

Session 1

Tuesday afternoon 2 September, 2014

1. Opening

The fifth European Conference of Reformed Churches at Hebron Hall, Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, Wales, was opened by Chairman Rev. Han Schenau (at 15:00).

Member churches present:

1. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands: Rev. Han Schenau, Rev. Nico Vennik, Prof. Hans Maris, Rev. Rik Bikker, Rev. Laurens den Butter.
2. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland: Rev. Andrew Lucas
3. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales: Rev. Dr Kevin Bidwell, Rev. Joshua Rieger, Rev. Richard Holst, Rev. Chris Kavanagh, Rev. Ian Hamilton, Rev. Dr Peter Naylor, Mr Rob Dykes
4. Free Church of Scotland: Rev. David Miller
5. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ('Liberated'): Rev. Lucius de Graaff, Rev. Piet Meijer, Rev. Roland Schipper, Rev. Kim Batteau, Drs Jos Colijn, Rev. Erik van Alten (missionary in Ukraine)
6. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland: Prof. David McKay, Mr Oswald Graham

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and the Reformed Churches of Spain were not represented.

Other churches and organizations represented:

1. Chiesa Riformata Filadelfia, Milan, Italy: Rev. Andrea Ferrari
2. Evangelical Reformed Church of Russia: Rev. Valerian Ten
3. Faculté de Jean Calvin, Aix en Provence, France: Prof. Paul Wells
4. General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches of Russia: Rev. Vladimir Li, Dr Soon Cheol Ahn
5. Illyricum Movement, Albania: Mr Eduart Demo
6. Reformed Evangelical Church, Poland: Rev. Dr Sebastian Smolarz
7. Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Church: Rev. Sandor Molnar

The Committee responsible for the conference:

Rev. Han Schenau (chairman), Rev. Lucius de Graaff (finances), Rev. David Miller, Prof. David McKay. Mrs Anja Mijnheer (RCN, BBK) provided administrative support to the committee.

2. Opening devotions (Rev. Kim Batteau)

Rev. Kim Batteau led the conference in worship.

Singing: Psalm 100 verses 1-2.

Prayer.

Reading: Romans 12: 1-3, 14, 17a, 18, 21 (NKJV). Exposition of the text: The mercies of God lead us to be transformed and to live a life of service, but more, serving *together* in a fallen, evil world.

Singing: 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (v.1 and v. 5).

Prayer

3. Opening address (Chairman, Rev. Han Schenau)

Previous conferences: Soest 2007 and 2008, Edinburgh 2010, and Kiev 2012. At this time we remember the Ukraine with compassion because of the conflict there.

Member churches: There are eight ICRC member churches: six are represented; two are missing (Spain and the FCSC). For the first time Albania is represented.

Men not present: Some men registered but are absent because of illness: Victor D'Assonville, Sebastian Heck, and Prof Arie Baars.

Programme: This has been designed to take account of feedback on Kiev 2012.

Theme: Reformed Piety proposed by Scottish brothers. Previous themes have been about mission. The fear of the Lord is the start of piety: knowing with grief that you are a sinner and knowing with joy that you can be a saved sinner in Jesus Christ, to live for him. Piety is for our services, sacraments, and whole of life, all to God's glory. Piety focuses on experience; there is the danger of subjectivism. If subjectivist, can it still be Reformed? Spirituality is an alternative term. It has the advantage of putting attention on the Holy Spirit but the danger of

charismatic positions and of being not balanced Trinitarian. Piety is the Holy Spirit's work in the congregation. Piety a good choice and the alternative term 'spirituality' could mean something different in our secular society. *Organizing committee:* David McKay (RPCI), David Miller (FCS), Lucius de Graaff (RCN), assisted by Anja Mijnheer (BBK) who replaced Mrs Gretie Enter. Rev. Han Schenau has been chairman three times and this the last. *ICRC:* Greetings received from ICRC to EuCRC. We return our greetings to them.

4. Introductions

4.1 Ukraine (Rev. Sandor Molnar)

Rev. Sandor Molnar brought the greetings of the Ukraine Reformed Churches. He offered some comments on the present conflict in Ukraine. The situation and its causes are very complicated; it is not black and white. The church is 'silent', not commenting about the situation, but praying for it.

