

THE THIRD MEETING OF THE
NORTH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED COUNCIL (NAPARC)

St. Louis, Missouri

October 28-29, 1977

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by John White, Retiring Chairman, of the Council, at 2:00 P.M., on October 28, 1977, at the Airport Rodeway Inn, St. Louis, Missouri. Donald J. MacNair conducted devotions, reading II Corinthians 1:8ff, with appropriate comments. Various members of the Council led in prayer. 7/2

2. ROLL CALL

The roll was taken, and the following were present as delegates and observers:

DELEGATES:

Christian Reformed Church (CRC)

Albert A. Bel, Jacob Kuntz, John H. Bratt, William P. Brink

Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)

John P. Galbraith, Jack Peterson, Lawrence R. Eyres, LeRoy B. Oliver

Presbyterian Church In America (PCA)

Morton H. Smith, Tim Fortner, Kenneth L. Ryskamp, Don R. Esty

Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES)

Joel Belz, Donald J. MacNair, J. Barton Payne, Thomas G. Cross, Mark Belz (alternate)

Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA)

Bruce C. Stewart, Robert A. Henning, Gerrold S. Milroy, John H. White

OBSERVERS:

Dodd Vernon, 4614 Durbin Drive, Augusta, Georgia, 30907 (ARP)
James Coad, Jr., Box 397, Due West, South Carolina, 29639 (ARP)
George Fuller, Box 44, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 19481 (UPUSA)
G. Aiken Taylor, Box 3108, Asheville, North Carolina, 28802 (PCA)
Robert W. Morrow, 411 North Vine, Sparta, Illinois, 62286 (RPCNA)
Ron Stegall, 2569 Cedarwood, Lawrence, Kansas, 66044 (RPCNA)

3. COMMUNICATIONS

The Secretary, John H. Bratt, presented the following communications: a letter from Paul M. Martin, Clerk of the RPCNA Synod, which included an index of the Study Papers that have been made by that denomination; a letter from Morton H. Smith, Clerk of the PCA General Assembly, with a similar list for the PCA; a letter from Morton H. Smith, indicating that the PCA had voted to approve the proposed amendment to the Constitution of NAPARC; a letter from LeRoy B. Oliver, Chairman of the Ecumenical Relations Committee

of the OPC. Since this letter has a number of items of interest to the Council, the substance of the letter is herewith quoted:

"The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church respectfully provides the following information to the Council meeting in St. Louis, October 28 and 29, 1977:

*Actions
of OPC*

1. The 44th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church approved the proposed amendment to the Basis of the Council.

2. At this time special committees of the General Assembly are studying the following matters: Standards of Discipline and Worship, Baptism and Gifts of the Spirit, Proof Texts for the Catechisms, and Linguistic Revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

3. The 44th General Assembly sent a proposed Form of Government to our presbyteries for a vote. Copies of this proposed Form of Government are available to members of delegations to this meeting of the Council.

4. Messrs. Eyres, Galbraith, Oliver and Peterson have been appointed as delegates to the October 28, 29, 1977 meeting of the Council.

5. The Committee proposes to the October meeting of NAPARC that it recommend to the major assemblies of the constituent churches that they engage in a joint study of the currently pressing question of divorce, including the legitimacy of divorced persons holding office in the church, that each church be requested to appoint two persons to serve on such a joint committee, and that the Committee be requested to report to the churches not later than 1979.

6. The Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations is engaged in conversations with the Committee on Fraternal Relations of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, concerning possible union between our two denominations and has received word of an action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America authorizing its Committee on Interchurch Relations to hold conversations with the OPC and RPCES.";

a letter from Eugene Rubingh, Secretary of the Task Force on World Hunger of the CRC, the substance of which is herewith quoted:

CRC

"The Synodical Task Force on World Hunger has requested me to address a letter to you in view of the forthcoming joint meetings of the assemblies of the NAPARC churches in 1978. The decision to write to your committee arose from a report by Mr. Louis Van Ess concerning a meeting of the diaconal agencies

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of the NAPARC churches. Mr. Van Ess reported a high level of interest in the work being contemplated by the Christian Reformed Church in the matter of world hunger. He felt that there existed a good possibility for sharing data and for the presentation of a challenge in this area to all the NAPARC denominations.

