

INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS

[As adopted by the 39th (2013) and amended by the 40th (2014) and the 43rd (2017)
Meetings of the Council.]

From *Bylaws IX*:

The Council will maintain a collection of its *Informational Documents* which might be useful to the Member Churches in pursuing the dual purposes for which the Council was established (*Constitution*, III). Either the collection, or a particular document listed therein, may be amended on motion passed by a majority of the voting Delegates, with the exception of the *List of NAPARC Member Churches* (which may be amended only as provided for in *Constitution*, VI.4). Included in the collection are the following:

1. List of NAPARC Member Churches
2. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports (2017)
3. Suggested Orders of the Day for the Annual Meeting (2012)
4. Suggested Structure for Conferences (1976)
5. List of NAPARC Operating and Study Committees (with their respective mandates)
6. List of NAPARC Consultations
7. Definition of Organic Union (2003)
8. Chart of Similarities and Differences Among the NAPARC Member Churches (including 2007 updates)
9. NAPARC "Golden Rule" Comity Agreement (1984)
10. NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations (1987)
11. Suggestions for Those Involved in Planning Activities for Our Young People (2012)
12. Pursuit of Organic Union (2012)

1. List of NAPARC Member Churches

<u>Abbrev.</u>	<u>Member Church</u>	<u>Year Received</u>	<u>Notations</u>
ARPC	The Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church	1982	
CanRC	The Canadian Reformed Churches	2008	
CRCNA	The Christian Reformed Church in North America	1975	suspended 1998; terminated 2002
ERQ	The Reformed Church of Quebec	2003	
FRCNA	The Free Reformed Churches of North America	2006	
HRC	The Heritage Reformed Congregations	2007	
KAPC	The Korean American Presbyterian Church	1982	
KPCA	The Korean Presbyterian Church in America (Kosin)	2014	
OPC	The Orthodox Presbyterian Church	1975	
PCA	The Presbyterian Church in America	1975	
PresRC	The Presbyterian Reformed Church	2009	
RCUS	The Reformed Church in the United States	1995	
RPCES	The Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod	1975	merged into PCA in 1982
RPCNA	The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America	1975	
URCNA	The United Reformed Churches in North America	2005	

2. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports (2017)

Name of Church/Federation:

Address of Official Website:

Year Established:

Confessional Standards:

Other Standards:.....

Statistical Information:

Effective date of statistical data

Total number of members (including baptized covenant children).....

Total number of communicant members.....

Total number of congregations (including mission works
not yet organized)

Total number of organized congregations/churches.....

Total number of presbyteries/classes

Total number of ordained ministers

Total number of ordained ruling elders.....

Total number of ordained deacons

Major Assembly:

Frequency

Date(s) and venue of most recent.....

Date(s) and venue of next

Interchurch Relations:

Membership in ecumenical organizations.....

Specify the different levels of ecclesiastical relationships
(and number of churches/federations in each)

Changes in ecclesiastical relationships.....

Cooperative ministries/projects with other NAPARC churches

Ongoing discussions regarding organic union with
NAPARC and/or other churches

World Missions Activity:

Current fields of labor.....

New fields being developed or under consideration

Specific opportunities for cooperation with other NAPARC churches....

Home (or North American) Missions Activity:

Current number of mission works.....

Location(s) of new mission work(s) being planned.....

Specific opportunities for cooperation with other NAPARC churches....

Diaconal Activity:

Ongoing diaconal ministries.....

Specific opportunities for cooperation with other NAPARC churches....

Major Assembly Study Committees:

List of ongoing (year established)

Final report(s) received at last major assembly (include
links to website).....

Significant Actions of the Most Recent Major Assembly:

Other Significant Theological or Ecclesiastical Developments:

Specific Matters for Prayer in the Life or Ministry of the Church:

Suggested Topics for Discussion Regarding Progress Towards Organic Union:

Suggested Topics for Discussion at a NAPARC Meeting:

3. Suggested Orders of the Day for the Annual Meeting (2012)

From the Report of the NAPARC Committee of Review to the 38th (2012) Meeting (pages 14–17, some footnotes omitted):

A. Annual Meeting

Since the occasion of the annual meeting is the primary opportunity for the Member Churches to meet in one place all together in pursuit of the dual purposes for which NAPARC was established—

- to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another, and
- [to] hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice

—the Committee devoted a considerable portion of its time to improving the utility of the time when the delegates are all present in the same place: at the annual meeting.

