

The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

**Acts of the 38th Synod of the
Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
held at the FRC Bethal
28th April – 1st May, 2014**



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Members and foreign delegates of Synod Bethal 2014

Top row from left to right: Br. E. Byker, Rev. C. van Wyk, Rev. S. 't Hart (FRCA), Rev. J.A. Breytenbach, Rev. C. Kleijn, Br. W. Spyker (FRCA), Rev. T. Lodder (CanRC), Br. C. Roose, Rev. D.M. Boersma (sitting), Br. C. du Plessis, Br. R. Raimond, Br. A.C. Bijker, Rev. F.J. Bijzet, Prof. A.J. de Visser (CanRC).
Bottom row from left to right: Rev. P.G. Boon, Br. T.W. Tamane, Rev. B.A. Matlaela, Br. W. Hofsink, Rev. M.P. Magagula

List of Abbreviations used in these Acts

APS	Admission Point Score
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BBK	Deputate Betrekkinge met Buitelandse Kerke
BTh	Bachelor of Theology
C&R	ICRC Constitution and Regulations
CanRC	Canadian and American Reformed Churches
CO	Church Order
CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
DGKN	De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland
DRCA	Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad
DRCAf	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
DVN	De Verre Naaste (RCNL organisation)
FR	Free Reformed
FRC	Free Reformed Church
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland
GKNv	Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
MDiv	Master of Divinity
MDSA	Mission Deputies South Africa
NGKA	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika
RCNL	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
RCNZ	Reformed Churches in New Zealand
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa
ZDNL	Zendings Deputaten Nederland

Acts of the 38th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa held at the FRC Bethal from 28th April – 1st May, 2014

Day 1 : Monday 28 April 2014

Article 1 Opening

Rev. Dr. Breytenbach led a prayer meeting prior to the synod meeting. On behalf of the convening church, the FRC Bethal, Dr. Breytenbach called the meeting to order.

Article 2 Credentials

The credentials were examined and both classes were found to be properly represented except for one delegate from Classis North who was absent during a part of the first day of the synod. He arrived during the afternoon session.

Classis North delegated:

Primary:

Rev. P.G. Boon

Rev. J.J. Drijfhout

Rev. M.P. Magagula

Elder W. Hofsink

Elder A.C. Bijker

Elder T.W. Tamane

Alternates:

Rev. B.A. Matlaela

Rev. S. Matlhokoane

Rev. D.M. Boersma

Elder P. Mogotsi

Elder D. Drijfhout

Elder T. de Wit

The following delegates from Classis North were present at synod:

Revv. Boon, Magagula and Matlaela and Elders Hofsink, Bijker and Tamane.

Classis South delegated:

Primary:

Rev. F.J. Bijzet

Rev. J.A. Breytenbach

Rev. C. Kleijn

Elder E. Byker

Elder C. du Plessis

Elder J. Struwig

Alternates:

Rev. C. Van Wyk

Rev. P. Abrahams

Elder F. Raimond

Elder R. Raimond

Elder W. Bijker

Elder J. De Haan

The following delegates from Classis South were present at synod:

Revv. Bijzet, Breytenbach and Kleijn and Elders Byker, Du Plessis and R. Raimond.

Article 3 Election of Officers

As Officers of Synod were elected for the duration of synod:

Chairman: Rev. P.G. Boon

Vice-chairman: Rev. C. Kleijn

Scribe: Elder E. Byker

Br. C. Roose as stated clerk was also present to minute the proceedings of Synod and assist the officers of Synod where help was needed.

Article 4 Constitution of Synod

After the election of the Officers of Synod, Rev Breytenbach declared synod constituted. The new Officers of Synod took their seats and the new chairman, Rev. Boon thanked Rev. Breytenbach and the congregation of the FRC Bethal for the preparation of synod.

Article 5 Welcome to delegates of sister churches, advisors and observers

From our sister churches, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and the Canadian and American Reformed Churches sent two delegates to attend synod. Rev. S. 't Hart and br. W. Spyker from the FRCA and Rev. T. Lodder from the CanRC provided their credentials, which showed that they were properly delegated by their churches. The credential letter from the CanRC also revealed that Prof. A.J. de Visser was also delegated by these churches and the meeting was informed that he would arrive, the Lord willing, on Tuesday morning. Rev. C. van Wyk, who was present as a representative of Classis South in connection with a proposal for Review of Mission, was also welcomed and requested to act as advisor for the duration of the synod.

Article 6 Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity

Everyone rose on request by the chairman to show their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.

Article 7 Adjournment

Synod adjourned for a short time to allow the Officers of Synod to discuss some arrangements, after which synod reconvened.

Article 8 Time schedule and committees and adoption of agenda and meeting procedures

Synod adopted the agenda proposed by the convening church with no additions or alterations.

The Officers of Synod proposed to discuss the proposal by Classis South, regarding a review of mission policies, together with the report by the Mission Deputies of South Africa.

They also proposed to appoint a committee to advise synod on the Report by MDSA and the mission proposals by Classis South, with the following members: Rev. C. van Wyk, Rev. M.P. Magagula and Elder A.C. Bijker.

Both proposals were adopted by synod.

A proposal to shorten the meetings, to be closed at 20:00, was also adopted by synod. The Officers of Synod proposed and the meeting adopted a revised time schedule as follows:

Morning session 1	08:30 – 10:00
Coffee/tea break	10:00 – 10:30
Morning session 2	10:30 – 12:00
Lunch	12:00 – 13:00
Afternoon session 1	13:00 – 14:30
Coffee/tea break	14:30 – 15:00
Afternoon session 2	15:00 – 16:30
Open window	16:30 – 17:30
Dinner	17:30 – 18:30
Evening session	18:30 – 20:00

Language policy: According to Synod Rules it was pointed out that everyone was allowed to speak in his home language and that a translator would be arranged if required.

Article 9 Greeting addresses

A letter from the GK Bethal with thanks for invitation to attend the prayer meeting and best wishes for our synod was read with appreciation (Appendix 1).

A message was read by Rev S 't Hart on behalf of the FRCA (Appendix 2).

A message was read by Rev. T Lodder on behalf of CanRC (Appendix 3).

A letter from Deputies BBK on behalf of RCNL was read. The letter indicated BBK's regret not to be able to attend the FRCSA synod due to their involvement in their own synod (Appendix 4).

Article 10 Deputies Internet

Material: Report from Deputies Internet Communication (Appendix 5).

Delegate br. A.C. Bijker represented deputies.

Synod decided:

1. To approve a budget of R 5000 for further website developments.
Grounds:
Deputies consider this amount as sufficient.
2. Not to budget for a paid administrator.
Grounds:
Responsibility for the website content should be divided between stakeholders, such as congregations and deputies. A paid administrator is therefore superfluous.
3. To approve the policy as proposed in Appendix A of the Report from Deputies Internet Communication (Refer to Report of Deputies Internet Communication Appendix A).
4. To approve continuation of new website development according to the approved policy.
5. To give the Deputies Internet Communication the right to allow, refuse or remove an entry or article in case of misbehaviour or placing of inappropriate information.
Ground:
Although the responsibility for the contents of the website is shared between stakeholders, a certain degree of overall control is required.
6. To reappoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To continue with a website development as per the approved policy.
Grounds:
The FRCSA needs an official website.
 - b. To find a capable person from each church in the federation to act as contact person.
Grounds:
Local churches should use the website to provide information about their own congregation.
 - c. To exercise the right to allow, refuse or remove an entry or article in case of misbehaviour or placing of inappropriate information.
Ground:
A certain degree of overall control is required.

- d. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- e. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod

Article 11 Additional delegate arriving

Delegate br. W. Hofsink arrived and was welcomed by the chairman. He showed his agreement with the Three Forms of Unity by rising from his chair.

Article 12 Responses to greeting messages from sister churches

Rev. Breytenbach responded to the message from the FRCA. He expressed our gratitude for the renewed offer to support our churches where necessary.

Rev. Kleijn responded to the message from the CanRC. He also expressed our gratitude for the renewed offer for support and states that, although it is a good thing to strive to reduce our dependence on support by our sister churches, we should not overdo it.

Br. Roose responded to the message from the RCNL. He expressed gratitude for the brotherly letter.

Article 13 Deputies Days of Prayer from Classis North ad Article 69 CO.

Material: Report on days of prayer by Classis North (Appendix 6).

Synod decided:

1. To appoint Classis South to take responsibility for calling days of prayer until the next synod.

Grounds:

It is customary to alternate between the two classes.

2. To instruct classis that a congregation can be tasked to make the necessary arrangements.

Grounds:

To task a congregation to arrange days of prayer is still within the spirit of the CO.

Article 14 Adjournment

Br. A.C. Bijker led the evening devotions by requesting the meeting to sing Ps 37: 2 and by Scripture reading from Proverbs 15: 1-3, 16, 19, 20 followed by prayer.

Synod adjourned for the night.

Day 2: Tuesday 29 April 2014

Article 15 Opening devotions

Br. E. Byker led the opening devotions by requesting the meeting to sing Hymn 48: 4 from the Book of Praise and by a meditation based on John 10: 1 – 15, followed by prayer.

Article 16 Deputies for Correspondence with the Government.

Material: Report of Deputies for Correspondence with Government (Appendix 7).

Delegate Rev. Magagula represented the deputies and explained some aspects of the deputies' work.

Synod decided:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

- a. In matters pertaining to the interest of the country, in happiness or in sorrow, depending on the circumstances, to condole with or congratulate the government, whether nationally, provincially or locally.
- b. To react appropriately on government measures, whether nationally, provincially or locally, that compromise the protection of the preaching of the Gospel.
- c. To testify to government in cases where the government, whether nationally, provincially or locally, transgress the universal law of God.
- d. To reflect on the specific nature and function of the mandate to testify to government and to report thereon to the next synod.
- e. To receive requests from government, whether nationally, provincially and locally, and to make such requests known to the churches.
- f. To stimulate, inform and monitor the congregations within the FRCSA to promote an active approach to government, whether nationally, provincially or locally, and investigate the possibility to react to the invitation from government on new and revised laws.
- g. To stay in contact with churches, the Parliamentary Desk, Christian initiatives and political parties regarding the furthering of our goals using the most appropriate way of co-operation.
- h. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- i. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 17 Welcome to new attendants

The chairman welcomed new arrivals, Prof. A.J. de Visser, delegate from the CanRC, and Rev D.M. Boersma, deputy for DRCA. They showed agreement with the Three Forms of Unity by rising from their chairs. Both were invited to act as advisors to synod during their presence.

Rev. P. Kurpershoek and Rev. P. Venter, as representatives of the RCSA, were welcomed as observers.

Article 18 Deputies Afrikaans Bible Translation

Material: Report of Deputies Afrikaans Bible Translation (Appendix 8).

Synod decided:

1. To adopt the report.
2. To conclude that deputies fulfilled their mandate.
3. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To monitor and be involved with new developments, regarding the new translation of the Bible into Afrikaans.
 - b. To take part in the proceedings of the KA (Kerklieke Advieskomitee), and if necessary with reference to our confession regarding the written Word of God and the distinction between canonical and apocryphal books.

- c. To inform the churches of progress and developments with the Afrikaans translation.
- d. To appoint readers to work with deputies.
- e. To keep the appointed readers up to date with the progress of the Afrikaans translation, and involve them as needed.
- f. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- g. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 19 Address by Rev. Kurpershoek on behalf of the RCSA

Rev. Kurpershoek conveyed greetings and best wishes from the Reformed Churches in South Africa and expressed the desire to intensify the contacts between the RCSA and the FRCSA. He urged the meeting to honestly explain what still separates our bonds of churches. He requested our churches to pray for next year's RCSA synod to stay on the right track (Appendix 9).

Article 20 Deputies for Relations with Churches in South Africa

Material:

Report of Deputies for Relations with Churches in South Africa (Appendix 10).

Synod decided:

1. To continue contact with the RCSA on a national level in view of strengthening the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith.
Ground:
To strive towards unity between believers is a Biblical command.
2. That in the discussions attention should be given to the RCSA's contacts with other churches as well as the issue of hermeneutics concerning the issues mentioned below:
 - i. What is the official RCSA approach to hermeneutics?
 - ii. The so-called *Cloete versification (Cloete omdigting)*.
 - iii. The RCSA Synod's decision on women as deacons.In the discussions deputies should take into account that some churches have ordained female elders contrary to RCSA synod decisions.
Ground:
Clarity regarding above issues should help to promote unity.
3. That local contacts between churches of the FRCSA and the RCSA should be stimulated with the aim of strengthening one another in the furthering of the true Biblical doctrine and lifestyle.
4. That contacts with Dutch Reformed Church in Africa - DRCAf (NG Kerk in Afrika – NGKA) should be continued in order to get to know them better and to support each other to maintain the true faith.
5. That contacts with English speaking churches with whom there is collaboration with regard to training of our theological students should be maintained.

6. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To continue contact with the RCSA on a national level in view of strengthening the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith. In the discussions attention should be given to contacts with other churches as well as the issue of hermeneutics.
 - b. To take responsibility for stimulating, assisting and monitoring local contacts between churches of the FRCSA and RCSA, with the aim of strengthening one another in the furthering of the true Biblical doctrine and lifestyle.
 - c. To advise local churches with questions and about steps towards unity.
 - d. To continue contacts with Dutch Reformed Church in Africa - DRCAf (NG Kerk in Afrika – NGKA) in order to get to know them better and to support each other to maintain the true faith.
 - e. To pursue contacts with English speaking churches with whom there is collaboration with regard to training of our theological students.
 - f. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - g. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 21 Session closure for lunch

Br. R. Raimond led in Scripture reading from James 3: 1-12. He requested the meeting to sing Ps 138: 1 and led in prayer. The meeting was reopened after lunch.

Article 22 Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

The Vice-Chairman, Rev. Kleijn, acted as chairman during the discussion of the report by DRCA, as Rev. Boon was involved as a member of DRCA.

Material:

- A. Majority Report of Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (Appendix 11).
- B. Minority Report regarding the relation with the GKNv/RCNL (Appendix 12).

Rev. D.M. Boersma was present as a representative of DRCA as well as of the Minority Report.

Rev. J.A. Breytenbach, Rev. P.G. Boon and br. C. Roose represented the Majority Report.

Synod decided:

1. Regarding churches in the Netherlands :

- The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCNL);
- De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGKN);
- The Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

- 1.1. To continue with a sister church relation with the RCNL according to the adopted rules.

Grounds:

- i. Although we have concerns that impact on the foundation under ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches of the RCNL have the responsibility and also the ability to refute them when convened in 2014 on their Synod of Ede.

- ii. As sister churches we remain responsible to encourage the RCNL to remain faithful to the Reformed doctrine.
- 1.2. To accept the proposal by the majority of the DRCA to send a letter to the synod of the RCNL in which our concerns are indicated.
- 1.3. To rephrase the letter, proposed by the majority of DRCA with detailed reasons for our concerns.
- 1.4. To appoint a committee to propose a rephrased letter with the following members: Rev Kleijn, br. E. Byker and br. W. Hofsink.
- 1.5. To send a Dutch translation of the letter to the RCNL synod.
- 1.6. To declare a letter from the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN) as admissible and to instruct DRCA to send a response in which the GKN is informed about the synods decisions.
- 1.7. Not to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* (DGKN).
Grounds:
 - i. The FRCSA have at this moment a responsibility towards the RCNL.
 - ii. The FRCSA cannot accede to the demand of the DGKN to sever ecclesiastical fellowship with the CanRC, which is put forward as a precondition by the DGKN.
- 1.8. To mandate DRCA to continue investigating the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN).
Ground:
The fact that the members of the GKN were in a sister church relation with us not long ago, necessitates us to continue to strive for restoring unity.
- 1.9. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To continue with a sister church relation with the RCNL according to the adopted rules.
 - b. Not to proceed with preparations to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* (DGKN). In case of members from this federation coming to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or as guests to the Lord's Supper – would they make this request – only after a conversation with them.
 - c. To remain updated as to the developments in the DGKN.
Ground:
The fact that members of the DGKN were in a sister church relation with us not long ago (before the Liberation of 2003), necessitates us to continue to strive for restoring unity.
 - d. To continue investigating the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN), and also to acquaint themselves with the evaluations and judgments of RCNL's major assemblies with regard to congregations and ministers now belonging to this federation, in order to formulate a substantiated proposal to the next synod whether the Lord expects the FRCSA to enter into a sister church relationship with this federation. In the meantime, in case of members from this federation coming to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or as guests to the Lord's Supper – would they make this request – only after a conversation with them.

Ground:

The fact that the members of the GKN were in a sister church relation with us not long ago, necessitates us to continue to strive for restoring unity.

- e. To closely cooperate with the deputies of the CanRC and FRCA in studying the developments on the Dutch ecclesiastical scene.

Ground:

The FRCSA is a small federation; we have limited manpower to study the developments on our own.

- f. To call upon the churches and consistories to remember in their prayers to the LORD the problematic ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands when deemed necessary by deputies.

Ground:

Our Saviour taught us to pray for the church in John 17. We should not underestimate the power of prayer.

- g. To send two delegates to the RCNL Synod of Ede 2014.

Ground:

Synod Pretoria 2011 only budgeted to send one delegate. The present situation necessitates a delegation of two persons.

- h. To send two delegates to the next RCNL Synod.

Ground:

The present situation necessitates a delegation of two persons.

- i. To inform the RCNL, DGKN and GKN in writing about the decisions concerning them.

Article 23 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned to allow an open period for committee meetings and preparation. Before dinner Rev. C. van Wyk requested us to sing Ps. 25: 4 and led in Scripture reading from Gal. 6: 1 - 10 and in prayer.

Day 3: Wednesday 30 April 2014

Article 24 Opening devotions and reopening

Rev. F.J. Bijzet led the opening devotions by requesting the meeting to sing Psalm 18: 1 from the Book of Praise and by a meditation based on Phil. 1. After singing Ps. 25: 2, 6 the meeting was reconvened.

The chairman welcomed everyone present, including Rev. Kurpershoek, who was again given the status of observer.

Article 25 Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (continued)

The committee for rephrasing the proposed "Letter of Concern" distributed a draft proposal for the meeting to study and decide on later.

Synod decided regarding:

2. Rules for sister church relations:

- 2.1. To adopt the new version of the Rules for Relations with Sister Churches as proposed by DRCA (Refer to DRCA Report Appendix 1).

- 2.2. To include the adopted Rules in the FRCSA's Synod Rules as soon as an updated version of the Synod Rules is produced.

Ground:

The rules for correspondence with sister churches should be readily available.

3. Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

- 3.1. To maintain sister church relations with the FRCA

Grounds:

- i. The FRCA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- ii. Personal visits are an effective means of developing, building and maintaining good relations.
- iii. The FRCA and the FRCSA are small church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By maintaining good contacts and by learning from each other, both church federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.

- 3.2. To instruct DRCA:

- j. To continue sister church relations with the FRCA according to the adopted rules.
- k. To send one delegate to attend Synod Baldivis 2015 of the FRCA and to instruct this delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.

4. Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC)

- 4.1. To maintain sister church relations with the CanRC

Grounds:

- i. The CanRC give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- ii. Personal visits are an effective means of developing, building and maintaining good relations.
- iii. The CanRC and the FRCSA are church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By maintaining good contacts and by learning from each other, both church federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.
- iv. Through presentations to the Canadian churches we show our gratitude for their support and we make our churches better known.

- 4.2. To instruct and authorise DRCA:

- l. To maintain sister church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules.
- m. To send a delegate to Synod Dunnville, Ontario, 2016 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA .

5. Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)

To instruct DRCA:

- n. To maintain contact with the RCNZ at the present level of exchanging information, so that we may remain informed about developments in their churches.
- o. To remain informed about the ecclesiastical relations between the RCNZ and the FRCA.

Grounds:

- i. Based on the limited information obtained by DRCA, the RCNZ seems to be a church federation which wants to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions.
- ii. According to decisions of previous Synods we should utilise our limited manpower to focus on our own region.
- iii. The FRCA is in a better position to maintain more intensive contacts with the RCNZ.
- iv. For the sake of immigrants from our churches who wish to settle in New Zealand, it would be wise to remain informed about developments in the RCNZ.

6. Churches in North America

To instruct DRCA:

- p. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in Northern America via the CanRC.

Ground:

According to the policy adopted by Synod Bethal 2000, to focus on our own region, it is better to leave more intensive contacts to the CanRC.

7. Churches in Africa

To instruct and mandate DRCA:

- q. To remain in contact with the ICRC regarding future regional conferences.
- r. To ask the mission boards of the FRCSA to delegate at least one of the missionaries to the next Africa Regional ICRC conference.
- s. To share the cost for attending this conference with the appropriate mission board.
- t. To consider the feasibility of actions by the FRCSA, in cases of possible contacts with churches in areas where ICRC – or sister churches are not active.

Grounds:

- i. The missionaries are the people who profit most from the ICRC regional missions conferences.
- ii. Since the missionaries and mission boards profit from sending a delegate, it is reasonable to share the cost.
- iii. The FRCSA and its members have a responsibility to promote the proclamation of the Gospel wherever reasonably possible.

8. ICRC

8.1. To continue ICRC membership.

Grounds:

- i. The ICRC is an organisation which adheres to its Reformed basis.
- ii. The ICRC provides a platform to maintain contacts with Reformed churches all over the world.
- iii. The ICRC provides us with opportunities to co-ordinate and structure our mission activities in a more effective way.
- iv. The ICRC offers opportunities to promote the proclamation of the gospel in our African continent.

8.2. To approve the revised version of the ICRC's Constitution and Regulations (Refer to DRCA Report Appendix 4d).

Grounds:

- i. The Basis of the Constitution is not amended in the revised version.
- ii. The newly proposed document seems to be more applicable in present ecclesiastical situations.
- iii. The newly proposed and adopted C&R is more detailed in its description of relevant items.
- iv. The newly proposed Committees structure offers opportunities to become more effective in promoting the proclamation of the Gospel in the African region.

8.3. To instruct and authorise DRCA:

u. To send two delegates to the ICRC 2017 conference in Hamilton, Canada.

Grounds:

- i. Representation at ICRC conferences is important in order to be aware of the opportunities the ICRC offers.
 - ii. FRCSA delegates found that the input by two delegates to the conference was far more effective than in the case of one delegate.
 - iii. In cases where voting was required, consultation between the two delegates led to a more responsible voting behaviour.
- v. To maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to find ways to support the proclamation of the Word of God and leadership training by those churches in their home countries, in co-operation with other ICRC member churches.

Grounds:

- i. The African member churches expressed their need for help to remain Reformed and to proclaim the Gospel in their home countries, as well as a need for leadership training in newly formed congregations.
 - ii. The FRCSA and the RCSA, as African church federations, are in a better position to provide certain forms of support to those churches, than churches from other continents.
- w. To disseminate more information on the ICRC to the churches and to stimulate feedback.

Grounds:

- i. The FRCSA are not fully utilising the opportunities provided by our ICRC contacts.

- ii. Attending ICRC conferences is a rather costly exercise and can only be justified if the FRCSA utilise the opportunities provided by the ICRC contacts.

9. FRCSA Information booklet

To instruct DRCA:

- x. To keep the booklet *Introducing the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* up to date, to adjust it when specific needs arise, and to publish it electronically through the FRCSA website.

Grounds:

- i. Since the booklet contains church details, it should be kept up-to-date.
- ii. Several churches use the information contained in the booklet in their own publications. It is therefore not necessary to provide printed copies.

10. Liaison for the churches

To instruct DRCA:

- y. To provide the church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad.
- z. To co-ordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad.

Ground:

There is an on-going need for the liaison function of DRCA since they gather information regarding churches abroad.

11. Budget 2014 - 2017

To approve the proposed budget.

12. Reporting

To instruct DRCA:

- aa. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- bb. To report to the next Synod and propose recommendations according to Article 11 of the Synod Rules.

Article 26 Revision Liturgical Forms and Form Prayers

Material:

- A. Report Deputies for the Review of Liturgical Forms and Prayers (Appendix 14).
- B. Rapport van Deputate vir Hersiening van Liturgiese Formuliere en Gebede (Appendix 15).

Rev. Kleijn represented Deputies for the Review of Liturgical Forms and Prayers.

Synod decided:

1. Not to make use of the revised RCSA Liturgical Forms and Prayers at this stage.
2. To continue to use our own respective Forms.
3. To provisionally approve the use of the text of the new Form of the GKSA for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper within our churches (for use in Afrikaans, English and Sotho services – the last two in translated form), in alternation with the forms already in use.

4. To appoint new deputies knowledgeable in Afrikaans and theology with the following mandate:
 - a. To study the Liturgical Forms in order to establish where they can be improved and to provide the next synod with appropriate recommendation.
 - b. To compile five new Prayers, of which four are for use in Worship services: 1) A confession of sin, 2) A prayer before the sermon 3) a prayer before the preaching of the Catechism, 4) and a prayer of thanksgiving to be used after the sermon, 5) A prayer for use in family worship, in English, Afrikaans and Sotho and to actively involve churches in the process of establishing new prayer forms.
 - c. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - d. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 27 Adjournment for lunch

Br. Tamane requested the meeting to sing Hymn 40: 1 and 2 from the Book of Praise. He led in Scripture reading from 1 Tim. 5: 17-27 and Prov. 22 and in prayer. The meeting was reconvened after lunch.

Article 28 Deputies Sustainability

Material:

Report of Deputies Sustainability (Appendix 16).

Brs. H. Pouwels and C. Roose were present as representatives of Deputies Sustainability.

Synod decided:

- 1 That all deputies should submit in time a well-developed strategic plan and 3 to 5 year projected budget to fund the operational plan.

Grounds:

 - i. Strategic plans and medium to long term budgets are basic requirements for sustainability.
 - ii. Medium – to long term planning can help deputies to monitor the progress of their mandates and to make timely amendments when necessary.
- 2 To appoint a deputyship to organise an Indaba, halfway between two synods, inviting all FR churches and deputies. The task to organise an Indaba should be alternated between the various deputies.

Grounds:

 - i. Indabas can help to prevent or solve misunderstandings.
 - ii. Indabas can help deputies to make a more accurate assessment of situations and to formulate more effective recommendations to synods.
 - iii. Indabas can improve the cooperation between the deputies and the churches.
- 3 That all deputies should submit an interim report at an Indaba in between the synods.

Grounds:

 - i. Interim reports between synods will force deputies to start their activities at an earlier stage.
 - ii. Interim reports will reduce the workload of deputies during the final months before synods.

- 4 That the treasurer should provide a financial overview at the Indaba.
Grounds:
 - i. An interim report will help to monitor the financial situation and to make timely adaptation when required.
 - ii. An interim report will help consistories to fulfil their financial obligations in time.
- 5 To Implement the “Differentiated Contribution model” as from 2015.
Grounds:
 - i. Synod should comply with decision 3 of Article 11 of the Acts of Synod 2012 by facilitating the implementation of the contribution model.
 - ii. A differentiated contribution model is more suitable and more justified system for a church federation with huge differences in household income levels.
- 6 That church councils should report their calculation re the contribution ability of their congregation to the Synod Treasurer 6 months before the next synod.
Grounds:
 - i. Only church councils can provide a more or less accurate indication of the contribution ability of their congregation.
 - ii. The Synod Treasurer should be informed about each congregation’s contribution ability to enable him to calculate the required contributions per congregation for the next inter-synodical period.
- 7 To dissolve Deputies Sustainability after the synod of May 2014.
Grounds:
 - i. Deputies Sustainability were appointed to address a specific problem. As this problem is properly addressed and guide lines for a solution of the problem are provided, there is no need for a further functioning of the deputyship.
 - ii. The number of deputyships should always be kept minimal.

The discussion about a proposal to merge Deputies Curators and Deputies Article 19 CO (Needy students) was postponed until the discussion about the Reports by Deputies Curators and Deputies Article 19 CO.

Article 29 Mission Deputies

Material:

- A. Report Mission Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches in SA (Appendix 17).
- B. Proposal by Classis South: “Development and Training in the Mission context” (Appendix 18).

Br. R. Snijder was present as representative of the MDSA and provided a summary of highlights of the report.

Synod appointed a committee to advise regarding the way to merge the report of MDSA and the proposal for review of mission of Classis South. As committee members were appointed br. A.C. Bijker, Rev. C. van Wyk and Rev. M.P. Magagula.

Br. A.C. Bijker and Rev. C. van Wyk reported on behalf of the committee. They pointed out that different views on what mission really is, exist between institutions involved in the FRCSA’s mission activities. Synod should give guidance to promote unity in the approach to mission work by all stakeholders.

Synod decided:

1. To mandate MDSA to consider requests for support outside of the current agreement of cooperation and these requests have to be assessed based on the following principles and pre-conditions:
 - i. It has to be related to the spreading of the gospel and has to have as ultimate goal the conversion of sinners and the gathering of Christ's church.
 - ii. Money can only be spent for such activities when there is a pre-defined reserve limit, to prevent jeopardising current mission work.
 - iii. The approval of ZDNL (Dutch Deputies) will be required insofar as ZDNL contributions are used.
 - iv. The Agreement of Cooperation has to be extended to cover this additional mandate.
 - v. Funding for projects relating to responsibilities of other Deputies and Churches within the FRCSA needs to be assessed in conjunction with such deputies.

2. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To continue the contact between the mission churches of the FRCSA and the supporting churches abroad.
 - b. To act, within this contact, in accordance with the agreement of cooperation, which synod made with the supporting churches abroad and the agreement of cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches.
 - c. To receive annually the policies and work plans from the mission churches, to receive the statements of the previous year, and the budget for the next year.
 - d. To consolidate the various budgets and present them to the deputies of the supporting churches.
 - e. To distribute, in accordance with the approved budgets of the mission churches, the incoming funds.
 - f. To ensure that the money is spent in accordance with the budgets, policies and work plans.
 - g. To assess the churches with the equivalent of R190 per member per year according to the old system, for calendar years 2014 – 2017, yet henceforth calculated for the different congregations according to the newly adopted differentiated contribution model.
 - h. To request from the mission churches the minutes and reports related to mission work.
 - i. To coordinate necessary mission affairs of mutual interest of the various mission fields.
 - j. To review the "Agreement of Co-operation between the FRCSA" and to have the Agreement signed by all co-operating churches.
 - k. To communicate funding requirements to consistories on an annual basis.
 - l. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - m. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Having decided the above, Synod turned to the proposal from Classis South regarding Development and Training in the Mission Context and concluded that the decisions above sufficiently address the various points proposed by Classis South namely:

- i. That Mission can include Development and Training.
- ii. That gifts in the mission congregations be harnessed and that individuals can be employed part-time or full-time and receive just remuneration for it.
- iii. That mission work be integrated in such a fashion that word and deed are combined, not only in the field but also in the respective committees. With this principle in mind, the consistories will have to carefully consider the competencies of mission committee members.
- iv. That it would be advisable for mission committees to develop a more unified approach.
- v. That there be greater mutual cooperation and liaison between the committees and deputyships.

Article 30 Deputies Article 11 CO (Needy Churches)

Material:

Report of Deputies Needy Churches (Appendix 19)

Br H. Pouwels was present as representative of deputies

Synod decided:

1. That the FRCSA contributions towards Article 11 CO are to be R380 000 in 2014, R400 000 in 2015, R420 000 in 2016 and R435 000 in 2017.

Grounds:

- i. The amounts increase by the expected annual inflation.
- ii. The amounts are required to fund the currently required support as budgeted.

2. That support will only be given based on the required information available. (Refer to the flow chart attached to the Deputies report).

Grounds:

- i. Congregations need to be financially responsible and give account of their financial expenses, income and ability. If the financial skills are not available in house, these skills can be outsourced and reimbursed by Deputies Article 11 CO.
- ii. Deputies Article 11 CO need the financial information to decide on the amount of support that can be granted.

3. That it will not be possible to assist needy churches who do not contribute according to ability.

Ground:

All churches should contribute to ability. Even the poor have to pay tithes, also the needy churches should contribute based on the differentiated contribution model presented by Deputies Sustainability.

4. To appoint a new member for Deputies Article 11 CO in the place of the outgoing deputy, br. H. Pouwels.

Ground:

Br Pouwels served two terms and wishes to be released from membership of Deputies Article 11 CO.

5. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To assess the churches for the calendar years 2014- 2017 as follows: for 2014: R380 000, for 2015: R400 000, for 2016: R420 000 and for 2017: R435 000.
 - b. To consider any new request for financial support coming from one of the churches and, once the merits of the request have been ascertained, to send a proposal to the other churches to help the needy church according to ability.
 - c. To use the guidelines, as determined by Synod 2011, as a framework for deputies' decision making process.
 - d. To organise an Indaba according to Article 28, Synod decided: 2, of these Acts, during the end of 2015 or beginning of 2016.
 - e. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - f. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 31 Session closure for lunch

Br. Du Plessis requested the meeting to sing Ps 130: 1 and led in Scripture reading from Marc 7: 31 – 37 and in prayer. The meeting was reopened after lunch.

Article 32 Letter of Concern to Synod RCNL 2014

The committee tasked with rephrasing the proposed "Letter of Concern" to the RCNL, distributed a revised version of the letter which was tabled for discussion.

Synod decided:

To approve and adopt the letter in its final form (Appendix 13).

Article 33 Deputies Article 19 CO (Needy Students)

Material:

Synod Report 2014, Deputies Article 19 CO (Appendix 20).

Synod decided:

1. To merge Deputies Article 19 CO with Deputies Curators.

Grounds:
By merging the two deputyships, new deputies will be able to work more effectively for the purpose of overall support for needy students.
2. To incorporate a mandate for support of needy students into the mandate for Deputies Curators.
3. That Deputies Article 19 CO are normally only responsible for supporting needy students in bursaries limited to the actual study costs, in line with the decisions of Synod 2012.
 - 3.1. This approach will have to be phased in with regard to current students, and cannot be implemented immediately by deputies. New students will from the start be dealt with in this way.
 - 3.2. Deputies have to encourage students, parents and churches to accept their respective responsibilities in this regard.

- 3.3. The sequence to follow when funds are needed to study should be parents first, then churches, and lastly the bond of churches (deputies), and not the other way round.
4. A reserve fund should be implemented in order to make provision for possible new students in need if the agreement with our Sister churches in the Netherlands via ZDNL/DVN is not renewed after expiration the end of 2015.
5. To allocate the equivalent of the following amounts of money (according to the old system) for the purpose of supporting needy students: R 100, R 120 and R 140 per year respectively for the calendar years 2015 – 2017, to be calculated per congregation according to the adopted differentiated contribution model.
6. To appoint one deputy from Deputies Article 19 CO, as appointed by Synod 2011, as additional member of Deputies Curators, with the following mandate:
 - a. To financially support students who want to study for the ministry of the Word and who are approved by Deputies Curators in accordance with Article 19 CO and the synodical regulations.
 - b. To implement plans to create a reserve fund.
 - c. To report to the next synod, within the frame of the Report by Deputies Curators, according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 34 Deputies Curators

Material:

Report of Deputies Curators (Appendix 21).

The Vice-Chairman, Rev. Kleijn acted as chairman during the discussion of this item as Rev. Boon was a member of Deputies Curators.

Synod decided:

1. To set an APS of 25 as the admission requirement for theological studies in the FRCSA.
Ground:
To ensure that students have the academic competence to follow the theological studies according to requirements, outcomes and curriculum adopted at previous synods.
2. Prospective students for theological studies must apply for access through admission procedures set by curators.
Ground:
Prospective students must be assessed by curators to ensure that only persons with adequate aptitudes and competencies are admitted to the studies.
3. In cases where deputies curators and mentor(s) conclude that the applicant for theological studies lacks basic competencies for theological studies, the student will follow a foundation course that is determined by the curators, and pass this course successfully.
Ground:
Many prospective students, particularly from disadvantaged communities, lack basic knowledge, skills and understanding with regard to study methods, tuition language, Reformed doctrines and church order. The normal academic study trajectory will be too difficult and the study outcomes inadequate for the outcomes and profiles set by synod 2006. The foundation course will cover these basic elements of theological studies.

4. Theological students must follow one of the following trajectories:
 - 4.1. Three years BA language studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution (university), followed by a four year MDiv course at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton. This trajectory will include practical work in South Africa during the CRTS summer recess.
 - 4.2. Foundation course, followed by a BA languages studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution, followed by a four year MDiv at the CRTS. This trajectory will include practical work in South Africa during the CRTS summer recess.
 - 4.3. Foundation course, followed by a BTh at an accredited tertiary education institution (currently Mukhanyo Theological College or George Whitfield Theological College), followed by at least two years of language studies (Hebrew II and Greek II) and at least one year at CRTS.

Ground: Due to contextual factors in the education and family life of prospective students, students have different aptitudes and competencies when applying for access to theological studies. The trajectories make provision for addressing the challenges that are the result of such factors to ensure that the outcomes set by synod 2006 are achieved.
5. Curators and mentor(s) can advise students to change their study trajectory at any stage of their studies.

Ground: Due to different competencies of students they may fail to achieve the expected outcomes. Curators and mentors must advise to ensure that students are redirected in time to an optimum study trajectory.
6. To merge Deputies Curators with Deputies Article 19 CO, and to appoint one deputy Article 19 CO to become a member of Deputies Curators.

Ground: Experience has shown that two separate deputies dealing with the theological students is too confusing for the students, and too burdensome for a small federation of churches. Furthermore such separation makes fulfilling their mandate more difficult for the deputies.
7. To approve the budget for the period 2015-2017 as proposed in the report of Deputies Curators and to merge it with the approved budget for Deputies Article 19 CO.
8. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To ensure that Synod decisions 1 – 5 above are adhered to.
 - b. To work towards the possibility of presenting the 1st year of the Master of Divinity of the CRTS locally via distance learning.

Ground:
4 years of studies abroad is regarded as a long time.
 - c. To appoint mentors for all students for the coming 3 years until the next synod.

Ground:
Proper spiritual and academic coaching during the whole course of studies is essential to work towards the outcomes set by the churches for prospective ministers.

- d. To present on an annual basis a training opportunity for office bearers, a men's conference, and a pastors' seminar for the churches.
Ground:
Ongoing training of (potential) office bearers in the churches is of vital importance. It is also good for office bearers from the different local churches to meet one another from time to time.
- e. To offer all ministers in the FRCSA the possibility to attend a conference once a year and/or to enable ministers to follow post graduate studies.
Ground:
Ongoing learning is essential for all pastors in the federation. The possibility for ongoing learning for a pastor should not be dependent on whether he serves a richer or poorer congregation. Therefore it is advisable to organise the support for ongoing learning on an equal footing via the Deputies Curators.
- f. To financially support approved students according to the parameters set by synod for the study towards the ministry of the Word, in accordance with Article 19 CO and the synodical regulations.
- g. To assess the churches for the calendar years 2015 – 2017 with the equivalent of an amount of R190 for 2015, R215 for 2016 and R240 for 2017 (according to the old system, to be calculated for the various congregations according to the adopted differentiated contribution model.
- h. To implement plans to create a reserve fund.
- i. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- j. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

After finalising the discussion regarding the report of Curators, Rev. Boon took over the chairmanship again.

Article 35 Adjournment

Synod decided to start the Thursday morning session at 08:00 in order to diminish the backlog which had developed during the Wednesday sessions.

Rev. T. Lodder requested the meeting to sing Ps 126 after which he led in a meditation based on Ps. 126 and in prayer. The meeting was closed for the night after singing Hymn 63:1 and 2 from the Book of Praise.

Day 4: Thursday 1 May 2014

Article 36 Reconvening

Rev. S. 't Hart requested the meeting to sing Ps 27: 2. He led in a meditation based on John 14: 1-4 and in prayer. After singing Ps 27: 6 the meeting was reconvened.

Article 37 Deputies Liturgical Music

Material:

Report of Deputies for Liturgical Music (Appendix 22).

Delegate Rev. Matlaela represented deputies.

Synod decided:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

- a. To test the newly proposed versification of the Afrikaans “Geloofsbelydenis” according to the criteria as adopted by Synod 2011.
- b. To ask the Afrikaans speaking churches to respond to the selected hymns before the end of 2015.

Ground:

Deputies will in this way be enabled to take the comments into consideration and bring the final selection before the synod for its final approval.

- c. To publish the hymns in folders and make these available to the churches for convenient use after receiving the comments from the churches (and before final approval by the next Synod).
- d. To consider requests from the churches with regard to subjects on which we do not have a sufficient number of hymns, and to look for hymns on these subjects if deputies are convinced that there indeed a shortage.
- e. To encourage the Sotho-speaking churches to discuss the principles for a good Hymnal.
- f. To test and standardise the hymns that are being sung in the Sotho-speaking churches.
- g. To contact the deputies of the RCSA (GKSA) regarding the revision of the Totius Psalm versification with the intention to:
 - i. relay our wish to retain the Totius versification;
 - ii. investigate whether the revised Totius versification can be used for our Psalter.
- h. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
- i. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 38 Deputies Article 49 CO

Material:

- A. Report from Classis South (Appendix 23).
- B. Report from Classis North (Appendix 24).

For the discussions and decisions regarding the Report from Classis North, the Chairman, Rev. Boon handed over the chairmanship to the Vice-Chairman, Rev. Kleijn, as Rev. Boon was involved as one of the deputies.

Synod decided:

1. To adopt both reports.
2. To acknowledge that the matter referred to in the letter attached to the Report about Classis South, was dealt with by the church of Cape Town.
3. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To render services to the classes in accordance with Article 49 CO.
 - b. To submit their reports of a visit to a classis immediately after that visit.
 - c. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 39 Stated Clerk

Material:

Report of Stated Clerk, Archive and Revision of Synod Rules (Appendix 25).

Synod decided:

1. Not to adopt the newly proposed Rules of Synod yet.
Ground:
The proposed Rules of Synod still need some revision.
2. To adopt the proposal to appoint deputies for translation of church documents into Northern Sotho, but to postpone the implementation until the next synod.
Ground:
New English and Afrikaans versions should be adopted before translated versions can be created.
3. That the minimum period for submitting deputies reports should at least be four months before a synod commences.
Ground:
Delegates to synods and church councils should be given enough time to study the reports.
4. To appoint a new deputyship with the following mandate:
 - a. To revise the proposed Rules of Synod.
 - b. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - c. To report to the next synod according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.
Grounds:
 - i. The proposed time schedule is not acceptable.
 - ii. The rules for closed sessions should be formulated in a separate article.
 - iii. The term 'unanimous' should be replaced by 'with common consent'.
 - iv. Rules for the format of deputies reports should be described more precisely to promote consistency.
5. To appoint a Deputy Stated Clerk and Archive with the following mandate:
 - a. To arrange the printing of the Acts of Synod 2014.
 - b. To request appointed deputies to provide information regarding the progress of their mandate on a regular basis.
 - c. To conduct upon instruction from the synod or the convening church the administration of the synod.
 - d. To act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church and to implement an archiving system.
 - e. To eventually merge and publish the revised Church Order and Rules of Synod in all three languages used in our churches, as well as the order of the service, as established in 1990, Article 14.
 - f. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - g. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 40 Synod Treasurer

Material:

Report of Synodical Treasurer (Appendix 26).

Synod decided:

1. To adopt the report with great appreciation.
2. To conditionally approve the following contributions from the churches:

	(2014)	2015	2016	2017
Article 11 CO	Quotum decided by synod 2011	Increase above inflation	Increase above inflation	Increase above inflation
Article 19 CO		R100 per member	R120 per member	R140 per member
Curators		R90 per member	Inflation increase	Inflation increase
MDSA	Quotum decided by synod 2011	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Article 11	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Article 11	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Article 11
Federational	Quotum decided by synod 2011	Inflation increase	Inflation increase	Inflation increase

3. To ask the former Deputies Sustainability to assist with working out the figures in terms of the adopted differentiated model.
4. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - b. To issue semi-annual statements at the end of May and September to the churches.
 - c. To request the churches to settle their accounts within 30 days.
 - d. To assess the churches with the following amounts for the calendar year 2011:
 - i. Denominational expenses: R20 per member.
 - ii. Needy churches: R220 per member.
 - iii. Needy students: R65 per member.
 - e. To cooperate with the previous Deputies Sustainability on the annual assessments.
 - f. To replace the previously accepted collection schedule for the following churches: Belhar, Bethal, Mamelodi and Soshanguve-North and possibly newly instituted churches that will fall within this schedule, with assessments according to the newly adopted differentiated contribution model.
 - g. To pay the deputies the assigned budgets at their request.
 - h. To reimburse travel expenses and other expenses made by deputies at their request.
 - i. To reimburse the air travel expenses of classes at their request.
 - j. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2015 or beginning 2016.
 - k. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 41 Inspection of Treasurer's books

Material:

Report of deputies for Inspection of Treasurer's books (Appendix 27).

Synod decided:

1. To adopt the report.
2. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To audit the books of the synod treasurer annually.
 - b. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 42 Inspection of Archive

Due to a misunderstanding no report was available.

Synod decides:

1. To reaffirm that incoming proposals from classes and outgoing letters are duly signed by chairman and clerk. Electronic scans are accepted in this regard.
2. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. To examine the synodical archive in accordance with the rules of synod.
 - b. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Article 43 Address to State President

Material:

A concept of a letter to the State President (Appendix 28).

Synod decided:

To adopt the proposed letter.

Article 44 Appointments (closed session)

Synod decided:

- 1 To refer in appointment letters to the possibility to co-opt members and to indicate deadlines.
- 2 To appoint:
 - 2.1. Deputies Relations with Churches Abroad.**
Br. H. Moes (convener), Cape Town, Rev. F.J. Bijzet, Cape Town, br. R. Raimond, Cape Town, sr. G. van den Berg, Cape Town.
Contact person for ICRC: Rev. D.M. Boersma, Pretoria-Maranata.
 - 2.2. Deputies Relations with churches in South Africa.**
Br. C. Roose (convener), Pretoria, Rev. P.G. Boon, Pretoria-Maranata; Rev. J.A. Breytenbach, Bethal; Rev. J.J. Drijfhout, Pretoria.
 - 2.3. Deputies Revision Liturgical Forms and Form Prayers.**
Rev. J.J. Drijfhout, Pretoria (convener); Rev. C. Kleijn, Johannesburg, Br. D. Drijfhout, Pretoria; Sr. Ingrid Hagg, Pretoria.
 - 2.4. Mission Deputies.**
Br. T. de Wit (convener), Pretoria; Sr. Christien Agema, Pretoria; Sr. T. Bijker, Pretoria-Maranata; Br. Harry Pouwels, Pretoria-Maranata; Br. J. Roos, Cape Town.

- 2.5. Deputies Liturgical Music.**
Br. F.J. van der Meer (convenor), Pretoria-Maranata, Rev. J. van der Linden, Pretoria-Maranata, Rev. B.A. Matlaela, Pretoria-Maranata, Rev. G.F. Mnisi, Pretoria-Maranata.
- 2.6. Deputies Afrikaans Bible Translation.**
Rev. J. van der Linden, Pretoria-Maranata (convener); Br. H. Schuring, Pretoria, Rev. C. van Wyk, Cape Town.
- 2.7. Deputies ad Article 11 CO.**
Br. A.C. Bijker, Pretoria (convenor); Br. M. Bijker, Pretoria-Maranata, Br. W. Hofsink, Pretoria-Maranata.
- 2.8. Deputies for the correspondence with the Government.**
Br. G. Hagg, Pretoria-Maranata, (convenor), Rev. M.P. Magagula, Pretoria-Maranata; Br. T. Tamane, Soshanguve-GG (North).
- 2.9. Deputies ad Article 49 CO.**
Classis North: Rev. J.J. Drijfhout, Pretoria; Rev. M.P. Magagula, Pretoria-Maranata.
Substitute: Rev. D.M. Boersma, Pretoria-Maranata; Br. B. Kamphuis, Pretoria.

Classis South: Rev. J.A. Breytenbach, Bethal; Rev. C. Kleijn
Substitute: Rev. F.J. Bijzet, Cape Town.
- 2.10. Deputies Curators.**
Br. R. Meeske (convenor), Johannesburg, Rev. P.G. Boon, Pretoria-Maranata; Rev. J.A. Breytenbach, Bethal; Br. G. Hagg, Pretoria-Maranata; Br. A. Smit (treasurer), Pretoria-Maranata; Rev. E. Viljoen, Cape Town; Br. A. de Lange, Pretoria.
- 2.11. Synod Treasurer.**
Br. E.J. van Vondel, Cape Town.

Substitute: Br. W.R. Hoving, Cape Town.
- 2.12. Stated clerk and archive.**
Br. C. Roose, Pretoria.
- 2.13. Revision of Synod rules.**
Br. C. Roose (Convenor), Pretoria; Br. E. Byker, Cape Town.
- 2.14. Archive Church.**
Church of Pretoria.
- 2.15. Inspection of the Synod Treasurer's books.**
Br. H. van der Linden (convenor), Cape Town.
- 2.16. Inspection of the Archive.**

Sr. M.A. Bijker, Johannesburg (convener); Br. D.A. Byker, Johannesburg.
- 2.17. Internet Communication.**
Br. T. de Wit (convenor), Pretoria; Br. G.D. Bijker, Pretoria; Br. A.C. Bijker, Pretoria.
- 2.18. Classis for days of prayer ad Article 69 CO.**
Classis South.

2.19. Indaba

Deputies to convene Indaba between Synods Bethal 2014 and Soshanguve-GG 2017: Deputies Article 11 CO (needy churches).

Article 45 Personal question period

No questions were raised, but the opportunity was used to thank the foreign delegates and the adviser for their positive contributions. In turn the foreign delegates expressed their thanks for the hospitality and for the opportunity to take part in the proceedings of the synod.

Article 46 Appointing convening church for Synod 2017

The FRC of Soshanguve was appointed to convene the next synod, to be held, the Lord willing in the last week of August 2017. The FRC of Pretoria-Maranata was appointed as the alternate.

Article 47 Adoption of Acts

Material:

A concept for the Acts of Synod, regarding the proceedings during the first day.

Synod decided:

1. To adopt the proposed Acts of Synod, Articles 1 - 17.
2. To task the Officers of Synod and the stated clerk to finalise the remainder of the Acts.

Article 48 Press Release

According to the Rules of Synod the Vice-Chairman will prepare a Press Release which will be published after approval by the Officers of Synod. The Vice-Chairman undertook to prepare the document before 5th June 2014 (Appendix 29).

Article 49 Censure Article 48 CO

The Chairman read Article 48 CO and noted with gratitude that censure was not necessary.

Article 50 Closure of synod

The Chairman thanked the convening church and the sisters and brothers of the Bethal congregation for the excellent way in which the synod was prepared and maintained. The Vice-Chairman, Rev. Kleijn, expressed his appreciation on behalf of synod for the capable manner in which Rev. Boon had chaired the sessions of synod.

The meeting sang Ps. 133 and Rev. Kleijn led the closing devotion with a meditation, based on Scripture readings from Acts 15 and 2 Timothy 3 and in closing prayer.

The Chairman declared Synod Bethal, 2014 closed.

Appendix 1 - Letter from GK Bethal



**GEREFORMEERDE
KERK BETHAL**



Predikant: Fanie Swanepoel
Tel : 017 647 6677 / 084 584 8823

H/v Sibitso Sibanyoni- en Wockestrate

Skriba: Willem de Klerk
Tel.: 084 411 5510

Posbus 390
Bethal
2310

Kassier: Alna Stemmet
Tel: 084 653 5335

attesskriba@gkbethal.co.za

25 April 2014

Die Kerkraad
Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk Bethal
Posbus 1294
Bethal
2310

VOORBIDDING EN SEËNWENSE: SINODE

Dankie vir u uitnodiging na die opening van u sinode. In erkenning van ons gedeelde belydenis dat Jesus Christus Koning en Hoof van die kerk is, en dat ons hierin gedeelde roeping het om die Evangelie uit te dra, wil ons u en die vergadering opdra aan die troue sorg en leiding van die Here ons God.

Vergun ons om hierin die Heilige Gees na te bid met die woorde van Kolossense 1:9-11:

Ons vra God dat Hy deur al die wysheid en insig wat die Gees gee, julle sy wil duidelik sal laat ken, sodat julle tot eer van die Here sal lewe deur net te doen wat Hy verlang. Mag julle vrugte dra deur goeie werke en toeneem in die kennis van God. Mag God deur sy wonderbare krag julle alle sterkte gee om in alle omstandighede geduldig te volhard.

Met opregte seënwense. U broeders in Christus.


Fanie Swanepoel
VDM


Willem de Klerk
Skriba
Bladsy 1 van 1



Appendix 2 – Greeting address from the FRCA

Speech to FRCSA Synod Bethal
28 April 2014

Mr Chairman,
Delegates and overseas visitors to this Synod
Brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ

Greetings from your sister, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Galatians 1:3-5)

We thank the LORD our God that the Son of God, out of the whole human race, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself a church chosen to everlasting life – and that we may be a part of this and experience this both in Australia and in South Africa.

We see Christ gathering His people by his Spirit and Word, and it is a blessing that we may share in this church gathering work of our Saviour. We may be joined in the unity of the true faith, and build each other up in that faith as we glorify our God and Father.

Close contact

For many decades we have enjoyed a sister-relationship with you. Since the year 2000, our relationship has been strengthened with the regular attendance at one another’s Synods. In this way we could pass on greetings, enjoy fellowship, yet even more we could encourage one another and offer assistance also in time of need, standing beside one another as churches of our Lord Jesus Christ, united in the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Most recently in 2012, we could welcome your Rev Breytenbach as your delegate to Synod Armadale. We were thankful for his advice that the official language at your Synod is English, since our mastery of Afrikaans (and Sotho) is somewhat limited. Rev Breytenbach could share with us some of your joys and challenges as federation in this country. He could also reflect on our growing interaction over the past decade.

Our churches have truly been blessed by the influx of South African migrants during this time. There is probably no FR congregation that does not have a number of families who enjoy biltong boerewors, and a braai. Indeed, the connections run so close that for the first time we have sent a delegate who is married to a South African. Also, for the first time our Synod decided to send two (2) delegates to your Synod, noting that our visits to South Africa and your visits to Australia have proven to be very beneficial in terms of mutual support and encouragement.

Brothers, we can only thank the Lord that our relationship has grown and strengthened over the years, as we truly need each other as reformed churches in this world.

Church Life

Allow us a few words about developments in the FRCA over the past 3 years.

Numerically we continue to experience a steady growth, for which we give thanks to our Heavenly Father. Earlier this year one new congregation was instituted in Melville, a location closer to the centre of Perth from our other congregations. This brings our federation to a total of 16 churches, spread over 3 distinct classical regions.

Mission work continues in Papua New Guinea, Sumba and China. Other opportunities are being considered within the region, including the Philippines. There has also been a renewed focus on mission and outreach opportunities that may exist within our own country, and in this regard we remain inspired by the mission activity that you are engaged in. It is wonderful to see your involvement and passion, and the Lord’s blessing on this work.

We continue to experience movement in the ministerial ranks. In the past 3 years we have experienced the retirement of Revs Veldman and de Boer, both of whom had served the FRCA for many years. Meanwhile, we could receive 3 ministers from Canada, being Rev van Spronsen in Busselton, Rev Alkema in Albany and Rev Poppe in Southern River, together with 2 ministers from Holland, being Rev Anderson in Rockingham and Rev Hagg in Armadale. Rev Hagg you of course know well, with him having been theologically trained by your churches. For this we are thankful, and this can only serve to continue to strengthen the bond between us.

Our churches presently experience 3 vacancies, and with a further minister reaching retirement age next year we continue to pray that the Lord may provide faithful men for the ministry of the gospel. In this regard we continue to support the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary, both financially and by way of encouraging our young men to attend there for the purposes of training for the ministry.

Needy Churches

Over the past 3 years we have enjoyed regular contact with your deputies for needy churches, who have kept us well informed of the financial struggles within your federation. We sympathise with you as a small bond of churches. Our 2012 Synod Armadale again mandated our deputies to coordinate responses to any requests for support received from your deputies for needy churches. Our churches have happily responded to such requests and we have willingly assisted you, recognising the Lord's abundant blessings and, indeed, we have only given what comes from His hand and belongs to Him.

We respect your desire to be a self-sufficient federation that does not have a long term dependency on overseas funds. Yet rest assured of our churches' willingness to help to the extent that we are called upon by you.

Sister-churches

Our last Synod did not enter into any new relationships. It did, however, appoint deputies to take up contact with the First Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, to make a careful investigation of this church and explore the feasibility of a sister church relationship. Synod also resolved to continue to work towards the goal of a sister church relationship with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, which we recognize as true churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our ongoing impediment has been the RCNZ's relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, which has now changed to one of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Synod Armadale has mandated our deputies to determine the practical implications of this change and evaluate how this impacts on the impediment.

We continue to maintain sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Reformed Churches in Indonesia, and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated). It is fair to say that the relationship with our Dutch sister churches took up the most time at our last Synod, to the point where Synod had to reconvene a second time to deal with this issue.

Already in 2009 our Synod Legana decided to *exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern 'spirit of the age'*. Seeing that there was no response to this exhortation, Synod Armadale 2012 considered this matter serious enough to decide to send a letter of admonition stating our concerns. Synod appointed an advisory committee to formulate this letter and then reconvened in April of 2013 to complete its work. The official admonition expresses as main concern that the RCN *tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the authority and plain meaning of Scripture for exegesis*. There are various examples given, including upholding *the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics* and also the study into whether Scripture allows for women to fill the offices of deacon, elder and minister. Our sister church relations with the RCN continue, yet Synod expressed *deep sadness at the lack of progress to*

resolve our concerns to date, so that our relationship is strained. In view of all this Synod also decided to advise local consistories *to exercise due care with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCN, and to call the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers, in view of the continuing struggle for the truth within these churches.*

We note that this matter is also on your agenda, with both a majority and minority report. Brothers, we wish you wisdom and patience as you discuss this matter, that you may find each other in a spirit of humility and make a decision that is for the benefit our mutual sister church in the Netherlands, and promotes the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the church.

Conclusion

Brothers, it is good to be here to share warm greetings from your sister across the ocean. We thank the LORD our God for you, and for the unity we can express in our Sovereign Lord and King. Brothers, may the kingdom work that you do here at Synod Bethal be blessed, and be a blessing to the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. May the LORD our God of all Grace continue to gather, defend and preserve His churches here in South Africa and throughout this world.

With Christian greetings,
Rev Stephen 'tHart and Br. Warnar Spyker
Delegates from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

Appendix 3 – Greeting address from the CanRC

Address to FRCSA Synod 2014

Dear brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ,

We are thankful for this opportunity to meet with you. Almost a year ago at our General Synod 2013 it was noted that it has been along time since we have sent delegates to your synod. For this reason our Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad (CRCA) was mandated to seriously consider sending a delegation to the next synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, if invited. This is why we are deeply thankful for your invitation and all that you've done to make our visit meaningful and fruitful. We are glad to be here so that we and you may mutually encourage, bless, and assist each other as fellow churches and servants of our risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ.

Since it has been so long and also because it is quite a distance for us to travel, both Dr. Arjan De Visser and I are making the most of this opportunity to reconnect, to get to know you better, and likewise to give you the opportunity to get to know us better as well. With the encouragement of the committee that has delegated us, we have taken the opportunity not only to attend this assembly, but also to make visits and presentations in some of your churches and schools, and to strengthen and establish contacts with the ministers, missionaries, and members among you. Hopefully, the Lord will use these new and renewed contacts for the growth and strengthening of our partnership in the gospel.

At General Synod 2013, held at Carman, Manitoba, we noted your desire to become less dependent on the financial support of sister churches. We want you to know, however, that we are committed to help you in whatever way is beneficial to you and feasible for us. Our prayer is that you are able to continue to be a testimony for the Triune God in South Africa, advancing his Name and his kingdom through the ministry of reconciliation. We have been told that you desire to do this both in word and in deed—both in preaching and extending mercy and relief to those who are afflicted, sick, and otherwise disadvantaged. May God enable you to do this by his mighty Holy Spirit.

Another way we are eager to be a blessing to you is through the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) in Hamilton. We invite you to send men to Hamilton, if you consider this a viable option and we are able to offer a suitable program of study. Part of the reason that Dr. Arjan DeVisser is here, whom you know well, is that you will be able to speak with him directly about how CRTS might be able to assist you in training your men for the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Our general synod, in fact, has mandated the Board of Governors of CRTS to investigate with you whether it is possible to set up some form of distance learning. At this point, it is difficult to say whether or how this will be possible, but we are committed to do whatever we can to make high quality ministerial training available for your students of theology.

As for recent developments in our churches, let me highlight the ones that are likely of particular interest to you. Our theological college, CRTS, recently received full accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). This accreditation affirms high academic quality, grants greater recognition to the degrees that are conferred, and makes the seminary more accessible to foreign students. Synod 2013 also appointed a fifth professor, Dr. Ted VanRaalte, as Professor of Ecclesiology, lightening

the load of the other professors, and allowing Dr. DeVisser to focus on Diaconiology (Pastoral Theology and Missiology).

CRTS also hosted a conference on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism, in 2013. On this occasion a website on the Heidelberg Catechism was launched, which is full of many helpful resources, including lesson plans, sermons, videos, historical information, and much more, in many different languages. This website is managed by the Professor of Dogmatics, Dr. Jason Van Vliet.

In January, CRTS hosted a conference to which a number of professors and ministers from our sister churches and theological university in the Netherlands were invited in order to discuss current debates about interpretation of Holy Scripture and the role of men and women in the church, especially in light of recent developments. This conference was well attended and intense. While the tone was frank and sometimes sharp, there was also evidence of a desire to understand each other and hold each other to the solid foundation of Christ and his Word. Our prayer is that God will cause the light of his Holy Spirit, through his Word, to guide and direct all his churches and all his servants into the truth, in accordance with his perfect revelation.

You are likely also interested in some of the more significant decisions of our most recent general synod. These decisions have been met with mixed reactions in our churches.

Firstly, the most recent revision of our songbook, the Book of Praise, was brought to completion. This revision includes the rewording of the 150 Genevan Psalms into contemporary English and the addition of 19 hymns.

Secondly, Synod Carman also wrote a letter to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands expressing deep concern, especially about recent developments surrounding Scripture interpretation and male and female roles in the church, already mentioned.

Thirdly, a particularly controversial decision of Synod 2013 that has a more direct impact on the life of our churches was to sustain appeals against Synod 2010 regarding women's voting.

Whereas Synod 2010 left it in the freedom of the local churches to regulate whether all communicant members, male and female, may participate in the election of office-bearers, Synod 2013 ruled in favour of the appellants that only male communicant members should be allowed to vote. There is an expectation that this matter will again be on the agenda of our next general synod.

There is much more to the life of our churches, indeed very much more, than synod decisions and debates on issues. This is sometimes forgotten in the heat of debate and controversy. In the Canadian and American Reformed Churches there is much evidence of the mighty work of God the Holy Spirit. This is happening by means of the diligent preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments through ministers and missionaries, the leadership and care of elders and deacons, through the service and mutual love of all the different members of the body, through the faithful evangelistic witness of church members, and through international relief efforts. By the grace, love and power of our Lord Jesus Christ among us, the kingdom of God is advancing and spreading in Canada and in the United States, also through mission work in Mexico,

Brazil, China, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and the Philippines. New mission fields and possibilities for church planting are being explored and entered both in our own land and around the globe.

From a human point of view, we have not always been successful, and our best efforts have been marred with sins, blunders and shortcomings. Yet, by God's mercy and love we remain committed to spread the good news of God's kingdom in Christ, and bearing witness to his Word and truth in the world. There is a growing awareness in our churches, both of the vast opportunities and of the real need to proclaim and embody the gospel of Christ in our rapidly growing cities. More and more of our churches are taking in refugees from Africa and other parts of the world, who are persecuted and oppressed for their Christian faith, especially from places like the Congo and Sudan. Many of our church members have become increasingly active in Canadian politics by running for parliament, spearheading campaigns for changes in legislation, particularly in the defence of human life at every stage and religious freedom to educate our children according to God's Word. All these obligations and commitments require much prayer and discipline, hard work and sacrifice, and most of all trust in the sovereign plan and power of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It will be plain to you by now that we have much in common. We are family to each other, even as we reach out to each other across the globe. We have one God and Father, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and we are called to one and the same hope, in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3-5). As Reformed churches both in South Africa and in North America, we're so busy with so many things in the name of Christ, and yet we sometimes wonder whether it's all worthwhile, and what the future holds. May we always remember when such questions surface that it is not our work that we are busy with, but our Master's. In everything, then, let us always listen for the voice of our Good Shepherd, eagerly follow him, and joyfully serve him.

Let me close with this prayer of the apostle Paul for the Ephesians, which is also our prayer for you, and which we ask you to pray for us:

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Eph 3:14-21)

Rev. Theo Lodder

Appendix 4 - Greeting message from the RCNL

To all the brothers and sisters of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa,
Represented in the general synod of Bethal 2014

Ede, the 28th of April 2014

Dear brothers in the Lord,

We, members of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated), send you our warmest greetings, as an expression of the communion in our Lord Jesus Christ. May He, our sovereign King, grant you grace, mercy and peace, that you may be able to serve Him with joy and to proclaim his gospel.

Unfortunately we can not express our feelings in a personal way, by sending a delegate to your reunion. As you doubtlessly will know, our churches are actually holding their synod, at the same time as you do. We look forward to the honor of receiving your delegate and hear from him how our brothers and sisters in South Africa are doing.

Dear brothers, our relationship is far more than a formal one. Be assured that we pray for you and for South Africa. We thank our Lord for the peace He gives you in a country with so many political and economic tensions, and where heavy crime makes its influence felt in everyday live. May God give you the necessary hope, faith and love to be faithful witnesses in the rainbow nation.

We learned that since your last synod two of your pastors have been released from their office, which is a considerable number, given the size of your churches. We know of the difficulties that arise from the economic (and emigrational ?) situation of your churches. With respect we have read the work of your deputies 'sustainability'. May the Lord bless you and provide you with whatever you need for being in his service.

We are grateful that our relationship could find expression in the actual work from Dutch pastors in your churches, and in the mutually undertaken missionwork in the different regions of South Africa.

The closeness of our ties was also felt in the attention that your deputies paid at the situation of our churches. We must admit that the way in which that attention was given sometimes caused some feelings of injustice on our side, but we are aware that it is the closeness of our bond – that is: the love – which drives the work of your deputies. May love also free us from the distrust in our look. We are fully confident that brotherly love will also guide your synod.

Dear brothers, we pray for you, for your work in the synod, for the congregations and for each member. May the eyes of your heart be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

With brotherly love, on behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
Rev. Jan-Matthijs van Leeuwen, deputy for relation abroad.

Appendix 5 – Report Deputies Internet Communication

Internet Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches in SA Report to Synod 2014

Date 08/Feb/2014, V2.00

Dear Brothers

Attached you find the report of the Internet Deputies, appointed by Synod 2011. The core principle of the proposed policy is that Internet Deputies maintain the minimum of information about the FRCSA and related organisations, but that congregations and organisations maintain their own Web based information using a provided platform/mechanism. Internet Deputies do not choose to be kept responsible for keeping information up to date; organisations or activities who want to be represented on the FRCSA website must maintain and update their own information.

We as Internet Deputies wish that all the wisdom and insight needed may be upon you.

May the Lord bless your work.

With brotherly greetings, for Internet Deputies:

Brs. AC Bijker (substitute), GD Bijker (deputy), br T de Wit (convenor)

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1. Deputyship

As per date of this report, MDSA consists of the following members:

- Tjeerd de Wit (Convenor)
- Gerhard Bijker
- Harry Bijker (Substitute)

Br Harry Bijker, although a substitute, participated in all meetings.

2. Instructions of Synod 2011

Synod 2011 decided to appoint Internet Deputies with the following instructions. A short response on how each instructions was followed up, is included:

1. To come forward with a Web policy for the FRCSA (making use of the material already available amongst our sister churches). Such a policy must at least define:
 - a. Purpose of the Website
Response: To provide information about the FRCSA and related organisations.
 - b. The type of content to be published.
 - c. The responsible parties for providing the content.
 - d. The control over content.
 - e. The rights individual entities (churches, schools, classes etc) have over their own part of the Website. (to place and update content)

Responses to b-e: The proposed policy can be found in Appendix A.

2. To continue with the current Web site until the policy has been accepted.

Response: The current Website was continued, with and without correct factual information. Acceptance of the policy is awaited by Deputies.

3. To come forward with a budget needed to put the policy into practice.

Response: Part of Appendix A

4. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Response: As per this report

1. Meetings

Meetings were held:

- 17 Jan 2012
- 5 Sep 2012
- 31 Jan 2013
- 2 Sep 2013

For the rest, contact was via email.

2. Some supporting Information

The essence of the proposed FRC Internet Policy is Self-Service.

We propose a basic, rather static FRC website controlled by Internet Deputies, while individual churches or organisations can place and update their own information using provided instructions.

In other words, Internet Deputies do not propose that anybody can send information to Deputies, who will then convert this into presentable information onto the Website. Experience with the FRC website so far has learned that it is very difficult to keep information up to date and Deputies prefer not to be involved in begging for information, nor in updating the website with this information. Parties who want to be present on the Website should also take responsibility to maintain their own information.

3. New Website

Internet Deputies were only instructed to put together a policy.

However, we decided that it would be useful to also start with a sample on how the new Website, using the proposed policy, would look like.

Early 2013 a person was found to start developing such a site, but due to time limitations, nothing came out of it.

About September 2013 another person was found, prepared to start implementing the policy. As of now, (Jan 2014) there is nothing to show yet, but we hope that by the time Synod starts, there will be something to look at so that Synod can see what we have in mind.

4. Budget

R5000/year for hosting the Website at Mweb.

5. Functioning of Deputies

Deputies worked well as a team and all are available for another period of three years, if the Lord gives us those years.

6. Suggestions

Deputies make following suggestions to Synod:

- i. Approve policy and budget as in Section 2 and Appendix A*
- ii. Approve continuation of new website development as per defined policy*

Yours in Christ,

Internet Deputies FRCSA.

Appendix A

Proposed FRC Internet Policy

1. Hardware, hosting.

The current www.vgk.org.za website is located on Rev Jopie vd Linden's virtual server at MWeb. Total costs for this website at this server is R400/month and has been paid so far by a donor. This location can stay as it is; costs are dealt with later on in this policy.

DNS server is on "zoneedit" and need not change.

Mail is via Google apps and considering the low volumes of mail, there is no need to change this.

2. Owner of vgk.org.za.

vgk.org.za is part of Rev Jopie vd Linden's setup, which is an Art 21 company. This will stay as it is. However, registration as an Art 21 organisation is not required in order to run a website. Ownership of vgk.org.za can be transferred to Internet Deputies, should the JvdL's project stop.

3. Design, programming, maintenance

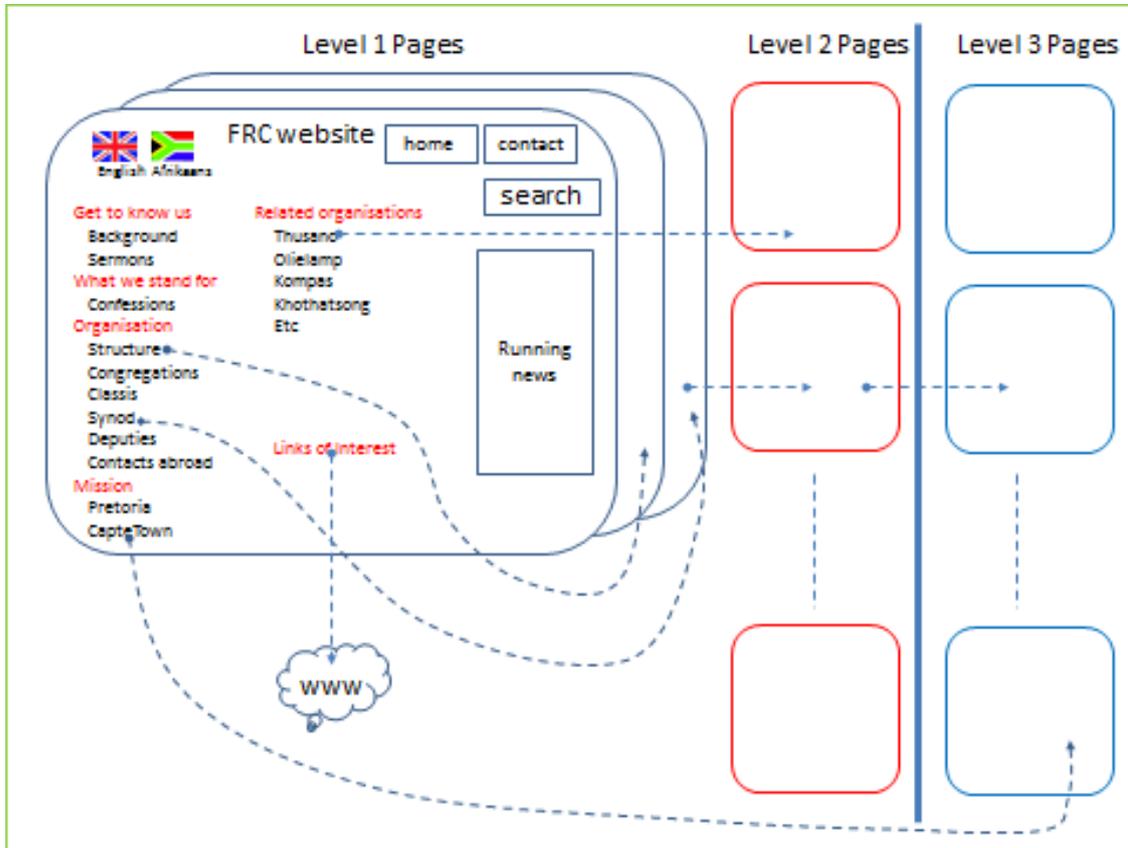
The current Web site runs on Drupal CMS (Linux)

Changing the new Website will be password protected and there will be levels of passwords for various access levels. Internet Deputies are not currently responsible for the development of the Website but are prepared to oversee the development, however within the limits as set out in this policy. Specifically, Internet Deputies will not be involved in keeping information current for everybody wanting to share information via the website. In the past it has become clear that various attempts have been made by organizations within the FRC to run a website while information was not updated. Internet Deputies want to establish a clear borderline between the responsibilities of Deputies and the responsibilities of participating **Entities** (see Section 4.1 for Entities) as far as keeping information current.

4. Content of the vgk.org.za website.

4.1 Page levels

The proposed structure of the new FRC website is as per next sketch.



Web information is normally presented in pages with content.

For the FRC website we will distinguish between 3 types of pages:

a. Level 1 pages.

These are pages which can only be filled with content by one (or a few) persons controlling the FRC website or by persons nominated by Internet Deputies to do so. (The only exception being uploading sermons, See 4.2.c). Level 1 pages reside on the site where www.vgk.org.za is hosted. These pages contain general information about the FRC bond of churches and should contain data which does not change often. There should for example be no addresses, names of people etc. on these pages because they change too often. In the sketch above we have, as an example, the main FRC landing page. When clicking on Structure there will be a new Level 1 page with some general information about the structure of the Bond of churches. (Church Government, Classis, Synod...)

b. Level 2 Pages.

Level 2 pages will not reside at the location where www.vgk.org.za is hosted. The content of these pages will be provided, uploaded and

kept current by **Entities** (See 4.2 for Entities). Internet Deputies will make information available to Entities on how to upload and change information on these pages. At the moment it is proposed to use Google Sites (<https://sites.google.com/>) for a location of these pages, because it is easy for third parties (Entities) to create and edit content at Google Sites. Content can include documents and photos. A "How to" guide will be made available for Entities on how to go about creating such pages.

c. Level 3 pages.

Level 3 pages fall completely out of the responsibility of the Internet Deputies. In the sketch above, as an example, there is a link from Mission/CapeTown to a level three page. This link points to a website not hosted by www.vgk.org.za and this website is completely developed and maintained by the Entity responsible for this website. (purely mentioned as an example)

4.2 Entities and pages content

In this policy, an **entity** is defined to be a local church or church related institution or activity like commissions, classis, Synod Deputies, Schools, Magazines, Old Age homes etc. even a basaar for that matter. It is proposed that www.vgk.org.za will not necessarily be a central website for all entities. In other words, entities can still have their own web sites. The following will be upheld:

- a. The Level 1 pages of www.vgk.org.za site will be bilingual (Afrikaans/English) and the language can be chosen via a small flag (SA or UK flag).
- b. The name of the site will become www.frc.org.za when switching to English.
- c. The Level 1 pages of the www.vgk.org.za website will only publish information not covered by other entities, except for sermons. Sermons will be accessible directly from the home or landing page, but individual churches will be able to upload sermons. (See Section **Services and Sermons, Text and Stored/Life Audio**).
- d. All entities, who want to be represented under the vgk.org.za website have to approach Internet Deputies. Internet Deputies will send out a general invitation in this regard. Internet Deputies can do three things as far as accommodating entities are concerned:
 - i. Create an icon on a Level 1 page with a link to a **Level 2** landing page on the vgk.org.za web site on which such an entity can place their own information. Instructions will be made available on how to add/remove information (Information includes documents). The landing page URL will be **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** Each entity must have the

ability to create password protected information. For example, Synod Deputies may not want to publish reports before Synod so that everybody can read it and may want to lift that restriction after a synod.

This option only allows for very basic usage of Web facilities (static info and document repository), entities must go for option ii if they want more facilities.

- ii. Or create a link to a website specified by such an entity, in other words **Level 3** pages. The URL can be anything. Entities can now do anything they want on their own website.
- iii. A mixture of i and ii above, where any entity can upload static information as per i. above to their **Level 2** page but still have a link to their own website with additional information (**Level 3** pages).

5. Personal Drop Bin

Internet considered the facility where people can share documents via something like a shared folder residing on the www.vgk.org.za website, but in the end decided against this. There are already various such services available on the Internet which are for free. <https://workspaces.acrobat.com> or <http://www.skydrive.live.com/> are for example two of those.

6. Email service.

Email service stays as it is. No separate email server will be created. Email addresses will reside on Google Apps. The only service Internet Deputies can provide is to create email addresses and mailboxes and information on how to access mail. Email addresses will have the format: address@vgk.org.za where 'address' can be anything to indicate the person/entity. Each 'address' is responsible for mail backup, deleting mails etc.

Stand-alone and re-route email addresses can be created. A re-route e-mail address forwards any mail to a defined alternative address. This allows stability to the outside world in a changing environment. For example, the scribe of an entity may change over time, but the email address stays the same.

7. Services and Sermons, Text and Stored/Life Audio

7.1 Stored Services and Sermons.

Any church can store the text of Sermons *and/or* audio MP3 dumps of church services on the www.vgk.org.za website. It is each church's choice to use this route or to cater for this service on their own website. The

process is as follows when using the central www.vgk.org.za sermon/service storage facility.

- (i) Click on the appropriate Icon (Services upload).
- (ii) Login for the appropriate Church, using Church name/password.
- (iii) Upload the audio MP3 file for the service if applicable.
- (iv) Upload the Sermon Text file if applicable (MS-Word)
- (v) Fill in the Liturgy sheet
- (vi) Logoff.

The sermon/service is now stored. Anybody can now retrieve such a sermon/service and liturgy via clicking Services Download Icon and choosing the required church.

Stored video will not be catered for since this takes up too much space. Churches can of course do their own stored video services if so required.

7.2 Life Services.

Some churches may want to stream services live. Internet Deputies will not be involved in setting up such a service. On a **Level 1** www.vgk.org.za main page there will be an Icon labelled "Streaming Services". Clicking this icon will show a list of churches providing this service. Behind the Church name will be a URL taking the user to the streaming facility of that church. It is up to this church to announce anything appropriate, like time of next stream, etc.

8. Source of basic info about each church. Content of local info (addresses, contacts etc).

All these responsibilities will be vested in the local church. The look and feel of this information should ideally be the same for each church and can be uploaded as per 4.2.d above using Level 2 pages.

9. Costs of developing and maintaining

R5000/year for hosting the website. Website programming and maintenance is volunteer work.

10. Design, maintenance, updating.

Done via central admin provided by Internet Deputies (email frcweb@vgk.org.za) and includes taking backups a regular times.

11. Handling of questions by people who visit the website and role administrator.

Questions can be asked via Contact Us icon. Mails via this service will go to an *administrator* (provided by Internet Deputies) who passes on the request to the correct person. An initial response will be:

Thank you for your request for information.

Your request has been forwarded to for an expert answer.

The person receiving this mail must also receive the email address of the 'expert' so that he/she can follow up.

The administrator will also be the point of contact for issues with the website, modifications needed on the website and general maintenance.

12. Links to related websites.

There may be websites of interest outside the world of the FRC. Links to these websites can be placed on the main landing page or on pages reserved for local churches or entities as described in 4.d. (Level 2 pages). Links on the main FRC landing page (vgk.org.za) can only be placed there by Internet Deputies after receiving a request to do so. Local churches and other entities are free to put any link they deem important on their own page(s) (as per 4.2.d.i or 4.2.d.ii).

13. Provision for church news, like calls for ministers and other general news.

On the main landing pages there will be a small window with running news. Specific persons (like scribes, ministers and other who can contribute) will be able (via login) to place short news items here. The web administrator will automatically receive an email when a new item has been placed. Any entity or church can also provide news via the mechanism of 4.i or 4.ii. Only the last news item will be visible, older items can be seen by clicking on 'more items'. News items will automatically be deleted after a specific time.

14. Search facility.

There will be a search option on the main www.vgk.org.za landing pages allowing searches in level 1 and Level 2 pages. Also sermons can be searched, as is the case currently.

15. Right of admission

Internet Deputies have the right to allow, refuse or remove an entity in case of mal behaviour or placing inappropriate information. Internet Deputies report to Synod, but between synods there is no synod and it would be unhealthy to wait for up to three years before actions can be taken.

Appendix 6 – Report of deputy Days of Prayer

Report deputy day of prayer to Synod Bethal June 2014

Introduction

The FRCSA Synod 2011 held in Pretoria appointed classis North as deputy for proclaiming a day of prayer in time of war, general calamities and other great afflictions, the presence of which is felt throughout the churches. This appointment is in line with what article 69 CO stipulates regarding days of prayer:

*In times of war, general calamities and other great afflictions the presence of which is felt throughout the churches, the classis which has been appointed for this purpose by the last **synod**, shall nominate a day of prayer. (Edition 2005, Acts Synod 2005, article 25, page 36).*

Instruction

The instructions from synod 2011 were:

Synod decides to appoint classis North with the following mandate:

1. To nominate, in line with article 69 CO a day of prayer;
2. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Activities

1. No days of prayer were proclaimed in the three years since previous synod.

Proposal

Synod appoints, in line with article 69 CO, a classis that can nominate a day of prayer.

For Classis North
T de Wit
Scribe



Appendix 7 – Report of Deputies for Correspondence with Government

REPORT OF DEPUTIES FOR CORRESPONDENCE WITH GOVERNMENT

1. The deputation appointed by the synod of 2011 consisted of the following members:

Br R Stolper (Convener)

Br G Hagg

Rev P Magagula

The deputation executed its task with the aforementioned members and no alternative or secondary members were appointed by the synod.

The deputies received the following instructions in a letter dated 10 August 2011 from the previous Synod:

2. Synod decides to appoint deputies with the following mandate:

- In matters pertaining to the interest of the country, in happiness or in sorrow, depending on the circumstances, to condole with or congratulate the government;
- To react appropriately on government measures that compromises the protection of the preaching of the gospel;
- To testify to government in cases where the government transgresses the universal law of God and to reflect on the specific nature and function of this mandate to the next synod;
- To receive requests from government and to make such requests known to the churches;
- To investigate the possibility to cooperate with other reformed churches as regards

Parliamentary desk (PD);

- To determine the advantages and disadvantages of this PD, the required manpower and possible costs;
- To make use of the PD if the deputies conclude that it is possible and responsible;
- To communicate the gathered information from this PD to the churches and encourage and advise them on the most appropriate actions to take;
- To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 12 of the Rules of the Synod.

3. Meetings.

The following meetings were held:

3.1 Official deputy meetings: two meetings were held in 2012 and the planned meetings for 2013 were cancelled due to urgent church matters which required the attention of the deputy members. The congregation responsibilities for Rev Magagula and Elder Hagg restricted both to participate fully in the deputy responsibilities and tasks. A number of unofficial “meetings” were held by emails conversation where responsibilities and tasks was divided between the members.

3.2 Discussing a letter to the president and his Cabinet

3.3 Discussing a letter to TopTV concerning the broadcasting of adult programs

4. Report on activities.

4.1 In matters pertaining to the interest of the country, in happiness or in sorrow, depending on the circumstances, to condole with or congratulate the government;

A letter has been send, see appendix A

4.2 To react appropriately on government measures that compromises the protection of the preaching of the gospel;

The deputies are grateful that the preaching of the gospel could take place without interference.

4.3 To testify to government in cases where the government transgresses the universal law of God and to reflect on the specific nature and function of this mandate to the next synod; No specific actions has been taken here

Note: The deputies are still of the opinion that this task “*To testify to government*” should also be the task of each congregation in our bond of churches. (See art 27 of the Church Order.)

4.4 To receive requests from government and to make such requests known to the churches;

No information or requests were received from government and the deputy did not initiate any action here.

4.5 To stimulate the congregations within the FRCSA for an active approach to the Government and investigate the possibility to react to the invitation from government on new and revised laws

No specific actions have been undertaken here due to limited time and availability of the deputy members.

4.6 To stay in contact with the deputies of the GKSA and PD to investigate the most appropriate way of co-operation

No activities have been employed here

4.7 To report to the next synod and formulate recommendation according to Art 11 of the Synod rules and advise them on the most appropriate actions to take;

Concerning the availability of the manpower and as well having skilled and experienced manpower on this deputation, the following recommendations are made:

- Appoint middle-aged members of the church who have an interest to be involved in SA governance and parliament activities. It is advised in the light of the composition of the VGK congregations to appoint members who are truly citizens and want to make a difference in their environment.

- Encourage the congregations by means of preaching that the church and the individual members have a Christian duty to participate in the society and prophesize God's Word and laws for the ordering of the society.

- According to art 27 of the Church Order each church should be involved with the government. Instruct the church councils by letter to form small commissions who confess and advice to its members how to participate in the SA elections. Such a commission was appointed in the FR Pretoria Maranata

5 Conclusions and recommendations.

The current deputies repeat from the previous report as this is still relevant:

To comment on new and revised laws applicable to us, is a huge task and it is unknown if we as FRCSA will be able to comment on our own, even with the support of the individual committees from the churches. This must be investigated in future.

To join forces with others (PD) is an option. To interact in a constructed manner it is still necessary for us to study all the documentation provided by government as well as the comments from the PD. If we differ from the PD comments we have to discuss this with them trying to get consensus on the matter. If not possible we still have to present our own comments. This is not a pro-active or the ideal situation keeping in mind that this has all to be done within a set time limit. To be pro-active we should start immediately after receiving the information from government, independent from the PD. After completing our comments we could compare it with the PD comments. The benefit of this pro-active approach is that views can be discussed during the study phase.

Due to the fact that the PD has members from extreme denominations we could expect to differ from opinion from them on a more frequent base than, for instance, from the Reformed Churches of South Africa. Therefore it is advised to form a closer work relation with them than the PD.

In the above comments we concentrated mainly on the approval of new and revised laws. Application of the law is as important as writing a law. To enforce this, when government is violating the law, a partnership with the PD can be effective. When all denominations stand together it will be a stronger appeal on government. On the other hand we also have to encourage our citizens (church members) to obey the laws. This could better be done by each church individually.

6 Instructions to new deputies

- In matters pertaining to the interest of the country, in happiness or in sorrow, depending on the circumstances, to condole with or congratulate the government;
- To react appropriately on government measures that compromises the protection of the preaching of the gospel;
- To testify to government in cases where the government transgresses the universal law of God and to reflect on the specific nature and function of this mandate to the next synod;
- To receive requests from government and to make such requests known to the churches;
- To stimulate the congregations within the FRCSA for an active approach to government and investigate the possibility to react to the invitation from government on new and revised laws.
- To stay in contact with the deputies of the Reformed Church of South Africa and the PD to investigate the most appropriate way of co-operation.

May God grant you wisdom and bless the work of the synod.

G R. Stolper.

G Hagg

P Magagula

Note: Br R Stolper is not available for a new appointment

Appendix 8 – Verslag van Deputate Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling

Rapport Bybelvertaling

English Summary:

The new Afrikaans Bible Translation is very important for our churches since it will be a more literal translation, and the last literal translation we had is from 1933. Deputies have been involved in all the discussions surrounding this translation and have been very involved in giving commentary on the translation work that has been done. Deputies are positive about this translation so far, but since it must still go through its last phases, it is still too early to make a (provisional) decision for our Afrikaans speaking churches.

Die *Bybel Direkte Vertaling* is 'n baie belangrike projek vir die Afrikaanse kerke van die VGKSA. 'n Nuwe Bybelvertaling is op sig 'n baie groot projek vir al die Afrikaanse kerke in Suid-Afrika, en die feit dat dit boonop 'n meer letterlike vertaling is, maak dit 'n projek wat menslik gesproke nie weer vinnig aangepak sal word nie. Ondertussen het ons 'n Bybelvertaling wat uit 1933 dateer. In die lig hiervan is ons betrokkeheid by hierdie nuwe Bybelvertaling wesenlik belangrik – juis ook om aan 'n nuwe generasie 'n goeie leesbare Bybel te kan saamgee. Indien ons nie hierdie Bybelvertaling kan goedkeur vir gebruik in ons eredienste nie, kan dit (menslik gesproke) beteken dat ons oor 40 jaar nog steeds met 'n 1933 Bybelvertaling sit! Dit is dus baie belangrik vir ons as kerke om erns te maak met hierdie Bybelvertaling en alles in ons vermoë te doen om seker te maak dat dit vir ons 'n bruikbare vertaling sal wees.

Die deputaatskap se opdrag het meegebring dat ons nie nodig gehad het om so baie te vergader nie. Die groot werk wat eintlik gedoen moes word, was die toetsing van die nuwe bybelvertaling. Ons het dus slegs 'n paar keer vergader as deputaatskap, maar baie kontak gehad oor die toetsing van die vertaling.

Ds. HH van Alten het uit hierdie deputaatskap getree in Augustus 2012 (weens te veel werk) en suster Tanya Bijker kon vanaf Desember 2012 nie meer so aktief betrokke wees nie. Broeder Henk Schuring het by Ds van Alten oorgeneem as sameroeper. Hy kon in die laaste klompie maande ook nie so goed funksioneer nie weens te veel werk.

Opdrag 1, 2 en 4: Betrokkeheid by die nuwe Bybelvertaling

Ons het elke vergadering van die Bybelgenootskap en die Kerklike Advieskomitee (wat betrekking het op hierdie vertaling) bygewoon en ons bydraes daar gelewer.

Ons was ook deel van die spesiale vergaderings waarin daar gepraat is oor die Messiasverwagting in die Ou Testament (en die effek daarvan op die vertaling) asook die Skrifkritiese tendense in sommige van die inleidings op die Bybelboeke. Hierdie vergaderings het tot gevolg gehad dat die Bybelgenootskap toegestaan het dat daar 'n aparte uitgawe van die Bybelvertaling sal wees waarin die inleiding op die Bybelboeke uitgehaal sal word, en waarin die Messiaanse tekste in die Ou Testament met 'n hoofletter aangegee sal word.

Twee sake wat ons ook onder die Kerklike Advieskomitee se aandag gebring het, is hulle negatiewe kyk op die Meerderheidstekste en die tendens om nie plek te gee vir sekere unieke Bybelse woorde, nie (dink bv aan die woord 'heerlikheid').

Die grootste betrokkeheid by die nuwe Bybelvertaling was deur middel van die toetsing van hierdie vertaling. Kerke is uitgenooi om kommentaar te lewer op die eerste fase van die vertaling, en daarvoor het deputate Br Henk Schuring, Sr Tanya Bijker en Ds. J van der Linden aangestel. As bylae by die rapport vind u 'n voorbeeld van so 'n toetsing van die vertaling. Hierdie proses van toetsing het plaasgevind op meeste van die Nuwe Testamentiese boeke, asook op Rut, Esra, Ester, Joël, Obadja, Jona, Miga, Nahum, Sefanja, Haggai, Sagaria, Maleagi. Soos u sal verstaan was dit 'n enorme intensiewe proses en letterlik maande se werk! Ons is baie dankbaar dat die Here kragte gegee het om so 'n intensiewe betrokkeheid te kon

hê by hierdie belangrike gebeurtenis vir die Afrikaanse kerke in ons land. Ons is nog nie seker hoeveel waarde hierdie bydraes in werklikheid gehad het nie, omdat die vertaling nog nie Fase 3 bereik het nie. Wat vir ons as kerke belangrik is, is dat ons wel by hierdie proses betrokke was en gedoen het wat ons kon om te help aan 'n goeie Bybelvertaling. Ons hoop dat die Here hierdie werk ook sal seën.

