosso Supremo Concílio, que trouxe as saudações da OPC. Ele veio com a sua esposa.

Em 2019 a representação à AGO da OPC foi pelos Pbs. Solano Portela e Adonias Silveira. Essa AGO registrou em suas atas questões levantadas pela BPC. Dentre essas observações extraímos a seguinte (traduzida):

A IPB decidiu, que “em casos excepcionais, ou seja, na ausência de oficiais, e sob a autorização do pastor (art.31, alínea “d” da CI/IPB), é permitido às mulheres pregar”. Este pronunciamento final preocupa a CEIR (a CRIE da OPC) e representa, pelo menos, uma escolha infeliz de palavras. Isso gerou uma forte discordância entre a IPB e a BPC e a CRIE/IPB presentemente sobrestou todos os contatos com a BPC. A CEIR enviou uma correspondência oferecendo-se para mediar uma solução entre as partes.

Na realidade, essa correspondência nunca chegou ao conhecimento da CRIE/IPB, mas tendo sido cientificados disso, pessoalmente, na AGO da OPC 2019, os representantes da CRIE indicaram que nada havia a ser mediado e que a IPB estava no aguardo de uma retratação da BPC pela forma esdrúxula na condução das comunicações.

Em 2020 recebemos a triste notícia do suicídio do Rev, Jack Sawyer, ausente na AGO OPC-2019. O Rev. Sawyer, que secretariava o Comitê de Relações Ecumênicas e Intereclesiásticas daquela denominação, era um grande amigo da IPB e sempre recebeu com fidalguia e apreço nossas visitas às Assembleias Gerais da OPC. Durante a pandemia do COVID 19, as Assembleias Gerais da OPC foram suspensas. A IPB recebeu convite oficial para se fazer presente na Assembleia Geral em junho de 2022, e estamos convidando seus representantes para o nosso Supremo Concílio, em julho de 2022.

REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA – RCSA (GKZA)

Os contatos com essa denominação começaram com a nossa presença na Assembleia Geral da Orthodox Presbyterian Church, em junho de 2010. Em dezembro de 2011 uma delegação daquela denominação visitou nosso país e contatos intensos, especialmente na área de educação teológica, foram bastante frutíferos. Em janeiro de 2012 os Revs. Davi Charles Gomes e Ludgero Morais se fizeram presentes ao Concílio Maior daquela denominação; em março de 2012 recebemos a visita de representante à Comissão Executiva da IPB – 2012; em outubro de 2012 o presidente da CRIE foi convidado por aquela denominação para dar início a uma Campanha Denominacional de Revitalização com uma série de pregações, assim como para realizar reuniões com a Comissão Especial de Revitalização, para definição de estratégias à frente; ficou programada já para janeiro de 2013 a vinda de dois pastores e docentes da RCSA, para visitas a diversas frentes de trabalho da IPB. Em paralelo o CPAJ da IPB celebrou convênio formal de cooperação acadêmica com a Northwest University e Escola Teológica da Denominação, ambas de Potchefstroom. A RCSA votou, em seu Concílio Maior reunido em janeiro de 2012, emitir convite de relações fraternas plenas à IPB – documento que foi apresentado ao SC/IPB – 2014, com a recomendação altamente positiva da CRIE para que esse relacionamento fosse firmado, em reciprocidade. Em janeiro de 2015, a relação como denominação fraterna foi formalizada e o intercâmbio, tanto educacional, como eclesial tem sido intenso desde então. Em 2016 a RCSA voltou a nos consultar sobre nossa posição em ordenação feminina, reforçando as admoestações e orientações que nossos representantes vinham concedendo àqueles irmãos com suas presenças em seu concílio maior trienal. Com satisfação, registramos que eles têm se mantido firmes

doutrinariamente, nesse aspecto. Seus representantes têm participado de nossas Comissões Executivas desde 2014 e estiveram também presentes na Comissão Executiva de 2019.

Durante a pandemia do COVID 19, os Sínodos Gerais da RCSA foram suspensos. Convidamos seus representantes para o nosso Supremo Concílio, em julho de 2022 e eles já confirmaram que se farão presentes.

INSTITUIÇÕES E ORGANISMOS - Organizações das quais participamos, mantemos alguma forma de relacionamento, ou temos interesse em observar, mesmo sem participação:

CONFRATERNIDAD LATINOAMERICANA DE IGLESIAS REFORMADAS – CLIR

Como membro fundador a IPB tem um papel importante na CLIR. Em 2009 a CLIR deixou de ser a representação regional da *World Reformed Fellowship* (WRF), da qual a IPB também é membro fundador e exerce hoje significativa liderança. A relação entre a CLIR e a WRF ainda é objeto de discussões. O SC/IPB-2010, em sua Resolução 15, determinou que a CRIE/IPB continuasse seus contatos para o relacionamento efetivo da IPB com a *Confraternidad Latinoamericana de Iglesias Reformadas*. A CRIE, através da tesouraria da IPB, continuou apoiando financeiramente a CLIR. O Rev. Ludgero Morais participou da Assembleia da CLIR em novembro de 2012. A CRIE convidou o secretário Executivo da CLIR – Rev. William Green para participar da CE/SC-IPB-2013. O Rev. Ludgero continuou representando a IPB na CLIR, em reunião realizada no início de 2013. Passos significativos para uma maior aproximação e trabalho conjunto com a WRF foram dados na reunião da Diretoria da WRF, ocorrida na África do Sul, em outubro de 2013. Representantes da CLIR foram convidados para participação no SC/IPB-2014, mas não se fizeram presentes. Em agosto de 2014 os presbíteros Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela participaram da Assembleia Geral da CLIR, no Panamá. O Pb. Adonias Silveira foi eleito para Diretoria da CLIR que tem como presidente o Rev. Dr. Alonzo Ramirez Alvarado, da *Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana* de Peru. Em 2015 não houve grandes desenvolvimentos no relacionamento. Em janeiro de 2016, a CRIE-IPB, consultada sobre se haveria uma possível objeção ou concordância quanto à realização de Assembleia Geral da CLIR no México, em 2017, após chegar a um consenso por reunião virtual, emitiu a seguinte posição, como orientação ao seu representante na CLIR, Pb. Adonias Silveira:

1. A Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB), através de sua Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas (CRIE) não tem qualquer objeção quanto à realização da Assembleia da CLIR, na data aventada [outubro de 2017], e considera muito apropriada que se processe nos 500 anos da Reforma do Século 16, data, sem dúvida, digna de ser lembrada e celebrada.
2. A IPB/CRIE, acha a localização muito adequada, e lembra que já se fez presente ao México em diversas ocasiões, em eventos da Igreja Nacional Presbiteriana do México (INPM), denominação com a qual mantém relacionamento fraterno pleno.
3. A IPB/CRIE julga necessário, para que o evento receba o seu pleno apoio, que receba igual apoio da denominação INPM, lembrando que tal apoio tem que transcender o de um presbitério ou sínodo da INPM, não sendo do nosso interesse encorajar qualquer dissensão ou diversidade de propósitos ou caminhos de segmentos daquela denominação irmã. Para tal, encarecemos que haja pronunciamento documental oficial da INPM sobre essa questão.
4. A IPB/CRIE lembra que as origens da CLIR e a base da nossa participação e relacionamento na CLIR, é fazer parte de uma **Fraternidade denominacional**, congregando Igrejas Reformadas da América Latina, que devem caminhar unidas, em torno dos símbolos de fé reformados, testemunhando a soberania de Deus e

o Evangelho Salvador de Cristo Jesus a um mundo que jaz no maligno e em trevas.

Acreditamos que tanto nossa posição como nossas preocupações estão bem expressas nos pontos acima, os quais são autoexplicativos.

Durante o ano de 2016, entretanto, os contatos continuaram e a INPM reverteu sua posição, concedendo apoio à realização da Assembleia Geral da CLIR, abrigada pela Sínodo de Tabasco, nos dias 30 e 31 de outubro de 2017. A CRIE decidiu não enviar representante, mas solicitou ao vice-presidente do Supremo Concílio da IPB, Rev. Augustus Nicodemus, convidado para trazer mensagem naquela ocasião, que representasse a IPB. O Rev. Ludgero Morais foi também um dos preletores convidados àquele evento. Na ocasião a IPB entregou a oferta anual à CLIR, referente a dois anos (US\$2 mil).

A CRIE continua recomendando que a efetividade deste relacionamento continue sob observação e que no próximo quadriênio (2022-2026) haja uma ampla discussão com a INPM, sobre a CLIR, para definir os passos futuros.

WORLD REFORMED FELLOWSHIP – WRF

A *World Reformed Fellowship* foi criada em 1994. As denominações, igrejas, organizações e indivíduos que solicitam filiação têm de subscrever à declaração de que a Bíblia é inspirada e livre de erros em suas afirmações e também a uma das seguintes confissões reformadas históricas: Confissão de Fé de Westminster, Cânones de Dort, Catecismo de Heidelberg, Confissão Belga, Confissão Gálica, Confissão Londrina de 1689, Declaração de Savoy, Segunda Confissão Helvética ou os Trinta e Nove Artigos.

Desde 2000 a WRF vem crescendo em número de membros e representatividade. Os seis continentes já se acham representados nela através de denominações, igrejas e instituições reformadas de todas as partes do mundo. Até o momento a WRF engloba 109 denominações e grupos eclesiais, além de mais de 90 organizações e instituições para-eclesiais reformadas.

A participação da IPB na Fraternidade, da qual é membro fundador, tem contribuído para o respeito que a IPB detém diante das demais denominações reformadas ali representadas e tem sido também importante para firmar a identidade reformada da Fraternidade. A IPB tem também assumido um papel de liderança crescente na WRF, contando com representantes no Conselho Diretor dessa fraternidade, além do Rev. Augustus Nicodemus Gomes Lopes, que também é membro da Fraternidade. Na Resolução No. 15 do SC/IPB-2010, determinou à CRIE/IPB que intensificasse “o relacionamento da IPB com a *World Reformed Fellowship*”, o que foi seguido na participação ativa da formação da Regional América Latina. O presidente da CRIE, além de participar das reuniões anuais do Conselho Diretor, tem participado das reuniões bimestrais do Comitê Executivo e da Comissão de Supervisão do trabalho do Diretor Internacional. Em 2013 a IPB foi devidamente representada na Assembleia do Conselho Diretor que ocorreu na cidade de Potchefstroom, na África do Sul.

Quando do comparecimento do presidente do Supremo Concílio da IPB como convidado especial à reunião do Conselho Diretor, realizada na Austrália, em abril de 2012, foi estendido o convite à WRF para realização de sua Assembleia Geral no Brasil, tendo a IPB como anfitriã. Este convite foi aceito pelo Conselho Diretor e os planos foram concretizados para a realização deste significativo evento internacional, que ocorreu em março de 2015. Este evento, que reuniu as maiores lideranças reformadas do globo e incluiu, além das sessões de negócios da Assembleia Geral, outros eventos paralelos (conferências, pregações, seminários), teve participação de destaque da IPB. Registre-se que quatro membros da IPB fazem atualmente parte do Conselho Deliberativo da WRF: Os Revs. Davi Charles Gomes e Mauro F. Meister; os presbíteros Rinaldo Lotti e Solano Portela, sendo que este último foi eleito vice-presidente do Conselho Deliberativo da WRF, em 2015. A CRIE apresentou os agradecimentos à IPB, pelo apoio recebido, que possibilitou a realização desse encontro. Em 2016 os representantes da IPB estiveram presentes

na reunião anual do Conselho Deliberativo da Fraternidade (*Board of Directors*), que se realizou em Jakarta, Indonésia.

Em março de 2016 faleceu o Presidente da WRF, Rev. Rick Perrin. Nos dias 22 e 23 de abril de 2016 o Presidente da CRIE, Rev. Davi Charles Gomes e o Pb. Solano Portela, viajaram para Lancaster, Pennsylvania, para representar a IPB nos funerais. O Rev. Rick Perrin foi um grande amigo e apoiador da IPB e deu preciosa contribuição à causa da fé reformada, em escala mundial.

O Pb. Solano Portela, na ocasião vice-presidente, foi levado a assumir a Presidência da WRF, posição que ocupou até o mês de outubro de 2016, quando problemas de saúde (agravamento de problemas passados) o levaram a renunciar a algumas atividades, entre as quais a essa presidência. Ela foi assumida pelo vice-presidente recém-eleito, Rev. **Rob Norris**, conhecido pregador, Ex-pastor da 4ª Igreja Presbiteriana de Bethesda, nas cercanias da Capital Norte-Americana.

Em 28 de outubro de 2017, o Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes assumiu responsabilidades maiores na WRF, como Diretor Internacional e CEO, conforme já havia sido aprovado na Reunião do Conselho Deliberativo da WRF, realizada em Jakarta, em março de 2016. A posse se deu na reunião do Conselho realizada em Wittenberg, na Alemanha, de 25 a 30 de outubro de 2017, concomitantemente à Conferência Reformada à qual compareceram dois representantes específicos da CRIE: Pbs. Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela, além dos demais integrantes da CRIE e representantes da IPB, como os Revs. Roberto Brasileiro e Juarez Marcondes Filho, que tiveram sua viagem custeadas por outras fontes. A eleição do Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes para essa atuação, na WRF, consolida ainda mais a já existente influência da IPB no campo reformado mundial.

Em 2019 a WRF realizou a sua Assembleia Geral na Indonésia, à qual compareceram (pela IPB) os Revs. Davi Charles Gomes e Mauro F. Meister (palestrantes na concomitante Conferência – “Stormy Seas”) e os Presbíteros Antonio Cabrera, Adonias Silveira e Solano Portela. O Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes já ocupava em tempo parcial a função de executivo principal (CEO) da WRF. Atualmente (2022) a WRF tem 73 membros denominacionais (em 30 países), 54 membros congregacionais (em 26 países), 114 membros organizacionais (em 30 países), e 374 membros individuais (em 53 países). Nessas quatro categorias a WRF abrange pelo menos 61 nações. Seu Conselho Deliberativo é composto de 32 membros, 6 dos quais são oficiais da IPB. Em outubro de 2019, o Rev. Davi Charles passou a dedicar-se à WRF em tempo integral. A Assembleia Geral, inicialmente projetada para ser realizada na Coreia em 2020 e, depois, em 2021, foi suspensa mais de uma vez, em função da pandemia, mas está projetada para ser realizada em outubro de 2022, nos Estados Unidos.

CONCLUSÃO E PROPOSTA DE RESOLUÇÃO DO SC/IPB-2022



Neste quadriênio 2018-2022 continuamos, como Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas da IPB, impelidos pelo senso de dever cristão, sabendo que é importante para a denominação que suas relações com outros que avançam o Reino de Deus sejam continuamente cuidadas e fortalecidas, recebendo as bênçãos provenientes do dar e receber.

Concluimos este relatório com uma PROPOSTA DE RESOLUÇÃO, submetendo-a à apreciação da Igreja reunida neste Supremo Concílio 2022. Rogamos a Deus que por intermédio deste mesmo Concílio manifeste claramente, quanto a essas propostas e demais resoluções, a que a sua boa e soberana vontade se manifeste claramente para a Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, no Reino de Seu Filho e nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo e à Sua Igreja espalhada por sobre a face da terra:

PROPOSTA

QUANTO À ADMINISTRAÇÃO DOS RELACIONAMENTOS ECLESIASTICOS:

Considerando as informações relatadas no Relatório Quadrienal da CRIE a este SC/IPB-2022,

A IPB resolve determinar à CRIE-IPB:

1. *Manter* nos mesmos níveis os relacionamentos inter-eclesiásticos:

Manutenção em Nível 1 - Contato ecumênico (*Ecumenical Contact*), ou Igrejas Relacionadas (*relating churches*):

- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA – **PCAU**
- WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA – **WPCA**
- IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DO CHILE – **IPCH**
- IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE MOÇAMBIQUE – **IPM**
- IGLESIA PRESBITERIANA EN PARAGUAY – **IPP**
- AASHISH PRESBYTERIAN MINISTRIES – **APM** (NEPAL)

Manutenção em Nível 2 - Relacionamento Correspondente (*corresponding relations*):

- IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DE ANGOLA – **IPA**
- GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN IN NEDERLAND (VRIJGEMAAKT) – **GKV**
- REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE – **RPCCEE**.

Manutenção em Nível 3 - Igrejas Irmãs (*sister churches*), Relações Fraternas (*fraternal relations*) ou Comunhão Eclesiástica Plena (*full ecclesiastical communion*):

- IGLESIA NACIONAL PRESBITERIANA DE MEXICO – **INPM**

- EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – **EPC**
- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA – **PCA**
- ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – **OPC**
- REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA – **RCSA** (GKZA)

2. Ampliar o nível de relacionamento inter-eclesiástico:

De Nível 2 (Correspondente – *Corresponding Relations*), para Nível 3 (Igreja Irmã – *Sister Church*):

- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KOREA (HAP THONG) – **PCKh**
- GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – NEW ZEALAND – **GPC**

3. Descontinuar os contatos, mesmo em nível ecumênico:

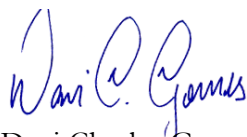
Descontinuar do Nível 1 - Contato ecumênico a BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – BPC.

4. Continuar apoiando o trabalho realizado pela World Reformed Fellowship - **WRF**, como membro fundador que é a IPB, e que conta com o envolvimento da liderança da IPB, determinando à Tesouraria da IPB que igualmente apoie e efetive as respectivas e costumeiras ofertas anuais a esta Instituição.

Em conclusão, é nossa esperança termos cumprido com fidelidade nossa função de assessoria ao Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, como definido no art. 1º do Regimento Interno da CRIE-IPB: “A CRIE é uma comissão da IPB que tem como objetivo estabelecer e manter relacionamentos e convênios inter-eclesiásticos, no Brasil e no Exterior, mediante a aprovação do SC, e nos interregnos da CE-SC”.

Este relatório, foi circulado eletronicamente pela CRIE entre seus membros, e recebeu aprovação de envio à Secretaria Executiva da IPB. Ele contém tanto as informações das atividades no quadriênio 2018-2022, quanto as avaliações particulares a cada relacionamento iniciado, mantido ou aprofundado. Nossas avaliações devem ser restritas às relações e às instituições relacionadas, não nos cabendo avaliar nossos esforços como CRIE, exceto quanto à intenção de fidelidade com a qual procuramos, na dependência da graça divina, cumprir nosso mandato.

Fazemos este encaminhamento em espírito de humildade e franca dependência da graça do Deus Soberano, que sozinho pode fazer prosperar qualquer ação em prol de seu Reino.



Davi Charles Gomes
Presidente da CRIE/IPB



Solano Portela
Secretário da CRIE/IPB

ANEXOS

Relação de ANEXOS: As páginas seguintes contêm os anexos indicados no texto deste Relatório Quadrienal CRIE 2018-2022 e que estão abaixo relacionados:

1. ANEXO 1 – Regimento Interno da CRIE.
2. ANEXO 2 – Carta da BBK/GKV, convidando a IPB a realização de Conferência.
3. ANEXO 3 – Carta Resposta da IPB à BBK.
4. ANEXO 4 – Carta da BPC à IPB condenando resolução do SC/IPB-2018 – Original em inglês
5. ANEXO 5 – Carta da BPC à IPB – Tradução para o Português.
6. ANEXO 6 – Resposta da IPB à BPC – Original em inglês.
7. ANEXO 7 – Resposta da IPB à BPC – Tradução para o Português.
8. ANEXO 8 – Carta de Agradecimento à OPC.
9. ANEXO 09 – Carta da Grace Presbyterian Church (GPC - New Zealand) – solicitando Relações Correspondentes com a IPB (Nível 2).
10. ANEXO 10 – Carta-convite da GPC, para a AGO, em outubro de 2019.
11. ANEXO 11 – Carta da Igreja Presbiteriana Conservadora, anexando outras correspondências.
12. ANEXO 12 – Carta do Presbitério de Pinheiros sobre o recebimento da Igreja Presbiteriana chilena “Cristo Mi Pastor”.
13. ANEXO 13 – Carta da Igreja Presbiteriana do Japão, convidando à AGO.
14. ANEXO 14 – Carta-convite das Igrejas Reformadas da Holanda (GKV-BBK), para a AGO.
15. ANEXO 15 – Carta de confirmação e posicionamento da CRIE/IPB, à GKV.
16. ANEXO 16 – Carta da Igreja Reformada na Holanda (Libertada - GKv) à IPB, em resposta a expediente anterior nosso, anexando decisões do Sínodo Geral 2020 da denominação.
17. ANEXO 17 – Documento da Igreja Reformada da Holanda (GKv), com o teor completo da decisão do Sínodo Geral 2020 sobre ordenação feminina de oficiais.
18. ANEXO 18 – Carta da Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE).
19. ANEXO 19 – Proposta de resolução da CE/IPB-2021 aprovando a ascensão do nível de relacionamento com a RPCCEE de nível 1 para nível 2.
20. ANEXO 20 – Carta da Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia (Hap-Tong), convidando para sua AG 2021 e solicitando informações da IPB.
21. ANEXO 21 – Carta à Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia (Hap-Tong), agradecendo o convite e prestando as informações solicitadas.
22. ANEXO 22 – Carta das Igrejas Reformadas da África do Sul (RCSA), explanando situação da pandemia e solicitando doações.
23. ANEXO 23 – Resposta à RCSA, informando sobre a terrível situação interna do Brasil e posicionando sobre a impossibilidade de atendimento, nesta ocasião.

24. ANEXO 24 – Correspondência enviada à GKV (22.09.2021).
25. ANEXO 25 – Texto básico das cartas-convite enviadas às Igrejas (21.12.2021).
26. ANEXO 26 – Texto sugerido de Resolução da CE/IPB-2020 sobre a Bible Presbyterian Church.
27. ANEXO 27 – Texto sugerido de Resolução da CE/IPB-2020 sobre estabelecimento de relacionamento eclesial com a Grace Presbyterian Church (NZ), e de incremento de nível com a Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia (Hap-Tong), para nível 2.
28. ANEXO 28 – Publicação da BBK (GKV), contendo referências aos efeitos da decisão de ordenação feminina ao oficialato.
29. ANEXO 29 – Posição da CRIE/IPB após reunião com a APMT sobre Igrejas Autóctones.
30. ANEXO 30 – Carta enviada à RPCCEE sobre contato ecumênico.
31. ANEXO 31 – Carta enviada à RPCCEE sobre *upgrade* do contato.
32. ANEXO 32 – Carta à Igreja Presbiteriana da Coreia (Hap-Thong), complementando informações prestadas no ANEXO 21 e convidando para o SC/IPB-2022.

CE-95/057

COMISSÃO DE RELACÕES INTER-ECLESIÁSTICAS

REGIMENTO INTERNO

CAPÍTULO I

Da natureza

ART. 1º A CRIE é uma comissão da IPB que tem como objetivo estabelecer e manter relacionamentos e convênios inter-eclesiásticos, no Brasil e no Exterior, mediante a aprovação do SC, e nos interregnos da CE-SC.

ART. 2º A CRIE é constituída de cinco membros, sendo o Presidente e SE/SC, membros natos e os outros três membros, eleitos pelo SC, quadrienalmente.

Parágrafo único. O Supremo Concílio elegerá três membros suplentes a serem convocados na ordem que forem eleitos.

CAPÍTULO II

Da competência

Art. 3º Compete à CRIE:

- I – representar a IPB junto às Igrejas com as quais o SC tenha aprovado relacionamento;
- II – propor e intermediar projetos com as Igrejas identificadas na alínea “T”, deste artigo, em favor das entidades da IPB que solicitarem apoio;
- III – reunir-se com as comissões congêneres das Igrejas convencidas de acordo com as diretrizes aprovadas em comum acordo;
- IV – reunir-se trimestralmente, em caráter ordinário, em datas fixadas pela própria comissão, e em caráter extraordinário, sempre que se fizer necessário;
- V – prestar Relatório anual à CE-SC e quatrienalmente ao SC, de suas atividades;
- VI – receber e encaminhar, sempre que possível, na forma estabelecida nos convênios, os projetos das diversas entidades às Igrejas conveniadas, através das respectivas comissões;
- VII – manter a Mesa da CE-SC informada de tudo o que se lhe refere, no que tange aos convênios, suas juntas, comissões e autarquias;
- VIII – coordenar, com apoio da tesouraria da IPB, os recursos financeiros e sua aplicação;
- IX – eleger, bianualmente, sua mesa;
- X – apresentar à Junta Patrimonial, Econômica e Financeira sua proposta orçamentária, na data própria;
- XI – eleger membros para representá-la, quando se tratar de reuniões conjuntas, de acordo com as disponibilidades financeiras, anualmente;
- XII – hospedar os representantes de outras Igrejas, quando se tratar de reuniões no Brasil;
- XIII – designar coordenadores para promoções de intercâmbio e outras, quando necessário;
- XIV – manter as instituições, juntas e comissões, informadas quando se tratar de seus projetos, e receber informações das mesmas sobre o desenvolvimento dos projetos aprovados, até a sua conclusão.

Art. 4º Os contatos com quaisquer Igrejas ou Instituições no exterior, devem ser feitos através da CRIE e/ou com seu conhecimento.

CAPÍTULO III **Da diretoria**

Art. 5º Poderá a CRIE, se necessário, convidar representantes das entidades da IPB, beneficiadas por projetos de apoio, para comparecerem às reuniões conjuntas com as congêneres, a fim de prestar e receber esclarecimentos.

Art. 6º A CRIE planificará as atividades em parceria com as Igrejas conveniadas, independentemente de solicitações de entidades da IPB.

Art. 7º A CRIE funciona sob coordenação de sua Mesa, constituída de Presidente, Vice-Presidente e Secretário, eleitos bianalmente;

§ 1º Compete ao Presidente:

- a) convocar e presidir as reuniões da CRIE;
- b) representar a CRIE;
- c) prestar Relatórios.

§ 2º Compete ao Vice-Presidente substituir o Presidente em suas faltas e impedimentos.

§ 3º Compete ao Secretário:

- a) fazer a correspondência da CRIE;
- b) lavrar, transcrever e arquivar as atas das suas reuniões;
- c) distribuir cópia das atas aos membros;
- d) elaborar os relatórios anual à CE-SC/IPB e quadrienal ao SC/IPB.

§ 4º Compete ao 2º Secretário:

- a) organizar e ter sob sua guarda os arquivos da CRIE;
- b) manter o cadastro das Igrejas e Instituições Conveniadas;
- c) acompanhar a execução de cada projeto;

§ 5º Os membros da Mesa poderão ser reeleitos, findos seus mandatos, bianalmente.

Art. 8º Qualquer membro que tiver impedimento para comparecer às reuniões da CRIE, deve avisar ao Presidente, com tempo suficiente para convocação do suplente.

CAPÍTULO IV **Da reforma**

Art. 9º Este Regimento poderá ser reformado por proposta da CRIE, aprovada pela CE-SC/IPB ou pelo SC.

CAPÍTULO V **Das disposições finais**

Art. 10 São nulas, de pleno direito, quaisquer disposições e resoluções, que, no todo em parte, implícita ou expressamente, contrariarem ou ferirem a Constituição da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil.

Art. 11 Este Regimento entrará em vigor, após sua aprovação pela CE-SC.



deputaten **Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken**
Committee on relations with churches abroad of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 02

To Igrejas Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB),
Comissão de Relações Inter-Eclesiásticas (CRIE)
For the attention of rev Solano Protela, secretaris
Av. Angélica, 1777, Ap. 11, São Paulo, SP, Brazil 01227 - 200
Email: solano@mackenzie.br; solano@terra.com.br

Zwolle, 2 May 2018

Re: request for your cooperation to organize an International Conference on Hermeneutics

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The issues around hermeneutics play an important role in meetings between Churches of Reformed Confession worldwide. Within our Churches (RCN), the decisions on M/F and Office are an example. Also, there are discussions on how to deal with questions regarding the subject of homosexuality.

As sister Churches, we maintain international relationships in order to inform and support each other. We have been looking for ways to put that into practice, when it comes to reflecting on questions as mentioned above. In our mandate as Deputies for Relations with Foreign Churches, it is stated that we, in consultation with our counterparts from Churches abroad, are to invest in organizing international conferences on important issues and matters that regard us as Churches worldwide.

We would therefore gladly support the organization of an International Conference on this issue, together with other Churches of Reformed Confession. As we share our ideas with you in this letter, we are fully open to any suggestions and input from your side.

- 1) In order to prevent a conference from being a meeting of a few specialists, who deliberate on the issue of hermeneutics on a scientific level, we prefer a more practical approach. The question is: How does the authority of the Word of God function? How do the Churches deal with this authority? What can we learn from each other in this regard?
- 2) We can see how it would be beneficial to analyze a number of decisions within various Churches on the subjects of homosexuality and M/F and Office in the setting of a conference, in order to find out in what way Churches base their decisions on the Word of God.
- 3) We would like to prevent a conference to focus only on the recent decisions of our Synod. The GKv have made certain decisions, but other Churches have as well, or are currently discussing issues and may be on their way to make decisions. It would be a good thing not to have all guns pointed at the GKv, but to consider the question how to help each other with what each of us has learned from the process we went through.
- 4) In such a conference, experiences could be exchanged. What have we learned as different Churches, and what can we share with each other from the discussions we have had and from the decisions we have made?

- 5) It could also be beneficial to reflect on the question, what it means to be male or female in a certain context. What position do churches take, not only when it comes to the Offices, but also when it comes to marriage, and to how men and women interact in general? How does this then relate to what the Bible says on this subject? To what extent does context play a role in our decisions?

Regarding the organization of a conference, we consider some possibilities. But again, we are open to your ideas.

- 6) We would prefer not to organize such a conference by ourselves as GKv, but rather to do this in cooperation with some Reformed/Presbyterian Churches from different continents, in order to build each other up from different contexts.
- 7) A conference would not necessarily have to take place in the Netherlands. We would actually prefer to meet in another continent. What could be expected from the GKv, would be that we play an active role in organizing such a conference. We would also be willing to contribute financially.
- 8) We would like to invite our sister Churches and our contact Churches to this Conference. Each Church would of course be free to decide to participate or not. We would however like to see Churches that do choose to participate, to also contribute in content.

Our question is if you would be willing and able to organize such a Conference with us, and with some other churches worldwide.

Also, would you perhaps be willing to host this Conference?

We would like to organize this Conference in the first half of 2019. Depending on reactions, we could set up a three- or four-day program.

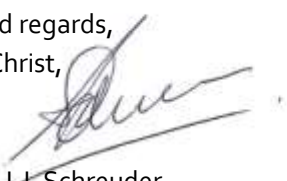
We look forward to your response. We would really appreciate you to think with us and to help us organize such an international possibility for reflection. Of course, we are also available for any questions that might occur with this letter. In that case, we ask you to contact our office.

If possible, we would like to receive an answer by July 1, 2018. We will need some time to process your responses, and would like to decide by September 1, 2018, whether it is a go or a no go.

This same request to organize this Conference with us, we have also sent to the VGKSA and GKSA (both South Africa), KPCK (Korea), RCJ (Japan), EPCEW (United Kingdom) and GKT (Indonesia). We assume these Churches also to be interested in further reflection on the subject of this Conference.

We wish you the blessings of the Lord in everything.

Kind regards,
in Christ,



rev J.J. Schreuder,
General Secretary BBK

deputaten **B**etrekkingen **B**uitenlandse **K**erken
committee on relations with churches abroad of the Reformed churches in The Netherlands

P.O. BOX 499
T: (+31) (0) 38 427 0 470

8000 AL ZWOLLE
E: info@bbk.nl

THE NETHERLANDS
W: www.bbk.gkv.nl

São Paulo, 28th of May, 2018

Rev. J. J. Schreuder,
General Secretary Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken (BBK)
Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKV)
PO Box 499 – 8000 AL ZWOLLE – The Netherlands
info@bbk.nl

Dear Rev. Schreuder, Grace and Peace!

Thank you for your letter of May 2, 2018, and we hereby acknowledge your invitation to participate in the organization of an International Conference on Hermeneutics and perhaps even hosting it. We appreciate the invitation, but, after prayerful consultation, CRIE-IPB has decided to decline this participation for the following reasons:

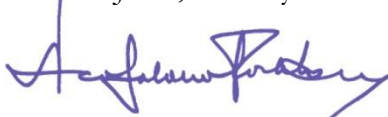
- For our denomination, the question of female ordination is a matter hermeneutically resolved. The Word of God does not open this door in the administration of the Church of Christ, and this differentiation of roles does not imply any connotation of female inferiority.
- In our last participation in the GKV General Synod, in April 2017, as well as in that of 2014 – three years before, we made the IPB position on this subject very clear.
- In addition, we see no benefit for the Kingdom in the discussion of the various interpretations that may be made of the biblical texts on homosexuality. The practical result of this is simply to cast doubt on the propriety and pertinence of the clear passages of Scripture dealing with the differentiation between the two sexes that our Creator God built into humanity.

We also would like to use this opportunity to make clear how the handling of these issues by the GKV have an influence on our relationship. We also believe that you, our brethren, should not be ignorant of the steps that lie ahead. Thus, we inform you that CRIE is recommending to the General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*) of IPB that will meet from July 22 to 29, 2018, the step-down of the ecclesiastical relationship between IPB with the GKV.

That is – the change will be a move **from** Sister Church Relationship (level 3) **to** Correspondent Church Relationship (level 2). This is necessary precisely because our GKV brethren declined to listen to numerous warnings, to not follow this course of having women ordained as church officers, and inserting that in your ecclesiastical standards. Your decision, in our understanding, subordinates Scripture to cultural context, not only taking into consideration historical aspects, but also having contemporary pressures speaking louder and higher than the clarity of biblical texts. Admonitions to this end were made both by the IPB and by the overwhelming majority of the Reformed denominations that sent representatives to your Synods.

Our prayer and sincere desire is that you, our brethren, may rethink the hermeneutical course on which the GKV has embarked, and return to the biblical-historical view, and that we may, in the near future, have our relationship return to the fraternal denominational level (level 3).

In Christ Jesus, our only Lord and Savior, I am, yours, in the bonds of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations

DRAFT

Interchurch Relations Committee (CRIE)
Igreja Presbiteriana Biblica
Attn: Davi Gomes, Solano Portela, et al.

CRIE

2018-2022

ANEXO 04

Dear Fathers and Brethren,

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are writing to you on behalf of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod, which has approved this communication.

We thank you for establishing a Level 2 relationship with our Synod. We have appreciated the opportunity to work with you in the ministry there in Brazil. As part of our relationship, we have committed to communicate with you about major decisions that may affect our fellowship and ministry with one another. Towards that end, we rejoice in many aspects of your recent Supreme Council. We are thankful for your commitment to global missions, to theological education, and to the support of joint ministries. We are also thankful for your recent action regarding the Reformed Church of the Netherlands in rebuking them for their recent actions taken to ordain women to the ministry. We have this week prayed for God's blessing and direction for your denomination both in our churches and in our Synod. Though not present, we have followed with interest the actions of your Supreme Council. Documents published from your Council, as well as recordings of the meetings, have given us a better understanding of what is taking place than we were able to achieve during our last visit.

As you can anticipate, we are sure, a number of those actions have caused grave concern among the members of our Synod. Namely:

- (1) *Permitting women to preach.* The report of the Permanent Committee for Interpretation of Question 158 of the Larger Catechism states:

“Whereas:

- 1) The matter was arising from document CLIX of the Executive Committee of the Supreme Council 2012 that answered a consultation about women preaching the Corporate Worship in light of Question 158 for the LC and sent to this subcommittee in Document 118 by the Executive Committee of the Supreme Council – IPB;
- 2) That, the report was suitable according to Presbyterian principles;
- 3) That, there is agreement with the decision from the Executive Committee in these items: ‘3, assure that officers and seminary students are included in the answer to question 158/LC, under the supervision of the pastor;’ ‘4, declare that, in exceptional cases, when there are no officers and under the authorization of the Pastor (art. 31) it is permitted to women to preach.’

“The Supreme Council answer:

“Approve fully the Report, with the following comments:

- a. Forbid that the pulpits from the IPB be opened to ordained women in any office from other denominations;
- b. Reaffirm former decisions from the Supreme Council that forbids women's ordination to offices in the IPB.”

While we commend the stated commitment to refuse ordination to women, the instruction of Paul to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:11, 12) precludes any validity to the decision to allow women to preach at all in the corporate worship of the Church, extraordinary circumstances or not. The Apostle provides for no such exceptions.

(2) *Response to the "Neo Puritans."*

"The Supreme Council/IPB – 2018 resolves:

3. To appoint a permanent commission to examine the extension of the damages that the practices of the Neo-Puritan movement have caused in the Presbyterian churches. This commission will write a pastoral letter to guide the IPB regarding the Neo-Puritan practices that have shaken up the health and unity of the church. This commission is to present a partial report to the Executive Committee of the Supreme Council and the full report to the Supreme Council in 2022."

The fact that the Supreme Council has already presumed the guilt of those labelled as Neo-Puritans, without a manifest willingness to consider their own culpabilities in any alleged damages to the churches, is troubling. Though there may be overzealousness on the part of some of the adherents to that point of view, the same may be said of any group, and does not discount the value of considering the validity of positions that, on the surface at least, are a calling of the Church to biblically confessional faith and practice. Such a calling is always appropriate, and should not be discouraged if you wish to continue on a course of reformation and faithfulness.

(3) Lastly, unjustifiable *actions on the floor* that repudiated ordination vows of church officers, specifically, a high official in the Church publicly demeaning the confessional standards as non-binding, and many in the Body showing a disregard of the teaching of the Scriptures (including the reading of pertinent passages) when those Scriptures contradicted the direction in which the Church leadership wished to move. The Body should have rebuked those actions.

We entered our relationship with you seven years ago at your invitation in order to help you continue your internal reformation. These actions seem to be backwards steps in that reformation. For example, while it was known that in rare cases a woman might have filled a pulpit under the authority of a minister, your Supreme Council has now sanctioned that unbiblical practice by Sessions and ministers. These things seem inconsistent with your expressed desires to us.

Accordingly, we are seeking your advice on how to proceed in our relationship in a way that will assist you in correcting these significant deviations from your testimony of adherence to orthodox faith and practice. We are deeply concerned for your Church and its testimony. If these deviations remain uncorrected, it will jeopardize our future relationship, which would grieve us deeply. It is our intention to review our relationship with the IPB at the next stated meeting of our General Synod. We realize that it may be difficult with your schedule to conveniently formulate a response and require some action from your committee, but we beg you, of the sake of the gravity of the issues involved, that you make every effort to do so, or we will be forced to reconsider our relationship.

Assuring you of our prayers,

The Interchurch Relations Committee of the Bible Presbyterian Church, General Synod

Kevin Backus, Chairman

Queridos pais e amigos,

Saudações no Nome do Senhor Jesus Cristo,

Estamos escrevendo para vocês em nome da Igreja Presbiteriana Bíblica, o Sínodo Geral, que aprovou esta comunicação.

