

# Contours of a Federation

**How Wide or Narrow Should a Reformed Church Federation be with regards to:**

**Doctrinal Matters**

**Geographical Location**

**Language and Culture**

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# 1. General principles from NT

- Image of the *body of Christ*
- *Ekklesia*
- *Hagioi*
- No superstructure
- No congregationalism

## **2. How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?**

**With regards to:**

### **2.1 Doctrinal matters**

# Doctrinal Matters

- Cooperation re Doctrinal Matters
- Each church has the same foundation
- Antithesis between the church and the world
- Antithesis also between true believers and those delinquent in doctrine and/or life
- Cooperation in ongoing spiritual battle

# Sub-conclusion re: Doctrinal Matters

*Sola Scriptura.*

*Tota Scriptura.*

*Churches who deviate from this, detach themselves from the rock on which Jesus Christ builds his church, and should be urged to return to the orthodox doctrine.*



## **2. How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?**

**With regards to:**

### **2.2 Geographical Location**

# Geographical Location

- Great Commission (Acts 1:8)
- Cooperation across geographical borders
  - Joint collection
  - Sharing of apostolic letters
- Worldwide dimensions of Christ's Church (Rev. 5:9-10)



# Sub-conclusion re: Geographical Location

*In principle there are no boundaries.*





## **2. How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?**

**With regards to:**

### **2.3 Language and Culture**

# Language and Culture

- A new unity / race / tribe / language on one foundation
- Gospel preached to each in his mother language
- Lingua Franca



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# Sub-conclusion re: Language and Culture

*In principle language and culture should not determine the boundaries of a federation.*



# 3. In Conclusion

- *Koinonia*
- A command or a voluntary choice?
- A lovely duty
- Federational unity
  - The honor of God
  - Mutual edification of the body of Christ
  - Protection of every local church

# True Ecumenicity – Confessional Statement



# True Ecumenicity – Confessional Statement



“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gathers, defends and preserves his church out of the whole human race (Heidelberg Catechism 21 - Joel 2:32; John 10:4,11,14; Acts 2:21; 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27;).

Therefore we believe that Christ’s church is peopled by all nations, languages, cultures, old and young, rich and poor (Colossians 3:11; Revelation 5:9). No manmade structures may curtail this diversity of Christ’s church.

Each believer and each church is called to pursue full fellowship with everyone sharing the true faith, and not to limit the unity in faith only with those sharing the same culture or language.



At the same time this does not take away that the Gospel should be preached as much as possible to each and everyone in his mother tongue (Acts 2:6,11). Nevertheless boundaries because of linguistic or cultural differences may not lead to ecclesiastical divisions.

It is therefore important to warn against the dangers of nationalism, where the fact that a believer is primarily a citizen of the kingdom of heaven is pushed to the background. This also applies to the danger of racism. There is but one Scriptural antithesis, namely between believing and unbelieving, between the empire of Christ and the empire of Satan (Psalm 129:4-5; John 17:14-17; 1 John 2:18-19; 3:10-17).



It is the duty of each believer to join the church where God's Word is purely preached and fully put into practice (Psalm 22:23; 23:6; Acts 2:42-44; Hebrews 10:25; Belgic Confession 27-29). Therefore we reject the doctrine of pluriformity. Believers should take a stand against false doctrine and erring churches and denominations (Psalm 84:11; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 2:9). True believers are duty bound to look for one another and to be church together (John 17:11; 20-21; Ephesians 4:3-4), cling to each other, encourage and when necessary admonish each other.





Furthermore each local congregation is duty bound to pursue federational unity with other congregations bearing the marks of a true church, namely the pure preaching of God's Word, the pure administration of the sacraments (Baptism and Lord's Supper) and the exercising of mutual discipline (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Revelation 1:11; BC 29). The purity of a congregation is not found in its historic origin, but in its being church in the present. God's covenant is always conditional, meaning that no church or federation can claim to remain God's people for ever.