Deputate se eerste reaksie op hierdie Bybelvertaling is een van opgewondenheid. Soos ons reeds genoem het, sien ons sekere gebreke, maar aan die ander kant is daar ook baie verbeteringe op die 1933/53 vertaling. Die nuwe vertaling is baie keer werklik duidelik en kragtig. Ander kere word woorde baie goed vertaal, ook al word daarvoor somtyds twee woorde gebruik (dink bv. aan “troue liefde” as vervanging van 1933 se “goedertierenheid” (hebreus: “chesed”). Nuwere ontdekkings en studies gee belangrike hulp by die verstaan van die teks (dink bv. aan Esra 4:9 waar sommige van die woorde in die 1933 vertaling as name vertaal is, waar dit in werklikheid op posisies wys). Dit is definitief 'n Bybelvertaling wat baie waarde vir ons as kerke gaan hê.

Omdat ons egter nog nie die laaste twee fases van die vertaling bereik het nie (finale beoordelings en standaardisering van die vertaling), is dit eintlik ook te vroeg om 'n voorlopige beoordeling te maak van die vertaling. Ons kan maar net noem dat daar met groot erns gewerk word om die oorspronklike teks te verstaan asook om dit in nuwerwetse Afrikaans oor te sit.

Ons wil hier net graag iets meer sê oor hoe ver die Bybelgenootskap nou gevorder het met hierdie Bybelvertaling. Soos ons genoem het, moet die grootste deel van fase 3 en 4 nog plaasvind. Die Bybelgenootskap het wel besluit om 'n gedrukte uitgawe van die Nuwe Testament en Psalms uit te gee in 2014 (ook al moet Fase 3 en 4 dus ook nog op hierdie vertaling plaasvind!). Hulle rede daarvoor is om meer mense bewus te maak van die vertaling. As ons kyk hoe die werk die afgelope jare gevorder het, sal die finale produk van hierdie vertaling eers tussen 2016 en 2020 verskyn.

Daar het ook totaal ongegronde verdagmaking teen hierdie vertaling plaasgevind (veral met eposse wat rondgestuur is). Die Bybelgenootskap het hierdie saak baie mooi hanteer en weerlê. In die hele proses is dit duidelik dat die verdagmakers nie die minste belangstel in die waarheid of om diensbaar te wees met die waarheid nie.

Opdrag 3: Informasie oor die BDV (Bybel Direkte Vertaling) aan ons kerke

Soos ons reeds genoem het, het die nuwe Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling nog nie Fase 3 en 4 bereik nie, en kan ons dus ook nog nie regtig iets offisiëls aan die kerke meld oor hierdie vertaling nie. Ons het die kerke egter wel solank begin wys op die belang van 'n goeie Bybelvertaling (twee artikels in Kompas in 2013) en begin bewus maak van die nuwe Bybelvertaling en die proses hieraan verbonde (drie artikels in 2012). Soos wat daar meer nuus is, sal ons dit aan die kerke deurgee.

Opdrag 5

Ons wil graag voorstel dat die vorige opdrag net so herhaal word aangesien dieselfde proses nog net so aan die gang is. Ons wil voorstel dat Ds. Carl van Wyk deelgemaak word van hierdie deputaatskap. Met sy kundigheid kan hy waardevolle insette lewer, en hy kan ook help om te beoordeel hoe hierdie nuwe vertaling in die Afrikaanse sendingskerke gebruik kan word.

Henk Schuring

Ds. Jopie van der Linden

Appendix 9 – Greeting message from the RCSA

Reformed Churches in South Africa
Deputies Ecumenical Affairs: National

**GREETINGS TO THE SYNOD OF THE
FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA
LORD WILLING CONVENING 28 APRIL - 1 MAY 2014**

Beloved moderator and brothers in Christ Jesus

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

With the words which some early Christians used to greet one another, I want to greet you today. To be with you, to profess together with you that we believe in the living Jesus Christ and that we live from His life-giving power, is a huge privilege. One can not and doesn't want to underestimate or dismiss the power of being together and living together in Christ Jesus.

For me personally and for us as Deputies of the Reformed Churches it was a privilege to receive the invitation to visit your synod and bring a message of greetings. To be with you when you meet, to personally observe your sincere struggles before the Lord to be faithful in his service and to be able to talk personally to one another, emphasizes that we as church communities seek one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that we really want to live together. And that is and will always remain one's prayer that we as churches will live fully the calling that the Lord has given us to show the unity we have in Christ.

Three years ago I also had to state in our greetings that the national contact between our have been very limited. This is still true today, even though the situations during the preceding years differed. One would have liked to talk much more in depth with each other and it remains our desire: to talk as deputies of our respective church communities meaningful and incisive with each other ... to support each other, to encourage, to admonish where necessary and particularly to jointly struggle on the road to realization of church unity. We pray that the Holy Spirit in the time ahead will awake us to this.

Our talks as churches is at a point where we have to be very honest with each other. Your deputies have - in the report that God willing will be discussed at your synod - referred to the words of Professor Callie Coetzee in 2008. And it remains the driving force in our being with you ... that we as church communities – in faith and prayer – will talk urgently with each other about those issues which hinder the realization of our unity in Christ.

Therefore I want to repeat the request which we as deputies of the RCSA have put forward several times: For you to tell us in an honest and straightforward, but also reasoned way, which matters hinder unification.

At the same time we are very excited when we look at the development of the talks in Pretoria. Here, five churches of the Lord Jesus Christ started to know each other and recognize each other in Christ Jesus. We are grateful for the work of the Spirit and we

acknowledge God's powerful love by which He brought these churches not only to cooperate with each other, but also wanting to live together. We pray that this being together with each other will deepen. But we also pray that these local contacts and being together will spread to other centers where there are FRCSA and GKSA congregations.

Since your last "normal" synod in 2011, the Reformed Churches in South Africa met in 2012 in synod. I am sure every one of you is aware of the events during the Synod, especially the decisions made about the turnaround strategy, and the brief given to deputies to pay attention to the whole issue of unity and diversity in our churches. Lord willing, we as RCSA will meet in Synod during January 2015 to reflect about these things dependant on the King of the church. I want therefore to request you earnestly to pray for us as churches that we will put us willingly under the guidance of the Spirit and that the Spirit will lead us to be church of the Lord – as we live in relationship with Christ and in line with His Word.

As Synod you meet during Easter, during the weeks in which we focus on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus and the new life that He has made possible and works each day. But you also meet in a very important socio-political time for South Africans ... with Freedom Day behind us – during which we reflected on the past twenty years of our country's journey - and Election Day - May 7, 2014 - ahead. And the big privilege you have as churches – in which we as churches may share you – is to preach the life-giving message of Jesus Christ in the uncertain socio-political era in which we live. Yes, we may bring the message of reconciliation and tell every South African in the words of 2 Corinthians 5:

We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God

May we really take each other's hands and in this way be living witnesses of our Lord Jesus. May your synod also contribute to this.

As deputies of the RCSA and as RCSA we pray that you all may experience the tremendous power of the Spirit, the power of the resurrection which is at work in each and every one of us. May our Lord bless you as synod and as churches with his grace, love and spirit!

Rev. Pieter Kurpershoek
(Chair: Deputies Ecumenical Affairs: National)

Appendix 10 – Report of Deputies for Relations with Churches in SA

Report of Deputies relations with churches in South Africa

1. Deputies: Rev. Jelle Drijfhout (secretary), Rev. Erik van Alten (convenor), Rev. Eugene Viljoen. In 2012, Rev. Van Alten accepted the call from the Reformed seminary in Kiev, Ukraine and Rev. Viljoen was released from his congregation. For this reason the office of deputies could not function after August 2012.
2. Mandate (Acts of the synod 2011, art 20)
 - a. To pursue contacts and discussions with English speaking churches with whom there is collaboration with regard to training of our theological students
 - b. To pursue the possibility of attending the TKR (Tussen Kerklike Raad) as observers
 - c. To continue contact with the Reformed Church RCSA on the national level
 - d. To take responsibility for stimulating, assisting and monitoring local contacts between churches where work is in progress to seek formal unity with other churches
 - e. To continue contacts with the Free Church of South Africa FCSA on a national level
 - f. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod
3. Execution of the mandate
 - a. Re a. This is the Church of England in South Africa (CESA) with whom there is collaboration regarding George Whitefield College. There is an agreement between George Whitefield College and our curators. We have no contact with anyone in the last while. There is currently no student at George Whitefield, so it became less urgent. (website: cesa.org.za/training/theological)
 - b. Re b. We sent a letter with the request to become observers of the TKR, but our request was rejected. Deputies decided to make no further attempts. In the contact with the RCSA we clearly observe how the TKR functions.
 - c. Re c. there were discussions with RCSA deputies:
 - i. Oct 27 2011 (first meeting since 2008 and therefore exploratory)
 - ii. May 10 2012 (we talked about church and bond of churches)
 - iii. latest plan: Aug 23 2013 - postponed by deputies of the GKSA. We couldn't find a new date, due to the departure of Rev. Erik van Alten and the release of Rev. Eugene Viljoen.
 - d. Re d. Deputies sent a letter to all the churches in our bond. The Pretoria churches gave feedback. Deputies have been informed about the progress of talks between the five church councils in Pretoria. They received the final document (= Collective statement). Rev. Viljoen was asked for his opinion but was not received.
 - e. Re e. Regarding the Free Church in South -Africa. No action was taken.
4. Letters sent
 - a. To the TKR - request to become observers of TKR
 - b. To all FRCSA councils. With this letter, the deputies wanted to achieve the following:

- i. To encourage the local church councils to seek unity with all who truly believe in Christ;
 - ii. to hear from the church councils what is happening regarding this in their congregation
 - iii. to offer our assistance in talks with other churches, in whatever stage the discussions may be.
 - c. To the DRCA - request to continue talks
5. Greetings
 - a. Rev. Erik van Alten brought greetings to the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches in September 2011
 - b. Rev. Erik van Alten brought greetings to the Synod of the Reformed Churches in February 2012
6. The NGKA: Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (website: <http://www.ngka.co.za/>)

Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) – NG Kerk in Afrika (NGKA)

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) – Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) has a General Synod (constituted 1963) and three regional synods namely: the Synod of the Orange Free State (constituted 1910 with circuits in the Free State, Eastern Cape, North-West Province and Lesotho), the Synod of Phororo and the Synod of North-and-South Transvaal. The church members are mainly Sotho, Tswana, Xhosa and Zulu speaking people. The DRCA was the result of a merger in 1963 of three churches – the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Bantoekekerk in Suid-Afrika (with two regional synods: Kaapland, constituted 1951 and Natal, constituted 1952), the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk van Transvaal (with one regional synod: Transvaal, constituted 1932), and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in the Orange Free State (with one regional synod: Orange Free State, constituted 1910). Near the end of the apartheid era in South Africa, the DRCA began union negotiations with the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. The union was formalized in 1994, but for theological and procedural reasons, a large group of congregations decided to withdraw from the union. They fought for and won the right to regard themselves as the continuation of the DRCA with two regional synods namely Orange Free State and Phororo (Northern-Cape). (See the Declaration of the High Court of Appeal on 27 November 1998: Case nr. 536/96)

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS – CONFESSIONS OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH IN AFRICA (NG KERK IN AFRIKA)

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) is firmly based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God with five essential doctrines namely the “Five Solas” of the Protestant Reformation – “Sola Scriptura” or Scripture Alone, “Sola Gratia” or Salvation by Grace Alone, “Sola Fide” or Salvation by Faith Alone, “Solus Christus” or In Christ Alone and “Soli Deo Gloria” or For the Glory of God Alone. These essential doctrines are set out in the doctrinal standards or confessions of the DRCA namely in the three articles of faith that includes: The Dutch Confession of Faith (Confessio Belgica), The Heidelberg Catechism and The Canons of Dort. The DRCA adopted also the following ecumenical creeds namely: The Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed and the Apostles Creed.

- a. Rev. Erik van Alten came in contact with representatives of the denomination and was invited to the synod where he brought a greeting message.
- b. The contacts were so positive that deputies decided to continue with further talks.

7. RCSA

- a. Prof. Coetzee said during the 2008 Synod of the FRC: "Our two churches (FRC en RCSA) grew by God's grace over the last years in our relationship. We have i started talking increasingly more with each other instead of about each other. Synod decisions witness of the mutual desire to grow towards the manifestation of true unity. The issues that still hinder true unification must be discussed with urgency in prayer and in faith."

The RCSA churches have a simple question for us: what are the issues that hinder unification? It is a fair question to ask and needs an honest answer. Because some of the deputies were new and unfamiliar with situation, we decided to first study the history of the talks between the FRC and the RCSA and to identify the main issues. We identified the following three points:

i. HERMENEUTICS

1. What is the official RCSA approach to hermeneutics?
2. Attention to the so called *Cloete omdigting* (new psalm-versification)
3. Attention to the issue of women deacons in the office

ii. CONTACTS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

1. How to judge the RCSA contacts with other churches?
2. Particular attention to the contacts with the DRCA

iii. DISCIPLINE

1. There is a perception that the discipline, as characteristic of the Church of Christ (BC, art. 29), is not sufficiently exercised in local congregations of the RCSA. This perception must be tested at the local level.

- b. In a conversation with the deputies of the Reformed Churches we have talked about church and bond of churches. From this discussion it became clear that the RCSA uses the term "sister church" and "church of Christ" much wider than the FRC. The RCSA will use it for churches with the same confessional forms , while the FRC uses these words only after the churches are tested to the marks of the true church (according to art. 29 BC). This difference of insight came out in the memorandum that was prepared by the deputies for the Synod of the Reformed Churches 2012. (Memorandum of Agreement between the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRCA)) In this memorandum is stated that "we recognize and respect each other as Churches of Jesus Christ" and there "is a deep spiritual unity between both churches, although it is still not complete and visible and structural". In the same memorandum is also stated that "differences regarding the confession will be addressed". Meanwhile the memorandum proposed to accept each other's attestations, to allow each other's members to the sacraments and to allow pulpit exchange. This memorandum was proposed to Synod 2012 of the GKSA, but was rejected by the synod. Deputies of the FRC were present at the discussion. We were grateful that the synod recognized that this proposal is premature as long as there is no unity in confession.
- c. GKSA Synod 2012: Rev Jelle Drijfhout and Rev. Erik van Alten were present at the discussion of the report of the RCSA deputies to the Synod. Rev. Erik van Alten brought a greeting message.

8. Recommendations

- a. To no longer desire to become observers of the TKR.

Grounds:

- i. Our request was rejected by TKR

- b. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

- i. To continue contact with the RCSA on a national level. These talks should be efficient and head to a conclusion. The talks must deal with the possible hindrances as stated below:

1. Hermeneutics

- a. What is the official RCSA approach to hermeneutics?
b. The so called *Cloete omdigting*
c. The Synod's decision on woman as deacon

2. Contacts with other churches.

- ii. To continue contact with the DRCA in Africa
iii. To continue contact with the FCSA
iv. To pursue contacts and discussions with English speaking churches with whom there is collaboration with regard to training of our theological students

POSSIBLE HINDRANCES FOR THE UNIFICATION WITH RCSA**1. SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE HINDRANCES**

Deputies relations within FRCSA churches in South Africa identify the following issues as possible hindrances for unification with the RCSA and we would like to discuss them with the Deputies of the Reformed Churches. These possible hindrances can be summarized under three categories, namely hermeneutics, ecumenical contacts and discipline.

Apart from the issue of contacts with other churches (see paragraph 2 below), these aspects are not yet worked out in detail. We undertake to do so as soon as possible.

a. HERMENEUTICS

i. Decision: request for a document which reflects the official RCA approach to hermeneutics

ii. Attention to the *Cloete omdigting* New psalm versification.

iii. Attention to the issue of women in the office of deacon (and women in other special offices)

b. CONTACTS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

i. How to judge the RCSA contacts with other churches?

ii. Particular attention to contact with the DRCA

c. DISCIPLINE

i. There is a perception that discipline, as mark of the Church of Christ (BC, art. 29) is not sufficiently exercised in the local congregations of the RCSA. This perception must be tested at the local level.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DRCA AS POSSIBLE HINDRANCE**Church unity and cooperation**

The church is the work of the Triune God. The church is the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The characteristics of the Church (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) are gifts from God. But every gift is also an obligation, a task. The unity of the church is a gift and a task. We confess that the church is one in Jesus Christ, but in the meantime the church should always strive for unity and fight against wrong division.

In the Bible the word *ekklesia* is used for the church as a whole (the church of all times and places), but also for the local church or the congregation of the church. This means that on the one hand no local church or denomination may identify himself with the church of all times and places, but on the other hand, we may never just speak about the church as an invisible church, because the local church is the body and bride of Christ. A bond of churches as we have in our days, didn't exist in the New Testament, but there was definitely fellowship between the local churches of Christ.

Because every Christian is called to join the true church (art 28 BC) it is important to know the marks of the true church (art 29 BC). The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: 1) if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; 2) if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; 3) if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin. You can recognize John 10:27 behind the marks of a true church: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. The striving for unity must happen on the basis of Scripture and confession. We must test one another with the marks of the true church. If unity in Christ is stated, it should

be reflected in a concrete form. It must in the first place receive form around Word and Sacrament (for example: allowing pulpit exchange; allow each other's members to have the Holy Supper, accepting each other's attestations). The unity must secondly receive form in fellowship: local congregations encouraging each other, taking care of each other, keeping each other in the truth of the gospel. Finally, there should be an attempt to have the unity also embodied in an organizational denomination. Where the unity is not (yet) stated, churches can work together in areas such as Bible translation and Bible distribution.

The FRC has stated until today that the marks of the true church are not visible enough in the DRCA. Therefore there is no unity with these churches, and we cannot strive for it.

Questions about the contacts between RCSA and DRCA

1. In the TKR there were discussions about things that divide RCSA and DRCA. What was the outcome of these discussions?
2. There is concluded that, although the two churches will not come in one Church bond in the short term, there are many points of agreement and the need for cooperation. What are these agreements and in what areas can the churches work together?
3. As churches we need to make the call for unity visible, but first we must be convinced that we are one in Christ. Has the RCSA already drawn this conclusion and on what grounds? Are the fundamental differences from the past now resolved?
4. What does the recognition of another church being a church of Christ mean for the RCSA?

Appendix 11 – Report of Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

Report for Synod Bethal 2014 of the FRCSA / VGKSA

Report of Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

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List of abbreviations used in this Report

AEPC Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church
BBK-NL/BBK GKNv Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the RCNL
BBK-SA/DRCA Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad of the FRCSA
BoP Book of Praise
CanRC Canadian and American Reformed Churches
CRCA Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
CRCA Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad of the CanRC
CRTS Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
C&R Constitution and Regulations of the ICRC
DAO Deputies Administrative Support of the RCNL
DGK/DGKN/RCNr Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (restored)
DKE/DCU Deputies Church Unity of the RCNL
EF Ecclesiastical Fellowship
EPC Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Malawi
EPCEW Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales
ESV English Standard Version Bible translation
FCSA Free Church in Southern Africa
FRC Free Reformed Church
FRCA Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
GDD General Deputies for Diaconal matters of the RCNL
GGRC Calvin Reformed Church, Indonesia
GGRI-NTT = GGRI Reformed Church of Indonesia
GKN/RCN Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
GKv/GKNv Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
HKO/RCO Deputies for Review of the Church Order of the RCNL
ICRC International Conference of Reformed Churches
KO Church Order
MC Mission Committee
NGK/NGK(NL)/NRC Netherlands Reformed Churches
NIV New International Version Bible translation
NKST Universal Reformed Christian Church of Nigeria
OOG/SDR Deputies for Support Development Reformed churches of the RCNL
RCB Reformed Churches of Brazil
RCBu Reformed Church of Burundi
RCK Reformed Church of Korea
RCNZ Reformed Churches of New Zealand
GKSA/RCSA Reformed Churches in South Africa
RPCNA Reformed Presbyterian Churches of North America
RCNL Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
SCBP Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise
SRC Sudanese Reformed Churches
TU/TUK Theological University, Kampen, NL
URC/URCNA United Reformed Churches of North America
URCC United Reformed Church in Congo

1 General

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (DRCA) herewith submit to Synod Bethal 2014 their report on the period 2011-2014 and its recommendations for the period 2014 –2017.

1.1 Deputies

Synod Cape Town 2011 appointed the following brothers as Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad: Rev. DM Boersma, Rev. PG Boon, Dr. JA Breytenbach, Prof. H de Jager and br. C Roose (convenor). All five brothers served as deputies for the full period of 3 years.

1.2 Mandate

Deputies report on the mandate given by Synod Pretoria 2011, found in Acts of Synod 2011, art. 19. The applicable mandate is mentioned at the beginning of each section.

1.3 Activities

In order to spread the workload, the deputies assigned geographical regions to the members as follows:

ICRC conference 2013 :	C Roose
Europe :	PG Boon, JA Breytenbach & C Roose
Australia, New Zealand :	H de Jager
Northern America :	DM Boersma
Secretary/minutes :	C Roose

Deputies met 12 times: 8th September 2011; 24th November 2011; 3rd May 2012; 13th August 2012; 15th November 2012; 31st January 2013; 14th February 2013; 2nd May 2013; 5th August 2013; 16th September 2013; 18th November 2013, 3rd February 2014.

Additional meetings together with representatives of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCNL) were held on 15th June 2011 (during Synod 2011) and on 16th and 17th January 2012.

Deputies also arranged a combined meeting in the FRC Pretoria on 16th January 2012, in which direct communication between members of those congregations and the visiting representatives of the RCNL could take place concerning developments in our Dutch sister churches. Other FRC congregations were also invited to attend this meeting

In line with point 5 of the mandate, as given by Synod Pretoria, 2011, deputies also sent Revv. Breytenbach and Boon in Feb/March 2013 to the Netherlands for discussions with deputies BBK of the RCNL(I) (GKNv), and representatives of the De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGKN) and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, previously known as the Voorlopig Kerkverband) (GKN).

DRCA accepted two invitations to visit sister churches abroad and an invitation to attend the ICRC conference 2013:

- Rev. JA Breytenbach visited the Free Reformed Churches in Australia (FRCA) and addressed their Synod Armadale 2012. He also provided information on our

churches to members of the FRCA in congregational meetings in Western Australia and he also met with the FRCA's DRCA.

- Rev. DM Boersma visited the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and addressed their Synod Carman West 2013. He was also able to do some coordination work for financial support by the Canadian churches for mission work and needy churches in South Africa and gave presentation on the FRCSA in various congregational meetings.
- Rev. DM Boersma and br. Roose attended the ICRC conference 2013 which took place in Cardiff, Wales, UK.

1.4 Compilation of this report

This report was compiled by all five deputies. It includes reports from each member of DRCA concerning his specific area of responsibility. All these reports were finally brought together in one main report. All Deputies RCA assume full responsibility for the content of this report, with the exception of section 2.4. This section is only supported by three of the five deputies as Prof. de Jager and Rev. Boersma do not agree with the contents of this section. For that reason Prof. de Jager and Rev. Boersma decided to write a minority report concerning section 2.4.

1.5 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to adopt the following general recommendations:

1. To appoint new deputies for the 2011 – 2014 period.
2. To honourably discharge Rev. P G Boon as a deputy for Relations with Churches Abroad after his service of 3 x 3 years from 2005 – 2014.
3. To honourably discharge Br. C. Roose as a deputy for Relations with Churches Abroad after his service of 2 x 3 years from 2008 – 2014.
4. To appoint the following brothers as deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad for the 2014 – 2017 period: Rev. JJ Drijfhout, Rev. DM Boersma, Dr. J A Breytenbach, Dr. G. Hagg and Prof. Herman de Jager.

Grounds:

- 1) According to art 9 of the Rules of Synod (art 10 in the old blue booklet), as adopted by the FRCSA Synod 2005 (art 25), deputies should not serve for more than three consecutive terms.
- 2) Rev. P G Boon has served three consecutive terms in DRCA.
- 3) Br. C Roose wants to reduce his ecclesiastical obligations in order to be able to spend more time with his family.

2 Contact with sister churches

This chapter describes what deputies did to carry out the mandates of Synod Pretoria 2011 to maintain relations with our sister churches.

2.1 Rules for sister church relations

Each FRCSA synod gives a mandate to DRCA to maintain ecclesiastical contacts with sister churches “according to the adopted rules”. DRCA however found out that it was rather difficult to get hold of those rules as they were not readily available. Consequently, the rules for correspondence are not really consulted by DRCA in their contacts with sister churches. DRCA regarded that as an unsatisfactory situation and decided to search for those rules and examine them in order to establish whether they needed to be reviewed. This resulted in a revised version of the rules which is attached to this report as Appendix 1. DRCA proposes that this new version is adopted by Synod 2014 and that it is added to the basic mandate of DRCA as indicated in the FRCSA’s Synod Rules.

2.1.1 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

To adopt the newly proposed rules for correspondence with sister churches and to insert those rules in the FRCSA’s Synod Rules.

Ground:

The existing rules for correspondence should be readily available and should therefore be inserted in a document which is regularly used, such as the Synod Rules.

2.2 Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA)

Mandate

1. To continue sister church relations with the FRCA according to the adopted rules.
2. To send one delegate to attend the next synod of the FRCA and to instruct this delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.

2.2.1 Activities

Deputies sent Rev. Breytenbach to attend the synod of the FRCA, 9 – 19 July 2012 in Armadale, and to give presentations on the FRCSA. Synod was addressed (Rev. Breytenbach’s speech is available at the following link: <http://bit.ly/1fRyLMP>). He also addressed two meetings, one combined meeting in Southern River for the congregations in the Perth area and one combined meeting for the congregations in Albany, where he showed Powerpoint presentations concerning the FRCSA. The FRCA’s Deputies Relations Churches Abroad invited him for discussions with them. In those discussions matters of mutual interest were focused on.

Matters that were focused on in the address to Synod and in the discussion with the Deputies:

- The challenge of being one church community within a diverse multi cultural church federation. Although there are many differences we both live in secular societies.
- The growing interaction. Emigration to Australia. The support of the Needy Churches in South Africa, especially Bethal.
- Sustainability of the FRCSA. With regard to the decision of the Synod of Pretoria, April 2012, the desire of the federation not to become dependent of foreign money.
- Training for the ministry. Both federations make use of the training of our Canadian sister in Hamilton. What are the possibilities of having the training in part by distance mode? During the synod a meeting was held between the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the FRCA, rev. Breytenbach and the two delegates of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The brothers from Canada took it upon them to report the need for training by way of distance mode by the Churches in South Africa and Australia to the Canadian Deputies.
- Contacts between the RCSA (GKSA) and the FRCSA.

During the synod, rev. Breytenbach had discussions with the delegate of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, rev. Archbald. A copy of the Acts of Synod, Pretoria 2011, has been send to those churches.

2.2.2 Synod Armadale 2012

a) Relations Churches Abroad

Synod decided to accept a recommendation to appoint deputies with a mandate to take up contact with the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore and to make a careful investigation of this church according to BC Art. 29, exploring the feasibility of a sister church relationship, and presenting a detailed report and accompanying recommendations to Synod 2015.

Synod decided to continue sister church relations with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Free Reformed churches in South Africa.

b) Relations with the FRCSA

Since the last synod, the churches have responded positively and in various ways to requests for financial support from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa. Deputies were appointed to continue sister church relations and coordinate ongoing financial support.

c) Relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Synod decided to encourage local churches to exercise practical support and interaction wherever possible in areas that are not reserved for relationships between sister churches.

Synod 2011 of the RCNZ has decided to discontinue sister church relationship with the CRCA and establish instead a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCA. Deputies were mandated to determine how the implications of the RCNZ's new

relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCA differs from their previous sisterchurch relationship and evaluate how this impacts on the impediment identified by previous Synods.

d) Relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia

Synod decided that the union in February 2012 of the federation of GGRI-NTT (original sister church), the federation of churches in Papua, and the federation of churches in Kalimantan Barat should be acknowledged with gratitude to the Lord. Deputies should report on the implications of this union and provide support to the GGRI with the intention of building up their Reformed character, and to support plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba. With respect to the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC), Synod decided to continue contact, helping wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches also, and to encourage the GGRC strongly to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, and thus a sister-church relationship with the FRCA.

e) Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford

Synod decided not to investigate the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford, which has seceded from the CanRC. Abbotsford requested deputies to make a judgment as to whether the CanRC are faithful or not, while the FRCA continues to recognise the CanRC as true and faithful churches.

f) Relations with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands

Synod decided that there were serious concerns regarding the faithfulness of the sister churches over quite a long time and that the RCNL did not reject all errors against the Word of God, that the seriousness of these concerns requires an official admonition to the RCNL in the form of a statement of weighty objections with respect to the doctrine and practice of the RCNL, also taking into account that the RCNL have requested synod to direct concerns directly to their synod. Special attention should be given to items like hermeneutics, ethics, sacraments, ecclesiology, church government, and liturgy. It had to take into account the responses already received from the RCNL, and to be done in consultation with deputies from sister churches in Canada and South Africa. An advisory committee was appointed to formulate this admonition, to be completed by March 2013 so that synod could reconvene on 22 April 2013 in order to adopt it and decide how to proceed with the relationship with the RCNL.

Having adjourned on 19 July 2012, Synod Armadale was reconvened on 22 April 2013.

Deputies FRCA consulted us by sending a draft of their letter of admonition. DRCA were hesitant to comment on the content of the letter as DRCA were still in discussion with BBKNL and our own investigations were still not yet completed.

Synod amended and adopted a draft document from the advisory committee.

Included were the statements of concern, which were elaborated on and substantiated in the letter, sent to the Synod of Ede 2014:

“1. The RCNL tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the authority and plain meaning of Scripture for exegesis. This seriously questions the ability and willingness of the RCNL to fully uphold the truth of Scripture.

2. The RCNL tolerates an approach to hermeneutics that does not uphold the sufficiency of Scripture for ethics. This approach conflicts with what we confess in Belgic Confession Art. 7 concerning the sufficiency of Holy Scripture.
3. Decisions of the RCNL about marriage and divorce leave room for a subjective approach in understanding and applying the Biblical norms. It remains our concern that such an approach has not been explicitly excluded by your synods.
4. The study into whether Scripture allows for women to fill the offices of deacon, elder and minister fails to affirm the clear teaching of Scripture that the special offices within the Christian church are reserved for men.
5. The adoption of regulations that allow for the amalgamation of local RCNL congregations with those of the NGK promotes a false ecumenism.
6. The past and continuing participation in the National Synod/Protestant Forum promotes a false ecumenism.
7. The RCNL has accepted a proliferation of hymns some of which are not unambiguously Biblical and Reformed.”

Synod decided that sister relations with the RCNL have to be continued, but expressed sadness that the relationship is strained. Synod decided to advise local consistories to exercise due care with respect to their responsibilities towards those coming from and going to the RCNL, and to call the FRCA to frequently remember the RCNL in their prayers. Deputies should continue to discuss matters of concern with deputies BBK and to report to the next synod.

g) Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Restored)

Synod acknowledged that the RCNr's relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford, may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship with the RCNr.

Synod decided to pray for true ecclesiastical unity based on God's Word and as maintained in the confessions, and to appoint deputies with a mandate to keep contact with the RCNr and be receptive to contact from other churches who have split off from the RCNL and the RCNr, and to report on further developments in this regard.

h) Training for the Ministry

Synod decided to continue to collect and forward funds to the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton, and to arrange the support of theological students as per adopted rules. In future cases where theological students work in Australia as part of the Pastoral Training Program, the churches will share the cost of this by way of assessment, according to the rules adopted by Synod 2009. The feasibility of offering the first year of study in Australia or by extension will continue to be investigated by the deputies. The deputies' recommendation to invite a guest lecturer to Australia from the seminary every two years rather than every three years was also adopted.

i) Book of Praise

Synod decided not to adopt the 19 additional hymns that had been presented to the churches for evaluation, since it was considered that a desire to have more hymns was not alive in the churches. However Synod decided to adopt provisionally the 150 psalms and 65 hymns as revised and published in the provisional Book of Praise (2010 edition) of the Canadian Reformed Churches, on the grounds that these revisions are an

improvement on the 2008 edition. Synod considered that it is prudent to invite input from the churches regarding producing such an Australian version of the Book of Praise in the event that a future synod decides to produce such an edition. This would include the revised version of the 150 psalms and 65 hymns, along with a prose section that incorporates the small changes authorized by FRCA synods over the years, and the FRCA church order. Amongst other things, deputies also received the mandate to submit the relevant material already received from the churches concerning the 2010 edition of the Book of Praise to the Canadian SCBP for consideration, and to study the use of capitalization for personal pronouns referring to God.

j) Bible Translation

Synod appointed Deputies to evaluate the NIV 2011 edition so that Synod 2015 can come to a definitive decision regarding feministic influences, in the interim Synod decided to disallow the NIV 2011 for use in the church services. Synod decided that the ESV should be evaluated regarding its strengths and weaknesses with a view to allowing it to be used in the church services.

2.2.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to adopt the following recommendations:

1. To continue sister church relations with the FRCA according to the adopted rules.
2. To authorise deputies to send a delegate to Synod Baldivis 2015 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.

Grounds:

- 1) The FRCA give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
- 2) Personal visits are an effective means of developing, building and maintaining good relations.
- 3) Both the FRCA and the FRCSA are small church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By maintaining good contacts and by learning from each other, both church federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.

2.3 Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC)

Mandate (Acts of Synod 2011, art. 19.2)

1. To maintain sister church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules;
2. To authorise deputies to send a delegate to Synod Carman West 2013 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.

2.3.1 Activities

Deputies maintained the sister church relationship with the CanRC. Nothing notable happened in the correspondence.

In accordance with mandate 2, Rev. D.M. Boersma attended Synod Carman West, held in May 2013. He also gave presentations on the FRCSA to churches in Alberta, Manitoba as well as Denver, Colorado (USA). He also made contact with the full Coaldale Committee during his visit to Coaldale. The attendance at such presentations was the highest when it was done after a worship service. For the future, we should consider making presentations to Reformed schools, too.

2.3.2 Synod Carman West 2013

Twenty-four delegates met in Carman, Manitoba for the tri-annual Synod. The CanRCs have two regional Synods (West and East) with four Classes each. The total membership at the beginning of 2013 was 28523 in 49 churches, with 60 pastors in active service.

a) Unity with the URCNA

Sadly, the unity process with the URCNA has slowed down. URC Synod 2010 noted that the songbook committee had made little progress and their Committee for theological education had reached an impasse. Two thirds of the local United Reformed churches have no contact with a local CanRC. The lack of information and contact leads to a lack of interest as well as suspicion in the URCs.

The biggest disagreement lies in the training for the ministry. The CanRC is strongly convinced that the churches have a responsibility to maintain their own federational seminary, whereas the URC never had their own seminary.

A joint church order committee was not reappointed by the URC Synod. It also instructed its Songbook Committee to contact the OPC to work together on a common Psalter Hymnal.

The CanRC continues with its own songbook. Text and tunes of Hymns were updated. The Book of Praise (BoP) is now finalized. The FRCA use the same BoP. They did not adopt the adding of new hymns in 2010, so there is now a degree of difference between them. The FRCA would like to have been more involved in updating the BoP.

b) Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS)

The CanRC is no longer waiting for the unity process with the URCNA to finish and values its own theological training highly. For the CanRC, it is a matter of principle that the church should have its own theological college under the oversight of deputies of Synod.

Synod decided, at the recommendation of curators, to expand their seminary with a fifth professor. This professor will be full-time in the ecclesiology department (church history, church government etc.) In the past, this area was combined with diaconology (practical theology) and missiology, a massive task. Having five professors will undoubtedly strengthen the seminary.

Synod appointed a fifth professor immediately: Rev. Ted Van Raalte. He was a minister in Surrey, BC. He just finished his doctoral dissertation at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids with a historical study in the area of church government.

Full external review of the CRTS, decided upon by Synod 2007, is now complete.

c) Decisions Regarding the FRCSA

Synod 2010 had decided “to recommend the FRCSA to the churches as worthy of continued financial assistance, to help them support the needy churches in the federation, and to assist them with their extensive mission work and relief efforts among the disadvantaged and sick in South Africa.” Synod 2013 repeated this recommendation.

The report of CRCA deputies mentioned the interest of the FRCSA in the theological training at the CRTS, mainly for our white students. Synod 2013 decided: “to mandate the Board of Governors of our Theological College to investigate together with the FRCSA if there are possibilities to set up a form of distance learning for the first year of theological training, with the use of facilitators in South Africa.” (art. 129)

Synod also decided to mandate their deputies to visit the next FRCSA Synod, since they have not visited two previous Synods.

d) The CanRC's Relationship with the RCNL (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands)

Synod 2010 appointed a special subcommittee for the CRCA (their BBK) to investigate and talk with BBK-NL.

The report this committee submitted was extensive and received appreciation at Synod. The RCNL deputies present did not show that anything was incorrect. It was clear, however, that a difference in opinion exists between the RCNL and the CanRC.

The report showed understanding for the Dutch situation and its challenges, as well as appreciation for the good in the churches.

They concluded that several visits and meetings (Synod Harderwijk, a meeting with the Theological University in Kampen) could not take away most of the critical issues.

Questions and criticism regarding three main points remained:

- 1) the way the TUK and Synod dealt with the objections against publications of some lecturers at the TUK makes the committee doubt that the commitment to a high view of Scripture at the TUK is sufficiently held up;
- 2) new deputies for M/V (men/women in the church) were appointed, but a publication that the subcommittee thinks is harmful, was neither endorsed or rejected by Synod;

- 3) the fear that continuing unity discussions between RCNL and NGK/NRC would undermine their confessional identity, remained.

The first recommendation of the committee, “to continue at this time the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship.” was discussed extensively, given the number of concerns the committee had mentioned. This recommendation was adopted, together with another recommendation to send a letter of admonition to the next Synod of the RCNL:

“To express in a letter of admonition from this synod to the next RCNL synod our brotherly concerns as per the rules for EF (1&6) about the direction we see our sister churches moving in at this time. This letter will express our love for the RCNL as church of the Lord and our sincere prayers for our sister church in the extreme secular European situation. But it will also describe our disquiet about the following matters:

- a. The views coming from or tolerated at the TUK which show marks of Scripture criticism and new hermeneutics.*
- b. The work of the Deputies M/W in the Church appointed by Synod Amersfoort-West 2005 and Zwolle 2008 and how Scripture was treated in their reports.*
- c. The growing relationship with the NRC, also on local level, without resolution of crucial differences such as women in office and subscription to the confessions.*
- d. A growing sense of estrangement between the CanRC and the RCNL which we hope and pray will not lead to a parting of the ways in the future.”*

In addition, Synod appointed a new subcommittee for contact with the GKNv/RCNL with a mandate to observe developments in the areas of concern.

e) Contacts with the Reformed Presbyterian Churches (RPCNA)

The RPCNA’s practice of ordaining female deacons raised questions at Synod 2010. However, they lacked a mandate to get into discussions with the RPCNA about this issue. Therefore there was no progress in the relationship during the past years. Synod mandated deputies to study this further and to enter into discussions with the RPCNA.

f) Women’s voting

The issue of women’s voting has been before many Synods. Synod 2010 decided to leave this in the freedom of the local churches. A minority and majority report were submitted at that time, and Synod decided that the Scripture evidence was inconclusive.

A number of churches appealed against this decision, mostly on church-orderly grounds: that an issue, once it has been placed on the agenda of a Synod, cannot be sent back to the local churches for them to decide on.

Synod decided:

- 1) That Synod Burlington 2010 erred on church political grounds in its decision to leave the matter of women’s voting in the freedom of the churches.
- 2) That Synod Burlington 2010 erred in stating that the exegetical sections brought forward in both the majority and minority reports are “hardly relevant or decisive for the matter of women’s voting”.

- 3) That the churches should return to the voting practice as it officially was before 2010, namely, male communicant members only voting.

We question whether one of the grounds of this decision (such as: “Contentious issue like this it is desirable that a decision of a synod has broad support in the churches.”) are sound. This reasoning deviates from the Reformed principles of church government.

2.3.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

1. To maintain sister church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules.
2. To authorise deputies to send a delegate to Synod Dunnville, Ontario, 2016 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA .

Grounds:

- 1) The CanRC give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions and the Church Order.
- 2) Personal visits are an effective means of developing, building and maintaining good relations.
- 3) Both the CanRC and the FRCSA are church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By maintaining good contacts and by learning from each other, both church federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.
- 4) Through presentations to the Canadian churches we show our gratitude for their support and we make our churches better known.

2.4 Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (RCNL)

This part of the report is subdivided according to the main mandates given to DRCA by Synod Pretoria 2011.

Mandates of Synod Pretoria 2011 & what has been done:

Synod Pretoria 2011:

19.3 Synod decides:

1. To continue the sister church relationship with the GKNv according to the established rules;
2. To wholeheartedly accept the invitation of the Dutch delegates to have an open discussion on the issues raised listed in point 3 below;

Proceedings DRCA:

DRCA had official meetings with the Dutch delegates on the following occasions:

- 16 & 17 January 2012 in Pretoria. Dutch delegates present: Rev. JM van Leeuwen, Dr. EA de Boer.
 - 1 Maart 2013 in Zwolle, Netherlands. DRCA present: JA Breytenbach & PG Boon. Dutch delegates present: K Wezemann, A Feijen, JM van Leeuwen, J Schreuder, M Blok, EA de Boer.
3. To instruct DRCA to address the following issues as raised by DRCA with the GKNv deputies. If any of these issues remain after these discussions, DRCA are authorized to communicate them with the GKNv Synod:
 - a. Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Reformed University
 - b. Women in Office
 - c. Deputies Church Unity
 - d. Proposed new Church Order
 - e. The decision making process at Synods of the RCNL
 - f. Consultation with sister churches

1) Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Reformed University

Synod Pretoria 2011:

- vi. Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Theological University

Deputies have reason to doubt that the Reformed doctrine is adequately maintained and protected at the Theological University in Kampen. In this regard we mention the names of Harinck, Paas, Kwakkel and Van Bekkum. We are also concerned because the churches in the GKNv do not receive enough feedback on how curators deal with the complaints that have been lodged against these lecturers/researchers.

Proceedings DRCA:

- a.) Dissertation of dr. Paas

According to the mandate, DRCA made a closer study of the dissertation of dr. S. Paas *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Leiden, 2003). Allegations were published against it that warranted a closer examination. Paas would

have entertained unbiblical views, such as the notion that the people Israel arose from migrant and Canaanite population, putting a question mark behind the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, as well as calling into question the historicity of the creation account in Genesis. Allegations were that he also continued to uphold liberal suppositions in later publications. Dr. Paas was appointed as lecturer (*universitair docent*) in Kampen. As DRCA we experienced this situation as confusing. In 2009 prof. Kwakkel wrote that Paas would not have been permitted to publish such a dissertation at the University of Kampen.¹ Yet presently dr. Paas is a lecturer at this very university. Enough reason to a closer study of the dissertation of dr. Paas.

In his dissertation Paas makes a *disconnect* between ‘history of religion’ and ontology or metaphysical reality. The historic evidence of the Old Testament is suspended until extra Biblical sources, in cooperation with a modern hermeneutical process stripping the text of literary conventions, can reinforce the historicity.

Paas states that the history of religion is a history of *religion in its historical manifestation* and not a history of God (p.24). A *history of the revelation of the living God* is not taken into consideration. According to Paas he does not pay attention to this, because of the restrictions of the modern scientific Old Testament discourse.

Paas follows in the footsteps of Troeltsch by stating that the history of religion is strictly immanent in its description. In the description and explanation of historical phenomena, traditional historical investigation does not allow for ‘supernatural’ agencies (p.25). Though acknowledging that “for a more profound understanding of the Old Testament and for a theological judgment on the religion of ancient Israel, more than a historical approach is required,” he nevertheless affirms that “for a theological reading of the Old Testament the historical approach to the religion of ancient Israel cannot be neglected” (27-28).

We sense here an ethical conflict. A study of Biblical texts, excluding a priori ‘supernatural’ agencies, is one sided, to say the least. If Scripture is God’s revelation and is self-authenticating, what positive role could the investigation of Scripture subjected solely to human rationality, without regard for God’s work, possibly achieve? Any result will be an undermining of Scripture, for once one submits himself to the strictures of the historical critical school, the results will be predictable. Consider the following conclusions that Dr. Paas comes to:

- Gen 2:4b-25 is relegated to an author called the Yahwist² who possibly wrote during the early or middle period of the monarchy and Gen 1-2:4a is said to be a Priestly document dated to the Persian period (post-exilic) (p.32-34). What Genesis says is, therefore, of minor importance for the history of pre-exilic creation theology (p.36). In light of all of this, Paas also concludes that “the first Old Testament references to Israel’s faith in YHWH as Creator of the world came from the early monarchic period” (p.49).

¹ *De Reformatie* 11 April & 2 Mei 2009.

² Dr. Paas’ use of the term *Jahwist* in his dissertation is confusing to say the least. Does he only mean with this term *worshiper of Jahwe*? How can this be the case on f.e. p.33 of his dissertation?

The above is in contradiction to what Scripture affirms to be the case. If one does not want to accept the testimony of Genesis 1 and 2, must one then also deny God's revelation of the fourth commandment from Mount Sinai? For according to Paas, Israel did not know of creation until the early monarchic period.

- Israel's creation belief has Canaanite background and possibly influenced by Egyptian notions (p.49, 121-132, 437)
- Israel arose from migrant and Canaanite population about 1175 B, "the tribes which came to be known as 'Israel'" (p.113-114)
- The narratives of the Exodus and Entry are "ideological" or "theological" reflections which may have some historical value (p.120)
- Paas considers creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1-11 (p.104). For Paas a key element of myth is that it stands outside our time, outside history (p.102). "Events regulated by God in a time that stands outside of ours are found in particular in the *Ur-history* (Gen. 1-11) ... We might say that Israel was of Canaanite origins ... and was, therefore, also rooted in a mythic climate of thought. In this way it is possible to think of myth as one of the foundations (and perhaps the foundation par excellence) of Israel's religion" (p.104).

One can have a closer discussion as to the meaning of the (literary) term 'myth'. Yet using the definition dr. Paas gives himself (p.97f), we are of the opinion that it is impossible for a theologian wanting to remain faithful to Scripture, to deal with the OT in this way. The so called 'creation stories' of the Old Testament are not done justice when dealing with them in terms of this definition given (p.97f). This is not only a matter of exegesis, it is a hermeneutic and confessional matter.

- YHWH is a derivative of El. According to Paas this is not a pronouncement about the theological reality of the divine truth. It is merely establishing that in the early stages of the religious history of Israel his worshippers to a great extent attributed the same qualities to YHWH as were attributed to El, and that the Canaanite El worship was to a great extent the source of the concepts the people of Israel used to give shape to their faith in their God.

Paas defended that the link he posed between Jahweh and the Canaanite El is merely of religion historic character, comparable to how our word for God is derived etymologically from the worship of Wodan. Yet in his dissertation it is apparent that it is about more than only words being so called morphological jars that can be filled up with a new meaning. The dissertation creates the impression that there are substantial and conceptual links between the Canaanite El and Jahweh. The argument that this is just religion history of the way how Israel believed, and that nothing is said about divine revelation, norm and truth, is not convincing. The question as to the actual relation between the historic revelation (by the living God) to Israel on the one hand, and the reality of Israel's daily belief on the other, is relegated to the side-line too easily. An orthodox theologian cannot do this.

An important question, when dealing with the dissertation of dr. Paas, is in how far an orthodox theologian can adapt – with apologetic motives – to a liberal discourse. To submerge yourself in an apologetic way into the mind-set of the scientific discourse of the day, and to operate within their parameters, with their instruments and axioms, may be regarded as laudable. Yet one has to be aware of ethical tensions that may arrive. One can ask whether there is not a too big disconnect between one's behaviour oriented to

broader acceptance in academic circles, and one's identity as a Christian. One has to ask the question whether the end justifies the means.

With regard to dr. Paas' dissertation, the impression arises that formulations used by him are read differently in theological academic circles, compared to how the churches have to read them according to dr. Paas.

To conclude, from an apologetic viewpoint, we appreciate the good elements in dr. Paas' dissertation, like his main thesis that a belief in creation was found among eighth century prophets. However, we are disappointed that he completely identifies himself with a religion-historical approach. We would have expected that as a Reformed scholar he would have stated clearly that although he does not adhere to the religion-historical approach, he will use this approach in order to show that even on the basis of those presuppositions one can defend a creation belief in eighth century prophets. As the dissertation now stands there is no hint of the author distancing himself from the approach. Even in later publications in other contexts dr. Paas did not distance himself from the religion-historical approach, but reiterated the same viewpoints.³

We regret that Dr. Paas' appointment at the TU in Kampen was upheld in spite of valid criticisms. We could expect that any minister who held such views would have been summarily disciplined. We make no judgment on Dr. Paas' personal faith. We only judge his publications.

By maintaining this appointment in spite of the valid objections brought against Paas' scholarly work, Kampen will probably no longer be able to call anyone to account concerning higher critical views in the future. It seems to us that this episode will leave Kampen open to future toleration of the teaching of the Scriptures in a critical manner which dishonours Scripture and its Author. Not taking disciplinary action has, we believe, made it very difficult to deal Biblically with similar cases in the future. The matter is serious for ultimately we are not simply talking about method here, but of an unbelieving ideology. This ideology controls how one arranges and views the facts. The clear meaning and intent of the Scriptures no longer have the last say, but man does. We fear that this approach will ultimately affect the integrity of the TU in Kampen and influence the views of students and thus future ministers.

b.) Dissertation of dr. K. van Bekkum

According to the mandate, DRCA made a closer study of the dissertation of dr. Van Bekkum. In 2010 dr. K. van Bekkum issued his dissertation *From Conquest to Coexistence. Ideology and antiquarian intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*.

Overview

In the Western Old Testament research a debate is ongoing on the entry into Canaan or conquest of the people of Israel as it is described in Joshua. Several hypotheses are upheld, also making use of the interpretation of archaeological material. They vary from the statement that no conquest had taken place, to the view that there had been a long process of peaceful infiltration. What Van Bekkum endeavours to demonstrate in his dissertation is that the establishment of Israel in Canaan was a process *from conquest to coexistence*. He endeavours to demonstrate that the conquest isn't a mythical ideological

³ Cf. *De Wapenveld* (51:5 – 2001); *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (2003), p.308-327: "Het Oude Testament als religieus document".

conception of later times. In his dissertation Van Bekkum tries to restore communication between the exegesis of the Old Testament and archaeology. He limits himself to the exegesis of Joshua 9:1-13:7, and with regard to the archaeology he limits himself to the period of the 14th-8th century BC. With regard to the miracle in Joshua 10 – sun and moon that stood still – Van Bekkum tries to explain it in terms of the conventions of old Eastern narratives. Consequently it becomes a literary *topos* emphasizing the totality and radicality of the triumph.

Furthermore Van Bekkum provides his own historiographical hypothesis with regard to Joshua 9-13. On the one hand the authors of these chapters used contemporary literary means. On the other hand they also showed respect for transmitted material and traditions. In his dissertation Van Bekkum comes to the conclusion that the historic ‘truth claims’ that are made in the book of Joshua, are neither proved by archaeology, nor denied. His dissertation can be merited for providing an exegetical-archaeological defence of the historicity of Israel’s conquest in Canaan (p.560). In the contemporary Western debate Van Bekkum endeavours to stand with the historicity of the Exodus and Entry of Israel into Canaan.

Methodology of Van Bekkum’s Exegesis of Joshua 9-13

Methodologically Van Bekkum describes the historical material in the Old Testament as the product of a community’s belief and expectations. To what extent the historical material is reflecting true happenings can only be established by a dialogical process with ‘artifactual evidence’(p.31-32, 357). Artefacts are objects produced by humans and functioning as evidence.

In his exegesis Van Bekkum makes a distinction between ‘truth claim’ and ‘truth value’ (p.32). Van Bekkum’s treatment of historical texts from the Old Testament leads to a situation that their historicity is suspended, since they first have to be stripped from conventions such as simplification, selectivity, suggestive detail, rhetorical exaggeration, anachronism and the like (p. 32f, 114f, 179, 201, 184, 194). Extra Biblical sources can help with this process. Only afterwards it can be discerned what is historical and what not, or how much of the story actually forms *history*.

The so called poetic fragments of Joshua 10:12b-13 are subsequently furnished by Van Bekkum with an own interpretation. Van Bekkum doesn’t want to deny that God performed a miracle on Joshua’s prayer. But according to him Joshua’s prayer was answered by a miracle of victory, described according to old Eastern conventions as a military victory in one day. In reality the miracle didn’t have anything to do with the true length of that day. The ‘fact’ that the sun stood still (Joshua 10:12-14) is interpreted in a metaphorical way, with the conclusion that the sun and moon did not actually stand still. Rather “the prolonging of the day to defeat the enemy at one time is understood as a rhetorical strategy, reflecting the common ancient Near Eastern literary technique of contracting a great military victory to a single time span” (p.250).

This interpretation deviates from the explanation Joshua 10 gives of itself. In verses 13 and 14 mention is made repeatedly that something very extraordinary happened on that day. People shouldn’t think this is a figure of speech or exaggeration, the text itself remarks! Verses 12d-13d is thus provided with Biblical commentary in verses 13e-14c: it was a historical day. The emphasis is placed on the unique way the prayer was answered. Verse 13 speaks about the day on which the LORD answered this concrete prayer: “The

sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day.” Joshua’s prayer, in combination with the explanation provided by the Bible text itself, doesn’t leave room to think that something else had happened than a miracle in the sense that the day was really longer. Notwithstanding Van Bekkum proceeds to label the explanation of the Bible text as a secondary meaning (p.247), whilst he himself provides the primary explanation. The secondary meaning he classifies as a hyperbolic interpretation with a reduced historicity (p.249-250). Van Bekkum even continues to postulate that the happenings of Joshua 10:12-14 can be interpreted in a metaphorical way. It becomes a mere image underscoring God’s victory, and we don’t have to take it literally (p.250).

In this regard one has to ask the question how an orthodox exegete can label his own exegesis as primary, without the text itself giving occasion to it. The text actually repeatedly states the contrary. It makes no sense to confirm God’s victory, but putting question marks behind the way how He had achieved it. An exegete doesn’t have the right to do this. Who gives us the right to label something as metaphorical language without the text giving occasion to it? Van Bekkum does the same in another article where he asserts that the battle between David and Goliath did not happen literally, but that it in a spiritual and historical sense it is exemplary for David’s battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 17). How can something be exemplary historical, if the example is not historical?⁴ An exegete would in such a case rather choose other possibilities of interpretation, which are definitively available.

The question regarding the inspiration of the book of Joshua is also relevant in this regard. Van Bekkum asserts that God’s Word coincides with the ideological processing of the so called text-community (the group of people who produced the text). The text of the book of Joshua is a reflection of the expectations of the text-community. How does this statement relate to the prophetic character of God’s Word, often contravening the expectations of the community? Prophets had to come with a message from God, a message the community did not wait for, and often suppressed.

We have to conclude that Van Bekkum’s method of exegesis goes beyond what one can call ‘freedom of exegesis’. Van Bekkum indicates in the Epilogue of his dissertation that he accepts art. 5 of the Belgic Confession – dealing with the divine origin of the Bible (p.499). However there then seems to be a discrepancy between words and deeds in this dissertation. The transparent meaning of the text as it functioned through the centuries, is not honoured. The meaning of the text becomes obscure, until the Old Testament scholar with his hermeneutical approach reveals the text to the Bible reader.

Dating of the conquest and its consequences

Not only Van Bekkum’s exegesis and hermeneutical approach of Joshua 9-13 raise questions. With regard to *dating* the Conquest Van Bekkum exploits certain archeological findings, whilst he puts other findings to the side-line (p.360-361). This has to do with his dating of the entry of Israel into Canaan. Van Bekkum states that it seems very likely that the cities Jericho and Ai were not inhabited during the entry, this contrary to what we find in Joshua 5-8. These chapters describe the entry of the people of Israel as well as the ensuing destruction of these cities. Yet a problem arose because Van Bekkum uses the

⁴ Van Bekkum in: *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (Dec 2003), p.328-355

prevalent dating in liberal Western science (p.343, 359-361, 558-559). It is striking that Van Bekkum chose not to investigate the archaeological findings of the 15th century systematically. Does he follow the trend here of liberal theology a priori omitting the 15th century? Liberal theology until present did not want to accept the existence of Israel as an ethnic group as early as the 15th century, their reason being that there are no extra-Biblical sources to confirm this. We conclude that also with regard to the dating of the Conquest Van Bekkum follows the method prevalent in liberal theology, namely to suspend the Biblical description of history not using it as evidence. Therefore the way in which Van Bekkum is dealing with the dating issue is not merely a technical discussion, but of a hermeneutical nature. Van Bekkum a priori seems to have decided not to allow archaeological findings of the 15th century to function in his argumentation.

Also with regard to the dating issue we see that the straightforward historical claims of Scripture are put aside. For example, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that the Exodus took place 480 years prior to Solomon's fourth year as king. But to accept this date is according to Van Bekkum a "lazy man's solution" (p.33). According to Van Bekkum it is methodologically incorrect to accept Biblical data at face value. "It's literary artistry and use of genre conventions should be studied first" (p.33). In the end, the current interpretation of archaeological evidence trumps the Biblical testimony and the traditional interpretation is not even discussed. Also in this sense Van Bekkum's dissertation is liberal, defining the word liberal as the tendency to suspend the historical reliability of Biblical passages until confirmed by extra-Biblical sources.

For long it was the 'trademark' of the Theological University in Kampen, despite the methods of liberal theology, to persist in developing theology (e.g. the Old Testament sciences) in line with the classical orthodox tradition. As indicated above, Van Bekkum's dissertation is characterized by the tendency to suspend the historicity of Old Testament passages, and reinstall them only after the confirmation of extra-Biblical evidence, a so-called dialogical process with artefactual evidence (p.59).

It can be regarded as something positive that Van Bekkum endeavoured to defend the historicity of Israel's conquest. But his conclusions come at a price – question marks behind the destruction of Jericho (also Hebr 11:30 lost its historical basis), question marks behind the OT's own dating of the exodus and entry. What you seem to win on the one side, you lose again on the other. To conclude one can say that there is gratitude for his intentions, but concerns in connection with his hypotheses and methods.

It should also be noted that with the sort of hermeneutics used by Van Bekkum to exegete passages from the Old Testament, the average Reformed church member becomes fully dependent on the scholar for reading and interpreting the Old Testament. Van Bekkum's wording on p.193 is illuminative in this regard: "So if there is anything historical in 2 Samuel 8 and 10..." Is it proper for an orthodox exegete to formulate in this way?

We have to conclude that in this dissertation two basic Reformed hermeneutical principles are violated– the transparency and historical reliability of the Old Testament.

One more aspect should be mentioned. Does Van Bekkum's dissertation have any merits if you consider it to be a sort of an apologetic approach? Did he – apologetically speaking – achieve something in a field where Christians, Atheists, Muslims, Jews, etc. meet one another? If this would be the case, decent communication to the churches is of vital

importance, in order to prevent misunderstanding and possible suspicions. And even more importantly, the author should also be transparent himself – *I am using the prevailing methods to prove something, but it doesn't mean I agree with all its axioms.*

Our concern as deputies is the fact that the Theological University in Kampen could approve a dissertation with such methodological principles. Does this mean that Kampen no longer holds to the traditional Reformed view of Scripture as perspicuous and its own interpreter? If the Old Testament no longer means what it says, where do we end up? It is unclear to us how he can distinguish between accepting the text of Scripture and what the text says (p.499). Our concern is the pattern that is being set in which the obvious meaning of the text is no longer maintained.

By not entering into substantial discussions about the dissertation of dr. Van Bekkum, and by appointing him as special lecturer Old Testament in Kampen, Synod Harderwijk 2011 provided credibility to this new and in our opinion unreformed way of dealing with Scripture.

c.) Discussions DRCA

During the joint discussions on 16-17 January 2012 we as DRCA asked special attention for the dissertation of S. Paas *Creation and Judgement* published in 2003, and the dissertation of K. van Bekkum *From Conquest to Coexistence* (2010). DRCA expressed the concern that in these dissertations a hermeneutical method was used that led to Scriptural criticism. DRCA questioned GKv BBK on the official stance of the Theological University in Kampen with regard to these publications. DRCA also questioned the role of Prof. Kwakkel, who was promotor of the dissertation *From Conquest to Coexistence*. Does he as Old Testament professor in Kampen uphold the same unreformed hermeneutical approach to Scripture? The discussion was hampered by the fact that the GKv BBK delegates had not read these dissertations themselves. GKv BBK did however explain the procedures prevalent with regard to the evaluation of dissertations in Kampen. According to them they are such that a promotor cannot be held accountable, would a dissertation contain unreformed Scripture critical elements: *“Evaluation of such study results by a study promoter/mentor is therefore not based on the question whether the promoter agrees with the conclusions of the study, but on the question whether proper research methods were used or not.”*⁵

Concerning the dissertation of S. Paas it was minuted: *“He [E.A. de Boer] stated that dr. Paas never published any doubtful document after his appointment at the TU, Kampen, but agreed that BBK SA's questions concerning that dissertation and the re-appointment of dr. Paas as a lecturer were justified. He indicated that he will take those questions to the relevant persons in the Netherlands ... Action points are that EdB will make the official reaction of the TU Kampen available to BBK SA.”*⁶

The delegates of BBK advised DRCA to also take notice of and study other publications coming from the TU in Kampen. They specifically pointed at the publication *In den beginne en verder. Een Bijbels-theologische reflectie op de schepping*.⁷ This booklet consists

⁵ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

⁶ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

⁷ G. Kwakkel and P.H.R. van Houwelingen eds., *In den beginne en verder. Een Bijbels-theologische reflectie op de schepping* (Barneveld, 2011).

of articles written by Kampen professors and lecturers, dealing specifically with creational texts in the Bible, how they were exegeted in the past, and how they should be exegeted. After having studied this publication, DRCA reached a twofold conclusion. On the one hand the articles displayed respect for the Word of God, in line with Reformed hermeneutics, on the other hand some articles (those written by G. Kwakkel and E.A. de Boer) provided openings for the combination of Biblical exegesis with evolutionism, although Kwakkel and De Boer did not proceed in that direction themselves. As DRCA we really appreciated the articles, being an enriching experience to study, but about the articles of above mentioned authors we had mixed feelings.

During the next joint discussion on March 1st 2013, DRCA put the discussion regarding the dissertations of Paas and Van Bekkum on the table again. It was minuted: *In January 2012 during the visit to SA there were discussions on this point with the specific focus point being the dissertations of Koert van Bekkum and Stefan Paas. Last year an in depth discussion proved to be not really possible because both NL deputies were not prepared well enough. The question is however whether this is the task of the deputies BBK. Synod Harderwijk discharged the Supervisory Board on the basis of the processes followed, but did not express itself about the scientific character. BBK NL has no intention to comment any further on this and does not regard it as its task.*⁸

DRCA then indicated that this answer is insufficient to them: *DRCA have studied the dissertations and came to the conclusion that more is at hand than merely technical-theological discussions. And this should not be shelved in just a formal way.*⁹ During the meeting of March 1st 2013 no agreement could be reached on the matter, but it was proposed that BBK GKv would assist in arranging a meeting with the Theological University in Kampen, specifically with the “Raad van Toezicht” and the “College van Bestuur”¹⁰, whilst DRCA delegates were in the Netherlands. Yet the SA delegates afterwards received the message that it was not possible to arrange a meeting on short notice. BBK GKv then promised to send via e-mail the official reaction of the Theological University (TU) in Kampen on the dissertation of S. Paas as well as a letter of the TU to DRCA of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), who had approached them with similar questions. After having sent many reminders, we received above mentioned letter to the DRCA of the CanRC in December 2013.

As DRCA we came to our conclusions, making use of all the documents available, including the reports of the DRCA of the CanRC,¹¹. We conclude that the TU in Kampen,

⁸ “In Januari 2012 tijdens het bezoek aan ZA is er een gesprek geweest over dit punt met specifiek als focus; de dissertaties van Koert van Bekkum en Stefan Paas. Vorig jaar bleek een diepgaande discussie niet goed mogelijk omdat de beide NL deputaten niet voldoende voorbereid waren. De vraag is echter of dit wel de taak is van deputaten BBK. De Synode van Harderwijk heeft décharge verleend aan Raad van Toezicht op basis van de door hen gevoerde processen., maar heeft geen uitspraak gedaan over wetenschappelijk karakter. BBK NL heeft geen intentie hier verder uitspraken over te doen en vindt dit ook niet haar taak.” Minutes Joint Meeting March 1st 2013.

⁹ “BBK ZA heeft proefschriften bestudeerd en zij zijn tot conclusie gekomen dat er meer speelt dan alleen technisch-theologische discussies. En dat moet niet formeel afgekapt worden.” Minutes Joint Meeting March 1st 2013.

¹⁰ Minutes Joint Meeting March 1st 2013.

¹¹ This is in line with the mandate we received from Synod Pretoria 2011: “To mandate DRCA to cooperate closely in the coming years with the deputies of the CanRC and the FRCA in studying the developments and addressing our concerns with the GKNv”. DRCA of the CanRC did have deliberations with the TU in Kampen on these matters.

while retaining S. Paas as a lecturer, did not publicly distance itself from the views he expressed in his dissertation, and they retained him as lecturer. We regard this as a watershed moment in the history of the TU.¹² The TU Kampen stressed that Paas is not lecturing in the subject of Old Testament, but in the field of missiology. But are subjects such as missiology and church planting not rooted in the Old Testament as well? Furthermore it should be noted that Paas' use of unreformed hermeneutics and Scripture critical hypotheses with regard to the Old Testament are not restricted to his dissertation.¹³ We also express our concern about the missiological textbook *Als een kerk opnieuw begint. Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming* (2008), of which S. Paas is the main author. Also in this publication unreformed hermeneutics and viewpoints are used, and taken on board.¹⁴

With regard to K. van Bekkum, TU Kampen upholds him as Old Testament lecturer, despite of his Scripture critical exegesis of Joshua 10 amongst others, and the use of unreformed hermeneutical methods in his dissertation *From Conquest to Coexistence* (2010).¹⁵ Synod Harderwijk 2011 also approved of TU Kampen's approach in this regard. Van Bekkum was also appointed lecturer Old Testament by this Synod.¹⁶

We conclude, confirmed by the work done by our Canadian counterparts, that the TU Kampen upholds lecturers with Scripture critical publications.

Synod Pretoria 2011 gave DRCA the mandate to address unresolved issues directly with the upcoming GKv Synod. As DRCA we request Synod Bethal 2014 to do this by way of a letter, calling on our beloved sister churches to restore the proper respect for holy

¹² From the Canadian report: "As deputies we met on April 19, 2012 with BBK and representatives of TUK. We expressed the concerns of the CanRC with respect to Dr. Paas' appointment in spite of valid protests against his dissertation (*Creation and Judgment*) and the unbiblical views he expounded there, such as the notion that the people Israel arose from migrant and Canaanite population, calling into question the historicity of the Exodus. We also pointed out that Paas never distanced himself from the views defended in his dissertation. In spite of our deep concerns, it was clear that this was a matter which TUK did not want to revisit. We were told that the decisions have been made, Paas is not teaching Old Testament (the area of his dissertation), and this old matter is closed. As far as we know this is the first time that unbiblical views are being tolerated in Kampen. We therefore consider Paas' appointment to be a watershed moment in the history of this institution. In our view with the setting of this precedent, it will be very difficult for TUK to stop any possible future Scripture critical thinking in its circles." *Report of the CRCA Subcommittee for Contact with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands Liberated* to Synod Carmen 2013, p.6.

¹³ See f.e. *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (2003), p.308-327: "Het Oude Testament als religieus document".

¹⁴ In this textbook an unhealthy polarization reveals itself between the so-called institutionalized churches and new church plants. Issues like creating space for allowing women in the church offices, making infant baptism optional, making the Sunday as the day of worship optional, making membership administration optional, add to the effect of polarization. The textbook also breathes an atmosphere of man-centered church planting (cf. the 5 so-called 'existentialen'). Reformed mission and church planting should be primary embedded in the glory of God, and God's lawful claim on this world. We also refer in this regard to the critical evaluation of this textbook in the articles of Rev. H. Drost in *Nader Bekeken* (Maart 2010).

¹⁵ The same can be said with regard to his proposed exegesis of 1 Samuel 17, as he published in his article "Het Oude Testament als historisch document. Een verkenning van de omslag in de visie op de oudtestamentische geschiedschrijving" in *Theologia Reformata* 46 (2003), p. 328-355.

¹⁶ Acta Harderwijk 2011-2012, p.156.

Scripture at the TU Kampen with regard to the above mentioned instances (see Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014, Appendix 2). In view of the fact that future and present pastors of our Dutch sister churches are trained at the TU Kampen, we fear that the current situation will impact on the sister church relationship. The relationship cannot continue as if everything is normal, when our mutual foundation of Scripture and Confession is affected negatively. As DRCA it is our task to advise our Synod whether our findings are that the RCNL remain faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions. Unless Synod Ede 2014 gives clear pronouncements in this regard, we hesitate to give this advise unrestrictedly, not taking away our gratitude for many other examples of obedience to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions within our Dutch sister churches.

2) Women in office

Synod Pretoria 2011:

iii. Women in office

There are real concerns regarding the impact of Deputies M/V in the church on the churches in the Netherlands. The publications of these deputies cause the Reformed doctrine on the offices to become a matter of debate – see explanation under § 2.3.3a of the report. The process is not supervised properly, leading to limitless discussions, including pleads to open the offices for women. We sense too little respect for the Word of God as the ultimate norm for church life.

Proceedings DRCA:

This point was also discussed during the joint meeting of 16-17 January 2012. It was minuted: *“Synod 2011 of the RCN appointed new deputies with new instructions. The new instructions seem to take away the concerns BBK SA had with the report of the previous deputies M/V.”*¹⁷ By then the Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011 weren't published yet. However, after we have studied these Acts, which have been published since, containing the decisions of Harderwijk in this regard (Art. 28-30, p.66-70), and after we have studied the Report published by Deputies M/V *in de kerk* for the upcoming Synod Ede 2014, we have to make the following observations and conclusions:

- ❖ In the reports of Deputies M/V *in de kerk* to both Synods Zwolle-Zuid 2008 and Harderwijk 2011, as well as in the manual they published to assist the churches (“Handleiding M/V”), diverging viewpoints on women in the special ecclesiastical offices were put on an equal footing, without providing Biblically sound direction. The Synods Zwolle-Zuid and Harderwijk did not criticise this, nor did they distance themselves from these viewpoints and modus operandi. This despite of the fact that amongst others several sister churches (including the FRCSA) called upon these synods to do this.
- ❖ Synod Harderwijk 2011 appointed new deputies and formulated a new mandate. This was not done because this synod distanced itself from the conclusions and / or modus operandi of the previous deputies. It was done for a very different reason: *Because the old deputies proved not to be able to come with concrete proposals, the intention is to come to completely new deputies.*¹⁸

¹⁷ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

¹⁸ “Omdat het oude deputaatschap niet bij machte bleek om met concrete voorstellen te komen wordt gestreefd naar een volledig nieuw deputaatschap.” Acta Synode Harderwijk, Art. 30, p.70.

- ❖ In the light of the above mentioned it is no surprise that Deputies *M/V in de kerk* could come with recommendations (in the majority report) to the upcoming Synod Ede 2014 that are in conflict with Scripture and Confession. We refer in this regard to the passages from Scripture as we find them in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, not excluding any other texts as well as the overall thrust of Scripture as it comes to us amongst others in the creational order, the exclusive admission of men to the priestly office, and the exclusive appointment of men in the apostolic office by our Lord Jesus Christ. We also refer to the explicit restriction of the special offices to men by the Belgic Confession in art. 30: “when faithful men are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.” Previous GKv Synods did not guard adequately against these proliferations.
- ❖ We regret this. The preliminary conclusion DRCA reached and communicated to the Synod Pretoria 2011 proved to be true: “we sense too little respect for the Word of God as the ultimate norm for church life.”
- ❖ Synod Pretoria 2011 gave DRCA the mandate to address unresolved issues directly with the upcoming GKv Synod. As DRCA we request Synod Bethal 2014 to do this by way of a letter (see Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014, Appendix 2), calling on them to:
 - evaluate the work of the Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, which was done in the period until Synod Harderwijk 2011, in a Scriptural and Confessional way; and to denounce everything that is in conflict with Scripture and Confession.
 - to disapprove of the Report of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, titled “Mannen en vrouwen in dienst van het evangelie”, and to restore the Scriptural and Confessional stance, as outlined in the second attachment (“Bijlage 2” written by D. Slump) of this Report.

When Synod Ede 2014 would approve the majority report, we are afraid that this will impact negatively on the sister church relationship, something we would like to avoid. The sister church relationship cannot continue without restraint if the foundation of Scripture and Confession is affected in one way or another.

3) Deputies Church Unity

Synod Pretoria 2011:

v. Deputies Church Unity

There are serious concerns with regard the process Deputies Church Unity (DKE) are involved in with regard to the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*. How can they claim to have reached unity with regard to hermeneutical questions with their counterpart deputies in the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, whilst the differences with this federation with regard to hermeneutical issues are so evident? The *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* allow women in the offices, and are currently debating whether homosexuality is allowed.

Deputies also have concerns about how the Deputies DKE participated in the so-called National Synod of Dordrecht. We are of the opinion that this strife towards unity is not according to Belgic Confession articles 27-29.

Proceedings DRCA:

During the joint meeting of 16-17 January 2012 it was minuted: “the report of deputies suggested that the two federations are growing closer to each other. This does not seem to be caused by the NGK(NL) becoming more biblical, but rather by the RCN deputies overlooking important differences. Although BBK SA supports promoting unity between

churches, such a unity should be based on the Word of God. Concerning the desire for unity, it was stated that Synod Harderwijk rebuked their deputies about their recommendations for more unity and instructed new deputies to resume the discussion about the issues on which the two churches differ. BBK SA should however be aware that the desire for more unity is also driven by the need to form a united front against the ever-increasing secularisation in the Netherlands.”¹⁹

During the joint meeting on 1 March 2013 in Zwolle, this point was not discussed.

Perusing the report of Deputies DKE to the upcoming Synod of Ede 2014, we have to conclude that our concerns expressed above were not farfetched. Synod Amersfoort 2011 gave them the following mandate: *to continue the discussion with the Committee for Contact and Negotiations with the NGK. The discussion should focus especially on the matter of the woman in office and the way in which in local churches the binding to the confession is practised.*²⁰ This should be seen against the background of Synod 2005, which expressed that *Decision 3: to take note with disappointment of the statement of the LV Lelystad that it is Biblically valid to open up the offices of elder and pastor also for sisters. This statement constitutes a serious barrier for mutual contact.*²¹ We are thankful for the clear direction this Dutch synod gave to these deputies in this regard.

Yet in their latest report Deputies DKE conclude, in connection with the above mentioned mandate: *On the basis of our discussion we became convinced that we can trust each other, and we hope and pray that the churches arrive at the same conclusion*²² And: *we can state as deputies that we as GKv and NGK trust that the Holy Scripture is accepted in both churches as God’s Word and we know of each other that the Scripture is in safe hands.*²³

Consequently they propose to Synod 2014 to take the following decisions:

Decision 2: *to state that through the mutual agreement in the discussions regarding hermeneutics the barrier that existed due to the decision of the NGK to open the offices for sisters in the congregation, is taken away.*

and

Decision 2: *to continue the contacts with the NGK and to move from discussions towards negotiations focused on ecclesiastical unity. Ground: now that the most important barrier*

¹⁹ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

²⁰ “de gesprekken met de Commissie voor Contact en Samenspreking van de NGK voort te zetten. Het gesprek dient zich vooral te richten op de zaak van de vrouw in het ambt en de wijze waarop in de plaatselijke kerken aan de binding aan de belijdenis vorm wordt gegeven.” Acta Synode Harderwijk 2011-2012 p.184.

²¹ “Besluit 3: met teleurstelling kennis te nemen van de uitspraak van de LV Lelystad dat het bijbels verantwoord is om de ambten van ouderling en predikant ook voor zusters open te stellen. Deze uitspraak vormt een ernstige barrière voor het onderlinge contact.” Acta Synode Amersfoort-Centrum 2005, chapter 10, p.23.

²² . “Wij zijn er op grond van onze gesprekken van overtuigd geraakt dat we als GKv en NGK elkaar vertrouwen kunnen schenken, en we hopen en bidden dat de kerken tot dezelfde conclusie komen.” Rapport DKE for Synod 2014, p.12.

²³ “kunnen we als deputaatschap dankbaar constateren dat we als GKv en NGK het vertrouwen hebben dat de Heilige Schrift door beide kerken als Gods Woord wordt aanvaard en we die Schrift bij elkaar in veilige handen weten.” Rapport DKE for Synod 2014, p.13.

*has been taken away, the road towards negotiations about actual ecclesiastical unity is opened.*²⁴

As DRCA we realise that the Report of DKE to the upcoming Synod of Ede 2014 has no official status within the GKv. We are also aware that it does not reflect the views of all churches in the GKv. Nevertheless, in view of the far reaching proposals this Report contains, we give attention to it. We conclude that DKE have reached a conclusion 180 degrees opposite to what Synod 2005 expressed. DKE create the impression that the difference of opinion circulated around the taxation of the so called VOP-Report (*Vrouwelijke Ouderlingen en Predikanten*) and its hermeneutic method. Yet the quotation above from Synod 2005 shows that the difference involved the opening of the offices of pastor and elder for women as such. The reasoning of DKE in their report is unconvincing. It creates the impression that theologians with their hermeneutical approaches can open doors that were closed in the past. We reiterate therefore our concerns as stated above: *“How can they claim to have reached unity with regard to hermeneutical questions with their counterpart deputies in the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken, whilst the differences with this federation with regard to hermeneutical issues are so evident? The Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken allow women in the offices, and are currently debating whether homosexuality is allowed.”* The impression is created that DKE have succumbed to the same hermeneutical approaches and deviations from Scripture and confession.

Synod Pretoria 2011 gave DRCA the mandate to address unresolved issues directly with the upcoming GKv Synod. As DRCA we request Synod Bethal 2014 to do this by way of a letter (see Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014, Appendix 2), calling on our beloved sister churches to distance themselves from these conclusions and proposed decisions of DKE. We do this, cautious of the fact that as sister churches we don't want to meddle into internal affairs. Yet at the same time we perceive that DKE's proposals can put strain on our mutual sister church relationship, something very dear to us.

4) Proposed new Church Order

Synod Pretoria 2011:

iv. Proposed new Church Order

Deputies are shocked by the fact that the Deputies who wrote the *Werkorde* unilaterally came to the proposal to open the (unchanged) office of deacons for women.

Proceedings DRCA:

During the joint meeting on 16-17 January 2012 this point was discussed, as minuted: *“One of our concerns about the proposed “Werkorde” was that provision was made for female deacons. Synod Harderwijk however rejected that version and a new version “Werkorde 2” was presented in which the provision for female deacons was deleted.”*²⁵ In the new draft of

²⁴ **“Besluit 2:** uit te spreken dat door de overeenstemming in de gesprekken over hermeneutiek de belemmering die er lag vanwege het besluit van de NGK om de ambten voor de zusters der gemeente open te stellen, is weggenomen.”

“Besluit 3: de contacten met de NGK voort te zetten en over te gaan van gesprekken naar samensprekingen met het oog op kerkelijke eenheid. Grond: nu de belangrijkste belemmering is weggenomen, ligt de weg naar samensprekingen over daadwerkelijke kerkelijke eenheid open.” Rapport DKE for Synod 2014, p.13.

²⁵ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

this church order the explicit provision for female deacons was taken out. With regard to the church order as such this matter has therefore been solved. With regard to the content of the matter (women in the special ecclesiastical offices), we refer to paragraph 3.iii above.

Furthermore the following was minuted during the joint meeting of 16-17 January 2012: *“The involvement of BBK SA in RCN Church Order matters should be limited to confession related issues, as other issues are to be left in the freedom of the sister churches, according to the FRCSA’s own Church Order. BBK SA mention the proposal concerning marriages between members of different church federations as an example.”*²⁶

During the joint meeting on March 1st 2013 the following was minuted: *PB asks whether a changed Church Order will have an effect on the sister church relationship. KW does not expect this. BBK ZA does not regard this as a point of Scripture and Confession unless in the new Church Order new points emerge that indeed have an impact.*²⁷ DRCA decided not to investigate this point any further.

5) The decision making process at Synods of the RCNL

Synod Pretoria 2011:

i. The decision-making process at GKNv Synods

As mentioned in § 2.3.4a of the report, deputies notice a change in the way Synods weigh issues and made decisions. Although the Bible is still considered as giving direction (Dutch: ‘richtinggevend’) and authoritative for decisions, it is apparent that other considerations are gaining weight.

On the basis of our sister church relationship, we need to call on our Dutch sister churches to prayerfully reconsider their direction. We need to remind them of their responsibility to continue to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God; and to encourage them to reject all thoughts that undermine it.

We also call them to have courage to overcome the fear for lack of support (‘draagvlak’) in the churches and to make decisions that are biblical but not popular in a post-modern age.

Proceedings DRCA:

Especially with regard to the work and reporting of the GKv deputies *M/V in de kerk* DRCA had questions about their *modus operandi*. On Synod Zwolle-Zuid 2008 this was already communicated by the SA delegate rev. PG Boon:²⁸ On Synod Harderwijk 2011 this concern was repeated by the SA delegate br. C Roose.²⁹ The Dutch Deputies *M/V in de kerk* have

²⁶ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

²⁷ “PB stelt de vraag of een gewijzigde KO invloed zal hebben op de zusterkerkrelatie? KW verwacht dit niet. BBK ZA vindt dit geen punt van schrift en belijdenis tenzij er binnen nieuwe KO nieuwe punten komen die deze wel aanraken.” Minutes Joint Meeting March 1st 2013.

²⁸ “Op verzoek van ds. Boon uit Zuid-Afrika wordt zijn bijdrage aan de discussie voorgelezen. Zijns inziens staan de voorstellen van deputaten op gespannen voet met de weg die art. 30 KO wijst. Vanuit de kerken is niet om een onderzoek in deze richting gevraagd. Door te enquêteren lopen de kerken het risico zich te veel te laten leiden door de behoeften van de kerkleden en de daar levende opinies. Gods Woord dient leidend te zijn. Dan zal er eerst een ambtsleer, los van empirisch onderzoek, geformuleerd moeten worden. Pas dan kan het rapport weer afgestoft worden en gekeken worden wat wel en wat niet mogelijk is.” Acta Zwolle-Zuid, ch 3 (Kerkregering), p.57.

²⁹ “Op tafel ligt het onderwerp *M/V*. Gezien de wijze waarop deputaten het behandelen in overeenstemming met de GS Zwolle-Zuid 2008 zijn we nog meer bezorgd. Het omgaan met de materie maakt dat de methode de indruk wekt dat de opinie van kerkleden één van de criteria is voor een beslissing. Ik zou door kunnen gaan met een lijst van zorgen, maar het is waarschijnlijk beter te zoeken naar de oorzaak van het veranderingsproces. Individualisme en zelfontwikkeling zijn zo enkele van die woorden. Kerkleden zijn niet ongevoelig voor de omgeving. We moeten ons realiseren dat we van nature belangrijk willen zijn, kijk maar naar Adam en Eva, ‘zijn als God’. Als we naar de kerkhistorie kijken zien we een niet eindigende herhaling van kerken die vals worden. En dit begon met herinterpretatie van bijbelse lessen. Ik waarschuw voor de val om Gods Woord zo te interpreteren dat het past bij onze ideeën. Tegen die achtergrond zult u begrijpen dat we bezorgd zijn over de ontwikkelingen in uw kerken.” Acta Harderwijk 2011, p.207.

held a survey in the churches, sending questionnaires to different members of the churches (pastors, elders, members), trying to identify the different views living in the churches. These views were subsequently published in their report as different legitimate alternatives, without evaluating them on the basis of Scripture and confession.

During the meeting of 16-17 January 2012 this matter was also tabled. The GKv delegates assured us that Synod Harderwijk 2011 reconsidered and revised the approach of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*. During this meeting it was minuted: *“Decision-making process of RCN synods: BBK SA’s concerns in this respect are to a large extent taken away by Synod Harderwijk, who, by their decision-making process seemed to give clear guidance to the churches and deputies.”*³⁰ We gladly accepted the answer given by BBK GKv and deemed the matter to be solved and our concerns taken away. By then the Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011 were not published yet.

During the meeting of 1 March 2013 the GKv delegates merely referred us to the Acts of Harderwijk 2011. It was minuted: *3.a Decision making process ... The Acts of the Synod of Harderwijk are fully on internet. They are therefore accessible for the sister churches. Deputies Administrative Support assume that the acts are downloaded. Pieter [Boon] notices that it is not always clear on the website which reports are final. Klaas [Wezemann] indicates that the final Acts are indicated clearly now. This point is therefore now completed.*³¹

For an evaluation of the Acts of Synod Harderwijk 2011 with regard to the work of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, and the impact on this point (Decision-making process), see 3.iii of this report, where more attention will be given to this point in combination with the substantial matter: women in office.

6) Consultation with sister churches

Synod Pretoria 2011:

ii. Consultation with sister churches

Future GKNv Synods should pay more attention to the advice of their sister churches. Delegates’ involvement is restricted to the ‘Buitenlandweek’, which tends to become a formality. Their advice is rarely seen back in later rounds of discussion of Synod. Synod should also follow the rules of sister church relationships and give clear instructions to its deputies to deliberate with sister churches, before far-reaching decisions are proposed with regard to – for example – the offices of the church, and the church order.

³⁰ Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

³¹ “3.a Decision making process ... De Acta van de synode van Harderwijk staan volledig op internet. Zijn dus inzichtelijk voor de zusterkerken. Deputaten Administratieve Ondersteuning (DAO) gaat er vanuit dat acta gedownload worden. Pieter [Boon] geeft aan dat niet altijd duidelijk is op de website welke rapporten definitief zijn. Klaas [Wezemann] geeft aan dat de definitieve Acta nu duidelijk aangegeven zijn. Dit punt is hiermee afgehandeld.” Minutes Joint Meeting March 1st 2013.

Proceedings DRCA:

This point was discussed on the meeting of 16-17 January 2012. We read in the joint minutes:

“According to BBK SA, issues like M/W in the church and revision of the Church Order, clearly qualify as such issues, but consultation with sister churches did apparently not take place... Visits of BBK SA delegates to RCN synods are experienced as somewhat disappointing as the impression is created that the input of the delegates is not really used for further consideration. Concerning the issue of consultation, the Dutch visitors agree that there is room for improvement and the RCN should take their own consultation rules more seriously. Synod Harderwijk 2011 however created the impression that they acted in line with those rules as they instructed deputies to consult with sister churches about certain issues. As far as the input of foreign delegates is concerned, BBK NL indicated that they are aware of this somewhat negative aspect of the “buitenlandweek”, but they are not sure how to improve that. They would like to make the meeting with sister churches as effective as possible and any suggestions are welcome. Foreign delegates are however welcome to extend their visit to Synod and take part in the meetings outside the “buitenlandweek”. Grouping of relevant subjects as near as possible to the “buitenlandweek” was suggested as something to consider. However due to a very extensive Synod agenda, BBK NL could give no guarantee that certain subjects will be discussed at a desired time.”³²

During the deliberations on March 1st 2013 attention was given to the question of the exact character of a sister church relationship. The GKv delegates expressed the fear that foreign churches want to meddle too much in the GKv church affairs on ground level. They should restrict themselves to official synodical publications dealing with Scripture, Confession and Church Order. The SA delegates agreed with this, though they added that sister churches have the right to ask questions whether the synodical decisions are also upheld in the churches. (Minutes Meeting March 1st 2013 in Zwolle, point 4)

It was encouraging to read that Synod Harderwijk 2011 mandated Deputies M/V in de kerk to liaise with the sister churches in fulfilling their mandate, realising that the matters at stake are impacting on the way Scripture, Confession and Church Order are used. To quote from the Acta of Synod Harderwijk 2011: *to pay careful attention to comments of related churches both in the Netherlands and abroad; and for the different parts to acquire information and advise from the TU and deputies, especially BBK, DKE, GDD, HKO and OOG.*³³ Based on this decision the SA delegates requested BBK GKv to arrange a joint meeting between a delegation of DRCA FRCSA, a delegation of BBK GKv and a delegation of the Deputies M/V in de kerk, during our visit to the Netherlands in February – March 2013. It came as a bit of a disappointment that BBK GKv did not want to cooperate in arranging such a meeting. On the one hand they stressed that they are the ‘official door’ towards the GKv and all its deputies, but on the other hand they refrained from dealing with our questions in a substantial way.

³² Minutes Joint Meeting 16-17 January 2012.

³³ “goede aandacht te geven aan uitspraken van verwante kerken in binnen- en buitenland” and “voor de verschillende onderdelen relevante informatie en advies in te winnen bij de TU en deputaatschappen, m.n. BBK, DKE, GDD, HKO en OOG.” Acta Synode Harderwijk, Art. 29 Decision 2.b, p.68.

The consequence is that Deputies *M/V in de kerk* finalized their report without consulting the FRCSA. From their report it is evident that they also did not familiarize themselves with what FRCSA DRCA wrote in their report to Synod Pretoria 2011 about women in office. The little words they devoted in their report to sister churches like the FRCSA, are rather one sided.

We have to conclude that there is not enough willingness among GKv deputies to enter into substantial deliberations with us as sister churches. We regret this. Synod Pretoria 2011 gave DRCA the mandate to address unresolved issues directly with the upcoming GKv Synod. As DRCA we request Synod Bethal 2014 to do this by way of a letter (see Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014, Appendix 2).

Further mandate:

Synod Pretoria 2011:

4. To call upon the consistories to remember in their prayers to the LORD the problematic ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands, and to pray to the LORD that the discussions to be held may be blessed;

Proceedings DRCA:

We as DRCA asked the churches by way of a letter for prayers, especially around the two joint discussions that took place on January 16th – 17th 2012 and March 1st 2013.

Proposals to Synod Bethal 2014

Concept decisions proposed to Synod:

Synod decides:

1. To consider reconvening in a prolonged session after the RCNL Synod Ede 2014 has taken decisions with regard to
 - i. the report of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*;
 - ii. the guarding of the Reformed doctrine at the Theological University in Kampen, specifically regarding the publications of dr. S. Paas and dr. K. van Bekkum;
 - iii. the report of *Deputies Kerkelijke Eenheid*;in order to take a responsible decision with regard to ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCNL in future.

Grounds:

- 1) These issues impact on the foundation of the church, being the Word of God and the three Forms of Unity, and therefore also on the foundation underlying ecclesiastical fellowship between the FRCSA and the RCNL.
- 2) Several office bearers in the RCNL have already pleaded in public for the opening of all church offices for women, something that is not in line with the subscription form they had signed as office bearers. This can already impact on the sister church relationship and it is therefore not wise to postpone dealing with the issue until the next FRCSA Synod in 2017. We will have to wait for the Synod of Ede to see how the sister churches in the Netherlands deal with the fact that some office bearers have stepped outside the boundaries of Scripture and confession in this regard. It will be premature for the Synod of Bethal to take a decision already on whether the sister church relationship can continue without any restrictions; or whether restrictions have to be placed on those

Dutch churches ratifying possibly wrong decisions of the Synod of Ede, or what to do if the Synod leaves above mentioned matters in the freedom of the churches; or what to do when the Synod postpones a clear pronouncement with regard to the gender of the special offices again for a couple of years. It is better to wait and deal with the facts.

- 3) DRCA could not reach total consensus on the necessity of a prolonged session.
2. To continue in the meantime with a sister church relationship with the RCNL.