Nós agradecemos por terem estabelecido um relacionamento de Nível 2 com o nosso Sínodo. Nós valorizamos a oportunidade de trabalhar no ministério junto vocês aí no Brasil. Como parte do nosso relacionamento, nos comprometemos a sempre comunicar a vocês as decisões importantes que podem afetar nossa fraternidade e ministério em conjunto. Com esse propósito, muitas coisas nos alegraram com respeito a sua última reunião do Supremo Concílio. Ficamos gratos por ver o seu compromisso com as missões em nível global, com a importância da educação teológica, e com o apoio de outros ministérios. Também estamos gratos por sua decisão com respeito à Igreja Reformada da Holanda em repreendê-los por terem recentemente trabalhado em favor da ordenação de mulheres ao ministério. Durante essa semana, nós oramos tanto em nossas igrejas locais como em nosso Sínodo pedindo a bênção e a orientação de Deus para a sua denominação. Embora não estivemos presentes, acompanhamos com interesse as ações do seu Supremo Concílio. Documentos que foram publicados pelo próprio Supremo Concílio, bem como gravações das reuniões, nos deram uma compreensão do que está acontecendo melhor do que a que tivemos durante nossa última visita.

Como vocês certamente podem imaginar, várias decisões tomadas causaram grande preocupação entre os membros do nosso Sínodo. Cito algumas:

- (1) *Permissão para mulheres pregarem.* O relatório da “Comissão Permanente de Interpretação da Pergunta 158 do Catecismo Maior” afirma:

“Considerando

- 1) Que, o assunto teve origem com o documento CLIX da CE/SC - 2012 que respondia a uma consulta sobre mulheres pregando em culto público à luz da pergunta 158 do C.M., e encaminhado a essa subcomissão pelo Doc. 118 pela CE/SC-IPB;
- 2) Que, no relatório apresentado, se constata idoneidade na resolução adotada dentro dos princípios presbiterianos;
- 3) Que, existe concordância com a decisão da CE/SC-IPB, especialmente em seus itens: ‘3) Assegurar que oficiais e seminaristas estão incluídos na resposta à pergunta 158/C.M, sob a supervisão do pastor (art.31, alínea ‘d’ da CI/IPB);’ do item ‘4) Declarar que, em casos excepcionais, ou seja, na ausência de oficiais, e sob a autorização do pastor (art.31, alínea ‘d’ da CI/IPB), é permitido às mulheres pregar.’

O SC/IPB - 2018 Resolve:

Aprovar o relatório em seus termos, com as seguintes observações:

- a. Proibir que os púlpitos da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil sejam ocupados por mulheres ordenadas a qualquer ofício em outras denominações;
- b. Reafirmar decisões anteriores do SC/IPB que proíbem a ordenação de mulheres aos ofícios da IPB;”

Enquanto nós louvamos o compromisso firmado contra a ordenação feminina, a instrução dada por Paulo a Timóteo (1 Timóteo 2:11, 12) invalida em termos absolutos qualquer decisão que permita as mulheres pregarem durante o culto público, independentemente das circunstâncias, sejam elas extraordinárias ou não. O Apóstolo não abre exceções.

(2) *Resposta aos “Neopuritanos”*

“O SC/IPB - 2018 Resolve:

3. Nomear Comissão Permanente para examinar a possível extensão do dano que a prática dessas igrejas tem causado nas igrejas presbiterianas, redigindo Carta Pastoral para orientação da IPB quanto às práticas neopuritanas que tem abalado a saúde e unidade da igreja, apresentando relatório parcial a CE-SC e relatório ao SC 2022.”

O fato de que o Supremo Concílio já presumiu a culpa daqueles rotulados como neopuritanos, sem antes manifestar uma disposição para considerar suas próprias culpabilidades em quaisquer danos que foram possivelmente causados às igrejas, é preocupante. Embora possa existir excesso de zelo por parte de alguns aderentes desse grupo, o mesmo pode ser dito de qualquer outro grupo, e também isso não impede que seja considerada a validade de posições que a primeira vista estão apenas chamando da Igreja a uma fé e prática bíblica e confessional. Tal chamado é sempre apropriado, e não deve jamais ser desencorajado se é que haja um desejo de continuar no curso de reforma e da fidelidade.

- (3) Por fim, ações injustificáveis no plenário que repudiavam os votos de ordenação de oficiais da igreja, especificamente vindo de um alto oficial da Igreja que publicamente menosprezou os padrões confessionais como não-vinculantes, e muitos no plenário mostrando um desrespeito ao ensino das Escrituras (incluindo a leitura de passagens pertinentes) quando aquelas passagens contradiziam a direção que a liderança da Igreja queria seguir. O Concílio deveria ter repreendido essas ações.

Nós iniciamos o relacionamento com vocês sete anos atrás, a seu convite, a fim de ajudá-los a avançar na reforma interna. Essas decisões parecem ser um retrocesso nessa reforma. Por exemplo, embora fosse de conhecimento geral que, em casos raros, uma mulher poderia ocupar o púlpito sob a autoridade de um ministro, a partir de agora o Supremo Concílio sancionou essa prática antibíblica adotada por Conselhos locais e ministros. Esses fatos parecem inconsistentes com os anseios que vocês expressaram a nós.

Consequentemente, estamos buscando a sua orientação sobre como proceder em nosso relacionamento de uma maneira que os ajude a corrigir esses desvios significativos do seu testemunho de adesão a uma fé e prática ortodoxas. Estamos profundamente preocupados com sua Igreja e seu testemunho. Se esses desvios permanecerem sem correção, isso comprometerá nosso futuro relacionamento, o que nos entristeceria profundamente. Temos a intenção de rever nosso relacionamento com a IPB na próxima reunião do nosso Sínodo Geral. Compreendemos que possa ser difícil, com a sua agenda de compromissos, formular uma resposta conveniente e exigir alguma ação da sua comissão, mas nós lhe imploramos, em nome da gravidade das questões envolvidas, que você faça todos os esforços para fazê-lo, caso contrário seremos forçados a reconsiderar o nosso relacionamento.

Estamos orando por vocês,

Comitê de Relações Inter-eclesiais da Igreja Presbiteriana Bíblica, Sínodo Geral

Kevin Backus, Presidente

São Paulo, 17th of August, 2018

Rev. Dr. Kevin Backus
Committee of Inter-Church Relations
Bible Presbyterian Church
1650 Love Rd
Grand Island, NY 14072
USA
kevmbacus@aol.com

Dear Brothers of the Bible Presbyterian Church

Grace and Peace!

This is to acknowledge, formally, reception of your DRAFT, sent through e-mail of August 7, 2018 (below), with indication that it contains the resolution that unanimously passed through your Interchurch Relations Committee, as well as through the General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church, held this month in the city of Lakeland, FL, USA. It has been circulated among all members of the Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations (CRIE) of the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). Even though your e-mail says that the General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*) of our denomination was commended, the DRAFT actually contains a reproach. We deeply regret that both your Committee as well as the BPC General Synod were led to act upon hearsay and divisive comments, mostly acquired through social media. We are sad also that, in its response, the BPC chose to go beyond the limits that should define Level 2 Relations (Corresponding Relations).

We lament that, even though invited to be present in our General Assembly, the BPC decided that it was not possible to come (we understand that this was due to the proximity of our two councils, which also hindered our participation in your General Synod). Nevertheless, this did not deter BPC's Interchurch Relations Committee from dealing with such important subjects based on secondary and, ultimately, untrustworthy sources. We are disappointed that we did not receive the brotherly courtesy of previous consultation before coming to your conclusions, and that you assumed exhaustive knowledge of these issues, pontificating about internal affairs of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB). Together with this serious measure, you continue by revealing a possible absence of desire to progress further with the relationship that has been so painstakingly constructed between bodies that, from our perspective, continue to share the deepest appreciation for God's Word.

Undue distribution

The letter you sent (which contains some items that were built on assumptions, edited recordings and hearsay) BEFORE being officially acknowledged and officially answered by our denomination, has ALREADY been widely circulating in IPB pastor social media groups. This is clearly a total breach of Christian Ethics and much beneath what anyone can expect of a healthy relationship between churches. We can only conjecture who did this and we are sorry that people with irregular denominational ties and with total disregard to proper channels can gravitate unpunished in our midst.

This is not the way to deal with possible disagreements, in a Christian manner. One cannot expect to achieve changes through social media. Friends talk to each other first. Time must be allowed to permit those appointed to represent the denominations to interact and respond before issues and decisions are taken and then further distributed. It has been said that your DRAFT is a public record (thus a document that can

circulate), but this should not apply to a denomination-to-denomination letter, nor permit that a member of the council distribute it to foster his cause with questionable intentions and, consequently, harmful results.

The three issues

CRIE-IPB will proceed to respond to the issues presented in your DRAFT in the order that they appear:

1. **“Permitting women to preach”** – The BPC received a transcript of the IPB resolution that contained this subject, but your discussions and the decision were taken before receiving officially this document. “Permitting women to preach” is not the title of the decision, nor does it reflect the emphasis that it is intended to have. The IPB decision has been properly quoted in the DRAFT, but the BPC chose to ignore that it is a *restrictive* decision, not a *permissive* one. In our e-mail of August 6, 2018, through which we sent the resolution, we commented, about this document:

This resolution can be seen from two different angles – from the standpoint that allows women, in exceptional circumstances (absence of pastors or elders, such as in a mission field situation) to preach; or understanding that it is a RESTRICTIVE measure – that which was possible to attain, in an Assembly of over 1200 delegates, which establishes and reaffirms scriptural limits, in a clearer fashion than before.

We will not go into a lengthy discussion or labor here in presenting again points of the original overture, trying to substantiate the decision. It is, granted, a complex matter, which involves other biblical passages besides 1 Timothy 2:11-12, cited in your DRAFT. But it is obvious that your Committee was induced to concentrate on the half-truth “Permitting women to preach”, instead of looking upon the whole *restrictive* picture. The decision clearly states that this preaching is in “exceptional cases” and “when there are no officers.”

An **example** of this might be in a mission field situation, such as we have had, in Brazil, with **Bible Presbyterian** missionaries Evelyn Moulton (1917-1983) and Margaret Harden (1916-1979), with their blessed labor for the Kingdom, in the hinterlands of Northeast Brazil and in São Paulo. They frequently preached the word and spread the glorious Gospel of Jesus – to old and young, not only on an individual basis, but also in joint worship with those being evangelized or disciplined by them.

In addition, the IPB decision clearly:

- a. Forbids that pulpits of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil be occupied by women ordained to any [church] office by other denominations;
- b. Reaffirms previous decisions of the General Assembly – IPB, that forbid ordination of women to offices of IPB.

Certainly, this is a manifestation of a Church that is fighting the good fight, and striving to adhere to biblical directives, concerning this point. It is far from the “significant deviations” from our testimony, or lack of “adherence to orthodox faith and practice,” as your DRAFT literally accuses the IPB.

2. **Response to the “Neo Puritans”** – Your DRAFT quotes part of a resolution of the IPB that appoints a Permanent Commission to assess damages that have been caused to the IPB by Neo-Puritan movements, *with the purpose of writing a pastoral letter to our denomination to preserve the health and unity of the church.*

You take issue with that, and a strange interest in the matter, inferring IPB’s culpability and proceeding to embark on a staunch defense of brethren of this persuasion, some of which have been

causing disturbance in our midst. Nevertheless, your DRAFT states that the activities of the Brazilian Neo-Puritans are merely “a calling of the Church to biblically confessional faith and practice.”

This is especially disheartening, and bewildering, for during the past years CRIE has been presenting the Bible Presbyterians as a **non**-neo-puritan denomination. We perceived you as a church faithful to the Westminster Standards, and one that saw nothing wrong with choirs, singing of hymns and songs besides the Psalms, and using instruments in public worship, nor with Christmas observance, just to mention a few neo-puritan tenets. In our understanding, the Bible Presbyterian Church did not consider that these practices contradict the regulatory principle of worship. Are we now to conclude that these perspectives, some of which characterize the divisive neo-puritans practices in our midst, now receive the support of the BPC and are considered “a calling of the Church to biblically confessional faith and practice?” This impels our denominational relationship backwards, and one can only wonder whether, if you had similar pressures and a divisive group in your midst, you would not also not come to such a position of assessing and guiding the situation within your churches. We can only conclude, benevolently appraising, that you are being grossly misled by some people in your ranks, or by your network of contacts in Brazil. Certainly it hasn't been through official and documental sources that you could have come to such a conclusion.

Just so that you can evaluate how we have been presenting the BPC to some of our pastors that made inquiries to CRIE about the progress that we were making in our relationship and about possible connections of the BPC with neo-puritan movements in Brazil, this is a quote from a standard correspondence concerning this matter:

Quote from a letter presenting and defending the BPC to the President of our Regional Board of Theological Education (JURET – NO/NE), Ronildo Farias. June 27, 2015 – at 0:18 a.m.:

We have heard rumors that some IPB pastors have been spreading that the BPC is a "neo-Puritan stronghold." This situation does not correspond to the truth and we speak with full knowledge of the cause: The BPC has choirs; The BPC sings hymns, in addition to the Psalms (the Hymnal used is Trinity Hymnal, published by the OPC and used by both the OPC and the PCA); The BPC uses Musical Instruments in its worship services and gatherings; the BPC churches celebrate Christmas – These are four of the main positions that characterize Neo-Puritanism (which are against choirs, singing of any hymns other than the Psalms, instruments, and Christmas celebrations). Counseling classes that have been given by both Doug Leaman and by visitors to our denomination, such as Rev. Dr. Kevin Backus, have a biblical and nouthetic emphasis, seeing the need for responsibility and the disruptive sin factor as issues to be addressed.

The BPC has a historical pre-millennial eschatological position (also found among some IPB pastors), usually post-tribulationist. It is not dispensationalist in its theology (as you well know, it is an error to label something as dispensationalism only by scrutinizing its eschatological position, for the great hallmark of this view is its divisions, even resulting in various forms of salvation throughout history). The BPC vigorously embraces the very same Symbols of Faith (CFW + Catechism) and all the pillars of sound Reformation Theology. Its Seminary (WRF) publishes a biannual "Journal," where such matters can be verified, by the articles contained therein.

You must understand the harm done by your DRAFT in this area, where the BPC aligns itself strangely with the **Brazilian** neo-puritans. Your insensitivity to the divisiveness that such positions can cause within a Reformed denomination, and your indictment of the IPB for creating a Commission to assess and write a

pastoral letter to the churches, have left the CRIE with the almost impossible task of presenting the BPC, as above, in a favorable light. Certainly, you must have been tragically induced to take this position.

3. **Actions on the Floor** – Your DRAFT refers to discussions on the floor of our General Assembly, states that “a high official in the Church” demeaned “confessional standards,” and that others in the plenary session showed “a disregard of the teaching of the Scriptures.” It ends with an admonition to the IPB, that it “should have rebuked those actions.”

It is very strange that a correspondent denomination would deal with floor debates, which are often vigorous (Acts 15) and, granted, not always commendable, using whatever information you were non-officially fed to rebuke another body.

From our side, we can only assume that the same people that aligned the BPC with the neo-puritan movement in Brazil, furthermore used edited recording of floor debates that were posted in social media by those that seem to thrive on division. Also, that by “a high official in the Church”, you are referring to the Rev. Augustus Nicodemus, who occupied the floor in the debate and proposed amendments to the resolution. Again, the BPC is being grossly misled and, as evidence of that, we post below official statements by church officers that were engaged in the debate. Please notice the Christian spirit and character of those, and the discrepancy with the hurried rebuking of your DRAFT:

- a. **Quote from a statement by The Rev. Ageu Magalhães**, Director of one of our seminaries, who debated and voted against the Resolution (July 31, 2018):

REV. JOSAFÁ VASCONCELOS AND AUDIOS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY – IPB

Some audios of discussions at the last meeting of the Supreme Council, IPB's general assembly, are circulating on social networks causing confusion and scandal. Therefore, I decided to write the following to generate some clarification.

... The audios that are circulating in the social networks give the impression of direct debate between Rev. Josafá Vasconcelos and Rev. Augustus. This is not true. When the subject of female preaching came to the plenary more than 10 conciliar delegates discussed it. Many expounded their understanding on the issue, agreeing or disagreeing with the report. These audios, taken from their original context, only bring confusion. Assembly meetings sometimes have heated discussions. The rebuke given by the Rev. Josafá to people who were interrupting him should not surprise us. Remember the events that led to the first council meeting in Jerusalem. Luke tells us that "... this brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate: with individuals from Judea (Acts 15: 2)... ... may all evil speech cease, for the sake of Christ.

- b. **Quote from Rev. Ageu, on the role of Rev. Augustus Nicodemus** (July 30, 2018):

*... Rev. Augustus Nicodemus has unquestionably been a blessing to the church of Christ in our country. Why am I writing all this? Because, a few days ago, the name of this faithful pastor has been slandered unfairly in social networks. The Supreme Council of the IPB, the General Assembly of the denomination, made a decision on female preaching, **restricting it**, and, **because of lack of understanding of the matter**, the network has been flooded with criticism and offenses against Rev. Augustus. What few know, **because they were not there** (I was), is that Rev. Augustus stood in favor of a document that is more restrictive than the current situation, in which women have preached in the IPB. Because of Rev. Augustus's word, 2 important items were added in the resolution against female ordination.*

*Even if he were totally mistaken (and he is not), it would not be fair to attack him the way they are doing. We must attack ideas rather than people. A man who has been used by God, as Rev. Augustus has, deserves at least respect. So, I ask you, my brother, my sister, that if in the excitement of the moment and, due to the misinformation, you wrote something unfair about the Rev. Augustus, before God, delete it. As the Word of God teaches us, **let us lay aside all malice, and slander of every kind (1 Peter 2: 1)**. God bless you.*

c. Quote from the joint statement by Revs. Josafá and Augustus, concerning the discussion and the supposed offenses:

*MESSAGE FROM REVS. AUGUSTUS NICODEMUS and JOSAFÁ VASCONCELOS
“There are six things the Lord hates, ... and the seventh His soul abhors: ... he who sows strife among brethren”
(Proverbs 6: 16-19-direct translation from the Portuguese version normally used in the IPB).*

I was sad to learn of an audio that has been put together with statements by myself and Rev. Josafá Vasconcelos during the plenary discussions of the IPB Supreme Council held last week (22-28 of July 2018). The statements refer to the interpretation of question 158 of the Larger Catechism about who may preach. After much debate in the plenary session, the General Assembly approved a decision that is summarized here:

- 1) Regular preaching in the churches is performed by their officers (pastors and elders);*
- 2) Exception is made for candidates to the sacred ministry;*
- 3) Women can preach exceptionally when there is no official available to preach and always under the authority of the pastor (a decision with which the Rev. Josafá disagrees);*
- 4) Prohibition of women ordained in other denominations to occupy Presbyterian pulpits;*
- 5) Reaffirmation of all previous decisions prohibiting the ordination of women under the IPB.*

....

The speech of Rev. Josafá Vasconcelos happened well before my speech. Between his pronouncement and my speech about half a dozen pastors and elders spoke. Therefore, neither Rev. Josafá was addressing me, let alone I him. His concern and mine were and are that the IPB remain faithful to the Word of God, although we disagree with what this means in the question of women's participation in worship.

The audio that was edited gives the impression that there was a debate between the two of us, aggravated by boos and squabbles. It may not have been the intention of the one that prepared it, but the end result is slanderous, lying, evil, and has brought more destruction and schism than anything else.

I spoke today with Rev. Josafá, my long-time friend, whom I love and respect. We have differences on this subject, but we have never lacked mutual love and respect. He read this text that I wrote and authorizes me to place his name signifying his approval. Together, we regret what happened, we repudiate this audio, and we pray for the church of Christ to proceed according to the Lord's teaching, in respect and brotherly love, even when there is disagreement between us. May God have mercy on His church.

Rev. Augustus Nicodemus Lopes, Rev. Josafá Vasconcelos

What can we apprehend from the overall context and especially from the statements of the brethren above? That the leadership of the IPB, and its General Assembly, is very aware of the need to regulate important matters, placing restrictive measures upon difficult situations, and that it is trying to do this in a conciliar way, adhering to the Word of God. As such, we appreciate advice from sister denominations, and also solidarity and encouragement. The latter can come even from denominations with which we have correspondent relations, such as the BPC, but letters of reprehension, induced by divisive spirits, seem to be improper, especially when based on unofficial sources, which harbor questionable motivation, and indicate a desire to

be belligerent and not brotherly. It is difficult to dispel the feeling that the BPC is being used as a platform and leverage point for Brazilian grudges against the IPB. Especially disturbing was the unethical distribution of your DRAFT through social media, instead of dealing with the matter through official channels.

The DRAFT promoted contention and even **ends with a threat**: correct the “significant deviations” or “we will be forced to reconsider our relationship. Philippians 2:14-15 (NKJV) says *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”* And 1 Corinthians 11:16 (NKJV) reaffirms, *“But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”*

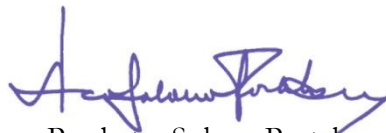
In response to your question on “how to proceed in our relationship,” we trace a quick review of where we are thus far:

1. As you properly acknowledge, contacts between BPC and IPB began seven years ago (2011), when two of our representatives of CRIE were present as observers to your General Synod.
2. From then on, we maintained Ecumenical Contact (Level 1) and exchanged delegates to our councils.
3. A Letter from the BPC, dated June 26, 2015, and signed by your stated clerk, Steven Brinegar, proposed a change in the relationship from Level 1 to Level 2 (Corresponding Relations). Specifically, the letter stated and confirmed, *“that the 78th General Synod of the Bible Presbyterian Church voted to enter into a corresponding relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil. This action took place on August 4, 2014.”*
4. We responded positively through letter on January 31, 2016 (*“We express our satisfaction for these steps and inform that we are sending the agreement of our Commission to our next Executive Committee Meeting, together with our annual report.”*).
5. The Executive Commission of April 2016 approved the move from level 1 to level 2, and we communicated this officially in your August 2016 Synod.

Considering the censorious spirit of your DRAFT and that you already appear not to deem the IPB worthy of relating to the purity present in the BPC, after consultation with all members of CRIE, we decided to suspend all contacts, until a clearer position from the BPC is received through proper channels. CRIE will then evaluate further steps, from IPB’s end, and will submit its recommendations to our Executive Commission, which will then come to a decision in due time.

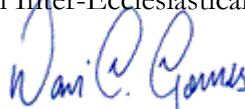
May the Lord be merciful and sustain us all, as we strive to proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and equip the saints in this dark world.

Prayerfully,



Presbyter Solano Portela

Secretary, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – CRIE/IPB



Davi Charles Gomes

President, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – CRIE/IPB

Resposta à MINUTA da BPC – TRADUÇÃO

São Paulo, 17 de agosto de 2018

Prezado Rev. Kevin Backus:

Com esta carta, reconhecemos, formalmente, o recebimento da sua MINUTA (*DRAFT*), enviado por e-mail no dia 7 de agosto de 2018 (abaixo), com indicação de que contém a resolução aprovada unanimemente por seu Comitê de Relações Inter-Eclesiásticas, bem como pelo Sínodo Geral da Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC), realizado neste mês na cidade de Lakeland, Flórida, EUA. Esta nossa carta circulou com todos os membros da Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas (CRIE) da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). Mesmo que o seu e-mail diga que o Supremo Concílio de nossa denominação foi elogiado, a sua MINUTA na verdade contém críticas. Lamentamos profundamente que tanto o seu Comitê quanto o Sínodo Geral da BPC tenham sido levados a agir com base em comentários contraditórios e cismáticos, em sua maioria obtidos através da mídia social. Ficamos tristes também que, em sua resposta, a BPC optou por ir além dos limites que deveriam definir as relações de Nível 2 (Relações Correspondentes).

Lamentamos que, embora convidado a estar presente ao nosso Supremo Concílio, a BPC decidiu que não era possível comparecer (entendemos isso pela proximidade dos dois concílios, o que também nos impediu de estar em seu Sínodo Geral). No entanto, isso não impediu o Comitê de Relações Inter-eclesiásticas da BPC de lidar com assuntos tão importantes baseados em fontes secundárias e, em última instância, não merecedoras de confiança. Estamos decepcionados por não termos recebido a cortesia fraterna de consulta prévia antes de chegarem às suas conclusões, e que vocês tenham presumido um conhecimento exaustivo dessas questões, pontificando sobre assuntos internos da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB). Juntamente com esse sério passo, vocês revelaram uma possível ausência de desejo em progredir ainda mais com o relacionamento que foi tão meticulosamente construído entre Instituições que, da nossa perspectiva, continuam a compartilhar o mais profundo apreço pela Palavra de Deus.

Distribuição indevida

A carta que vocês enviaram (que contém alguns itens que foram construídos em cima de suposições, gravações editadas e boatos) ANTES de ser oficialmente recebida e oficialmente respondida por nossa denominação, JÁ tem circulado amplamente nos grupos de mídia social pastorais da IPB. Esta é claramente uma violação total da Ética Cristã e muito abaixo do que qualquer um pode esperar de um relacionamento saudável entre as igrejas. Só podemos conjecturar sobre quem fez isso e lamentamos que pessoas com laços denominacionais irregulares e com total desrespeito aos canais apropriados possam gravitar impunes em nosso meio.

Não é essa a maneira cristã de lidar com possíveis divergências. Não se pode esperar que mudanças sejam alcançadas através das mídias sociais. Amigos conversam entre si, primeiro. Deve-se permitir que o tempo necessário àqueles que são designados para representar as suas denominações venham a interagir e responder **antes** que as decisões sejam tomadas e só então ficarem passíveis de distribuição. Foi dito que a sua MINUTA é um registro público (portanto, um documento que pode circular), mas

isso não se aplica a uma carta de denominação a denominação, nem permite que um membro do concílio a distribua para promover sua causa com questionáveis intenções e, conseqüentemente, resultados prejudiciais.

As três questões

A CRIE-IPB aqui procede a responder aos problemas apresentados em sua MINUTA na ordem em que aparecem:

1. **“Permitir que as mulheres preguem”** – Cópia da resolução da IPB que contém este assunto foi o único documento que foi enviado pela CRIE, mas suas discussões e, posteriormente, a decisão foi efetivada **antes** de receber oficialmente o documento. “Permitir que mulheres preguem” não é o título da decisão, nem reflete a ênfase que se pretende ter. A decisão da IPB foi devidamente citada na sua MINUTA, mas a BPC optou por ignorar que é uma decisão *restritiva* e não *permissiva*. Em nosso e-mail de 6 de agosto de 2018, através do qual enviamos a resolução, comentamos sobre este documento: *Essa resolução pode ser vista de dois ângulos diferentes - do ponto de vista que permite às mulheres, em circunstâncias excepcionais (ausência de pastores ou presbíteros, como em situações de campo missionário), pregar; ou entendendo que é uma medida RESTRITIVA - aquilo que foi possível alcançar, em uma Assembleia de mais de 1200 delegados, que estabelece e reafirma limites bíblicos, de uma maneira mais clara do que antes.*

Não entraremos em uma longa discussão nem nos empenharemos aqui para apresentar novamente pontos a respeito do Relatório original, tentando substanciar a decisão. Concordamos que este é um assunto complexo, mas que envolve outras passagens bíblicas além de 1 Timóteo 2:11-12, que foi citada em sua MINUTA. É óbvio que o seu Comitê foi induzido a concentrar-se na meia verdade “Permitir que as mulheres preguem”, em vez de olhar para todo o quadro *restritivo*. A decisão afirma claramente que esta pregação ocorre em "casos excepcionais" e "quando não há oficiais".

Um exemplo dessa exceção pode ser visto em uma situação de campo missionário, tal como tivemos no Brasil, com as missionárias da Bible Presbyterian Church, Evelyn Moulton (1917-1983) e Margaret Harden (1916-1979), com seu trabalho abençoado no Reino, no interior do Nordeste e em São Paulo. Elas frequentemente pregaram a palavra e espalharam o glorioso Evangelho de Jesus - para velhos e jovens, não apenas individualmente, mas também em adoração conjunta com aqueles sendo evangelizados ou discipulados por eles.

Além disso, a decisão da IPB claramente:

- a. Proíbe que os púlpitos da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil sejam ocupados por mulheres ordenadas a qualquer cargo [da igreja] por outras denominações;
- b. Reafirma as decisões anteriores do Supremos Concílio - IPB, que proíbem a ordenação de mulheres para cargos da IPB.

Certamente, esta é uma manifestação de uma Igreja que está lutando o bom combate, e se esforçando para aderir às diretrizes bíblicas, sobre este ponto. Está longe dos “desvios significativos” de nosso testemunho, ou da falta de “adesão à fé e prática ortodoxas”, como sua MINUTA literalmente acusa a IPB.

2. Resposta aos “Neo Puritanos” - Sua MINUTA cita parte de uma resolução da IPB que nomeia uma Comissão Permanente para avaliar danos causados à IPB por movimentos neo-puritanos, com o propósito de escrever uma carta pastoral para nossa denominação para preservar a saúde e a unidade da igreja.

Vocês discordam disso e têm um estranho interesse no assunto, inferindo a culpabilidade da IPB e prosseguindo com uma firme defesa dos irmãos dessa persuasão, alguns dos quais têm causado perturbação em nosso meio. No entanto, sua MINUTA afirma que as atividades dos neo-puritanos brasileiros são meramente “um chamado da Igreja para a fé e prática bíblicamente confessionais”.

Isso é especialmente desanimador e desconcertante, pois nos últimos anos a CRIE tem apresentado os *Bible Presbyterians* como uma denominação **não**-neo-puritana. Avaliamos vocês como uma igreja fiel aos Padrões de Westminster, e uma que não via nada de errado com corais, cântico de hinos e canções além dos Salmos, e o uso de instrumentos no culto público, e nem com a observância do Natal, só para mencionar alguns conceitos neo-puritanos. Em nosso entendimento, a Bible Presbyterian Church nunca considerou que essas práticas entrassem em contradição com o princípio regulador do culto. Devemos agora concluir que essas perspectivas, algumas das quais que caracterizam as práticas neo-puritanas e que estão causando divisão em nosso meio, agora recebem o apoio da BPC e são consideradas “um chamado da Igreja para a fé e prática bíblicamente confessionais”? Isso retroage o nosso relacionamento denominacional e ficamos nos perguntando: se vocês tivessem pressões similares e um grupo cismático em seu meio, também não chegariam a tal posição de avaliar e orientar a situação dentro de suas igrejas? Só podemos concluir, avaliando com benevolência, que vocês estão sendo grosseiramente enganados por algumas pessoas em seu meio ou por sua rede de contatos no Brasil. Certamente não foi através de fontes oficiais e documentais que vocês poderiam ter chegado a tal conclusão.

Apenas para que possam avaliar como temos apresentado a BPC a alguns de nossos pastores que tem feito perguntas à CRIE sobre o progresso em nosso relacionamento, e sobre possíveis conexões da BPC com movimentos neo-puritanos no Brasil, segue uma citação de uma correspondência padrão sobre este assunto:

Citação de uma carta apresentando e defendendo a BPC ao Presidente da nossa Junta Regional de Educação Teológica (JURET – NO/NE), Ronildo Farias. 27 de junho, 2015 – às 0:18:

Temos ouvido rumores que alguns pastores da IPB têm divulgado que a BPC é um “reduto neo-puritano”. Tal situação não corresponde à verdade e falamos com pleno conhecimento de causa: A BPC tem corais; a BPC Canta Hinos, além dos Salmos (o Hinário utilizado é o Trinity Hymnal, publicado pela OPC e utilizado tanto pela OPC, como pela PCA); a BPC utiliza Instrumentos Musicais em seus cultos e ajuntamentos; as igrejas da BPC celebram o Natal – só para explicitar quatro das posturas principais que caracterizam o Neo-puritanismo (que se posiciona contra corais, cânticos de quaisquer hinos que não sejam os Salmos, instrumentos e celebrações natalinas). As aulas de aconselhamento que têm sido ministradas tanto pelo Doug Leaman como por visitantes dessa denominação, como o Rev. Dr. Kevin Backus, tem abordagem bíblica, noutética, enfatizando responsabilidades e o fator perturbador do pecado, como questões a serem tratadas.

A BPC tem posição escatológica pré-milenista histórica (também encontrada entre alguns pastores da IPB), normalmente pós-tribulacionista. Não é dispensacionalista em sua teologia (como você bem sabe, é um erro rotular de dispensacionismo apenas pela aferição da posição escatológica, pois o grande distintivo dessa corrente são as divisões, chegando até a formas diversas de salvação, ao longo da história). A BPC abraça vigorosamente nossos mesmos Símbolos de Fé (CFW + Catecismos) e todos os pilares da sã Teologia da Reforma. O seu Seminário (WRF) publica um “Journal” semestral, onde tais questões podem ser conferidas, pelos artigos ali contidos.

É necessário que entendam o dano causado pela sua MINUTA nesta área, onde a BPC se alinha estranhamente com os neo-puritanos brasileiros. Sua insensibilidade à divisão que tais posições podem causar dentro de uma denominação reformada, e sua condenação à IPB por criar uma Comissão para avaliar e escrever uma carta pastoral às igrejas, deixaram a CRIE com a tarefa quase impossível de apresentar a BPC, vista do modo acima, em uma luz favorável. Certamente vocês devem ter sido tragicamente induzidos a assumir essa posição.

3. Ações na Plenária – Sua MINUTA refere-se às discussões no plenário da nossa Assembleia Geral, e afirma que “um oficial proeminente na Igreja” fez pouco caso dos “padrões confessionais”, e que outros na sessão plenária mostraram um desrespeito ao ensino das Escrituras”. Termina com uma admoestação à IPB, de que “deveria ter repreendido essas ações”.

É muito estranho que uma denominação correspondente trate de debates em plenário, que são frequentemente vigorosos e, nem sempre, elogiáveis, usando qualquer informação que foi lhes alimentada de maneira não-oficial, para repreender outra denominação.

Do nosso lado, só podemos supor que as mesmas pessoas que alinharam a BPC com o movimento neo-puritano no Brasil, usaram, além disso, a

gravação editada de debates de chão que foram postados nas mídias sociais por aqueles que parecem deleitar-se em divisão.

Além disso, por “um oficial proeminente na Igreja”, vocês devem estar se referindo ao Rev. Augustus Nicodemus, que usou da palavra no debate e propôs emendas à resolução. Novamente, a BPC está sendo grosseiramente enganado e, como prova disso, publicamos abaixo declarações oficiais de líderes da igreja que estavam envolvidos no debate. Por favor, note o espírito cristão e o caráter daqueles, e a discrepância com a apressada repreensão da sua MINUTA:

- a. **Citação de uma declaração do Rev. Ageu Magalhães.** Diretor de um dos nossos seminários, que debateu e votou contra a Resolução (31 de julho de 2018)

REV. JOSAFÁ VASCONCELOS E OS ÁUDIOS DO SC/IPB

Alguns áudios de discussões da última reunião do Supremo Concílio, assembleia geral da IPB, estão circulando nas redes sociais provocando confusão e escândalo. Por isso, resolvi escrever o que segue para gerar algum esclarecimento.

... Os áudios que estão circulando nas redes sociais dão a impressão de debate direto entre Rev. Josafá e Rev. Augustus. Não é verdade. Quando o assunto da pregação feminina veio ao plenário mais de 10 conciliares o discutiram. Muitos expuseram ali o seu entendimento sobre a questão, concordando ou discordando do relatório. Estes áudios, retirados do seu contexto original, só trazem confusão.

Reuniões conciliares por vezes contam com discussões acaloradas. A repreensão dada pelo Rev. Josafá a pessoas que o estavam interrompendo não deveria causar espécie. Lembre-se dos eventos que geraram a primeira reunião conciliar em Jerusalém. Lucas conta que houve “da parte de Paulo e Barnabé, contenda e não pequena discussão” com indivíduos da Judéia (At 15.2).

... que toda maledicência cesse, por amor a Cristo.

- b. **Citação do Rev. Ageu Magalhães, sobre o papel de Rev. Augustus Nicodemus** (30 de julho, 2018):

*... Rev. Augustus Nicodemus tem sido, inquestionavelmente, uma bênção para a igreja de Cristo em nosso país. E por que eu estou escrevendo tudo isso? Por que há alguns dias o nome deste pastor fiel tem sido caluniado injustamente nas redes sociais. O Supremo Concílio da IPB, assembleia geral da denominação, tomou uma decisão sobre a pregação feminina, **restringindo-a**, e, **por falta de entendimento da matéria**, a rede foi inundada por críticas e ofensas ao Rev. Augustus. O que poucos sabem, **porque não estavam lá** (eu estava), é que o Rev. Augustus se posicionou a favor de um documento que é mais restritivo do que a situação atual, em que mulheres tem pregado à vontade na IPB. Por causa da palavra do Rev. Augustus,*

foram acrescentados 2 itens importantes na resolução contra a ordenação feminina.

Mesmo que ele estivesse totalmente enganado (e não está), não seria justo atacá-lo da forma como estão fazendo. Nós devemos atacar ideias e não pessoas. E um homem que tem sido usado por Deus como o Rev. Augustus, merece, no mínimo, respeito. Assim, eu peço a você, meu irmão, minha irmã, que, se na empolgação do momento e da desinformação, você escreveu algo injusto sobre o Rev. Augustus que, diante de Deus, apague.

Como nos ensina a Palavra de Deus, joguemos fora de nossa vida a maldade e todo tipo de maledicência (1Pe 2.1). Que Deus te abençoe.

c. Citação da declaração em conjunto dos Revs. Josafá e Augustus, a respeito do debate e das supostas ofensas:

“Seis coisas o Senhor aborrece, e a sétima a sua alma abomina: ... o que semeia contendas entre irmãos” (Pv 6.16-19).

O que podemos apreender do contexto geral e especialmente das declarações dos irmãos acima? Que a liderança da IPB, e o Supremo Concílio, estão muito conscientes da necessidade de regular assuntos importantes, colocando medidas restritivas em situações difíceis, e que estão tentando fazer isso de maneira conciliar, aderindo à Palavra de Deus. Como tal, apreciamos conselhos de denominações irmãs e também solidariedade e encorajamento. Estes últimos podem vir até mesmo de denominações com as quais temos relações correspondentes, como a BPC, mas cartas de repreensão, induzidas por espíritos cismáticos, parecem impróprias, especialmente quando baseadas em fontes não oficiais, que abrigam uma motivação questionável, e indicam um desejo de ser beligerante e não fraterno. É difícil dissipar a sensação de que a BPC está sendo usado como plataforma e ponto de alavancagem para ressentimentos de brasileiros contra a IPB. Especialmente preocupante foi a distribuição antiética da sua MINUTA através das mídias sociais, em vez de lidar com o assunto através dos canais oficiais.

A sua MINUTA foi contenciosa e promoveu dissensão e até **termina com uma ameaça**: corrigir os “desvios significativos” ou “seremos forçados a reconsiderar nosso relacionamento”. Filipenses 2.14-15 diz: *“Fazei tudo sem murmurações ou contendas, para que vos torneis irrepreensíveis e sinceros, filhos de Deus inculpáveis no meio de uma geração pervertida e corrupta”*. 1 Coríntios 11.16 reafirma: *“Contudo, se alguém quer ser contencioso, saiba que não temos tal costume, nem as igrejas de Deus”*.