"We thought an excellent opportunity for such a presentation might be accorded to us next year in June during the joint sessions of the major assemblies. We believe we could present a challenging call to the NAPARC churches to unite together in an attack on the problem of world hunger.

"We understand that there will be certain joint sessions including a time of worship and a session devoted to fellowship. We believe that a session also devoted to this crucial topic will unite us in consideration of a specific item of business which may affect us all.

"Our Task Force will be most grateful for your consideration of this request. We will be prepared to make such a presentation in June, though we are not suggesting that this must be a solely CRC presentation. We would, however, be willing to help in any way."

4. MINUTES APPROVED

The Minutes of October 29-30, 1976 were approved as corrected:

Article 2 - delete "retiring"

Article 10 - RPCES should be RPCNA

Article 14 - replace "unanimously" with "without descent"

l.c. Add "H" to the spelling of Pittsburgh throughout the Minutes

dissent

5. DOCKET

The Agenda as indicated by these Minutes was adopted.

6. ARRANGEMENTS

The Rev. Donald J. MacNair reported on the arrangements. The Council passed the motion to assume the cost for the evening meal. Adopted.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer, A. A. Bel, made his report, which was received as information. (See Appendix A).

The budget for the year 1977-1978 is to be \$500.00, to be allocated by the Treasurer to the member denominations. Adopted.

As a policy, the Treasurer is to consult with the Interim Committee on any questions that he may have on bills submitted to him. Adopted.

8. ELECTIONS

Officers

The Rev. William P. Brink (CRC) was elected Chairman. The Rev. Morton H. Smith (PCA) was elected Secretary. Mr. Albert A. Bel (CRC) was reelected as Treasurer. Mr. Jacob Eppeinga (CRC) was elected Assistant Treasurer.

Interim
Com.

Later in the meeting, the following were elected to the Interim Committee: The Rev. John P. Galbraith (OPC), the Rev. Donald J. MacNair (RPCES), and the Rev. John H. White (RPCNA).

The By-Laws were suspended to provide the election of three (instead of two) additional members to the Interim Committee, so as to provide for at least one representative from each member Church. Adopted.

9. INTERIM COMMITTEE REPORT

The Rev. John H. White, Chairman of the Interim Committee, presented the report of the Interim Committee:

"The Interim Committee consisted of John White, Barton Payne, John Galbraith, John Bratt, and Tim Fortner. The Committee carried on its business by correspondence and has met for a luncheon meeting here in St. Louis. The Interim Committee through its Chairman and Secretary has sought to implement the actions of the 1976 NAPARC meeting. Letters were written to each of the Interchurch Committee chairmen concerning the conferences they were responsible to convene.

Conferences

OPC	Christian Education Theological Education
CRC	Race Relations
RPCNA	Offices in the church

"The chairman of the Interim Committee sought to fulfill the spirit of Article 6A6 (1976 Minutes) by asking each conference to report its plans to the Interim Committee.

"Reports of the Conferences on Home Missions, Race, Foreign Missions, Offices have been received and copies of those reports will be distributed at this meeting.

"A proposed Agenda was sent to each Interchurch Relations Committee and additional items for the agenda were requested and received.

"We would recommend the following:

1. That the Executive Director of the N.P.R.F. be invited to sit in on NAPARC meetings as a means of communication between N.P.R.F. and NAPARC and that he be permitted to give information and advice when appropriate. (Reference 1976 Minutes, Article 16). Adopted.

Invite
NPRF
Director

2. Because two Interchurch Committees have recommended that we discuss the nature and authority of NAPARC Conferences, we recommend the following policy:

Nature &
Authority
of NAPARC
Conferences

The Role of Authority of NAPARC in Sponsoring Conferences:

- a. The stated purpose and function of the Council is to 'facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies' and 'exercise mutual concern'; its authority is only 'advisory' and it is not to 'curtail or restrict the autonomy of the member bodies.' Adopted.
- b. The Council may call a conference of the member bodies on subjects of mutual concern, to which all member churches are urged to send representatives. Adopted.
- c. The materials and conclusions of such a conference should be sent to the Interchurch Committees of all the member churches, and to the NAPARC Interim Committee, Adopted.
 - (1) The chief uses of the materials and conclusions of a NAPARC-sponsored conference would be (1) the information and instruction of the member churches and (2) the conveying of responses - approval, disagreement, or further study - by each member church to the others. Adopted.
 - (2) The materials and conclusions are to be considered the property of the several member churches and may be used and publicized by them only in their own name unless approved by other member churches also; joint publicity of the results of the conference should be by the churches themselves as distinguished from publicity by NAPARC which is consultative rather than policy-making. Neither NAPARC nor NAPARC-sponsored conferences may speak for the member churches. Adopted.
 - (3) The ultimate purpose of the conferences is to search the Scriptures for better understanding of subjects to provide churches with tools through which they may apply this understanding to the Church's life and to seek an understanding that would be agreeable and common to all the member churches. Adopted.

3. That all the congregations of the NAPARC churches be asked to pray for the concurrent meeting of our major assemblies in June 1978. Adopted.
4. That a maximum of forty-five minutes be devoted to the discussion of the question of the need for consultation between member churches concerning the establishment of local congregations (e.g. Should a 'comity' agreement be sought between NAPARC member churches?) Adopted.
5. That NAPARC recommend to the major assemblies of the constituent churches that they engage in a joint study of the current pressing question of divorce especially as it relates to: (1) 'Divorce and Re-marriage,' and (2) 'Divorce and the Church Officer.' Adopted.
6. That the official abbreviation for the Council be: NAPARC. Adopted."

10. REPORT ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

The roll was called on the Constitutional report from each delegation as to the action of their major assembly on the Constitutional amendment, as follows:

*Amendment
to Constitu-
tion adopted*

CRC - yes
OPC - yes
PCA - yes
RPCES - yes
RPCNA - not presented

The ARP observers indicated that their Synod had also approved the amendment.

The Amendment having been approved by the required two-thirds of the major Assemblies of the member churches, the Amendment is thus enacted, and the Constitution has thus been amended.

11. RECESS

Recess was taken at 5:15 P.M. for dinner. The Rev. Donald J. MacNair led the Council in devotions during the dinner hour.

12. ARP MEMBERSHIP

The Committee considering the application for membership of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, composed of John Bratt, Chairman, LeRoy Oliver, Secretary, Bruce Stewart, Thomas Cross, and Harry Schutte made the following report:

*ARPC
Application*

"The report of our committee is as follows:

"The Committee to Consider the Proposed Membership of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in NAPARC reports that we are tremendously encouraged by many things that are happening in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. Particularly, we note the action of Synod in directing the Board of Trustees of Erskine College and Seminary 'to require that those teaching Bible will personally affirm and teach the Scriptures as the infallible and inerrant Word of God.'

"However, the Board of Trustees and the faculties of Erskine College and Seminary have expressed in a formal document their 'inability to comply' with the directive of Synod.

"Therefore, your Committee recommends that NAPARC postpone action regarding the proposed membership of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in NAPARC."

Postpone

The motion was made to adopt the report and to send a copy of the report to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The vote was as follows:

CRC	Abstained
OPC	Yes
PCA	Yes
RPCNA	Yes
RPCES	Yes

Adopted.

The Committee is continued to work with the ARP Church regarding their application for membership.

13. ECCLESIASTICAL FELLOWSHIP

The Rev. Jack Peterson (OPC) presented the report of the NAPARC Committee on Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship:

Churches in
Ecclesiastical
Fellowship

"The Meeting of the NAPARC Committee on Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship was held in Jacksonville, Florida, on February 15, 1977. Members of the Committee were: Tymen Hofman (CRC), Jack Peterson (OPC), Tim Fortner (PCA), Tom Cross (RPCES) and Bruce Stewart (RPCNA). Peterson and Stewart served as Chairman and Secretary respectively.

"It was voted to divide the expenses of the meeting equally between the five denominations, and that these expenses and their division be reported to the Secretary to administer.

"The Mandate to the Committee from NAPARC is as follows: to consider the CRC concept of 'Churches in Ecclesiastical Fellowship' in a broader context with a view to recommending a church relationship policy that would be suitable for all the churches.

"The Biblical basis for ecclesiastical fellowship is unity and truth. (Ephesians 4, John 17, I John 1; see also CRC Acts 1944, pp. 81-83 and RPCNA Constitution, pp. 222, 223.)