Ground:

Although the issues i-iii impact on the foundation under ecclesiastical fellowship, the churches of the RCNL have the responsibility and also the ability to refute them when convened in 2014 at their Synod of Ede.

3. To send a letter of concern to the RCNL Synod of Ede 2014 (see appendix 2).

Grounds:

- 1) This is in line with the decision of Synod Pretoria 2011, namely to address unresolved issues directly to the Synod of our sister churches.
- 2) It is logistically possible that Synod Bethal 2014 sends the letter of concern to the Synod Ede 2014. Therefore DRCA regard this as the better option, rather than only they sending the letter.
- 3) This is in line with the advice of Deputies BBK RCNL, who communicated that it would be better to directly address their Synod.
4. To mandate DRCA to closely cooperate with the deputies of the CanRC and FRCA in studying the developments on the Dutch ecclesiastical scene.
5. To mandate DRCA to call upon the churches and consistories to remember in their prayers to the LORD the problematic ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands.

Ground:

Our Saviour taught us to pray for the church in John 17. We should not underestimate the power of prayer.

6. To inform the RCNL in written about the decisions concerning them.
7. To send an additional delegate to the RCNL Synod of Ede 2014.

Ground:

Synod Pretoria 2011 only budgeted to send one delegate. The present situation necessitates a very careful and highly responsible evaluation for which a delegation of two persons is a minimum requirement.

8. To send also two delegates to the next RCNL Synod.

3 Contact with other churches

3.1 De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (DGKN)

Synod Pretoria 2011:

19.4 Synod decides:

1. To mandate DRCA to investigate developments in the DGK to ascertain whether the decision to acknowledge the brotherhood with them should be maintained;
2. To request DRCA to report in writing about this investigation to the next Synod and make recommendations;
3. To inform the DGK in writing about the decisions concerning them.

Proceedings DRCA:

On February 22nd 2013 DRCA Revs Breytenbach and Boon, whilst visiting the Netherlands, had a meeting with the deputies for relations with churches abroad of the *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* (DGK). Prior to this DRCA had informed BBK RCNL about this and asked them to serve us with information and their views on the DGK. We did not receive anything. During this meeting several matters were discussed:

- Presentation of the FRCSA and the DGK. The DGK presently consists of 12 churches (Amersfoort, Assen, Bergentheim/Bruchterveld, Berkel en Rodenrijs /Bergschenhoek, Dalfsen, Emmen, Ermelo, Groningen, Hasselt, Mariëberg, Opeinde, Zwolle).
- When asked about their stance with regard to the singing of hymns, BBK DGK indicated that the introduction of the many hymns in the GKv was one of the reasons for the Liberation of 2003, yet this does not mean that they are critical of the use of hymns as such. They also sing hymns in their church services.
- Relationship between the DGK and the RCNL
DRCA delegates asked BBK DGK whether there are official contacts with the RCNL to work towards healing the split of the past. They answered that their Synod Emmen 2009/2010 had sent a letter to the RCNL Synod of Harderwijk 2011 in this regard. It was for them a great disappointment that this synod decided not to react substantially to the invitation of DGK. They only received a short formal letter back. The DGK experience this in such a way that the RCNL are not prepared any longer to communicate and to work towards restoring the split. On an informal level there are still contacts (f.e. via family) with RCNL members, although the DGK experience that it becomes increasingly difficult to address the issues.

During the meeting of the DRCA delegates with BBK RCNL on March 1st 2013, the same question was asked to them about their official contacts with DGK. We also asked why Synod Harderwijk 2011 decided to stop communication with the DGK. Doesn't the Saviour expect of us to continue to strive towards unity? BBK RCNL answered that DGK attached so many conditions to the communication (f.e. to revisit what they regard as wrong synod decisions of the past), that Harderwijk 2011 regarded the communication as meaningless.³⁴

³⁴ Acta Harderwijk 2011, Art. 74, p.166: "a. kennis te nemen van de brief van de GS van de Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld) (GKh) d.d. 21 mei 2010; b. met verdriet te berusten in de afwijzende houding die hierin doorklinkt en niet meer inhoudelijk te reageren op dit schrijven.

Grond: sinds 2006 is er in de contacten met de GKh geen enkele vooruitgang geboekt. Daarom is het op dit moment niet zinvol om inhoudelijk te reageren."

- Relationship between the FRCSA and the RCNL
BBK DGK made it clear that a sister church relationship with the FRCSA cannot be considered as long as they are sister churches with the RCNL. We communicated to them that the FRCSA are loyal to their (old) sister, although this is not a blind loyalty. This is also visible from the dealings of DRCA FRCSA with the RCNL.
- Relationship between the FRCSA and the CanRC
BBK DGK made it clear that a sister church relationship cannot be considered with the FRCSA as long as they are sister churches with the CanRC. The FRCSA have the obligation to investigate the Liberation that took place in Abbotsford (Canada), and to express themselves about it. BBK DGK also pointed to the according to them lamentable cooperation between the CanRC and the United Reformed Churches, a federation that does not acknowledge the Dutch Liberation of 1944. As DRCA we answered that we should not bind each other to the history, but to obedience to Christ in the present. We also answered that there is no reason to revisit the relationship with the CanRC.
- Relationship between the DGK and the GKN
The *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)* came into existence partly because of secessions from the DGK. Mainly because of this the relationship between these two federations is sensitive. The DGK indicated that they do not foresee rapprochement on the short term.
As DRCA we studied the material availed to us by BBK DGK about the splits that took place, for example in the DGK Zwolle. From these documents as well as from the discussions we had, we carefully have to conclude that DGK consistories and assemblies, in their zeal for on-going reformation, display not enough patience with (in their eyes) wandering sheep. The zeal for on-going reformation is important, but it is a danger that especially in a small seceded federation an overreaction can take place. This is for us at this stage reason to advise our synod not to take a decision to start with focused deliberations in order to become sister churches. Possibly in the coming years it will be clarified whether there is a sectarian element or not (with sectarian we mean an overemphasis on a certain aspect of doctrine or life at the expense of the broadness of the Reformed faith). Possibly when more pastors become active in the DGK, the experience of dominance of individuals will fade away. In the meantime we advise our churches – when members of the DGK approach consistories in SA for membership – first to have a conversation with them.

Proposals to Synod Bethal 2014

Synod decides:

1. Not to proceed with preparations to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with *De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)* (DGK). In case of members from this federation coming to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or as guests to the Lord's Supper – would they make this request – only after a conversation with them.

Grounds:

- 1) The FRCSA have at this moment a responsibility towards the RCNL.
 - 2) The FRCSA cannot accede to the demand of the DGK to sever ecclesiastical fellowship with the CanRC, which is put forward as a precondition by the DGK.
2. To mandate DRCA to remain updated as to the developments in the DGK.

Ground:

The fact that members of the DGK were in a sister church relation with us not long ago (before the Liberation of 2003), necessitates us to continue to strive for restoring unity.

3. To inform the DGK in writing about the decisions concerning them.

3.2 Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN)

During the visit to the Netherlands, DRCA also had a meeting with delegates of the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN). Prior to this DRCA had informed BBK RCNL about this and asked them to serve us with information and their views on the GKN. We did not receive anything. During the meeting on February 27th 2013 several matters were discussed:

- Presentation of the FRCSA and the GKN. The GKN presently consists of 8 congregations (Assen, Dalfts, Ede-Veenendaal, Goes, Hardenberg, Kampen, Zwijndrecht, Zwolle).
- The members of the GKN made a conscious decision to secede from the RCNL (whether or not via the DGK). In the local congregations of the RCNL where they were members, they could no longer share the responsibility for heresies both in life and doctrine that the consistories tolerated. The members of the GKN follow the developments within the RCNL from close by. Their heart goes out to many fellow believers in the RCNL. They are concerned about the increasing number of heresies in life and doctrine in the RCNL, and warn that it can be dangerous to wait too long to secede. To postpone can lead to indecision, with the danger that you and your children become contaminated with worldliness and heresy as well.
- The GKN had deliberations already with the CanRC and the FRCA. They are thankful for this. They don't know yet how their federation will develop in future. The ecclesiastical scene in the Netherlands is very instable and they want to stand open to God's guidance in future. Nevertheless they would like to cooperate – if possible – with the churches abroad.
- On local level it already happened that attestations between the FRCSA and the GKN were accepted.

On the basis of the first deliberations we as DRCA advice our synod, when members of the GKN would approach one of our churches with an attestation, before accepting it, first to have a conversation with the person.

Furthermore we advise that DRCA continue deliberations with the GKN, in order to keep in touch with developments among them, and to investigate whether it is our task to work towards a sister church relationship.

In order to do this in a responsible way, DRCA have to inform themselves about how the RCNL assess the GKN, specifically with regard to congregations and ministers who seceded from the RCNL. It is important to hear both sides of the story. DRCA have to ask BBK RCNL to give them access to the (confidential) acts of synod that dealt with these secessions and withdrawals.

Furthermore we advise synod to take notice of the letter sent by the GKN dated April 10th 2013 (Appendix 3),, to respond to it with a letter of receipt, and to communicate to them our synod decisions regarding them.

Proposals to Synod Bethal 2014

1. To mandate DRCA to continue investigating the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN), and also to acquaint themselves with the evaluations and judgments of RCNL major assemblies with regard to congregations and ministers now belonging to this federation, in order to come with a substantiated proposal to the next synod whether the Lord expects the FRCSA to enter into a sister church relationship with this federation. In the meantime, in case of members from this federation coming to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or as guests to the Lord's Supper – would they make this request – only after a conversation with them.

Ground:

The fact that the members of the GKN were in a sister church relation with us not long ago, necessitates us to continue to strive for restoring unity.

2. To inform the GKN in writing about the decisions concerning them.

3.3 Reformed Churches in New Zealand (RCNZ)

Mandate

To continue contact with the RCNZ at the present level of exchanging information, so that we may remain informed about the developments in their churches.

3.3.1 Activities

Contacts were limited to discussions between Rev. Breytenbach from the FRCSA and Rev. Archbald from the RCNZ, who both attended the FRCA Synod Armadale 2012, as delegates from their respective churches . Some informal contacts took place between delegates of both churches during the ICRC conference 2013 in the UK.

On request by Rev. Archbald, an electronic version of the FRCSA's Acts of Synod 2011, was sent to Rev. Archbald.

3.3.2 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

1. To mandate DRCA to maintain contact with the RCNZ at the present level of exchanging information, so that we may remain informed about the developments in their churches.
2. To instruct the DRCA to remain informed about the ecclesiastical relations between the RCNZ and the FRCA.

Grounds:

- 1) Based on the limited information obtained by DRCA, the RCNZ seems to be a church federation which wants to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Reformed confessions.
- 2) According to decisions of previous Synods we should utilise our limited manpower to focus on our own region.
- 3) The FRCA is in a better position to maintain more intensive contacts with the RCNZ.
- 4) For the sake of immigrants from our churches who wish to settle in New Zealand, it would be wise to remain informed about developments in the RCNZ.

3.4 Churches in North America

Mandate

To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in North America via the CanRC.

3.4.1 Activities

Deputies remained informed. There is nothing noteworthy to report except for issues as reported in § 2.2.2 points a) and e).

3.4.2 Conclusions

There are no issues for consideration by Synod Bethal 2014.

3.4.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

To mandate DRCA to remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in Northern America via the CanRC.

Ground:

According to the policy adopted by Synod Bethal 2000, to focus on our own region, it is better to leave more intensive contacts to the CanRC.

3.5 Churches in Africa

Mandate

Synod Pretoria 2011 did not give DRCA a specific mandate but decided (art. 19.7):

1. To instruct DRCA to remain in contact with the ICRC regarding future mission conferences;
2. To instruct DRCA to ask the mission boards of the FRCSA to delegate at least one of the missionaries to the next Africa mission conference;
3. To remind DRCA of the decisions of previous synods to deal with the existing contacts in Africa via the ICRC regional conferences and the sister churches.

3.5.1 Activities

DRCA tried to remain in contact with relevant institutions regarding Regional ICRC mission conferences. Unfortunately no conferences were realised.

Concerning decision 3) above, DRCA would like to point out that this decision puts a limitation on possible contacts, which seems to be too severe. If regional conferences do not take place, which is the reality of our present situation, the only allowed contacts with churches in Africa should go through sister churches. As sister churches are also not always available, this decision means that requests from churches in Africa must in some cases be turned down. In view of the fact that DRCA received various requests for contacts or support from churches in Africa, DRCA is of the opinion that the limitation as enforced by above decision 3) should be slightly lifted in order to enable DRCA to act positively on requests from countries in Africa where no other sister churches or ICRC churches are present.

3.5.2 Regional ICRC Conferences in Africa

For information on this topic refer to § 4.3.8.

3.5.3 Conclusions

- Possible contacts with Africa churches should not totally be made dependent on contacts through ICRC – or sister churches.
- In cases where no ICRC – or sister churches are available, DRCA should be allowed to consider possible direct actions by the FRCSA.

3.5.4 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

1. To instruct DRCA to remain in contact with the ICRC regarding future regional conferences.
2. To instruct DRCA to ask the mission boards of the FRCSA to delegate at least one of the missionaries to the next Africa Regional ICRC conference.
3. To share the cost for attending this conference with the appropriate mission board.
4. To instruct DRCA in cases of possible contacts with churches in areas where ICRC – or sister churches are not active, to consider the feasibility of actions by the FRCSA.

Grounds:

- 1) The missionaries are the people who profit most from the ICRC regional missions conferences.
- 2) Since the missionaries / mission boards profit from sending a delegate, it is reasonable to share the cost.
- 3) The FRCSA and its members have a responsibility to promote the proclamation of the Gospel wherever reasonably possible.

4 ICRC

Mandate

Mandate regarding contacts with the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC):

1. To continue ICRC membership;
2. To authorise DRCA to send one delegate to the ICRC 2013 conference in Wales.

4.1 Report on visit to the ICRC 2013 conference in Cardiff, Wales, UK.

4.1.1 FRCSA Delegation

Based on above mandate DRCA appointed br. C. Roose and Rev. D.M. Boersma as delegates to attend the meeting in Wales. It was important to us to send two delegates so that they can consult with each other. Although our budget only allowed us to send one delegate, we were under the impression that Rev. Boersma's travel expenses were going to be paid by the ICRC because he is a member of the ICRC Missions Committee. When this appeared not to be the case, the ICRC treasurer was so kind to carry the travel expenses anyway since we are a small church and our input is appreciated. Both our delegates were appointed in Advisory Committees, so we could make significant contributions compared to the small size of our federation.

4.1.2 Overview of the conference

The ICRC 2013 was organised by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW) and took place in a conference room at the Treforest Campus of the University of South Wales near Cardiff. The conference started with a prayer service on Wednesday, 28th August, and continued from 29 August until 4 September.

4.1.3 Highlights of the ICRC conference

a. Membership

At the beginning of the conference the membership list contained 30 member churches. The conference closed with a list of 32 member churches.

Six church federations applied for ICRC membership:

- Sudanese Reformed Churches (SRC).
- Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Kenya (AEPC);
- Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA);
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Malawi (EPC); (incomplete)
- Nongo u Kristu u I Ser u sha Tar (Universal Reformed Christian Church) of Nigeria (NKST); (incomplete)
- Reformed Church of Burundi (RCBu); (withdrawn)

The AEPC and the SRC were both accepted as members.

The application of the CRCA generated a long discussion. Various delegates expressed their unhappiness that the application had not been submitted on time. Others objected that the CRCA did not discuss their intention to apply for membership with the PCEA, the nearest member church. The matter of the lateness of the application was resolved and the application was declared admissible by the conference.

The second objection about the failure to contact the PCEA remained a stumbling block for some delegates, although this was not a formal requirement for acceptance as a member church.

In the end, the application failed to obtain the required two/third majority vote. The CRCA was only granted observer status and encouraged to reapply for membership in 2017.

b. Executive Committee

A new Executive Committee was elected to serve for the next four years (Appendix 4a).

Two members of the previous executive Committee retired after serving the ICRC from its initiation in 1982, being Rev. Cornelius Van Spronsen (Corresponding secretary) and Mr. Henk Berends (Treasurer).

c. Church introductions and Observers

Representatives of the following church federations introduced their churches to the conference. Most of those representatives were present as observers, with the exception of the Reformed Church of Brazil, from which the representative was an official delegate, after his church federation was accepted as a member church by the 2009 conference of the ICRC, in their absence. The following churches were introduced:

○ **Christian Reformed Churches of Australia**

- Represented by Rev. Geoff van Schie.

The CRCA was established in 1951 by Dutch immigrants. There are 52 congregations in the CRCA, with about 8750 members. 72 Ministers are serving the churches and 17 ministers are retired.

The CRCA upholds the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity as their confessions.

They have sister church relations with, among others, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (USA), the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Reformed Churches in South Africa. They also have some, what they call, looser contacts with other South African churches as a result of the influx of South African immigrants into Australia.

The CRCA also had sister church relations with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ), but this relation has been demoted to a lower level of ecclesiastical contacts by the RCNZ. This was however no reason for the RCNZ not to support the application of the CRCA. The RCNZ was in fact one of the two required church federations providing written recommendations in support of the application, together with the RCSA.

The CRCA was a member church of the Reformed Ecumenical Council until 2010, but terminated their membership due to unbiblical developments in that organisation.

The CRCA founded a Reformed Theological College in 1954 which is still functioning.

The CRCA spent lots of time to study the matter of women in church offices and concluded finally in their Synod of 2004, that the offices of elders and ministers are not open to women, according to Biblical teachings, but that women could serve in the office of deacons.

- **Reformed Church of Korea**

- Introduced by Rev. Dongsup Song.

The RCK was founded in 2005 and holds the Three Forms of Unity. It is still a very small church federation with 4 congregations and about 200 members. Relations with other churches were not revealed, except for indications that they are no friends with the World Council of Churches.

- **Reformed Church of Brazil**

- Represented by Elder Luiz Fernando.

The RCB was accepted as an ICRC member church in 2009, but at that stage they were not able to send a representative. Both churches supporting their application for membership (CanRC and RCNL) were active in the area, by means of missionaries. As a result of those activities the RCB was formed.

Their confessions are the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity.

The RCB maintains sister church relations with the CanRC and the RCNL(I) and are looking for more ecclesiastical contacts with other Reformed - and Presbyterian churches.

- **Nongo u Kristu u I Ser u sha Tar, Nigeria**

- Introduced by Rev. Peter Azuana.

The NKST's name in the local language was changed in 2012, but the abbreviation is still the same as it also fits the new name.

The NKST was founded in 1911 as a result of mission work (humanly speaking) by the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and hold the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional basis. The Christian Reformed Churches of North America became involved in supporting this church federation in a later stage.

The NKST is a large church federation with 353 congregations, which are organised in 53 classes. 557 Ministers are serving the churches.

They founded a Christian University in 2005, which is still functioning but under pressure by non-christian government officials. Furthermore the NKST run a Seminary, a Bible College, 53 secondary Christian schools and 500 primary schools and a number of orphanages.

The NKST also run 9 hospitals, medical clinics and training facilities for nursing, midwifery, medicine and technology.

- **Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Kenya**

- Represented by Rev. Daniel Kitongo.

The AEPC was founded in 1962 by the World Presbyterian Mission. Their confessions are the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

The AEPC formed a theological training institute in 2010, the Uzima Bible College. Uzima is the Swahili word for eternal life.

- **Sudanese Reformed Churches**

- Represented by Rev. Patrick Jok Wic.

The SRC was instituted in 2005 in a environment dominated by Muslims, which regarded the eradication of Christianity as their god (Allah)- given task. After the split of Sudan in two countries and the termination of the war, there is at least now more freedom to live as Christians.

The SRC consist of 16 congregations located on both sides of the international border between Sudan and South Sudan and the total number of church members is about 8500.

They hold the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort as their confessions and they try to form a Reformed church governing system, which is still not fully in place.

Ecclesiastical contacts are developing between the SRC and e.g. the RCSA.

One of their theological students is studying at Mukhanyo Theological College.

Apart from above churches the following church federations were represented by observers: Ely Presbyterian Church, Cardiff; Evangelical Church Alliance in London; Reformed Christian Church of India; Reformed Church in Japan; Reformed Church of North India; Tushino Evangelical Reformed Church in Moscow.

d. Advisory Committees

Nine Advisory Committees were appointed to provide advice concerning several agenda items. See Appendix 4.a for details.

e. Presentations and Workshop arrangements

The main theme for ICRC 2013 was “Preach the Word”.

Three presentations about the following aspects of preaching were delivered:

- “**The necessity of preaching**” by Dr. Robert Letham; (download at: <http://bit.ly/1kbH4XO>)
- “**The nature of preaching**” by Dr. James Visscher; (<http://bit.ly/1hcdKAw>)
- “**The Practice of Preaching in Illiterate Cultures**” by Ho Jin Jun, D. Miss., PhD. (<http://bit.ly/1pq91PH>)

Time was made available in the afternoon sessions to discuss the papers.

The writer of this report would like to suggest that above papers are in some way used by ministers and missionaries of the FRCSA to learn more about preaching aspects.

Both of us were impressed with the quality and the clarity of the presentations and think they could well be used as discussion subjects for Bible study groups.

f. Review of the ICRC Constitution and Regulations

The ICRC 2009 Conference appointed a committee to review the Constitution and Regulations (C&R) because it was more than 30 years old.

The Review Committee made a revised draft and sent it to the member churches for comment.

DRCA discussed the report in their meeting of 5th August 2013 and decided to send some comments as they did not fully agree with some of the new proposals. DRCA were of the opinion that newly proposed regulations concerning the adoption of the new C&R by the major assemblies of the member churches was confusing and seemed to be contrary to the existing regulations concerning the authority of the ICRC versus the churches’ major assemblies.

Another newly proposed regulation limited the status of delegates to “ministers or ruling elders” only. In view of the FRCSA’s rotating system for office bearers and its limited man

power, DRCA considered this new proposal as impractical. In view of the advisory character of the ICRC's decisions, it was also considered unnecessary.

Our comments and other comments were considered by the Advisory Committee during the conference. The Advisory Committee proposed amendments in which our comments were accommodated.

The Advisory Committee pointed out that the amendments to the Constitution can only be accepted at the next conference after approval by a two-thirds majority of the major assemblies of the member churches. The Regulations part however, could be implemented by this conference.

Major assemblies still have the right to propose amendments to both the Constitution and the Regulations before the 2017 conference.

The amended C&R was unanimously adopted by the conference. DRCA considers the amended C&R as an improvement of the previous version and recommends therefore that Synod 2014 adopts the newly proposed ICRC's Constitution and Regulations in full.

In order to enable synod delegates to make their own judgement a summary of the amendments is attached to this report as Appendix 4.b, while the previous C&R (2009), the newly amended C&R (2013) and a document, indicating the amendments in red text, are attached to this report as resp. Appendix 4.c; 4.d and 4.e.

g. Mission Committee Report

The MC had received 10 mandates from the 2009 conference. We summarize what they reported on the most important mandates.

Mandate 1: the MC produced a booklet in which all the mission work of the member churches was listed. DRCA regards this booklet as very useful for our mission workers and other workers to share resources among ICRC member churches in the areas where our churches work. We received 3 copies of the booklet. One is kept in our archive, two were given to Mission Deputies SA. Since it contains sensitive information, it should not be made public. According to mandate 7, a contact list was added to this booklet.

Mandate 2 was "to gather and to study the relevant documents from the member churches regarding their mission vision, policies, etc."

The MC reported that they were not able to fulfil that mandate as only a third of the member churches responded to their request concerning this point.

Mandate 3: the MC arranged a meeting with representatives of the world mission agencies in which the ICRC member churches were involved. This resulted in a meeting of seven agencies on behalf of 11 member churches and proved to be very fruitful. It was therefore suggested to mandate the MC to arrange more such meetings, at least two between subsequent ICRC meetings.

Mandate 4 asked for arranging mission related papers for the next ICRC . This resulted in the paper presented by Dr. Jin Ho Jun.

Mandate 5: the MC published a Newsletter twice.

Mandate 9: the MC could not propose a budget yet, because new committees had been proposed.

Mandate 10: to draft a list of persons from the member churches who are qualified and may be able to serve as short time theological teachers. The MC reported this is in progress.

h. Regional meetings

Regional meetings are the platforms where ICRC member churches are offered opportunities to work and plan together to promote mission activities, theological training and ministries of mercy in their specific region.

They are a matter of concern because they are only functioning properly in Europe. All other regions reported very few activities in this respect, with Africa and South America being fore-runners with no meetings at all since the 2009 conference. The missions committee has been trying to get a member church in Africa to organize a meeting, but with no success.

The meeting therefore agreed that more efforts are needed to promote Regional meetings. Hopefully the new Committee for Regional meetings will have a positive impact.

i. Other matters

○ **ICRC profile in member churches**

From the reports by the various office bearers, a general complaint arose concerning the functioning of the ICRC within the member churches. There was a general feeling that the opportunities provided by the ICRC are not utilised on grass root level in the member churches.

One example of that aspect is the rather sad state of the regional meetings, which results in poor communication and co-operation between member churches in areas where they could work together. The consequence being, that opportunities for the proclamation of the Gospel are wasted.

Another example is that the knowledge about Reformed and Presbyterian churches in the world, which is available through the ICRC contacts, is not always utilised by church councils when they are supposed to guide church members in finding an ICRC member church when moving to another country.

DRCA knows of cases where members of the FRCSA emigrated to another country and joined a non-ICRC member church, while ICRC member churches were present. DRCA did not receive a request for information in those cases.

A third example is the lack of interest when DRCA sent letters to all the FRCSA consistories in which DRCA offered to give a presentation about the 2009 conference at congregational meetings. Only one church council reacted positive.

○ **Meeting of African member churches**

Few churches in Africa are part of the ICRC: only the Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA), the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA), the United Reformed Church in Congo (URCC) and our own FRCSA. However, two more African churches became members at this conference: the AEPC and the SRC.

We used the opportunity to arrange a meeting of all the African church delegates and observers on 2 September, in order to get to know each other and to find ways for cooperation and support.

The meeting discussed ways in which we could cooperate in providing leadership training. This is especially needed for the SRC, since they have planted many new churches and are planning to plant many more in the coming years. They have many office bearers who need training.

There are tremendous opportunities for promoting the preaching of the Gospel in Africa; we should find ways to utilise those opportunities.

Further, the meeting discussed how a regional conference can be organized. The 2008 Regional conference in Kenya decided to ask the NKST to organize the next one for 2011, but this did not materialize. Nigeria remains a good location for the meeting since it is easily accessible from many parts of Africa. The NKST observer promised to investigate the possibility of organising it in April or the second part of May and to draw up an budget. All those present would think about which churches they know and can invite to this meeting. There are very few ICRC member churches in Africa.

j. Appointments

A list of appointments is available with DRCA but appointments which are specifically of interest for the FRCSA are the following:

- Missions Committee:
 Prof. Arjan de Visser (CanRC)
 Rev. Dirk Maurits Boersma (FRCSA)
 Rev. Patrick Wic (SRC)
- Theological Education Committee:
 Prof. Douw Breed (RCSA)
 Dr. Melle Oosterhuis (RCNL)
- Diaconal Committee:
 Rev. Pieter Boon (FRCSA)
- Regional Conference Committee:
 Africa - Rev. Daniel Kithongo (AEPC)

k. Next ICRC conference

The United Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario, was chosen to be the host church for the next conference, to be held between May and July 2017.

The timing of the 2017 conference could have an impact on the arrangements for the FRCSA's Synod 2017, since our Synods are usually held in May. We recommend that Synod 2014 consider scheduling the next synod in September.

4.2 Conclusions

- The ICRC 2013 conference was well organised and proved to be very informative and educational.
- The conference proved to be an excellent platform for face-to-face contacts with the representatives of the new member churches from Africa.
- The opportunities for co-operation with other churches, as provided by the ICRC contacts, are not properly utilised by the member churches.
- Regional ICRC conferences in Africa should be promoted.

- A representation of two FRCSA delegates proved to be much more effective than one delegate and should be considered for future conferences.
- The proposed amended Constitution and Regulations, as adopted in its final format by the conference seems to be an improvement of the previous version.

4.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

1. To continue ICRC membership.

Grounds:

- 1) The ICRC is an organisation which adheres to its Reformed basis.
- 2) The ICRC provides a platform to maintain contacts with Reformed churches all over the world.
- 3) The ICRC provides us with opportunities to co-ordinate and structure our mission activities in a more effective way.
- 4) The ICRC offers opportunities to promote the proclamation of the gospel in our African continent.

2. To uplift the ICRC profile in the FRCSA.

Grounds:

- 1) The FRCSA are not fully utilising the opportunities provided by our ICRC contacts.
- 2) Attending ICRC conferences is a rather costly exercise and can only be justified if the FRCSA utilise the opportunities provided by the ICRC contacts.

3. To adopt the revised version of the ICRC's Constitution and Regulations (Appendix 4d).

Grounds:

- 2) The Basis of the Constitution is not amended in the revised version.
- 3) The newly proposed document seems to be more applicable in present ecclesiastical situations.
- 4) The newly proposed and adopted C&R is more detailed in its description of relevant items.
- 5) The newly proposed Committees structure offers opportunities to become more effective in promoting the proclamation of the Gospel in the African region.

4. To authorise DRCA to send two delegates to the ICRC 2017 conference in Hamilton, Canada.

Grounds:

- 1) Representation at ICRC conferences is important in order to be aware of the opportunities the ICRC offers.
- 2) FRCSA delegates found that the input by two delegates to the conference was far more effective than in the case of one delegate.
- 3) In cases where voting was required, consultation between the two delegates led to a more responsible voting behaviour.

5. To authorise DRCA to maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to find ways to support the proclamation of the Word of God and leadership training

by those churches in their home countries, in co-operation with other ICRC member churches.

Grounds:

- 1) The African member churches expressed their need for help to remain Reformed and to proclaim the Gospel in their home countries, as well as a need for leadership training in newly formed congregations
- 2) The FRCSA and the RCSA, as African church federations, are in a better position to provide certain forms of support to those churches, than churches from other continents.

5 FRCSA Information booklet

Mandate

To keep the booklet *Introducing the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* up to date and to adjust it periodically and when specific needs arise.

5.1 Activities

Deputies updated the details of all the churches.

5.2 Conclusion

- 1) Deputies finalised their update of the Information booklet during May 2012.
- 2) The booklet reflects the situation in the FRCSA as on February 2014.

5.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

To instruct DRCA to keep the booklet *Introducing the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa* up to date, to adjust it when specific needs arise, and to publish it electronically through the FRCSA website.

Grounds:

- 1) Since the booklet contains church details, it should be kept up-to-date.
- 2) Several churches use the information contained in the booklet in their own publications. It is therefore not necessary to provide printed copies.

6. Liaison for the churches

Mandate

1. To provide the FRCSA church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad.
2. To coordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad.

6.1 Activities

DRCA served as a liaison between the deputies Needy Churches and the sister churches in Australia and Canada. Our function has been to make the initial contact and then to leave it to the respective deputies.

No requests for information were received from the church councils.

6.2 Conclusion

Church councils are apparently not fully aware of DRCA's mandate to provide information concerning foreign churches.

6.3 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

1. To mandate DRCA to provide the church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad.
2. To mandate DRCA to coordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad.

Ground:

There is an on-going need for the liaison function of DRCA since they gather information regarding churches abroad.

7. Budget 2014-2017

	Item	ZAR
1	One delegate to Synod FRCA in Baldivis 2015	15 000
2	One delegate to Synod CanRC in Dunnville, Ontario, 2016	18 000
3	Two delegates to next Synod RCNL @ R11 000 pp	22 000
4	One/Two delegates to ICRC Conference 2017 in Hamilton, Canada @ R 18 000 pp	36 000
5	One/Two delegates to Africa Regional ICRC conference 2014/2015 (shared with Mission?)	15 000
6	ICRC membership fee 2014-2017	2 000
7	Other costs	4 000
	Total 2014-2017	112 000

7.1 Recommendations

DRCA requests Synod to decide:

To approve the proposed budget for the 2014 – 2017 period

8. Proposed Mandate for 2014-2017

DRCA respectfully request Synod Bethal to appoint deputies with the following mandate:

1. To continue sister church relations with the FRCA according to the adopted rules. [§2.2]
2. To send a delegate to Synod Baldivis 2015 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA. [§2.2]
3. To continue sister church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules. [§2.3]
4. To send a delegate to Synod Dunnville, Ontario, 2016 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA. [§2.3]
5. To continue with a sister church relationship with the RCNL according to the adopted rules. [§2.4]
6. To remain updated as to the developments in the DGK [§3.1]
7. To continue investigating the *Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland* (GKN), and also to acquaint themselves with the evaluations and judgments of RCNL major assemblies with regard to congregations and ministers now belonging to this federation, in order to come with a substantiated proposal to the next synod whether the Lord expects the FRCSA to enter into a sister church relationship with this federation. [§3.2]
8. To closely cooperate with the deputies of the CanRC and FRCA in studying the developments on the Dutch ecclesiastical scene. [§§2.4, 3.1 and 3.2]
9. To call upon the churches and consistories to remember in their prayers to the LORD the problematic ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands. [§§2.4, 3.1 and 3.2]
10. To inform the RCNL, DGK and GKN in writing about the decisions concerning them. [§§2.4, 3.1 and 3.2]
11. To send an additional delegate to the RCNL (RCNL) Synod of Ede 2014 [§2.4]
12. To send two delegates to the next RCNL (GKNv) Synod. [§2.4]
13. To maintain contact with the RCNZ at the present level of exchanging information, so that we may remain informed about the developments in their churches. [§3.3]
14. To remain informed about the ecclesiastical relations between the RCNZ and the FRCA. [§3.3]
15. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in Northern America via the CanRC. [§3.4]
16. To remain in contact with the ICRC regarding future regional conferences. [§3.5]
17. To ask the mission boards of the FRCSA to delegate at least one of the missionaries to the next Africa Regional conference. [§3.5]
18. To share the cost for attending the next Africa Regional conference with the appropriate mission board. [§3.5]
19. To consider the feasibility of actions by the FRCSA, in cases of possible contacts with churches in areas where ICRC – or sister churches are not active. [§3.5]
20. To continue ICRC membership. [§4.3]
21. To uplift the ICRC profile in the FRCSA. [§4.3]
22. To send two delegates to the ICRC 2017 conference in Hamilton, Canada. [§4.3]
23. To maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to find ways to support the proclamation of the Word of God and leadership training by those churches in their home countries, in co-operation with other ICRC member churches. [§4.3]

24. To keep the booklet Introducing the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa up to date, to adjust it when specific needs arise, and to publish it electronically through the FRCSA website. [§5.3]
25. To provide the church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad. [§6.3]
26. To coordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad. [§6.3]
27. To report to the next Synod and propose recommendations according to article 11 of the Synod Rules.

Deputies RCA herewith submit their report with the prayer that the Lord may grant you wisdom for your deliberations so that you may serve His church and glorify His Name by making good decisions.

P.G. Boon, chairman
C. Roose, secretary
D.M. Boersma
J.A. Breytenbach
H. de Jager

DRCA Report Appendix 1 – Rules for church relations

Rules for maintaining sister church relations with other church federations.

The FRCSA maintain sister church relationships with other church federations which show the marks of the church of Jesus Christ.

1. The purpose of the relationship is to support each other in maintaining, defending and promoting the truth of Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confessions in doctrine and church practice, as it is expressed in preaching, church discipline and worship;
2. The churches shall share with each other the agenda and decisions of their Synods;
3. The churches will invite each other's delegates to Synod and receive them as advisors whenever applicable;
4. The churches will share with each other their Acts of Synods or send the relevant decisions to each sister church;
5. The churches will allow each other's members to the use of the sacraments;
6. The churches will give each other's ministers permission to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments;
7. The churches will strive to inform the sister churches when changes to the confessions, church order or liturgical forms are considered at Synod, so that they can give advice before decisions are made.
8. The churches will inform sister churches when new sister church relationships are initiated.

Reëls vir die onderhouding van susterkerkverhoudings met ander kerkverbande.

Die VGKSA onderhou susterkerkverhoudings met ander kerke wat die kenmerke van die kerk van Jesus Christus vertoon.

1. Die doel van die verhouding is om mekaar te ondersteun by die onderhouding, verdediging en bevordering van die Skriftuurlike waarheid soos saamgevat in die Gereformeerde Belydenisgeskrifte betreffende die leer en kerklike praktyke, en soos dit tot uiting kom in die prediking, kerklike tugtoepassing en eredienste;
2. Die kerke sal mekaar in kennis stel van die agenda en besluite van hulle sinodes;
3. Die kerke sal mekaar se afgevaardigdes uitnooi om hulle sinodes by te woon en sal hulle as adviseurs ontvang waar toepaslik;
4. Die kerke sal hulle Sinodehandelinge met mekaar uitruil en mekaar oor relevante besluite inlig;
5. Die kerke sal mekaar se lidmate toelaat om die sakramente te gebruik;
6. Die kerke sal mekaar se predikante toelaat om die Woord te predik en die sakramente te bedien;
7. Die kerke sal soveel as moontlik hulle susterkerke inlig oor voorgestelde wysigings van belydenisse, kerkorde en liturgiese formuliere, wat deur sinodes oorweeg word, sodat hulle mekaar kan adviseer voordat besluite geneem word;
8. Die kerke sal die susterkerke in kennis stel van die aangaan van nuwe susterkerkverhoudings.

DRCA Report Appendix 2 - Letter of Concern to RCNL Synod Ede, 2014

To the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKNv) to be convened God willing in 2014 in Ede

Reverend Brothers in Christ,

We greet you in the almighty name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We give glory to our triune God for his on-going church gathering work in the Netherlands. Both in past and present a strong bond exists between the RCNL and the FRCSA, for which we thank Him. We are united by the same foundation we build on, even though in very different parts of God's world. We are thankful for the faithful preaching of the Gospel in your midst and the testimony of your members in word and deed in a world that is drifting away from its Creator and Recreator. We are especially thankful for the ongoing support we receive for the mission work in South Africa. We therefore communicate to you in humility and yet with the ardent hope that this letter will be read with willingness and the realisation that Christ's love compelled us to write it. Our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship state that the "*FRCSA maintain sister church relationships with other church federations which show the marks of the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the relationship is to support each other in maintaining, defending and promoting the truth of Scripture as summarized in the Reformed Confessions in doctrine and church practice*". It is in the context of ecclesiastical accountability that we direct our exhortations to you.

The fact that we have decided to write this letter, testifies that certain matters remained unresolved after the deliberations our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad had with their counterpart deputies, the *Deputaten Betrekkings met Buitelandse Kerken* of the RCNL. They themselves also advised us to approach you with regard to the unresolved matters.

***Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Theological University (TU) in Kampen**

Our concerns regarding the guarding of the Reformed doctrine at the TU have been communicated on various occasions to BBK RCNL. Since we have not seen any indication that our concerns have been recognized, we feel the need to directly address you.

9. Specifically we ask you to indicate clearly that the views of dr. Stefan Paas expressed in his dissertation *Creation and Judgment* (2003) are not in harmony with the Word of God and the three Forms of Unity to which we subscribe as Reformed Churches. To us it is inconceivable that a person holding such views could be appointed as lecturer at the TU. That Paas does not teach in the area of Old Testament studies is no reassurance for us. Paas' use of unreformed hermeneutics and Scripture critical hypotheses are not restricted to his dissertation. And are subjects such as missiology and church planting not rooted in the Old Testament as well? We also express our concern about the missiological textbook *Als een kerk opnieuw begint. Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming* (2008), of which S. Paas is the main author. Also in this publication unreformed hermeneutics and viewpoints are taken on board. It is our view that the Directors of the TU ought to have dealt with this matter by not allowing Paas to teach at the TU as long as he held to the views expressed in these publications. Failure to do so means that a

foothold has been established at the TU for the methods and conclusions of present day scholarship which does not take seriously the special nature of Scripture as the inspired and therefore trustworthy Word of God. This reality does not infringe on the freedom of scientific research. To the contrary, we are convinced that the orthodox paths protect Biblical scholars from the peer pressures of the modern scientific discourse.

Similarly, we are concerned about the methodology and conclusions expressed in the dissertation of dr. Koert van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence* (2010). We ask you to indicate clearly that the views of dr. Koert van Bekkum expressed in this dissertation are not in harmony with the Word of God and the three Forms of Unity to which we subscribe as Reformed Churches. Methodologically, Van Bekkum posed that the factuality of historic events as described in the Bible cannot be accepted at face value. The end result of his methodology is that the historic reliability of certain Biblical passages is reduced. For example Joshua 10:12-14 cannot mean that the sun and moon stood still. Similarly, the straightforward historic statement of 1 Kings 6:1 is set aside by Van Bekkum. We observe a diminished respect for the authority and accuracy of Scripture. The fact that this was a dissertation promoted under the auspices of the TU only augments our concerns. That Van Bekkum was subsequently appointed as lecturer at the TU creates concern for the future training of ministers of the Word within the RCNL. Allowing such views to be presented and promoted undermines the orthodox character of the TU and jeopardizes the training of future ministers of the Word. We urge you as yet to deal with these matters in a way that honors the Holy Spirit, the supreme author of the whole of Scripture.

It is causing us pain to witness that Scripture critical scholarship is accepted at the TU which is under the governance of the RCNL. We are also honest and sincere when we say that the refutations against these allegations of Scriptural criticism, published by the TU, by some of its personnel, by its Board of Directors as well as Supervisory Board, could not take away our concerns. Also bearing in mind that Paas and Van Bekkum acted with apologetic and strategic motives did not diminish our concerns. In our South African context we have observed that Scripture critical views entered formerly Reformed academic institutions in a similar way, eventually causing disastrous spiritual and numerical decline in the Reformed federations they serve. We should be vigilant that love for the (academic) world does not surpass the love for the living God, his Word and his Church. Out of our love for you, we beseech you to take our concerns seriously and to be resolute in refuting opinion and scholarly hypotheses which don't honor the infallibility, clarity and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures (Belgic Confession, art. 7). We call on you to restore the proper respect for Holy Scripture and to return to the right path of interpretation of Holy Scripture.

***Women in the special ecclesiastical offices**

We are compelled also to communicate our dismay about developments in your federation regarding women in office. While your synods have thankfully not made a decision allowing for women office bearers, we are concerned by the work of the Deputies M/V *in de kerk* and the way past synods have supervised their activities.

When a committee appointed by Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 developed a manual to facilitate reflection on the role of women in the church, it failed to direct the churches to what Holy Scripture says on this matter. Instead, what Scripture clearly reveals regarding this matter became merely one option to be considered among others. Consecutive synods did not restore this. Synod Harderwijk 2011 appointed deputies with a mandate to answer the question whether Scripture permits the appointment of women to the offices elder and minister. This is evidence of a diminished regard for the plain teaching of Scripture that these offices are to be filled by faithful men who are chosen in agreement with the instructions provided by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Synod Harderwijk 2011 neither corrected the misleading views of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, who communicated to the churches that the Reformed confessions are indecisive on this matter. Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, referring back to the rule the apostle Paul gave to Timothy, states that “faithful men” are to execute these offices.

Our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad have requested to meet with Deputies *M/V in de kerk* during their visit to the Netherlands in February-March 2013, yet this request was not granted by BBK RCNL. In our opinion this request was not farfetched. It was in line with the mandate given by Synod Harderwijk to Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, namely “*goede aandacht te geven aan uitspraken van verwante kerken in binnen- en buitenland*” and “*voor de verschillende onderdelen relevante informatie en advies in te winnen bij de TU en deputaatschappen, m.n. BBK, DKE, GDD, HKO en OOG.*”³⁵ This is the more painful to us, after having read the report of Deputies *M/V in de kerk* to Synod Ede 2014, in which they portray a one-sided image of our churches we cannot associate with.

We call on you to restore the orthodox direction. In a church that wants to remain faithful to Holy Scripture, the matter of women in the special ecclesiastical offices cannot be framed as an open question. When the unambiguous teaching of the Word of God about male leadership in the church becomes a matter of debate, then a dangerous hermeneutical approach is showing its influence. We urge you in the Lord to defend the Biblical truth that God calls faithful brothers to give leadership in the churches. We ask you to encourage your churches to resist the inroads of egalitarian and emancipatory thinking regarding the special offices in the church.

We call on you to re-evaluate the work of the Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, which was done in the period until Synod Harderwijk 2011, in a Scriptural and Confessional way, and to denounce everything that is in conflict with Scripture and Confession. We also call on you to disapprove of the Report of Deputies *M/V in de kerk*, titled “*Mannen en vrouwen in dienst van het evangelie*”, and to restore the Scriptural and confessional stance, as outlined in the second attachment (“*Bijlage 2*”) of this Report.

***Deputies Church Unity**

We feel both hesitant and obliged to exhort you to disapprove of the Report of Deputies DKE on your table. We feel hesitant since we realise that this Report has no status within your federation and that it deals with affairs in the Netherlands. At the other hand we feel

³⁵ Acta Synode Harderwijk 2011, p.67-68.

obliged to mention it, since to our humble opinion we question the way the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* adhere to the Confessions of the Church. They also allow, contrary to the teaching of Scripture, women in all ecclesiastical offices.

We realise that it would perhaps be easy to reason that you as churches in the Netherlands are the trendsetters, and that your 'more conservative' sisters far away will follow in due time. Yet we implore that you take serious our mutual agreement with regard to ecclesiastical fellowship, and that you will purely on the basis of the love of God and his Word give serious attention to the points raised in this letter. It is this love that compelled us to write this letter. The issues raised in this letter are of such a nature that they can impact on our mutual ecclesiastical fellowship, would there not be a change of course.

We are writing this letter in the serious awareness that we and the churches we serve are not beyond reproach, and that we have numerous weaknesses in doctrine and life to combat ourselves. And we are convinced that the better you will know us, the more you will be aware of this. On an on-going basis we experience the onslaught of our arch enemies, Satan, our own old man, as well as the sinful world. Also here in South Africa the pressure to adapt to the spirit of the age is immense, whether it is racism, syncretism, financial dishonesty and corruption, erosion of family values, respect for human life, as well as the Western secularism and its agenda.

It is our sincere hope that you will seriously consider this letter and restore the catholic direction with regard to the points mentioned above. We urge you and your churches to stand firm in confessing the whole truth of the Word of God and to defend this truth boldly and vigorously even when it is denounced and hated by the world. We hope and pray that our concerns may one day be put to rest and that our churches and yours may remain faithful until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, majesty and power.

We look forward to your imminent response.

With brotherly greetings
Synod Bethal 2014
Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

DRCA Report Appendix 3 – Letter from the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

(English translation)

Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

Deputaat-scriba: J.F. de Leeuw

Prinsesselaan 11, 3851 XM Ermelo

Tel. 06-53672343, E-mail: j.f.deleeuw@online.nl

To: the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa 2014
c/o Deputies RCA
Rev. P.G. Boon
Dunwoodielaan 1201
0186 Waverley, Pretoria
South Africa

Ermelo, 10th April 2013

Esteemed brothers

With gratitude, the meeting of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) on 22nd March 2013, has taken notice of the report of a meeting between a delegation of the Committee for Churches Abroad of the GKN and rev. P.G. Boon and Rev. H. Breytenbach on behalf of your Deputies RCA.

The brothers J. de Bruijne, Rev. L. Heres, Rev. R. van der Wolf and J.M van Wijk of the GKN were able to report that they had an open and honest discussion with your deputies on 27th February 2013, during which much mutual recognition was experienced.

The position of the GKN could be explained and a lot of questions were answered. The meeting was felt to be brotherly and edifying.

As a result of a recommendation by the Committee for Churches Abroad, the meeting of the GKN of 22nd March 2013 has decided to address you, the synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, with a request to intensify contacts with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland.

The GKN are aware of the facts that the distance between us is large and man power resources are limited at both sides. Apart from that, you also have to deal with lots of issues from the churches in the Netherlands, with which you are confronted. Lots of issues which require evaluation and where you are forced to make certain choices.

May the Lord be with you and may He grant you wisdom in your deliberations and decision making. May the Lord provide that your decisions may be to promote the honour of God and to be a blessing for the churches in South Africa. May He also provide that the activities of your synod may serve to build in obedience on the one foundation Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. In the Netherlands and everywhere else in the world where you maintain contacts with fellow believers.

With brotherly greetings,

On behalf of the meeting of the GKN, dated 22nd March 2013

Re. E. Hoogendoorn, praeses

J.F. de Leeuw, deputy-scribe

Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

Deputaat-scriba: J.F. de Leeuw
Prinsesselaan 11, 3851 XM Ermelo

Tel. 06-53672343, E-mail: j.f.deleeuw@online.nl

Aan : de synode van Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika 2014,
p/a deputaten BBK
ds. P.G. Boon
Dunwoodielaan 1201
Waverley, 0186, APretoria,
Suid Afrika
famgboon@gmail.com

Ermelo, 10 april 2013.

Geachte broeders,

Dankbaar heeft de vergadering van de Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) van 22 maart 2013 kennis genomen van het verslag van het gesprek dat een afvaardiging van de commissie buitenlandse kerken van de GKN met ds. P.G. Boon en ds. H. Breytenbach namens uw deputaatschap BBK mocht hebben.

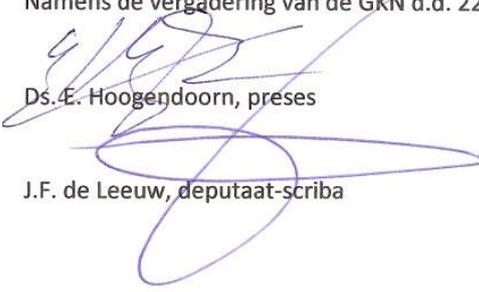
De broeders J. de Bruine, ds. L. Heres, ds. R. van der Wolf en J.M. van Wijk van de GKN konden melden dat zij op 27 februari 2013 met uw deputaten een opert en eerlijk gesprek hebben gevoerd, waarbij veel onderlinge herkenning mocht worden ontmoet.

De positie van de GKN kon worden verduidelijkt en veel vragen beantwoord. Het contact is als broederlijk en opbouwend ervaren.

Op aanbeveling van de commissie buitenlandse kerken heeft de vergadering van de GKN van 22 maart 2013 besloten zich tot u, de synode van Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika 2014, te richten met het verzoek tot verdergaand contact met de Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland.

De GKN zijn zich er van bewust dat de fysieke afstand groot en de mankracht over en weer beperkt is. Daarbij komt dat er veel is dat er vanuit de kerken in Nederland op u afkomt. Veel wat u moet beoordelen en waarin u voor keuzes wordt geplaatst. De Here is u nabij en schenke u wijsheid en inzicht bij uw overleggingen en besluitvorming. Geve de Here dat uw besluitvorming mag zijn tot eer van God en tot zegen van de kerken in Zuid Afrika. Dat het werk van uw synode ook dienstbaar mag zijn aan het in gehoorzaamheid bouwen op het ene fundament Jezus Christus de opgestane Heer. In Nederland en overal in de wereld waar u contacten met de broederschap onderhoudt.

Met hartelijke broedergroet,
Namens de vergadering van de GKN d.d. 22 maart 2013.


Ds. E. Hoogendoorn, preses

J.F. de Leeuw, deputaat-scriba

Appendices to the ICRC part of the DRCA Report to Synod 2014, Bethal

DRCA Report Appendix 4a – Executive Committee

The following executive Committee was elected to serve for the next four years:

- Chairman: Rev. Richard Holt (EPCEW)
- Vice Chairman: Rev. Dick Moes (URCNA)
- Recording Secretary: Rev. Dr. Peter Naylor (EPCEW)
- Corresponding Secretary: Dr. James Visscher (CanRC)
- Treasurer: Mr Kyle Lodder (CanRC)

Advisory Committees were appointed to provide advice concerning the following subjects:

- Financial report;
- Press release;
- ICRC conference 2017;
- Missions;
- Review of ICRC Constitution and Regulations;
- Committees to review applications for membership by AEPC, SRC, and CRCA;
- Incomplete applications for membership.

DRCA Report Appendix 4b - Summary of the proposed and by ICRC 2013 adopted amendments to the ICRC C&R

The “CONSTITUTION” part:

- **Articles I and III** concerning **Name** and **Purpose** are more clearly defined, but the meaning of those articles was not amended.

- **Article II**, the **Basis** is not amended.

- **Article IV, Membership** is considerably changed. An additional paragraph referring to the institution of the ICRC in 1982 is inserted. Basic requirements to be eligible for membership are still the same, except for the fact that a sentence is added in point 4 concerning suspension of membership (added part in **bold/italic** text): “whenever the Conference concludes that a Member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice (**which includes the ordination of persons to the offices of minister or ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture (cf. Belgic Confession art. 30)**), is no longer in agreement with the Basis”. The details of the requirements however are moved to the “Regulation” part under “X. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP”. Those details are made more stringent as a few additional requirements are added to the already existing requirements, being 1) that churches applying for membership should show their desire to become members, by attending ICRC meetings, and 2) Membership of churches failing to send delegates to three consecutive ICRC meetings will automatically be terminated.

The remaining articles **V. AUTHORITY** and **VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**, were not amended in meaning, but described more specifically.

The “REGULATIONS” part:

- **Article I, MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE**, is still basically the same.

- **Article II** is a new article with the heading “**DELEGATES, OFFICIAL OBSERVERS, OTHER GUESTS, PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR, AND VOTING**”. This article replaces the previous article **V. PARTICIPANTS**, while more specific details regarding the voting process are inserted. Those details were lacking in the previous version. In the new article II more detailed information is provided about the various types of attendants and their rights are more specified. An interesting addition in the case of Official Observers (Visitors in the old version) is that they too should represent churches who comply with the ICRC Basis.

- **Art. III. CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE**, replaces article VI from the previous version. The main amendment being that the “convening church” is replaced by the “moderator of the previous conference” as the convenor.

- **Art. IV. OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE**, replaces article II. EXECUTIVE OFFICERS (EO) of the old version and is considerably changed. Where the old EO consisted of four (4) officers, the new team contains six (6) members due to the addition of the Treasurer and a newly created officer function, the Coordinator (for explanation refer to article V. COORDINATING COMMITTEE). Another amendment is that the title “chairman” is replaced by “moderator”.

- **Art. V. COORDINATING COMMITTEE**, replaces the old art. III. INTERIM COMMITTEE but with a widely extended mandate in order to improve the functioning of the ICRC conferences and the required activities in between conferences. New under this heading is that there should be permanent ICRC Committees as follows:

- i. The Regional Conferences Committee;
- ii. The Website Committee;
- iii. The Missions Committee;
- iv. The Theological Education Committee;
- v. The Diaconal Committee.

It should be noted that the Regional Conferences Committee is a new proposal which was deemed necessary in order to promote the occurrence of Regional Conferences, as the previous system does not seem to work in most regions.

- **Art. VI. COMMITTEES, SPECIAL CONFERENCES, AND CONSULTATIONS**, Replaces the previous version's article IV COMMITTEES, but the contents is totally different as it describes various types of possible committees, such as Operating -, Facilitating – and Study Committees, possible additional activities and how such activities should be handled.

- **Art. VII. AGENDA**, is a somewhat amended art. VII. AGENDA MATERIAL of the previous version. Main amendments being 1) that the agenda should include time blocks to allow bilateral discussions between delegates, 2) that member churches are encouraged to write reports on certain issues or developments in their churches and propose such reports as points for the agenda, and 3) that all agenda points which requires discussions and decisions, are to be referred to Advisory Committees for advice. The last point is already common practice in the ICRC conferences, but was not specified in the Regulations.

- **Art. VIII. RULES OF ORDER**, is maintained in its original position but the contents provide a much more extended explanation of various types of motions and the way in which such motions should be handled.

- **Art. IX. FINANCES**, also still in its original position, but containing a much more extended and more specific mandate for the Treasurer.

- **Art. X. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**, a newly inserted article with detailed requirements for churches wishing to become members. Most of those requirements were in the previous version located in art IV of the Constitution.

- **Art. XI. INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS**, also a newly inserted article in which is specified how certain documents should be stored and should be made available if needed by member churches.

- **Art. XII. AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS**, contains the same requirements as the previous version with an added requirement that only major assemblies of the member churches or a committee appointed by the ICRC may propose amendments.

DRCA Report Appendix 4c – Original ICRC C&R
(Constitution & Regulations as valid up to 2013)

CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS
of the
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

CONSTITUTION

Article I. NAME

The name shall be The International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Article II. BASIS

The basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).

Article III. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches;
3. to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfilment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the member churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

Article IV. MEMBERSHIP

1. Churches shall be admitted as members which:
 - a. faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith;
 - b. have been sponsored by at least two member Churches;
 - c. furnish:
 - i. their confessional standards,
 - ii. their declaratory acts (if applicable),
 - iii. their form of subscription,
 - iv. their form of government;
 - d. are not members of the World Council of Churches or any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis;

- e. are accepted by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, every member Church having one vote.
2. Termination of membership shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, whenever the Conference is of the opinion that the member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice is no longer in agreement with the Basis.

Article V. AUTHORITY

The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member Churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation.

Article VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The *Constitution* may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the member churches. The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary two years before the meeting of the Conference. He shall send it to the member churches immediately.

REGULATIONS

Article I. MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Conference shall convene every four years.
2. Each meeting of the Conference shall determine the time, place, and convening church of the next Conference.

Article II. EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Each meeting of the Conference shall elect the following officers: a Chairman, Vice- Chairman, a Recording Secretary, and a Corresponding Secretary.

1. The Chairman shall:
 - a. call the meeting to order at the appointed time and see to it that each session is properly opened and closed;
 - b. insure that the matters on the agenda are dealt with as expeditiously as possible;
 - c. put to the meeting every motion that is made and duly seconded, as well as take the vote;
 - d. rule on all points of order, subject always to an appeal from two voting delegates.
2. The Vice-Chairman shall:
 - a. take the chair when the Chairman desires to express himself on any question before the meeting;
 - b. assume the duties and privileges of the Chairman in his absence;
 - c. render all possible assistance to the Chairman.
3. The Recording Secretary shall:
 - a. call the roll every day once the devotions have concluded;
 - b. keep an accurate record of all the *proceedings* of the meeting;
 - c. insure that all documents are properly cared for;
 - d. forward three copies of the *proceedings* to the member churches as soon as possible after compilation.
4. The Corresponding Secretary shall:

- a. during the meeting of the Conference, assist the Recording Secretary whenever and wherever possible;
 - b. in between the meetings of the Conference:
 - i. attend to all correspondence;
 - ii. receive all reports from committees of the Conference and distribute them to the member Churches;
 - iii. assist the convening Church;
 - iv. publish materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference;
 - v. report to the next meeting of the Conference on his activities and in the interim be responsible to the Interim Committee.
5. The Executive shall manage the proceedings of the meetings, arrange and propose the business to be transacted in every session and make recommendations concerning committees.

Article III. INTERIM COMMITTEE

The Interim Committee shall consist of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Recording Secretary.

It shall:

1. oversee the work of the Corresponding Secretary;
2. invite one of the alternate committee members to serve when necessary;
3. report to the next meeting of the Conference;
4. be dismissed subsequent to its report to the next meeting of the Conference.

Article IV. COMMITTEES

1. The Conference may appoint a committee to study any matter that is deemed to be of mutual concern to the member churches.
2. Every attempt shall be made to make the members of these committees as representative as possible. The Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve.
3. Committee reports shall be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary at least one year prior to the next meeting of the Conference.

Article V. PARTICIPANTS

1. The following are to be seated at the meetings of the Conference:
 - a. Voting delegates from the member churches. Each member church shall be entitled to sending two voting delegates to the meeting. These delegates shall be known as 'Voting Delegates.'
 - b. Advisory delegates from the member churches. Each member church may appoint two advisors, but they shall have no vote. These delegates shall be known as 'Advisors.'
2. No others shall sit as participants in the meeting unless and until invited by the Conference to participate.

These include:

- a. Observer delegates of Churches that have made application for membership in the Conference. These delegates shall be known as 'Observers.'

- b. Visiting delegates of Churches which have not yet applied for membership. These delegates shall be known as 'Visitors'.
3. The Conference may provide a designated area for official Observers and Visitors, to distinguish them from others who may be present to observe the meeting.

Article VI. CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The convening church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.
2. The convening church shall appoint one of its members to preside at the opening of the Conference.
3. The convener shall designate three delegates who will collect, examine and report on the credentials of each delegation.
4. The convener shall supervise the election of the Executive Officers.

Article VII. AGENDA MATERIAL

1. The Conference shall place on its agenda;
 - a. correspondence from member Churches;
 - b. applications for membership from other Churches;
 - c. reports from its special committees and Corresponding Secretary;
 - d. reports from its Interim Committee;
 - e. recommendations from any two member Churches to extend an invitation to another church to send observers to the Conference.
2. Materials for the agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance. Recommendations should also be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary one year in advance and be circulated as soon as possible thereafter. Amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other agenda material received less than one year before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides.
3. The agenda must be finalized three months in advance and a copy be sent to all member Churches.
4. Additional subjects for the agenda introduced by a delegate of a member Church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the agenda in a regular way. In such cases, the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the agenda.

Article VIII. RULES OF ORDER

1. To obtain the floor each speaker must be recognized by the chair. He shall address himself to the Chairman with decorum and respect.
2. If a delegate fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the Chairman shall call him to order.
3. If any delegate has spoken twice on a given issue, others who have not yet spoken shall be given priority by the Chairman.
4. When the Chairman believes that a motion has been sufficiently discussed, he may propose that debate be drawn to a close. Any delegate convinced of the same may move to close the discussion.

5. Decisions shall be taken on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast, with the exception of Article IV, 1, c., IV, 2., VI of the Constitution and Article X of the Regulations.

Article IX. FINANCES

Each meeting of the Conference shall appoint a Treasurer with the mandate:

- a. to assess the membership annually according to the established method;
- b. to collect the funds in equal installments;
- c. to reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;
- d. to provide the Missions Committee with the budgeted amount as required;
- e. to submit a financial report to the next Conference; and
- f. to draw up a budget with the assistance of the Interim Committee for the following Conference.

Article X. AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS

These *Regulations* may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

The proposed amendment(s) shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

DRCA Report Appendix 4d – New proposed ICRC C&R

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS (After incorporation of all amendments as adopted by ICRC 2013)

CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS of the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES

CONSTITUTION

I. NAME

The name of the Conference shall be The International Conference of Reformed Churches (“ICRC”).

II. BASIS

The basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
3. to facilitate and promote cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

1. The Conference was duly constituted on October 26, 1982, by delegates from the eight founding churches, having been previously authorized to do so by their major assemblies. A list of past and present members of the Conference shall be maintained among the Conference’s documents.
2. Churches eligible for membership are those which:
 - a. faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith;
 - b. have complied with the applicable *Regulations* regarding applications for membership;
 - c. are not members of any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis.
3. Admission to membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote.

4. Suspension or termination of membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, whenever the Conference concludes that a Member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice (which includes the ordination of persons to the offices of minister or ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture (cf. Belgic Confession art. 30), is no longer in agreement with the Basis; Removal of suspension shall also be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote. A proposal to suspend, terminate, or remove the suspension of the membership of a Member Church may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church. A suspended Member Church may send Delegates to meetings of the Council but shall not vote.
5. When a Member Church fails to send at least one Delegate to three consecutive meetings of the Conference, its membership shall be automatically terminated as of close of the third such meeting, unless during that meeting the Conference determines by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, that there are good and sufficient grounds for such failure.

V. NATURE AND EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

It is understood that the Conference is not a synodical, classical, or presbyterial assembly, and therefore all actions and decisions of the Conference, other than those with respect to a church's membership in the Conference (*Constitution*, IV), are advisory in character and may in no way curtail, restrict, or intrude into the exercise of the jurisdiction or authority given to the governing assemblies of the Member Churches by Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

This *Constitution* may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the major assemblies of the Member Churches eligible to vote, such amendment having been proposed to the Member Churches by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches present and eligible to vote, each Member Church having one vote. An amendment, as proposed to the Member Churches, is not amendable.

A proposal to amend the *Constitution* may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church eligible to vote, or by a Committee of the Conference, and shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary not later than two years before the meeting of the Conference.

REGULATIONS

I. MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Conference shall ordinarily meet every four years.
2. Each meeting of the Conference shall determine the time, place, and convening Member Church for the next Conference.

II. DELEGATES, OFFICIAL OBSERVERS, OTHER GUESTS, PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR, AND VOTING

1. Delegates. Each Member Church shall appoint no more than four Delegates to each meeting of the Conference and, except as provided in *Regulations* IX.2.a, shall ordinarily bear the cost of its Delegates' travel, housing, and meal expenses in attending the meeting. It shall furnish to the Corresponding Secretary an appropriate letter of credentials for its Delegates, each of whom must be an ordained minister or ruling elder (presently or previously) in that Member Church.

- a. Voting Delegates. Each Member Church shall designate not more than two of its Delegates as "Voting Delegates."
 - b. Advisors. The other members of a Member Church's delegation shall be designated as "Advisors." They may participate in the deliberations of the Conference, but they may not vote.
2. Official Observers. Official Observers are duly credentialed representatives of non-Member Churches that faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis (*Constitution*, II) and are invited to attend the meeting (at their own expense) by the Coordinating Committee. Up to two Official Observers per sending church may be given the privilege of the floor, which may be revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.
 3. Other Guests. All persons present for the meeting who are neither Delegates nor Official Observers shall be considered as "Other Guests." A two-thirds majority vote of the Delegates present shall be required to grant the privilege of the floor to Other Guests, which may be subsequently revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.
 4. Except as provided in the *Regulations*, no other persons shall be granted the privilege of the floor. The Conference may provide a designated area for Official Observers and for Other Guests (who have been granted the privilege of the floor), to distinguish them from others who may be present to observe the meeting.
 5. Except as otherwise provided in either the *Constitution* or the *Regulations*, a (simple) majority vote in the affirmative adopts any motion. Only Voting Delegates may vote on matters being considered by the Conference. Insofar as is possible, significant decisions in respect of the purpose of the Conference (*Constitution*, III) should: i) be taken by consensus, and ii) give witness on the basis of the Scriptures and the Reformed standards.

III. CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The convening Member Church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.
2. The Moderator (of the previous meeting) shall convene the meeting of the Conference and through the election of Officers.
3. The Moderator (of the previous meeting) appoint Delegates who will serve as a Credentials Committee to examine and report on the credentials (previously furnished to the Corresponding Secretary) of each delegation.

IV. OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

1. Each meeting of the Conference shall elect the following Officers: Moderator, Vice-Moderator, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Coordinator and Treasurer. The Vice-Moderator of the previous (quadrennial) meeting shall normally succeed to the office of Moderator and shall be declared elected by acclamation, unless the Conference determines to conduct an election.
2. The responsibilities of the Officers will be as follows:
 - a. *Moderator*
 - (1) preside at the meetings of the Conference;
 - (2) make required appointments;
 - (3) call the meeting to order at the appointed time and see to it that each session is properly opened and closed;
 - (4) insure that the matters on the agenda are dealt with as expeditiously as possible;
 - (5) put to the meeting every motion that is made and duly seconded, as well as take the vote;
 - (6) rule on all points of order, subject always to an appeal from two Voting Delegates;

(7) convene the next (quadrennial) meeting of the Conference, appoint a Credentials Committee of three Delegates to examine and report on the credentials of each delegation, and preside through the election of Officers;

(8) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

b. *Vice-Moderator*

(1) take the chair when the Moderator desires to express himself on any question before the meeting;

(2) assume the duties and privileges of the Moderator in his absence;

(3) assist the Moderator when needed;

(4) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

c. *Recording Secretary*

(1) maintain and call the roll of Delegates at the commencement of business each day;

(2) keep an accurate record of all the *Proceedings* of the meeting, including a list of all Official Observers and Other Guests (who are granted the privilege of the floor);

(3) insure that all documents are properly cared for during the meeting and are turned over to the Corresponding Secretary following the publication of the *Proceedings* of the meeting;

(4) arrange for the printing of the *Proceedings* of the meeting and for the distribution of three copies of the *Proceedings* to each of the Member Churches;

(5) forward an electronic edition of the *Proceedings* (edited to remove sensitive material) to the Website Committee (through the Corresponding Secretary) for posting on the ICRC Website.

d. *Corresponding Secretary*

(1) during the meetings of the Conference, assist the Recording Secretary when needed;

(2) in between the meetings of the Conference:

i. carry on-correspondence on behalf of the Conference with regard to inquiries from the public, to the work of the Conference (and its Committees and Special Conferences), and to the next meeting of the Conference;

ii. prepare and present to the Conference a written report regarding his labors on behalf of the Conference;

iii. prepare and present to the Coordinating Committee an annual written report regarding his labors on behalf of the Conference;

iv. assist the convening Member Church in preparing for the next meeting of the Conference;

v. when necessary, assist Delegates from Member Churches and Invited Observers in applying for visas to attend meetings of the Conference;

vi. receive materials for the Agenda for the next meeting of the Conference, and distribute them, with the proposed Agenda, to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than three months before that meeting;

vii. receive proposals for amendments to either the *Constitution* or the *Regulations* that have been properly proposed by a Member Church and distribute them promptly to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches;

viii. receive reports of Study Committees and Special Conferences and distribute them promptly to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches;

- ix. receive applications for membership in the Conference, advise Churches applying for membership of the procedure and requirements for such, and advise sponsoring Member Churches regarding their responsibilities with respect to such;
 - x. communicate the actions of the Conference (or its Coordinating Committee) to appropriate parties, including the extension of invitations to Official Observers and Other Guests;
 - xi. arrange for the preparation of a Press Release of the meeting of the Conference (for approval by the Conference) suitable for posting on the Conference's Website and for inclusion in the *Proceedings*;
 - xii. execute documents as required or authorized by the Conference (or the Coordinating Committee or its Executive Committee);
 - xiii. serve as an *ex officio* member of all Operating Committees and provide counsel to them as appropriate;
 - xiv. maintain updated copies of the Conference's *Constitution, Regulations, and Informational Documents*, as they may be amended from time to time;
 - xv. maintain the archives of the Conference's documents, including the *Proceedings* and papers from its prior meetings, and arrange for their safe storage;
 - xvi. where he is unsure regarding the discharge of any of the above responsibilities, he may seek the advice of the Executive Committee, under whose oversight he serves.
- e. *Coordinator*
- (1) preside at the meetings of the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Committee;
 - (2) maintain regular communication, as appropriate, with the chairman/convenors of all ICRC Committees, Conferences, and Consultations to encourage them in the faithful discharge of their responsibilities;
 - (3) make the necessary arrangements for, prepare an agenda for, convene, and preside at the annual meetings of the Coordinating Committee;
 - (4) call, make the necessary arrangements for, prepare an agenda for, convene, and preside at the meetings of the Executive Committee;
 - (5) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.
- f. *Treasurer*
- (1) keep full and accurate accounts of receipts into and disbursements from the Treasury in books belonging to the Conference;
 - (2) receive and disburse the funds of the Treasury in accordance with the policies and directions of the Conference (*Regulations, IX*);
 - (3) deposit all funds of the Treasury in the name and to the credit of the Conference in insured or other accounts as may be designated by the Conference;
 - (4) execute documents as required or authorized by the Conference (or the Coordinating Committee);
 - (5) monitor the funds of the Treasury and alert the Coordinating Committee to significant deteriorations in the Conference's financial condition that might undermine the Conference's ability to meet its financial obligations;
 - (6) submit periodic reports to the Coordinating Committee, as he deems appropriate or is requested by the Executive Committee;
 - (7) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

- (8) submit an annual financial report to the Coordinating Committee summarizing: all receipts and disbursements, deposits and withdrawals from the Treasury, and the Conference's assets (including bank accounts and investments, and interest/dividends earned thereupon);
- (9) where he is unsure regarding the discharge of any of the above responsibilities, he may seek the advice of the Executive Committee, under whose oversight he serves.

V. COORDINATING COMMITTEE

There shall be a Coordinating Committee to arrange for the orderly carrying on of the work of the Conference between the quadrennial meetings of Conference.

1. Membership. The members of the Coordinating Committee shall be:
 - a. The Coordinator;
 - b. and the following members (serving *ex officio*, with vote):
 - (1) The Moderator
 - (2) The Vice-Moderator;
 - (3) The Corresponding Secretary;
 - (4) The Chairmen/Convenors of the following committees:
 - i. The Regional Conferences Committee;
 - ii. The Website Committee;
 - iii. The Missions Committee;
 - iv. The Theological Education Committee;
 - v. The Diaconal Committee.
2. Functions. The functions of the Coordinating Committee include:
 - a. advise the Conference with respect to applications from churches seeking admission to membership;
 - b. propose to the Conference a nomination for the convening Member Church for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference;
 - c. propose to the Conference a theme for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference, and nominate two or three speakers;
 - d. propose to the Conference nominations for the Officers of the meeting: Moderator (usually the Vice-Moderator of the previous quadrennial meeting), Vice-Moderator (usually selected with a view towards his serving as the Moderator of the next quadrennial meeting), Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Coordinator, and Treasurer;
 - e. propose to the Conference nominations for the members (including the Chairman/Convenor when required) of Committees;
 - f. propose to the Conference a budget for the next four years, including such honoraria as it deems appropriate;
 - g. propose to the Conference an assessment schedule for the next four years, based upon the budget it is also proposing to the Conference;
 - h. extend invitations to non-Member Churches that meet the requirements of *Constitution*, IV.2 to send (at their own expense) Official Observers to the next meeting of the Conference;
 - i. extend invitations to other non-Member Churches to send (at their own expense) observers (as Other Guests);

- j. deal responsibly with all matters pertaining to the implementation of a previously adopted action of the Conference, which had been inadvertently overlooked during the meeting of the Conference, and which requires action before the next meeting of the Conference;
 - k. in the event an Officer of the Conference (or a Chairman/Convenor of a Committee) becomes incapacitated or is otherwise unable or unwilling to continue to serve, appoint a presbyter of a Member Church to perform the functions of that office on an interim basis;
 - l. advise the Conference in situations where, following a split or disruption in a Member Church, one of the churches resulting therefrom (but having a name different from that on the list of ICRC Member Churches) desires to be recognized as the (continuing) Member Church in the ICRC:
 - (1) such advice shall be given only after the Coordinating Committee has consulted with and sought the advice of appropriate representatives of those Member Churches that have first-hand knowledge of the situation; and
 - (2) provided its advice is consistent with the advice received from such consultation, the Coordinating Committee may authorize the Corresponding Secretary to implement its advice pending the decision of the next meeting of the Conference.
3. Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the Coordinating Committee (“the Executive Committee”) shall consist of the Coordinator, the Moderator, the Vice-Moderator, and the Corresponding Secretary. Its functions include:
- a. During the meetings of the Conference:
 - (1) manage the proceedings of the meetings, and arrange and propose the business to be transacted in each session;
 - (2) liaise with the convening Member Church.
 - b. Between meetings of the Conference:
 - (1) oversee the work of the Corresponding Secretary and advise him in the execution of his duties (in such matters, he may participate in the deliberations, but not vote);
 - (2) oversee the work of the Recording Secretary and advise him in the execution of his duties;
 - (3) oversee the work of the Treasurer and advise him in the execution of his duties;
 - (4) arrange for periodic audits of the Treasury’s accounts, as it deems appropriate, and submit an audit report to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the Member Churches with the Agenda materials;
 - (5) consult with the convening Member Church regarding the planning and arrangements for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference, including the selection of a suitable venue for the meeting and the arrangements for the accommodation of the Delegates;
 - (6) propose an Agenda for the next meeting of the Conference, including reviewing materials received after the deadline for submission and making a recommendation(s) with respect to their inclusion in the Agenda;
 - (7) propose to the next meeting of the Conference: the erection of several Advisory Committees to assist the Conference in reviewing the matters before it, the assignment of specific matters to particular Advisory Committees, and nominations for the membership of such Advisory Committees;
 - (8) when necessary, act as the legal representative of the Conference;
 - (9) meet in person not more than once (if such meeting requires a significant expenditure of funds for travel) - and at other times, by telephonic or video conferencing media, at the call of the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary whenever such may be necessary to the accomplishment of its business.

4. Meetings. The Coordinating Committee shall meet by voice- or video-conferencing media, and shall meet at least annually. When it becomes necessary for the Coordinating Committee to act at a time other than that of its annual meeting, the Coordinating Committee is authorized: (i) to meet at the call of the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary to take the necessary action(s); or (ii) if the matter is primarily of an administrative nature, to take the necessary action by an informal exchange of email initiated by the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary—but only if there is no objection either to the proposed action itself or to the making of the decision by such procedure. All such actions, whether by conference call or by email exchange, shall be reported to the next meeting of the Conference.
5. Reports. The Coordinating Committee shall report on its work to the next meeting of the Conference.

VI. COMMITTEES, SPECIAL CONFERENCES, AND CONSULTATIONS

The Conference may establish Operating, Facilitating, and Study Committees as it deems appropriate to the accomplishment of its purpose (*Constitution*, III). These Committees shall continue until the matters assigned to them have been completed, and shall report annually to the Coordinating Committee and every four years to the meeting of the Conference. The Conference may also call Special Conferences on subjects of mutual concern and arrange for Consultations among the agencies of the Member Churches. The mandates of the respective Committees and Special Conferences shall be included in the Conference's *Informational Documents*. In the discharge of their respective mandates, Committees, Special Conferences, and Consultations shall take care not to infringe or intrude upon the prerogatives of the Member Churches for the conduct of their own ministries.

1. ICRC Operating Committees

Operating Committees are established, normally with three to five members (together with an alternate), to oversee a particular part of the Conference's operations (e.g., Regional Conferences, the Website). Members of an Operating Committee shall be elected at each meeting of the Conference and may be re-elected to serve at the pleasure of the Conference. The Conference will designate a chairman for an Operating Committee from among those elected, and the Operating Committee shall elect from among its members a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Operating Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than six months before the next meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, Operating Committees shall meet by voice- or video-conferencing media, and shall meet at least semi-annually. The expenses of an Operating Committee shall be borne by the Treasury.

2. ICRC Facilitating Committees

Facilitating Committees are established, normally with five to seven members (together with two alternates), to assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy. Members of a Facilitating Committee shall be elected at each meeting of the Conference and may be re-elected to serve at the pleasure of the Conference. The Conference will designate a chairman for a Facilitating Committee from among the appointees, and the Facilitating Committee shall elect from among its members a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Facilitating Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than six months before the next meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, Facilitating Committees may meet once in person between meetings of the Conference (perhaps in conjunction with the appropriate Consultation), and at other times by voice- or video-conferencing media. The expenses of a Facilitating Committee shall be borne by the Treasury.

3. ICRC Study Committees

Study Committees are established, normally with five to seven members (together with two alternates), to study matters of mutual concern to the Member Churches and, when appropriate, to make recommendations to the Conference with respect to such matters (bearing in mind the nature and extent of the Conference's authority, *Constitution*, V). The members of a Study Committee shall be elected by the Conference with a view to their particular competency and experience in the subject matter, and with a view to the diversity of perspectives among the

Member Churches. The Conference shall designate a Convenor from among those elected. The Study Committee shall elect from among its members a chairman and a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Study Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year before the next meeting of the Conference. In discharging its mandate, a Study Committee shall solicit the input of the Member Churches (through their appropriate agencies). The expenses of a Study Committee shall ordinarily be borne by the Treasury.

4. ICRC Special Conferences

The Conference may call Special Conferences on subjects of mutual concern to which all Member Churches are urged to send representatives. The Conference shall designate one of the Member Churches to convene the Special Conference and to appoint a chairman and a secretary (who will keep minutes of the Special Conference and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator). All reports (other than interim reports) of Special Conferences should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year before the next meeting of the Conference. Unless the Conference determines otherwise (and authorizes a special appropriation), the expenses of conducting the Special Conference (e.g., meeting hall rental, speakers' honoraria, promotional materials, etc.) shall be borne by the Treasury, but the travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Special Conference shall be borne by their sending church.

5. ICRC Consultations

Representatives of the appropriate corresponding agencies of the Member Churches (e.g., world/home missions, Christian/theological education, diaconal/relief/development ministries of mercy) are encouraged to gather together periodically with their counterparts in the other Member Churches to consult with each other regarding the ministries that have been entrusted to them and to explore ways in which they might cooperate with one another to advance the cause of Christ. Unless such Consultations are already being arranged by a Facilitating Committee, each Consultation, before it adjourns, shall select a host agency, a chairman, and a secretary, and set the date and place, for the next Consultation, and communicate such to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. If several years have elapsed since a Consultation has last met, the Coordinating Committee may encourage the Consultation to meet and, towards that end, may appoint a host and a convenor for such meeting. Ordinarily the minutes of a Consultation's proceedings shall not be circulated beyond the participants in the Consultation. The travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Consultation shall be borne by their sending church.

VII. AGENDA

1. The following shall be placed on the Agenda for the meetings of the Conference:
 - a. report of the Credential Committee (when available);
 - b. correspondence from Member Churches;
 - c. discussion of reports from Member Churches;
 - d. applications for membership from other Churches;
 - e. reports from its Committees and Special Conferences;
 - f. reports from the Corresponding Secretary;
 - g. reports from the Coordinating Committee;
 - h. recommendations from any two Member Churches to extend an invitation to another church to send observers to the Conference.

2. The Agenda shall also include several blocks of time so as to allow for the bilateral meetings of various delegations.
3. Each Member Church is encouraged to submit a written report highlighting significant actions of its major assembly and developments in its life since the last meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, such reports will not be read aloud to the Conference, rather the Conference will allocate time in the Agenda for a discussion of the reports, during which Delegates from the Member Churches may ask questions and/or discuss portions of a Member Church's report. In preparing their reports, Member Churches are encouraged to make use of the *Suggested Form for Member Church Reports*.
4. Materials for the Agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary not later than six months in advance of the next meeting of the Conference. Recommendations from other than Operating Committee or Facilitating Committees should be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year in advance of the next meeting of the Conference. Proposed amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other Agenda materials received less than six months before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides.
5. The Agenda must be finalized three months in advance and a copy be sent to all Member Churches.
6. All matters placed on the Agenda for the meeting of the Conference, except those for which review is unnecessary or inappropriate, shall be referred to Advisory Committees to be elected by the Conference, which shall review the matters referred to them, so as to assist the Conference in understanding them and to advise the Conference concerning them, especially with respect to recommendations contained therein. The report of an Advisory Committee shall be considered by the Conference when the matters assigned to that Advisory Committee are taken up by the Conference.
7. Additional subjects for the Agenda introduced by a Delegate of a Member Church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the Agenda in a regular way. In such cases, the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the Agenda.

VIII. RULES OF ORDER

While binding the Conference to the observance of detailed parliamentary rules is not suitable for a conference consisting of delegates from many diverse backgrounds, the following general rules may serve to maintain good order in the meetings of the Conference.

1. Main Motion. A main motion presents a specific subject for consideration or action by the Conference.
 - a. A main motion is acceptable if the mover has been recognized by the Moderator and another motion is not pending before the Conference; if requested by the Moderator, the mover will present the motion in writing.
 - b. A main motion is not acceptable if:
 - (1) it conflicts with the *Constitution* or the *Regulations* of the Conference;
 - (2) if another motion is before the Conference;
 - (3) it is in conflict with a decision already made by this meeting of the Conference.
2. Motion to Amend. A motion to amend is a proposal to alter the main motion in language or meaning before voting on the main motion. A motion to amend: i) must be germane to the main motion, and ii) must not nullify the main motion.

3. Motions to Defer or to Take No Action.
 - a. If deemed advisable, the Conference may decide to defer a motion temporarily. Deferring a motion implies that the Conference will resume consideration of the motion at a later time in the meeting.
 - b. If the Conference prefers not to take any action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to take no action.
4. Motions to Reconsider or to Rescind. If for weighty reasons any Voting Delegate desires either a reconsideration or a rescission of a matter once decided, he may:
 - a. move to reconsider the action—the purpose of which is to propose a new discussion, the possible proposal of additional amendments, and/or a new vote on the matter;
 - b. move to rescind a previous decision—the purpose of which is to annul that decision as if the original motion had been defeated.
5. Call for a Division of the Question. At the request of any Voting Delegate, a motion consisting of more than one part may be divided appropriately and each part voted upon separately.
6. Appeal of the Ruling of the Moderator. If any two Voting Delegates are not satisfied with a ruling of the Moderator, they may appeal the ruling and ask the Conference to vote on whether to sustain the ruling.
7. Discussion. The Moderator should allow flexibility while still maintaining good order. He should ensure that all Delegates are able to follow the discussion and to understand the motions. When the discussion leads to alternative views on a matter, he should ask the appropriate Advisory Committee to review the matter and recommend a way forward, and he should encourage the Delegates to work toward consensus.
 - a. Anyone with the privilege of the floor wishing to speak must be recognized by the Moderator before addressing the Conference.
 - b. The Moderator should obtain the support of a second before putting a motion to the Conference for discussion.
 - c. If a speaker does not keep to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the Moderator should call the Delegate to speak to the point and avoid unnecessary remarks.
 - d. If a speaker has spoken twice on an issue, others who have not yet spoken twice should ordinarily be given priority by the Moderator.
 - e. When the Moderator believes that a motion under consideration has been discussed sufficiently, he should propose that the vote be taken. If there are no objections, the vote may then be taken. If there are objections, the Moderator should allow continued discussion or call for a (two-thirds majority) vote on whether to end discussion.
 - f. Any Voting Delegate, when he deems a matter has been discussed sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. If a two-thirds majority votes to close discussion, the motion under consideration shall be voted on after those who have already requested to speak have been given opportunity to do so.
8. Voting.
 - a. Ordinarily votes will be determined by a voice vote, and the Moderator will call for both the “Yes” and the “No” votes. Where the Moderator is unsure, or if a Voting Delegate disagrees with the Moderator’s judgment on a voice vote, the Moderator shall retake the vote by the raising of a hand.
 - b. In matters of a personal nature or of great importance, it is advisable that the Conference vote by ballot.
 - c. A Voting Delegate may ask to have his negative vote recorded.
9. Right of Protest. It is the right of any Voting Delegate to protest against any decision of the Conference. Protests should be in writing and registered promptly.
10. Closed Session. A closed session is one in which only the Delegates of Member Churches are present. The Conference should not go into closed session except in unusual or delicate situations.

IX. FINANCES

The Conference shall establish a Treasury, into which all assessments and other receipts shall be deposited, and out of which, all expenses of the Conference shall be paid or reimbursed in accordance with the actions and policies of the Conference.

1. Assessments

- a. Each meeting of the Conference shall approve a budget for the Conference for the next four years.
- b. Before each meeting of the Conference, each Member Church is requested to inform the Corresponding Secretary of the number of its baptized members, as of the close of the calendar year immediately preceding such meeting.
- c. The total assessment to each Member Church shall be determined by apportioning the total budget for the Conference for the next four years to each Member Church on the basis upon which the number of its baptized members—weighted by the per capita income of the nation in which such Member Church is located (to be ascertained from a standard recognized published index)—bears to the total number of baptized members of all Member Churches.
- d. A Member Church's total assessment for the four-year budget should be paid in four equal annual instalments.

2. Conference Meeting Expenses

- a. The Treasury shall bear the following expenses:
 - (1) all food consumed by Delegates, Official Observers, Other Guests, and their spouses at the meetings of the Conference;
 - (2) accommodations for up to two Delegates per Member Church;
 - (3) upon the advice of the Executive Committee, travel costs for up to one delegate for those Member Churches that are unable to bear that cost;
 - (4) costs of travel and accommodations, plus a nominal honorarium, for the speakers.
- b. Unless the Conference determines otherwise with respect to a particular request for payment or reimbursement, the Treasury shall not bear any of the following expenses:
 - (1) travel costs to attend the meeting of the Conference;
 - (2) except for food consumed at the meetings of the Conference, any of the expenses of Official Observers or Other Guests;
 - (3) expenses of spouses.

3. Other Expenses. The Treasury shall also bear the expenses for:

- (1) all honoraria approved by the Conference;
- (2) meetings of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee;
- (3) meetings of Operating Committees, Facilitating Committees, and Study Committees;
- (4) conducting Special Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.), but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (5) if upon the advice of the Coordinating Committee, conducting Regional Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.)—but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (6) other items included in the budget approved by the Conference.

X. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. Prior to making an application for membership, the major assemblies of Churches that might be eligible for membership in the Conference shall ordinarily demonstrate their desire to be an active participant in the Conference by sending an Official Delegate(s) to at least one meeting of the Conference. Churches considering applying for membership are also encouraged to send an Official Delegate(s) to the appropriate ICRC Regional Conference.
2. In making an application for membership in the Conference, major assemblies of Churches shall furnish to the Corresponding Secretary copies (either paper or digital) of: their confessional standards, declaratory acts (if applicable), form of government, and form(s) of subscription, together with a brief overview of their history, ecclesiastical relationships, memberships in ecumenical organizations, missions activities, and the theological education of their ministers.
3. Applications for membership in the Conference shall be sponsored by at least two Member Churches, which, in their own ministries, have ongoing first-hand knowledge of the ministry and life of the applicant Churches. In their letters of sponsorship, Member Churches shall include a statement of the reasons or grounds which lead them to conclude the applicant Churches faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis (*Constitution*, II). The sponsoring Member Churches should assist the applicant Churches in preparing their applications, as needed.
4. Churches applying for membership in the Conference should make every effort to send an Official Delegate(s) to the meeting of the Conference at which their application is to be considered, in order to be able to respond to questions and meet with the appropriate Advisory Committee(s) and respond to questions. Ordinarily, no action to receive an applicant Church as a member will be taken by the Conference without such Official Delegate(s) being present, unless the Conference determines by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, to proceed with acting upon the application.
5. The World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches are deemed to be organisations whose aims and practices are in conflict with the Basis.

XI. INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The Conference will maintain a collection of its *Informational Documents* which might be useful to the Member Churches in pursuing the purposes for which the Conference was established (*Constitution*, III). Either the collection, or a particular document listed therein, may be amended by a majority vote of the Delegates, with the exception of the List of ICRC Member Churches (which may be amended only as provided in *Constitution*, IV). Included in the collection are the following:

1. List of ICRC Member Churches
2. List of ICRC Committees (with their respective mandates)
3. Member Church Assessment Schedule (2009)
4. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports
5. Protocol for Responding to Major Disasters (2009)
6. Protocol for Responding to Opportunities to Assist Persecuted Christians (2009)

XII. AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS

These *Regulations* may be amended or suspended by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches present and eligible to vote, each Member Church having one vote.

A proposal to amend the *Regulations* may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church, or by a Committee of the Conference, and shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary not later than one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

DRCA Report Appendix 4e – Details of proposed amendments to ICRC C&R

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS

(Final proposal as adopted by ICRC 2013, with amendments indicated in red text)

CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS of the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF REFORMED CHURCHES CONSTITUTION

I. NAME

The name of the Conference shall be The International Conference of Reformed Churches ("ICRC").

II. BASIS

The basis of the Conference shall be the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort) and the Westminster Standards (the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms).

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Conference shall be:

1. to express and promote the unity of faith that the Member Churches have in Christ;
2. to encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the Member Churches;
3. to facilitate and promote encourage cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy in the fulfilment of the missionary and other mandates;
4. to study the common problems and issues that confront the Member Churches and to aim for recommendations with respect to these matters;
5. to present a Reformed testimony to the world.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

1. The Conference was duly constituted on October 26, 1982, by delegates from the eight founding churches, having been previously authorized to do so by their major assemblies. A list of past and present members of the Conference shall be maintained among the Conference's documents.

2. These Churches eligible for membership are those shall be admitted as members which:

- a. faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith;
- b. have complied with the applicable Regulations regarding applications for membership ~~been sponsored by at least two member Churches;~~
- ~~c. furnish~~
 - ~~i. their confessional standards,~~
 - ~~ii. their declaratory acts (if applicable),~~

~~iii. their form of subscription;~~

~~iv. their form of government;~~

c. are not members of ~~the World Council of Churches or~~ any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis.

~~e. are accepted by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, every member Church having one vote.~~

3. Admission to membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote.

4. Suspension or ~~t~~Termination of membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, whenever the Conference ~~concludes is of the opinion~~ that a Member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice (which includes the ordination of persons to the offices of minister or ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture (cf. Belgic Confession art. 30), is no longer in agreement with the Basis; Removal of suspension shall also be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote. A proposal to suspend, terminate, or remove the suspension of the membership of a Member Church may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church. A suspended Member Church may send Delegates to meetings of the Council but shall not vote.