Em resposta à sua pergunta sobre “como dar andamento ao nosso relacionamento”, traçamos um resumo rápido de onde estamos até agora:

1. Como vocês afirmam, os contatos entre a BPC e a IPB começaram há sete anos (2011), quando dois de nossos representantes da CRIE estiveram presentes como observadores em seu Sínodo Geral.
2. A partir daí, mantivemos o contato ecumênico (Nível 1) e trocamos representantes entre nossos Concílios.

3. Uma carta da BPC, datada em 26 de junho de 2015, e assinada pelo seu secretário, Steven Brinegar, propôs uma mudança na relação do Nível 1 para o Nível 2 (Relações Correspondentes). Especificamente, a carta declarou e confirmou, “que o 78º Sínodo Geral da Bible Presbyterian Church votou para estabelecer um relacionamento correspondente com a Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil. Esta ação ocorreu em 4 de agosto de 2014”.
4. Respondemos positivamente por carta em 31 de janeiro de 2016 (“Expressamos nossa satisfação por essas medidas e informamos que estamos enviando a concordância de nossa Comissão à nossa próxima reunião do Comitê Executivo, juntamente com nosso relatório anual”).
5. A Comissão Executiva de abril de 2016 aprovou a mudança do nível 1 para o nível 2 e comunicamos isso oficialmente à BPC em seu Sínodo de agosto de 2016.

Considerando o espírito de censura da sua MINUTA e, também, que vocês já parecem não considerar a IPB digna de se relacionar com a pureza presente na BPC, após consulta com os membros da CRIE, decidimos suspender todos os contatos, até que uma posição mais clara da BPC seja recebida através dos canais apropriados. A CRIE, então, avaliará outros passos, do lado da IPB, e submeterá suas recomendações à nossa Comissão Executiva, que então tomará uma decisão no tempo devido.

Que o Senhor seja misericordioso e sustente a todos nós, enquanto nos esforçamos para proclamar o evangelho salvador de Jesus Cristo e equipar os santos neste mundo sombrio.

Em espírito de oração, Solano Portela e Davi Charles Gomes

São Paulo, 27th of August, 2018

Rev. Ross W. Graham (graham.1@icloud.com)

Stated Clerk

Rev. Tony Curto (curto@bellsouth.net)

Chairman - Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR)

Orthodox Presbyterian Church

607 N. Easton Rd., Bldg. E, Box P

Willow Grove, PA 19090-0920

Dear Brothers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church:

Grace and Peace!

This past July, between the 22nd and the 29th, we held our XXXIX General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (**IPB**), in the city of Águas de Lindóia, state of São Paulo. We were privileged to have the Rev. Jack Sawyer as the Fraternal Delegate representing the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rev. Sawyer made a firm effort to overcome language barriers and had a thorough participation in our plenary sessions. He brought a pertinent and biblically founded address to the Assembly and made some acquaintances, exchanging ecclesiastical standpoints, with other foreign delegates from East Timor, Iraq, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Nepal, Korea, and the USA, as well as with other Brazilian leaders, in our denomination. Certainly, many of our delegates, through his word and testimony, know the OPC better, now. We expect to be able to send you a summary of some pertinent decisions made by our General Assembly during the month of September, for your information and follow-up.

We would like to thank you for sending him and we stress the importance of such contacts between sister churches, especially when they are developed and maintained on a personal level, and with thorough engagement, as we testified in our brother. This is especially helpful to us as we strive to maintain a faithful reformed witness in Brazil and abroad. We also understand that having a pastor away for some length of time is not easy for the local Church, so we extend our gratitude to the Session of Pineville Presbyterian Church, for releasing him to such an important task.

We take this opportunity to inform you that the General Assembly re-elected for the next four years (2018-2022) the officers that have occupied the Presidency and the Vice-Presidency; as well as the Stated Clerk for the period 2018-2026. These are, respectively, the Rev. Roberto Brasileiro, the Rev. Augustus Nicodemus and the Rev. Juarez Macedo. The officers of our Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations (CRIE) were also re-conducted, and it remains presided by the Rev. Davi Charles Gomes.

Yours, in the bonds of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela

Executive Secretary, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB.

Copies: Jack Sawyer and The Session of Pineville Presbyterian Church (pinevillepresch@suddenlinkmail.com)

GRACE

Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Commission on Inter-Church Relations
Presbyterian Church of Brazil

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 09

30th October 2019

Dear Brothers,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We were encouraged by the presence of your representative, Solano Portela, at our recent General Assembly and enjoyed a good time of fellowship with him and also with Marcos Agripino of APMT.

The Assembly has asked us to write to you expressing our wish to enter into a Corresponding relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

We trust this will be a step towards further working together to further the purposes of His Kingdom.

If it would be helpful for this process, Assembly has approved sending representatives to attend your Executive Commission meeting in 2020.

We pray the Lord's blessing upon you in all your work.

In His Service,

Richard Eyre: Moderator

David Bayne: Stated Clerk

NATIONAL CHURCH
117 Pages Road Allenton,
Ashburton, Canterbury
Ph 03 307-7355 and 0275 289800

GRACE

Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 10

To: The Rev. Davi Gomes
Committee on Interchurch Relations
Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil

1st February 2019

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We remember with gratitude the kind invitation you extended to us to attend the 39th Supremo Concilio of the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil. We were privileged to receive wonderful hospitality and enjoyed times of rich fellowship amongst you, making new friends in the Gospel.

Having reported back to our General Assembly later in the year, the brothers were very encouraged by all we had to say.

It is the desire of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand to enter into a formal relationship with the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil so that we may further the work of the Gospel and the extension of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We understand that the process for establishing such a relationship is to send you this, our Church's official request, so that your Committee may take the next step in developing our relationship.

If there is further information that you would like to receive from us, please ask and we will be willing to provide what you may need.

We have appreciated ongoing contact with some of your people who have expressed interest in working with us here in New Zealand and we look forward to further interaction and working together.

As we enjoyed your hospitality in Brazil, we wish to invite you to New Zealand. Our General Assembly meets in Dunedin from the 7th to 11th of October and you would be most welcome to attend, or to send others in your place. We are aware that the World Reformed Fellowship meet in Indonesia in early August and it may not be possible to make two trips a short time apart. However, if you were able to visit New Zealand en route then we would also appreciate that, and can assure you of hospitality and the opportunity to meet with several of our people.

Yours in His Service,

Richard Eyre
Moderator

David Bayne
Stated Clerk

NATIONAL CHURCH

117 Pages Road Allenton,

Ashburton, Canterbury

Ph 03 307-7355 and 0275 289800



IGREJA PRESBITERIANA CONSERVADORA DO BRASIL

CNPJ 63.089.296/0001-89

Rua Pedroso, 351 – Bela Vista – São Paulo – SP

CRIE
2018-2022
ANEXO 11

São Paulo, 28 de maio de 2019

À Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil.

Saudações cristãs,

Inicialmente manifestamos nossos mais sinceros desejos de sucesso sob as bênçãos de Deus para esta Comissão e para toda a Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil.

Em março de 2018, em nome da Assembleia Geral da Igreja Presbiteriana Conservadora do Brasil, encaminhamos correspondência à XXXIX Reunião Ordinária do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil informando situação desagradável envolvendo a Igreja Presbiteriana de Pinheiros e uma de nossas Igrejas (anexo 1). Uma vez que tal correspondência foi recebida pela secretaria executiva dentro do prazo estabelecido na convocação da XXXIX Reunião Ordinária do Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (anexo 2) e não obtivemos qualquer retorno, em abril próximo passado enviamos correspondência ao Secretário Executivo, Rev. Dr. Juarez Marcondes Filho (anexo 3), solicitando informações acerca da deliberação do Supremo Concílio quanto à nossa correspondência. Esta carta foi recebida pela secretaria executiva no dia 17 de abril próximo passado (anexo 4).

Até o presente momento continuamos sem resposta a nenhuma das nossas correspondências. Em virtude disso, vimos mui respeitosamente solicitar a esta Comissão que estude que medidas podem ser tomadas.

Sendo o que tínhamos para o momento desde já agradecemos,

No serviço do Mestre,



Rev. Welerson Alves Duarte

Presidente da Assembleia Geral Da IPCB



IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DO BRASIL
SÍNODO DE SÃO PAULO
Presbitério de Pinheiros - PPNH
CNPJ 04.085.901/0001-84

São Paulo, 5 de junho de 2019

A
CRIE DA IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DO BRASIL.
At. Presidente presb. Solano Portela.
Assunto: Recebimento de Igreja no Chile.

Prezados irmãos:

O Presbitério de Pinheiros vem por meio deste, oficializar a essa Comissão, que recebeu em sua jurisdição a Igreja Presbiteriana Cristo Meu Pastor, que fica em Santiago – Chile. A referida igreja se desligou da Igreja Presbiteriana do Chile (IPCH), em 02 de dezembro de 2018.

O recebimento se deu conforme a Constituição da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, seguindo os trâmites de organização de uma nova igreja local, com assembleia para eleição de pastor e oficiais. O pastor eleito já pertence a Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil e os oficiais foram eleitos e ordenados, conforme os nossos Princípios de Liturgia.

Colocamo-nos à disposição para maiores esclarecimentos, caso essa douta Comissão achar necessário.

Atenciosamente.

Rev. Chun Kwang Chung
Secretário Executivo

Rev. Arival Dias Casimiro
Presidente do PPNH

대한예수교장로회총회

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
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SEOUL, KOREA.
TEL+82-2-559-5600, FAX:+82-2-568-7456

Date: July 11 2019

Dear the President of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil
Dr. Davi Charles Gomes / the President of Inter-Ecclesiastical Commission
Rev. Young Gyu Ko
/Representative of Establishing Ecclesiastical Relations with the Presbyterian Church in Korea(GAPCK)

We greet you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We wish to respectfully invite you to The 104th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea(Hapdong) as follow;

- (1) Place: Choonghyun presbyterian church
 - (2) Date: September 23(Mon) ~ 27(Fri) 2019
 - (3) Address: Taeheranro27gil 40, Gangnam-gu Seoul, Republic of Korea (06136)
 - (4) Phone: +82-2-552-8200
 - (5) Schedule for foreign delegates (Wednesday, September 25)
 - pm 12 - IRCC Luncheon
 - pm 2 - Report of IRCC(includes your greeting and brief message)
- ※ ① IRCC: the Inter-Church Relationship and Cooperation Committee of GAPCK(Hapdong)
② Please prepare your greeting and brief message within 3 minutes(including translation).

We will provide 2 nights' lodgings and 2 days' breakfasts for the delegate(s) of your denomination or organization during 23(Mon) ~ 25(Wed). Please fill our attached registration form and submit it by Aug 2 2019.

We always appreciate your prayers.
May God bless your denomination or organization abundantly!

Yours in Christ

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea



Moderator Rev. Seung-hee, Lee

Chairman of Inter-Church Relationship and Cooperation Committee Rev. Jong-gu, Lim

General Secretary Rev. Woo-sik, Choi

2019 Registration Form for Foreign Delegates

Name of Denomination or Organization	
Name of Delegate	
Title (remark pastor or elder)	
Expected arrival date	
Expected departure date	
Address with postal code	
E-mail	
Mobile phone number with country and area code	
Spouse's name (if your spouse accompany you)	
Will you attend IRCC luncheon on Wednesday, September 25?	
Will your spouse accompany you to the luncheon and our meeting?	
Any special dietary or allergies needs?	
Are you willing to share a room with your companion?	
If you have any other special needs, please let me know.	



DEPUTATEN BETREKKINGEN BUITENLANDSE KERKEN
COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

POSTBUS / P.O. BOX 499
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To the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil

Zwolle, July 2019

Esteemed brothers,

By means of this letter we wish to cordially invite you to attend the General Synod of the Reformed Churches (liberated) in The Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt, GKv), to be convened by the GKv of Goes. The synod itself meets, just as Synod Meppel did in 2017, in the Conference center Mennorode in Elspeet and is scheduled to commence meeting on November 16th 2019.

Delegates from foreign churches are invited to attend the Week on Foreign Relations ('Buitenlandweek') of the synod from January 7th – January 11th, 2020.

During this period foreign delegates will have the opportunity to present their churches and have an advisory role in the General Synod in the sessions of Thursday 9th till Saturday 11th.

Lodging facilities will be provided in Hotel Mennorode in Elspeet, from the day of arrival on Tuesday January 7th until lunch on Saturday January 11th. Lodging and meals for 2 delegates of your church will be at our expense.

If possible, please try to arrive in the Netherlands no later than Tuesday January 7th, and inform us in time about your travel schedule and time of arrival in the Netherlands.

In order to make sure everything is organised on time, we would like to be informed no later than October 1st 2019, whether your churches accept our invitation and if so, how many delegates will be sent. As soon as we receive your favourable reply, we will give you more details about the programme for our foreign guests, and their participation in the synod sessions.

If your churches are unable to attend the meeting, we would appreciate greetings mailed to our office info@bbk.nl.

We look forward to hearing from you in due time.

We wish you the Lord's blessings in all your endeavours.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.J. Schreuder', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rev. J.J. Schreuder, general secretary BBK

(enclosed: registration form)

São Paulo, 20th of December, 2019

To:

Rev. J.J. Schreuder, general secretary BBK
Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (GKv)
Post Bus – P.O. Box 499
ZWOLLE, THE NETHERLANDS

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

We are thankful for the presence of your delegates, Revs. Theodore Havinga and Piet Meijer, in our XXXIX General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), in the city of Águas de Lindóia, state of São Paulo, between the 22nd and the 29th of July, 2018. By this time you must have already received our confirmation and the proper forms, responding to your invitation to attend the Week on Foreign Relations (*Buitenlandweek*) of your General Synod, from January 7th – January 11th, 2020. The Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes will be attending, accompanied by his wife, Adriana.

As your delegates must have reported, our General Assembly was deeply concerned about the decision by the Synod of Meppel opening the offices of elder, deacon and minister to women, even though it left up to the individual churches to decide as to how and when they will wish to put this in practice. We have voiced our view on this issue several times, while this was an ongoing discussion, in your previous synods, both on a person-to-person basis, as well as formally in meetings and through letters. Our understanding of pertinent Biblical texts, and our confessional allegiance to the interpretation that the Westminster Confession of Faith has, concerning this practice, leads us to restrict ecclesiastical leadership to males, while in no way considering this a diminishing of the role of women in the church, but as just plain adherence to guidelines that have been set by the very God, whom we serve. As consequence of your decision, our General Assembly felt compelled to change our relationship status, from “Fraternal, or Full Relations” (Level 3), to “Correspondent Relations” (Level 2).

Meanwhile, we continue to pray for the GKv and intercede before the Throne of God, that you will be moved by the Spirit to review this decision, which can open the door to many contemporary practices found in broad evangelicalism, and that gives the false impression that we are “tuned-in” with the times, but which downgrades our close allegiance to the Word of God.

You may be assured that we will deal with this subject in the most respectful way, and that we can never forget the long-lasting bonds of Christian fellowship that we have built together during the past decades. Nevertheless, our hearts will remain grieved by these steps that our then sister-denomination decided to take.

We look forward to a profitable time of discussions and interaction on this and other matters.

Yours, in the service of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB



CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 16

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To the Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil
per email: solano@mackenzie.br

Gouda, December 22, 2020
Betreft: decisions regarding men/women in office
Kenmerk: 43-D-7-201222 - IPB

To all sister churches abroad who sent letters to the 2020 Synod of Goes regarding men/women in office

Dear brothers,

Decisions regarding men/women in office

In a letter to the 2020 general synod of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) (May 31, 2018), you expressed your concern about the decision made in 2017 by the general synod of Meppel, permitting women to serve in church offices. You requested the synod to revoke this decision. The synod gave all objections, submitted by Dutch and foreign churches, serious consideration.

Different views

The synod decided to continue to give room for both the opinion and the practice of women serving in church offices. She observed a meticulous handling of Scripture in the substantiating of this opinion. Meanwhile, the synod expressed that the opinion and practice of excluding women of serving in church offices remain similarly justified. This opinion can also be argued by respectful Bible reading.

Unanimous decisions

The synod delegates still disagree on the topic of allowing women to serve in church offices. Nevertheless, they supported the synod decisions unanimously. Amongst each other, the delegates saw careful and principled handling of the Bible, which may be expected of Reformed believers. It is this way of handling Scripture that unites, despite remaining disagreement in opinions. That is why the decisions were taken in unison in an atmosphere of warm-hearted harmony.

Dealing with differences

There has been room for opposite views on a serious issue before within reformed churches both nationally and internationally. On this topic – men/women serving in church offices – the synod didn't want to bind consciences either. Both opinions are justified within the reformed confession. Both opinions are also substantiated by a reformed way of reading Scripture.

Church boards in the Netherlands have the freedom to decide whether they will call women to serve in offices locally. We may expect to find both practices in the future. Each church member and each church board may seek guidance in God's words about dealing with different opinions within the church. We build on the same foundation, even if we do so in different ways.



Room

Reformed churches have never been single minded on each and every topic. Hence, church unity is not based on having the same views. It's foundation is her Lord, Jesus Christ. From there, we seek to find our way forward together. Some may walk on one side of the road, some may walk on the other side. But it is the Spirit who unites us and we walk together in faith, hope and love. We call reformed churches nationally and internationally to accept one another on the basis of that foundation and to continue to give one another room, also in church meetings. Thus, we let the Christ's love carry us. He is Lord over the church of all times and places.

Decision

Please find enclosed the decisions that have been taken, together with the committee report *Serve each other sincerely from the heart* that was written to substantiate the decisions.

Objection 3: the synod too easily dismisses the so called 'remain silent' texts: refer to decision 3.

Objection 9: the decisions of the GS Meppel demonstrate the use of a 'new hermeneutics': refer to decision 7.

We sincerely thank you for your brotherly letter and commend you to God's blessing.

Kind regards, in Christ,

ds. A. Koster,
scriba 2

Enclosed:

1. Report '*Serve each other sincerely from the heart*'
2. Synod decisions

**Report of the
Synod Committee weighing
Revision requests about
The Men and Women in
Church Office decisions**

**Serve each other sincerely
from the heart**



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Preface

Here before you is the report "Serve each other sincerely from the heart" from the "Synod Committee weighing Revision requests about The Men and Women in Church Office decisions" (RMW) of the General Synod of Goes (GS Goes), 2020, of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated). The members of the committee were: PG. (Peter) Bakker, M.O. (Marc) ten Brink, L.C. (Bert) Groen, R.P. Rutger Heij, S. (Sieds) de Jong, and P. (Pier) Poortinga. The report was made in preparation for the decisions which are going to be made at the GS Goes, responding to the requests for revision and officially communicated objections from (sister-) churches in The Netherlands and abroad against the decisions of the GS Meppel, which created room for the ordination of women office bearers. Along with this, the report seeks to provide grounds for those decisions.

In this report we explore what the Bible says to us about the position of men and women in the church and in the world. An all-encompassing treatment of this theme within the scope of a committee report is not necessary, and therefore not called for. What is called for are the Biblical passages which throw light on the most important points of discussion which again and again are referred to when the question is treated as to whether next to men, women also can be deacons, elders, or ministers. We are concerned with the following subjects in particular: salvation history and the creation order, dealing with differences and culture, not ruling but serving, the so-called "remain silent" texts, and the interpretation of the Bible. Each one of these subjects receives a separate chapter, or treatment in an appendix. The major themes of this "story" are described in chapters 1 to 6. One subject which supports this story is to be found in an appendix.

Understandably, the focus of this report is on the relationship between men and women in the church. However, where the Bible speaks, we see that it treats the whole breadth of human existence, and that there is no strict separation between the church and the world. In this report the aspect of the "world" is therefore part of the discussion, although we do not deal with it in depth.

A number of writers have contributed to this report. "A number of writers" implies that the writing style of this report can differ per section. The committee doesn't see this as an objection. The fact that a number of subjects can be written about, and sometimes repeatedly, makes it possible to read the different chapters and sections individually. We would like to thank Heleen Sytsma, in particular, who, by drawing our attention to certain points and by her suggestions, has certainly contributed to improving the report.

As we mentioned, this report is first of all intended as a report to the General Synod of Goes, 2020, in relation to decisions concerning men and women in church office of the GS Meppel, 2017. It seeks to offer a perspective, based on the Bible, which can serve as a coherent interpretive framework for evaluating the objections which have been raised against these decisions. We discover the reliability and therefore the convincing power of this interpretive framework when we allow our understanding of the Bible to be led by listening to the living voice of our Living Lord. It is not helpful here if we try to make the truth of the Bible certain by a strongly rationalistic approach. We hope that readers of this report may sense that we have attempted to integrate the full truth of the Bible into it.

From the moment that the question arose as to whether women, too, could serve in church offices, there has been much study and discussion, and that has led, sometimes, to disagreements. The title of this report, "Serve each other sincerely from the heart," conveys the hope and the prayer of our committee.

Our prayer is that this report may serve, promote, and, where needed, restore peace in the church of Christ. To Him alone be the glory!

Peter G. Bakker, chairman of the RMW Committee. Marum, April, 2020

Summary of the report

A report of almost 70 pages demands something of its readers. In order to help you as readers, we are arranging the most important conclusions of each chapter in sequence. These summaries are consciously intended as a stimulus to read the chapters involved more carefully, since we hope that our arguments lead clearly to the conclusions. These summaries offer you, our readers, as well, the opportunity to get a quick sense of the drift of the report, and thus to choose what seems to you to be the most relevant or interesting among the different chapters.

Chapter 1: Men and women: starting from and returning to the beginning

On the basis of the first chapters of the Bible a certain authority relationship between men and women has been assumed (men having authority over women). From this point of view, this inequality would not permit women to bear an office in the church. However, the beginning of Genesis shows vividly how man and woman are made in God's image in exactly the same way, and that they both have the same high cultural mandate to fulfill and are to complement each other. The fact that this harmonious begin situation has been shattered, and has degenerated into all kinds of inequality, does not ask for a modification of the initial ideal (same image, same calling), but precisely for its restoration.

Genesis 1 and 2 puts all the emphasis on the unity, the solidarity, and the cooperative nature of man and woman. The keyword is not difference, but, above all, unity.

Further, the way in which Paul cites passages from Genesis 1-3 in his letters does not indicate a timeless position of command of male office-bearers, but precisely a (return to) unity and equality between man and woman. Therefore, Paul's words do not form a barrier, preventing women from serving in church offices.

Chapter 2: Not ruling over, but serving

The basic pattern which we discover in the teaching of Jesus is: don't lord it over others, but serve each other. We hear this same basic pattern repeated when the Bible speaks of the relationship between men and women in the new covenant. Because they are *one* in Christ, they are called to jointly demonstrate the image of God. In the New Testament there is no compelling reason to be found whereby women would not be able to do certain tasks or bear certain offices.

This reality asks for a concrete, joint carrying out of this task, whereby men and women, each with the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit, stand side by side in the service of God, and serve each other sincerely from the heart. This applies as well with respect to all the offices in the congregation of Christ.

It is the case, with respect to both men and women, that bearing a church office does not depend on differences in sex, but upon the gifts which they have received, and the tasks to which they have been called. The differences between men and women are hereby not blotted out, but being a man or a woman is not the basis on which certain tasks or offices are given, or not given.

Chapter 3: Men and women and church office, and contemporary culture

In the discussion concerning admitting women to the church offices it is said that this is, consciously or unconsciously, to bow before contemporary Western culture. By this is meant: the current climate of thought, those norms and values which are generally being held to, although not always in a clear and open way. This chapter explores this argumentation. The conclusion of this chapter is that the developments in society may, indeed, be the immediate reason for considering the position of women in the church, but the decision to open the church offices to them is the result of a renewed, in-depth consideration of what God in His Word asks from us in this area.

Chapter 4: Diversity and unity

Reflection on the subject of man and woman in church office, and the decisions which the Synod of Meppel took, have led to three results. 1) There are those who are opposed to admitting women to the church offices, on Biblical grounds; 2) there are those who favor the latter, on Biblical grounds, and 3) there are those who, on the basis of the Bible, see room for both standpoints. The question is: how should we as a church deal with this situation?

Here too there are differences of opinion. Some emphasize the differences and draw the conclusion that it is impossible to remain together in one church with people who have another point of view. The result is then a church split. Others acknowledge the differences, but find them to be of such a character as not to warrant separating from one another.

In this chapter we argue for the latter position. That is not to say that striving for unity has priority above listening carefully to the Bible. That would be a false dichotomy. For it is exactly the holy Scriptures which show us how important the Lord of the church Himself sees unity. Unity is no subordinate issue for the Lord!

Chapter 5: Hermeneutics and the authority of Scripture

Hermeneutics plays a role when we reflect on the subject of man and woman in church office. It is important that we read the Bible in a responsible way. When big changes are possible, it is proper that the question regarding our acknowledging the authority of Scripture is posed. That question is addressed in this chapter.

Considering new questions can only be done when we listen to the witness of Scripture itself, and we do this transparently and legitimately. Such new reflection can be described as being done with due regard for the "freedom of exegesis."

God's Word is diverse and opens up all kinds of perspectives to us. It is the living Word for all times! We should not try to ignore or make light of such diversity of texts and perspectives. They allow us to see the rich variety of Christ and His redemption. We are receivers of the revelation of God's salvation, which opens itself up to us, again and again, in an unimaginable and breathtaking way.

Chapter 6: The "remain silent" texts

In the course of the years a number of texts in the letters of Paul have gotten the name the "remain silent" texts, in particular 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. The name which these texts have gotten makes it difficult to read them separately from the discussion which has arisen in connection with them, since it is disputable whether Paul's words can be construed as they have been. In this chapter we argue that it is, Biblically speaking, responsible to read these texts in a way that doesn't create an obstruction to admitting women to the church offices.

Therefore, in this chapter we limit ourselves to those texts which have gotten the name of "remain silent" texts, because the church+es have asked the Synod of Goes explicitly to give attention to these

texts. However, the argumentation for the men and women in church office decisions is not based on individual, unconnected Bible texts. This is clear if one reads the entire report.

Appendix: "You read it there, plain and simple, don't you?"

"You read it there, plain and simple, don't you?" This reaction from those who read the Bible about the subject man, woman, and church office, is in itself very understandable. If we read through the Bible you can certainly get the impression that men have a more important position than women.

However, whoever takes the time to read the Bible carefully begins to realize that it was written in a completely different time and culture than the one in which we live today. The subordinate position of the woman was normal in the cultural context of the Bible. While in the Bible there is no call for a direct revolution against the existing social relationships, within that context women are emphatically given worth and dignity. In this way we see how a dynamic is present with a visible impact on the concrete position of women today.

Influenced by the surrounding culture, the Scripture presumes and applies the subordinate position of women in its texts. At the same time we see critical tendencies in many Bible passage regarding its own context and, naturally enough, particularly regarding the relationships in the beginning. As a consequence, the Scripture cannot be seen as forbidding an admission of the church offices to women.

1. Men and women: starting from and returning to the beginning

Initial summary

As support for an authority relationship between man and woman (men ruling over women), reference is often made to the events which are recorded in the first chapters of Genesis. God made the man first, and the woman was the first to sin. Supposedly, this shows that women cannot be office-bearers in the church.

However, the beginning of Genesis offers us quite a different picture. It shows us how man and woman were both created in God's image, how they both received the identical high cultural mandate to fulfill, and how they were meant help each other and complement each other. The fact that this harmonious begin situation was then shattered and degenerated into all kinds of inequality, does not ask for an modification of the ideal (same image, same task), but precisely calls us to strive for a restoration of it.

Introduction

(Note of the translator: in the rest of this translation, Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV)).

Different churches, both within The Netherlands and abroad, have expressed criticism of the decision of the General Synod of Meppel (2017) to create room for women as office-bearers. Part of this criticism focuses on the interpretation of Genesis 1-3, and of Paul's references to those chapters, especially in 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 11, and Galatians 3.

For example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (OPC) pointed to the significance of the order which God made use of: He created Adam first, and after that Eve. The OPC writes (note of the translator: the original English was not consulted): "We observe that God, even before Eve was created, forbade Adam to eat of the fruit of tree. Eve violated that commandment, after she was misled by the snake. Hereby she ignored Adam's leading role, and was instrumental in leading both of them into sin. These two events (the order established at creation, and the fact that Eve allowed herself and Adam to be misled) are the basis upon which the Holy Spirit later gave His command not to admit women to the special office of minister or elder in the church of Christ."

As well, eight Dutch congregations in our federation, which have worked together to call for a revision of the decisions, asked, during a discussion session which was organized with them, for a close reading of Genesis 1-3 and of Paul's references to these chapters.

The following is, point by point, the interpretation of these Bible portions which supposedly forbid women to serve in the church offices:

Genesis 1

God makes both man and woman in His image (Genesis 1:27).

- They are called to love one another and to seek the best for each other.
- Both of them are allowed to represent their Creator and point to Him in all things.
- Together they receive the mandate to fill the earth, to give leadership to the earth, in particular to the animals (Genesis 1:28).

- Man and woman stand side by side in exercising this authority.
- God gives man and woman equal value.

Genesis 2

God gives man and woman different positions and responsibility.

- God makes the man first, out of earth, and then makes the woman out of the man (Genesis 2:7).
- God forbids Adam to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; Adam has the primary responsibility to obey that command (Genesis 2:16-17).
- The woman is made as a helper for the man, not the other way around (Genesis 2:18).
- The man (Hebrew: *ish*) calls the woman after himself: "Woman" (Hebrew: *ishah*) (Genesis 2:23).
- In the process and enactment of marriage, the man takes the initiative (Genesis 2:24).

Genesis 3

After the Fall, as well, God takes both the equality *and* the difference of position of man and woman into account.

- Not Adam, but Eve is misled by Satan. She is the first one who sins (Genesis 3:1).
- After the Fall, God first summons Adam to give an account, and only after that Eve (Genesis 3:9).
- The Gospel, by which God intervenes savingly, rescuing man and woman from sin, does not constitute a break with creation, but a restoration of creation. The loving unity of man and woman is restored, and the differing responsibilities are again put into practice according to God's original intention (Genesis 3:16).¹

1 Timothy 2

- Paul is probably talking here about a specific situation in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 1:3-7), but he bases his prohibition on the Biblical statements about creation and the Fall. The reference in 1 Timothy 2:13 (*for Adam was formed first, then Eve*) is a clear reference to Genesis 2:24-25. In 1 Timothy 2 Paul is alluding to what Eve says in Genesis 3:13: *the serpent deceived me, and I ate*. Paul does not exonerate Adam (see Romans 5:12-19), but tells what happens when the proper division of the roles of man and woman is reversed. That's why he forbids women to teach with authority in the church. Since he bases this on creation and the Fall, there is every reason to conclude that this prohibition is in effect in our day as well.

1 Corinthians 11

- Paul wants all women to continue to give a visible expression of their support for male leadership in the church: "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (vs. 8-9). This passage does not argue for differing roles for man and woman in the church, but only indicates the way these roles are carried out. Indeed, Paul seeks to obliterate all male feelings of superiority by adding: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman

¹ In the Synod report of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (2000) we read on this subject: "There seem to be both continuity and discontinuity between what is established in creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and what is stated in the curse in Genesis 3. In Genesis 2, man is given the responsibility to work and take care of the garden (v. 15). In Genesis 3 it is assumed that his work continues but that now, after the fall, he will work a land that is cursed, and he will toil with pain and sweat (vv. 17-19). In like manner, after the fall the woman will continue to bear children and be under her husband's leadership, but, in the context of sin, her child-bearing will be painful, and her relationship to her husband will be disrupted, since "he will rule over you" (v. 16). In the setting of the curse, this statement is to be understood as an oppressive or sinful kind of rule.

In summary, Genesis 1 clearly speaks of an equality of male and female in exercising dominion over the earth. Genesis 2 speaks of the man's priority and implied leadership within the marriage. Genesis 3 does not invalidate the pronouncement of Genesis 2 but affirms that in the context of sin the man's priority and leadership will be distorted, i.e., his rule will be oppressive."

was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God" (vs. 11-12). However, this in no way takes away from the fact that this passage is saying that male leadership in the church ought to be respected.

Galatians 3

- In Galatians 3:28 Paul writes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus." The first point Paul is making here is the truth that where it concerns salvation in Christ, there is no difference between man or woman (or between Jew and Greek, slave or free). This text certainly has social consequences. Paul, in his conflict with Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 demands that Jews and Greeks, in their fellowship around dining tables, may never be separated from each other. But this text does not speak directly about the subject of offices in the church.

If you follow this interpretation, it leads to the conclusion that women may not bear any church office. However, in the interpretation which follows we hope to show that you can explain these Bible passages differently. In chapter 5, we deal in detail with the charge that our interpretation undermines the authority of Scripture. There we discuss hermeneutics and the authority of Scripture. And in chapter 6 we discuss the "remain silent" texts. This different interpretation, which the Synod of Meppel called Scriptural, offers, in our view, room for female office-bearers.²

Genesis 1-3

Genesis 1

Equality: both man and woman are God's image

All Bible exegetes agree about how impressive and significant it is that God has created human beings in His image. B. Wentsel writes, for example: "the idea of man and woman being 'the image of God' is no peripheral thought of the author, nor does it constitute a subordinate theme in the Scriptures, but is a keyword. By means of this notion the nobility, the value, and the specific character of human beings are portrayed."³

Being the image of God: this is true of both man *and* woman. John Calvin maintained, incorrectly, that there was a difference: "Certainly, it cannot be denied, that the woman also, though in the second degree, was created in the image of God..."⁴ The plural "them" (Genesis 1:26) indicates that both the man and the woman were made in God's image. Both were equally gifted to be able, as God's representatives, to fulfill their given task, and together to cultivate the earth. "They will be fruitful and multiply, they will fill the earth and bring it under subjection, they will have dominion over the fish and the birds and everything that creeps on the ground. And that is at the same time their task, the task of humanity, both the man as well as the woman, both of whom have been created in the image of God."⁵ That says a lot. "Hereby it has been declared, in principle, that the man and the woman have a high and costly value. There is in Genesis 1:17 no thought of one being more or less important, being more or less valuable, being higher or lower, religiously and ethically, socially and culturally. Here we see the image of God as being for each the same, equality and partnership, a being together and a cooperation in the area of the entirety of culture."⁶

² In order to provide an interpretation which is as good as possible, we have chosen to first give attention to Genesis 1-3, then to compare Scripture with Scripture, and see how Paul uses these texts. The so-called "remain silent" texts are looked at in chapter 6.

³ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*, Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987, p. 588.

⁴ Calvin, J., *Commentary on the book of Genesis, Vol. 1* (trans., John King; original Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh, Scotland; reprint Baker Book House), Grand Rapids: 1979, p. 129 (comment on Genesis 2:18).

⁵ Gispen, W.H., *Genesis (Commentaar op het Oude Testament)*, Kampen: 1974.

⁶ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*, Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987, p. 588.

There can be no area where man or woman can say to the other: "I don't need you."

Distinctions

It is not the case that this is all there is to say, for God also creates differences between man and woman. Right after it is said that God created humanity as His image, we read that He created them "male and female" (Genesis 1:27). God did not create a unisex creature, He created male and female. However, it is difficult to pin down precisely what is unique to man and to woman. There are observable differences, for example, among which a different role in reproduction. But in the case of psychological differences, it is considerably more difficult to describe. We may safely say that the last word has not yet been spoken about this subject.

"Wholeness of life is to be reached where both the male and the female element are fruitfully present. Both are jointly responsible in their own fashion. The woman provides her contribution in her own characteristic way to the totality of life." And: "Where this equality has been put into effect at all levels, it will in practice be clear that man and woman, by virtue of their own identity, will find their own path in life, whether in the matter of choosing a profession or tracing out an area of concentration, or in playing one's own role in the same area as the other."⁷

"Many people are afraid that the distinct qualities of men and women will become invisible if they work together in all areas, afraid that they will then become 'the same,' and that the uniqueness of their sexuality will disappear. But is this really the case? Have you ever observed that people become exactly the same because they work together? Even when people carry out the same tasks, everybody does it in his or her own way. (...) It is precisely when we work together that our uniqueness comes to expression, that we discover what our own talents are and what the abilities of the other person are. And what is even more important: only then is our dependence on one another most visible. We show that we need one another."⁸

Genesis 2

Text and culture

To achieve a valid reading and interpretation of Genesis 2 it's important to realize that the events of this book in the Bible were written (much) later than they occurred in history. The writer(s) lived in a completely different time, in which the relation of man to woman was also different than our day. If you don't take account of this, you may inadvertently read elements of the culture after the Fall into God's revelation in the first chapters of Genesis. One example is the repeated formula, "the man *and his wife*" (Genesis 2:25; 3:8; see also verse 12). If you're not aware of the fact that this way of speaking about man and woman is borrowed from the language and culture the post-Fall situation, that of the patriarchs of ancient Israel, you risk understanding this phrase as a subordination of woman with respect to the man, intended by God. If you are aware of the background of the writer(s) of the Bible and the typical use of words and images belonging to it, you will be actually surprised by those passages, in Genesis 2, for example, in which the equality of man and woman is emphasized. The Holy Spirit, here, lifts, as it were, the writer(s) of the Bible up out of his (their) limitations as culture-bound human beings. See also Genesis 5:1b-2: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created." This sentence contains an "inversion" (chiastic) structure.⁹

⁷ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*, Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987, p. 588.

⁸ Leene, A., *Samen dansen in de kerk, Als mannen en vrouwen op God lijken*, Amsterdam: 2004.

⁹ Paul, M.J., Brink, G. van den, Bette, J.C. *Bijbelcommentaar Genesis/Exodus*, Veenendaal: 2011.

- a. When God created,
 - b. Man,
 - c. he made him in the likeness of God;
 - c` male and female he created them,
(and he blessed them and named them)
 - b` Man,
 - a` when they were created

By calling both of them "man," God emphasizes the complete equality of both individuals, created by Him: both are made almost divine, crowned with glory and honor to be God's next-in-command king and queen (Psalm 8:6).

Adam first, then Eve

Man and woman were created by God *after* each other in time, and in different ways: Adam first, out of the ground, then Eve, out of Adam's rib or side. You could conclude from this that this indicates a subservient role for Eve, but that is not demanded by the description of the events as they are written in Genesis 2.

First of all, we do not read in this chapter that God created the *man* (in contrast to woman) first. The name "Adam" is not yet used as proper name in Genesis 2: God creates the woman out of the "human being" ("Adam") (Genesis 2:7). It is only after this that the "human being" becomes two: "she shall be called Woman (the female form of "man"), because she was taken out of Man."¹⁰ The woman is not created as a new creature, next to the man; rather, she is made *out of* him. Humanity "blossoms into" man and woman. But it is also true that the fact that man and woman are differently made in time and as far as "material" is concerned, is communicated as an "unadorned fact" in the second chapter of the Bible. Nothing is said about the possible consequences for their mutual relationship.

