



KNOX PRESBYTERY

Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches

Knox Presbytery Fall 2024 Stated Meeting

October 1, AD 2024

Trinity Reformed Church
Moscow, Idaho

Fellowship with Kuyper Presbytery

Knox Presbytery joined with Kuyper Presbytery to fellowship and sing.

Call to Order

Jared Longshore delivered an exhortation from Hebrews 11. He then prayed for our meeting.

The Fall 2024 Stated Meeting of Knox Presbytery was called to order at 8:50am by Presiding Minister Toby Sumpter (King's Cross Church, Moscow).

Roll Call (Establishment of a Quorum)

Member Churches

1. Christ Church (Moscow, ID): Douglas Wilson & Ben Zornes
2. Christ Church (Omaha, NE): Grant Little & Nathan Joslin
3. Christ Church (Spokane, WA): Kenton Spratt
4. Christ Covenant Church (Grand Prairie, AB): Nathan Zekveld & Jamie Soles
5. Covenant Presbyterian Church (Cochrane, AB): Chris Cousine
6. Holy Trinity Church (Colville, WA): Jody Jacobs
7. King's Covenant Church (Tasmania, AU): Josh Downes & Geoff Downes [Motion 2]
8. King's Cross Church (Moscow, ID): Shawn Paterson & Zach Wilke
9. King's Cross Church (Wenatchee, WA): Gene Helsel & Jess Monnette
10. Trinity Church (Coeur d'Alene, ID): Chase Fluhart & Bob Dowers
11. Trinity Covenant Church (Fort St. John, BC): James Zekveld & Isaac van Schaik

Mission Churches

1. Christ Church Troy (Troy, ID): Joshua Dockter (sponsored by Christ Church, Moscow) [Motion 3]

2. Holy Covenant Church (Mead, WA): Andre Fowlkes (sponsored by King's Cross Church, Wenatchee)
3. King's Church (Spokane Valley, WA): Ben Tate (sponsored by Trinity Church, Coeur d'Alene)

Candidate Churches

1. Igreja Protestante Reformada (Joinville, BR): Thiago McHurt via video call (sponsored by Christ Church, Moscow)

Approve Agenda

Motion 10/1/24: 1 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To approve the agenda.

Second: Gene Helsel (King's Cross Church, Wenatchee)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Church Reports

Introduction of Mission and Candidate Churches

Motion 10/1/24: 2 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To bring candidate church, King's Covenant Church (Tasmania, AU), into full membership in Knox Presbytery of the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

Second: Kenton Spratt (Christ Church, Spokane).

Ben Zornes shared regarding history of the church and Gordon Wilson's recent visit to the church.

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0).

Motion 10/1/24: 3 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To acknowledge candidate church, Christ Church Troy (Troy, ID), as a mission church of Christ Church (Moscow, ID).

Second: Kenton Spratt (Christ Church, Spokane)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Brazil Update

Douglas Wilson (Christ Church, Moscow) shared regarding his ministry trip to Brazil.

Thiago McHertt (Igreja Protestante Reformada, Brazil) shared regarding their ministry in Joinville.

Prayer for Mission and Candidate Churches

Presiding Minister Report (attached)

Motion 10/1/24: 4 → Gene Helsel (King's Cross Church, Wenatchee) made the following Motion:

To ratify the establishing of ordination committees by PM Toby Sumpter for Zach Wilke (Shawn Paterson, chair) and Joshua Dockter (Ben Zornes, chair).

Second: Jamie Soles (Christ Covenant Church, Grand Prairie)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Discussion of Sacramental Cooperation Paper (attached)

Douglas Wilson (Christ Church, Moscow) provided background to his paper regarding sacramental cooperation and his recommended addition to the Book of Procedures.

New Saint Andrews College M.Div Presentation

Joe Rigney, NSA Fellow of Theology, shared that Greyfriars Hall is now becoming a Master of Divinity program at the college under the oversight of Christ Church.

Broken for Lunch with Kuyper Presbytery at 11:56am, reconvened at 1:05pm

Nathan Joslin Ordination Exam

Committee members: Ben Zornes, chair (Christ Church, Moscow), Chase Fluhart (Trinity Church, Coeur d'Alene), Nate Harlin via video call (Tyndale Presbytery), and Gene Helsel (King's Cross Church, Wenatchee).

Nathan Joslin's committee led the examination of Nathan with other delegates also asking questions.