4.2 Cardiff (Rev. Richard Holst)

Rev. Richard Holst introduced Cardiff and its churches. Cardiff was the venue of the ICRC last year. Currently Wales is hosting a NATO summit. The Presbyterian Church began in the 18th century through the 'Great Awakening' or 'Evangelical Revival', was constituted in 1811 and adopted a Reformed confession of faith in 1823. Today Wales is characterized by small, independent churches. The EPCEW has 15 small congregations. We are active in church planting in England and Sweden.

Chairman commented: the EuCRC does not work with a hosting church but it has had help from Peter Naylor and Richard Holst locally.

4.3 Albania (Mr Eduart Demo)

Edi Demo spoke about Albania and the Illyricum Movement. Albania was in Islamic darkness for 6 centuries, then 50 years of communism when it was officially atheistic and you would go to prison for just mentioning the word 'God'. In 1991 it was liberated. Edi was from a Muslim family and was converted to Christ. Church planting is a necessity. They have an advantage in that they are in close contact and familiar with the Muslim community. This makes them effective but pressure is increasing on them. There are perhaps about 15,000 Christians in a Muslim population. The Government registers churches. There are not denominations because it is all new.

4.4 Italy (Rev. Andrea Ferrari)

Rev. Andrea Ferrari (Milan). Andrea spoke of his development from a Roman Catholic background, through Assemblies of God, then Reformed Baptist, and finally embracing covenant theology and ecclesiology. The Filadelfia congregation has about 45 members. Filadelfia has connections with the URCNA. It also has contacts with a small group of believers in Bucharest; one of them is being trained in Westminster West. Filadelfia has a few Chinese members and is hoping to send one to train in Westminster West.

5. Website (Rev. Joshua Rieger)

Rev. Dr Bill Schweitzer and Mr Andrew Haylett are responsible for the website: www.eucrc.org. Currently it contains information about the committee, member churches, conferences and papers, mission, theological education, contact details. We know people are using it. We want it to be better and we need help from you, the member churches. We want to put individual congregations on the map, and information about your conferences and activities.

Close 16:59

Session 2

Tuesday evening 2 September, 2014

6. Opening (Chairman, Rev. Han Schenau)

19:00

Singing: Psalm 25 verses 2 & 6.

The chairman explained Prof. Aarie Baars' absence through illness.

7. Introduction to the Church in France (Prof. Paul Wells)

During the last half century in France there has been a total change of dynamic. The Roman Catholic Church has lost France: in 1950, 82% of the population was baptized in Rome but now it is only 12%. The average age of priests is 72, because there is a shortage, and this has led to laymen ministering, and a renewed interest in Scripture. The mainline Reformed and Lutheran churches have also decreased (400,000) but the Evangelical churches (which include Pentecostals and Charismatics) have increased (700,000). Paul Wells is a pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church of France, which has 50 congregations and 30 ministers. There is no vision for development and growth. There is a strict Baptist work called the Timothy Mission. The French Gospel Coalition this year held a conference with speakers Don Carson and Tim Keller which was attended by about 600-700 people, many in the age range 25-30. The seminary at Aix en Provence is 40 years old now.

8. Paper 1. Piety according to John Calvin (Prof. Arie Baars)

Prof. David McKay read Prof. Arie Baars' paper (which was incomplete, *but a complete version was supplied in November and has been made available on the website*).

9. Plenary Discussion

Ian Hamilton opened the plenary discussion with the following remarks. Fundamental features shaped JC's understanding of piety. His conversion: 'God subdued me in a sudden conversion.' That is his definition of the pious man – subdued by God. 1. True piety is Scriptural (source and shaper) with the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit. 2. Trinitarian. His theology was not first of all Justification by Faith but the glorious Trinitarian God. (*Institutes* 1.13.17 quotes Gregory of Nazianus). 3. Piety is ecclesial. He is against 'pietism' (as distinct from piety): 'we' rather than 'I'. Piety is nourished in the church by the 'ordinary' means of grace. Agrees with Cyprian: he who will not have the church as his mother will not have God as his Father. 4. Catholic. He meets with Lutherans. Read his letters, e.g., his correspondence with the English exiles, 'Bear with tolerable foolishnesses!' (*Institutes* 4.10.30) 5. Let love be our guide and all will be safe. (cf., Hodge *Systematic Theology* vol. 2: he makes a positive comment on Schleiermacher!) The Reformed Faith is not monochrome and not a compilation of little shibboleths. 6. True piety was deeply and affectionately transformative, to bring us into true likeness of the Lord Jesus. Union with Christ is transformative. Col. 3: 12ff. Do we use our national characteristics as an excuse when we are not captivated by the gospel? Piety has a divine template, who is Jesus Christ. The great need in the Reformed Church is to preach Christ.