The sequence of the appearance of man and woman at creation in Genesis 2 does not imply difference in rank. "In theory a temporal sequence can indicate or imply an order of rank. But in Eden that was not the case, because the 'order' was indicated from the beginning as follows: man and woman, who were created after each other, were nevertheless given *equal dominion* over the creation in order to bear God's image *together*. Where the 'order' is so clearly described, it is impossible to draw another conclusion merely from the sequence of appearance."¹¹

The same applies for the fact that Adam gave names to the animals. There are exegetes who conceive of this as a sign of his position of superiority. However, the text of Genesis 2 does not particularly indicate this. The task of Adam giving names to the animals is described in Genesis 2 in the context of the human being who is alone and is looking for someone to help him. In *this* context God brings all the animals to Adam, and Adam calls them what they signify for him. None of them are found to provide the helper he's looking for. Thus, being called to be name-giver to the animals is not in the first place an indication of Adam's authority, but of his quest for help and cooperation.¹²

¹⁰ Boer, de ,E.A., *Zij aan zij, Pleidooi voor een vrouwelijk ambt in de kerk*, Barneveld: 2006.

¹¹ Amersfoort-de Horsten, *Man, vrouw en ambt* (In revisieverzoek), 2019.

¹² The Synod report of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (2000) sees the man's authority over the woman exclusively in the relationship within marriage: "It is also true that Adam, in a fashion somewhat similar to how he named the animals, gave the 'woman' her name (v. 23). This fact is immediately linked with marriage: verse 24 says, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.' This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:6; Eph. 5:31) to show the intimate union between husband and wife (...) There is nothing in Genesis 2 to suggest that male priority goes beyond the institution of marriage."

A Helper fit for him

The word "helper" (Genesis 2:18) generally suggests to us the sense of someone who makes a certain contribution somewhere, someone who offers help where a job needs to be done. Intuitively, this means a second class position. However, in Genesis 2 an image emerges of two equally strong and equally qualified creatures of God.

"Precisely because God is called the Helper of Israel, it's impossible to interpret helper here as meaning the lesser to the person who is helped. In the texts just cited it is exactly the opposite. Being a 'helper' indicates a relation of complementing and supporting each other."¹³ The male form of the Hebrew word used here points as well to a strong helper who is really a match for the person being helped.

"Ezer," the Hebrew word for helper, is a general word which in itself does not indicate subservience. When it is applied to the woman, it does not signify that she is not of equal stature as he. The word is used 21 times in the Old Testament. 16 times it involves someone "greater" who helps us (God as Israel's helper: Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7,26,29; Psalm 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:17; 115:9, 10,11; 121:1,2; 124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9), 5 times without having a hierarchical meaning (2 times for the woman as creation (Genesis 2:18,20); and 3 times for nations Israel asked military help from (Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:4; Daniel 11:34)).

The addition "fit for him" (New King James Version: "a helper comparable to him") in Genesis 2:18 puts even more emphasis on the equality of the helper God is giving to the man. We may think of the "left hand" over against the "right hand," together being *one*.

The Hebrew word "kenegdo" means: "over against," "counterpart" (Herbert Donner). You could think of "mirror image," in which the man recognizes himself. See Adam's reaction in vs. 23. This was God's whole intention in "cutting" the woman out of the "wood" of Adam.

Whatever wording you choose, here an image is painted of two equal partners, who complement each other and who now, together, may carry out an important commission. "As in Genesis 1 it is not a complementarity which makes the one subject to the other. Neither has authority over the other; neither is either the leader or the led. The image puts concretely the point made in Genesis 1, that it is men and women together who comprise the representation of God in the world."¹⁴

The woman made from the rib/side of the man

The fact that the woman was made from (a rib of) the man, although indicating a different creation process, emphasizes precisely their equality and mutuality. "The term 'tsela,' 'side' ('rib') (Genesis 2:21) emphasizes the two-sidedness of the human, as we read in 1:27b, and indicates that the woman has the same level as the "adam," "human being," out of which this "side" has been taken. At the same time, by means of this expression the close relationship between the man and his wife is portrayed."¹⁵ "The intention is clear: the process of creation itself explains how man and woman belong together."¹⁶

Man-woman

The unity and equality of man and woman strike us again when Adam meets his wife for the first time. At that occasion, he exclaims with surprise: "*One* the same as me!" (Genesis 2:23).

¹³ Genderen, J. van, Velema, W.H., *Beknopte Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Kampen: 1992.

¹⁴ Goldingay, J., *Genesis for everyone*, London: 2010.

¹⁵ Jagersma, H., *Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel Genesis 1:1-25:11*, Nijkerk: 1995.

¹⁶ Westermann, C., *Genesis 1-11*: London: 1974.

The man (Hebrew: "ish") calls her after himself: "isha" (woman). This pair of words serves to strengthen their solidarity with each other, rather than the difference between them, or express a relation of authority. "With the words: 'she shall be called "isha," because she was taken out of "ish",' the close relation between the ish, man, and the isha, the woman, is very emphatically verbalized."¹⁷ After Adam has said that the woman has completely the same character as he does, he uses a term which expresses that exactly.

Marriage

It is very special, as well, that the man is going to break his ties with his parents, and become one with his wife. In the culture of that day this says a lot. For it was the case that a married son almost always would stay with his family to live. In chapter 2 we go more deeply into this cultural context.

This makes the prescription in Genesis 2:24 even more striking: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife." We see here a manner of speaking which gives expression to a total, lasting, spiritual and emotional unity. It is a call for the man to give himself totally to that one woman, and to focus on her interests, to a deep psychological attachment to her. "It is the atmosphere of the Song of Solomon."¹⁸

Just as Genesis 1 does, Genesis 2 puts all the emphasis on the unity, the solidarity, and the togetherness of man and woman. An image is painted for us of a woman who in a complementary way fits her husband. Man and woman are, in their diversity, mutually dependent on each other. Their relationship is one of equality and complementarity, not one of the one ruling the other. The keyword is not rank order or difference, but unity. There is variety here, but above all unity.

The marriage form in our Reformed Church Book also begins by stating this: with regard to the aspects of the marriage bond, the unity of husband and wife is primary.¹⁹ This is not a denial of the differences which exist; unity is not the same as being exactly the same. What is involved is not a reduction of the differences, but being bound together, and therefore working together.

On the basis of this unity, the Reformed dogmatician, B. Wentsel, draws the conclusion that "women many not be excluded from any sector of public life. The church ought to open all the church offices to women, and, where they have done this already, give women a proportional representation in the governing of the church, corresponding to their capability and gifts."²⁰

Genesis 3

The woman is misled

The snake addresses the woman (Genesis 3:1). By perverting the facts, the snake is attempting to find an entrance into the woman's mind in order to introduce sin into the world. Wrongly, the woman does not get help from the man in her conversation with the snake. Hereby she is avoiding their characteristic and essential identity as a team. And Satan succeeds in his sly plan: Eve eats of the

¹⁷ Jagersma, H., *Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel Genesis 1:1-25:11*, Nijkerk: 1995.

¹⁸ Deurloo, K. van, *Genesis*. (Verklaring van een Bijbelgedeelte), Kampen: 1999.

¹⁹ In the report of the Synod committee which studied the subject of man and woman in relation to the ordination of women several years ago, called "Serving Together" (Dutch: "Samen Dienen") we read the following words, which are very worth taking to heart: "In Genesis the commission to rule and develop this earth is given to Adam and Eve together. As the first human couple, they are husband-and-wife, but at the same time they represent humanity. This commission is still in effect for all of humanity. But increasingly there are those who remain unmarried, through circumstances or by choice. The original commission to men and women is in our day partly carried out outside the setting of marriage. This means, at least, that certain Biblical prescriptions are not always directly applicable in our present day" (Samen Dienen, p. 9).

²⁰ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*, Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987, p. 588.

forbidden fruit. When she sins, she turns to her husband "who was *with her*" ("emah") (Genesis 3:6). "This word accentuates the fact that both the woman and the man have sinned."²¹ By means of the added clause, "the narrator seeks to bring to expression the fact that Adam didn't need any tempting, he just went along. In this way the narrator shows that, next to one way of transgressing, by means of temptation, there is another, just as important: going along."²² The man then makes manifest that he is, indeed just like his wife, disobedient to God: "and he ate" (Genesis 3:6). Together they transgress the boundaries which were given to Adam in Genesis 1:27, and which he, at that time, accepted without any hesitation. Together, and without a word, they eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree. This silence means that "the man, without any questions or further explanation, goes along with eating the fruit."²³

Further, the joint role of Eve and Adam as *partners in crime* is visible in the events which directly follow. Both are conscious of their being naked. Both make loincloths of fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Both receive God's judgment pronounced upon them.

Adam is addressed

The separation between God and humanity which has taken place, is followed by immense consequences; God does not let this go unpunished. He addresses Adam: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9).

There is a difference of interpretation concerning the fact that *God* calls to Adam. Nevertheless, it is clear that this call is heard *after* the Fall into sin. It is a signpost marking the contrast between the situation now and the harmony and equal status of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2, before. The Fall into sin has shattered the original unity which existed previously.

Ruling

God comes now with three severe punishments. The snake "bites the dust." Man and woman are deeply, negatively affected as far as carrying out their jointly given cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28). The man is confronted with thorns, thistles, and the sweat of future labor. The woman sees, next to the pain and difficulty she will experience in childbearing, that her unity with the man has been severely compromised: her "desire shall be with her husband," and "he shall rule over her" (Hebrew: "mashal").

"Ruling" is itself a neutral term. Depending on who is ruling, it can have either a positive or a negative result. For example, Ezekiel speaks of foreigners who "rule" as a judgment (11:9), Isaiah gives an oracle concerning Egypt as having a "hard master," a "fierce king" who will "rule over them" (19:4), and of usurers who exploit the people of Israel and "rule" over them (3:12). However, God Himself is also called a "ruler": "Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him" (Isaiah 40:10). "O Bethlehem... from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel... And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth" (Micha 5:2,4). The connotation and emotional impact of "ruling" is thus dependent upon the context.

Genesis 3 tells of the announcement of judgment and a curse. The "ruling of the man" over the woman (3:16), in the light of this context, is interpreted by almost all commentators as extremely negative for

²¹ Selms, A. van, *Genesis (De Prediking van hert Oude Testament)*, Nijkerk: 1989.

²² Westermann, C., *Genesis (Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament)*. Neukirchen:1974.

²³ Jagersma, H., *Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel Genesis 1:1-25:11*, Nijkerk: 1995.

the woman. "Ruling is just as negative as the thorns and thistles of verse 18. It is a judgment, and that not only for the woman, but indirectly also for the man (...) The ruling of humanity over the animals is part of the order of creation, but the ruling of the man over the woman is a judgment."²⁴

In the following chapters of Genesis the fact that the perfect unity of man and woman, as it existed in the beginning, has been disrupted by the tyrannical behavior of the man, becomes visible in many different ways. We can point out a few examples: Lamech is not satisfied with having *one* wife, as God intended (see the Song of Solomon), but takes two wives (Genesis 4:19). Sichem brutally crashes through all boundaries, and assaults and rapes Dina, Jacob's daughter (Genesis 34:2).

Curse or punishment

The punishment, described in Genesis 3:16, that the man will rule over his wife, was seen for a long time, by many Bible expositors and churches, as a universal prescription.

You find this interpretation in the marriage form which was used in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands up until the previous century. Here the bride receives the following commission: "You are to love your lawful husband, honor, respect, and also obey him in all things which are right and proper, as your lord; just as the body is to be submissive to its head, and the congregation to Christ. You are not to rule over your husband, but be silent; for Adam was made first, and then Eve, in order to help Adam. And after the Fall God said to Eve, and through her, to all women: 'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' You are not to oppose this ordinance of God, but much rather obey the commandment of God, and follow the example of those holy women who put their hope in God, and were submissive to their husbands; just as Sarah was obedient to her husband, Abraham, calling him lord."

However, Genesis 3 does not prescribe a divine "ordinance," but pronounces a *curse* on the woman, the effects of which may and actually *must* take place, just as the thorns and thistles were pronounced on the man as a curse.

"We do not read here that what will be the case in practice, is the way it should be (quoting Genesis 3:16). Much of the misery in the relation between husband and wife is a factual result of the Fall. However, this does not mean that wives are to acquiesce to abusive situations instead of combatting them. That's why it is also incorrect to derive an ethical guideline from this text, as if it were God's intention that wives should be submissive to their husbands."²⁵

"Genesis 3:16 was interpreted in the past as a *command* that the wife should be submissive to her husband, whereas the situation here is a *punishment*, a curse pronouncement, or distress regulation, which was to be and still must be fought against and overcome."²⁶

Restoration

Happily, God does not abandon men and women to their fate, after the Fall. In addition to the judgment, He announces the end of the dictatorship of the one who is the chief guilty person, and comes with words of grace: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

²⁴ Selms, A. van, *Genesis (De Prediking van het Oude Testament)*. Nijkerk: 1989.

²⁵ Douma, J., *Genesis*, Kampen: 2005. p. 32.

²⁶ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*. Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987. p. 588.

God offers a hopeful perspective and restoration with this promise of the coming of a descendant who will dethrone Satan.

Adam and Eve

Adam gives the woman a name, Eve. "She was the mother of all living."

It is not correct to see in this giving of a name an act of leadership on Adam's part. Women, too, give names to others (without the man being mentioned) in the Bible: Cain (Genesis 4:1), Seth (Genesis 4:25). Other examples are: Moab (Genesis 19:37), Ruben (Genesis 9:32), Joseph (Genesis 30:6), Moses (Exodus 10), Samson (Judges 13:24), Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20), and see also Luke 1: 60.

Back to the beginning

God restores what has gone wrong in His good creation. It is striking about this restoration that when the "last things" are mentioned ("eschaton"), the language of the "first things" ("proton") returns (see Isaiah 11, Revelation 21). The return is thus a going back to the beginning, but then glorified. We hear this refrain continually in the Bible.

We hear it in Mark 10:6 ("But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female'"), and in 2 Corinthians 3:18 ("And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another"), echoing Genesis 1:26 ("Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth'").

Colossians 3:10 ("[you have put on] the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator") refers to Genesis 1:27 ("So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"). Matthew 19:8 ("Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so") goes back to Genesis 2:24 ("Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh").

And Revelation 22:2 ("...also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month") is directly connected to Genesis 2:9 ("And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil").

In His grace, God works with "slow haste" on returning to the beginning. That is to say, without domination from man's side or the subordination of the woman, God is moving to restore, personally to each, and jointly together, His image, and the love which as a delicious aroma pervades everything. "New Jerusalem is at the same time New Eden (...) The disturbance of the first paradise forced God to pronounce the curses (Genesis 3:14,17). That is in New Eden no longer necessary: nothing which God's curse rested upon will be found in the city."²⁷

Paul and Genesis 1-3

Introduction

In his letters the apostle Paul refers back, in different places, to God's creation of man and woman. He does that for example in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 11:3-12, and Galatians 3:28. (An extensive

²⁷ Kamp, H.R. van der, *Openbaring. Profetie vanaf Patmos* (CNT), Kampen:2000.

discussion of the interpretation of the first-mentioned text, about the "remain silent" texts, is to be found in chapter 6 of this report.) Here we look above all at how Paul appeals to Genesis 2 and 3.

1 Timothy 2

Paul writes to Timothy: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." (1 Timothy 2:11-13).²⁸

The chronological order of "first Adam, then Eve; first the man, then the woman" does not signify a "creation order" of rank, as we found in reading in Genesis 1 and 2. The relation between man and woman at creation is distinguished by unity and equality. There is no indication of a normative, asymmetric structure which God has placed in creation.

Does what Paul says to Timothy give us a reason to return to Genesis and revise the interpretation which we have given earlier? Or is it possible that Paul in 1 Timothy 2 means perhaps something other than that we have long thought was his reasoning?

What Paul writes in other places, does not, in any case, point in the direction of a pattern which applied to Adam and Eve (the one created after the other), which can be extended to meaning a strict rank order applying to all men and all women.²⁹

We look at a few examples. In his letter to the church in Rome Paul, when he writes about who has brought sin into the world, sees all men and women as included in Adam: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Adam may then here be seen as the head of humanity. On the other hand, Eve is called the mother of all human beings (Genesis 3:20). In the "foundational promise" concerning the battle with the snake, Adam is not mentioned, but she is, and believers are called the descendants of Eve (Genesis 3:15). In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul alludes to the fact that "the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning"; but he does not apply this to women only. He warns *all* the Corinthians, thus also the men, that they ought not to be led astray from following Christ: "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

After Paul points to Adam's priority at creation, he then points to Eve's priority in being tempted and sinning.³⁰ If the creation order of "first the man then the woman" meant a timeless rank order, then wouldn't that have been sufficient and decisive for the apostle to state?³¹ However, instead of that he comes with a *second* argument regarding a "Fall order": the woman was misled, not the man.

All things considered, there is good reason to wonder if Paul in 1 Timothy 2 is really referring to Adam and Eve in order to argue for a continuing, subordinate position of the woman.

If Paul is not arguing based on a "creation order," or even a "Fall order," *what* is Paul getting at with his reference to Adam and Eve?

²⁸ The question of whether Paul is thinking here specifically of gatherings or not is addressed in chapter 6. See especially footnote 73 there.

²⁹ Niemeijer, P., *Over zwijgteksten en scheppingswerk*, Hilversum: 2018

³⁰ Klinker-de Klerck, M., *Herderlijke regel of inburgeringscursus?*, Zoetermeer: 2013. p. 57.

³¹ Dorland, P., *Ambtsdrager M/V. Mogen vrouwen een kerkelijk ambt bekleden?* Soest:2013.

To get a good answer to this question, it's important to consider that the apostle is reacting to a concrete discussion in the congregation of Ephesus, and that he is addressing himself to what is happening there. Concretely he is facing the question about how he should react to the claim from women that they may exercise authority over men, and even place themselves *above* them (vs. 12). It seems that these women have supported their claim with arguments, pointing to the central role of Eve. Paul responds to this argumentation. Eve as seen by the women in Ephesus as a role model. She is the "mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). New life proceeds from her and her daughters. This reasoning, with the claim that belongs to it, is rejected by Paul. Eve was not first, but Adam. They may not use the order at creation as an argument to claim authority. Support for this interpretation can be seen in the way Paul, in the original Greek, emphatically names Adam in the sentence: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." He says this to contradict what is being said about Eve's priority. Further, Paul calls Eve by her name, whereas she had received that name only after the Fall (Genesis 3:20). This seems to be a conscious choice, since in verse 14 he speaks once more about "the woman." While she was only called Eve later on, according to Paul, the first woman was created after and out of the man. Humanity did not begin with the woman. Women in Ephesus can therefore not argue from a "birth order" to claim authority over men. And thus we, in our day, can similarly not argue from a chronological order at creation to support the claim that only men can be considered for exercising a "ruling office" in church.³²

The same thing applies to the second argument of Paul: not Adam, but the woman was misled. Paul had once written: "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21). That suited the interpretation of the women in Ephesus just fine, that is, with their claim of legitimately having authority in and leading the church. But Paul rejects this claim. For the second "misled" he uses in Greek a strong word that means something like "to mislead completely." Hereby he states that the woman did not do better than her husband. That is what he wants to say. His message is in any case *not*: "The first woman allowed herself to be misled, and therefore, also, women may not teach in the congregation."³³

1 Corinthians 11

Paul writes: "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man."

This passage about head coverings has to do with the application of a principle, instead of the principle itself; there is little difference of opinion about this. In fact in this passage it is clearly allowed for a woman to pray and to prophesy in church services, just as long as she doesn't do so in an offensive way. This passage thus supports the broader Biblical teaching that women and men do not only share in the same way salvation in Christ, but also in the responsibility for church services and even for the prophetic proclamation of the Gospel.

Paul reminds his readers, just like in 1 Timothy 2, about creation: God made the woman from and for the man. It seems to be just a small step to say on this basis: on the grounds of creation there is therefore a continuing subservient role for the woman with regard to the man. But when we draw this conclusion we ought to take account of *all* of Paul's words.

"Paul makes it clear that what he has been saying is not meant as an undue subordination of women. There is a partnership between the sexes and in the Lord neither exists without the other."³⁴

³² Folkers, H., Harmsen, M., Leene, A., Verkerk, M., *Zonen & dochters profeteren*, Zoetermeer: 2004, p. 156

³³ Dorland, P., *Ambtsdrager M/V. Mogen vrouwen een kerkelijk ambt bekleden?* Soest:2013.

³⁴ Morris, L., *1 Corinthians*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Melbourne: 1958.

Almost directly after his statement about the woman who comes forth from the man and for his sake has been created, Paul writes strikingly: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God" (1 Corinthians 11:11,12). This very significant addition of Paul is not to be found in Genesis 1-3, but the apostle brings it to the readers' attention. Hereby he points to the motif of the interconnectedness and the solidarity of a husband and his wife. Both matters belong, according to Paul, to the structure of created life: the woman comes out of the man, *and* the man exists by means of the woman. The total picture becomes hereby quite different.

Paul does not put the emphasis on subordination, but, just as Genesis does, on the unity of man and woman. God has determined at creation that "in the Lord" one cannot exist apart from the other. It is a matter not of subordination, but of coordination as "creation order."

"Paul reminds his readers in a healthy way that man and woman have been created for each other and that they need each other. While the first woman was taken out of the man, all men since then have been born from a woman. Paul emphasizes that this mutual service is 'in the Lord' (that is to say, in Christ), not because this truth only applies to Christians, but because it is precisely Christians who ought to respect the equality of man and woman."³⁵

³⁵ Anderson, D., *1 Korintiërs, Orde op zaken in een jonge stadskerk* (Nieuwe Testament), Kampen:2008.

Galatians 3³⁶

Paul writes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) His statement has been significantly called "the magna charta of the proclamation of equality."³⁷ More is involved here than only participating in salvation in Christ.

"Differences or variation ought not make a difference in privilege or rank in the congregation" (Jager:94).³⁸

"...the grammatical construction of the pair 'neither male and female' is different from that of the other two pairs, which read 'neither . . . nor.' It has been rightly discerned that this was done deliberately to pick up the language of Genesis 1:27 ('male and female created he them'), thereby indicating that in Christ male and female are restored to their original equal participation in the image of God and the concomitant call to jointly exercise dominion over creation."³⁹

"It is remarkable that here in Galatians Paul should include the pairs slave-free and male-female. The two issues implied by these pairs are not discussed elsewhere in the letter, which is primarily about the Jew-gentile agenda. The fact that he includes them suggests that this trio of paired opposites had become part of an early confession that announced the universality and inclusiveness of the new covenant. It is likely that the confession was meant to counter the chauvinistic statements found in the Jewish cycle of morning prayers in which the (male) believer thanked God that he had not been made a gentile, or a slave, or a woman. This early baptismal confession would thus announce the church's belief that in Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed."⁴⁰

"Here the normal words for man and woman are not used, but rather two words which indicate male and female. This means that in Christianity no woman is any longer made subordinate due to her sex. In Christ she has the same position as the man--for that time a revolutionary statement!"⁴¹ (We write more about this in the following chapter.)

"From the reference to the first pair (Jew-Greek) it can be seen that the 'oneness in Christ' proclaimed in Galatians 3:28 is relevant not only to the equal standing they all enjoy in salvation but also to some 'societal' implications. Part of Paul's reason for writing was to clear up the problem of Peter's refusal to eat with gentiles at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). The oneness of Jew and gentile in Christ required equal treatment in table fellowship. Presumably that equal treatment in table fellowship would apply not only to the Jew-Greek pair but just as well to slave-free and male-female pairs."⁴² What is here involved is nothing less than the disappearance of ranks and classes; now there is equal value for all who have been clothed with Christ.

The equal position of men and women in church services becomes even clearer against the background of the subordinated position of the woman--because of her not being circumcised and her menstrual bleeding as a source of uncleanness--in the Old Testament services in the temple and in the synagogue. "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

³⁶ Much of this chapter is borrowed from the Synod report of the Christian Reformed Church in North America from 2000.

³⁷ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek*, Dl.3a, Kampen: 1987, p. 632.

³⁸ Jager, H.J., *De briefaan de Galaten*, Collegedictaat, Kampen: 1980.

³⁹ Christian Reformed report, p. 16-17.

⁴⁰ Christian Reformed report, p. 16.

⁴¹ Ouweneel, W.J., *De vrijheid van de Geest. Bijbelstudies bij de brief van Paulus aan de Galaten.*, Vaassen: 1997.

⁴² Christian Reformed report, p. 17.

See also Ephesians 4:5-6: " one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Paul is not speaking here about baptismal practice, but about the meaning of baptism. All are equally incorporated as member of the body of Christ and are worthy, according to the measure of the gifts given (vs. 7), to be equipped for work in His service (vs. 12).

In this way the confession in Galatians 3 appropriates the equality of man and woman in Genesis 1:17 once again. "The force of the implied equality in this passage can be seen as follows. Just as it would be inappropriate to say, 'Theophilus may not be an elder because he's a Greek,' or 'Onesimus may not be an elder because he's a slave,' so too it is inappropriate to say, 'Apphia may not be an elder because she is a woman.'"⁴³

Conclusion

Genesis 1 and 2 put all the emphasis on the unity, the solidarity, the togetherness of man and woman. An image is painted of a woman who in a complementary way "fits" the man. Man and woman are, in their diversity, mutually "right" for each other. They have an equal, complementary relationship, not one of the one having authority over the other. Not rank order or difference, but unity is the keyword. There is variety, but above all unity.

As well, the way that Paul, at different moments in his letters, quotes from Genesis 1-3, does not point to a timeless position of superior authority of male office bearers in the church, but precisely to (a restoration of) the unity and the equality of man and woman. Paul's words are therefore no barrier to allowing women to serve in the church offices.

⁴³ Christian Reformed report, p. 17.

2 Not ruling over, but serving

Initial summary

The chief question of this chapter is: does the New Testament teach us that there are differences between men and women which of necessity lead to the conclusion that women may not have a teaching or ruling office in the church? In the first place we consider whether gender is a criterion or not. If the Bible only describes situations in which men bear certain offices, does this lead of necessity to the conclusion that women may not bear these offices? In the second place we see if a difference in gifts would provide grounds for a distinction between men and women with respect to the offices. After this exploration via two approaches, our next step is to listen to the teaching of Jesus Christ about mutual relationships within the Kingdom of God. This teaching offers us an important fundamental imperative: don't lord it over others, but serve! Stemming from this fundamental imperative we look at the reality of the New Covenant and what Paul, in particular, writes about it, when it involves the mutual relationship between a man and a woman within marriage, and between men and women within the congregation of Christ. What can we learn from this about mutually being of service and serving in the church offices where men and women in the congregation are concerned? Finally, the chief question is answered in a conclusion.

Two lines?

When reflecting on man, woman, and church office, it is often said that there are two lines in the Bible, both of which ought to be taken into account of. One line is that of the equality of man and woman, and the other is that of different responsibilities. It is claimed that man and woman are equal, but that they have each received their own special position from God, with the accompanying responsibilities. They complement each other. The man leads, and the woman follows, it is then claimed. Or expressed differently: the man is given the service of ultimate responsibility, and the woman the service of giving help. In marriage, the man is to be the head, and the wife is to give the help which is fitting. The husband has authority over his wife, and the wife should obey it. This division of the position and the responsibilities is often described as a relation of authority: the husband has authority over his wife.

The difficulty of these two lines does not rest in the starting point, that God has made human beings as man and woman, and that this brings differences with it. God chose for this and had a clear intention in doing so. This is the way that God looks at humanity which He made as male and female, not equal in all ways, but of equal value. The question is: do the differences signaled here imply that women may not bear a teaching or ruling office in church? Do the latter belong exclusively to the responsibilities of the man?

When you answer this question on the basis of the two lines, you are using gender as the first criterion. If men are to assume a teaching and ruling office due to their maleness, does this mean, conversely, that women may not assume these offices due to their femaleness? However, the prior question we ought to pose is: does God use gender as the first and most important criterion? A question which flows from this is: suppose that in the situations which the Bible describes, only men have certain offices. Does this lead of necessity to the conclusion that the church offices, as we know them, cannot be opened to women? Or does the Bible give us more room here than we have thought for a long time?

Church offices: gender as the criterion?

On the basis of the commonly accepted structure of church offices in the Reformed tradition, with, for example, only male deacons, we have tended, indeed, to see maleness as the first criterion to be used, even before we look at the gifts which have been given by the Holy Spirit. We read, for example, in 1 Timothy 3:2 that the "overseer" must be the husband of one wife. The Lord Jesus appointed only male apostles. That strengthens us in the conviction that certain tasks are only meant for men. However, the question is whether these observations must be elevated to a norm, in the sense of: this is the way it should be, and should be always.

The way the Lord Jesus chose twelve men as His disciples is in continuity with the Old Testament, where we read about the twelve sons of Jacob as the patriarchs of the people of Israel. By appointing twelve disciples as His apostles, Jesus laid a basis for forming the new Israel (see Matthew 19:28), by means of which the blessing of Abraham was to reach all the nations.

However, this appointment of twelve apostles does not in advance exclude the appointment of women, in the preaching of Gospel. It is clear that women are able to proclaim to these twelve apostles the Gospel concerning the resurrection of the Lord. On the day of Pentecost, women share in receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, and women are specified as fellow workers in the proclamation of the Gospel.

J.P. Versteeg writes about the fact that women, too, followed Jesus, as follows: "The fact that Jesus was followed by women must have been extremely startling and offensive. The attitude of Jesus toward women was in the most sharp contrast imaginable with the general attitude toward women of the men in Judaism of those days (...) Jesus' allowing women to follow Him was the most clear proof that He--over against the public opinion of those days--saw women as being at the same level as men. It had to be clear for every teacher of the Law and Pharisee that Jesus and His salvation were there for women in precisely the same way they were there for men. The women who followed Him each received from Him their individual task. Their following Him was at the same time their serving Him."⁴⁴

Seeing men, exclusively, as being able to serve in church office in the New Testament seems to mesh with the exclusive service of priests in the Old Testament (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). However, on the basis of what we see about the appointment of twelve men as apostles, we may wonder if this is really the case. And there are more texts of Scripture which do not support the case of men-only church offices.

We read in the letter to the Hebrews that the entire service of priests in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. If there is a service of priests now, then it applies to the congregation of Christ in its entirety, both men and women. This is the way the apostle Peter speaks about the congregation as a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9). The line of being a priest is here extended to the congregation as a whole.

To connect the Old Testament service of priests with the New Testament service in the offices is furthermore remarkable, because the church of Christ in the age of the new covenant on earth does not need a separate office of priest any longer. Jesus Christ, as High Priest, continues the service of priests in heaven. Hereby He has brought into being a totally different, new reality. It means that men and women may participate, through Christ, in His salvation and in His Spirit, and may directly stand before God. They may boldly go to the throne of grace.

⁴⁴ Versteeg, J.P., *Evangelie in viervoud. Een karakteristiek van de vier evangeliën*, Kampen: 1980, p. 85.

Finally, in making a connection between the Old Testament service of priests and the New Testament service in the offices, it is not clear what exactly it means now to "minister Christ's redemption," and why this ministry would be only reserved for men.

For the rest, we ought to be careful in equating the New Testament elder with the office of elder as we now know it in the Reformed tradition. Strictly speaking, we don't have an office of "elder" anymore. We are accustomed to having often relatively *young* elders, who have not been appointed for a lifetime (Note of the translator: Presbyterian churches do ordain elders for life, but Reformed churches do not), and who have another set of tasks than is described in the New Testament. The same thing applies as far as the office of minister is concerned.

The church structure, as it is described in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, shows signs of the ancient family ("familia"): the elder was "...an overseer," "God's steward" in God's house (Titus 1:7). For the faith community in which men received a leading role was in large part was analogous to the community of the home (1 Timothy 3:5; see also Titus 1:6-9). The father, the "pater familias," of a home was the first to be seen as being suited to lead the Christian congregation.⁴⁵ The fact that apparently for Paul and the apostles it was natural that the "pater familias" would be appointed as elder, does not have to mean that their intention was hereby to establish a church office for all times which was exclusively meant for men. It is on the other hand a good explanation of why all the elders we see in the New Testament are men. However, in the New Testament we also read about women who were able to be active in the same way as the elders.

Prof. Dr. J. van Bruggen has pointed out that a woman like Phoebe, who as deaconess must have independently carried out many activities (Romans 16:1), undoubtedly also gave leadership to the congregation. That's why Van Bruggen does not want to conceive of the difference between overseers and deacons as a contrast between giving leadership on the one hand, and giving help and service on the other. Van Bruggen, while it is true that he assumes that hereby deacons did not yet have leadership over the whole congregation, still does not see the difference between overseers and deacons in the area of giving leadership or not.⁴⁶ Apparently, giving leadership (ruling) is not in itself unique to the task of the elders, but has a broader radius.

That's why it's easy to explain why we read about women who received responsible tasks in the congregation in Paul's first letter to Timothy.

Paul writes in this way in 1 Timothy 3:11 about women who in various ways are involved with the work of (overseers and) deacons. In 1 Timothy 5 we see older women/widows for whom the same can be said; we can even wonder if these women did not in fact belong to the group of elders. This also applies to the older women we read about in Titus 2. Often emphasis is laid on the men in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. But you can wonder about the kind of position the women we read about here really possessed in the congregation there. Did Paul and the apostles, when they appointed elders, really want to make the sharp distinction between offices which were only for men and offices in which women could play a role? It is plausible that, in a time and culture in which the role of elder was automatically filled by a man, they saw the possibility of letting women, next to the men, not only bear the office of deacon, but also the office of elder and minister.

⁴⁵ Van Houwelingen, P.H.R. *Timoteüs en Titus. Pastorale instructiebrieven* (CNT, deel 3), Kampen: Kok, 2009, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Folkerts, F.H. e.a. (red.), *Ambt en aktualiteit, Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. dr. C. Trimp t.g.v. zijn afscheid als hoogleraar aan de Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1993.

As far as the office of minister is concerned, Prof. Dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen has looked carefully at the relation between the current office of minister in Reformed churches and the New Testament elder. He writes that in the footsteps of Calvin, in the Reformed tradition, a distinction has been made between two kinds of elders: elders with a ruling office, and elders with a teaching office. "But there is an insufficient exegetical basis for two kinds of elders. The difference was one, not in the nature of their tasks, but rather of the intensity of their work in the congregation (...). The minister of our day is thus not an elder who has been given a special task (that of minister), but can be better compared to an apostolic assistant, like Timothy or Titus, as the classic Reformed ordination form does."⁴⁷

Apparently the ministry of the Word is not so much connected with the office of elder, but with the task of an apostolic assistant. In other words, one didn't have to be an elder to have this task. Therefore the question is: is it proper to say that women cannot proclaim the Word (cannot bear a teaching office) because they are not elders? If men didn't have to be an elder to have that position, why would women have to? And if the Word can be ministered by male apostolic assistants, why not by female apostolic assistants? It is striking that women in the New Testament are also called this, and are introduced to us as such (Romans 16:1-20). They too were thus assistants and fellow workers in the ministry of the Gospel. They too taught and prophesied (see for the teaching activity, Acts 18:26). In the written Gospels we hear already how on Easter morning women went on their way, proclaiming, and on the day of Pentecost women were mobilized to proclaim the mighty works of God. In the letters of the New Testament this line is apparently continued: women may know that they have been fully mobilized in passing on the good news of Jesus Christ. This offers us a basis to let them function as ministers in our present day.

Finally, our current structure of church offices in Reformed churches is traceable back to the time of the Reformation, and in particular, to Calvin. But Calvin, too, understood that the Bible does not offer us a kind of blueprint for the structure of offices and how they are to be filled. Functions in the church can disappear and/or shift. Church offices can be in movement. This fits very well with the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives His gifts where they are needed, and thereby mobilizes people in His own time and manner.

In this connection, how should we read Article 30 and 31 of the Belgic Confession? Does this confession allow us to open the church offices to women? These questions deserve attention because it has been thought that our Reformed confessions, on the basis of the Bible, clearly set up a boundary: the church offices ought to be closed to women in the congregation. Therefore, opening the offices to them is in conflict with the confessions. Supposedly, this is the only conclusion, seeing as the confessions clearly speak about male church office-bearers.

However, the difficulty with this approach is that in this way we pose questions to the confessions to which they have no answers. The issue as to whether women may or may not bear a church office, and what this involves, remains outside the horizon of the confessions. That is to be expected, of course, in confessional documents which arose in a time and culture in which only men were candidates for service in these offices. From the fact that the confessions assume this reality we cannot conclude that the confessions, on the basis of the Bible, do not allow any room for opening the offices to women in the congregation.

By the way, we observe that Article 30 and 31 of the Belgic Confession do not put any emphasis on the maleness of office-bearers. It is striking that Article 30 formulates its text modestly and even neutrally, when, in connection with the first letter to Timothy it speaks of "persons" (as the original French text

⁴⁷ Van Houwelingen, P.H.R. *Timoteüs en Titus. Pastorale instructiebriefven* (CNT, deel 3), Kampen: Kok, 2009, p. 29-32.

also says). It is possible to hear here that Paul, in First Timothy, is writing about the ministry of men *and* women.

Offices and gifts

Looking at it from another angle, we can wonder if the borderline between allowing or not allowing certain people to bear a church office is the one separating the different genders. Suppose that we look at the two issues separately from each other, and take our starting point in another connection which is unmistakably present in the Bible, namely the connection between church offices as gifts to the congregation, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit which believers themselves receive. What is then the picture that the New Testament gives us?

Hereby we can think of the example of Timothy. Paul calls him not to neglect the gift which is in him, and which he has received in order to fulfill his calling (1 Timothy 4:14, see also 6:12). Paul connects the gift which Timothy has received and which has received public acknowledgment, on the one hand, and his competency to carry out his tasks, on the other. What is important is the gift which has been received. This guarantees that Timothy will be able to keep on carrying out his tasks. Timothy's special tasks demands a gift adequate to them, you could say, but, inversely, the gift demands to be used to carry out the tasks which Timothy has received.

Alongside this, we may think about the way in which Paul writes about special ministries in the congregation. From 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4, for example, we can conclude that these ministries are gifts, given in order to guarantee that the gifts of the Spirit which all have received are put to use for the sake of building up the congregation of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:7,28, and Ephesians 4:7,11, and 16).

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-10 it is striking that the gifts and tasks are spoken of together; it seems as if they are one and the same thing. That is not extraordinary, when we think about the fact that those who have received the task from the Spirit to fulfill certain special ministries in the congregation are themselves just as much part of all in the congregation to whom the Spirit has given gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7). In other words, these are special ministries or tasks, carried out by persons who, with those gifts which they have received, have been able to be of service in putting into practice the gifts of all in the congregation.

The image that we get here of the congregation is the image of a "gifted" congregation where all, both men and women, share without distinction in the gifts of the Spirit. Gifts point to the way in which someone can and may be of service, and will be so in helping build up the congregation. We see that here no distinction is made between men and women. This could be an indication that they are equally available for service, including service in the ministry of church offices, in proportion to the gifts they have received for it.