Motion 10/1/24: 5 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To enter executive session.

Second: James Zekveld (Trinity Covenant Church, Fort St John)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

George Little (Christ Church, Omaha) and Nate Harlin (Tyndale Presbytery) remained in the room per PM Toby Sumpter and the delegates' request.

Motion 10/1/24: 6 → Joslin Credentials Committee made the following Motion:

To recommend Nathan Joslin for ordination as a minister of Word and sacrament to Christ Church in Omaha, Nebraska with the requirement that he pursue a year of study in both Hebrew and Greek and they report his completed studies to Tyndale Presbytery.

Second: Not required

Motion Carried: (16, 0, 0) [Nathan Joslin not present]

Motion 10/1/24: 7 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To leave executive session.

Second: Jess Monnette (King's Cross Church, Wenatchee)

Motion Carried: (16, 0, 0) [Nathan Joslin not present]

Motion 10/1/24: 8 → Ben Zornes (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To transfer Christ Church (Omaha, NE) to Tyndale Presbytery, effective when they meet to receive them.

Second: Chris Cousine (Covenant Presbyterian Church, Cochrane)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Continued Discussion on the Sacramental Cooperation Paper

Motion 10/1/24: 9 → Kenton Spratt (Christ Church, Spokane) made the following Motion:

To task PM Toby Sumpter to form a committee to revise the language on sacramental cooperation that was adopted at last Council meeting in light of Douglas Wilson's paper and suggest a framework for fraternal relations.

Second: Gene Helsel (King's Cross Church, Wenatchee)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Second Reading of the Proposed Memorial on Paedocommunion

Memorial: “As elders who hold the keys, we do not exclude baptized children from the Lord’s Table because God has incorporated them into His covenant and congregation through baptism. The covenant promises are theirs in Christ. We believe that in the sacraments God calls us to respond by faith in Christ according to our age and capacity. We affirm that faith is a necessary condition for worthy participation at the Table and that God gives such faith even to small children. Jesus said: ‘Let the little children come to me.’”

Kenton Spratt’s (Christ Church, Spokane) recommendation: “*The only Reformed orthodox view of paedocommunion is to welcome baptized children at the Lord’s Table because God has incorporated them into His covenant and congregation through baptism. The covenant promises are theirs in Christ. We believe that in the sacraments God calls us to respond by faith in Christ according to our age and capacity. We affirm that faith is a necessary condition for worthy participation at the Table and that God gives such faith even to small children. Jesus said: ‘Let the little children come to me.’*”

Motion 10/1/24: 10 → Douglas Wilson (Christ Church, Moscow) made the following Motion:

To add the proposed memorial on paedocommunion to the aforementioned committee’s work, along the lines of Kenton Spratt’s recommended language.

Second: James Zekveld (Trinity Covenant Church, Fort St John)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Proposed Spring 2025 Knox Presbytery Meeting

The plan is for our Spring meeting to be focused on fellowship/study with fewer business items.

Motion 10/1/24: 11 → Gene Helsel (King’s Cross Church, Wenatchee) made the following Motion:

To meet in Moscow, Idaho on March 25–27, AD 2025 with Kuyper Presbytery.

Second: Chris Cousine (Covenant Presbyterian Church, Cochrane)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)

Motion 10/1/24: 12 → Kenton Spratt (Christ Church, Spokane) made the following Motion:

To adjourn.

Second: Grant Little (Christ Church, Omaha)

Motion Carried: (17, 0, 0)



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PM Report Fall 2024

Gents,

My PM Report is relatively light this time around.

I'm grateful to report relative peace and growth in our presbytery, with some areas of challenge.

I've given some input to Christ Covenant in Grand Prairie as they have been considering a potential mission/candidate church in Drayton Valley, AB. I am also planning to visit Covenant Presbyterian in Cochrane, AB in October for a short conference (along with Jared Longshore) as well as Trinity Covenant in Fort St. John BC in November.

I have also been involved in giving some counsel to Stuart Bryan and the Trinity CDA elders as they work through a challenging situation.

The only items I'm requesting your ratification are for appointing the Chairs of the following two ordination committees:

Forming Zach Wilke's Ordination Committee at the request of King's Cross Moscow (Shawn Paterson Chair)

Forming Josh Dockter's Ordination Committee at the request of Christ Church Moscow (Ben Zornes Chair)

Finally, I will just note that an ad hoc Council meeting met on May 20 to approve the final revisions to the CREC Standards.