1. Improving the Usefulness of the Member Church Reports

The Committee believes that the practice of reporting to one another on developments in our respective churches remains a vital part of our annual meetings in carrying out the purposes for which NAPARC was established—and that the opportunities which the discussion of the reports present, both for mutual encouragement and for prayer, should be maintained. However, as the number of Member Churches has grown from five to twelve, it has become clear that the reading of the reports aloud during the meeting is perhaps not the best use of the precious limited time the delegates have to be together. Accordingly, the Committee is recommending that, instead of the delegations continuing the practice of preparing their reports in a (sometimes lengthy) narrative format to be read aloud to the annual meeting, the Member Churches be encouraged to prepare their reports in a summarized or bullet-item format whenever possible (including website links to relevant documents) so that the time available for discussion during the meeting may be focused on the matters that will be most useful to the churches in their work of advising, counseling, and cooperating with each other. To that end, the Committee has prepared a *Suggested Form for Member Church Reports*, which it would encourage the delegations to employ, at least as a starting point. We would suggest that, as delegations present their oral remarks on their reports,¹ they focus largely on those summary or bullet items which they believe would be most conducive to further discussion by the meeting. The Committee would also suggest that the Interim Committee, in proposing the docket for the meeting, include with it an assignment to another delegation (other than the one presently reporting) the responsibility to prepare a couple of questions concerning the report, as well as to lead the meeting in prayer for the church at the conclusion of the meeting's consideration of its report.²

2. Extension of the Duration of the Annual Meeting

The Committee is recommending that an additional day be added to the annual meeting of NAPARC to make the time of the annual NAPARC meeting more profitable towards the accomplishment of the purposes of NAPARC, including:

¹ The reports themselves having been distributed to the delegations in a timely manner before the meeting.

² Cf. *Bylaws IV*, “This is a time when NAPARC delegates assemble to share reports from their churches, to talk about important issues raised, and to pray with and for each other.” One logical manner to proceed in making such assignment, assuming the churches are reporting in alphabetical order, would be to have the church immediately preceding the reporting church (alphabetically) be assigned responsibility of both preparing the questions concerning the report and of leading the meeting in prayer at the conclusion thereof.

- Allowing sufficient time during the reports of the Member Churches for discussion of major issues arising during the course of the reports;
- Increasing the time allotted to recesses for meals to allow greater opportunity for bilateral meetings of the delegations of the Member Churches;
- The addition of a worship service; and
- The addition of a speaker on cultural issues of the day facing the Member Churches.

Presently, the plenary sessions of the annual meeting of NAPARC allow for up to five and one-half hours of meeting time to consider the items listed on the Docket. ... To make better provision for the inclusion of the bulleted items listed above, the Committee recommends that a second day be added to the annual meeting (such that the schedule for the plenary sessions of the annual meeting be adjusted to something like the following):

<u>Day</u>	<u>Times</u>	<u># Meeting Hours</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Tuesday	2:00 – 5:00 p.m.	2½	net of ½ hour for break
	Evening		worship service
Wednesday	10:00 – 12:00 p.m.	2	
	2:00 – 5:00 p.m.	2½	net of ½ hour for break
	Evening		speaker provided by host
Thursday	10:00 – 12:00 p.m.	<u>2</u>	
	Total # hours:	<u><u>9</u></u>	

a. More Opportunities for Bilateral Meetings of Delegations

Assuming that the meeting of the Interim Committee (which immediately precedes the annual meeting) adjourns on time, the new schedule would significantly increase the meeting time in the plenary sessions (from five and one-half to nine hours); provide six two-hour blocks of time for bilateral meetings (lunch and dinner times on Tuesday; breakfast, lunch, and dinner times on Wednesday; and breakfast time on Thursday); and provide occasions for a worship service on the first evening and a speaker on the second evening, and increase the opportunities for informal fellowship around both.

b. Inclusion of a Public Worship Service

Noting that—

- all saints are united to Jesus Christ their Lord by His Spirit and by faith, and to one another in love, and are obliged to the performance of such duties (public and private) as do conduce to their mutual good (*cf.* WCF 26.1);
- saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God (*cf.* WCF 26.2; BC 28);
- it is unto the catholic visible Church that Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life (*cf.* WCF 25.1; BC 30);
- the basis of NAPARC includes the “hold[ing] out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice” (*Constitution, II*)

