



Report Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa to Synod Belhar 2021

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A. Date of Report

January 27th, 2021

B. Version (e.g. Majority report, minority report, sequence number if more than one report).

Only and final report

C. Date and Place of Mandating Synod.

Synod Soshanguve 2017

D. Date and Place of Proposed Receiving Synod.

Synod Belhar 2021

E. Mandate according to Acts Synod Soshanguve 2017, p.24

Synod decided:

1. To take note of the report of DCCSA and to adopt in general the approach of DCCSA towards their mandate.

Ground:

Deputies have fulfilled their mandate.

2. To express its concern about section 3 regarding the agreements between the FROCSA and the RCSA deputies in respect of the Cloete verifications.

Ground:

An agreement had been made between deputies DCCSA and Deputies for Ecumenicity of the RCSA to engage with theologians who were involved in the versification process. DCCSA however proposed to terminate the discussion about the Cloete versification despite the fact that this engagement has not taken place.

3. To appoint new deputies with the following mandate:

3.1 To continue contact with the RCSA on a national level in view of strengthening the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith. Focus should be given, but not limited to:

- i. the nature of a church federation;*
- ii. how deviance from Scripture and Confession should be dealt with in a Reformed church federation;*
- iii. how local churches should uphold federational decisions;*
- iv. to continue the discussion on the Cloete versification;*
- v. to discuss the issue whether women in office (elders and/or deacons) is a confessional or an essential matter.*

Grounds:

3.1.1. To strive towards unification implies agreement on the nature of a church federation.

3.1.2. Synod noticed that there is a growing tendency within the RCSA of local congregations not upholding federational decisions.

3.1.3. Deputies have indicated that some RCSA synod decisions are in conflict with Scripture, Confession and Reformed hermeneutics.

3.2. To actively assist congregations in their local contacts with RCSA congregations, advising them on all relevant matters.

Ground:

Conclusions reached during the deliberations of deputies on the national level also have an impact on the local level. Local and national deliberations should remain on par. In local contacts, deliberations should take place about the question how local RCSA congregations continue to function in a federation where deviance from the Reformed doctrine has become endemic with regards to certain matters, after repeated appeals to synod have been turned down. Local churches are not forced to comply with decisions, e.g. with regards to women in (diaconal) office, cooperation with the DRC, and using the Cloete-versifications. On the other hand, these things will continue unchallenged in future and so negatively influence the health of the federation.

3.3. To submit a study document to the next synod on what the impact will be of:

- i. the Memorandum of Understanding between the RCSA and the DRC;*
- ii. the decision by the RCSA synod about women in the office of deacons;*
- iii. the decision by the RCSA synod to accept the Cloete versification.*
- iv. on the local contacts between the FRCSA and RCSA congregations.*

Ground:

The local engagement between congregations, currently in different federations, cannot continue indefinitely without also striving to become one on a federational level.

3.4. To continue contacts with the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – DRCAfr (NG Kerk in Afrika – NGKA) in order to get to know them better and to support each other to maintain the true faith. Contacts should at this stage not directly be aimed at unification, but to support the DRCAfr in their search for a real Reformed church policy.

Grounds:

3.4.1. DRCAfr is a federation that wants to be a Church of Christ, but need support to pursue on a Scriptural route.

3.4.2. We may be able to help each other regarding theological training and training of elders.

3.4.3. To be able to help them we should be more informed and know them better.

3.4.4. They may be invited to attend our synod.

3.5. To encourage contacts between local FRCSA congregations and DRCAfr congregations where possible and to report back on such activities to deputies.

Ground:

Local contacts may help to get a clearer idea of how DRCAfr churches function.

3.6. To encourage Church Councils to identify Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their area, and make contact with them and have discussions to know each other better, to be able to support each other, if needed also theologically.

Ground:

We need to support churches in our areas with whom we are one in faith, even if the language differs.

3.7. To re-establish contacts with the Free Church of South Africa (FCSA) and to attend their synods (General Assemblies), and to invite their representatives to attend FRCSA synods, with the aim to investigate if we can support each other theologically, and to report on their activities.

Ground:

Through their connections with the Free Church of Scotland, the FCSA is linked to the ICRC. As the FRCSA is also a member of the ICRC, this means that both church denominations share the same basis of the Reformed faith, which is a good reason to investigate possibilities to support each other.

3.8. To organise an Indaba according to Article 28 of the Acts of the FRCSA Synod 2014, during the 1st quarter of 2019.

3.9. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2017 and Synod 2020.

3.10. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2017.

4. To approve a budget of R8000 for activities by DCCSA.

Ground:

Contacts with churches indicated above requires a fair amount of travelling.

F. Membership

Br Wolter Bijker (convener)

Rev Pieter Boon (secretary)

Rev George Mnisi

Rev Hannes Breytenbach

Rev Sam Matlhokoane

G. Summary of activities and methods employed

Deputies held meetings on:

Nov 9th 2017;

Feb 15th 2018;

May 2nd 2018;

Aug 22nd 2018;
 Nov 21st 2018;
 Jan 31st 2019 (with Deputies Ecumenicity of RCSA);
 Feb 6th 2019 (with Bishop Glenn Lyon of REACH);
 Jun 10th 2019 (with Deputies Ecumenicity of RCSA);
 Oct 16th 2019 (with Deputies Ecumenicity of RCSA); Feb 6th 2020.

Due to the lockdown restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, no meetings were held during the rest of 2020. A meeting was scheduled for November 2020, but cancelled due to illness of the secretary.

On June 28th – 29th 2019 a Conference was held focusing on *The Essentials of a Church Federation*.

H. Detailed Report – working on the Mandates

Mandate 3.1

To continue contact with the RCSA on a national level in view of strengthening the bond in the unity of the Reformed faith. Focus should be given, but not limited to:

- i. the nature of a church federation;*
- ii. how deviance from Scripture and Confession should be dealt with in a Reformed church federation;*
- iii. how local churches should uphold federational decisions;*
- iv. to continue the discussion on the Cloete versification;*
- v. to discuss the issue whether women in office (elders and/or deacons) is a confessional or an essential matter.*

Numbers i-iii all circle around the topic *church federation*. For that reason deputies have decided to organize a conference focusing especially on the character and essentials of a church federation.

During the conference attention was paid to:

- the Biblical roots of church federation
- the formation of church federation during the age of the Reformation
- the history of church federations in South Africa
- many relevant questions regarding our current situation.

Below you will find a summary of the findings of the conference, which were extremely helpful to fulfil our mandate. For an overview of the programme and topics dealt with during the conference, see Annexure 5. After the conference, the findings of the conference were also used in our ongoing talks with Deputies Ecumenicity of the RCSA.¹

In this regard the following can be mentioned very briefly. For a better understanding we refer to the summary of the conference below:

Mandate 3.1: i. the nature of a church federation: There is agreement between the FRCSA and the RCSA in regards to the nature of a church federation. Practical reality is however more complex.

Mandate 3.1: ii. how deviance from Scripture and Confession should be dealt with in a Reformed church

¹ For an overview of the history of communications between the RCSA and FRCSA, we refer to the article “Eenheid in waarheid – Kort oorsig van die VGKSA se ekumeniese verhoudings oor 70 jaar” in: PG Boon & HH van Alten eds., *Gedenkbundel 70 Jaar Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria, 2020), p.152-155.

federation; Deputies Ecumenicity acknowledged that there are local RCSA churches who do not uphold all decisions of synods, that were taken on the basis of Scripture and Confession. They pleaded for patience in dealing with these situations in an church orderly way, which can take in their view years.

Mandate 3.1: iii. how local churches should uphold federational decisions;

Again in theory there is by and large agreement, yet in practice there are several churches that ignore federational decisions, without walking the church orderly road of appeal. This has an indirect influence on the major assemblies, in the sense that they become all the more hesitant to take clear decision on essential matters.

Summary Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation

For an elaborate report on the Conference, please visit <https://www.vgk.org.za/konf>

Scriptural principles: one in doctrine

Each church must be built on the foundation of the apostles, on the Gospel they brought (Ephesians 2: 20-21). When a church deviates from the apostolic testimony, it is no longer a church of Christ. See Galatians 1: 8: But if we, or an angel from heaven, preach you a gospel contrary to those we preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Scripture reveals a clear contrast between the church and the world (John 17: 14-18; 1 John 3:13). Scripture also reveals an antithesis between the true believers and those in the church who have become worldly in doctrine and / or lifestyle. Light and darkness, truth and lie, cannot live together in the same place (1 John 2: 18-19). Therefore, in Scripture we find the call to unmask those who claim to follow Christ but despise his Word (Rev. 2: 9). There is a clear call in the NT to avoid them and to separate from those who have become apostate in doctrine and / or life (2 Tim. 2: 17-19). It is a spiritual struggle to protect one another close to the true teaching of the Gospel of Christ (2 Cor 11:28). Christ gives unity in truth (John 17:17; 1 John 1: 6; 1 John 2: 4-6; 3 John 1: 4).

Jesus Christ is the Word. Churches should build on Scripture alone, and live according to all of Scripture. Churches that deviate from this disassociate themselves from the rock on which Jesus Christ builds his church, and are encouraged to return to the orthodox doctrine of Scripture.

One across geographical boundaries

What we also find in the NT is the call to local congregations, wherever they are planted, to begin working together. There is no indication of a superstructure in the NT. All local churches are directly under their Head, Jesus Christ. However, there is interdependence. We can think of the call to hold collections for each other, e.g. the more affluent congregations for the benefit of the financially struggling congregation in Jerusalem (Rom. 15: 25-28; 1 Cor. 16: 1-3). A du Plooy calls this joint action to collect for Jerusalem: an organized and visible and tangible experience of being in a relationship, a unity despite the boundaries between countries and nations (*In die Skriflig* 18,71 (1984), p29-30).

Another example of cooperation across geographical boundaries is found in the call to share the letters that the apostles had written to each local congregation (Col. 4:16). These revelations of cooperation in Scripture across geographical boundaries can be compared to the seeds of a flower. In the seed all the characteristics of the flower are already present. We find the seed in the NT. A well-functioning connection between churches is the flower that grows

from this seed. How broad or narrow should a Reformed church federation be in regards to geographical location? In principle, given the revelation in Scripture, there are no boundaries.

One across cultural and linguistic boundaries

We profess the Scriptural calling of local churches to live in ecclesiastical unity with other churches, based on the foundation of God's Word alone: "Behold, I lay in Zion a chosen and precious cornerstone ... you are a chosen generation, proclaiming a royal priesthood, a holy people, a people as property, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light, you who used to be no people, but now the people of God" (1 Peter 2: 6-10).

Scripture defines the church, consisting of all believers (of whatever race, nation, tribe or language they are) as a new unity, a new race, a new nation, a new people. It becomes their primary identity, their primary citizenship. Now this new unity is something that not only can remain abstract theory, but it must become visible in church-related and ecumenical unity. It is the unity in Christ, in the midst of all diversity (Col 3:11). In the NT we find no indication that there are segregations between congregations based on different cultures. The indication is that there was unity in one congregation in each town. For example, although the harbor city of Corinth was very cosmopolitan, all that diversity came together in the unity of one congregation. We also find the call to unity in e.g. Ephesians 4: 1-4: "Then I exhort you ... to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called ... and earnestly strive to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. It is one body and one Spirit, as you were also called in one hope of your calling."

How broad or narrow should a Reformed church federation be in relation to language and culture? In principle, language and culture should not determine the boundaries of a church federation. It does not take away the fact that local congregations use different languages so that the Gospel can be preached in such a way the hearers can understand it in their mother language as much as possible. But these different local congregations should look for each other in federational unity. Local churches that are not interested in living in federational unity with other local churches in their area because of cultural or linguistic differences, are erring and disregarding Christ's call for unity.

