

# THE CHURCH ORDER

## CHAPTER 1

### THE CONFESSION AND ORDER OF THE CHURCH

#### Article 1

The Dutch Reformed Church is based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. The doctrine which the Church confesses in agreement with the Word of God, is expressed in the Forms of Unity as formulated at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19, namely the thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Canons of Dordt.

#### Article 2

- 2.1 Whereas the Word of God requires that everything in the congregation of Christ should proceed in a proper and orderly manner (1 Corinthians 14:40), a number of regulations are given in the following articles for the life and work of the Church with a view to the fulfilment of its task and calling in accordance with Holy Scriptures and the Confession.
- 2.2 These regulations deal with the offices in the Church, the assemblies of the Church, the work of the Church, governance and discipline of the Church and the external relationships of the Church.
- 2.3 The Dutch Reformed Church determines its own internal order based on its inalienable calling and internal authority as church of Jesus Christ as well as its right to freedom of religion.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

#### 2.1. General Regulations

#### Article 3

3.1. Christ performs the entire ministry in his church and kingdom through his Word and Spirit. He does this inter alia by using

3.1.1 the ministry<sup>1</sup> of the three particular offices in the church, namely:

- that of minister of the Word<sup>2</sup>
  - that of elder
  - that of deacon
- to equip the believers for their ministry in the church and in the world.

3.1.2 the ministry of all believers<sup>3</sup>

3.2. These three offices are equal, but are distinguished in their charge and work. In the exercise of their calling no office bearer may rule over other office bearers, since Christ is the only Head, King and Master of his church.

#### Article 4

No one may serve in one of the particular offices in the church of Christ without

- being called (or elected) legitimately,
- receiving the necessary approbation, and
- being invested.

#### 2.2 The ministers of the Word

#### Article 5

5.1 For admission to the ministry of the Word the requirements are:

5.1.1 suitability for the office<sup>4</sup>

5.1.2 thorough theological training<sup>5</sup> and

5.1.3 the signing of the declaration for licensing which incorporates the underwriting of the Forms of Unity.

5.2 General Synod determines the requirements for the training, the form it takes and supervision, and the places where it will be undertaken on recommendation of the General Board of Governors.

5.2.1 The General Board of Governors is constituted by General Synod in accordance with the *Rule for the General Board of Governors*.

5.3 Where more than one synod is involved in a local board of governors for historical or other reasons, the synods concerned agree on the composition of the board of governors. Other synods are each entitled to appoint one representative in the board of governors.

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<sup>1</sup> No ministry shall be done amongst the members of another congregation unless it is with the approval and knowledge of that congregation.

<sup>2</sup> "Minister of the Word" refers to "minister of the gospel", preacher, minister and concepts with similar meanings. Where this Church Order Book refers to the masculine, it includes the feminine and vice versa, unless specifically stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the Church Order Art 55

<sup>4</sup> Art 5.1.1 cf. the Rule for the Regulation of the Training of Ministers and their Admission to the Ministry, point 4.1.1.

<sup>5</sup> Art 5.1.2 cf. the Rule for the Regulation of the Training of Ministers and their Admission to the Ministry, point 4.1.2.

- 5.3.1 The care of, as well as the control and supervision of the training of ministers of the gospel are managed by a local board of governors.
- 5.3.2 The local board of governors is responsible for the selection, guidance, supervision, examination and recommendation for admission to the ministry of theological students. These responsibilities may be performed by (a) committee(s) on behalf of the board of governors.
- 5.3.3 The DR Church faculty board is more specifically responsible for the academic training of the students.
- 5.3.4 One member of the DR Church faculty board sits on the local board of governors in an advisory capacity.
- 5.4 The board of governors appoints an examining committee composed of as many members as considered necessary from qualified persons nominated by the various synods. Members of the examining committee need not be members of the board of governors.
- The examining committee is charged with:
- 5.4.1 The selection and recommendation to the board of governors of ministry candidates after completion of their theological studies.
- 5.4.2 The conduct of *colloquium doctum*.

## Article 6

Granting of the competency to be called as a minister of the Word, or the termination of this privilege, is governed by the General Board for Competency on behalf of General Synod.

## Article 7

- 7.1 A Minister of the Word for a local congregation is called by the church council of the congregation with the approval of the congregation and the presbytery. Before the letter of call is sent off:
- 7.1.1 approval from the congregation must be procured by means of announcement;
- 7.1.2 the presbytery or its authorised representative must confirm in writing that all the ecclesiastical requirements for the call have been met. If all requirements have not been met, the presbytery or its authorised representative declares the call invalid;
- 7.1.3 objections to a call or the person called must be submitted to the presbytery or the presbytery committee who deals with it according to the regulations of the synod concerned.
- 7.2 Ministers in the employ of other church assemblies (presbytery, synod, or General Synod) (See Rule for the Competency of Ministers of the Word, Candidates for the Ministry and Retired Ministers, points 2.3.1 and 2.3.2) are called by the relevant assembly or its authorised representative. Before the letter of call is forwarded:
- 7.1.1 the approval of the assembly must be secured by publication of the call in *Kerkbode* and
- 7.2.2 the *Church Order* committee of the particular synod, or the person/sub-committee so authorised, must confirm in writing that all the requirements of the *Church Order* have been met. If all requirements have not been met, the relevant synod *Church Order* committee or its authorised official/sub-committee refers the call back to the assembly for rectification, or, if necessary, the call is declared invalid.
- 7.3 The calling assembly draws up the letter of call.
- 7.3.1 A representative of the presbytery committee, who is not a member of the congregation involved, advises the church council.
- 7.3.2 In the case of a call by the denomination, advice is given by the relevant synod *Church Order* committee or its authorised official.
- 7.4 The letter of call is the offer of employment which describes the responsibilities, according to Article 9 of the *Church Order*, and the conditions of service, according to Article 13 of the *Church Order*, of the person called. In the case of a call by the denomination, the necessary amendments are made with regard to the responsibilities and the conditions of service.
- 7.5 Within the framework of the *Church Order* and the relevant synod resolutions the conditions in the letter of call are negotiable when considering the call<sup>6</sup>.
- 7.6 After consideration of the conditions of the letter of call and any negotiations concerning it, the employment contract, by which the minister of the Word enters the employment of the congregation or the denomination, is drawn up in its final form.
- 7.7 The final contract of employment with a minister employed by a congregation is approved by the presbytery or its authorised representative, and in the case of a minister of the Word employed by the denomination, by the relevant synod *Church Order* committee or its authorised official. Both parties then sign the final agreement and the induction can take place, taking into account the other requirements for induction (see Article 8 of the *Church Order*).
- 7.8 This contract of employment can be altered from time to time with the agreement of both parties and the written approval of the presbytery (or its authorised representative) in the case of a minister in a local congregation, and the relevant synod *Church Order* committee or its authorised official in the case of a minister employed by the denomination.

## Article 8

- 8.1 The induction of a minister in a congregation takes place after:
- 8.1.1 the presbytery (or its authorised representative) has confirmed in writing that all the ecclesiastical requirements have been met,
- 8.1.2 the contract of employment has been signed by both parties.
- 8.1.3 In the case of a minister of the Word in office in the church, the following is submitted to the presbytery or its authorised representative and presented to the calling church council:
- 8.1.3.1 a deed of demission from the previous position.
- 8.1.4 In the case of a minister of the Word in a position outside the church, the following are submitted to the presbytery or its authorised representative and presented to the calling church council:
- 8.1.4.1 a certificate of honourable discharge; and
- 8.1.4.2 an attestation from the previous congregation.
- 8.1.5 In the case of candidate ministers
- 8.1.5.1 the deed of licence must be produced;
- 8.1.5.2 an attestation must be submitted to the calling church council; and

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Functional Decisions*: Minister of the Word: letter of calling and procedures for a call.

8.1.5.3 the induction is performed with the laying on of hands after which the competence of a minister has been acquired.

8.2 The induction of a minister serving the denomination takes place after:

8.2.1 The relevant synod legal affairs/*Church Order* committee or its authorised official has confirmed in writing that all the requirements of the church have been met;

8.2.2 all the required documents were produced/submitted (cf. Art 8.1 of the *Church Order*); and

8.2.3 the contract of employment has been signed by both parties.

8.3 The church assembly that employs the minister/candidate minister is responsible for notifying the General Board for Competency without delay of any change in someone's position and/or competence.

## Article 9

9.1 The office of the minister of the Word is focussed on the ministry of the Word in all its forms.

9.2 The minister of the Word is called to be a follower of Christ and to commit his life to the service of the Lord and his church.

9.3 The minister of the Word functions within a congregation, within the broader church structures and in the service of the church in the world.

9.4 In a congregation a minister accepts responsibility for studying and preaching the Word of God, ministry of the sacraments, the prayer ministry and the continued development of skills for the ministry. Together with the other offices the minister is also responsible for:

- worship services,
- edifying the congregation,
- teaching and training of believers for their ministry,
- the ministry of the congregation in the world,
- leading and organising the congregation,
- exercising Christian love and discipline,
- pastoral care.

The church council, in conjunction with the minister of the Word, discerns how these responsibilities are exercised, in line with particular gifts, and incorporate it in an employment contract.

9.5 The minister of the Word also participates in the joint ministry of the denomination in the various church assemblies and ecumenical relationships.

9.6 As part of the ministry of the denomination to the world, the denomination regulates the manner in which the minister of the Word serves in the church and in the world.

## Article 10

A minister of the Word may not perform any official duties (Article 9) amongst the members of another congregation without the permission of that church council.

## Article 11

11.1 A minister of the Word may leave the church ministry only for serious and weighty reasons. He/she ceases to be a minister of the Word when the congregation/denomination is left to accept another position. He/she may, however, receive prior permission from the General Board for Competency to retain competency as a candidate minister.

11.2 Such retention of competence can be granted only if the position accepted is spiritual in nature and is directly concerned with the proclamation of the Word and is related to and considered to be beneficial to the Dutch Reformed Church.

11.3 If there are other substantial reasons, retention of competence may only be granted if the General Board for Competency, based on recommendations by the church council and presbytery, conclude that there are adequate *bona fide*<sup>7</sup> reasons to accept another position<sup>8</sup>.

## Article 12

12.1 The minister of the Word is called and employed by a church assembly (church council, presbytery, synod or General Synod) for the purpose of executing his office or ministry.

12.2 The minister of the Word, as one called by the Lord through His church, is answerable to the Lord and the church assembly concerned.

12.3 The church assembly grants ministers of the Word the respect and support that will enable them to effectively discharge their office and calling by the Lord and His church.

12.4 Employment and termination of employment is in the hands of the church assembly who employs the minister of the Word.

12.5 Only persons with the necessary competency (cf. CO art. 6) may serve in a congregation or in the denomination as a minister of the Word (cf. footnote 1 at CO art. 3 as well as Rule 3).

12.6 The services of a minister of the Word are terminated with immediate effect upon the loss of competence in accordance with the Rule for the Regulation of the Competence of Ministers, Candidate Ministers and Retired Ministers.

12.7 The church assembly concerned may terminate the services of a minister in the following cases:

12.7.1 On grounds of misconduct;

12.7.2 On grounds of incompetence or poor performance;

12.7.3 On grounds of the operational requirements (including financial incapability) of the congregation/church assembly.

## Article 13

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<sup>7</sup> Reasons are *bona fide* when a minister resigns from his/her work without any hint of correctional and/or disciplinary action. Reasons may include that the minister presently does not see his way open to continue with the ministry.

<sup>8</sup> Where the competency of a candidate for the ministry is assigned, the following may also be considered, namely whether the other position "is spiritual in nature and is directly concerned with the proclamation of the Word and is related to and considered to be beneficial to the Dutch Reformed Church."

The congregation or church assembly which employs a minister of the Word, must take care of his spiritual, emotional and physical needs and is jointly responsible for his professional development and is responsible for his remuneration as agreed<sup>9</sup>.

#### **Article 14**

14.1 A minister of the Word retires at the age determined by General Synod.<sup>10</sup>

14.2 A minister of the Word who retires from service for reasons of poor health, or age, or other reasons, and qualifies for it, receives allowances in accordance with the rules of the relevant pension fund. Sufficient provision should also be made for the widow and orphans of the minister of the Word.

14.3 A retired minister of the Word can, with approval of the presbytery, be called for a fixed term and for a specific task (cf. Rule for Fixed Term Positions, point 4).

14.4 A retired minister of the Word who retires because of poor health must first be declared available to be called by the General Board for Competency.

### **2.3 Elders and Deacons**

#### **Article 15**

15.1 At their installation elders and deacons confirm their agreement with the confession of the church.

15.2 There should be a regular retirement of elders and deacons. The church council determines the period of service for elders and deacons.

#### **Article 16**

16.1 The office or ministry of the elder centres on spiritual discernment, care, guidance, management and supervision, and includes:

16.1.1 the equipping of members for their ministry;

16.1.2 the governance of the congregation;

16.1.3 home visitation;

16.1.4 exercising supervision and discipline;

16.1.5 guarding over the purity of doctrine;

16.1.6 co-responsibility for catechism;

16.1.7 the vocation to lead others to Christ;

16.1.8 leading of worship services where consent has been given by the church council and the presbytery<sup>11</sup>

16.1.9 other charges determined by the church council in line with 16.1.

16.2 Taking 16.1.1 to 16.1.9 into consideration, the church council determines the area of responsibility of each elder.

#### **Article 17**

17.1 The office or ministry of the deacon centres on a ministry of practical service. It starts in the worship service and from there it extends to the congregation and the world in which the members live.

The office of deacon includes:

17.1.1 the equipping of members for their ministry;

17.1.2 the upliftment, comfort and support of all who are in need of care in some way or another;

17.1.3 the collection and spending of the means required for diaconal work;

17.1.4 the organisation and management of the ministry of care of the congregation;

17.1.5 other charges determined by the church council in line with 17.1.

17.2 Taking 17.1.1 to 17.1.4 into consideration, the church council determines the area of responsibility of each deacon.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ASSEMBLIES OF THE CHURCH**

#### **3.1 General Regulations**

#### **Article 18**

There are four church assemblies: church council, presbytery, synod and General Synod.

#### **Article 19**

Supervision, government and discipline in the Church are entrusted to these assemblies.

#### **Article 20**

20.1 These assemblies have, each according to its own nature, ecclesiastical authority<sup>12</sup> conferred upon them by Christ.

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<sup>9</sup> See the A-Z Policy as included in the Church Order book.

<sup>10</sup> The current decision of General Synod (1986) is retirement at age 65 years.

<sup>11</sup> See Church Order Art 48.3.5.

20.2 The authority of the presbytery, according to its nature and function, over the church council is the same as that of the synod and General Synod, according to their nature and function, over the other church structures.

### **Article 21**

The church assemblies attend to affairs from an ecclesiastical perspective, in the light of the Word of God and in an ecclesiastical manner.

### **Article 22**

Art 22.1 Major assemblies deal only with matters that belong there, or matters which have been referred by minor assemblies and which could not be concluded by the minor assemblies.

Art 22.2 A major assembly can act where a church council or presbytery does not exist anymore or is unable to constitute.

### **Article 23**

23.1 The resolutions of assemblies or their authorised representatives are binding, but they may be subject to appeal to a major assembly or to the authorised representative of the major assembly<sup>13</sup>.

23.2 Members, office bearers and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church may not seek redress in the civil courts against decisions of a church assembly(ies), until they have used and exhausted the ecclesiastical means available to them.

### **Article 24**

Every assembly begins each day with a reading from Scripture and prayer and ends it with thanksgiving.

### **Article 25**

Every assembly must have a chairperson responsible for its guidance and orderly conduct, and a secretary who minutes the acts of the assembly.

