

*The PLAN for Correspondence and Friendly Intercourse proposed by a Convention of Delegates appointed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, and the Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, when met in New-York, on the 3d Tuesday of June, 1798, and agreed to be reported to these respective Judicatories; which plan has been unanimously approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in May 1799; has been adopted in part, by the Associate Reformed Synod, at their last meeting; and is to come under the consideration of the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, at their next meeting at Albany, on the first Tuesday of June, 1800.*

“ The committee appointed to prepare a draft of a plan for correspondence and intercourse between the Churches under the superintendence of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, and the Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, beg leave to report :

“ That, from considerations of propriety and expediency, it is to be received as the basis of the plan, that the several ecclesiastical bodies or judicatories concerned, are to remain and be preserved entirely separate and independent—That, consistently with this fundamental principle, the three following kinds or degrees of intercourse appear to be practicable, and ought to be recommended, viz. 1. The communion of particular churches. 2. The friendly interchange of ministerial services. 3. A correspondence of the several judicatories of the conferring churches.

“ I. *The Communion of particular Churches.*

“ Any member in communion with any church concerned in this conference, may be received to occasional communion in any other church thus concerned on producing to the proper church-officers to whom

application may be made, sufficient testimonials of a good and regular standing in the church with which he is statedly connected ; provided, but not otherwise, that the church-officers to whom this application shall be made, shall judge that the circumstances of the church of which they have the oversight, render it expedient and for mutual edification to admit the applicant to occasional communion with them.

“ Persons under censure or process of censure in any particular church concerned in this agreement, shall not be received to occasional or stated communion in any other church so concerned, while such censure remains, or such process is unfinished. But, on the other hand, when any member in one of said churches desires to connect himself with another church, he shall not be refused a certificate of his good standing, when such standing is really good ; nor shall it be esteemed disorderly or unkind for the church to which he may present said certificate to receive him.

“ II. *The friendly interchange of ministerial services.*

“ It shall be permitted to the competent church-officers in any congregation settled or vacant under the care of the conferring judicatories, to invite any Minister who is in good standing with any of said judicatories, to preach in the pulpit of such congregation, if they shall judge it to be expedient : But here, as in the former case, it shall be entirely optional to give or to withhold such invitation ; nor shall it be esteemed offensive or unkind if the invitation be for'

“ In cases where the people residing within the limits suitable to a congregation, shall be composed of members from two or from all of the conferring churches, it shall be recommended to the people thus circumstanced, to call and cause to be settled among them a regular licentiate or minister in any of said churches, as the majority shall by vote determine ; and that such licentiate or minister when thus settled, shall attach himself to the judicatories of that church to which the majority so calling him did belong ; unless said majority

shall freely consent that the minister called do choose the judicature with which he will be connected, in which case the minister may, without offence, make his choice among the judicatories of any of the churches conferring; and where there are any congregations or bodies of people in such situation that they cannot obtain adequate supplies of ministerial service from that particular church to which they, or a majority of them, belong, it may and shall be lawful for them to make regular application for supplies to any of the other judicatories concerned in this conference.

“ III. *A correspondence of the several judicatories of the conferring Churches.*

“ Any judicatory of the conferring churches may invite the regular members of any other judicatory concerned in this agreement, to sit as corresponding members, whenever it may be judged expedient so to do. But here, as in the former cases, a neglect to invite shall not be considered as offensive, in as much as each judicature must always be best able to judge whether such a measure be expedient.

“ It is, moreover, recommended that delegates be appointed by the General Assembly, by the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church, and by the Synod of the Associate Reformed Church, to sit in those judicatories respectively, with the privilege of deliberating on all subjects that may come before them; and also of voting on all questions which the members of the judicatory in which they sit shall not deem constitutional, but without power to vote on any question of this description. Provided, nevertheless, that the number of such delegates shall never exceed three, unless by a future agreement this number be increased.

“ It is further recommended that the churches conferring, mutually watch over each others purity in doctrine, discipline, and manners, and be ready to receive complaints against any of their ministers or members upon these subjects; which complaints may be preferred and prosecuted either by individuals in their own name,

*in periculo*, or by a judicatory which shall communicate the necessary information to the judicatory to which the offender is subject; in which latter case, it shall be taken up as a *fama clamosa*, and prosecuted by said judicatory, and the whole proceedings thereon shall be transmitted properly authenticated to the informing body for their satisfaction.—It is understood that certificates or recommendations shall be esteemed authentic and sufficient when they are made agreeably to the rules of that church by which they are granted.

“ It is also understood that all congregations in making applications for supplies shall obtain leave from the judicatory to which they statedly and regularly belong; and that in making application either for supplies, or for the settlement of a minister, they shall conform to the rules of that judicatory to which the application shall be made.”

☞ The above plan has been proposed in consequence of a correspondence which commenced between these churches in 1785, and subsisted several years. In 1794, the General Synod of the Dutch Church, declared, “ their earnest desire that the earliest opportunity be taken to revive the friendly correspondence entered into with the Presbyterian and Associate Reformed Churches in America.” At their next meeting in 1797, they determined “ on the most speedy and effectual measures to revive the correspondence,” they appointed a committee, and invited the other churches to appoint committees also. Committees from the three churches met the following year, and after prayer to God for his direction and counsel, the plan submitted, was the result of their joint deliberation. It having been already published by the classis of Albany, (whether properly or not in the present stage of the business) and some of the consistories having undertaken to condemn it, it cannot now be made too public. *He that doeth truth cometh to the light.* Hereafter may appear a full and accurate history of this correspondence taken from authentic documents.

May 14, 1800.