A du Plooy writes: There are no boundaries for a church federation. There is only one ecumenical church, across cultural and linguistic boundaries (*In die Skriflig* 18.71 (1984), p33).

Lovely duty

The NT reflects a time when the apostles were still active. They worked with apostolic authority (1 Cor. 1: 1,2). We live in a time when the apostolic order is complete. It is fundamental to Reformed church polity that no church may now rule over another church, and no office bearer over another office bearer. However, all churches should work closely together in the way the apostle laid the foundation for them.

Is a church federation something that local churches voluntarily participate in, or is it a duty? It's both. Churches realize that this act of participating and sharing across geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries is the logical consequence of listening to the Gospel and putting it into practice. It's a lovely duty. The NT does not reveal any super-structure over local churches. Nevertheless, the NT reveals that local churches are called and obliged to organize in federational unity, with the aim of:

- the glory of God;
- the mutual building of the body of Christ;
- the safeguarding of every local church to continue to display the characteristics of a true church.

Lessons from Church History

Church history teaches us that the Reformed view on a church federation grew in the century of the Reformation, partly through the circumstances in which Christ had brought his church. Reformed church polity has grown in insight, especially with regard to the relationship between church and government. The Dort Church Order of 1618-1619 takes as its point of departure the gains of the Reformation, the renewed focus on Christ's direct spiritual government of every local church, as well as the Scriptural calling of local churches to live in a relationship.

The General Regulation that replaced the Dort Church Order in The Netherlands and South Africa from 1816 has radically changed the view of the church. The authority was taken away from the local church and given to a synodical administration. However, the Dort Church Order is based on the Scriptural principle that every local church is directly under the authority of Christ and his Word. Christ governs every local church directly through his Word and Spirit.

We should be aware that although our Church Order is based on the Dort Church Order, our thinking is often unconsciously still influenced by the General Regulation. The danger still lies in the fact that too much authority is attributed to the synod or other major assemblies. The synod is not the most important meeting, though that is often the perception. The major assembly is not a qualitative term, but a quantitative or numerical one. A major or broader assembly (such as a classis or synod) is not a meeting with more authority, but 'major' or 'broader' indicates that more than one church is represented at the meeting. Such a major assembly may only take decisions on matters that the local churches have put on its agenda in order to take a joint decision.

The word *synod* often causes wrong perceptions. We must be aware that confusion may arise when using this word. The General Regulation defined the word in a way that is foreign to Scripture. When we continue to use the word synod, we must make it explicit that it is not the highest authority over the churches, but a temporary gathering between churches with derived authority.

Apart from the danger of 'synodocracy', there is also a movement in which local churches are no longer prepared to conform to essential matters decided by all churches together. In reaction to this, major assemblies no longer want to take a stand on essential matters, with the result that local churches can each go their own way. We must not forget that isolation is also dangerous. It is important that the worldwide church of Christ keeps in touch with each other. We all tend to err, especially under the pressure of the particular society we live in.

Major assemblies, such as a classis or synod, are means of promoting and protecting the spiritual government of Christ in every local church. These meetings are intended to preserve the unity in doctrine and life between local churches. If there are no more meetings where local churches meet, local churches will drift apart. Major assemblies are a gift intended to

preserve local churches close to Christ and his Word, to promote the spiritual government of Christ in every local church. Major assemblies promote the biblical command: Let all things go well and orderly (1 Cor. 14:40) and: For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (1 Cor. 14:33)

Local churches and federations must be open to the often surprising church gathering work of Christ. He does not automatically follow the contours of historical church federations. Christ opens doors that were closed in the past, and He also closes doors that were open in the past.

It is an organic process when local churches get to know each other and grow in realizing that they are one in doctrine and life. An organic process cannot be enforced with decisions and / or structures.

Recognizing and acknowledging each other as true churches of Christ in doctrine and life is something that takes its time and should not be squeezed with a result-driven mentality.

A decision towards pulpit exchange and the opening of the sacraments for each other makes no sense if local congregations do not know each other in several respects and if mutual trust have not been established.

As congregations begin to cooperate more and more organically, structural steps should follow, such as pulpit exchange, accepting one another's attestations, opening the sacraments to one another, calling each other's ministers. This can result in the holding of joint classis meetings. This is how a bond starts growing locally. In the event of questions or doubts, patience should be considered. Come time, come advice.

Practical matters:

Is it better if synods always consist of delegates from all local churches and not from a delegation from the lesser assembly?

The elected delegates from a lesser assembly (like the classis) do not necessarily come from every local church. If every local church sends a delegate, the nature of synod changes. It then becomes more of a sort of voting meeting, rather than a deliberative meeting that seeks to understand and conclude all matters seeking as much consensus as possible. The church is not a democracy. We do not strive for major assemblies to be as democratic as possible. The local church council has a direct authority from Christ, but as soon as the churches gather together, that major assembly does not have direct authority from Christ. The office bearers there are present as representatives of all the churches, not just of their own local church.

Can a local church belong to more than one federation?

Being part of a church federation means that a local church has agreed to follow the church order of the denomination. If the congregation is to belong to two federations, they will both have to have the same church orders, otherwise a conflict will arise. And if the two church orders are actually the same, shouldn't there be one church federation and not two? A complicating factor, however, is that church federations sometimes have the same (historical) church order on paper, but in practice they no longer stick to it.

'Church hopping'

In our consumer driven society, it is increasingly happening that people easily move from one church to another, not because a congregation has become really sick and dying, but simply out of their own preference. This trend must be countered because

- it is disobedient to the office bearers under whose authority Christ has placed a member,
- it breaks the promises of a member's profession of faith,
- it is very detrimental to the spiritual well-being of a family, especially the children. If children learn that allegiance to a church can be easily changed, they will change even easier as they grow older.

How long should a congregation continue to work towards reform in a church federation that has become ill?

It is not something one can easily determine for someone else. We must be wise and not judge each other on the exact time when someone or a congregation should leave a sick church. We must strive for the official way, and when those official channels have been exhausted, if we can say that we have done our best to the best of our ability, we should not say that you are breaking away from them, but that they has broken the unity of faith with you.

What can be done if a local church ordains women in special offices?

If Scripture, Confession, and Church Order are broken within a federation, then we have different ways of addressing the problem in Reformed church polity. One is that the visitors on behalf of classis visit a local congregation, and inquire about it. The Church Order stipulates that they must timely admonish those who do not keep their promises to the Church Order.

Secondly, during each classis meeting, as the representatives of the churches gather, the chair of the classis is empowered by the churches that are assembled, to ask each church whether the decisions of the major assemblies are upheld, whether the ministry of local offices is continuing, and whether the church needs help. If other churches know that a particular congregation no longer follows the Church Order, they have the right to address it.

Third, the responsibility of every member in his office as a believer is paramount. If a local congregation starts to deviate from the Church Order, a member must write a letter to his church council, asking questions, and then, if they do not give a correct answer, inform the church council that they are obliged to appeal to the major assemblies.

In the end, if these processes do not bear fruit, the other churches simply no longer accept the credentials of that congregation, because the credentials when they come to classis always say that they promise to abide with all the decisions that conform to the Word of God and the Church Order. When a local congregation no longer lives according to its promises, it places itself outside the federation.

We must also be mindful of dubious 'church political' reasoning, which states for example, that women in church offices is a matter that does not conflict with the Word, Confession and Church Order. A local congregation that ordains women in office breaks its promise to be a church in line with the Church Order. Such a step runs counter to Scripture and Confession. Already in the NT there was the dilemma that heretics claimed to follow Christ and his Word. Such statements should however be tested against the content of Scripture (Gal. 1: 8).

When a local congregation holds the view that they may depart from the Church Order, they break their promise to live in a relationship of unity with other local churches.

Should a sister church relationship be broken if a sister church's synod decided to allow women into office?

If it is clear that a church federation has made this decision, if the sister churches have addressed the matter but without result, and time has been given for appeals within the denomination, then comes the moment the bonds must be broken. There cannot be a sister-church relationship with a federation that deviates structurally from the teachings of Scripture. Nor is it Scriptural to have a sister church relationship with another federation simply because one shares the same language and culture, whilst there is no doctrinal unity.

What if there is local rapprochement with a congregation that is part of a federation where other congregations, for example, allow women in church offices or do not allow black members?

The local unity does not exist with the whole federation, but only with a specific congregation from that federation. The local congregation in question should be asked what is being done in their federation to address the deviation from Scripture, Confession and Church Order. We must keep in mind that within Reformed church polity, the relationship with a 'third party' does matter.

Should a church council ratify synod decisions first, before they become legal in the local congregation?

When a church council or classis delegates brothers to go to a meeting and make decisions, the church council or classis promises in advance to adhere to the decisions. The credentials state: We will abide by all the decisions taken in accordance with the Word of God, and instructed our delegate to participate in the meeting accordingly. According to this, ratification has no place. Ratification undermines the authority of the major assembly and the promise made on the credential letter. Local congregations therefore pledge with their credentials that decisions taken at major assemblies will be directly binding, unless it can be proven that they are in conflict with Scripture or Church Order (CO art. 31).

The churches must be actively be involved in the preparation process, prior to the synod, in preparing matters that affect all churches and which the synod must decide on. Subsequently, churches must then accept decisions as binding unless they violate art. 31 CO. This is how it stands in our Church Order. It must be considered binding and accepted, rather than waiting for an act of the church council to ratify it.

Mandate 3.1: iv. to continue the discussion on the Cloete versification;

Deputies Ecumenicity of the RCSA served us with a number of publications dealing with the Cloete versification of the Psalms, clarifying the approach and background of this versification:

- TT Cloete, *Prof WS Prinsloo en die omdigting van die Psalms*
- JL Helberg, *Die messiaanse aard van psalms: hoe dit 'n Nuwe-Testamentiese lees, vertaling en omdigting van die psalms raak*
- FIJ van Rensburg: *Psalmberyming in Afrikaans*
- HF van Rooy: *Die nuwe Psalmomdigting: Die Messias weggelaat?*
- HF van Rooy: *Die 2001-vertaling van die Psalms na vyf jaar*
- HF van Rooy: *Psalm 137 en die beryming van die wraakpsalms.*

Upfront we as deputies want to emphasize that we regard TT Cloete as a talented poet, and although some versifications are better than others, the poetical quality of the versifications are beyond doubt. As deputies we also acknowledge that it is not wrong if there are more than one versifications being used in a federation of churches. This need not compromise the unity in a federation.

As for the Cloete versifications in particular, the theological hermeneutical points of departure remain for as a fundamental matter, also after reading the above literature thoroughly. As for our arguments in this regard we refer back to our report to Synod Soshanguve 2017.

Also the point of departure of the Cloete versifications to use the 1983-translation of the Bible in Afrikaans remains a fundamental matter, a translation which is based on a method of translation that makes it unfit for use in our church services, as was decided by FRCSA synods in the past. When reading the above mentioned literature, we hold the impression that the opposing parties within the RCSA as for the Cloete versifications, not really articulate each others arguments correctly, causing them to defeat something the other party does not really stand for. This may hinder rapprochement.

As for deliberations between local FRCSA and RCSA congregations, the Cloete Versifications do not form an obstacle, since all of these RCSA congregations have rejected the Cloete Versifications on the same fundamental principles as we hold.

Mandate 3.1: v. to discuss the issue whether women in office (elders and/or deacons) is a confessional or an essential matter.

Firstly we refer to the findings of the Conference, on which we have reported above, clearly emphasizing that the issue whether women in office is a confessional matter.

Secondly we can report that this matter was discussed with Deputies Ecumenicity of the RCSA. During the discussions we sensed that there was some difference of opinion between the members of Deputies Ecumenicity how to interpret their synod decisions. Some reported that their synod declared it a confessional matter, other reported it to be an essential matter.