Questions suggested. 1. What is the difference between piety and pietism? 2. Why is there such a palpable lack of Calvinic piety in our Reformed churches? 3. What place should piety have in theological education?

Questions from the floor.

1. How to develop humility? As we learn Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28-30). Humility is connected with exalted manliness (Moses). Jesus Christ is the grace of God. John Murray: Faith is ultimately 'extraspective' (looks outside oneself).

2. How has Calvinism been defined as rationalistic, when Calvin was pious? Cyclical pathology in the life of faith in the world since Adam. What was the great sin of Israel? Covenant presumption? Worship with lips; hearts far from me! By default we are hypocrites. Pietism is unmediated feeling of God and makes the knowledge of God as sideshow.

Singing: Psalm 146.

Prayer: Rev. Joshua Rieger.

Close 21.01.

Session 3

Wednesday morning 3 September, 2014

10. Opening worship (Rev. Joshua Rieger)

09:15 Rev. Joshua Rieger led opening worship.

Prayer

Singing: Rejoice the Lord is King (verses 2-3)

Reading: Psalm 93. Comment. Our God is King. He is majestic and mighty. Our foes are strong. But he is stronger.

Application: trust in him and live as befits the gospel (as Phil. 1:27).

Singing: All creatures of our God and King (verses 1 & 5)

Prayer

11. Paper 2. Communion with God (Rev. Ian Hamilton)

Ian did not 'read' the paper circulated but spoke around it.

Reading: 1 John 1: 1-4.

John Owen 1616-1683 is generally acknowledged to be the greatest Puritan pastor-theologian. He came to prominence when he wrote a controversial work, *The Death of deaths and the death of Christ*. But he is at his best in his focus on the glory of God, as in the first three volumes of his collected works: 1 The Glory of Christ, 2 Communion with God, and 3 The Holy Spirit.

The Cappadocian fathers, Calvin, Owen, explored the glories of the Trinity. Calvin quotes Gregory's baptismal oration, section 41.

Fellowship (*koinonia*) with God is the fruit of the gospel. Rev. 3:20: 'I will come in and eat with him.' The Lord Christ is exceedingly delighted in tasting the sweet fruits of the Spirit in his saints. He communicates himself to us and we return to him what we have in union with him. Union with Christ is the foundation of communion with God. *Koinonia* used to describe marriage intimacy. Christ from eternity contemplated his wedding day and the joy of communion with his people. (Is Calvin's emphasis on Christ as '*autotheos*' the only development in the understanding of the Trinity since the Cappadocians?) Communion with God is always mediated, through Christ.

1. Communion with the Father is communion in love. The Father has had thoughts of kindness to us from eternity. Communion with him is to receive, and return, his love. God loves that he may be loved in return. This order cannot be reversed! Take up his love in a pure act of believing. It will open your soul to love him. Christ did not win God's love for us, but his love gave us his Son. 2. Communion with the Son is in grace, his personal grace and his purchased grace. His personal grace is seen in the Song of Songs. Tell him that you choose him above all others. How do we know communion with him in his purchased grace? Approve and embrace the divine way of saving us. In holiness: Christ intercedes with the Father that he would give us the Spirit of holiness. In the grace of privilege before God: the grace of adoption. 'Here am I and the children God has given me.' 3. Communion with the Holy Spirit is supremely in comfort: he brings the promises of God to our remembrance and applies Christ to us. Christ is the answer to every question you will ever ask. Our congregations need to see how comprehensive our Saviour, Jesus Christ, is. John 14-17: hearts troubled? Christ teaches them about the holy Trinity. The Lord's Supper: as with Calvin, we have communion with Christ in his human nature. Theology is crucial for living. How does this impact the life of the congregation?

Prayer.

12. Discussion

Four groups (to discuss and pray) and then plenary.