—the Committee is recommending that a public worship service be conducted on the evening of the first day of the annual meeting of NAPARC, as follows:

1. That the host Member Church request a session/consistory of one of its nearby congregations to call and conduct a public service for the worship of God at an appropriate time following the evening meal;

2. That the service include the reading and preaching of Scripture (by a minister of the host Member Church), prayer, singing, and (if the session/consistory conducting the service so chooses) an offering (for a beneficiary of its choosing);
3. That members of nearby NAPARC congregations be invited to attend the service; and
4. That the congregation at which such service is conducted also be requested to provide some light refreshments following the service so as to provide an opportunity to promote fellowship among the gathered saints.

c. Inclusion of an Annual Lecture

The Committee discussed several ideas for ways in which the Member Churches might encourage one another in their witness to our North American culture. Given the blessings our Lord has bestowed on the Member Churches, particularly in terms of godly men who are well qualified to bring the Word of God to bear upon the challenges of our culture, the Committee is recommending:

1. That the host Member Church be requested to arrange a program for the Wednesday evening during the meeting, featuring a speaker who would bring a lecture on a particular issue, ordinarily arising out of the challenges in our North American culture today, and prepare some questions for a time of discussion thereafter (not to exceed ninety minutes total for both the lecture and the discussion); and
2. That, subject to the approval of the Interim Committee, the recorded lecture be posted on the NAPARC Website.

4. Suggested Structure for Conferences (1976)

From the Minutes of the 2nd (1976) Meeting (Article 6.A):

That, in response to the directive of the previous meeting of the Council, a conference on the subject of Office in the Church be arranged. It asks that such a conference be held within the next year; that two full days be allowed for it; that, to allow adequate time for conferring in depth, the number of topics be limited to three; ... [and] that the structure of the conference follow these general lines:

- 1) A paper be prepared, by a designated person, on each subject to be discussed, and distributed to the conference two months prior to the conference, and that the paper suggest reading material and questions for discussion;
- 2) A brief response paper (two or three pages) be prepared by a designated person, relating to specifics in the master paper, to be distributed two or three weeks prior to the conference;
- 3) At the conference the writer of the master paper give a rationale (not a summary) for his paper in 10 minutes;
- 4) A group discussion of 45-60 minutes be held;
- 5) Plenary discussions then be held for at least three hours;
- 6) A chairman to lead the discussion of each topic be appointed at the time that the writer of the master paper is appointed;...

5. List of NAPARC Operating and Study Committees (with their respective mandates)

OPERATING COMMITTEES:

Website Committee

The Website Committee shall consist of five members (including the Secretary, *ex officio*, and with an alternate), to oversee the operation of the Council's website, with a mandate to:

- a. Arrange for the construction and maintenance of a website for the Council, which shall include a list of the NAPARC Member Churches (with links to the Members' websites, where possible); copies of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Informational Documents*; copies of the *Minutes* of previous meetings of the Council (in a form suitable and appropriate for posting on the Internet); a list of the upcoming meeting dates and venues for the major assemblies of the Member Churches; materials for upcoming meetings of the Council; and other materials which the Website Committee deems appropriate (bearing in mind the nature and extent of the Council's authority, *Constitution V*).
- b. Develop and implement policies for the operation of the Council's website, including a job description for the position of Webmaster, and report such to the next meeting of the Coordinating Committee.
- c. Appoint a Webmaster to labor under its oversight.
- d. Send a report to the Secretary at least six weeks before the next annual meeting.
- e. Propose a budget for the following year to the Interim Committee.

STUDY COMMITTEES:

[none presently]

6. List of NAPARC Consultations

World Missions
Home Missions
Christian/Church Education
Relief/Diaconal Ministries
Theological Training
Youth Ministries

7. Definition of Organic Union (2003)

From the Report of the Committee on Collation and Organic Union (Paper R, Recommendation 2), which was adopted by the 28th (2003) Meeting (Minutes, Article XII.B, page 5):

Organic union is defined as two or more NAPARC Churches joining their diverse gifts, heritage and calling on the basis of the Scriptural mandate (Ephesians 4:1–16; Acts 15:1–16:5; John 17; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31) to form one church by uniting together in theology, polity and ministry. This would require the eventual integration of church courts and administrative and legal structures.