In this regard we refer to the document we received from them: **21.1 Report Deputies Unity in Diversity**. This document is available with us if anyone wants to read it.

Whether the discussion on *essential* or *confessional* has been concluded or not, what is clear is that the RCSA synods has closed the special offices of elder and minister for women, whilst opening the special office of deacon for women.

In practice there are RCSA congregations that did not open all three special offices for women, there are those who have opened only the office of deacon for women, and there are those who have opened both the office of deacon and elder for women.

Mandate 3.2: To actively assist congregations in their local contacts with RCSA congregations, advising them on all relevant matters.

In Classis North some of our deputies were closely involved with the contacts with the RCSA congregations Die Kandelaar, Oos-Moot and Totiusdal. Advice was given to committees, consistories and classis meetings.

As deputies we sense that local churches ask for guidance as for their ongoing local contacts. We regard this to be the most important mandate for deputies in the coming years. We also has to acknowledge that we did not manage to reach out to all churches, especially not those in Classis

South to assist and advise them. For the coming years this has to become more a priority mandate.

Until present local churches have worked with a mandate to make contacts with neighbouring churches. During the past years it became increasingly clear that there are also other RCSA congregations (who are technically not neighbouring churches) who desire to join the local contacts. This applies especially for the Classis Pretoria-Moot of the RCSA. We therefore ask synod to deliberate on this, taking cognizance of this development, and give directions wherever necessary. It is evident that, especially in Classis North, an organic process is unfolding along the lines as reported in the above summary of the *Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation*. This is promising, yet asks for proper involvement and advice from the other churches in the FRCSA.

Mandate 3.3. To submit a study document to the next synod on what the impact will be of:

i. the Memorandum of Understanding between the RCSA and the DRC;

During our deliberations with Deputies Ecumenicity of the RCSA this point received due attention. From their side they explained how this memorandum functions in practice. According to them this memorandum especially serves a need in rural areas, where local congregations of the RCSA and DRC are becoming small, financially vulnerable, and have no choice than to cooperate. This is possible in view of the affinity that has existed since long in the past between the so called *three sister churches*. The memorandum allows for, amongst others, pulpit exchange, administration of the sacraments, and acceptance of each other's members to the sacraments.

Especially in regards to this point we as deputies sensed a difference in approach to the reality of church federation, and the close cooperation with other church federations who have deviated from the Reformed doctrine. We question the practice to closely cooperate with DRC congregations, without urging them to address errancy in their federation and/or secede from an unfaithful federation.

Some RCSA congregations have appealed to synod that this memorandum be put aside. However two consecutive synods have endorsed the memorandum, meaning that it is something to stay. The local RCSA congregations with which FRCSA congregations have cooperation, have rejected this memorandum however.

Also in regards to evaluating this memorandum, we refer to the findings of the *Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation*.

Mandate 3.3. To submit a study document to the next synod on what the impact will be of:

ii. the decision by the RCSA synod about women in the office of deacons;

As for a study document on women in the office of deacons, we refer to the book *The Deacon. Biblical Foundations for Today's Ministry of Mercy* by Dr. Cornelis van Dam, especially the chapters

6. Are Female Deacons Biblical?

8. Women and the Diaconate.

In these chapters several applicable Bible passages are exegeted and applied to the topic.

Dr. Pieter Boon has written a review of this book, which was published both in the FRCSA magazine *Kompas* and the RCSA magazine *Die Kerkblad*.

In summary, both men and women are called to serve, to be servants (the original meaning of the Greek word *diakonos*). However Scripture reveals that the authority and end responsibility over the ministry of mercy, Christ has entrusted to God fearing brothers to be ordained in a special office.

**Mandate 3.3. To submit a study document to the next synod on what the impact will be of:
iii. the decision by the RCSA synod to accept the Cloete versification.**

This matter has already been dealt with above, see Mandate 3.1 iv.

**Mandate 3.3. To submit a study document to the next synod on what the impact will be of:
iv. on the local contacts between the FRCSA and RCSA congregations.**

Synod Soshanguve 2017 formulated as ground for this mandate: "The local engagement between congregations, currently in different federations, cannot continue indefinitely without also striving to become one on a federational level."

As for this topic, we again refer to the summary report of the *Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation*, serving as study document in this regard.

As a working agreement between the local FRCSA and RCSA congregations, it has been stated that for the middle term congregations still have a calling in their respective federations. However, in the local agreements between FRCSA and RCSA congregations, it is stated explicitly that federational unity should remain a future goal. In the agreement between the FRC Pretoria-Maranata and the RC Oos-Moot it is stated for example:

"Die Here gee eenheid tussen ware gelowiges en daarvoor moet ons noukeurig op die uitkyk wees. Ons moet goed oplet na dit wat die Here doen en die deure wat Hy vir ons oopmaak. Ons is tans nie kerkregtelik aan mekaar gebind nie, en daarom is elke kerkraad dit eens dat ons hard moet werk om daadwerklik bymekaar uit te kom as 'n kerkverbandelike eenheid." (see Annexure 4)

With the increasing diversity in the RCSA federation, for example with regards to women in office as well as the reception of the *Memorandum for Cooperation with the DRC*, it is evident that the possibility of unity on a federational level between the FRCSA and RCSA is fading. However, on a local level there are more and more possibilities for close cooperation. Past FRCSA synods have expressed the wish that deliberations on national and local level should remain on par. Reality teaches us though that this goal becomes increasingly unattainable. As deputies we sense that our role on national level is decreasing, whereas our advice and assistance on local level is much needed.

Referring to the outcomes of the *Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation*, we as deputies want to stress the importance of church unity to grow organically. We also regard it important to question ourselves on whether we have approached the quest for church unity too much top-down, instead of bottom-up. Aren't we, perhaps subconsciously, also influenced by the legacy of the General Regulation? Don't we see church unity too much as something a synod has to decide on, and in the meantime holding off all local contacts until synod has reached a verdict?

To be clear, we don't mean that synod shouldn't be involved in the process of church unity. However synod, as a meeting of the churches, should evaluate what is happening locally and what is growing organically on a local level, steering things in the right direction by going back to the Biblical

principles, stimulating and wherever needed admonishing one another.

All this being said, our advice to synod would be, in the current circumstances, not to maintain as prerequisite in regards with the contacts with the RCSA that national and local deliberations should remain on par. Would the growing doctrinal diversity within the RCSA persist, this is not attainable nor responsible.

As for the near future, deputies should accompany and advice local churches in the organic process of growing towards each other. Tangible expressions of that can be for example:

- pulpit exchange
- administration of the sacraments by each other's pastors
- acceptance of each other's members to the sacraments
- acceptance of each other's attestations
- if need be, making use of each other's pastors as councillors or 'loan pastors' during times of vacancy
- calling of each other's pastors
- reaching agreements as to geographical boundaries between congregations, in case of neighbouring churches
- attendance of each other's classis meetings

We sincerely realize that in rolling out the above mentioned steps, proper consultation has to take place with the other churches and deputies in our federation.

Furthermore, the end goal should always be kept in mind, namely to grow towards full federational unity. As deputies we realize that presently many church federations have in a sense become outdated, in the sense that a historical federation often comprises of different theological orientations, varying from liberal, charismatic to orthodox. As deputies we realize a calling for all congregations who want to remain fully obedient to Christ and his Word in doctrine and life in present and future, to organically grow towards more unity with congregations building on the same foundation, also when they currently belong, for historical reasons, to different denominations.

Mandate 3.4. *To continue contacts with the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa – DRCAfr (NG Kerk in Afrika – NGKA) in order to get to know them better and to support each other to maintain the true faith. Contacts should at this stage not directly be aimed at unification, but to support the DRCAfr in their search for a real Reformed church policy.*

Several attempts have been made to meet with the moderamen of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, however all were in vain. We contribute this partially to the retirement of scribe Dr. Andries Hoffman, who through the years did much to maintain the contacts with us.

At present we do not experience a desire from their side to continue pursuing contacts with the FRCSA. We therefore propose to for the time being set aside this mandate, on the condition that should they take initiative from their side to contact us, to immediately resume these contacts.

Although complicated due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, we will still extend an invitation to them to address our synod Belhar 2021.

Mandate 3.5. *To encourage contacts between local FRCSA congregations and DRCAfr congregations where possible and to report back on such activities to deputies.*

Due to time constraints we haven't actively reached out to local FRCSA congregations in this regard. We did however, as deputies, investigated whether there are local DRCAfr congregation situated closes to one of our congregations. Our finding is that this is not really the case.

Mandate 3.6. *To encourage Church Councils to identify Reformed and Presbyterian churches in their area, and make contact with them and have discussions to know each other better, to be able to support each other, if needed also theologically.*

As deputies we had a constructive meeting at the FRC Pretoria with Rev Glenn Lyons, presiding bishop of the *Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church*, formally known as the *Church of England in South Africa*. For several years we already cooperate with this federation, in the sense that we make use of their seminary *George Whitefield College* in Muizenberg for our theological students from the Cape. The meeting with Rev Lyons was to get better acquaintance of each other's federations, as well as explore possibilities of further cooperation. What struck us was the far reaching unity we share in faith, both in doctrine and life. They maintain an orthodox stance against the encroaching liberalism we all face, as becomes evident for example in not allowing women in the special ministry of the church. And, relevant to our South African situation, also maintain a clear stance against racism, whether from white or black or whatever side. As for the integration of different races into one congregation, some of their churches can really serve as example for us.

It should be noted as clarification that although their structure of church governance differs from ours, the fact that they have a bishop doesn't mean that they have a form of hierarchy comparable to the Roman Catholic Church.

Due to time constraints we haven't actively reached out to local FRCSA consistories in connection with this mandate. We agree that this remains an important mandate for the future.

Mandate 3.7. To re-establish contacts with the Free Church of South Africa (FCSA) and to attend their synods (General Assemblies), and to invite their representatives to attend FRCSA synods, with the aim to investigate if we can support each other theologically, and to report on their activities.

In May 2018 Rev PG Boon attended the General Assembly of the FCSA in King Williamstown, Eastern Cape. He addressed the assembly on behalf of the FRCSA, sending them sincere greetings from their sister in Christ, located in the same country, yet nevertheless far removed in different provinces. The FCSA is mainly located in the Eastern Cape, about a thousand kilometres both from Cape Town and Pretoria.

Rev Boon was also tasked by the ICRC Jordan 2017 to make contact with the FCSA in connection with their membership of this conference, since they have been absent for several conferences.

For a more elaborate report on Rev Boon's visit in 2018, please see Annexure 1.

In May 2020 Rev Boon was also planning to attend their General Assembly in King Williamstown, however due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the Assembly had to be cancelled.

As for the future we as deputies regard it important to intensify our relations with this federation and their seminary Dumisane in King Williams Town. We encounter many similar challenges in the same country, especially in regards to our mission churches.

Mandate 3.8. To organize an Indaba according to Article 28 of the Acts of the FRCSA Synod 2014, during the 1st quarter of 2019.

We can thankfully report that a successful Indaba was held from March 1st – 2nd 2019 at the FRC Johannesburg. We are very much indebted to the congregation of Johannesburg for helping us organizing this event and making it a success.

Our impression is that the Indaba served the mutual deliberation between the different deputies as well as between deputies and churches in the federation. It also encouraged the different deputies to start working on their mandates received from Synod Soshanguve 2017 timeously.

For a press release on the proceedings of the Indaba (in both English and Afrikaans), please see Annexure 2 and 3.

Mandate 3.9. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2017 and Synod 2020.

Done. A copy of this interim report can be sent on demand.

Mandate 3.10. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2017.

See this very report.

Mandate 4. To approve a budget of R8000 for activities by DCCSA.