## **3.2 Specific regulations**

### **3.2.1 Church Council**

#### **Article 26**

26.1 Every congregation has a church council, entrusted with the supervision, government and discipline of the congregation.

26.2 The church council consists of all the ministers of the Word as well as the elders and deacons<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Article 27**

27.1 A church council may decentralise and delegate to decentralised church councils<sup>14</sup> clearly prescribed powers which are submitted to the presbytery for approval.

#### **Article 28**

28.1 The church council meets at least four times a year. Under exceptional circumstances and with approval of the presbytery the church council can meet less frequently.

28.2 The church council annually elects a chairperson from the minister(s) and elders.

28.3 Extraordinary meetings of the church council are convened after consultation with the minister(s) of the Word if the chairperson is not a minister of the Word of the congregation.

28.4 If the local minister(s) of the Word cannot attend an ordinary or extraordinary meeting of the church council, or if the congregation is vacant, the substitute minister or another minister of the Word (serving or retired) appointed by the presbytery or its authorised representative, must attend the meeting in an advisory capacity with report to the presbytery. At the request of the church council this person may also act as chairperson.

### **3.2.2 Presbytery**

#### **Article 29**

Neighbouring congregations are grouped together in presbyteries as an expression of the church's interrelation and with a view to proper church discipline. This grouping of congregations is done from time to time by the synod. The presbytery meets once a year or as determined by the relevant synod.

#### **Article 30**

30.1 The presbytery is composed of the minister(s) of the Word and one elder/deacon as delegates of the church council of every congregation within the presbytery. Where there is a vacancy for a minister of the Word, church council may delegate an elder or deacon for the vacant post.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Article 3 and 21 of the Church Order

<sup>13</sup> Cf. The Belgic Confession Article 30.

<sup>14</sup> Decentralised church councils consist of the minister/s of the Word, elders and deacons, appointed by the church council. Under the term "decentralised church council" any grouping in the congregation is understood.

30.2 If a congregation has more than one post for a minister of the Word, the church council is entitled to delegate another elder/deacon for each additional post, if the synod so resolves. Where there is a vacancy for a minister of the Word in such a congregation, church council may delegate an elder or deacon for the vacant post.

30.3 For each delegate an alternate is appointed. An elder/deacon may serve as an alternate for a minister of the Word.

30.4 All delegates must be provided with credentials.

## **Article 31**

The activities of the presbytery comprise:

31.1 Church visitation;

31.2 the supervision of the congregations, to see to it that church councils and congregations fulfil their vocation;

31.3 advice and help to church councils;

31.4 the establishment of new congregations or dissolution of congregations at the request of church councils and the determination of congregation boundaries;

31.5 attending to matters which are presented to the presbytery meeting either in the first instance or by way of appeal;

31.6 the management of the communal calling and joint work of the congregations in the presbytery as determined by the presbytery from time to time;

31.7 the supervision and discipline of all elders, deacons and ministers of the Word, which include retired ministers of the Word and ministry candidates, without excluding the supervision of the church council over its office-bearers (see Article 62.2 of the *Church Order*).

31.8 the appointment of substitute ministers of the Word.

31.9 granting of limited competence on the request of church councils.

### **3.2.3 Synod**

## **Article 32**

The synod assembly is composed of delegates of congregations which form a geographical unit and which can meet easily. The grouping may be changed by General Synod/ the Moderamen of General Synod if requested and approved by the relevant synod(s)/ synod committee(s).<sup>17</sup>

## **Article 33**

33.1 Synods are constituted in one of the following ways, as decided by each synod itself:

33.1.1 one minister of the Word and one elder/deacon as delegates of the church council from each congregation in the synod. Where there is a vacancy for a minister of the Word, an elder or deacon may be delegated in place of the minister of the Word; or

33.1.2 if a congregation has more than one post for ministers of the Word, the church council is entitled to delegate more ministers of the Word and an additional elder/deacon for each additional minister of the Word, if synod so decides. If there is a vacancy for a minister of the Word in such a congregation, an elder or deacon may be delegated for that vacant position.

33.1.3 An equal number of ministers and elders/deacons from each presbytery in the synod. The synod decides on the manner of delegation and the number of delegates per presbytery.

33.2 Theological training is represented in an advisory capacity by one member of the faculty of the Theological Faculty Stellenbosch and/or the Theological Faculty Pretoria and/or the Theological Faculty Bloemfontein.

33.3 For each delegate an alternate is appointed. An elder/deacon may be an alternate for a minister of the Word.

33.4 Delegates must be provided with credentials.

## **Article 34**

Synod meets at least once every four years, if possible in the year following the ordinary meeting of General Synod.

## **Article 35**

The mandate and competence of the synod comprise:

35.1 composing and amending of regulations and rules for the activities entrusted to it as long as they are not contrary to the *Church Order* ;

35.2 the management of the communal calling and joint work of the congregations its area, subject to Article 22 and therefore also Article 26, 31 and 43 of the *Church Order*. The nature and scope of these matters are determined by synod itself;

35.3 the training of ministers of the gospel as prescribed by Article 5;

35.4 the acquisition of the necessary funds for its own activities and the financing of General Synod according to an agreed formula;

35.5 the handling of matters which are presented to it either in the first instance or by way of appeal;

35.6 the appointment of delegates to General Synod.

## **Article 36**

The constituent churches or synods maintain full jurisdiction over their properties, finances, activities, etc, which they had before becoming a constituent of General Synod, or which they procured afterwards, except those which have been or will be transferred to General Synod in accordance with the *Church Order*, or which are being held in trust by General Synod.

## **Article 37**

The constituent churches may withdraw from General Synod with the retention of all rights, privileges, properties, name, etc, if they can justify their action before God in the light of his Word.

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<sup>17</sup> Different synods use different names (e.g. moderamen, service council, synodical service committee) for a body that performs the functions of the synodical committee.

## 3.2.4 General Synod

### Article 38

38.1 General Synod consists of a maximum of 200 members consisting of an equal number of ministers of the Word and elders/deacons from the synods.

38.1.1 The first 100 delegates are comprised of 10 persons per synod:

38.1.2 The remaining 100 are made up proportionally according to the number of professing members per synod.

38.2 Theological training is represented in advisory capacity by one member of staff from each of the theological faculties of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein.

38.4 Each delegation must be provided with credentials.

### Article 39

The moderator's committee of General Synod, consisting of a moderator, a vice-moderator, an actuary and an additional member, leads the Synod (Cf. Article 25 of the *Church Order*). The general secretary acts as secretary of the meeting, in advisory capacity. During the session the moderator's committee is assisted by the moderators/chairpersons of the different synods.

### Article 40

40.1 At the start of a meeting of General Synod a moderator's committee is elected for the duration of the meeting.

40.2 Members of the moderator's committee may not be elected in the same position for more than two terms.

40.3 Before General Synod adjourns a General Synod Moderamen is constituted (cf. the Rule for the Moderamen).

### Article 41

The delegated minister with the longest service who is the oldest in years, opens the meeting and presides until the moderator is elected. The general secretary helps with the constitution of the assembly and the election of the moderator.

### Article 42

42.1 General Synod itself decides when the next meeting of General Synod will be, provided that no more than four years may pass between meetings.

42.2 The General Synod Moderamen convenes an extraordinary General Synod if it deems it necessary, either on its own initiative, or at the request of one or more synods.

### Article 43

43.1 The mandate of General Synod comprises:

43.1.1 that which gives expression to our communal identity in terms of Scripture, confession, *Church Order*, calling and policy;

43.1.2 that which affects our national and international ecumenical relationships;

43.1.3 that which affects the church's public testimony on national and international level<sup>18</sup>;

43.1.4 the celebration of our mutual connectedness;

43.1.5 the designation of the Bible translation(s) for official use;

43.1.6 determining the confessions according to Art. 44, the *Church Order*, the liturgical forms and practices, the hymnal(s) and the liturgical guidelines for worship services;

43.1.7 determining the formal requirements for the training of the ministers of the Word;

43.1.8 the administration of immovable property and funds of General Synod<sup>19</sup>;

43.1.9 the control over general church media;

43.1.10 the consideration of appeals brought before it.

### Article 44

44.1 Amendment of the Confession is possible only after it has been approved by a two-thirds majority of each synod and two-thirds of all the church councils<sup>20</sup>, each supporting it with a two-thirds majority.

44.2 Article 44.1 and 44.2 of the *Church Order* are amended after each synod has approved it with a two-thirds majority and General Synod thereafter approves it with a two-thirds majority.

44.3 General Synod may, with the exception of article 44.1 and 44.2, amend or augment the *Church Order* with a two-thirds majority.

44.4 Matters concerning doctrinal discipline, doctrinal disputes or disputes between synods and minor assemblies may be brought before General Synod by way of appeal. In cases of doctrinal discipline and doctrinal disputes a two-thirds majority is required to confirm the decision of General Synod (cf. Article 65.2 of the *Church Order*).

44.5 Lacking a two-thirds majority, any of the parties may make a further appeal to the individual synods. The combined absolute majority of votes of the individual synods is then final.

### Article 45

45.1 General Synod may draw up rules for its meetings and ministry groups/committees/task teams.

45.2 General Synod may suspend articles of the *Church Order* or grant dispensation from them, with the exception of Article 44.1 and 44.2, with a two-thirds majority.

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<sup>18</sup> A synod/presbytery which functions outside of the Republic of South Africa, handles the public witness and the relationship and agreements with that state and other entities within society on behalf of the denomination.

<sup>19</sup> This article must be read with the *Rule for the Administration of Property, Goods and Funds*.

<sup>20</sup> For the procedure followed by church councils when deciding on a change to the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church in order to obtain the approval and approbation of at least a two-thirds majority of professing members of congregations for the decision, cf. the *Rule for the Increase, Combination, Unification and Amalgamation of Congregations, and the Formation of a New Denominational Entity*, point 6.

## Article 46

General Synod may appoint ministry groups/committees/task teams to advise it or to execute resolutions and charges.

## Article 47

General Synod may organise church offices and make appointments to fill positions in the offices through the General Task Team for Funds.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

### 4.1 Public Worship

#### Article 48

48.1 The worship service is, under the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, the official public gathering of the congregation to meet with God and to experience the communion of the saints under the guidance of the specific offices and through the ministry of the Word, the ministry of the holy sacraments, prayer, music and offerings.

48.2 The form of the worship service is determined by the church council using the liturgical guidelines determined by General Synod.

48.3 The leading of worship services is the responsibility of one of the following persons:

48.3.1 the minister of the Word of the local congregation, or in his/her absence;

48.3.2 the substitute minister;

48.3.3 another competent minister<sup>21</sup> of reformed confession invited by the church council;

48.3.4 a student of a theological faculty of the Dutch Reformed Church (Cf. Article 5.2 of the *Church Order*) who, either in accordance with the requirements of the relevant faculty and with the permission of the church council, is receiving part of his/her practical training in the congregation, or after completion of his/her practical training, was invited by a church council;

48.3.5 an elder who has been authorised to preach by the church council and the presbytery (cf. Articles 3, 10 and 16.1.8 of the *Church Order*).

48.4 Preaching:

48.4.1 With a view to the proclamation of the whole council of God, the preaching must at all times do full justice to the church year and the Confessions.

48.4.2 The content of the preaching must always be an exposition and application of Holy Scripture.

48.5 The Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt must continually be presented systematically in the preaching.

### 4.2 Sacraments

#### Article 49

##### 49.1 Baptism<sup>22</sup>

49.1 Holy baptism is administered by a minister of the Word<sup>23</sup> using water and an approved liturgical form. Except in highly exceptional circumstances<sup>24</sup>, this is done during the official public meeting of the congregation.

##### 49.2 Communion

49.2.1 Holy Communion is celebrated at least four times a year in each congregation (cf. Functional Decision Communion: Regular celebration of communion).

49.2.2 The following are admitted to holy communion:

49.2.2.1 professing members of the congregation;

49.2.2.2 baptismal members of the congregation who have been admitted to holy communion by the church council (cf. Functional Decision Communion: process of allowing children to communion);

49.2.2.3 visitors from other Dutch Reformed congregations;

49.2.2.4 visitors from other churches (cf. the *Rule for Relations with other Churches and Groups*, points 3.2.2.1 AND 3.2.2.2)

### 4.3 Youth Ministry

#### Article 50

50.1 The youth as an integral part of the congregation is the responsibility of the Church and this responsibility is inalienable and not transferable.

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<sup>21</sup> It is understood that a competent minister of the Word who may lead worship services is a person who has that competence within the DR Church or another church of reformed confession. When a church council invites a person who is not deemed to have such competence to lead a worship service, it is acting contrary to the Church Order (Compare Acts General Synod 1998, p 409, 1.19.2.2). Cf. the *Rule for Relations with other Churches and Groups*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Functional Resolutions: Baptism*

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Article 48.3.1 to 48.3.3 with footnote.

<sup>24</sup> The merits of such a request is considered by the church council.



50.2 The ministry to the youth as covenant youth is an integral part of the comprehensive ministry within the congregation in which God through his Word is manifested to the youth by proclamation, teaching, equipping, pastoral care and service. This ministry within the congregation for and by the youth is performed under the guidance of the offices.

50.3 The children of the congregation, as well as all persons outside the Church who wish to become professing members of the congregation, must be instructed in the Word of God and the doctrine of the Church. This instruction has as its aim the public confession of faith by means of which they share in the full rights and responsibilities of confirmed members.

50.4 Where required by the extent of the work and other circumstances, it is undertaken jointly within the denomination.

## **4.4 Pastoral Care**

### **Article 51**

51.1 The ministers of the Word, elders and deacons must extend pastoral care to all members of the congregation in particular to the needy, sick and elderly. They must be visited, encouraged, comforted and supported. Members must also be warned continually against false teachings and heresies, worldliness and ungodly practices.

51.2 The Christian marriage as an institution of God must be kept holy and church councils must maintain the necessary pastoral supervision in this regard.

51.3 Church councils ensure that departed members of the congregation are buried/cremated in a Christian manner.

## **4.5 General Congregational Ministry**

### **Article 52**

52.1 The Church directs itself by means of general congregational ministry to the members in order to build up the congregation so that it may accomplish its ministry.

52.2 The Church directs itself by means of the intensive, specialised congregational ministry to people alienated from the church who are still formal members in order to reach them meaningfully and to lead them back to communion with Christ.

52.3 Where required by the extent of the work and other circumstances, it is undertaken jointly within the denomination.

## **4.6 Mission and Evangelisation**

### **Article 53**

53.1 Mission is the saving act of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to the world, by which He, through his Word and Spirit, gathers for Himself a community out of the entire human race.

Through this congregation

- \* God causes his Word to be proclaimed to the fallen world,
- \* He brings about the communion of the saints out of all nations and
- \* He enables ministry to be rendered to the world in need,
- \* He causes his command to protect and manage creation to be given visible expression, and
- \* his justice is proclaimed to society and the world.

By these means He causes his kingdom to come until the end of time.

53.2 Through missions the church ministers the gospel in all its dimensions to people outside the church.

53.3 Mission is the vocation of every member as well as the congregation. Where the extent and other circumstances of the work require it, missionary work is undertaken jointly within the denomination.

## **4.7 Ministry of Caring**

### **Article 54**

54.1 With priestly concern the Church must assist, comfort and spiritually uplift the poor and others in need of care.

54.2 Where the extent and other circumstances of the work require it, congregations perform the ministry of caring jointly within the denomination.

## **4.8 Ministry of the faithful**

### **Article 55**

55.1 The calling of the Church in its mission to the world (*Missio Dei*) implies the devoted ministry of every believer.

55.2 Every believer receives from the Lord the gifts, the opportunities and the power of the Holy Spirit to embody the love of God for this world in their daily lives.