Please feel free to reach out if I can be helpful to you or your elders or congregation.

Blessings,
Toby Sumpter

A Paper on Sacramental Cooperation

Douglas Wilson

Introduction

Since the CREC was founded, we have been marked by two distinctive practices that has set us apart from the rest of the Reformed and evangelical world. We are now confronted with a situation in which those two distinctives are now in obvious tension with each other. This paper hopes to offer a way of navigating those tensions in a way that preserves both distinctives.

The first distinctive is a willingness to pursue a Reformed catholicity on a practical level. All CREC churches are required to incorporate into their statements of faith the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon. After this, they are required to adopt at least one of the following—the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), the American Westminster Confession of Faith (1788), the Three Forms of Unity (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of the Synod at Dordt), the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1562), the London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), the Savoy Declaration (1658), the Reformed Evangelical Confession (see Article XI, the CREC Constitution), the Second Helvetic Confession (1562), or the 39 Articles of Christian Religion (1571).

This was done with the full recognition that there were discrepancies or even contradictions at different places between these confessions, or between a particular confession and the CREC Constitution. To deal with the latter situation first, upon entering the CREC a church would need to take an exception to their confession in order to resolve any tension or contradiction with the CREC Constitution. An example of this would be the article on the consecration of bishops, which in the 39 Articles presupposes the office of bishop (Art. 36). We don't have that office, and so all our churches need to function with the government we have, not the government we don't.

An example of the former kind of tension would be the differences between the London Baptist and the Westminster on the subject of the propriety of infant baptism. Another example would be the differences between Presbyterians who commune small children and those who do not.

The second distinctive feature of the CREC has been our practice of communing baptized children. Although we do not mandate paedocommunion in any of our confessions or memorials, the practice is very widespread among us, and has become something of a cultural expectation. It may be that a memorial on the subject will be adopted at some point, but this has not yet happened.

Our Language, Both Old and New

We were aware at the very beginning that this approach could present some real challenges, and this recognition was addressed in our documents at the start. We originally said this:

“All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (*e.g.* individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another’s members.

In the transfer of members from one CREC church to another, differences arising from issues such as membership, paedobaptism, and paedocommunion, must be handled with pastoral sensitivity. Receiving churches do not have to adopt or practice such variations, but they should do all within their power to accommodate them.”

After our recent emendations, we now say this:

G. All members in good standing in a local CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches as included in the Book of Procedures, Article XIII Sacramental Cooperation.

H. Controversies within a local congregation regarding matters arising from differences between our various confessions will not be adjudicated beyond the local church level. All churches agree to work cheerfully and carefully in their study of doctrinal differences, and to strive for like-mindedness with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

Article XIII. Sacramental Cooperation

A. The CREC is a unified communion of churches with various confessional differences. While we allow a variety of views and practices related to the sacraments (*e.g.*, paedobaptism and credobaptism, paedocommunion and credocommunion), we seek mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21). Therefore, all CREC churches agree to recognize the sacramental actions of other CREC churches by accepting the baptismal and communicant status of their members, regardless of any confessional differences between the churches.

1. All members in good standing of a CREC congregation must be received by any other CREC church with their baptismal and communicant status intact, even if the receiving church would not have conferred that status themselves. All CREC churches will handle problems arising from differences in how membership is reckoned from church to church (*e.g.*, individual vs. household) with all charity and good faith, seeking to include one another’s members.

2. Any credobaptist church in this Communion must accept the validity of baptism administered in another CREC church, even if it would not have performed that particular baptism. Such a church shall accept that the person is, in fact, baptized, though they might consider the baptism irregular.

3. Any paedobaptist and credocommunion church (defined as having both communicant and non-communicant members, where non-communicants become communicants after

the session accepts their profession of faith as credible), shall agree to accept the communicant status conferred by other CREC churches upon their members. Therefore, the credocommunion churches shall agree to accept transfers of members in good standing from other CREC churches and will honor and accept the communicant status they held in their sister church, regardless of age or mental capacity, by transferring them as communicant members.

Members in good standing of one CREC church shall be received by transfer to another CREC church, with their baptismal and communicant status intact, regardless of confessional differences. However, once a member has transferred, the receiving church is not under obligation to deviate from its regular practice if children are subsequently born to the member. Any new admission to baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be done according to the church's normal practice.