Except for the costs involved in attending the General Assembly in King Williamstown in 2018, there were no other costs incurred by deputies. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions we have spent only half of our budget. For the new term we do need, however, the same amount (with inflation correction) again.

I. Proposed mandates to be given by Synod Belhar 2021 for the new term

1. Replace sentence with: To encourage and assist all local churches to take initiative to embark on deliberations with local congregations of the RCSA, and calling on local churches to contact deputies for advice and assistance when they plan to start preliminary discussions and whenever they need help in their discussions with RCSA churches.

Grounds:

- Each situation has unique challenges, and deputies can inform and make suggestions regarding applying guidelines and making agreements with local RCSA churches.

2. To compile clear guidelines for local churches, along which they can pursue deliberations with local congregations from the RCSA.

Grounds:

- It is important that local churches, when entering into deliberations, make sure that they deal with all necessary matters;
- It is important to have some uniformity between local churches in our federation, preventing that each local church pursue deliberations in their own way;

3. To compile a draft agreement which local churches can use to sign with another local congregation, in case the deliberations were successful and there is a mutual desire to work together.

Grounds:

- Future cooperation between local congregations should have an official status; and not left to the initiative of individual pastors or office bearers.
- The agreement can specify the term of cooperation into the future, after which proper evaluation has to take place again.
- The agreement can help to keep the end goal alive, namely to come to federational unity.

4. To study the consequences of the growing cooperation between local churches with other local churches, whilst at the same time still belonging to different federations.

Grounds:

- The goal is to come to unity in one federation, however there is also the realization that the road towards this does entail a period of growing towards a new situation.
- The risk of becoming indifferent as to the value and necessity of a joint church federation must be avoided.

5. To continue deliberations between deputies on a national level

Grounds:

- to stay informed about developments in each other's federations and matters of mutual interest.²
- to assist where possible in strengthening the bond of faith in adherence to the

² An example of this during the recent years was the application of br KT Mogale to be allowed into the ministry in the RCSA, after being suspended by the Free Reformed Church Mamelodi and having withdrawn from the church.

Word of God, as summarized in the Confessions, in mutual agreement and loyalty to the church order.

6. To continue to maintain contacts with the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church in order to stimulate joint cooperation between local churches and in regards to theological training.

Grounds:

- The FRCSA has already entered into an agreement of making use of their theological seminary *George Whitefield College* in Muizenberg.
- Past contacts have proved that we share much as for our commitment to abide with the Word of God in doctrine and life.
- We share the South African context we are living in with all its challenges, and can be of help for one another.

7. To continue maintaining and intensifying contacts with the Free Church in Southern Africa, amongst others by attending their General Assemblies.

Grounds:

- Both the FRCSA and the FCSA belong to the International Conference of Reformed Churches. The ICRC stresses the importance of cooperation between churches in the same region.
- As for our mission congregations, we can help one another because of similar challenges we meet.
- We share the South African context we are living in with all its challenges, and can be of help for one another.

8. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.

9. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2017.

10. To approve a budget of R 8 400 for activities by DCCSA.

Ground:

- Contacts with churches indicated above require a fair amount of travelling.

J. Signatures of Deputies

Chairman: Br W Bijker



Secretary: Rev PG Boon



Members: Rev GF Mnisi



Rev S Matlhokoane



Rev JA Breytenbach



Annexures

Annexure 1:

Report General Assembly Free Church in Southern Africa King Williams Town, May 25th 2018



On May 25th 2018 I visited the General Assembly of the Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA), held in King William's Town. The Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa delegated Rev. Sam Matlhokoane and me to attend this Assembly. Unfortunately Rev. Sam was prevented from attending, so I had to travel on my own.

In King William's Town I received a warm welcome, and rather soon after my arrival the opportunity to address the assembly. In my address I conveyed the sincere greetings on behalf of our federation, and wished them God's blessing on their life in this same country of ours, although in a different province. In my address I also paid attention to the request I received from the ICRC to deliberate with them about their future membership. For at least two consecutive conferences they haven't attended, and the constitution of the ICRC stipulates that in such a case a federation's membership can be ended. Yet the ICRC of 2017 considered that there were ample circumstances not to end their membership yet, and first deliberate with them. Myself and Dr. Jack Whytock were asked to do this. Dr. Whytock, who is working at the Dumisane Theological College in King William's Town, was also present.

The feedback that we received from the assembly was mainly the following:

- The FCSA has a rather huge backlog in paying their contributions to the ICRC (an amount of R 70,000 floated around, although I'm not sure if this is correct).
- Some members of the assembly asked the question what value the ICRC entails for the FCSA, and whether it is worthwhile to stay member.

As for the second point, I explained the benefit of the ICRC, especially for smaller federations. As to the first point, I had a short deliberation with the moderamen of the assembly, and a possible solution was vented whether it would be possible to request the ICRC to waive the FCSA's debts, enabling them to make a new start, and the FCSA promising from their side to attend in future. It is a reality that the FCSA are battling with finances, and that they struggle to pay their own pastors'

salaries on a monthly basis. I shared this proposal also with Dr. Whytock, and he seemed to agree with it. He stressed though that in overcoming the financial challenges of the FCSA, a change of heart is necessary, and everybody (church members and leaders) has to learn to contribute enough to the service of the Lord.

The Assembly closed on Friday afternoon, after which I traveled back to East London to catch my flight. Yet since the aviation authorities decided to ground all SA Express flights just the day before, I unexpectedly had to stay over one night in East London, flying back to Johannesburg the Saturday morning.

I thank the Lord for the opportunity to get closer acquaintance with the FCSA. The FRCSA and the FCSA stand on the same foundation of Scripture and Confession (they the Westminster Confession, we the Three Forms of Unity), and we serve the Lord in the same country with all its challenges. Certainly we will have to look for ways and means to cooperate more closely in future!

PG Boon



Moderamen

Annexure 2:

Press Release of Indaba

March 1 -2, 2019 at the Free Reformed Church Johannesburg

The Indaba was arranged by *Deputies for Relations with Churches in South Africa*, who were appointed by the previous synod to do this. The convener of these deputies, br. Wolter Bijker, opened by reading from God's Word, singing and prayer. Afterwards the secretary, Rev. Pieter Boon, continued to chair the meeting. He explained the purpose of the Indaba, which is meant to be a meeting of the churches halfway between synods, during which the different deputies appointed by synod should present interim reports to the churches. In this way the churches want to ensure that deputies start with fulfilling their mandates in time, not postponing their work until shortly before the next synod. Furthermore the Indaba creates the opportunity for deputies to ask clarity from the churches in cases where they don't understand their mandate. And the churches receive the opportunity to deliberate on possible details in how to execute synod decisions. It is important to add that synod made it clear that the Indaba is not a decision making meeting. The focus is on deliberation.

All churches sent a representation, with the exception of the FRC Belhar.

An agenda was sent out in advance, and after having been adopted, the different deputies appointed by synod received opportunity to present their interim reports to the churches. In this press release you will find a short overview, without claiming to be complete, of what was deliberated during the Indaba.

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

Represented by br. Hans Moes, he informed the Indaba about the activities of these deputies (located in Cape Town) since the previous synod. Attention was given especially to the relationship with the *Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)*, since Synod Soshanguve 2017 has decided to continue our sister church relationship with certain restrictions. Br. Moes especially asked attention for ways and means how to reach out to the minority group of those members and pastors in the RCNL who are disenchanted, and those congregations who have decided to appeal against the decisions of Synod Meppel 2017.

Furthermore deliberation took place on how our churches should implement the synod decisions in practice. Rev. Boon explained how the church council of the FRC Pretoria-Maranata interpreted and implemented the decision by Synod 2017 and br. Moes confirmed that deputies understood that decision in the same way:

- In case a member from the RCNL desires to celebrate the Lord's Supper in South Africa, (a delegation of) the local consistory first has to have a conversation with such a brother or sister. Both those who are against and those in favour of women in office, may be allowed to the Lord's table, however in case of those who are in favour of women in office (which is contrary to Scripture), they have to promise that they will keep silent on the matter and not propagate their views.
- In case of a pastor from the RCNL who desires to preach in our churches, the local consistory first has to have communication with him. If he is against the decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 with regards to women and office and with regards to the amalgamation with the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, he will be allowed on the pulpit. However, if he agrees with these decisions and if his consistory is not appealing against these decisions to the next synod, he will not be allowed on the pulpit, even if he promises to remain silent on the matters.

Since the letter that was sent by Synod Soshanguve 2017 to Synod Meppel 2017 was ruled inadmissible by the latter synod because of being too late (something Synod Soshanguve already feared would happen), the synod scribe was asked to in that case write a new letter and submit it to the next synod (Goes 2020).

During the Indaba consideration was also given to the thought whether the FRCSA has the calling, given the current circumstances of the RCNL, to approach all individual congregations in the Netherlands, and not only work through the official channel of deputies. What was emphasized, though, is that we should not grow tired to pray for our Dutch sister churches. This can have more attention in our church services.

Deputies also explained synod's intention with the decision that local churches should first seek concurring advice from classis, before calling a pastor from the RCNL. The intention is not to rule over a local church, but to prevent painful situations for an individual pastor in such a process. One of the churches expressed the fear that the consequence of the wording *concurring advice* can lead to classis to rule over a local church. Deputies explained that this decision is in line with the approach of our sister churches in Canada.

Regarding approaching sister churches abroad as for more finances (for mission or theological training for example), deputies indicated that they do not want to play a leading role in this or become the official channel. They are prepared though to assist in making contacts.

Deputies also asked churches to again look into the custom that they (deputies) provide pastors travelling overseas with a so called preaching attestation, since this is made very little use of.

Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa

In their interim report deputies gave feedback on their activities. In line with their mandates they had deliberations with:

- the Reformed Churches in South Africa
- the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church (formally the Church of England in South Africa)
- the Free Church in Southern Africa
- the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (which seceded from the DRC)

Deputies also advised local churches on their deliberations with local congregations of the RCSA, which have been conducted during recent years in line with synod's request that local churches make contact with neighbouring congregations of the RCSA. Feedback from our churches indicated that there are diverging reactions within RCSA congregations as to decisions of their synod, pointing towards increasing diversity and difference of opinion within the RCSA in essential matters. The importance of involving the deputies appointed by synod in the local deliberations was stressed. Synod gave them the mandate to actively assist local churches in their deliberations with RCSA congregations.

From the side of the FRCSA gratitude has and should be expressed for certain RCSA synod decisions, like

- the decision not to allow women in the offices of elder and minister.

At the other hand concern was and should be expressed as for other synod decisions within the RCSA, like:

- the Memorandum of Ecumenical Relationship with the DRCSA;
- allowing women into the (unaltered) office of deacon;
- the acceptance of the Cloete versifications of the Psalms.

The main aim of the deputies is to strengthen the unity, are we not too focused on the differences? Deputies emphasized that when paying attention to the differences with the RCSA, they do so in order to execute their given mandates. Paying attention to differences doesn't mean that there is not appreciation for the similarities between the churches.

Deputies Revision Liturgical Forms and Form Prayers

Br. Douwe Drijfhout presented the interim report of these deputies to the Indaba. Although half of the members appointed by synod declined, the other two continued with the work. They have sent letters to the churches and at this moment are waiting for feedback from the churches in regards to:

- the linguistically improved liturgical forms;
- the proposed form prayers;
- the new RCSA form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Br. Drijfhout also explained that liturgical forms are available in Sotho in the book *Puku ya Kereke* issued by *NG Sendinguitgewers* in 1983. These forms closely resemble our liturgical forms.

Printing of the above mentioned will happen in collaboration with Deputies Liturgical Music and the Stated Clerk.

