

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Jan Hus Presbytery

Day 1, September 26, 2023, 09:00

1. PM Bogumił Jarmulak opens Presbytery (Attila Hajdú takes minutes)
2. **Roll Call and Quorum Call** (9 churches needed)
 - a. **Christian Evangelical Reformed Church – Mykolaiv, Ukraine:**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Volodimir Mykita
 - b. **Evangelical Reformed Church – Mogilev, Belarus**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Sergey Udaliyov
 - c. **Evangelical Reformed Church – Gdansk, Poland**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Paweł Bartosik
 - d. **Evangelical Reformed Church – Poznan, Poland**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Bogumił Jarmulak
 - ii. Represented by: Rev. Andrzej Polasek
 - e. **Evangelical Reformed Church – Wroclaw, Poland**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Marek Kmieć
 - ii. Represented by: Rev. Sebastian Smolarz
 - f. **Holy Trinity Evangelical Reformed Church – Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Ihor Lishchinskiy
 - g. **Holy Trinity Reformed Church – Dunaevtsy, Ukraine**
 - i. no show
 - h. **Mitaka Evangelical Church – Tokyo, Japan**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Ben Zedek Smith
 - i. **Presbyterian Reformed Church – Burgas, Bulgaria**
 - i. Represented by: Yavor Rusinov
 - j. **Reformed Church of Christ the Savior – Rivne, Ukraine**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. San Sanych Sr.
 - ii. Represented by: Rev. Yuriy Lishchinskiy (online)
 - k. **Reformed Evangelical Church of St Andrew – Pidhaichiky, Ukraine**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Volodimir Yakubovskiy
 - l. **Trinity Evangelical Church – Diósd, Hungary**
 - i. Represented by: Rev. Attila Hajdú
3. Quorum established (11/12)
4. Introduction of guests
 - a. Jan Prorok– Reformed Congregation of the Most Holy Trinity, Karlovy Vary, Czechia (mission church of Evangelical Reformed Church, Wrocław, PL)
 - b. Norway – Kenneth Rosenblad, Bibelkirken Vestfold, Bjørnar Stensvold
 - c. Tom Cotton, Japan Tokyo Grace Christian Fellowship
 - d. John Unger
5. approval of the minutes of Presbytery 2022
 - a. accepted by email
6. PMOC report accepted

7. Hus Constitutional Committee Report (see below after minutes)
 - a. Ben Zedek explains the gist of proposal #1.
 - i. motion: Ben Zedek moves to adopt position #1 (Proposed reading) on this and present it to council
 - ii. second: San Sanych
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place.
 - iv. vote: motion carries unanimously**
 - b. Ben Zedek explains the gist of proposal #2.
 - i. motion: Ben Zedek moves to adopt proposal #2 (“Proposed reading”) on this and present it to council
 - ii. second: Sebastian Smolarz
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place.
 - iv. vote: motion carries unanimously**
8. Mitaka Evangelical Church (Tokyo) proposal
 - a. Ben Zedek explains the gist of the proposal
 - i. motion: Ben Zedek moves to adopt the proposal
 - ii. second: San Sanych
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place.
 - iv. vote: motion carries unanimously**
9. Trinity Evangelical Church (Diósd) proposals
 - a. Attila Hajdú explains the gist of the proposal
 - i. motion: Attila Hajdú asks to amend the agenda to add (2/3 vote needed) the proposal to change the Hus BOP
 - ii. second: San Sanych
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place.
 - iv. vote: motion carries 10 yea 1 nay**
 - b. Attila Hajdú explains the gist of proposal #1
 - i. motion: Attila Hajdú proposes that the original proposal that was to sent to council to be considered for the Hus BOP
 - ii. second: Ben Zedek
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place.
 - iv. vote: motion carries unanimously**
 - c. Attila Hajdú explains the gist of proposal #2
 - i. motion: Attila Hajdú proposes that the original proposal that was sent to council to be considered for the Hus BOP
 - ii. second: Ben Zedek
 - iii. discussion: general discussion of the topic took place, but at the request of the Diósd church, proposal #2 and #3 is postponed for discussion at a later time
10. Date and place for 2024 (official) Hus meeting
 - a. Place: Ivano-Frankivsk, Nazareth House, UA
 - b. Date: 2024, second half of September, TBD on Hus email list
11. Meeting adjourned 12:00PM