55.3 With this in mind the Church should equip, inspire and support believers.

55.4 The Church creates opportunities where believers become involved in expanding the church and the Kingdom of God.

55.5 Believers are also at liberty to launch their own actions and form networks and partnerships to advance the Kingdom.

55.6 The Church uses its sound judgment to give its approval and cooperation to these actions, networks and partnerships which also serve the *Missio Dei*.

## **4.9 Doctrine and Current Affairs**

### **Article 56**

The Church endeavours to promote Scriptural views on current affairs, doctrinal and ethical issues and strives to promote morally sound public life.

#### **4.10 Stewardship**

##### **Article 57<sup>25</sup>**

Each church assembly makes the necessary provision for the careful control of the material affairs of the Church and reports annually on its stewardship to the congregation, presbytery, synod or General Synod, as the case may be.

#### **4.11 Labour relations**

##### **Article 58**

Conditions of service for employees, other than ministers, employed by a church council or other assembly are set out in a contract.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CHURCH SUPERVISION, CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE**

#### **Article 59**

59.1 Church supervision is done and church correction and discipline are exercised:

59.1.1 to the glory of God;

59.1.2 for the welfare of the Church;

59.1.3 for the salvation of the sinner;

59.2 as prescribed by

59.2.1 the Word of God;

59.2.2 the Confessions;

59.2.3 the *Church Order* and other regulations<sup>26</sup> of the Church.

59.2.3 the employment contract.

#### **Article 60**

##### **Church supervision and correction**

60.1 Supervision and correction have a spiritual character which is fitting for the church as a fellowship based on faith and love. Supervision and correction are therefore conducted in an ecclesiastical manner and by spiritual means.

60.2 The official exercise of correction by church assemblies, or those authorised by them, does not replace the vocation of the faithful to admonish one another, but supplements it.

60.3 The official supervision and correction of the church is of a pastoral-canonical nature and must be applied from a Biblical and spiritual perspective in a fair and just manner.

60.4 Church supervision covers the whole spectrum of life (profession and conduct) of all the members (baptismal and professing) of the congregation, including office-bearers.

#### **Article 61**

##### **Sins which are subject to correction**

61.1 Sins which are subject to correction are those which contravene the Word of God and the confession of the Church.

61.2 Sins that cause public offence, or that come to the attention of the Church in accordance with the prescriptions of Matthew 18:15-17, expose the offender(s) to an official correctional enquiry.

61.3 Misconduct in terms of labour relations by employees of the church could also be sins subject to correction.

#### **Article 62**

62.1 All baptismal and professing members of the congregation fall under the supervision and discipline of the church council.

62.2 All elders, deacons and ministers, retired ministers and candidates for the ministry, fall under the supervision and correction of the presbytery, without excluding the supervision of the church council over its office-bearers (cf. Art. 31.7 of the *Church Order*).

62.3 Members of the church who are employed by the congregation or the denomination can be corrected for misconduct.

#### **Article 63**

63.1 Employees serving the congregation or denomination can be disciplined by the church in terms of their contract of employment.

63.2 Church disciplinary action is the result of violations at work and has to do with the terms of the contract of employment.

63.3 Employees in the service of the denomination fall under the church discipline of the employer.

63.4 Ministers of the Word, retired ministers and candidates for the ministry, fall under the supervision and discipline of the presbytery.

#### **Article 64**

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<sup>25</sup> This Article must be read in conjunction with the Rule for the Regulation of Properties, Assets and Funds.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the *Rule for Correction and Discipline*.

## **Disciplinary measures**

64.1 The measures for church discipline listed below may be applied by the investigating bodies.

### **64.2 Baptismal Members**

- 64.2.1 a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;
- 64.2.2 censure comprising the withholding of holy communion and/or refusal of the public confession of faith;
- 64.2.3 excommunication from the congregation by means of the relevant form.

### **64.3 Confirmed Members**

- 64.3.1 a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;
- 64.3.2 censure comprising the withholding of the sacraments and the suspension of other privileges of membership;
- 64.3.3 excommunication from the congregation by means of the relevant form, if censure and continued pastoral care have not led to repentance.

### **64.4 Elders and deacons**

- 64.4.1 a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;
- 64.4.2 suspension with or without withholding of the sacraments and the suspension of members' privileges until there is evidence of true repentance;
- 64.4.3 dismissal from office with suspension of members' privileges and withholding of the sacraments.

### **64.5 Ministers of the gospel, retired ministers, candidates for the ministry/employees with report to the General Board for Competency in the case of those who are licensed for ministry**

- 64.5.1 a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;
- 64.5.2 suspension for a fixed period with one or more of the following measures:
  - 64.5.2.1 suspension of members' privileges;
  - 64.5.2.2 withholding of the sacraments;
  - 64.5.2.3 partial or total withholding of remuneration and allowances by the employer.
- 64.5.3 If the investigating body is not convinced of the sincerity of the repentance, the suspension can be extended.
- 64.5.4 Dismissal from the service of the congregation or the denomination with one or more of the following measures:
  - 64.5.4.1 suspension of members' privileges for a fixed period and/or until there is repentance;
  - 64.5.4.2 withholding of the sacraments for a fixed period and/or until there is repentance;
  - 64.5.4.3 notice to the General Board for Competency that the person's licence is suspended for a fixed period;
  - 64.5.4.4 notice to the General Board for Competency that the person's licence is revoked with immediate effect, which means the annulment of the *Deed of Licence*;

## **Article 65**

### **Appeals<sup>27</sup>**

- 65.1 In accordance with Article 23 of the *Church Order* appeals may be lodged against the findings and correctional and/or disciplinary measures of investigative bodies.
- 65.2 In doctrinal cases appeals may be lodged as far as with General Synod (Compare Article 44.4 of the *Church Order*).
- 65.3 In other correctional and/or disciplinary matters, appeals can be lodged only as far as with the synod.

## **Article 66**

### **The suspension of correctional and/or disciplinary measures**

66.1 Church disciplinary measures are aimed at inducing contrition and repentance and are lifted, taking Article 59.1 of the *Church Order* into consideration, in the case of:

### **66.2 Members**

- 66.2.1 When a confirmed member gives evidence of repentance after being censured, an investigating body or church council lifts the suspension if it is convinced of the sincerity of the repentance.
- 66.2.2 Where the public confession of faith has been withheld, the church council admits the baptismal member to such confession if the body conducting the church discipline is convinced of the sincerity of the repentance.
- 66.2.3 When a member who has been excommunicated from the congregation gives evidence of repentance and desires to be received back into the congregation, the church council, if it is convinced of the sincerity of the repentance, receives the person back into the congregation by means of the relevant form. In the case of baptismal members, this step can be accompanied by public confession of faith.

### **66.3 Elders and deacons**

66.3.1 If the presbytery or its authorised representative as investigative body/broader church structure as employer is convinced of the sincerity of repentance, suspension can be lifted. Elders and deacons who were dismissed can then be elected to the church council again.

### **66.4 Ministers of the Word, retired ministers and candidates for the ministry**

66.4.1 If the presbytery or its authorised representative as investigative body/broader church structure as employer is convinced of the sincerity of the repentance, censure and suspension as correctional and/or disciplinary measures are lifted with report to the General Board for Competency.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. the *Rule for Correction and Discipline*.

66.4.2 In the case of dismissal of an employee according to Article 64.5.4 of the *Church Order*, the presbytery must lift the suspension of members' privileges and the withholding of sacraments before the General Board for Competency can restore the right to practise.

66.4.3 Restoration in service of the congregation can be effected only after a successful appeal and if the body of appeal decides for it.

66.4.4 A person who lost the right to practice through correctional and/or disciplinary procedures, can only be licensed again after *colloquium doctum* by a candidates committee and after the recommendation of a board of governors (See the *Rule for the Competence of Ministers, Candidates for the Ministry and Retired Ministers*).

66.4.5 In the case of loss of competence by a correctional and/or disciplinary act because of gross sins such as adultery, immorality, divorce, murder, perjury, theft, or loss of competency because of heresy, permission for licensing may be granted only by the Moderamen of General Synod on recommendation of the General Board for Competency in exceptional cases after favourable recommendations have been received from all the parties concerned.

## CHAPTER 6

### EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH

#### 6.1 Church and State

##### Article 67

67.1 In the light of Romans 13 the church recognises the state as a servant of God for our good. It is God who grants the state the mandate to maintain justice and to punish the malefactor.

67.2 The Church acknowledges that the government which controls a specific state by virtue of its physical rule, is ordained by God and must be respected as such. The norm for the participation of the Church in the legal process and exercise of civil rights is the Word of God.

67.3 Christ is the Head of the Church. Therefore, the Church considers its right to freedom of worship, which includes its Biblical-prophetic witness to the state authority and the world in which it is situated, as inalienable. In the exercise thereof it claims the legally determined protection of the government.

67.4 The Church approaches authorities of state at all levels in an orderly manner. This liaison is conducted by its recognised church assemblies or the committees they appoint for this purpose. Liaison on matters which affect the Church at the general synodical level is conducted by General Synod or its relevant committee. Liaison without a specific mandate from General Synod is conducted by the relevant committee in consultation with the Moderamen of General Synod (Cf. Article 43.1.3 of the *Church Order* and the footnote).

#### 6.2 Church, Society and free association

##### Article 68

Where possible, the Church gives support to social non-church organisations which have a positive Christian basis and are aimed at furthering the kingdom of God. This support is given from an ecclesiastical perspective and in an ecclesiastical manner. Whether a specific organisation may claim the support of the Church depends upon its principles and aims and how these are put into practice.

#### 6.3 Church and education

##### Article 69

69.1 The Church endeavours to ensure that the Word of God and Protestant-Christian norms and values direct policy in educational institutions and the cultural idiom in which education takes place.

69.2 The Church acknowledges the internal competence of educational institutions to decide matters which are typically educational (standards, syllabi, etc.).

69.3 The Church endeavours to ensure Christian education for its children and youth. This education must include well-grounded standards and syllabi.

#### 6.4 Church and ecumenical relations

##### Article 70<sup>28</sup>

70.1 The Church endeavours through its assemblies to co-operate with other Christian churches in a responsible manner, to deliver a joint message and to strive together for the maintenance of Christian principles.

70.2 General Synod determines the substance and scope of the relations with other churches or church communities by means of an ordinary majority vote.

70.3 The degree and manner of co-operation are determined in each case by the degree of consensus regarding confession, church government, worship services and the view on the Christian way of life of the church involved.

70.4 The decision regarding application for or termination of membership of an ecumenical organisation is determined by a two-thirds majority vote of General Synod.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. the Rule for the Relationship to other Churches and Groups.

# RULES

## FUNCTIONING OF GENERAL SYNOD

### RULE 1

#### RULE FOR THE MODERAMEN

#### 1. NAME

Moderamen of General Synod.

#### 2. COMPOSITION

2.1 The Moderamen of General Synod is composed as follows:

2.1.1 the moderator's committee who were elected during the Synod;

2.1.2 one representative (with alternate) from each synod nominated by the synod and elected by General Synod;

2.1.3 four additional members with alternates elected by General Synod.

2.1.4 the general secretary serves in the Moderamen in an advisory capacity.

2.2 The composition of the Moderamen includes:

2.2.1 At least three women of which at least one should be qualified as a minister.

2.2.2 At least two members who are not ministers.

2.3 The moderamen is elected for a period of two years and members can only serve two terms in the same position.

2.4 When a vacancy occurs during the term of office, the Moderamen fills the position from the list of elected alternates.

#### 3. CHARGE

3.1 The Moderamen takes responsibility for the leadership between meetings of synod in respect of:

3.1.1 identifying, prioritising and evaluating activities;

3.1.2 the composition of project-, program- and task teams; and

3.1.3 monitoring of the process.

3.2 The Moderamen

3.2.1 appoints a Management Team for each term to implement the activities of General Synod. This is done in line with the relevant rule;

3.2.2 appoints the senior personnel employed by General Synod;

3.2.3 manages the senior personnel employed by General Synod in cooperation with the Management Team of the Moderamen.

3.2.4 coordinates and integrates the activities of General Synod;

3.2.5 deals with urgent affairs, with report to General Synod;

3.2.6 acts as the meeting of members of General Synod's media companies;

3.2.7 advises the boards of directors of the media companies regarding the appointment of the chief executive officer of the Bible Media Group and the appointment of the editor of the *Kerkbode*;

3.2.8 works very closely with the leadership structures in the synods regarding communication and the implementation of decisions; and

3.2.9 approves, under instruction of General Synod, Rules and amendments to Rules for the activities of General Synod.

3.3 The Moderamen appoints an executive of at least five members with the moderator of General Synod as the chairperson, the assessor as vice-chairperson and the general secretary as secretary.

3.4 The executive deals, in terms of the charge of the Moderamen, with all administrative and urgent matters, with report to the Moderamen.

#### 4. MEETINGS

4.1 The Moderamen meets at least twice annually.

4.2 The executive of the Moderamen meets when necessary.

### RULE 2

#### RULE FOR THE MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE MODERAMEN

#### 1. NAME

Management Team of the Moderamen.

#### 2. COMPOSITION

2.1 The Moderamen appoints a Management Team for each term. The Management Team is composed of members who jointly possess the management abilities, inter alia, in the areas of finances, legal affairs, labour relations, projects, facilities, communication and companies.

2.2 With the exception of the general secretary, the personnel of General Synod and functionaries whose services are bought out by General Synod, do not serve as members of the Management Team. They may, however, be present at meetings on invitation and in an advisory capacity.

2.3 At least two members of the Management Team must be delegates to General Synod.

2.4 The Management Team is composed of:

2.4.1 two representatives from the Moderamen.

- 2.4.2 two representatives from the General Task Team Finance;
- 2.4.3 one expert in the area of ecclesiastical law/legal affairs recommended by the General Task Team Legal Affairs;
- 2.4.5 one expert in the area of labour relations recommended by the General Board for Competency;
- 2.4.6 one expert in the area of office- and project management;
- 2.4.7 one expert in the area of communication;
- 2.4.8 the general secretary ex officio.
- 2.4.9 The Management Team has the right to co-opt additional members, as necessary.
- 2.5 The general secretary is the executive officer of the Management Team.
- 2.6 A member of the staff of the Office of General Synod acts as minuting secretary for the meetings of the Management Team.
- 2.7 The Management Team appoints its own chairperson and vice-chairperson.
- 2.8 Vacancies in the Management Team are filled by the Moderamen, on the recommendation of the Management Team.
- 2.9 The chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary act as the executive committee.
- 2.10 The executive committee deals, in terms of the charge of the Management Team, with all administrative and urgent matters, with report to the Management Team.

### **3. CHARGE**

- 3.1 The Management Team is charged with:
  - 3.1.1 the execution of decisions assigned to the Management Team by General Synod and/or the Moderamen;
  - 3.1.2 the general management of the activities of the Moderamen and the co-ordination of the activities of the task teams;
  - 3.1.3 the general management of the projects and programs of General Synod;
  - 3.1.4 the appointment of project teams in consultation with the Moderamen;
  - 3.1.5 the broad functioning of the Office of General Synod, while the general secretary is responsible for the day to day functioning;
  - 3.1.6 finalising the budget for the activities of General Synod in consultation with the General Task Team Finances and for the final approval by the Moderamen.
  - 3.1.7 the appointment of personnel (excluding senior personnel) for the organisational functions and expert personnel for the specialist functions of the Office of General Synod;
  - 3.1.8 finalisation and approval of service contract for personnel (excluding senior personnel) in the Office of General Synod;
  - 3.1.9 the approval and management of the personnel policy of General Synod;
  - 3.1.10 the general management of communication;
  - 3.1.11 the alignment of the activities of the companies of the church with the strategic plan and goals of General Synod; and
  - 3.1.13 reporting to the Moderamen.