Deputies Liturgical Music

These deputies were inactive until shortly before the Indaba, because of time constraints on the side of the convener. On behalf of these deputies, srs Anita Kamphuis and Marthie Breytenbach gave a presentation to the Indaba. The following was mentioned:

- Deputies still have to start with the process to serve the churches with a substantiated recommendation with regards to the Revised Totius versification.
- Investigations are also underway in how to assist the Sotho speaking churches to start singing more Psalms.

- Deputies have started with the process to test the hymns used on the mission field (*Difela tsa Sione*) according to the criteria set by synod.

The Indaba urged these deputies to make contact with the previous deputies Liturgical Music in order to get more clarity as to their mandate nr. 2 (page 29 of Acts of Synod Soshanguve 2017).

Deputies ad Article 11 CO (Needy Churches)

On behalf of these deputies, br. Marius Bijker gave a presentation to the Indaba. The contributions from the churches to these deputies have been reduced drastically, in line with the decision of Synod Soshanguve 2017. The current number of congregations receiving funds has decreased to one (Belhar). These deputies still have a surplus fund (R 2,100 000), although they indicated that the surpluses can be depleted quite rapidly when churches that are currently vacant would receive a pastor and would be in need of financial help.

Deputies reported that their role in channelling funds from the sister churches in Australia to other FRCSA deputies have been terminated now, after the synod in Australia decided henceforth not only to support needy churches in SA, but any project of the FRCSA.

Deputies are thankful that the Lord provided them with enough funds in the past years, so that they could fulfil their mandate to serve the churches.

Deputies ad Article 49 CO

These deputies were appointed by synod to assist the classes in cases of special difficulty. There are two in each classis and the arrangement is that they assist when needed. However, not in their own classis, but in the other. Since the last synod there was one instance in which their help was asked.

Synod Treasurer & Deputies for Inspection of the Synod Treasurer's Books

Synod treasurer, br. Rigardt Hoving, gave a clear overview of the federational income and expenses until the end of 2018.

A report was also received from br. Albert van der Linden, appointed to inspect the treasurer's books, informing that the books have been audited until the end of 2017. It also stated: "Brother Rigardt Hoving should be congratulated for his diligence and meticulous approach."

Stated Clerk & Archive & Deputies for Inspection of the Archive & Archive Church

Stated clerk br. Kees Roose presented his report to the Indaba. A point of attention is that the two persons appointed by synod to take over from him, both declined. Br. Roose is approaching the end of his period of being appointed for three consecutive times by synod, the maximum period preferably for a deputy to serve according to synod rules. So the churches were asked to come up with a replacement for br. Roose, who has served diligently for many years in conducting the administration of synods, publishing the acts of synod and securing proper archiving.

Br. Roose also pointed to the fact that until now synods have not budgeted for the expenses of the Indabas. It was proposed that this point be considered by deputies for the revision of synod rules, when drafting their revised synod rules.

A point discussed was the way of delegation to synod, and whether each local church should be represented at synod. It was emphasized that churches should first investigate carefully what synod and classis rules say about this, and what decisions had been taken about this matter in the past, before coming with new proposals (this in line with Church Order art. 33).

Deputies for Revision of Synod Rules

Br. Bertus Byker presented these deputies' interim report. It contained the text of the newly proposed Rules of Synod, as part of their mandate to finalise its text by receiving final feedback from the churches.

In the old text some minor wordings were changed in order to avoid confusion. Furthermore a few sentences were added to reflect synodical decisions re the Indabas.

Attendees were urged to submit any comments on the draft rules to deputies as soon as possible.

Classis for days of prayer ad Article 69 CO

Classis North was appointed in this regard. This classis asked the church of Pretoria to take care of this. During the Indaba one request was made for a day of prayer especially in regards to the financial challenges foreseen in the coming years as for the mission work.

Deputies for Internet Communication

The interim report was presented by br. Gerhard Bijker and sr. Renette Ros. The renewed website, active as from October 2017, was introduced and explained. Deputies invited the churches to make more active use of the website, which allows for each local church to maintain and update independently its own webpage. The churches were also invited to post more sermons, something that is currently done only by one or two churches. Proper information should also be given as for the text, liturgy and preacher.

Deputies were asked to ensure that enough and proper keywords are attached to sermons and documents, in order that search engines pick them up.

Mission Deputies (MDSA)

Br. Harry Pouwels introduced their interim report. The main issue is how to manage the reduction in funds from the Netherlands. This reduction is based on the policy that projects should not depend for more than 50% on one sponsor. It will be implemented over a period of 10 years. It urges the sending churches mainly Maranata and Belhar/Bellville to rethink the way we perform mission. Our current model of doing mission work is very capital intensive.

In 2018 Mission Deputies made a kind of gentleman's agreement with Deputies Curators (see next paragraph) as for looking for extra funds abroad to subsidize shortfalls. It was agreed that Mission Deputies will approach our Canadian sister churches and that Curators will approach our Australian sister churches as for extra funding.

After having approached the Canadian delegates to our previous synod, Mission Deputies are of the opinion that we should not expect millions of Rands from our Canadian sister churches. It is not that the Canadian churches are not willing or able to help, however we have to realize that they have currently also obligations to several other mission projects, and to support their own Reformed education and Theological Training.

The previous synod decided on an amount, according to the so called differentiated contribution model, for each congregation to contribute towards expenses of the federation (which includes the mission). It was discussed whether this amount can be increased much more in future. The consensus was that it will not be possible to lift this 'financial ceiling' way more in future. Last synod already decided on a considerable increase compared to the previous synod. As for the foreseen shortfalls in the mission, the churches were invited to consider what extra they will be able to

contribute. A special request went out to churches who are (or were) vacant for a couple of years, whether they see opportunity to contribute capital amounts in order to fund the coming years during which the mission has to transition into a new model.

Mission Deputies showed two possible future scenarios for the year 2026, the year in which Dutch funding will be reduced to a maximum of 50% of the total budget.

	A: Continuation of the mission project at present scale	B: Mission project downscaled
Total Cost Mission FRCSA	R 7 000 000,00	R 4 000 000,00
Dutch (ZAM) Contribution 2026 (max 50%)	R 3 500 000,00	R 2 000 000,00
Contribution FRCSA (synod)	R 300 000,00	R 300 000,00
Johannesburg	R 400 000,00	R 400 000,00
Bellville & JH Fund	R 200 000,00	R 200 000,00
Maranata	R 150 000,00	R 150 000,00
Other FRCSA donations	R 100 000,00	R 100 000,00
Mission Points contributions	R 100 000,00	R 100 000,00
Total Shortfall	R 2 250 000,00	R 750 000,00

On the Indaba some discussion also took place as for new approaches to do mission, amongst others a model of so called 'tent making ministry', as well as making more use of teaching elders (part timers). It was acknowledged that there are weaknesses attached to 'tent making ministries', as we often see around us in Africa. It can lead to superficial preaching and the neglect of proper pastoral care of the congregation. The question was asked whether there are possibilities to overcome these disadvantages, by making use of a blended model, having one full time missionary, in cooperation with a number of part-timers. This is however not a MDSA topic but a sending church consideration.

The question was asked whether the churches should maintain the current size of the mission project. It was remarked that we should not stop with mission, yet change our approach to attain sustainability.

Mission Deputies also indicated that they are open for a scenario where the mission is 'unbundled' again, which could lead to their role becoming superfluous, if this could solve the problem that the congregations are not involved enough with the mission project or the current financial challenges.

Mission Deputies informed the churches about an upcoming Conference ('Sendingsberaad'), God willing 5-6 April 2019 in Pretoria, which they hope to organize to address the current challenges. They also urged the two sending churches (Cape Town and Pretoria-Maranata) to meet with Deputies Curators before this event to reach more clarity as to the (church orderly) details pertaining teaching elders.

Deputies Curators

Br. Ronald Meeske presented the interim report. The financial contributions of the churches towards Curators have increased drastically since Synod Soshanguve 2017. One and a half years later it is clear that the churches have stepped up to the challenge and paid what was asked of them. During the Indaba Deputies Curators sincerely thanked the churches for their willingness. Moreover, the

Lord was thanked for sending new students to study theology, having the desire to enter the ministry of his Word. After years of several vacancies in the churches, Curators started to specifically encourage brothers to consider the ministry. Presently six to eight young men have started to study or will soon start.

Curators also reported on the growing cooperation with the *Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary*. A Memorandum of Agreement was reached according to which:

- South Africa will pay the travelling costs, tuition fees and medical insurance of SA students studying in Hamilton;
- Canada will pay the living costs of SA students studying in Hamilton.

This favourable agreement makes it financially possible for students from South Africa (with its weak Rand) to study in Hamilton.

Furthermore Curators installed video recording equipment in the lecture rooms of CRTS and received permission to make use of the recorded lectures for those SA students (from the mission field) studying according to Trajectory B (not being able to go to Hamilton). Curators were asked, though, to reconsider the desirability of Trajectory B for the future, in order to secure the same expectations and the same quality of training for all students from the federation.

Synod Soshanguve gave Curators the green light to start working towards appointing an anchor theologian, either fulltime or part-time. Curators reported on their activities in this regard. In the coming years they will continue to investigate and work towards fulfilling this mandate. Currently Dr Hannes Breytenbach is fulfilling this role to a large extent.

Curators receive a considerable annual amount from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, which is used at the moment to fund the work of Dr Breytenbach. The feedback received from Australia is that they are willing to continue with this funding in future, although the South African churches do not have to expect big increases in this funding, because of the fact that the Australian churches have several other financial obligations as for mission work elsewhere in the world.

Deputies Afrikaans Bible Translation

Rev. Jopie van der Linden presented the interim report. According to their synod mandates, deputies are involved with and monitoring the new translation of the Bible in Afrikaans, called the *Bybel Direkte Vertaling*. Deputies reported that they evaluated the method of translation as sound, resulting in a translation staying close to the original text and therefore fit for use in church services and personal Bible study. Deputies also reported that feedback given in the translation process so far is being treated seriously. The hope is that this translation will be published in 2020.

Questions were also asked about which original manuscripts were used in the translation process. Unfortunately the Majority Text is not being used, although footnotes will be incorporated in cases of significant differences.

Deputies are currently gathering information from our English speaking sister churches, in order to formulate a responsible recommendation to the next synod as for what English translation(s) should be used in the churches.

Conclusion

There was much gratitude towards the congregation of Johannesburg for all the good food and hospitality we enjoyed, especially in view of the fact that during the same week they experienced a

burglary and many things were stolen from the kitchen. The Johannesburg brothers and sisters went out of their way to make the Indaba a success!

We thanked the LORD for the opportunity to meet together and deliberate on the work of all the deputies of synod. May all the different deputies continue their work for Christ's churches with renewed motivation and energy!

The Inbaba was closed with Scripture reading and prayer by br. Ronald Meeske, after which all enjoyed a beautiful and delicious lunch and then departed.

On behalf of Deputies for Contact with Churches in SA, appointed by synod to organize the Indaba,

Rev. Pieter Boon



Annexure 3:



Persverslag van Indaba 1-2 Maart 2019 by die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk Johannesburg

Die Indaba is gereël deur *Deputate vir Betrekkinge met Kerke in Suid-Afrika*, wat hierdie taak van die vorige sinode ontvang het. Die sameroeper van hierdie deputate, br. Wolter Bijker, het geopen met die lees uit God se Woord, sang en gebed.