5. When a Member Church fails to send at least one Delegate to three consecutive meetings of the Conference, its membership shall be automatically terminated as of close of the third such meeting, unless during that meeting the Conference determines by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, that there are good and sufficient grounds for such failure.

V. NATURE AND EXTENT OF AUTHORITY

It is understood that the Conference is not a synodical, classical, or presbyterial assembly, and therefore all actions and decisions of the Conference, other than those with respect to a church's membership in the Conference (*Constitution*, IV), are advisory in character and may in no way curtail, restrict, or intrude into the exercise of the jurisdiction or authority given to the governing assemblies of the Member Churches by Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church ~~The conclusions of the Conference shall be advisory in character. Member Churches are to be informed of these conclusions and are recommended to work towards their implementation.~~

VI. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

This ~~The~~ *Constitution* may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the major assemblies of the Member Churches eligible to vote, such amendment having been proposed to the Member Churches by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches present and eligible to vote, each Member Church having one vote. An amendment, as proposed to the Member Churches, is not amendable. A proposal to amend the *Constitution* may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church eligible to vote, or by a Committee of the Conference, and ~~The proposed amendment(s)~~ shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary not later than two years before the meeting of the Conference. ~~He shall send it to the member churches immediately.~~

REGULATIONS

I. MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The Conference shall ~~ordinarily meet~~ ~~convene~~ every four years.

2. Each meeting of the Conference shall determine the time, place, and convening Member Church for ~~of~~ the next Conference.

II. DELEGATES, OFFICIAL OBSERVERS, OTHER GUESTS, PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR, AND VOTING

1. Delegates. Each Member Church shall appoint no more than four Delegates to each meeting of the Conference and, except as provided in *Regulations* IX.2.a, shall ordinarily bear the cost of its Delegates' travel, housing, and meal expenses in attending the meeting. It shall furnish to the Corresponding Secretary an appropriate letter of credentials for its Delegates, each of whom must be an ordained minister or ruling elder (presently or previously) in that Member Church.

a. Voting Delegates. Each Member Church shall designate not more than two of its Delegates as "Voting Delegates."

b. Advisors. The other members of a Member Church's delegation shall be designated as "Advisors." They may participate in the deliberations of the Conference, but they may not vote.

2. Official Observers. Official Observers are duly credentialed representatives of non-Member Churches that faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis (*Constitution*, II) and are invited to attend the meeting (at their own expense) by the Coordinating Committee. Up to two Official Observers per sending church may be given the privilege of the floor, which may be revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.

3. Other Guests. All persons present for the meeting who are neither Delegates nor Official Observers shall be considered as "Other Guests." A two-thirds majority vote of the Delegates present shall be required to grant the privilege of the floor to Other Guests, which may be subsequently revoked at any time by a majority vote of the Delegates present.

4. Except as provided in the *Regulations*, no other persons shall be granted the privilege of the floor. The Conference may provide a designated area for Official Observers and for Other Guests (who have been granted the privilege of the floor), to distinguish them from others who may be present to observe the meeting.

5. Except as otherwise provided in either the *Constitution* or the *Regulations*, a (simple) majority vote in the affirmative adopts any motion. Only Voting Delegates may vote on matters being considered by the Conference. Insofar as is possible, significant decisions in respect of the purpose of the Conference (*Constitution*, III) should: i) be taken by consensus, and ii) give witness on the basis of the Scriptures and the Reformed standards.

III. CONVOCATION OF THE CONFERENCE

1. The convening Member Church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.

2. The Moderator (of the previous meeting) shall convene the meeting of the Conference and ~~convening church shall appoint one of its members to preside through the election of Officers at the opening of the Conference.~~

3. The Moderator (of the previous meeting) ~~convener shall appoint~~ ~~designate three Delegates~~ Delegates who will serve as a Credentials Committee to ~~collect~~, examine and report on the credentials (previously furnished to the Corresponding Secretary) of each delegation.

4. ~~The convener shall supervise the election of the Executive Officers.~~

IV. EXECUTIVE OFFICERS OF THE CONFERENCE

1. Each meeting of the Conference shall elect the following Officers: Moderator ~~Chairman~~, Vice-Moderator ~~Vice-Chairman~~, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Coordinator and Treasurer. The Vice-Moderator of the previous (quadrennial) meeting shall normally succeed to the office of Moderator and shall be declared elected by acclamation, unless the Conference determines to conduct an election.

2. The responsibilities of the Officers will be as follows:

4.a. ~~The Chairman shall:~~

- (1) preside at the meetings of the Conference;
- (2) make required appointments;
- (3) ~~a-~~ call the meeting to order at the appointed time and see to it that each session is properly opened and closed;
- (4) ~~b-~~ insure that the matters on the agenda are dealt with as expeditiously as possible;
- (5) ~~c-~~ put to the meeting every motion that is made and duly seconded, as well as take the vote;
- (6) ~~d-~~ rule on all points of order, subject always to an appeal from two Voting Delegates;
- (7) convene the next (quadrennial) meeting of the Conference, appoint a Credentials Committee of three Delegates to examine and report on the credentials of each delegation, and preside through the election of Officers;
- (8) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

2.b. ~~Vice-Moderator The Vice-Chairman shall:~~

- (1) ~~a-~~ take the chair when the Moderator ~~Chairman~~ desires to express himself on any question before the meeting;
- (2) ~~b-~~ assume the duties and privileges of the Moderator ~~Chairman~~ in his absence;
- (3) ~~c-~~ assist ~~render all possible assistance to~~ the Moderator ~~Chairman~~ when needed;
- (4) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

3.c. ~~The Recording Secretary shall:~~

- (1) ~~a-~~ maintain and call the roll of Delegates at the commencement of business each ~~every~~ day ~~once the devotions have concluded~~;
- (2) ~~b-~~ keep an accurate record of all the *Proceedings* of the meeting, including a list of all Official Observers and Other Guests (who are granted the privilege of the floor);
- (3) ~~c-~~ insure that all documents are properly cared for during the meeting and are turned over to the Corresponding Secretary following the publication of the *Proceedings* of the meeting;
- (4) ~~d-~~ arrange for the printing of the *Proceedings* of the meeting and for the distribution of ~~forward~~ three copies of the *Proceedings* to each of the Member Churches ~~as soon as possible after compilation~~;
- (5) forward an electronic edition of the *Proceedings* (edited to remove sensitive material) to the Website Committee (through the Corresponding Secretary) for posting on the ICRC Website.

4.d. ~~The Corresponding Secretary shall:~~

- (1) ~~a-~~ during the meetings of the Conference, assist the Recording Secretary when ~~needed ever and wherever possible~~;
- (2) ~~b-~~ in between the meetings of the Conference:
 - ~~i-~~ attend to all correspondence;
 - ~~ii-~~ receive all reports from committees of the Conference and distribute them to the member Churches;
 - ~~iii-~~ assist the convening Church;
 - ~~iv-~~ publish materials, reports or other publications as authorized by the Conference;

- ~~i. v. report to the next meeting of the Conference on his activities and in the interim be responsible to the Interim Committee~~ carry on correspondence on behalf of the Conference with regard to inquiries from the public, to the work of the Conference (and its Committees and Special Conferences), and to the next meeting of the Conference;
- ii. prepare and present to the Conference a written report regarding his labors on behalf of the Conference;
- iii. prepare and present to the Coordinating Committee an annual written report regarding his labors on behalf of the Conference;
- iv. assist the convening Member Church in preparing for the next meeting of the Conference;
- v. when necessary, assist Delegates from Member Churches and Invited Observers in applying for visas to attend meetings of the Conference;
- vi. receive materials for the Agenda for the next meeting of the Conference, and distribute them, with the proposed Agenda, to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than three months before that meeting;
- vii. receive proposals for amendments to either the *Constitution* or the *Regulations* that have been properly proposed by a Member Church and distribute them promptly to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches;
- viii. receive reports of Study Committees and Special Conferences and distribute them promptly to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches;
- ix. receive applications for membership in the Conference, advise Churches applying for membership of the procedure and requirements for such, and advise sponsoring Member Churches regarding their responsibilities with respect to such;
- x. communicate the actions of the Conference (or its Coordinating Committee) to appropriate parties, including the extension of invitations to Official Observers and Other Guests;
- xi. arrange for the preparation of a Press Release of the meeting of the Conference (for approval by the Conference) suitable for posting on the Conference's Website and for inclusion in the *Proceedings*;
- xii. execute documents as required or authorized by the Conference (or the Coordinating Committee or its Executive Committee);
- xiii. serve as an *ex officio* member of all Operating Committees and provide counsel to them as appropriate;
- xiv. maintain updated copies of the Conference's *Constitution, Regulations, and Informational Documents*, as they may be amended from time to time;
- xv. maintain the archives of the Conference's documents, including the *Proceedings* and papers from its prior meetings, and arrange for their safe storage;
- xvi. where he is unsure regarding the discharge of any of the above responsibilities, he may seek the advice of the Executive Committee, under whose oversight he serves.

e. Coordinator

- (1) preside at the meetings of the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Committee;
- (2) maintain regular communication, as appropriate, with the chairman/convenors of all ICRC Committees, Conferences, and Consultations to encourage them in the faithful discharge of their responsibilities;
- (3) make the necessary arrangements for, prepare an agenda for, convene, and preside at the annual meetings of the Coordinating Committee;
- (4) call, make the necessary arrangements for, prepare an agenda for, convene, and preside at the meetings of the Executive Committee;
- (5) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.

f. Treasurer

- ~~a. to assess the membership annually according to the established method;~~
- ~~b. to collect the funds in equal installments;~~
- ~~c. to reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;~~
- ~~d. to provide the Missions Committee with the budgeted amount as required;~~
- ~~e. to submit a financial report to the next Conference; and~~
~~to draw up a budget with the assistance of the Interim Committee for the following Conference.~~

- (1) keep full and accurate accounts of receipts into and disbursements from the Treasury in books belonging to the Conference;
- (2) receive and disburse the funds of the Treasury in accordance with the policies and directions of the Conference (*Regulations*, IX);
- (3) deposit all funds of the Treasury in the name and to the credit of the Conference in insured or other accounts as may be designated by the Conference;
- (4) execute documents as required or authorized by the Conference (or the Coordinating Committee);
- (5) monitor the funds of the Treasury and alert the Coordinating Committee to significant deteriorations in the Conference's financial condition that might undermine the Conference's ability to meet its financial obligations;
- (6) submit periodic reports to the Coordinating Committee, as he deems appropriate or is requested by the Executive Committee;
- (7) serve *ex officio* (with vote) as a member of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee.
- (8) submit an annual financial report to the Coordinating Committee summarizing: all receipts and disbursements, deposits and withdrawals from the Treasury, and the Conference's assets (including bank accounts and investments, and interest/dividends earned thereupon);
- f. (9) where he is unsure regarding the discharge of any of the above responsibilities, he may seek the advice of the Executive Committee, under whose oversight he serves.

~~5. The Executive shall manage the proceedings of the meetings, arrange and propose the business to be transacted in every session and make recommendations concerning committees.~~

IV.V. COORDINATING INTERIM COMMITTEE

~~The Interim Committee shall consist of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the Recording Secretary. It shall:~~

- ~~1. oversee the work of the Corresponding Secretary;~~
- ~~2. invite one of the alternate committee members to serve when necessary;~~
- ~~3. report to the next meeting of the Conference;~~
- ~~4. be dismissed subsequent to its report to the next meeting of the Conference.~~

~~There shall be a Coordinating Committee to arrange for the orderly carrying on of the work of the Conference between the quadrennial meetings of Conference.~~

1. Membership. The members of the Coordinating Committee shall be:
 - a. The Coordinator;
 - b. and the following members (serving *ex officio*, with vote):
 - (1) The Moderator

- (2) The Vice-Moderator;
- (3) The Corresponding Secretary;
- (4) The Chairmen/Convenors of the following committees:
 - i. The Regional Conferences Committee;
 - ii. The Website Committee;
 - iii. The Missions Committee;
 - iv. The Theological Education Committee;
 - v. The Diaconal Committee.

2. Functions. The functions of the Coordinating Committee include:

- a. advise the Conference with respect to applications from churches seeking admission to membership;
- b. propose to the Conference a nomination for the convening Member Church for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference;
- c. propose to the Conference a theme for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference, and nominate two or three speakers;
- d. propose to the Conference nominations for the Officers of the meeting: Moderator (usually the Vice-Moderator of the previous quadrennial meeting), Vice-Moderator (usually selected with a view towards his serving as the Moderator of the next quadrennial meeting), Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Coordinator, and Treasurer;
- e. propose to the Conference nominations for the members (including the Chairman/Convenor when required) of Committees;
- f. propose to the Conference a budget for the next four years, including such honoraria as it deems appropriate;
- g. propose to the Conference an assessment schedule for the next four years, based upon the budget it is also proposing to the Conference;
- h. extend invitations to non-Member Churches that meet the requirements of *Constitution*, IV.2 to send (at their own expense) Official Observers to the next meeting of the Conference;
- i. extend invitations to other non-Member Churches to send (at their own expense) observers (as Other Guests);
- j. deal responsibly with all matters pertaining to the implementation of a previously adopted action of the Conference, which had been inadvertently overlooked during the meeting of the Conference, and which requires action before the next meeting of the Conference;
- k. in the event an Officer of the Conference (or a Chairman/Convenor of a Committee) becomes incapacitated or is otherwise unable or unwilling to continue to serve, appoint a presbyter of a Member Church to perform the functions of that office on an interim basis;
- l. advise the Conference in situations where, following a split or disruption in a Member Church, one of the churches resulting therefrom (but having a name different from that on the list of ICRC Member Churches) desires to be recognized as the (continuing) Member Church in the ICRC:
 - (1) such advice shall be given only after the Coordinating Committee has consulted with and sought the advice of appropriate representatives of those Member Churches that have first-hand knowledge of the situation; and
 - (2) provided its advice is consistent with the advice received from such consultation, the Coordinating Committee may authorize the Corresponding Secretary to implement its advice pending the decision of the next meeting of the Conference.

3. Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the Coordinating Committee ("the Executive Committee") shall consist of the Coordinator, the Moderator, the Vice-Moderator, and the Corresponding Secretary. Its functions include:

a. During the meetings of the Conference:

- (1) manage the proceedings of the meetings, and arrange and propose the business to be transacted in each session;
- (2) liaise with the convening Member Church.

b. Between meetings of the Conference:

- (1) oversee the work of the Corresponding Secretary and advise him in the execution of his duties (in such matters, he may participate in the deliberations, but not vote);
- (2) oversee the work of the Recording Secretary and advise him in the execution of his duties;
- (3) oversee the work of the Treasurer and advise him in the execution of his duties;
- (4) arrange for periodic audits of the Treasury's accounts, as it deems appropriate, and submit an audit report to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the Member Churches with the Agenda materials;
- (5) consult with the convening Member Church regarding the planning and arrangements for the next quadrennial meeting of the Conference, including the selection of a suitable venue for the meeting and the arrangements for the accommodation of the Delegates;
- (6) propose an Agenda for the next meeting of the Conference, including reviewing materials received after the deadline for submission and making a recommendation(s) with respect to their inclusion in the Agenda;
- (7) propose to the next meeting of the Conference: the erection of several Advisory Committees to assist the Conference in reviewing the matters before it, the assignment of specific matters to particular Advisory Committees, and nominations for the membership of such Advisory Committees;
- (8) when necessary, act as the legal representative of the Conference;
- (9) meet in person not more than once (if such meeting requires a significant expenditure of funds for travel)—and at other times, by telephonic or video conferencing media, at the call of the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary whenever such may be necessary to the accomplishment of its business.

4. Meetings. The Coordinating Committee shall meet by voice- or video-conferencing media, and shall meet at least annually. When it becomes necessary for the Coordinating Committee to act at a time other than that of its annual meeting, the Coordinating Committee is authorized: (i) to meet at the call of the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary to take the necessary action(s); or (ii) if the matter is primarily of an administrative nature, to take the necessary action by an informal exchange of email initiated by the Coordinator and/or the Corresponding Secretary—but only if there is no objection either to the proposed action itself or to the making of the decision by such procedure. All such actions, whether by conference call or by email exchange, shall be reported to the next meeting of the Conference.

5. Reports. The Coordinating Committee shall report on its work to the next meeting of the Conference.

~~V. VI. COMMITTEES, SPECIAL CONFERENCES, AND CONSULTATIONS~~

~~1. The Conference may appoint a committee to study any matter that is deemed to be of mutual concern to the member churches.~~

~~2. Every attempt shall be made to make the members of these committees as representative as possible. The Conference shall also appoint members who can serve as substitute members should original appointees no longer be able to serve.~~

~~3. Committee reports shall be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary at least one year prior to the next meeting of the Conference.~~

The Conference may establish Operating, Facilitating, and Study Committees as it deems appropriate to the accomplishment of its purpose (*Constitution*, III). These Committees shall continue until the matters assigned to them have been completed, and shall report annually to the Coordinating Committee and every four years to the meeting of the Conference. The Conference may also call Special Conferences on subjects of mutual concern and arrange for Consultations among the agencies of the Member Churches. The mandates of the respective Committees and Special Conferences shall be included in the Conference's *Informational Documents*. In the discharge of their respective mandates, Committees, Special Conferences, and Consultations shall take care not to infringe or intrude upon the prerogatives of the Member Churches for the conduct of their own ministries.

1. ICRC Operating Committees

Operating Committees are established, normally with three to five members (together with an alternate), to oversee a particular part of the Conference's operations (e.g., Regional Conferences, the Website). Members of an Operating Committee shall be elected at each meeting of the Conference and may be re-elected to serve at the pleasure of the Conference. The Conference will designate a chairman for an Operating Committee from among those elected, and the Operating Committee shall elect from among its members a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Operating Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than six months before the next meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, Operating Committees shall meet by voice- or video-conferencing media, and shall meet at least semi-annually. The expenses of an Operating Committee shall be borne by the Treasury.

2. ICRC Facilitating Committees

Facilitating Committees are established, normally with five to seven members (together with two alternates), to assist the Conference in facilitating and promoting cooperation among the Member Churches in such areas as missions, theological education, and ministries of mercy. Members of a Facilitating Committee shall be elected at each meeting of the Conference and may be reelected to serve at the pleasure of the Conference. The Conference will designate a chairman for a Facilitating Committee from among the appointees, and the Facilitating Committee shall elect from among its members a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Facilitating Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than six months before the next meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, Facilitating Committees may meet once in person between meetings of the Conference (perhaps in conjunction with the appropriate Consultation), and at other times by voice- or video-conferencing media. The expenses of a Facilitating Committee shall be borne by the Treasury.

3. ICRC Study Committees

Study Committees are established, normally with five to seven members (together with two alternates), to study matters of mutual concern to the Member Churches and, when appropriate, to make recommendations to the Conference with respect to such matters (bearing in mind the nature and extent of the Conference's authority, *Constitution*, V). The members of a Study Committee shall be elected by the Conference with a view to their particular competency and experience in the subject matter, and with a view to the diversity of perspectives among the Member Churches. The Conference shall designate a Convenor from among those elected. The Study Committee shall elect from among its members a chairman and a secretary, who will keep minutes of the meetings and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. All reports (other than interim reports) of Study Committees should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year before the next meeting of the Conference. In discharging its mandate, a Study Committee shall solicit the input of the Member Churches (through their appropriate agencies). The expenses of a Study Committee shall ordinarily be borne by the Treasury.

4. ICRC Special Conferences

The Conference may call Special Conferences on subjects of mutual concern to which all Member Churches are urged to send representatives. The Conference shall designate one of the Member Churches to convene the Special Conference and to appoint a chairman and a secretary (who will keep minutes of the Special Conference and send copies to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator). All reports (other than interim reports) of Special Conferences should be submitted to the Corresponding Secretary for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year before the next meeting of the Conference. Unless the Conference determines otherwise (and authorizes a special appropriation), the expenses of conducting the Special Conference (e.g., meeting hall rental, speakers' honoraria, promotional materials, etc.) shall be borne by the Treasury, but the travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Special Conference shall be borne by their sending church.

5. ICRC Consultations

Representatives of the appropriate corresponding agencies of the Member Churches (e.g., world/home missions, Christian/theological education, diaconal/relief/development ministries of mercy) are encouraged to gather together periodically with their counterparts in the other Member Churches to consult with each other regarding the ministries that have been entrusted to them and to explore ways in which they might cooperate with one another to advance the cause of Christ. Unless such Consultations are already being arranged by a Facilitating Committee, each Consultation, before it adjourns, shall select a host agency, a chairman, and a secretary, and set the date and place, for the next Consultation, and communicate such to both the Corresponding Secretary and the Coordinator. If several years have elapsed since a Consultation has last met, the Coordinating Committee may encourage the Consultation to meet and, towards that end, may appoint a host and a convener for such meeting. Ordinarily the minutes of a Consultation's proceedings shall not be circulated beyond the participants in the Consultation. The travel, housing, and meal expenses of the Member Churches' representatives in attending the Consultation shall be borne by their sending church.

VI. PARTICIPANTS

~~1. The following are to be seated at the meetings of the Conference:~~

~~a. Voting delegates from the member churches. Each member church shall be entitled to sending two voting delegates to the meeting. These delegates shall be known as 'Voting Delegates.'~~

~~b. Advisory delegates from the member churches. Each member church may appoint two advisors, but they shall have no vote. These delegates shall be known as 'Advisors.'~~

~~2. No others shall sit as participants in the meeting unless and until invited by the Conference to participate. These include:~~

~~a. Observer delegates of Churches that have made application for membership in the Conference. These delegates shall be known as 'Observers.'~~

~~b. Visiting delegates of Churches which have not yet applied for membership. These delegates shall be known as 'Visitors'.~~

~~3. The Conference may provide a designated area for official Observers and Visitors, to distinguish them from others who may be present to observe the meeting.~~

VII. CONVOCAION OF THE CONFERENCE

~~5.4. The convening church shall organize a prayer service prior to the opening session of the Conference.~~

~~6.5. The convening church shall appoint one of its members to preside at the opening of the Conference.~~

~~7.6. The convener shall designate three delegates who will collect, examine and report on the credentials of each delegation.~~

~~8.7. The convener shall supervise the election of the Executive Officers.~~

VII. AGENDA MATERIAL

1. The following ~~Conference~~ shall be placed on the ~~its~~ Agenda for the meetings of the Conference:
 - a. report of the Credential Committee (when available);
 - b. correspondence from Member Churches;
 - ~~a-c.~~ discussion of reports from Member Churches;
 - ~~b-d.~~ applications for membership from other Churches;
 - e. reports from its ~~special~~ Committees and Special Conferences;
 - ~~e-f.~~ reports from the Corresponding Secretary;
 - ~~d-g.~~ reports from the Coordinating ~~its-Interim~~ Committee;
 - ~~e-h.~~ recommendations from any two Member Churches to extend an invitation to another church to send observers to the Conference.

2. The Agenda shall also include several blocks of time so as to allow for the bilateral meetings of various delegations.

3. Each Member Church is encouraged to submit a written report highlighting significant actions of its major assembly and developments in its life since the last meeting of the Conference. Ordinarily, such reports will not be read aloud to the Conference, rather the Conference will allocate time in the Agenda for a discussion of the reports, during which Delegates from the Member Churches may ask questions and/or discuss portions of a Member Church's report. In preparing their reports, Member Churches are encouraged to make use of the *Suggested Form for Member Church Reports*.

- ~~2-4.~~ Materials for the Agenda should be received by the Corresponding Secretary not later than six months ~~one-year~~ in advance of the next meeting of the Conference.

Recommendations from other than Operating Committee or Facilitating Committees should ~~also~~ be in the hands of the Corresponding Secretary ~~one-year-in-advance-and-be~~ for distribution to the interchurch relations committees of the Member Churches not later than one year in advance of the next meeting of the Conference ~~circulated-as-soon-as-possible-thereafter~~. Proposed ~~a~~Amendments to Committee proposals can be received by the Corresponding Secretary up to the opening session of the next meeting of the Conference. Other ~~A~~agenda materials received less than six months ~~one-year~~ before the opening of the next meeting of the Conference shall only be considered if the Conference so decides.

- ~~3-5.~~ The Agenda must be finalized three months in advance and a copy be sent to all Member Churches.

6. All matters placed on the Agenda for the meeting of the Conference, except those for which review is unnecessary or inappropriate, shall be referred to Advisory Committees to be elected by the Conference, which shall review the matters referred to them, so as to assist the Conference in understanding them and to advise the Conference concerning them, especially with respect to recommendations contained therein. The report of an Advisory Committee shall be considered by the Conference when the matters assigned to that Advisory Committee are taken up by the Conference.

- ~~4-7.~~ Additional subjects for the Agenda introduced by a Delegate of a Member Church shall be restricted to those matters which are important and urgent and which could not have been placed on the Agenda in a regular way. In such cases, the meeting of the Conference shall decide by a two-thirds majority whether to place these matters on the Agenda.

VIII. RULES OF ORDER

While binding the Conference to the observance of detailed parliamentary rules is not suitable for a conference consisting of delegates from many diverse backgrounds, the following general rules may serve to maintain good order in the meetings of the Conference.

- ~~1. To obtain the floor each speaker must be recognized by the chair. He shall address himself to the Chairman with decorum and respect.~~

- ~~2. If a delegate fails to adhere to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the Chairman shall call him to order.~~
- ~~3. If any delegate has spoken twice on a given issue, others who have not yet spoken shall be given priority by the Chairman.~~
- ~~4. When the Chairman believes that a motion has been sufficiently discussed, he may propose that debate be drawn to a close. Any delegate convinced of the same may move to close the discussion.~~
- ~~5. Decisions shall be taken on the basis of a simple majority of votes cast, with the exception of Article IV, 1,c., IV, 2., VI of the Constitution and Article X of the Regulations.~~

1. Main Motion. A main motion presents a specific subject for consideration or action by the Conference.

a. A main motion is acceptable if the mover has been recognized by the Moderator and another motion is not pending before the Conference; if requested by the Moderator, the mover will present the motion in writing.

b. A main motion is not acceptable if:

- (1) it conflicts with the *Constitution* or the *Regulations* of the Conference;
- (2) if another motion is before the Conference;
- (3) it is in conflict with a decision already made by this meeting of the Conference.

2. Motion to Amend. A motion to amend is a proposal to alter the main motion in language or meaning before voting on the main motion. A motion to amend: i) must be germane to the main motion, and ii) must not nullify the main motion.

3. Motions to Defer or to Take No Action.

a. If deemed advisable, the Conference may decide to defer a motion temporarily. Deferring a motion implies that the Conference will resume consideration of the motion at a later time in the meeting.

b. If the Conference prefers not to take any action regarding a matter, it may adopt a motion to take no action.

4. Motions to Reconsider or to Rescind. If for weighty reasons any Voting Delegate desires either a reconsideration or a rescission of a matter once decided, he may:

a. move to reconsider the action—the purpose of which is to propose a new discussion, the possible proposal of additional amendments, and/or a new vote on the matter;

b. move to rescind a previous decision—the purpose of which is to annul that decision as if the original motion had been defeated.

5. Call for a Division of the Question. At the request of any Voting Delegate, a motion consisting of more than one part may be divided appropriately and each part voted upon separately.

6. Appeal of the Ruling of the Moderator. If any two Voting Delegates are not satisfied with a ruling of the Moderator, they may appeal the ruling and ask the Conference to vote on whether to sustain the ruling.

7. Discussion. The Moderator should allow flexibility while still maintaining good order. He should ensure that all Delegates are able to follow the discussion and to understand the motions. When the discussion leads to alternative views on a matter, he should ask the appropriate Advisory Committee to review the matter and recommend a way forward, and he should encourage the Delegates to work toward consensus.

a. Anyone with the privilege of the floor wishing to speak must be recognized by the Moderator before addressing the Conference.

b. The Moderator should obtain the support of a second before putting a motion to the Conference for discussion.

c. If a speaker does not keep to the point under discussion or becomes unnecessarily lengthy in his remarks, the Moderator should call the Delegate to speak to the point and avoid unnecessary remarks.

d. If a speaker has spoken twice on an issue, others who have not yet spoken twice should ordinarily be given priority by the Moderator.

e. When the Moderator believes that a motion under consideration has been discussed sufficiently, he should propose that the vote be taken. If there are no objections, the vote may then be taken. If there are objections, the Moderator should allow continued discussion or call for a (two-thirds majority) vote on whether to end discussion.

f. Any Voting Delegate, when he deems a matter has been discussed sufficiently, may move to close the discussion. If a two-thirds majority votes to close discussion, the motion under consideration shall be voted on after those who have already requested to speak have been given opportunity to do so.

8. Voting.

a. Ordinarily votes will be determined by a voice vote, and the Moderator will call for both the "Yes" and the "No" votes. Where the Moderator is unsure, or if a Voting Delegate disagrees with the Moderator's judgment on a voice vote, the Moderator shall retake the vote by the raising of a hand.

b. In matters of a personal nature or of great importance, it is advisable that the Conference vote by ballot.

c. A Voting Delegate may ask to have his negative vote recorded.

9. Right of Protest. It is the right of any Voting Delegate to protest against any decision of the Conference. Protests should be in writing and registered promptly.

10. Closed Session. A closed session is one in which only the Delegates of Member Churches are present. The Conference should not go into closed session except in unusual or delicate situations.

IX. FINANCES

~~Each meeting of the Conference shall appoint a Treasurer with the mandate:~~

~~a. to assess the membership annually according to the established method;~~

~~b. to collect the funds in equal installments;~~

~~c. to reimburse all costs incurred by the Conference;~~

~~d. to provide the Missions Committee with the budgeted amount as required;~~

~~e. to submit a financial report to the next Conference; and~~

~~f. to draw up a budget with the assistance of the Interim Committee for the following Conference.~~ The Conference shall establish a Treasury, into which all assessments and other receipts shall be deposited, and out of which, all expenses of the Conference shall be paid or reimbursed in accordance with the actions and policies of the Conference.

1. Assessments

a. Each meeting of the Conference shall approve a budget for the Conference for the next four years.

b. Before each meeting of the Conference, each Member Church is requested to inform the Corresponding Secretary of the number of its baptized members, as of the close of the calendar year immediately preceding such meeting.

c. The total assessment to each Member Church shall be determined by apportioning the total budget for the Conference for the next four years to each Member Church on the basis upon which the number of its baptized members—weighted by the per capita income of the nation in which such Member Church is located (to be ascertained from a standard recognized published index)—bears to the total number of baptized members of all Member Churches.

d. A Member Church's total assessment for the four-year budget should be paid in four equal annual installments.

2. Conference Meeting Expenses

a. The Treasury shall bear the following expenses:

- (1) all food consumed by Delegates, Official Observers, Other Guests, and their spouses at the meetings of the Conference;
- (2) accommodations for up to two Delegates per Member Church;
- (3) upon the advice of the Executive Committee, travel costs for up to one delegate for those Member Churches that are unable to bear that cost;
- (4) costs of travel and accommodations, plus a nominal honorarium, for the speakers.

b. Unless the Conference determines otherwise with respect to a particular request for payment or reimbursement, the Treasury shall not bear any of the following expenses:

- (1) travel costs to attend the meeting of the Conference;
- (2) except for food consumed at the meetings of the Conference, any of the expenses of Official Observers or Other Guests;
- (3) expenses of spouses.

3. Other Expenses. The Treasury shall also bear the expenses for:

- (1) all honoraria approved by the Conference;
- (2) meetings of the Coordinating Committee and its Executive Committee;
- (3) meetings of Operating Committees, Facilitating Committees, and Study Committees;
- (4) conducting Special Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.), but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (5) if upon the advice of the Coordinating Committee, conducting Regional Conferences (e.g., meeting hall rental; speakers' travel, meals, accommodation, and honoraria; promotional materials, etc.)—but not for the travel, meals, or accommodation of the participants;
- (6) other items included in the budget approved by the Conference.

X. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. Prior to making an application for membership, the major assemblies of Churches that might be eligible for membership in the Conference shall ordinarily demonstrate their desire to be an active participant in the Conference by sending an Official Delegate(s) to at least one meeting of the Conference. Churches considering applying for membership are also encouraged to send an Official Delegate(s) to the appropriate ICRC Regional Conference.

2. In making an application for membership in the Conference, major assemblies of Churches shall furnish to the Corresponding Secretary copies (either paper or digital) of: their confessional standards, declaratory acts (if applicable), form of government, and form(s) of subscription, together with a brief overview of their history, ecclesiastical relationships, memberships in ecumenical organizations, missions activities, and the theological education of their ministers.

3. Applications for membership in the Conference shall be sponsored by at least two Member Churches, which, in their own ministries, have ongoing first-hand knowledge of the ministry and life of the applicant Churches. In their letters of sponsorship, Member Churches shall include a statement of the reasons or grounds which lead them to conclude the applicant Churches faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis (*Constitution*, II). The sponsoring Member Churches should assist the applicant Churches in preparing their applications, as needed.

4. Churches applying for membership in the Conference should make every effort to send an Official Delegate(s) to the meeting of the Conference at which their application is to be considered, in order to be able to respond to questions and meet with the appropriate Advisory Committee(s) and respond to questions. Ordinarily, no action to receive an applicant Church as a member will be taken by the Conference without such Official Delegate(s) being present, unless the Conference determines by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, to proceed with acting upon the application.

5. The World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches are deemed to be organisations whose aims and practices are in conflict with the Basis.

XI. INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS

The Conference will maintain a collection of its *Informational Documents* which might be useful to the Member Churches in pursuing the purposes for which the Conference was established (*Constitution*, III). Either the collection, or a particular document listed therein, may be amended by a majority vote of the Delegates, with the exception of the List of ICRC Member Churches (which may be amended only as provided in *Constitution*, IV). Included in the collection are the following:

1. List of ICRC Member Churches
2. List of ICRC Committees (with their respective mandates)
3. Member Church Assessment Schedule (2009)
4. Suggested Form for Member Church Reports
5. Protocol for Responding to Major Disasters (2009)
6. Protocol for Responding to Opportunities to Assist Persecuted Christians (2009)

XII. AMENDMENTS TO THE REGULATIONS

These *Regulations* may be amended or suspended by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches present and eligible to vote, each Member Church having one vote ~~of the votes cast~~. A proposal to amend the *Regulations* may be initiated only by the major assembly of a Member Church, or by a Committee of the Conference, and ~~The proposed amendment(s)~~ shall be sent to the Corresponding Secretary ~~not later than~~ one year prior to the meeting of the Conference.

Appendix 12 – DRCA Minority Report regarding the relations with the RCNL

Reports for Synod Bethal 2014 of the FRCSA / VGKSA

**Deputies for Relations with Churches
Abroad
Minority Report**
regarding the relationship with the GKNv/RCNL

This minority report only deals with paragraph 2.4 of the DRCA report regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated) (GKNv/RCNL)

Submitted by prof. Herman de Jager and Rev. D.M. Boersma.

Mandate to DRCA

The Deputies for Relations with Churches abroad (DRCA) received a mandate from the Synod Pretoria 2011 in respect of 6 issues that the DRCA had to investigate and report back to the Synod Bethal 2014, for their decisions.

To instruct DRCA to address the following issues (six) as raised by DRCA with the GKNv Gereformeerde kerken Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) deputies. If any of these issues remain after discussion, DRCA are authorised to communicate them with the GKNv Synod.

As DRCA we have given these issues our attention since 2011 through exchange of written correspondence and in meetings.

This was not always easy because underlying some of the issues were deep-seated differences that led eventually to our decision to submit this minority report.

The reason for this report

DRCA have had the following procedure in submitting their report: each member submits the section of the report for which he was responsible in the past 3 years. The different sections of our report were discussed in two meetings of deputies in November 2013 and February 2014. It became clear that deputies differed in the evaluation of the results of the investigations regarding the GKNv as well as the way we think Synod should respond to the GKNv Synod. In this report we propose an alternative to the majority report as supported by the other 3 deputies.

Differences

1 It is our view, shared by the deputies from the Netherlands, that our responses should be based on official Synod decisions, and not on reports *drafted* for tabling at future Synods.

Deputies (DRCA) started on this path in 2011 by writing: *“there are real concerns regarding the impact of Deputies M/V in the church on the churches in the Netherlands. The publications of these deputies cause the Reformed doctrine on the office to become a matter of debate.”*

What was a matter of concern in 2011 became a tendency in the following years: to be concerned with the reports proposed to the next Synod of the GKNv. This tendency finds its climax in the current majority report. Par 2.4 gives a discussion of the six mandates from Synod 2011. Under mandates 2 and 3, which deal with the m/v report and deputies church unity, most of the attention is given to reports of deputies. The reader will find that very little space is given to a proper description of the decisions of Synod Harderwijk. However, this has always been the usual approach for DRCA deputies, to give an unbiased summary of Synod decisions and then to

provide our own evaluation to Synod.

2

We believe this has a negative result. The majority report does not follow our accepted rules for sister church relations when it concludes at the end of the discussion of mandate #3:

“... calling on our beloved sister churches to distance themselves from these conclusions and proposed decisions of DKE (see Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014). We do this, cautious of the fact that as sister churches we don’t want to meddle into internal affairs. Yet at the same time we perceive that DKE’s proposals can put strain on our mutual sister church relationship, something very dear to us.”

What is mentioned in one sentence (“we don’t want to meddle into internal affairs”) is contradicted in the proposals of the majority report.

We must allow our sister churches to respond to their own reports and not prescribe what they should do with them. This is especially true of the report of the Deputies M/V (majority and minority) which were only released at the end of last year; Synod Ede will only discuss them later this year. We do disagree with the majority report of the Dutch m/v deputies, but there is also a minority report on that same issue.

FRCSA deputies and Synod should leave the responsibility where it belongs: in the hands of our sister churches. Those churches sent delegates to their Synod and are praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Do we no longer take this seriously?

Also, the majority report adds unnecessary threats in its conclusions:

“When Synod Ede 2014 would approve the majority report, we are afraid that this will impact negatively on the sister church relationship, something we would like to avoid. The sister church relationship cannot continue without restraint if the foundation of Scripture and Confession is affected in one way or another.” (conclusion of discussion on mandate #2)
“DKE’s proposals can put strain on our mutual sister church relationship” (conclusion of discussion on mandate #3)

This threatening tone is repeated and receives a climax in proposal 1 at the end of par. 2.4:

To consider reconvening in a prolonged session after the RCNL Synod Ede 2014 has taken decisions with regard to i. the report of Deputies M/V in de kerk; ii. the guarding of the Reformed doctrine at the Theological University in Kampen, specifically regarding the publications of dr. S. Paas and dr. K. van Bekkum; iii. the report of Deputies Kerkelijke Eenheid.

We find this premature. By stating this, the FRCSA Synod has already decided that whatever reasons the GKNv Synod may have, they are invalid and against Scripture. We don’t even consider them. These proposals already put our sister church relationship under strain before Synod Ede has even discussed these three issues.

2 The majority report does not acknowledge enough that the GKNv is an autonomous church federation with its own structures and style of operation; that it participates in a social

and economic environment that is fundamentally different from that in which our small church denomination operates in South Africa.

A couple of examples from the report follow:

iii Women in office: The process is not supervised properly, leading to limitless discussions including pleas to open office for women. We sense too little respect for the Word of God as the ultimate norm for church life.

ii Consultation with sister churches: Delegates' [involvement] is restricted to the 'Buitenlandweek' which tends to become a formality. Their [advice] is rarely ... [recognised] in later rounds of discussion of Synod. Synod should follow the rules of sister church relationship and give clear instructions to its deputies to deliberate with sister churches, before far-reaching decisions are proposed [sic] with regard to – for example – the offices of the church and the church order.

These are just two examples where, in our opinion, insufficient attention is being given to the fact that the GKNv is an independent church denomination. Where such issues of concern are raised by the Dutch congregations (such as, for example, whether women can hold office, or changes to the church rules), why must deputies first consult with all their sisterchurches? (and they do have a large number of them)

The question is: what is meant by *far-reaching decisions are proposed*? Surely it is not about far-reaching decisions, but about proposals? This is one of the fundamental differences, as was discussed in point 1, namely that the majority report regards proposals as if they are already ratified decisions.

This issue is also linked to the first: which documents are we expected to respond to?

3 Tone of communication

The communication of our deputies in South Africa with the deputies in the Netherlands (GKNv) has a tone of “*as we see it, so must it be*”, otherwise tension is introduced into the relationship. It is our view that this is not a brotherly approach – we should not carry on like this with sister organisations.

The six issues our deputies were required to address, as it was worded in our instructions, must have hurt our brother deputies in the Netherlands very deeply. Accusations were made suggesting that the Bible is no longer considered authoritative; that processes are not properly supervised, and so on. We noticed that the willingness of deputies GKNv to respond to our issues deteriorated over time. We, DRCA, have reasons to be frustrated with their response, but we should show some understanding for this. We are afraid that this frustration has influenced the way we raised the issues with them and the way they were described and evaluated in the report.

The result of this was that some written communications were full of accusations and lacking in brotherly love. This was discussed in early 2013 but the relationship has not improved since then. We feel that our relationship with our Netherlands brothers has seriously deteriorated to a purely technical level, devoid of all warmth and sense of brotherhood. This is a matter of concern to us. How can we mend this relationship?

4 Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Theological University:

With regard to the two dissertations by Dr Van Bekkum and Dr Paas, only the chairman of our deputies has been able to study them in depth. The remaining deputies have noted the criticism of the dissertations, and that was accepted.

In the process, DRCA took note of the views of the deputies of the Canadian churches and this no doubt influenced our investigations. It is striking to us that a positive review of Van Bekkum's dissertation was published by prof. Peels, the Old Testament professor in Apeldoorn. The dissertations have also been reviewed within the structures of the GKNv.

There has never been a genuine debate about the contents of these dissertations between DRCA and the deputies of the GKNv. Our report is correct in stating that at first this was due to the lack of preparation by deputies GKNv and later due to their unwillingness to have such a discussion. We regret this. However, we understand their reasons; they are not the right channel to respond to our objections.

Official responses have been provided by prof Kwakkel and the 'Raad van Toezicht' (board of supervision) of the TUK, also in response to the letter sent by the Synod of the CanRC. These official responses need to be taken into account and studied carefully so that we do justice to them.

What stands out in the treatment of the two dissertations is that there is a clear description of how the writer of the majority report reads the dissertations. However, there is no indication that the writers of the dissertations recognize themselves in the picture painted of them. Dr. Paas showed in his correspondence that he does not feel that the criticism does justice to his publication and his views. There is also no significant interaction with the official defenses given by prof Kwakkel and the 'Raad van Toezicht' (board of supervision) of the TUK.

We would like to mention two things which stand out in these official responses:

- 1) the repeated commitment to the authority of Scripture at the TUK;
- 2) in defense of these dissertations they mention the fact that they were written within the framework of the current theological methods accepted in the Netherlands. It is a matter of debate how a Reformed theologian should operate within that framework. As sister churches, we can make a bigger effort to show some understanding for the tension that this provides as well as appreciation for the efforts they make to address the questions of their time and culture in the way they are doing theology.

Prof EA de Boer referred us, during our meeting in January 2012 about the dissertations and the preservation of the Reformed doctrine at the Theological University, to one of the University's publications - *In den beginne en verder*, which deals with creation. The publication was made available to all the deputies for study. Although no Scriptural discrepancies were found by the deputies, some were of the opinion that two articles give *possible* openings that might be used for wrong teaching. But in fact, this has not happened and the authors cannot be accused of Scripture criticism on the basis of this publication.

We are of the opinion that we should take this as a good sign that in an official publication by several staff members of the TUK, the authority of the Scriptures is upheld.

Instead of sending the proposed letter of concern, we propose that Synod conclude that no conclusive proofs of Scripture criticism have been found.

Let us express instead that we ask the Lord to give them and their professors wisdom and faith to operate in the current postmodern climate of the Netherlands. Then, after showing our understanding and positive concern, we suggest that Synod take the opportunity to make them aware of the danger for the professors in Kampen of functioning within the framework of Scripture-critical methods, and we can call them in a brotherly way to remain faithful to fight the good fight of the faith (1Tim6:12) and to correctly handle the word of truth (2Timothy 2:15).

Proposed letter of concern to Synod Ede 2014

It would be premature to send a letter of concern to the Synod of the GKNv in its proposed form.

In the letter, Synod is asked to *indicate clearly that the views of Dr Stefan Paas and Dr Koert van Bekkum are not in harmony with the Word of God and the three Forms of Unity*. We are not convinced that the majority report shows conclusive proof of this.

Synod Ede 2014 is being asked in the proposed letter of concern to do something that is not possible for the Synod to do.

Aspects of the contents of the dissertations have received attention and structures within the church have dealt with the issues. How can the synod, without conclusive proof on our part, be asked "*to indicate clearly that their views are not in harmony with Scripture and the three Forms of Unity.*" And what are we supposed to do if Synod is not able to grant us this request?

Further, in regard to the issues of m/v (women in office) and church unity (DKE) the letter requests Synod "*to re-evaluate the work of the Deputies M/V in the church ... in a Scriptural and Confessional way, and to denounce everything that is in conflict with Scripture and Confession*". The Synod is called on to *restore the orthodox direction*.

We need to give our sister churches the opportunity to interact with their own reports without prescribing what they should decide.

It is premature to address them in a letter at this stage, and as it is now phrased, will not make any positive contribution.

Does Synod Bethal need to be reconvened after the GKNv Synod is concluded?

We propose that our synod will not reconvene after the GKNv Synod Ede 2014 has made decisions regarding these three issues:

- i the report of Deputies M/V in the church*
- ii guarding the Reformed doctrine at the Theological University in Kampen, specifically regarding the publications of Dr K van Bekkum and Dr S Paas.*
- iii the report of Deputies on church unity.*

This proposal came at the very end of the three years of work done by deputies DRCA and met considerable opposition within deputies. We are convinced that this puts unnecessary pressure on the entire process and runs the risk of making hasty decisions.

It is premature and sounds like a threat to reconvene a synod where the intention is to take final decisions on resumption of correspondence with the GKNv, while Synod Ede 2014 is still in session, and its Acts have not yet been published.

Further, ground 2 under the first proposal of the majority report makes it sound as if there is great danger for the FRCSA mainly because some office bearers have pleaded in public for the opening of all church offices for women. Such publications and opinions have existed in the past already without any consequences for our churches; and there is no proof that there is an urgent danger. The case is overstated.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is obvious that matters that our sister churches in the Netherlands will be tabling at Synod will give an indication of movement and change within the churches. It is obvious too that this is not wrong: a church must still change, still ask what is the will of God in new situations, and remain open to new questions that come to mind. On the other hand, one must guard against uniformity and conformity to world opinions and efforts to adapt the will of God to the changing spirit (fashions) of the times.

As sister churches, we should not meddle in this process. We should pray for them, we can make them aware of questions and concerns we have, but we should not try to prescribe to them in what way they should make decisions.

We therefore would like to make alternative proposals for section 2.4 of the report:

1. That Synod reject proposal 3 of the majority report to send a letter of concern to Synod Ede 2014;
2. That Synod reject proposal 1 of the majority report to reconvene (Bethal 2014) Synod to take decisions on further correspondence with the GKNv;
3. To continue with the sister church relationship with the RCNL according to the rules of correspondence;

4. To mandate deputies DRCA to study the decisions of Synode Ede 2014 carefully against Scripture and the three Forms of Unity (in the light of the three main issues mentioned in their report), and provide a report to the next Synod as usual.
5. To send only one representative to Synod Ede 2014.
6. To inform the GKNv of these decisions and to express in a letter that we ask the Lord to give them and their professors at the TUK wisdom and faith to respond to the current postmodern climate of the Netherlands in a biblical way. In addition, to take the opportunity to make them aware of the danger for the professors in Kampen of functioning within the framework of Scripture-critical methods, and to call them in a brotherly way to remain faithful to fight the good fight of the faith (1Timothy 6:12) and to correctly handle the word of truth (2Timothy 2:15).

Grounds:

1. Deputies did not find conclusive proof of Scripture criticism in publications of professors at the TUK. DRCA can monitor the direction of the teaching at the TUK in the future and report if there is conclusive proof of aberration from Scripture and the confessions.
2. According to the rules of sister church relationships, we should refrain from prescribing what the Synod of the GKNv should do with their own reports.
3. Synod should not hastily respond to decisions of the GKNv synod. Instead, deputies should be given enough time to study them, discuss them with deputies of the GKNv if necessary, and to report to the next Synod.
4. A negative tone has begun to dominate in the communication with the GKNv deputies. As sister churches, we should indeed call them to remain faithful to the Scriptures, but we have an obligation to do this with a willingness to listen and with brotherly love. Even if we disagree with their decisions, we should raise these issues in such a way that our communication does not become a stumbling block to see that their decisions might be wrong.

Conclusion

Dear brothers,

We humbly submit this report to Synod with the prayer that our Lord will give you grace and wisdom to handle this difficult issue in a way that glorifies Him.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Herman de Jager and Dirk M. Boersma

Appendix 13 – Letter of Concern to Synod Ede 2014 of the RCNL

30 april 2014

Aan de generale synode van De Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) in Nederland, bijeen in Ede in 2014

Geachte broeders in Christus,

Wij groeten u in de almachtige naam van onze Heer en Redder Jezus Christus. Wij prijzen onze drieënige God dat Hij zijn kerk blijft vergaderen ook in Nederland. Zowel in het verleden als in het heden bestaat er een sterke band tussen de GKv en Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika. Daar danken wij Hem voor. Wij zijn één door hetzelfde fundament waarop wij bouwen, zij het in heel verschillende delen van Gods wereld. Wij zijn dankbaar voor de trouwe prediking van het evangelie in uw midden en het getuigenis van uw leden met woord en daad in een wereld die van zijn Schepper en Herschepper wegdwaalt. Wij zijn vooral ook dankbaar voor de jarenlange steun die wij vanuit Nederland ontvangen voor het zendingswerk in Zuid-Afrika.

Wij schrijven u in de bescheiden maar toch brandende hoop, dat deze brief welwillend door u gelezen wordt omdat u beseft dat de liefde van Christus ons ertoe bracht zo te schrijven. Onze regels voor een zusterkerkverhouding geven het volgende aan: *De VGKSA onderhouden zusterkerk relaties met andere kerkverbanden die de kenmerken van de kerk van Jezus Christus vertonen. Het doel van deze relatie is elkaar te ondersteunen in het handhaven, verdedigen en bevorderen in leer en leven van de waarheid van de Schrift, die samengevat is in de gereformeerde belijdenissen.*³⁶ Het is in de context van deze wederzijdse verantwoordelijkheid dat wij in deze brief een aantal oproepen aan u doen.

Het feit dat wij besloten hebben deze brief te schrijven, geeft aan dat bepaalde zaken niet opgelost konden worden in de besprekingen die

April 30th 2014

To the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKNv) convening in 2014 in Ede

Esteemed Brothers in Christ,

We greet you in the almighty name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We give glory to our triune God for his on-going church gathering work in the Netherlands. Both in past and present a strong bond exists between the RCNL and the FRCSA, for which we thank Him. We are united by the same foundation we build on, even though in very different parts of God's world. We are thankful for the faithful preaching of the Gospel in your midst and the testimony of your members in word and deed in a world that is drifting away from its Creator and Recreator. We are especially thankful for the ongoing support we receive for the mission work in South Africa.

We communicate to you in humility and yet with the ardent hope that this letter will be read with willingness and the realisation that Christ's love compelled us to write it. Our rules for ecclesiastical fellowship state that the *“FRCSA maintain sister church relationships with other church federations which show the marks of the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the relationship is to support each other in maintaining, defending and promoting the truth of Scripture as summarised in the Reformed Confessions in doctrine and church practice”*. It is in the context of this ecclesiastical accountability that we direct our exhortations to you.

The fact that we have decided to write this letter, testifies that certain matters remained unresolved after the deliberations

³⁶ *“FRCSA maintain sister church relationships with other church federations which show the marks of the church of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the relationship is to support each other in maintaining, defending and promoting the truth of Scripture as summarised in the Reformed Confessions in doctrine and church practice”*

onze Deputaten voor betrekking met buitenlandse kerken (Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad) hadden met de Deputaten BBK van de GKv. Laatstgenoemden gaven ons toen het advies direct aan u te schrijven met betrekking tot de onopgeloste zaken. De twee hoofdzaken zijn:

1. Handhaving van de gereformeerde leer aan de Theologische Universiteit (TU) in Kampen

Onze zorgen betreffende de handhaving van de gereformeerde leer aan de TU werden bij verscheidene gelegenheden voorgelegd aan de Deputaten BBK van de GKv. Aangezien er geen aanduiding was dat onze zorgen herkend en gedeeld werden, zien wij ons genoodzaakt de volgende zaken nu rechtstreeks aan u voor te leggen:

- a. De opvattingen van dr. Stefan Paas gepubliceerd in zijn dissertatie *Creation and Judgment* (2003) zijn zorgwekkend. Dit geldt ook voor zijn handboek *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*. Zie bijlage 1.
- b. Wij maken ons ook zorgen over de methode en conclusies zoals verwoord in de dissertatie van dr. Koert van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence* (2010). Zie bijlage 2.
- c. Wij maken ons zorgen dat Schriftkritisch onderzoek geaccepteerd wordt aan de TU, een instelling die valt onder de verantwoordelijkheid van de GKv. Zie bijlagen 1 & 2.

Helaas konden de weerleggingen tegen de beschuldigingen van Schriftkritiek, zoals gepubliceerd door de TU, door sommige docenten aan de TU, door de Raad van Toezicht en College van Bestuur, onze zorgen niet wegnemen.

Het feit dat Paas en Van Bekkum met apologetische motieven te werk gingen, en 'in de huid van hun tegenstanders kropen' is voor ons geen reden tot minder zorg. In de zuidafrikaanse context hebben wij waargenomen hoe dit soort Schriftkritische opvattingen op een soortgelijke wijze hun opwachting maakten in gereformeerde academische instellingen, en hoe dit later een desastreus geestelijke achteruitgang tot gevolg had in de

our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad had with their counterpart Deputies, the *Deputaten Betrekkingen met Buitelandse Kerken* of the RCNL. They themselves also advised us to approach you with regard to the unresolved matters. The two main issues are:

1. Guarding the Reformed Doctrine at the Theological University (TU) in Kampen

Our concerns regarding the guarding of the Reformed doctrine at the TU have been communicated on various occasions to BBK RCNL. Since we have not seen any indication that our concerns have been recognized, we feel the need to directly address you on the following matters:

- a. The views of dr. Stefan Paas expressed in his dissertation *Creation and Judgment* (2003) is a matter of concern. This also applies to the missionary textbook *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*. See annexure 1.
- b. Similarly, we are concerned about the methodology and conclusions expressed in the dissertation of dr. Koert van Bekkum, *From Conquest to Coexistence* (2010). See Annexure 2.
- c. We are concerned that Scripture critical scholarship is accepted at the TU which is under the governance of the RCNL. See annexures 1 & 2.

Unfortunately the refutations against these allegations of Scriptural criticism, published by the TU, by some of its personnel, by its Board of Directors as well as Supervisory Board, could not take away our concerns.

The fact that Paas and Van Bekkum acted with apologetic motives does not diminish our concerns. In our South African context we have observed that Scripture critical views entered Reformed academic institutions in a similar way, eventually causing disastrous spiritual decline in the Reformed federations they serve. We

kerkverbanden waaraan deze instellingen verbonden zijn. We zullen waakzaam moeten zijn dat de liefde voor de (academische) wereld niet uitstijgt boven de liefde voor de levende God, zijn Woord en zijn Kerk. Onze liefde voor u dringt ons om er bij u op aan te dringen onze zorgen serieus te nemen en op resolute wijze standpunten en wetenschappelijke hypothesen die de onfeilbaarheid, helderheid en volkomenheid van de heilige Schrift niet honoreren, te weerleggen (Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis, art. 7). We roepen u op het gepaste respect voor de heilige Schrift te handhaven en te blijven bij de juiste uitleg van de heilige Schrift.

2. Vrouwen in de bijzondere kerkelijke ambten

Wij zijn gedwongen ook onze zorgen te uiten over ontwikkelingen in uw kerkverband met betrekking tot vrouwen in het ambt. Zie bijlage 3.

Wij roepen u op hierin de orthodoxe koers vast te houden. In een kerk die trouw wil blijven aan de heilige Schrift, kan de vraag of vrouwen in de speciale kerkelijke ambten mogen dienen, niet als een open vraag ter discussie gesteld worden. Wanneer het ondubbelzinnige onderricht van het Woord van God over mannelijk leiderschap in de kerk een zaak van debat geworden is, dan is dit een indicatie dat een gevaarlijke hermeneutische benadering zijn invloed doet gelden. Wij sporen u aan in de Heer, dat u de bijbelse waarheid dat God trouwe broeders roept in de kerk om de leiding te nemen, blijft verdedigen. Wij vragen u uw kerken aan te moedigen de aanslagen van het hedendaagse egalitaire en emancipatorische denken met betrekking tot de kerkelijke ambten het hoofd te bieden.

Conclusie

Wij vragen u de wederzijdse afspraak inzake onze zusterkerkrelatie ernstig te nemen, en dat u puur op basis van de liefde voor God en zijn Woord ernstige aandacht schenkt aan de zaken die wij in deze brief noemden. Het is deze liefde die ons ertoe bracht deze brief te schrijven.

Het is onze oprechte hoop dat u aan deze brief werkelijk inhoudelijke aandacht zult schenken en dat u de katholieke richting zult blijven

should be vigilant that love for the (academic) world does not surpass the love for the living God, his Word and his Church. Out of our love for you, we beseech you to take our concerns seriously and to be resolute in refuting opinion and scholarly hypotheses which don't honour the infallibility, clarity and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures (Belgic Confession, art. 7). We call on you to maintain the proper respect for Holy Scripture and continue on the right path of interpretation of Holy Scripture.

2. Women in the special ecclesiastical offices

We are compelled also to communicate our concern about developments in your federation regarding women in office. See annexure 3

We call on you to maintain the orthodox direction. In a church that wants to remain faithful to Holy Scripture, the matter of women in the special ecclesiastical offices cannot be framed as an open question. When the unambiguous teaching of the Word of God about male leadership in the church becomes a matter of debate, then a dangerous hermeneutical approach is showing its influence. We urge you in the Lord to defend the Biblical truth that God calls faithful brothers to give leadership in the churches. We ask you to encourage your churches to resist the inroads of egalitarian and emancipatory thinking regarding the special offices in the church.

Conclusion

We ask you to take seriously our mutual agreement with regard to ecclesiastical fellowship, and that you will purely on the basis of the love of God and his Word give serious attention to the points raised in this letter. It is this love that compelled us to write this letter.

It is our sincere hope that you will seriously consider this letter and maintain the catholic direction with regard to the points mentioned above. We urge you and your

handhaven met betrekking tot de punten die genoemd zijn. Wij roepen u en uw kerken op standvastig te zijn in het belijden van de hele waarheid van het Woord van God en deze waarheid dapper en krachtig te verdedigen, zelfs wanneer die door de wereld gehaat en verworpen wordt. Wij hopen en bidden dat onze zorgen weggenomen mogen worden en dat onze en uw kerken trouw mogen blijven tot de wederkomst van de Heer Jezus Christus in glorie, majesteit en kracht.

Met broedergroet

Synode Bethal 2014
Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

Voorzitter: Ds. P.G. Boon



Ondervoorzitter: Ds. C. Kleijn



Scriba: Br. E. Byker



Bijlage 1

Publicaties van Dr. S. Paas

Conform de opdracht aan hen gegeven, hebben onze deputaten voor betrekkingen met buitenlandse kerken een nadere studie gemaakt van het proefschrift van dr. S. Paas *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Leiden, 2003). Beweringen waren gepubliceerd over dit proefschrift die een nader onderzoek noodzaakten. Paas zou onbijbelse opvattingen handhaven, zoals de stelling dat het volk Israël afkomstig was van migrante en Kanaänitische populaties, iets dat een vraagteken plaatst achter de exodus van het volk Israël uit Egypte. Ook zou de historiciteit van de beschrijving van de schepping in Genesis bevraagtekend worden. Er waren ook beweringen dat hij schriftkritische opvattingen zou blijven handhaven in latere publicaties. Dr. Paas werd benoemd als universitair docent in Kampen. In 2009 schreef prof. Kwakkel dat het

churches to stand firm in confessing the whole truth of the Word of God and to defend this truth boldly and vigorously even when it is denounced and hated by the world. We hope and pray that our concerns may be put to rest and that our churches and yours may remain faithful until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, majesty and power.

With brotherly greetings

Synod Bethal 2014
Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Chairman: Rev: P.G. Boon



Vice-chairman: Rev. C. Kleijn



Scribe: Br. E. Byker



Annexure 1

Publications of Dr. S. Paas

According to the mandate given to them, our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad made a closer study of the dissertation of dr. S. Paas *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Leiden, 2003). Allegations were published against it that warranted a closer examination. Paas would have entertained unbiblical views, such as the notion that the people Israel arose from migrant and Canaanite population, putting a question mark behind the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, as well as calling into question the historicity of the creation account in Genesis. Allegations were that he also continued to uphold liberal suppositions in later publications. Dr. Paas was appointed as lecturer (*universitair docent*) in Kampen. In 2009 prof. Kwakkel

Paas niet toegestaan zou zijn een soortgelijk proefschrift aan de Universiteit van Kampen te verdedigen.³⁷ Toch is dr. Paas momenteel docent aan deze universiteit.

In zijn proefschrift maakt Paas een onderscheid tussen 'history of religion' en de ontologie of de metafysische werkelijkheid. Het historisch getuigenis van het Oude Testament wordt opgeschort totdat buitenbijbelse bronnen, in samenwerking met een modern hermeneutisch proces dat de tekst van literaire conventies stroopt, de historiciteit kan garanderen.

Paas stelt dat de geschiedenis van religie een geschiedenis is van *religie in zijn historische manifestatie* en niet een geschiedenis van God (p.24). Een *geschiedenis van de openbaring van de levende God* wordt niet in berekening genomen. Volgens Paas schenkt hij hieraan geen aandacht, vanwege de restricties van het modern wetenschappelijk oudtestamentisch debat.

Paas volgt in de voetsporen van Troeltsch door te stellen dat de geschiedenis van religie streng immanent is in haar beschrijving. In de beschrijving en verduidelijking van historische fenomenen, wordt in het traditioneel historisch onderzoek geen ruimte toegelaten voor 'bovennatuurlijke' agenten (p.25). Hoewel hij erkent dat voor *een dieper verstaan van het Oude Testament en voor een theologisch oordeel over de religie van oud Israël, meer dan een historische benadering nodig is*, benadrukt hij wel dat voor *een theologisch lezen van het Oude Testament de historische benadering tot de religie van oud Israël niet overgeslagen kan worden* (27-28).

Wij nemen hier een ethisch conflict waar. Een studie van bijbelse teksten, waarbij men a priori 'bovennatuurlijke' agenten uitsluit, is op zijn minst eenzijdig. Als de Schrift Gods openbaring is en het gezag aan zichzelf ontleend, welke positieve bijdrage kan het onderzoek van de Schrift ingeperkt door slechts de menselijke rationaliteit, zonder aandacht voor Gods werk, maken? Ieder resultaat zal de Schrift ondermijnen, want als men zich ondergeschikt stelt aan de beperkingen van de historisch

wrote that Paas would not have been permitted to publish such a dissertation at the University of Kampen.⁴² Yet presently dr. Paas is a lecturer at this very university.

In his dissertation Paas makes a *disconnect* between 'history of religion' and ontology or metaphysical reality. The historic evidence of the Old Testament is suspended until extra Biblical sources, in cooperation with a modern hermeneutical process stripping the text of literary conventions, can reinforce the historicity.

Paas states that the history of religion is a history of *religion in its historical manifestation* and not a history of God (p.24). A *history of the revelation of the living God* is not taken into consideration. According to Paas he does not pay attention to this, because of the restrictions of the modern scientific Old Testament discourse.

Paas follows in the footsteps of Troeltsch by stating that the history of religion is strictly immanent in its description. In the description and explanation of historical phenomena, traditional historical investigation does not allow for 'supernatural' agencies (p.25). Though acknowledging that "for a more profound understanding of the Old Testament and for a theological judgment on the religion of ancient Israel, more than a historical approach is required," he nevertheless affirms that "for a theological reading of the Old Testament the historical approach to the religion of ancient Israel cannot be neglected" (27-28).

We sense here an ethical conflict. A study of Biblical texts, excluding a priori 'supernatural' agencies, is one sided, to say the least. If Scripture is God's revelation and is self-authenticating, what positive role could the investigation of Scripture subjected solely to human rationality, without regard for God's work, possibly achieve? Any result will be an undermining of Scripture, for once one submits himself

³⁷ *De Reformatie* 11 April & 2 Mei 2009.

⁴² *De Reformatie* 11 April & 2 Mei 2009.

kritische school, zullen de resultaten voorspelbaar zijn. Neem bijvoorbeeld de volgende conclusies waar dr. Paas bij uitgekomen is:

- Gen 2:4b-25 wordt gedegradeerd tot een auteur genaamd de Yahwist³⁸ die het mogelijk geschreven heeft in de vroege of midden periode van de monarchie en Gen 1-2:4a wordt beschouwd als een priesterdocument daterend uit de Persische periode (post-exilisch) (p.32-34). Wat Genesis dus zegt is daarom van weinig waarde voor de geschiedenis van de pre-exilische scheppingstheologie (p.36). In het licht van dit alles, komt Paas tot de conclusie dat *de eerste oudtestamentische verwijzingen naar Israël's geloof in YHWH als Schepper van de wereld stammen uit de vroeg monarchische periode* (p.49). Dit is in strijd met wat de Schrift hierover getuigt. Als men niet het getuigenis van Genesis 1 en 2 wil accepteren, moet men dan ook Gods openbaring van het vierde gebod vanaf de berg Sinai ontkennen? Want volgens Paas wist Israël dit niet over de schepping tot en met de vroeg monarchische periode.
- Israël's scheppingsgeloof heeft een Kanaänitisch achtergrond en is mogelijk beïnvloed door egyptische noties (p.49, 121-132, 437)
- Israël ontstond uit migrante en Kanaänitische populaties rond 1175 voor Christus, *de stammen die later bekend werden als 'Israël'* (p.113-114)
- De narratieven van de exodus en de intocht zijn *ideologische* en *theologische* reflecties die mogelijk een bepaalde historische waarde hebben (p.120)
- Paas beschouwt de schepping als een mythe, samen met veel materiaal uit Genesis 1-11 (p.104). Voor Paas is een belangrijk element wat iets als een mythe definieert, het feit dat het buiten de tijd staat, buiten de geschiedenis (p.102).

to the strictures of the historical critical school, the results will be predictable. Consider the following conclusions that Dr. Paas comes to:

- Gen 2:4b-25 is relegated to an author called the Yahwist⁴³ who possibly wrote during the early or middle period of the monarchy and Gen 1-2:4a is said to be a Priestly document dated to the Persian period (post-exilic) (p.32-34). What Genesis says is, therefore, of minor importance for the history of pre-exilic creation theology (p.36). In light of all of this, Paas also concludes that “the first Old Testament references to Israel’s faith in YHWH as Creator of the world came from the early monarchic period” (p.49). The above is in contradiction to what Scripture affirms to be the case. If one does not want to accept the testimony of Genesis 1 and 2, must one then also deny God’s revelation of the fourth commandment from Mount Sinai? For according to Paas, Israel did not know of creation until the early monarchic period.
- Israel’s creation belief has Canaanite background and possibly influenced by Egyptian notions (p.49, 121-132, 437)
- Israel arose from migrant and Canaanite population about 1175 B, “the tribes which came to be known as ‘Israel’” (p.113-114)
- The narratives of the Exodus and Entry are “ideological” or “theological” reflections which may have some historical value (p.120)
- Paas considers creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1-11 (p.104). For Paas a key element of myth is that it stands outside our time, outside history (p.102).
- “Events regulated by God in a time

³⁸ De wijze waarop Dr. Paas in zijn proefschrift van de term *Jahwist* gebruik maakt is op zijn minst verwarrend. Bedoelt hij met de term alleen maar te verwijzen naar een *vereerder van Jahwe*? Hoe kan dit het geval zijn op bijv. p.33 van zijn proefschrift?

⁴³ Dr. Paas’ use of the term *Jahwist* in his dissertation is confusing to say the least. Does he only mean with this term *worshiper of Jahwe*? How can this be the case on f.e. p.33 of his dissertation?

Dingen die door God geregeld zijn in een tijd die buiten de onze staat, vormen specifiek onderdeel van de Oer-geschiedenis (Gen. 1-11) ... We kunnen zeggen dat Israël van Kanaänitisch oorsprong was ... en was, daarom, ook geworteld in een mythisch klimaat van denken. Op deze wijze is het mogelijk de mythe te beschouwen als een van de grondslagen (en misschien de grondslag par excellence) van Israël's religie (p.104)

Het is mogelijk een gedetailleerde discussie te voeren met betrekking tot de betekenis van de (literaire) term 'mythe'. Als we echter gebruik maken van de definitie die dr. Paas zelf geeft (p.97v), komen wij tot de overtuiging dat het onmogelijk is voor een theoloog die trouw aan de Schrift wil blijven, om op deze wijze met het OT om te gaan. Er wordt geen recht gedaan aan de 'scheppingsverhalen' van het Oude Testament, zoals ze genoemd worden, wanneer men met hen omgaat in termen van de gegeven definitie (p.97v). Dit is niet alleen een exegetische zaak, het is een hermeneutische en confessionele zaak.

- YHWH is een afgeleide van El. Volgens Paas is dit niet een uitspraak over de theologische realiteit van de goddelijke waarheid. Het is alleen de constatering dat in de vroege stadia van de religieuze geschiedenis van Israël, de aanbidders van YHWH tot een grote mate dezelfde kwaliteiten aan hem toeschreven als aan El, en dat de Kanaänitische El-aanbidding tot een grote mate de bron vormde voor de concepten die het volk Israël gebruikte om hun geloof in hun God vorm te geven.

Paas verdedigde dat de link die hij legde tussen Jahweh en de Kanaänitische El alleen van godsdiensthistorische aard was, vergelijkbaar met hoe ons woord voor God etymologisch afgeleid is van de aanbidding van Wodan. Toch is het in zijn proefschrift evident dat het om meer gaat dan alleen woorden die zogeheten morfologische kruiken zijn die gevuld kunnen worden met een nieuwe

that stands outside of ours are found in particular in the Ur-history (Gen. 1-11) ... We might say that Israel was of Canaanite origins ... and was, therefore, also rooted in a mythic climate of thought. In this way it is possible to think of myth as one of the foundations (and perhaps the foundation par excellence) of Israel's religion" (p.104).

One can have a closer discussion as to the meaning of the (literary) term 'myth'. Yet using the definition dr. Paas gives himself (p.97f), we are of the opinion that it is impossible for a theologian wanting to remain faithful to Scripture, to deal with the OT in this way. The so called 'creation stories' of the Old Testament are not done justice when dealing with them in terms of this definition given (p.97f). This is not only a matter of exegesis, it is a hermeneutic and confessional matter.

- YHWH is a derivative of El. According to Paas this is not a pronouncement about the theological reality of the divine truth. It is merely establishing that in the early stages of the religious history of Israel his worshippers to a great extent attributed the same qualities to YHWH as were attributed to El, and that the Canaanite El worship was to a great extent the source of the concepts the people of Israel used to give shape to their faith in their God.

Paas defended that the link he posed between Jahweh and the Canaanite El is merely of religion historic character, comparable to how our word for God is derived etymologically from the worship of Wodan. Yet in his dissertation it is apparent that it is about more than only words being so called morphological jars that can be filled up with a new meaning. The dissertation creates the impression that there are substantial and conceptual links between the Canaanite El and Jahweh. The

betekenis. Het proefschrift wekt de indruk dat er substantiële en conceptuele links zijn tussen de Kanaänitische El en Jahweh. Het argument dat dit alleen godsdiensthistorie is van de wijze waarop Israël geloofde, en dat niets gezegd wordt over goddelijke openbaring, norm en waarheid, is niet overtuigend. De vraag naar het actuele verband tussen de historische openbaring (door de levende God) aan Israël enerzijds, en de realiteit van Israël's dagelijks geloof anderzijds, wordt te gemakkelijk gepasseerd. Een orthodox theoloog kan dit niet doen.

Een belangrijke vraag met betrekking tot het proefschrift van dr. Paas is in hoeverre een orthodox theoloog zich kan aanpassen – met apologetische motieven – bij het vrijzinnig debat. Wanneer men zich op apologetische wijze dompelt in de manier van denken van het wetenschappelijk debat van de dag, en opereert binnen deze begrenzings, met deze instrumenten en axioma's, mag dat als een loffelijke prestatie beschouwd worden. Toch moet men bedacht zijn op het ethisch spanningsveld wat dit met zich meebrengt. Men mag zich afvragen of er niet een te grote discrepantie bestaat tussen je gedrag gemikt op bredere acceptatie in academische kringen aan de ene kant, en je christelijke identiteit aan de andere. De vraag moet gesteld worden of het doel de middelen heiligt.

Wat het proefschrift van dr. Paas betreft, ontstaat de indruk dat de formuleringen die hij gebruikt, verschillend gelezen wordt in theologisch academische kringen, vergeleken bij hoe de kerken ze behoren te lezen volgens dr. Paas.

Samenvattend waarderen wij, uit een apologetisch oogpunt, de goede elementen in het proefschrift van dr. Paas, zoals zijn hoofdstelling dat een scheppingsgeloof aanwezig was bij de profeten van de achtste eeuw. Toch zijn we teleurgesteld dat hij zich volledig identificeert met de godsdiensthistorische benadering. Wij zouden op zijn minst verwachten dat hij als zijnde een gereformeerde wetenschapper duidelijk zou stellen dat, hoewel hij de godsdiensthistorische

argument dat this is just religion history of the way how Israel believed, and that nothing is said about divine revelation, norm and truth, is not convincing. The question as to the actual relation between the historic revelation (by the living God) to Israel on the one hand, and the reality of Israel's daily belief on the other, is relegated to the side-line too easily. An orthodox theologian cannot do this.

An important question, when dealing with the dissertation of dr. Paas, is in how far an orthodox theologian can adapt – with apologetic motives – to a liberal discourse. To submerge yourself in an apologetic way into the mind-set of the scientific discourse of the day, and to operate within their parameters, with their instruments and axioms, may be regarded as laudable. Yet one has to be aware of ethical tensions that may arrive. One can ask whether there is not a too big disconnect between one's behaviour oriented to broader acceptance in academic circles, and one's identity as a Christian. One has to ask the question whether the end justifies the means.

With regard to dr. Paas' dissertation, the impression arises that formulations used by him are read differently in theological academic circles, compared to how the churches have to read them according to dr. Paas.

To conclude, from an apologetic viewpoint, we appreciate the good elements in dr. Paas' dissertation, like his main thesis that a belief in creation was found among eighth century prophets.

However, we are disappointed that he completely identifies himself with a religion-historical approach. We would have expected that as a Reformed scholar he would have stated clearly that although he does not adhere to the religion-historical approach, he will use this approach in order to show that even on the basis of those presuppositions one can defend a creation belief in eighth century prophets. As the dissertation now stands there is no hint of

methode volgt, hij deze methode volgt om aan te tonen dat zelfs met deze vooronderstellingen het mogelijk is aan te tonen dat een scheppingsgeloof aanwezig was bij de profeten van de achtste eeuw. Zoals het proefschrift er nu uitziet is er geen aanduiding dat de auteur zichzelf distantieert van deze methode. Zelfs in latere publicaties distantieert dr. Paas zichzelf niet van de godsdiensthistorische methode, maar herhaalde hij dezelfde standpunten!³⁹

Wij betreuren het dat de benoeming van dr. Paas aan de TU in Kampen gehandhaafd werd ondanks geldige kritiek. Wij zouden verwachten dat een predikant die zulke standpunten handhaaft, summier als zijnde ambtsdrager onder de tucht geplaatst zou worden. Wij vellen geen oordeel over dr. Paas' persoonlijk geloof. Wij beoordelen alleen zijn publicaties.

Door zijn benoeming te handhaven, de geldige kritiek tegen zijn wetenschappelijk werk ten spijt, zal Kampen mogelijk in de toekomst niet langer in staat zijn wie dan ook ter verantwoording te roepen die schriftkritische standpunten publiceert. Het komt ons voor dat dit incident Kampen kwetsbaar zal maken voor toekomstige tolerantie van onderwijs van de Schrift op een wijze die de Schrift en haar Auteur oneer aandoen. Wij vrezen dat, door geen tuchtstappen te nemen, het heel moeilijk zal worden op een bijbelse wijze met soortgelijke gevallen in de toekomst om te gaan. De zaak is ernstig omdat wij het hier per slot van rekening niet alleen over een methode hebben, maar over een ongelovige ideologie. Deze ideologie bepaalt hoe wij de feiten rangschikken en beoordelen. De evidente betekenis en bedoeling van de Schriften hebben niet meer het laatste woord, maar de mens. Wij vrezen dat deze benadering uiteindelijk de integriteit van de TU in Kampen zal aantasten en de opvatting van de studenten en dus toekomstige predikanten zal beïnvloeden.

Verder is het zo dat Paas' gebruik van ongereformeerde hermeneutische methoden en schriftkritische hypothesen met betrekking tot

the author distancing himself from the approach. Even in later publications in other contexts dr. Paas did not distance himself from the religion-historical approach, but reiterated the same viewpoints!⁴⁴

We regret that Dr. Paas' appointment at the TU in Kampen was upheld in spite of valid criticisms. We could expect that any minister who held such views would have been summarily disciplined. We make no judgment on Dr. Paas' personal faith. We only judge his publications.

By maintaining this appointment in spite of the valid objections brought against Paas' scholarly work, Kampen will probably no longer be able to call anyone to account concerning higher critical views in the future. It seems to us that this episode will leave Kampen open to future toleration of the teaching of the Scriptures in a critical manner which dishonours Scripture and its Author. Not taking disciplinary action has, we believe, made it very difficult to deal Biblically with similar cases in the future. The matter is serious for ultimately we are not simply talking about method here, but of an unbelieving ideology. This ideology controls how one arranges and views the facts. The clear meaning and intent of the Scriptures no longer have the last say, but man does. We fear that this approach will ultimately affect the integrity of the TU in Kampen and influence the views of students and thus future ministers.

Furthermore it should be noted that Paas' uses of unreformed hermeneutics and Scripture critical hypotheses with regard to the Old Testament are not restricted to his dissertation. We also express our concern about the missiological textbook *Als een kerk opnieuw begint. Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming* (2008), of which S. Paas is the main author. Also in this publication unreformed hermeneutics and viewpoints are used and taken on board. In this textbook an unhealthy

³⁹ Cf. *De Wapenveld* (51:5 – 2001); *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (2003), p.308-327: “Het Oude Testament als religieus document”.

⁴⁴ Cf. *De Wapenveld* (51:5 – 2001); *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (2003), p.308-327: “Het Oude Testament als religieus document”.

het Oude Testament niet tot zijn proefschrift beperkt zijn. Wij maken ons ook zorgen om het missiologisch handboek *Als een kerk opnieuw begint. Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming* (2008), waarvan S. Paas de hoofdauteur is. Ook in deze publicatie worden standpunten en een hermeneutiek uitgedragen die niet gereformeerd zijn. In dit handboek komt een ongezonde polarisatie tussen de zogeheten geïnstitutionaliseerde kerken en de nieuwe kerkplantingen aan de oppervlakte. Zaken als ruimte creëren voor het toelaten van vrouwen in de kerkelijke ambten, het optioneel maken van de kinderdoop, het optioneel maken van de zondag als dag voor de eredienst, het optioneel maken van een ledenadministratie, dragen bij tot het effect van polarisatie. Het handboek ademt een sfeer van mensgerichte kerkplanting (vgl. de 5 zogeheten 'existentialen'). Gereformeerde zending en kerkplanting behoren primair uit te gaan van de eer van God, en zijn recht op deze wereld. Wij verwijzen in dit verband ook naar de kritische bespreking van dit handboek in de artikelen van ds. H. Drost in *Nader Bekeken* (maart 2010).

Bijlage 2

Proefschrift van Dr. K. van Bekkum

Conform de opdracht aan hen gegeven, hebben onze deputaten voor betrekkingen met buitenlandse kerken een nadere studie gemaakt van het proefschrift van dr. Van Bekkum. In 2010 verdedigde dr. K. van Bekkum zijn proefschrift *From Conquest to Coexistence. Ideology and antiquarian intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*.

Overzicht

In het westers oudtestamentisch onderzoek is een debat gaande over de intocht in Kanaän of de verovering van het volk Israël zoals beschreven in Jozua. Verschillende hypothesen worden gehandhaafd, ook met gebruikmaking van archeologisch materiaal. Dezen variëren van de stelling dat er geen verovering had plaatsgevonden, tot de opvatting dat er een lang proces van vreedzame infiltratie had plaatsgevonden. Wat Van Bekkum poogt te demonstreren in zijn proefschrift is dat de vestiging van Israël in Kanaän een proces *from conquest to coexistence* was. Hij poogt te

polarization reveals itself between the so-called institutionalized churches and new church plants. Issues like creating space for allowing women in the church offices, making infant baptism optional, making the Sunday as the day of worship optional, making membership administration optional, add to the effect of polarization. The textbook also breathes an atmosphere of man-centered church planting (cf. the 5 so-called 'existentialen'). Reformed mission and church planting should be primary embedded in the glory of God, and God's lawful claim on his world. We also refer in this regard to the critical evaluation of this textbook in the articles of Rev. H. Drost in *Nader Bekeken* (March 2010).

Annexure 2

Dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum

According to the mandate, our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad made a closer study of the dissertation of Dr. Van Bekkum. In 2010 Dr. K. van Bekkum issued his dissertation *From Conquest to Coexistence. Ideology and antiquarian intent in the Historiography of Israel's Settlement in Canaan*.

Overview

In the Western Old Testament research a debate is ongoing on the entry into Canaan or conquest of the people of Israel as it is described in Joshua. Several hypotheses are upheld, also making use of the interpretation of archaeological material. They vary from the statement that no conquest had taken place, to the view that there had been a long process of peaceful infiltration. What Van Bekkum endeavours to demonstrate in his dissertation is that the establishment of Israel in Canaan was a process *from conquest to coexistence*. He endeavours to demonstrate that the conquest isn't a mythical ideological conception of later times. In his dissertation Van Bekkum tries to restore communication between the exegesis of the Old Testament

demonstreren dat de verovering geen mythisch ideologisch concept van latere tijden is. In zijn proefschrift poogt Van Bekkum de communicatie te herstellen tussen de exegese van het Oude Testament en de archeologie. Hij beperkt zichzelf tot de exegese van Jozua 9:1-13:7, en met betrekking tot de archeologie beperkt hij zichzelf tot de periode van de 14^e – 8^e eeuw voor Christus. Met betrekking tot het wonder in Jozua 10 – de zon en de maan die stil bleven staan – probeert Van Bekkum dit te verklaren in termen van de conventies van oud oosterse narratieven. Dit leidt er toe dat het een literaire *topos* wordt, die de totaliteit en radicaliteit van het triomf onderstreept.

Verder levert Van Bekkum zijn eigen historiografische hypothese met betrekking tot Jozua 9-13. Enerzijds hebben de auteurs van deze hoofdstukken gebruik gemaakt van contemporaine literaire vormen. Anderzijds hadden zij ook respect voor overgeleverd materiaal en tradities. In zijn proefschrift komt Van Bekkum tot de conclusie dat historische ‘truth claims’ die in het boek Jozua gemaakt worden, noch door de archeologie bewezen, noch ontkend worden. De verdienste van zijn proefschrift kan hierin gezien worden dat het poogt een exegetisch-archeologische verdediging te geven voor de historiciteit van Israëls verovering in Kanaän (p.560). In het contemporaine westerse debat poogt Van Bekkum te staan voor de historiciteit van de Exodus en Intocht van Israël in Kanaän.

Methoden van Van Bekkum's exegese van Jozua 9-13

Methodisch beschrijft Van Bekkum het historisch materiaal in het Oude Testament als het product van het geloof en verwachtingen van een gemeenschap. In welke mate het historisch materiaal echte gebeurtenissen weergeeft, kan alleen vastgesteld worden door een dialogisch proces met ‘artifactual evidence’ (p.31-32, 357). Artefacten zijn objecten door mensen vervaardigd, die als bewijs functioneren.

In zijn exegese maakt Van Bekkum een onderscheid tussen ‘truth claim’ en ‘truth value’ (p.32). Deze wijze waarop Van Bekkum met historische teksten uit het Oude Testament

and archaeology. He limits himself to the exegesis of Joshua 9:1-13:7, and with regard to the archaeology he limits himself to the period of the 14th-8th century BC. With regard to the miracle in Joshua 10 – sun and moon that stood still – Van Bekkum tries to explain it in terms of the conventions of old Eastern narratives. Consequently it becomes a literary *topos* emphasizing the totality and radicality of the triumph.

Furthermore Van Bekkum provides his own historiographical hypothesis with regard to Joshua 9-13. On the one hand the authors of these chapters used contemporary literary means. On the other hand they also showed respect for transmitted material and traditions. In his dissertation Van Bekkum comes to the conclusion that the historic ‘truth claims’ that are made in the book of Joshua, are neither proved by archaeology, nor denied. His dissertation can be merited for providing an exegetical-archaeological defence of the historicity of Israel's conquest in Canaan (p.560). In the contemporary Western debate Van Bekkum endeavours to stand with the historicity of the Exodus and Entry of Israel into Canaan.

Methodology of Van Bekkum's Exegesis of Joshua 9-13

Methodologically Van Bekkum describes the historical material in the Old Testament as the product of a community's belief and expectations. To what extent the historical material is reflecting true happenings can only be established by a dialogical process with ‘artifactual evidence’ (p.31-32, 357). Artefacts are objects produced by humans and functioning as evidence.

In his exegesis Van Bekkum makes a distinction between ‘truth claim’ and ‘truth value’ (p.32). Van Bekkum's treatment of historical texts from the Old Testament leads to a situation that their historicity is suspended, since they first have to be stripped from conventions such as simplification, selectivity, suggestive detail, rhetorical exaggeration, anachronism and

omgaat, heeft tot gevolg dat hun historiciteit opgeschort wordt, aangezien zij eerst ontdaan dienen te worden van conventies als simplificatie, selectiviteit, suggestieve detail, retorische overdrijving, anachronisme en dergelijke (p.32f, 114f, 179, 201, 184, 194). Buitenbijbelse bronnen kunnen met dit proces helpen. Pas hierna kan vastgesteld worden wat historisch is en wat niet, en hoeveel van de story in werkelijkheid *history* is.

De zogenaamde poëtische fragmenten van Jozua 10:12b-13 worden vervolgens door Van Bekkum voorzien van een eigen interpretatie. Van Bekkum wil niet ontkennen dat God een wonder verricht heeft in antwoord op Jozua's gebed. Maar volgens hem is Jozua's gebed beantwoord met een overwinningswonder, beschreven volgens oud oosterse conventies als zijnde een militaire overwinning in één dag. In werkelijk had het wonder dus niets te maken met de ware lengte van die dag. Het 'feit' dat de zon stil stond (Jozua 10:12-14) wordt verklaard op een metaforische wijze, met de conclusie dat de zon en maan niet echt stil hebben gestaan. Integendeel, *de verlenging van de dag om de vijand in één keer te verslaan wordt verstaan als een retorische strategie, die de algemeen literaire techniek uit het oude nabije oosten reflecteert om namelijk een grote militaire overwinning samen te bundelen tot één enkele tijdsduur.* (p.250)

Deze interpretatie wijkt echter af van de verklaring die Jozua 10 over zichzelf geeft. In de verzen 13 en 14 wordt genoemd dat er iets zeer buitengewoons op die dag gebeurd is. Mensen moeten niet denken dat dit alleen beeldspraak is of overdrijving, zegt de tekst zelf! De verzen 13e-14c geven dus bijbels commentaar op de verzen 12d-13d: het was een historische dag. De klem wordt gelegd op de unieke wijze waarop het gebed beantwoord werd. Vers 13 spreekt over de dag waarop de HEER dit concreet gebed beantwoord heeft: "De zon bleef een volle dag boven aan de hemel staan voordat ze onderging." Jozua's gebed, in combinatie met de verklaring die de Bijbel zelf geeft, laat geen ruimte te denken dat hier iets anders plaatsgevonden heeft dan een wonder in die zin dat deze dag echt langer was. Toch gaat Van Bekkum door en bestempelt de verklaring in de

the like (p. 32f, 114f, 179, 201, 184, 194). Extra Biblical sources can help with this process. Only afterwards it can be discerned what is historical and what not, or how much of the story actually forms *history*.

The so called poetic fragments of Joshua 10:12b-13 are subsequently furnished by Van Bekkum with an own interpretation. Van Bekkum doesn't want to deny that God performed a miracle on Joshua's prayer. But according to him Joshua's prayer was answered by a miracle of victory, described according to old Eastern conventions as a military victory in one day. In reality the miracle didn't have anything to do with the true length of that day. The 'fact' that the sun stood still (Joshua 10:12-14) is interpreted in a metaphorical way, with the conclusion that the sun and moon did not actually stand still. Rather "the prolonging of the day to defeat the enemy at one time is understood as a rhetorical strategy, reflecting the common ancient Near Eastern literary technique of contracting a great military victory to a single time span" (p.250).

This interpretation deviates from the explanation Joshua 10 gives of itself. In verses 13 and 14 mention is made repeatedly that something very extraordinary happened on that day. People shouldn't think this is a figure of speech or exaggeration, the text itself remarks! Verses 12d-13d is thus provided with Biblical commentary in verses 13e-14c: it was a historical day. The emphasis is placed on the unique way the prayer was answered. Verse 13 speaks about the day on which the LORD answered this concrete prayer: "The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day." Joshua's prayer, in combination with the explanation provided by the Bible text itself, doesn't leave room to think that something else had happened than a miracle in the sense that the day was really longer. Notwithstanding Van Bekkum proceeds to label the explanation of the Bible text as a secondary meaning (p.247), whilst he himself provides the primary

bijbeltekst als een secundaire betekenis (p.247), terwijl hij zelf de primaire verklaring geeft. De secundaire verklaring bestempelt hij als een hyperbolische interpretatie met een verminderde historiciteit (p.249-250). Van Bekkum gaat zelfs zo ver te stellen dat de gebeurtenissen van Jozua 10:12-14 op een metaforische wijze geïnterpreteerd kunnen worden. Het wordt alleen een beeld dat Gods overwinning beklemtoont, en we hoeven het niet als letterlijk te beschouwen (p.250).

In dit verband moet de vraag gesteld worden hoe een orthodoxe exegeet zijn eigen exegetische primair kan noemen, terwijl de tekst hiervoor geen aanleiding geeft. De tekst stelt namelijk bij herhaling het omgekeerde. Het overtuigt niet Gods overwinning te beamen, maar vraagt tevens te plaatsen achter hoe Hij het gedaan heeft. Een exegeet heeft niet het recht dit te doen. Wie geeft ons het recht iets als metaforische taal te bestempelen als de tekst er geen aanleiding toe geeft? Van Bekkum doet dit ook in een ander artikel als hij stelt dat de strijd tussen David en Goliath niet echt heeft plaatsgevonden, maar dat het in geestelijke en historische zin exemplarisch is voor de strijd van David tegen de Filistijnen (1 Sam 17). Hoe kan iets historisch exemplarisch zijn, als het voorbeeld niet historisch is?⁴⁰ Een exegeet zal in zo'n geval bij voorkeur andere verklaringsmogelijkheden kiezen, die zeker ook voorhanden zijn.

De vraag naar de inspiratie van het boek Jozua is ook relevant in dit opzicht. Van Bekkum stelt dat Gods Woord samenvalt met de ideologische processering van de zogenaamde tekst-gemeenschap (de groep mensen die de tekst heeft voortgebracht). De tekst van het boek Jozua is een reflectie van de verwachtingen van de tekst-gemeenschap. Hoe houdt deze stelling verband met het profetisch karakter van Gods Woord, dat vaak lijnrecht tegen de verwachtingen van de gemeenschap inging? Profeten moesten met een boodschap van God komen, een boodschap waar de gemeenschap niet op zat te wachten, en vaak ook verdrong.

explanation. The secondary meaning he classifies as a hyperbolic interpretation with a reduced historicity (p.249-250). Van Bekkum even continues to postulate that the happenings of Joshua 10:12-14 can be interpreted in a metaphorical way. It becomes a mere image underscoring God's victory, and we don't have to take it literally (p.250).