8. Chart of Similarities and Differences Among the NAPARC Member Churches (including 2007 updates)

	ARPC	ERQ	KAPC	OPC	PCA	RCUS	RPCNA	URCNA
CREEDS	Westminster Standards Additions and notes.	WCF (1647 with ERQ preamble); Heid. Cat.	Westminster Standards; Creed of 12 Articles	Westminster Standards America Version prior to 1903	Westminster Standards American Version prior to 1903	Three Forms of Unity	Westminster Standards Testimony of the RPC	Three Forms of Unity
MEMBERSHIP How received:	Credible profession of faith (together with covenant of membership)	Credible Profession of faith	Credible confession of faith	Credible profession of faith	Credible profession of faith	Confessional	Credible profession of faith	Confessional
OFFICERS Number: Women: Vows:	Three Deacons Systm. Doct.	Three Deacons Syst. Doct.	Three No Systm, Doct	Two/Three No Systm. Doct.	Two No Systm. Doct.	Three No Full subscrpt.	Two Deacons Syam. Doct.	Three No Full Subscpt.
POLITY Broader/Higher Means Courts Synod/Assembly Owner of Property	Higher F.O.G Irenical; Delib/ Judicial Minist/Elder Presbytery	Higher ODE (Eccl. Ord. Discp.) Deliberative/ Judicial Delegated Congregation	Higher BCO/Const. Deliberative/ Judicial Delegated Congregation	Higher F.G. Deliberative/ Judicial Delegated Congregation	Higher B.C.O/Const Semi-Deliber/ Judicial TE/Rep. RE Congregation	Higher Constitution Deliberative/ Judicial Mandatory Minist/Elder Congregation	Higher Constitution/ D.C.G.;B.D; Deliberative/ Judicial TE/Rep. RE Synod	Broader Church Order Deliberative Delegated Minist/Elder Congregation
WORSHIP Means to conduct Psalms/Hymns Regulative Principle Number of L.D. serv.	Dir. Worship Yes Yes Sess. mand.	Variations Yes Yes One	Variations Yes Yes Sess. mand.	Dir. Worship Yes Yes Sess. mand.	Variations within WCF/BCO parameters Yes Yes Sess. mand.	Dir. Worship Yes Yes Sp. Council. mandated	Dir. Worship EPS/a capell Yes Sess. mand.	Variations w/in COparameters Yes Yes Two
WEDDING'S SUPPER & FREQUENCY	Fenced/ Session controlled	Fenced/verb. Warn./ Council controlled/ once mo.	Session Controlled	Fenced/ Session controlled	Fenced/ Session Controlled	Fenced/Ex. Visiting Church Memb. /Sp. Council controlled	Fenced/Ex. Visiting Church Memb./ Session controlled	Supervised/ Consistory controlled
CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
REQUIRED CATECHIZING	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

	ARPC	ERQ	KAPC	OPC	PCA	RCUS	RPCNA	URCNA
CONFIRMATION	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
THEOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVES		Mixture continental reformed and presbyterian polity, theol. and practice; French Translation WCF (1647)		Within confessional bounds, freedom/ women not in military combat	Within Confessional bounds, freedom	6 day creatn/ Male hdshp voting in cong. mtngs/ Women not in military combat/Members not in oath bound societies.	Members not in oath bound societies/ Women not in military combat.	Within Confessional bounds, freedom
ECUMENICAL	NAPARC; ICRC	NAPARC	NAPARC	NAPARC; ICRC	NAPARC; NAE; WRF	NAPARC ICRC	NAPARC; ICRC; NAE	NAPARC; ICRC
MISSIONS	HM/FM	HM	HM/FM	HM/FM	HM/FM	HM/FM	HM/FM	HM/FM
INTERCHURCH RELATIONS	Fraternal: EPC;KAPC; OPC;CRC; PCA;RPCNA IPAR (Mex) ARPC (Pak) Corresp: CPC; CPCA; PCUSA	Fraternal: No Corresp: CanRC; OPC	Fraternal: PCA;OPC; RPCNA; ARPC;KPC-Hapdong; KPC-Refmd; KPC-Hapshin Corresp.	Eccles Fellow ARPC; CanRC; CGKN; EPCW; EPCI; FCS; PCA; PCK(Kosin);R CJ;RCUS; RCNZ; RPCI; RPCNA	Fraternal: NAPARC Churches Correspond:	Fraternal: RCUS; RPCNA; CanRef; ERCC; GKN-Lib. Corresp: URCNA	Fraternal: RCUS;ARP; OPC;PCA, KAPC FCScotland Synod of NA Corresp:	Eccles Fellowship: CanRC Corresp: ERQ, FRC, OCRC, OPC, RCUS, RPCNA
OTHER FRATERNAL RELATIONS	ARP - Pakistan; Arp-Mexico						RPC Australia RPC Ireland RPC Scotland TCCF Cyprus	
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	College and Seminary	None: (Close connection with Farel RTS)	Seminary	M.T.I.	College and seminary	None	College and Seminary	None