12. Session 2 (1:15-4:15 PM: 11:15 PM-2:15 AM Kyiv Time)
 - a. informal meeting (no quorum – UA ministers offline)
13. Sacramental Cooperation Committee Report (discussion only)
 - a. we like Hus’ proposal and agree most with committee suggestion #4
14. Other items for discussion only (from the Council Agenda)
 - a. ministerial training – agree
 - b. Confessional revision – agree
 - c. on Christian education – agree
 - d. Creation – agree
 - e. Terrorism – ask PM to appoint a committee to review this memorial
 - f. Homosexuality – some modifications to this memorial and PM of Hus will create a committee to create a memorial on Marriage and sexuality
 - g. Worship – agree
 - h. Abortion – agree
 - i. Critical Social Justice Movement paper – Bogumil thinks it should be re-written in a better way
 - j. Anti-Semitism and Nation – push for the Hus proposal and wholeheartedly refute the Knox proposals if the Hus proposal does not pass
 - k. Augustine presbytery – agree
 - l. Knox presbytery – agree
 - m. on Arbitration – change title to “arbitration”
 - n. report on church planting commission – proposal seems overly eager to give our brand name to outsiders, we are vary of a situation when no church wants to sponsor them
15. Meeting adjourned at 14:48
16. Meeting reconvened September 27, 2023 09:15 AM
 - a. no quorum, unofficial meeting, church reports
 - b. no Zoom participants
17. Spring theological conference in Ukraine
 - a. to be decided
18. Presbytery ended at 12:00 PM

Hus Constitutional Committee Report

Members: Rev. Attila Hajdu, Rev. Ben Zedek Smith (chairman), Rev. Dr. Sebastian Smolarz

Proposal #1

Addition to the Preamble of the Constitution after the sentence: “We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.”

New addition: “As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Proposed reading: “We use the word Communion in its common sense of being participants in one particular body gathered within the broader body, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As a Communion, we recognize the ordination of all the ministers of our churches. Additionally, we recognize the baptisms of all the members of our churches, and we receive at the Lord’s Table all communicant members of our churches.”

Rationale: The proposed addition clarifies the nature of the communion we form together as churches.

Proposal #2

Hus Presbytery is asking the Council/PMoC to establish a committee that would propose a common confession of faith for all the CREC churches (apart from the individual confessions that each church adopts). That could be an old confession, like the New Confession of Faith from 1654 (see: Appendix 1), or a new, yet similar in content, confession drafted by the committee. All the CREC churches would then adopt the confession as a common confession for all the CREC churches.

Rationale: A common confession adopted by all the CREC churches would underline the confessional unity of the CREC and, together with the mutual recognition of ordination and the sacraments, would express the full communion of our confederated churches as a communion of pulpit and table.

Appendix #1

New Confession of Faith (1654)

I. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God and the only rule of knowing Him savingly, and living unto Him in all holiness and righteousness, in which we must rest; which Scriptures, whoever does not believe but rejects them, does instead thereof take himself to any other way of discovering the mind of God, cannot be saved.

II. There is one only God, who is a Spirit, all-sufficient, eternal, infinite, unchangeable, almighty, omniscient, just, merciful, most holy, good, true, faithful and only wise; working all

things according to the counsel of His own will; the creator, governor and judge of the world. The knowledge of God by faith is necessary to salvation and every other way of knowledge of Him is insufficient to salvation.

III. That this God is infinitely distinct from all creatures in His being and blessedness.

IV. That this God is one in three persons or subsistences—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

V. God made man upright in His own image to yield obedience to Him, so that the chief end of man is to live to God and enjoy Him forever.