In this regard one has to ask the question how an orthodox exegete can label his own exegesis as primary, without the text itself giving occasion to it. The text actually repeatedly states the contrary. It makes no sense to confirm God's victory, but putting question marks behind the way how He had achieved it. An exegete doesn't have the right to do this. Who gives us the right to label something as metaphorical language without the text giving occasion to it? Van Bekkum does the same in another article where he asserts that the battle between David and Goliath did not happen literally, but that it in a spiritual and historical sense it is exemplary for David's battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 17). How can something be exemplary historical, if the example is not historical?⁴⁵ An exegete would in such a case rather choose other possibilities of interpretation, which are definitively available.

The question regarding the inspiration of the book of Joshua is also relevant in this regard. Van Bekkum asserts that God's Word coincides with the ideological processing of the so called text-community (the group of people who produced the text). The text of the book of Joshua is a reflection of the expectations of the text-community. How does this statement relate to the prophetic character of God's Word, often contravening the expectations of the community? Prophets had to come with a message from God, a message the community did not wait for, and often suppressed.

We have to conclude that Van Bekkum's

⁴⁰ Van Bekkum in: *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (Dec 2003), p.328-355

⁴⁵ Van Bekkum in: *Theologia Reformata* 46,4 (Dec 2003), p.328-355

Wij moeten concluderen dat Van Bekkum's methode van exegese buiten de kaders beweegt die men 'vrijheid van exegese' zou kunnen noemen. Van Bekkum geeft in de Epiloog van zijn proefschrift aan dat hij art. 5 van de Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis aanvaardt – dat handelt over de goddelijke oorsprong van de Bijbel (p.499). Maar het schijnt dat er een discrepantie is tussen woorden en daden in dit proefschrift. De klaarblijkelijke betekenis van de tekst zoals deze door de eeuwen heen gefunctioneerd heeft, wordt niet gehonoreerd. De betekenis van de tekst wordt onduidelijk, tot het moment dat de oudtestamentische wetenschapper met zijn hermeneutische benadering de tekst aan de bijbellezer kan openbaren.

Datering van de verovering en de gevolgen hiervan
Het zijn niet alleen de exegese van Van Bekkum en zijn hermeneutische benadering van Jozua 9-13 die vragen oproepen. Met betrekking tot de datering van de Verovering maakt Van Bekkum gebruik van bepaalde archeologische vondsen, terwijl hij andere ontdekkingen negeert (p.360-361). Dit heeft te maken met de datering van de intocht van Israël in Kanaän. Van Bekkum stelt dat heel waarschijnlijk de steden Jericho en Ai niet bewoond waren tijdens de intocht, dit in tegenstelling tot wat we in Jozua 5-8 lezen. Deze hoofdstukken beschrijven de intocht van het volk Israël zowel als de daaropvolgende verwoesting van deze steden. Een probleem duikt echter op omdat Van Bekkum de heersende datering in de vrijzinnige westerse wetenschap gebruikt (p.343, 359-361, 558-559). Het is opvallend dat Van Bekkum ervoor koos de archeologische vondsen van de 15^e eeuw niet systematisch te onderzoeken. Volgt hij hier de trend van de vrijzinnige theologie door de 15^e eeuw a priori buiten beschouwing te laten? De vrijzinnige theologie wilde tot op heden het bestaan van Israël als etnische groep zo vroeg als de 15^e eeuw niet aanvaarden, omdat er volgens hen geen buitenbijbelse bronnen zijn om dit te bevestigen. Wij concluderen dat ook met betrekking tot de datering van de Verovering Van Bekkum ervoor kiest de heersende methode in de vrijzinnige theologie te volgen, namelijk om de bijbelse geschiedschrijving buiten beschouwing te laten en niet als bewijsmateriaal te gebruiken. Daarom is de wijze waarop Van Bekkum met het dateringsvraagstuk omgaat niet alleen een

method of exegesis goes beyond what one can call 'freedom of exegesis'. Van Bekkum indicates in the Epilogue of his dissertation that he accepts art. 5 of the Belgic Confession – dealing with the divine origin of the Bible (p.499). However there then seems to be a discrepancy between words and deeds in this dissertation. The transparent meaning of the text as it functioned through the centuries, is not honoured. The meaning of the text becomes obscure, until the Old Testament scholar with his hermeneutical approach reveals the text to the Bible reader.

Dating of the conquest and its consequences
Not only Van Bekkum's exegesis and hermeneutical approach of Joshua 9-13 raise questions. With regard to *dating* the Conquest Van Bekkum exploits certain archeological findings, whilst he puts other findings to the side-line (p.360-361). This has to do with his dating of the entry of Israel into Canaan. Van Bekkum states that it seems very likely that the cities Jericho and Ai were not inhabited during the entry, this contrary to what we find in Joshua 5-8. These chapters describe the entry of the people of Israel as well as the ensuing destruction of these cities. Yet a problem arose because Van Bekkum uses the prevalent dating in liberal Western science (p.343, 359-361, 558-559). It is striking that Van Bekkum chose not to investigate the archeological findings of the 15th century systematically. Does he follow the trend here of liberal theology a priori omitting the 15th century? Liberal theology until present did not want to accept the existence of Israel as an ethnic group as early as the 15th century, their reason being that there are no extra-Biblical sources to confirm this. We conclude that also with regard to the dating of the Conquest Van Bekkum follows the method prevalent in liberal theology, namely to suspend the Biblical description of history not using it as evidence. Therefore the way in which Van Bekkum is dealing with the dating issue is not merely a technical discussion, but of a hermeneutical nature. Van Bekkum a priori seems to have decided not to allow archeological findings

technische discussie, maar van hermeneutische aard. Het lijkt of Van Bekkum a priori besloten heeft archeologische vondsten van de 15^e eeuw geen ruimte in zijn argumentatie te geven.

Ook wat de zaak van de datering betreft zien we dat de duidelijke historische claims van de Schrift aan de kant geschoven worden. 1 Koningen 6:1 geeft bijvoorbeeld aan dat de Exodus 480 jaren voor het vierde regeringsjaar van Salomo plaatsvond. Maar om deze datering te aanvaarden is volgens Van Bekkum een “lazy man’s solution” (p.33). Volgens Van Bekkum is het methodisch niet correct bijbelse data te accepteren zoals die zich aandienen. “It’s literary artistry and use of genre conventions should be studied first” (p.33). Het gevolg is dat de contemporaine interpretatie van archeologisch materiaal uiteindelijk het bijbelse getuigenis overtroeft en de traditionele interpretatie wordt niet eens besproken. Ook in deze zin is Van Bekkum’s proefschrift vrijzinnig, het woord vrijzinnig in die zin definiërende dat de historische betrouwbaarheid van bijbelgedeelten opgeschort wordt totdat die weer door buitenbijbelse bronnen bevestigd is.

Voor lange tijd stond de Theologische Universiteit in Kampen ervoor bekend dat men ervoor koos, de methoden van de vrijzinnige theologie ten spijt, om door te gaan de theologie (zoals de oudtestamentische wetenschap) te ontwikkelen in lijn met de klassiek orthodoxe traditie. Zoals hierboven aangetoond, is het kenmerkend voor het proefschrift van Van Bekkum dat de historiciteit van het Oude Testament opgeschort wordt, en pas weer bevestigd wordt nadat er buitenbijbelse gegevens hiertoe aanleiding geven, een zogeheten dialogisch proces met ‘artefactual evidence’ (p.59).

Het kan als positief beschouwt worden dat Van Bekkum poogde de historiciteit van Israël’s verovering te verdedigen. Maar aan zijn conclusies hangt een prijskaartje – vraagtekens achter de verwoesting van Jericho (ook Hebr 11:30 verliest hiermee zijn historische basis), vraagtekens achter de datering die het Oude Testament zelf geeft van de exodus en intocht. Wat je aan de ene kant schijnt te winnen, verlies

of the 15th century to function in his argumentation.

Also with regard to the dating issue we see that the straightforward historical claims of Scripture are put aside. For example, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that the Exodus took place 480 years prior to Solomon’s fourth year as king. But to accept this date is according to Van Bekkum a “lazy man’s solution” (p.33). According to Van Bekkum it is methodologically incorrect to accept Biblical data at face value. “It’s literary artistry and use of genre conventions should be studied first” (p.33). In the end, the current interpretation of archaeological evidence trumps the Biblical testimony and the traditional interpretation is not even discussed. Also in this sense Van Bekkum’s dissertation is liberal, defining the word liberal as the tendency to suspend the historical reliability of Biblical passages until confirmed by extra-Biblical sources.

For long it was the ‘trademark’ of the Theological University in Kampen, despite the methods of liberal theology, to persist in developing theology (e.g. the Old Testament sciences) in line with the classical orthodox tradition. As indicated above, Van Bekkum’s dissertation is characterized by the tendency to suspend the historicity of Old Testament passages, and reinstall them only after the confirmation of extra-Biblical evidence, a so-called dialogical process with artefactual evidence (p.59).

It can be regarded as something positive that Van Bekkum endeavoured to defend the historicity of Israel’s conquest. But his conclusions come at a price – question marks behind the destruction of Jericho (also Hebr 11:30 lost its historical basis), question marks behind the OT’s own dating of the exodus and entry. What you seem to win on the one side, you lose again on the other. To conclude one can say that there is gratitude for his intentions, but concerns in connection with his hypotheses and methods.

je weer aan de andere kant. Concluderend kan gezegd worden dat er waardering is voor zijn intenties, maar zorgen wat betreft zijn hypothesen en methode.

Er dient op gewezen te worden dat bij dit soort hermeneutiek die Van Bekkum gebruikt om passages van het Oude Testament te exegetiseren, het gemiddelde gereformeerde kerklid volledig afhankelijk wordt van de wetenschapper voor het lezen en verstaan van het Oude Testament. Van Bekkum's woordgebruik op p.193 is openbarend wat dit betreft: "So if there is anything historical in 2 Samuel 8 and 10..." Is het gepast voor een orthodoxe exegeet op een dergelijke wijze te formuleren?

Wij moeten concluderen dat in dit proefschrift twee basale gereformeerde hermeneutische principes geschonden worden – de transparantie en de historische betrouwbaarheid van het Oude Testament.

Er is één aspect dat nog overwogen dient te worden. Heeft het enigzins meriete als Van Bekkum in zijn proefschrift een apologetische benadering kiest? Heeft hij – apologetisch gesproken – iets bereikt op een gebied waar christenen, moslims, joden etc. elkaar ontmoeten? Als dit het geval zou zijn, is degelijke communicatie naar de kerken van vitaal belang, ten einde misverstanden en mogelijk achterdocht te voorkomen. En wat nog belangrijker is – de auteur dient zelf ook transparant te zijn – *ik gebruik wel de heersende methode om iets te bewijzen, maar dat betekent niet dat ik met alle axiomas instem.*

Wij zijn bezorgd over het feit dat de Theologische Universiteit in Kampen een proefschrift met dergelijke methodische uitgangspunten kon goedkeuren. Betekent dit dat Kampen niet langer de traditioneel gereformeerde beschouwing van de Schrift als helder, duidelijk en haar eigen uitlegster handhaaft? Als het Oude Testament niet meer zegt wat er staat, waar eindigen we? Het is onduidelijk hoe je kunt onderscheiden tussen het aanvaarden van de tekst van de Schrift en wat de tekst zegt (p.499). Wij maken ons zorgen dat

It should also be noted that with the sort of hermeneutics used by Van Bekkum to exegete passages from the Old Testament, the average Reformed church member becomes fully dependent on the scholar for reading and interpreting the Old Testament. Van Bekkum's wording on p.193 is illuminative in this regard: "So if there is anything historical in 2 Samuel 8 and 10..." Is it proper for an orthodox exegete to formulate in this way?

We have to conclude that in this dissertation two basic Reformed hermeneutical principles are violated– the transparency and historical reliability of the Old Testament.

One more aspect should be mentioned. Does Van Bekkum's dissertation have any merits if you consider it to be a sort of an apologetic approach? Did he – apologetically speaking – achieve something in a field where Christians, Atheists, Muslims, Jews, etc. meet one another? If this would be the case, decent communication to the churches is of vital importance, in order to prevent misunderstanding and possible suspicions. And even more importantly, the author should also be transparent himself – *I am using the prevailing methods to prove something, but it doesn't mean I agree with all its axioms.*

Our concern is the fact that the Theological University in Kampen could approve a dissertation with such methodological principles. Does this mean that Kampen no longer holds to the traditional Reformed view of Scripture as perspicuous and its own interpreter? If the Old Testament no longer means what it says, where do we end up? It is unclear to us how he can distinguish between accepting the text of Scripture and what the text says (p.499). Our concern is the pattern that is being set in which the obvious meaning of the text is no longer maintained.

By not entering into substantial discussions about the dissertation of dr. Van Bekkum, and by appointing him as special lecturer

hiermee een voorbeeld is gesteld waarvolgens de klaarblijkelijke betekenis van de tekst niet langer gehandhaafd wordt.

Door niet betrokken te raken bij de diepgaande discussies over het proefschrift van dr. Van Bekkum, en door hem aan te stellen als docent Oude Testament in Kampen, heeft de Synode van Harderwijk 2011 volgens ons geloofwaardigheid verleend aan deze nieuwe en volgens ons ongereformeerde wijze van Schriftuitleg.

Bijlage 3

Vrouwen in de bijzondere kerkelijke ambten

Hoewel uw synoden nog geen besluit genomen hebben om vrouwelijke ambtsdragers toe te laten, maken wij ons zorgen over het werk van Deputaten M/V in de kerk en de wijze waarop voorgaande synoden toezicht hielden op hun activiteiten.

Toen deputaten aangesteld door Synode Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 studiemateriaal schreven om de reflectie op de rol van vrouwen in de kerk te faciliteren, lieten zij na de kerken te wijzen op wat de heilige Schrift hierover zegt. Wat de Schrift duidelijk openbaart over deze zaak, werd integendeel gedegradeerd tot één optie naast anderen. De daaropvolgende synoden hebben dit niet gecorrigeerd. De Synode van Harderwijk 2011 heeft deputaten aangesteld met het mandaat de vraag te beantwoorden of het volgens de Schrift geoorloofd is vrouwen in de ambten van ouderling en predikant aan te stellen. Dit op zich toont aan dat er een verminderde achting is voor het duidelijk onderwijs van de Schrift dat deze ambten bediend moeten worden door trouwe mannen die gekozen zijn in overeenstemming met de instructies die daarvoor door de heilige Geest gegeven zijn door de apostel Paulus (1 Timoteüs 2:11-14, 1 Korintiërs 14:33-35).

De Synode van Harderwijk 2011 heeft ook niet de afwijkende opvattingen van de Deputaten M/V in de kerk gecorrigeerd. Zij hadden namelijk aan de kerken gecommuniceerd dat de gereformeerde belijdenisgeschriften geen uitspraak over deze zaak doen. Artikel 30 van de Nederlandse

Old Testament in Kampen, Synod Harderwijk 2011 provided credibility to this new and in our opinion unreformed way of dealing with Scripture.

Annexure 3

Women in the special ecclesiastical offices

While your synods have not made a decision yet allowing for women office bearers, we are concerned by the work of the Deputies M/V in de kerk and the way past synods have supervised their activities.

When a committee appointed by Synod Amersfoort-Centrum 2005 developed a manual to facilitate reflection on the role of women in the church, it failed to direct the churches to what Holy Scripture says on this matter. Instead, what Scripture clearly reveals regarding this matter became merely one option to be considered among others. Consecutive synods did not restore this. Synod Harderwijk 2011 appointed deputies with a mandate to answer the question whether Scripture permits the appointment of women to the offices elder and minister. This is evidence of a diminished regard for the plain teaching of Scripture that these offices are to be filled by faithful men who are chosen in agreement with the instructions provided by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 2:11-14, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Synod Harderwijk 2011 neither corrected the misleading views of Deputies M/V in de kerk, who communicated to the churches that the Reformed confessions are indecisive on this matter. Article 30 of the Belgic Confession, referring back to the rule the apostle Paul gave to Timothy, states that “faithful men” are to execute these offices.

Our Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad have requested to meet with Deputies M/V in de kerk during their visit to the Netherlands in February-March 2013, yet this request was not granted by BBK RCNL. In our opinion this request was not farfetched. It was in line with the mandate given by Synod Harderwijk to Deputies M/V

Geloofsbelijdenis, terugverwijzende naar de regel die de apostel Paulus gaf aan Timoteüs, stelt dat personen (in de oorspronkelijke latijnse tekst staat: mannen) die trouw zijn deze ambten zullen bedienen.

Onze Deputaten voor betrekkingen met buitenlandse kerken hebben verzocht de Deputaten M/V in de kerk te ontmoeten tijdens hun bezoek aan Nederland in februari-maart 2013. Dit verzoek werd door de Deputaten BBK GKv afgewezen. Volgens ons was dit verzoek niet vergezocht. Het was in lijn met het mandaat dat de Synode van Harderwijk aan Deputaten M/V gaf, namelijk “goede aandacht te geven aan uitspraken van verwante kerken in binnen- en buitenland” en “voor de verschillende onderdelen relevante informatie en advies in te winnen bij de TU en deputaatschappen, m.n. BBK, DKE, GDD, HKO en OOG.”⁴¹ Dit is des te meer pijnlijk, nadat wij het rapport van Deputaten M/V in de kerk aan de Synode van Ede 2014 hebben gelezen, waarin zij een eenzijdig beeld van onze kerken schetsen, waarin wij ons niet vinden.

*in de kerk, namely “goede aandacht te geven aan uitspraken van verwante kerken in binnen- en buitenland” and “voor de verschillende onderdelen relevante informatie en advies in te winnen bij de TU en deputaatschappen, m.n. BBK, DKE, GDD, HKO en OOG.”*⁴⁶ This is the more painful to us, after having read the report of Deputies M/V in de kerk to Synod Ede 2014, in which they portray a one-sided image of our churches we cannot associate with.

⁴¹ Acta Synode Harderwijk 2011, p.67-68.

⁴⁶ Acta Synode Harderwijk 2011, p.67-68.

Appendix 14 – Report Deputies for Review Liturgical Forms and Form Prayers

Deputies for the review of Liturgical Forms and Prayers Report to FRCSA Synod, Bethal May 2014

1. Deputies: Rev. Jelle Drijfhout (secretary), Rev. Keith Kleijn (convener), brother Harm Snijder
2. Mandate of Synod (article 21 of Acts of synod 2011)
 - a. To review what the GKSA has done and is doing regarding the liturgical forms and to advise next synod;
 - b. To rewrite the Prayers of the Afrikaans Psalter in modern Afrikaans; and to serve the next synod with a proposal;
 - c. To be in contact with the deputies of Classis North, who deal with the Sotho translation of the liturgical forms;
 - d. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.
3. Meetings: 22 Jul 2013, 19 Aug 2013, 18 Nov 2013
4. Material
 - a. Acts FRCSA Synod 2011, particularly articles 14 and 21;
 - b. Acts GKSA Synod 2006, 20.13 (pp 520-535) regarding an alternative form for the Lord's Supper;
 - c. Acts RCSA Synod 2009, 21.1 (p. 432-435), regarding an alternative form for the Lord's Supper; 21.5 (p. 465-490); Revised translations of liturgical forms; 2.6 (p. 492-495) regarding additions to the form for Baptism; 21.7 (p. 496 -505): Revised versions of the Prayers; 21.8 (p. 506-507): Revised translation of the Subscription Forms;
 - d. Acts RCSA Synod 2012, 21.11: Report re-translation of Confessions of Faith, Forms and Prayers together with recommendations already approved;
 - e. Letter of FRC Pretoria, 31 Jan 2013 regarding Afrikaans Liturgical Forms together with an appendix outlining the background of past synod decisions regarding Liturgical Forms;
 - f. Correspondence of br Harm Snijder regarding the Prayers.
 - g. Acts RCSA Synod 2012, 21.1: Deputies on matters of Doctrine; Alternative form for the Lord's Supper plus attachments 1 and 2.
5. Report on mandate of synod (section 2 of this report)
 - a. Regarding a) We interpret 'review' as to check, evaluate and to make recommendations.
 - b. Regarding b) It appears that synod 2011 did not fully appreciate the meaning of the request of the Church council of Pretoria (and of br Snijder). The request did not only ask for a linguistic revision of the Prayers, but also a revision of their content.
 - c. The GKSA are still in the process of revision of their Forms and Worship prayers. We used the text of Forms and Prayers as recorded in the GKSA acts of synod of 2009 and 2012.

- d. Regarding c) Deputies of classis North reported in August 2011 that Potchefstroom was contacted and that the book *Puku ya Kereke* still has the Sotho version of the Liturgical forms in rather archaic language. A new version of the book is envisaged which uses a more modern version of language but no publication dates are currently available.

It is decided: To use the current version of *Puku ya Kereke* but to use more modern versions of Forms which are already available, that is, for Baptism of Infants, the Lord's Supper plus the Abbreviated Form of the Lord's Supper. This recommendation is based on information available up to Aug 2011.

6. Evaluation of Forms

- a. Form for the Baptism of Infants: Some minor changes were evident. Although the new text is useful, its language is not an improvement.
- b. Form of Baptism of Adults: The same as a) applies.
- c. Form for the Public Profession of Faith: Some minor changes in the use of words, but otherwise the same.
- d. Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: More differences were evident because the Form of the GKSA is based on an older Form than the Dutch Form on which FRCSA Forms are based. The more recent Dutch form was already an improvement. In principle there are no differences in content. But using the Form of the GKSA would not be an improvement.
- e. Abbreviated Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: The same as d) applies.
- f. Alternative Form for Celebration of the Lord's Supper: GKSA Deputies had the task to compile an alternative Form which includes the accents of John Calvin. This focuses on the communion with Christ. He is the host at the table and nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of believers (Belgic Confession, article 35 – see appendix).
- g. Form for the Excommunication of Communicant Members: It is perfectly scriptural and we can use it.
- h. Form for the Excommunication of Non-communicant Members: Missing from available GKSA documents.
- i. Form for Re-admission into the Church of Christ: This form is literally the same as our form.
- j. Form for Installation of Ministers of the Word: Although the form is shorter than that of the FRCSA, all important elements are present although some appear in a different order. The form is scriptural and can be used.
- k. Form for Installation of Missionaries: missing from GKSA documents.
- l. Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons: The form is scriptural and the basic elements are present. It can thus be used. But it offers significant less content compared to our current form.
- m. Form for the Solemnization of Marriage: This form is not as complete and rich in content as the FRCSA form, but it is not unscriptural (except perhaps the reference to the third goal of marriage which can be questioned on exegetical grounds). But all important elements are present.

7. Conclusions regarding Forms

- a. The linguistic changes in the revised GKSA forms are minimal. We could use the GKSA forms in our services (with the exception of the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons and the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage - these forms are poorer in content than our current forms). Altogether we don't find the GKSA Forms very satisfactory. We expected and had hoped for a better linguistic update. Overall we detect an impoverishment rather than an improvement compared to our current forms.
- b. The GKSA continues to base its forms on older forms than used by ourselves. Because our forms are based on more recent Netherlands forms, they incorporate newer insights. This is evident, for example, in the list of sins within the Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in the Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons.
- c. The Synod of the GKSA distributed a new Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper which emphasizes our communion with Christ. We believe this form is a positive addition to the two Forms we already have.
- d. We face a difficult dilemma: Do we choose to use the Forms of the GKSA, as the church council of Pretoria proposes, or do we continue to use our own forms? The advantage of the first option is being more hospitable to visitors. Our forms would be familiar. The disadvantage is that the language still remains outdated. This makes it less hospitable to other than GKSA visitors. What should be decisive? Because we prefer not to use the GKSA's Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons and the Form for the Solemnization of Marriage but our own forms, we require our own book. Deputies recommend the second option: To retain our own Forms.
- e. Church Councils carefully need to consider whether it would not be more hospitable to project the Form on screen, so that visitors can follow the text being read.

8. Conclusions regarding the Prayers:

- a. The GKSA have linguistically updated their Prayers. But changes are minimal and unsatisfactory. The use of language remains archaic and long-winded.
- b. However, there is a more serious problem. The Prayers are one-sided. They focus on our sin and depravity. The gratitude for God's work in our lives and the praise of God for His work of redemption, is lacking. The Prayers breathe an atmosphere of gloom and may create misunderstanding regarding our position in Christ. They are therefore unbalanced which makes them not well suited to serve as Prayers.
- c. There are 14 Prayers which can not only be used for the church liturgy, but also at home. Deputies find this number excessive, we do not need that many.
- d. Based on these considerations, deputies did not proceed with the linguistic renewal of the Prayers.
- e. Deputies recognize that Prayers are nevertheless of value not only because they may assist elders in compiling prayers to be used in church services led by elders, but also because they have a wider application. They can also teach members how to formulate prayers for home and personal use.

9. Recommendations to synod 2014:
- a. At this stage we do not recommend that the FRCSA make use of the revised GKSA Liturgical Forms and Prayers;
 - b. That we continue to use our own respective Forms;
 - c. To appoint new deputies and to give them the original instruction of the synod of 2008: To study the Liturgical Forms in order to establish where they can be improved and to provide the next synod with appropriate recommendation. Deputies recommend only to appoint deputies knowledgeable in Afrikaans and in theology.
 - d. To approve the use the text of the new Form of the GKSA for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper within our churches (for use in Afrikaans, English and Sotho services – the last two in translated form).
 - e. To instruct deputies to continue to seek alternative Forms for Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - f. To recommend that congregations display the Forms on screen so that everybody (including visitors) can follow the text.
 - g. Not to continue the use of the present Prayers in church services.
 - h. To instruct deputies to compile five new Prayers, of which four are for use in Worship services: 1) A confession of sin, 2) A prayer before the sermon 3) a prayer before the preaching of the Catechism, 4) and a prayer/thanksgiving to be used after the sermon, 5) A prayer for use in house liturgy, in English, Afrikaans and Sotho.

Appendix: New GKSA Form for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper

The celebration of Communion with the Living Christ / Emphasis on the accents of Calvin

Note: This Form focuses on our gratifying communion with the living Christ. He hosts us at his table, being the living bread which came down from heaven to nourish and sustain our spiritual life (Belgic Confession, article 35).

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Instituted by Christ

This Communion was established by our Redeemer himself.

Now when the hour came, he took his place at the table, along with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will never again eat one until it finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. For I tell you, from now on I will never drink the product of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it in pieces, and handed it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Keep on doing this in memory of me." He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for you. (NIV, Luke 22v14-20)

Remember Christ

In obedience to the words of Christ: "Keep on doing this in memory of me" we celebrate at the Lord's Supper that Jesus Christ was sent to this world according to the promises of God the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us who are sinners. With joy, we confess that our life rests upon his death. We thank our faithful Saviour who sacrificed himself as the Good Shepherd and gave his life for his sheep. We celebrate the divine mystery:

*He appeared in a body,
was vindicated by the Spirit,
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory (NIV, 1 Tim 3:16).*

Our Attitude and God's Assurances

The great gift of God's grace in Christ inspires us to dislike ourselves because of our sins and to humble ourselves before God. With joy and gratitude we accept the assurance that all our sins are forgiven on the basis of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We accept that His perfect righteousness is credited and given to us. We therefore come to Him as with hands outstretched towards an abundant Giver, as sick to the Healer, as sinners to Him who works righteousness, and as dead to Him who gives life. Christ is the only One who feeds our souls. We accept the invitation of the heavenly Father to participate in the communion with Him and to be refreshed and to gain renewed strength from Him until we reach heavenly immortality. The unmistakable signs and seals of bread and wine assure us of Christ's heartfelt love and loyalty. We

know that He works in our hearts everything that is represented by bread and wine. He is indeed our bread of life.

Communion with Christ and with brothers and sisters

The blessings of the Lord's Supper are just as certain given to us as if we could see and touch Christ himself during Supper. The bread and wine witness and ensure us that, in this communion, Christ pours his life into us, which penetrates into our bone and marrow. When the bread is given to us, we are led to consider that similarly to bread which nourishes, maintains and protects our physical bodies, so does the body of Christ nourish our souls and give it life. When the wine as a symbol of the blood of Christ is served to us, we contemplate that the blood of Christ cherishes, comforts, strengthens and fills us with joy. Not only does Christ give us the signs thereof, but he also completes His work by the Spirit He promised. Through the Spirit Christ gives us life in His community, so that we may agree with the Apostle:

I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives in me (NIV, Gal 2:19-20)

He makes us offshoots of Him, the heavenly Vine, so that we may bear His fruit. By the same Spirit He commits us to each other in true love as members of the same body of Christ. At His table, Christ commands us:

"This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. (NIV, Joh 15v12)

Bread is made from many grains mixed together, so that one grain cannot be distinguished from another. In a similar way it is proper for us to live harmoniously and connected to each other without discord or division. Jesus warns us that

"Every kingdom divided against itself is destroyed" (NIV, Mat 12v25)

While we experience the glorious presence of Jesus Christ at this table, through His Word and Spirit, we must consider the command of Jesus:

"This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you." (NIV Joh 15v12).

Expectation of Christ's Coming

The Apostle Paul associates the Celebration of the Lord's Supper with Christ's coming when he says:

For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (NIV, 1 Cor. 11v26).

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we experience the joy of sharing in the new covenant through the blood of Christ. We thank God that we may know and share in salvation as proclaimed by the prophets. At the same time we look forward to the coming of our Saviour in glory. With joyful expectation we look forward to the eternal wedding feast where we will drink the new wine in the kingdom of his Father. With great joy, we pray together with God's church:

"Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" (NIV, Rev 22v20)

Prayer

Gracious God and Father, we wish to celebrate at this table the glorious communion with your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We ask you: Send us your revitalising Spirit, that we may be nourished with the true life giving bread from heaven that provides eternal life. Amen.

Song

(for example Sb 17-2)

Exhortation

Let us lift our hearts on high in heaven to Christ who is at the right hand of the Father. Let us all come with joy and unity to the table of the Lord. Thank Him for His great love that He bestowed upon us when he sacrificed himself, and that He still bestows upon us by giving us all his benefits.

Appendix 15 – Verslag van Deputate vir Hersiening Formuliere en Gebede

Rapport van die deputate hersiening van die formuliere en gebede vir die sinode van die VGK 2014

1. Deputate: ds Jelle Drijfhout (sekretaris); ds Kees Kleijn (sameroeper); br Harm Snijder
2. Opdrag van die sinode (art 21 Handeling 2011)
 - a. To review what the GKSA has done and are doing regarding the liturgical forms and advise next synod;
 - b. To rewrite the form prayers in the Afrikaans Psalter in modern Afrikaans en serve the next synod with a proposal;
 - c. To be in contact with the deputies of Classis North, that deals with the Sotho translation of liturgical forms;
 - d. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.
3. Vergaderings: 22 Julie 2013; 19 Augustus 2013; 18 November 2013
4. Materiaal:
 - a. Handeling VGKSA Sinode 2011, met name artikels 14 en 21;
 - b. Handeling GKSA Sinode 2006, 20.13 (bl. 520 – 535) re Alternatiewe Nagmaalsformuliere;
 - c. Handeling GKSA Sinode 2009, 21.1 (bl. 432 – 435), re Alternatiewe Nagmaalsformuliere; 21.5 (bl. 465 – 490): Hersiene vertalings van liturgiese formuliere; 2.6 (bl. 492 – 495) re byvoeging by doopsformulier; 21.7 (bl. 496 – 505): Hersiene vertalings van die Formuliergebede; 21.8 (bl. 506 – 507): Hersiene vertaling van Ondertekeningsformuliere;
 - d. Handeling GKSA Sinode 2012, 21.11: Rapport Hervertaling Belydenisskrifte, Formuliere en Formuliergebed met aanbevelings wat goedgekeur is;
 - e. Brief van VGK Pretoria, 31 Jan 2013 re Afrikaanse Liturgiese Formuliere met bylaag oor agtergrond sinodebesluite insake liturgiese formuliere;
 - f. Korrespondensie Harm Snijder re Formuliergebede.
 - g. Handeling GKSA Sinode 2012, 21.1: dep leerstellige sake: alternatiewe nagmaalsformuliere + bylae 1 en 2
5. Uitwerking van die opdrag
 - a. Regarding a) Ons interpreteer review as volg: nagaan, beoordeel en aanbevelings doen.
 - b. Regarding b) Dit lyk vir ons asof die sinode die agtergrond van die voorstel van die kerkraad van Pretoria nie goed geken het nie. Dit is in elk geval duidelik dat br Snijder nie net vra om taalkundige hersiening van die formuliergebede nie, maar ook inhoudelik.
 - c. dit is duidelik dat die GKSA ook nog in die proses is en dat die formuliere en gebede nog nie hul definitiewe vorm gekry het nie. Ons gebruik vir ons ondersoek die formuliere en gebede soos dit staan in die handeling van 2009 en 2012.
 - d. Regarding c) Deputies of classis North reported in August 2011 that Potchefstroom was contacted and that the book *Puku ya Kereke* still has the various forms in archaic language. A new version of the book with more modern language is envisaged, but no dates are available.
It is decided: To use *Puku ya Kereke* as it is now, except the following forms for which more modern versions are available: Child Baptism, Lord Supper and a shorter version for the Lord's Supper.
After this date nothing more happened.
6. Toetsing formuliere
 - a. Formulier vir die bediening van die heilige doop aan kinders: hier en daar word ander woorde gebruik, maar verder dieselfde. Dit is bruikbaar maar die taalgebruik is nie 'n verbetering nie.

- b. Formulier vir die bediening van die heilige doop aan volwassens: dieselfde
 - c. Formulier vir die aflegging van belydenis van geloof: hier en daar word ander woorde gebruik, maar verder dieselfde.
 - d. Formulier vir die viering van die heilige nagmaal: die verskille is groter, omdat die formulier van die GKSA teruggaan op 'n ouer formulier as die Nederlandse formulier waarvan ons formulier 'n vertaling van is. Die Nederlandse formulier het al 'n verbetering ondergaan. Inhoudelik is daar geen prinsipieële verskille nie. Tog sien ons dit nie as 'n verbetering as ons terug sou gaan na die formulier van die GKSA.
 - e. Kort formulier vir die viering van die heilige nagmaal: dieselfde
 - f. alternatiewe nagmaalsformulier: die deputate van die GKSA het ook die opdrag gekry om 'n alternatiewe nagmaalsformulier te ontwerp met klem op die aksente van Calvyn. In hierdie Formulier val die klem op die wonderlike gemeenskap met die lewende Christus, waardeur Hy as Gasheer aan die tafel ons deur die Heilige Gees werklik met Homself voed (vgl NGB, art 35). (sien bylae)
 - g. Formulier vir die uitsluiting uit die gemeente van Christus: dis volkome skriftuurlik en goed hanteerbaar.
 - h. Formulier vir die uitsluiting van dooplidmate: ontbreek
 - i. Formulier om 'n afgesnyde lidmaat weer in die gemeente van Christus op te neem: Hierdie formulier is letterlik dieselfde as ons formulier
 - j. Formulier vir die bevestiging van bedienaars van die Woord: Hoewel die formulier korter is as die van die VGK, word alle belangrike elemente genoem, dikwels ook in 'n ander volgorde as wat ons gewoon is. Die formulier is Skriftuurlik en goed bruikbaar.
 - k. Formulier vir die bevestiging van sendelinge: ontbreek
 - l. Formulier vir die bevestiging van ouderlinge en diakens: hoewel die formulier wel skriftuurlik is en die basiese elemente noem is en dus ook bruikbaar is, is dit wel 'n groot verarming in vergelyking met ons huidige formulier.
 - m. formulier vir die huweliksbevestiging: hierdie formulier is nie so kompleet en ryk as die VGK formulier nie, maar dit is nie onskriftuurlik nie (behalwe miskien die verwysing na die derde doel van die huwelik wat eksegeties bevraagteken kan word). Alle belangrike elemente word genoem.
7. Konklusies met betrekking tot formuliere
- a. wat ons tot nou toe gelees het is regtig minimale taalkundige veranderings. Ons sou dit in ons dienste kan gebruik (met uitsondering van die bevestigingsformulier vir ouderlinge en diakens en die formulier vir die huweliksbevestiging: hierdie formuliere is 'n verarming ten opsigte van ons huidige formulier.) Tog vind ons dit nie bevredigend nie. Ons het verwag en gehoop dat die taalkundige vernuwing beter aangepak sou word. Ten opsigte van ons huidige formuliere vind ons dit eerder 'n agteruitgang as vooruitgang.
 - b. Ons konstateer dat die GKSA nog steeds voortbou op ou formuliere, terwyl ons huidige formuliere nuwere insigte verwerk het, omdat ons formuliere aansluit by die Nederlandse formuliere. Dit sien 'n mens byvoorbeeld in die 'sondelys' wat in die nagmaalformulier staan, maar ook in die formulier vir die bevestiging vir ouderlinge en diakens.
 - c. Die laatste sinode van die GKSA het ook 'n nuwe nagmaalsformulier met nadruk op die gemeenskap met Christus aan die kerke toegestuur. Ons beoordeel hierdie nagmaalsformulier as 'n baie positiewe aanvulling op die twee formuliere wat ons het.
 - d. Ons staan voor 'n lastige dilemma: kies ons vir aansluiting by die GKSA, soos die kerkraad van Pretoria sou wil hê, of bly ons liever by ons eie formuliere. Die voordeel van opsie 1 is 'gasvryheid' vir besoekers wat uit die gereformeerde kerke kom. Hulle kan in hul psalmboek die formulier saamlees. Nadeel is egter die taalgebruik wat tog nog steeds outyds is. Dit is weer minder gasvry vir ander gaste. Wat moet die swaarste weeg? Aangesien ons in elk geval nie die formulier vir bevestiging van ouderlinge en diakens en die huweliksformulier wil oorneem nie, moet ons tog 'n eie boekie hê.

Na alles oorweeg te hê kies deputate op hierdie stadium vir opsie 2: ons behou ons eie formuliere.

- e. Kerkrade moet dalk ernstig oorweeg of ons nie die formuliere op 'n skerm moet projekteer nie, sodat ook buitestaanders kan saamlees.
8. Toetsing en konklusie met betrekking tot die formuliergebede
- a. Die GKSA het ook die formuliergebede taalkundig vernuwe, maar dit is minimaal en onbevredigend. Die taalgebruik is nog steeds argaïs en omslagtig.
 - b. Daar is egter 'n groter probleem met die formuliergebede, naamlik hul eensydigheid. Ons sonde en verdorwenheid kry veel meer aandag as byvoorbeeld die dankbaarheid vir wat God reeds in ons lewe gedoen het en ook die lofprysing op wie God is en sy verlossingswerk. Die formuliergebede asem 'n atmosfeer van somberheid, roep misverstande op ten aansien van ons posisie in Christus en is daarom ongebalanseerd. Dit maak hulle grotendeels ongeskik om as formuliergebede in ons kerke te kan dien.
 - c. Daar is 14 formuliergebede, nie net vir kerklik gebruik, maar ook vir die huisliturgie. Deputate vind dat dit veel te veel is en dat ons hulle nie almal nodig het nie.
 - d. Op grond hiervan sien die deputate daarvan af om die formuliergebede taalkundig te vernuwe.
 - e. Deputate dink wel dat formuliergebede goed sou wees om te hê – dit kan ouderlinge help in leesdienste, maar kan ook 'n wyer betekenis hê, naamlik om lidmate formulerings aan te leer vir huiselike en persoonlike gebede.
9. Aanbevelings vir die sinode van 2014:
- a. Om op hierdie stadium nie aan te sluit by die hersieningswerk wat in die GKSA ten aansien van die formuliere en gebede gedoen is nie
 - b. Om verlopig nog ons eie formuliere te gebruik
 - c. Om 'n nuwe deputaatskap te benoem en hulle die oorspronklike opdrag van die sinode van 2008 te gee: to study the liturgical forms in order to identify unclear and poorly formulated articles and to provide next sinod with suggestions for improvement. Deputate wil graag aanbeveel om Afrikaanse taalkundiges en teoloë in hierdie deputaatskap te benoem.
 - d. Om die nuwe nagmaalsformulier van die GKSA vry te gee vir gebruik in die eredienste (in Afrikaans, Engels en Sotho)
 - e. Om nuwe deputate opdrag te gee om op soek te gaan na alternatiewe formuliere vir doop en nagmaal
 - f. Om die kerkrade aan te beveel om formuliere op 'n skerm te projekteer sodat almal (ook gaste) kan saamlees
 - g. Om die formuliergebede nie langer in die erediens te gebruik nie
 - h. Om 'n nuwe deputaatskap opdrag te gee vyf nuwe formuliergebede te skryf: vier vir gebruik in die erediens: 1) 'n skuldbelydenis, 2) gebed vir die opening van die Woord, 3) gebed vir die kategismusprediking 4) en 'n voorbede/dankgebed na die prediking. En een gebed vir die huisliturgie. In Afrikaans en Engels en Sotho

BYLAE

Formulier met klem op die aksente van Calvyn

Notas

In hierdie Formulier val die klem op die wonderlike gemeenskap met die lewende Christus, waardeur Hy as Gasheer aan die tafel ons deur die Heilige Gees werklik met Homself voed (vgl NGB, art 35).

Teks

Die viering van die gemeenskap met die lewende Christus

Instelling

Gemeente van ons Here Jesus Christus.

Die nagmaal is deur ons Verlosser self ingestel.

“Toe dit tyd was, het Jesus aan tafel gegaan en die apostels saam met Hom. Hy sê toe vir hulle: ‘Ek het baie daarna uitgesien om hierdie paasmaaltyd saam met julle te eet voordat Ek ly. Ek sê vir julle: Ek sal dit nie weer eet voordat dit in die koninkryk van God sy volle betekenis gekry het nie.’ Daarna neem Hy ’n beker, spreek die dankgebed uit en sê: ‘Neem dit en gee dit vir mekaar aan. Ek sê vir julle: Ek sal van nou af nie weer wyn drink voordat die koninkryk van God gekom het nie’. Toe neem Hy brood, spreek die dankgebed uit, breek dit en gee dit vir hulle met die woorde: ‘Dit is my liggaam wat vir julle gegee word. Gebruik dit tot my gedagtenis’. Met die beker na die maaltyd het Hy net so gemaak en gesê: ‘Hierdie beker is die nuwe verbond, beseël deur my bloed, wat vir julle vergiet word’” (Lukas 22:14-20).

Gedagtenis

In gehoorsaamheid aan die woorde van Christus: “Gebruik dit tot my gedagtenis” herdenk ons met die gebruik van die nagmaal dat Jesus Christus ooreenkomstig God se belofte deur die Vader na hierdie wêreld gestuur is. Die Here Jesus het Homself as ’n offer gegee vir ons wat sondaars is. Met blydskap bely ons dat ons lewe in sy dood berus. Ons dank ons getroue Heiland wat as Goeie Herder sy lewe vir sy skape afgelê het en verbly ons in die Goddelike geheimenis:

*“As mens het Jesus in die wêreld gekom,
deur die Gees is bevestig dat die reg aan sy kant is,
aan die engele het Hy verskyn;
aan die heidennasies is Hy verkondig,
in die hele wêreld is Hy geglo,
en in heerlijkheid is Hy opgeneem” (1 Tim 3:16).*

Gesindheid en versekering

Die groot geskenk van God se genade in Christus spoor ons aan om vanweë ons sonde ’n afkeer in onself te hê en ons voor God te verootmoedig. Met blydskap en dankbaarheid gryp ons vas aan die versekering dat al ons sondes vergewe is op grond van die lyde en sterwe van Jesus Christus ons Here en Heiland. Sy volkome geregtigheid is ons toegereken en geskenk. Ons kom daarom met ons hande uitgestrek na die oorvloedige Gewer, as siekes na die Geneesheer, as sondaars na die Werker van geregtigheid, as dooies na Hom wat lewend maak. Christus is die enigste voedsel van ons siele. Daarom nooi die hemelse Vader ons uit om deur deelname aan die nagmaal aan Hom verkwik te word en nuwe krag uit Hom te put totdat ons die hemelse onsterflikheid bereik. Die onmiskenbare tekens en seëls van die brood en wyn verseker ons van Christus se hartlike liefde en trou. Ons kan weet dat Hy in ons alles werk wat in die tekens aan ons voorgelê word, en dat Hy inderdaad vir ons die Brood van die lewe is.

Gemeenskap

Die seëninge van die nagmaal word netso seker aan ons gegee asof ons Christus self in die nagmaal sien en aanraak. Die brood en wyn betuig en beseël aan ons dat Christus sy lewe in die nagmaal in ons oorgiet, asof dit in murg en been indring. Wanneer die brood as teken aan ons gegee word, moet ons dadelik aan die ooreenkoms dink: Soos die brood die lewe van ons liggaam voed, onderhou en beskerm, so is die liggaam van Christus die enigste voedsel om ons siele te voed en lewendig te maak. Wanneer die wyn as teken van die bloed van Christus aan ons voorgesit word, moet ons onthou dat die bloed van Christus ons koester, verkwik, versterk

en met blydskap vul. Dit doen Christus nie deur bloot 'n teken aan ons voor te hou nie, maar Hy volbring dit deur die Gees wat Hy beloof. Deur die Gees laat Christus ons in sy gemeenskap lewe, sodat ons met die apostel mag sê: *“ek is saam met Christus gekruisig, en nou is dit nie meer ek wat lewe nie, maar Christus wat in my lewe”* (Gal 2:19-20). Hy maak van ons lote aan Hom, die Hemelse Wynstok, sodat ons vir Hom vrugte kan dra. Deur dieselfde Gees verbind Hy ons aan mekaar in egte liefde as lede van een liggaam. *Want dit is immers aan tafel saam met Christus waar sy bevel tot ons kom: “Dit is my opdrag: Julle moet mekaar liefhê soos ek julle liefhet”* (Joh 15:12).

Soos brood saamgestel is uit baie korrels wat so met mekaar vermeng is dat die een nie van die ander onderskei kan word nie, so betaam dit ons om so eengesind en verbind aan mekaar te wees dat daar geen tweedrag of skeiding onder ons mag voorkom nie. Jesus waarsku ons immers: *“Elke koninkryk wat onderling verdeeld is, gaan te gronde”* (Mat 12:25). Terwyl ons aan die tafel die heerlike teenwoordigheid van Jesus Christus deur Sy Woord en Gees ervaar, dink ons weer aan die bevel van Jesus: *“Dit is my opdrag: Julle moet mekaar liefhê soos ek julle liefhet”* (Joh 15:12).

Verwagting

Die apostel Paulus plaas die nagmaal binne die perspektief van Christus se wederkoms wanneer hy sê: *“Elke keer as julle van hierdie brood eet en uit die beker drink, verkondig julle die dood van die Here totdat Hy kom”* (1 Kor. 11:26). Wanneer ons die nagmaal vier, ervaar ons die vreugde om deel te hê aan die nuwe verbond in Christus se bloed. Ons dank die Vader dat ons die verlossing waarvan die profete geprofeteer het, mag ken. Tegelyk sien ons met die viering van die nagmaal uit na die verskyning van ons Verlosser in heerlijkheid en die ewige huweliksfees waartydens ons vol vreugde saam met Hom die nuwe wyn sal drink in die koninkryk van sy Vader. Met groot blydskap bid ons saam met God se kerk: *“Amen! Kom, Here Jesus!”* (Op 22:20).

Gebed

Barmhartige God en Vader, ons wil nou met hierdie nagmaal die heerlike gemeenskap met u geliefde Seun Jesus Christus vier. Ons bid U: Stuur ons U lewendmakende Gees, sodat ons gevoed kan word met die ware brood uit die hemel wat die ewige lewe skenk. Amen.

Lied

(bv Sb 17-2)

Hartverheffing

Laat ons ons harte omhoog hef na Christus waar Hy aan die regterhand van die Vader sit. Kom almal met blydskap en eensgesindheid na die tafel van die Here toe. Dank Hom vir sy groot liefde wat Hy aan ons betoon het toe Hy homself as offer vir ons oorgegee het, en wat Hy steeds betoon deur al sy weldade aan ons te skenk.

Appendix 16 – Report of Deputies Sustainability

Report Deputies Sustainability – Synod 2014 (Updated report 5 March 2014)

1. Executive summary

Synod 2011 appointed Deputies Financial Review (which was later changed to Deputies Sustainability) to avoid the proposed 35% increase in synod contributions and to advise synod how to handle the financial side of the four deputies i.e. Needy Churches, Needy Students, Curators and Mission. It seemed that the FRCSA was becoming a needy federation.

At the adhoc synod 2012, the proposed 35% increase was avoided without any negative impact in the functioning of the four deputies. The shortfall in 2010 for mission turned in a huge surplus 2 years later. In essence we saw again that God provided; all work of deputies could carry on.

However, a shortage in money can be a blessing in disguise. In the rethink of the objectives and policies of all deputies and their respective mandates from synods a few paradigm shifts are required:

- There was too much dependency on the bond of churches in the past. More emphasis should be placed that each church needs to be church in their own environment. Presently, there is a difference in expectations of what a church federation should do for ministers and congregations.
- Too much dependency on foreign aid. The FRCSA should contribute to ability before foreign money can be requested.
- FRCSA do not have to feel dependant on Dutch support for mission, mission in SA is Dutch mission run by FRCSA.

A second outcome of the rethink of how the financial side of the bond of churches was handled, was about the situational differences in which the individual churches operate. This led to a review of the way in which the collection of the synod contributions for the four deputees are handled. The main challenge was how to change the “flat rate system” to a model so that all churches contribute to ability. This led to the “differentiated contribution model”.

In addition it was concluded that more communication is needed so that deputies share views and approaches and find common approaches to be church in South Africa.

Your deputies are of the opinion, that the four deputyships in question all have a sustainable approach and that there is no need for a prolonged deputyship sustainability if the proposals made in this report are accepted and implemented.

2. Background

At the Synod 2011 two deputy reports highlighted concerns regarding the financial situation and advised synod to change the view regarding the financial requirements within the bond of FR churches. A shortage of R656 000 in the mission for 2010 was the basis for this request. Art 11 (needy churches) also highlighted a radical change to reduce the dependency on foreign sister churches.

Synod appointed Deputies “Financial Review” (FRD) to avoid the proposed 35% in synod contributions and gave a mandate to rethink the purpose of the deputies (Mission, Art 11, 19 and Curators) and their mandates. An adhoc synod was planned for Feb 2012 where FRD had to table revised contribution amounts that will be attainable by the churches.

During the adhoc Synod 2012 (held in April) the increases in synod contributions were brought back from 35% to 12% and the increases in the two respective years thereafter are in line with inflation. No negative impact was foreseen with the reduced amounts.

The mandate for Deputies Financial Review became also clearer and the name subsequently changed to Deputies Sustainability (DS). (See mandate in next paragraph)

3. Mandate from Synod 2012 to Deputies Sustainability (DS)

Synod 2012 decides to resubmit the Synod 2011 mandates for the Deputies Mandate (Acts Synod 2011, art. 18.2)

- 1) To investigate the overall financial impact of the budget proposals of various deputies involved, on the churches;
- 2) To investigate the financial situation of each deputyship and to encourage deputies to rethink their current working methods in order to develop a financially sustainable system;
- 3) To make proposals in the form of a working document to be discussed in an indaba during September/October 2011, where all the relevant parties are involved;
- 4) To appoint a competent facilitator for the indaba;
- 5) To coordinate the preparation of the indaba with MDSA;
- 6) To report back to an ad-hoc synod during February 2012 and propose an overall strategy to be discussed and decided on by this synod;

In addition the synod referred the DFR to the MDSA report to Synod 2011, in which the reasons for such an indaba were spelled out in more detail.

4. Work approach by deputies:

The 2011 Synods request was to involve churches and to organise an Indaba to discuss the various issues within the federation. After the Indaba held on Nov 2011 (see Synod 2011 report) the intention was to have a follow up Indaba mainly re theological training. However, curators organised a workshop and invited all churches and deputies where they tabled proposals regarding theological training.

Over and above the indaba, DS held information sessions with power point presentations at all but one of the congregations. There is general acceptance re the findings and direction proposed by the DS. The congregations were also requested to give input on the proposed “differentiated contribution model”. No negative feedback was received. Lastly, all the congregations were requested to determine their contribution ability and to supply it to DS before Oct. 2013.

Deputies met 11 times for meetings. Deputy Br Harm Snijder requested to be relieved of his appointment and br Kees Roose was co-opted.

5. Principle issues

Deputies first looked at the principle issues from Scripture in terms of sustainability. Only biblical principles should be the base for practical proposals. The majority of these issues were presented and discussed at the Indaba 2011. Based on a school of thought that the church federation has the ultimate responsibility in terms of financial support, your deputies also looked at what a church federation is.

A. Sustainability and Stewardship

What is sustainability in the ecclesiastic world? In a business world sustainability is to maintain, continue or to uphold a business or element of business. It is often expressed in an economic value. An example is that if a business is not profitable, it is not sustainable.

A biblical example can be found in 1 Kings 12 where Rehoboam ignored the limits of sustainability.

But was the work of the apostles sustainable? Did they put too much responsibility on the young believer’s shoulders? Was Paul irresponsible in the way he spread the gospel?

We confess that we are totally dependant on our Provider and Creator, our Father in heaven. Even more so, we are totally dependant on the salvation by our Saviour, his Son Jesus Christ. In response to this life giving mercy, we should be obedient to his Word and Law as our most significant part of our gratitude. But we are humans with limitations (as a result of our fall in sin).

But how do we then determine our limits in terms of our work for God? How much can and should we contribute? This question is important but can also set a wrong antithesis. Is there any activity or element of our life that should not be to the glory of our Lord?

Sustainability is therefor a complicated term and should be looked at in the light of other ethical elements of a christian's life like stewardship and our culture mandate.

Stewardship is a term that can help believers to create a biblical and Christian world view. We are stewards of all the God's given gifts, talents, possessions and skills we obtain or have, it all belongs to Christ and we need to use it to God's glory to our ability: at our work, home, office or factory. In our profession, in our spare time, evenings, weekends and holidays, in our family life or if you are alone; all should be used to the glory of our God.

Therefore each individual is responsible to create a balance between work with an income and work without an income, time with the family and time for church related work, etc. (For a more detailed view on stewardship, please refer to Appendix 1).

B. What is a church federation (bond of churches):

Members of the church federation of the FRCSA are used to an ecclesiastical system of minor and major assemblies, in which decisions are taken concerning the functioning of the congregations and the church federation as a whole.

It is however not always clear what the relation between those assemblies is and what the extend of their authority is.

Certain questions can therefore be asked concerning the functioning and authority of the minor assemblies (= the church councils) and the major assemblies (classes and synods).

In order to get clear answers for such questions it is necessary to go back to the basis of what a church federation is.

According to the Bible and official ecclesiastical documents:

The Bible:

Indications of inter-congregational co-operation and support are present (Acts 11: 29, 30; Acts 15; 2 Cor. 8), but indications of regulations for the functioning of churches within any form of organisation are totally absent.

The Apostles are clearly mandated to preach the Word (Matt. 28: 19) and to institute congregations by arranging the appointment of office bearers for those congregations (Acts 14: 23, Titus 1: 5), but we find absolutely nothing about a mandate to organise a group of congregations within a 'bond of churches'.

The Holy Scriptures are very clear concerning the matter of authority in the church of Christ. In Acts 20: 28 (NIV) is stated that elders are appointed by the Holy Spirit, to be "overseers" of "all the flock" to "keep watch" and to "be shepherds" and in Titus 1: 7 (NIV) elders are called "managers of Gods household". Peter commands the elders to: "be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them" (1 Peter 5: 2, NIV). There can therefore be no doubt that elders (the consistory) have God-given authority over the congregation.

There can also be no doubt that such God-given authority is not given to any other group of believers or any other ecclesiastical structure.

The Reformed confessions:

Four of our six Reformed confessions refer to “a holy catholic Christian church. The communion of saints”. Art. 27 of the Belgic Confession (BC) describes what the catholic Christian church is: “a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers”, which exists world wide and for all times. There is however not a single reference to a ‘bond of churches’ in our confessions. As our confessions are supposed to be summarised versions of what the Bible teaches us, that makes sense as we cannot confess something which is not in the Bible.

FRCSA Church Order:

Art. 1 states: “In the church of Christ all things should be done in good order. For this reason it is necessary to have regulations

It should be noted that no claim is made that all the regulations in the CO are derived directly from Scriptural guide lines. The CO simply states that regulations are necessary to promote the good order in the church of Christ. For that reason we find regulations in the CO which are not directly based on Biblical guidelines, but which can be traced back to general Scriptural rules, for a proper functioning of the churches.

Artt. 28-35, 38-39, 41-50 and 52 deal with aspects concerning the functioning of a bond of churches. Important to note is that the authority of the major assemblies is restricted and based on the conviction that the primary source for all matters on the major assembly’s table is the local consistory. In view of what the Bible teaches us, that makes sense, as the consistory is the only ecclesiastical structure with God-given authority.

Conclusion:

A church federation could be defined as a group of churches who have the following features in common:

- are located in the same country or in a few neighbouring countries;
- adhere to the same doctrine;
- have the same governing system;
- acknowledge each other as true churches of Christ and as united in doctrine, functioning and discipline.

Although organising our congregations within a bond of churches is not based on direct Biblical commands, the necessity for it can still be traced back to Biblical principles concerning the church of Christ.

Based on texts such as John 17: 21-23, where the Lord Jesus Christ prays for the unity of all believers, and 1 Cor. 12: 12 or Eph. 4: 15, 16 where the church is described as one body with properly functioning parts to support the functioning of that one whole body, it is clear that we as believers are tasked to strive to unity of all believers. The one “holy catholic Christian church” from our Reformed confessions should be our goal, not only in the far future but already today.

Forming an official bond of churches is therefore a sound practise as long as it promotes the functioning of the congregations as churches of Christ and as long as it motivates the congregations to strive to the realisation of the “holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers” as described in art. 27 of the BC.

According to assumptions by church members:

Various perceptions of the meaning and value of a federation of churches are found in the FRCSA.

There are also different opinions about the authority of major assemblies as compared to the authority of consistories, in terms of what should be handled by consistories only, or which matters should be decided in major assemblies.

Unity expectations

As a result of those differences, expectations concerning the manifestation of unity between churches within our church federation, are also different.

Federations of churches consist most of the time of churches with the same language and the same culture and resulting from that fact, many activities are done in the same way by all the congregations.

In long established churches, this has in many cases lead to regulations as decided by major assemblies and adopted by the churches, concerning e.g. the order of worship services or which songs should be sung in such services, etc.

By simply adhering to such rules, a feeling of unity is created between the members of the various congregations.

Real unity

A feeling of unity however, is not the same as a required characteristic of unity. Specifically in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual federation of churches such as the FRCSA, such regulations could even create a feeling of disunity.

Your DS therefore would like to suggest that our major assemblies should be very careful with regulations and rules about how certain things should be done and such rules should be limited to matters which are clearly related to real characteristics of unity such as doctrine, church discipline or matters related to the marks of a true church as described in our BC art. 29.

Such an approach implies that differences in our ways of worshipping within our bond of churches should be allowed as long as those different ways are all aimed at proclaiming the true Word of God and as long as they promote the unity of true believers as the one body of Christ.

Function and position of our major assemblies

The above described approach also implies that we should care for our fellow believers. This view is supported by what is written in 2 Cor. 8, where the apostle Paul urges the members of the local church to follow the example of the Macedonian churches, by sharing their resources with fellow believers.

Our system of major assemblies provides a means of promoting and regulating the way in which we take care of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Concerning this issue however the authority of those assemblies could be (and is) questioned:

- Q1 Has a major assembly the authority and to which extend, to enforce its decisions on the congregations?
- Q2 Is the acceptance of authority of major assemblies not conflicting with the God-given authority and responsibility of consistories and therefore in conflict with the Holy Scriptures?
- Q3 Has a major assembly the authority to requisite financial contributions or man power resources for federal purposes from the congregations?
- Q4 If there are no direct Scriptural guide lines to support the functioning of major assemblies, does that not mean that decisions by such assemblies and enforcing such decisions on the congregations, can be described as binding above Scripture?
- Q5 If consistories are the only ecclesiastical structures with God-given authority, what is their position, authority and responsibility i. t. o. decisions taken by major assemblies?

Cases of misuse of authority by major assemblies are well known in the history of Reformed churches and questions about their authority are therefore highly valid.

On the other hand however, cases of misuse of authority by consistories are also known.

In view of our confession that we, although being believers, still struggle to be obedient to God's will and still tend to do things wrong, it makes sense that the Bible urges us to be a hand and a foot towards each other and to watch over each other. It is therefore wise to consult fellow believers in order to reach wise decisions (Proverbs 15: 22, Proverbs 24: 6). Major assemblies provide means to consult a wider circle of fellow believers, or in the words of Proverbs "many advisors". In view of the fact that all the believers belong to the one body of Christ, it is obvious that all of them should strive to promote the functioning of the whole body and not only that part which is represented by a local congregation.

In order to make the advisors effective, major assemblies need a form of authority, because if there is no way to enforce decisions, the advise of the many advisors is useless.

Reformed consistories therefore submit themselves to decisions by major assemblies and commit themselves to comply with such decisions, but with safety measures which protects their own sovereignty and responsibility. For that reason we find a whole range of articles in the CO in which is dealt with aspects of the authority of major assemblies and the limitations of that authority, but also with the responsibility of consistories concerning decisions by major assemblies.

The answers to above questions are therefore as follows:

- Q1 Yes, but within the limits as indicated in the CO art. 31. Furthermore major assemblies have no authority over matters which are the responsibility of the church councils only.
- Q2 No, provided that it is in line with Scriptural guide lines in terms of seeking advise from many advisors, and in line with our obligation (also as consistory) to act as a part of the whole body of Christ.
- Q3 Yes, but with the provision that such requisitions should serve to promote the functioning of the whole body of Christ.
- Q4 No, providing that such decisions are aimed at promoting the Kingdom of God, which is the indirect Scriptural guide line for the functioning of major assemblies.
- Q5 Consistories have only authority over their own congregation and this authority is subject to the commands as given in the Bible regarding the functioning and responsibilities of office bearers. Consistories submit themselves to the rules of the adopted CO, which includes adherence to decisions by major assemblies, but they have the responsibility to ensure that such decisions are in line with the Word of God and our confessions. Article 31 of our CO provides a way to oppose such decisions in cases where they are deemed to be contrary to Biblical teachings.

It should however be noted that there is an additional risk factor in our FRCSA federation due to the fact that it is a small federation with limited man power resources. Such a situation can lead to a range of subsequent meetings of specifically our synods, which are dominated by the same nucleus of 'experienced' delegates, mainly from the older established churches. Even with the best intentions, such a situation is a recipe for one-sidedness.

Your DS therefore plead for changing our system for appointment of delegates or advisors to synods, in such a way that all the congregations are in some way represented in our synod meetings.

In this respect it should be noted that 'sustainability' in the church of Christ is not aimed at preserving the old ways of the church, but at promoting the proper functioning and maintenance of the church in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ for as long as necessary.

C. Equal and unequal.

The world trend is that we should all be equal. Democracy is seen as the only acceptable governance model in this world. Equality is a result of the human rights campaign in our times.

Although one can prove that individuals were unduly treated as unequal in the past, the pursuit to equality in today's world is so fierce that certain sins are becoming acceptable e.g. homo-sexuality. In the same light, the attempt to help all in terms of basic needs, leads to individuals claiming to have a **right** to equal income, a right on health, a right on property (land) etc. Also in our churches, this phenomenon of rights is evident.

The Scriptural view is that we are all equal for God but different in functions and gifts. We have different gifts, therefore a women's function is different from a man's function.

The bible teaches us also to be content with our situation. Also to be content with our financial situation and not to change it in a right to receive assistance to a level of equality.

We have to be content with our situation also in the church environment. Due to historic (and sometimes unfair) situations people do not have the same privileges than other. Access to education, money and basic life skills has often lead to certain tribes or nations being less privileged in the economic world. Access to Christianity also had an advantageous impact to the wealth of certain nations. On the contrary, being caught up in a pageant culture, also had an impact on the development of skills and behaviour of individuals. Social injustice is an important part of the ethical life of Christians but reality also has it that one cannot undo the past.

The perception that Christianity leads to wealth is often proclaimed. Young Christians often have an expectation that wealth is part of Christianity: equality in income, opportunities and positions are admired. Especially within a church or church federation this is often an (unstated) expectation.

The bible teaches us that we have to be church irrespective of income or external factors. The bond of churches can help and should help for example in cases where the Word cannot be preached in needy congregations. Also in cases where funds are lacking if young men want to study for the ministry.

However, the bond of churches is not responsible to accept the responsibility of being church from the congregation. Nor is a bond of churches responsible for the social welfare of members from the respective churches. The bond of churches can merely assist, meaning that the responsibility remains with the individual congregation or with the church council.

D. Contribute according to ability

As stated under stewardship, we are all gifted but in different levels. The Old Testament guideline is not based on a fixed portion or amount. One tenth of income is used as the guideline to contribute to the Lord, the wealthy (farmers with a huge crop) gave more in value than the poor famine stricken farmer, but both had to give 10%.

In the New Testament we read that believers gave what was needed, the rich even gave houses and property. However, we do not read about a flat rate, on the contrary, those who could give often gave more than 10%. The norm in the NT was "what is required to spread the gospel over the whole world".

E. Foreign support from sister churches

Under the heading: "What is a church federation" above, it was pointed out that supporting each other as believers, is a Biblical principle. From the Biblical examples, which are quoted as argumentation for that statement, it is also clear that those supporting activities were not

limited to a group of congregation within a certain area, but that all the existing congregations all over the world were supposed to show an “act of grace on (their) part” (2 Cor. 8: 6, NIV). The apostle Paul even considers such an act of grace as a means “to test the sincerity of your love” (2 Cor. 8: 8, NIV).

To support churches or fellow-believers in need is therefore clearly a Biblical principle. But does that mean that expecting and requesting support is also a Biblical right?

In view of the fact that Paul considers providing support as an act of grace, it follows that accepting such support by the receiving party is also acceptable. But it should be noted what Paul writes about “the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people (2 Cor. 8: 1-4, NIV)”.

The “extreme poverty” of the Macedonian churches was therefore not an excuse to refrain from sharing what little they had in the service of the Lord’s people. They even regarded it as a privilege.

Being needy is therefore not an excuse to refrain from contributing whatever we can contribute to the Lord’s people, our fellow-believers. Contributing to the Lord’s people is an expression of our love for our Lord Jesus Christ, irrespective whether we are poor or rich.

We therefore conclude that accepting support from fellow-believers or sister churches is acceptable according to Biblical guide lines as it shows our fellow-believers love for our God, but it should not be in contrast with a lack of contributions from our own resources as this can be regarded as a lack of love for our God from our side.

Does this also mean that we can start all types of projects or make arrangements in our congregations, regardless of the required resources and based on the assumption that our sister churches within and outside our church federation have a Biblical obligation to help us? In general, the answer to that question is no, although there could be exceptions. The general Biblical rule however is that we are supposed to take responsibility for what we do or plan to do. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to calculate and accept the consequences of our plans before we start to implement those plans (Luke 14: 26-33).

To take responsibility includes planning to maintain and promote sustainability of our actions in the service of our Lord and that means that our planning should take the limitations of our resources into consideration. One such limitation is the unpredictability of financial support from foreign sister churches and it is therefore wise to make our dependence on foreign support as little as possible, in order to maintain our activities in the service of our Lord, even when foreign support falls away.

The mission activities in which the FRCSA are involved should be regarded somewhat differently as those activities are still driven by our Dutch sister churches. But even in this case the question could be asked what we, as FRCSA, could and should do i. t. o. mission work, when financial support from the Netherlands would fall away.

DS would also like to suggest that the handling of foreign (financial) support should be done by already existing ecclesiastical bodies and not by an additional central fund raising body. Grounds for this suggestion are that, due to our limited man power resources we should strive to utilise already existing bodies and the fact that there are existing bodies such as Deputies for Contacts with Churches Abroad (DRCA) and Deputies ad Art. 11 CO. DRCA could act as liaison organisation to facilitate contacts between the parties who are actually handling the foreign support.

6. Results- proposals

A. Differentiated contribution model:

How should we handle the finances required for the church federations work (Art 11, 19, Theological training and Mission)? Is a flat rate for all congregations of ±R600 per member per year fair? Can the poorest congregation in our bond of churches attain this? The answer is known. But there is more, the contributions made (if any) by the poorer churches were very low. The conclusion is that a congregation with very low income is so discouraged by an amount charged which is totally unattainable, that no money is contributed.

Our present flat rate system does cater for the number of members per church but ignores members with no income. The biggest flaw is however that it presumes that congregations have a fairly even income.

Unfortunately, South Africa has a huge difference in income levels amongst its population. A level of measure is the Gini co-efficient and the calculation for 2009 of 0.62 is the highest in the world. This is also very true in our bond of churches, we have very blessed and wealthy churches re material income but also very poor congregations.

Deputies Sustainability are of the opinion that the system should be changed to biblical norms. Each should contribute to their ability, the wealthy at least the same percentage as the less gifted. However, deputies want to go further, the gifted can give a higher percentage with less an impact on his/her lifestyle than the poor. A 10% of R75 000 per month is easier to give than a 10% of R7 500 per month of a household.

Deputies do not work with individual members but only with churches via church councils; therefore the church council should determine the church/congregations contributions ability.

The proposed model is differentiated based on income level or contributions ability.

How should a church council determine their contribution ability? There are a number of variables:

- No. of income points

- Income per income point

- Calculate the average income per income point

- A percentage to contribute to the church and synod contributions (proposed by deputies – see attached Graph).

- A calculation of 12% as a contribution to synod responsibilities (or 6% if needy).

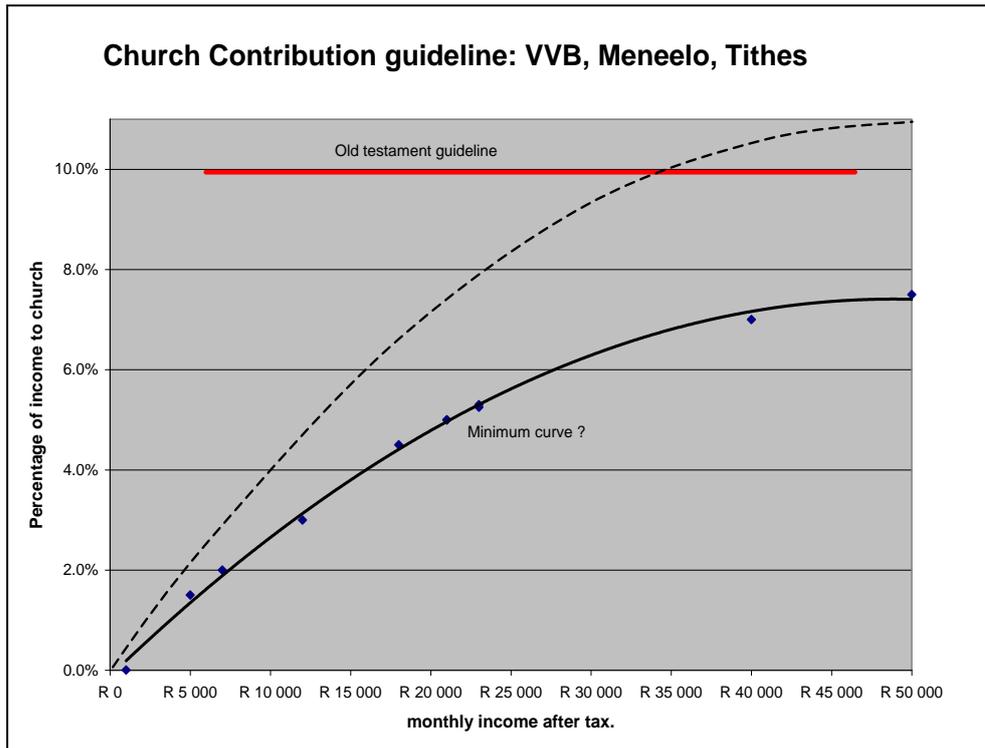
The proposed percentage for church related contributions can be read from the graph as shown below. The percentage graph is calculated based on a number of inputs:

- The wealthy can easier contribute a higher percentage than the less gifted.

- Christians (reformed) have three obligations: Church support, Reformed education and support to the poor. Ten percent for the mentioned three areas is the minimum.

Contribution for the church (contributions ability) is not the deputies' responsibility. However it is used to calculate a portion of this amount as a synod contribution. 12% of the yearly contributions ability is proposed to be used as the contribution for synod (deputies 11, 19, TT, Mission and Federal Church expenses).

The amount is reduced by half to 6% if a church is needy. The principle behind this is that although one is needy, one should still give to ability.



Deputies Sustainability estimated the average income level per church based on available information. LSM data and other trends were used together with data published by the respective churches to calculate a preliminary average monthly income after tax per church.

Church	Income after tax (Avg per household)	No of Members	Income pionts/ households	% Contribution acc to graph	Yearly contribution potential	Needy church ?	% Synod contrib.	Amount for Synod	Amount per member /year.
Belville	R 25 000	409	148	5.5%	R 2 442 000		12.00%	R 293 040	R 716
Belhar	R 5 750	98	22	1.6%	R 24 288	yes	6.00%	R 1 457	R 15
Bethal	R 17 500	42	15	4.2%	R 132 300	yes	6.00%	R 7 938	R 189
Jo'burg	R 29 000	87	30	6.1%	R 636 840	yes	6.00%	R 38 210	R 439
Pretoria	R 20 000	441	165	4.7%	R 1 861 200		12.00%	R 223 344	R 506
Maranata	R 27 000	331	120	5.8%	R 2 255 040		12.00%	R 270 605	R 818
Soshanguve	R 8 000	150	50	2.0%	R 96 000	yes	6.00%	R 5 760	R 38
Mamelodi	R 9 500	100	30	2.4%	R 82 080	yes	6.00%	R 4 925	R 49
Total		1658						Total R 845 279	R 510
								Required* R 725 000	R 437
								Difference 17%	

Assumption The synod contribution is 12% of annual church contribution.
For needy churches the synod contribution is halved to 6%

Required* The amount required in 2012 as decided by synod

The above model was presented to all but one of the churches as well as the majority of mission pionts. All churches accepted the model as a practical and biblical norm. All churches undertook to use the model and supply the requested information to DS before Oct 2013. At the time of writing the report not all churches have supplied the information and as stated to the churches, the estimations will be used in our report to synod.

The amounts should be updated by the respective church councils every year before the next synod i.e. every third year. The table is based on 2013 income levels, for every year the annual

inflation rate can be used to adjust the amounts requested from the churches. (For 2014 a 6% can be added)

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the above table regarding contribution ability;

The present synod contributions amount requested from the churches is R725 000 per year. Based on the model above the ability to contribute can be R845 000. In other terms, the FRCSA can contribute 17% more than what is currently paid over to the Synod Treasurer.

Although not directly the responsibility of the DS, one can see that the older wealthier churches can contribute even more if required. The “yearly contribution potential” and the church budgets (not shown here) indicate that there is room for additional support if required.

The majority of churches (wealthy or poor) do not contribute to ability. Churches (accept one or two) are not overloaded with financial obligations, on the contrary, they can easily contribute more. DS recommend that this element of christian life should get more attention in the congregations.

It is the accountability of each church council to budget for church expenses but also to use financial surpluses for the needy outside the bond of churches.

Synod 2014 should get the sum of the respective deputies and see to it that it is below the R896 000 (R845 000 plus 6% inflation). If the amount is less a proportionate reduction can be made to the amounts required from each congregation.

B. Manpower ability/capacity for federal tasks

All the churches were approached with the question if federal tasks cause an overload on manpower in the churches. The churches generally did not experience a shortage of manpower for federal tasks but sometimes individuals are overloaded. An example is where one person is appointed in more than one deputyship, or if appointed deputies don't function and the workload is not shared properly between deputies. Another problem is that ministers are too often appointed as deputies while that task can also be performed by church members.

One area where we saw duplication is in the field of the administration of theological students. We propose that Deputies Art 19 should be integrated with deputies Curators because of the overlapping of functions which can be dealt with far more effectively in one structure.

It could function as follows:

- Synod will appoint one additional deputy to the DC
 - The mandate of DC will be extended to include the mandate of the art 19.
- The effect will be that there is a direct line of communication between all persons involved and it will eliminate a lot of unnecessary administration and communication

C. Dependency on foreign churches

The FR church federation in SA is very much dependant on the funds received from overseas. 85% of the funds for the four deputyships in question came from overseas sister churches during the period 2008-2010.

However, mission should not be seen as if the FRCSA is dependant on Holland. Mission by the FRCSA is in essence Dutch mission but operated by FRCSA. There is an agreement in terms of the commitments and the financial support is one element that is clearly defined as part of the mission transfer that took place in 1992. The deputies Mission NL confirmed this at the Indaba held in Nov 2011.

However, if one excludes mission, the foreign support for synod deputies is still 65%. The biggest portion goes to Needy Churches (Art 11).

We read that Paul was collecting from the congregations in Greece and Macedonia for the poor congregation in Jerusalem. So collections for foreign churches is not unfamiliar in the Bible. But was it a continuous support or only a once off? Secondly, the poor congregation of Jerusalem did not request support, it was offered.

Your DS therefore suggest that boundless fund raising, based on world wide ecclesiastical contacts, is not in line with the principles for promoting sustainability, as boundless funds tend to result in irresponsible planning. In our view, members of - and congregations or organisations within the FRCSA should strive to be self supporting in their service of the Lord. Furthermore we would like to suggest that depending on foreign support is only ethically acceptable if it is clear that members of the FRCSA contributed as much as they could for the Lord's service. Secondly it should be a temporary solution.

D. Rethink deputies (MDSA, Art11, 19 & TT) current approaches

The mandate given by synod states: "Re drafted approaches/working methods/policies for the 4 deputyships by updated Synod reports". DS is of the opinion that this is not required since all 4 deputyships have sustainable approaches. The reasons are set out below.

Art 11 – Needy churches: Already in their 2011 report, it was highlighted that the present way of assistance to needy churches could not be maintained. The basic principle is that the responsibility to support a minister lies with the congregation (church council). The proposal (which was subsequently also adopted by synod) was to only support the needy churches in the non-basic elements of a minister's stipend. The money for the basic elements has to come from the congregation. This is being implemented and two of the four congregations are on the system. It is anticipated that the total cost will roughly be halved although it will take time.

Art 19 – Needy students. In the adhoc synod, deputies needy students tabled the change in policy: first the direct family is responsible to support a Theological student, there after his congregation and only if they cannot support, the federation. Also curators enforced stricter criteria for students and there are now less students than planned in 2010. With Holland supporting up to 50%, there is no need and funds are sufficient.

Deputies Curators – Theological training. Although there is not yet consensus, the proposal tabled at a workshop last year November how and where to train theological students for the ministry, was a practical and cost conscience proposal. The theoretical thinking without a cost component has made change to a financial achievable model.

Mission – MDSA –Mission Deputies SA highlighted with reason some concerns in 2010/11 report. The number of new instituted churches foreseen as well the number of students and missionaries resulted in a view that the FRCSA will become totally dependant on foreign aid and become a "needy" federation.

However, the number of mission points to be instituted did not materialise, there are fewer missionaries, less students and the Euro is stronger. The shortage in money 2009/10 also resulted in a rethink of capital cost. All these factors resulted in a huge reduction in cost leading to a huge surplus at 2013.

Care should be taken that MDSA should not receive mandates that contradicts with the sovereignty of a church (refer to "What is a church federation").

E. Communication within the bond of churches.

MDSA posed a question in their 2011 report if one should not develop one vision for the FRCSA. Based on the "What is a church federation" this is not an acceptable objective, on the

one hand due to the diversity within our bond of churches, but even more so in terms of structure. Each church is directly responsible to the Owner of the church i.e. Jesus Christ. Although agreements can be made if shared (bond of churches) resources are used, one cannot enforce a vision and operational plan from Synod or Deputy level on churches.

What became clear at the indaba held by DS is the need between the churches to engage, communicate with each other to create understanding of each other's needs and circumstances to be able to grow together as a bond of churches.

Deputies propose the following changes:

Synod

- Extend the number of representatives to 1 minister + 1 elder (or 2 elders in case a minister is not available) per church to ensure representation of all churches in the FRCSA through the two classis's North and South. This can be changed again if the bond grows to the extent that a PS (Particular Sinod) is instituted.
- All deputies are required to compile a written progress report annually to the clerk of the synod and all church boards.

Institute an Indaba Forum

The objective is to create a forum in the FRCSA to discuss relevant issues facing churches today and grow together in understanding of each other and the challenges in the church today and to grow in the unity of Jesus Christ to build the Kingdom of God.

In between synods the FRCSA will hold an Indaba consisting of :

- two elders and the minister of all congregations
- two representatives and the missionary off all mission points.
- representatives off all sister churches should be invited

The proposed agenda should include firstly that all deputies give feedback re progress with their respective mandates. Secondly, a list of relevant topic's emanating from synod, deputies, classis or church councils can be presented by local or international speakers.

The organising of the Indaba should be the responsibility of the church calling the next synod.

F. Is there a further need for DS (FRD)?

Deputies' sustainability should be disbanded after the synod of May 2014 for the following reasons:

There is no financial crises in the church federation and the need has expired. However, synod should act as the sustainability gate keeper by only accepting deputies reports submitted in time with well-developed operational plans and 3 to 5 year projected budgets to fund operational plans. Further to that:

- Deputies deliver an interim report at an Indaba in between the synods
- The questor should be able to provide a financial overview at synods and at the Indaba
- Church councils should report their calculation re the contribution ability to the questor 6 months before the next synod.

We therefore conclude that this deputyship has served its purpose and with current structures functioning properly it should be disbanded.

7. Proposed decisions to Synod.

- 1) All deputies should submit in time a well-developed strategic plan and 3 to 5 year projected budget to fund the operational plan.

Grounds:

- i. Strategic plans and medium to long term budgets are basic requirements for sustainability;
- ii. Medium – to long term planning can help deputies to monitor the progress of their mandates and to make timely amendments when necessary.

- 2) Instruct the next convening church to organise an Indaba as close as possible between the synods.

Grounds:

- a. deputies, church councils and other persons or institutions involved;
- b. Indaba's can help to prevent or solve misunderstandings;
- c. Indaba's can help deputies to make a more accurate assessment of situations and to formulate more effective recommendations to synods.

- 3) All deputies deliver an interim report at an Indaba in between the synods.

Grounds:

- i. Interim reports between synods will force deputies to start their activities at an earlier stage;
- ii. Interim reports will reduce the workload of deputies during the final months before synods.

- 4) The treasurer should provide a financial overview at the Indaba.

Grounds:

- a. An interim report will help to monitor the financial situation and to make timely adaptation when required;
- b. An interim report will help consistories to fulfil their financial obligations in time.

- 5) Synod - Extend the number of representatives to 1 minister + 1 elder (or 2 elders in case a minister is not available) per church to ensure representation of all churches in the FRCSA through the two classis's North and South.

Grounds:

- a. In a multi-cultural and multi-lingual church federation, it is very important to utilise all opportunities to promote the unity in Christ by involving all the congregations.

- 6) Implement the "Differentiated Contribution model" as from 2015.

Grounds:

- i. Synod should comply with decision 3 of Article 11 of the Acts of Synod 2012 by facilitating the implementation of the new contribution model;
- ii. differentiated contribution model is more suitable and more justified system for a church federation with huge differences in household income levels.

- 7) Church councils should report their calculation re the contribution ability to the Synod Treasurer 6 months before the next synod.

Grounds:

- a. Only church councils can provide a more or less accurate indication of the contribution ability of their congregation;
- b. The Synod Treasurer should be informed about the congregation's contribution abilities in order to calculate the required contributions per congregation for the next inter-synodal period.

- 8) Integrate deputy art 19 (Needy Students) in the Curators mandate and appoint an additional person to the curators.

Grounds:

- a. The mandates of Deputies Art. 19 and Deputies Curators overlap and may cause duplication of activities;
 - b. A single deputyship with a combined mandate should be able to function more effectively than two separate deputyships.
 - c. The number of deputyships should always be kept minimal.
- 9) Deputies Sustainability should be disbanded after the synod of May 2014.
- Grounds:*
- a. Deputies Sustainability were appointed to address a specific problem. As this problem is properly addressed and guide lines for a solution of the problem are provided, there is no need for a further functioning of the deputyship;
 - b. The number of deputyships should always be kept minimal.

DS trust that our Lord will enlighten synod with wisdom so that it may be to the glory of Name and the coming of His Kingdom.

Br Ronald Meeske
Br Kees Roose
Br Harry Pouwels

Stewards are called to be faithful and productive in God's kingdom

Contribution to the financial indaba, 11-12 November 2011

D.M. Boersma

Intro

A church member got a good job 10 years ago. She has used her money well and bought a house. She also bought two cars. She contributes to the church, but when the elders who visit her check the contributions, they discover that she only gives R20 per month, which is the same as another lady who lives in a zozo and has a cleaning job. When the elders ask her about her tithing, she says 'This is none of your business. I can decide what I do with my money!'

It sounds correct: the bank account and the cars are in her name. The money belongs to her, right?

The topic of stewardship is foundational for the finances of the church and the federation, which we are discussing today. I try to give some principles I have learned.

God is the owner of everything

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." (Psalm 24,1-2)

God is and remains the owner. His ownership is absolute. He sets the rules, which are righteous.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Gen1,28)

Man is the crown of creation. God appointed him as ruler over earth. He placed creation and its creatures in our hands. Man is God's representative and must rule under God.

God gave his people ownership in the Promised Land. Each family received their own piece of land. It had to be returned to the rightful owners in the Year of Jubilee (every 50th year).

This ownership is not absolute, however. Before they receive the Promised Land, he says:

"The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." (Lev25,23)

What assets do we receive?

God gave his people possessions: land, vineyards, whole cities. Nowadays money is a clearly visible asset that we need to manage every day. But there are other assets under our stewardship:

- time (opportunities: Ephesians 5,16)
- language/speech (we can speak careless words (Matthew 12,36), foul language, slander and lies (Colossians 3,8-9) as opposed to building each other up (Ephesians 4,29) and thanking God (Colossians 3,17))
- creative and intellectual gifts
- wisdom
- authority
- money
- children
- and even our bodies (mind, the senses, reproductive organs, hands and feet).

What is the purpose of stewardship?

Whatever assets or gifts we have, as stewards we work with the possessions of **someone else**. Stewards must use the assets in the interest of the owner. Serve the king! Produce something for his kingdom.

Every creature was created for the glory and enjoyment of God. Man as king of creation must rule and manage creation so that every other creature can thrive for God's glory. Exploitation is selfish, harms other creatures and takes away from God's glory.

We are stewards in the middle of the battle between two kingdoms. Satan has established his kingdom on

earth through sin. We are constantly challenged to use our gifts for evil or for good. Rom6,1–14 teach that being united with Jesus' death and resurrection places us under the obligation to serve our saviour and king. The grace we have received, calls us to use our bodies as instruments of righteousness, serving the kingdom of heaven. Grace motivates us to be stewards!

The special role of the church

Christians, as members of the church of Jesus, have a specific calling to be stewards. Every Christian is called to be a member of the local church, the body of Christ. God has given his church a special role in the coming of his kingdom on earth.

First, God has entrusted the church with the message of the kingdom. The church, under the leadership of the elders is the steward of this gospel. This is the gospel of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. He sent the church to preach it to the whole world and call people to repentance and obedience:

- Several passages in Paul's letters about the gospel entrusted to apostles and handed over to the church. Also Mt28,18-20: 'make disciples, teach them to obey')
- 2Tim1,14: "*Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you*"; (2Tim2,2) "*entrust it to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others*"; 1Tim3,15: the church is "*God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*"
- Luke24,46–48: "*This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.*"

Second, Jesus poured out his Spirit on his church and gives each believer charismata (grace gifts) of the Spirit:

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.
(1Pt4:10–11)

The purpose of these gifts is that we serve each other and build each other up. This helps everybody to play his part in the body of Christ.

It is my impression that the church as God's instrument is undervalued by many South African Christians. It is often seen as optional to join a church. Participation is not constant. But the church has a central place in God's purpose for the world. If Christians don't see their special calling, they will fail to be good stewards and waste their gifts.

It is the calling of each local church to teach the members not only about their personal stewardship but also about their shared stewardship in the body of Jesus. We should invest more in teaching and equipping!

Is the kingdom on our minds?

We focus on the finances of the church(es) today. Stewardship is broader than money. If every member of a local church would deposit his tithes into the church's bank account but would not worship God and serve with his gifts, that church would cease to exist.

This mission of the church is not only carried out with money, but with all the gifts God has placed in our hands. But let us apply this for a moment on money.

If I zoom into the the mission churches, I notice that many members have more money than 20 years ago. A new generation is growing up who will have more money than their parents. Who will give them guidance on how to spend it?

If they watch TV or listen to the values of their friends, they are going to spend it on themselves: a house, status symbols, education, food, life insurance, and on whatever obligations they have in the community. We will have Christians who are consumers.

How much will they give to the church? That depends on what they know and believe about stewardship and the kingdom.

To which kingdom do they belong? And if they belong to the kingdom of God, do they realize the calling they have received?

According to Randy Alcorn (*Money, possessions, and eternity*, p. xv):

“What we do with our money loudly affirms which kingdom we belong to.”

Money can give you a false security, as Jesus teaches in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12,13-21). He introduces the parable with a warning:

“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (v.14)

And he concludes with a warning:

“So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (v. 21)

Like any other gift of God, money can become an idol. Maybe it just works faster than other idols. It gives you a sense of control, power, and value.

Accumulate money and possessions - and the result is power and self-sufficiency. They turn into a treasure that captivates your heart (Matthew 6,21):

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

This word ‘treasure’ plays an important role in the teaching of the New Testament. Treasure has everything to do with our eternal destination. It indicates where your hope for the future lies. 1Timothy 6,17–19:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

Stewardship has an expiration date: the moment will come when the commission ends and the owner will ask his steward how he has managed the possessions that were put in his hands. Apparently, how we behave as stewards determines where we end up in eternity!

The task of the church

So the churches have a huge responsibility.

Not in the first place to make sure that enough money comes in so that the ministry of the church can continue. Our first responsibility is to teach members to be stewards. We must be concerned that every member will lay up treasure in heaven and warn them against the danger of idolatry.

In order to be responsible, we have the following calling as churches:

- To teach about the responsibility of stewardship so that the kingdom of God guides their use of their gifts (including money)
- To make members aware of the danger of idolatry
- To help believers understand and appreciate the grace of God. God’s grace alone will make them humble servants and generous givers.
- to practice accountability in all gifts, and especially in how the money in the church is managed.

Mission Deputies of the Free Reformed Churches in SA Report to Synod 2014

Date 03 Feb 2014, V2.0



**Suid-Afrikaanse
Sendingdeputate**

Dear Brothers

Attached you find the report of the mission Deputies, appointed by Synod 2011.

Not all relevant information is included in this report, like minutes of MDSA meetings and reports of workshops and conferences. This information is available on request at the email address specified in the report.

The report presented at the previous synod contained concerns around the sustainability and viability of the work of the FRCSA as a whole and the mission work in particular. Specific deputies were appointed to investigate this matter and as mission deputies we also looked at the mission work and its sustainability. The visitation in 2011 had a very specific focus on the mission work from a strategic and sustainability point of view. A detailed report was presented by the visitation team and distributed to the various mission boards with the request to study the contents and look at alternatives to grow the mission work on a sustainable basis. Both Cape Town and Pretoria considered the recommendations during their strategic planning sessions and new strategic plans were drafted and presented.

The deputies still believe that the capacity within the FRCSA is limited and the growth of the mission work will thus have to be managed within these constraints. At the same time requests have been received to also consider alternative projects as part of mission work that do not fall within the "traditional" mission scope of work.

The recommendations made contain the detail of the more elaborate mandate we believe should be part of the mission deputies' responsibilities with the clear objective of spreading the Gospel.