Proposed Language for churches entering under the 1689:

“As a church that subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, we believe, teach, and practice that ‘those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of baptism,’ and that ‘immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.’ Nevertheless, in keeping with our historic Reformed Baptist heritage, we will accept infant baptisms and baptisms performed through sprinkling or pouring as valid baptisms for the purposes of membership in the local church and communicant status at the Lord's Table.”

Some Oddities and Twists

As we consider what our documents said about this originally, there were *two* musts to be considered, and not just one. “All members in good standing in a local CREC church *must* be received by another other CREC church regardless of confessional differences between the churches.” The second *must* said that all such issues “*must* be handled with pastoral sensitivity.” The requirement of “must be received” seemed open and shut. At the same time, it also said that receiving churches do not have to adopt *or practice* such variations, but they should do *all within their power* to accommodate them.” There was a barrier to some, but it was created by their sectarian approach to the sacraments, and not by ours.

My concern is that, depending on how we apply our new language, we are drifting toward a sectarianism of our own.

We have now created a genuinely anomalous situation. Baptism is a one-and-done sacrament, and so a child who was baptized in infancy could come into a CREC church that held to baptistic convictions. It would be quite possible for them to receive such a baptism as “irregular but valid,” and they could do so without themselves having to administer such an irregular baptism. All they would need to be is charitable and accommodating. There is not an irreconcilable tension for them, and this accommodation has a historic precedent that some Reformed Baptists have followed since the 16th century. It is not some novelty that we came up with. It is true that a

certain strain of *strict* Reformed Baptist churches could not join the CREC if they insisted upon always considering infant baptism to be no baptism at all. But the inability to join together in this case would not be the result of a barrier created by the CREC. We would have been as flexible as it is possible for us to be. We would have opened out our doors as far as it is possible for them to go.

But the situation is quite different for a credo-communion church. If a child has been communing at a paedocommunion church for two years, and the family moves to a credo-communion church, the receiving church has to figure out what to do *every time* they serve communion, which in our churches will usually be weekly.

The anomaly is that this creates a situation where ecclesiastical fellowship is possible between churches that are much farther apart in their sacramentology, and is made difficult (or perhaps even impossible) between churches that are closer together in their view of the sacraments. Have we created an odd denominational amalgam where the London Baptist and the Westminster can join hands, but Westminster and Westminster cannot? If so, that seems pretty weird. This would be like a Wisconsin Synod Lutheran church agreeing to commune a Southern Baptist while turning away a Missouri Synod Lutheran.

Four Oddities

The apostle Paul said that we were to labor to preserve the unity of the saints in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). This is a charge from the apostle to work hard at it, and such a charge recognizes that it can be quite a challenge. There is genuine *work* involved. The following are some oddities that our attempts to walk out a reformed catholicity have created for us:

A credo-communion church which practices paedobaptism is not in the same position that the Reformed Baptist church is. Our statement cited earlier said that they would not have to *practice* paedocommunion, but they would have to do all within their power to accommodate it. But once they had received a family with a communing two-year-old, the first time they administered communion to the congregation, they would have to start *practicing* paedocommunion, which would violate their conscience. The oddity is that the Presbyterian credo-communion church is much closer to the majority of CREC churches doctrinally than is the Reformed Baptist church. They are much closer, but they are now prohibited from joining and the Reformed Baptist church is not. They consider their infants to be covenant members, and the Reformed Baptist church considers them to have no part in the new covenant at all. This means that we allow churches to come in when *all* the infants in the congregation are excluded entirely, and won't allow churches in if they exclude one child more than that. They hold back all their own children, just like the Reformed Baptists, but then they also exclude the one child of a family seeking to transfer in.

A second oddity is that churches that subscribe to the Westminster with the same understanding that most of the *authors* of the Westminster had (credo-communion) could be excluded from membership in a denomination that has the Westminster Confession as one of the confessional options, and which many if not most of our churches use. The Westminster Confession by itself does not exclude the practice of paedocommunion, but the Westminster *Standards* do, which reveals for us what their original intent was. Thus when they proscribe "ignorant and ungodly"

persons from the Supper (WCF 29.8), a paedocommunion advocate can interpret those words as not referring to the ignorance of infancy, but rather to a culpable ignorance of the sort that hangs out with ungodliness. And he can do this while recognizing that the Westminster Standards do elsewhere exclude the kind of ignorance that infants have.