### **4. MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The Management Team meets at least once per quarter.
- 4.2 The Management Team meets as necessary with project- and program leaders.
- 4.3 The executive of the Management Team meets when necessary.

## **RULE 3**

### **STANDING ORDERS**

#### **1. OPENING AND CONSTITUTION**

- 1.1 The delegates gather at the place and time previously determined by the Moderamen. The delegated minister of the Word with the longest service, who is the oldest in years, opens the meeting and chairs the meeting until the moderator has been elected. The general secretary assists with the constituting of the meeting and the election of the moderator. At an extraordinary General Synod the chairperson of the Moderamen acts as chairperson.
- 1.2 The calculation of the delegation per synod as determined by Article 38.1.2 of the *Church Order* is done by the Moderamen. Credentials of delegates must reach the general secretary at least three months before the meeting commences. Amended credentials can be submitted up to the commencement of the meeting. At the constitution the credentials are tabled. At an extraordinary General Synod credentials and reports are submitted as determined by the Moderamen and only those matters are tabled for which the extraordinary General Synod was convened.
- 1.3 The meeting is declared legally constituted by the chairperson from the delegates whose credentials have been submitted. The majority of the delegates to the meeting in accordance with Article 38.1 of the *Church Order*, constitutes a quorum.
- 1.4 After the constitution of General Synod a Moderator's Committee is elected for the duration of the meeting.
- 1.4.1 The election of the Moderator's Committee is conducted from separate nomination lists. The collection and counting of votes is the charge of a committee appointed beforehand by the Committee for the Agenda.

- 1.4.2 The Moderator's Committee of General Synod consists of a moderator, an assessor and actuarius. The general secretary acts in an advisory capacity as secretary for the meeting. During the meeting the Moderator's Committee is assisted by the moderators/chairpersons of the different synods.
- 1.4.3 Members of the Moderator's Committee may not be elected at more than two consecutive meetings to serve in the same position.<sup>29</sup> Subsequently the person may however be elected to one of the other positions.
- 1.5 The meeting is held with open doors, unless the meeting decides otherwise.
- 1.6 Each daily session is opened in a fitting manner with Scripture reading and prayer and closed in prayer.
- 1.7 A member of the meeting must give his/her apologies in advance if he/she will absent for part of the meeting. An alternate may appear instead of the person. No member may leave the meeting without the permission.

## 1. VOTING

- 2.1 Every member of a meeting must vote. For a decision, an absolute majority of votes of the members present is required, except in the cases where the *Church Order* requires a two-thirds majority (Article 44.1, 44.2 and 70.4). Persons who attend the meeting in an advisory capacity may participate in the discussion, but may not vote.
- 2.2 If the vote concerns the election of persons, it is conducted by secret ballot in the following way:
  - 2.2.1 First a list of nominees is drawn up. Every voting member may nominate person, but not more than the number of persons to be elected.
  - 2.2.2 From the names on the list of nominees, each voter votes for as many names as the number of persons to be elected.
  - 2.2.3 The person who receives the most votes, is elected, provided that the number of votes received, constitute an absolute majority of the members present.
  - 2.2.4 If one or more of the required number have not received the absolute majority of votes of the members present, a further vote is conducted among the names which received the highest number of votes and together constitute an absolute majority.
  - 2.2.5 If an equal number of votes are cast for two or more persons and the issue cannot be resolved by a further round of voting, the decision is made by casting the lot.
- 2.3 Voting proceeds as follows:
  - 2.3.1 In all cases, where there is no consensus, voting is by a show of hands, or in controversial matters by secret ballot if the meeting so decides. The majority of votes determines the matter.
  - 2.3.2 In the case of motions with amendments, the amendments are voted on first in ascending order from the last which was tabled and then the proposal as amended by the approved amendments. Only if all the amendments are rejected does the meeting vote on the original motion.
  - 2.3.3 After each vote on a motion or amendment the result of the vote is announced – not then number of votes for and against the amendment, but whether it has been approved or rejected.
  - 2.3.4 A member may, with or without stating reasons, request that it be noted in the minutes that he/she did not agree with a resolution which was passed, or that he/she was not present when the resolution was passed.
  - 2.3.5 Persons who attend the meeting in an advisory capacity may participate in the discussion, but may not vote.

## 3. DISCUSSION OF BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Committee for the Agenda is appointed by the Moderamen, draws up the agenda for the meeting, and ensures that, if at all possible, it is delivered to the delegates six weeks before the meeting. Before the meeting of General Synod the agenda, and after the meeting the acts, are sent to all serving ministers of the Word of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as congregations, officials and interested parties. The agenda and acts can be distributed in printed and/or electronic form.
- 3.2 The report of the Committee for the Agenda is tabled first.
- 3.3 The general secretary takes notes of matters which appear in more than one place in the agenda and makes these notes available to the chairperson.
- 3.4 In conducting the meeting the chairperson follows the order that appears to be most suitable. The chairperson presents the matters to be tabled clearly, gives the necessary information about them and may, if required, make suggestions to help the meeting to come to a decision.
- 3.5 The chairperson aims, where a matter appears more than once in the agenda, to table it at the most appropriate time and, if at all possible, to finalise it there.
  - 3.5.1 Where the same matter appears elsewhere, only the heading is given and the relevant page reference as indication that the matter has been concluded.
  - 3.5.2 The chairperson has an ordinary vote, but not a deciding vote.
- 3.6 When dealing with issues connected with the order of the meeting for which there are no provisions in these standing orders, the chairperson acts in accordance with custom and own judgement. If any member objects to this, it is subjected to decision by the meeting.
- 3.7 Each member of a meeting must address the chairperson when participating in the discussion.
- 3.8 When a matter is tabled, each member may speak to it except when the meeting decides otherwise. No person may speak out of turn, and/or without leave of the chairperson. If two or more members stand up together, the chairperson determines who speaks first.
- 3.9 No member of the assembly is allowed to speak more than once to the same matter, except when he/she wishes to draw the attention of the chairperson to a contravention of the standing orders, or with the approval of the meeting, or by way of the proposer's rebuttal.
- 3.10 The chairperson may, when he/she considers the matter to have been discussed sufficiently, put it to the meeting whether a vote should be taken.

## 4. MOTION AND AMENDMENT(S)

- 4.1 The motion and the amendment(s) must be submitted in writing and be signed by the proposer and the seconder. Recommendations of a project team and a permanent or temporary task team are deemed to be motions before the meeting. If a temporary task team submits a recommendation which affects the recommendation of a project team or a permanent task team, the motion is that of project team or permanent task team and the temporary task team must amend. If more than one project- or general task team submit a motion to the meeting on the same issue, the chairperson rules which one is substantive.
- 4.2 Nobody may ask to speak to an issue, nor may a motion or amendment be received by the chairperson, before he/she has tabled it.

<sup>29</sup> Since General Synod 2011 this regulation is also applicable to the position of the actuarius.

- 4.3 A motion or amendment which has been tabled, may not be withdrawn without the leave of the meeting.
- 4.4 The proposer of a point of discussion or motion is limited to 8 minutes, with 5 minutes for rebuttal, and other speakers to 5 minutes. In specific instances the meeting may disregard this time limit.
- 5. POINT OF ORDER**
- 5.1 A point of order is a motion which deals with:
- 5.1.1 the order in which matters are tabled, or
- 5.1.2 suspending the discussion of a specific issue, or
- 5.1.3 the referral of a specific issue, or
- 5.1.4 dropping a specific issue.
- 5.2 A point of order may be submitted at any stage of the discussion. It is voted upon without debate. However, it is within the chairperson's discretion to hold the back the point of order, if the chairperson is of the opinion that it is being used to prevent a proper discussion of the issue.
- 6. REPORTS AND POINTS FOR DISCUSSION**
- 6.1 Only a church assembly, or its authorised representative, and a board of governors in matters of policy in accordance with Article 5.2 of the *Church Order*, may submit points for discussion to be General Synod. Points for discussion, which originate from church councils or presbyteries, are sent, with motivating arguments, to the relevant synod/synodical committee/moderamen.
- 6.2 Such a synod meeting or its authorised representative discusses the point for discussion from a church council or presbytery and then forwards the point for discussion to General Synod with additional comments.
- 6.3 Points for discussion and matters to be tabled are only valid if they are in accordance with CO Article 43 and received by the general secretary at least three months before the meeting.
- 6.4 Urgent matters may be tabled if the meeting so decides after consultation by and on the recommendation of the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs.
- 6.5 Reports by project- and general task teams of General Synod must be submitted to the general secretary at least three months before the meeting.
- 6.6 Urgent matters which arise in the three-month period prior to the meeting, and have been dealt with by project- or general task teams may be tabled as addendum reports with the leave of the Committee for the Agenda.
- 6.7 The Committee for the Agenda have the right to have reports submitted by the project- or general task teams shortened, if they are unnecessarily long.
- 6.8 Recommendations by permanent committees which entail amendments to the *Church Order* and Rules, are marked in the agenda: For the attention of the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs. These proposals are then checked before the Synod by the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs for formulations that are satisfactory from the point of view of ecclesiastical law, without any opinion expressed regarding the principle of the committee's proposal. During the discussion of such a recommendation in the report of a project- or general task team, the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs advises on the relevant aspects of ecclesiastical law.
- 7. TEMPORARY TASK TEAMS, PROJECT- AND GENERAL TASK TEAMS**
- 7.1 Temporary task teams, as appointed by the Committee for the Agenda, may begin their activities before the start of Synod.
- 7.2 The nomination of temporary committees while General Synod is in session, is done by the meeting with a show of hands on the recommendation of the Moderamen.
- 7.3 Officials employed by synods and General Synod may sit in temporary task teams in an advisory capacity (as representatives or observers who are paid for by synods).
- 7.4 Points for discussion which are received in time, are referred by the general secretary to the relevant project- or general task teams for report to General Synod. Other points for discussion are dealt with by temporary task teams. Persons who have submitted points for discussion may clarify it at a meeting of the project- or general task team.
- 7.5 Temporary task teams do not make recommendations concerning the reports of project- or general task teams, unless there is a point for discussion on the same matter which brings new aspects to light, or when a matter is referred to them by synod.
- 7.6 After the conclusion of the meeting tasks are executed and activities continued under the guidance of the Moderamen, where necessary by project- and general task teams, with the continual coordination of the Management Team of the Moderamen and with the support of the Office of General Synod. Project teams deal with activities which have a shorter or *ad-hoc* duration, while general task teams do the work which is more long term or indefinite.
- 7.7 Project- or general task teams are nominated after the conclusion of the meeting by the Moderamen. A convenor is appointed for each project- and general task team, who calls up the appointed members to the first meeting and handles the constitution.
- 7.8 Vacancies in project- and general task teams which arise between ordinary meetings of General Synod are filled by the Moderamen on recommendation of the particular project- or general task team.
- 8. REVISION**
- 8.1 Decisions once taken may only be reconsidered after due notice and with the agreement of the meeting at a time set by the moderator's committee.
- 8.2 Notice of revision
- 8.3.1 Revision may be granted if it is argued convincingly that
- 8.3.1.1 in the course of the discussion of the issue in the meeting, certain aspects were insufficiently covered, or not at all; and/or
- 8.3.1.2 information became available at a later stage which necessitates revision of the decision.
- 8.3.2 Each notice of revision is referred to the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs.
- 8.3.3 The applicant puts the reason(s) for the application for revision to the Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs.
- 8.3.4 The Temporary Task Team for Legal Affairs makes a recommendation to synod on each notice of revision.
- 8.3.5 The meeting decides with a majority vote whether the revision is granted. If granted, the issue is opened for debate and the meeting can come to a different decision or stand by the original decision.
- 9. MINUTES**
- 9.1 Motions are minuted as submitted in writing.
- 9.2 All the motions and amendments are minuted, including those which are rejected.



- 9.3 The minutes of each session day are edited by a minuting committee and passed by the meeting on the following session day and signed by the moderator and secretary.
- 9.4 The minutes of the last session are edited by the minuting committee and passed and signed by the Moderamen.
- 9.5 Resolutions by General Synod (as contained in the *ACTS* and the amendments to the *Church Order* ) come into effect at publication of the printed and/or electronic version of the *Acts of General Synod*, unless General Synod decides otherwise.
- 10. ACCESS TO LESSER ASSEMBLIES, OFFICE BEARERS AND MEMBERS.**
- 10.1 If General Synod decides on matters of policy, it is competent to address the Church as a whole, i.e. lesser church assemblies, office bearers and members.
- 10.2 If General Synod passes resolutions on matters of policy which have to be followed up or put in practice, General Synod works through the constituting synods.
- 11. CLOSING**
- The meeting is closed in a manner decided on by the Moderator's Committee.

## RULE 4

### RULE FOR THE GENERAL TASK TEAM ARCHIVES

**1. NAME**

General Task Team Archives.

**2. COMPOSITION**

- 2.1 The Moderamen appoints a General Task Team Archives for each term. The Task Team is composed of the following:
- 2.1.1 The archivist or persons tasked with archives from each of the archives in Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein, Pietermaritzburg and Windhoek, with the chairperson or other representative of each of the relevant archives committees as alternate;
- 2.1.2 one representative of the Joint General Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church of Transvaal, with alternate; and
- 2.1.3 one specialist in the area of archives, with alternate.
- 2.2 Vacancies in the General Task Team Archives are filled by the Moderamen on recommendation of the Task Team.

**3. CHARGE**

- The Task Team is charged with
- 3.1 formulating a general policy for archives for the Church;
- 3.2 advising the archive committees of the different synods on compiling archive rules and manuals;<sup>30</sup>
- 3.3 coordination of activities of the archives in the different synods;
- 3.4 advising the archive committees of the different synods on the application of relevant legislation;
- 3.5 checking whether the different places where archive materials are stored, meet the requirements for adequately and safely preserving archives;
- 3.6 preserving and opening up of General Synod's own archives at the appointed storage facilities;
- 3.7 compiling of the *In Memoriam*-reports on officials/office bearers employed by General Synod;
- 3.8 publication of the history of the entire Church; and
- 3.9 reporting to the Moderamen and General Synod.

**4. MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The Task Team meets at least once per annum in rotation at one of the church archives.
- 4.2 At the first meeting for the term the Task Team elects a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary.
- 4.3 The task team does not have an executive committee.

## RULE 5

### RULE FOR THE GENERAL TASK TEAM BIBLE TRANSLATION, EXPOSITION AND DISTRIBUTION

**1. NAME**

General Task Team for Bible Translation, Exposition and Distribution.

**2. COMPOSITION**

- 2.1 The Task Team is composed by the Moderamen of
- 2.1.1 one Old and one New Testament theologian of the Dutch Reformed Church recommended by each of the Faculty Boards of the theological faculties of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein from among their lecturers (present or past); and
- 2.1.2 Two ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church employed by the Bible Society of South Africa.
- 2.2 Experts in other subjects may be co-opted, but the total number of theologians and experts may not exceed ten.

<sup>30</sup> For dealing with archival- and museum materials, as well as the submission of registers. Compare the resolutions/rules of synods.

- 2.3 The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) nominates one Old Testament- and one New Testament theologian from the present or past corps of URCSA lecturers at their own expense in advisory capacity.
- 2.4 Other member churches of the DR Church Family can appoint one Old Testament- and one New Testament theologian at their own expense in advisory capacity.