"We conceive the definition of Ecclesiastical Fellowship to be as follows: Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church order and church life though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time and there might be considerable need for mutual concern and admonition.

"The decision to enter into or to withdraw from Ecclesiastical Fellowship with any church body should be decided by each church on an individual basis.

"The call of Scripture to unity should be manifest in our attitudes and actions toward other Reformed churches. While union may not be possible at this time, Ecclesiastical Fellowship provides visible evidence of Scriptural unity and serves to edify each group involved.

"Receiving of churches into Ecclesiastical Fellowship shall imply, and where feasible and desirable shall involve:

1. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies, (NAPARC has already approved recommendations that each church in ecclesiastical fellowship shall be invited to send two fraternal delegates to a church's major assembly, and that delegates shall have the privileges of the floor.)
2. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option)
3. Intercommunion (regulated by each session or consistory)
4. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
5. Communication on major issues of joint concern
6. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity (including respect for the discipline of churches with whom we are in ecclesiastical fellowship.)

"It is the understanding of this committee that NAPARC may recommend this report to its constituent churches, but that the recommendations are not to be considered binding upon member churches. Rather this report contains guidelines for Ecclesiastical Fellowship which are recommended to NAPARC churches to help to preserve the unity of the church, to protect its diversity, and to encourage and counsel one another as Reformed churches.

"Therefore, we propose that NAPARC recommend the following church relationship policy to its constituent churches:

truth

1. That we acknowledge the Scriptural mandate (Ephesians 4) to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship where it is consistent with Scriptural unity and ~~truth~~ as a visible demonstration of the unity of the church both to the church and to the world.
 2. That we define Ecclesiastical Fellowship for NAPARC Churches as follows: Ecclesiastical Fellowship is a relationship in which the churches involved are Reformed in their confessional standards, church order and church life though there may be such differences between them that union is not possible at this time and there might be considerable need for mutual concern and admonition.
 3. That where churches enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with other Reformed churches, that relationship be implemented where possible and desirable by:
 - a. Exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies.
 - b. Occasional pulpit fellowship (by local option)
 - c. Intercommunion (regulated by each session/consistory)
 - d. Joint action in areas of common responsibility
 - e. Communication on issues of joint concern
 - f. The exercise of mutual concern and admonition with a view to promoting the fundamentals of Christian unity.
 4. That we mutually recognize that the decision to enter into or withdraw from Ecclesiastical Fellowship with another Reformed church shall be decided by each church on an individual basis."
- Adopted.

14. TASK FORCE ON WORLD HUNGER

In response to the communication from Eugene Rubingh proposing that a joint program be presented at the concurrent major Assemblies of the Churches in Grand Rapids, it was moved that the Council ask the concurrent Synod Committee to consider the use of this program on world hunger. Approved.

cap *WORLD HUNGER* *l.c./h.c*

15. REPORT OF MAJOR DECISIONS OF NAPARC MAJOR ASSEMBLIES

An oral report was given by representatives of each of the member Churches, and of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, of major decisions made at their recent meetings of their major Assemblies.

l.c.

16. RECESS

Recess was taken at 9:30 P.M. to reconvene at 8:30 A.M. The session was closed with prayer by the Rev. Morton H. Smith. (PCA).

The Council reconvened at 8:30 A.M. on Saturday morning. The Rev. Jack Peterson (OPC) led in devotions.

17. THE CONFERENCE REPORTS

A. Conference on Race Relations

The report of the Conference on Race Relations (See Appendix B) was received and referred to the Interchurch Committees of the member Churches for action. Adopted. *R.C.*

B. Conference on Office

The report of the Conference on Office was received (See Appendix C). It was moved that the Council sponsor a Study Committee on Office, with focus on an exegetical study on the concept of office. Adopted.

Motion to reconsider this action was adopted. The substitute was moved that we sponsor a study on ~~hermeneutics~~ *committee* (instead of one on office). Adopted.

It was moved that two representatives be appointed by each Interchurch Relations Committee, and that the CRC convene the meeting of this study committee. Adopted.

C. Conference on Home Missions

The report of the Conference on Home Missions was received, and it was noted that another meeting would be held in November of 1977 (See Appendix D).

D. Conference on Foreign Missions

The report of the Conference on Foreign Missions was received. It was noted that the next meeting would be held in November 1977 (See Appendix E *and F*).

