

Press Release:

PRESS RELEASE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES MEETING IN CARDIFF, WALES, FROM AUGUST 29 – SEPTEMBER 4, 2013

The eighth meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was held in Cardiff, Wales, from 29 August to 4 September 2013. A prayer service held at Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Cardiff, preceded the official meeting. The service was led by Rev. Dr Peter Naylor. Rev. Ian Hamilton preached from 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 on the theme, "The Context and Privilege of Gospel Ministry." Several brothers from the UK led in prayer for the conference, the delegates and their respective churches, and the kingdom of God generally. The delegates, together with members of the churches in the area of Cardiff, "lifted the roof" in joyful praise to the Lord singing psalms and hymns.

The conference was held in the conference centre of the University of South Wales, Pontypridd, where most of the delegates were accommodated. A few delegates were accommodated at the Village Hotel about six miles away. Excellent meals were provided by the staff at the Stilts Food Court on the university campus.

All arrangements for the conference were made by the host organising team comprised of members of the nearby Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales. Hearty thanks for their care and excellent organisation were extended to them at the end of the conference.

The conference was opened by the retiring chairman, Rev. Bruce Hoyt, who welcomed the delegates from far and near and then led in a brief meditation on Luke 18:24-34.

At the recommendation of the Interim Committee the following were appointed as the Executive: Rev. Richard Holst (EPCEW) Chairman, Rev. Dick Moes (URCNA) Vice-Chairman, Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor (EPCEW) Recording Secretary, Rev. Dr. James Visscher (CanRC) Corresponding Secretary, and Mr. Kyle Lodder (CanRC) Treasurer. The chairman expressed appreciation to Rev. Cornelius van Spronsen, the retiring Corresponding Secretary, and Mr. Henk Berends, the retiring Treasurer, for their faithful service over many years.

Member churches

When the conference opened there were thirty member churches as follows:

1. Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church [ARPC]
2. Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia [CRCI]
3. Canadian and American Reformed Churches [CanRC]
4. Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [CRCN]
5. Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales [EPCEW]
6. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland [EPCI]
7. Free Church of Scotland [FCS]
8. Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) [FCSC]
9. Free Church in Southern Africa [FCSA]
10. Free Reformed Churches of North America [FRCNA]
11. Free Reformed Churches of South Africa [FRCSA]
12. Heritage Reformed Congregations [HRC]

13. Independent Reformed Church in Korea [IRCK]
14. Orthodox Presbyterian Church [OPC]
15. Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia [PCEA]
16. Presbyterian Church Korea (Kosin) [PCKK]
17. Presbyterian Free Church of India [PFCI]
18. Reformed Churches of Brazil [RCB]
19. Reformed Churches in Indonesia [RCI]
20. Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [RCN]
21. Reformed Churches of New Zealand [RCNZ]
22. Reformed Churches of Spain [RCS]
23. Reformed Churches in South Africa [RCSA]
24. Reformed Church in the United States [RCUS]
25. Reformed Presbyterian Church of India [RPCInd]
26. Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland [RPCI]
27. Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America [RPCNA]
28. Reformed Presbyterian Church of NE India [RPCNEI]
29. United Reformed Church in Congo [URCC]
30. United Reformed Churches in North America [URCNA]

New member churches

During the conference the following churches were received as members with joy and thanksgiving:

1. Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church [AEPC]
2. Sudanese Reformed Churches [SRC]

Papers

The theme of the Conference was "Preach the Word" based upon 2 Timothy 4:2. This theme was covered in three papers. The authors of the papers gave addresses based on their papers in the evening sessions which allowed members of the local churches to hear the addresses. On the morning following each address, the conference divided into four groups for discussion, after which there was a period of questions from the groups directed to the author of the papers.

The first address was given by Rev. Dr. Robert Letham (EPCEW) entitled "The Necessity of Preaching." Dr. Letham noted that preaching involves a proclamation of the Word of God and an appeal to the hearers, which requires the work of the Holy Spirit to bring about change in the hearts of the hearers. He noted that while the Spirit and the (proclaimed) Word are distinct, they are inseparable and so we can be confident that the preaching of the Word of God will accomplish God's intended purpose.

The second address was given by Rev. Dr. James Visscher (CanRC) entitled "The Nature of Preaching." Dr. Visscher noted that preaching is the faithful proclamation of God's Word; it is a Triune revelation, covenantal in content, Christocentric, progressive, relevant, comprehensive, compelling, and evangelistic. Dr. Visscher pointed out that each of these aspects of the Word has implications for preaching and for the hearer.

The third address was given by Rev. Dr. Jun Ho Jin (KPCK) entitled "The Practice of Preaching in Non-Literary Cultures." Dr. Jin noted that fifty-five percent of the 650 million evangelical Christians are not Caucasian, giving evidence that the centre of Christianity has shifted to Africa and Asia. In these continents literacy rates are low: forty percent in Africa and twenty percent in Asia. Dr. Jin, using Asia and specifically Cambodia as an example, recommended that preaching in non-literate cultures should be easy and simple, should include apologetics designed for the culture, should be expository and applicatory, should rise from a cultural "point of contact," and should address the power encounters common in Asian culture.

Introductions

Five churches applied for membership in the ICRC: the Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC), the Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC), the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), the Universal Reformed Christian Church in Nigeria (URCCN), and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Malawi (EPCM).

These churches each gave an introduction of their church to the Conference. In addition observers/delegates from the Reformed Churches of Korea (RCK) and the Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB) also gave introductions of their churches.

Missions

The Missions Committee reported on its work in fulfilling its mandate. Two meetings were held, one in the Netherlands and one at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania. The highlight of those meetings was the time spent with representatives of the missions agencies of some of the member churches. The Missions Committee wants to encourage all member churches to send members of their mission agencies to participate in such meetings for mutual reflection on the mission task of the church and to discuss strategies for building up of the church for the glory of our God.

Mr. Mark Bube prepared another edition of the "Mission Field Survey." He explained the sections of the booklet and how useful it could be to churches that are engaging in mission to relate to one another and help one another. All member churches are urged to send in information for incorporation in a future update of the booklet.

Significant actions

A special committee to review the constitution, regulation, and structures of the ICRC presented its report at this meeting of the Conference. The Conference proposed several amendments to the Constitution. This will be passed along to the major assemblies of the member churches for approval. The Conference also approved substantial revisions to its regulations. It recommended several changes to the structure of the Conference in order to encourage more regional interaction between the member churches and to give a higher priority to their theological education and diaconal ministries. To facilitate this a Coordinating Committee, a Theological Education, a Diaconal Committee, and a Regional Conferences Committee have been appointed in addition to the already existing Missions Committee. Finally, in order to give greater visibility to the ICRC and to improve communication among the member churches and make information about the various ministries of the member churches more easily accessible, a Website Committee was appointed.

Budgetary matters

The Conference adopted a four-year budget for 2014-2017 in the amount of \$155,000 USD, or \$35,000 USD per annum. This is an increase of approximately \$15,000 USD from the previous budget total of \$140,000 USD. Resources for newly formed committees were budgeted.

Next meeting of the Conference

The next meeting of the Conference is scheduled for 2017 in the Hamilton area of Ontario, with the Jordan United Reformed Church (URCNA) to be host church.

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