

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.