Group 1. Bride of Christ individually or as a congregation? Piety becomes pietism when we flatten the covenantal and raise up individualism. Do distinctions in the Trinity allow for different personal relations with God? Practically, we need to teach the congregations to think in terms of the Trinity. East richer than West in its Trinitarian language.

Group 2. How does our communion with the three Persons work without falling into tritheism? Confession of sin to the Father at the Lord's Table. Liturgical outworking: our worship, our preaching.

Group 3. Rich to talk about Trinity. Owen is stimulating. God is honoured by us having a greater understanding of the Trinity. Prayer: the order, to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit, but worship of the Three-One. Preaching to be informed by the Trinity.

Ian Hamilton: develop a Christological instinct in reading Scripture. I am more than ever aware of typology.

Group 4. Was Owen right? Yes. Communion with the triune God is central to our lives. Conscious communion in personal 'quiet times' not to be lost. Challenge low level of Christian life. Problematic aspects: Puritans tend to withdraw from normal life. How to combine devotion and the mundane, and keep communion with God as a vital part of daily life, not just a high theological ideal?

Ian Hamilton: communion with God is relational. Thomas Goodwin (quote from vol. 7): 'You often come on matters of business, but when do you come to see me?' If I spent time with wife only for matters of organization of the home, she would ask, 'What about just spending time with me?' Preach the loveliness of Jesus Christ that people want to spend time with him. If we were more captivated by the Person of Christ, would seek more the communion of Christ.

Paul Wells: the way in which the *Institutes* opens is a reaction against Aquinas. There is no knowledge of God that isn't relational and covenantal, mediated, and therefore Trinitarian. Jean Cadier, in an article: Calvin replaced essentialism (of Thomas Aquinas) with 'Personal-ism'.

13. Business Meeting

Member churches' voting delegates met for a business meeting.

Closed at lunchtime.

Afternoon sightseeing visit to Barry Island.

Session 4

Wednesday evening, 3 September, 2014

14. Evening devotions (Rev. Andrea Ferrari)

Recorded by Rev. David Miller.

Rev Andrea Ferrari.

Singing: The Church's one foundation

Reading: Revelation 4 & 5. Reflection: life of piety. 1. The setting: this present evil age. 2. The source: God's revealing of himself. 3. The site: the church. Revelation shows God's pattern.

Free time for fellowship/networking.

Session 5

Thursday morning 4 September, 2014

15. Opening devotions (Rev. Erik van Alten)

9:14

Singing: Psalm 113

Reading: Joshua 1: 5-9, for encouragement, because many of us work in small churches. 'Be strong' is covenantal language carried by the promise of God. The strength is not in ourselves but in God's being with us. We find the same in Haggai 1: build, I will be with you. Immanuel – 'God with us.' (Cf. Matthew 11: 2-30 and 2 Corinthians). It is also a call to obedience: be careful to fulfil all the law which I give you.

Prayer.

Singing: Psalm 90 verses 1-3 'O God our help in ages past'

16. Paper 3. The Holy Spirit and the Congregation (Prof. Hans Maris)

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Prof. Hans Maris.

Prof. Maris presented his paper.

The Chairman thanked the speaker.

17. Discussion

Four groups (to discuss and pray) and then plenary.

Plenary discussion

Group 1 concentrated on the leading question, 'What kind of spiritual 'defensive strategy' could we develop in order to remain faithful to the Word of God and at the same time strengthen our congregations in a living Reformed faith?' Catechism, not give in to demands of youth, understand the culture we are in and the changes that have taken place. Why are young people leaving the churches? Secularized Europe. Mankind inclined to hate God. We should not be surprised. The need for faithful pastors.

Group 2. Discussion led to two questions. 1. Could more be said about the connection between prayer and prophecy in the New Wine movement? 2. The paper was in general negative about excesses of experience. What should authentic experience look like? Han Schenau added a question here: Is the congregation's demand for experience a result of the culture or a legitimate demand for biblical things that we have lost sight of for a time?

Group 3. Similar to group 1. Is our piety whole, or is something missing, that people look for outside? Sound doctrine and emotion, do we have the combination, or are we dry – only at the intellectual level? Luke 24 – their

heart burned within them. Start with pastors, who have a spiritual life that is an example to others. We must have a sound theology of the Holy Spirit. Experimental Calvinism seen in the book of Acts.