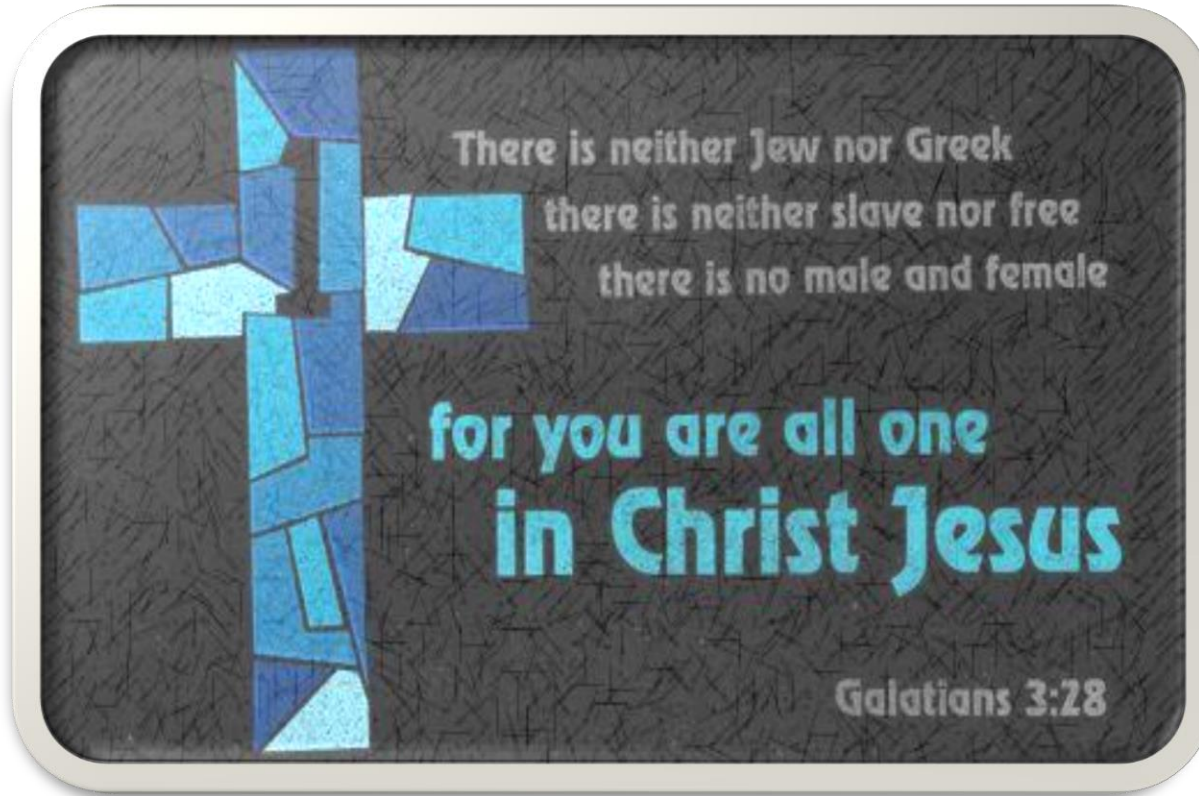


Throughout church history many churches have become apostate. God, who is great in mercy, has given through the ages times of reformation, revival and return to his Word (Psalm 102:13-14; Isaiah 1:9; Romans 9:29). Jesus Christ is an eternal King who will never be without subjects (1 Kings 19:18; Isaiah 59:21; Matthew 16:18, 28:20; John 10:28-29; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; BC 27). Therefore the tendency of local congregations to remain part of a denomination because of traditional loyalty or for other secondary reasons should be rejected. And therefore each local congregation should reflect from time to time (for example each new generation or quarter of a century) in which denomination their calling to be church of Christ can be executed best.



We profess the Scriptural calling that local congregations should live in federational unity with other congregations building on the foundation of God's Word alone (1 Peter 2:6-10). At the same time we should be aware of the danger that belonging to an erring denomination can negatively influence local congregations in executing their Christ given duty (Acts 4:19-20; Romans 9:6; 2 Timothy 2:16-19).

Christ's church gathering work is dynamic and each new generation has the task to put the call to unity into practice (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). In this regard we reject the ecumenical movement pursuing a unity not founded upon the Word of God alone. Christ gives unity in the truth (John 17:17; 1 John 1:6; 2:4; 3 John 1:4). Any other unity is not a gift of Christ."



Thank you for your attention!