But is there not a true *weirdness* in having churches with the Westminster Confession as our standard while at the same time recognizing that we would exclude from membership almost all of the men who wrote it? This is not the case in other areas where we take exceptions to the Confession—pope as antichrist, parts of the OT in Aramaic, lawful sabbath activity, etc. Those disagreements don't have the same impact at all.

A third oddity is that if paedocommunion truly is a credal advance, one that stands on the shoulders of the Reformers who have gone before us, as most of us want to maintain, it ought to proceed in a reformational way, not a revolutionary or schismatic way.

A fourth oddity, as though we didn't have enough of them, is that we are now distinguishing CREC-administered sacraments from sacraments administered by other orthodox Christian bodies. We are requiring a receiving church to accept a communicant status of someone coming from a CREC church, while not requiring this if they were coming from a PCA church, with all other factors being identical. This has the effect of treating the two Christian sacraments as denominational tokens, which in my view is not right.

Viewing the Game Film

As our Constitution was not inspired by God, it is possible for it to contain irreconcilable differences or true contradictions. This could well be one of them, but I hope and pray not. Under this constitutional language, a credo communion church coming into the CREC is told that they *must* receive a paedocommunion family coming from elsewhere in the CREC, and they are also told that they themselves don't have to *practice* paedocommunion. One of these has to give, somehow and to a certain extent.

The decision of the CREC Council (Sept. 27-28, 2023) began to resolve it in the "must receive" direction. This created the situation of what to do with churches who had entered the CREC already, under a different understanding.

East River Church in Batavia, Ohio was admitted into the CREC by Augustine Presbytery (9/23/22). They also planted another church with the same doctrinal commitments, Silver City Church. Prior to this, as they were coming in, Pastor Foster had made it clear that they were a credo-communion church, and did not have any inclination to change. The late Gregg Strawbridge, as presiding minister of Augustine, had assured him that it could be worked out, and so Augustine approved their full membership. Presumably Pastor Strawbridge had some sort of a plan to deal with this, but the Lord took him home without us knowing what it was, or whether we would agree with it. Given the fact that East River, believing they saw the handwriting on the wall, has voted to remove themselves from the CREC, much of this is now a moot point.

At the same time, the basic issues are not yet resolved, and so it should be edifying to review the game film. We don't want anything like this to happen again. And even if we prevent it from happening again by not receiving any more credo-communion churches, we still have the truly weird situation of being able to admit credo-baptist churches, but not credo-communion churches.

Our Proposed Memorial

At the spring meeting of Knox Presbytery, the following proposed memorial was accepted as a first reading:

“As elders who hold the keys, we do not exclude baptized children from the Lord’s Table, because God has incorporated them into His covenant and congregation through baptism. The covenant promises are theirs in Christ. We believe that in the sacraments God calls us to respond by faith in Christ according to our age and capacity. We affirm that faith is a necessary condition for worthy participation at the Table and that God gives such faith even to small children. Jesus said: ‘Let the little children come to me.’”

This memorial has the advantage of providing additional clarity on how we are approaching the question of child communion. Unfortunately, it does not address the central tension that has resulted from our decision to strive for a Reformed ecumenicity. It continues to admit Baptist churches into communion with paedobaptist churches, despite the wide divide between them, while excluding fellow paedobaptist churches which practice credo-communion.

The Baptist churches that come into the CREC are excluding children from the Table, just as the credo-communion churches are, but are doing it by means of keeping them *entirely* away. They keep them away from the Table by keeping them completely out of the house. The credo-communion churches allow them into the house, but keep them back from the Table. How does it make sense for us to commune with people who keep children fifty feet away from the Table, but then refuse to do this with people who keep them 25 feet from it?

Under BOP Article XIII, add a new #4

4. When members of the CREC who have young children who have been communicants move to another area, and are interested in joining a credo-communion CREC congregation there, they must recognize that the obligation of pursuing an ecumenical catholicity is an obligation that they share together with any church they are interested in joining. They should recognize that if their two-year-old comes in as a communicant, and all the children who are native to that church are not yet communing, this does create an opportunity for strife, discord, and pastoral headaches. Consequently, before applying for membership, they should meet with the appropriate leaders of this church to work out an arrangement that is acceptable to all, if possible, one that enables their child to continue to commune. The arrangement should include their recognition that if they have any more children after they join, that child will come to the Table on the same terms and in the same way all the other children in the church do. It should also include a willingness to withdraw their application to join, for the sake of church unity.