Summary of Distinctives

1. Three Forms of Unity (RCUS, URCNA)
2. Additional chapters XXXIV and XXXV in Westminster Confession of Faith (ARPC)
3. The Testimony of the RPCNA
4. Women in the office of Deacon (ARPC, ERQ, RPCNA)
5. Exclusive Psalmody / A Cappella Singing (RPCNA)
6. Exclusive Six Day Creation Position (RCUS)
7. Male Headship Voting in Congregational Meetings (RCUS)
8. Delegated Synod / Assembly (ERQ, OPC, URCNA)
9. Required Catechizing and Confirmation (RCUS, URCNA)
10. Members not in Oath-Bound Societies (OPC, RCUS, RPCNA, URCNA)
11. Women Not Serving in Military Combat Roles (OPC, RCUS, RPCNA, PCA)
12. Visitors to Lord's Supper examined as to faith and Church Membership (RCUS, RPCNA, URCNA)
13. No Denominational Educational Institutions (ERQ, OPC, RCUS, URCNA)
14. Church Property Held by Synod / Presbytery (ARPC, RPCNA)

9. NAPARC “Golden Rule Comity Agreement (1984)

From the Minutes of the 10th (1984) Meeting (Article 15):

15. COMITY MATTERS. It was moved that the Council send a copy of the following “golden rule comity agreement” from the NAPARC Mission Consultation to each of the interchurch committees of the member churches, and ask them to seek the approval of it by their denomination, and that if approved, they communicate it to the consistories/sessions, classes/presbyteries and the mission agencies of their respective Churches. Adopted.

“Golden Rule” Comity Agreement

Comity has-meant different things to different people. We representatives of the home missions agencies and committees or boards of our denominations resist territorial statements on comity in light of the social and cultural complexity of North American society and the great spiritual need of our many countrymen who are apart from Jesus Christ. Out of a concern to build the Church of Jesus Christ rather than our own denominations and to avoid the appearance of competition, we affirm the following courteous code of behavior to guide our church planting ministries in North America:

1. We will be sensitive to the presence of existing churches and missions ministries of other NAPARC churches and will refrain from enlisting members of these existing ministries.
2. We will communicate with the equivalent or appropriate agency (denominational missions committee or board, presbytery missions or church extension committee, or session) before initiating church planting activities in a community where NAPARC churches or missions ministries exist.
3. We will provide information on at least an annual basis describing progress in our ministries and future plans.
4. We will encourage our regional home missions leadership to develop good working relationships.

10. NAPARC Agreement on Transfer of Members and Congregations (1987)

Adopted at the 13th (1987) Meeting:

Recognizing that the churches of NAPARC have on occasion unintentionally received members or ordained officers who were under various states of discipline in another NAPARC church, thus creating tension between the churches, and at the same time recognizing the need for mutual freedom and openness on the part of the churches, we agree to respect the procedures of discipline and pastoral concern of the other denominations as follows:

1. Regular Transfer of Membership.

That in the regular transfer of membership between NAPARC churches, the session/consistory or presbytery/classis not receive a member until the appropriate document of transfer is in the hands of the receiving church.

2. Transfer with Irregularities.

- a. That upon request for a transfer of membership by a person under discipline, the sending session/consistory or presbytery/classis inform the receiving body of the nature and extent of the disciplinary procedure before implementing the requested transfer, thus enabling informal consultation between the pastors and elders of both churches.
- b. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church has taken into serious account the discipline of and the information supplied by the sending church.
- c. That such a person not be received officially until the judicatory/assembly of the receiving church is satisfied that proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been seriously attempted.
- d. That a "fugitive from discipline" who is no longer a member of a church or who is no longer on the roll of a presbytery shall not be received until the former judicatory/assembly has been contacted to determine if proper restitution has been made and/or reconciliation has been attempted.