### **3. CHARGE**

The Task Team

- 3.1 advises General Synod concerning the designation of Bible Translation(s) for official use (Cf. Art. 43.1.5 of the *Church Order*);
- 3.2 initiates and advises General Synod concerning the publication of Bible Translations in accordance with the needs of members;
- 3.3 serves as the official link between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Bible Society of South Africa concerning the activities of the Bible Society of South Africa, including Bible translation programs, research, publications and Bible distribution; and
- 3.4 reports regularly to the General Synod/Moderamen on relevant matters as well as on the work of the Bible Society of South Africa.

### **4. CONSTITUTION AND MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The Task Team constitutes as soon as possible after being appointed.
- 4.2 If this is not possible to meet in one place, the appointed convenor conducts the constitution telephonically or electronically.
- 4.3 The Task Team meets at least twice between meetings of General Synod.
- 4.4 Interim vacancies are filled by the Moderamen on recommendation of the Task Team.

### **5. FUNDING**

The Task Team submits a budget for its activities to the Management Team of the Moderamen after consultation with the General Task Team Finance.

### **6. MINISTERS OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH EMPLOYED BY THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

- 6.1 General Synod provides a number of ministers for service in the Bible Society of South Africa by agreement.
- 6.2 Ministers in the service of the Bible Society of South Africa are formally appointed and solemnly assigned by the General Task Team for Bible Translation, Exposition and Distribution.
- 6.3 The terms of service of ministers in the employ of the Bible Society of South Africa are determined by employment contracts between the persons concerned and the Bible Society.
- 6.4 Ministers employed by the Bible Society of South Africa are wholly funded by the Bible Society of South Africa.

## **RULE 6**

### **RULE FOR THE GENERAL TASK TEAM FINANCE**

#### **1. NAME**

General Task Team Finance.

#### **2. COMPOSITION**

- 2.1 The Moderamen appoints a General Task Team Finance for each term. The Task Team consists of:
- 2.1.1 one member from each of the synods, preferably the chairperson, vice-chairperson or secretary of the corresponding task team of the synod concerned, with alternate;
- 2.1.2 the administrator/executive officer of each of the synods, with alternate; and
- 2.3 experts limited to a maximum of three persons.

#### **3. CHARGE**

The Task Team

- 3.1 advises General Synod concerning the policy to be followed regarding finance;
- 3.2 draws up an annual budget for General Synod in consultation with the Management Team of General Synod based on
- 3.2.1 the budgeting- and investment policies of General Synod;
- 3.2.2 the priorities set by the Moderamen;
- 3.2.3 the availability of funds for it; and
- 3.3 submits the budget to General Synod for final approval;
- 3.4 keeps an eye on monies spent for all the activities of General Synod, including expenses for personnel and administration;
- 3.5 checks the financial accounts of General Synod and submits it to the Moderamen for approval;
- 3.6 advises annually concerning the remuneration of ministers of the Word after consultation with the General Board for Competency;
- 3.7 considers the financial implications of filling vacancies in posts for employees of General Synod;
- 3.8 acts in all legal actions or disputes about property, assets and funds without any further specific assignment on behalf of General Synod after consultation of the General Task Team Legal Affairs..

#### **4. CONSTITUTION AND MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The Task Team constitutes as soon as possible after being appointed and has a maximum of two meetings per year.
- 4.2 At constitution, an executive is appointed consisting of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and an investment expert. Preferably the executive does not meet more than four times per year.
- 4.3 The Task Team appoints an investment task team and other sub-task teams as required.

## **RULE 7**

## RULE FOR THE GENERAL TASK TEAM LEGAL AFFAIRS

### 1. NAME

General Task Team Legal Affairs

### 2. COMPOSITION

2.1 The General Task Team Legal Affairs is appointed by the Moderamen consisting of:

2.1.1 the actuary of General Synod;

2.1.2 the actuary or legal expert from each of the synods, with alternate;

2.1.3 the manager or other member for the General Board for Competency, with alternate; and

2.1.4 one DR Church lecturer in canon law from one of the faculties of theology at Stellenbosch, Pretoria, or Bloemfontein, with alternate. If a theological faculty is not represented and wishes its DR Church lecturer to be involved in the activities of the Task Team, such a lecturer may attend the meetings of the Task Team in advisory capacity at the expense of the faculty/board of governors.

2.1.5 The Task Team may co-opt one member.

### 3. CHARGE

3.1 The Task Team

3.1.1 advises General Synod on the exposition and application of the *Church Order*, Rules of General Synod and general decisions by synod, which come directly to the Task Team or after submission to the actuary;

3.1.2 studies matters referred to the Task Team by General Synod and serves General Synod/Moderamen with a report and recommendations in this regard;

3.1.3 sees to it that all resolutions by General Synod which bring about amendments to the articles of the *Church Order* and the Rules of General Synod, are inserted in the correct places, is edited and published as soon as possible;

3.1.4 brings legal inconsistencies which affect General Synod, which come to its attention, to the attention of the Moderamen with an indication of a possible remedy;

3.1.5 acts as committee of appeals for General Synod (cf. Articles 23 and 43.1.10 of the *Church Order* and the *Rule for Appeals*) or appoints from its members such an authorised body of appeal to consider the appeal;

3.1.6 studies in advance all points for discussion with regard to amendments of the *Church Order* and the Rules of General Synod;

3.1.7 advises General Synod or those authorised by it in cases where General Synod may be charged in court;

3.1.8 actively attempts to keep ecclesiastical issues out of court and takes care that where cases do in fact end up in court, they are properly defended;

3.1.9 gets legal advice when requested by General Synod or those authorised by it;

3.1.10 revises the *Church Order* and the Rules of General Synod and makes proposals to General Synod; and

3.1.11 reports to the Moderamen and General Synod.

### 4. CONSTITUTION AND MEETINGS

4.1 The Committee constitutes as soon as possible after appointment and meets once a year at the most;

4.2 At constitution an executive is appointed, consisting of the actuary as chairperson, a vice-chairperson, secretary, and an additional member. The executive meets when necessary.

4.3 The Task Team appoints sub-task teams as required.

## RULE 8

### RULE FOR THE GENERAL BOARD FOR COMPETENCY

### 1. NAME

General Board for Competency.

### 2. COMPOSITION

2.1 The General Board for Competency is appointed by the Moderamen and consists of eight permanent members (see 2.3.1 to 2.3.5 below) who jointly possess expertise and experience in the areas of supervision of ministers of the Word, management of labour relations, ecclesiastical law, labour law, common law, conflict resolution, disciplinary and correctional procedures and labour actions.

2.2 At least two members of the General Board for Competency must be delegates to General Synod.

2.3 The General Board for Competency is composed of:

2.3.1 the representative of the General Task Team Legal Affairs, with alternate;

2.3.2 the manager of the General Board for Competency;

2.3.3 the representative of the General Board of Governors, with alternate;

2.3.4 the representative of Guidance for Ministers, with alternate; and

2.3.5 four experts, at least two of which must not be licensed to minister in the church, with alternates.

2.3.6 Where necessary the General Board for Competency is assisted by one member from each synod, appointed by the relevant synod or its authorised body. When the General Board for Competency deals with an issue of competency, it is done in consultation with the member appointed by the synod involved.

2.3.7 The General Board for Competency has the right to co-opt two additional members.

2.4 The manager acts as secretary of the General Board for Competency.

2.5 The chairperson and vice-chairperson are elected by the General Board for Competency.

2.6 Vacancies in the General Board for Competency are filled by the Moderamen on recommendation of the Board.

2.7 The chairperson, manager and one other member appointed by the General Board for Competency, act as executive committee.

2.8 The executive deals, in terms of the charge of the General Board for Competency, with all administrative and urgent matters with report to the Board.

### **3. CHARGE**

- 3.1 The General Board for Competency is responsible for:
  - 3.1.1 issuing competency for the ministry (licensing) on recommendation of the boards of governors;
  - 3.1.2 the suspension or withdrawal of competency on recommendation of a presbytery or its authorised body of enquiry;
  - 3.1.3 keeping the register of competence;
  - 3.1.4 the administration of credits for continued professional development for the ministry;
  - 3.1.5 keeping the register of enquiries involving all correctional and disciplinary enquiries and matters of appeal where students or licensed persons are involved.
  - 3.1.6 advice and guidance to regional synods and presbyteries with a view to uniform and coordinated actions in handling correctional and disciplinary enquiries, appeals and decisions on competency;
  - 3.1.7 training and equipping with regard to matters of ecclesiastical law, labour law and common law in correctional and disciplinary actions and competency applications.
  - 3.1.8 giving advice to investigative bodies;
  - 3.1.9 providing relevant information to church assemblies and the Year Book on the competency of candidates for the ministry, ministers of the Word and retired ministers;
  - 3.1.10 advice to applicants and church assemblies on dealing with applications for the restitution of competency and the requirements which have to be fulfilled;
  - 3.1.11 assistance and advice regarding the exchange of posts;
  - 3.1.12 reporting annually to the General Task Team Finance regarding remuneration packages for ministers of the Word;
  - 3.1.13 reporting to the Moderamen and General Synod.

### **4. MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The General Board for Competency meets at least once a year.
- 4.2 The executive of the General Board for Competency meets when necessary.

### **5. THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL BOARD FOR COMPETENCY**

- 5.1 The General Board for Competency employs a manager.
- 5.2 The key functions of the manager are:
  - 5.2.1 keeping the competency register up to date;
  - 5.2.2 dealing with all correspondence regarding the competency register;
  - 5.2.3 providing guidance to the General Board for Competency on matters of competency;
  - 5.2.4 keeping the register of enquiries of all correctional and disciplinary actions and appeals; and
  - 5.2.5 acting as secretary of the General Board for Competency.
- 5.3 The budget for the office and the activities of the General Board for Competency are managed by the General Task Team Finance and the Management Team of the Moderamen in consultation with the General Board for Competency. The activities of the General Board for Competency are funded through a registration fee and this money may only be used for the functioning of the Board. The annual registration fee is determined by the Management Team of the Moderamen on recommendation of the General Board for Competency and the General Task Team Finance.

## **RULE 9**

### **RULE FOR THE GENERAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

#### **1. NAME**

General Board of Governors

#### **2. COMPOSITION**

The General Board of Governors consists of

- 2.1 two representatives from each of the boards of governors at Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein, preferably the chairperson and secretary, with alternates;
- 2.2 one representative from each of the synods not already represented in terms of 2.1 above, with alternate;
- 2.3 one representative from each of the DR Church faculty boards at the theological faculties of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein, preferably the chairperson, with alternate;
- 2.4 two representatives appointed by General Synod, amongst which must be a representative of the General Board for Competency, with alternates;
- 2.5 one representative from the Forum for Continued Professional Development, with alternate.
- 2.6 Each member church of the Dutch Reformed Church family can nominate one representative in advisory capacity at its own expense.

#### **3. CHARGE**

- 3.1 The General Board of Governors
  - 3.1.1 oversees theological training in general and continued professional development, and advises General Synod with regard to the policy to be followed with regard to theological training and continued professional development in view of the A-Z Policy.
  - 3.1.2 co-ordinates and discuss matters of common interest to the different theological faculties and centres for continued professional development as referred to the General Board of Governors by General Synod and/or boards of governors, and provides guidance in this regard;
  - 3.1.3 determines the minimum requirements for admission to the ministry of the gospel in conjunction with the boards of governors and DR Church faculty boards and submits it to General Synod for approval;
  - 3.1.4 sees to it, in conjunction with the boards of governors, that the requirements for admission to the ministry of the gospel in the DR Church is implemented in the academic programs at university and/or the programs at the centres for professional development.

- 3.1.5 assures, through adequate control and appropriate steps that the theological training at the different theological training centres is suitable and of equal standard;
- 3.1.6 determines the scope of *colloquium doctum*, which is implemented by the boards of governors;
- 3.1.7 exercises a discretion in deserving cases of application for licensing to make a recommendation to a board of governors for additional study and/or examination for the purpose of licensing;
- 3.1.8 possesses the discretionary power regarding the requirements for the (additional) training of second career applicants;
- 3.1.9 keeps a register of all students selected for theological training and.
- 3.1.10 receives reports from boards of governors regarding continued professional development of licensees at the different centres for continued professional development and provides copies thereof to the General Board for Competency
- 3.1.11 compiles, without amendment to the contents, the reports by the different boards of governors, with a view to one combined report to General Synod;
- 3.1.12 reports to the Moderamen and General Synod.

#### 4. CONSTITUTION AND MEETINGS

- 4.1 The General Board of Governors constitutes as soon as possible after appointment and meets twice a year at the most.
- 4.2 An executive is appointed at constitution, consisting of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and a secretary.
- 4.3 The General Board of Governors may appoint sub-task teams for advice regarding any aspect of theological training.

## MINISTERS OF THE WORD

### RULE 10

#### RULE FOR THE TRAINING AND LICENSING OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD

##### 1. PLACE WHERE AND AGREEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY

Theological training in the DR Church takes place at the theological faculties and centres for professional development at the universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein and is determined by means of an agreement in writing between the synod(s) involved and the university, on condition that it is not in conflict with the decisions of General Synod as contained in this Rule.

##### 2. COMPOSITION OF TASK TEAMS AND SUB-TASK TEAMS

###### 2.1 General Board of Governors

The General Board of Governors is the task team of General Synod which carries over-all responsibility for theological training (cf. *Rule for the general Board of Governors*).

###### 2.2 Local Board of Governors

2.2.1 The board of governors is composed of representatives from the synod(s) within whose area the theological faculty is situated. The number of members in a board of governors is determined by the synod(s) concerned. Other synods have the right to each nominate one representative in the respective boards of governors at their own expense. One member of the DR Church faculty board sits in the board of governors. If the synod(s) concerned nominates a minister(s) of the Word tasked with theological training and separated for service in the broader church structure, this person serves in the board of governors.

###### 2.2.2 Functions

The board of governors

2.2.2.1 executes the policy and rules of General Synod and the regulations and decisions of the relevant synod in respect of theological training;

2.2.2.2 is responsible for the selection, guidance, care of, supervision over, examination and recommendation for admission to the ministry of theological students who are registered at the particular university and wish to become ministers of the Word in the DR Church.

2.2.2.3 negotiates and makes agreements with the university about the church's requirements for, the nature of, and supervision of theological training.

2.2.2.4 nominates and appoints lecturers in theology to serve the denomination, or nominates lecturers in theology who are appointed by the university with the input of the church in a post awarded to the church, or accredits lecturers who are appointed by the university without any input from the church;

2.2.2.5 takes care of and supervises the continued professional development of licensees within the area of the particular synod(s) subject to the *A-Z Policy*; and

2.2.2.6 cooperates with other ecclesiastical partners at the university, the other boards of governors of the church, the General Board of Governors and other reformed churches in the ecumenical field to promote and develop theological training.

###### 2.3 Executive

Every board of governors appoints an executive in accordance with the regulations and/or Rules of the synod(s) involved.

###### 2.4 Sub-task teams/-committees

The board of governors itself deals with the following matters or is assisted in its execution or advised on it by sub-task teams or – committees:

2.4.1.1 A person intending to study theology is presented with a motivated report to the board of governors by the presbytery as a candidate in theology. The board of governors is provided with a written statement by the sending congregation that the prospective student is a member of the congregation. The board of governors can also admit a student provisionally pending the submission of the notice, report and/or statement.

2.4.1.2 Part of the selection duties of the board of governors is the assessment of the report by the presbytery, the initial and further personality evaluation of the student, acquiring the student's agreement on the church's understanding of the office of minister of the Word as expressed in the Word, the articles of faith, ecclesiastical regulations, statement of calling and policy of General Synod.

2.4.1.3 The board of governors meets the prospective student before the start of theological studies, preferably with representatives of the sending congregation and the presbytery. The meeting is used to discuss the student's calling understanding, spiritual growth, church involvement, availability of scholarships and ministry opportunities.