Daarna het die sekretaris, ds. Pieter Boon, verder gegaan om die vergadering te lei. Hy het die doel van die Indaba verduidelik, naamlik om 'n byeenkoms van die kerke halfpad tussen sinodes te wees, waartydens die verskillende deputate wat deur die sinode aangestel is, hulle tussentydse verslae aan die kerke moet voorlê. Op hierdie manier wil die kerke verseker dat deputate betyds begin om hulle mandate uit te voer, en dit nie tot kort voor die volgende sinode uit te stel nie. Verder skep die Indaba die geleentheid vir deputate om duidelikheid van die kerke te vra in gevalle waar hulle nie hulle mandaat verstaan nie. Die kerke ontvang ook die geleentheid om deur te praat oor moontlike details oor hoe om die sinodebesluite uit te voer. Dit is belangrik om by te voeg dat die sinode dit duidelik gemaak het dat die Indaba geen besluite kan neem nie. Die fokus is op beraadslaging. Alle kerke het 'n afvaardiging gestuur, behalwe die VGK Belhar.

'n Agenda is vooraf uitgestuur, en nadat dit goedgekeur is, het die verskillende deputate wat deur die sinode aangestel is, die geleentheid gekry om hulle tussentydse verslae aan die kerke te presenter. In hierdie persverslag vind u 'n kort oorsig, sonder om volledig te wees, van dit wat beraadslaag is tydens die Indaba.

Deputate vir Kontakte met Buitelandse Kerke

Verteenwoordig deur br. Hans Moes, het hy die Indaba ingelig oor die aktiwiteite van hierdie deputate (woonagtig in Kaapstad) sedert die vorige sinode. Aandag is veral gegee aan die verhouding met die *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in Nederland, omdat Sinode Soshanguve 2017 besluit het om bepaalde beperkinge op die susterkerkverhouding te plaas. Br. Moes het veral aandag gevra vir manier hoe om uit te reik na die mindersheidsgroep van lidmate en predikante in die Gkv wat verontrus is, en daardie gemeentes was besluit het om in beroep te gaan teen die besluite van Sinode Meppel 2017.

Verder het daar beraadslaging plaasgevind oor hoe die kerke die sinodebesluite behoort te implementeer. Ds. Boon het verduidelik hoe die VGK Pretoria-Maranata die besluit van Sinode 2017 geïnterpreteer en geïmplementeer het en br. Moes het bevestig dat deputate die sinodebesluit op dieselfde manier verstaan het:

- In geval 'n lidmaat van die Gkv begeer om die nagmaal in Suid-Afrika te vier, sal ('n afvaardiging van) die plaaslike kerkraad eers 'n gesprek met so 'n broeder of suster hê. Beide hulle wat teen en hulle wat ten gunste van die vrou in die amp is, mag aan die nagmaal toegelaat word, hoewel in die geval van hulle wat ten gunste van die vrou in die amp is (wat teen die Skrif ingaan), moet hulle belowe dat hulle sal swyg oor die saak en nie hulle mening sal propageer nie.

- In geval 'n predikant van die GKv begeer om te preek in ons kerk, sal die plaaslike kerkraad eers met hom kommunikeer. As hy teen die besluite van Sinode Meppel 2017 m.b.t. die vrou in die amp is en m.b.t. die samevoeging met die *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, sal hy op die preekstoel toegelaat word. Hoewel, as hy met hierdie besluite saamstem en as sy kerkraad nie appelleer teen hierdie besluite by die volgende sinode nie, sal hy nie op die preekstoel toegelaat word nie, ook nie as hy belowe om oor hierdie sake te swyg.

Omdat die brief wat Sinode Soshangvue 2017 na Sinode Meppel 2017 gestuur het, onontvanklik verklaar is deur laasgenoemde sinode omdat dit te laat ingedien is (iets wat Sinode Soshanguve al voorsien het souk on gebeur), is die sinode skriba gevra om in daardie geval 'n nuwe brief te skryf en voor te lê aan die volgende sinode (Goes 2020).

Tydens die Indaba is daar ook aandag geskenk aan die gedagte of die VGKSA 'n roepig het, gesien die huidige omstandighede van die GKv, om alle plaaslike gemeentes in Nederland te benader, en nie net deur die amptelike kanaal van die deputate te werk nie. Wat benadruk is, is da tons nie moeg moet word om vir ons Nederlandse susterkerke te bid nie. Dit kan meer die aandag in ons kerke geniet.

Deputate het ook die sinode se bedoeling met die besluit dat plaaslike kerke eers 'concurring advice' van die klassis moet soek, voordat hulle 'n predikant uit die GKv beroep, verduidelik. Die intensie is nie om oor 'n plaaslike kerk te heers nie, maar om 'n pynlike situasie vir 'n individuele predikant in so 'n proses te verhoed. Een van die kerke het sy vrees uitgespreek dat die gevolg van die woordkeuse 'concurring advice' kan lei tot 'n situasie waar die klassis oor 'n plaaslike kerk regeer. Deputate het verduidelik dat hierdie besluit in lyn is met die benadering van ons susterkerke in Canada.

Wat betref die benadering van susterkerke oorsee vir meer finansiële hulp (vir die sending en Teologiese opleiding byvoorbeeld), het deputate aangedui dat hulle nie 'n leidende rol hierin wil speel of die amptelike kanaal wil word nie. Hulle is wel bereid om te help om kontakte te lê.

Deputate het die kerke ook gevra om weer na die gewoonte te kyk dat hulle (deputate) 'n sogenaamde 'preek-attestaat' uitreik aan predikante wat oorsee reis, aangesien hiervan baie min gebruik gemaak word.

Deputate vir Kontakte met Kerke in Suid-Afrika

In hulle tussentydse verslag het hierdie deputate terugvoer gegee oor hulle aktiwiteite. Ooreenkomstig hulle mandaat het hulle samesprekings gevoer met:

- Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
- Die Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church (voorheen bekend as die Church of England in South Africa)
- Die Free Church in Southern Africa
- Die Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (wat afgeskei het van die NG Kerk-familie).

Deputate het plaaslike kerke ook van advies gedien wat betref hulle samesprekings met plaaslike gemeentes van die GKSA, wat in onlangse jare plaasgevind het in lyn met die sinode se versoek dat plaaslike kerke kontak maak met naburige gemeentes van die GKSA. Terugvoer vanuit ons kerke dui aan dat daar uiteenlopende reaksies binne GKSA gemeentes is op die besluite van hulle sinode, wat wys op toenemende diversiteit en verskil van opinie binne die GKSA wat wesentlike sake betref.

Die belang daarvan om die deputate by plaaslike samesprekings te betrek, is onderstreep. Die sinode het hulle naamlik die opdrag gegee om plaaslike kerke te help met hulle samesprekings met GKSA gemeentes.

Van die kant van die VGKSA is en moet dankbaarheid uitgespreek word oor bepaalde GKSA sinodebesluite, soos

- die besluit om nie vroue in die ampte van ouderling en predikant toe te laat nie.

Aan die ander kant is en moet kommer uitgespreek word oor ander sinodebesluite binne die GKSA, soos:

- die Memorandum van Ekumeniese Verhouding met die NGKSA;

- die toelating van vroue in die (ongewysigde) diakenamp;
- die aanvaardig van die Cloete-omdigtings van die Psalms.

Die vraag is bespreek of ons nie te veel op die verskille fokus in die samesprekings van die deputate nie? Deputate het benadruk dat wanneer hulle aandag skenk aan die verskille met die GKSA, hulle dit doen om hulle mandaat uit te voer. Aandag vir die verskille beteken nie dat daar nie waardering is vir die ooreenkomste nie.

Deputate vir die Hersiening van Liturgiese Formuliere en Formuliergebede

Br. Douwe Drijfhout het die tussentydse verslag van hierdie deputate aan die Indaba gepresenteer. Hoewel die helfte van die lede wat deur die sinode aangestel is, die benoeming nie aanvaar het nie, het die ander twee voortgegaan met die werk. Hulle het briewe na die kerke gestuur en wag tans op terugvoer van die kerke in verband met:

- die taalkundige verbeterings wat in die liturgiese formuliere aangebring is;
- die nuwe GKSA formulier vir die viering van die nagmaal.

Br. Drijfhout het ook verduidelik dat liturgiese formuliere beskikbaar is in Sotho in die boek *Puku ya Kereke* wat uitgegee is deur *NG Sendinguitgewers* in 1983. Hierdie formuliere lyk baie op ons liturgiese formuliere.

Die druk van bogenoemde verbeterde formuliere sal gebeur in samewerking met *Deputate Liturgiese Musiek* en die *Sinode Sekretaris*.

Deputate Liturgiese Musiek

Hierdie deputate was inaktief tot kort voor die Indaba, as gevolg van tydsgebrek by die sameroeper. Namens hierdie deputate het susters Anita Kamphuis en Marthie Breytenbach 'n presentasie aan die Indaba gegee. Die volgende is genoem:

- Deputate moet nog met die proses begin om die kerke te dien met 'n begronde voorstel wat betref die gebruik van die hersiene Totiusberyming.
- Daar word ondersoek hoe om die Sothosprekende kerke te help om meer Psalms te sing.
- Deputate het met die proses begin om die gesange wat op die sendingsveld gebruik word (*Difela tsa Sione*) te toets volgens die kriteria wat die sinode opgestel het.

Die Indaba het hierdie deputate opgeroep om kontak te maak met die vorige deputate vir liturgiese musiek, om by hulle meer duidelikheid te kry oor mandaat nr. 2 (bl. 29 in die Sinodehandelinge Soshanguve 2017).

Deputate ad Art. 11 KO (Hulpbehoewende Kerke)

Namens hierdie deputate het br. Marius Bijker 'n presentasie aan die Indaba gegee. Die finansiële bydraes vanuit die kerke vir hierdie deputate is drasties verminder, in lyn met die besluit van Sinode Soshanguve 2017. Tans is daar slegs een gemeente wat finansiële ondersteuning word (Belhar). Hierdie deputate het steeds 'n oorskot (R 2,100 000), hoewel hulle aangedui het dat die surplusse vinnig kan verdwyn wanneer kerke wat tans vakant is, 'n predikant sou ontvang en daardeur hulpbehoewend word.

Verder is daar gerapporteer dat hierdie deputate se rol om fondse vanaf die susterkerke in Australië te kanaliseer na ander VGKSA deputaatskappe tot 'n einde gekom het, nadat die sinode in Australië besluit het om voortaan nie net hulpbehoewende kerke in SA te ondersteun nie, maar enige projek van die VGKSA.

Die deputate is dankbaar dat die Here hulle met genoeg fondse voorsien het in die afgelope jare, sodat hulle hulle mandaat om die kerke te help kon uitvoer.

Deputate ad Art. 49 KO

Hierdie deputate is deur die sinode aangestel om die klassisse by te staan by spesiale probleme. Daar is twee in elke klassis en die afspraak is dat hulle help nie in hulle eie klassis nie, maar in die ander. Sedert die laaste sinode was daar een geval waarby hulle hulp ingeroep is.

Boekhouer van die Sinode en Deputate vir die Inspeksie van sy boeke

Die boekhouer, br. Rigardt Hoving, het 'n duidelike oorsig gegee van die inkomstes en uitgawes van die sinode tot en met die einde van 2018.

'n Verslag is ook ontvang van br. Albert van der Linden, wat aangestel is om die boekhouer se boeke te kontroleer. Daarin word vermeld dat die boeke geaudit is tot die einde van 2017. Daarin staan ook: "Brother Rigardt Hoving should be congratulated for his diligence and meticulous approach."

Sinode Sekretaris & Deputate vir Inspeksie van die Argief & Argiefbewarende Kerk

Sinode Sekretaris br. Kees Roose het sy tussentydse verslag aan die Indaba gepresenteer. 'n Aandagspunt is dat die twee persone wat die sinode benoem het om van hom oor te neem, beide die benoeming nie aanvaar het nie. Br. Roose nader die einde van sy periode waarin hy drie keer agtermekaar deur die sinode benoem is, die maksimale tydperk vir 'n deputaat om te dien volgens die sinodereëls. Die kerke is gevra om voorstelle in te dien wie br. Roose kan vervang, wat vir baie jare trou gedien het wat betref die administrasie van die sinodes, die publiseer van die sinodehandelinge en die behoorlike argivering van sinode materiaal.