3. Recourse and Appeal.

Where communication or action regarding the sending/receiving of a member or ordained officer/office bearer does not satisfy either the dismissing or receiving judicatory/assembly, communication may be submitted to the interchurch relation committees of the denominations involved with a view to mediation of the problem. If this proves unsatisfactory, the session/consistory or presbytery/classis may register its concern to the appropriate judicatory/assembly of the other denomination.

4. Congregational Transfer.

That a congregation seeking to leave a NAPARC church to become affiliated with another NAPARC denomination be received only after it has complied with the requirements of the form of government of the church from which it is separating, and the receiving church shall be responsible to see that this is done.

11. Suggestions for Those Involved in Planning Activities for Our Young People (2012)

From the Report of the NAPARC Committee of Review to the 38th (2012) Meeting (page17):

B. Provision for the Needs of Our Young People

Taking note of—

- our desire to see our covenant young people enjoy good Christian fellowship with those of their own age and be firmly established in the Reformed faith;
- the difficulty many (especially those in more isolated situations) have in finding a spouse who is also firmly established in the Reformed faith

—your Committee recommends:

1. That the need of our young people for good Christian fellowship be highlighted by adding the phrase “activities for young people” to section 4 of the NAPARC *Constitution*, III (Purpose and Function);
2. That presbyteries/classes and sessions/consistories be encouraged to invite young people from other NAPARC congregations in the area to planned activities for young people, especially to camps/retreats for those of high school or college ages;
3. That the youth committees of the presbyteries/classes of the NAPARC Member Churches be encouraged to meet together from time to time to explore possible ways in which they might cooperate in planning activities for our covenant young people;
4. That Member Churches be requested to organize periodic consultations of youth ministries representatives; and
5. That information regarding upcoming camps/retreats hosted by NAPARC Member Churches for those of high school or college ages be included on the NAPARC website.

12. Pursuit of Organic Union (2012)

From the Report of the NAPARC Committee of Review to the 38th (2012) Meeting (pages 17–21, some footnotes omitted):

C. Pursuit of Organic Union

... Taking into account the discussion at the 37th (2011) Meeting and the comments it has received on the matter, your Committee is not recommending any substantive change to this clause in the Constitution.³ Your Committee observes that the subject of this clause is “the constituent churches,” and therefore believes that the correct reading of the clause is that it is the Member Churches, not NAPARC, who are to do the “hold[ing] out *before each other.*”⁴ Your Committee is united in the conviction that any proposal for one Member Church to begin a process of uniting organically with another Member Church(es) should originate in the appropriate assembly(s) of the Member Churches themselves, and should not be initiated or driven by NAPARC. And, with this understanding, your Committee offers the following as information that might be helpful to the Member Churches as they continue to “hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.”

1. Confessional Considerations. Both sets of the confessional standards enumerated in the Basis⁵ of NAPARC speak to the teaching of Scripture on the unity of the church, the communion of saints, the government of the church, and the binding of the conscience....

2. Counsel From Several of Our Reformed/Presbyterian Fathers and Brethren. In preparing for its discussions on the issue, your Committee sought counsel from the writings of several of our Reformed/Presbyterian fathers and brothers, including Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), and Iain Murray....

3. Some Options. The unity which those in the one catholic or universal church enjoy begins with their being joined, by faith, to Christ, her Head and Husband. Appreciating the “already/not yet” dimensions of the coming of His kingdom, particular churches wrestle with how best to express and manifest that unity among themselves in this age. At least five possible options for how a Member Church might take up its responsibility to “hold out before each other ...” come to mind:

a. Do nothing. Your Committee simply observes that such is not faithful to that to which the Member Churches have already committed themselves.

b. Negotiated bilateral mergers. Most of us are wary of anything that might resemble a “top/down” effort by denominational leaders, focusing on the more administrative/organizational dimensions of the union, to press forward in negotiating a merger of two Member Churches before the hearts of the people in both churches have been knit together among themselves. Well-intended efforts to merge two churches (“A” and “B”) into one (“AB”), before they are ready, could easily end up resulting in three churches (the new “AB,” the “Continuing A,” and the “Continuing B”), instead of the desired one, as members’ consciences feel taxed beyond what they are able to bear.

c. Gradual long-term process. This is a longer-view approach in which Member Churches, instead of devoting their resources and energies to trying to negotiate bilateral mergers in the

³ Your Committee is proposing: *i*) to insert the word “to” before the word “hold” to perfect the grammatical construction of the sentence; and *ii*) to divide Article II between the first sentence, which states the Basis of NAPARC, and the second sentence, which is more in the nature of a statement of the Purpose of NAPARC, rather than of the Basis itself.