- 2.4.1.4 Selected theological students are assisted by the board of governors during the formal registration at the university, advised on matters pertaining to the course introduced to the Church's involvement in the theology faculty.
- 2.4.1.5 Based on a written evaluation report the board of governors annually grants consent to theological students to continue their studies.
- 2.4.1.6 A theological student's selection may be suspended or terminated by the board of governors when academic progress, attendance, behaviour, or involvement in the church is not satisfactory.
- 2.4.1.7 The board of governors annually reports on the student's progress to the sending congregation, the student's current congregation, the presbytery(ies) involved and the General Board of Governors.
- 2.4.1.8 The selection of a theological student at one of the theological training centres approved by the church, can be transferred to another theological training centre approved by the church by the board of governors, provided the necessary documentation accompanies it and the other board of governors accepts the selection.
- 2.4.1.9 Final selection takes place at examination before licensing.
- 2.4.2 Guidance, care and supervision**
- 2.4.2.1 The guidance of theological students has a caring value and a screening function. Accompaniers annually make a recommendation with a view to continuing the training on the basis of good personal contact with the theological student and on the basis of a written report.
- 2.4.2.2 The guidance and care of theological students is an integrated process in which the congregation(s), the presbytery(ies) and the board of governors each makes its own contribution.
- 2.4.2.3 The board of governors guides and cares for the theological student in respect of academic development, spiritual formation and personal development.
- 2.4.2.4 The board of governors takes responsibility for the theological student's suitability for the ministry and readiness for the ministry, which includes ongoing professional development and a practical church year.
- 2.4.2.5 The board of governors draws up a code of conduct for theological students and supervises and exercises discipline over the student's compliance with the code of conduct.
- 2.4.2.6 The church where the theological student is a member during training is responsible for the pastoral care and supervision of the doctrine and life of the student.
- 2.4.3 Discipline**
- 2.4.3.1 For the duration of their training theological students come under the joint supervision of the board of governors and the DR Church faculty board (cf. Article 5.3 of the *Church Order* and 2.5 below).
- 2.4.3.2 As members and office bearers in congregations, theological students, concerning their life and doctrine, come under the supervision and correction of the church assembly which has responsibility according to the *Church Order*. The board of governors may consult the relevant assembly on this.
- 2.4.3.3 This supervision does not annul the supervision of the University over theological students.
- 2.4.3.4 For a disciplinary enquiry the board of governors appoints an authorised investigative committee of at least three members from among themselves and/or from the region of the relevant synod(s). The investigating body may co-opt experts as full members.
- 2.4.3.5 During a disciplinary enquiry a theological student may be assisted by a member of the DR Church.
- 2.4.3.6 The disciplinary enquiry is conducted in terms of the relevant provisions of the Rule for Correction and Discipline.
- 2.4.3.7 The following disciplinary measures may be imposed by the investigating body:
- 2.4.3.7.1 a reprimand in private or in the meeting of the investigating body;
- 2.4.3.7.2 suspension for a specified period of the student's selection with a view to licensing; or
- 2.4.3.7.3 termination of the student's selection with a view to licensing.
- 2.4.3.8 The relevant synod(s) or his/their authorised bodies handle the appeal of a theological student against a disciplinary measure(s).
- 2.4.4 Examination and recommendation for licensing**
- 2.4.4.1 Each board of governors appoints a candidates committee in terms of the regulations and/or rules of the synod(s) involved.
- 2.4.4.2 The candidates committee examines the candidates (cf. 6. below) and recommends the successful candidates to the board of governors for licensing by the General Board for Competency.
- 2.4.4.3 The candidates committee is continuously involved in the process of training to ensure that the training meets the requirements of the DR Church.
- 2.5 DR Church Faculty Board**
- 2.5.1 The DR Church Faculty Board is composed of the lecturers in theology appointed by the DR Church to the theological faculty of the university and the church's centre for professional development at the university.
- 2.5.2 The DR Church Faculty Board, together with the board of governors is responsible for the formation of theological students for the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church and the other member churches of the Dutch Reformed Church family.
- 2.5.3 The board of governors is represented by at least one member, who does not have an appointment at the university or the centre for professional development, in the DR Faculty Board.
- 3. THEOLOGICAL LECTURERS**
- 3.1 Nomination, appointment and accreditation**
- 3.1.1 The nomination and appointment of theological lecturers at universities where ministers of the Word are trained for the DR Church, can be done in one of two ways:
- 3.1.1.1 The university may appoint a lecturer after input by the church as provided in the agreement between the university and the synod(s) concerned. The board of governors nominates and installs such lecturer as theological lecturer of the DR Church.
- 3.1.1.2 The board of governors may, after consultation with the university, nominate, appoint and install a lecturer at the centre for professional development for service to the denomination. The university is requested to accredit such a theological lecturer to also act as a lecturer at the faculty of theology.
- 3.1.2 In both cases the job description and profile is published in *Kerkbode*.
- 3.1.3 The nomination and installation of theological lectures in lecturing posts created and filled by the church, takes place in terms of Article 7 and Article 8.2 of the *Church Order*.
- 3.1.4 Lecturers' positions awarded by the university under an agreement to the church, shall be filled in accordance with the rules and criteria determined by the university in consultation with the church, and is funded as agreed between the university and the church.
- 3.1.5 Theological lecturers at the university, appointed without input from the church, can be accredited as theological lecturers by the board of governors. Only appointed and accredited lecturers can offer church-specific and the church's own training for theological students of the DR Church.
- 3.1.6 The nomination and accreditation of theological lecturers by the board of governors, is published in *Kerkbode* for approbation by the denomination.

3.1.7 Theological lecturers appointed by the board of governors, has the competency of a minister of the Word in the DR Church. Candidates can be solemnly confirmed by the laying on of hands or solemnly dedicated, and thus acquire the competency of a minister of the Word.

### **3.2 Requirements for nomination**

3.2.1 At the nomination of theological lecturers, the following requirements must be adhered to:

3.2.1.1 the person must have the competency of minister of the Word or the competency of a candidate for the ministry in the DR Church;

3.2.1.2 the person must have the necessary academic qualifications and comply with the other requirements for the position;

3.2.1.3 the person must be involved in the church and have sufficient experience in church ministry; and

3.2.1.4 the person must be an undoubted champion of the reformed doctrine.

### **3.3 Discipline**

3.3.1 As members and office bearers in congregations, theological lecturers, concerning their life and doctrine, come under the supervision and correction of the church assembly which has responsibility according to the *Church Order*. The board of governors may consult the relevant assembly on this.

3.3.2 When a complaint against or adverse report of a lecturer is made to the board of governors, the board of governors hands it over to the presbytery responsible. The board of governors may also act as complainant in a disciplinary inquiry. Where an investigating body decides to sanction a theological lecturer in terms of Section 64 of the *Church Order* and such sanction affects the theological lecturer's employment relationship with the university, an agreement concerning the continued employment of the lecturer is entered into between the church and the university.

3.3.3 The board of governors oversees and is responsible for managing the employment relationship of theological lecturers appointed at a centre for professional development for service to the denomination. These include disciplinary action by the board of governors in terms of the Rules for Correction and Discipline against such theological lecturers.

3.3.4 The university oversees and is responsible for managing the employment relationship of theological lecturers who are appointed as staff of the university. The provisions laid down in this regard by the university, apply to disciplinary action. Where disciplinary measures applied by the university affect a theological lecturer's service to the church, an agreement regarding the continued employment of the lecturer is entered into between the church and the university.

3.3.5 For a disciplinary enquiry of a theological lecturer of the DR Church, the board of governors appoints an authorised investigating body of at least three members from among themselves and/or from the region of that particular synod(s). The investigating body may co-opt experts as full members.

3.3.6 During a disciplinary enquiry a theological lecturer may be assisted by a DR Church member.

3.3.7 The disciplinary enquiry is conducted in terms of the relevant provisions of the Rule for Correction and Discipline.

3.3.8 The following disciplinary measures may be imposed by the investigating body:

3.3.8.1 a reprimand in a private meeting or within the meeting of the investigating body;

3.3.8.2 suspension for a fixed period of the lecturer's privilege to train theological students of the DR Church; or

3.3.8.3 ending the lecturer's privilege to train theological students of the DR Church and the eventual termination of the church's financial contribution in respect of the person concerned, as agreed with the university.

3.3.9 The synod(s) involved, or his/their authorised body(ies) handle the appeal of a theological lecturer against a disciplinary measure(s).

3.3.10 The board of governors may, after due inquiry, decide to suspend or terminate the accreditation of a theological lecturer.

## **4. REQUIREMENTS FOR THEOLOGICAL TRAINING**

### **4.1 General Requirements**

4.1.1 The theological training of the church is primarily focused on the training and education of ministers of the Word for the ministry of the church.

4.1.2 In addition to this main objective theological training also deals with

4.1.2.1 the training of theologians who can serve the church and gospel through teaching, research and doing other specialised work (such as Bible translation) for the church;

4.1.2.2 the training for other offices, services and ministries as the church deems necessary (such as youth workers, pastoral workers, evangelists); and

4.1.2.3 the training and equipping of members for their service according to their gifts inside and outside the congregation.

4.1.3 In the reformed tradition, institutions for theological education take joint responsibility with congregations and the denomination for the training for the office of minister of the Word in the church.

4.1.4 In the training of ministers of the Word attention is given to the integrated formation of knowledge (logos), character (ethos) and the skills and attitudes (pathos). Regular attention is given to at least the following in students during theological training:

4.1.4.1 spiritual life and spiritual disciplines;

4.1.4.2 vocation awareness;

4.1.4.3 mental health and personal growth;

4.1.4.4 biblical and theological knowledge and understanding;

4.1.4.5 contextual insight and judgment;

4.1.4.6 understanding of the church and the mission and operation of congregations; and

4.1.4.7 formation of specific skills needed for ministry.

4.1.5 Synods do everything in their power to establish and expand continued professional development. Theological training and professional development is a task and responsibility throughout a person's ministry and therefore the DR Church establishes a tradition of learning throughout their ministry amongst licensees of the Church.

### **4.2 Academic requirements**

4.2.1 The DR Church requires its students to undergo a six-year training in reformed theology, which includes the acquisition of the related degrees. This six-year training should at least include the successful completion of Greek II and Hebrew II.

4.2.2 The academic requirements for admission to the gospel ministry in the DR Church is formulated by the General Board of Governors in consultation with the boards of governors and the DR Church faculty boards and approved by the General Synod. The General Board of Governors and the boards of governors ensure that these requirements are implemented in the academic programs at the theological faculties and/or the programs of the centres for professional development.

4.2.3 Courses, modules and/or programs are offered by the university in the following disciplines:

4.2.3.1 Old Testament Studies;

4.2.3.2 New Testament Studies;

- 4.2.3.3 Church History and Polity/Ecclesiology;
- 4.2.3.4 Dogmatics and Ethics/Systematic Theology;
- 4.2.3.5 Religions and Missions/Missiology;
- 4.2.3.6 Practical Theology.
- 4.2.4 Specialisation in a particular area of study, including a dissertation on a specialised topic, is an academic requirement for theological training.
- 4.3 Additional requirements**
- 4.3.1 The following are additional requirements for theological training and admission to the ministry:
- 4.3.1.1 the successful examination of the candidate's knowledge of the Bible and the creeds;
- 4.3.1.2 the successful evaluation of the student's language and communication skills;
- 4.3.1.3 the regular attendance of courses, modules and programs offered by the university and the centre for professional development;
- 4.3.1.4 the successful completion of the ministry formation and the compulsory church year in accordance with the stipulations of the board of governors and the DR Church Faculty Board;
- 4.3.1.5 the successful delivery of a trial sermon under the supervision of a lecturer and a member of the candidates' committee in a congregation during the final year of study.
- 4.3.2 Candidates seeking admission to the gospel ministry are required to complete at least three years of full-time training at one of the church-approved theological training centres. In the case of second-career students and other highly exceptional cases, the General Board of Governors may, on submission of a board of governors, set aside this requirement.
- 4.3.3 The General Board of Governors has discretionary authority regarding the requirements for the (additional) training of second-career applicants and provides the board of governors and the DR Church Faculty Board with the requirements with which a particular applicant must comply.
- 5. CONGREGATION YEAR**
- 5.1 Training in ministry formation takes place during all the years of study, but especially during the final year.
- 5.2 During the final year students work for ministry formation under the supervision of a congregation minister and in a congregation approved by the board of governors and the DR Church Faculty Board from the beginning of February to the end of October.
- 5.3 Theological students sign the following agreement before the start of the congregation year:  
"I, the undersigned, endorse sincerely and as the Lord the teachings contained in the Forms of Unity of the reformed churches, the thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort. I declare with all my heart that I accept and confess it as in accordance with the Word of God; that I will faithfully uphold the doctrine; that I commit myself to the promotion of religious knowledge, Christian morals, order and unity with all diligence; and I commit myself, if it should be found that I acted against any part of this declaration and promise, to abide by the decisions of the competent church meeting. "
- 5.4 The church council of the congregation where the theological student spends the church year, provides the board of governors and the DR Church Faculty Board before the end of September with a report on the practical training. The board of governors involved and the DR Church Faculty Board provides the *pro forma* for this report (cf. also 6.2.7 below).
- 6. CANDIDATES EXAMINATION**
- 6.1 The candidates examination takes place at the end of the final year or as soon as practicable thereafter, and is conducted by the candidates committee.
- 6.2 The inquiry during the candidates examination takes place, in as far as possible, in the presence of the candidate and deals with:
- 6.2.1 the candidate's calling, and motivations to become a minister of the Word;
- 6.2.2 the candidate's testimony of assurance of faith and the experience of the grace of God;
- 6.2.3 the candidate's life story, which includes care for spiritual, physical and emotional health;
- 6.2.4 the candidate's testimony about the understanding of what a minister of the Word's work entails, which includes the awareness of gifts and growth opportunities;
- 6.2.5 the candidate's suitability for the ministry and readiness for the ministry;
- 6.2.6 the formation of the candidate's spirituality and personal development, which includes the continuing personality assessment;
- 6.2.7 the contents of the report of the congregation(s) where the candidate underwent practical training during the congregation year, including the candidate's active involvement in the congregation, devotion to the teachings of the Church, example, impeccable behaviour and faithful performance of duties ;
- 6.2.8 the contents of the report from the centre for professional development on the candidate's church-specific training, professional formation, knowledge of the Bible and the creeds as well as language and communication skills (see also 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2 above);
- 6.2.9 the contents of the report on the student's life and teaching from the congregation where the theological student is a member during training;
- 6.2.10 the contents of the report by the lecturer and the member of the candidates committee on the assessment of the candidate's trial sermon (see 4.3.1.5 above); and
- 6.2.11 the contents of the report by the DR Church Faculty Board on the candidate's academic knowledge, devotion to the teachings of the church, application of theoretical academic knowledge in the practice of ministry and the successful completion of the required university courses, modules and programs.
- 6.3 The board of governors rules on recommendation of the candidates committee that a candidate meets the stipulated requirements and is therefore recommended to the General Synod for licensing (see Section 6 of the *Church Order* ).
- 6.4 A candidate rejected by the board of governors, can report again for examination and possible admission at a future date determined by the candidates committee.
- 6.5 Students of the DR Church who studied abroad, complete the candidates examination with a view to licensing by the General Board for Competency.
- 7. COLLOQUIUM DOCTUM**
- 7.1 *Colloquium doctum* is taken with the candidates committee by
- 7.1.1 persons whose return to the ministry is recommended to the board of governors by a synod or its authorised representative; or
- 7.1.2 persons who have been admitted to the ministry at the training centres of other churches and desire to become ministers of the Word in the DR Church.
- 7.2 The following requirements for admission to *colloquium doctum* are set for persons who wish to return to the gospel ministry in the DR Church:
- 7.2.1 proof of good character by means of a testimonial by the church council of the congregation of which the candidate is a member;



