

Overture from the Reformed Church of Silverstream

Re: Church Visitation Question 40

Esteemed Brethren,

The Reformed Church of Silverstream respectfully overtures synod to support the following:

Overture

That question 40 of the church visitation questionnaire be changed to read, “Are suitable young men in the congregation encouraged to enter the ministry, and to undergo suitable theological training?”

Grounds

1. The current question ends with the phrase, “and in particular to attend the Reformed Theological College in Geelong.” This emphasis was agreed upon at a time when there were no significant problems in the RCNZ’s relationship with the RTC. Since that time, the views of some of the professors on Word and Spirit have led to a change in the relationship. A new memorandum of understanding was drawn up to reflect that new relationship. The wording of this question should also be altered to reflect the changed situation.
2. The Hamilton synod allowed churches the freedom to abstain from paying quota for the RTC, making it a “recommended quota.” A similar freedom, less binding on churches as to their recommendations for theological training, would be more in line with the decision about quota.
3. Newly-established sister-church relationships provide us with more options than before. For example, we are now in a sister-church relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Their seminary in Hamilton, Ontario, should now be viewed as a recommended option for us. We are pursuing sister-church relations with the URCNA as well. MARS, a seminary used by their churches, could also be included in our recommendations to those seeking to pursue a calling to the ministry.
4. Changes in the mandate of our deputies make room for supervision of students who attend other seminaries, such as MARS. This new arrangement has already been implemented with one student who studied at MARS, and another is likely to study there soon. Changing the church-visitation question would reflect this change in our arrangements as well.
5. The current wording of the church-visitation question places churches that have serious concerns about the RTC in a difficult position.