E. Conference on Diaconal Ministries

It was reported that a Conference on Diaconal Ministries had been held, though no report had as yet been received of this Conference at the time of the Council meeting (See Appendix *G* for reports subsequently received by the Secretary).

F. Conference on Theological Training

It was reported that there would be a Conference on Theological Training during 1978.

G. Conference on Christian Education

It was reported that there is to be a Conference on Christian Education during the remainder of 1977 or in 1978.

H. The following action of the 1976 Council Meeting, Article 6 B, is hereby reaffirmed and spread upon the Minutes:

"That all Committees of NAPARC send their reports to the Interim Committee one month before the annual meeting of NAPARC, and that each delegation report relative decisions of the major Assemblies to the Interim Committee in order to aid the Committee in framing the agenda for the next meeting." Adopted.

relevant

18. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHURCH POLITY

It was moved that the Council accept the gracious offer of the Rev. Richard DeRidder (CRC) to make a comparative study of the polity of the member Churches of the Council, and to make a recommendation to the Council as to how the results of this study might be published. Each Church is to supply him with a copy of their Books of Order. Adopted. l.c.

19. COMITY AGREEMENTS

It was moved that the matter of comity agreements be referred to the Conference on Home Missions, with the request that they report their findings in this area back to the Council. Adopted.

20. FINANCING OF NAPARC CONFERENCES

It was moved that expenses for NAPARC Conferences and joint Study Committees be borne by the member Churches (including such items as: meals, travel, lodging, etc.), and that the cost for such items as duplication and secretarial aid be borne by the NAPARC treasury. Adopted. l.c.

21. RPCES MEMBERSHIP

In response to the question as to whether the RPCES is still participating in the Council only provisionally or not, the RPCES delegation indicated that with the strengthening of the doctrinal statement of NAPARC, the provisional qualification of their membership no longer exists (See Minutes of October 31 - November 1, 1975, Item 5). still

22. RULING ELDER PARTICIPATION

It was moved that the Interim Committee consider means of promoting increased participation by ruling elders in the activities of NAPARC, and report recommendations to the next annual meeting. Adopted.

23. BY-LAWS

It was moved that the Interim Committee review the By-laws, and that they report any proposed changes to the next meeting. Adopted. 8

24. OBSERVER INVITATIONS

It was moved that the Reformed Church in the United States and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church be invited to send observers to the 1978 meeting of NAPARC. Adopted.

It was moved that requests for additional requests for invitations are to be referred to the Interim Committee, which is to report to the next meeting of the Council. Inter-church Committees of the NAPARC member Churches are to supply the names and any information to the Interim Committee on prospective observers. Adopted. l.c.

25. PERMANENT RECORDS

The Secretary is to give thought to the form and security of the original documents, and make proposals regarding the same through the Interim Committee to the Council.

26. RELATION WITH NPRF

It was moved that the Interim Committee be instructed to seek a meeting with the Executive Director of NPRF with the view of seeking means of supplementing the work of the two organizations. Adopted.

27. EXPENSES FOR INTERIM COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was moved that participating Churches bear the expenses of their members to l.c. Interim Committee meetings. Adopted.

28. REFORMED EVANGELISM STUDY

It was moved that the Interim Committee consider the possibility of calling a conference or erecting a study committee on Reformed Evangelism. Adopted.

29. CONCURRENT SYNOD ARRANGEMENTS

The Rev. John Bratt (CRC) reported progress on the concurrent Synod arrangements. He indicated that there is to be a meeting with two delegates from each Church to be held at the Calvin College Commons Building in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on December 7, 1977, at 12:00 noon. l.e.

30. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

The date and place of the next meeting was set for October 27-28, 1978, to be held at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The OPC is to make arrangements for the meeting. Adopted.

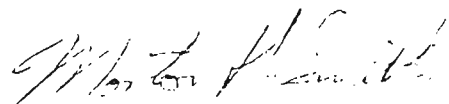
3. THANKS

The Council expressed its thanks to the Rev. Donald J. MacNair (RPCES) for making the arrangements for this meeting of the Council.

32. ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned at 11:35 A.M., being led in a devotional and closing prayer by the Chairman, the Rev. William P. Brink.

Respectfully submitted,



Morton H. Smith, Secretary