- 7.2.2 evidence that the candidate was investigated by the synod or its authorised representative regarding his personal assurance, personal experience of the grace of God, vocation awareness and fitness for ministry.
- 7.3 The board of governors refers everyone who reports for *colloquium doctum*, for personality assessment beforehand.
- 7.4 The following requirements are set for ministers of the Word of reformed churches with whom the DR Church has formal ecumenical ties, who desire to be admitted to the ministry DR Church:
- 7.4.1 The minister of the Word in the service of another reformed church submits a motivated application in writing to the board of governors of one of the theological training centres of the DR Church. This application is accompanied by testimonials from
- 7.4.1.1 the presbytery of the DR Church, within whose boundaries the person serves as a minister or lives (if no longer in active ministry);
- 7.4.1.2 church or church from which the person wishes to transfer, if desirable or possible.
- 7.4.2 A written undertaking regarding the submission of membership by the applicant and a written confirmation of the acceptance of membership by a congregation of the DR Church is required before the application can be dealt with further.
- 7.4.3 In the case where additional training is required, such a person can only be recommended by the candidates committee to the board of governors for licensing after successful completion of the supplementary training and after *colloquium doctum*.
- 7.4.4 If no further additional training is required, after *colloquium doctum* the person can be recommended by the candidates committee to the board of governors for licensing.
- 7.5 The following requirements are set for people who have a complete or partial theological training at the training centres of reformed churches with whom the DR Church has formal ecumenical ties:
- 7.5.1 The person who trained at the training centre of another reformed church, submits a motivated application in writing to the board of governors of one of the theological training centres of the DR Church. This application is accompanied by a written confirmation of membership of a congregation of the DR Church and the testimony of the presbytery of the DR Church within whose boundaries the person resides or is a member.
- 7.5.2 In the case where additional training is required because the DR Church Faculty Board and the board of governors deem the theological training as non-equivalent to the training required by the DR Church for its theological students, such a person can only be recommended for licensing by the board of governors after successful completion of supplementary training and after *colloquium doctum* by the candidates committee.
- 7.5.3 If no additional training is required, the person can be recommended for licensing by the candidates committee to the board of governors after *colloquium doctum*.
- 7.6 The following requirements are set for persons who have undergone complete or partial theological training at the training centres of non-reformed churches, or at training centres which are not connected to a church:
- 7.6.1 persons who have undergone complete or partial theological training at the training centres of non-reformed churches, or at training centres which are not connected to a church, are expected to complete the required theological study at one of the church-approved theological training centres of the DR Church. The General Board of Governors in consultation with the particular board of governors and the DR Church Faculty determine the omitted training.
- 7.6.2 These persons are considered theological students at the university and at the centre for professional development and the requirements for theological students are applicable to these persons (cf. 4. above).
- 7.7 Contents of *colloquium doctum*
- 7.7.1 The General Board of Governors determines the scope for *colloquium doctum*, which the boards of governors implement.
- 7.7.2 The *colloquium doctum* is an enquiry into the candidate's academic ability, as well as the candidate's knowledge of reformed theology and devotion to the teachings of the church. This enquiry may be oral or in writing.
- 7.7.3 The candidates committee provide the candidate of a prescribed range for *colloquium doctum*, in order that academic competence and devotion to the teachings of the church can be judged *inter alia* on the basis thereof.
- 7.7.4 Upon satisfactory completion of *colloquium doctum*, the candidate is recommended to the board of governors for a decision.
- 7.8 The board of governors rules on recommendation of the candidates committee that a candidate meets the stipulated requirements and is therefore recommend to the General Synod for licensing (cf. Article 6 of the *Church Order* ).
- 7.9 A candidate who is rejected by the board of governors, can report to the board of governors for *colloquium doctum* again after six months.

## 8. LICENSING

- 8.1 A representative of the General Board for Competency deals with licensing on behalf of General Synod (cf. Article 6 of the *Church Order* ).
- 8.2 The licensing takes place during a public church gathering which is organised by the board of governors for this purpose. In exceptional cases licensing can also take place during or after a meeting of the board of governors.
- 8.3 Approved candidates are admitted to the ministry of the Gospel with an appropriate speech, pledging of the Solemn Declaration on Admission to the Ministry and the handing over of a Deed of Admission. The Deed of Admission is signed by two members of the General Board for Competency.
- 8.4 The candidate responds to and signs the following Solemn Declaration on Admission to the Ministry.

"I, the undersigned ....., convinced of my vocation from the Lord and admitted to the public ministry of the Word in the Dutch Reformed Church, hereby declare before the Lord

1. that I believe that the doctrine as contained in the three universal creeds and the three Doctrinal Standards of Unity - viz. the Belgic Confession (Confessio Belgica), the Heidelberg Catechism and the Statutes of Dordt are in agreement with the Word of God;
2. that I will faithfully proclaim and live according to this doctrine;
3. that I will counter all heresies against this doctrine and do all I can to keep them from the Church;
4. that, if at a later date I develop any objection to or acquire a different understanding of the doctrine, I will not teach or promote it before I have submitted it to a competent church assembly for consideration;
5. that I will adhere to the order of the Dutch Reformed Church;
6. that I, to be called, will act in accordance with the *Church Order* and resolutions of the Dutch Reformed Church;
7. that I will devote myself to the expansion of the Kingdom of God by the promotion of the knowledge of, trust in and obedience to the Triune God;
8. that I commit myself to ongoing development of proficiency in ministry.

I commit myself by my signature to all the above."

8.5 Licensees have the competence of candidate ministers in the DR Church. Registration with the General Board for Competency and annual reporting with a view to retaining the competence of a candidate minister is regulated by the Rule for the Regulation of the Competence of Ministers of Word, Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Retired Ministers.

## 9. ADDITIONAL SYNOD REGULATIONS

The synod(s) which accepted responsibility for the theological training at a church approved theological training centre, can, according to the local circumstances and relationships with the university, stipulate its own or additional regulations, provided it does not conflict with the decisions of General Synod as contained *inter alia* in these Rules.

## RULE 11

### RULE FOR THE REGULATION OF THE COMPETENCE OF MINISTERS, CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY AND RETIRED MINISTERS

#### 1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.1 Each aspect of the regulation of the competence (which includes obligations and rights) of ministers, candidates for the ministry and emeriti is based upon the belief that it is Christ who rules his church by his Word and the Holy Spirit and that He does so through persons whom He calls, equips and appoints to his service.
- 1.2 The competence for doing the work of the minister of the Word is not dependent on specific capabilities or special qualities, or a separate spiritual status which is endowed with perpetual honour or power and which is attained through the act of ordination. There is no such thing as an office which is particular to the person and which grants such a person certain rights and competencies without the person holding office within the structure of a congregation.
- 1.3 A person can be a minister of the Word if the person has been properly called, received the required approbation and been inducted in a congregation (cf. Articles 4, 7 and 8 of the *Church Order*). The office of minister of the Word functions within the congregation, given that persons mentioned in 2.3, viz. those appointed by the broader church structures to serve the denomination, may be called by a congregation and inducted in the position in a congregation. Ministers employed by the broader church structures have a limited competence and in terms of Article 9 of the *Church Order* they are only entitled to the ministry of the Word, serving the sacraments, and the ministry of prayer upon invitation by a congregation. If ministers of the Word, in addition to their work within the broader structures, have also by agreement been called to a congregation and been inducted as a minister of the congregation, they have full competence of office.

#### 2. THE COMPETENCE OF MINISTER OF THE WORD

- 2.1 For the attainment of the competence of a minister the following applies: It is someone who has:
  - 2.1.1 a Minister of the Word is someone who has
    - 2.1.1.1 received the internal call from the Lord,
    - 2.1.1.2 completed theological training according to the prescriptions of General Synod,
    - 2.1.1.3 been examined as to doctrine and conduct and suitability for the ministry,
    - 2.1.1.4 been licensed and declared available to be called,
    - 2.1.1.5 been called/appointed by a congregation or the denomination, and
    - 2.1.1.6 been inducted/solemnly set apart for service to the church.
- 2.2 Every minister of the Word who has been inducted in a congregation, has full competence and holds the office as defined in *Church Order* Article 9.
- 2.3 Every minister of the Word who has been appointed for service in the broader church structures and has been solemnly set apart for service to the denomination, holds limited competence. (cf. 2.2 above). These are :
  - 2.3.1 Ministers of the Word who were called by the denomination as DR Church lecturers to train theological students at denominationally approved theological training centres of the Dutch Reformed Church;
  - 2.3.2 Ministers of the Word appointed by the denomination to serve presbyteries, synods or General Synod or may be called by General Synod; and
  - 2.3.3 Ministers of the Word appointed by the denomination to serve organisations such as the Bible Society, the Chaplaincy Services, or other bodies approved by General Synod or the Moderamen of General Synod, on behalf of General Synod.
- 2.4 A candidate for the ministry appointed in terms of 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 above, does not attain the competency of a minister of the Word, but remains a candidate.
- 2.5 If the husband or wife of a minister employed by a congregation or the broader church structures is transferred, and demission has to be granted as a result, the service contract is ended with the competency of minister of the Word being retained.
- 2.6 Persons who have received demission in accordance with *Church Order* Articles 12.7.2 and 12.7.3, in terms of the *Rule for Fixed Term Positions*, or in terms of 2.5 above, retain the competence of minister of the Word, subject to their reporting annually before 31 March to the General Board for Competency giving cause why they should retain competence as ministers of the Word. This report must be accompanied by a confidential recommendation concerning the person's participation in congregational activities from the church council of the congregation where the person is a member. Persons in this category retain limited competency and in terms of *Church Order* Article 9 may only undertake the ministry of the Word, ministry of the sacraments and the ministry of prayers on the invitation of a congregation.

#### 3. THE COMPETENCE OF A CANDIDATE FOR THE MINISTRY

- 3.1 A candidate for the ministry is someone who has completed the required theological training, has been officially admitted (licensed) and is available to be called.
- 3.2 Candidates for the ministry may proclaim the Word at worship services and other occasions by invitation of a church council.
- 3.3 Persons who have received demission in accordance with *Church Order* Article 11, or to further their studies (cf. Rule for Leave of Ministers of the Word, 5.4 and 5.5), revert to being candidates for the ministry.

3.4 The names of all candidates for the ministry who have attained the age of 60 years and have declared their intention in writing to the General Board for Competency no longer to be available for the full-time ministry, are published in the *Kerkbode* and in the *Jaarboek* as “not available for calls”. They do however, just as is the case with candidates for the ministry who have turned 65, retain permission to preach and may therefore do so by invitation of a congregation. Persons who are already 65 when admitted to the ministry may be called in terms of the *Rule for Fixed Term Positions*.

#### **4. THE COMPETENCE OF EMERITUS**

4.1 An emeritus is a minister of the Word who has retired in terms of Article 14 of the *Church Order*.

4.2 An emeritus retains the competency of a minister of the Word and can perform official duties as described in Article 9 on invitation of a congregation.

4.3 An emeritus may be called in terms of the *Rule for Fixed Term Positions* (cf. 3.4).

4.4 An emeritus may continue acting as a marriage officer.

4.5 For the sake of properly maintaining the competency register, emeriti must annually report the General Board for Competency before 31 March until they reach the age of 70.

#### **5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

5.1 In view of the pledge signed on admittance, a person with legal competence must participate in continued professional development.

5.2 All persons with legal competence should, for the sake of the development of their own proficiency in ministry, enrol in the mentoring program of the DR Church.

#### **6. AMENDMENTS TO COMPETENCE ALREADY GRANTED TO MINISTERS AND CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY**

6.1 Persons to whom the General Board for Competency has granted competence as minister of the Word, candidate for the ministry, or emeritus, retain such competence even if General Synod amends this rule, provided that the original conditions applicable to their case still apply.

6.2 Ministers of the Word, candidates for the ministry and emeriti of the DR Church who wish to become ministers in another denomination of reformed profession, may apply to the General Board for Competence in advance to remain available to be called to the Dutch Reformed Church while the person works in the other denomination.

6.3 Ministers who have *bona fide*<sup>31</sup> reasons for wanting to leave the ministry, may send an application, motivated by the minister, the church council and presbytery, to the General Board for Competence.

6.3.1 The General Board for Competence considers the application.

6.3.2 If the application is successful, such a minister is granted leave to retain competence as candidate for the ministry.

6.3.3 For the proper maintenance of the register of competence, such persons must report annually before 31 March to the General Board for Competence.

#### **7. LOSS OF COMPETENCE**

7.1 Persons cease to be ministers of the Word, or where applicable, emeriti, if they:

7.1.1 no longer perform the work set out in 2.2 and 2.3 above, subject to 2.6 above;  
7.1.2 serve in a political management body or make themselves available for election as political candidates in an election at any level of government;

7.1.3 dissociate themselves by word or deed from a DR congregation;

7.1.4 submit their resignation to the relevant church assembly or committee and it is accepted (cf. 7.5);

7.1.5 give notice in writing to the General Board for Competence that they resign the office of minister, with notice to the presbytery under whose supervision they fall;

7.1.6 lose it as a result of church discipline (cf. Article 64.5.4 of the *Church Order*).

7.2 Persons cease to be candidates for the ministry if they:

7.2.1 serve in a political management body or make themselves available for election as political candidates in an election at any level of government;

7.2.2 dissociate themselves by word or deed from a DR congregation;

7.2.3 give notice in writing to the General Board for Competence that they resign their competence as candidates for the ministry;

7.2.4 lose it as a result of church discipline (cf. Article 64.5.4 of the *Church Order*).

7.3 When a person ceases to be a minister, candidate for the ministry, or emeritus, the following procedure is followed:

7.3.1 It is the responsibility of the church assembly concerned to inform the General Board for Competence of the loss of competence.

7.3.2 The person returns his/her *Deed of Licence* via the secretary of the presbytery committee to the General Board for Competence.

7.3.3 The General Board for Competence gives notice in the *Kerkbode* of the loss of competence.

#### **8. READMISSION TO THE MINISTRY**

8.1 Former ministers or candidates for the ministry may only be readmitted to the ministry as follows:

8.1.1 The person must apply in writing to the presbytery under whose supervision he/she falls.

8.1.2 This presbytery investigates the matter, taking into account Article 64.4.5 of the *Church Order*. In the case of a former minister, evidence is sought from all the church councils and presbyteries within whose jurisdiction the person resided at the time of and since he/she lost competence. Evidence may also be sought from church councils and presbyteries which the person resided in before he/she left the ministry. In the case of former candidates for the ministry evidence is sought as far as possible from all the church councils and presbyteries in whose jurisdiction they resided before and after they ceased to be candidates for the ministry.

8.1.3 The presbytery provides the synod/synodical committee/moderamen in whose jurisdiction the presbytery falls with all the relevant documents, a report and recommendations.

8.1.4 The secretary of the synod/synodical committee/moderamen sends the documentation and the report to the General Board for Competence for advice.

8.1.4.1 When a synod/synodical committee/moderamen deals with the application, the applicant is examined in person in accordance with 7.2 of the *Rule for the Training and Licensing of Ministers of the Word*, taking Article 66.4.4 and 66.4.5 of the *Church Order* into account. If the result is positive, the person is referred to an candidate's committee for *colloquium doctum*. In the case of Article 64.4.5 of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Bona fide* reasons exist when the minister resigns from his work without any likelihood or threat of disciplinary action against the minister. Reasons could include that the minister doesn't presently see his way open to continue with the ministry.