Group 4. Consensus. We agree with Prof. Maris' analysis and the warning. However, we felt the paper was defensive and negative. We need to appreciate why people are going to such movements as New Wine. If people are looking for deep relations with God and are not finding it in our churches, what should we do?

Prof. Maris' response to groups. Group 1. It is difficult to put Reformed spirituality across to a younger generation. It is important to look at the older generation because the younger is drawing on those examples. If we are not convincingly demonstrating what it is to be a Christian, they will not listen to our instruction. Many pastors are eager to speak and slow to listen to others; that is a problem. How important for parents to listen to their children and also to know their own sins in their heart. It is part of a Christian attitude of humility before the Lord. The question of worship with music: there is a tendency to focus on 'me and my experience' rather than on God, who is the content of our worship. Group 2. I accept that the paper was negative in balance. I intended to give a biblical basis for sound thinking, as I contradicted the wrong mentality. In New Wine is a genuine search for experience. But when prayer is done in that way, it is not praying, but it is about seeking prophecy. That is my criticism. The Bible is full of 'experience'. The Lord sends out his disciples and he asks obedience, trust, faith: that is experience (as Abraham went out). Central to the experience of faith is that the Lord is there with his promises. It is all about trust, faith, about the Word of God. There is no experience without the Word of God, without Christ. Knowing the Lord, telling what it means to follow Christ, should be part of our preaching. Christ must be existential in our lives. Benny Hinn with his handkerchief and we all fall down – is a wonderful experience – but it is not Christian experience, not the experience of faith. Han's question. Is there something missing in our Reformed tradition? In our tradition there is wisdom and knowledge and pastoral experience. Today we need all kinds of psychological specialists outside the biblical path to help us. The Bible is the way to judge. Don't seek something missing from the perspective about what we want. It is about dedication to the Lord and his church. Group 3. Put whole of life under God; experience is part of that, not just rational. The burning heart is proper. Group 4. Accepted that it tended to be negative. We must look for genuine, biblical experience. I am certain we have the answers in Christ and in his Word.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Maris.

Rev. Laurens den Butter had taken photos and he is making them available.

Session 6

Thursday afternoon, 4 September, 2014

18. Opening

14:15

Chairman welcomed Rev. Chris Kavanagh and Mrs Julie Kavanagh. He thanked Rev. Kavanagh for his help with the registration of participants.

Singing: Great is thy faithfulness

19. Missional Co-operation (Rev. David Miller)

Booklet provided: *Survey Church Planting in Europe* (September 2014). A shorter booklet than before but more places identified. In future, we hope to include ICRC member churches from outside Europe who are working in Europe, such as the OPC and ARPC.

Mapping (Google map) shown; to be embedded on the website. The main purpose is not a guide for people going on holiday but to show places where there is no work being done so that we can work together there. Jos Colijn: keep the map alive, and perhaps add plans for church plants.

Question: should we expand it to include the mission work of organizations such as Redeemer's City to City work, marked with a difference coloured tag on the map? It was left with David Miller to consider the options..

Edi Demo: Illyricum Movement needs help with church planting in Albania. What steps should we take practically? Chairman: must be cautious not to raise too high expectations. The conference cannot do more than facilitate co-ordination among the churches.

Oswald Graham: add short term relief projects so that we may co-operate on it.

20. Presentations

20.1 Presbyterian Church in Russia (Rev. Vladimir Li)

I am a biochemist but now pastor in Moscow Presbyterian Church. Two years ago, in October 2012, we formed a General Assembly attended by 30 delegates from four parts of Russia, where there are 70 congregations. Numbers were fewer than we had hoped, but a start has been made. We shall meet biennially. I am chairman, Rev. Dr Ahn Soon Cheol is deputy. (Rev. Valerian Ten prefers 'Reformed' and has formed his own union.) We maintain fraternal relations. The next GA is in October, on Sakhalin Island. Present tasks include: government registration; developing a faculty of Reformed Theology (it is interdenominational).