Br. Roose het ook op die feit gewys dat tot dusver sinodes nie begroot het vir die Indabas nie. It is voorgestel dat hierdie punt deur deputate vir die hersiening van sinodereëls saamgevat word, wanneer hulle 'n hersiene konsep van sinodereëls skryf.

A punt wat bespreek is, is die manier van afvaardiging na die sinode, en of elke plaaslike kerk by die sinode verteenwoordig moet wees. Dit is benadruk dat kerke eers noukeurig moet ondersoek wat die sinode- en klassisreëls hieroor sê, en watter besluite daar reeds in die verlede oor hierdie saak geneem is, voordat daar met nuwe voorstelle gekom word (dit in lyn met Kerkorde art. 33).

Deputate vir Hersiening van Sinodereëls

Br. Bertus Byker het hierdie deputate se tussentydse verslag gepresenteer. It het die teks bevat van die nuut voorgestelde sinodereëls, as deel van hulle mandaat om die teks te finaliseer deur terugvoer van die kerke te ontvang.

In die ou teks is enkele klein aanpassings gemaak om verwarring te voorkom. Verder is 'n paar sinne bygevoeg in lyn met die sinodes se besluite aangaande die Indabas.

Almal teenwoordig is opgeroep om enige kommentaar op die konsep sinodereëls so gou as moontlik aan hierdie deputate te stuur.

Classis vir Biddag volgens Art. 69 KO

Klassis Noord is in hierdie verband aangewys. Hierdie klassis het die kerk van Pretoria gevra om daarna om te sien. Tydens die Indaba is 'n versoek gedoen vir 'n biddag, spesiaal in verband met die finansiële uitdagings wat in die komende jare vir die sendingswerk voorsien word.

Deputate Internet Kommunikasie

In interimverslag is deur br. Gerhard Bijker en sr. Renette Ros gepresenteer. Die hernude webwerf, aktief vanaf Oktober 2017, is voorgestel en verduidelik. Deputate het die kerke uitgenooi om hierdie webwerf meer aktief te gebruik, omdat dit die moontlikheid bied aan elke plaaslike kerk om onafhanklike sy eie webbladsy te onderhou en op te dateer. Die kerke is ook uitgenooi om meer preke op die webwerf te plaas, iets wat tans net deur een of twee kerke gedien word. Behoorlike inligting rakende die teks, liturgie en prediker moet wel bygesit word.

Aan deputate is 'n versoek gerig om seker te maak dat genoeg en toepaslike sleutelwoorde aan die preke en dokumente toegevoeg word, sodat soekmasjiene dit maklik kan optel.

Sendingsdeputate (SDSA)

Br. Harry Pouwels het die tussentydse verslag gepresenteer. Die hoofsaak waarvoor aandag gevra is, is die vermindering van fondse vanuit Nederland. Die vermindering is gebaseer op hulle beleid dat

projekte nie vir meer as 50% afhanklik mag wees van een donor nie. Hierdie beleid sal oor 'n tydperk van 10 jare ingefaseer word. It dwing die sendende kerke, veral Maranata en Belhar/Bellville om te herbesin oor die manier waarop ons sending doen. Ons huidige model van sendingwerk is baie kapitaal-intensief.

In 2018 het sendingsdeputate 'n soort afspraak met deputate kuratore (sien volgende paragraaf) gemaak, wat betref die soek vir ekstra fondse uit die buiteland om tekorte aan te spreek. Daar is ooreengekom dat sendingsdeputate ons Canadese susterkerke sou benader en kuratore ons Australiese susterkerke. Nadat die Canadese afvaardigdes by ons vorige sinode benader is, is sendingsdeputate van oordeel dat ons nie miljoene rande van ons Canadese susterkerke moet verwag nie. Dit is nie dat die Canadese kerke nie gewillig of in staat is om te help nie, maar ons moet besef dat hulle tans ook verpligtinge teenoor ander sendingsprojekte het, asook die ondersteuning van hulle eie Gereformeerde onderwys en Teologiese opleiding.

Die vorige sinode het 'n bedrag bepaal, bereken met behulp van die sogenaamde gedifferensieerde model van kontribusies, waarvolgens elke gemeente moet bydra aan die uitgawes van die kerkverband (inklus sending). Daar is bespreek of hierdie bedrag in die toekoms baie verhoog kan word. Die konsensus was dat dit nie moontlik sal wees om hierdie 'finansiële plafon' nog baie te lig i die toekoms nie. Die onlangse sinode het alreeds besluit op 'n aansienlike verhoging vergeleke by die vorige sinode. Met betrekking tot die verwagte tekorte in die sending, is die kerke uitgenooi om te oorweeg wat hulle nog ekstra sal kan bydra. 'n Spesiale versoek is gerig aan kerke wat tans (of onlangs) vakant is (was), of hulle kans sien om ekstra kapitale bedrae teskenk om die sending te help in hierdie tyd waarin hulle na 'n nuwe model moet oorbeweeg.

Sendingsdeputate het twee moontlike toekomsscenario's geskets m.b.t. die finansiële behoeftes van die sending, spesifiek vir die jaar 2026, die eerste jaar waarin die Nederlandse steun verminder sal wees tot 'n maksimum van 50% van die begroting:

	A: Continuation of the mission project at present scale	B: Mission project downscaled
Total Cost Mission FRCSA	R 7 000 000,00	R 4 000 000,00
Dutch (ZAM) Contribution 2026 (max 50%)	R 3 500 000,00	R 2 000 000,00
Contribution FRCSA (synod)	R 300 000,00	R 300 000,00
Johannesburg	R 400 000,00	R 400 000,00
Bellville & JH Fund	R 200 000,00	R 200 000,00
Maranata	R 150 000,00	R 150 000,00
Other FRCSA donations	R 100 000,00	R 100 000,00
Mission Points contributions	R 100 000,00	R 100 000,00
Total Shortfall	R 2 250 000,00	R 750 000,00

Op die Indaba het daar ook diskussie plaasgevind oor nuwe metodes om sending te dryf, waaronder 'n model van sogenaamde 'tentmakersbediening', asook om meer gebruik te maak van lerende ouderlinge (deeltyds). Daar is erken dat daar swakhede aan die konsep van 'tentmakersbediening' kleef, iets wat ons gereeld rondom ons in Afrika sien. Dit kan tot oppervlakkige prediking lei en ook die verwaarlosing van goeie pastorale sorg aan die gemeente. Die vraag is gevra of daar moontlikhede is om hierdie nadele te oorkom, deur van 'n gemengde model gebruik te maak, deur een voltydse sendeling te hê, in samewerking met 'n hoeveelheid deeltydse medewerkers. Hierdie is egter nie 'n saak vir sendingsdeputate om oor te besluit nie, dit moet die sendende kerke doen.

Die vraag is gevra of die kerke die huidige grootte van die sendingsprojek ook in die toekoms moet handhaaf. Daar is opgemerk dat ons nie met sending moet ophou nie, maar dat ons wel ons model moet verander om sodoende volhoubaar te bly.

Sendingsdeputate het ook aangedui dat hulle daarvoor oop staan om die sending te 'ontbondel', wat daartoe kan lei dat hulle rol oorbodig sou raak, as dit die probleem kan oplos dat dat gemeentes tans nie genoeg betrokke is by die sendingsprojek nie. 'Ontbondeling' kan moontlik ook die huidige finansiële uitdagings verlig.

Sendingsdeputate het die kerke ingelig oor 'n Sendingsberaad wat DV van 5-6 April 2019 in Pretoria sal plaasvind, wat hulle hoop te organiseer om die huidige uitdagings aan te spreek. Hulle het die twee sendende kerke opgeroep (Kaapstad en Pretoria-Maranata) om vooraf met kuratore te vergader om meer duidelikheid te kry oor die kerkregtelike details m.b.t. lerende ouderlinge.

Deputate Kuratore

Br. Ronald Meeske het die tussentydse verslag gepresenteer. Die finansiële bydraes van die kerke aan kuratore het drasties verhoog sedert Sinode Soshanguve 2017. Een en 'n halwe jaar later is dit duidelik dat die kerke die uitdaging aanvaar het en dit betaal het wat aan hulle gevra is. Tydens die Indaba het die deputate kuratore die kerke hartlik bedank vir hulle gewilligheid.

Verder is die Here gedank omdat hy nuwe studente gestuur het om Teologie te studeer, met die begeerte om bedienaars van die Woord te word. Na jare van verskeie vakatures in die kerke, het kuratore begin om aktief broeders aan te moedig om die bediening te oorweeg. Tans het ses tot agt jong manne begin studeer of sal binnekort begin.

Die kuratore het ook verslag uitgebring oor die groeiende samewerking met die *Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary*. 'n Memorandum van Samewerking is onderteken, waarvolgens:

- Suid-Afrika die reiskostes, klagsgeld en medies versekering van die SA studente wat in Hamilton studeer, sal betaal;
- Canada die lewenskostes van SA studente wat in Hamilton studeer, sal betaal.

Hierdie vir ons baie gunstige ooreenkoms maak dit finansiële moontlik vir studente uit SA (met sy swak Rand) om in Hamilton te studeer.

Veder het die kuratore video-opname-apparatuur in die lesinglokaal van CRTS geïnstalleer en toestemming ontvang om van die opnames gebruik te maak vir daardie SA studente (vanaf die sendingsveld) wat studeer volgens Roete B (nie in staat om na Hamilton te gaan nie).

'n Vraag is wel aan die kuratore voorgelê om die wenslikheid van Roete B te heroorweeg, om daardeur seker te maak dat alle studente in die kerkverband dieselfde kwaliteit opleiding ontvang.

Sinode Soshanguve 2017 het aan kuratore die groenlig gegee om te begin werk rigting die aanstel van 'n ankerteoloog, hetsy voltyds hetsy deelyds. Die kuratore het gerapporteer oor hulle aktiwiteite in hierdie verband. In die komende jare sal hulle voortgaan om te ondersoek en te werk na die uitvoering van hierdie mandaat. Tans vervul dr. Hannes Breytenbach hierdie rol in 'n groot mate.

Die kuratore ontvang 'n aansienlike jaarlikse bedrag van die Free Reformed Churches of Australia, wat tans gebruik word om die werk van dr. Breytenbach te finansier. Die terugvoer wat daar uit Australië ontvang is, is dat hulle gewillig is om voort te gaan met hierdie ondersteuning in die toekoms, hoewel die SA kerke nie groot verhogings in hierdie ondersteuning moet verwag nie, vanweë die feit dat die Australiese kerke verskeie ander finansiële verpligtinge het wat betref sendingswerk op ander plekke in die wêreld.

Deputate vir Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling

Ds. Jopie van der Linden het die tussentydse verslag gepresenteer. Volgens die sinodemandate is hierdie deputate betrokke by die monitering van die nuwe vertaling van die Bybel in Afrikaans, genaamd die *Bybel Direkte Vertaling*. Die deputate het gerapporteer dat hulle die vertaalmetode as 'n verantwoorde metode beskou. Dit lei tot 'n vertaling wat naby die grondteks bly en daarom geskik is vir gebruik in die erediens en vir persoonlike Bybelstudie. Die deputate het ook genoem dat

daardie terugvoer wat hulle tot op hede gegee het in die vertalingsproses, ook ernstig geneem is. Die hoop is dat hierdie vertaling teen 2020 uitgegee sal word.

Daar is ook vroeë gevra oor die oorspronklike manuskripte wat in die vertalingsproses gebruik is. Ongelukkig is die Meerderheidstekste nie gebruik nie, hoewel daar voetnote in die vertaling aangebring sal word waar daar uiteenlopende verskille is.