VI. Man who was thus created is fallen into a state of sin and misery; so that our nature is wholly corrupted, disabled to all that is spiritually good, in bondage to sin, at enmity with God, prone to all that is evil; and while we continue in that estate, the wrath of God abides upon us.

VII. That every transgression of the law of God is sin, the wages whereof is eternal death.

VIII. That God out of His love sent Jesus Christ to be the only mediator between God and man, without the knowledge of whom, by the revelation of the gospel, there is no salvation.

IX. That this Jesus Christ is God by nature, the only and eternally begotten Son of the Father, and also true man in one person.

X. That this Jesus Christ is our redeemer and surety, who, dying in our stead, laying down His life a ransom for us and bearing our sins, has made full satisfaction for them.

XI. That this Lord Jesus Christ is He that was crucified at Jerusalem, was buried, rose again and ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of God, making intercession for us, who remains forever a distinct person from all saints and angels, notwithstanding their union and communion with Him.

XII. All true believers are partakers of Jesus Christ and all His benefits freely by grace, and are justified by faith in Him and not by works, He being made of God righteousness unto us.

XIII. That no man can be saved unless he is born again of the Holy Spirit, repents, believes, and walks in holy conversation and godliness.

XIV. That whosoever does not prize and love Jesus Christ above himself and all other things, cannot be saved.

XV. Whosoever allows himself to live in any known sin, upon any pretense or principle whatsoever, is in a state of damnation.

XVI. That God is to be worshipped according to His own will, and that only in and through Jesus Christ.

XVII. That all the dead shall rise again.

XVIII. That in the last day, God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ and reward every one according to his works.

XIX. That all believers shall be translated into an everlasting state of blessedness and an inheritance of glory in the kingdom of heaven.

XX. That all the wicked and unbelievers shall be cast into everlasting torments with the devil and his angels in hell.

Beginning in 1652, John Owen (1616–1683) was a prominent member of the Rump Parliament Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel. That committee, which featured prominent Independents/Congregationalists, had drafted *The Principles of Faith* (1652; reprinted Nov. 2, 1654). When Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) dissolved the Rump (April 20, 1653), the first Protectorate Parliament (September 3, 1654) established a committee to determine the limits of toleration in religion. Owen was once again a key member, but Parliament added Presbyterian figures to the Congregational theologians (Owen, Goodwin, Nye, and Simpson)—notably, Richard Vines (1600–1655/56), Thomas Manton (1620–1677), Stephen Marshall (ca. 1594–1655), and Francis Cheynell (1608–1665). Richard Baxter (1615–1691), also a member, remains a quandary due to his Neonomian doctrine of justification and his eclectic ecclesiology. The confession they drafted survives in only one extant copy, which originally belonged to George Thomason (†1666) of “Thomason Tracts” fame. His copy is now in the British Library, sans cover or title page. That deficiency is covered by a manuscript copy of the absent page from Thomason’s hand.¹

As was the case with the *Principles of Faith* (1652), Parliament took no action to implement this succinct declaration. Perhaps this is due (once more) to the dissolution of a parliamentary body by Cromwell—the Lord Protector dissolved the first Protectorate Parliament on January 22, 1655.

It has been suggested that the motivation for this and the previous 1652 summary of Christian principles was related to the English translation and publication of the Socinian Racovian Catechism (1652).² This would explain the Trinitarian language of these brief post-Westminster declarations. And yet such orthodox language would be generic to any statement of Christian essentials. Perhaps more telling is the language of “ransom” in reference to Christ’s atoning death. That term would have been anathema to

Socinians, whose exemplaristic view of Christ's death on the cross eschews any notion of propitiation or satisfaction of divine justice.

Why this confession was produced on the heels of the republication of the 1652 Principles a month prior is not clear. Apparently, the committee, now enhanced with Presbyterian brethren, felt a fresh start was necessary. While it uses several clauses from the former document, it also enlarges and adds a number of doctrinal articles and reflections not found in the previous Principles. Thus it is indeed a "new confession."