Finally, Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 certainly assume that there are services and ministries in the congregation, but they are not mentioned as such. The gifts are what is prominent. Apparently what is of first importance is the gifts themselves. In other words: the special services and ministries are hidden behind the gifts. Here too it appears that what is of decisive importance is not whether it is a man or a woman who fulfills these tasks. The gifts themselves settle the matter.

If it concerns the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then, on the basis of what we have just seen, the conclusion is that the tasks apparently demand gifts which fit these tasks, and that, inversely, the gifts demand certain tasks to be carried out. Tasks and gifts go and work together. No mention is made of a firm

connection between tasks and being a man. Further, nowhere in the New Testament do we read that women may not fulfill certain church offices in the congregation. And just as little is there any explicit statement that only men may bear certain offices. We may assume that with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), a new reality has truly made a breakthrough. With it, it is now the time in which all believers, both men and women, may share in the gifts of the Spirit. This includes the fact that women can be called to use their specific gifts for tasks for which their gifts are fitting, including when that will include church office responsibilities. Here it is not a matter of unconnected "proof texts" from the Bible, either for or against women in church office. The issue is: how may the reality of Pentecost take shape in the devoted use of gifts by men and women in the congregation of Christ? It has to do with the developing impact of the coming of Jesus Christ, in order to save us from the curse of sin and to restore broken relationships.

The teaching of Jesus

How did it actually happen that we as churches came to explicitly exclude women from the ministry of the church offices in the congregation?

One explanation is to be found in a certain interpretation of the so-called "remain silent" texts (1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15). A line of thinking emerges from this interpretation in which other Bible texts are seen to join in the chorus. Because of the so-called "remain silent" texts, women are given a subordinate place in church life, and this is coupled to the man being the head. That places him in a certain way above the woman: he represents Christ. Concretely filled in, this means that a married man can tell his wife what to do, *and* that men in the congregation should give direction to the women. You can call this ruling or dominating. From this standpoint it follows that in the congregation only men may speak with authority flowing from a church office. Because in the "remain silent" texts reference is made to the creation and to the law, this supposedly demonstrates that it is a matter of something which God has established as a timeless structure of the relationship between man and woman, as it has been since the beginning. Shortly summarized: in the whole Bible you find a "line of male responsibility," in which the woman is subordinate to the man.

In other passages of this report, as well, this line of thinking is analyzed. In this chapter we look at the question: is it possible that a danger is lurking in this line of thinking, whereby we unintentionally ascribe to men a certain superiority, which doesn't jibe with the teaching of Jesus?

In Mark 10:42-45, we read: Jesus called his disciples and said to them: "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Not "lording it over people," but serving them: Jesus Himself came with this approach to the world, and He asks His followers to adopt it as well. Following Jesus Christ means that that listen to Him, who tells us: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

There is a lot to say for the view that we should not conceive Mark 10:42-45 as words in which a contrast is made between the abuse of power of worldly leaders and the exercise of authority by (future) church leaders. The Lord Jesus appears to be teaching us a basic principle which applies in His kingdom and in the Christian congregation. That basic principle is heard in the Reformed church order

(see the *Gereformeerde Kerkboek* or www.gkv.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/kerkorde/) in A2.2: "We all stand before the one Lord, Jesus Christ, the head of His church. No person or church may lord it over another person or church."

Not "lording it over people," but serving them: that basic principle totally opposes the curse of Genesis 3:16. It resounds in the way Paul, in Ephesians 5:21-33, speaks about the man as head within marriage, but also about the surrender of the woman to the man. We recognize it in the so-called "remain silent" texts. It is the lesson which Peter gives the office-bearers (1 Peter 5). This is evidently what is fitting for the kingdom of God, for everyone, regardless of gender.

The fact that Paul and Peter (see 1 Peter 3:1-7) speak in the context of the social relationships which were current in their day, does not mean they saw those relationships of authority as what God willed the creation order to be for all time. "Not lording it over people, but serving them" expresses the command to love from a different perspective than people of that time were used to. It is here a matter of the reality of God's kingdom and the restoration of relationships in Christ.

In the following section of this chapter, this is made more clear and worked out.

The restoration of relationships in Ephesians 5:21-33

This section of the letter speaks about the relation between man and woman within marriage. Hereby, verse 21 is the starting point for Paul. In marriage, too, the command is: submit to one another, out of reverence for Christ. What is involved here is mutual submission. By using this language the apostle expresses himself forcefully. Within a Christian marriage "lording it over the other" is completely wrong, just as it is completely wrong in the congregation of Christ.

This we continue to hear in the following words: Paul calls the man the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the church. Hereby self-renunciation is meant, the love of Christ which offered itself up. The husband ought to follow that example in relation to his wife. What is involved is a deep offering of oneself, in which Christ is reflected, He who loved us as Himself. A wife may in this way be served by her husband.

What can Paul have meant when he chose for the word "head"? He lived in a time in which women needed a "head." Generally the wife remained, in the legal and religious sense, part of the family of her father or eldest male representative, the "pater familias." What Paul writes here about marriage means that the woman disengages herself from the structures which belong to her old, pagan life, not a trivial step in any sense. She dedicates herself to her husband, and together with him they follow Christ as their head (Ephesians 5:22-24). What is going on here is a new order of existence: dedicated to Christ, a wife is from that point on dedicated to her husband and thereby also detached from her old, pagan life.

But doesn't that imply a new relationship of authority, whereby the husband commands and the wife obeys? Take notice that Paul here places the husband's being the head within the context of the relation between Christ and His congregation. The latter is the model and source for the mutuality within marriage. Paul is anxious to place men and women in their marriages within the community/family of Christ. Moreover, he characterizes the relationship between husband and wife in marriage from God's command to love, which gets its fulfillment in Christ. Everything indicates that Paul here is not describing the next relationship of authority, but a mutual, close solidarity with each other. Husband and wife form a solid relationship, just as there is a solid relationship between Christ

and His congregation. In this sense Paul is building on what he said in Ephesians 4, where he writes about Christ as head of the congregation. There Paul describes as primary the indissoluble solidarity between Christ and His congregation, and not His authority over it.

What does it mean for the wife to be dedicated to her husband? It means that she is being asked to answer his serving love with a surrender to her husband. Her surrender, too, exists in the light of the love of Christ, which is also true for her husband. Just as the love of Christ stirs up to mutual love and surrender to Him, so the wife can and may, for her part, surrender to her husband.

But the fact that the wife in this way submits to her husband, does not mean she is subordinate to him. It places her back in her proper place, side by side to her husband, just as it was in paradise. In this connection, the reference to Genesis 2:24 is very fitting, there where it is emphasized that man and woman together may be *one* (humanity). Just as Christ is bound to His congregation, so may man and woman be bound together: together one body.

This is a great mystery! Together husband and wife may show forth the love of Christ in their marriage. Here it may be expressed that they submit to each other out of reverence for Christ and for God (verse 21).

In Ephesians 5:33 we read that a wife ought to have reverence for her husband. Is this an example of subordination? It is quite natural to connect the word "reverence," which Paul uses here, with what he says about the mystery/the secret in verse 32, namely, how marriage may be a reflection of the solidarity between Christ and His congregation. The word "reverence" fits the holiness of this secret. Within the image that Paul uses he sees this "reverence" reflected in the surrender of the wife to her husband, just as husband and wife, together, are exhorted to serve each other out of "reverence" for Christ and for God. In this way verse 33 goes back to verse 21, and the circle of what Paul is saying is completed. Within the luminous circle of God's love in Christ, marriage begins to shine again as it was originally intended to do, when the LORD created man and woman and gave each other to each other.

On the basis of this interpretation of Ephesians 5 the question arises: can we derive something from this about the diversity between man and woman, and about their different roles? If Paul let the latter be heard in his teaching, in any case it doesn't play a major role here, for the whole of this section is focused on the unity and the solidarity within marriage, with as major chord: love.

Being the head as an image of Christ

This interpretation of Ephesians 5 shows us that the man being the head in the Bible has a special meaning. This portrayal is only used in the New Testament for married men (see also 1 Corinthians 11:3). It's only within marriage that the man (husband) is the head of a woman (his wife). But we have to say something more about this: the husband is only the head of his wife as an image of Christ! This is an important point. In this way it becomes clear that the man being the head has everything to do with the restoration of relationships through Jesus Christ. In paradise the man is not called the head of his wife. It does not belong to the creation order that the man is the head of his wife. This has been maintained, but on shaky grounds, for nowhere in the Bible is this said. The man's being the head is a description given not before, but after the Fall into sin, and clearly to indicate how Christ binds man and woman once again in unity--as head and body--in order to manifest, together, the image of God in mutual submission.

In this way it becomes clear that the man being the head does not have anything to do with a hierarchical order, whereby the husband would have an authoritative position with respect to his wife,

with accompanying powers. Moreover, it becomes clear that being the head is not an indication of the position of men with respect to women in general. This being the head of the man is so only within marriage, as we've seen. In Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, too, no mention is made, in a general sense, of the man as the head of the woman. In these verses Adam is not presented as the image of Christ, but as the image of a sinful and mortal humanity. Here the argument does not revolve around Adam as being as man, but as the one out of whom God has created humanity. All of humanity, descended from this one Adam, is directed to the one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:25-29 and the reality of the new covenant

In Galatians 3:28 Paul writes: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Paul speaks here not of "man or woman," but uses the expression "male and female." Hereby he is referring to Genesis 1:27, where we read that God created humanity as male and female. Can this text throw light on the relation between men and women, and does this have possible consequences for opening the church offices to women in the congregation?

In the traditional exegesis within the Reformed churches we hear often a warning that there are no far-reaching conclusions to be drawn from this text. The point being made here concerns our (personal) faith commitment to Christ, it is said, not the mutual relations which are described here.⁴⁸

However, we may ask if this narrowing of the meaning is correct here, and if there is possibly something being said about the consequences of the new reality in Christ for living together in the congregation. For in this part of the letter Paul is writing about baptism and how they who come to faith and are baptized are *one*, and together form *one* body. In this connection he even speaks of the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. In other words, Paul is speaking here with emphasis of a new situation which accompanies the reality of the new covenant. He says that the time of the old covenant, and of being "under the law," has passed, and that a new reality has appeared. Now is the time of living "under grace."⁴⁹

From this perspective, it is striking that Paul now mentions distinctions which were very important for the Jews. These distinctions were even regulated by the law, and subordination was a constant theme. And further, Christians with a pagan background knew these kinds of separating walls between people. In Ephesians 2 Paul writes penetratingly about the wall dividing Jews and Greeks, which has now been broken down since the age of the grace in Christ has appeared.

The letter to the Galatians, as well, emphatically portrays this new reality. Paul expands the application to other areas: slave and free, male and female. The relations as they took form "under the law" have now been removed in Christ, so that the promises to Abraham concerning all nations can be fulfilled. Moreover, relations are restored. In the congregation of Christ the described relations are now to be seen in the light of the redemption through Christ, and of the renewing power of His Spirit. In Christ the separating walls of ethnicity, social status, and gender, have been pulled down, and relationships are totally restored as they were meant to be. Here we glimpse, indeed, a new reality which transcends the individual person.⁵⁰

If we do not relate the new reality of being "under grace" to living together in God's kingdom, and maintain old forms in it, we could be maintaining structures which do not reject attitudes of superiority and discrimination. For example, this is the way that slavery was maintained and defended,

⁴⁸ See, for example, Prof. dr. S. Greijdanus (KNT-Bottenburg), Amsterdam: 1936, p. 252.

⁴⁹ See, for this interpretation, W. Steenbergen, 'Samenleven onder de genade. De genade als structuur-bepalende kracht voor het samenleven in en buiten de gemeente', in: Dr. J.P. Versteeg (e.a.), *De Geest schrijft wegen in de tijd*, Kok: Kampen, 1984, p. 58.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48-49.

with the Bible open.⁵¹ Further, our challenge is to see how the reality of the being "*one* (body) in Christ" may be given shape in the congregation and in society.

The new reality has as its produced effect for the congregation that every rank order falls away. There are still differences, in background, social status, and gender, but the reality "in Christ" remains preeminent and leads us. Prof. Dr. J.P. Versteeg, who points to this, adds that the distinction between the old and the new dispensation, with regard to the congregation, can be indicated by the words "representation" and "participation." Where walls of separation are broken down, no one acts *on behalf* of the other. Everyone stands *side by side* to the other.⁵²

This becomes visible, as well, in baptism, as Paul writes about it in Galatians 3:25-29. Men *and* women, sons *and* daughters receive the sign of the new covenant. This is in contrast with the sign of the old covenant, circumcision. Further, Paul's reference to Genesis 1:27 is now to be understood, for with the restoration of relationships we return to the way that God created humanity: man and woman, side by side to each other in complete harmony.

The interpretation of Galatians 3:25-29 which we present here is not a matter of giving in to the spirit of the age or culture, but is doing justice to the reality of the new dispensation. In no way is Paul totally leveling gender or other relevant differences, and even less is he rejecting authority relationships in general; parents have authority over their children, the government over its subjects, and employers over employees. What is important is that in all things the unity in Christ becomes primary, and that (gender) differences and mutual relationships are always to be seen in that light.

If these new relationships, flowing from the unity in Christ, are so all determinative, why doesn't Paul, in the New Testament, stand up as a fighter for women's rights, and why doesn't he stimulate women explicitly to take on certain tasks? The reason for this is that he is not a politician, and that he is not promoting the overthrow of relationships in society, but rather he is proclaiming the breakthrough of the kingdom of God. His focus is: how do *all* people participate in salvation, and in what way does that begin to permeate *all* the areas of life? Relationships change from inside out: between Jews and Greeks, between a Lord and his slave, and between men and women, if they stand side by side to each other in solidarity with Christ.

If this what Paul is presenting to us in Galatians 3:25-29, we are faced with insistent questions. Have we, as churches, been sufficiently conscious of the fact that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit creates new forms? Have we as churches perhaps been too much enmeshed in worldly relationships, while they have been cursed at Golgotha? Isn't maintaining a certain kind of inequality then a form of wordliness?⁵³ This interpretation of Galatians 3 leads us to draw the conclusion that by putting the emphasis on the men leading, and the women being subordinate, we have unjustly maintained hierarchical structures, which after Pentecost have no legitimacy. In this way, it could very well be the case that we have unintentionally made room for the continuance of the curse of Genesis 3.

At the same time, Galatians 3 challenges us to consider what way men and women *together* may manifest the image of God in the congregation, so that it is clear that God is a God of love, who loves us in His Son as Himself. God gives them to each other, to stand side by side in His service, for the

⁵¹ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek 3a God en mens verzoend*, Kampen: 1987. P. 636. Wentsel adds that this does not hereby mean that a "unisex" will emerge, or that all relations of authority disappear.

⁵² Versteeg, J.P., *Kijk op de kerk. De structuur van de gemeente volgens het Nieuwe Testament*, Kampen: Kok 1985, p. 11-12, zie ook p. 20.

⁵³ See P. van der Velde in *De Geest schrijft wegen in de tijd*.

upbuilding of the congregation, and to the honor of His great name. And therefore it should be also: side by side in the church offices.

Galatians 3:25-29 thus does not give explicit teaching about gifts and ministries in the congregation, but the text shows us vividly the transition from the old to the new covenant, and the restoration of relationships in Christ. The new reality has consequences for living and working together in the congregation of Christ. Galatians 3:28 (see also Colossians 3:18-25) paints a picture of a Christian fellowship of Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, and men and women, who in this world may form a fellowship of love as model of a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15). The question is: have we sufficiently seen and honored this new reality? And concretely: how is this to be put into practice with regard to the church offices?

Ministering in church offices is being of service

The New Testament does not use the word "office" as such.⁵⁴ Where we speak of offices, the New Testament often speaks of gifts. Nevertheless, there is a word which is very prominent when tasks in the congregation are involved. Prof. Dr. J.P. Versteeg points to the fact that the central word which is used for (church) office is "service" (Greek: *diakonia*). He points out that what is involved here is a completely new characterization, in connection with which every element of receiving honor or appreciation is missing. In his opinion, it can be called striking that this word, with this unique denotation, has been chosen for. In this way it is made clear that not authority, but service is characteristic for the church office concept in the New Testament. The office itself is even in two respects to be characterized as service. It is itself service, and it is aimed at giving service. The church office is to be carried out in service of the charismatic (use of gifts) serving of believers.⁵⁵

Also, when we speak of the authority of the church office we ought to bear in mind what has just been noted. The office does not derive its authority from itself, but from the Word. This authority remains in effect, also when women carry out a particular service/ministry in the congregation.

Conclusion

When we step back and get an overview of all our findings in this chapter, then it is striking that the basic pattern which we came across in the teaching of Jesus, namely "not lording it over others, but serving," is also the basic pattern which resounds again when we read of the relation between men and women within the new covenant. Because they have become one in Christ, they are called to manifest the image of God together.

This reality asks for a concrete, joint carrying out of this task, whereby men and women, each with the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit, stand side by side in the service of God and serve each other sincerely, from the heart. This applies also with respect to all the church offices in the congregation of Christ. We certainly saw in the New Testament that there is no compelling reason to be found for preventing women from carrying out certain tasks or holding certain offices.

It is for both men and women the case that their holding an office or not does not flow forth from a difference in gender, but rather from the gifts which they have received and the tasks to which they are called. By saying this we are not levelling the differences between men and women, but their being a man or a woman is not the basis of their being appointed to or prevented from certain tasks or church offices.

⁵⁴ Van Bruggen, J., *Ambten in de apostolische kerk. Een exegetisch mozaïek*, Kampen: Kok 1984, p. 146.

⁵⁵ Versteeg, J.P., *Kijk op de kerk*, p. 30-31.

3. Men and women and church office, and contemporary culture

Initial summary

In the discussion about admitting women to the church offices, is regularly said that this is bowing before contemporary Western culture--consciously or not. By this is meant: the current climate of thought, the norms and values which are regarded to be applicable to everyone, though often not made explicit. This chapter delves into this argumentation. The conclusion is that you can't say this so confidently.

Church in time and culture

Christ's church finds itself always existing in the midst of the culture of its time; it doesn't float in the air. Thereby it must always find a way to relate to that culture, and it has always done that. The question is: how do the norms and values of the society in which the church finds itself relate to Christian norms and values, and to what degree is there a mutual influence, back and forth? The Bible makes clear that the church has as its task and calling to be healingly present in society: as salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16; see Philippians 2:15; Titus 2:7-8; 1 Peter 2:12). That makes the church relevant.

Not always unambiguously

The way the church relates to culture is diverse. There are subjects concerning which the church ought to distance itself from the culture. Examples are: the prevailing loose sexual ethics, the egotistical culture of enjoyment, and the enormous emphasis on the individual and on economic interests and motives. This climate of thought is far removed from Biblical ethics. There are also subjects concerning which the church must shine in giving a good example to society. Examples are: concern for the environment, care for the displaced, and striving for just social and economic relations. As far as what culture offers us, we must "approve what is excellent" (Philippians 1:10) (Dutch text: "discern what is valuable").

The Spirit and culture

That distinction, between the areas where the church must distance itself from culture, and the areas where it ought to take leadership, makes the assertion that the man and woman and church office decisions of the Synod of Meppel are clearly "going along with the culture," shaky at best. Using that label, the implication is that our surrounding culture is always bad, and that we as a church may never go along with the tendencies in society. In other words, the church, supposedly, should by definition look with suspicion at developments in the culture.

However, there are examples which demonstrate the opposite, namely that it is the church, especially, which should have learned from the time and culture in which it functioned. In the period when in society there was resistance to slavery, for a long time the church defended slavery, appealing to the Bible. When apartheid (in South Africa) was looked at critically in Dutch society, the same thing happened in that area. These two examples show that the Holy Spirit sometimes can make something clear to the church concerning the will of God in the age in which it is functioning. This asks for a careful evaluation of the situation in which women take on the same functions as men in society, while the church keeps them out of the church offices. Perhaps the latter took place by means of the influence of the culture on the church, up till the beginning of the 20th century, while the Bible points us in another direction. That would mean that the church was following culture, rather the Bible, in this area for more than 1,500 years.

'Christ and Culture'

H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) wrote about the church and culture, and how they relate to each other, in the insightful book *Christ and Culture*.⁵⁶ Niebuhr distinguishes different possible positions:

1. Christ over against culture: a radical turning away from and retreating from culture;
2. The Christ of culture: you feel at home in the culture you live in, which manifests divine points of light;
3. Christ above culture: grace lifts the culture to a higher level;
4. Christ and culture in paradox: you know yourself to have been placed by God in a condemned culture;
5. Christ, who transforms culture: grace recreates a culture according to God's will.

The accusation that the man and woman and church office decisions of the Synod of Meppel mean that the church is bowing before culture, evaluates these decisions negatively in the light of position 4. Niebuhr makes clear in his book that other positions are also possible, as we see in this list.

Christian emancipation of the woman

These Synod decisions can certainly be seen as the result of a Christian emancipation of women. In the Reformed tradition there were already moves, since the beginning of the 20th century, to think through again the place of women in the church.⁵⁷ Developments in society were the immediate reason for thinking more about admitting women to the church offices, but the decision which has been taken is the result of a renewed thinking through about what God in His Word asks of us in this area. It witnesses to self-reflection when, in these new discussions this question plays a role: how strongly is our traditional situation colored by culture? Let us search for that which, in our current culture, forms a threat to the man and woman relationship, but also for that in which the culture may challenge us in a positive way.

Remaining alert

It is important, as a church federation and as individual believers, to be alert to being influenced by things in society which are opposed to God's Word. In times in which the church seeks and finds solidarity with society, it's necessary, out of principle, not to dilute the wine with water. At such times vigilance is called for: are we not going too far in going along with the culture in areas where the Bible points us in a different direction? There can be an undesirable influence coming from our culture which strongly affects our hearts. The Bible has the first and the last word in all the areas of our life, including where society is threatening to penetrate and capture our life. However, the sanctification of life does not begin with decisions about admitting women to the church offices, but in our own heart.

Conclusion

The immediate reason for considering admitting women to the church offices has been the developments in our society, but the decision which has been taken is the result of a renewed thinking through of what God asks of us in this area.

⁵⁶ Niebuhr, H.R., *Christ and culture*, [HarperCollins Publishers Inc](#), 1951.

⁵⁷ Kuyper, A., *Tractaat van de Reformatie der kerken*, Höveker en Zoon, Amsterdam: 1883.

Maarten Verkerk, Nienke Verkerk-Vegter en Hillie van de Streek, *Herman Bavinck en het 'vrouwenvraagstuk'. Religie als motivatie en inspiratie*. Tijdschrift voor Genderstudie 2012, nr. 1.

4. Diversity and unity⁵⁸

Initial summary

The reflection about the subject of man and woman and the church offices, and the decisions which the Synod of Meppel took, have led to three results. People are: 1) on the basis of the Biblical arguments against admitting women to the offices, or 2) for their admittance, on the basis of Biblical arguments; or 3) they see, Biblically speaking, room for both standpoints. It appears that we will not be able to convince each other and come to a general consensus. The question is: how are we going to deal with this situation as a church?

To that question there are also different answers. Some emphasize the differences and draw the conclusion that it is impossible for people who have different views of this subject to remain together in one church. The result would be a church split. Others acknowledge the differences, but find them not weighty enough to warrant a church split.

We would like to plead for the latter option. That does not mean that striving for unity has priority above the need to listen carefully to the Bible. You can never play those two convictions off against each other. For it is precisely the Holy Scripture which shows us how important the Lord of the church finds unity to be. Church unity is for the Lord no minor issue.

Is uniformity demanded?

In the years past we in the Reformed churches (Liberated) were used to a situation in which uniformity prevailed in our federation from Limburg in the south to Groningen in the north. Every church used the same order of service in the church services, and everywhere the same psalms and hymns were sung. We read the same newspaper (Nederlands Dagblad), and voted for the same political party (the GPV). That uniformity was not a matter of a Biblical principle; that was the way it went in Dutch society as a whole, with various distinct religious and ideological streams, each with their own newspapers and political parties (Note of the translator: I have added some explanatory material).

Now the situation has changed, as everyone can see easily, and the question is: what (degree of) uniformity does God ask of us in the Bible? In this report we try to show in a careful way that the decisions of the Synod of Meppel are responsible ones, and depend on another exegesis than was used in the past. Differences in exegesis are not new, and we should allow them from each other. But now we see that this has led to a growth in diversity in practice in our church life, we will have to find ways to deal with this and relate to each other in a Biblical manner.

The Biblical truth

It is important to establish what the weight is of the subject in question. When it involves admitting women to the church offices or not, we're not talking about the teaching about redemption, but about how the offices are to be organized, and the way in which church government is to be given shape. Perhaps this can be done in various ways, and there is room for differences of opinion and activity in this area.

We are not so used to this way of doing things. Often we thought that the Bible had to lead to having *one* standpoint, because otherwise there would be no objective truth any more. But it is not the character of the Bible to teach us *one* standpoint about all kinds of matters. Over against postmodernism we hold tenaciously to *one* truth. That one truth is not formed by conclusions or

⁵⁸ For this part of the report we have made use of the report of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (2000).

standpoints of people, not even by synod decisions or age-old church policy, but by the one Word of God (Art. 7, Belgic Confession). That is the one truth which we must return to and rest upon in every discussion. This one truth has been summarized by the church in the true and complete teaching about redemption (the second question to parents of a child who is to be baptized, in our traditional Baptism Form), that which we have put into words in our confessions. It is quite striking that there is nothing in our confessions which makes it impossible to open the church offices to women.

How should we use the Word of God to arrive at a valid standpoint? It is important to acknowledge that there is relief, rich variety, in the Bible: we read there not only commands, but also description, there are not only norms prescribed, but also examples given. With regard to certain issues, the Bible gives clear warnings, but in other cases gives a general indication in a certain direction.

A number of the texts which play a role in the man and women and church office discussions are embedded in passages where Paul is speaking about the organization of God's people. If there is difference of opinion about what Paul exactly means, that does not mean that this difference separates us from Christ and from the new humanity which He is now involved in creating. We don't have to walk away from each other simply because of that difference of opinion, or reject each other, or show each other the door. It is important to keep on talking to each other about this subject out of our joint union with Christ, the Head of the church.

Hereby we recognize that the issue as to whether women may bear church offices or not does not affect the heart of Christian faith, but rather the organization of church life. This recognition may also help us by considerations which we must make with a good conscience. Sometimes it is said that whoever has difficulties with the Synod decisions must be able to decide, in his or her own conscience, whether he or she can remain a member of a congregation which agrees with these decisions. That can certainly be a considerable struggle. However, a serious difference about the organization of the church ought to be resolved while still maintaining the unity of the church. The Bible, and, in the tradition of Biblical theology, diverse Reformed theological leaders show us this way of proceeding here.

The Biblical ideal of unity

Jesus calls His disciples to stay united. In connection with this, the most well-known text is probably John 17:20-23. In the so-called High Priestly prayer, Jesus shows Himself to be deeply moved concerning the well-being of the church. He points to the dangers and the powers which come from outside the church, and to the manifestation of the power of the devil (John 17:11-19). He names also the internal threats to this unity (John 17:20-23). Most striking is His deep wish and desire, expressed repeatedly in verse 21 and 23, that the unity of the church ought to be a witness to the world: "...that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent me and loved them even as You loved me" (John 17:23). The aim which the Lord has for the church is to be realized, certainly in part, by its unity. Divisions create a negative witness, both to the world and to the members of the church, in particular the young, new Christians, and to those weak in faith.

Christ's urgent prayer in John 17, with its desire for unity, is worked out by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. The members of the church, "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2), have an urgent responsibility to commit themselves to maintaining unity: "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment..." (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Splits and divisions in the body of Christ are in direct conflict with what the fellowship of the Church ought to be. Paul understood that it was his commission as apostle to proclaim the Gospel, so that all eyes had to be focused on the central figure of Christ. Partisanship, which divided the body, diverts our attention from the essential aim of the service of the Gospel.

Dealing with differences in a Biblical manner

In Ephesians 4:3 Paul gives us the guideline: "(I urge you to be) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." For the wisdom of God, in all its variety, is meant to be visible through the church (Ephesians 3:10). It's quite striking that Paul doesn't just say to maintain the unity in Christ, He gives a practical guideline for how that unity must be kept intact.

In Ephesians 4:4-6 he sums up what all believers have together: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." That is to say, when the church is confronted with splits and divisions, it must make an appeal to the heart of Christian faith. Unity and diversity is possible through the power of peace, which binds believers together: humility, gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). "Humility" here points to modesty in your relation to God, the term "gentleness" here indicates your attitude toward your neighbor, and "patience, bearing with one another in love" means that you are generous in giving the other person the space to be different, and to think and to act differently. We're called to hold the banner of God's Word high, *and* we're called to be modest and gentle and to bear with one another in love.

It is precisely this combination which is important. God, too, does not sweep the truth--of our sins--under the carpet; rather He finds a way to in no way minimize that reality, and still have a relation with us. It is sin in me which pushes me to do away with relationships; it is a dissolving power. But if in the entirety of the Gospel it's a matter of restoring relationships, I may not do away with them. Jesus Himself offered Himself up to have enemies be reconciled with each other. The unity of the church is not threatened by diversity, but by division. We will have to find ways to prevent such division.

In certain ways, differences within the congregation can be beneficial to the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12, for example, Paul shows that diversity in the body is necessary and is a healthy mark of the church (see also Romans 12:4). To be clear: the diversity which Paul is talking about here is related to the diversity of spiritual gifts, not to a difference of opinion concerning or conflicting interpretations of the Bible. Nevertheless, his emphasis on recognizing and accepting differences without coming to a quick condemnation is instructive regarding an attitude which ought to characterize the body of Christ. This attitude is vividly described in that great and beautiful chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians, in which the call to faith, hope, and love concludes with the declaration that love is the greatest of these three.

Love in the deep, Biblical sense, does not replace Christian obedience to God's Word. Not at all: in 1 John it is repeatedly emphasized that obedience and love are inseparable. Yet love is the essential, binding factor which enables a Christian congregation to stay focused on its aim: to glorify God by working on the growth of His kingdom. For this reason Paul prays, "...that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11). If due to a difference of opinion division is prevailing in the church, it will, tragically, lose power. That applies to different areas: with respect to missions, seeking to proclaim the Gospel to others, but also in the capacity of its own members to be able to grow in holy obedience.

We believe, on the basis of God's Word, that all of Jesus' disciples are one in Him. That must be visible and remain so in the church. There will always be opposing forces which try to undermine that aim. Philippians 4:2-3 makes a personal appeal to every believer to make every possible effort to become one with the others in the Lord. That latter addition is essential, if you want to understand the dynamic of Paul's appeal. Our unity is in Christ. As long as we seek to make everything we are and have to be focused on Him as Savior and Lord of the church, we can radiate unity and keep that unity intact. In both Philippians 4 as in 1 Corinthians, Paul is deeply concerned about the damage which visible divisions will bring to the mission of the church.

Philippians 2:3 calls us, in all humility, to regard the other more important than ourselves. That appeal is not a one-time affair. The Bible teaches us that the people of God must walk together in humility, and in a spirit of mutual service. We are called to live, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). That is not an easy task in our secularized society. There the self-interest and the rights of the individual are the number one priority. That can very easily mean that in the church there is an attitude whereby we think that we have a God-given right to have a church or church federation in which we all think alike about issues which do not belong to the heart of our faith, and are not a mark of a Christian life-style. If things go this way, it is not the Lord who determines the boundaries of the church, but we ourselves. We learn to deal with differences from what Paul writes to Timothy. Ephesus had false teachers who said that the resurrection had already taken place. That is certainly no unimportant issue. Paul writes to Timothy, here, that he must not be argumentative, but should be friendly to everyone. He must be a good teacher, and a tolerant human being, and should correct his opponents gently. Then the Lord will perhaps bring them to repentance, so that they come to know the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Even in the case of doctrinal error of this type, the approach of the servant of the Gospel should be one that enables there to be a continuing, positive contact with the erring person. How much more should this be true of all of those who confess Christ in accordance with the Scriptures!

Around the Reformation

The Reformation of the 16th century was a time, pre-eminently, in which mutual differences manifested themselves within the church. It is instructive to see how things developed at that time. Above all, the Reformers made an appeal to the Word of God as the foundation of the truth.

Martin Luther

Luther abhorred the idea of leaving the church. For him, the substance of the church was the presence of Christ in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. He believed that you ought not to leave the church as long as the Word was proclaimed and the sacraments administered. In fact, Luther was always ready to defend the reformation of the church, more than separating or division. It was as late as 1537-1538 that he came to accept definitively the division in the church. But shortly after that, in his book *On the Councils and the Church* from 1539, he acknowledged that even if church councils made wrong decisions about important theological subjects, it was not a reason, necessarily, to reject the authority of the church gathering, or to leave the church. In Luther's view, as long as the Gospel was proclaimed in the church, and thus the true presence of Christ was visible, it was necessary to reform the church from within.

John Calvin

For Calvin, too, the teaching of the church was crucial, when the issue was how you should deal with differences of interpretation and views. The fourth book of his *Institutes* is dedicated to the church. Going into much detail, he argues that if the marks of the true church are present, it is not legitimate to leave that church, or to take part in splits on the grounds of the mistakes or lies in the church. The following quote shows how Calvin thought about this:

"The pure ministry of the Word and pure mode of celebrating the sacraments are, as we say, sufficient pledge and guarantee that we may safely embrace as church any society in which both these marks exist. The principle extends to the point that we must not reject it so long as it retains them, even if it otherwise swarms with many faults.

What is more, some fault may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from communion with the church. For not all the articles of true doctrine are

of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion. Such are: God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy; and the like. Among the churches there are other articles of doctrine disputed which still do not break the unity of faith. Suppose that one church believes--short of unbridled contention and opinionated stubbornness--that souls upon leaving bodies fly to heaven; while another, not daring to define the pace, is convinced nevertheless that they live to the Lord. What churches would disagree on this one point? Here are the apostle's words: 'Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of the same mind; and if you be differently minded in anything, God shall reveal this also to you' [Phil. 3:15]. Does this not sufficiently indicate that a difference of opinion over these nonessential matters should in no wise be the basis of schism among Christians? First and foremost, we should agree on all points. But since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining, or we must condone delusion in those matters which go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation."⁵⁹

If we follow Luther and Calvin, then a church split on the grounds of a difference of opinion about women office-bearers, would only be justified if it can be clearly shown that the marks of the true church are in dispute. Concretely this means: only if the presence of Christ in the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments are at issue. If they are not, then there is only one thing to do, according to the Reformers: remain in the church, and work there on reformation, and on bringing about a better understanding of God's Word.

The 18th and the 19th centuries

The echo of this attitude is to be heard in the voice of the respected leader, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who, just like the Reformers, powerfully argued for the unity of the church. In his *Treatise on the Reformation of the Churches*, Kuyper paints two scenarios:

1. "You see and know that your church has become a synagogue of Satan. If *that* so, then you must, without hesitation leave it, and shake off the dust of your feet to it.
2. You see and know that your church is not yet a synagogue of Satan. If *that* is so, you may not yet send it a letter of departure. On the contrary, you are obliged to remain.

Following Calvin's example, we would like to seriously urge everyone to see if the church, which you want to leave, has indeed been left by God in such a way that it is not only its well-being has been lost, but also the substance of the church. You may not withhold your love because it is sick or mutilated. Instead of that, it may expect from you, seeing it is sick, an even greater involvement on your part."⁶⁰

Limited responsibility

It is true that that the Reformed churches (Liberated) have changed, including their stance toward "the uniformity of the churches." (Note of the translator: the Reformed churches (Liberated), since 1944, had insisted on the Biblical requirement of one church federation in a geographical area, as opposed to accepting different denominations as legitimate). But the changes are not occurring everywhere at the same tempo. The increased diversity in our federation can call forth the question: what is the scope of my responsibility, and when am I bound in my conscience?

It is important to know that church members are not responsible for the decisions of their local church council. Even more important, even office-bearers do not have to agree with a decision which has been made by the majority of the church council. Even less are local congregations responsible for the

⁵⁹ Calvin, J., *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.12, (Vol. 2, trans. F.L. Battles), Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.

⁶⁰ Kuyper, A., *Tractaat van de Reformatie der kerken*, Amsterdam: Höverker en Zoon 1883, p. 162.

decisions of other churches. "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith" (2 Corinthians 1:24).

In connection with this point, the General Synod of Groningen-South (1978) made a declaration regarding the baptism of adopted children which is worth mentioning here. The Synod declared that the decisions were not binding doctrinal statements, but a church rule for baptismal practice. In a comparable way, the decisions of the Synod of Meppel to allow women to the offices, are not binding doctrinal statements, but offer room within the church federation to local congregations to have women office-bearers when they appoint members to the church offices. In short: the decisions do not establish a universal truth, but offer a guideline for church practice. Furthermore, it's important to give shape to this practice in such a way that there is room for those who agree with the new guideline as well as for those have trouble with it.

Tolerance for opponents

The Bible teaches us to distinguish between differences which occur within the church and the fight against "opponents." The latter expression comes from Philippians 1:28.

In the congregation of Philippi there was no agreement about everything, as we see in Paul's letter. Nevertheless, Paul says that the brothers and sisters there must learn to "strive for the Gospel" (1:27). It is a big mistake to confuse these two categories, as if brothers and sisters who are striving for the same Gospel are our opponents. Yes, there are opponents, there is thus no limitless tolerance. But with those who strive for the faith in the Gospel there can be differences of opinion. However, those differences of opinion ought not to bring their unity in danger. Neither of the two positions around women officer-bearers may be called an unwillingness to subject oneself to God's Word. We are all building on the same foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). That's why tolerance is called for.

When there are such differing views, humility is called for. No one of us can speak the last word about these things. Differing views about what God means in His Word flow forth from our human and sinful limitations.

It is important to signal two dangers: abandoning God's word, but also: making human words the Word of God. We need each other (Ephesians 3:18-19). We stand side by side in our common quest to find Biblical answers to our questions. Entering into and remaining in discussion with each other gives trust in one another, as we discover in each other love for God, His Word and His church.

The catholic church

The church is formed and filled by those who confess Christ as the anointed Son of God (Matthew 16:13-18). Many of the people who followed Jesus saw Him a forerunner of the Messiah: Elijah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist. But the disciples saw Jesus as the Messiah Himself. Peter speaks on behalf of the disciples when he is asked to speak: "Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.'"

God enables people to confess that Jesus is the anointed Son, and together they form the church. Article 27 of the Belgic Confession says about the church: it is a holy gathering of the true believers. We see something of this in the growing unity across church borders. At the same time tension is increased: there is a certain unity, but we're not yet one. But if we were to become one, we don't see the tension diminished: we are one, but we're not agreed about all kinds of issues.

We can react in different ways to the broken reality in which there is only one church, while all kinds of churches are visible. You could say: there is only one church, therefore all those other churches are wrong. You could also say: there is indeed only one church, but the reason for the existence of all these different churches is our own fault as believers. We are somehow not able to have the unity which there should be. Therefore, we maintain the catholicity of the church by knowing ourselves bound to each other, even in the midst of the brokenness which expresses itself in our inability to convince each other concerning truth and error.