The mission work has also seen a number of changes and disappointments and whilst these are regrettable in some way we still see God's hand, blessing and guidance through all these events whilst our focus remains on spreading the Gospel where He provides us the opportunities.

We pray that you as synod delegates may receive strength and wisdom in order to have positive discussions and that God may bless all decisions made.

With sisterly and brotherly greetings, for MDSA:

Br. R Snijder
Chairman

Sr. T Bijker
Secretary

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1. Deputyship

As per date of this report, MDSA consists of the following members:

- Roel Snijder (Chairman)
- Harm Snijder (Treasurer)
- Lodewijk Ijlst, co-opted by MDSA in order to replace br Jaap Smit who resigned due to his departure to the GKSA.
- Tjeerd de Wit
- Tanya Bijker

2. Instructions of Synod 2011

Synod 2011 decided to appoint Mission Deputies with the following instructions. A short response on how each instructions was followed up, is included:

1. *To continue the contact between the mission churches of the FRCSA and the supporting churches abroad;*
MDSA have maintained contact with Mission Deputies in the Netherlands (ZDNL) throughout the past 3 years. Information like minutes, budgets, reports etc. have been communicated with these deputies.
2. *To act, within this contact, in accordance with the agreement of cooperation, which synod made with the supporting churches abroad and the agreement of cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches;*
These agreements of co-operation were indeed followed. It should be noted that still not all churches within the FRCSA have signed the agreement of co-operation.
3. *To receive annually the policies and work plans from the mission churches, the budget for the next year and the statements of the previous year;*
This information was received regularly by MDSA. These plans and policies are also discussed at our annual conference, normally in October, attended by all role players. The budget for the year following arises from the input received from these policies and plans.
4. *To consolidate the various budgets and present it to the deputies of the supporting churches abroad;*
At the end of every year the budget for the following year is shared with deputies in the Netherlands. For the past three years, the 5 year budgets were not prepared due to too many uncertainties and changes in the mission work. For 2011 and 2012 the budgets were also sent to Coaldale, Canada, who supported us throughout those years. As the support was not needed anymore, this flow of information was also stopped.
5. *To distribute, in accordance with the approved budgets of the mission churches, the incoming funds;*
Funds have been distributed according to accepted budgets.
6. *To ensure that the money is spent in accordance with the budget, policies and work plans;*
This has been attempted at all times,
7. *To assess the churches with a minimum amount of R130 per member for*

calendar year 2011 and to assess the churches for 2012, 2013 and 2014 with an amount to be finalized at an ad hoc synod early 2012.;

Except from the needy churches in our bond of churches, all the other churches (i.e. Maranata, Pretoria, Kaapstad and Johannesburg) paid their respective assessments for the 3 years under review. The needy churches did not make any contributions towards MDSA via collections, as was recommended by Synod 2011.

8. *To present a Revised budget before the end of 2011 to deputies for Financial Review to be presented at the ad-hoc synod;*
This was indeed presented to these Deputies, now called Deputies Sustainability.
9. *To request from the mission churches the minutes and reports related to mission work;*
Deputies received minutes and reports from the respective Mission Boards on a regular basis and were also distributed to ZDNL.
10. *To coordinate necessary mission affairs of mutual interest of the various mission fields;*
This happened mainly at the annual joint mission strategy meetings, attended by the Mission Boards, MDSA and other relevant parties. These meetings are held every year in October and are also used to discuss the budget for the year following.
11. *To have the "Agreement of Co-operation between the FRC's in South Africa" signed by all co-operating churches.*
Two churches have not signed yet, Mamelodi and Soshanguve GG.
12. *To divide the different tasks amongst themselves;*
Done.
13. *To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.*
Via this report.

The ad hoc synod of April 14, 2012 added to these instructions:

1. *To approve the below mentioned contribution amounts (per member per year) for the next 3 years till the next synod i.e. 2014. There after the proposed differentiated model for contributions should be used if approved by Synod 2014. For MDSA these contributions are:*

<i>2011</i>	<i>R130</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>R150</i>
<i>2013</i>	<i>R175</i>
<i>2014</i>	<i>R190</i>

See finance section of this report.

2. *To add an instruction to the mandates of MDSA, Art 11,19 and Curators to communicate information, concerning needed funding to consistories on an annual basis.*
A financial summary was sent to all churches in Aug 2013 for the first and only time.
3. *To call all deputies to include a properly motivated and sustainable operational plan with at least a three year budget in their synod reports. Criteria such as*

dependency on foreign money, the federations own ability to contribute, availability of manpower etc. should play an important role.

The operational plan and necessary budgets are included in this report and summarised under the recommendations section. At this stage we can point out that mission work is mostly dependant on foreign funding and only 5% being contributed locally. The concerns we raised in our 2011 report regarding the availability of manpower remains a concern whilst substantial surpluses are available at present.

3. Meetings

As result of the regional nature of the composition of the MDSA it was possible to meet regularly (minutes of the meetings can be provided upon request by Tanya Bijker tanya@bijker.co.za)

Meetings were also held with Deputies Needy Churches, Deputies Theological Training, Mission Boards from Maranata, Mamelodi and Cape Town as well as representatives from the Mission Deputies Netherlands and Church Council Bethal. The following table provides a breakdown of the meeting schedule for the period March 2011 – January 2014.

Date	Invitees and purpose
28 March 2011	MDSA
5 September 2011	MDSA
19 September 2011	Meeting with ZDNL in NL
20 October 2011	MDSA & Visitation team from the Netherlands.
21 & 22 October	MDSA Mission Workshop (see 4.3.1)
26 October 2011	MDSA & Visitation team from the Netherlands.
31 October 2011	MDSA & Visitation team from the Netherlands.
10 November 2011	MDSA & Visitation team from the Netherlands
11-12 Nov 2011	Attend Indaba Deputies Sustainability
20 February 2012	MDSA
23 April 2012	MDSA
25 June 2012	MDSA
29 & 30 June 2012	Attend Mission Board Cape Town Workshop
27 August 2012	MDSA
25 September 2012	MDSA
13 October 2012	Attend special Inbada deputies Curators and Article 11.
26 & 27 October 2012	MDSA Mission Workshop (see 4.3.1)
3 December 2012	MDSA
21 January 2013	MDSA
18 February 2013	MDSA & Br Renger Doornbos from Mission Deputies Netherlands
9 March 2013	Attend strategic workshop Mission

	Board Maranata
20 May 2013	MDSA & MB Maranata & Church Council Maranata.
25 June 2013	MDSA
19 & 20 July	Special Mission Workshop
26 August 2013	MDSA
8 September	MDSA & Church Council Bethal
21 October 2013	MDSA
25 & 26 October 2013	MDSA Mission Workshop (see 4.3.1)
28 October 2013	MDSA & Mission Deputies Netherlands
11 November 2013	MDSA
20 January 2014	MDSA

4. Activities

4.1 Report on visitation (from NL) 2011

This visitation took place from 20 Oct till 15 Nov 2011. MDSA was instrumental in organizing the visitation. This visitation only dealt with the sustainability of the FRCSA mission work and the visitation team was requested to pay attention to this issue, not only as far as money is concerned, but also in connection with manpower and the sustainability of the way we as FRCSA work in mission. The following persons participated in the visitation:

For ZDNL:

1. Rev. Marco Buitenhuis;
2. Rev. Henk Folkers (advisor, on the invitation of DFR);
- 3 & 4. Rev. Roel & Madeline Sietsma;
5. Brother Jaap van der Vinne, Secretary ZDNL;

For MDSA for the visitation of the mission work of Pretoria / Maranata:

6. Brother Hans Moes;
7. Brother Jaap Smit;

For MDSA for the visitation of the mission work of Cape Town:

8. Brother Hilko Lubbinge;
9. Rev. Piet Magagula;

Secretary for the visitation: Sister Madeline Sietsma.

MDSA defined the instructions to visitors, see [Appendix A, Visitation instructions 2011](#).

A summary of the recommendation that came out of the visitation can be found in [Appendix B for CapeTown](#) and [Appendix B for Pretoria](#). The full report can be received on request from sr Tanya Bijker at tanya@bijker.co.za

4.2 Reports on visitation 2013

The normal visitations did not take place in 2011, as mentioned above. For that reason, normal visitations were done afterwards and only by local people. These visitations only took place in 2013 and the following locations were visited:

F4 by: brs FJ van Dijk and J Hagg
Nellmapius by: Rev JJ Drijfhout and br AC Bijker
Akasia by: brs FJ van Dijk and JA Boon
CapeTown by: Rev T de Boer and br F Raimond

The other locations were not visited due to lack of manpower. Instructions for these visitations can be found in [Appendix C, Visitation instructions 2013](#) Conclusions of these reports, as far as available, can be found in [Appendix D, Visitation report 2013 conclusions](#).

The complete visitation reports can be received on request from sr Tanya Bijker at tanya@bijker.co.za

4.3 Mission Planning

4.3.1 Workshops

Every year the MDSA hosts a mission workshop where members from the respective mission boards, representatives from the missionary churches, representatives from Deputies Netherlands are invited to discuss issues of mutual concern. These discussions focus mainly on strategic plans and budgets and each mission board is responsible for proposing their strategic direction for the coming year, supplemented with their budgets. The following issues are typically discussed during these meetings:

- Strategic plans of various Mission Boards
- Budget next year
- Long term budgets (5 years)
- Funding and fundraising
- Next visitation from the Netherlands
- Information sessions/PR overseas and local

4.3.2 Strategic session 19/20 Jul 2013

After the finalisation of the financial statements at the beginning of 2013 it became clear that whereas a couple of years ago there was concern about the financial sustainability of the mission, the situation has changed considerably due to:

- The sale of the parsonage houses of rev. Nicholson and rev. Breytenbach.
- Interest earned on the savings account.
- Currency fluctuations: the weakening of the Rand resulted in exchange rate gains of R150 000.
- Bellville under spending by R400 000, Maranata under spending by R260 000
- Gifts from Canada to the amount of R260 000

Currently MDSA has a general reserve of R3.4 million and a contingency fund of R4.3 million, plus funds for special purposes of R430 000, leading to a total reserve of more than R8.4 million.

Furthermore MDSA expects that this reserve will grow considerably because of:

- Rev. De Boer and rev. Boon each accepting a call to a congregation: their salaries and costs form part of the current budget.
- Possible sale of the parsonage houses of Rev Boon.

- A possible further weakening of the rand will increase the exchange rate gains.

In light of these MDSA decided to organise a special consultative meeting on 19 & 20 July 2013 to discuss with all stakeholders in the mission what should be done. The workshop was attended by representatives of the mission boards of Pretoria-Maranata and Cape Town (including missionaries), representatives of the church councils of Pretoria-Maranata, Pretoria, Bethal and Johannesburg.

Although MDSA does not have a direct responsibility for strategic planning for the mission boards, it was decided that a meeting touching upon overarching strategy was opportune at this time. The purpose of the workshop was to brainstorm different ideas, considerations relating to mission work in South Africa. Some of the main discussion points were:

- If we expand the mission projects, do we have the manpower in our congregations to manage this or should we find a different management model?
- Should we 'invest' some of the surplus in colleges like Mukhanyo? Should we ask Synod for a widened mandate to include (some) theological and other types of training.
- The Cape Flats mission project has started a multi-point strategy, whereby one missionary is responsible for a couple of mission points. The advantages and disadvantages of this approach were discussed.
- Should we appoint a senior missionary to be responsible for leadership training and mentoring as well as coordination of country-wide initiatives?

The meeting was of an explorative nature and of course, no decisions were taken.

4.2.3 Widening mandate?

In the MDSA report to Synod 2011 it was written:

"The financial constraints we currently experience have a serious impact on the mission work. The current work is already under pressure, and growth is something we cannot fund at all. Later in this report, we mention that it is imperative to arrange a conference to discuss the work the bond of churches is supporting, of which mission work is probably the largest portion."

The conference mentioned was held in November 2011, an ad-hoc synod convened and Deputies Sustainability appointed. A lot of effort went into thinking about Mission and Money. However, one issue raised in the 2011 report, that of manpower, did not get much attention. Quotes from 2011 report:

*"MDSA suggests hosting a separate indaba around this topic and we recommend that this is not specifically around mission work but also the impact of the work we as bond of churches do in South Africa. The Lord is certainly calling on all of us to preach and teach without hesitation, but we also have to consider the **availability of manpower**, availability of financial support and our approach in all of this."*

*"The general view often heard is that we just have to go and look overseas and funds will be made available. Have we ever looked at our own bond of churches and the **manpower** we have available and how we could approach all this work in a different way and still be in a position to manage the work that is all done with the common goal of **"... go and make disciples of all nations, ..."** and **"... store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ..."**. Does this only apply to our churches or to all churches worldwide? Don't they, other churches elsewhere, have their own calling for this work in their respective countries and areas for which they require their own manpower and*

resources? Is our continuous call on them to support the work in SA depriving them from their own calling?"

As mentioned, the issue of local manpower (needed to manage the work), was not really discussed. But it did play a role in the past three years. The Maranata Mission Board, through its 2014 Budget and 2013 Strategic plan, indicated that they have reached the limit of what they can handle due to the amount of work and the ever changing Mission Board members due to manpower needed elsewhere, for example as office bearers and many other functions.

We are now three years later and the financial picture has drastically changed. There was a serious threat of running out of funds in 2011, we now have a big surplus. In section 6 you can read about these reserves and the reasons for them.

Was MDSA pessimistic in 2011? MDSA is of the opinion that in 2011 we had to draw attention to the financial situation prevailing at that time. And in retrospect, it resulted in a lot of rethinking about how money is applied in mission and how money can be applied for the good and the bad.

As is often the case, circumstances force us to think about the way forward. In 2011 the lack of funds forced MDSA to make proposals at that time in order to address this issue.

And now in 2013/2014 with surplus funds, we were forced again to think about the way forward.

But before thinking about this way forward, let's first take a look at the current MDSA mandate, as far as applying funds is concerned: (quote from 2011 mandate, see section 2 Above)

1. *To act, within this contact, in accordance with the **agreement of cooperation**, which synod made with the supporting churches abroad and the agreement of cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches;*
2. *To receive annually the policies and work plans from the mission churches, the budget for the next year and the statements of the previous year;*
3. *To consolidate the various budgets and present it to the deputies of the supporting churches abroad;*
4. *To distribute, in accordance with the approved budgets of the mission churches, the incoming funds;*
5. *To ensure that the money is spent in accordance with the budget, policies and work plans;*

The above mentioned **agreement of cooperation** describes the task of MDSA as follows:

(Translated from Dutch)

- a. *to have a long term view of the mission work in South Africa through bringing together, co-ordinating and seeing work in action;*
- b. *put together every year a mission budget with an explanation for the churches in South Africa;*

- c. *to keep an eye on the roll-out of the policy by sending churches and reporting about this to ZDNL (Mission Deputies Netherlands);*
- d. *to publish a financial annual report and also a general annual report about how the policy was executed;*
- e. *making available information if and when needed by ZDNL so that they can provide information sessions in the Netherlands.*

Especially point b) and c) restrict MDSA to spent money **only** based on Budgets by the sending churches.

And with this restriction in mind we consider the following facts:

- i. Mission by the FRC so far has been restricted to preaching the Gospel and church planting.
- ii. Mission Deputies in the Netherlands are part of a larger setup which includes DVN and Synod Deputies ZHT (GKv Deputies for Mission, Compassion and Training) and there is a constant discussion how mission relates to the other topics, like compassion and training.
- iii. Training **within** the FRC is dealt with by Curators Theological Training.
- iv. Spreading the Gospel can also happen **outside** the Bond of Churches via training, as it happens by Rev Jopie van der Linden's Preaching Library (<http://www.preachinglibrary.za.org/>), by Mhukanyo, by Cross Roads Bible Institute (evangelism in jails), all of them with involvement from FRC members. And there are others (like GWC, George Wycliff College), some with FRC members involved and some not.
- v. Earlier in 2013 MDSA did receive a request from Bethal for financial support for Rev Breyenbach so that he can teach at Mhukanyo College. The Bethal congregation is too small to fully support Rev Breytenbach and Bethal saw this as a solution.
- vi. MDSA also received a request from Rev Jopie van der Linden for his Preaching Library project.
- vii. There is also compassion work being done by FRC members and there are various projects with and without DVN support.
- viii. Classis North even has Deputies Social Upliftment with a mandate to co-ordinate all upliftment work in the Classis North area and possibly come with their own projects so that church members can climb out of their financial dire straits.

Point i. above has prevented MDSA to consider financial support as requested in v. and vi. above.

All this takes us back to what was said earlier:

And now in 2013 with surplus funds, we were forced again to think about the way forward.

What follows are some thoughts of MDSA presented here for Synod's consideration.

- a. Spreading the Gospel, **without** the intention to plant new churches, is already happening in the FRC, some organized like Preaching Library with the involvement of FRC Johannesburg, some less organized, like participating in Cross Roads Bible Institute jail evangelism by some FRC church members. MDSA proposes that Synod expands MDSA's mandate so that such activities can be supported. Synod can pre-determine which organisations can be supported while all others are excluded, or Synod can give MDSA the mandate to judge

themselves. We propose that such assessment is based on a few principles to be applied in the process such as:

- i) It has to be directly related to the spreading of the Gospel.
 - ii) It has to be preferably an initiative where FRC members or specific FRC congregations or FRC related churches are directly or indirectly involved with this work.
 - iii) Each proposal is also accepted and approved by ZD-NL.
- b.** Such a mandate would alleviate the manpower problem and could have a few pre-conditions:
- a.1) The manpower problem is solved in that spreading of the Gospel takes place without the need for manpower out of the FRC manpower pool to manage these activities.
 - a.2) Pre-condition 1: MDSA proposes that money cannot be spent for such activities after reaching a pre-defined reserve limit. For example, if it is accepted that MDSA reserves should be enough to cover six months of current mission activities, then allocating money in accordance with the proposed extended mandate will not happen when less than this reserve is available.
 - a.3) Pre-Condition 2: The approval of ZDNL (Dutch Deputies) will be required insofar as ZDNL contributions are used, because it deviates from the current Agreement of Cooperation.
 - a.4) Channelling money for training, if approved by Synod, should happen in consultation with deputies Theological, **where applicable.**
- c.** As far as compassion work is concerned: MDSA does not have specific proposals to Synod. MDSA cannot see how centralizing compassion work (like DVN in the Netherlands), can be handled by MDSA as far as manpower is concerned. Getting involved with various projects and strategies in this regard is time consuming and our Bond of Churches is too small to tackle this problem in a structured way. Of course there are many social problems in newly instituted and existing congregations in the FRC as well as in mission points. A lot of work is done by various organizations to alleviate social problems with success, within and outside the FRC. Also Deputies Social Upliftment in Classis North attempts to pay attention to this challenge, while on the Cape Flats there is a Social Worker.

So, in summary, the proposal to Synod is to include in MDSA's mandate; financial support for Spreading the Gospel through other means such as Theological or related training, the Preaching Library Project and other similar projects, without having to do or manage these activities ourselves but providing the funding for these projects managed by other deputies or external institutions.

5. Mission information.

5.1 Sessions

The purpose of information sessions are to promote the mission work and keep all supporting churches directly involved informed about progress and challenges on the mission field. This is regulated in Article 8 of the "Agreement of Cooperation" for national information sharing and Art 15 of the "Akkoord van samewerking" for information sharing with the Netherlands.

To comply with this requirement two information visits per year are planned for the supporting churches in The Netherlands and one information session per year for each FRCSA congregation and each mission point.

Netherlands:

- 2011 During 2011 Rev DM Boersma and Rev T de Boer visited the Netherlands.
- 2012 br Hans Moes and Rev P Abrahams visited the Netherlands
- 2013 Rev Magagula in March 2013. The second visit was cancelled on ZDNL's request and will now take place first quarter 2014.

South Africa.

- 2011&2012 Maranata was responsible for the local information sessions and this happened at all locations.
- 2013 Cape Town was responsible for information sessions, but only Pretoria and Maranata received an information session. It should be noted that it is difficult for Cape Town to give information sessions in all congregations and mission points in Gauteng. MDSA has suggested Cape Town makes available a short presentation in English which can be used in Gauteng in those locations where they cannot go themselves in order to provide information about the work on the Cape Flats.

5.2 Newsletters

MDSA had a plan in early 2012 to issue a 6-monthly newsletter containing information provided by missionaries. However at the same time, the Pretoria Mission Board started with such a service and MDSA consequently dropped this plan. However, it became clear at the time of writing this report that this initiative may come to an end due to lack of manpower. At the same time MDSA received a request from ZDNL to streamline mission news gathering and dissemination. (See section [5.3 Additional information dissemination.](#)) MDSA is currently envisioning, together with the Mission Boards, to combine this newsletter service with the request from ZDNL. The flow of concise information between South Africa and the co-operating churches in the Netherlands has been a contentious issue for a long time. The way SDSA plans to implement this service is to have a dedicated PR person. At the moment the plan is that sr Tanya Bijker, currently secretary of the SDSA, will fulfil this function. A new secretary will take over her secretarial function. At the time of writing SDSA was still looking for new secretary. sr Tanya will make sure that the co-operating churches in the Netherlands as well as the churches in South Africa will be informed regularly about various aspects of the mission work which are of interest to the general public.

5.3 Additional information dissemination.

Early 2014 ZDNL came with a new proposal in order to keep church members in the Netherlands more informed about and involved with what happens at the mission points. This proposal entails the following:

- a. There are 6 classis in the ZDNL area.
- b. All churches in one Classis will be informed about what happens at one (or maybe two) mission points.
- c. There will be a constant information flow from one missionary to one Classis (or rather representative committee of churches in that Classis).
- d. This way church members won't get lost and confused between all mission points and the names of all missionaries, and thus are able to build a clearer picture in their minds of what they are involved with.
- e. This will not replace visits by missionaries twice a year in order to do information sessions and visit churches and places like schools, catechism classes etc.

A pilot project with one classis involved has started in January 2014. As mentioned in section [5.2 Newsletters](#), MDSA tries to combine this request from ZDNL with regular provision of information to local churches.

6. Finances

6.1 Current situation

During the past 3 years, the financial situation of the Mission work in South Africa has changed dramatically. Three years ago we were forced to stop all expansions, freeze all capital projects and cut expenses. This scenario has changed completely. Some of the reasons are:

1. Rev Breytenbach accepted a call to Bethal
2. His manse was subsequently sold.
3. The late Rev Nicholson's manse was sold.
4. The pension for the widow of the late Rev Nicholson was finalised and the MDSA was relieved from further substantial financial obligations
5. Rev T de Boer accepted a call to the Netherlands
6. Rev PG Boon accepted a call to Pretoria Maranata
7. The exchange rate of the Rand against the Euro deteriorated drastically, hence an increase in Rands received from the Deputies in the Netherlands
8. Support to Mukhanyo was also stopped as from 2012.

6.2 Budget next three years

The mission committee of Maranata indicated during the past annual mission workshop that they are at their limit of capacity for the work they are currently undertaking in the Tshwane area. They do not anticipate any growth in preaching/mission points in Tshwane. Therefore the budget for Maranata will only grow with inflation. Furthermore, the church council of Maranata made a principle decision that only South African ministers will be called for mission work in South Africa, which reduces the stipend and related costs.

In Cape Town, the mission work is currently undertaken jointly by a full time missionary (rev Carl van Wyk) and rev Peter Abrahams, who is 50% allocated to the mission work and for the other 50% working in the Belhar congregation. They do plan for an additional missionary later in 2014. For the next 3 years, no more expansion is planned in the mission work in Cape Town. They are considering the possibility of mission workers to support the multi-point mission model.

The implications of the above mentioned points are that the budgets are under no pressure for the next 3 years. Over and above that, significant reserves were accumulated over the past three years. See [Appendix E, Financial Statements](#) for overview.

Full financial statements are available on request from br Harm Snijder harm@auditworks.co.za

6.3 Reserves

At the end of 2012, the MDSA had reserves amounting close to R8.2 million. Of this amount, roughly R500 000 had been allocated for future commitments. MDSA want to keep approximately 50% of an average annual budget as a reserve, leaving us with R5 million as general reserves. This amount excludes any surplus for the 2013 financial year.

It is amazing how quickly the financial situation of the MDSA has changed. We really had great concerns about the financial sustainability of the mission work in South Africa. We prayed a lot for wisdom to find solutions. God provided them, although in a much different way as we would have expected.

The MDSA is of the opinion that the purpose of the mission work in South Africa is not to create reserves and investments. The money was collected for mission work, and thus should be expensed accordingly. We have certain recommendations to the synod in this respect, see section [4.2.3 Widening mandate?](#)

6.4 Pension scheme

The pension provision for the missionaries in Pretoria has been finalised. No foreign pension contributions are made anymore, reducing the retirement costs dramatically.

6.5 Fundraising and relations with Canada/Australia

During 2011 and 2012 MDSA received support from Coaldale, Canada. The support given was on an ad hoc basis from collections organized by the Coaldale congregation. Due to the improvement of the financial situation of MDSA, the support was not necessary any more, and subsequently stopped. We thank the Lord that he provided support via Coaldale. This support, which was much needed at the time, was much appreciated by MDSA.

7. Functioning of MDSA and observations.

7.1 Functioning of MDSA

The co-operation within the MDSA team over the past three years has been excellent and we feel that the Lord was with us in our work. Br Roel Snijder plans to step down during 2014 and synod is requested to appoint a new member. **Br Harry Pouwels** has been approached and he is prepared to become an SDSA member.

7.2 MDSA observations

MDSA's most important observation is lack of manpower in our small bond of Churches in order to execute the work for which money is available.

Another observation is that Synod 2014 of the GKv (which started in January 2014) has to deal with a report from their deputies concerning mission and compassion work. If accepted, this could have some impact on our relationship with ZDNL. The report recommends strongly the responsibility of local churches for mission and related work (as is currently already the case), but also proposes a more central/national vision on mission work, while it is important to note that in this report the word 'sending' has been replaced by 'mission', a word which for the Dutch audience means spreading the gospel as well as training and compassion work. (i.e. Word and Deed).

8. Suggestions

Proposed MDSA Instructions to be approved by Synod 2014:

- i. To continue the contact between the mission churches of the FRCSA and the supporting churches abroad;*
- ii. To act, within this contact, in accordance with the agreement of cooperation, which synod made with the supporting churches abroad and the agreement of cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches;*

- iii. *MDSA may consider requests for support outside of the current agreement of cooperation and these requests have to be assessed based on the following principles and pre-conditions:*
 - a. *It has to be directly related to the spreading of the Gospel*
 - b. *Each proposal is also accepted and approved by ZD-NL*
 - c. *Pre-condition 1: MDSA proposes that money cannot be spent for such activities after reaching a pre-defined reserve limit. For example, if it is accepted that MDSA reserves should be enough to cover 6 months of current mission activities, then allocating money in accordance with the proposed extended mandate will not happen when less than this reserve is available.*
 - d. *Pre-Condition 2: The approval of ZDNL (Dutch Deputies) will be required insofar as ZDNL contributions are used and Synod proposes that the Agreement of Cooperation is extended to cover this additional mandate.*
 - e. *All funding for projects relating to instructions of other Deputies within the FRCSA needs to be assessed in conjunction with such deputies. For example, channelling money for training in the context of spreading the gospel, if approved by Synod, should happen in consultation with deputies Theological, where applicable.*
- iv. *To receive annually the policies and work plans from the mission churches, the budget for the next year and the statements of the previous year;*
- v. *To consolidate the various budgets and present it to the deputies of the supporting churches abroad;*
- vi. *To distribute, in accordance with the approved budgets of the mission churches, the incoming funds;*
- vii. *To ensure that the money is spent in accordance with the budget, policies and work plans;*
- viii. *To assess the churches with a minimum amount of R190, R205, R225 and R240 per member for calendar years 2014 – 2017 respectively.*
- ix. *To request from the mission churches the minutes and reports related to mission work;*
- x. *To coordinate necessary mission affairs of mutual interest of the various mission fields;*
- xi. *To have the "Agreement of Co-operation between the FRC's in South Africa" signed by all co-operating churches.*
- xii. *To divide the different tasks amongst themselves.*
- xiii. *To communicate information, concerning needed funding to consistories on an annual basis.*
- xiv. *To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod*

And finally, MDSA reminds synod to appoint a replacement for Deputy br R Snijder.

Yours in Christ,
Mission Deputies South Africa

Appendix A, Visitation instructions 2011

Instructions to the visitation team 2011 Version 2.0 – 26/09/2011

The main focus of this year's visitation is the strategic direction and methodology of Mission within our Bond of Churches. What lessons have we learned thus far and what can we do to change our "old habits". How do we establish an independent "togetherness" ie. Mission churches functioning on their own and having a strong bond with the Bond of Churches.

In order to obtain some insight we have attempted to draft instructions as guidelines which the team needs to investigate, evaluate and where necessary provide recommendations with regards to the following:

Specific for the Mission Churches and Missionaries and mission team

1. Growth towards Self Governing instituted Church

1.1. Self Governance / Ownership

- 1.1.1. Members are "owners" of the church
- 1.1.2. Members to take the lead in church activities
- 1.1.3. Members to identify the need for "material" items and provide for them amongst themselves
- 1.1.4. Members understanding of a self governing church

1.2. Missionary's focus on preaching the Gospel and Spiritual growth amongst members (Acts 6 – apostle continuing with spreading the Gospel)

- 1.2.1. The growth (spiritual and in numbers) as compared to the previous visitation 2008
- 1.2.2. Gifts of specific brothers that could be utilised in mission work
- 1.2.3. The short term possibility of instituting office bearers
- 1.2.4. Factors that contribute to the possibility of closing a mission point

2. What is the Missionaries view with regards to:

- 2.1. Mission Workers assisting the Missionary in evangelism and covering a wider area.
- 2.2. Involvement of theological training
- 2.3. Alternatives that will encourage member's participation and sense of Ownership.
- 2.4. Mission Churches having to help themselves with no alternative/outside funding.
- 2.5. Is the current structure functional and an effective way of Mission.

3. Functioning of the missionary:

- 3.1. On the mission field assigned to him
- 3.2. Within a strategic plan – is he part of the strategic planning process and does he know what the strategic plan is.
- 3.3. In the sending church to which he and his family belongs and his spiritual attitude towards his calling
- 3.4. With regards to his personal time management
- 3.5. His functioning within the mission team
- 3.6. His ability and the possibility for further academic development
- 3.7. Pastoral care of missionaries and their families
- 3.8. What impact does socio-economic circumstances have on his work.
- 3.9. Do young missionaries receive coaching in their first years as missionary?
- 3.10. Can a missionary approach the mission team/support structure for mission related questions or topics?

Specific for Mission Boards and Church Councils

4. Mission work (existing and establishing new missionary points)

- 4.1. Mission Boards' Vision & Mission and building a strategic plan around this.
- 4.2. Factors influencing the strategic plan (limiting factors & opportunities).
- 4.3. Utilisation of existing manpower and exploring alternatives.
- 4.4. The use of youth in mission work/activities and the supervision thereof.
- 4.5. Utilising events as opportunity to spread the Gospel (eg. sport events).
- 4.6. Effectiveness of existing approach and/or structures in Mission work.
- 4.7. Alternative approach to Mission work maximizing our "footprint".
- 4.8. Missionary's role of execution vs members role of execution
- 4.9. Participation of the Missionary Church members in Mission work (ripple effect)

5. Mission finance (also to be discussed with MDSA)

- 5.1. Is there a need for a central fund raising body
- 5.2. Does money solve all problems
- 5.3. Is there a vision of changing the mission methodology in utilising manpower more effectively
- 5.4. Is it correct to continuously source funding from the whole world to further our mission work in SA?
- 5.5. May we limit the growth of our mission work due to manpower and financial constraints? If no, please motivate.
- 5.6. To ensure sustainability of mission work and self governing churches, what focus is placed on financial independence of a newly instituted church?

6. Structures

6.1. Mission Board (in conjunction with point 4)

- 6.1.1. Functioning and status of the Mission Board.
- 6.1.2. Drafting, implementing and monitoring of strategic plans.

- 6.1.3. Communication and cooperation/support between the Mission Board and the Church Council.
- 6.1.4. Relationship with Missionaries and Mission Team(s).
- 6.1.5. Availability/utilisation of manpower.
- 6.1.6. Public Relations with specifically the mission and supporting churches.
- 6.1.7. Relationship with MDSA.

6.2. Church Council

- 6.2.1. Relationship with Missionary.
- 6.2.2. Relationship with Mission Board and MDSA.
- 6.2.3. Relationship with the supporting churches.
- 6.2.4. Relationship with and/or support from mission churches' members

Specific for MDSA and other Deputies

7. Discussion Mission Deputies and other Deputies

7.1. Discussions with MDSA

- 7.1.1. Decisions Synod 2011
- 7.1.2. Communication/Relationship with ZDNL
- 7.1.3. Relationship with other deputies
- 7.1.4. Financial Support Structures
- 7.1.5. Financial Support package for newly instituted churches
- 7.1.6. Reserves and Provision for Emeriti
- 7.1.7. Forward Thinking
- 7.1.8. Discuss point 5

7.2. Other Deputies if required

- 7.2.1. MTC(+) arrangements, financial support, educational support, contact deputies Curators.
- 7.2.2. Deputies Article 11.
- 7.2.3. Deputies Article 19.
- 7.2.4. Relationship/Funding DVN for Students.
- 7.2.5. Separation of functions and independence of other deputies.
- 7.2.6. Do these deputies mainly focus on supporting Mission work.

General

8. Concerns/Questions:

- 8.1. The road to financial independence
- 8.2. What should be done with the surplus of theological students (possible missionaries) in the future?
- 8.3. Training of members from the congregations on how to use their talents in their congregations, i.e. organisational and financial management skills.

- 8.4. Use of a Bible School as means to spread the Gospel as method as opposed to formal mission work creating “House Churches”.

9. “Food for Thought”

- 9.1. We tend to focus on structures and policies as a solution to the problems. We should evaluate if we do enough to study the biblical / Reformed doctrine within the context of Africa, and translating it to a Christian lifestyle and the functioning of the church.
- 9.2. The role of prayer in the mission work should get more attention.
- 9.3. Promoting discipleship among the members (both “Sendende Kerk” and the new Mission Church): broader than training men to become elders so that we can institute the church. What resources are available to train members for many activities in the church:
 - 9.3.1. build an attitude of serving: members must learn to take initiatives, not be afraid or wait for others.
 - 9.3.2. small group / Bible study leaders.
 - 9.3.3. the work of mercy.
- 9.4. Building financial responsibility in the mission churches is important. However, this should not only be done through skills training, but first of all through Christ-centred biblical teaching about serving and worshiping God based on his grace. Can we evaluate this, too? Do we as missionaries give this enough attention and do we agree on this?

These instructions are an attempt to assist the Visitation team in doing their assessment and report on their findings. The MDSA and others are concerned about how we go about mission work and the effect of this work and the work of other deputies on the Bond of Churches.

Appendix B, Visitation report 2011 conclusions

Appendix B for CapeTown

Summary of findings Cape Town:

1. There is willingness in Cape Town to perform missionary work. Those involved do their best to support the work.
2. There is uncertainty within the structure of the mission work. The relationship between Belhar and Leiden is unclear. On the one hand the congregation members of Leiden fall under Belhar, because Belhar is an instituted church and because there is (temporary?) no missionary at Leiden. On the other hand, Belhar is not (yet) a sending church for the work at Leiden, although it appears that they assume this at times. Clarity is required.
3. In the practice of missionary work at Leiden it is not clear why the church council of Bellville has directly interfered with this and also with the work of the church of Belhar in matters of policy, and with the appointment of a volunteer. In these the SK was bypassed, but why?
4. There is a clear distrust between the church council of Bellville and Bellville SK. The reason is not clear. Why is there a lack of trust?
5. Those involved do not abide by their accepted agreements initiated by themselves. This leads to unworkable situations.
6. Lack of communication between parties.
7. There are on-going difficulties between the missionary of Belville and the SK. Although the situation has improved, it still plays a role. An obsolete document still leads to problems and not all involved have accepted by now that this document is from the table for good.

Action points Cape Town:

1. There should be a discussion, as soon as possible, between the church council and the SK of Belville, led by a mediator (facilitator) from outside, in other words, someone who is not involved at all in this case. Possibly someone from classis North, or someone from outside the immediate church community of Bellville.
2. The structure of the mission should provide all parties a clear vision. A clear and concise instruction should be accepted and used by the SK, the missionary and the church council. It is recommended to draw up these instructions through a workshop with all involved. The instructions should also include provisions relating to all concerned, not only the direct 'role players' such as SK, missionary and church council, but distant role players, like the MDSA.

3. The position of the church of Belhar in relation to the mission work should be clarified. The question whether Belhar can act as the sending church for the work in Leiden, must be answered.
4. The position of volunteer couple Koning in Capte Town, which is of temporarily nature, should be made clear. The official position of brother Koning should be clarified. Is he an office bearer? If not, what are his competencies and responsibilities?

Appendix B for Pretoria

Missionaries

It can be explained why there are still foreign missionaries but time has arrived that these missionaries gradually make place for local ones, as is happening already. It is important to continue this way and not to call anymore missionaries from overseas. It has been shown now that capable brothers can be found locally who can be trained to become a pastor or missionary. The fact that a proponent is available who is not getting a call begs the question if local missionaries are getting enough appreciation. Support and a positive affirmation can be of importance here.

Action points:

1. In principle no missionaries will be called from outside anymore. Missionaries will be called, if at all possible, from local candidates.
2. The possibility of part-time work for missionaries and ministers en serving multiple congregations deserves more study and consideration.
3. Starting local (indigenous) missionaries will work under supervision of more experienced missionaries or pastors.
4. It is strongly recommended that the experienced missionary with talents in the area of coaching and supervision (and who steps back after finishing off the work at CC) will be used as a coach or mentor for beginning missionaries, ministers, congregations and students.

Actions by: SK's, MDSA, church councils sending churches.

Men

There is attention for the approach and involvement of men from the beginning of the mission work. This can and should happen even more. Along with that, missionaries also look at cultural values. How can these be recognised and applied in a Christian manner within the mission work? This appears to be fruitful and promotes the involvement of the men with the congregation. The Mission Team is a good place where this can be discussed, studied and learned together.

Action point:

The way men are approached and their training with an eye on the future office, gets priority when discussing these topics with the aim to stimulate and help each other in this regard.

Action by: Missionaries and mission workers and members Mission Team.

Women.

Often people think too modest about the contributions of sisters and women. But there are no objections to involve them as needed. They are also allowed to lead in case there are no men doing so. We must be careful not to react to the phenomenon "women in office". There is no talk about that here. Here we deal with involving all members of the congregation with their talents.

Action point:

We involve sister and women even more and also more candid with all their talents and at the same time make preparations so that they, when the time is ripe, accept the leadership of brothers in office.

Action by: Missionaries and mission workers; members Mission Team

Students.**Action point 1:**

It is recommended that there will be a clear relation between the number of theology students who get financial support from the churches and from mission and the expected number of vacancies within the same community.

Action by: Deputies Curators Theological Training and DFR.

Action point 2:

It is recommended that the FRCSA expresses itself in the same way to all candidate-students for B.Th as well as M.Th level, in connection with the preparation for the office of minister or missionary. Students will this way no longer be referred to different training institutions based on where they hail from (mission congregation or an older congregation) – as per synod 2011 decision - when they apply for support from the churches in order to prepare themselves for the office. Based on the talents and the goal set out for them, they should get the same study advice, but taking into account the first action point of this paragraph (the number of students needed).

Action by: Deputies Curators Theological Training and MDSA.

Action point 3:

It is recommended that a theological study is done at an institution recognized by the churches and accredited by the government. MTC and GWC are good places to study for students aiming at B.Th level.

Action by: Deputies Curators Theological Training, MDSA and synod.

Action point 4:

It is also recommended that the churches choose for the same reformed training institute for all students who aim for the M.Th level. A FRCSA training institute is not possible. The preference should go to a university within the South African context (Potchefstroom). After enquiring, it also became clear that the reformed training institutes overseas (like Kampen and Hamilton) are open to students from all backgrounds.

All theology students from the churches should be subjected to the same training criteria and all should have the same training possibilities.

Action by: Deputies Curators Theological Training and synod.

Structure**Action point 1:**

There is a need to streamline the structure of the mission work even more. It is recommended that there will be one sending church per classis; there is also one SK per

classis. This makes Maranata the sending church for Nellmapius. All mission work will be guided by the SK in that classis. This is already happening in Tswane. In Cape Town, Bellville is the sending church for the mission work.

Action point 2:

In Cape Town the mission work in Leiden and Delft should resort again under the SK Bellville. The communication from the SK to MDSA must and can be restored in that case. Only this way ZDNL and MDSA can work optimally.

Action by: MDSA, SK's and church councils sending churches.

Involvement

In Cape Town as well as in Tswane there is a cordial willingness to do the mission work. All involved do their utmost in order to support the work.

Action Point:

The involvement of the older churches and their members in the mission congregations, the mission work and the mission contacts can be stimulated further. More information can stimulate this. It is pleasing if this involvement takes place and church members from the older churches show interest for the mission work and the other way around, everybody who gives this way, also receives back a lot. This promotes mission and integration. Initiatives like joined conferences, of which the Indaba which we attended was one, are good examples thereof.

Action by: MDSA, SK's through information session in own circles.

Independency

A congregation gets instituted as an independent church when the office can be introduced. At that stage the missionary steps back. This does not by definition mean that an instituted church must have or finance their own minister. Financial dependency of a church is not ideal and financial independency is important and it should be prevented that a church starts as needy right from the beginning. This is not necessary if one understands a church to be a congregation with instituted offices.

The three 'selves' (self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending) are still workable goals for local churches as well as for the bond of churches. Support from the deputies needy churches in the bond of churches needs to be restricted. This may feel callous at times, but it strengthens the concept of ownership. The implication of this for the mission work is that this is part of the road to independence.

Action point 1:

An instituted church does not by default have its own minister or is entitled to have one and cannot automatically call itself needy from the time of institution.

Action by: Deputies Art 11, DRF and Synod.

Action point 2:

It is the task of the missionary to inform the congregation about their responsibility in connection with caring for their minister. He must also implant a need to give the 10th generous or to give their own contribution or which form is most suitable for this purpose.

Action by: Missionary and Mission team.

Funds and Projects

Funds for mission from the Netherlands will not increase. The expenses for mission will have to be consolidated. The work can nevertheless continue by acting in the way as proposed in recommendations 1,2,3 and 7. At the same time we accept with this that the mission work stays dependent on foreign support. Due to the historical growth for this and the joint nature of the mission project in South Africa there are sufficient reasons to justify this exception.

Action point 1:

The financing of the mission work by FRCSA and GKv (Netherlands) will not be regarded in the first place as a form of financial dependency but as a joint project in which all partners contribute equally per head. (Contributions in SA en NL are calculated per member and for the number of members). This manner prevent a negative self-image in SA and the joint project can function in a healthy manner. This way of thinking may require a new contract of co-operation which covers more than the usual five years and which also describes responsibilities in the new situation. The growth – in the sense of fruits of the labour – is something which cannot be calculated.

Action by: MDSA, ZDNL

Action point 2:

Bursaries for students will not be given unlimited, but will only be financed from mission money (with possible support from partners) if there is a plan for how they will fit into opportunities within the churches. Theological training and support by the churches for needy students fall outside the mission budget.

Action by: Deputies Curators Theological Training and DFR.

Action point 3:

The projects booklet should be treated the correct way. It may not threaten the notion of ownership of the mission congregations and it recommended using this booklet with restraint.

Action by: SK's and MDSA and propaganda commission ZDNL

Paid/Unpaid

Action point:

All volunteers who work or participate in the mission will be treated equally. Hence, the budgets of volunteers will not appear in the mission budget. Some expenses made by them, like mission material and fuel can be paid out of running costs.

Action by: SK's, MDSA

Instituting needy churches?

Action point:

A congregation becomes a church when the offices can be instituted. The does not by definition make a congregation expensive or needy. A church is a congregation of believers as placed together by Christ and they themselves determine their tithes, income and expenses. The can ask and receive help from sister churches. Whether and how (maybe part-time or together with another congregation) they can maintain a minister is a separate question. Non-paid office bearers can also govern a church.

Action by: Deputies Art 11 and DFR.

Appendix C, Visitation instructions 2013

- 1. Missionary's work on the Mission Field and the contribution of the following activities in building the Church**
 - 1.1. Preaching**
 - 1.1.1. In building the members Christian Life
 - 1.1.2. Attendance of church service(s) on a Sundays and other Christian holidays
 - 1.1.3. The use of Catechism and Confession documents in the sermons
 - 1.2. Sacraments and Liturgy**
 - 1.2.1. Member's understanding of its importance
 - 1.2.2. The guidelines for accepting members into the congregation
 - 1.2.3. Song and Praise during church services
 - 1.3. Catechism (young and old)**
 - 1.3.1. It's effect in helping to build the member's Christian outlook
 - 1.3.2. The use of lesson planning and reading material in developing the respective members
 - 1.3.3. Use of others in the presentation of catechism classes
 - 1.4. House visits**
 - 1.4.1. Frequency with which members receive house visits
 - 1.4.2. Use of mission workers, students and other brothers during house visits
- 2. Functioning of the Mission Church through its Members with specific focus on**
 - 2.1. Christian life**
 - 2.1.1. Attendance of church services by members
 - 2.1.2. Members encouraging each other to attend regularly (onderlinge sorg)
 - 2.1.3. Participation of members as a living member in weekly gatherings such as bible studies, youth meetings, catechism etc.
 - 2.1.4. "Open door" policy
 - 2.1.5. Alternative approaches / informal gatherings
 - 2.2. Social and Financial Need (Acts 6 – Calling of the 7)**
 - 2.2.1. Diaconal Aid within the church
 - 2.2.2. The impact of social and economic needs on mission work
 - 2.2.3. Guiding members to participate in and be actively involved with this work within the church

3. Growth towards Self Governing instituted Church

3.1. Self Governance / Ownership

- 3.1.1. Members are “owners” of the church
- 3.1.2. Members to take the lead in church activities
- 3.1.3. Members to identify the need for “material” items and provide for them amongst themselves
- 3.1.4. Members understanding of a self governing church

3.2. Missionary’s focus on preaching the Gospel and Spiritual growth amongst members (Acts 6 – apostle continuing with spreading the Gospel)

- 3.2.1. The growth (spiritual and in numbers) as compared to the previous visitation 2005
- 3.2.2. Gifts of specific brothers that could be utilised in mission work
- 3.2.3. The short term possibility of instituting office bearers
- 3.2.4. Factors that contribute to the possibility of closing a mission point

4. What is the Missionaries view with regards to:

- 4.1. Mission Workers assisting the Missionary in evangelism and covering a wider area
- 4.2. Alternatives that will encourage members participation and sense of Ownership
- 4.3. Mission Churches having to help themselves with no alternative/outside funding
- 4.4. Is current structure functional and an effective way of Mission

5. Functioning of the missionary:

- 5.1. On the mission field assigned to him
- 5.2. Within a strategic plan
- 5.3. In the missionary church to which he and his family belongs and his spiritual attitude towards his calling
- 5.4. With regards to his personal time management
- 5.5. His functioning within the mission team
- 5.6. His ability and the possibility for further academic development
- 5.7. Pastoral care of missionaries and their families

6. Training/Mentoring/Coaching of

- 6.1. Missionaries
- 6.2. Mission workers
- 6.3. Volunteers
- 6.4. Available programmes/Institutions
- 6.5. Responsible Person/Body
- 6.6. Church Council
 - 6.6.1. Relationship with Missionary
 - 6.6.2. Relationship with MDSA and Mission Board
 - 6.6.3. Relationship with all supporting churches
 - 6.6.4. Relationship with and/or support of mission churches

Appendix D, Visitation report 2013 conclusions

F4:

The church is functioning well under the leadership of the pastor.

Akasia:

Report had no conclusion

Nelmapius:

Report had no conclusion

CapeTown:

Dit was vir ons as visitatore 'n verrykende ervaring om op voetsoolvlak met die sending op die Kaapse Vlakte kennis te maak.

Alle gesprekke – met kerkrade, GSK, lidmate en sendelinge – was opreg en openhartig. By almal het ons 'n liefde vir die uitbreiding van die evangelie geproe.

Wat ons in die besonder getref het by almal op die Kaapse Vlakte, was die wil om *self* die werk aan te pak. Dit gaan saam met die kinderlike vertroue op die Here, dat Hy die moontlikhede en die gawes sal skenk om dit te kan doen. *“Ons kan dit doen, want ons kyk op!”*

Wat hierdie visitasiespan so besonder maak, is dat albei visitatore betrokke was by die besinning oor die doel van die evangelisasiewerk op die Kaapse Vlakte so ver terug soos Februarie 1984. Toe is die besluit geneem is om met eredienste in Belhar self te begin.

Tydens daardie beraad is die doelstelling van die evangelisasiewerk soos volg geformuleer :

Die doelstelling van die evangelieverkondiging in Belhar is om die Woord uit te dra, sodat deur die werking van die Heilige Gees, 'n selfstandige Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk in Belhar tot stand kom. (...)

As die groeiproses na selfregering sigbaar word, sal die taak van die sendingwerkers verskuif van leidinggewend na ondersteunend en raadgewend.

En dit is wat 'n mens tans sien gebeur. Daar is sinds 1984 'n mooi groei in die werk:

- van sendingouderlinge uit die VGK Kaapstad (Raimond en Van der Linden)
- na Nederlandse werkers (Griffioen en Van 't Foort)
- na Afrikaanse sendelinge (Breytenbach en Nicholson)
- na inheemse werkers (Abrahams en Van Wyk met Arendse)

Inheemse mense gee nou leiding aan die werk en voer dit uit. Tegelyk is daar geleentheid om die kundigheid wat die Here in 'n gemeente langsaan die sendingveld gegee het, te gebruik om raad te gee en te ondersteun.

Mag die Here die werk seën sodat baie mense wat tans nog sonder God lewe, tot geloof sal kom in ons Verlosser Jesus Christus.

Appendix E, Financial Statements

Mission Deputies South Africa
Abbreviated income statements for the years
2010 - 2012

	2012	2011	2010
	R	R	R
Contributions received - Netherlands	3,964,538	3,450,524	3,637,976
FRCA contributions	387,141	350,050	347,697
Canada support	262,633	163,601	284,731
Interest	174,383	125,534	97,215
Other	1,260	89,700	212,298
Exchange rate gains	149,567	254,318	-
Total income	4,939,522	4,433,727	4,579,917
Expenses			
Mission boards	3,396,775	3,214,753	4,213,388
Other cost	305,840	726,526	810,797
Exchange rate losses	-		211,784
Total expenses	3,702,615	3,941,279	5,235,969
Net surplus	1,236,907	492,448	656,052
Capital inflows	206,926	2,643,703	
Capital outflows	8,248	950,000	2,551,765
Total surplus (deficit) for the year	1,435,585	2,186,151	3,207,817

Mission Deputies South Africa
Abbreviated balance sheets for the years 2010 -
2012

	2012	2011	2010
	R	R	R
Investments	3,159,382	2,821,652	3,058,997
Cash on hand	4,514,613	3,647,669	1,213,621
Other receivables	798,366	747,028	477,317
Other payables	-	-	-
	274,763	792,063	720,737
Total assets	8,197,598	6,424,286	4,029,198
General reserves	7,760,384	6,034,579	3,672,622
Funds for specific purposes	437,214	389,707	356,576
Total reserves	8,197,598	6,424,286	4,029,198

Appendix 18 – Proposal regarding Mission by Classis South

To the Synod

Development and Training in the Mission context

Mandate received from Classis:

Revision of the concept of Mission in the FRCSA federation.

The question that needs to be answered is: is Mission defined solely as church planting, or does Development and Training of the congregation and across congregational borders, also fall under the umbrella of Mission?

Are all role players in the FRCSA federation unanimous on what Mission entails?

There are a number of deputy-ships. However, there is little cooperation and connection between these deputy-ships.

Hence, Training is considered to fall under the ambit of deputies for Theological Training, thus the curators. Therefore it is not considered relevant to the Mission deputies, as they restrict themselves to the financial matters pertaining to Mission and church planting .

Mission and Training apparently do not belong together.

While social problems are identified they also are not deemed part of Mission, despite the mission worker in the field being confronted by them.

In addition it is noted that the vision on Mission in the Netherlands is totally different , while they contribute approximately 95% of the mission budget. To them Development and Training remain very important.

‘Mukhanyo’ has long been a project budgeted for by the Netherlands Deputies for Mission in South Africa. They would gladly add George Whitefield College to their project portfolio(see below).

The following is a citation from Appendix 4 of the deputy-ship Netherlands Deputies for Mission in South Africa:

“The training and development of ministers, missionaries and/or elders appears to us to be an excellent allocation of funds”. “Mukhanyo training college has been a project on the mission budget for a long time. The training of students from Bellville at the George Whitefield College has not featured, possibly because there were no students enrolled at the college at the time. During the 2011 visitation we visited Mukhanyo.

We would applaud the use of money from the mission budget in order to tighten bonds between the FRCSA and Mukhanyo.”

We need to re-consider this matter.

The developments within the FRCSA federation form the basis for this report from Classis South.

a. Rev J.A. Breytenbach is currently committed to Mukhanyo for 4 days /week.

The FRC Bethal consistory considers this work to be Mission work. The classis concurs that this is an ideal opportunity to strengthen the Reformed character of MTC. In

addition it enhances the Reformed witness both within South Africa and outside its borders, to the glory of God.

b. The new Vision and Strategy for Mission of the FRC CapeTown.

Development and Training is an integral part of the strategic plan. This is true for the congregations on the Cape Flats as well as across congregational borders. For example, to establish connections with the George Whitefield Training Institute.

This work will require the calling of a second missionary in the future. This matter has been presented to the consistory of CapeTown and the Deputies for Mission in SA and has, in principle, been approved .

(A comprehensive document concerning this can be obtained from Rev. Carl van Wyk - cvanwyk@webafrica.org.za. He presented this at a Mission Workshop d.d. 31 Aug. 2013.

A number of considerations:

1. It has been generally accepted within the reformed churches that Development and Training form part of the Mission. This has been supported and explained in a number of appendices.

We draw your attention to the following:

Appendix 1 – ‘Deputies for Theological Training and Mission’ by Rev. H.H. van Alten.

Appendix 2 – ‘Mandate, vision, mission’ by De Verre Naasten, specifically point 3 .

Appendix 3 – ‘ From Mission to Aid’ , this is an excerpt from an article by Rev. Bram Beute titled ‘Het einde van de zending’.

Appendix 4 - Letter from the Deputies for Mission , the Netherlands.

Classis South is of the opinion that Development and Training should be considered as Mission. This is demonstrated in the appendices (listed above) in theory, as well as by practical examples.

2. The concept of Development and Training has already been discussed in the FRCSA federation in 2002 and in 2010 together with the Dutch deputies, SA deputies and the various Mission committees.

This matter has also been dealt with at synod level and synod has taken decisions in this regard. This was however , specifically focused on Theological training, which falls under the Deputies Curators mandate.

3. The question is not : “Is Theological training Mission?”, but, “ Is Development and Training (of people both in and outside the congregations) considered to be Mission in the broader sense of the term?”

Yes, this implies that the theological training facet also falls under the umbrella of Mission. The FRCSA does not wish to start it’s own theological training, preferring to cooperate with other institutions such as “Mukhanyo Theological College” and

“George Whitefield” with a view to enhancing the reformed character of training courses on offer there.

4. It is the **revision of the mission vision within the FRCSA** that is of pertinence. The traditional view of mission (mainly that of church planting) is not feasible in the long term. The FRCSA is small, yes, but the Lord has graciously blessed the federation with the Gospel, which we must simply share: as effectively and best we can.

5. Mission in South Africa is conducted using a traditional model; this entails church planting, institution, with an own consistory and minister. The classis proposes that the FRCSA federation adopts a broader view. The Mission methodology should predominantly change to 'sowing the Word and sharing the riches of the Gospel'.

6. The classis also proposes that all Mission in the FRCSA be administered under one umbrella; that agreement is reached on the breadth and methodology of Mission. In addition, to consider the inclusion of the work done by Rev. J van der Linden and his library. Comprehensively this proposes a far greater degree of cooperation and liaison between all mission committees, mission deputies and curators for theological training in the future.

Finally –

Problems experienced in the mission field that require further attention:

Mission in the long term needs to be sustainable. It is not church planting that was/is the chief goal but the training of indigenous people (and the supply of suitable material) so that they can continue the work themselves which should enjoy greater priority.

A few examples: the Lord often calls people in an unorthodox fashion, quite different to what occurs in established churches. A brother may feel called by God to serve fulltime in the spread of the Gospel. He is married, employed, has a house, maybe even a car, etc.

The question is: should we ignore or hamper such people, while we acknowledge that God has given them these gifts. These individuals need not complete a theological degree but can be guided by the missionary for Development and Training, as in the Cape, (in conjunction with the other missionaries). He walks down this road together with the minister.

Naturally there will be theological aspects attached to this, for example a course in Theological Orientation; while he also completes in-service training. This individual need not necessarily make sermons. He can use reading sermons. His remuneration can be on the scale of income he currently enjoys with supplementation regarding expenses such as petrol, travel expenses, stationery, computer etc. This would not be an expensive package compared to that of a formally educated minister. In the Afrikaanse speaking mission congregations there are two brothers who are fluent in Xhosa; who feel called by God. This lends the mission (specifically in the Cape) far greater opportunities amongst other population groups.

Can we ignore these brothers because they might not have the intellectual capacity to complete an in-depth theological training?

Even the synod recognises these people and in the Acts of Synod describes them as "different ministries within the church".

What follows is an excerpt from the FRCSA Acts of Synod (36th Synod held in the FRC Pretoria from 13 – 16 June 2011).

The excerpt comes from Article 29 Deputies Curators (page 29):

“Synod acknowledges:

- 1. That God has given different gifts and opportunities to different people, and that He follows his own path with each of them;*
- 2. That God uses people in his churches in different ways and ministries. Because of this the churches need to consider via deputies which other ministries could function in our churches. Functioning on different expertise levels necessitates different levels of training. This implies that there will be different routes at different stages for different students.”*

Therefore, synod should examine this matter as it is closely associated to Development and Training. The church federation is greatly limiting herself in this by its perspective on the different gifts which manifest on the mission field.

Classis South requests the Synod to declare:

- a. That Mission includes Development and Training.
- b. That gifts in the mission congregations be harnessed and that the individual be employed part-time or full-time and receives a just remuneration for it. (See also the declaration by synod “Synod acknowledges points 1 and 2, quoted above)
- c. That mission work be integrated in such a fashion that word and deed are combined, not only in the field but also in the respective committees. Thus the consistories will need to consider the composition of the mission committees.
- d. That it would be advisable for mission committees to think about the work and develop a more unified approach.
- e. That there be greater cooperation and liason between the mutual committees and deputy ships.

On behalf of the classis held 15 February 2014, FRC Cape Town:

Rev. C. Kleijn: chairman

Rev. P.A. Abrahams: deputy chairman

15 February 2014, Bellville.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – ‘Deputies for Theological training and Mission’ by Rev.H.H. van Alten

Appendix 2 – ‘Mandate, vision, mission’ by De Verre Naasten, mainly point 3.

Appendix 3 - ‘From Mission to Aid’ this is an excerpt from the article by Rev. Bram Beute titled ‘Het einde van de Zending’.

Appendix 4 – Letter from Deputies for Mission, the Netherlands

Aan die Sinode

Toerusting en Opleiding en Sending

Opdrag van die klassis:

Herbesinning op die sendingsvisie binne die VGKSA-kerkverband.

Vraag wat die studie uiteindelik moet beantwoord: is net kerkstigting, in die direkte sin van die woord, sending of kan Opleiding en Toerusting van gemeentes en ook oor gemeentegrense heen ook as sending gesien word?

Is almal in die VGKSA-kerkverband dit eens wat sending is?

Daar is verskeie deputaatskappe. Maar daar is min samewerking en daar is min verbinding tussen hierdie deputaatskappe.

So is opleiding 'n saak vir die deputate wat met Teologiese Opleiding gemoeid is, dus deputate kuratore. En dus is dit nie 'n saak wat die sendingsdeputate (SDSA) aan gaan nie, want hulle behartig net die finansies vir sending en kerkstigting wat daaruit voortspruit.

Sending en opleiding hoort blykbaar nie by mekaar nie.

Maatskaplike probleme sien ons wel raak, maar dit val blykbaar nie onder sending nie, terwyl die sendingwerkers in die veld wel daarmee te doen het.

Verder sien ons dat daar in Nederland, wat ongeveer 95% van die sendinggelde bydra, 'n totaal andere visie is op sending.

Toerusting en opleiding is vir hulle baie belangrik.

'Mukhanyo' staan reeds jare lank as projek op die begroting van die Nederlandse Deputaatskap vir sending in Suid-Afrika. En hulle sal ook graag George Whitefield aan die projeklys toevoeg (sien hieronder).

Hieronder volg 'n aanhaling uit Bylae 4 van die deputaatskap ZZA (Ned.):

“De opleiding en toerusting van predikanten, zendelingen en/of ouderlingen lijkt ons een prima besteding van zendingsgeld.” “Mukhanyo als opleiding staat al langer als project op onze begroting. De opleiding van de studenten in Bellville aan het George Whitefield College viel daarbuiten, mogelijk omdat er op dat moment geen student daar was. Tijdens die visitatie van 2011 mochten we ook Mukhanyo bezoeken. We zouden het toejuichen als VGKSA de lijnen met Mukhanyo aanhaalt en daar ook zendingsgeld voor gebruikt.”

Dit is nodig dat ons verder oor hierdie saak besin.

Aanleiding vir hierdie rapport van die Klassis Suid is die verwickelinge in die VGKSA kerkverband.

a. Ds. J.A. Breytenbach is tans vir 4 dae per week verbonde aan Mukhanyo.

Die kerkraad van VGK Bethal beskou die werk wat hulle predikant doen as sendingwerk. Die klassis stem saam dat dit 'n pragtige geleentheid is die Gereformeerde karakter van MTC te versterk en ook die Gereformeerde getuie in Suid-Afrika en daarbuite tot eer van die Here te versterk.

b. Die nuwe sendingsvisie en strategie van die sendende kerk Kaapstad.

Toerusting en Opleiding maak 'n groot deel van die strategiese plan uit. Dit is binne die gemeentes op die Kaapse Vlakte sowel as oor gemeentegrense heen. Byvoorbeeld om ook by die Opleidingsinstituut, “George Whitefield”, aansluiting te probeer vind. Vir hierdie werk word die beroeping van 'n 2e sendeling in die vooruitsig gestel.

Dit is 'n saak wat aan die kerkraad van Kaapstad en die sendingsdeputate (SDSA) voorgelê is en in beginsel so aanvaar is. ('n volledige dokument daarvoor kan aanvraag word by ds. Carl van Wyk (cvanwyk@webafrica.org.za). Hy het op die Sendingbosberaad d.d. 31 Aug. 2013 daarvoor 'n bydrae gelewer.)

Enkele oorwegings:

1. In die gereformeerde kerke word algemeen aanvaar dat Opleiding en Toerusting deel van sending is soos dit ook in die onderskeie Bylaes uiteengesit word.

Ons wys spesifiek na die volgende bydraes:

Bylae 1 - 'Deputaatskap teologiese opleiding en sending' van ds. H.H. van Alten

Bylae 2 - 'Mandaat, visie, missie' van De Verre Naasten, veral punt 3.

Bylae 3 - 'Van zending naar hulpverlening', dit is 'n deel uit die artikel 'Het einde van de zending' van ds. Bram Beute.

Bylae 4 - Brief zendingsdeputaten Nederland

Die Klassis Suid is dit eens dat Opleiding en Toerusting sending opsigself is. Dit word in die verskillende bylaes aangetoon met sowel teoretiese grondings as voorbeelde vanuit die praktyk.

2. Die saak van Opleiding en Sending is alreeds binne die VGKSA-kerkverband bespreek. Sover terug as 2002 (en in 2010 met ZDNL, SDSA en die verskeie sendingkommissies).

Die saak het reeds op die sinodetafel gediens en die sinode het reeds besluite daaromtrent gemaak. Maar, dit was spesifiek gefokus op TEOLOGIESE opleiding. En dit val dan weer spesifiek onder Deputate Kuratore.

3. Die vraag is nie: "Is TEOLOGIESE opleiding sending?" nie. Maar, "Is OPLEIDING EN TOERUSTING (van mense binne eie gemeentes en oor gemeentegrense heen) in die breër sin van die woord, wel sending?"

En ja, dan val ook die verbinding met teologiese opleiding onder die groter sambreel van sending. Die VGKSA wil ook nie 'n eie teologiese opleiding begin nie, maar saam met ander instansies, vanuit die sending, werk soos byvoorbeeld "Mukhanyo Theological College" en "George Whitefield" om juis die gereformeerde karakter van die opleidings te bevorder.

4. Dit gaan dus oor die **herbesinning op die sendingsvisie binne die VGKSA.**

Die tradisionele sendingsmetodiek (hoofsaaklik die plant van kerke) is op die langtermyn nie volhoubaar nie. Die kerkverband van die VGKSA is klein, ja, maar die HERE het in sy genade die kerkverband ryklik geseën met die evangelie wat ons gewoon net behoort uit te deel; so doeltreffend en so goed as moontlik.

5. In Suid Afrika is die sending nog steeds besig op die tradisionele sendingsmodel; dit is die plant van kerke met 'n eie kerkraad en predikant.

Die klassis stel dus voor dat die VGKSA-kerkverband met 'n breër oog na die sending kyk. Die sendingsmetodiek behoort grotendeels te verskuif na "saai van die woord en uitdeel van die rykdom van die evangelie".

6. Verder stel die klassis ook voor om die sending binne die VGKSA onder een sambreel te plaas; dat almal saamstem oor die reikwydte van sending en die metodiek daarvan. En om selfs ook die werk van ds. J. van der Linden en sy biblioteek hierby te betrek. Verder: dat die verskeie sendingkommissies, sendingsdeputate en kuratore vir teologiese opleiding baie nouer saamwerk in die nabye toekoms.

Ten slotte -

Dit wat nog problematies op die sendingveld is en aandag behoort te geniet:

Op die lange duur moet die sending ook volhoubaar kan wees. Nie soseer net die plant van kerke was/is tans die hoofdoel nie, maar ook die oplei van inheemse mannekrag (en die verskaf van geskikte materiaal) om die sendingwerk self verder te neem moet groter prioriteit geniet.

Enkele voorbeelde: die HERE roep mense dikwels op 'n heel ander manier as in die gevestigde kerke. 'n Broeder voel hom deur die Here geroepe om voltyds in diens van die evangelie te staan. Hy is byvoorbeeld getroud, werk, het 'n huis, miskien selfs 'n motor, ens.

Die vraag is: moet ons sulke mense ignoreer of hulle belemmer in hulle roeping, terwyl die Here vir hulle ook gawes gee? So iemand hoef nie 'n hele teologiese opleiding te ondergaan nie maar kan deur die sendeling vir Opleiding en Toerusting, soos aan die Kaap, (in samewerking met die ander sendelinge) begelei word. Hy stap gewoon die pad saam met die predikant.

Natuurlik is daar ook teoretiese aspekte aan verbonde, soos byvoorbeeld 'n kursus in Oriëntering in die Teologie; terwyl hy ook indiensopleiding doen. So iemand hoef ook nie noodwendig preke te maak nie.

Hy hou gewoon leespreke. En jy betaal hom gewoon die skaal van inkomste wat hy tans verdien en uitgawes soos petrol, reisonkoste, skryfbehoeftes, rekenaar, ens. Dus nie 'n duur traktement soos vir 'n geskoolde predikant nie.

In die Afrikaanssprekende sendinggemeentes is daar ook broeders (twee) wat die Xhosa-taal magtig is; en hulle deur die Here geroepe voel. Dit gee die sending (spesifiek aan die Kaap) soveel meer moontlikhede onder ander bevolkingsgroepe. Kan ons sulke broeders afskryf, omdat hulle miskien nie die verstandelike vermoëns het om 'n volle teologiese opleiding te deurloop nie? Selfs die sinode erken sulke mense in haar sinodehandelinge. Die sinode beskryf dit as "different ministries within the church".

Hier volg 'n aanhaling uit die Sinodehandelinge van die VGKSA (36 ste sinode gehou te VGK Pretoria vanaf 13 tot 16 Junie 2011) Die aanhaling val onder Artikel 29 Deputate Kuratore (bladsy 29):

"Synod acknowledges:

- 1. That God has given different gifts and opportunities to different people, and that He follows his own path with each of them;*
- 2. That God uses people in his churches in different ways and ministries. Because of this the churches need to consider via deputies which other ministries could function in our churches. Functioning on different expertise levels necessitates different levels of training. This implies that there will be different routes at different stages for different students."*

Die sinode behoort dus ook hierdie saak, wat noue verband met Opleiding en Sending het, verder in oënskou te neem. Die kerkverband doen haar soveel tekort ook op hierdie manier waarop ons na ander gawes op die sendingveld kyk.

Die Klassis-Suid versoek die Sinode om uit te spreek:

- a. Dat toerusting en opleiding sendingwerk is.
- b. Dat gawes in die sendinggemeente benut moet word en dat 'n persoon deelyds of voltyds aangestel kan word en daarvoor 'n billike vergoeding kan ontvang. (sien ook die uitspraak van die sinode "Synod acknowledges pnt 1 en 2. - aangehaal hierbo)
- c. Dat sendingwerk so geïntegreer word dat woord en daad kan saamgaan.
Nie net in die veld nie, maar ook in die onderskeie kommissies. Die kerkrade sal dus moet besin oor die samestelling van die sendingskommissies.
- d. Dat dit goed sal wees dat die sendingkommissies besin oor die werk en meer eenheid daarin bring.

e. Dat daar meer samehang en samewerking moet wees tussen verskeie kommissies en die deputaatskappe onderling.

Namens die klassis van 15 Februarie 2014 te VGK Kaapstad:

Ds. C. Kleijn: voorsitter

Ds. P.A. Abrahams: ondervoorsitter

15 Februarie 2014; Bellville.

Bylaes:

Bylae 1 - 'Deputaatskap teologiese opleiding en sending'

van ds. H.H. van Alten

Bylae 2 - 'Mandaat, visie, missie' van De Verre Naasten, veral punt 3.

Bylae 3 - 'Van zending naar hulpverlening', dit is 'n deel uit die artikel 'Het einde van de zending' van ds. Bram Beute.

Bylae 4 - Brief zendingsdeputaten Nederland

BYLAE 1 by Klassis Suid – Toerusting en Opleiding en Sending DEPUTAATSKAP TEOLOGIESE OPLEIDING EN SENDING

HH van Alten

Inleiding

Die vraag wat die deputaatskap moet beantwoord, is of teologiese opleiding deel is / kan wees van sending. En aan my is gevra om hierdie vraag vanuit my ervaring in Oekraïne te beantwoord. Laat ek dit onmiddellik stel dat my ervaring na slegs drie maande in die land 'n beperkte ervaring is. Ek sal hierdie vraag beantwoord met wat ek tot dusver gesien het en met wat ek hieroor opgelees het.

Agtergrond: Oekraïne

Op die webwerf van die Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (ERSU) vind ons die volgende historiese agtergrond oor die gereformeerde teologiese seminarie in Kiev, geskryf deur dr. Clay Quarterman (<http://www.ersu.org/en/about-ersu/history>):

Ukraine has a Reformed Christian heritage that stretches back to the Reformation. In the 16th century many Reformed churches sprang up in territories that are now part of Ukraine. But this part of Ukraine's Christian millennium was almost forgotten. These Reformed roots were renewed in the 1920s, when Canadian-Ukrainian missionaries helped revitalize this heritage in western Ukraine. Some of these believers suffered persecution in Soviet times, including Pastor Semenyuk of Rovno. It was his lifelong dream to see a Reformed seminary in Ukraine – a dream that he would live to see fulfilled.

The Reformed heritage was further revitalized in the 1990s by Dutch missionaries, who renewed Reformed churches in Rovno, Stepan, Zacarpathia & Kherson. Presbyterian missionaries also worked in this period, reviving the Reformed witness in Odessa region, then spreading to Nikolaev, Kherson, Kharkov, and Kyiv. But these churches needed new leaders in order to grow. And their leaders needed seminary level training.

Marten & Janneke Nap, Dutch missionaries from the Reformed Churches Liberated of Gelderland and Flevoland (UC), moved to Kyiv in the early 1990s and set up a “Kitchen seminary” in their home. They thought of naming the seminary after the Orthodox Patriarch Cyril Lukaris of the 17th Century, who had correspondence with Calvinists and wrote a famous Confession where many Calvinistic ideas are expressed. The Naps' small seminary may have seemed insignificant, with Rev. Nap teaching 5 students in the kitchen of his apartment. But it was an important beginning.

Something similar took place in Odessa. The Evangelical Presbyterian Churches (EPCU) also needed leaders and began training several students in the Monday night “School of Theology and Church Expansion” (STCE). This local training was supplemented by lectures in Kyiv at Ukraine Biblical Seminary (UBS) in July 1996. Odessa Presbyterian Seminary (OPS) was formed in Sept 1997, working in tandem with the UBS lectures to train leaders both in practical work and in Reformed theology.

When the Presbyterians came into contact with the Reformed in 1997, they decided to work together and involve other Reformed workers to form an ongoing Ukrainian institution. Consultations were held in 1998-9 with representatives from several Ukrainian churches and missions: the Ukrainian Evangelical Reformed Churches (UERC), the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU), and the Reformed Church of the Sub Carpathians (KRE), as well as foreign sponsors: the Reformed Churches Liberated in Gelderland and Flevoland, Mission to the World of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA).

Out of these consultations came the initiative to form the Evangelical Reformed Seminary of Ukraine (ERSU). An alliance (Soyuz) was formed in 1999 (legally recognized in 2001), and a joint Board was appointed by the UERC and EPCU, providing the infrastructure for the new seminary. Clay Quarterman was elected as President, and Marten Nap as Academic Dean. Official government registration was granted ERSU in February 2003, which is registered as a program of the Board of Union of Reformed Churches of Ukraine. M.Div. classes began in May 2000 with the first 20 students. A second class of 17 students was added in September 2002, when the first yearly Convocation was held.

Motivering

Dr Clay Quarterman gee in hierdie historiese agtergrond 'n belangrike motivering waarom daar met teologiese onderrig in Oekraïne begin is: “But these churches needed new leaders in order to grow. And their leaders needed seminary level training.” Quarterman se motivering vir teologiese onderrig, nl. die opleiding van (toekomstige) leiers in die kerk, kom 'n mens telkemale in die literatuur teë. In die konteks van sending en teologiese opleiding skryf Wilson onder andere soos volg:

“The church needs leaders... These leaders are called, chosen, trained, tested and proven to be such. Theological education plays the role of training and equipping these leaders. If it is true that the growth of the church depends on its leadership... and if it is also true that the quality of that leadership in turn depends, at least partly, on adequate and appropriate training, then theological education holds the key to the well being of the church.”

En Burton skryf:

“In missionary work throughout the world, missionaries are vitally interested in preaching and teaching the gospel, establishing functioning local churches, and preparing leadership.

In die werk van sending word daar voortdurend gesoek na persone wat die gewes het om in die kerk leiding te kan gee vanuit die Woord. Verder word daar ook gesoek na maniere om hierdie gewes te laat ontwikkel. Dit wil my daarom voorkom dat daar in elke sendingsprojek 'n fase kom wanneer die sendeling en sendingsorganisasie die noodsaak begin sien van die opleiding van toekomstige voorgangers (en ander ampsdraers en bedieninge) in die nuutgestigte kerke. Die verkondiging van die evangelie en die stigting van nuwe gemeentes lei noodwendig tot hierdie vraag.

Fase in die sendingsproses

Dit is egter duidelik dat teologiese opleiding sekerlik nie die eerste fase in die sendingsproses is nie. Die kerk se primêre taak is die verkondiging van die evangelie met die oproep tot geloof en bekering; die jong gelowiges word rondom die verkondiging van die Woord versamel en vorm 'n nuwe gemeente. Ons kan dit die eerste-linie sendingswerk noem.

Maar die volgende fase is om hierdie kerke op te bou en ampsdraers aan te stel, soos wat Paulus aan Titus opdra in Titus 1:5: “Om hierdie rede het ek jou in Kreta agtergelaat, dat jy nog verder sou regmaak wat oorgebly het, en van stad tot stad ouderlinge sou aanstel soos ek jou beveel het.” Paulus het die eerste-linie werk verrig, en hy stel Titus aan om die volgende fase te behartig.

Oor hierdie volgende fase skryf Ebenezer (2013) soos volg:

“The church must be directly involved in the theological education process, if its primary task is that of birthing and nursing. Cyprian reminds the people of God, “He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother.” The church’s responsibility as mother does not cease with conversion; she needs to be involved in the nurture and growth of her offspring. In its desire to see God’s kingdom established, the church must actively participate in the processes that would help this cause.”

Van ‘birthing and nursing’ beweeg die sending na ‘nurture and growth’. Deel van die ‘nurture and growth’ is teologiese opleiding, die toerusting van toekomstige voorgangers. Dit is ook wat tans in Oekraïne gebeur.

Dit is goed om in gedagte te hou dat, aangesien hier alreeds ‘n aantal gereformeerde kerke bestaan het, die sendelinge nooit werklik met die eerste-linie werk besig was nie; die eerstelinie werk is iets wat geleidelik vanuit die jong kerke self verrig word. Sedert ds. Martin Nap in die begin van die negentigerjare van die vorige eeu hierheen gekom het, was die sending hoofsaaklik besig met tweede- en derde-linie sendingwerk (kerklike opbouwerk en opleiding).

Maar ook daarbinne sien ons verskuiwing...

Ds. Jos Colijn was in die laaste 12 jaar dosent aan die teologiese seminarie, asook medebetrokke by die kerklike opbouwerk. Di. Cor Harryvan en Henk Drost is uitsluitlik beroep vir die kerklike opbouwerk. Daar was dus gevolglik meer as twee voltydse persone beskikbaar vir kerklike opbouwerk, terwyl die seminarie met minder as een voltydse persoon moes klaarkom.

Intussen het ek ds. Colijn se plek ingeneem, en my taak is byna uitsluitlik teologiese opleiding. Verder sal ds. Drost waarskynlik in Februarie/Maart 2014 repatrieer, en tans word daar gesoek na iemand wat vir 50% kerklike opbouwerk kan verrig en vir 50% by die seminarie betrokke kan wees. Waar die kerke hoe langer hoe meer selfstandig word, verskuif die fokus van die Oekraïne-sending geleidelik van kerklike opbouwerk na teologiese opleiding. Ons het hier dus te make met die sg. tweede- en derde-linie sendingwerk, nl. kerklike opbouwerk en teologiese opleiding, met ‘n al hoe groter fokus op die derde-linie sendingwerk.

Uiteraard, hoe meer ‘n jong kerkverband selfstandig word, hoe meer sal die teologiese opleiding verinheems en institusionaliseer. Met ‘verinheemsing’ bedoel ek dat daar ‘n proses op gang kom om die buitelandse dosente (m.a.w. die sendelinge) te vervang met kundige inheemse dosente wat die konteks en die taal beter ken. Met ‘institusionalisering’ bedoel ek dat die teologiese opleiding hoe langer hoe meer ‘n vaste en georganiseerde plek binne die kerkverband sal begin inneem. Maar desnieteenstaande hierdie ontwikkeling bly dit van belang om te besef dat teologiese opleiding na sy wese missionêr is. Dit beteken nie slegs dat daar in die teologiese ensiklopedie plek vir die sendingwetenskappe behoort te wees nie, maar dat die missionêre aspek die geheel van die teologie behoort te beïnvloed.

Kort samevatting

- 1) Teologiese opleiding is ‘n fase in die sendingsproses, en daarom wesenlik deel van sending.
- 2) Teologiese opleiding, in watter formaat ook al, volg noodwendig vanuit die verkondiging van die evangelie en die stigting van nuwe gemeentes.
- 3) In die sendingwerk in Oekraïne is daar ‘n geleidelike klemverskuiwing vanaf kerklike opbouwerk na teologiese opleiding.
- 4) Teologiese opleiding in Oekraïne word beskou as sending en as deel van die sendingproses.
- 5) Teologiese opleiding is, ook in Suid-Afrika, ‘n noodwendige uitvloeisel uit die sendingwerk wat daar gedoen is/word.
- 6) Die besluit of sodanige teologiese opleiding onder Sendingsdeputate of Deputate teologiese opleiding tuishoort, is van minder belang. Dit is geen prinsipiële vraag nie, maar ‘n praktiese

reëling. Die diskussie daaroor moet daarom geen prinsipiële lading kry nie, anders mis ons die punt.

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BYLAE 2 by Klassis Suid – Toerusting en Opleiding en Sending

MANDAAT, VISIE, MISSIE

van ZHT als deputaatschap van de GKV

1. MANDAAT

Met het oog op de realisatie van Zijn totale reddingsplan, uitlopend op het uiteindelijke heil: een nieuwe mensheid op een nieuwe aarde waar God bij mensen woont (Openb. 21:2), verzamelt onze God zich door heel de kerkgeschiedenis een kerk.

Hij legt de kerk, vanuit het perspectief van zijn totale reddingsplan, een **mandaat** op: = het verwachte heil 'verkondigen' door een missionaire gemeenschap te zijn, door de wereld om haar heen op te roepen zich te bekeren en te voegen bij Gods volk dat op weg is naar het heil en = het verwachte heil 'demonstreren' door een liefdevolle gemeenschap te zijn, zowel naar binnen als naar buiten.

Op deze wijze houdt de kerk de eer en het recht van de Here als Schepper en Verlosser hoog.

2. VISIE

Als we onder woorden proberen te brengen in welke concreet-historische situatie we Gods mandaat vorm moeten geven, zijn er twee perspectieven te onderscheiden: een wereldhistorisch en een kerkhistorisch perspectief. De GKV plaatsen zichzelf welbewust in deze beide perspectieven.

Een kerkhistorisch perspectief

Vanuit een lang kerkhistorisch perspectief moet geconstateerd worden dat er wereldwijd een grote kerkelijke pluraliteit is ontstaan.

De GKV willen welbewust staan in de kerkelijke en theologische traditie die in de 16e eeuw haar confessionele vorm herkreeg door de Reformatie. De aan die ontwikkeling ten grondslag liggende inzichten mn. mbt. de aard en betekenis van de Bijbel als Gods Woord zijn zozeer fundamenteel dat de GKV ook nu nog dit als hoofdkenmerk van haar **identiteit** wil blijven handhaven. Dit heeft gestalte gekregen door de 'drie formulieren van eenheid' als kern van haar belijden aan te nemen en te handhaven. In de Presbyteriaanse lijn geldt hetzelfde voor de Westminster confessies.

Dat betekent allereerst dat de GKV zichzelf ziet als behorend bij de familie van Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse kerken. Dankbaar kan worden geconstateerd dat de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse kerken, dankzij mn. de zending sinds het begin van de 19e eeuw, zich inmiddels over alle continenten van de wereld heeft verspreid.

Deze identiteit betekent dat de GKV zich welbewust wil onderscheiden van andere kerkelijke en theologische tradities. Dit sluit uiteraard de erkenning niet uit dat in de loop van de kerk- en zendingsgeschiedenis andere kerken en tradities van grote betekenis zijn geweest in het brengen van mensen tot erkenning van God als Schepper en Verlosser en het opbouwen van kerkelijk leven.

Mandaat, visie en missie 2 De Verre Naasten

Geconstateerd kan worden dat er ook binnen de familie van de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse kerken differentiatie is opgetreden. Er zijn vele kerken die formeel en historisch weliswaar uit de Reformatie voortkomen, maar feitelijk in kerkelijke, theologische en oecumenische beslissingen zich inhoudelijk verwijderen of dreigen te verwijderen van de confessionele beslissingen die kenmerkend zijn voor kerken uit de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse traditie.

Een wereldhistorisch perspectief

Vanuit een breed wereldhistorisch perspectief zijn er twee aspecten die in dit verband in rekening gebracht dienen te worden.

Allereerst is dat de *globalisering*. In de loop van de wereldgeschiedenis van de laatste paar eeuwen zijn vrijwel alle plaatsen op aarde aan elkaar verbonden door het bestaan van een wereldwijd ('globaal' of 'mondiaal') infrastructureel netwerk. Dit gegeven biedt goede mogelijkheden voor en verplicht tot saamhorigheid en samenwerking met de wereldwijd verspreide kerken van de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse traditie.

Vervolgens dient ook het bestaan van een ingrijpende *welvaartskloof* ('Global Rift') die dwars over de wereld loopt in rekening te worden gebracht. Een deel van de kerken van de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse traditie leeft aan de 'rijke' zijde van de kloof; een ander deel leeft aan de andere zijde ervan. Dit stelt kerken die saamhorigheid, eenheid en samenwerking willen vormgeven voor grote uitdagingen.

3. MISSIE VAN DE GKN

3.1. Algemene aspecten

Kerkverband en lokale kerken

De GKV, als nationaal kerkverband van de Gereformeerde Kerken, op basis van de Gereformeerde kerkrechtelijke inzichten die aan de organisatie van dit kerkverband ten grondslag liggen, zal steeds erkennen dat de primaire verantwoordelijkheid voor de realisatie van het mandaat van de kerk ligt bij de lokale kerkelijke gemeenschap. Alle kerkverbandelijke en oecumenische programma's en activiteiten staan primair ten dienste van de ontwikkeling en het functioneren van lokale gemeenschappen.

Daarnaast zijn er taken waarvan erkend wordt dat ze de gemeenschappelijke verantwoordelijkheid van het kerkverband zijn. Dan is het nodig dat een centraal kerkverbandelijke instantie een 'Generaal Beleid' formuleert dat kan garanderen dat programma's en activiteiten in de kerken adequaat en professioneel uitgevoerd worden, waarbij de complexiteit van de regionale en mondiale situatie waarin de programma's worden geïmplementeerd in rekening gebracht wordt. Goede 'samenwerking' tussen het centrale en het lokale niveau is een belangrijk aspect van de missie van de kerk.

Oecumene

De oecumenische kerkelijke eenheid, zowel nationaal als internationaal, zal de kerk altijd ter harte gaan als een zaak die tot haar mandaat behoort. Van oudsher hebben de GKV daarvoor een deputaatschap (BBK) dat bilaterale oecumenische relaties onderhoudt.

Mandaat, visie en missie 3 De Verre Naasten

In de huidige wereldsituatie is het bevorderen van een multilateraal oecumenisch netwerk zoals in aanzet geïstitutioniseerd in ICRC, van groot belang. Ook dat behoort primair bij de taak van BBK. Dat multilaterale netwerk is een belangrijk referentiekader voor ZHT.

Kader als voorwaarde

Een belangrijke voorwaarde voor kerken om vorm te kunnen geven aan haar mandaat, in welke wereldhistorische situatie dan ook maar, is het hebben van betrouwbaar (personeel) kader dat capabel is om confessioneel betrouwbaar en contextueel relevant te theologiseren met het oog op de vormgeving van het mandaat van de kerken, en om leiding te geven aan de ontplooiing van de kerken in haar concrete context.

Een deel van de missie van de GKV is dan ook = het opleiden, vormen en trainen van bekwaam en betrouwbaar kader voor de eigen kerken, en = bijdragen aan het opleiden, vormen en trainen van

bekwaam en betrouwbaar kader van andere kerken voorzover die op de weg van de GKV worden geplaatst en er relaties mee onderhouden (kunnen) worden.

3.2. Op ZHT gerichte aspecten

De GKV hebben een deputaatschap gevormd (ZHT) en een instituut gevestigd (DVN) om een drietal concrete componenten van de missie van de kerken te kunnen realiseren. Die drie componenten worden hieronder toegelicht.

Tenslotte wordt ook de taak van 'voorlichting' aan eigen achterban omschreven.

Zending

Wanneer we het mandaat (zie 1) om missionaire gemeente te zijn uitwerken, is de aandacht allereerst gericht op de ontwikkeling van levendige en krachtige lokale gemeenschappen die het verwachte heil 'verkondigen' en 'demonstreren' in de eigen lokale, regionale en nationale context.

Daarnaast heeft de kerk haar mandaat van oudsher gezien als gericht op regio's die voorbij de nationale en continentale grenzen liggen.

Ook al constateren we dat Gods kerk in het algemeen, en de kerken van de Gereformeerde en Presbyteriaanse familie in het bijzonder, wereldwijd is verbreid, toch houdt dat de mogelijkheid volledig open dat er regio's in de wereld zijn waar onder directe missionaire verantwoordelijkheid van de GKV een zendingsproject kan worden gestart dat gericht is op het planten van kerken.

Bij het uitzetten van strategie en beleid daarop gericht, zal wel zo goed mogelijk het bestaan van het multilaterale oecumenische netwerk in rekening worden gebracht.

Hulpverlening

Vanwege het gegeven dat Gods kerk door Zijn Geest en Woord door eeuwenlange zendingsarbeid wereldwijd is verbreid, zal het 'uitreiken' van kerken over de eigen nationale en continentale grenzen heen steeds vaker plaatsvinden in de vorm van een relatie met een andere kerk.

Als bilaterale oecumenische relatie zal dit allereerst worden onderhouden door BBK, terwijl de bilaterale oecumenische relaties in toenemende mate worden ingebed in het multilaterale netwerk van de ICRC.

Mandaat, visie en missie 4 De Verre Naasten

In allerlei gevallen kan het bieden van hulp, aanvullend op de oecumenische relatie nodig zijn. In relaties met kerken aan de andere zijde van de 'Global Rift' is deze behoefte aan hulp bijna structureel aanwezig. De kerken zijn in dat deel van de wereld vaak onvoldoende in staat aan de kerkelijke en maatschappelijke eisen voor de ontwikkeling van de kerkelijke gemeenschap te voldoen. Dan is er alle reden om hulp te verlenen.

Hulpverlening vindt plaats in het kader van een partnerrelatie waarin, ondanks de (vooral materiële) asymmetrie, voor het handhaven van de formeel-kerkrechtelijke gelijkwaardigheid nadrukkelijk gewaakt moet worden.

De partnerrelatie leidt onvermijdbaar tot een wederkerig proces van elkaar opscherpen en van elkaar leren, een proces dat uitdrukkelijk wordt gestimuleerd.

In dat verband is het van groot belang dat allerlei concrete aspecten van de hulprelatie (type van en criteria voor hulp, de formele procedures voor aanvragen, verlenen en verantwoorden van hulp, enz) in zorgvuldige overeenkomsten worden geformuleerd.

De volgende hulpsectoren worden beleidsmatig in het overleg met de partner en in de uitwerking van programma's gehanteerd.

Allereerst is er de sector die rechtstreeks op de opbouw van gemeenten en kerken is gericht; daarnaast zijn er drie sectoren die indirect wel de ontwikkeling van de kerkelijke gemeenschap willen ondersteunen maar die primair zijn gericht op maatschappelijke en economische aspecten

van de kerkleden: de onderwijssector, de sociaal-economische sector en de gezondheidssector. Naast het bieden van boven omschreven structurele hulp, is er af en toe reden om noodhulp (humanitaire hulpverlening) te bieden.

Training

Veel kerken aan de andere zijde van de 'Global Rift' ervaren een ernstig tekort aan bekwaam kader om de kerken te leiden. Vanwege het cruciale belang voor kerken van het hebben van 'betrouwbaar kader' (zie 3.1.) zien de GKV het als haar missie om aan de oplossing van dat probleem een bijdrage te leveren. Training van kader van buitenlandse kerken, als bijzondere vorm van hulpverlening, heeft daarom centrale aandacht in het beleid en de programma's.

Voorlichting

Naast de drie componenten van de missie, zoals hierboven vermeld, die primair gericht zijn op externe doelgroepen, is er ook een deel van de missie gericht is op de eigen kerken: 'voorlichting'. Het is van doorslaggevend belang om de eigen kerkelijke gemeenschap te informeren over de ontwikkeling van programma's en projecten, en de ontwikkeling van de politieke, maatschappelijke en religieus-culturele contexten waarin programma's en projecten worden gerealiseerd. Dit alles met het doel om de materiële en immateriële ondersteuning door de kerkleden, door gebed, gaven en meelevens, waardoor uiteindelijk de realisatie ervan mogelijk gemaakt wordt, gebaseerd kan zijn op voldoende inhoudelijke kennis, betrokkenheid en geloofsvertrouwen. Via 'voorlichting' wordt ook vormgegeven aan de wederkerigheid (zie boven) tot op het niveau van de kerkelijke gemeenten.