⁴ *Emphasis added.* The clause does not read, “and the Council is to hold out before the Member Churches the desirability and need for organic union....”

⁵ *Constitution, II.*

short term, focus instead on developing ways to serve, edify, and deepen their fellowship with other Member Churches over the long term, perhaps a generation or more. Member Churches would actively look for ways and opportunities to work (in areas such as missions, relief efforts, training of men for the ministry, Christian schools, activities for young people, and church education and publications) and to worship together with one or more other Member Churches. Such things might include:

- pulpit exchanges
- participating in occasional services of public worship (e.g., “Reformation Day”) conducted by the other Member Church
- mutual invitations to youth and family camps
- intentional cross-pollination in the training of men for the ministry
- scheduling concurrent meetings of major assemblies and classes/presbyteries
- closer cooperation in world missions endeavors, including the sending of missionaries to labor with a mission established by the other Member Church
- annual bilateral meetings of interchurch relations committees’ representatives
- coordinating responses to major disasters
- joint publication projects
- joint involvement in Christian schools.

As the years roll by, and as it pleases the Lord to allow the bonds of mutual trust and affection to ripen and deepen between/among them, Member Churches, having already laid a foundation for working and living more closely together, can begin to explore whether, without sacrificing principles of conscience with respect to their own distinctives, they might be ready to put a formal structure in place to capture what is already a present reality in their mutual lives.

Your Committee believes that this approach fits with the logical order of the dual purposes of NAPARC—“[i] to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and [ii] hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice”⁶—and most of the changes your Committee is proposing are focused on helping the Member Churches better carry out their responsibilities with respect to the first.

d. “A Reformed Dream” General Assembly.

... Your Committee is of one mind with regard to the idea of establishing a general assembly, with each (former) Member Church becoming a particular synod under that general assembly: that a specific proposal for such should not be originated by NAPARC, but only in the appropriate assembly(s) of the Member Churches, who are seeking to become part of the new general assembly, themselves. Your Committee also believes that, even if as many as a half dozen of the Member Churches were to unite in forming such a general assembly, there would still be some Member Churches left behind, who are not yet (and may not be in our lifetimes) ready to unite. Therefore, there will still be an ongoing valuable purpose and function for NAPARC to carry on, both for the Member Churches who are not (then) able to become part of the new general assembly, and for the new general assembly which (one might hope) would also become (or continue) a Member Church in NAPARC.

e. Combination of c. and d. This approach would build on the gradual long-term process described in “c. Gradual long-term process,” above, with a view that whatever formal structure might eventuate would resemble the new general assembly in “d. ‘A Reformed Dream’ General Assembly,” above. It might also include pursuing the gradual long-term process simultaneously with more than one other Member Church, waiting upon the Lord for His blessing, with one of the possible fruits over the long term being the formation of a new general assembly by several Member Churches, like the one envisioned in d.

4. A Way Forward. Your Committee is thankful that both the Reformed and the Presbyterian traditions are represented and embraced in NAPARC, and observes that, generally speaking

⁶ *Constitution*, II.

and without wanting to limit what our Lord is able to do among us, the obstacles to be surmounted when contemplating any form of organic union among Member Churches would be fewer among those Member Churches that are from the same tradition. Accordingly, your Committee would encourage Member Churches, as each considers possible courses or options to pursue in taking up its responsibility to “hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice,”⁷ to:

- be involved actively in seeking opportunities “to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with”⁸ all of the other Member Churches;
- seek opportunities for working together with other Member Churches in particular ministries;
- develop regular conversations with other Member Churches, particularly among those from within the same tradition, with a long-term view towards possible organic union; and
- keep in mind that full organic union of all Member Churches will occur upon the Second Advent, for which we all long today.

⁷ *Constitution*, II.

⁸ *Id.*