Conclusions

The differences with regard to women in church office have put the unity which we have in Christ under pressure. There are some who are not sure that the Reformed churches (Liberated) still want to remain faithful to God's Word. Others have interpreted the pronouncements of the Synod of Meppel as a signal that the church has forgotten to be faithful to the Word, and has capitulated to the movement for change in a society which is opposed to God's Word. This conclusion has led some church members to threaten to leave their local congregations. Further, a number of foreign churches, with whom we have had sister-church relations for years, have broken ties with us. For everyone who is involved this is a deeply sad development. The difference of opinion about the subject of men and women and church office has had a strongly bipolarizing effect, till now: some of us have already been pulled apart, and those of us who belong together are being pulled apart further.

In this chapter we have tried to show how different convictions and conclusions with regard to the unity of the body of Christ can be the cause of a centrifugal force, bringing people together, which is strong enough to resist and overcome confusion and division.

In the light of the Biblical imperative to have church unity, we hereby make an appeal to our brothers and sisters in Christ to cherish mutual trust, both in our own fellowship as well as world-wide.

5. Hermeneutics and the authority of Scripture

Initial summary

Hermeneutics plays a role in the reflections about man and woman and church office. It is important to approach the Bible in a responsible way. When big changes are happening, it is proper that there is a call to acknowledge the authority of Scripture. That call is answered in this chapter.

Reflections upon the new questions being posed can only take place based on the witness of Scripture itself and along that path become transparent and legitimate. We can describe the new reflections in this area as the freedom of exegesis.

Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics is reflection about our way of interpreting and reading the Bible. In short: exegesis is the Bible interpretation itself, and hermeneutics thinks about the way we come to a particular exegesis, and, more broadly, how we ought to read the Bible. The word "hermeneutics" is also used in other connections, such as in the study of law.

In the reflections about man and woman and church office, the term "the new hermeneutics" is regularly heard. This expression is generally used to describe the result of an interpretation of the Bible: whoever, on the grounds of the Bible, does not see any room for opening the church offices to women, is seen as an adherent of the "old hermeneutics," while whoever does see such room is then supposedly an adherent of the "new hermeneutics." Often the concept of "new hermeneutics" is looked at with distrust, as if it is a magic wand with which you can let the Bible say what is not there.

Hermeneutics has always followed a path of development, and the border between "old" and "new" hermeneutics is therefore difficult to pinpoint. If you would want to describe a difference, you could say that classic Biblical hermeneutics is the reflection on doing exegesis and on the exegetical rules by which someone arrives (or should arrive) at a particular exegesis of a Bible passage or passages. The "new hermeneutics" (of the Bible) can be described as critical reflection on understanding Scripture. In this process, reading, interpreting, and appropriating communicative activity and processes play a role.⁶¹ The "new hermeneutic," of this sort, asks, properly, for an account of the choices which we have made in arriving at a certain exegesis (of the Bible).

There is also a form of hermeneutics by which the reader himself or herself may read and interpret the Bible in the way he or she wants to, just as everyone can, and may see something different from someone else--as in interpreting a modern work of art. This we may call philosophical hermeneutics. This, in our context, is certainly not the way we (the Synod of Meppel and the writers of this report) read the Bible, but there is a fear among some that this is where we are heading.

In the reflection about man and woman and church office, hermeneutics plays a role, indeed, but not according to the division of the "old" and the "new" hermeneutics. What is important is that the demand be honored that Bible interpreters carry on hermeneutical activity in a responsible way. You cannot establish this ahead of time, but only after the fact. In chapter 6 we show that with more attention for critical reflection on understanding Scripture it is possible to come to a trustworthy exegesis.

The Bible on its own interpretation

⁶¹ Bruijne, A.L.Th de, *Gereformeerde hermeneutiek vandaag*, Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2017, p. 22.

It is evident that various plausible exegeses of a Bible text can exist, next to each other. That puts pressure on us: is this because of the Bible itself, or because of the reader? The General Synod of Ede (2014) declared that both ways of looking at the issue--women *may not*, and women *may* be church office-bearers--are possible on the basis of the Bible.

The church, the tradition, or the confessions may not establish the interpretation of Scripture, but the church must, on the basis of exegesis, come to decisions with an eye to church practice. Luther said: the Bible does not need any interpretative authority besides itself. That was his answer to the Roman Catholic church, which declared that *it* determined what the Word said. Luther and later Protestants said the opposite: *the Word* determines what the church should say. That is what we, too, believe and confess (see the Belgic Confession, Art. 5).

Different people, who sincerely say that the Bible alone is determinative for what we in the church should do, can have different standpoints. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 the apostle says: "knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." "Someone's own interpretation" means here: unconnected to the rest. You may not artificially detach a single text from the totality of the Bible, for there is only *one* Author. If you do that, then you can let the text say something completely different from what is intended. The Bible is clear, that is a faith principle. And just as much: the clarity of the Bible is a critical principle: the Bible is clear for me, but also for the other person. I must always be ready to listen, and to have my views and starting points open for discussion. The Holy Spirit can truly make the Bible clear. He leads us into the truth. Hereby, He makes use of human beings. We must patiently take the effort to always read the Bible afresh, and to try to understand it.

The Bible and culture

The Bible contains the Gospel for all times and all places, but in its form has been shaped by the time and the culture in which it was presented. One example of this, which already has been mentioned, is that the culture of almost all ancient Eastern countries was strongly patriarchal. This culture worked itself out in the Greek and Roman world, and therefore in the New Testament texts. The inequality of man and woman, the subordination of women and the hostility to women which went along with it, formed the cultural climate of the New Testament age.

In God's patience, He chose to adapt to that culture with His gracious work of restoration, with the result that the society of His people, too, was strongly colored by that patriarchy. That does not mean that this kind of patriarchy, with all the consequences for the relations between man and woman, was God's prescription for all times and places. In other words, that God and His Bible writers adapted to the culture of that time does not make the recording of it in the Bible normative.

The Bible and translation

The Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, in a time which was not ours. In order to understand its language, not only a translation of the words and the sentences is needed. The time, as well, in which the original text was written, needs to be taken account of. "This requires us to travel back in time in our thoughts."⁶²

Next to the language used, we must have knowledge, among other things, of the topography, the geography, the culture, and even the flora and fauna of that time and place, in order to understand the Scripture. And this includes its historical and literary context.⁶³ We must be careful with the sources and the data to be found outside Holy Scripture. They can help us in understanding the Scripture, but they are always of a secondary significance. "The things these sources say cannot be decisive

⁶² Bruggen, J. van, *Het lezen van de Bijbel, een inleiding*, Kampen: Kok 1995, p. 78.

⁶³ Bruggen, J. van, *Het lezen van de Bijbel, een inleiding*, Kampen: Kok 1995, p. 78-88.

concerning the truth and the value of Holy Scripture."⁶⁴ It is clear that such data can never have an importance above or next to the Scripture.

The authority of Scripture

When certain texts and Biblical notions are interpreted differently now than previously, the question inevitably is raised as to the authority of Holy Scripture: are we listening, with this new interpretation, sincerely and with respect to what God reveals in His Word, or are we giving it our own subjective twist?

God's Word cannot exist without "translating" the message of God's Word. There must always be a certain distance to be bridged over when the Scriptures are interpreted.⁶⁵ Jesus does this too when He opens the Scriptures for the travelers to Emmaus (Luke 24:27). The interpretation of the Scripture is aimed at understanding God's Word and at faith. Jesus therefore tells the travelers to Emmaus, as well, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25)

It is important to see the close relationship between the authority of Scripture and translating it. The church has not let itself be hindered from composing confessional statements by its principle that the Scripture is its own interpreter.

The freedom of exegesis

Because the Scripture is its own interpreter, in the churches there has always existed the possibility of new reflection. The decision in answering new questions can only become clear and legitimate by listening the witness of Scripture itself. This new reflection can be described as the freedom of exegesis.⁶⁶ That is to say, when confronted with a new, relevant question, we must go back to the Scripture itself, and try, with utmost respect and in faith, once again to understand what we read there. This coming to understand the Scripture we must do together, in a transparent and legitimate way. Abraham Kuyper calls the freedom of exegesis an obligation over against the confessional life of the church, and he says that he cannot do without the freedom of exegesis. "This total freedom is furthermore indispensable, if Theology is to fulfill its obligation to the confessional life of the Church."⁶⁷ He wants to maintain the freedom of exegesis, so that the church "does not live from the water in a pitcher, and cut itself off from the Fountain out of which that water was taken."⁶⁸

If we, through the freedom of exegesis, arrive at a new interpretation, then the authority of Scripture is not being questioned. We have to do with differences in *interpretation* of the Scripture between people who all acknowledge the authority of the Scripture, and with integrity and in good conscience make an appeal to Bible texts and to the Bible as a whole. In this interpretation, historical and cultural arguments play a role.

The question as to what is authoritative, is something characterizing all ages, and is posed with regard to all kinds of ethical issues. That was already so in the time of ancient Judaism, in which people were able to differ about all kinds of matters, but had to be agreed about the Jewish law. There are examples in the New Testament, too. The most well-known example is the discussion at the apostolic gathering in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Often there was a search for giving proper shape to a Christian way of life. More recent examples of ethical reconsiderations concern the legitimacy of slavery and apartheid, and the view of the place of women in society. Again and again the church has gone back to the Scripture

⁶⁴ Greijdanus, S., *Schriftbeginselen ter Schriftverklaring*, Kampen: Kok 1946, p. 126.

⁶⁵ Berkouwer, G.C., *Dogmatische Studiën, De Heilige Schrift I*, Kampen: Kok, 1966, p.142.

⁶⁶ Berkouwer, G.C., *Dogmatische Studiën, De Heilige Schrift I*, Kampen: Kok, 1966, p. 202.

⁶⁷ Kuyper, A., *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, algemeen deel*, Amsterdam: 1894, p. 544.

⁶⁸ Kuyper, A., *Encyclopedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid, algemeen deel*, Amsterdam: 1894, p. 545.

with its questions, and change was accompanied by a lot of pain. Again and again, too, the question about the authority of Scripture was posed, and answered.

The Bible is not a "pitcher," but a "fountain," in which we may see and believe the activity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for all ages. We may appeal to the promise: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13,14) This promise is in the first place meant for the apostles, but in the second place also for those who through their proclamation believe in Jesus (John 17:20).

Conclusion

God's Word is richly diverse, and opens up all kinds of perspectives on reality. It is the living Word for all times. We must not try to do away with or make light of that diversity of texts and perspectives. They show us the many-colored glory of Christ and His redemption. We are receivers of the revelation of God's salvation which again and again, in a marvelous way, reveals itself.

6. The "remain silent" texts

Initial summary

In the course of the years a number of texts in the letters of Paul have gotten the name the "remain silent" texts. We're talking about 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. They are quoted in discussions about man and woman and church offices. However, the label these texts have received has a limiting effect, as if they only touch the issue as to whether, next to men, women may bear a church office. The label that they have gotten makes it difficult to read them separately from that discussion, while it is questionable if these words of Paul are applicable to it.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes about what should be happening in the congregation of Corinth. Applied to our subject, the question arises: does Paul believe that the women in that congregation should remain silent, and if so, what does that mean exactly? Only when you have answered those questions can you proceed to consider what these texts mean for our day.

In the first letter which Paul sent to Timothy, Paul gives Timothy advice. Here, too, we have to ask ourselves: what kinds of advice are they exactly, and are they for us, too, normative? That's why we try, in this chapter, to look carefully at what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14 and in 1 Timothy 2.

In this chapter we limit ourselves, thus, to a number of texts which have been called the "remain silent" texts, also because churches have asked the General Synod of Goes emphatically to give attention to these texts. However, the substantiation of the man and woman and church office decisions does not rest merely upon unconnected Bible texts. That is clear from the entirety of this report.

About Paul and the Corinthians

Paul wrote a letter, as is evident at the opening of it. That is worth pondering: this is not prophecy, nor a law text, but a letter. And specifically, it is a letter addressed to the congregation of Corinth, a port city. At the same time, it is more than just a letter. It is namely one of the books of the New Testament (see Art. 4 of the Belgic Confession).

The first letter to the Corinthians is the first letter which has been preserved, not the first one which Paul sent to the congregation there (1 Corinthians 5:9). When Paul is at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8) he hears from those who were living with Chloe that there are problems in the congregation of Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11). That is, among other reasons, the immediate reason for his writing this letter, the first of such letters to be preserved. Another reason is that the congregation has asked Paul all kinds of questions.⁶⁹

After the letter which we call 1 Corinthians (while it is actually the second letter), Paul writes again, a letter which has not been preserved (2 Corinthians 2:4). His last and fourth letter we know as the second letter to the Corinthians. In this chapter we focus on the first (preserved) letter.

1 Corinthians as a whole

The passage which plays a role in the man and woman and church office discussion we find in 1 Corinthians 14:27-40. Later in this chapter we go into detail about this passage, but it is important not to forget the whole of the letter when we are discussing it.

Paul writes about factions being formed, adultery, and about bringing each other to the secular judge for justice. He has heard about this from "Chloe's people" (1 Corinthians 1:11). The questions which the congregation has sent Paul, he treats starting in chapter 7 (1 Corinthians 7:1). Paul deals with marriage, eating meat offered to idols, prayer, prophesying, the Lord's Supper, and about the

⁶⁹ Anderson, R.D., *1 Korintiërs, Orde op zaken in een jonge stadskerk*, (CNT), Kampen: 2008.

relationship between different gifts, prophesying, and speaking in tongues. He then writes about the resurrection and his travel plans, and closes the letter with greetings.

The letter is thus a reaction to information from Choe's people (those who lived with her), and answers the congregation's questions. When we read 1 Corinthians 14, it's important to remember that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 already wrote that women were prophesying in Corinth. On the basis of that passage, you cannot conceive of 1 Corinthians as a total prohibition of women prophesying. 1 Corinthians thus does not properly belong to those group of texts which we call the "remain silent" texts.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

In 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, Paul gives practical guidelines for how the congregation is to react to speaking in tongues and prophecy. Verse 34 and 35 belong to this discussion. For the church members in Corinth, these two verses were not the heart of this passage. You can see that, because verse 36 is connected with verse 33. Verses 34 and 35 seem to be a side remark. It could be that Paul, after he was finished with his instructions, added this remark to them. In a number of manuscripts (copies) of this letter, verse 34 and 35 occur after verse 40.

Starting with verse 26, Paul begins to explain the concrete meaning of the instructions he had given earlier regarding the gatherings of the congregation in Corinth. He had said in 1 Corinthians, namely, that everyone may contribute something, thus men and women. Paul now gives examples of what people can contribute: a song, a lesson, a revelation, something said in tongues or the translation of what was said in tongues. He gives as the criterion: let that which is contributed be upbuilding to the congregation. And in the verses 27-33 he makes that concrete, so concrete that we can almost see it before our eyes.

Paul says: in the meetings let only two or three speak or prophesy at the same time, while he had previously called for all to prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1,12, and 39). If someone speaks in tongues, there *must* be an interpretation; otherwise that person must be silent. That is not an absolute prohibition from speaking, but rests on the criterion Paul had mentioned earlier: is it upbuilding for the congregation? Prophesying, as well, may take place by two or at most three people at the same time. This is to be followed by an evaluation of this prophecy by others. On what grounds? We may think of the principle in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Jesus is Lord," and what is said about false prophets in Matthew 7:15-23. Think also of what John writes in 1 John 4:1-6: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1 John 4:2).

In the case of evaluating prophecy, too, the idea is that it must be upbuilding to the congregation, and everything must take place in an orderly manner. If, during the prophesying, someone who is sitting there wants to interrupt, the speaker is to be quiet and first let the other person speak. It seems as if the first speaker is not told to be quiet, but that someone in the gathering place is given the right to speak. How someone indicates that he or she wants to speak, is not said.

Verse 30 is not grouped with the "remain silent" texts, but in fact that is the case here. Paul says here, as it were: you are not the only one who has the gift of the Spirit. Don't absolutize your gift, and stop talking at the appropriate moment.

Everyone who has the gift of prophecy, may prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:5, 24 and 26). Verse 31 adds here an instruction for the gatherings: do it one by one, so that everyone can be taught and encouraged. Proper order and the peace of the gathering must not be disturbed. For that reason Paul writes further: (Dutch NBV translation) "The person who prophesies must have power

over his own spirit" (English ESV: "and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets") (vs. 33). Thus when you prophesy during gatherings, keep yourself under control, in contrast with the pagan way of prophesying, whereby prophets become ecstatic. The Holy Spirit does not take the control away from the believers' own spirit.

Speaking in tongues must be translated or interpreted by another person. "Don't become ecstatic" could mean that you must speak understandable language. One gets the impression from these verses that the Corinthians had a very high opinion of themselves, for Paul writes a bit further on: "Or was it from you that the word of God came?" Verse 36 closes, with this remark, connecting to verse 33. The subject here is not women (verse 34-35), but the gifts of the Spirit (verse 26-33). The Corinthians wanted to ignore Paul's demands, while in all the other congregations the people held to them.

Paul's remark in verse 36 is quite sharp in tone. In verse 37 he adds to this sharpness. It sounds like a direct confrontation, which concludes with a declaration from the Lord. In the words of Paul we hear: if you don't recognize what I'm saying as from the Lord, *your* words shouldn't be recognized at all! This expression could be referring back to Matthew 7:21,23. The passage concludes with a short summary of the previous verses in verse 39 and 40: "So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order." And for all the words spoken in the congregation the criterion is that they must be upbuilding.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Now we look at the passage which is called a "remain silent" text: "the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."

These verses occur in the context of evaluating prophecy and combatting chaos. In the surrounding verses there are other limitations regarding people who are prophesying. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul has already mentioned that women also are prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5). For the Corinthians it was immediately clear what Paul meant in 14:33-34. Paul is giving instructions, and he substantiates them as well. Women must remain subordinate, as the law says. This "being subordinate" you can interpret as "patiently endure," without doing injustice to Paul's intention. Compare this to church members in our day who "endure" quietly what is being said in a sermon, without shouting out all kinds of things in reaction.

The reference to the law (verse 34) is special, because we know of no law in which this is said. Some think that Paul is making a reference to Genesis 3:16, but those words do not have the power or the status of a law. It is more probable that Paul is here making a connection with what the Greeks at that time imagined with the word "law." By "law" the Greeks thought of a habit or convention, that which has been commonly done, either written down or not.⁷⁰

The context and the words which Paul uses here make it possible to read 1 Corinthians 14:33 and 34 as follows: you women must voluntarily not get involved in discussions in the gatherings. They must

⁷⁰ Dorland, P., *Ambtsdrager M/V, Mogen vrouwen een kerkelijk ambt bekleden*, Soest: 2013.

"endure" it, as is the custom. If they want to ask something, they must do it at home, for it's not appropriate if they do that in the congregational gathering.

Paulus advises Timothy

The next text which is grouped with the "remain silent" texts, we find in 1 Timothy 2:11-13. Here too it's important to give attention to the character of the text itself and to the context in which it is found.

The apostle Paul writes a letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 1:1,2). In contrast to many letters of Paul, this is not a letter to a congregation, but a letter to a fellow worker. The letter is to be seen as "internal correspondence."⁷¹ The letter is addressed to Timothy, the "preacher" in the young congregation in Ephesus. His task is to lead the congregation in the right direction. Because Paul is no longer in the city, he gives his instructions through a letter.

The congregation of Ephesus is in danger. There are people who are teaching a divergent doctrine. They are named in full (1 Timothy 1:20). The warnings against error and the people who are in error begin and end the letter.⁷² After the start of the letter, normal for that time, Paul begins directly to discuss the doctrinal errors which are threatening the congregation. The letter ends with a section about people who are in error. The middle section of the letter consists in instructions meant for Timothy, but Paul is writing Timothy with an eye to the congregation Timothy is serving. The section where the so-called "remain silent" texts are located, chapter 2:8-15, contains moral instruction concerning congregational life and how the believers ought to relate to each other.

Chapter 2, in which Paul is instructing Timothy, begins with an appeal: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

The instructions which Paul gives starting at verse 8 are not unconnected with this appeal. You can see the appeal as the motivation for the instructions. The attitude of prayer of the men, and the clothing specifications for the women are to be of service to the plan of God, who desires that all people be saved and come to know the truth.

Paul says that he desires that this be true in every gathering. There is a difference of opinion about what the expression "every gathering" means. Does it mean "everywhere" or "in all the gatherings, wherever they may be"?⁷³ However this may be, the women must be modest, wise, and know how to behave. But nothing here in this context points to a subordinate position of the woman.

We read: "Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control. The saying

⁷¹ Houwelingen, P.H.R. van, *Timoteüs Titus, 'Pastorale instructiebrieven'*, (CNT), Kampen: 2009.

⁷² Houwelingen, P.H.R. van, *Timoteüs Titus, 'Pastorale instructiebrieven'*, (CNT), Kampen: 2009.

⁷³ Holwerda, D., *De Schrift opent een vergezicht*, Franeker: 2019, p. 660 "It seems to me most probable that Paul means 'every (regular) place of prayer,' including here in 1 Tim. 3:8."

Dorland, P., *Ambtsdrager M/V, Mogen vrouwen een kerkelijk ambt bekleden?*, Soest: 2013, p. 49 "Another objection is that the Greek expression for 'in every place' does not warrant thinking of gatherings here."

is trustworthy..." (1 Timothy 2:11-3:1a). (Note of the translator: the ESV connects 3:1a with the following verses in chapter 3, not with the previous verse)

Paul writes that a woman must allow herself to be taught "obediently" and "modestly." It is helpful here to look at the Greek. To begin: the Greek word that is used for teaching, or here "be taught" (*manthanein*) is the English "to learn." Here in verse 11 the idea is that of the disciple *learning*, about studying and taking part in the learning process.

Further, this learning process ought to take place obediently and modestly. "Obediently" is the translation of the Greek *hēsuchia*. This word indicates a restfulness which comes from inside you. In other places in his letters Paul uses this word to exhort church members to "restfulness" (see 1 Thessalonians 4:11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:12). "Modestly" is the translation of the Greek *hupotachè*. This word indicates here a pupil's receptive respect for an authoritative teacher. Paul urges the women to have an attitude which is necessary for learning, for receiving teaching. Receiving teaching is central. Here it is not fitting to be assertive or to have a know-it-all attitude. What's involved here is not a subordination which has been structured into creation by God, but the acceptance of the place of a pupil: have an attitude of wanting to learn, that is, a receptive attitude. Just as for the men "praying with raised hands" does, the outward posture of women ought to be a reflection of their inward focus.

In verse 12 Paul goes on to write about another, although related, subject. In the Dutch New Bible Translation (NBV) we read, as we also read in the English ESV: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet." (additions of the translator) These translations can mislead us. For in the Greek the connection between verse 11 and 12 is much less prominent than in these Dutch and English translations (addition of the translator). In Dutch the sentence has "for I do not permit...", but in the Greek the "for" is absent, and the "she" ("a woman" in the ESV) does not refer to the "woman" in verse 11; Paul writes in verse 12 "the woman" again. Finally, the word for "to teach" in verse 12 another Greek word is used, namely *didaskein*, "to teach" in English. With respect to *receiving teaching* Paul says that this should take place obediently and modestly (verse 11). With respect to *giving teaching* by a woman, Paul says that she may not do this by herself, and that she may not have authority over men, and that she must be modest (verse 12).

Of crucial importance here is the Greek word *authentēin* (Dutch NBV translation: "I do not permit a woman *herself* to teach or exercise authority over men"). A very accurate interpretation is needed here, for the verse plays a big role in the man, woman, and church office discussions. The word occurs just one time in the Bible. We know it well from non-Biblical Greek texts. In classical Greek the word has a special meaning: it refers to a murderer, originally even someone who has murdered one (or all) of his or her relatives. In later Greek it takes on the meaning of being a dictatorial ruler. Even later, the meaning shifts to "deciding things for oneself," "settle business by oneself," with the emphasis on "oneself," independently of another person. The connotation here is that someone is no longer following orders, but is himself or herself the boss, without being subordinate to someone else.⁷⁴

It is thus important to be aware of the aspects of meaning the word *authentēin* contains. Paul means here: doing something "on one's own authority," alone, and thus not with others, and on one's own initiative, not on the initiative of others. That is the meaning of verse 12: Paul is forbidding a highhanded, autonomous teaching by women, who act without regard for others or consulting others, or wanting to give an account for this action to anyone. In the context, this must have to do with the

⁷⁴ Holwerda, D., *De Schrift opent een vergezicht*, Kampen: Voorhoeve 1998, p. 682.

situation in Ephesus. Paul gives in passing an image of what was sometimes happening in Ephesus (1 Timothy 5:11 and 2 Timothy 3:6,7). According to Paul, men too are forbidden from acting or proclaiming the Word autonomously, on their own authority. This prohibition has been in force up till our day in the Reformed church order (see the Reformed churches (Liberated) Church Order, Art. A2.2, A3.2, B6.3). In giving these instructions, Paul is concerned as well that the good reputation of the congregation not be damaged in the opinion of outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7, 1 Timothy 5:14 and 1 Timothy 6:1).

The interpretation which is often given of this verse, to the effect that it is concerned with ruling or giving leadership in general, can thus not be derived from the Greek word used here, *authentēin*, (Dutch NBV translation: "herself"). If he had meant that, Paul would most probably have chosen another word, as occurs in other places in the New Testament (*archein, exousia, prohistania*). Paul's word choice is important for understanding what Paul wants to make clear to Timothy. Paul's not talking about giving leadership in general, and also not, in general, about a woman who is ruling over a (arbitrary) man. The word used in verse 11, "*huptachè*," is used in contrast with the word "*authentēo*" in verse 12.⁷⁵

The continuing text in 1 Timothy 2: instruction and motivation

In 1 Timothy 2:8-10 Paul adds, as we have seen, words about motivation to his words of instruction. The same thing happens in verse 13 and 14: after the instruction about imparting teaching to others, Paul gives motivation for his instruction. To do this Paul uses a temporal argument. The question is: do we have to read this as an appeal to creation order, and thus silence all opposing arguments? That would be strange, since Paul mentions the Fall together with creation. The Bible and our confessions speak against an "order of rank related to the Fall" in human relationships (Ezekiel 18:20, Belgic Confession, Art. 15).

Paul does not formulate a principle here, but refutes the arguments which women presented in their struggle for power. In verse 12 it is, namely, a case of highhanded, autonomous activity. No one way act in such a way, including the men. The women in verse 12 have probably another ambition. It is striking that Paul mentions Eve by name here, since when she was created, she didn't yet have that name. One possible explanation of why Paul does this here, is that he's reacting to what is happening in Ephesus. It seems quite plausible that the women of Ephesus are appealing to Eve. That's why Paul unexpectedly mentions Eve, the mother of all the living. Paul wants to indicate that women cannot appeal to Eve in order to achieve power.

Paul quotes Eve herself in verse 14 (see Genesis 3:13). He says, in other words: women, you may appeal to Eve, but listen to what Eve herself says about this. Paul positions Adam and Eve over against each other. That is fitting by the use of the word *authentēin*. In Ephesus the women were beginning to have competition with the men. Paraphrasing what we read in verse 14: you may point to Eve as proof that women are the ones who deserve to teach. But the chronological order at creation militates against that thought. Moreover, Eve became the transgressor, as she herself admitted. This, while she could have known better than to do what she did.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Holwerda, D., *De Schrift opent een vergezicht*, Franeker: 2019, p. 497 – 498 "Then it is most probable, indeed, that we must regard the contrast 'living in complete subordination'-'authentēin' in 1 Tim. 2 as having exactly the same meaning as in the text in Proclus; in other words, that in the Bible text it is a matter of a woman who liberates herself from being a woman in subordination, and herself starts to decide things without recognizing her husband in this; and not about a woman who rules over a (arbitrary) man. See 1 Tim. 2:8-15 and Titus 2:1-10." This comparison supports Holwerda's conclusion.

⁷⁶ Dorland, P., *Ambtsdrager M/V, Mogen vrouwen een kerkelijk ambt bekleden?*, Soest: 2013.

When you bring verse 15 into the picture, it becomes clearer that Paul is showing that the appeal which women are making to Eve's example is nonsense. In verse 15 Paul states, namely, what the real situation is. This verse does not belong any longer to the motivating factors of verse 12, but still is connected to that section. The women seem to be linking their situation in Ephesus with Genesis. Paul turns this around, by linking Genesis to the situation in Ephesus: "Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control" (1 Timothy 2:15).

It is a striking sentence, even more because there in the Greek the beginning of the sentence is in the singular, while the second half is in the plural. Most of the Bible translations don't show this difference. The Dutch Naardense Bible *does* translate it this way, with the singular at the start, and the plural in the second half (as does the English ESV; note of the translator).

All the manuscripts of the original Greek have this singular/plural construction, which most probably was current in the Greek. There is only *one* woman in the whole world who credits her salvation to having children, that is Eve. The first part of the sentence refers to her, in the singular. The second part of the sentence, in the plural, is concerned with the women who are mentioned in verse 12. According to Paul, they may be saved by the Gospel Timothy is bringing. They are saved by a faith which works through love. This latter attitude is so much different than the attitude the women in Ephesus are demonstrating.

Finally, Paul writes: "The saying is trustworthy" (1 Timothy 3:1a) (note of the translator: as we have mentioned, the ESV connect these words not with the previous text, but with the following one). This is a formulation which always is used as a confirmation of what is previous, when words about salvation are used. This is indeed the case in 2:15.

Take note: the "remain silent" texts and the right of women to vote

The General Synod of Ommen (1993) made a decision about the right of women to vote in congregational elections. You can read Article 24, decision 3, grounds 1d, of that decision, as indicating that women are not allowed to be an elder or a minister. But the GS Ommen did not declare these grounds involved with the exegesis of the texts of 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, and 1 Timothy 2, to be eternally valid. That is, furthermore, not the task of a Synod. A Synod is to make decisions, based on grounds, for the sake of church practice, but does not canonize any particular exegesis (see also the Minutes (Acta) of GS Berkel and Rodenrijs (1996), Art. 29, decision 3, grounds 2).

Conclusion

The General Synod of Meppel (2017) decided that, Biblically speaking, there is room for women to be admitted to the church offices. In the considerations which led to that decision, the so-called "remain silent" texts were not ignored.⁷⁷ However, in the grounds you cannot find a discussion of the exegesis of these texts. That has led to a lot of confusion. In particular, the phrase that these two texts are "too controversial" to categorically exclude women from the teaching and ruling office, gave the impression that they didn't play any role in the decision making.

⁷⁷ For an overview of the material that has contributed to these decisions, see: <https://www.onderwegonline.nl/vrouw-in-het-ambt>

For this reason this report gives extensive attention to 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2. We want to show: it is, Biblically speaking, responsible to read these texts in this way. We are submitting this possible exegesis to the churches, and are praying that the Holy Spirit will give us the wisdom which is needed to, together, understand God's Word. It is our conviction that the Synod of Meppel decided to open the church offices to women on the basis of a responsible way of reading the Bible.

Appendix

1. "You read it there plain and simple, don't you?"

Initial summary

"You read it there plain and simple, don't you?" This reaction of Bible readers to the subject man, woman, and church office, is in itself understandable. As we read the Bible, you can easily get the impression that men have a more important position than women.

However, whoever takes the time to read the Bible more carefully should realize that it came into being in a completely different time and culture than that in which he or she lives today. A secondary position of the woman, seen from cultural context of the Bible, is self-evident. While in the Bible there is no call for a direct revolution against the existing social relationships, in that context the woman is certainly given protection, and that with emphasis.

In this way the Bible functions as a counterweight, with an observable impact on the concrete position of women.

Introduction

Chapter 1 shows that the relationship between man and woman at creation is characterized by equality, distinction, and unity. With God's announcement of punishment after the Fall into sin came the man's domination of the woman. Since then God has been working with "slow haste" to restore the good relations between man and woman.

By saying this not everything has been said. There is also the reality of a culture in which the man-woman relations have taken shape. Salvation has a history. What does this mean for reading and interpreting the Bible on this subject? When views change, people can wonder: how is it possible that we've always read these texts differently? And you can't avoid the fact that Jesus only appointed male apostles, and Paul only male elders, can you?

I. The Bible and context

A well-known rule for the reading the Bible is that we have to read it "contextually." What we mean by that can be easily illustrated by the example of the position of the earth in the cosmos. Five hundred years ago everyone thought that the sun revolved around the earth (the geocentric cosmology). That was the way people read the Bible, too: the earth is fixed, built on an unmovable foundation, and on the earth rests the firmament of the heavens, above which the heaven of heavens is located, the place where God's throne is to be found. The sun, the moon, and the stars revolve in their orbits around the earth, as God has decreed.

Thanks to people like Copernicus, we now know that because the earth is revolving around its axis, it *looks like* the sun, the planets, and the stars are revolving around the earth, but that in reality the earth, just like all the other planets, revolves around the sun. Not the earth, but the sun is at the center of our solar system (the heliocentric cosmology). For the church this discovery meant a culture shock.

However, doing justice to the Biblical text means to take into account, emphatically, that God revealed His Word first to Israel, thus in language and terms from the Near East, and in relation to images which were understandable at that time.

It is in relation to these images that God speaks in a liberating way: contextually. That it to say, He both adjusts to, as well as opposes, current views. He transforms and transcends them, and makes it in this

way possible to understand, from very diverse backgrounds, His revelation, and to serve Him. In this way His Word has full expressive power in our own lives today.

What does this mean regarding man-woman relations in the Old and New Testament? We must realize that the LORD in Genesis 1-3 tells about the first human couple and about the creation of the world and humanity. The foundational lines which are drawn there, at the beginning the history of the world and salvation history, are of great importance. At the same time we must realize, as we read, that God revealed this first of all to the Israel of that day. Genesis 1-3 cannot be lifted out of its context. These chapters have to be read, first of all, literarily, canonically, and also culturally, in connection with the stories about the marriages of the patriarchs and the legislation about marriage and sexuality in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

"The factual answer to the question about the authority of the Bible regarding these kind of issues (the abolition of slavery, another view of poverty as social injustice, the view of the place of the woman in society and church, the view of marriage, fertility, relations, of physical and mental limitations, of ecology) is seen to be given in a continual interaction between culture, context, and the Bible."⁷⁸

This starting point leads to a striking perspective on man-woman relations.

First of all: the Biblical texts do not, in the first place, think at all in terms of the individual (the man) over against the other (the woman). Both are, together, created in God's image, but are representatives as "the human being," and "the living one," again and again of a greater whole, humanity. That is to be seen from how both are called, but also by the way in which Genesis 5 and 1 Chronicles 1 portray the beginning of humanity.

Whoever reads this in the context of the patriarch stories and the legislation of the Pentateuch discovers that no individual in Israel can be seen separately from his or her family, and from the "father," the person who is head of the family.

Whoever, in reading, weighs the meaning of this context, sees how the cultural environment of the text resounds in it. In the unsafe society of the ancient world, it is scarcely possible for the individual to survive without being imbedded in greater whole. Certainly the relatively weak, such as women and children, need the physical and economic protection of the men and of a greater whole. The "house of the father" (and, infrequently, "of the mother," Genesis 24:28) offers that protection, and, self-evidently, there a man is at the head. In this way, Adam was head of the first family.

In this cultural context the secondary position of the woman in the Bible is truly something self-evident, a presupposition. And that's why it is so that this self-evidently secondary position of the woman is assumed in all kinds of passages.

In our time and culture, we live in a society in which the government and the legal system function so robustly that, on that basis, safety can be guaranteed. We no longer have "extended families," not to mention a "pater familias," who with regard to the safety and well-being of all involved has the right to decide, for example, about marriages and other relationships.

We think in the first place from the standpoint of the individual human being, who has been created in God's image. Man and woman form now a primary social unit. Their living together is an individual decision, with or without it being made explicit to and supported by a broader social and church setting. Women occupy social positions at all levels. Christians have, legitimately, no objection to this.

⁷⁸ Van den Brink, G., van der Kooij, C., *Christelijke dogmatiek*, Zoetermeer: 2012.

To get a good idea of this subject, we proceed, in the following pages, to describe a number of differences, determined by time and culture, regarding the relations between men and women.

II. The difference between the Biblical and the contemporary age

Roles

In the time of the Bible

The woman was seen in the time of the Bible, above all, as a (potential) mother; her longing to be a mother is central. Think, for example, of the despair of Lot's daughters, which motivated them to have children by their father (Genesis 19:32), or Rachel's tremendous relief when she, by stealth, managed to get pregnant and have children (Genesis 30:3). The task of the woman was to bear and to raise children, and to run the household. Read Psalm 113: "He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children" (vs. 9), and Psalm 128: "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table" (vs. 3).

The present day

In our day, in contrast, motherhood and marriage are a possibility, by choice, for the woman. Man and woman earn their living together, and care for the children together.

Inclusivity

In the time of the Bible

The wife was at that time not called by her own name, but seen and treated as an extension of her husband. Noah--*with his wife*--and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth--*with their wives*--went into the ark (Genesis 7:13). At the time of the Exodus out of Egypt, 600,000 *men* were involved. The fact that the women and children were not counted with the men, does not alter the story here.

The present day

In our day, married women do not like to be seen or introduced as just the "wife of...," as if they are not themselves someone and do not have their own identity. When we count people today, the women and children are seen as completely equal in value to the men. The Netherlands has around 17 million *inhabitants* (men, women, and children); the Reformed churches (Liberated) have about 110,000 *members*, counting everyone (men, women, and children).

Inequality

In the time of the Bible

Wives in the time of the Bible were subordinate to their husbands and Sarah, who called her husband Abraham "Lord," is presented as an example (1 Peter 3:6).⁷⁹

Men did not speak in public with women. Think about the amazement felt by Jesus' disciples when they came to discover that He was involved in a conversation with a woman (John 4:27).

When women bore a daughter, they were twice as long "unclean" (two weeks and 66 days) as required after the birth of a son (one week and 33 days). The value in money of a human life was specified as 50 silver shekels for a man, and 30 silver shekels for a woman (Leviticus 27).

The present day

Today, if a wife would voluntarily call her husband "Lord," and treat him as such, this would be perceived as very strange. The fact that men from other cultures sometimes refuse to shake the hand of a woman, in The Netherlands, is seen as negative and undesirable, let alone if they would refuse to speak to women.

⁷⁹ See further the remarks of footnote 76.

Covenant

In the time of the Bible

God made a covenant with Abraham. Hereby He gave Abraham the charge to circumcise all the men and the boys: Abraham's own sons, but also the sons of his slaves, and the sons of foreigners who been bought (Genesis 17:12).

The present day

Baptism, the sign of the new covenant, is administered to boys and men *and* to girls and women.⁸⁰

Polygamy

In the time of the Bible

Polygamy was common. Elkana had two wives (1 Samuel 1:2). Abraham had three (Genesis 16:1,3; 25:1). Jacob had four (Genesis 29:30; 30:9). Gideon had many wives (Judges 8:30). Living as one of the wives in such a relationship was in many cases difficult and arduous.