Vastgesteld september/oktober 2003

BYLAE 3 by Klassis Suid – Toerusting en Opleiding en Sending

Het einde van de zending (artikel uit De Reformatie)

Ds. Bram Beute

Van zending naar hulpverlening

Aan de verandering van zending naar partnership zit ook nog een andere kant. In plaats van kerkplanting is zendingswerk meer en meer het ondersteunen van bestaande kerken geworden. En terecht. De gemeente is allereerst geroepen het evangelie met woord en daad te verkondigen. De gemeente is daar als lichaam van Christus ook het beste toe in staat. De gemeente laat niet alleen Christus' stem horen, maar ziet ook met zijn ogen en toont zijn liefde met zijn handen.

Christus wil present zijn in deze wereld door zijn gemeente en zijn evangelie laten verkondigen. Vanuit de praktijk is dat ook goed duidelijk te maken. Een nieuwe gemeente die met beide voeten in de lokale cultuur staat is veel beter in staat de omgeving te bereiken dan zendelingen van ver weg, ook al zal die lokale gemeente misschien wel geholpen moeten worden bij de organisatie van plaatselijk missionair werk.

Het is terecht dat kerkplanting in de zending steeds meer veranderde in de ondersteuning van geplante kerken. Daarmee wordt het woord 'zending' ook een minder correct woord. We zenden als kerken nauwelijks mensen uit als zending om kerken te planten, maar we bieden allerlei vormen van hulp om (meestal jonge) kerken te helpen bij de opbouw van hun kerkelijk werk.

Vandaar dat het deputaatschap dat binnen de GKv het 'zendingswerk' coördineert het deputaatschap voor 'Zending, Hulpverlening en Training' heet. (Het uitvoerend orgaan van dit deputaatschap is De Verre Naasten). Met 'hulpverlening' wordt geduid op allerlei vormen van hulp die vanuit Nederland aan buitenlandse kerken verleend wordt. In tegenstelling tot wat nogal eens verondersteld wordt, moet dus bij 'hulpverlening' dus niet alleen of allereerst gedacht worden aan materiële hulp ter bestrijding van allerlei vormen van armoede. Hulpverlening is erop gericht om kerken te helpen kerk te zijn in hun context. Dat kan dus economische hulp zijn, maar veel vaker nog is het (ondersteuning van) theologisch onderwijs, hulp bij gemeentepopbouw, enzovoort. (Het feit dat naast 'hulpverlening' ook nog 'training' wordt genoemd in de naam van het deputaatschap heeft geen duidelijke inhoudelijke grond, maar een historische achtergrond.)

Welke hulp we vanuit Nederland willen geven, zouden we overigens in Nederland niet op voorhand moeten willen beslissen. Dat gebeurt nu soms nog wel. Soms wordt door besturen van zendingswerk vanuit onze kerken gesteld, dat ze alleen hulp willen geven aan evangelieverkondiging en daarom willen ze wel evangelisatie-acties of kerkplantingswerk van partnerkerken ondersteunen, maar geen theologische opleiding of de bouw van een ziekenhuis.

Als het echter waar is dat de gemeente met al haar functies – o.a. verkondiging, diaconaat en onderwijs – Christus zichtbaar en erfahrbaar maakt en zo het evangelie laat klinken, dan is het belangrijk dat al die functies van de kerk ondersteund worden. Wie uitgaat van dat principe zal merken dat de ene kerk vraagt om hulp bij de bouw van een ziekenhuis, omdat dat in een hindoeïstische context de enige manier is om openbaar iets van Gods liefde te zien, terwijl de ander vraagt om studiebeurzen voor theologisch studenten. Als Nederlandse kerken bij voorbaat al beslissen bij welke onderdelen van het kerkelijk werk ze wel behulpzaam willen zijn en bij welke niet dreigt paternalisme.

BYLAE 4 by Klassis Suid – Toerusting en Opleiding en Sending

Zuidhorn, 25 oktober '13



*Deputaatschap
voor Zending
in Zuid-Afrika*

Aan deputaatschap Klassis Suid
p/a br. F. Koning

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Zendingsdeputaten hebben uw brief (mail dd. 13 oktober '13 met bijlage) ontvangen.

We willen daar als volgt op reageren.

Landelijk gezien zijn wij nog een van de weinige zendingsdeputaatschappen die nog direct contact met zendingen hebben. De meeste anderen helpen jonge kerkverbanden met vooral training en toerusting.

Over de vraag of "Opleiding en toerusting" zendingswerk is, is door de kerken in Zuid-Afrika nog niet zo lang geleden gesproken. In een 'Beraad' van SDSA en SK 's op 22 & 23 oktober '10 is besloten dat Theologische Opleiding voortaan vanuit Deputaten artikel 19 KO zal worden verzorgd. De synode van de VGKSA heeft daarover ook uitspraken gedaan.

Omdat onze afspraak met VGKSA is dat wij hun zendingswerk ondersteunen, kunnen we niet op eigen houtje het zendingsgeld uitgeven aan andere doelen. Wanneer VGKSA echter besluiten om hun zendingsgeld ook te besteden aan zendingsopleidingen, kunnen we dat moeilijk tegenhouden.

We zouden het ook niet willen tegenhouden. De opleiding en toerusting van predikanten, zendingen en/of ouderlingen lijkt ons een prima besteding van zendingsgeld.

In 2010 is het gezamenlijke project van DVN en ZZA ter ondersteuning Theologie opleiding en hulpbehoevende studenten voor de jaren 2011 t/m 2015 gemaakt tussen Dep. Art. 19 en DVN.

Mukhanyo als opleiding staat al langer als project op onze begroting. De opleiding van de studenten in Bellville aan het George Whitefield College viel daarbuiten, mogelijk omdat er op dat moment geen student daar was.

Tijdens die visitatie van 2011 mochten we ook Mukhanyo bezoeken. We zouden het toejuichen als VGKSA de lijnen met Mukhanyo aanhaalt en daar ook zendingsgeld voor gebruikt.

We hebben wel aarzelingen bij een eigen opleiding in Zuid-Afrika. Niet dat we tegen eigen opleidingen zijn, maar voor de VGKSA lijkt dat te hoog gegrepen. Dat punt is bij de laatste visitatie ook naar voren gekomen.

Wat ons bevreemdt is dat bovenstaande niet een merkbare rol lijkt te hebben gespeeld bij het besluit van de Classis Zuid dd. 14 september '13 en in de vraagstelling van de brief van ds van Wijk. De vragen rond "Opleiding als deel van de zending" zou, denken wij, mogelijk kunnen beginnen bij Deputaten art 19 én bij de besluiten hierover op de synode van de VGKSA.

We wensen jullie wijsheid en Gods zegen bij je werk.

Met hartelijke broedergroeten,

i.o. J. van der Vinne, secretaris ZZA

Report to Synod May 2014. – Art 11 – Deputy Needy Churches
FRCSA

Synopsis:

The previous two reports (2011 and 2012) submitted to synod contained a number of changes where the responsibility to take proper care of the minister was re-evaluated and put back to the respective church council's (consistory) table. In future, only non-basic elements will be supported if churches are needy. Secondly, church councils should be financially responsible (as per visitation questions) which means that church councils should provide financial statements as well as the contribution ability of the congregation.

During 2012 and 2013 deputies needy churches started to implement the above mentioned changes. As stated by synod 2012: "Deputies will decide with wisdom on the path and time of the implementation". It will take time but progress has already been made.

We thank our Provider and Owner of all our possessions and gifts that He gave us the means to support the needy churches in 2012 and 2013 and that the figures are looking considerably better compared to three years ago.

Soli Deo gloria

Mandate:

Synod 2012 decides to reappoint the synod 2011 deputies (art 11) with the following mandate:

1. To consider any request for financial support coming from one of the churches and once the merits of the request have been ascertained to send a proposal to the other churches to help the needy church according to ability;
2. That the guidelines as set out in deputies report 2011 be used as a framework for deputies' decision making process;
3. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Further detail to mandate as decided by Synod 2012.

1. To implement the principle that the congregation is responsible for the basic elements of a minister's stipend and that only the non-basic elements will be supported by deputies article 11 CO. Deputies will decide with wisdom on the path and time of the implementation.
2. To use half of the assessment for Curators (R45) for the benefit of deputies article 11 CO over the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 and communicate this decision to the churches.

Financial overview:

Below is a cash-flow indicating the present situation as well as the expected future figures. Some explanations regarding the figures are mentioned as well.

Deputate Art11 (Hulpbehoewnde kerke) van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika Inkomste-state vir die jare 2009-2013 en begroting 2014 -2017

Hulpbehoewende Kerke	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Begin Saldo	356 445	(116 714)	776	(42 495)	346 773	393 852	348 207	391 861	393 975
Inkomste	722 086	908 592	1 160 208	1 132 725	1 228 683	1 050 000	990 000	1 093 000	1 064 000
Bydraes Ontvang	245 900	247 300	286 400	357 167	373 175	380 000	400 000	420 000	435 000
Johannesburg	11 100	9 500	22 220	25 650	25 665				
Kaapstad	82 200	82 600	90 860	115 425	120 655				
Maranatha	69 600	66 400	73 040	93 480	96 760				
Pretoria	8 300	88 800	97 680	121 125	130 095				
Soshanguve	-	-	2 600	1 487	-				
Skenkings Ontvang	449 440	619 355	855 739	761 640	846 304	650 000	570 000	655 000	613 000
SDSA	150 000	80 000	60 000	40 000	20 000	-	-	140 000	148 000
Jan Hulsjerfonds	-	-	100 000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Anoniem	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Australië	-	184 000	419 073	418 632	419 316	380 000	340 000	305 000	275 000
Kanada	299 440	355 355	276 566	303 008	406 988	270 000	230 000	210 000	190 000
Rente Inkomste	26 747	41 937	18 069	13 918	9 204	20 000	20 000	18 000	16 000
Uitgawes	365 641	1 025 306	1 159 432	1 175 220	881 910	1 002 920	1 035 645	1 049 346	1 061 887
Ondersteuning betaal	363 771	1 023 334	1 157 067	1 173 444	878 167	998 920	1 031 445	1 044 846	1 057 137
Johannesburg	120 840	231 735	149 565	152 220	165 667	178 920	191 445	204 846	217 137
Mamelodi	126 030	136 836	136 836	91 224	-	120 000	120 000	120 000	120 000
Soshanguve	93 001	168 630	189 999	190 000	142 500	100 000	120 000	120 000	120 000
Bethal	-	199 333	380 667	440 000	420 000	420 000	420 000	420 000	420 000
Belhar	23 900	286 800	300 000	300 000	150 000	180 000	180 000	180 000	180 000
Bankkoste	1 870	1 972	2 365	1 776	3 743	4 000	4 200	4 500	4 750

Income:

Dependency on foreign support:

In 2010, 67% of the funds came from abroad. The budget 2014 is based on 62% from abroad and the forecast 2017 is that less than 45% is collected from abroad. In dollar terms the support from Australia as well as from Canada since 2011 reduced by 33% (calculated in their currency) in 2014 mainly due to the devaluation of the Rand against the respective currencies. Deputies have informed Australia (FRCA) and Canada (CRC) of the reduced amounts required and also expressed our gratitude in supporting needy churches.

There is a positive trend to be less dependent on foreign support.

Contributions from churches FRCSA.

Based on the findings from deputies Sustainability that the churches in RSA do not contribute to ability and that the contributions can be increased by $\pm 20\%$ using the model proposed, art 11 request synod to allocate R380 000 in 2014 to and increase this by inflation (average 6%) per annum.

A request was made to the Consistory FRC Bellville to support art 11 from the Jan Hulzer fund. Art 11 feels that one first has to exhaust local funds before money is requested from abroad. There are still two payments due based on a previous agreement. These payment will increase with an annual interest of 6% and are reflected in the years 2016 and 2017.

Expenditure/Support to needy churches.

Implementation of the new guidelines to keep the responsibility for their minister's support at the local church council has taken place:

For Bethal en Belhar the rule that all inflationary increases in the ministers stipend should be born by the congregation, was implemented as from 2012.

For Mamelodi and Soshanguve the guideline to only pay the non-basic elements of a minister's stipend is implemented.

In general churches have difficulties to submit a budget (fixed stipend), financial statements and budget figures. Deputies art 11 has offered assistance in reimbursing the cost that bookkeepers/auditors charge to assist the churches in submitting proper financial statement, IRP5's and budgets.

A meeting with FRC Johannesburg was held to clarify the pension of Rev Retief. It was pointed out that the classis and synod had allocated the cost to support of Rev Retief to art 11. This is an agreement irrespective of the financial status of the Johannesburg congregation.

In summary one can conclude that despite inflation, the implementation of the new guidelines has reduced support by from a high of R1,2 million to a fairly steady amount of R1,0 million for 2013 and beyond.

Recommendations:

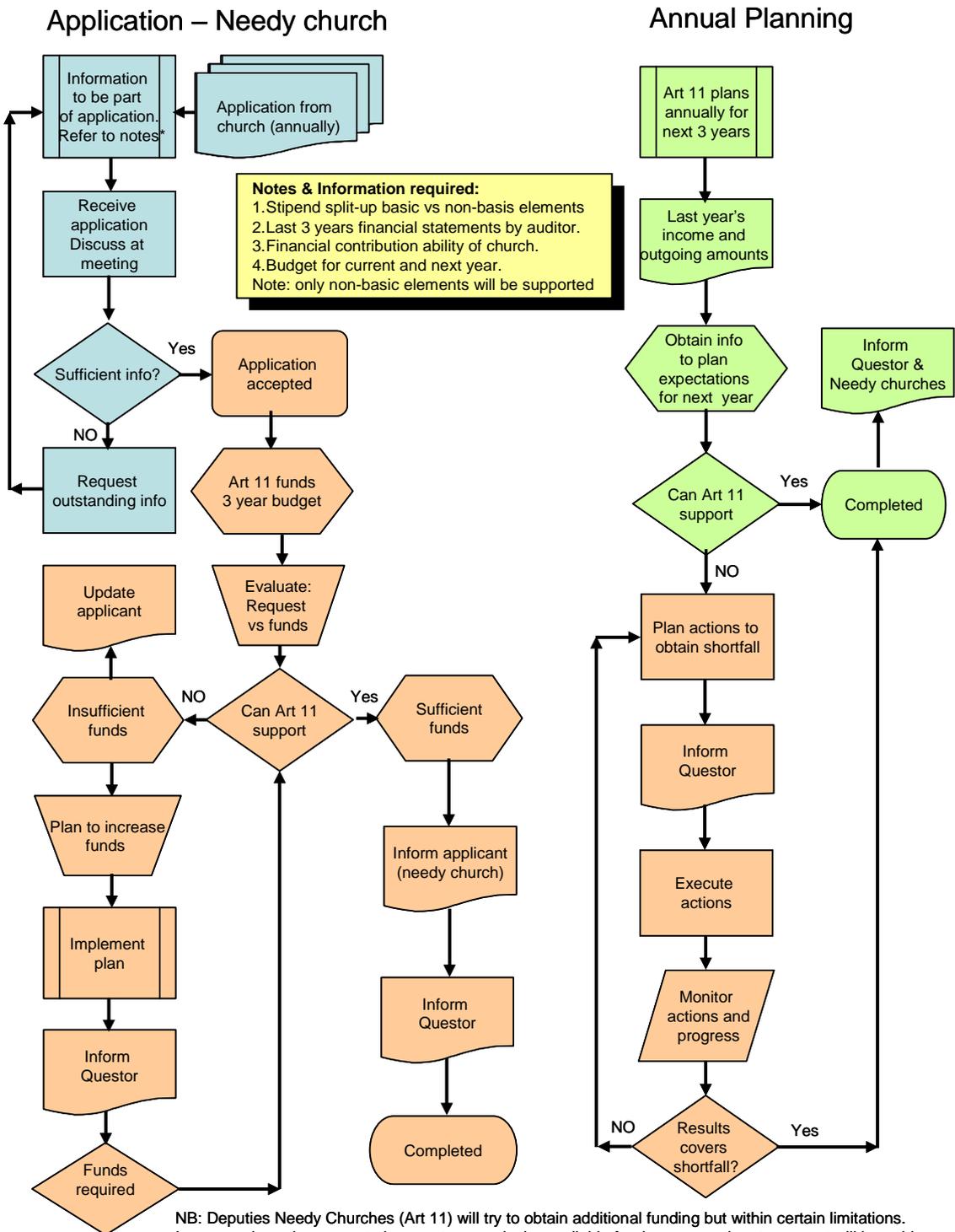
1. FRCSA contribution towards art 11 to be R380 000 in 2014 to R400 000 in 2015, R420 000 in 2016 and R435 000 in 2017.
Grounds: The amounts increase by the expected annual inflation.
The amounts are required to fund the required support as budgeted.
2. Support will only be given based on the required information available. See attached flow chart.
Grounds: Congregations need to be financial responsible and give account of their financial expenses, income and ability. If the financial skills are not available in house, these skills can be contracted and reimbursed by art 11.
Deputies art 11 need the financial information to decide on the amount of support that can be granted.
3. If churches do not contribute to ability, no assistance will be paid over.
Grounds: All churches should contribute to ability. Even the poor has to pay tithes, also the needy churches should contribute based on the differentiated contribution model presented by Deputies Sustainability.
4. Appoint a new member for outgoing depute br. H Pouwels.
Grounds: Br Pouwels served two terms.

The deputies pray that our Lord may bless the synod with his Spirit so that all decisions may be to the glory of His Name.

The deputies
Br Marius Bijker (scribe)
Br Wolter Miske (convenor)
Br Harry Pouwels

5 March 2014

Flow diagrams for Deputy Needy Churches



NB: Deputies Needy Churches (Art 11) will try to obtain additional funding but within certain limitations. In cases where the requested support exceeds the available funds, a proportionate amount will be paid. If churches want to obtain foreign funding outside art 11, an application should be made to Deputies RFC (BBK).

Final Updated Report to Synod May 2014. – Art 11 – Deputy Needy Churches FRCSA

Synopsis:

The previous two reports (2011 and 2012) submitted to synod contained a number of changes where the responsibility to take proper care of the minister was re-evaluated and put back to the respective church council's (consistory) table. In future, only non basic elements will be supported if churches are needy. Secondly, church councils should be financially responsible (as per visitation questions) which means that church councils should provide financial statements as well as the contribution ability of the congregation.

During 2012 and 2013 deputies needy churches started to implement the above changes. As stated by synod 2012: "Deputies will decide with wisdom on the path and time of the implementation". It will take time but progress has already been made.

We thank our Provider and Owner of all our possessions and gifts that He gave us the means to support the needy churches in 2012 and 2013 and that the figures are looking considerably better compared to three years ago.

Soli Deo gloria

Mandate:

Synod 2012 decides to reappoint the synod 2011 deputies (art 11) with the following mandate:

4. To consider any request for financial support coming from one of the churches and once the merits of the request have been ascertained to send a proposal to the other churches to help the needy church according to ability;
5. That the guidelines as set out in deputies report 2011 be used as a framework for deputies' decision making process;
6. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Further detail to mandate as decided by Synod 2012.

3. To implement the principle that the congregation is responsible for the basic elements of a minister's stipend and that only the non-basic elements will be supported by deputies article 11 CO. Deputies will decide with wisdom on the path and time of the implementation.
4. To use half of the assessment for Curators (R45) for the benefit of deputies article 11 CO over the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 and communicate this decision to the churches.

Financial overview:

Below is a cash-flow indicating the present situation as well as the expected future figures. Some explanations regarding the figures are mentioned as well.

Budget 2014 Needy Churches in SA - Cash flow -(Oct, 2013)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Actuals	Actuals	Actuals	Expected	Budget	Forecasts		
Saldo/opening balance	R 506 975	R 390 251	R 361 331	R 441 000	R 711 677	R 888 964	R 938 877	R 926 544
Income								
Mission deputies	R 80 000	R 60 000	R 40 000	R 20 000	R 0	R 0		
Churches contribution	R 247 300	R 263 000	R 360 000	R 370 000	R 400 000	R 360 000	R 380 000	R 410 000
Donations	R 27 091							
Canada - support	R 328 364	R 300 000	R 300 000	R 300 000	R 270 000	R 243 000	R 218 700	R 196 830
Australia - support	R 184 000	R 420 000	R 420 000	R 420 000	R 378 000	R 340 200	R 306 180	R 275 562
Jan Hulser (FRC Bellville)		R 100 000	R 115 000	R 118 000	R 100 000	R 100 000	R 100 000	R 100 000
Interest	R 41 937	R 20 000	R 12 000	R 8 000	R 8 000	R 8 000	R 8 000	R 8 000
Total	R 908 692	R 1 163 000	R 1 247 000	R 1 236 000	R 1 156 000	R 1 051 200	R 1 012 880	R 990 392
Expenditure								
Pension Jhb	R 130 830	R 152 220	R 159 831	R 167 823	R 176 214	R 186 786	R 197 994	R 209 873
Soshanguve North FRC	R 168 630	R 190 000	R 190 000	R 150 000	R 100 000	R 106 000	R 112 360	R 119 102
Mamelodi FRC	R 136 836	R 127 200	R 95 000	R 45 000	R 100 000	R 106 000	R 112 360	R 119 102
Belhar FRC*	R 286 800	R 300 000	R 300 000	R 180 000				
Johannesburg	R 100 915	R 0	R 0	R 0	R 0			
Bethal	R 199 333	R 420 000						
Bank charges	R 2 072	R 2 500						
Total	R 1 025 416	R 1 191 920	R 1 167 331	R 965 323	R 978 714	R 1 001 286	R 1 025 214	R 1 050 577
Surplus/ (shortfall)	R 390 251	R 361 331	R 441 000	R 711 677	R 888 964	R 938 877	R 926 544	R 866 359
Income for Projects - Manse Bethal								
Australia	R 787 418							
SA Disenchanted fund	R 128 214							
Total	R 915 632							

Income:**Dependency on foreign support:**

In 2011, 67% of the funds came from abroad. The budget 2014 is based on 56% from abroad and the forecast 2017 is that less than 50% is collected from abroad. In dollar terms the support from Australia as well as from Canada since 2011 reduced by 36% (calculated in their currency) in 2014 mainly due to the devaluation of the Rand against the respective currencies. Deputies have informed Australia (FRCA) and Canada (CRC) of the reduced amounts and also expressed our gratitude in supporting needy churches.

Contributions from churches FRCSA.

Based on the findings from deputies Sustainability that the churches in RSA do not contribute to ability and that the contributions can be increased by $\pm 20\%$ using the model proposed, art 11 request synod to allocate R360 000 in 2015 to and increase this by inflation (average 6%) per annum.

A request was made to the Consistory FRC Bellville to support art 11 from the Jan Hulzer fund. Art 11 feels that one first has to exhaust local funds before money is requested from abroad. At the time of the report no feedback was received re this request.

Expenditure/Support to needy churches.

Implementation of the new guidelines to keep the responsibility for their minister's support at the local church council has taken place:

For Bethal en Belhar the rule that all inflationary increases in the ministers stipend should be born by the congregation, was implemented as from 2012.

For Mamelodi and Soshanguve the guideline to only pay the non basic elements of a minister's stipend is implemented.

In general churches have difficulties to submit a budget (fixed stipend), financial statements and budget figures. Deputies art 11 has offered assistance in reimbursing the cost that bookkeepers/auditors charge to assist the churches in submitting proper financial statement, IRP5's and budgets.

However, Belhar is

A meeting with FRC Johannesburg was held to clarify the pension of Rev Retief. It was pointed out that the classis and synod had allocated the cost to support of Rev Retief to art 11.

In summery one can conclude that despite inflation, the implementation of the new guidelines has reduced support by from a high of R1,2 million to a fairly steady amount of R1,0 million for 2013 and beyond.

Recommendations:

5. FRCSA contribution towards art 11 to be R360000 in 2015 to R380000 in 2016 and R410 000 in 2017.
6. Support will only be given based on the required information available. See attached flow chart.
7. All churches should contribute to ability. If churches do not contribute, no assistance will be paid over.
8. Appoint a new member for outgoing depute br. H Pouwels who served two terms.

The deputies pray that our Lord may bless the synod with his Spirit so that all decisions may be to the glory of His Name.

The deputies
Br Marius Bijker (scribe)
Br Wolter Miske (convenor)
Br Harry Pouwels

5 Dec. 2014

Synod report 2014 Deputies Article 19

17 March 2014

Dear Chairman and members of this gathering,

The deputies would like to report as follows:

Acting Deputies

Br. A de Lange - adelange@lantic.net

Br. EJ de Wit – erikjdw@yahoo.co.uk

During 2013 deputies Br. M. Bijker (Secretariat) and Br. A. Boon stepped down as members.

Contact among Deputies was primarily via e-mail. A joint meeting was held with Deputies Curators and Theological Training in January 2014 to discuss mutual matters.

1. Ad hoc Synod decision 2012

☑ Authorize deputies to increase the contribution to R80.00 per member per annum.

1.1. Instructions received:

☑ To financially support students from within the MTS or those who are undergraduate students with a view to study for the ministry of the Word, in accordance with article 19 CO and the synodical regulations.

☑ To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the rules of Synod.

2. Deputies report:

a) Financial overview of the period 2011 - 2013:

Deputies gave financial support to three students during the period 2011- 2013. In 2013, R134 000 was needed for support (including class fees). Payments are done in accordance of the needs of the students. The Treasurer (quaestor) is responsible for the necessary payments.

b) Financial overview for the period April 2014 onwards:

The contributions by members of the FRCSA is currently R108 000 per year, made up of R80.00 per member as decided by Synod 2012. In 2014 there will be four students possibly five. At the time of the report we did not receive final approval to support Andre Mulongo, and for this reasons nothing has been finalised with ZDNL / DVN.

The funds available to Dep. Art.19 in December 2013 was R150 000. During 2012 – 2013 the available funds for Art.19 grew substantially because a student has since given up his studies. During 2011-2013 an average of R190 000 per year was needed for support.

However, the total expenses in 2014 will increase to R385 000. If no students are accepted in the following years, the financial outlook for 2014 – 2017 is as follows, assuming an escalation of 7% pa):

2014	2015	2016	2017
R 397 032.00	R 424 824.00	R 454 824.00	R 486 381.00

A final agreement was reached with our Sister churches in the Netherlands via ZDNL/DVN for financial help and they agreed to contribute 75% of the cost. They agree to contribute for four students at the time of the report.

ZDNL and DVN are currently offering to contribute 50 % and 25% respectively. Based on these numbers the required contributions are as follows:

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
FRCSA	R 101 200.00	R 108 000.00	R 135 500.00	R 154 000.00	R 174 000.00
ZDNL/DVN 75 % 50 % & 25 %	R 95 035.00	R 297 774.00	R 318 618.00	R 340 921.00	R 364 785.00
	R 196 235.00	R 397 032.00	R 424 824.00	R 454 824.00	R 486 481.00
Profit / Loss	R 62 170.00	R 11 712.00	R 18 471.84	R 29 759.87	R 27 043.06

To make up the contribution of the FRCSA, the contribution per member needs to increase from R 80 pa to R 100 pa, escalating annually with R20 to R 140 in 2017.

c) Considerations

The proposed budget caters for a total of five students. At the moment when students in need apply for help, we have to cater for student fees, books, accommodation, basic living cost of the students, family support etc.

The agreement with our Sister churches in the Netherlands via ZDNL/DVN expires on 31/12/2015. The weakening ZAR is not in our favor because they contribute 75% of the cost and not a fixed Euro amount.

3. Recommendations

We recommend that the synod:

- i. Increases the current contribution from the local churches of R 80 pa to R 100 pa, escalating with R20 annually to R 120 in 2017.
- ii. Combine deputies Art. 19 and deputies Theological Training. Deputies Art. 19 are convinced that working close in conjunction will improve processes and communication because the one work on a theological level and the other at financial level with students.

4. Recommendations as per Ad hoc Synod report

- i. Deputies Art.19 is only responsible for supporting needy students in bursaries limited to the actual study costs.
 - a. This approach will have to be faced in, and cannot be implemented immediately.
 - b. Students, parents and churches will be encouraged to accept their respective responsibilities in this regard.
 - c. The channel to follow when funds are needed to study should be parent -church-bond of churches (Art.19), not the other way round.
- ii. A reserve fund should be implemented in order to assist possible new students in need.
 - a. Start make provision if the agreement with our Sister churches in the Netherlands via ZDNL/DVN is not renewed after expiration the end of 2015.

Addendum A

Expenses		Escalation: 1.07	7%			
Student	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Rofhiwa Ramphabana		R 61 022.00	R 65 293.54	R 69 864.09	R 74 754.57	
Jacob Mnisi	R 58 277.00	R 61 022.00	R 65 293.54	R 69 864.09	R 74 754.57	
Oscar Makobe		R 90 566.00	R 96 905.62	R 103 689.01	R 110 947.24	
Solomon Makwakwa	R 75 788.00	R 78 686.00	R 84 194.02	R 90 087.60	R 96 393.73	
A. N. Other (B.Th)		R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	
A. N. Other (Dipl)		R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	R 0.00	
Andre Mulongo (Congo)		R 105 736.00	R 113 137.52	R 121 057.15	R 129 531.15	
	R 134 065.00	R 397 032.00	R 424 824.24	R 454 561.94	R 486 381.27	
Amount per member		R 80.00	R 100.00	R 110.00	R 120.00	
Members		1350	1350	1400	1450	
# students		5	5	5	5	
Income : The Netherlands pays 75%						
Interest and offerings	R 1 530.00	R 2 500.00	R 2 500.00	R 3 000.00	R 3 500.00	
Contribution FRCSA Churches	R 101 200.00	R 108 000.00	R 135 000.00	R 154 000.00	R 174 000.00	
Contribution The Netherlands	R 95 035.00	R 297 774.00	R 318 618.18	R 340 921.45	R 364 785.95	
					0.75	
	R 197 765.00	R 408 274.00	R 456 118.18	R 497 921.45	R 542 285.95	
Profit / Loss	R 63 700.00	R 11 242.00	R 31 293.94	R 43 359.52	R 55 904.68	R 205 500.14
Starting capital 01-01-2014	R 150 000.00					

Appendix 21 – Report of Deputies Curators

**FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF SOUTH AFRICA
DEPUTIES CURATORS
REPORT TO
SYNOD MAY 2014**

FEBRUARY 2014

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Executive summary

The work of deputies curators since 2011 went through three phases. Firstly curators started with an evaluation of their mandate and to assess their activities against the mandate. The decisions of synod 2006 and the profile of a Minister of the Word of God and curriculum outcomes were used as starting point. The actual curriculum development has still to be finalised.

Secondly the actual implementation of the theological training was evaluated in terms of delivery and the use of training providers. Currently curators have a mandate to use Mukhanyo Theological College, George Whitfield Theological College and the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton. At an Indaba in October 2012 curators presented their vision to a broad spectrum of brothers in our bond of churches in order to get a better understanding of the direction for theological training in the FRCSA. The Indaba was well attended and resulted in significant insights with regard to the strategy and direction for theological training.

Thirdly curators were engaged in the oversight and management of current students, taking an active interest in their studies and mentorship. This culminated in the appointment of a permanent mentor / co-ordinator for one day per week to guide our students both spiritually and academically. We are grateful that Rev J van der Linden accepted this call in May 2013.

In this report we share our activities, strategy and plans for the development of future Ministers in the FRCSA.

1 Synod instructions 2011 and results

Curators received the following instructions:

- 1 To mandate curators to consult with the Mukhanyo Theological College (MTC) regarding continuous support whether in the form of finances or lecturers

Result: Curators assisted in availing lecturers to MTC;

- 2 To officially participate in the Reformed Theological Training Initiative (RTTI), initiated by the Reformed Church of Rietvallei, Pretoria, with the objective of working towards a single local training institution suitable for all the theological students from the FRCSA, in line with the decisions made by synod Cape Town 2006 to work towards a MTS;

Grounds:

The objectives of the RTTI are in line with what previous synods have decided regarding theological training.

Result: Curators participated in the initiative but RTTI was discontinued.

- 3 To mandate curators to interact and cooperate with the local churches in the FRCSA in the process of establishing the RTTI;

Result: Curators interacted with local churches but RTTI initiative was discontinued.

- 4 To mandate curators to request the next convening church for an ad-hoc synod, if need be, for the formal implementation of the RTTI;

Result: Not applicable anymore.

- 5 To mandate curators to appoint either a national co-ordinator or a special committee tasked:
 - a. To refine the description of the modules and content based on the outcomes set by synod Cape Town 2006;
 - b. To work towards a uniform standard for all students in the federation, starting to compile a training manual with profiles, outcomes and learning goals in theological training format and context.

Ground:

The development of theological training within the FRCSA remains a priority.

Result: This work is in process. This report describes the implementation of this mandate, which is closely linked to the strategic direction for future theological training.

- 6 To appoint as regional co-ordinator for classis North: Rev. P.G. Boon;

Result: Rev Boon accepted the appointment

- 7 To appoint as regional co-ordinator for classis South: Dr. J.A. Breytenbach;

Result: Dr Breytenbach accepted the appointment

- 8 To present a revised budget before the end of 2011 to deputies for Financial Review to be presented at the ad-hoc synod;

Result: Curators communicated to these deputies about their uncertain situation in view of the discontinuation of the RTTI and about the fact that prospects for the future were undefined.

- 9 To approve the following budget and to set the contribution per member at R 90.00 per annum for calendar year 2011 with an annual increase according to the inflation rate;

Item	Description	Amount (ZAR)
1	Administration, archiving	8,000.00
2	Administrative assistant	50,000.00
3	Lecturing costs for Plus Program	50,000.00
4	Conferences (office bearers / men)	25,000.00
5	Pastors Seminars	30,000.00
6	Expenses for Regional Co-ordinators and for the execution of mandate 6	150,000.00
7	Costs Deputies Curators	30,000.00
	Total:	343,000.00
	Total expected income: ca. 1300 members x R 90 x 3 years = R 351,000.00	

Result: the budget was approved, but contribution per member changed at the special synod of 2012.

- 10 To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Result: The current report covers the period 2011-14.

2 Synod instructions 2012

A special synod was held in 2012 to discuss the financial sustainability of the FRCSA. The synod instruction was:

To use half of the assessment for Curators (R45 per member) for the benefit of deputies article 11 CO over the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 and communicate this decision to the churches;

Grounds:

1. Deputies article 11 experience cash flow problems at present.
2. Deputies Curators have considerable capital funds at present and will likely not deplete these funds within the indicated years.

3 Meetings

Since the previous synod Deputies Curators met on the following dates:

2011: 8 Sept, 10 Nov

2012: 28 Jan, 15 March, 7 Jun, 25 Aug, 13 Oct (Indaba), 8 Nov

2013: 19 Jan, 14 Feb, 16 May, 15 Aug, 28 Oct

2014: 25 Jan, 17 Feb, 3 Mar

4 Involvement in training initiatives outside the FRCSA

4.1 Involvement with RTTI / GTOI

The co-ordinators were closely involved with the *Reformed Theological Training Initiative*. In November 2011 the co-ordinators reported the following to curators:

- a. The co-ordinators have been involved in the Reformed Theological Training Initiative, including the work committee for preparation of a meeting of churches, which the RC Brooklyn would convene.
- b. This meeting of churches was cancelled, due to a negative attitude of the Theological School in Potchefstroom (TSP) towards the RTTI. It is clear that tensions exist within the RCSA increase with regard to the RTTI, despite the fact that this initiative intends to be completely Reformed and intends to focus on in-service training which is not offered by the TSP.

In view of this situation FRCSA involvement in the IRTT was suspended in the hope that such involvement can be continued in the near future. Since then regrettably the RTTI has been discontinued.

As a result, curators had to reconsider and redirect their future focus.

4.2 Involvement with Mukhanyo Theological College

- a. Curators attended the Annual General Members Meetings of MTC. Curators were closely involved in the adoption of a new Statement of Faith. Although it is an improvement on the previous Statement of Faith, we regretted the fact that Mukhanyo doesn't want to take a clear stance on infant baptism. Our advice was to continue to accommodate Baptist students at MTC, but not to remain 'neutral' with regard to the Biblical doctrine on baptism in the lectures. Recently MTC accepted this advice. All lecturers are now instructed to teach infant baptism where applicable.
- b. Some curators were also involved with drafting a new curriculum for MTC in November 2011 since MTC received its own accreditation independent of the Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP) at the Northwest University. Unfortunately this curriculum has not been finalised and implemented to date. Recently MTC appointed dr Hannes Breytenbach as the Dean to assist them in this process and substantive progress has been made.
- c. Curators evaluated MTC as a service provider for the FRCSA on an continuous basis and report in this regard as follows:
 - Positive:
 - MTC cherishes Biblically faithful theological training.
 - MTC focuses on the African context.
 - MTC offers an integrated course with regard to theological training, languages and practice.
 - Negative:
 - There was limited continuity in lecturing, as there were only a few permanent lecturers, and block courses were offered through guest lecturers. This situation impacts on both the academic quality and the coaching of the spiritual development of the students. Since 2014 this situation has changed. MTC now has permanent appointments for all but two lecturers.
 - There is still concern about standards as reflected in average class performance marks.
 - Quality of the teaching of the languages Greek and Hebrew are not at our required standards. Since the arrival of Dr Breytenbach this issue is being addressed.
 - MTC's financial position is constrained, as no church(es) effectively take ownership of the institution.

- Due to the location of MTC, our students have to stay on the campus during the week, causing them to be absent from their families.

5 Indaba on Theological Training in the FRCSA

5.1 Proposal to Indaba

An Indaba on theological training was held on 13 October 2012. The discussions revealed that diverse opinions about theological training exist in our bond of churches. The discussions resulted in a shared vision on the development of “men of God” to serve His flock in the FRCSA.

Curators shared the conviction expressed by Synod 2011 that the ‘status quo’ of separate training institutions and standards for white, coloured and black students could not be a permanent solution. Curators submitted the following proposal to the Indaba:

- All theological students from the FRCSA have to start with a 3 year BA degree at a SA university, with the following mandatory subjects: Greek and Hebrew for 2 years, and English and another SA language for 3 years.
- All theological students follow the 4 year Master of Divinity presented by the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS). Curators strive towards offering the 1st year of this master locally through distance education. Furthermore students will return during the Canadian summer holidays (half May until end of August) to SA for their practical work. The CRTS has in principle accepted this proposal.

5.2 Discussions

During the Indaba no consensus could be reached on this proposal. The following pro’s and con’s were discussed:

Pro’s

- All students will receive a high quality academic and solidly Biblical training.
- All students of the FRCSA receive the same training and could be called to any of the churches.
- Students have the possibility to terminate their theological studies after obtaining a BA degree, if they would not feel a calling to the ministry anymore. This degree will provide them with a good qualification for alternative employment, contrary to the current system (e.g. at MTC). From a viewpoint of sustainability the new option is better for the churches, rather than having students who neither enter the ministry, nor are capable to pay back their loans.
- In a different and conducive environment students (and their families if they have) receive the opportunity to grow spirituality, a process that is often hampered when they stay in their hometown.

- The financial implications for the FRCSA are limited, since the Canadian sister churches pledged financial help for all SA students living and studying in Canada.

Con's

- There are concerns about the level of BA studies in South Africa, which may not be acceptable to Hamilton.
- Studies at a South African university expose students to false doctrines.
- Not all students, who already have families, will be able to move to Canada for this period. 3 to 4 years in Canada are a long time which may lead to social alienation.

Participants at the Indaba were unanimous about the importance of proper coaching and mentoring of the students – whatever study route they take. This is necessary in order to fulfil the requirements laid down as outcomes by the churches (see ACTA Ad Hoc Synod 2006). The following conclusions were drawn:

- Coaching on a part-time basis offered by a full-time pastor may result in neglect of the students and/or congregation.
- Although mentors were appointed to each student, the mentorship did not always function properly or at all. FRCSA ministers require training to be able to mentor.
- A disadvantage of the MTC-Plus program is that it is offered mainly after the BTh degree at MTC has been obtained. Experience taught that students need coaching, both academically and spiritually on a continuous basis during the full course of their studies.

Curators concluded that a part-time paid coach had to be appointed as soon as possible, and to have contact sessions with the students on a weekly basis (see point 7 below).

5.3 Post-Indaba evaluation

After the Indaba curators evaluated the feedback on their proposal. They decided to retain the proposal as the best option currently available, yet to strive towards it in a flexible and incremental way. When this route will cause real problems, e.g. for the family of a student, curators can make use of other training providers, such as:

- George Whitefield Theological College
- Mukhanyo Theological College

The Mukhanyo Plus program can then be continued with the possibility of assistance from the CRTS.

After further consideration a revised strategic plan for theological training was developed, see point 7 *Strategic Plan for 2013-17* below.

6 Report on Theological Students

6.1 Co-ordinator South

Synod 2011 reappointed dr. JA Breytenbach as co-ordinator for theological training in Classis South. Rev Breytenbach moved from Cape Town to Bethal January 2011.

At that stage student Christian Willemse was a student at George Whitefield Theological College. It was impossible to guide the student in a productive way. Curators withdrew their support of br Willemse due to insufficient academic results and he terminated his studies in 2012.

6.2 Co-ordinator North

Synod 2011 reappointed rev. PG Boon as co-ordinator for theological training in Classis North. Since 2011 the following students were mentored:

- *Bongani Ndlovu*: Due to insufficient academic results Bongani had to terminate his studies in 2012.
- *Oscar Makobe*: Due to issues in his personal and family life, curators in consultation with dep. Art. 19, decided not to support Oscar's studies for 2013. After consideration of improvement curators have decided to continue support for 2014 (BTh 3) on probation.
- *Jacob Mnisi*: For 2014 Jacob is now registered for BTh 4 at MTC. Curators can give a good attestation about him, both academically and spiritually. He is also involved in the church of Soshanguve-North (GG), where rev. Thabo Matlaela is his local mentor.
- *Solomon Makwakwa*: For 2014 Solomon is registered for BTh 2 at MTC. Due to underperformance in BTh 1 the curators support Solomon conditionally for one semester. End of 2012 Solomon married Dikeledi. The past years Solomon was involved with the mission congregation of Soshanguve-Southeast (XX/VV), where rev. Pieter Boon was his mentor.

6.3 Mentorship 2013-14

Rev J van der Linden was appointed as mentor and mentorship co-ordinator in July 2013. The programme is offered at the premises of the Reformational Study Centre (RSC) near Pretoria. The students (enrolled at Mukhanyo Theological College) receive guidance on Fridays. The curators pay the expenses associated with lodging the students. The curators are also in the process of expanding their own library to be able to meet the requirements for the proper functioning of the students and the mentorship programme.

Rev van der Linden has mentored the following students:

- Jacob Mnisi
- Solomon Makwakwa
- Oscar Makobe

- Rophiwa Rhampabana: Rophiwa approached curators for support for theological studies early 2014. As enrolment at the university had closed he enrolled at MTC.
- William Mahlaole: William approached curators for support for theological studies early 2014. As he has no matric exemption, he was advised to rewrite matric, which he accepted.
- André Mulongo approached the curators for support end of January 2014. He is from the DRC and studies at MTCC. The issue of financial support is still under consideration.

7 Strategic Plan 2013 to 2020

7.1 Strategic direction 2013-2020

The strategic direction of Theological Training is based on decisions by previous synods with regard to outcomes, curriculum, training structure and mentorship.

7.2 Basis for strategy

The following decisions of previous synods are reaffirmed:

- All aspects of theological training must be to the honour of God and the wellbeing of the churches.
- Theological training must lead to Ministers of the Word as defined in the *Profile of a Minister of the Word*, as adopted by synod 2006 (Acta 2006, pt 3)
- Deputies Curators must establish a Ministerial Training Structure of the churches and for the churches (Acta 2006b, pt 6).
- Theological Training of students from all the churches must fulfil the course outcomes as adopted by synod 2006.
- A mentorship co-ordinator and local mentors will be appointed to guide students.

7.3 Outcomes of the strategy

- To deliver Ministers of the Word who fulfill the requirements of the Profile.
- To establish a Ministerial Training Structure which is owned by the FRCSA and offers equal theological training to all students from the FRCSA. Ultimately the FRCSA should have its own theological training institution with full-time and part-time lecturers, and the option of outsourcing specific courses.
- The convergence of existing theological training trajectories over time with the aim of establishing the same theological training provision.

7.4 Admission requirements

- South African tertiary training institutions use Admission Point Score for Grade 12 as admission requirement to ensure that students are academically competent to complete the studies. Deputies Curators propose to set the APS for FRCSA theological training at 25.⁴⁷ In addition, applicants will meet with curators and mentor(s) for assessment of their intent, and will be psychometrically tested.

⁴⁷ The University of Pretoria has set an APS of 30 for language studies, the North West University 20

- b. Applicants for theological training in the FRCSA who did not achieve an APS of 25 will be advised to rewrite their Grade 12 examination.
- c. Young men from the FRCSA who intend to study theology must submit a completed Notice of Intention to Deputy Curators, in which their local pastor and consistory are involved. Curators will assess the applicant and advise on admission and study trajectory.

7.5 Contextual factors

- a. Students for Theological Training come from different congregations and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. It has become clear that many students do not have an understanding of basic Reformed doctrines, Confessions and practices. Their academic competence is often below standards for admission to tertiary education institutions. Curators want to resolve the challenges resulting from contextual factors without diminishing the synod decisions on profile, outcomes and requirements.
- b. The theological training will offer a foundation course for students who qualify through their APS, but are not yet ready for formal theological training.

7.6 Study trajectories

a. Foundation course

Applicants for theological training who are not ready for formal theological studies or language studies will be required to register for the foundation course. Successful completion of the foundation course is a prerequisite for access to theological studies. The foundation course can be provided through outsourcing (e.g. Mukhanyo Theological College or a university) or insourcing (by FRCSA ministers of the Word).

b. Theological studies trajectories

Curators will advise applicants to follow one of the following trajectories:

- i. Three years BA language studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution (university), followed by a four year MTh course at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton. Access to the CRTS studies is governed by the CRTS admission policy. This trajectory will include practical work in South Africa during the CRTS summer recess.
- ii. Foundation course, followed by a BA languages studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution, followed by a four year MTh at the CRTS.
- iii. Foundation course, followed by a BTh at an accredited tertiary education institution (currently Mukhanyo Theological College or George Whitfield Theological College), followed by at least two years of language studies (Hebrew II and Greek II) and at least one year at CRTS.
- iv. Curators may advise students to change trajectory during their studies.

7.7 Mentorship as core component of strategy 2013-23

Curators believe that the churches should supervise the theological training as well as the theological students irrespective of the training trajectory. This responsibility cannot be abdicated.

In order to bring the task of supervising and assisting our students satisfactorily into effect, curators have decided on an intensive form of mentorship. It will be compulsory for every theological student of the FRCSA to enroll for this mentorship program, regardless of the progress he has made with his theological study. Every student will be mentored on a continuous basis regarding his academic and spiritual progress and qualifications, his calling and functioning in the congregation, as well as his personal functioning. There should be correlation between the mentorship and the theological training facility where the student is enrolled. Students will spend up to two days a week in the mentorship programme.

The curators will appoint a minister part-time for the coordination and implementation of the mentorship programme. The consistory that is responsible for the maintenance of this minister will be remunerated. The main function of this mentor is to manage and coordinate the program, and to function as a mentor himself on an academic, spiritual, practical and personal level. He reports to the curators quarterly. Additional mentors will be appointed according to the needs of the programme. The mentor(s) will assist the curators in drafting a detailed description of the outcomes for each field of theological studies.

The mentor(s) can and should make use of other qualified and appropriate persons within and outside the bond of churches. For practical experience the student will provide services to selected congregations for limited periods, under guidance by the local minister. The local mentor will provide the curators with a student progress report twice a year. For academic guidance experts from our bond of churches or external, or lecturers from overseas can provide extra tuition.

The mentorship programme will apply to the full study trajectory. Curators and mentors will assess progress of students. Lack of growth may result in an advice to terminate studies.

All ministers in the bond of churches will be invited for formal mentorship training in order to optimize their function as local mentors. Curators will develop criteria for this training and task descriptions of local mentors.

The budget of curators makes provision for annual programme costs.

7.8 Training of local mentors

The current mentor and curators have identified the need for more effective mentorships through training and proper consultation of local mentors. The training should make provision for enhancing the capacity of local pastors to guide students in a semi-structured way, in which mentor and mentee cooperate in a 'sharing partnership'.

Training of mentors should include issues such as commitment, planning, communications and assessment.

Training of mentors can be done in the following way:

- General mentorship training at established institutions, It is proposed that all pastors be given the opportunity to follow a general course.

- Specific training for FRCSA mentorship based on an analysis of training needs, e.g. by mentorship co-ordinator or external specialist.
- Selected mentorship courses, workshops or seminars, on specific issues, e.g. by theological mentor trainer.

8 Stimulation and recruitment of Theological Students 2014 to 2017

Curators are convinced that there is a need for affirmative recruitment of theological students throughout the bond of churches. Curators are in the process of developing a prospectus or brochure for congregations and young men who are interested in theological training. The prospectus will be finalised after synod 2014 has decided on the training.

In addition, curators, through the mentor, plan an open day once a year for prospective students.

9 Outsourcing of training

For many years MTC and GWTS have been the preferred providers of theological training for students from the African and Coloured churches. Curators expect that this situation will continue for at least the short-to-medium term, depending on the implementation of the strategy.

Curators will enter into formal agreements with the training providers to ensure an effective partnership for the delivery of ministers of the Word according to the adopted profile. The agreements will make provision for increased involvement of FRCSA ministers in the training institution, if required.

As MTC and GWTS do not belong to the FRCSA, curators will regularly assess the training that is provided against the outcomes that have been set by previous FRCSA synods. Curators will design an assessment method for this purpose, including the assessment of FRCSA students on an annual basis. In addition, the mentor(s) will assess the training on a continuous basis.

Curators will investigate the possibility of acquiring additional training providers, either institutional or individual.

10 Members of deputies curators

Since synod 2011, deputies curators comprised of:

Brs. R. Meeske (convenor), JA Breytenbach, G Hagg, J Mhlanga, A Smit (treasurer),
 J van der Linden, A vd Lugt, E Viljoen
 Co-ordinator Classis North: PG Boon
 Co-ordinator Classis South: JA Breytenbach
 Secretary: sr. T. van Alten (until June 2013), sr C Hagg (since July 2013).

In 2013 br. A vd Lugt resigned as curator and sr. T. van Alten moved abroad.

In 2013 curators appointed rev. J. van der Linden as part-time mentor of the students. The appointment is effective as from 1 April 2013 until synod 2014. With his appointment rev. Van der Linden ceased to be curator, since it is the curators' task to supervise his work. As Rev van der Linden takes over rev. Boon's tasks as regional co-ordinator Rev. Boon was appointed curator.

Curators propose to synod 2014 to reappoint rev. Van der Linden as part-time mentorship co-ordinator for the period until synod 2017.

11 Combining Deputies Art 19 with Deputies Curators

The work of deputies curators and deputies for needy students (art. 19) are closely related. Both deputies met several times, and agreed on the following was resolution:

- Until Synod 2014 both deputies will continue separately, although dept art. 19 will attend every first and last curators meeting of the year, including the meeting with the students.
- For the synod 2014 both deputies will propose to the churches that the two deputies merge, implying that one of the art. 19 deputies will henceforth become a member of deputies curators.

12 Financial Overview

Annexure A provides the financial overview of deputies curators for 2011-2013.

13 Budget 2013-2017

Annexure B provides the budget for 2013-17

14 Instructions Synod 2014

Synod decides:

- 14.1 To set an APS of 25 as the admission requirement for theological studies in the FRCSA.
Ground: To ensure that students have the academic competence to follow the theological studies according to requirements, outcomes and curriculum adopted at previous synods.
- 14.2 Prospective students for theological studies must apply for access through admission procedures set by curators.
Ground: Prospective students must be assessed by curators to ensure that only persons with adequate aptitudes and competencies are admitted to the studies.
- 14.3 In cases where deputies curators and mentor(s) conclude that the applicant for theological studies lacks basic competencies for theological studies, the student will follow a foundation course that is determined by the curators, and pass this course successfully.
Ground: Many prospective students, particularly from disadvantaged communities, lack basic knowledge, skills and understanding with regard to study methods, command of tuition language, Reformed doctrines and church order. The normal academic study trajectory will be too difficult and the study outcomes inadequate for the outcomes and profile set by synod 2006. The foundation course will cover these basic elements of theological studies.
- 14.4 Theological students must follow one of the following trajectories:
 - a. Three years BA language studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution (university), followed by a four year MTh course at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton. This trajectory will include practical work in South Africa during the CRTS summer recess.

- b. Foundation course, followed by a BA languages studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution, followed by a four year MTh at the CRTS.
- c. Foundation course, followed by a BTh at an accredited tertiary education institution (currently Mukhanyo Theological College or George Whitfield Theological College), followed by at least two years of language studies (Hebrew II and Greek II) and at least one year at CRTS.

Ground: Due to contextual factors in the education and family life of prospective students, students have different aptitudes and competencies when applying for access to theological studies. The trajectories make provision for addressing the challenges that are the result of such factors to ensure that the outcomes set by synod 2006 are achieved.

- 14.5 Curators and mentor(s) can advise students to change their study trajectory at any stage of their studies

Ground: Due to different competencies of students they may achieve or fail to achieve the expected outcomes. Curators and mentor(s) must advise to ensure that the students is redirected on time for an optimum study trajectory.

- 14.6 To instruct Deputies Curators to work towards to possibility of presenting the 1st year of the Master of Divinity of the CRTS locally via distance learning.

Ground: 4 years of studies abroad is regarded as a long time.

- 14.7 To appoint rev. J. van der Linden as coach/mentor for the coming 3 years until the next synod.

Ground: Proper spiritual and academic coaching during the whole course of studies is essential to work towards the outcomes set by the churches for prospective ministers.

- 14.8 To merge Deputies Curators with Deputies art. 19 CO, and to appoint one deputy art. 19 to become member of Deputies Curators.

Ground: Experience has shown that two separate deputies dealing with the theological students is too confusing for the students, and too burdensome for a small federation of churches. Furthermore for both deputies it makes fulfilling their mandate not easier, but more difficult.

- 14.9 To instruct Deputies Curators to present on an annual basis an office bearer's training opportunity, a men's conference, and a pastor's seminar for the churches

Ground: Ongoing training of (potential) office bearers in the churches is of vital importance. It is also good for office bearers from the different local churches to meet one another from time to time.

- 14.10 To enable all ministers in the FRCSA to attend a conference once a year and/or to enable ministers to follow post graduate studies. A maximum amount has to be set

per minister per year. Ministers should submit their proposal to Deputies Curators for approval. Afterwards ministers should send in a written report to Deputies Curators as well as an article written in such a way that it can be published in one of the magazines church members read.

Ground: Ongoing learning is essential for all pastors in the federation. The possibility for ongoing learning for a pastor should not be dependent on whether he serves a richer or poorer congregation. Therefore it is advisable to organise the support for ongoing learning on an equal footing via the deputies curators.

14.11 To approve the budget for the period 2015-2017 as proposed in this report.

Annexure A: Financial Overview
Theological School of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.

Statement of income and expenses for the Financial period from 01.01.2011 until 31.12.2013

<u>Year</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Income	128517.88	65793.61	58303.36	252614.85	343000
Payment received from Churches	110518	46003.58	41357.01	197878.59	343000
Interest Received	17999.88	19790.03	16946.35	54736.26	0
Expenses	30155.54	94248.62	56285.79	180689.95	343000
Administration , Archiving	0	0	2059	2059	8000
Administrative Assistant	2475	1925	0	4400	50000
Office Bearers / Mens Conferences	2381.5	0	0	2381.5	25000
Bank Charges	24	0	27	51	0
Books Purchased - Theological Students	1312.48	0	1580	2892.48	0
Reformed Theological Training Initiative	4564.88	0	0	4564.88	0
Costs Deputies Curators	7279.04	9143.77	13267.77	29690.58	30000
Pastors Seminars	12118.64	47022.85	9988.22	69129.71	30000
Hamilton Conference 2013	0	36157	1863.8	38020.8	0
Expenses Regional Co-ordinators / Coaches	0	0	27500	27500	150000
Lecturing Costs for Plus Programme	0	0	0	0	50000

01.01.2011 Opening Balance - Cheque account	1919.76
01.01.2011 Opening Balance - Deposit account	466506.41
Total income for period 01.01.2011 to 31.12.2013	252614.85
	-
Total Expenses for period 01.01.2011 to 31.12.2013	180689.95
31.12.2013 Closing Balance - Cheque account	46108.4
31.12.2013 Closing Balance - Deposit account	494242.67
<u>Total cash position as per 31.12.2013</u>	<u>540351.07</u>

Financial status of Curators

Ad Smit,
Treasurer

Annexure B: Budget 2014-17

1 Direct Student cost		Cost	Days P/A	Total P/A	2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		Notes
Students	Per night	Number	Cost	Student No	Cost	Student No	Cost	Student No	Cost		
Accommodation	180	35	R 6,300.00	1	R 6,300.00	1	R 6,930.00	1	R 7,276.50	2015 10% increase 2015 5% Increase	
Sustenance	160	35	R 5,600.00	5	R 28,000.00	6	R 36,960.00	6	R 38,808.00	2016 10% increase 2015 5% Increase	
Mentor	1 day per week		R 5,500.00	6000	R 71,000.00	9000	R 108,000.00	9000	R 118,800.00	2014 increase in march to R6000 2015 1,5 Days increase to R9000 (6 Students) 2016 10% increase	
Administration Cost				1 day		1,5 days		1,5day			
Stationary & printing					R 2,400.00		R 2,400.00		R 2,400.00		
general costs (catering & traveling)					R 3,600.00		R 3,600.00		R 3,600.00		
Administrator including Art19	1 day per week		R 2,000.00		R 2,000.00		R 2,000.00		R 2,000.00		
Books for Library			R 5,000.00		R 5,000.00		R 5,000.00		R 5,000.00		
Lecturers	Lecture Days										
Local	??		R 10,000.00		R 10,000.00		R 10,000.00		R 10,000.00		
Oversees	??		R 50,000.00		R 50,000.00		R -		R -		
Mukhanjo Plus									R 30,000.00	Oscar	
Hamilton 6 months											
2 Administration(Cora)					R 8,000.00		R 8,000.00		R 8,000.00		
Prospectus					R 5,000.00						
Curators Cost (Flights)					R 15,000.00		R 15,000.00		R 15,000.00		
3 Office Bearers & Mens conferences					R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		
4 Pastor Training & Development											
Pastors Development Conferenc					R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		
Guest Speaker Mentor training					R 30,000.00					Arjan de Visser	
5 Development of pastors											
Attendance Conferences					R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		R 20,000.00		
Post Graduate Studies											
Total			R 795,074.50		R 276,300.00		R 237,890.00		R 280,884.50		

Cash flow	Current Contributions								
Opening balance						R 550 000.00	R 378 700.00		R 235 532.00
Cash Outflow						R 276 300.00	R 237 890.00		R 280 884.50
Cash Inflow						R 105 000.00	R 94 722.00		R 86 131.92
Churchbond Income	1300X60					R 78 000.00	R 78 000.00		R 78 000.00
Interest Received	R400000X6% in 2014					R 27 000.00	R 16 722.00		R 8 131.92
Balance						R 378 700.00	R 235 532.00		R 40 779.42
Cash flow	Required Contributions								
Opening balance						R 550 000.00	R 417 700.00		R 315 872.00
Cash Outflow						R 276 300.00	R 237 890.00		R 280 884.50
Cash Inflow						R 144 000.00	R 136 062.00		R 129 952.32
Churchbond Income	1300X90					R 117 000.00	R 117 000.00		R 117 000.00
Interest Received	R400000X6% in 2014					R 27 000.00	R 19 062.00		R 12 952.32
Balance						R 417 700.00	R 315 872.00		R 164 939.82
Assumptions									
	We have 5 students in 2014								
	We have 6 students in 2015								
	The interest we receive is at 6%								
	We have 1 student doing the Plus program in 2016								

Appendix 22 - Report of the deputies for liturgical music

General

The deputies for liturgical music held several meetings. Sometimes a meeting consisted of the entire deputation, and at other times of the Afrikaans members only. We had contact with the *Calvyn Jubileum Fonds* as well as with the *NG Kerk Uitgewers*, the copyright holders of the *Liedboek van die kerke 2001*.

The deputies functioned at an average level.

Assignment 1 and 2 – Comments from the churches

The deputies were somewhat tardy in forwarding the selection of hymns. The consistories still had 6 months to test the hymns (in accordance with our synodical brief), but we did not realize that the consistories would still spend some time discussing how to introduce the new hymns to the congregation, with the result that we did not get feedback on the hymns from the churches.

Assignment 3 – Publishing the hymns

This concerns two separate matters: the use of the chosen hymns (from the *Liedboek*) and the use of the new scriptural hymns ('Skrifberymings') that did not form part of the old Psalm Books.

The use of the new scriptural hymns may appear to be a temporary problem. As the older type of *Psalm Book* is phased out, the new *Psalm Book* (containing the new scriptural hymns) will have to be purchased. In time, the problem should thus be solved. However, considering the fact that the number of scriptural hymns are constantly increasing, this becomes a long-term challenge. In our opinion, a long-term solution must therefore be found.

With regard to the hymns in the *Liedboek 2001*, we have received permission to make copies and have them bound separately. This collection could also be expanded (on the basis of the criteria determined by the Synod 2011).

In essence, we need to find a way to publish the songs while allowing for the possible addition of more songs in future (according to the criteria of Synod 2011). In our view, this leaves us with two possibilities: the use of a projector to make the songs available, or making them available in some kind of ledger format (to which new songs can be added).

We do not consider the projector a wise choice. First, it is a matter that will need to be examined in much more (theological) detail by our churches. Secondly, it is not expedient to establish a pattern of behaviour among church members that abolishes the necessity of remembering what they need to take when preparing to go to church. The use of the projector also restricts the use of the songs to the church service instead of them being sung at home as well.

We would like to suggest making the approved songs available in a ledger format in the churches.

The hymns we want to use have copyright restrictions on them. This means that we cannot just make copies as we wish, but that we have to pay for the usage of these hymns. We have obtained permission to make copies of the chosen hymns for our church members. The cost of this (a maximum of 40 hymns, 1500 copies per hymn) will be R1 918,00, payable once to *NG Kerk Uitgewers* (see attached document).

Assignment 4 – List of themes

The list of themes can in effect be expanded almost infinitely. With regard to the matter of choosing hymns and new songs, there is a real possibility that the deputies may concern themselves with things that are not so relevant in the churches today. It is our conviction that it would be better for the churches to identify topics from the weekly services for which there are an insufficient number of songs available, and search for and identify songs accordingly. We

would therefore suggest sending this list to every minister in the Afrikaans churches and request that they keep it in mind when selecting songs to accompany their sermons. They can let us know where they find shortages. By following this process the churches can also let the deputies know if there is still a need for more songs on the Christian feast days (one of the original reasons for looking at the hymns for our worship services).

Assignment 5 – New hymns

The delegation re-examined the list of hymns and the list of subjects for which we are specifically trying to find hymns, but we have not really discovered anything new. It might be due to a blind spot because we also worked with the same list in previous years.

The church of Pretoria suggested a new versification of the Confession as an alternative to the current versification thereof. Although we try to avoid duplication in our new church hymnal, we do however consider it wise to have an alternative to the Confession. It is a text that we use every Sunday, and variety and alternative choices are of prime importance to ensure that it can continue to be sung consciously and with conviction. (See attached song.)

Assignments 6 and 7 – Material for Sotho-speaking churches

All documents have been sent to the Sotho-speaking churches. We suggested that the documents be discussed by the consistory and that sermons be held in which the principles of the church song are examined in the light of the Scriptures. It is important that the Sotho-speaking churches do not experience this matter as a foreign issue which is imposed on them from the outside, but that it is a natural consequence from the Scripturally faithful worship of our God.

Assignments 8 and 9 – Current hymnal of the Sotho-speaking churches

According to what we were able to ascertain, there are two volumes from which the Sotho-speaking churches can select songs for church services, which are the *Lifela* and a Zulu Hymnal (some congregations sing a very small selection of these songs).

Some of the songs in these two volumes are very strongly based upon the Psalms. To enable the greater majority of the Psalms to be converted to Sotho songs would however require that the Lord imparts special capabilities through his Spirit to individuals in his church today. This is something for our churches to pray for.

For an assessment of the collections of songs currently in use by the Sotho-speaking churches, we turned to Prof AJ de Visser for advice and also examined the current practice in the churches.

Prof De Visser views the task of assessment as huge and not easily accomplished. This is also due to the fact that *Lifela* is written in Southern Sotho, a language in which none of our ministers is truly fluent. In the meantime we have learned of a D Th study that is being made of the *Lifela* at Potchefstroom, which might in future help us significantly in our assessment of this volume.

In practice, the churches currently only sing a selection from the hymnal. We recommend that we commence by assessing and standardising this list to the greatest possible extent, and ensuring that the songs that are sung at present are Scripturally sound. This process should involve a majority of the Sotho-speaking ministers, and we would like to suggest that it becomes part of the Mission Team's agenda. When the current list is standardised, new songs can be added to it once they have been properly assessed. Furthermore, special attention must be given in this process to searching for Sotho songs that are versifications of Psalms.

Assignment 10 – Contact with the deputies of the GKSA

We have contacted the *Calvyn Jubileum Fonds*, and according to them, our current Psalm Book is still widely in use and will also still be printed as needed.

The revised Totius versification was recently approved by the Synod of the Reformed Churches and released to be used by the churches, but as far as they know, none of the congregations make use of it as a volume. It has also not (yet) been published in book form. Apparently it underwent such an intensive process of revision that much more than a basic language revision was done.

We deputies are of the opinion that we should not make the choice to use the revised Totius versification, because we should not isolate ourselves unnecessarily from other Reformed churches with regard to the songs that we use.

Assignment 11: Recommendations

We recommend that the Synod extends the combined assignment of this deputation for the Afrikaans and Sotho-speaking churches, but that each section of the deputation should have sufficient manpower to enable it to work independently to complete its assignment. We understand that this deputation still has some important tasks to complete and that it should continue to exist. At the same time, we request the Synod to seriously consider limiting the workload of this deputation as much as possible and assigning it only tasks which are really necessary. As churches our manpower is limited, and many of the things that have kept this deputation busy are not necessarily a priority in the churches. We as churches are unfortunately not in a position to always do what we would like to do, so we are compelled to prioritise and to give proper attention to what we do. Please view the assignments below in this light.

We request that the Synod gives the following assignment to the new deputation:

- 1) To ask the Afrikaans speaking churches to respond to the selected hymns within a year. Deputies will then take the comments into consideration and bring the final selection before the synod for its final approval.
- 2) After receiving the comments from the churches (and before final approval by the next Synod), the deputies can publish the hymns in a file-format and make it available to the churches for convenient usage. (Hymns that are not approved by the next Synod, can still be removed from the file). Deputies must also pay *NG kerk Uitgewers* for the usage of the hymns.
- 3) To consider requests from the churches with regard to subjects on which we do not have sufficient hymns, and to look for hymns on these subjects if deputies are convinced that this is indeed true.
- 4) To encourage the Sotho-speaking churches to discuss the principles for a good Hymnal.
- 5) To test and standardise the hymns that are being sung in the Sotho-speaking churches at the moment (through the work of the Mission Team).
- 6) To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

Appendix to Report of Deputies Liturgical Music

Scripture and ecclesiastical songs

1. Commemorate the deeds of God

It is especially songs from Scripture we want to take into consideration when reflecting on ecclesiastical songs. There are no better examples of (good) ecclesiastical songs. For that purpose it is essential that we determine the essence of these songs. About what are these songs? Which function do these songs have? What does Scripture say about content, purpose and essence of songs?

When talking about “ecclesiastical songs”, we mean the songs as they were and are sung by the holy, catholic church, and also: could be sung in future. We are talking about the songs for the *church*, the songs for the people with whom God erected a covenant. The songs from Scripture function in the context of communication between God and his people.

If we had to search for a word with which the songs from Scripture could be summarized, we would choose the word “commemorate”: to be actively busy with God’s words and deeds from the past with an eye on the present time and the future. The songs from the Old Testament cannot be separated from these words and deeds: God created heaven and earth, concluded a covenant with Israel, salvaged his people out of Egypt and guided them through the dessert into the Promised Land.

God’s deeds of grace reach a pinnacle in the New Testament in the works of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, the Word, or in other words God’s blessings given to us in Christ, determines communion between God and his people. This is at the centre of what the new covenant means and as a result, this gives direction and content to the ecclesiastical songs. God’s deed are called into commemoration and presented as deeds of Jahwe, He who is today and yesterday the same for his people (compare amongst others: Ps 102:28, Jes 41:4, Jes 43;10). Via the ecclesiastical songs, the church is actively busy to commemorate God’s deeds and words from the past with an eye on the present and the future.

There are numerous examples of songs from Scripture indicating this. The commemoration of God’s deeds comes explicitly to the fore in for example Ps 78, 106 and 107. Let us look at two other examples. Asaf complains in Ps 74 about the brutal force with which the enemy has “defiled the dwelling place of your Name” (vs7). Everything is in ruins (vs 3-8). In verses 12-17, the Asaf commemorates the deeds of salvation of his God in the past. With this as a ground, the Lord is requested to act, to look back at his covenant. The purpose of all this that God’s Name, his honour, gets redress. “..... may the poor and needy praise your name.” (vs 21). And in psalm 80 it is told how God cared for his people (= past time). Based on the “commemoration”, restoration from oppression is being asked (= present time). With this, the eyes are also focussed on the future: “Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name” (vs 18)

It is obvious that, when living with God, Scriptures takes on a central position. God revealed in Scripture who He is, what his Name means, and which deeds are his. In the New Testament, the Word takes centre stage in the association between God and his people. Also, for the ecclesiastical songs, there is no other option but the Word who speaks. A good ecclesiastical song is determined by words and meanings from Scripture. Put it differently: a good ecclesiastical song is saturated by Scripture. Commemorating God’s deed means automatically: his Word is at the centre. This was already the case in the New Testament: praise songs by Mary, Zechariah and Simeon are unimaginable without

“the Law and the Prophets”. Also in the songs from the Revelations to John, the Old Testament is being opened.

In this context we can point out the close relationship between the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10) and the Magnificat, the song of Mary (Luk 1:46-55). From Mary’s song it is clear that she knew her “Bible” and that the Word was the centre of her song. Zechariah sung about the salvation brought about by God. He has “raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as He said through his holy prophets of long ago.” Luk 1:69,70). God remembers his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham. (vs 72,73). The same holds for both the songs of Mary and Zechariah: Scriptures were opened up. It is not different with Simeon. (Luk 2:29-32). He knows what the prophets have spoken about the light of the Lord that will be revealed for the pagans and the glory of God for his people. (Isa 40:4, 49:6, 51:4, 60:3)

From the above it is clear that a good ecclesiastical song is not rooted in man, but in Scripture. Put it differently: a good ecclesiastical song is anchored in Scripture and not in what man in reaction to the Word tries to say. In the ecclesiastical song, the Word of God is central and not man’s response to the Word. An ecclesiastical song is determined by the Word and not by a man’s faithful experience and feelings. Man and his religious experiences cannot be the centre of an ecclesiastical song, even if these experiences are put into words from Scripture.

One could explain this by comparing an ecclesiastical song with a window. The purpose of a window is to let in light and to be able to look outside from the inside. One can however only look through the window when light enters from the outside. The window turns into a mirror in case it gets dark outside and there is light at the inside, and we only see ourselves in the room. The same way, the function of the song is to let the Light come inside (or: to commemorate God’s deeds). This is the most important pre-condition before looking to the outside. The song is nothing else than an introspection of a religious moved person if the starting point for a song is not “to commemorate the deeds of God”, and it would reflect the singer itself, not God.

Hence, the first pre-condition for a song to be an ecclesiastical song, is that the centre must be at the right place: the church sings in her songs about God and how he revealed Himself in his Words and deeds. God’s Word and the commemoration of his deeds, claim everything in the ecclesiastical song. This is also true for personal feelings and experiences; they can only be mentioned in that light. Here also, Scripture gives clear direction.

Many examples can be mentioned from Scripture where this is clear. In Psalm 77, the poet complains that God, apparently, distances Himself from him and from his people. In verses 1-11, the poet expresses his feelings when he “thought about the former days, the years of long ago” (vs 5). Yet, this reference is not the centre of this song. From subsequent verses it is already clear that the poet speaks with the Covenant between God and his people in the background. This comes even stronger to the fore in verses 12-21, in which the poet commemorates the past in a different light and points to the salvation from Egypt and the passage through the dessert. In the New Testament one could look at the New Testament songs. For example, Mary had enough reasons to sing especially about the message delivered by the angel and what that meant for her. However, Mary places in her song God’s deeds and his promises which were now fulfilled, at the centre. In that framework she can sing about the Mighty one, who did great things for her (Luk 1:49).

God’s words and works are at the centre of each good ecclesiastical song and for that reason it will be especially God as acting person featuring in such a song. Not human activities, but the actions of God are at the centre of interest.

It will most of the time also not be a problem that the “I” form instead of the “we” form is being used in a song, when God’s name is at the centre of the song, as described above.

Sometimes it is thought that a song is not suitable as ecclesiastical song when it uses of the first person, I. That this is not the case is already evident from many “I” songs Scripture is full of. Apart from the above examples we can point to Psalms 6, 39, 42, 43, 88 and 116. However, we first have to mention that society in the Old Testament was different from our individualistic society. Every individual lived with the idea that he/she was part of a community. “I” and “we’ could, so to speak, be interchanged. The community could not exist without the individual. But the individual could also not be considered apart from the community, and also did not want to be. The Old-Testament songs must be read from this perspective. On the other hand, it must be remarked that also in the New Testament church, the unity between individual and community is pre-supposed. Also there, “I” and “we” cannot exist separately. The word “congregation’ as an indication of a church service in the New Testament indicates this unity. There is attention for the individual, because the Lord called everyone personally “by his name”. But for that very reason, this attention never eliminates the community (compare Rom 15:7, 1 Cor 12:12-28). Also in the New Testament, it becomes clear that, in our songs, we are connected to each other, as we will discuss further on.

In short, the songs from Scripture indicate that the “I” and “we/us” cannot be placed against one another. The “I” is always part of the congregation. Also in ecclesiastical songs. There is room for personal attention, in so far this is recognizable as in the wider context of the congregation of Christ. This will always be the case when a song deals with the commemoration of God. Or put differently: when Scripture is being opened in an ecclesiastical song at a level it should be opened. A New Testamentic ecclesiastical song is especially a reflection of Scripture, of God and his salvation in Christ. This reflection must be audible and understandable. This cannot be hidden behind many personal announcements. This is where we find the criteria in order to determine if an “I” song can indeed serve as an ecclesiastical song. Words, passages and announcement from Scripture resound in an ecclesiastical song, rephrased in a personal way or not. A song with all attention focussed on the poet/singer and with occasionally a few terms from the Bible, cannot be regarded an ecclesiastical song.

What was mentioned above is of great importance when judging the theological content of the songs/hymns, which can serve as ecclesiastical songs of the church. There are many songs which contain no unscriptural words, but still, are no ecclesiastical songs for the reason that the centre of the song is not correct. In contrast, there are “I” songs which can indeed be used as ecclesiastical songs.

To explain, let’s take a few songs as examples. The following song has three verses:

<i>Lord, I worship you</i>	<i>Jesus, I worship you,</i>	<i>Holy Spirit, I worship you</i>
<i>I submit my life to you</i>	<i>I submit my life to you</i>	<i>I submit my life to you</i>
<i>Hallelujah</i>	<i>Hallelujah</i>	<i>Hallelujah</i>

This song does not mention anything in conflict with Scripture. Yet, it is not an ecclesiastical song, because the centre of this song is not “the commemoration of the Name of the Lord” whereby the Lord is supposed to be the acting Person. The song indicates actions of the poet, and there is nothing wrong with them, but nothing is being said about the “why” of his acts, his motives. The “why” lacks and the reason for this is that works of the Lord do not come into the picture. References to the deeds of God (especially the blessings through Christ) are absent. As a result of this the text hangs in the air. Texts like there can serve at most as some sort of acclamation, where the “why” would become clear from the contexts outside the text itself (for example a liturgical context). Church history however has shown that the “why” must be expressed in texts before they can start to be designated as an ecclesiastical song.

This is totally different with a song like “Jesus, leven van mijn leven” (Hymn 14 in the Dutch *Gereformeerde Kerkboek*). Also here, we encounter definitely an “I” song, but the commemoration of Christ’s suffering and death are at the centre. The poet/singer commemorates the work of salvation of Christ in this song. Moreover, Christ is the acting person in this song, and not the poet/singer (compare the line: “Saviour, you who sought me”). Characteristic in this song is the fact that the poet strongly expresses that the salvation in Christ is for him/her. This song can safely be sung by the congregation for the very reasons that not the feelings of the poet, but the works of Christ are at the centre.

This is also the case with songs: “Jesus, meine Zuversicht” (Hymn 22) and “Ik wil U, o God mijn dank betalen” (Hymn 40). A few other examples not in the *Gereformeerde Kerkboek* are: “Jesus lebt, mit ihm auch Ich”, “Der Abend kommt, die Sonne sich verdeckt” and “Was mein Gott will, das g’scheht allzeit”.

The ecclesiastical song is about God’s deeds and this also says something about (the origin) of the “new song”. In the Old Testament, the commemoration of God’s deeds automatically led to “new songs”. (see for example: Ps 33, 40, 96, 98, 144, 149, Isa 42:10). It is apparent that songs in the Old Testament commemorate God’s deeds, deeds He did in those days. In the New Testament, God gave his name in his Son and God’s blessings now become the centre of praise, this is surely of importance and has a meaning for songs of the Christian church. The church commemorates God’s deeds in her songs, and hence it is totally self-evident that these songs also embrace the New Testamentic deeds of God. “New” songs emerge in the New-Testamentic church when the church commemorates the name and deeds of *Christ*. The commemoration of the works of salvation of Christ results in praise thereof. And – as is obvious from Scripture – the songs of the church are ideally suited for this purpose. Hence, the existence of New Testamentic songs is self-evident in the New Testament.

2. Praise, confession, prayer, pleading and preaching.

In general, the singing of songs is considered to be praising the Lord, praising his Name. And this is correct. Yes, it is meaningful to further investigate this from Scripture. From Scripture it is clear that the commemoration of God’s works of salvation automatically leads to praising God and is accompanied by this praise. Here we think of the many Psalms where the congregation commemorates the deeds of God while praising Him. (Ps 48, 77, 81, 89, 90, 105, 106, 107 etc.) While praising, you reflect on the Name. In this manner, we adore God. You could also say, this way we confess his Name, because commemoration with praise pre-supposes that his deeds are believed with our heart and confessed with our mouth.

Praise and confession – this cannot be separated from each other. To praise God (in Scripture sometimes also called: to bless his Name, compare Ps 103, 134), implies that his name is being confessed. He who confesses his Name, because the word is near (Rom 10:8-10), offers to God a praise song. “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of our lips that confess his Name.” The Hebrew word for “praise” has everything to do with “confess”. Fil 2:6-12 mentions briefly what the church has to praise, to confess and to recite. Here we read that God exalted Christ to the highest place and that He gave Him a name that is above every name, “so that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”. In these words, we hear the words from Isa 45:23 (“that...by me every tongue will swear”. Paul quotes these words in Rom 14:11: “...every tongue will confess to God”.

Praising and confessing this Name cannot be separated from each other. To the contrary, this pre-supposes each other. One praises God, because his Name is near (Ps 75:1). This Name has to be

confessed, because “The word is near you, it is in your mouth and in your heart”. (Rom 10:8, compare Deut 30:11-14).

The deeds of God are *proclaimed* when the songs in the church service have the function to praise and confess these deeds. And this leads us to the ecclesiastical songs being a type of proclamation of the Word. From Scripture it is clear that there is a relationship between praise and proclamation. We start with 1 Pet 2:9, where it is written: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Peter uses the Greek word “*ex-angelo*” for declare/proclaim. About the meaning of this word, FJ Pop writes in “*Bijbelse woorden en hun geheim*”:

“To proclaim the great deeds of the Lord means to mention with praise what He is, was and will be and what He has done, does and will do with an eye on the blessings for the people. This proclamation using praise is meant as propaganda. This praise can be heard outside the congregation, so that the world may hear how great, holy and good God is and so that every knee will bow for him”

God’s people has been called out of the darkness with the purpose to proclaim the deeds of God using praise. Praise and proclamation go hand in hand. This not only becomes clear from the meaning of the word “*ex-angelo*”, but also from various places in Scripture.

Praise and proclamation are clearly linked to each other in for example Ps 22:22 (“I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you”), and Ps 71:14-16:

“But as for me, I will always have hope,
I will praise you more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteousness,
of your salvation all day long:
though I know not its measure.
I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign Lord;
I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone.

Ps 102:19-22 talks about the people God will create in order to praise Him. God will release the condemned, so that “the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion and his praise in Jerusalem” (vs 21). To praise God is mentioned here in the same breath as to declare his Name. This is also the case in Ps 9:11 (“Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what He has done”) and Ps 51:15 (“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise”). Finally we mention Isa 12:4-5 (“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known among the nations what He has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world”). From these and other Bible verses it is clear how close praise and proclaim/declare are together in a song.

The praise of God in a song pre-supposes that his deeds (his Name, his commendation, his righteousness) be mentioned. The splendour of Jahwe had to be proclaimed to the nations (Isa 66:19). For that purpose, there is a church on earth. “The people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise” (Isa 43:21)

Praising God also implies that at that moment proclamation takes place. In daily life you cannot praise somebody without you and the person involved know about what this praise is. For the same reason you can only praise God if you directly or indirectly tell the people for what reason. There is always a specific reason for praise; one does not just do it, without a reason. There is always a reason which, one way or another, is reflected in words. Sometimes elaborate, sometimes very succinct. Therefore it is for example written: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise” (Rev 5:12).

In Scripture, the proclaiming function is assumed there where the song gets the function of the dwelling of the Word of God amongst the congregation. The aspect we see in the Old as well as in the New Testament. In Deut 31:19-22 Moses receives the mandate from God to write a song and teach it the Israelites, so that “it may be a witness for me against them”. And when Moses spoke the words of this song before the people (Deut 32:1-43), he said to them: “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing in the Jordan to possess.”

Also Psalms 78 and 105 show that the song has a function in teaching God’s deeds. In Ps 78, God’s deeds from the past are passed on to the next generations, with this purpose in mind: that coming generations will know these deeds, that they will learn to fear God, and that they may be protected against apostasy. (vs 6-8). In other words, with this song coming generations must be kept faithful to the Word.

Ps 105 sings about deeds of God, especially the delivery of the people of Israel from Egypt. As becomes already clear from the preamble (“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his Name; make known among the nations what He has done”) praise and proclamation go hand in hand in this song.

The proclaiming function of the song, through which the Word comes and dwells among the congregation, is also apparent from the New Testament. Especially the well-known texts from 1 Cor 14:26, Eph 5:18-19 and Col 3:16 must be mentioned here.

From 1 Cor 14:26 it is clear, when somebody comes to the gathering of the congregation with a song (“Psalm”), that such a song should not only be focussed on God, but also should serve the edification of the congregation. Hence, Paul assumes that a song should have a proclaiming character.

Col 3:16 is about the Word of Christ which “should dwell in you richly”. The manner in which this happens we find in the rest of the text: “as to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God”

The Word of God dwells richly in us when we teach and admonish each other through a song. The text of Eph 5:18-19 shows remarkable parallels with Col 3:16. Eph 5:18 talks about “be filled with the Spirit”. This can be compared with “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” in Col 3. The “be filled with the Spirit” happens through talk among each other in songs and through singing and rejoicing before the Lord to one’s heart content. Both texts teach us that the ecclesiastical song serves the purpose to become filled with the Spirit and to make sure that the Word lives “richly” in us. It is striking that Paul shows that the song is a means to open up the Word as well as receive the Spirit. From this it is clear that Word and Spirit cannot be separated from each other, also not in songs. Hence, in ecclesiastical songs, we not only talk about a movement from men to God, but also from God to men. Moreover, the congregation upholds the gospel before each other through singing. They “teach” and “admonish” each other doing so. The Old testament function of a song, as became clear from Deut 31/32, Ps 78 and Psalms 105-107, did not change in the new covenant. The ecclesiastical song has a proclaiming character.

As for the texts from Ephesians and Colossians, it has been remarked that it is not clear if they relate to a church service or not. Whatever the case, Paul would surely *also* have the church services in mind. A separation between “Sunday” and “Monday” would have been unimaginable in the first century. Also, the separation between “an ecclesiastical song” (song used in a church service) and “a spiritual

song” (a song not used in church service liturgy) is not obvious. In any case, there are no sources from which this distinction can be derived.

Up to now all the emphasis was on the song as praise, which is always accompanied by confession and proclamation of the name. There are however also songs which are not outspoken praise songs. We find Ps 150 and Ps 88 in the same Book of psalms. There are many songs in Scripture in which we find complaining, pleading and praying.

Also here, the background is that the church may *commemorate* the Name and deeds of God (for example Ex 12:14, Judges 16:28, 2 Kings 20:3, Neh 5:19, Ps 77:11-12, Ps 132:1). The congregation prays for the world, for governments, for the church on earth and for all who are in personal distress. (Fil 1:3-4, 1 Tim 2:1-2, 2 Tim 1:3, 1 Thes 1:2). “To commemorate” in prayer means: to make an appeal to God based on his promises/words from the past, based on which we ask God to *act* in the present and the future.

When God is asked in the songs from Scripture to think about his creation (his people, the poet/singer) then this implies that it is trusted that God will act now and in future. And this trust and this hope, leads to the praise of God. It has to.

And this also explains why pleading/beseeching and confession on the one hand and praise of God on the other hand, are close together in Scripture. The calling and lamentations of God’s children is never without the sure hope that salvation will come. This we learn from many Psalms (Ps 9;19, 38:14-16, 39:8, 42:6, 43:5, 54, 55:17, 56:5, 57:2, 69:30-34, 74:11-12, 119:49-50 and 130:5). Even Ps 88 - the most striking lamentation prayer from the book of Psalms – starts with the words: “O Lord, the God who saves me”.

Also confession of sins and praise are often tightly connected in the songs from Scripture. This happens out of the principle: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”. God’s works of salvation hang in the air, without recognizing and acknowledging one’s own guilt and powerlessness. Because why “salvation” and why a “redeemer” without recognizing and acknowledging one’s own guilt and powerlessness?

Also in the New Testament pleading is always associated with words like hope, trust and consolation, for example in Rom 5:3-6, 8:23-25, 1 Cor 1:5-7 and 2 Cor 1;10.

Practically: intense supplications and intercessions can have their place in ecclesiastical songs, because creation is subjected to frustration (Rom 8:20) and “we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”. (Rom 8:23). An ecclesiastical song can and also may contain a “a cry out of the depths” (Ps 130:1).

To praise, to sing “to the honour of God” in and outside church services, does not exclude that on that moment there can be no place for lamentation and intercessions and confession of sins. Lamentation and praise song do not stand next to each other as two separate “existential” expressions of the human religious soul. Through the Spirit, this becomes one. Paul says we are comforted “in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor 1:4).

Appendix 23 - Report from Deputies article 49 Classis South

To: Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa 2014

C/o Free Reformed Church of Bethal

Johannesburg, 7 March 2014

Esteemed brothers,

Synod Pretoria 2011 appointed Rev. E. Viljoen en Rev. C. Kleijn as deputies ad article 49 CO and Rev. J.A. Breytenbach as substitute from Classis South to assist Classis North where necessary according to the church order.

Deputies can report that they attended the meetings of Classis North on the following occasions:

1 December 2012 for the first part of the examination (sermon evaluation) of student Phineas Kgate. Rev. C. Kleijn was present.

26 January 2013 for the second part of the examination of student Phineas Kgate. Rev. J.A. Breytenbach and Rev. C. Kleijn were present.

16 June 2012 in connection with the suspension Rev. T. Mogale from Mamelodi. Rev. C. Kleijn and Rev. E. Viljoen were present.

22 February 2014 in connection with the deposition of Rev. J. Mhlanga, Pretoria-Maranata's missionary in Soshanguve WW. Rev C. Kleijn was present and there was consultation with Rev. J.A. Breytenbach who was not able to be present.

On all those occasions the deputies could assist the meeting with their advice and could agree with the final decisions made by the Classis. Deputies can attest that things were done in a thorough and responsible way according to Scripture and the Church Order.

May the Lord guide and bless you in all your deliberations.

With brotherly greetings,

Rev. J.A. Breytenbach

Rev. C. Kleijn

Rev. E. Viljoen

Appendix 24 - Report from Deputies article 49 Classis North

Deputies ad art. 49 Church Order
Classis North
Free Reformed Churches in South Africa

Pretoria, March 13th 2014

To: Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
To be convened God willing in April 2014 in Bothal

Esteemed brothers in Christ,

Report of Deputies ad art. 49 CO in Classis North

Synod of Pretoria 2011 appointed Revs. K.T. Mogale and P.G. Boon as Deputies, and Rev. T. de Boer as substitute, according to art. 49 of the Church Order:

"The synod, in addition, shall appoint deputies who are to assist the classes in all matters comprised in the Church Order, and – upon the request of the classes – in cases of special difficulties. They, or some of them, shall also oversee the peremptory examination of prospective ministers. The deputies shall keep an accurate record of their work and submit a written report. They shall, if so required, justify their actions."

The custom is that usually the Deputies according to art. 49 who form part of Classis South, assist Classis North if there is a need, and vice versa.

Since the last Synod (Pretoria 2011) there was only one instance where Classis South needed the help of Deputies art. 49.

1. On March 9th 2013 Classis South met in Johannesburg in connection with the decision of the Consistory of Cape Town to dismiss Rev. E. Viljoen, on his request, from his bond with the Church of Cape Town. According to Church Order art. 14 this meeting was attended by Deputies art. 49, Revs. T. de Boer and P.G. Boon. The Classis approved the decision of the Consistory of Cape Town and decided to make Rev. Viljoen available for a call for the period of one year, starting from April 1st 2013, this is in accordance with a federational decision in this regard stipulating one year. Furthermore it was decided that when requested, the Classis could investigate whether there are merits to extend the period with a maximum of another year.

Deputies art. 49 can testify that this matter was dealt with in a careful and thorough way by Classis South. Since the Consistory of Cape Town did not submit the full and signed financial agreement between them and Rev. Viljoen, the Classis requested the Consistory to submit this before the end of March 2013. The Classis and Deputies art. 49 only received the agreement in April. After Deputies art. 49 had studied it, they communicated their view to the Classis by way of a letter (see attached). No further feedback was received.

2. Synod Pretoria 2011 had appointed Revs. K.T. Mogale and P.G. Boon as Deputies according to art. 49 and Rev. T. de Boer as substitute. In the meantime Rev. K.T. Mogale has left the FRCSA, and Rev. T. de Boer has accepted a call to a sister church in the Netherlands. Furthermore Rev. P.G. Boon has served now for three terms of three years as Deputy art. 49. The Synod is therefore requested to appoint two new deputies, as well as a substitute.

Wishing you God's blessing and wisdom on your proceedings.

With brotherly greetings,



Rev. P.G. Boon

Attachment 1:

Deputate art. 49 klassis Noord
o/a:
PG Boon
Dunwoodieaan 1201
Waverley, 0186
Pretoria

9 Mei 2013

Aan: Klassis Suid

IWM LOSMAKING DS E. VIJJOEN

Geagte broers,

Deputate ad art. 49 KO is versoek om die vergadering van klassis Suid op 9 Maart te besoek in verband met die losmaking van ds. E. Viljoen. Tydens hierdie vergadering is daar gekonstateer dat die finansiële ooreenkoms tussen die kerkraad van Kaapstad en ds. Viljoen nog nie onderteken was nie, en dat daar op bepaalde punte ook nog onduidelikheid was. Daar is toe besluit dat die kerkraad van Kaapstad voor einde Maart 2013 'n ondertekende ooreenkoms aan die klassis en deputate ad art. 49 KO sou voorlê.