Die deputate is tans besig om inligting in te samel vanaf ons Engelssprekende susterkerke, om daarmee 'n verantwoordelike aanbeveling vir die volgende sinode te kan doen wat betref watter Engelse vertaling(s) ons in ons kerke behoort te gebruik.

Konklusie

Ons is baie dankbaar teenoor die gemeente van Johannesburg vir die heerlike maaltye en gasvryheid wat ons geniet het, veral gesien die feit dat in dieselfde week daar nog ingebreek is en baie items uit die kombuis gesteel is. Die broeders en susters in Johannesburg het uit hulle pad gegaan om van die Indaba 'n sukses te maak!

Ons het die HERE gedank vir die geleentheid om saam te kon kom en te beraadslaag oor die werk van al die sinodedeputate. Mag al hierdie deputaatskappe voortgaan met hulle werk vir Christus se kerke met hernude motivering en energie!

Die Indaba is afgesluit met Skriflesing en gebed deur br. Ronald Meeske, waarna almal 'n pragtige en heerlike middagete in die tuin geniet het.

Namens Deputate vir Kontakte met Binnelandse Kerke, benoem deur die sinode om die Indaba te organiseer.

Ds. Pieter Boon

Annexure 4:

**Ooreenkoms tussen die Gereformeerde Kerk Oos-Moot en die Vrye
Gereformeerde Kerk Pretoria-Maranata**

Die kerkrade van die Gereformeerde Kerk Oos-Moot en Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk Pretoria-Maranata is dankbaar vir die samesprekings wat daar gedurende die afgelope jare plaasgevind het. Die HERE het ons op mekaar se pad geplaas en ons mog mekaar herken en toe ook erken as plaaslike gemeentes wat slegs wil bou op die fondament van God se Woord, soos Christus se kerk dit deur die eeue ook in die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid bely het. Die kerkrade het daarom die volgende ooreenkoms saam opgestel.

1. Leertug

- 1.1. Kanselruil vind plaas met predikante direk in diens van die betrokke gemeente.
- 1.2. Wanneer 'n dwaling tydens kanselruil sou plaasvind, hanteer die plaaslike kerkraad wat oor die diens toesig hou, die vermeende dwaling daar en dan. As die saak suksesvol opgelos word, word dit as afgehandel beskou.
- 1.3. Indien die saak nie suksesvol opgelos word nie, word dit verwys na die betrokke predikant se eie kerkraad om daar, deur hulle, volgens die betrokke kerkraad se kerkorde-reëlings verder hanteer te word.

2. Drie Formuliere van Eenheid, Liturgiese Formuliere en Bybelvertaling

- 2.1. Die bewoording van die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis agterin die 2015 Psalmboek bied twee opsies. GK Oos-Moot bevestig dat hulle slegs die bewoording "neergedaal het na die hel" gebruik.
- 2.2. Die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid tussen die GK Oos-Moot en die VGK Pretoria-Maranata verskil in enkele opsigte van mekaar. Die bewoording van die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid wat deur die plaaslike gemeente gebruik word, sal van toepassing wees met 'n ruildiens.
- 2.3. Die Liturgiese Formuliere tussen die GK Oos-Moot en die VGK Pretoria-Maranata verskil in meerdere opsigte van mekaar. Die bewoording van die Liturgiese Formuliere wat deur die plaaslike gemeente gebruik word, sal van toepassing wees wanneer met 'n ruildiens die sakramente van die heilige nagmaal en doop in die plaaslike gemeente bedien word.
- 2.4. In alle gevalle sal die plaaslike gemeente se Liturgiese Orde gevolg word.
- 2.5. Die 1933/1953 Bybelvertaling word deur beide kerke gebruik.

3. Kerklid

- 3.1. GK Oos-Moot bevestig dat die 150 berymde Psalms en 48 Skrifberymings van Totius asook die toonsettings van die die Onse Vader-gebed (SB 59) en die Geloofsbelydenis (SB 71) in eredienste gesing word. Geen "Amen"-liedere of Cloete-omdigtings word deur GK Oos-Moot gesing nie.
- 3.2. VGK Pretoria-Maranata bevestig dat die 150 berymde Psalms en 50 Skrifberymings (behalwe SB 44:1 tov "Skeppingsmiddelaar") van Totius asook die toonsettings van die die Onse Vader-gebed (SB 59) en die Geloofsbelydenis

(SB 71) in eredienste gesing word. Die gemeente spreek die 'Amen' uit aan die einde van eredienste, nadat die voorganger die Seën en Amen uitgespreek het.

4. Gesamentlike Eredienste

- 4.1. Op Sondag het elke gemeente hulle eie 2 eredienste (oggend en aand eredienste). In die geval waar daar wel gesamentlike eredienste gehou word (bv. kerklike feesdae), sal dit altyd gehou word by die ordereëlings wat gemeenskaplik ooreengekom is. Dit beteken onder andere dat liederes wat in beide kerke goedgekeur is, gesing sal word en geen ander liederes nie. Die kerk waar die gesamentlike diens gehou word sal onder verantwoordelikheid en toesig van dié betrokke kerkraad plaasvind.

5. Attestate

- 5.1. Kerkrade sal (belydenis of doop) attestate, wanneer 'n lidmaat of lidmate dit aanvra, behandel en bespreek met die betrokke lidmaat/lidmate asook bespreek met die betrokke kerkraad en slegs daarna aan die betrokke lidmaat/lidmate gee, sodat hulle dit by die gemeente waar hulle hulle voeg, kan indien. Die kerkraad sal ook 'n kopie van dié attestaat aan die 'ontvangende' kerkraad stuur via die skriba. Attestering, in lyn met die Kerkorde (een kerkverband), is nog nie outomaties nie, en vir die doel word ooreengekom dat dit nie net 'n brief sal wees nie, maar ook 'n wedersydse gesprek.
- 5.2. Beide kerkrade is dit eens dat alle vorme van attestate wedersydse afgegee en aanvaar sal word. 'Kerklike gegewens' sal nie van toepassing wees nie.
- 5.3. Attestate sal deur 'n kerkraad se voorsitter en/of ondervoorsitter en/of skriba onderteken word (minimum van 2 handtekeninge), en volgens die normale gebruik aan die gemeente bekend gemaak word.
- 5.4. Indien daar iets onduidelik op 'n attestaat is, sal dit met die betrokke kerkraad uitgeklaar word.
- 5.5. VGK Pretoria-Maranata bevestig dat vir die doel om die Heilige Nagmaal by 'n ander gemeente te kan vier, 'n 'Bewys van Lidmaatskap' uitgereik word. GK Oos-Moot bevestig dat hulle dit 'n 'Nagmaal Attestaat' noem. Beide kerkrade bevestig dat hiervoor geen gesprek met die betrokke lidmaat/lidmate of betrokke kerkraad plaas hoef te vind nie.

6. Sakramente

- 6.1. Heilige Nagmaal en Doop; Kerkrade sal 'n skriftelike 'Bewys van Lidmaatskap' (VGK) of 'Nagmaal Attestaat' (GK) aan lidmate gee wat vra om die Heilige Nagmaal by 'n ander gemeente te vier. GK Oos-Moot en VGK Pretoria-Maranata sal mekaar se predikante toelaat om op uitnodiging die sakramente te bedien.
- 6.2. GK Oos-Moot en VGK Pretoria-Maranata bevestig dat hulle beide geslote nagmaalstafels het en slegs gaste met 'n attestaat kan saam nagmaal vier. Geen gesprek sal plaasvind met gaste uit betrokke gemeentes nie.

7. Besondere ampte

- 7.1. Beide kerkrade bevestig op grond van die Skrif dat vrouens nie verkiesbaar is vir die besondere ampte (predikant, ouderling en diaken) nie.

8. Gesamentlike aksies

- 8.1. Eenheid moet ook op grondvlak gestalte/vorm aanneem. Beide kerkrade is dit eens om dit in hul eie gemeente aan te moedig. Daar moet gekyk word om aktiwiteite te kombineer soos bv. vrouesaamtredae, ampsdraerskonferensies, jeugdae, Bybelstudies ens.
- 8.2. As daar by 'n gemeente 'n gesprek plaasvind soos bv. 'n gemeentevergadering waarby ander gemeentes sal baat, kan ander gemeentes genooi word.
- 8.3. Nooi mekaar na Klassisvergaderings.
- 8.4. In geval van 'n huweliksbevestiging, kan daar van mekaar se predikante gebruik gemaak word. Die ordereelings vir die huweliksbevestiging sal gebruik word van die gemeente waar die paartjie lidmate is of as lidmate gaan aansluit.

9. Oor en weer erkenning van mekaar

- 9.1. Ons moet in die oor en weer erkenning van mekaar, mekaar nie alleen in die goeie tye nie, maar ook in die moeilike tye bystaan. Ons moet dieper na mekaar beweeg en in mekaar se wel en wee betrokke wees.
- 9.2. Die Here gee eenheid tussen ware gelowiges en daarvoor moet ons noukeurig op die uitkyk wees. Ons moet goed oplet na dit wat die Here doen en die deure wat Hy vir ons oopmaak. Ons is tans nie kerkregtelik aan mekaar gebind nie, en daarom is elke kerkraad dit eens dat ons hard moet werk om daadwerklik bymekaar uit te kom as 'n kerkverbandelike eenheid.

10. Tydraamwerk

- 10.1. Daar word besluit om hierdie ooreenkoms elke 2 jaar weer in oënskou te neem.

Datum van ondertekening: 21 Augustus 2019

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Geteken namens VGK Pretoria-Maranata

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Geteken namens GK Oos-Moot

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Ander kommissielede

Annexure 5:

Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation

We live in an era during which different federations or denominations coexist already for generations.

We also live in an era during which local congregations increasingly ask themselves whether they are in the right denomination, or whether time has come for them to exit their denomination.

During this Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation the speakers will go back to Scripture and church history in their search for what the essence of a federation should be.

We heartily invite you to attend this conference.

When: Friday 28 June 4pm – Saturday 29 June 1pm

Where: *Free Reformed Church Pretoria*. Address: 798 28th Avenue, Rietfontein, Pretoria.

There are no costs attached to the conference.

In connection with the meals, please RSVP latest on Monday 24 June by sending a message to Gonnie (072 984 7827)



Canadian and American Reformed Churches

United Reformed Churches
IN NORTH AMERICA



Conference on the Essentials of a Church Federation

Friday 28 June 2019

16:00 Coffee & Tea
 16:30 Welcome & Opening
 17:00 "Living together in the faith: The roots of the Reformed view of church federation." by Prof. Dr. Ted van Raalte (Professor of Ecclesiology at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary)
 17:40 Questions
 18:00 Supper
 19:00 "Survey of church orders in Reformed denominations in regards to church federation since the original Church Order of Dordt until

Saturday 29 June 2019

8:30 Coffee & Tea
 9:00 Opening
 9:15 "Contours of a Federation. How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be with regards to:
 - Doctrinal matters
 - Geographical location
 - Language and culture" by Dr. Pieter Boon (Minister of the Free Reformed Church Pretoria-Maranata)
 9:50 Questions

	present.” by Dr. Dolf Britz (Professor Emeritus of Church History at the University of the Free State)	10:00	Coffee & Tea
		10:30	Questions & Discussion
19:40	Questions	12:00	Preparing Concluding Statement
20:00	Coffee & Tea	13:00	Closure
20:30	“Can a synod leave essential matters for local churches to decide, or does this create the danger that a federation will start falling apart?” by Dr. Hannes Breytenbach (Missionary of the Free Reformed Church Pretoria)	13:15	Lunch
21:10	Questions		
21:30	Closure		