The present day

Polygamy is illegal in The Netherlands.

Marriage and divorce

In the time of the Bible

In Bible times a father could give away his daughter in marriage, or "sell" her. Caleb promised: "Whoever strikes Kiriath-sepher and captures it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife." (Joshua 15:16). The bridegroom would pay a certain amount of money for his bride, after which she became his property, and was obliged to obey him. Men would choose a woman to marry, but the reverse was not the case. Only the wives were required to be faithful in marriage. With a few exceptions, only the husbands had the right to dismiss their wives with a "bill of divorce" (Deuteronomy 22:19; 24:1).

The present day

Women may and are able to date, to ask a man to marry them, and to apply for a divorce.

Possessions

In the time of the Bible

A wife was regarded as the possession of her husband, and was treated accordingly. Thus we hear

Jacob saying to Laban: " Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed" (Genesis 29:21), and we read further at the time of Moses: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17), and: "...but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as plunder for yourselves. And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you" (Deuteronomy 20:14).

In the present day

We would not even think of putting our wives in a list of our possessions.

⁸⁰ Without equating baptism and circumcision, "the administration of baptism to girls and women shows in a definite manner the superiority of the New Testament dispensation above the Old Testament dispensation."
<https://www.refoweb.nl/vragenrubriek/19480/besnijdenis-alleen-voor-jongens/>

Worship services

In the time of the Bible

At that time, the worship services were above all an activity for men. Women were allowed to enter only the forecourt of the the temple, and in the synagogues there was a separate area reserved for them. Men have the duty to go three times a year to God's house, not the women. There was a separate area reserved for them there, and they were not allowed to sit with the men. As well, the many rituals regarding "cleanliness" often had as a result that the women were excluded from participating in the worship services. The religious vows which the women pledged only had validity when the vows were confirmed by their husbands or fathers (Numbers 30:2).

In the present day

Women participate fully in all activities in church.

III. The Bible on men and women

The society in which we live today is strongly oriented to the individual, with equal rights, equal opportunity, and self-development for each (autonomous) person. With regard to many issues involved here, the Bible, and especially Genesis 1-3, emphatically opposes the tendencies of such an individualistic society. Christians are called to let themselves be guided by God's revelation. With our emphasis on the individual, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we, as human beings and as humanity, are strongly *connected* to each other, and that God has intended this to be so. This applies, without a doubt, to God's new family, of which Christ is the head, and which is oriented to His future.

Further, marriage between one man and one woman has had a special place, from the beginning, and on the road to God's kingdom, in spite of the brokenness caused by the Fall. Jesus emphasizes this Himself, once again. Here, *unity* is what counts, and hereby the interest of the other is placed above that of one's own family, career, or anything else.

The big question is: what do we do with the secondary position of the woman which is presumed in many Bible texts?

IV. Adapting and transforming

Exegetically speaking, there is justification in seeing the more patriarchal relationships at the time of the patriarchs and in the early church as being in fact sinful, the result of the curse in Genesis 3 (see chapter 1 of this report for this point). It is furthermore striking that, on the one hand, the Scripture does not directly call for a direct revolution against the existing social relationships, but, on the other hand, emphatically calls for the protection of women in this context. In the Scripture, we see preeminently that humanity is the image of God, and that, in Christ, there is neither man nor woman. The Scripture functions hereby as a counterweight, with observable impact on the concrete position of women.

In this connection the comparison with yeast is vividly made.⁸¹ Yeast works unseen and its effect is only to be seen later. The kingdom of heaven is active as yeast in society. Society is not blown up with a lot of noise, but, in a hidden way, the beneficial activity of the Gospel works slowly in its development, and gradually produces fruit.

Now we would like to show something of this from texts in the Old and New Testaments.

⁸¹ See the report Men and women and church office, "Serving together," (M/V en ambt 'Samen dienen') Meppel:2017

The Old Testament

- a) In Exodus 21:1-6 there are all kinds of regulations concerning slaves. These instructions are comparable to what we know from extra-Biblical, ancient Near Eastern law regulations. It seems as if God's people took something from these. God does not say here: "You should be totally different"; that wouldn't have worked. He allowed His people to live in the midst of an existing culture, in which slaves had a social place. Rather, God works, liberatingly, step by step, in changing evil slave practices. He restrains slavery. He gives, indeed, regulations concerning slavery, but then in combination with the sign of the covenant: the sabbath year as the space for celebrating freedom with God. And it was forbidden to treat a fellow Israelite as a slave!
- b) In Exodus 21:7-11 we see something similar. There exists a culture with certain rules. This culture is miles away from our own. Someone can sell his own daughter! A rich owner can subsequently have his way with the daughter of someone else. Apparently, our God does not explicitly forbid these things. But in 21:10-11 we read: don't allow her to be someone without any rights. You may not neglect her, but must provide her food and protection. Here too we see that, on the one hand, God adapts to an existing culture, and that, on the other hand, He corrects it by providing protection to the weak.
- c) In Numbers 5 we read about legislation which has to do with jealousy. In the eyes of a Dutch person, in the year 2020, this is a ceremony which is very unfriendly to women: what do you mean, a provision only for men who suspect their wives of something? Wouldn't the other way around to be more expected? Nevertheless, in the Israel of that day it must have been a liberating and gracious provision. In the laws of Hammurabi, a wife had to be thrown into water, and if she floated, she was proven innocent. In an age when women couldn't swim, this was thus a death penalty. Numbers 5 keeps the matter within the home, and gives the wife all the room she needs to be proven innocent. In the same way, there are more examples in the Mosaic legislation which can be given in which a tendency to a strong criticism of society is expressed (expressing support for those who are unprotected and those without rights, criticizing the concentration of power and power in a few, against exploitation, implicitly against slavery, etc.). The Torah shows continually that God is a God of redemption and deliverance. That is good news for women!
- d) In the Old Testament men are clearly more prominently at center stage than women. The leadership roles of prophet, priest, and king are almost without exception fulfilled by men. However, exceptions--"premonitions of Pentecost"--are to be seen. Moses' sister Miriam takes the stage as a prophetess (Exodus 15:20-21). "Miriam is the first woman in the Bible who gets the title of prophet, and that, even before Moses gets that title."⁸² Deborah is called to be a prophetess and a judge (Judges 4:4-10), and Huldah as a prophetess (2 Kings 22:14-20; 2 Chronicles 34:22-28). Hannah speaks prophetically in her prayer/song (1 Samuel 2:1-10), pointing to a new age in which Israel is going to be ruled by a king. Nowhere does Scripture come with excuses for this leading role for women. Their leadership is accepted by the people gratefully and in a natural manner. "When God breaks into the structure of the patriarchal world, that can mean that He appoints women as prophets or judges."⁸³

⁸² Jagersma, H., *Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse bijbel*, Exodus I, Kampen: 1999.

⁸³ Goldingay, J., *Exodus en Leviticus voor iedereen*, Franeker: 2010.

- e) While God initiates the old covenant, we see from many facets that this is not God's final will for His people.

We hear repeatedly from the prophets that God is going to do "something new" for His people, something which will surpass anything He has done in the past. God even announces through the mouth of Jeremiah (31:31-34) that He is coming with a new covenant for Israel, one which will be different than the covenant which He made when He led them out of Egypt. God proclaims through the mouth of Joel (2:28-32) that in that day He will pour out His Spirit on *both men and women, sons and daughters*, so that all of them will prophecy. Ezekiel (11:19-20; 36:26-27) speaks of an age of renewal in which God will make His people more obedient by giving them, men and women, "living hearts" instead of "hearts of stone." Isaiah, too, speaks clearly about the coming, new age. The new age will be more inclusive, because the "servant of the LORD" (49:6) will be light and will bring salvation, to Jews and Gentiles alike. God's coming salvation includes eunuchs and foreigners as well (56:1-8), those who under the law were excluded (Leviticus 21:17-23; Deuteronomy 23:1-9).

The way in which the New Testament writers use these Old Testament prophecies (see Hebrews 8:7-13; Acts 2:16-21; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3; Acts 13:47) makes clear that they clearly understood that these prophecies would be fulfilled when the new covenant had made its entrance.

- f) In the Song of Solomon 2:16 and 6:3 we read: "My beloved is mine, and I am his (...) I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine." Here husband and wife have "ownership rights" over each other. It gives us a glimpse of how God meant things to be in the beginning. "Husband and wife feel strongly attached to each other, they fit each other, and complement each other, in accordance with God's purpose (see Genesis 2:22-23)."⁸⁴

The New Testament

- a) Over against the marriage relationship in the time of the Bible, in which the wife was subordinate to her husband, in the New Testament God paints a portrait, too, of the special dynamics between a husband and a wife in their relationship. Hereby we are struck by the positive, loving light shed on the wife, who, just as at the beginning, exists in a completely mutual and equal relation to her husband.

1 Corinthians 7:3 and 4: "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does."

The most intimate contact between husband and wife is portrayed by Paul as one of complete mutuality. This reminds us of the way in which God created man and woman: as a unity of two. "Not an authority structure, but becoming one flesh with each other, is definitive here."⁸⁵ "Paul uses the striking verb 'to have authority' (over each other's body): this verb is taken from legislation concerned with the rights of property, and indicates that someone has administrative rights over something (...) This is a somewhat strange verb to use for a marriage. If Paul had only said that the husband is entitled to use the body of his wife, then we could think of the mentality of the dominant husband against which the feminism of this age has protested

⁸⁴ Brink, van den, G., Bette, J.C., Zwiep, A.W., *Studiecommentaar Oude Testament*, Veenendaal: 2012.

⁸⁵ Anderson, R.D., *1 Korintiërs. Orde op zaken in een jonge stadskerk*, Kampen: 2008

against so stridently. But this association is totally excluded, because immediately the converse is presented: the wife is entitled to use the body of her husband."⁸⁶

Ephesians 5:21: "...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Paul's call to mutually accept the authority of each other provides, precisely because of its mutuality, space, in an exceptional way, for the wife, certainly when he also later adds that husband must serve their wives in love, following the example of Christ's love for the church. "Subjecting yourself, subordinating yourselves to one another, must take place."⁸⁷

Matthew 5:28: "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jesus uncovers how intensely evil is rooted in people and in society. Sinning against the seventh commandment is shown to be something evil, making women victims because the evil resides in the hearts of men.

1 Timothy 3:2: "Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach..." By means of this instruction, Paul is continuing his criticism of society, by in fact forbidding polygamy in the congregation of Christ.

- a) Jesus prepared the renewed appreciation of the position of the woman in the Christian congregation. In His approach to women, we find not one trace of slighting or discrimination. In contrast with the Jewish tradition, Matthew mentions five women in Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17). Only men occur in Jewish genealogies (see Genesis. 5; Ezra 2). Luke, as well, mentions exclusively men (Luke 3:23-38). Jesus goes against the Rabbinic custom of not associating with women. To the astonishment of the disciples He carries on a conversation with a woman from Samaria (John 4:27), whom he moreover sends out as the first missionary witness (4:41-42). "The fact in itself that Jesus associated with a woman was for the standards of that time extraordinary."⁸⁸ "It is remarkable that Jesus was also involved with the liberation of women. This may be seen as something peripheral, nevertheless we see here that Jesus, in contrast with those of his time, does honor this woman, does speak with her."⁸⁹ By touching women, He is guilty, according to the views of the Rabbis, of numerous transgressions against the moral order: the mother-in-law of Peter (Matthew 8:14 f.), the bent-over woman (Luke 13:10-17), the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:25). He permits himself to be anointed by a woman of questionable morals (Luke 7:36-50). He associates in a free and natural way with women: Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42; John 11). He proclaims to unconverted scribes that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before they do (Matthew 21:13). Next to the small circles of the thirteen, Jesus had gathered a bigger group of 70 apostles around Him, among which men *and* women. Concerning the latter, we know how they travelled with Jesus through the land, and cared for Him out of their own means. They were present at His crucifixion, and waited in the upper room for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church: Mary of Magdalene, Joanna, the

⁸⁶ Bruggen, J. van, *Het huwelijk gewogen 1 Korinthe 7*, Groningen: 1984

⁸⁷ Leeuwen, J.A.C., *Paulus' zendbrieven aan Efeze, Colosse, Filemon en Thessalonica* (KNT-Bottenburg), Amsterdam: 1926. For the rest, the Dutch NBV translates incorrectly here "*accepting one another's authority*." This gives a false impression of what is meant here with the word *hypotassomai*: "to show respect." The same thing occurs in the NBV translation of Eph. 5:22,24, while here in verse 33 this *hypotassomai* is expressed as *phobeomai*, "to show respect, awe." See Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:5, 1 Pet. 3:1,5.

⁸⁸ Ridderbos, H., *Het evangelie naar Johannes*, Kampen: 1987.

⁸⁹ Grosheide, F.W., *Het heilig evangelie volgens Johannes* (KNT-Bottenburg), Amsterdam: 1950.

wife of Herod's household manager, Susanna, and many others (Luke 8:2-3). To a few of them the risen Lord showed Himself, as the very first to see Him after His resurrection, and afterwards they were the first who were privileged to tell this to the apostles (Matthew 28:9).

- c) In accordance with the prophecy in Joel 3:1 and its fulfillment "in the last days" (Acts 2:17-18), Paul points often to the gifts of the Spirit which Christians are receiving in the new covenant (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 27-30; Ephesians 4:7-13). Belonging to these gifts were also "teaching," "giving leadership," of which Paul emphatically says that they have been given to "all" (1 Corinthians 12:7; see also 1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 5:7). What is the use of a gift if it cannot be put into practice?
- d) Just as Joel had prophesied, both men *and* women receive the Spirit in the new covenant, who enables them to prophesy (Acts 2:17-18). The prophetic utterances of Mary and Elizabeth were registered (Luke 1:39-56), and through them God teaches the church still. The same thing is true of the prophetess Anna (forming a duo with Simeon). In Corinth men and women prophesied (1 Corinthians 11:5), and the daughters of Philip received the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9). "The Greek verb indicates first of all a function."⁹⁰ "They had the gift of prophecy, and thus a task in leading the congregation."⁹¹
 In Exodus 19:5-7 God promises to Israel that, if they keep His covenant, they will be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In the New Testament this promise is applied to the church, one time with the emphasis on the priestly aspect (1 Peter 2:4-10), and another time with emphasis on the kingly aspect (Revelation 5:10; see Revelation 1:6).
 In agreement with this and other texts, the catechism does not distinguish between male and female members who share in the anointing in Christ, and who confess His name. It calls each one of them "a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him... (and will) hereafter reign with him eternally over all creatures" (Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 32). Thus women participate, just as men do, in all aspects of the "office of all believers."
- e) Women receive in the new covenant many leadership tasks (perhaps to be understood in terms of church office?), in a way that far transcends the service of women in the old covenant, including the proclamation of the Gospel.
 Paul mentions different female fellow workers in this proclamation. First of all he mentions Prisca (Romans 16:3). It is striking that in four of the six places where this woman, together with husband, is named, she is mentioned first: Acts 18:18,26; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19. (The order is reversed in Acts 18:2 and 1 Corinthians 16:19). She also gives "catechism class," together with her husband, to Apollos (Acts 18:26). "This couple takes on a pioneering role."⁹² "...in supporting and working together with the apostle in Gospel-proclaiming activity, she had no purely passive role."⁹³ "...In the service of the Gospel, she did not have a 'place at the back' in the work."⁹⁴ Further we can mention Euodia and Syntyche, who "have labored side by side with me (Paul) in the Gospel together" (Philippians 4:3).

If we translate "proclamation of the Gospel," instead of "the Gospel," we are not being unfair to the text, for it is based on New Testament usage. See especially 1 Thessalonians 3:2, and further, for

⁹⁰ Eck, J. van, *Handelingen De wereld in het geding* (CNT), Kampen: 2003.

⁹¹ Grosheide, F.W., *De handelingen der apostelen II*, Amsterdam: 1948

⁹² Bruggen, J. van, *Romeinen. Christenen tussen stad en synagoge*, (CNT), Kampen: 2006.

⁹³ Greijdanus, S., *De brief van den apostel Paulus aan de gemeente te Rome I*, (CNT). Amsterdam: 1933.

⁹⁴ Jager, H.J., *Enige opmerkingen over Romeinen. Collegedictaat*, Kampen: 1978.

example, Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:18; 10:14; Philippians 2:22; 4:15. Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis are called those who "worked hard for the Lord" (Romans 16:6,12). These examples are important, not only because they show commendable zeal on the part of these women, but especially because Paul uses these words ("worked hard") for those who have a leadership task in the churches (1 Thessalonians 5:12), including the work of preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

Prof. D. Holwerda, Professor in Greek language and literature at the University of Groningen, remarked in this connection: "It has puzzled me that people try to escape the force of this use of language by stating that 'the Gospel' doesn't have to mean 'preaching the Gospel,' asserting that the cited text proves nothing regarding the activity of the women in preaching. Their service could have been limited to, let's say, buttering bread for sandwiches and sewing buttons for the (male) preachers of the Gospel. But this, in my opinion, is to abuse the text. We read that Euodia and Syntyche 'labored side by side' (!) with Paul in the Gospel, 'together with (or as the Dutch 1951 NBG translation says, "next to"; isn't that something different than "under"?) Clemens and the rest of my fellow workers.' While it is true that we don't know more about Clemens, we do know who Paul calls 'fellow workers' (in the Gospel). They are: Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2; Rom. 16:21), Titus (2 Cor. 8:23), Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus (Col. 4:10,11), Prisca (!) and Aquila (Rom. 16:3), Demas and Luke (Philem. 24), Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25), Philemon (Philem. 1), and Urbanus (Rom. 16:9). With respect to by far the most of them it is certain (see for Epaphroditus, for example, Col. 1:7) that they were directly involved in the actual activity of the Gospel. To understand this in contemporary missionary terms: they were guru's, not chauffeurs. Otherwise, Paul would not have longed for the Christians to 'be subject to such as these, and to every (!) worker and laborer' (1 Cor. 16:16). A minister asks this regarding his elders, but not for his gardener (however the latter indirectly can be of service to the Gospel). So: what gives us the right, if we see women also included in this company, to suddenly think of help of a totally different sort?"⁹⁵

All these specific examples of women in leadership roles in the age of the new covenant support the notion that the baptismal confession of Galatians 3:28 functioned powerfully in the church. Women shared not only in salvation, but were, surprisingly enough, and to a high degree also involved in essential leadership tasks in the early church.
"Women had a prominent place in Paul's setting."⁹⁶

It is a miracle of grace that a third of all the names mentioned are women. From the beginning the church assigned an essential place to women, their ministry was of vital importance. They received a status which no other religion in the world has ever assigned to them."⁹⁷
"Women occupy an importance place. Paul calls them his fellow workers, without ever giving the impression that they had a lower position than men."⁹⁸

As an argument against the "yeast idea" there has often been the response that Jesus only appointed men as apostles, and that Paul only designated and appointed male elders (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). But was there an expectation that this practice would be continued? Would that have been in harmony with what the New Testament has to say about the new status and role of women in the age of the new covenant? It doesn't seem to have been the case at all.

⁹⁵ Holwerda, D., *De Schrift opent een vergezicht*, Franeker: 2019.

⁹⁶ Stott, J., *De boodschap van Romeinen* (BSV), Hoenderloo: 2009.

⁹⁷ Pawson, D., *Een toelichting op de brief aan de Romeinen*, Putten: 2015.

⁹⁸ Wright, T., *Paulus voor iedereen*, Franeker: 2011.

"From the fact that Christ did not appoint women to be apostles, people have drawn the conclusion that women are not candidates for church offices. Supposedly, this would be an extension of the Old Testament practice, whereby there were no priestesses. However, this argument is very disputable. For the twelve apostles represent the new covenant community of the church, as the twelve patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, represented the ancient people of God. In order to give this symbolism its proper impact on the Jews, it was necessary that the apostles be men, because, in the Jewish mind of that time, women couldn't represent anything or anyone.

Furthermore, the Rabbi and his disciples formed a complete life-and-work community, so that the presence of women was naturally excluded, and the choice of women would only damage the cause of Jesus.

Finally, it is very debatable whether a direct line can be drawn from the twelve apostles to the later office-bearers of the church, or not."⁹⁹

Conclusion

The movements within the Old and New Testaments, described above, help us to understand why Paul was hesitant regarding a dominant leadership position for women. At the same time, in the light of Scripture they can help us to positively appreciate the increased possibilities of self-development for women in contemporary Western culture. Under the influence of the surrounding culture, the Scripture presumes and makes use of the subordinate position of women. At the same time, we see, from the critical tendencies in many Bible passage regarding its own context, and, naturally, especially the relationships in the beginning, that Scripture does not oppose opening the church offices to women.

"Christianity is not bound to a particular culture or its expressions. Christians adapt to the cultural particularities of their surroundings as long as these cultural expressions do not hinder them from serving Christ, and they are not forced to worship other expressions which the culture presents. This explains their attitude toward slavery, toward politics, toward rules for eating and clothing. We must see the selection of church office-bearers in this perspective: in the context in which we live, who can do these tasks the best? We must also see gender and sexuality in this perspective. In a patriarchal culture, in which women cannot have leadership functions, Christians may not demonstratively appoint women to such positions, just as little as they would agitate to liberate the slaves. This would block the sight of what it means to have true freedom as a Christian, who is not dependent on his or her social status. It means, as well, that in another culture, in which women have another position, they can certainly be called to a church office. In every situation we should ask: who is the best candidate?"¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Wentsel, B., *Dogmatiek 3a, God en mens verzoend*, Kampen: 1987.

¹⁰⁰ Beek, van de A., *Lichaam en Geest van Christus. De theologie van de kerk en van de Heilige Geest*, Zoetermeer: 2012.

Final Thoughts

You have just read the committee report "Serve each other sincerely from the heart." The question follows naturally: how should we proceed?

Well, first of all, addressing this question is emphatically the task of the General Synod of Goes (2020). For it is clear that a large number of churches have expressed objections to, and asked for a revision of, the Men and Women and Church Office decisions of the previous Synod of Meppel (2017). The latter Synod decided that, in the light of Scripture, there was room to allow women, also, to all the church offices.

Therefore, women may serve in the office of deacon, elder, and minister. It is now the task of the representatives to the General Synod of Goes to evaluate the questions and the requests to revisions, regarding this decision, and to make a statement about them. They are also the people who finally have to answer the question: how should we proceed?

At the same time, the things that happen at the Synod involve the churches in the federation. That's why we want to help you, as an involved church member, or perhaps an office-bearer, to discover what the Bible does and doesn't say about the position of men and women in the church. It's possible that you have been following, with great interest, the discussion about men and women and church office for a long time. In short, this committee report is first of all meant to accompany and assist in the treatment of the revision requests at the General Synod, but, further, we want to serve all of our church councils and church members with it.

In this report, we have tried to listen carefully to what the Bible says about how men and women have been intended to be by God, and how they are to be mobilized in having a role in His plan of salvation. Further, against this background, we examined what this means for their position in relation to the carrying out of the church offices as we know them in the church. On the basis of its findings, the committee has come to the conclusion that, in its opinion, as seen from Scripture, men *and* women are called in serve each other in all things, that we cannot speak of one person being superior or inferior, or of a Biblical directive that men are superior to women, but rather that they are both, in the same way, able to be committed to carry out all kinds of church tasks, including the church offices.

But then... Does this now mean that all churches must feel obligated to placing women in church offices? No, the committee is convinced that every congregation has its own responsibility here. What the committee is presenting, in this report, is a Scriptural substantiation of this view, based on a cohesive exegesis of what is said in the Bible about the position of men and women in the church. This exegesis is not exclusive, and does not pretend to be offering the final and definitive verdict on this issue.

Is that possible? To have *one* Bible, and yet *two* possible conclusions which lead to different results? Can these two conclusions and these diverse results exist next to each other? We have two reactions to this question.

In the first place, we would like to point to that which Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:9,10) and to the Ephesians (Ephesians 3:17-21). Paul makes clear to the Corinthians, and also to us, that our knowledge is deficient and our prophesying limited. We will not be able to understand everything, for only "when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away." For now we may find our

way with the encouraging words of Paul to the Ephesians: "that you... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Through these words we see how true it is that we need each other, and that we must keep on working together in order to understand, more and more, the enormous range of Christ's love.

In the second place we would like to point to the relatively minor importance of this subject in relation to God's plan of salvation for creation and humanity. In this report we affirm that the question of whether women can be church office-bearers or not does not touch the heart of Christian faith. It concerns the organization of the church in our time, nothing more, and also nothing less. Our faith does not depend on it. On the other hand, we are certainly spurred on to resolve our differences of opinion in this area within the unity of the church.

It is our prayer that this report may help the churches of our federation, and every one of us, personally, in the area of the theme of men and women and church offices, to together find a way which does justice to what the Bible says, and, in Christ, remain connected and committed to each other. Then we are truly one in Christ, chosen and called to serve each other sincerely from the heart.

*I long to serve you sincerely
and to be like Christ to you,
Pray that I may find grace
so you can be like Him to me.*

*Then perfection will come,
when we stand before Him and sing,
If we have followed the path
of Christ's love and suffering.*

(The church songbook "Revival" (*Opwekking*) 378)

Appendix 2 decisions

Material:

1. the decisions of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) (RCN (L)) General Synod of Meppel, 2017, (GS Meppel) regarding men and women in church office (Acta, Art.18);
2. letters with requests to revise these decisions, as follows:
 - a. RCN (L) Bussum-Huizen (Nov. 15, 2017);
 - b. RCN (L) Capelle aan de IJssel- Noord (May 18, 2018, and Nov. 20, 2019);
 - c. RCN (L) Zuidwolde Dr. (Aug. 30, 2018);
 - d. RCN (L) Ureterp (Sept. 25, 2018);
 - e. RCN (L) Vlaardingen (Oct. 15, 2018);
 - f. RCN (L) Rijnsburg (Nov. 21, 2018);
 - g. RCN (L) Kantens (Jan. 1, 2019);
 - h. RCN (L) Amersfoort- de Horsten (Jan. 31, 2019);
 - i. RCN (L) St. Jans klooster- Kadoelen (Feb. 2, 2019);
 - j. RCN (L) Baflo (Feb. 21, 2019);
 - k. RCN (L) Urk (March 15, 2019);
 - l. RCN (L) Ommen- Noord-Oost (March 15, 2019);
 - m. RCN (L) Vroomshoop (May 6, 2019);
 - n. RCN (L) Katwijk (June 3, 2019);
 - o. RCN (L) Mariënberg (July 1, 2019);
 - p. RCN (L) Bruchterveld (June 20, 2019);
 - q. RCN (L) Zuidbroek (July 9, 2019);
 - r. RCN (L) Blije-Holwerd (Aug. 19, 2019);
 - s. RCN (L) Zaamslag (Aug. 3, 2019);
 - t. RCN (L) Ten Boer (Sept. 12, 2019);
 - u. RCN (L) Den Helder (Oct. 1, 2019);
 - v. RCN (L) Apeldoorn- Zuid (Sept. 30, 2019);
 - w. RCN (L) Hattem- Centrum (Oct. 28, 2019);
3. letters with requests to improve the grounds for these decisions, as follows:
 - a. RCN (L) Dronten- Noord (Oct. 10, 2018);
 - b. RCN (L) Groningen- Noordwest (Nov. 19, 2018);
 - c. RCN (L) Haren (Oct. 10, 2018);
 - d. RCN (L) Amersfoort- Zuid (Jan. 10, 2019);
 - e. RCN (L) Wezep (Jan. 1, 2019);
 - f. RCN (L) Assen- Marsdijk (Jan. 21, 2019);
 - g. RCN (L) Soest- Baarn (June 3, 2019);
 - h. RCN (L) Bunschoten- West (July 4, 2019);
 - i. RCN (L) Axel (July 11, 2019);
 - j. RCN (L) Balkbrug (July 13, 2019);
 - k. RCN (L) Heemse en RCN (L) Baalder (Aug. 15, 2019);
 - l. RCN (L) Schildwolde (Aug. 22, 2019);
 - m. RCN (L) Veenendaal-Oost (Sept. 16, 2019);
 - n. RCN (L) Valkenburg Zuid-Holland (Apr. 23, 2019);
 - o. RCN (L) Waardhuizen (Sept. 19, 2019);
 - p. RCN (L) Emmeloord (Oct. 14, 2019);
 - q. RCN (L) Drachten- Oost (Oct. 22, 2019);
 - r. RCN (L) Capelle ad IJssel- Zuid-West (Nov. 11, 2019);
 - s. RCN (L) Gouda (Nov. 9, 2019);
 - t. RCN (L) Zuidlaren (Nov. 11, 2019);
 - u. RCN (L) Zeist- de Bilt (Dec. 2, 2019);
4. 17 letters from foreign sister- and contact churches, in which deep concern is expressed regarding these decisions; for a complete overview of these, see appendix X.

5. the report of the committee weighing revision requests, "*Serve each other sincerely from the heart*" ("*Elkaar van harte dienen*" (03-07-2020))
6. the presentation report of the committee weighing revision requests (17-08-2020)

Decision 1:

to acknowledge, with approval, the report of the committee weighing revision requests, "*Serve each other sincerely from the heart*" ("*Elkaar van harte dienen*") (hereafter called "the committee report").

Grounds:

The committee report offers a careful study of the subject "men and women, and church offices," which demonstrates a respectful attitude toward and making use of the Scriptures. This study provides us with a good basis for answering the requests to revise, to clarify, or to improve the decisions, which requests have been extended by the churches in connection with the decisions of the GS Meppel, 2017, regarding men and women in church office.

Decision 2:

to reject the requests to set aside the decisions by which the GS Meppel, 2017, made possible opening the church offices of deacon, elder, and minister to women.

Grounds:

The committee report has demonstrated that, on the basis of a reverent and careful consideration of the material in Scripture, it is possible to come to the conviction that the church offices are open to women.

Decision 3:

- a. to be willing, to a degree, to agree to the objections against decisions 3 to 6 of the GS Meppel, 2017, as follows: the Synod replaces those decisions and their grounds with the declaration that, on the basis of a responsible interpretation of Scripture, there is room in the churches for the conviction and the practice that men and women may be called, in the same way, to all the tasks in the church, including service in the church offices.
- b. to maintain the last part of decision 6 a of GS Meppel, 2017, whereby in the General Regulation regarding permission to preach, Art. 1, the word "male" is to be removed.

Grounds:

1. The committee report, on the basis of a coherent interpretation of Scripture, gives responsible support for this standpoint, which forms the basis for this declaration.
2. In the grounds expressed for decisions 3 to 6 of the GS Meppel, 2017, the support from Scripture showed too little coherence. Churches in The Netherlands and in foreign countries correctly expressed objections to this.
3. As grounds for the rejection of the objections which have been received, the following key points of the interpretation from Scripture, in particular, are relevant in the committee report:
 - a. There are good exegetical arguments for the interpretation of the so-called "remain silent" texts, by which these texts provide no good reasons for excluding women from a church teaching or ruling office.
 - b. There are good exegetical arguments for an interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-14, by which this passage does not need to be used as a timeless framework for the interpretation of Genesis 1-3 (where, supposedly, there is a "creation order," by which women have a subordinate position to men)
 - c. In Genesis 1-2 the emphasis is on the unity and the mutual service of man and woman. Although man and woman were created different (male and female), both of them were given the mandate to help creation unfold, develop, and shine. There are good reasons for not presuming subordination (of the woman to the man), but full equality.

- d. In Genesis 3 we see how sin shatters this original unity and mutual service. The punishment which Eve receives as a result of the Fall into sin, that is, being subject to the domination of her husband, is not an ethical guide for a subordination of all women to all men, but rather a curse, imposed by God, which through the redemption in Christ ought to be fought against and, as much as possible, overcome. It is not possible to deduct from this a lasting, hierarchy of men above women.
- e. In the New Testament, and particularly in the apostle Paul's writings, where we read about men and women, the emphasis is once again on their unity and equality (1 Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28).
- f. In the New Testament the call to serve given to followers of Christ is central. In accordance with the example of our Lord, all are called to do what He said: don't lord it over others, but serve each other. Here there is no emphasis on the difference between men and women. With regard to carrying out special tasks, what counts is: which gifts fit which tasks? (1 Cor. 12:4-11).
- g. When "the restoration of the relation between men and women as overcoming the punishment, which is the result of sin" is seen as a constant refrain in salvation history, different Old Testament passages are to be read as signals of this restoration. Also, where there is accommodation to the surrounding culture, in which women are subordinate, there are passages which can be read as offering critiques of this culture, pointing in another direction.

Decision 4:

- a. decisions 7 and 8 of the GS Meppel, 2017, are to be replaced by the declaration that the churches in the RCN (L) federation have the freedom to decide whether and when women, too, may be called to service in one of the church offices.
- b. to reject the objections against decision 7 of GS Meppel, 2017, that it made it possible for the decisions regarding men and women, and church office, to be directly implemented.

Grounds:

- 1. In our church life, the situation we were used to, either tacitly or explicitly regulated, has changed, so that the way church services are filled in, and the way church offices tasks are carried out, are increasing in diversity. We will need to learn again, from Scripture, and from our church leaders in the past, that this does not mean an undermining of the unity of our church federation.
- 2. In these developments, every local congregation must be able to determine its own position and tempo, with an eye to maintaining tranquility and peace in the congregation. To this end, we offer the following considerations to assist in this process:
 - a. The church structure which can be discovered in the New Testament, is an accommodation to the social (patriarchal) structure of that age, and therefore is not uniformly normative for our own church structure and filling in the church offices in our time (see the committee report, the chapter "Not ruling over, but serving").
 - b. The unity of the church rests in its Lord, Jesus Christ, and is specified and shaped by the truth which Scripture teaches us: its true and complete teaching, summarized in the Confessions (Church Order, Art. A1); the issue of women in church office is not part of this confessional teaching.
 - c. Scripture teaches us in the New Testament (for example, in the letter of Paul to the Philippians), how we ought to deal with different views within the church (see the committee report, the chapter "Diversity and unity").
- 3. Whereas filling in the church offices belongs to the freedom of the local congregations, and our church unity is not affected by this, the congregations ought to respect, as well, the way different congregations are working together with congregations from other church federations, and not put pressure on the spiritual cooperation of the congregations in our federation, in line with what Church Order A2.1 specifies; where necessary, arrangements can be made about this.

Decision 5:

deviating from the GS Ede, 2014, to declare:

- a. that there are good reasons not to speak of two lines in the Scriptures (equality, but also difference in responsibility between men and women), but rather of *one* line of equality, damaged by sin and God's curse, but restored in Christ;
- b. that reflection about the structure of church offices is not necessary to answer the question: may sisters, too, be called to service in the church offices?

Grounds:

1. The committee report has provided a sufficient refutation of what the GS Ede, 2014, without further substantiation, declared regarding the two lines.
2. A reflection about the structure of church offices would only be of service when it would be necessary to do justice to a difference in responsibility between men and women.

Decision 6:

to reject the objection that GS Meppel, 2017, did not sufficiently pay attention to the objections of sister-churches.

Grounds:

1. Although this is not to be found in the grounds for the decision, in both the deputy report to GS Meppel, as well as in the discussions at the Synod, including during the "foreign churches week," extensive attention was given to the responses of the sister-churches.
2. Objections from sister-churches are reasons for not taking a decision only when they concern matters which are constitutive for the unity of the church (see ground 3 under decision 4).

Decision 7:

to reject the objection that the decisions of the GS Meppel demonstrate the use of a "new hermeneutics."

Grounds:

A different interpretation of the texts or application of the Scripture material regarding the questions relating to men and women, and church office, does not mean that we have to approach and use Scripture in a different way.

Decision 8:

to reject the objection that the deputies of the "Synod Committee concerning Men and Women in Church Office" (Dutch: "M/V en ambt"), appointed by the GS Ede, 2014, were incorrectly discharged in 2017.

Grounds:

According to Art. 9, sub articles 1 and 2 of the regulations for the General Synod, discharging a committee is not connected to the evaluation of the content of reports or their proposals.

Decision 9:

to reject the objection against the call given by the GS Meppel to the churches to carefully formulate regulations with an eye to appointing men and women to tasks not belonging to the church offices.

Grounds:

the objection concerns the supposed "appointments analogous to appointments to church offices;" the call of the Synod is broader, and intends nothing more than protecting both those who fulfill a special task, and the congregation itself.

Decision 10:

- a. to send these decisions, with the committee reports supporting them, to:
 1. The churches which have requested revisions;
 2. the churches which have written letters requesting a further substantiation, renewed considerations, or reformulations, without requesting a revision;
 3. the (former) foreign sister-churches, which have written the Synod concerning the decision of the GS Meppel;
 4. the ICRC, which, due to these decisions of the GS Meppel, 2017, has suspended the membership of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated).
- b. to send each church requesting a revision, and the foreign churches mentioned, separate letters, as answers.



Reformed
resbyterian
Church of Central and Eastern Europe

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 18

Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil - IPB
Comissao de Relacoes Inter Eclesiasticas - CRIE

Rev. Davi Charles Gomes
Presb. Solano Portela

Dear Brothers

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord!

I am writing you following our personal discussions and your encouragements (at Comissao Executiva – Brasilia - DF). After I arrived home, we discussed your proposal with my colleagues and they asked me to write you.

By the way of this letter we would like to request to start a correspondence with the aim of establishing fraternal relationship between our denominations – Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil and Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe.

We already have a fruitful cooperation with your mission organization Agência Presbiteriana de Missões Transculturais - APMT, with your missionaries in Europe. We are very close to sign a cooperation protocol with APMT.

We also would like to deepen our relationship with your denomination, with the hope of finding practical possibilities to minister together, to glorify God through this.

Our denomination subscribes to the Westminster Standards, Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession.

Attila Szasz

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe

Cluj Napoca. July 7, 2018.