20.2 Austria and Switzerland (Rev. Kurt Vetterli)

The Evangelical Reformed Church Westminster Confession started in the late 1990s in Neuhofen. Church planting was first in Rankweil (Austria), and from there in Winterthur, near Zurich, (2005), in Basel and Vienna (2008). Rev. Vetterli started in Basel without a salary and the congregation met in the garden because had no room. Moved three times since then. Salary came for two or three months. So working part time as a nurse in a retirement home – tent-making, not easy, after being in the pastorate full-time. About 10 people in Basel. Mixture of discouragement and encouragement. Pray for people to join us, mature Christians who know the Reformed faith. We would like two more couples to work with us. Pray for support to allow full time pastoral work.

20.3 Prof. Hans Maris

Germany full of churches. Conviction: need for church planting – Heidelberg (Sebastian Heck, USA support) – and for theological education institution – RTS. Read next issue of *Lux Mundi*, an article by Victor d'Assonville.

Kevin Bidwell prayed.

21. Workshops

Workshop 1: Theological Co-operation, chaired by Rev. Jos Colijn.

In this workshop we would like to discuss the possibilities and need for theological co-operation among Presbyterian and Reformed theological institutions. We think about: a theological conference for European institutions, teachers and students; study weeks for theological students and professors; exchange of students and teachers.

Workshop 2. Handling Conflict in the local church, chaired by Rev. Andrew Lucas.

In John 13: 35, our Lord states, 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' Sadly we have to confess that the reality is often very different, due to the presence of conflict in the life of the local church. Whilst some disputes are relatively minor in nature, others can divide entire congregations, destroying their witness in the process. In this workshop we endeavor to answer three basic questions: 1. What are the underlying causes of conflict and what form does it take? 2. What steps can be taken to prevent conflict arising in the first place? 3. How are we to handle conflict when it does appear?

Workshop 3. How to fund a missionary, chaired by Rev. Piet Meijer.

Main question: Should a Reformed missionary organization (e.g., DVN) support the salaries of missionaries and local pastors in sister churches abroad? Or is Paul the tentmaker our model?

Some topics: The preacher of the gospel has a right to be rewarded. It is important for Reformed churches to deal with salaries of pastors and planters in a careful, transparent, and biblical manner. Supporting salaries for missionaries must not hinder the growth and independence of the congregation. Tentmaker the ideal alternative? Support must be complementary and should improve the partner's own responsibility. Support needs to be reviewed with a determined period of time. The level of salaries of pastors and church planters must be determined by the local church denomination. The church is catholic and therefore ecumenical support is biblical. Is there room for Christian sponsors? How to avoid a situation of 'who is paying has a say.'

Session 7

Thursday evening, 4 September, 2014

22. Opening worship (Mr Eduart Demo)

19:00

Singing: Glory be to God the Father

Prayer

23. Sermon (Rev. Richard Holst)

Reading: Matthew 16: 13-20

Sermon: Our Lord's promise to build the church (verse 18). 1. As the builder of the church Christ is pre-eminent. 2. As the builder he exercises his choice of agents and instruments.

Singing: The church's one foundation

The Chairman noted that some delegates leaving very early. Session closed 19:42.

Session 8

Friday morning, 5 September, 2014

24. Opening (Prof. Paul Wells)

9:12

Singing: Rejoice the Lord is King verses 1-2

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31. 'Of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom of God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.' It sets forth the eternal covenant of redemption. The heart of Reformed piety is here. Righteousness (not by our law-keeping), sanctification the Spirit's progressive work, redemption the whole work past and future, from slavery looking forward to blessed hope. In Christ, three offices of Mediator, Priest, Prophet and King. In Christ we have all this. We must understand what it is to live in Christ: we cannot look to our works or experience but to the wisdom of God in Christ.

Prayer.

Singing: Rejoice the Lord is King verses 3-4

News: Victor D'Assonville and Arie Baars are both improving in health. A Russian brother involved in an accident is also recovering in hospital.

Recess. Business Meeting of the Committee

25. Plenary Session

10:45

The Chairman summarized the work of the business meeting. It is agreed that there must be parity of the churches in the committee. We have decided to increase the number to five, and Andrew Lucas will serve subject to the agreement of his own Presbytery. The next conference in 2016 will be in the Netherlands, d.v. We have invited Drs Jos Colijn to become the chairman in 2016 and he has agreed. The finances are healthy. Costs covered.

Comments and suggestions from the conference.