The full title of the work is A new Confession of Faith, or the first principles of the Christian Religion necessary to be laid as a foundation by all such as desire to build on unto perfection. Represented by a Committee of Divines ... unto the grand Committee for Religion as fitt to be owned by all such Ministers as are or shall be allowed to receive the publique maintenance for their works in the Ministry. Propounded to the Parliament, 12 Dec. A

transcript is found in T. M. Lawrence, "Transmission and Transformation: Thomas Goodwin and the Puritan Project, 1600–1704," PhD diss. (2002), 224–27.

1 Cf. Catalogue of the Pamphlets, Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration, Collected by George Thomason, 1640–1661, 2:1, 1653–1661 (1908), 93 (entry for Dec. 12, 1654; E. 826. [3.]).

2 John Coffey, "The Toleration Controversy During the English Revolution," in Christopher Durston & Judith Maltby, eds., *Religion in Revolutionary England* (2006), 52.

James T. Dennison Jr., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: 1523–1693*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008–2014), 428–429

Mitaka Evangelical Church (Tokyo) proposal

Memorial on Nations

We believe God made all nations from one man, Adam. These nations were sundered by sin. But God, by the cross of Christ and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is reuniting and reconciling the nations, drawing them into one Church, the Body of Christ. We, therefore, detest and repudiate all forms of nationalistic and racial hatred, prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and persecution, including anti-Semitism, oikophobia, white supremacy, Critical Race Theory, and kinism. We seek to unite the nations in the worship of the triune God, sanctifying all peoples, languages, and customs to His glory. Trinity Evangelical Church, Diosd, Hungary, Proposals

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#1 Book of Procedures Amendment (BoP III.B)

Current reading:

Delegates about to become new members shall normally provide to the presbytery a one-page summary of their church (membership, elders, confessional standards, other useful descriptions, etc.).

Proposed addition:

Delegates about to become new members shall normally provide to the presbytery a one-page summary of their church (membership, elders, confessional standards, other useful descriptions, etc.) **and a copy of their constitution.**

Rationale:

Knowing the content of a candidate church's constitution would make it easier to ask questions about its state and character, and so to better evaluate its readiness to become a member church.

Constitution III.L says:

In making a motion to seat a candidate church, a sponsoring church needs to be prepared to answer questions concerning the general health of that church and the likelihood of that church being able to embrace the CREC constitution when considered for full membership. The church which makes the motion to seat the candidate church must be the church which moves to receive the church into full membership when that issue comes before presbytery. The church which moves to receive the church into membership must be prepared to answer questions related to the doctrinal integrity of the church's confession, and the moral, spiritual, and covenantal health of the families of the officers.

#2 Constitution Amendment (Constitution IV.C.8)

Current Reading:

With regard to meetings, the Presiding Ministers of Presbytery and Council have the following authority and responsibilities: to prepare agendas, chair the meetings, submit reports of their work, call ad hoc meetings when necessary, and prepare minutes of the meetings to be posted in public. In addition, the Presiding Minister of Church Council shall bear the responsibility for maintaining a true and accurate copy of the CREC Constitution, reflecting all amendments and additions thereto, and for making the Constitution available by means of electronic publishing.

Proposed addition:

The Presiding Minister of a Presbytery shall bear the responsibility for maintaining true and accurate copies of the Presbytery churches' Constitutions, reflecting all amendments and additions thereto, and for making the Constitutions available digitally to the Presbytery churches.

Rationale:

According to Constitution III.E.1.a, a CREC member church must "have its own constitution." This is one of four requirements spelled out in the Constitution. It seems reasonable that the content of the constitution is known to other churches not only when a new church is received into membership but also after it becomes a member church.

#3 Constitution Amendment (Constitution II.C)

Current reading:

Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14). Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church.

Proposed addition:

Each congregation must be committed in principle and practice to government by a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Jas. 5:14). Congregations without a plurality of elders must have accountability with another established CREC church. **Further, congregations that are without a plurality of elders for two years shall become mission churches.**

Rationale:

To further clarify what shall happen when a member church does not have a plurality of elders anymore.