São Paulo, 20 de março de, 2021

À Comissão Executiva da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – 2021

At. Comissão de Exame do Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB sobre o ano de 2020

Caros irmãos em Cristo:

Quanto ao Item 4.1 do seu Relatório Anual 2020, a CRIE sugere o seguinte texto de RESOLUÇÃO, a ser apreciado e definido, em sua forma final, pela egrégia Comissão Executiva:

O Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, reunido em sua Comissão Executiva na Igreja Presbiteriana Central de Campinas, sita a Rua General Osório 619, Centro, Campinas-SP, quanto ao documento _____, Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB sobre o ano de 2020, Item 4.1, solicitando efetivação de Relacionamento Eclesiástico Correspondente (Nível 2) para a *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe* (RPCCEE):

Considerando:

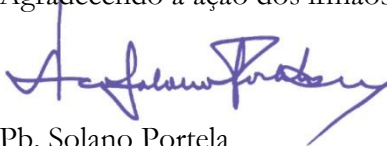
- a. Que é da competência da CRIE o estabelecimento de Relacionamento Ecumênico (Nível 1),
- b. Que é da competência da Comissão Executiva a aprovação de progresso no nos laços para Relacionamento Correspondente (Nível 2).
- c. Que é da competência exclusiva do Supremo Concílio da IPB a aprovação de Relacionamento Fraterno, ou Pleno (Nível 3);
- d. Que este relacionamento, em Nível 1, já foi considerado e aprovado pela CRIE com a denominação acima nominada;
- e. Que esta denominação, por seu representante, já visitou a IPB, em seu Supremo Concílio de 2018, e já mantém um extenso relacionamento com a APMT/IPB, sendo apoio importante para nossos missionários da Base Europa;
- f. Que já há aprovação da RPCCEE para aprofundamento do relacionamento com a IPB, desde 2018, conforme carta da RPCEE, anexada ao Relatório da CRIE à esta CE, como Anexo 01;
- g. Que há parecer favorável da CRIE/IPB para que esse laço em nível 2 seja firmado;

A CE-SC/IPB-2021 resolve:

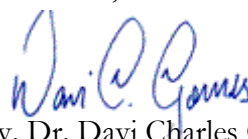
1. Autorizar e formalizar o Relacionamento Correspondente com a *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe* (RPCCEE);
2. Oficiar esta decisão a essa denominação, por intermédio da CRIE, desejando as ricas bênçãos de Deus ao trabalho de expansão do Reino que realizam, agradecendo concomitantemente o apoio que já vêm prestando aos nossos esforços missionários na região da Europa central e oriental.

Sala das sessões, ___ de abril de 2021

Agradecendo a ação dos irmãos, quanto a essa decisão, subscrevemo-nos,



Pb. Solano Portela
Secretário



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
Presidente

보낸사람: 김항식 <hangsikim@hanmail.net>

받는사람: <davicharles@me.com>

참조: <h2oviva@hanmail.net>, cpc96 <cpc96@hanmail.net>

날짜: 20.12.23 16:49 GMT +0900

제목: Greetings of Chrstitmas & New year from Hapdong(GAPCK)

Dear Dr. Davi Charles Gomes / The representative of Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil

I hope that you and your denomination will always be under the grace and peace of our almighty God.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, our GAPCK's 105th General Assembly had to be compressed to a single day, and conducted through Zoom video conferencing. The General Assembly representatives were unable to convene in a single location (Sae-Eden Church), and instead held 36 separate assemblies. Although we faced some difficulty for it was our first conference conducted virtually, we give thanks to our Lord for its success. Our only regret is that we weren't able to invite you and the representatives of your denomination due to current circumstances.

We write today to request information regarding your next General Assembly. Specifically, we would appreciate if you could apprise us of the following:

Information requested regarding the 2021 General Assembly

1. Date:
2. Location:
3. Whether foreign representatives will be invited or not:
4. Others:

We supply for your information details regarding our 106th General Assembly of GAPCK in 2021 as follows:

1. Date: September 13th(Mon) ~ 17th(Fri) in 2021
2. Place: Ulsan Metropolitan city (Confirmation pending, will provide follow-up notice.)
3. Whether foreign representatives will be invited or not: As of now the plan is to invite foreign representatives, although we note there is a possibility of cancellation depending on the trajectory of COVID-19.
4. others: If we are able to move forward with inviting foreign representatives, we'll have the luncheon at 12:00, followed by greetings & short speech in our General Assembly location at 14:00 on September 15th(Wed).

ANEXO 03 – P.2 CRIE2021

We here in South Korea are preparing for a severe winter, as we expect an increase in COVID-19 cases along with the cold weather. The highest level of action by the Korean government is expected. Nevertheless, we are hopeful. There are welcome news of vaccines and treatments being approved, and we remain optimistic that we may have the opportunity to meet the representatives of your denomination in person at our next General Assembly.

We would greatly appreciate a response at your earliest convenience.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and a happy new year!

Thank you!

Best regard

Jung-Ho, Kim

The president of Inter-church Relationship & Cooperation Committee of GAPCK

São Paulo, 20th of March, 2021

To:

The president of Inter-church Relationship & Cooperation Committee of GAPCK (Hapdong)
c/o – Rev. Jung-Ho, Kim
hangsikim@hanmail.net; h2oviva@hanmail.net; cpc96@hanmail.net

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 21

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

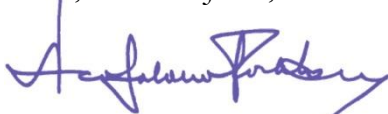
Praying for your spiritual and physical health, we thank you for your letter of December 20, 2020, giving us some information about the PCK's 105th General Assembly, supplying data about the 106th GA – which has been placed on our agenda (September 13-17, 2021 at Ulsan Metropolitan City), inviting us to be represented there, and requesting some information from our end about our own **GA**.

We also have been experiencing disruption of “normal life”, as we consider it, that has been affecting activities on a world-wide scale, ever since the last months of 2019, throughout 2020, persisting to this day, even with greater virulence. Brazil is currently considered the epicenter of the pandemic with the loss of 3,000 lives every day, and a sum total of over 300,000 persons that have lost their lives to the CORONA virus. This made us postpone meetings of our Executive Commission in 2020, and we are currently scheduling a limited one for April 20-23, 2021. The pandemic has also prevented greater interaction between our two denominations, as it was our plan and desire. Nevertheless, we continue to thank God for your fellowship and for enabling you to stand for the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3) and thank you for the invitation to your next GA. If at all possible, we plan to send two representatives.

As far as your request for information concerning the date, location, and other questions about our **General Assembly**, we would like to position you about the following:

- The *Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil* holds its Executive Committee meetings (*Comissão Executiva - CE*) annually. It consists of the 80 presidents of Synods, plus presidents and officers of our boards and agencies. At this meeting, these boards and agencies present their reports and receive guidelines for the years ahead.
- In the year of 2020, after successive postponements, the meeting is scheduled to take place on the above dates (April 20-23, 2021), but with very limited attendance, with no foreign visitors.
- Our General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*) **happens only every four years**. The next one should be in July, 2022, in the city of Salvador (Northeast Brazil) – but we don't have the set dates as yet. Administrative matters are annually managed by the **CE**, but specific doctrinal matters, or eventual constitutional amendments, are referred to the next **GA**, and can be deliberated only at this major council.
- You will certainly be invited to be present at our General Assembly, as we have been doing during past years, hoping that by then international travel and restrictions have been lifted.

Yours, in Christ Jesus, our Savior,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB

SDDS

*Sinodale Deputate
Diakonale Sake*

Sinodale Deputate Diakonale Sake
Ingelyfde maatskappy kragtens Art 21 van die
Maatskappywet
NPO verw: 036-927
PBO No 930004788

Posbus 20004
Noordbrug
2522

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Molenstraat 62 Potchefstroom, 2531

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 22

23 November 2020

THE STATED CLERKS
CHURCHES IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE RCSA

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The Synod Deputies for Deacon Affairs (SDDS in Afrikaans) of the Reformed Churches in South Africa function as a non-profit company according to South African Law and acts on behalf of the deacons of the churches. These deputies have been involved in the management and maintenance of two orphanages as well as a retirement village since 1947, a total of 73 years.

These deputies also offer assistance on both national and international level. This is done by the utilisation of the Emergency Fund, which was created to assist people in need. Should the directors become aware of an emergency, funds are immediately transferred to alleviate the initial crisis - usually within twelve to twenty-four hours. These funds are transferred to the relevant deacons who are local to the area in which the crisis occurs. If the emergency occurs where there is no Reformed Church, a trustworthy associate is identified to distribute the contribution in a wise, responsible manner.

Thereafter, correspondence detailing the disaster is sent to all congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. This is done to ensure that the financial assistance for the immediate need is continued. Congregants are encouraged to open both their hands, as well as their hearts, and there is always a generous response, which results in a good outcome.

On a national level, assistance has been offered in cases of droughts, veld fires, wind damage, floods, mudslides and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Examples of such disaster assistance on international level include the following: tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan, earth quakes in Nepal, hurricanes in the West Indies and Mozambique, and famines in South Sudan, Congo, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The assistance is offered to people in need. The only criterion required is need.

It is important to note that people choose to contribute money to this particular fund because they are confident in the manner in which the assistance is rendered and distributed. Secondly, they are able to indicate to which need or crisis their aid will be distributed. The condition set out by the contributor is always adhered to.

During the past two years, the deputies have become involved in the drought crisis in the Northern Cape Province and surrounding areas in South Africa. These are areas in which farmers, their employees and people in rural villages suffer greatly as result of what has been named **the worse drought in a hundred years**. Government subsidies are non-existent - aggravating the matter.

While the members of the Reformed Churches in South Africa have assisted the deputies to address need, they too are experiencing the pressure of COVID-19. As a result, they have to assist fellow church members at this stage.

We humbly refer to the example of the generous Corinthians, who assisted their fellow brothers and sisters of Jerusalem, with the approach we have implemented to address this terrible drought.

Should you be able to assist us with any contribution, do take note of the exchange rate, which results in the multiplication of amounts by 11 to 20 times. Essentially, this means that any amount is of greater value to the fund than first considered.

The SDDS account number and banking details:

Name: SDDS

Bankers: ABSA Bank

Branch: 94 Steve Biko Street, Potchefstroom, North West Province, South Africa, 2531

Postal address: PO Box 1054, Klerksdorp, North West Province, South Africa, 2570

Account number: 3330141750

Branch Code 632005

Swift Code: ABSAZAJJ

We thank you for your compassion. Be assured that we will appreciate your assistance most sincerely. Please keep our drought-stricken people in your prayers.

Your brothers in Christ



FJ Potgieter

SDDS: Chairman

fritz.j.potgieter@gmail.com



HSJ Vorster

SDDS Liaison Officer

hannes@susan55.co.za

São Paulo, 20th of March, 2021

To:

The Sinodale Deputate Diakonale Sake (SDDS) of the
Reformed Churches in South Africa

c/o – Revs. F. J. Potgieter and H. S. J. Vorster

fritz.j.potgieter@gmail.com; hannes@susan55.co.za;

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 23

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

Praying for your spiritual and physical health, we thank you for your letter of November 23, 2020, and apologize for the delay in responding to it. We were glad to see our sister church involved, through the SDDS, in so many relief actions both inside the African continent as well as on a world-wide scale, catering to so many needs.

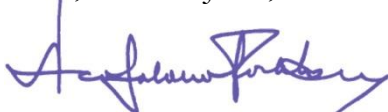
Part of the reason for the delay in answering you is for the difficulties brought about by the COVID19 pandemic which has hindered not only church life, but also seminary teaching and meetings of commissions, such as our Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations (CRIE) of the *Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil* (IPB). But your letter was examined with great attention.

Brazil has been experiencing disruption of “normal life”, as we consider it, that has been affecting activities on a world-wide scale, ever since the last months of 2019, throughout 2020, persisting to this day, even with greater virulence. Our country is currently considered the epicenter of the pandemic with the loss of 3,000 lives every day, and a sum total of over 300,000 persons that have lost their lives to the CORONA virus. Therefore, our churches have been involved in taking care of internal needs, such as purchasing oxygen cylinders (in short supply, especially for the Amazon region); supplying basic non-perishable food items; caring for the sick and unemployed; and, sadly, burying and comforting many families that have lost loved ones.

Vaccination is proceeding slowly, and the death curve continues to rise. We are constantly pleading for the Lord’s mercies, for our country and for the world, but also for submission to His sovereign will, knowing that in the midst of all this, there are still many blessings to be counted.

Considering all of this internal burden, we thank you very much for your letter, but the IPB is unable to be considered as a contributor to your relief efforts at this time. We pray that the Lord Almighty will supply the needs and bring resources from other brethren, especially to these drought-stricken areas. We continue to thank God for your fellowship and for enabling you to stand for the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

Yours, in Christ Jesus, our Savior,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 24

São Paulo, 22nd of September, 2019

Dear Brothers of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Vrijgemaakt*):

Grace and Peace!

These are some topics that we thought could contribute to your steadfast growth and faithful march in the Kingdom:

A Word of Encouragement: Be encouraged by the fact that you are the source of many faithful churches that have been planted or supported around the Globe. Certainly, this has pleased our LORD and it is a precious heritage.

A reminder about Children's Ministry: Don't forget the ministry to children. Young minds must be taken care of at the earliest age, but there must be biblical sustenance provided through the pre-teens and teenage years. In a confused World, with so many attractions and behavioral deviations, this must be done always reinforcing the practical differentials of our faith, stressing the implications of our basic Christian beliefs, and not only overstressing a head knowledge of our reformed tenets. Teach them to think and act for themselves, but under guidance. Ask the LORD to show clearly, through his Holy Spirit in His word, what needs to be corrected, if churches start to be a repository of older people, only, and the message is not being received by the new generations.

A Needed Emphasis on Pastors' training: Training of pastors in the area of biblical counseling and visitation - the creator of human beings has given us His Word to explain human origin and nature (including sin), to outline the path to a relationship with Himself (salvation), and to provide guidelines for behavior and relationships that not only please Him but allow for true happiness and meaning (service). It is amazing how the Holy Spirit uses the Word rightly explained to make a difference in individual, family, and community life.

A Warning as you seek Relevance: Make your message relevant to this dark world, but don't forget that it is exactly that – dark and sinful. Therefore (Rm 1.1-2), understand that relevance does not come with conformity. The advancement of the church of Christ, there and elsewhere, will only happen in a healthy form when we maintain our identity, as instructed by 1 Peter 2.9-10. Relevance will not be achieved through a change in our hermeneutic, but it will be established by sound exegesis of the Word of God, one that does not subordinate interpretation, application and breach of limits therein contained to sociological or politically correct pressures.

May the LORD guide your steps. Yours, in the bonds of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – **CRIE**

Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil

São Paulo, 20th of December, 2021

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 25

To:
Rev., *Stated Clerk*

Church

Address

E-mail:

Dear Rev.:

Grace and Peace!

As members of the *Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil* (CRIE/IPB), under whose auspices are all international and inter-ecclesiastical relations of our denomination. It is our privilege to write to you on behalf of the Executive Secretary, Rev. Juarez Marcondes Filho, and the President, Rev. Roberto Brasileiro Silva, of the *General Assembly* (Supremo Concílio) of the *Presbyterian Church of Brazil*. This letter has the purpose to invite the *Church* to be represented at the XXXL General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil (IPB), to be held in the city of **Cuiabá**, state of **Mato Grosso** (MT), between the 24th and the 31st of July, 2022, should international travel become feasible again, considering the current pandemic situation.

Though the assembly will start on the 24th of July, the most important dates for our foreign delegates would be between the 26th to the 30th, when our corresponding delegates will be scheduled to bring greetings to the Assembly. Other events will also take place during those days, such as a special reception for foreign delegates by the Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations. We will host the foreign delegations (up to two delegates per invited denomination, or Institution) at our expense, offering room, board and local transportation. Unfortunately, we will not be able to cover air transportation, at this time.

We wish to plan well for your coming, so it would be good to know in advance whether you will accept this invitation by **filling the attached form** (please notice additional information contained therein) and sending it to us through e-mail (solanoportelabr@gmail.com) before March 30, 2022. Please contact us at any time, if you need further information or documentation you might need for a Brazilian visa, which is required for many countries. We understand that the Brazilian visa procedure is online, now, and much simplified with issuance of an electronic code.

At this time, we would also take the opportunity to steer your attention to a pressing need that has happened in the beginning of this month of December, 2021, affecting churches and families from our states of Minas Gerais and Bahia. We are referring to heavy and continued rainfall that has caused severe flooding, destroyed roads and bridges, and has left many cities with no communication, electricity, and crucial supplies. Quoting from a letter received by our Commission from the Pastor who is responsible for the relief efforts to the affected region, President of South Bahia Regional Synod, Rev. Alexandre Lessa: besides the death toll of over

20 people, there are “6,300 whose houses have been destroyed, and around 220,000 people” are suffering deprivation one way or another. Therefore, we covet your prayers for this situation, interceding for that region, to the Throne of Grace, for God to enable us to gather and bring supplies to those in dire need. Should you need further information about this need, we will be glad to put you in touch with Rev. Lessa.

We look forward to seeing you this July 2022, the Lord willing, certain that your presence and fellowship will be a blessing for us and for the *Evangelical Presbyterian Church*.

Yours, in the bonds of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President, Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations

**Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – July 24 to 31, 2022
Cuiabá, MT, Brazil**

Registration Form for Foreign Delegates

(send to: solanoportelabr@gmail.com, before **March 30, 2022**)

Please **fill one form for each delegate** (we will host up to **two** delegates from your Denomination/Institution)

Name of Denomination or Institution Represented:	
Name of Delegate:	
Title, Office:	
Postal Address (line 1):	
Postal Address (2), with code:	
e-mail:	
Accompanied by:	
Date of Birth:	
Number of Passport (Brazil may require a VISA – check):	
Phone number (mobile) with country and area code:	
Any special medical or dietary needs?	
Are you willing to share a room (yes, or no)? Remarks.	
Expected arrival date:	
Expected departure date:	
Other remarks:	

- Between the 26th to the 30th of July, 2022, we will be glad to receive a word, letter of greetings, or any message that your denomination may see fit to deliver to our General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*). Please consider around 5 to 7 minutes for your delivery time.
- Please notice that the City of Cuiabá is in a state (Mato Grosso) located in the Western part of Brazil, a 1:15 hr flight from São Paulo's Airports (Guarulhos – **GRU**, or Congonhas - **CGH**).
- Depending on your country of origin, Brazil may require a VISA in your passport, in reciprocity to your country's requirement for Brazilian travelers. Check your situation on the Internet. Check traveling conditions and requirements imposed by the pandemic situation at the time of travel.

Registration Form for Foreign Delegates

(send to: solanoportelabr@gmail.com)

Please **fill one form for each delegate** (we will host up to **two** delegates from your Denomination/Institution)

Name of Denomination or Institution Represented:	
Name of Delegate:	
Title, Office:	
Postal Address (line 1):	
Postal Address (2), with code:	
e-mail:	
Accompanied by:	
Date of Birth:	
Number of Passport (Brazil may require a VISA – check):	
Phone number (mobile) with country and area code:	
Any special medical or dietary needs?	
Are you willing to share a room (yes, or no)?	
Expected arrival date:	
Expected departure date:	
Other remarks:	

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3. Depending on your country of origin, Brazil may require a VISA in your passport, in reciprocity to your country's requirement for Brazilian travelers. Check your situation on the Internet. Check traveling conditions and requirements imposed by the pandemic situation at the time of travel.

À Comissão Executiva da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – 2020
At. Comissão de Exame do Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB – 2019

Caros irmãos em Cristo:

Quanto ao Item 5.2 do Relatório Anual 2019, sobre o Relacionamento com a Bible Presbyterian Church, a CRIE sugere o seguinte texto de RESOLUÇÃO, a ser apreciado e definido, em sua forma final, pela egrégia Comissão Executiva da IPB - 2020:

O Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, reunido em sua Comissão Executiva na Igreja Presbiteriana Central de Campinas, sita a Rua General Osório 619, Centro, Campinas-SP, quanto ao documento XXX, Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB-2019, ANEXO 09,

Considerando:

- Os acontecimentos já relatados à Comissão Executiva CE-SC/IPB-2019, envolvendo documentos oriundos da Bible Presbyterian Church (BPC), contra a IPB, que foram alvo de ampla circulação, inclusive por ministros da IPB que mantêm duplos laços de afiliação;
- A decisão, também aprovada pela mesma CE-SC/IPB-2019, de sobrestar o relacionamento com a BPC até esclarecimentos ou pedidos de desculpas pelo ocorrido;
- A ausência de um posicionamento satisfatório da BPC quanto às perturbações criadas no seio da IPB,

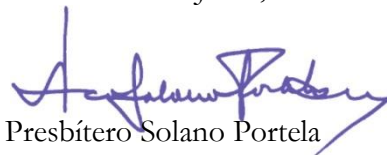
A CE-SC/IPB resolve:

- Autorizar rebaixamento do nível de relacionamento eclesiástico da Bible Presbyterian Church com a IPB, de Nível 2 (Relacionamento Correspondente), para Nível 1 (Relacionamento Ecumênico);
- Determinar a ministros da IPB que eventualmente estejam sob o regime de dupla jurisdição (IPB e BPC), que devem fazer a sua escolha junto aos seus respectivos presbitérios.
- Recomendar a ministros da IPB que tratem das questões eclesiásticas pelos caminhos normais da denominação, e não envolvendo outras denominações, ou por mídias sociais, caminhos esses que não contribuem para o esclarecimento de problemas, ou fundamentação da verdade, mas que apenas prejudicam a união que deve subsistir em nosso meio e relacionamentos.

Sala das sessões, xx de abril de 2020.

Agradecemos a atenção para essa questão e oramos por sabedoria para as decisões e resoluções desta CE-SC/IPB-2020.

Em Cristo Jesus,



Presbítero Solano Portela
Secretário

À Comissão Executiva da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – 2020
At. Comissão de Exame do Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB – 2019

Caros irmãos em Cristo:

Quanto ao Item 5.3 do Relatório Anual 2019, a CRIE sugere o seguinte texto de RESOLUÇÃO, a ser apreciado e definido, em sua forma final, pela egrégia Comissão Executiva:

O Supremo Concílio da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil, reunido em sua Comissão Executiva na Igreja Presbiteriana Central de Campinas, sita a Rua General Osório 619, Centro, Campinas-SP, quanto ao documento XXX, Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB-2019, ANEXO 10, solicitando efetivação de Relacionamento Eclesiástico Correspondente (Nível 2) para duas denominações:

Considerando:

- a. Que é da competência da CRIE o estabelecimento de Relacionamento Ecumênico (Nível 1),
- b. Que é da competência da Comissão Executiva a aprovação de progresso no nos laços para Relacionamento Correspondente (Nível 2).
- c. Que é da competência exclusiva do Supremo Concílio da IPB a aprovação de Relacionamento Fraterno, ou Pleno (Nível 3);
- d. Que este relacionamento, em Nível 1, já foi estabelecido pela CRIE com duas denominações que têm demonstrado afinidade doutrinária com a IPB e firmeza na Palavra de Deus, em suas práticas e pregações, **a saber, a Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK – Hap-Tong), ou Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia, na Coréia do Sul, e a Grace Presbyterian Church (GPC), da Nova Zelândia;**
- e. Que estas denominações, por seus representantes, já visitaram a IPB, e já foram visitadas, por integrantes da CRIE, sendo os resultados relatados em detalhes nos Relatórios Anuais da CRIE/IPB;
- f. Que já há aprovação da Assembleia Geral da PCK (Hap Tong) para que se firme um relacionamento fraterno (Nível 3) com a IPB;
- g. Que já há uma formalização da GPC, anexada ao Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB, com uma resolução da AGO da GPC, solicitando que seja estabelecido um relacionamento correspondente com a IPB;
- h. Que há parecer favorável da CRIE/IPB para que esses laços em nível 2 sejam firmados;

A CE-SC/IPB-2020 resolve:

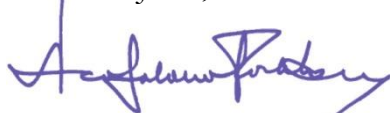
1. Autorizar e formalizar o Relacionamento Correspondente com a **Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK – Hap-Tong)**, ou Igreja Presbiteriana da Coréia, na **Coréia do Sul**, e a **Grace Presbyterian Church (GPC), da Nova Zelândia;**
2. **Remeter ao SC/IPB-2022 a solicitação da Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK – Hap-Tong)**, para que o nível de relacionamento progrida até o Nível 3 (Relações Fraternas, ou Plenas),

3. Oficiar a decisão a essas denominações, desejando as ricas bênçãos de Deus ao trabalho de expansão do Reino que realizam.

Sala das sessões, xx de abril de 2020.

Agradecendo a ação dos irmãos, quanto a esses passos, subscrevemo-nos.

Em Cristo Jesus,



Presbítero Solano Portela
Secretário,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
Presidente

Comissão de Relações Inter Eclesiásticas – IPB



Spring Letter 2019

April 2019

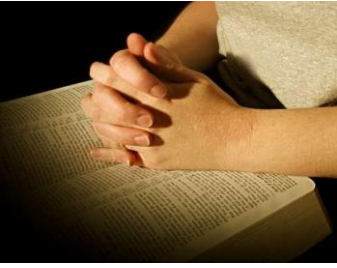
Dear brothers and sisters,

It is our tradition to inform our brothers and sisters abroad about recent developments in our churches by means of a Spring Letter. We provide this information to emphasise the value of the bond that we share, and also to give you the opportunity to share these developments with us. We encourage you to react to them.

It is a great privilege to have such a bond with you. The relations we maintain with the churches abroad are a frequent reminder of the fact that the church of the Lord Jesus is truly worldwide. It is God's gift of grace to us that he made us alive together with Christ, through faith. We may know that through His blood we are liberated from sin and we may live knowing that He is our head. He has risen from the dead and all authority is given unto Him. It is with that immense strength that He is working for us. And it is thanks to Him and through faith in Christ and in One Spirit that a church may now grow in which Jews and heathens may have access to the Father. Thus, there is one worldwide church that is a temple, which is the residence of God, with Christ as the cornerstone of this very temple. The foundation has been laid by the prophets and the apostles. It is only by building further on this foundation, in connection with Christ, and in the unity of the Spirit of God, that we truly become partakers of God's salvation. It is our duty to preserve this unity bestowed upon us by the Spirit, in the bond of peace. In Christ's strength, it is our duty to live as new people, children of light, walking the way of life with Christ in mind. And not taking part in the practices of darkness, but rather exposing these. Only when we are filled by the Holy Spirit and only in the strength of God we will be able to resist all the influences of evil spirits, just as stated by Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

Indeed, this is an exciting task. We have been called to preach the gospel in the language of today, to deal with the questions of today without adaptation to what is contrary to God's Word. It is only by doing so that we believers, together as church of Christ, shall be able to shed light in the darkness.

In the contacts with you and in the discussions within our own churches the recurring question is how to approach the exciting task mentioned above. We cannot but be open to mutual encouragement, as well as to the warnings and corrections mandated by God's Word. As believers and as churches worldwide, we have received the Spirit of God together so as to support one another.



Join us in prayer, that we too, as Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands may continue our way in our willingness to listen to one another and in obedience to our head Christ.

As deputies we do our utmost in making sure that the reactions from our international contacts are used in a constructive way in the ecclesiastical debate in the Netherlands. If relations are severed or put on hold by foreign churches, it does affect us a great deal. It is for this very reason that we shall always try to view the reactions from abroad with the highest seriousness. This can be done, among other things, by asking ourselves what the core of our faith and of the church is and in what way that might be influenced by present-day issues. This very question was faced in January when the translated version of the Nashville Statement was published in the Netherlands. Although this publication did not have its origins in the Reformed Churches (liberated), it still did attract a lot of attention in our churches. Homosexuality is a theme which poses us a relevant question on how behaviour and attitude to life, context and gospel relate to each other.

For the following overview of recent developments in our churches we have used the brochure entitled 'Uitwerking synodebesluiten 2017', which can be found on the Gkv website. (Only available in Dutch).

At the time of the General Synod in Meppel 2017, it became clear that the plan to start a joint reformed theological university would not succeed. The Christian Reformed Churches (CGK) could not agree with plans put forward. In Kampen however, a close cooperation has been reached between "our" theological university and the ministerial training of the Dutch Reformed Churches (NGK). It has been agreed that students who wish to become minister in the NGK can now take the Ministry Master programme at the Theological University in Kampen.

This cooperation is a result of the mutual desire of both the NGK and the Gkv to repair the church connection. Presently, there is a group representing both churches with a mandate to supervise the process of reunification.

Furthermore, there is some suspense about the ongoing discussions with the CGK. In many places there are close mutual contacts or even close cooperation. But there are also tangible tensions, which come to surface when dealing with the questions concerning the admission of women to the ecclesiastical offices and homosexuality.

Our synod of Meppel has established a study committee of deputies with the authority to do a thorough research on whether there is a reason to modify the traditional approach to homosexuality.

It is to be expected that the two most contentious issues which the next synod will have to deal with and decide upon will be the revision requests concerning Meppel's decisions on man/woman and office, and the topic of homosexuality.

The synod of Meppel decided that the churches may open the offices of elder, deacon and minister to women, and it is up to the churches to decide as to how and when they wish to put this to practice. There is a committee of deputies assigned to help the individual churches when opening discussions on the concerning matter. It appears that many churches are showing willingness to the appointment of women as deacons. Several local churches have already appointed female elders and one woman is now even open to calling as a minister in our churches. However, it is worth stating that there are also churches which have voiced objections against the decisions (or against the grounds upon which these decisions have been taken).

Many of our foreign sister churches are concerned about the decisions taken by the GS Meppel. At this moment, three sister churches have severed ties with us because of this. Seven have either suspended their relationship with us, imposed extra conditions, or have downgraded the relations. We know that they follow us with true concern and also anxiously look forward to what the next synod will decide.

Furthermore, we would like to inform you that Goes has been designated as the convening church for the next synod. The plan is to hold the prayer meeting there on 19 November, which will be the start of the new General Synod. The election of the synodic board is to take place on the following day. The meetings are to commence in January 2020 in conference centre Mennoerde in Elspeet.

In order to give the foreign delegates the opportunity to participate and make recommendations before the subjects on the agenda are dealt with, there will be a week on foreign relations which will take place from Tuesday 7 up to Saturday 11 January. More information will follow in due course.

At the end of his letter to the Ephesians we read Paul's call to prayer. He also requests prayer for himself, so that whilst in prison, he may speak boldly and use the right words to proclaim the gospel.

So we pray for you and humbly ask you to do the same for us:

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people".

Please receive our warm regards. May God bless you in everything.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joop Schreuder', written over a horizontal line.

On behalf of deputies BBK,
Joop Schreuder (general secretary)

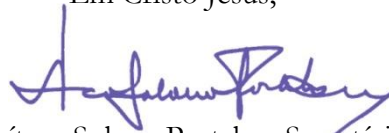
À Comissão Executiva da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil – 2020
At. Comissão de Expediente - Exame do Relatório Anual da CRIE/IPB – 2019
Ref.: Proposta APMT para estruturação de Igrejas Autóctones

Caros irmãos em Cristo:

Quanto ao Item 5.1 do nosso Relatório Anual 2019, a CRIE tem a informar:

1. O Supremo Concílio 2018 (SC/IPB – 2018 – DOC. XCIV) e a Comissão Executiva 2019 (CE-SC/IPB – 2019 – DOC. LXXXV), recebendo proposta da APMT para estruturação de Igrejas Autóctones (“Proposta de Filosofia de Trabalho Missionário e Plantação de Igrejas Autóctones”), devolveu os documentos à proponente indicando que a JET e a CRIE deveriam ser ouvidas na proposta e as conclusões apresentadas a esta CE-SC/IPB-2020.
2. No dia 27 de junho de 2019, às 14 horas, estiveram presentes os Pbs. Adonias da Silveira e Solano Portela em Campinas, na Casa de Retiros Lar Luterano Belém, onde a APMT estava reunida com os diversos integrantes da evangelização transcultural da IPB em território brasileiro, exatamente para cumprir a determinação do SC/IPB, quanto essa estruturação de igrejas transculturais nas diversas etnias existentes no território brasileiro, pretendida pela APMT.
3. APMT preparou uma “CARTILHA DE IGREJAS AUTÓCTONES”, que deve estar integrando o Relatório desta a essa egrégia Comissão Executiva do SC/IPB-2020.
4. Na reunião supracitada, foi realizada uma apresentação do trabalho da APMT nos segmentos transculturais do Brasil pelo Missionário Rev. Cácio Silva, ficando claro que existem vários bolsões étnicos no Brasil, que transcendem as tribos indígenas, e a APMT está se preparando para realmente coordenar o trabalho que já está em andamento entre haitianos, povos de língua latina, ciganos, muçulmanos, chineses, entre tantos outros.
5. Nesse sentido a “Cartilha” foi debatida e comentada. Grande parte da discussão que permeou, inclusive, a última reunião da CE, diz respeito a colocação da palavra IGREJA AUTÓCTONE, gerando a percepção de que a APMT desejava formar novas denominações.
6. No entanto, o Rev. Marcos Agripino explicou que esta não é a intenção da APMT. A busca é por uma estrutura de estabelecimento de igrejas, que tenha vínculos com a IPB, **não, necessariamente, estruturas que tenham relacionamentos inter-eclesiásticos.**
7. Assim sendo, a opinião da CRIE é que as questões remanescentes dizem mais respeito à JET do que a CRIE.
8. Concluímos que, considerando que o desejo e proposta da APMT é buscar uma estrutura de igrejas incipientes nas diferentes etnias que coexistem no território nacional, em um contexto transcultural, **todas subordinadas e enquadradas na estrutura denominacional da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil**, a CRIE não tem o que discordar nem a opinar sobre a CARTILHA, exceto sugerindo que a palavra “**relacionamento**”, que é mencionada três vezes, na seção “Quanto aos Vínculos”, da Cartilha, seja substituída pela palavra “**conexão**”.
9. A CRIE reafirma que o seu escopo de atuação é no relacionamento **entre denominações**, entendendo que a JET continuará participando e contribuindo com as questões referentes à ordenação de pastores, nessas igrejas.

Em Cristo Jesus,



Presbítero Solano Portela – Secretário

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 30

São Paulo, 20th of March, 2021

To:

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE)
c/o – Rev. Attila Szasz
presbyterianus@gmail.com

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

We are thankful for your presence in our country for the Executive Commission Meeting of The Presbyterian Church of Brazil (**IPB**), in the city of Brasília, in 2018. We have interacted internally with our Presbyterian Agency for Trans-Cultural Missions (**APMT**), discussed the **RPCCEE** with our own Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations (**CRIE**), and have been considering your denomination in *Ecumenical Relations* with the **IPB (Level 1)** – a step that is within the scope of action of **CRIE**.

We are deeply sorry that the disruption of “normal life”, as we consider it, has been affecting activities on a world-wide scale, ever since the last months of 2019, throughout 2020, persisting to this day, even with greater virulence. Brazil is currently considered the epicenter of the pandemic with the loss of 3,000 lives every day, and a sum total approaching the 300,000 dead figure. This has certainly prevented greater interaction between our two denominations, as was our plan and desire. Nevertheless, we would like to thank you, brethren, for the support and fellowship that you have given to our missionaries in what we call “Base Europe”, and for standing for the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

This letter has also the purpose of informing you that **CRIE** is asking our Executive Commission of the **IPB**, which should meet next April 20-23, 2021, to **step up** our ecclesiastical relationship to **Level 2** (*Correspondent Relations*). We will keep you informed about the outcome of this overture.

Meanwhile, we will continue to pray for the **RPCCEE** and intercede before the Throne of God, that He may sovereignly remove current communication and travel barriers, by His gracious mercies, so that we can meet again and deepen our fellowship and actions.

Yours, in the service of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB

São Paulo, 29th of July, 2021

CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 31

To:

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE)
c/o – Rev. Attila Szasz
presbyterianus@gmail.com

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

In complement to our letter of March 30, 2021, we are pleased to inform you that the Executive Commission of The Presbyterian Church of Brazil (**IPB**), meeting in the city of Campinas, last April 20 -23, 2021, has approved the annual report of the Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations (CRIE), and its overtures. Therefore, it approved the **step up** of the ecclesiastical relationship with the RPCCEE from **Level 1** (*Ecumenical Relations*) to **Level 2** (*Correspondent Relations*).

For a better understanding of the scope of this category of *Correspondent Relations*, in our denomination, we explain: This refers to churches (denominations) that, after initial contacts, identify themselves confessionally, as well as to objectives and ministries with IPB, and mutually recognize these affinities with each other, desiring the deeper relationship of full fellowship. This is the stage characterized by formal meetings; interchange of delegates to each other major councils; cooperation in ministries and projects; signing of cooperation agreements; consultation as to major theological matters; and interchange of minutes of major assemblies and annuaries, as well as other denominational documents. It is the phase that **precedes** mutual recognition as **sister churches**.

Looking forward to a mutually profitable relationship for The Kingdom, we pray for the **RPCCEE** and hope that we can meet again as our God be served to remove current communication and travel barriers, always submissive to his sovereign will.

Yours, in the service of the victorious Lamb,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB

São Paulo, 20th of March, 2021

To: **CRIE – 2018-2022 – ANEXO 32**

The president of Inter-church Relationship & Cooperation Committee of GAPCK (Hapdong)
c/o – Rev. Jung-Ho, Kim
hangsikim@hanmail.net; h2oviva@hanmail.net; cpc96@hanmail.net

Dear Brothers in Christ, Grace and Peace!

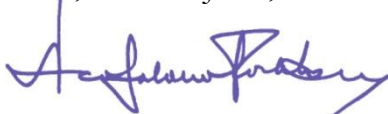
Praying for your spiritual and physical health, we thank you for your letter of December 20, 2020, giving us some information about the PCK's 105th General Assembly, supplying data about the 106th GA – which has been placed on our agenda (September 13-17, 2021 at Ulsan Metropolitan City), inviting us to be represented there, and requesting some information from our end about our own **GA**.

We also have been experiencing disruption of “normal life”, as we consider it, that has been affecting activities on a world-wide scale, ever since the last months of 2019, throughout 2020, persisting to this day, even with greater virulence. Brazil is currently considered the epicenter of the pandemic with the loss of 3,000 lives every day, and a sum total of over 300,000 persons that have lost their lives to the CORONA virus. This made us postpone meetings of our Executive Commission in 2020, and we are currently scheduling a limited one for April 20-23, 2021. The pandemic has also prevented greater interaction between our two denominations, as it was our plan and desire. Nevertheless, we continue to thank God for your fellowship and for enabling you to stand for the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3) and thank you for the invitation to your next GA. If at all possible, we plan to send two representatives.

As far as your request for information concerning the date, location, and other questions about our **General Assembly**, we would like to position you about the following:

- The *Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil* holds its Executive Committee meetings (*Comissão Executiva - CE*) annually. It consists of the 80 presidents of Synods, plus presidents and officers of our boards and agencies. At this meeting, these boards and agencies present their reports and receive guidelines for the years ahead.
- In the year of 2020, after successive postponements, the meeting is scheduled to take place on the above dates (April 20-23, 2021), but with very limited attendance, with no foreign visitors.
- Our General Assembly (*Supremo Concílio*) **happens only every four years**. The next one should be in July, 2022, in the city of Salvador (Northeast Brazil) – but we don't have the set dates as yet. Administrative matters are annually managed by the **CE**, but specific doctrinal matters, or eventual constitutional amendments, are referred to the next **GA**, and can be deliberated only at this major council.
- You will certainly be invited to be present at our General Assembly, as we have been doing during past years, hoping that by then international travel and restrictions have been lifted.

Yours, in Christ Jesus, our Savior,



Presbyter Solano Portela
Executive Secretary,



Rev. Dr. Davi Charles Gomes
President

Commission on Inter-Ecclesiastical Relations – IPB

***RELATÓRIO QUADRIENAL DA CRIE
À XL REUNIÃO ORDINÁRIA
DO SUPREMO CONCÍLIO DA
IGREJA PRESBITERIANA DO BRASIL***

COMISSÃO DE RELAÇÕES INTER-ECLESIÁSTICAS (CRIE)

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