Get more young people involved. How? Invite to lectures? Open meeting, stimulate awareness.

Arrange papers to cover three approaches: exegetical, theological, practical.

Choose speakers from a broad base. They do not have to be professors, and competent pastors should also be considered.

Make time for a session of corporate prayer.

26. Closing Statement

A draft Closing Statement was read by Prof. David McKay. Amendments suggested and noted. **See Appendix 1.**

27. Chairman's closing remarks

The Chairman believed that it had been a good conference. He thanked Rev. Richard Holst, Rev. Chris Kavanagh, and Rev. Dr Peter Naylor for local assistance. The Chairman reminded the conference to practice the piety that it had talked about. Excellent leaders and teachers must be examples of piety. Let it be our dedication to be excellent ministers as examples of piety. May the words of Psalm 25 be our daily prayer: Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You. Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all their troubles!

28. Thanks to the retiring Chairman

Rev Kim Batteau thanked Rev. Han Schenau for his chairmanship of the conference.

29. Closing devotions (Mr Eduart Demo)

Singing: To God be the glory! Great things he has done.

Reading: Matthew 28: 18-20. My heart is full of joy to hear this. All authority belongs to Jesus. The Gospel is across all cultures. Share our knowledge with others – 2 Timothy 2: 2. Encouragement to make disciples.

Prayer.

Singing: Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee.

Closed at: 11:08.

Appendix 1 Closing statement

The fifth meeting of the European Conference of Reformed Churches took place from 2nd to 5th September 2014 at Hebron Christian Conference Centre, Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, Wales. 36 people attended the conference, representing 14 churches from 9 countries. The location provided occasions to meet some of the members of the congregations in Cardiff which belong to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW). The conference delegates appreciated the opportunity to get to know their work better.

The theme of the conference was 'Reformed Piety'. This reflected a realization that, in the pluralistic, multi-religious situation in which many of the churches in Europe find themselves, where many 'spiritualities' are on offer, there is a great need to understand the principles of Reformed piety which were formulated by earlier generations of Reformed thinkers on the basis of Scripture and to apply them to contemporary Christian living and mission. In theological education, too, we are conscious that our pastors must be educated by teachers who are not only excellent in understanding and teaching their subjects but are also examples in their piety.

The conference sought to address these issues through lectures, workshops discussions.

Three lectures were presented:

1. 'Piety according to John Calvin' (Arie Baars, Netherlands, due to illness presented by David McKay, Ireland)
2. 'Communion with God' (Ian Hamilton, England)
3. 'The Holy Spirit and the congregation' (Hans Maris, Netherlands).

Opportunities for both group and plenary discussion were provided. Delegates from various churches were given opportunity to introduce themselves and to tell something of the work in which their churches are engaged. There was also a presentation on 'Missions Co-operation' (David Miller, Scotland) and three workshops were conducted on 'Handling conflict in the local church' (Andrew Lucas, Ireland), 'How to fund a missionary' (Piet Meijer, Netherlands) and 'Theological Co-operation' (Jos Colijn, Netherlands).

One of the key purposes of the conference is to promote co-operation in mission among Reformed churches. Information from all the churches on missions in Europe is being collected and made available to the member churches so that duplication of effort can be avoided and partnership in mission promoted. It is hoped that this information can be included on the EuCRC website (www.eucrc.org) in due course.

The conference also seeks to promote co-operation among the seminaries of the Reformed Churches. This project is ongoing and aims to provide opportunities for the stronger to help the weaker institutions. The workshop generated a number of ideas for practical ways in which potential faculty members and also pastors could be trained in situations where local resources are limited.

All of the delegates appreciated the conference, particularly the opportunities it provided for networking with Reformed brothers and sisters from across Europe, and are going back to their home churches stimulated to apply the things that they learned here. The challenge now is to combine a whole-hearted commitment to the biblical truths of the Reformed Faith with a warm devotion to the worship and service of our triune God that will transform all aspects of individual and congregational life and will enable the Lord's people to be salt and light in a very needy world.

In particular we emphasised:

1. The need to be thoroughly Trinitarian in our Reformed piety
2. The need for warm-hearted experiential Calvinism that provides a biblical alternative to Pentecostal spirituality
- 3 The significance of having fellowship with brothers from countries such as Albania, Italy, Russia and Ukraine.