Dit het alles toe bietjie langer geduur en ons as deputate art. 49 KO het onlangs 'n ooreenkoms ontvang, onderteken deur sowel die kerkraad van Kaapstad en ds. Viljoen op 16 April 2013.

As deputate ad art. 49 KO wil ons graag die volgende advies aan klassis Suid gee t.a.v. hierdie ooreenkoms:

- Ons is van oordeel dat die kerkraad van Kaapstad sy finansiële verpligtinge teenoor ds. Viljoen in verband met sy losmaking en die periode daarna ruim nakom. Dit geld vir traktement, emeritering of pensioenvoorsiening, mediese sorg, behuising, vervoer en nog meer.
- Dit val ons op dat die aanbod van die kerkraad beduidend ruimer is as dit wat die kerke gesamenlik afgesprok het. Tydens die vergadering op 9 Maart het die afgevaardigdes van die kerkraad van Kaapstad aangedui dat dit is weens die feit dat ds. Viljoen in sy bedieningsjare in Kaapstad nooit studieverlof gehad het nie. In die ondertekende ooreenkoms sien ons egter nie 'n verwysing na hierdie kompensasie iwm studieverlof terug nie. Dit lyk vir ons belangrik dat dit meer eksplisiet vermeld word.
- Ons is van oordeel dat – wanneer die kerkraad 'n reëling getref het wat ruimer is as normaal – dit belangrik is dat hulle die gemeente van Kaapstad daarin geken het. Is daar dalk 'n notule van 'n gemeentevergadering wat aandui dat hierdie saak met die gemeente bespreek is? Ons ag dit belangrik om ook hierdie finansiële sake sorgvuldig af te handel, juis om te sorg dat daar 'n punt gestel kan word agter die spanninge van die verlede in die kerk van Kaapstad.

Met hartlike broedergroet,

T de Boer & PG Boon

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1. General

Deputies Stated Clerk and Archive (SC&A) herewith respectfully submit their report to Synod Bethal, 2014.

1.1 Deputies

Synod Pretoria, 2011, appointed as Deputies SC&A: br. C. Roose (convenor) and br A. W. Herder.

1.2 Mandate

Deputies wish to draw your attention to the fact that Art. 31 of the Acts of Synod 2011 is not very clear about what the mandate exactly is. Above mentioned Art. 31 consists of two sections, being:

1. "Synod decides"
2. "Synod decides to appoint deputies with the following mandate".

A part of the deputies mandate seems to be listed under the first section, "Synod decides", and not, as could be expected, under the second section. In this respect we refer to above mentioned Art. 31, "Synod decides", points 4 – 6.

As Synod 2011 could not be expected to execute their decisions 4 – 6 in section 1 themselves, deputies assumed that those points were also meant to be a part of their mandate.

For the sake of clarity we represent Art. 31 of the "Acts of the 36th Synod held at the FRC Pretoria June 13th – 16th, 2011" below:

Article 31 Stated Clerk and Archive.

Synod decides:

1. To request the classes to inform the stated clerk and the other classes when changes are made in deputies;
2. To revise the current rules of synod to include the changes made since the synod of 2005;
3. To request the deputies ad article 49 CO to submit their reports of a visit to a classis immediately after that visit;
4. To investigate whether the synodical archive needs to be moved to a secure place with more space or whether the archiving church can accommodate for the required space;
5. To mandate deputies to request the appointed deputies on the progress of their mandates;
6. To request the various deputies to submit their reports no later than 4 months before opening of synod;
7. To request the various deputies to submit their reports in English, except those deputies who deal with mainly Afrikaans issues. They are requested to submit with their report an English summary.

Synod decides to appoint deputies with the following mandate:

1. To include the current Rules of Synod as an appendix in the acts;
2. To serve the next synod with a proposal regarding revised Rules of Synod;
3. To re-formulate article 2 of Rules of Synod in order to make provision for foreign delegates which are not elders or ministers, by formulating the status of advisors in such a way that it is in line with Scriptural teachings concerning the functioning of females and non-office bearers in the church.

4. To run upon instruction from the synod or the convening church the administration of the synod;
5. To act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church;
6. To sell acts of the synods against cost price to those who are interested;
7. To eventually merge and publish the revised Church Order and Rules of Synod in all three languages used in our churches, as well as the order of the service, as established in 1990, article 14;
8. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 of the Rules of Synod.

1.3 Activities

Deputies discussed their working method in meetings on 14/03/13 and 13/07/13, but most discussions took place by means of e-mails and telephone discussions.

2 Reporting and Execution of Mandate

2.1 Deputy changes made by Classes

No information concerning changes of deputies were received.

2.2 Rules of Synod as revised by Synod 2005

Refer to 2.9.

2.3 Deputies ad Article 49 CO

E-mail messages were sent to the relevant deputies, but up to the date of this report, no reactions were received.

2.4 Required space for Synodical Archive

After consultation with the church council of the FRC Pretoria, additional space was provided for the synodical archive inside the same vault where the original part of the archive was stored. All documents which were stored at br. A.W. Herder's house, were transferred to the newly created space, except surplus Acts of Synods.

2.5 Progress on deputies mandates

A message was sent on 8th April 2013 to Deputies for Liturgical Music in which they were requested to comply with the mandate, as given to them by Synod 2011, with spesific reference to "Synod decides 5.1, where deputies were tasked "*To send within 18 months a provisional collection of the approved and possibly to be selected hymns and new skrifberymings and the approved criteria to the Afrikaans churches for evaluation by these churches, asking the churches to respond within 6 months;*"

Another request was sent to deputies Art 49 as indicated onder 2.3 above. No other requests were made.

2.6 Requests to submit deputies reports

A message was sent on 31/07/13 to all deputies as appointed by Synod 2011 and by the ad-hoc Synod 2012, in which they were urged to submit their reports to the convening church council and to the Stated Clerks before 5th January 2014. This spesific date was determined after the convening church council of the FRC Bethal decided to convene Synod 2014 on 5th May 2014. A reminder message was sent on 28th December 2013.

2.7 Request to submit deputies reports in specific languages

A message was sent on 23/09/13 to all deputies as appointed by Synod 2011 and by the ad-hoc Synod 2012, in which they were requested to comply with the rule is given under “Synod decides”, point 7, Acts of Synod 2011, article 31.

2.8 Inclusion of Rules of Synod in Acts 2011

The Rules of Synod as revised by Synod 2005 were included in the Acts of Synod 2011 as Appendix 14 (was supposed to be App. 15).

2.9 Proposed revised Rules of Synod

A proposal for revised Rules of Synod is enclosed as App. 1 in this report. Your deputies used the Rules of Synod of our sister churches in Australia, Canada and the Netherlands for an update of our own Rules. More detailed descriptions regarding e.g. the tasks of the officers of Synod and voting procedures, were included in the newly proposed version as your deputies were of the opinion that these items were not clearly described in the present Rules of Synod. The order of articles was also rearranged in order to obtain a more logical set of rules.

Your deputies also included a specified schedule for the preparation of synods by the convening churches under the heading: “Duties of the convening church”. This heading was originally the subject of Article 4, but we propose to move that forward to become Article 2, as it seems more logical to attend to the preparation of synods first, before matters such as “Delegates” and “Visitors to synod” are addressed.

Deputies also propose revised time schedules for certain activities, such as submission of deputies reports, etc., as the present time schedules were considered as somewhat unrealistic and unpractical. A required deadline of four months before the commencement of synod for submission of deputy reports is an example of such an unrealistic time schedule. Most deputies find it difficult to motivate themselves to complete their report while the commencement of the synod is still far away. It also forces them to finish their ongoing activities more or less half a year before commencement of the synod, while a lot of things can still happen during that time. This leads to a practice which is fairly common in the FRCSA, being the submission of additional reports, which are submitted within the indicated four months period, even up to the date of commencement of the synod. The implications of this practice are an additional work load for deputies and that it makes a mockery of our Rules of Synod. Deputies therefore tried to establish the minimum required time period for the various tasks and suggest that Synod 2014 adopts the newly proposed time schedules in the proposed revised Rules of Synod as shown in Appendix 1.

2.10 Reformulation of Article 2 of Rules of Synod

Your deputies found that the uncertainty about the status of advisors in synod meetings can be retraced to certain misunderstandings concerning the function of advisors.

There seems to be a perception that advisors are directly involved in the decision making process of synods. As this process is a church governing action, it makes sense that persons, involved in such a process, should be ministers or ruling elders according to Scriptural guidelines (e.g. 1 Timothy 3) as summarised in the Belgic Confession art. 30. Therefore, if this perception is correct, advisorship should be limited to ministers and elders.

According to an interpretation of our Church Order (CO) by Synod 2008 however, this perception is not correct. With reference to article 32 CO: “Delegates to major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by their senders, on which basis they have the right to vote”, Synod 2008 declared that “A major assembly according to the CO is made up of brothers officially delegated by consistory or classis. **Mandate is limited to them only to discuss and decide** on matters of that assembly;” (Acts Synod 2008, art. 17, Synod decides, ground c).

According to this officially adopted view, advisors are not involved in the decision making process in synod meetings. Their only function in such meetings is to provide information to the meeting about certain matters, in order to enable Synod (= brothers delegated by classes) to discuss and decide in a responsible way on such matters. Based on this same view, Synod 2008 added another ground to the same decision in art. 17: “A major assembly always has the right to request advice. This however should only happen upon invitation by the assembly itself” (Acts Synod 2008, art. 17, Synod decides, ground d).

The consequence of this view is that the Scriptural guidelines for persons involved in the governing of the church, are not applicable to advisors. Your deputies therefore propose that advisorship is not limited to office bearers or male persons only and that an advisor can be anyone who is officially appointed to act in that capacity.

We, as deputies SC&A, fully agree with the view as formulated by Synod 2008 concerning this matter, but we would like to point out a few irregularities in that respect.

Article 32 CO does not really state what Synod 2008 read in it. This article only requires that delegates to major assemblies should have credentials signed by their senders. The article does however not specify what the meaning of the word ‘senders’ is. According to the text of art. 32, delegates from sister churches who have credentials signed by representatives of those sister churches, fully comply with the requirements for membership of the synod and even have the right to vote.

Furthermore, artt. 41 and 45 CO clearly state who the members of respectively the classis and the regional synod should be, but art. 46 about “Synod” does not specify who the synod members should be.

Although we have no mandate to address above mentioned irregularities, we suggest that Synod should take some action to correct the text of artt. 32 and 46. Concerning art. 32, we propose to replace the words “senders” by “representatives of their consistory, classis or regional synod” and concerning art. 46 we propose to add as a first sentence: “Synod shall consist of brothers officially delegated by the classes or regional synods”.

2.11 Administration of Synods

Deputies SC&A were actively involved in the organisation and administration of Synods 2011 and 2012 and in the compilation and publishing of the Acts of those Synods. They also provided support to the church council of the FRC Bethal for the organisation and administration of Synod 2014.

2.12 Synodical Archive activities

Extra storage space was provided by the church council of the FRC Pretoria inside the vault where the synodical archive was already installed. All the synodical documents, for which not enough space was available during the last years, were

stored in br. Herder's house. These documents were now transferred to the newly created space in the vault of the FRC Pretoria. The only documents remaining with br. Herder are excess Acts of previous synods.

It should be noted that the documents in the Archive are well maintained, but a proper archiving system is not in place. We therefore suggest that Synod decides to add the implementation of such a system to the mandate of the Stated Clerk. As this may imply some costs for buying filing material, deputies suggest that Synod 2014 allows the Stated Clerk to spend some money for that purpose.

2.13 Sales of Acts of Synod 2011 and 2012

Deputies offered excess Acts of Synod 2011/2012 for sale at the cost price of R 100 per copy, by requesting all the church councils to place an advert to that effect in their relevant church publications. There were however no takers at all and about 20 excess copies are still in the vault of the FRC Pretoria.

Your deputies would like to suggest that Synod gives an indication to the Stated Clerk how to handle this matter. Assuming that church members will not be interested in buying excess copies and assuming that the printing of 80 copies will most probably cost more or less the same as printing 100 copies, there seems to be a choice between printing 80 copies and distributing them as is done up to now, or printing 100 copies and distribute all of them, except the copies for the archive and official institutions, to the church councils and let the church councils decide how they want to distribute them in their congregations. The last option offers the advantage that more church members will be aware of the activities of synods and related matters in the FRCSA church federation.

2.14 Merging and publishing of revised Church Order, Rules of Synod and Order of Worship Services in three languages.

As there is not yet a Northern Sotho translation available, this mandate could not be fulfilled. Your deputies therefore suggest that a booklet, containing the revised Church Order, Rules of Synod and Order of Worship Services, should, for now, be compiled in English and Afrikaans in order to make the latest versions of those documents available for the churches. The Northern Sotho translation could then be added in a later stage.

3. Recommendations

Your deputies SC&A respectfully propose to adopt the following recommendations.

3.1. To adopt the revised and updated version of the Rules of Synod as proposed by deputies SC&A.

Grounds:

- a. The newly proposed Rules of Synod are more user friendly for the FRCSA in their present situation.
- b. The newly proposed Rules of Synod provide more detailed and clearer descriptions of certain items.

3.2. To include the adopted version of the Rules of Synod in the Acts of Synod 2014.

Grounds:

- a. The newly adopted Rules of Synod should be included in the Acts as supporting material for the synod’s decisions regarding this subject.
 - b. The new Rules of Synod should be made available as soon as possible.
- 3.3. To amend the first sentence of art. 32 CO to read as follows:
 “Delegates to major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials, signed by **representatives of their consistory, classis or regional synod**, on which basis they have the right to vote.”
 Grounds:
- a. The present text of art. 32 could create confusion concerning the status and rights of delegates from other institutions than consistories, classes or regional synods.
- 3.4. To amend art. 46 CO by inserting as a first sentence: **“Synod shall consist of brothers officially delegated by the classes or regional synods.”** into the present text.
 Grounds:
- a. Inclusion of the indicated sentence should prevent confusion about the status and rights of advisers;
 - b. Inclusion of the indicated sentence makes the description of major assemblies in artt. 41, 45 and 46 more consistent.
- 3.5. To discharge deputies SC&A.
 Grounds:
- a. Deputies SC&A have fulfilled their mandate as far as possible.
- 3.6. To re-appoint a deputy SC&A with a mandate as proposed under “4. Proposed Mandate for deputies Stated Clerk and Archive.”
 Grounds:
- a. The function of Stated Clerk is still required for future synodical activities.
 - b. The remaining tasks do not require more than one deputy.
- 3.7. To appoint new deputies with knowledge of the Northern Sotho language for translation of the Church Order, Rules of Synod and Order of Worship Services in Northern Sotho, with a mandate as proposed under “5. Proposed Mandate for Deputies for Translation of Church Documents.”
 Grounds:
- a. Persons with knowledge of Northern Sotho are required to translate the indicated documents.
 - b. The present deputies SC&A are not able to provide Northern Sotho translations.

4. Proposed Mandate for Deputies Stated Clerk and Archive

1. To arrange the printing of the Acts of Synod 2014.
2. To include the newly revised and adopted Rules of Synod as an appendix in the Acts of Synod 2014.
3. To arrange the printing and publishing of a booklet, containing the latest adopted version of the Church Order, the Rules of Synod and the order of worship services, as established in 1990, article 14.
4. To request appointed deputies to provide information regarding the progress of their mandate on a regular basis.
5. To run upon instruction from the synod or the convening church the administration of the synod.
6. To act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church and to implement an archiving system.
7. To eventually merge and publish the revised Church Order and Rules of Synod in all three languages used in our churches, as well as the order of the service, as established in 1990, article 14.
8. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 (new article 9) of the Rules of Synod.

5. Proposed Mandate for Deputies for Translation of Church Documents

1. To translate the revised Church Order and Rules of Synod in Northern Sotho.
2. To provide the translated Church Order and Rules of Synod to the Stated Clerk for printing.
3. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to article 11 (new article 9) of the Rules of Synod.

Report compiled by:
C. Roose
A. W. Herder

Appendix 1: Proposed Rules of Synod (English version)

SYNOD RULES OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Article 1 Synod schedule

1. Synod will be convened every three years by the church appointed at the last synod to organise the date and meeting place for such synod.
2. In the event of a pressing issue requiring immediate attention, for which reason at least one classis requests an extra-ordinary synod, the convening church shall, in consultation with the other churches, announce the date and venue.

Article 2 Duties of the convening church

The convening church:

1. shall prepare the synod in co-operation with the appointed Stated Clerk and shall conduct the following actions according to the indicated schedule:
 - a) at least six (6) months before commencement of synod:
 - i. invite the churches to submit any new items of business for inclusion on the provisional draft agenda, according to Article 30 of the Church Order;
 - ii. request the classes to submit items to be placed on the provisional draft agenda. These items should reach the convening church no later than six (6) weeks before start of synod. Synod may decide to accept in exceptional circumstances items not sent in time;
 - iii. inform the secretaries of Deputies for Contacts with Churches Abroad and Deputies for Contacts with Churches in South Africa about the scheduled meeting dates of synod.
 - b) at least four (4) months before commencement of synod:
 - i. request deputies to submit their reports which should reach the convening church at least six (6) weeks before commencement of synod.
 - c) at least six (6) weeks before commencement of synod:
 - i. provide a provisional draft agenda and forward one electronic copy to each church and one electronic copy to the secretary of the Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad. This agenda shall be accompanied by one electronic copy of all the relevant information;
 - ii. prepare a time schedule for the synod meetings.
 - d) at least one (1) month before commencement of synod:
 - i. place a notice of the forthcoming synod as well as the provisional agenda in a suitable church publication;
 - ii. send all the relevant documentation to the church councils, synod delegates appointed by the classes and any other officially appointed delegates.
2. shall, in accordance with article 3, request possible advisors to attend synod;
3. shall give timeous notice to any deputies whose presence may be required at synod;
4. shall report on the examination of delegates credentials and oversee the signing of the attendance register prior to constitution of synod;
5. shall convene a prayer-meeting before the commencement of synod to ask for God's blessing on the work.

Article 3 Members of Synod

The synod shall be comprised of legitimate delegates from the classes. They shall, according to article 32 of the Church Order, present their credentials which shall bind them to the Holy Scriptures, the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order.

Each classis shall be represented by three ministers and three elders. In case three ministers can not be delegated because of vacancies or legitimate hindrances, more elders can be delegated. Should a deacon take the place of an elder in the delegation the synod shall decide whether he has voting rights.

All ministers **and missionaries of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa**, not delegated to synod, may be present at synod, where they can act as advisors upon invitation by the chairman.

Official delegates from churches with which the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa correspond, **may also be admitted as advisors upon invitation.**

Article 4 The agenda

The following items of business shall appear on every agenda

1. Opening by the Convening Church
2. Signing of Attendance Register, Examination of Credentials and Report of Findings
3. **Election of Officers and Constitution of Synod**
4. Delegates agreement with the Three Forms of Unity
5. Adoption of the Agenda
6. Adoption of Meeting Procedures
7. Correspondence received by the convening church
8. Instructions **from classes**
9. Proposals **from classes**
10. Reports by:
 - (a) Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad
 - (b) Deputies for Contact with Churches within South Africa (church groups)
 - (c) Mission Deputies
 - (d) Deputies for Correspondence with the Government
 - (e) Deputies Curators for Theological Training
 - (f) Deputies Article 11 of the Church Order (Needy Churches)
 - (g) Deputies Article 19 of the Church Order (Needy Students)
 - (h) **Deputies Article 49 of the Church Order**
 - (i) The Synod Treasury
 - (j) **Deputies** to Control the Treasury
 - (k) **Stated Clerk & Archives**
 - (l) **Deputies for Inspection of the Archives**
 - (m) **Any other deputies as appointed by the previous synod**
11. Appointment of Deputies, **Archive Church and Classis for days of prayer ad article 69 CO**
12. Benedictory greetings to the President
13. Questions according to article 41, paragraph 2, of the Church Order
14. Personal questions
15. Appointment of the convening church, and place and time of the next synod
16. Adoption of the Acts of Synod and the Press Release
17. Censure according to Article 48 of the Church Order
18. Closing of Synod

Proposals and amendments which were not delivered to the convening church in time (see articles 2.1.a and 2.1.b) shall not be taken into consideration by the synod, except by special resolution.

Article 5 Officers of Synod

The opening of synod will be conducted by an office bearer **on behalf of** the convening church. After a report on the credentials of the delegates, **the election of the officers of synod shall take place and synod shall be constituted.**

The three officers of synod are: the chairman, the **vice chairman** and the clerk.

Officers of synod are chosen by election, **according to the rules as described in Article 8.**

The Chairman

The chairman shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum, according to Article 34 of the Church Order.

He shall place before Synod every motion that is made and seconded, in accord with the accepted order; and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken, so that every member may know on what he is voting.

If the chairman feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman for that period of time.

He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.

The Vice-Chairman

The vice-chairman shall, in the absence of the chairman, assume all his duties and privileges.

The vice-chairman shall render all possible assistance to the chairman as circumstances require.

He shall prepare the Press Release, which shall be approved by the Officers of Synod prior to its publication in a suitable **publication.**

The Clerk

The **clerk** shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. These will as far as possible be finalised during the meeting. He shall also bear responsibility for any correspondence from the synod, and at the conclusion of synod arrange for all synod documents together with an index to be included in the Archives.

Article 6 Visitors to synod

1. Synod is open to all members of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.

2. Synod shall decide on the admission of non-members.

3. **Closed Sessions of Synod**

A closed session shall be used in delicate or unusual situations.

A closed session shall, as a rule, mean a session where members of Synod and the stated clerk only may be present. Synod may invite other persons to attend closed sessions when deemed necessary.

Article 7 Correspondence from Synod

Correspondence from the Synod to persons within the bond of churches shall be **signed and** handled by the clerk.

Official correspondence to persons or institutions outside the bond of churches shall be signed by the Officers of Synod.

Copies of such correspondence shall be kept in the archive.

Article 8 Rules for Decision making and Voting

Decisions will be formulated as follows: **Material – Decision – Grounds.**

Wherever possible decisions shall be made unanimously. Should a proposal, motion or amendment be put to the vote, a majority of votes shall be required before the proposal, motion or amendment is carried.

It is in the freedom of the chair to determine how the vote is to be taken: by calling the roll (in any order) or by show of hands.

Should the voting result in a tie, the proposal, motion or amendment shall be rejected, and where this occurs when examining a candidate, he will fail.

In the final count no blank votes or abstentions shall be considered, they are invalid.

Voting about persons shall be by ballot. An outright majority of votes must be obtained. Blank votes are not valid and shall not be counted in determining a majority. This rule applies to the election of any person(s).

Synod may resolve to appoint persons that have been recommended by the Officers of Synod. Otherwise the voting will proceed as follows:

1. By casting a free ballot.
2. Should there be more than two candidates from which to choose and no majority vote is reached a second free ballot shall take place.
3. If there is no result after two free ballots, any subsequent choice shall be restricted to the candidates who received the most votes in the previous ballot, with this proviso, that there shall be twice the number of nominations as is required to fill the positions.
4. Should this ballot reveal no clear majority the oldest person or persons shall be appointed.

Voting about delicate matters shall also be by ballot.

Article 9 Deputies

To assist synod in the execution of their decisions the officers of synod, in agreement with the major assembly shall appoint churches or persons in this capacity.

Duties shall be divided as equally as possible. Deputies shall preferably not be appointed for more than three subsequent periods in the same deputyship. Execution of decisions for which no deputies have been appointed shall be the responsibility of the Officers of Synod.

In case of deputyships with a limited number of members, sufficient alternate members are to be appointed to ensure proper functioning of the deputies.

In cases where the functioning of deputies is hampered by a loss of members and non-availability of alternate members, deputies have the authority to propose additional members in order to fulfil their mandate. Such proposals are to be submitted to a classis for approval.

Deputies shall submit a written report of their activities at the following synod.

Such reports are to be sent to the convening church at least six (6) weeks prior to the commencement of synod and shall, as far as possible, include the following information:

1. The name of the deputyship, names of members and alternative members appointed by synod.
2. The instructions synod gave the deputies.
3. Report on the work done and the meeting dates.
4. A reference list.
5. Deputies conclusions and recommendations, formulated in such a way (material – decision – grounds) that synod may make use of this formulation when outlining its decisions and recording these decisions in the Acts of Synod.
6. Proposed mandate for new deputies.

The mandate to deputies shall be in effect from one synod to the next.

Article 10 Instructions to Deputies

Each synod shall determine its mandate for respective deputyships.

Apart from any specific instructions the following general instructions shall apply:

1. Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad:
 - (a) shall consist of **five** members, from which a secretary and chairman shall be appointed;
 - (b) **shall send** the Acts of Synod, the provisional agenda for the synod and the Report by Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad to the deputies of churches with whom we correspond;
 - (c) **shall** send letters of greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, to the synods of churches with whom we correspond;
 - (d) **shall** supply attestations for ministers of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa who wish to lead services in one of our corresponding churches;
 - (e) **shall maintain correspondence with sister churches according tot the adopted rules;**
 - (f) **shall** report on decisions taken by synods of our corresponding churches;
 - (g) **shall** deliver any correspondence with, and Acts of Synod from, the churches with whom we correspond to deputies responsible for the care and maintenance of the Archives;
2. Deputies for Contact with Churches within South Africa (church groups):
 - (a) **shall** consist of five members, from which a secretary and a chairman shall be appointed and two alternate members;
 - (b) **shall** formulate proposals to synod with regard to exercising contact with church groups within South Africa;
 - (c) **shall** deliver finalised correspondence and documents to deputies responsible for the care and maintenance of the Archives.
3. Deputies for Correspondence with Government:
 - (a) shall consist of three members, **from which a secretary and chairman shall be appointed, and one alternate member;**
 - (b) **shall by** means of proposals and draft letters equip synod to fulfil her duty in co-operating with government, and in certain circumstances ,to witness to them as the Church of Christ;
 - (c) **shall deliver** finalised correspondence and documents to deputies responsible for the care and maintenance of the Archives.
4. Synod Treasurer:
 - (a) is responsible for the control of synod income and expenses;
 - (b) shall keep books of account where all income and expenses will be shown;
 - (c) **shall** reimburse any expenses incurred in the execution of a synod mandate and for which a specified account has been rendered;
 - (d) **shall** prepare a financial report documenting income and expenditure and a balance statement for scrutiny and audit by synod;
 - (e) **shall** arrange that the appointed **deputies** annually audit the abovementioned financial statements and present a report of their findings to the synod;
5. **Stated Clerk and Archive:**
 - (a) **shall run, upon instruction from the synod or the convening church, the administration of the synod;**
 - (b) **shall assist the convening church to prepare the synod;**
 - (c) **shall record decisions and make minutes during the synod meetings and assist the scribe in compilation of the Acts of synod. The Stated Clerk may be present during closed sessions, the minutes of which he will deal with in a confidential manner;**
 - (d) **shall act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church;**
 - (e) **shall offer surplus Acts of Synod for sale against cost price to those who are interested;**
 - (f) **shall request deputies ad article 49 CO to submit their reports of a visit to a classis immediately after that visit;**
 - (g) **shall request information from appointed deputies on the progress of their mandates;**

- (h) shall request the various deputies to submit their report in English, except those deputies who deal with mainly Afrikaans issues. They are requested to submit with their report an English summary;
- (i) shall arrange publication of the acts as follows (Acts of Synod 2008, art,16):
 - the complete acts with appendices will be printed in limited numbers for distribution to consistories, archives, libraries and deputies;
 - the complete acts with appendices will be made available electronically for those who are interested;
- (j) shall ensure that legal requirements are met with regard to the distribution of copies of the Acts of Synod to public institutions.

6. Church in Charge of the Archives:

- (a) shall in co-operation with the appointed Stated Clerk take care of the Archives;
- (b) shall ensure that the appointed archivist maintains the Archives in such a way that they are complete and accessible.

The following documents shall be kept in the Archives:

- The Acts of Synod
- The Acts of Synod of churches with whom we correspond
- Reports and letters of all deputyships
- All incoming documents to have reached synod
- Copies of letters that synod has sent

The Archive must be inspected prior to each synod by deputies appointed by the previous synod for that purpose.

Article 11 Amendment of Synod Rules

Amendment of these rules may only take place if a proposal to this effect, is placed on the synod agenda by a classis, or if it is recommended by deputies appointed by synod for this purpose.

Authorized by the synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa at Bethal on xx April/May 2014

..... chairman
 clerk
 vice chairman

Appendix 2: Voorgestelde Sinodereëls (Afrikaanse versie)

SINODEREËLS VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

Artikel 1 Vergaderskema van die sinode

1. Die sinode sal een keer in drie jaar saamgeroep word deur die kerk wat van die vorige sinode opdragte daarvoor ontvang het.
2. Indien daar 'n dringende rede is om vroeër byeen te kom en minstens een klassis om dieselfde rede dit versoek, sal die sameroepende kerk in oorleg met die ander kerke, die tyd en plek van so 'n vervroegde sinode vasstel.

Artikel 2 Die take van die sameroepende kerk

Die sameroepende kerk:

1. sal die sinode voorberei in samewerking met die benoemde Sinodale Administrateur saamwerk en sal die volgende aksies uitvoer volgens die hieronder aangeduide skedule:
 - a) ten minste ses (6) maande voor die aanvang van die sinode:
 - i. 'n versoek aan die kerke rig om sake vir die agenda in te stuur volgens Artikel 30 van die Kerkorde;
 - ii. 'n versoek aan die klassisse rig om sake vir die agenda in te stuur. Hierdie sake moet tenminste ses (6) weke voor die aanvang van die sinode by die roepende kerk ingehandig word. Die sinode kan besluit om in uitsonderlike omstandighede later ingehandigde sake te aanvaar;
 - iii. lig die sekretaris van die Deputate vir Betrekkinge met Buitelandse Kerke en die Deputate vir Kontak met Binnelandse Kerke in oor die geskeduleerde vergaderdatums van die sinode.
 - b) ten minste vier (4) maande voor die aanvang van die sinode:
 - i. rig 'n versoek aan die deputate om hulle verslae ten minste ses (6) weke voor die aanvang van die sinode vir die roepende kerke te stuur.
 - c) ten minste ses (6) weke voor die aanvang van die sinode:
 - i. stel 'n voorlopige agenda vas en stuur 'n elektroniese afskrif daarvan na alle kerke en ook aan die sekretaris van die Deputate vir Korrespondensie met Buitelandse Kerke. Hierdie agenda moet vergesel wees van 'n elektroniese afskrif van alle relevante inligting;
 - ii. stel 'n tydrooster vir die sinodevergaderings op.
 - d) ten minste een (1) maand voor die aanvang van die sinode:
 - i. plaas 'n kennisgewing van die sinode en die voorlopige agenda in 'n geskikte kerklike publikasie;
 - ii. stuur alle relevante dokumentasie na die kerkrade, sinodeafgevaardigdes, soos deur die klassisse benoem en enige ander officieel benoemde afgevaardigdes.
2. rig in ooreenstemming met artikel 3 'n versoek tot moontlike adviseurs om die sinode by te woon;
3. stel deputate betyds in kennis van die tydstip waarop hulle teenwoordigheid by die sinode benodig word;
4. rapporteer oor die ondersoek van die geloofsbriewe en sorg vir die ondertekening van die presensielys deur die afgevaardigdes voor die sinode gekonstitueer word;

5. roep 'n bidstond saam voor die aanvang van die sinode om 'n seën oor die werk te vra.

Artikel 3 Samestelling van die sinode

Die sinode word saamgestel uit wettige afgevaardigdes van die klassisse. Hulle moet, kragtens artikel 32 van die Kerkorde, geloofsbriewe van hul klassis saambring waarin die binding aan die Heilige Skrif, die drie Formuliere van Enigheid en die Kerkorde uitgedruk word.

Elke klassis vaardig drie predikante en drie ouderlinge af. Indien daar nie drie predikante afgevaardig kan word nie, as gevolg van vakatures of wettige verhinderings, kan daar meer ouderlinge afgevaardig word. As 'n diaken in plaas van 'n ouderling afgevaardig word, besluit die sinode of hy stemreg sal hê.

Alle predikante **en sendelinge van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika** wat nie na die sinode afgevaardig is nie, mag die sinode bywoon, waar hulle, op versoek van die voorsitter, as adviseurs kan optree.

Amptelike afgevaardigdes van die kerke wat met die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika korrespondeer, **kan op versoek van die sinode**, ook as adviseurs toegelaat **word**.

Artikel 4 Die agenda

Die volgende items moet op die agenda van elke sinode verskyn:

1. Opening deur die sameroepende kerk.
2. Ondertekening van bywoningsregister, ondersoek van en verslag oor die geloofsbriewe.
3. **Verkiesing van 'n moderamen en konstituering van die sinode.**
4. Betuiging van instemming met die Belydenis deur die afgevaardigdes.
5. Vaststelling van die agenda.
6. Vaststelling van die werkwyse van die sinode.
7. Sake wat by die sameroepende kerk ingekom het.
8. Instruksies **van klassisse.**
9. Voorstelle **van klassisse.**
10. Verslae van:
 - (a) Deputate vir Korrespondensie met Buitelandse Kerke.
 - (b) Deputate vir Kontak met Binnelandse Kerke (Kerkgroepe).
 - (c) Sendingdeputate.
 - (d) Deputate vir Korrespondensie met die Owerheid.
 - (e) Deputate Kuratore vir Opleiding tot Woorddiens.
 - (f) Deputate Artikel 11 KO (Hulpbehoewende Kerke).
 - (g) Deputate Artikel 19 KO (Hulpbehoewende Teologiese Studente).
 - (h) Deputate Artikel 49 KO**
 - (i) Die Kwestor.
 - (j) **Deputate** vir Kontrole van die Kwestor.
 - (k) **Sinodale administrateur & Argief.**
 - (l) **Deputate vir Kontrole van die argief.**
 - (m) Alle ander deputate soos deur die vorige sinode benoem.**
11. Benoeming van deputate, **Argiefbewarende kerk en Klassis vir biddae volgens artikel 69 KO.**
12. Seënwense aan die staatspresident.
13. Rondvraag volgens artikel 41, paragraaf 2, van die Kerkorde.
14. Persoonlike rondvraag.
15. Aanwysing van die sameroepende kerk, en die vaststelling van die tyd en plek van die volgende sinode.
16. Vaststelling van die Handeling en die Kort Verslag.
17. Sensuur volgens artikel 48 van die Kerkorde.
18. Sluiting.

Voorstelle en besware wat nie betyds by die sameroepende kerk ingelewer is nie (sien artikels 2.1.a en 2.1.b) word nie behandel nie, tensy die sinode anders besluit.

Artikel 5 Die moderamen

Die sinode word geopen deur 'n ampsdraer wat deur die sameroepende kerk daartoe versoek is. Nadat daar oor die geloofsbriewe verslag gedoen is, word 'n moderamen verkies en word die vergadering gekonstitueer.

Die moderamen bestaan uit 3 lede, naamlik die voorsitter, die skriba en die 2de voorsitter.

Die moderamen word deur stemming verkies volgens die riglyne soos beskryf in artikel 8.

Die voorsitter

Die voorsitter moet sorg dat sake in die korrekte orde behandel word en so spoedig as moontlik afgehandel word en dat die sinodelede die reëls vir 'n goeie orde, volgens artikel 34 KO, in ag neem.

Enige voorstel wat gesekondeer word, sal hy aan die sinode voorlê, in ooreenstemming met die aanvaarde volgorde. In geval van sake waarvoor gestem moet word sal hy seker maak dat alle vrae en onsekerhede in verband met die saak duidelik uitgeklaar is, sodat elke lid weet waarom hy sy stem uitbring.

Indien die voorsitter die behoefte voel om aan 'n bespreking van 'n sekere saak deel te neem, sal hy die voorsitterskap aan die 2de voorsitter oordra, vir die tydperk van die bespreking.

Hy het die reg en sal dit ook uitoefen, om voorstelle of persone buite orde te verklaar. Indien sodanige verklarings vanuit die vergadering aangeveg word, sal dit aan die sinode voorgelê word vir 'n besluit daaroor by meerderheidsstem.

Die 2de voorsitter

Die 2de voorsitter sal, in die geval van afwesigheid van die voorsitter, al sy pligte en regte oorneem. Hy sal ook soveel as moontlik die voorsitter ondersteun soos die omstandighede dit vereis.

Die 2de voorsitter is ook belas met die opstel van 'n kort verslag van die sinode, wat hy na goedkeuring deur die moderamen in 'n geskikte blad publiseer.

Die skriba

Die skriba is verantwoordelik vir die opstel van die Handeling van die Sinode. Hierdie Handeling word sover moontlik tydens die vergadering voltooi. Verder versorg die skriba die briefwisseling van die sinode. Hy dra ook die sinodedokumente, met 'n inhoudsopgawe, oor aan die argiefbewarende kerk.

Artikel 6 Bywoning van die sinode

1. Die sinodevergaderings is toeganklik vir alle lidmate van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.
2. Die sinode besluit oor die toelating van nie-lidmate.
3. Vergaderings in camera/ Geslote vergadersessies van die sinode
In gevalle van sensitiewe of ongewone situasies sal die sinode in geslote sessies vergader. 'n Geslote sessie beteken as 'n reël 'n vergadersessie waarby slegs die sinodelede en die sinodale administrateur aanwesig mag wees. Die sinode kan ander persone nooi om by die sessie aanwesig te wees indien dit noodsaaklik geag word.

Artikel 7 Sinodale briefwisseling

Briewe van die sinode aan persone binne die kerkverband word deur die skriba onderteken en afgehandel.

Amtelike briewe aan persone of instansies buite die kerkverband word deur die moderamen onderteken.

Afskrifte van korrespondensie moet in die argief bewaar word.

Artikel 8 Reëls vir Besluitneming en Stemming

Besluite word as volg geformuleer: Dokumentasie – besluit – gronde.

Besluite sal verkieslik eenparig geneem word. By 'n moontlike stemming oor 'n voorstel of wysigingsvoorstel word 'n meerderheid van stemme vereis vir aanvaarding daarvan.

Die voorsitter het die reg om te besluit hoe 'n verkiesing gehou sal word, deur afroep van die presensielys (in enige volgorde) of daar handopsteking.

By staking van stemme word 'n voorstel verwerp, en in die geval van 'n eksaminering van 'n kandidaat word hy afgewys.

By die bepaling van die meerderheid van stemme word blanko stemme en onthoudings nie saamgetel nie.

Oor **sake betreffende** persone sal skriftelik gestem word. Hierby geld dat 'n volstreekte meerderheid van stemme behaal moet word. Blanko stemme word nie as 'n geldige stem by die bepaling van die meerderheid gereken nie. Hierdie reëling geld vir enige stemming oor persone.

Die sinode kan na goeie denke persone benoem wat deur die moderamen aanbeveel is. Andersins vind die verkiesing soos volg plaas:

1. Deur middel van vrye stemming.
2. Waar daar uit meer as twee persone gekies moet word en geen meerderheid verkry word nie, vind 'n tweede vrye stemming plaas.
3. Indien daar na die tweede vrye stemming nog geen meerderheid verkry is nie, moet 'n herstemming gehou word tussen hulle wat die meeste stemme verkry het, met dien verstande dat dan gestem word uit twee keer die aantal benodigde persone.
4. As by daardie stemming geen meerderheid verkry word nie, word die oudste persoon of persone benoem.

Besluite oor sensitiewe sake sal ook deur middel van skriftelike stemmings bepaal word.

Artikel 9 Deputate

Vir die uitvoering van besluite van die sinode word kerke of persone benoem wat deur die moderamen, met instemming van die vergadering, aangewys word.

Take moet soveel as moontlik eweredig verdeel word. Deputate sal verkieslik nie meer as drie keer na mekaar in dieselfde deputaatskap benoem word nie. Uitvoering van besluite waarvoor geen deputate benoem is nie, is die taak van diegene wat die moderamen gevorm het.

In gevalle van deputaatskappe met 'n beperkte aantal lede moet voldoende plaasvervangende lede benoem word om 'n goeie funksionering van die deputaatskap te verseker.

Waar die deputate se funksionering nadelig beïnvloed word deur verlies van lede of nie-beskikbaarheid van plaasvervangende lede, het deputate die reg om addisionele lede te benoem sodat deputate hulle mandaat kan uitvoer. Sulke benoemings moet aan 'n klassis vir goedkeuring voorgelê word.

Op die volgende sinode moet deputate skriftelik oor hul werksaamhede verslag doen.

Die verslae van deputate moet ten minste ses (6) weke voor aanvang van die sinode aan die sameroepende kerk gestuur word en sal sover moontlik die volgende inligting bevat:

1. Die naam van die deputaatskap en die name van die lede en plaasvervangende lede wat deur die sinode benoem is.
2. Die mandaat wat deur die sinode aan die deputate gegee is.
3. Verslag van werksaamhede van deputate en vergaderdatums.
4. 'n Lys van geraadpleegde bronne.
5. Gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings van die deputate, so geformuleer (dokumentasie – besluit – gronde) dat dit as besluit van die sinode kan dien en in die Handeling opgeneem kan word.
6. **Voorgestelde opdragte vir nuwe deputate**

Die opdragte aan deputate duur van sinode tot sinode.

Artikel 10 Instruksies aan deputate

Elke sinode sal die opdragte vir die onderskeie deputaatskappe vasstel.

Benewens hierdie spesifieke opdragte, sal die volgende algemene instruksies geld:

1. Deputate vir Betrekkinge met Buitelandse Kerke:
 - (a) **sal** uit **vyf** lede bestaan waaruit 'n voorsitter en 'n sekretaris gekies word;
 - (b) **stuur** die sinodehandelinge, die voorlopige agenda vir die sinode, en die verslag van die Deputate vir Korrespondensie met Buitelandse Kerke aan die deputate van kerke wat met ons korrespondeer;
 - (c) **stuur** briewe met seënwense namens die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, aan die sinodes van ons korresponderende kerke;
 - (d) **verskaf** attestate aan predikante van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika wat wil voorgaan in eredienste van ons korresponderende kerke;
 - (e) **sal korrespondensie met susterkerke onderhou volgens die goedgekeurde reëls**;
 - (f) **rapporteer** oor besluite van sinodes van ons korresponderende kerke;
 - (g) **sal** korrespondensie met, en Sinodehandelinge van, die kerke waarmee kontak onderhou word, aan deputate verantwoordelik vir die argief, oorhandig.
2. Deputate vir Kontak met Binnelandse Kerke (Kerkgroepe):
 - (a) **sal** uit **vyf** lede bestaan. waaruit 'n voorsitter en 'n sekretaris gekies word, en twee plaasvervangende lede;
 - (b) **sal** voorstelle formuleer en aan die sinode voorlê in verband met die beoefening van kontak met binnelandse kerke (kerkgroepe);
 - (c) **sal** afgehandelde korrespondensie en dokumente aan deputate verantwoordelik vir die argief, oorhandig.
3. Deputate vir Korrespondensie met die Owerheid:
 - (a) **sal** uit drie lede bestaan waaruit 'n voorsitter en 'n sekretaris aangewys word en een plaasvervangende lid;
 - (b) **sal** deur middel van voorstelle en konsepbriewe die sinode in staat stel om sy taak na te kom om die nodige samewerking van die owerheid te verkry ten behoeve van die kerk, en om in bepaalde gevalle as kerk van Christus voor die owerheid te getuig;
 - (c) **sal** afgehandelde korrespondensie en dokumente aan deputate verantwoordelik vir die argief, oorhandig..
4. Sinodale kwesoor:
 - (a) **is verantwoordelik vir** die beheer van sinodale inkomste en uitgawes;
 - (b) **sal** 'n oorsigtelike boekhouding byhou waarby alle bewyse van inkomste en uitgawes getoon kan word;
 - (c) **sal** vergoeding betaal vir enige onkoste wat in die uitvoering van opdragte van die sinode gemaak is en waarvoor gespesifiseerde rekeninge ontvang is;
 - (d) **sal** 'n finansiële verslag opstel wat bestaan uit 'n inkomste- en uitgawestaat en 'n balansstaat ter insae van die sinode;
 - (e) **sal** toesien dat 'n jaarlikse kontrole van bogenoemde finansiële state deur die benoemde deputate uitgevoer word, en dat 'n verslag daarvan aan die sinode voorgelê word;
5. **Sinodale Administrateur en Argief:**
 - (a) **sal, in opdrag van die sinode of the roepende kerk, die administrasie van die sinode hanteer**;
 - (b) **sal** die roepende kerk behulpsaam wees met die voorbereiding van die sinode;
 - (c) **sal** besluite en ander relevante sake tydens die vergaderings van die sinode notuleer en sal die skriba bystaan met die samestelling van die Sinodehandelinge. Die notularis mag ook tydens **in camera-sittings/geslote vergadersessies** aanwesig wees vir die neem van notule wat hy as vertroulik sal behandel;
 - (d) **sal in samewerking met die argiefbewarende kerk, as argivaris optree**;
 - (e) **sal oortollige Sinodehandelinge teen kosprys aan belangstellendes te koop aanbied**;

- (f) sal deputate artikel 49 KO versoek om hulle verslae oor besoeke aan klassisvergadering onmiddellik na die besoeke in te dien;
- (g) sal by deputate inligting vra oor die vordering van hulle werk;
- (h) sal die verskillende deputaatskappe versoek om hulle verslag in Engels in te dien, met uitsondering van dié deputate wat hoofsaaklik Afrikaanstalige sake hanteer. In die laaste geval moet deputate versoek word om met hulle verslag 'n Engelstalige opsomming daarvan in te sluit;
- (i) sal reël dat die publikasie van sinodehandelinge soos volg plaasvind (Acts of Synod 2008, art,16):
 - 'n beperkte aantal gedrukte eksemplare van die volledige Handeling met bylaes sal vir verspreiding na kerkrade, argiewe, biblioteke en deputate gebruik word;
 - die volledige Handeling met bylaes sal ook elektronies beskikbaar gestel word vir belangstellendes;
- (j) sal daarvoor sorg dra dat aan wettelike vereistes voldoen word insake die verspreiding van eksemplare van die Handeling na openbare instansies.

6. Argiefbewarende kerk:

- (a) sal in samewerking met die benoemde Sinodale Administrateur vir die argief sorg;
- (b) sal daarop toesien dat die benoemde argivaris sorg dat die argief volledig en toeganklik is.

Die volgende dokumente moet in die argief wees:

Handeling van die sinodes.

Handeling van sinodes van korresponderende kerke.

Verslae en briewe van alle deputaatskappe.

Alle dokumente wat by sinodes ingekom het.

Afskrifte van briewe wat deur sinodes verstuur is.

Die argief moet voor elke sinode gekontroleer word deur die **deputate wat deur die vorige sinode daarvoor benoem is.**

Artikel 11 Wysiging van die sinodereëls

Wysiging van hierdie reëls is slegs moontlik as 'n sodanige voorstel deur 'n klassis op die agenda van die sinode geplaas word, of deur 'n deputaatskap, wat deur die sinode hiervoor benoem is, aanbeveel word.

Vasgestel deur die sinode van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika te Bethal op xx April/Mei 2014

..... voorsitter
 skriba
 2de voorsitter

Appendix 26 – Report of Synod Treasurer to Synod 2014

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
Synod Treasurer
Report to the 2014 Synod
To: The Secretary of the Synod: C. Roose
Sent by e-mail on 2 March 2014

Name and contact details of the Synod Treasurer

Ernst van Vondel
Springfontein Street B, Stellenryk, 7550
Cell: 082 458 3148, Phone 021 910 4001, E-mail evvondel@prwergrp.co.za

A.30 2011 Synod Decisions

1. To issue semiannual statements at the end of May and September to the churches

This has not always been done.

2. To request the churches to settle their accounts within 30 days

Refer to the list of debtors (note 1 to the financial statements) for outstanding contributions. Notably, Cape Town fell behind, but payments were made in January 2014 to start settling debt.

3. Contributions to be paid

	A11		A19		Kerkverband		Kwester	
							Totaal	
2011	R	220	R	65	R	70	R	305
2012	R	285	R	65	R	20	R	370
2013	R	295	R	80	R	20	R	395
2014	R	370	R	80	R	20	R	420

4. To cooperate with the deputies financial review on the annual assessments

Cooperation was given and financial reports were prepared and tabled at the Indaba in 2011.

5. Exception to contributions

To accept a collection schedule instead of the aforementioned assessment per member from the following churches: Beibor, Bethal, Mamelodi and Shushangwe-North and possibly newly instituted churches that will fall within this schedule.

Only the congregation of Shushangwe-North paid over collections and only for 2011 and 2012 (and not 2013).

6. To pay the deputies the assigned budgets at their request

Payments have been made and are detailed in the attached financial statements.

7. To reimburse travel expenses and other expenses made by deputies on their request:

Payments have been made and are detailed in the attached financial statements.

8. To reimburse the air travel expenses of classes on their request:

Payments have been made and are detailed in the attached financial statements.

Note: To appoint two deputies as treasurers (decided at 2008 Synod)

Ground: It is common practise to have two persons overseeing the finances.

The second appointee, Rigardt Irving was not involved during the period under review.

This is not because of his own fault, but because deputy Van Vondel experienced many practical difficulties with sharing this function between two people.

Consequently, Ernst van Vondel, handled the tasks by himself.

To mitigate this loss in control, Herman van der Linden was asked by the Treasurer to audit the financial statements for 2011, 2012 and 2013. The audit report is attached to this report.

9. Conclusions & Recommendations

9.1 Needy Churches

The attached financial statements shows the financial result and position for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The report by the deputies should outline the financial requirements going forward.

9.2 Needy Theological Students

The attached financial statements shows the financial result and position for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The report by the deputies should outline the financial requirements going forward.

9.3 Inter-denominational costs

The attached financial statements shows the financial result and position for 2011, 2012 and 2013.

At a contribution rate of R20 per member per year, the shortage was R37,864 for 2013 and the shortage was R21,103 for 2012 and there was a surplus of R6,868 for 2011.

The main reason for the shortages for 2013 and 2012 were because of the international travelling costs to Canada, Australia and The Netherlands.

For this item, the fund balance at 31/12/2013 stood at R165,911, and therefore there is no need to request an increase in contribution for the next three years. Deputies Foreign Churches should however keep this fund balance in mind when performing planning for the next three years.

Sinodale Kwestor van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika

Finansiële state vir die jaar geëindig 31 Desember 2013

Balansstaat

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
BATES					
Bedryfsbates					
1	1 307 257	817 272	730 855	778 925	1 277 695
Debitteure	1 307 257	817 272	730 855	778 925	1 277 695
Bank - Alisa lopende rekening	578 993	312 497	89 235	180 360	14 820
Termyndepositos	108 095	483 089	183 727	85 131	58 985
Geldmarkfonds	620 171	21 686	354 412	382 828	308 813
			168 485	200 005	895 278
OPGEHOOPTE FONDESE EN LASTE					
4	1 307 257	817 272	730 855	778 925	1 277 695
5	1 307 257	817 272	730 855	778 925	1 277 695
Opgehoopte Fondse					
Opgehoopte - fondse	1 307 257	817 272	730 855	778 925	1 277 695
Beihil Pastorie - ojkelfonds	-	C	13 450	741 660	1 024 278
Bedryfslaste					
Kred teur - SA VGK Kaarstad	-	-	-	23 900	253 418

Sinodale Kvestor van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika
Finansiële state vir die jaar geëindig 31 Desember 2013
Inkomstestaat

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Hulpbehoewende Kerke					
Inkomste					
Bydraes Ontvang	464 773	72 505	776	1116 714	356 445
Johannesburg	1 316 688	1 247 725	1 160 208	506 332	721 086
Keapstad	373 475	357 167	286 300	247 300	245 300
Mareeathle	25 685	25 650	22 220	9 500	11 100
Pretoria	120 655	115 415	90 800	82 800	82 200
Sosangwe	96 750	93 480	73 040	66 400	69 600
Skenkings Ontvang	130 095	121 125	57 280	88 800	8 200
SDSA	1 487	2 600	2 600	-	-
Antoniem	875 610	858 739	858 739	610 555	449 440
Australië	20 000	40 000	80 000	80 000	150 000
Canada	118 000	115 000	200 000	-	-
Rente Inkomste	-	-	100	184 000	-
Lifgawes	410 316	418 632	410 073	355 355	298 440
Ondersteuning betaal	405 988	303 008	276 553	41 937	26 747
Johannesburg	8 204	13 918	18 309	1 025 306	322 642
Mamelodi	881 910	1 175 220	1 157 057	1 033 334	363 771
Sosangwe	878 167	1 175 444	1 157 057	231 755	120 840
Beitels	1 358 657	1 522 220	1 366 858	1 366 856	126 050
Bankkoste	142 500	91 124	189 999	169 650	53 001
	420 000	400 000	380 867	139 338	-
	150 000	300 000	300 000	285 800	23 900
	3 743	1 776	2 365	1 372	1 870
Kerkerberend					
Inkomste					
Bydraes Ontvang	(37 864)	(21 103)	6 868	12 608	12 058
Johannesburg	28 851	32 142	36 931	45 325	52 447
Keapstad	25 900	23 054	28 000	25 860	25 700
Mareeathle	1 740	1 800	2 000	1 500	2 220
Prodia	8 180	8 100	9 260	8 260	8 220
Sosangwe	6 560	6 550	5 540	6 540	6 590
Rente inkomste	8 820	8 530	8 880	8 880	8 800
Lifgawes	3 551	7 084	2 200	1 934	-
Kostes aangees	65 715	53 251	30 053	23 012	25 747
	65 271	52 347	28 884	32 060	40 389
					38 518

Reiskoste Bineland	13 672	14 458	34 313	23 360
Reiskoste Bineland	21 982	8 069	17 422	23 237
Skriftoeloesings	11 055	2 367	643	70 541
Verworsings	3 638	4 000	-	2 320
Bankkoste	904	1 153	538	1 870
	35 010	(31 810)	(51 394)	(32 046)
Hulpkoste wende Teologiese Studente	197 755	220 041	43 461	52 447
Inkomste	101 200	84 050	25 680	25 700
Bydrees Ontvang	6 960	5 565	1 500	2 220
Johannesburg	32 720	25 815	8 260	8 220
Kaapstad	26 240	21 580	6 640	6 960
Warananata	35 280	28 860	8 880	8 300
Pretoria	-	200	-	-
Sos-angane	35 035	152 527	-	-
Stenkings ontvang: SOSA	1 450	3 464	14 781	26 747
Rente Inkomste	134 687	597 745	51 855	84 495
Ultravos	134 063	273 537	51 260	82 625
Ondersteuning betaal	-	74 671	-	3 500
Andre de Vente	-	34 892	-	-
Oskar Makobe	75 783	46 999	-	-
Selomon Mkwawa	58 277	17 272	-	-
Jacob Ynis	-	88 163	51 160	79 125
Bergari Nchlovu	-	453	695	1 870
Chris Willemsse	622	-	-	-
Bankkoste	-	-	-	-
Totale (verkort) oorskot	489 986	(21 166)	(155 500)	336 454

Sinodale Kvestor van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika
Finansiële state vir die jaar geëindig 31 Desember 2011
Nota's tot die state

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
1. Deure					
Johannesburg	31 233	29 808	24 878	1 400	15 540
Kapstad	807 644	1 504 460	65 258	-	-
Pretoria/Masemola	18 136	31 400	9 340	87 523	3 540
Pretoria	(401 209)	(4 930)	(2 550)	(4 560)	(4 560)
Jan Huislerfonds	233 000	1 15 000	-	-	-
Sendingsdepartement SA - Skerping van Kerkdele via SDSA	100 000	-	-	-	-
Sendingsdepartement SA - Vrij Belhar	19 331	19 331	19 331	80 300	-
	<u>3 79 959</u>	<u>3 32 497</u>	<u>24 235</u>	<u>160 360</u>	<u>14 220</u>
2. Termynrekenings					
Alma Termynrekenings x 2	-	-	304 472	332 828	308 613
3. Geldmarkfonds					
Alma Geldmarkfonds	620 171	21 686	108 485	200 605	895 278
4. Opgevoerde Fondse					
Hulpbehoewende Kerke					
Coenstansbaai	525 577	440 622	439 932	556 673	230 200
Ander	-	-	(35)	-	-
Coenstansbaai	751 773	72 925	776	(116 710)	395 615
Coenstansbaai	911 349	513 577	440 622	439 932	556 645

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Gekeurde Handelskwaliteits					
Oopningsbalans	205 175	224 277	217 405	234 802	192 744
Oorskot (te vert)	(37 864)	(21 103)	6 808	(2 628)	(2 058)
Sluitingsbalans	165 311	203 175	224 277	211 420	204 802
Hulpbehoevende Ingeleese Kerkerte					
Oopningsbalans	87 520	52 510	84 220	125 713	187 762
Oorskot (te vert)	63 078	35 010	(35 810)	(51 354)	(22 046)
Sluitingsbalans	150 597	87 520	48 410	74 359	165 715
Verenigings					
Oopningsbalans	-	-	-	127 118	127 118
Oorskot (te vert)	-	-	-	(127 118)	-
Sluitingsbalans	-	-	-	-	127 118
Totale Opgeskoopte Fondse	1 307 257	817 271	717 429	762 860	1 024 278
5 Bethal Pastorie Projektfonds					
Oopningsbalans	0	13 450	13 450	253 418	-
Skerfings ontvang van Australie				533 815	253 418
Dra oor van Verenigings Opgeskoopte Fondse				(27 118)	-
Aansoop van pastorie				(90 000)	-
Dra oor na Hulpbehoevende Kerkerte Fonds		(13 450)			
Sluitingsbalans	0	0	13 450	13 450	253 418

Die konserkoms het die geriments van Bethal as die hulle partre te so, verknoop, die fondse geprovisoneel terug sal gaan na die Hulpbehoevende Kerkerte Fonds.

Appendix 27 – Report of Inspection of the Treasurer books



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Fax: 086 542 8771

E-mail: herman.vanderlinden@axact.co.za

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4 April 2014

VERSLAG VAN DIE OUDITEUR AAN DIE SINODE VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE VAN SUID-AFRIKA

Op grond van inligting wat deur die Sinodale Kwestor (Ernst van Vondel) verstrekk is, het ek die balansstaat van die Sinodale Kwestor van die VGK van Suid-Afrika soos op 31 Desember 2010, en die verwante inkomstestaat, staat van verandering in ekwiteit en aantekeninge tot die finansiële state vir die twaalf maande wat op daardie datum geëindig het geouditeer. Die Kwestor is vir hierdie finansiële state verantwoordelik. My verantwoordelikheid is om oor hierdie finansiële state 'n mening uit te spreek, gebaseer op die audit.

Omvang

Vanjaar se audit is beplan en uitgevoer om redelike versekering te verkry dat die finansiële state vir van wesenlike wanvoorstellings is. Die audit het die volgende behels:

- 'n Evaluering van die rekeningkundige beleid en beginsels;
- Stawingstoetse op steekproefbasis van brondokumente na die rekeningkundige rekords;
- 'n Bespreking van 2010 se finansiële state;
- 'n Evaluering van die pligte van die boekhouer.

Ek is van standpunt dat my audit 'n redelike grondslag bied vir my mening.

Ouditmening

Ek kan die versekering gee dat die rekeningkundige en administratiewe pligte nougeset en sorgvuldig deur die boekhouer uitgevoer is. Na my mening bied die finansiële state 'n redelike weergawe, in alle wesenlike opsigte, van die finansiële posisie en resultate van die Kwestor op 31 Desember 2010.

Herman H. van der Linden

Axact Accounting (Pty) Ltd, Reg. Nr. 2011/101020/07

Director: H.H. van der Linden NHDA, GTP(SA)[™]

4 April 2014

**VERSLAG VAN DIE OUDITEUR
AAN DIE SINODE VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE VAN SUID-AFRIKA**

Op grond van inligting wat deur die Sinodale Kwestor (**Ernst van Vondel**) verstrek is, het ek die balansstaat van die Sinodale Kwestor van die VGK van Suid-Afrika soos op **31 Desember 2011**, en die verwante inkomstestaat, staat van verandering in ekwiteit en aantekeninge tot die finansiële state vir die twaalf maande wat op daardie datum geëindig het geouditeer. **Die Kwestor is vir hierdie finansiële state verantwoordelik.** My verantwoordelikheid is om oor hierdie finansiële state 'n mening uit te spreek, gebaseer op die audit.

Omvang

Vanjaar se audit is beplan en uitgevoer om redelike versekering te verkry dat die finansiële state vry van wesenlike wanvoorstellings is. Die audit het die volgende behels:

- 'n Evaluering van die rekeningkundige beleid en beginsels;
- Stawingstoetse op steekproefbasis van brondokumente na die rekeningkundige rekords;
- 'n Bespreking van 2011 se finansiële state;
- 'n Evaluering van die pligte van die boekhouer.

Ek is van standpunt dat my audit 'n redelike grondslag bied vir my mening.

Ouditmening

Ek kan die versekering gee dat die rekeningkundige en administratiewe pligte nougeset en sorgvuldig deur die boekhouer uitgevoer is. Na my mening bied die finansiële state 'n redelike weergawe, in alle wesenlike opsigte, van die finansiële posisie en resultate van die Kwestor op **31 Desember 2011**.



Herman H. van der Linden

4 April 2014

**VERSLAG VAN DIE OUDITEUR
AAN DIE SINODE VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE VAN SUID-AFRIKA**

Op grond van inligting wat deur die Sinodale Kwestor (**Ernst van Vondel**) verstrekkend is, het ek die balansstaat van die Sinodale Kwestor van die VGK van Suid-Afrika soos op **31 Desember 2012**, en die verwante inkomstestaat, staat van verandering in ekwiteit en aantekeninge tot die finansiële state vir die twaalf maande wat op daardie datum geëindig het geouditeer. **Die Kwestor is vir hierdie finansiële state verantwoordelik.** My verantwoordelikheid is om oor hierdie finansiële state 'n mening uit te spreek, gebaseer op die audit.

Omvang

Vanjaar se audit is beplan en uitgevoer om redelike versekering te verkry dat die finansiële state vry van wesenlike wanvoorstellings is. Die audit het die volgende behels:

- 'n Evaluering van die rekeningkundige beleid en beginsels;
- Stawingstoetse op steekproefbasis van brondokumente na die rekeningkundige rekords;
- 'n Bespreking van 2012 se finansiële state;
- 'n Evaluering van die pligte van die boekhouer.

Ek is van standpunt dat my audit 'n redelike grondslag bied vir my mening.

Ouditmening

Ek kan die versekering gee dat die rekeningkundige en administratiewe pligte nougeset en sorgvuldig deur die boekhouer uitgevoer is. Na my mening bied die finansiële state 'n redelike weergawe, in alle wesenlike opsigte, van die finansiële posisie en resultate van die Kwestor op **31 Desember 2012**.



Herman H. van der Linden

4 April 2014

**VERSLAG VAN DIE OUDITEUR
AAN DIE SINODE VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE VAN SUID-AFRIKA**

Op grond van inligting wat deur die Sinodale Kwestor (**Ernst van Vondel**) verstrekkend is, het ek die balansstaat van die Sinodale Kwestor van die VGK van Suid-Afrika soos op 31 Desember 2013, en die verwante inkomstestaat, staat van verandering in ekwiteit en aantekeninge tot die finansiële state vir die twaalf maande wat op daardie datum geëindig het geouditeer. Die Kwestor is vir hierdie finansiële state verantwoordelik. My verantwoordelikheid is om oor hierdie finansiële state 'n mening uit te spreek, gebaseer op die audit.

Omvang

Vanjaar se audit is beplan en uitgevoer om redelike versekering te verkry dat die finansiële state vry van wesenlike wanvoorstellings is. Die audit het die volgende behels:

- 'n Evaluering van die rekeningkundige beleid en beginsels;
- Stawingstoetse op steekproefbasis van brondokumente na die rekeningkundige rekords;
- 'n Bespreking van 2013 se finansiële state;
- 'n Evaluering van die pligte van die boekhouer.

Ek is van standpunt dat my audit 'n redelike grondslag bied vir my mening.

Ouditmening

Ek kan die versekering gee dat die rekeningkundige en administratiewe pligte nougeset en sorgvuldig deur die boekhouer uitgevoer is. Na my mening bied die finansiële state 'n redelike weergawe, in alle wesenlike opsigte, van die finansiële posisie en resultate van die Kwestor op 31 Desember 2013.



Herman H. van der Linden

Appendix 28 – Letter to the State President

The President,
Mr. J. Zuma
Private Bag X1000
Pretoria
0001

The synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa met from the 28th of April till the 1st of May 2014 in Bethal. The delegates expressed their wish to assure you of their prayers for you in your responsible task as President of our country. We realise this is no easy task in a country with so many needs and challenges. We pray that the Lord our God may grant you the necessary wisdom, guidance and strength for that task.

We pray that through your government the kingdom of Christ may be promoted and His church may live peaceful and quiet in all godliness and holiness. May you seek your help in Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Ruler of the kings of the earth, and in the Word of God.

We greet you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,

Rev. P.G. Boon
Chairman

Rev. M.P. Magagula
Deputy for Correspondence with the Government

Rev. C. Kleijn
Vice Chairman

Mr. T.W. Tamane
Deputy for Correspondence with the Government

Mr. E. Byker
Clerk

PRESS RELEASE OF THE SYNOD OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES, HELD FROM 28 APRIL TO 1 MAY 2014 IN BETHAL

Opening and Constitution

Before Synod commenced, Rev JA Breytenbach led a prayer meeting in the Free Reformed Church (FRC) of Bethal to ask for God's blessing. Thereafter the delegates moved to the Jim van Tonder School, where the Synod itself was held. Rev JA Breytenbach opened the meeting on behalf of the convening church of Bethal. The credentials of the delegates were examined and the following brothers were confirmed as delegates for their classes:

Classis North:

- **Pastors:** P.G. Boon, M.P. Magagula and B.A. Matlaela
- **Elders:** A.C. Bijker, W. Hofsink and T.W. Tamane

Classis South:

- **Pastors:** F.J. Bijzet, J.A. Breytenbach and C. Kleijn
- **Elders:** E. Byker, C. du Plessis and R. Raimond

Synod elected the following brothers as its office bearers:

Chairman: Rev. P.G. Boon
Vice-chairman: Rev. C. Kleijn
Scribe: Elder E. Byker

Br. C. Roose acted as the stated clerk. He was present to minute the proceedings of Synod.

Delegates of sister churches, advisors and observers

The sister churches of Australia and Canada both sent two delegates to Synod. This was the first time we received multiple person delegations which shows that our relationships have intensified in the past ten years. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia sent Rev S. 't Hart and Br. W. Spyker, while the Canadian and American Reformed Churches sent Prof. A.J. de Visser (previously serving as one of our missionaries) and Rev. T. Lodder. On Monday night Rev S. 't Hart and Rev. T. Lodder presented messages of greeting on behalf of their churches. They both told something about their own bond of churches and expressed their appreciation for the growing contacts between us as sister churches and their desire to continue to support us wherever needed. During Synod they regularly contributed as advisors.

Rev. C van Wyk, our missionary in Wesbank, was also present at Synod, partly in connection with a proposal from Classis South regarding mission work. He was invited to serve as an advisor.

Our sister churches in the Netherlands sent a written message of greeting. They were unable to attend in person due to their involvement with their own Synod, which was meeting simultaneously.

On Tuesday Synod welcomed pastors P. Kurpershoek and P. Venter as observers from the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA). Rev P. Kurpershoek presented a message of greeting on behalf of the RCSA. He expressed the wish that the contacts between the RCSA

and the FRCSA may grow. He urged for honesty in identifying what still separates our churches. He also asked for prayers for the forthcoming RCSA Synod in Jan 2015. He asked that we pray that the churches may remain faithful to God and to His Word.

Contacts with Churches in South Africa

Synod was pleased with the presence of the two observers of the **Reformed Churches of South Africa** (RCSA). They spoke openly which helped to confirm the importance of the contacts between the RCSA and the FRCSA. The purpose of the relationship is to support each other in the pursuit of Reformed teaching and life. Synod decided to continue the contacts at a national level in order to strengthen the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith. Focus points of discussion will be hermeneutics (the explanation of the meaning of Scriptures), the Cloete psalm versification and the RCSA decision to allow female deacons to office.

Synod was also pleased to note the good progress made in the development of contacts in Pretoria between the five local RCSA and the FRCSA congregations. The Synod instructed the deputies to stimulate these local contacts and to support and to monitor such contacts. The ultimate goal is that the churches can strengthen and encourage each other in the promotion of true Scriptural teaching and life.

Synod also decided to continue contacts with the **Dutch Reformed Church in Africa**. This bond of churches continued to exist in 1994, when most of their congregations joined the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa. The Synod instructed the deputies to use these contacts to get to know each other better and to support each other in maintaining the true faith.

In addition, Synod repeated the instruction of the previous Synod, namely to maintain contacts with **English speaking churches** with which we cooperate regarding the training of theological students.

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (DRCA)

Synod accepted the proposal of deputies that the sister church relationships with the **Canadian and American Reformed Churches** (CanRC) and the **Free Reformed Churches of Australia** (FRCA) is to be continued. Synod expressed its sincere thanks towards these churches for their support of the South African churches, particularly with regards to financial support for needy churches. The presence of deputies of these churches at Synod and their contributions during the discussions were highly appreciated.

The sister church relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCNL) required a more extensive discussion. Unfortunately our deputies were divided on how to react to worrying developments within the RCNL. Synod decided to amend the letter formulated by the majority of the deputies directed at the Synod of the RCNL. Its purpose is to encourage them to remain faithful to the reformed teaching. Synod expressed its gratefulness for the close relationship that existed in the past and for the support that we continue to receive, especially for our missionary work. On the other hand, there was a serious warning against new teachings that have entered the RCNL. These teachings undermine the infallibility and clarity of Scriptures. These teachings become apparent in the

writings of two lecturers at the Theological University of Kampen, as well as the proposal of the majority of their deputies to allow women to take up all offices at the church.

In spite of these concerns, Synod decided to continue with the relationship with the RCNL, based on the following motives:

1. The RCNL has the responsibility and ability to refute the matters about which we are concerned at their Synod in Ede.
2. As sister churches we remain responsible to encourage the RCNL to remain faithful to the Reformed doctrine.

Synod decided not to establish sister church relationships with **De Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands (restored)** (DGKN). Apart from the fact that we currently have a responsibility towards the RCNL, we are also unable to meet their requirement that we end our sister church relationship with the CanRC. It was decided to continue examining the **Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands** (GKN). Should members of either the DGKN or GKN visit South Africa, Synod recommends that the consistories admit them as guest to the Lord's Supper only after a favourable personal conversation.

Synod instructed the deputies to remain up to date of developments in the **Reformed Churches of New Zealand** and the **churches in North America**, via our sister churches.

Synod further decided that our contacts with churches in other African countries will be dealt with by means of our membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) and its regional mission conferences and via existing contacts of our sister churches. Deputies were instructed to maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to use appropriate means to promote the proclamation of the Gospel and to support their training initiatives in cooperation with other ICRC member churches. In the case of requests from churches which are not associated with the ICRC, or with its member churches, deputies should judge the feasibility of such contacts. Synod ruled that the ICRC membership was to be continued and that the revised version of the ICRC's Constitution and Regulations were accepted as an improvement.

Bible translation, liturgical music, liturgical forms and form prayers

Synod was pleased to note the publication of a preliminary version of a new Afrikaans source orientated translation of the New Testament and of the Psalms. Deputies were reappointed and instructed to monitor and to remain involved with the new translation of the Bible into Afrikaans. In the past our deputies were also actively involved as members of the "Kerklike Advieskomitee" regarding this translation. Deputies also receive support from readers within our congregations.

In the past year Deputies liturgical music submitted to congregations a list of 11 hymns as well as the new hymns directly based on scripture as used within the RCSA. Congregations were instructed to test these based on the criteria accepted by Synod 2011. However, no feedback was received from congregations. Congregations will again be asked to submit feedback to deputies before the end of 2015 so that deputies will be able to finalise the selection for submission to the next synod. Deputies were also instructed to investigate whether the revised Totius versification can be used for our Psalter.

Synod also appointed Sotho-speaking members to the deputies. Their task is to test and standardise the hymns that are being sung in our Sotho-speaking congregations.

Synod decided not to make use of the revised RCSA Liturgical Forms and Prayers at this stage because these do not appear to be a significant improvement. We will continue to use our own forms and we will consider their further improvement. Synod decided to provisionally approve the use of the text of the new Form of the GKSA for the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, as an alternative to the forms already in use.

With regard to form prayers, synod decided to task deputies to compile five new prayers, four for use within worship services and one for use in family worship.

Mission

Synod thankfully noted the mission work done by our churches and of the new possibilities created by the surplus of available funds. Synod decided to allow deputies to consider requests for support which fall outside the current Agreement of Cooperation which focusses on a more restricted framework of church planting only. These requests must, however, be related to the broader goal of spreading the gospel of which the ultimate purpose is the conversion of sinners and to gather the church of Christ. This decision addresses the central issue of a proposal brought forward by Classis South, that is, that the scope of Mission should also include development and training.

Theological Training

On grounds of the report of deputies, synod decided to set clear admission requirements for new theological students. Theological students will be required to follow one of the following trajectories:

- a. Three years BA studies (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution (university), followed by a four year MDiv course at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) in Hamilton Canada.
- b. A Foundation course, followed by a BA (Hebrew III, Greek III) at an accredited tertiary education institution, followed by a four year MDiv at the CRTS;
- c. A Foundation course, followed by a BTh at an accredited tertiary education institution (currently Mukhanyo Theological College or George Whitfield Theological College), followed by at least two years of language studies (Hebrew II and Greek II) and at least one year at CRTS.

Synod thankfully took note of the appointment and activities of Rev Jopie van der Linden as mentor of students in the North. Synod stressed the importance of good mentorship for all students.

Deputies were tasked to create room for ongoing training and development of ministers and of office bearers,

Because of the close relationship between Deputies Curators (theological training) and Deputies art. 19 CO (needy theological students) Synod decided to merge these two deputyships.

Sustainability and financial contributions

On grounds of a thorough report of Deputies Sustainability, Synod introduced a new model of differentiated financial contributions of congregations starting from 2015. Its aim is to ensure that congregations contribute to the costs of the church federation on basis of financial means (judged by an estimated average income of congregation members). This requires consistories to submit an updated estimate of the average financial income of its congregation members before each synod.

Synod also accepted the proposal of deputies that churches organise an Indaba, halfway between two synods, to which all Free Reformed congregations and deputies are invited. Its purpose is threefold: a. Indabas can help to prevent or solve misunderstandings which may easily arise within our multicultural setting; b. Indabas can help deputies to make a more accurate assessment of situations and to formulate more effective recommendations to Synod; c. Indabas can improve the cooperation between the deputies and the churches. To attain these goals all deputies will be required to submit an interim report at the Indaba in between synods.

Synod appreciated the report and work done by the synod treasurer. Synod decided to provisionally set the budget for coming years as follows (its totals must still be converted to the differentiated scale of contributions per congregation).

Purpose/year	(2014)	2015	2016	2017
11: Needy churches	Quotum decided by synod 2011	Increase above inflation	Increase above inflation	Increase above inflation
19: Students		R100 per member	R120 per member	R140 per member
Curators		R90 per member	Inflation increase	Inflation increase
Mission Deputies	Quotum decided by synod 2011	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Art. 11	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Art. 11	No inflation increase, same amount as in 2014. Inflation increase to go to Art. 11
Federational	Quotum decided by synod 2011	Inflation increase	Inflation increase	Inflation increase

Next synod and closure

The FRC of Soshanguve was appointed to convene the next synod, with the FRC of Pretoria-Maranata as the alternate. The next synod is planned for the last week of August 2017. This date was selected in order to help deputies towards submitting their reports in time (4 months before synod). In the past the holiday period Des - Jan made it difficult to meet the deadline for submission of reports for a synod held in May.

The chairman thanked the convening church and the sisters and brothers of Bethal for the excellent way in which the synod was accommodated and maintained. After a meditation by the vice-chairman on Acts 15, Rev Boon declared synod closed.

On behalf of synod:

Rev PG Boon (chairman) Rev C Kleijn (vice-chairman) br E Byker (scribe)

Appendix 30 – Persverslag

PERSVERSLAG VAN DIE SINODE VAN DIE VRYE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE, GEHOU VAN 28 APRIL TOT 1 MEI 2014 IN BETHAL

Opening en konstituering

Na 'n bidstond in die VGK Bethal kerkgebou, gelei deur ds JA Breytenbach, verhuis die afgevaardigdes na die Jim van Tonder Skool waar die Sinode self gehou sal word. Namens die sameroepende kerk van Bethal open ds JA Breytenbach die vergadering. Ondersoek van die geloofsbriewe wys dat die volgende broeders wettig deur hul klassis afgevaardig is:

Klassis Noord:

- predikante PG Boon, MP Magagula en BA Matlaela
- ouderlinge AC Bijker, W Hofsink en TW Tamane

Klassis Suid

- predikante FJ Bijzet, JA Breytenbach en C Kleijn
- ouderlinge E Byker, C du Plessis en R Raimond

Die volgende moderamen is verkies: Voorsitter: ds PG Boon; Ondervoorsitter: ds C Kleijn; Skriba: br E Byker.

Br C Roose is ook aanwesig as kerkverbandelike administrateur en sal die Handeling van die Sinode opstel.

Afgevaardigdes van susterkerke, adviseurs en waarnemers

Ons susterkerke uit Australië en uit Kanada het hierdie keer albei twee afgevaardigdes na ons Sinode gestuur. Dit is die eerste keer in die geskiedenis van ons kerke en wys hoe die bande met daardie kerke die laaste dekade baie geïntensiveer het. Namens die Free Reformed Churches of Australia was ds S 't Hart en br W Spyker aanwesig en namens die Canadian Reformed Churches (die ons bekende) prof AJ de Visser en ds T Lodder. Tydens die Sinode is hulle herhaaldelik genooi om hul insette as adviseurs te gee. Maandagaand het ds S 't Hart en ds T Lodder groetboodskappe namens hul kerke oorgedra. Daarin het hulle iets oor hul eie kerkverbande vertel en uiting gegee aan hul waardering vir die groeiende kontakte tussen ons as susterkerke en dat hulle met liefde ons as kerke wil bly ondersteun waar dit nodig is.

Ds C van Wyk, ons sendeling in Wesbank, was ook op die Sinode aanwesig o.a. in verband met 'n voorstel van Klassis Suid betreffende Sending. Hy is genooi om as adviseur tydens die Sinode op te tree.

Ons susterkerke in Nederland het 'n groetboodskap per brief gestuur en laat weet dat hulle ongelukkig ons Sinode nie kan bywoon nie vanweë betrokkenheid by hul eie Sinode wat gelyktydig vergader.

Op Dinsdag verwelkom die vergadering vir die predikante P Kurpershoek en P Venter as waarnemers van die GKSA. Ds P Kurpershoek dra die groete en seënwense van die GKSA oor. Hy spreek die wens uit dat die kontakte tussen die GKSA en die VGKSA verdiep mag word. Hy dring ook daarop aan dat eerlik aangegee word wat die kerke nog van mekaar skei. Hy vra ook vir ons voorbede vir die GKSA Sinode, wat as die Here wil in Januarie gehou sal word, dat die kerke getrou mag bly.

Kontakte met Kerke in Suid Afrika

Die Sinode was bly met die teenwoordigheid van twee afgevaardigdes van die **GKSA** en hul openhartigheid. Dit het die sinode des te meer laat besef hoe belangrik die kontakte tussen die GKSA en die VGKSA is. Dit gaan daaroor dat ons mekaar ondersteun in die stryd vir die Gereformeerde leer en lewe. Die sinode het dan ook besluit om die kontakte met die GKSA op nasionale vlak voort te sit met die oog op die versterking van die band in die eenheid van

die Gereformeerde geloof. In die bespreking moet aandag gegee word aan die saak van hermeneutiek (die uitlegkunde van die Skrif), die sogenaamde Cloete omdigting en die GKSA besluit oor vroue in die amp van diaken.

Die Sinode het met blydschap kennis geneem van die goeie vordering van die kontakte in Pretoria tussen vyf plaaslike GKSA en VGKSA gemeentes. Die sinode het die deputate dan ook opgedra om plaaslike kontakte tussen die twee kerkverbande te stimuleer, te ondersteun en te monitor met die doel om mekaar te versterk in die bevordering van die ware Skriftuurlike leer en lewe.

Met betrekking tot die **NG Kerk in Afrika** ('n kerkverband wat in 1994 nie met die samesmelting tot die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk saamgegaan het nie) het die sinode besluit om kontakte met hulle voort te sit om mekaar beter te leer ken en om mekaar te ondersteun in die onderhouding van die ware geloof.

Die Sinode het ook die besluit van die vorige Sinode herhaal om deputate opdrag te gee om kontakte te onderhou met Engels sprekende kerke waarmee daar samewerking is m.b.t. die opleiding van teologiese studente.

Betrekkinge met buitelandse kerke (BBK)

Op grond van 'n gemotiveerde voorstel van die deputate BBK besluit die sinode om die susterkerkverhouding met die **Canadian Reformed Churches** en die **Free Reformed Churches of Australia** voor te sit. Die Sinode spreek ook sy opregte dank uit teenoor die kerke vir die manier waarop hulle die Suid-Afrikaanse kerke bystaan, veral ook wat betref finansiële steun aan hulpbehoewende kerke. Die aanwesigheid van afgevaardigdes van daardie kerke op die Sinode en hul insette tydens die besprekings is baie gewaardeer.

Soos verwag het die susterkerkverhouding met die **Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)** (GKNv) baie meer bespreking vereis. Ongelukkig was die deputate BBK nie eenstemmig oor hoe om te reageer op bekommernisse oor ontwikkelinge binne die GKNv nie. Die sinode besluit om die konsepbrief van die meerderheid van die deputate aan te pas en dit na die Sinode van die GKNv te stuur om hulle aan te moedig om die gereformeerde spoor te behou. Dank is uitgespreek oor die hegte bande wat ons oor die jare mog hê en oor die hulp wat ons steeds nog van hulle mag ontvang, veral vir ons sendingswerk. Aan die ander kant is ernstig gewaarsku teen 'n nuwe hermeneutiek ('n nuwe manier van Skrifuitleg wat die onfeilbaarheid en duidelikheid van die Skrif ondermyn) wat hom wys in geskrifte van twee dosente aan die Teologiese Universiteit van Kampen en in die voorstel van die meerderheid van hul deputate om alle ampte vir vroue oop te stel. Die sinode besluit om die susterkerkverhouding met die GKNv voort te sit volgens die vasgestelde reëls met as redes: (1) Hoewel ons bekommernisse het wat die fondament van ons kerklike verhouding raak, het die GKNv die verantwoordelikheid en die vermoë om die sake waarvoor ons bekommerd is, op hul sinode te Ede af te wys; (2) As susterkerke bly ons verantwoordelik om die GKNv te bemoedig om trou aan die Gereformeerde leer te bly.

Aangaande die **De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld)** (DGK) besluit die sinode om nie voort te gaan met voorbereidings om 'n susterkerkverhouding met hulle aan te gaan nie. Behalwe dat ons op die oomblik 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor die GKNv het, is daar ook die rede dat ons nie kan toegee aan die voorwaarde wat die DGK stel dat ons ons susterkerkverhouding met die CanRC eers moet verbreek.

Aangaande die **Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland** (GKN) is besluit dat ons deputate daardie groep kerke moet bly ondersoek. Sou lidmate uit die DGK of GKN Suid Afrika besoek dan word aanbeveel dat die kerkrade hulle as lidmate of as gaste aan die Heilige Nagmaal toelaat, net na 'n amptelike gesprek met hulle.

Betreffende die **Reformed Churches of New Zealand** en die **Kerke in Noord Amerika** het die Sinode die deputate opgedra om via ons susterkerke op hoogte bly van ontwikkelinge.

Die kontakte met **kerke in ander Afrikalande** sal bly loop deur die Internasionale Konferensie vir Gereformeerde Kerke (ICRC) en sy regionale sendingskonferensies en via susterkerke wat reeds daar kontakte het. Die deputate word gemagtig om kontakte met Afrikaanse ICRC lidkerke te onderhou en maniere te vind om die verkondiging van die Woord en die opleiding en toerusting deur daardie kerke te ondersteun, in samewerking met ander ICRC lidkerke. Indien die deputate aansoeke kry van kerke waaronder die ICRC of susterkerke nie aktief is nie dan moet hulle beoordeel hoe haalbaar so 'n kontak is.

Lidmaatskap van die **ICRC** word voortgesit en die gewysigde weergawe van die ICRC se “Constitution and Regulations” word as 'n verbetering goedgekeur.

Bybelvertaling, liturgiese musiek, formuliere en gebede

Die Sinode neem met dank kennis van die feit dat die nuwe Afrikaanse bron-georiënteerde vertaling van die Nuwe Testament en die Psalms reeds in 'n voorlopige uitgawe beskikbaar is. Deputate word weer aangestel met die mandaat om as lede van die Kerklike Advieskomitee by die voortgang van hierdie vertaling betrokke te wees. Die deputate sal in die proses bygestaan word deur lesers uit die kerke.

Die deputate liturgiese musiek het in die afgelope jaar 11 gesange en die nuwe Skrifberymings van die GKSA aan die kerke gestuur om te toets volgens die kriteria wat deur die Sinode 2011 aanvaar is. Hulle het egter nog geen terugvoer vanuit die kerke daarvoor ontvang nie. Daarom word die kerke gevra om voor die einde van 2015 hul terugvoer daarvoor te gee sodat die deputate 'n finale seleksie aan die volgende sinode kan voorlê. Deputate word ook gevra om met die deputate van die GKSA in kontak te kom met betrekking tot die publikasie van die hersiene Totiusberyming en te ondersoek of ons dit in ons erediens kan gebruik.

Die Sinode het ook Sotho-sprekendes in die deputaatskap benoem, aangesien hulle die opdrag gekry het om die gesangebundel te toets wat tans in die Sotho-sprekende kerke gebruik word.

Die sinode besluit om nie gebruik te maak van die hersiene liturgiese Formuliere en Gebede van die GKSA nie omdat dit nie werklik 'n verbetering sou beteken nie. Ons bly by ons eie formuliere en gaan kyk hoe ons die formuliere verder kan verbeter. Die Sinode het wel besluit om voorlopig die nuwe nagmaalsformulier van die GKSA te aanvaar vir gebruik in die kerke, ter afwisseling van die twee nagmaalsformuliere wat ons reeds gebruik.

Wat die formuliergebede betref, word besluit om aan deputate op te dra om vyf nuwe gebede saam te stel, vier vir gebruik in die erediens en een vir gebruik by die huis.

Sending

Met dankbaarheid het die sinode kennis geneem van die sendingswerk wat deur die kerke verrig is en van die moontlikhede wat daar nog voorlê, veral met die surplus fondse wat nou beskikbaar is. Die sinode besluit om die deputate toe te laat om versoeke vir ondersteuning te oorweeg wat buite die huidige raamwerk van net kerkplanting val. Daardie versoeke moet egter wel verband hou met die verbreiding van die evangelie en as uiteindelige doel hê die bekering van sondaars en die vergadering van Christus se kerk. Daarmee het die sinode die kern van Klassis Suid se voorstel aangespreek naamlik dat toerusting en opleiding in spesifieke gevalle ook as sending beskou kan word.

Teologiese Opleiding

Op grond van die deputateverslag besluit die sinode om duidelike toelatingsvereistes vir nuwe studente te stel. Teologiese studente moet een van die volgende studietrajekte volg:

- a. 'n Driejarige BA studie in Hebreeus en Grieks in Suid Afrika en daarna 'n vierjarige MDiv studie in Hamilton, Kanada
- b. 'n Oorbruggingskursus, gevolg deur 'n driejarige BA studie in tale en daarna 'n vierjarige MDiv studie in Hamilton;

- c. 'n Oorbruggingskursus, gevolg deur 'n BTh in Suid Afrika (aan die Mukhanyo Theological College of aan die George Whitfield Theological College), met daarna ten minste twee jare universitêre talestudie en een jaar studie in Hamilton.

Die sinode neem met dank kennis van die aanstelling en werksaamhede van ds Jopie van der Linden as mentor van die studente in die Noorde. Die belang van goeie mentorskap vir alle studente, ook hulle in die Suide word benadruk.

Die deputate kry ook as opdrag om geleenthede te skep vir voortgesette opleiding en toerusting van predikante en ander ampsdraers.

Vanweë die noue verbinding tussen die werk van deputate Kuratore en deputate hulpbehoewende studente is besluit om daardie twee deputaatskappe saam te voeg.

Volhoubaarheid en Kerkverbandelike bydraes

Op grond van 'n deeglike rapport van deputate volhoubaarheid besluit die sinode om 'n nuwe model vir gedifferensieerde kerklike bydraes vanaf 2015 in te voer. Dit beoog dat alle kerke na drakrag (ooreenkomstig die geskatte gemiddelde inkomste en drakrag van die gemeentelede) sal bydra aan die kerkverbandelike uitgawes. Voor elke sinode sal die kerkrade gevra word om 'n berekening te maak van die vermoë van hul gemeente om by te dra.

Die sinode het ook die voorstel van deputate om tussen die sinodes 'n landelike indaba te hou (waarin alle kerke en deputaatskappe verteenwoordig is), goedgekeur. As gronde vir die besluit word genoem: a. Indabas kan (veral in ons multikulturele kerkverband) help om misverstande te voorkom of op te los; b. Indabas kan deputate help om die situasies beter in te skat en om meer effektiewe voorstelle vir die sinode te formuleer; c. Indabas kan die samewerking tussen die deputate en die kerke verbeter.

Om bostaande te bereik word aan alle deputate opgedra om 'n tussentydse verslag aan die indaba voor te lê.

Daar word ook besluit om elke keer 'n ander deputaatskap aan te wys om die indaba te organiseer. Die eerste indaba sal DV rigting die einde van 2015 gehou word, en deputate art. 11 (hulpbehoewende kerke) is aangewys om dit te organiseer.

Die sinode besluit ook om die Deputate Volhoubaarheid (Sustainability) te ontbind, soos deur hulle self versoek. Hulle het die mandaat voltooi en met die besluite wat geneem is, is hulle bestaan in die toekoms nie meer nodig nie.

Met groot waardering neem die sinode kennis van die verslag van die kwesor. Die sinode besluit om voorlopig die volgende bydraes van die kerke te vra wat nog omgewerk moet word volgens die nuwe model van gedifferensieerde bydraes.

	(2014)	2015	2016	2017
Art. 11	Kwotum deur sinode 2011 besluit	Verhoging bo inflasie	Verhoging bo inflasie	Verhoging bo inflasie
Art. 19		R100 per lidmaat	R120 per lidmaat	R140 per lidmaat
Kuratore		R90 per lidmaat	Inflasie verhoging	Inflasie verhoging
MDSA	Kwotum deur sinode 2011 besluit	<i>Geen inflasie verhoging, Dieselfde bedrag as in 2014. Inflasie verhoging na hulpbehoewende kerke</i>	<i>Geen inflasie verhoging, Dieselfde bedrag as in 2014. Inflasie verhoging na hulpbehoewende kerke</i>	<i>Geen inflasie verhoging, Dieselfde bedrag as in 2014. Inflasie verhoging na hulpbehoewende kerke</i>
Kerkverband	Kwotum deur sinode 2011 besluit	Verhoging volgens inflasie	Verhoging volgens inflasie	Verhoging volgens inflasie

Volgende sinode en sluiting

Die VGK van Soshanguve word benoem om die volgende sinode saam te roep. As datum word genoem die laaste week van Augustus 2017. Hierdie later datum is gekies om te help dat die deputate se verslae betyds (4 maande voor die sinode) ingedien word. Vanweë die vakansietyd in Desember en Januarie was dit dikwels moeilik vir deputate om die sperdatum te haal. Die VGK Pretoria-Maranata word as moontlike plaasvervanger benoem.

Die voorsitter dank die sameroepende kerk en die susters en broeders van Bethal vir die uitstekende manier waarop hulle die sinode ontvang en versorg het. Na 'n meditasie oor Handeling 15 deur die tweede voorsitter sluit ds Boon die sinode.

Namens die Sinode

Ds PG Boon (voorsitter)

ds C Kleijn (ondervoorsitter)

br E Byker (skriba)