*Church Order* the applicant's case is referred to the General Synod/Moderamen for a decision before the person may appear for *colloquium doctum* (cf. 9 below).

- 8.1.4.2 When an application is submitted directly to a synod, a committee may examine the applicant during the meeting, subject to all the requirements stated above. If the result is positive, a recommendation to that effect is put to the meeting. If the recommendation of the committee is negative, the applicant concerned may defend his/her application before the plenary meeting or submit a new application to a subsequent synod.
- 8.1.4.3 If the synodical committee/moderamen refuses the application, the applicant is informed in writing stating the reasons. The applicant may appeal against the decision of the synodical committee/moderamen to synod, or submit a new application at a later date.
- 8.1.4.4 If an applicant requests to be excused from the meeting for reasons acceptable to the meeting, the application is dealt with in the person's absence.
- 8.2 Once a candidate has received approval to appear for *colloquium doctum*, this must be conducted within 18 months.
- 8.3 After successful completion of *colloquium doctum* before the candidates committee, the applicant is recommended to the General for Competency for licensing.
- 8.4 Former ministers who are readmitted to the ministry have the competency of candidates for the ministry. Induction in a congregation after acceptance of a call is performed with the laying on of hands.

## **9. READMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF PERSONS REFERRED TO IN ARTICLE 66.4.5**

- 9.1 When a former minister or candidate for the ministry applies for readmission to the ministry in accordance with Article 66.4.5 of the *Church Order*, church assemblies must also pay attention to the following:
  - 9.1.1 There must be clear evidence of repentance and conversion.
  - 9.1.2 There must be sufficient evidence that church discipline came into its own.
  - 9.1.3 There must be adequate proof that the readmission to the ministry will not have an adverse effect on the DR Church.
  - 9.1.4 The time lapse, publicity, extent of adverse effects, restitution, the well-being of the church and the conscious withholding of official acts of the minister of the Word should also be taken into consideration.

## **10. READMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF PERSONS WHO HAVE LEFT THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH**

- 10.1 A former minister of the Word or a candidate for the ministry who had gone over to another church or religious organization and who has since become a member of a Dutch Reformed congregation again and wishes to be readmitted to the ministry of the Word in the DR Church, must follow the same procedure as mentioned in 8.1 to 8.4 above.
- 10.2 The *colloquium doctum* is conducted according to regulation 7 of the Rule for the Training and Licensing of Ministers of the Word.

## **11. ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF MINISTERS FROM OTHER CHURCHES**

- 11.1 A minister serving in a reformed church with which the DR Church has formal ecumenical ties, may be admitted to the gospel ministry in the DR Church, if the requirements set out in 7.4 of the Rule for the Training and Licensing of Ministers of the Word are met.

## **12. APPEALS CONCERNING COMPETENCE FOR OFFICE**

- 12.1 A person who feels aggrieved by a decision of the General Board for Competency concerning his/her competence, may appeal to a subsequent meeting of the General Board for Competency with the submission of new information.
- 12.2 A person who still feels aggrieved after the case concerning his/her competence has been reconsidered by the General Board for Competency, may appeal to the General Synod/Moderamen.
- 12.3 A person whose competence is affected by the recommendation(s) of a disciplinary body in a correctional/disciplinary hearing, may put his/her case in writing to the General Board for Competency before the General Board for Competency decides the matter.

## **13. COMPETENCE REGISTER - FEES AND PUBLICATION**

- 13.1 Irrespective of all other regulations, each person who wishes to retain competence, must apply the General Board for Competency for such competence annually before 31 March in the required form. Each application must be accompanied by the prescribed registration fee set annually by the Management Team of the Moderamen.
- 13.2 The basic information contained in competence register is published annually in the *Jaarboek*. Provision is made in the *Jaarboek* for the different categories. Any incorrect information must be brought to the attention of the General Board for Competency by the person or church assembly involved without delay. Corrections are made in the *Kerkbode*.

# **RULE 12**

## **RULE FOR TENT MAKER'S POSITIONS**

### **1. NATURE**

- 1.1 A tent maker's position for a minister of the Word is a part-time<sup>32</sup> position for an indefinite period.
- 1.2 A tent maker's position displays the character of a normal position for a minister of the Word. A tent maker is a minister of the Word who works part-time, as agreed, in exercising the official duties of Article 9 of the *Church Order*.

### **2. CREATING A NEW POSITION**

- 2.1 If a congregation wants to create a tent maker's position for a minister of the Word, or for financial or other reasons wants to convert an existing full-time<sup>33</sup> position to a tent maker's position, the church council makes a motivated submission to the presbytery or its authorised representative.

<sup>32</sup> The term 'part-time' refers to a minister of the Word who is inducted in a specific congregation and who, in terms of the employment contract, receives only a portion of his/her income from the congregation for a specified portion of his/her time.

<sup>33</sup> The term 'full-time' refers to the ministry of a minister who has been inducted in a specific congregation and who, in terms of his/her employment contract receives his/her full remuneration from the congregation.

- 2.2 The presbytery or its authorised representative, taking into account the requirements for ministry and the financial circumstances of the congregation, approves the tent maker's position.
- 2.3 The presbytery or its authorised representative advises the church council on drawing up an employment contract.
- 2.3.1 The relevant prescriptions of Article 7 of the *Church Order*, applicable regulations in rules<sup>34</sup> and connected decisions are adhered to.
- 2.3.2 A tent maker's position may not be established in order to procure or retain competence as a minister of the Word or to gain admission to church assemblies.
- 2.3.3 Given the guidelines of synod, in the same congregation equality of remuneration must be maintained in proportional terms between a full-time and a part-time position.
- 2.3.4 A tent maker's position is pensionable, unless the minister of the Word filling the position and the church council obtain approval from the trustees of the synod's pension fund to join another legally approved pension fund.
- 2.3.5 A post for tent maker has clearly defined duties which are directly related to the profession of minister of the Word.
- 2.4 After the presbytery or its authorised representative approved the position and the recommended employment contract, the church council may go ahead with the call.
- 2.5 With the creation of a position for a tent maker within the broader church structures, the assembly concerned sees to it that the relevant requirements of this rule are applied.

### **3. CALLING**

- 3.1 The church council calls in accordance with the ecclesiastical directives and finalises the employment contract in consultation with the presbytery in line with Articles 7.4 to 7.7 of the *Church Order*.
- 3.2 In the case of a minister of the Word whose post is changed from a full-time post to a tent maker's post, the employment contract is amended, approved and signed, without the minister being called and inducted again.

### **4. DELEGATION TO BROADER ASSEMBLIES**

A minister of the Word in a tent maker post is delegated to broader assemblies.

### **5. EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT WITH OTHER EMPLOYER(S)**

- 5.1 When an employment contract is made with a tent maker, the church council sets its condition(s) for the tent maker's work for the other employer(s)
- 5.2 The making of all future employment contracts with other employers must be approved in advance by the church council.

### **6. TERMINATION**

- 6.1 When a minister of the Word in a tent maker post accepts a call or reaches the normal retirement age, the contract with the church council/assembly is terminated.
- 6.2 Upon termination/retirement, the church council informs the General Board for Competence accordingly.

## **RULE 13**

### **RULE FOR FIXED TERM POSITIONS**

#### **1. NATURE**

- 1.1 A fixed term position for a minister of the Word is a position with a prearranged term (with a starting date and a termination date) and a prescribed task. After expiry of the term and completion of the task, a fixed term position terminates.
- 1.2 A fixed term position can be filled full-time or part-time.

#### **2. CREATING A POSITION**

- 2.1 If a congregation wishes to create a fixed term position for a minister of the Word, the church council makes a motivated submission to the presbytery or its authorised representative.
- 2.2 The presbytery or its authorised representative approves the fixed term position, taking into account the congregation's requirements for ministry and its financial circumstances.
- 2.3 The presbytery or its authorised representative advises the church council on drawing up an employment contract.
- 2.3.1 The relevant prescriptions of Article 7 of the *Church Order*, applicable regulations in rules and connected decisions are adhered to.
- 2.3.2 A fixed term position may not be established in order to procure or retain competence as a minister of the Word or to gain admission to church assemblies.
- 2.3.3 Given the guidelines of synod, in the same congregation equality of remuneration must be maintained in proportional terms between a fixed term position and a part-time position.
- 2.3.4 A fixed term position is pensionable, unless the minister of the Word filling the position and the church council obtained approval from the trustees of the synod's pension fund to join another legally approved pension fund, or in highly exceptional cases received exemption of joining from the trustees of the synod's pension fund.
- 2.3.5 A fixed term position has clearly defined duties which are directly related to the profession of minister of the Word.
- 2.4 After the presbytery or its authorised representative approved the position and the recommended employment contract, the church council may go ahead with the call.
- 2.5 With the creation of a fixed term position within the broader church structures, the assembly concerned sees to it that the relevant requirements of this rule are applied.

#### **3. CALLING**

- 3.1 The church council calls in accordance with the ecclesiastical directives and finalises the employment contract in consultation with the presbytery in line with Articles 7.4 to 7.7 of the *Church Order*.
- 3.2 A minister of the Word who applies for a fixed term position in the same congregation and is appointed, is not called and inducted again.

#### **4. EMERITI**

- 4.1 Up to the age of 70 years an emeritus can, with approval of the presbytery, be called in a fixed term position, after which the emeritus retires permanently from church employment. An emeritus cannot be appointed in a fixed term position after the age of 70.
- 4.2 When reaching normal retirement age (65 years), the minister must retire without necessarily taking pension.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. inter alia regulation 2.4.2 of the *Rule for the Management of Labour Relations in case of Misconduct, Incompetence and Incapability*.

- 4.3 An emeritus can be accept employment in the same congregation again, only if
- 4.3.1 A fixed term position is created according to the prescribed procedure (cf. 2.1 to 2.5 above);
- 4.3.2 all obligations were fulfilled at retirement;
- 4.3.4 a new employment contract is entered into;
- 4.3.5 calling and induction into the position has taken place;
- 4.3.6 contributions to the pension fund are continued; and
- 4.3.7 the other requirements of this rule have been met.
- 4.4 An emeritus who is already on pension when the fixed term position is accepted, is exempt from pension contributions. Employment in the previous congregation cannot be accepted when already on pension (cf. 4.3.6).

## **5. TERM**

- 5.1 The term for a fixed term position may not last more than three years.<sup>35</sup>
- 5.2 At expiry of the term, the position can be filled for a maximum of two years by the same or another minister of the Word, on condition that the presbytery or its authorised representative grants permission to do so and a new employment contract is entered into.

## **6. DELEGATION TO BROADER ASSEMBLIES**

A minister of the Word in a fixed term position is delegated to broader assemblies.

## **7. TERMINATION AND RETENTION OF COMPETENCE**

- 7.1 A minister of the Word in a fixed term position leaves the employ of the congregation/broader assembly on the date on which the term expires.
- 7.2 A minister of the Word in a fixed term position can be dismissed from serving the congregation/broader assembly before expiry of the term on grounds of misconduct, incompetence or industrial requirements (cf. the *Rule for the Management of Labour Relations in case of Misconduct, Incompetence and Incapability*).
- 7.3 The employment of an emeritus in a fixed term post is terminated no later than the last day of the month during which the age of 70 years is reached.
- 7.4 At termination of service after expiry of the term, the church council informs the General Board for Competence accordingly.
- 7.5 At termination of service after expiry of the term, the competency of the minister of the Word/emeritus is retained.

# **RULE 14**

## **RULE FOR LEAVE OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD**

### **1. GENERAL CONDITIONS**

- 1.1 The church council or its authorised task team/committee/service group manages all leave to which a minister of the Word is entitled in terms of the contract of employment.
- 1.2 The minister of the Word applies for leave in the prescribed form to the church council or its authorised task team/committee/service group. Leave, with the exception of sick leave, can only be taken after the application has been approved.
- 1.3 All leave taken is recorded in a leave register which is checked every six months by the church council and annually by the presbytery in session.
- 1.4 If a minister of the Word is employed by the broader church structures, all leave is managed, approved and checked by the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group as representative of the employer.
- 1.5 Leave cannot be transferred from one employment relationship to another.

### **2. ANNUAL LEAVE**

- 2.1 A minister of the Word is entitled to 42 calendar days annual leave with full remuneration for every twelve months in the service of the congregation/denomination, unless otherwise agreed.
- 2.2 A minister is entitled to leave *pro rata* from commencement of service.
- 2.3 The church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group and the minister of the Word agree on when the annual leave shall be taken. If an agreement cannot be reached, the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group can decide when the minister of the Word takes leave.
- 2.4 Annual leave may not be taken during a period of notice of termination of service.
- 2.5 Annual leave is taken during the year in which it was earned. A maximum of 21 calendar days may be transferred to the next year. Accumulated leave must be taken during the first six months of the following year.
- 2.6 At least 21 consecutive calendar days of ordinary leave must be taken annually.
- 2.7 Accumulated cash in lieu of leave is only payable on termination of service. A *pro rata* portion of the present year's unused leave and the accumulated leave carried over from the previous year can be paid out to a maximum of thirty calendar days. Payment is made in accordance with existing legislation.

### **3. SICK LEAVE**

- 3.1 The church council or its authorised task team/committee/service group may grant a minister of the Word sick leave with full remuneration and allowances.
- 3.2.1 Sick leave is calculated at 120 calendar days and is granted in cycles of 3 years.
- 3.2.2 If the sick leave granted is exceeded in a cycle of three years, a minister of the Word may elect to utilise available vacation leave as sick leave. If all the sick leave and vacation leave has run out and ill health still prevents the effective execution of duties, the minister of the Word may apply for further sick leave. If the assembly grants it, the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group determines the remuneration for an agreed period of time and makes suitable arrangements for substitute ministry.
- 3.2.3 In the case of an application for sick leave for more than 3 calendar days the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group may insist on a report of a doctor to determine:

<sup>35</sup> Expectations must not be created that the position will be continued permanently. At expiry of the term, employment contracts must not be continued implicitly.

- 3.2.3.1 why the minister of the Word is not well enough to perform his/her duties; and
- 3.2.3.2 how long the absence is expected to continue before normal duties can be resumed.
- 3.2.4 The church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group will have the right to submit a medical certificate from a doctor to the church assembly, at the expense of the minister of the Word, before approving sick leave.
- 3.2.5 If the sick leave exceeds 120 days in a three year cycle, the advice of the presbytery or its authorised task team/committee/service group is sought with a view to the continuation of the Gospel ministry in the congregation.

#### **4. LEAVE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 A minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 calendar days leave for professional development per year is granted to the minister of the Word, unless otherwise agreed.
- 4.2 Leave for professional development accrues pro rata to a minister of the Word from the starting date of employment.
- 4.3 Leave for professional development is granted after the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group approved the particular course/program.
- 4.4 Leave for professional development cannot be transferred to the following year.

#### **5. STUDY LEAVE<sup>36</sup>**

- 5.1 Study leave is a concession and the church assembly and the minister of the Word must agree on study leave in the light of local circumstances.
- 5.2 When a church assembly and the minister of the Word agree on part time study, the minister of the Word is only entitled to partial remuneration.
- 5.3 When a church assembly and the minister of the Word agree on full time study for less than six months, the minister of the Word provides for himself/herself for the duration of the study period and now allowances are payable.
- 5.4 If the study period is longer than six months, a minister must request demission from the employer.
- 5.5 The minister makes his/her own arrangements with the General Board for Competence with regard to retaining the competence of a candidate for the ministry at demission due to further studies.
- 5.6 The minister of the Word must first utilise accumulated leave before the person. A minister of the Word may apply for leave to be reinstated which he/she has utilised for relevant study purposes, provided that the course(s) approved beforehand by the employer was successfully completed.

#### **6. MATERNITY LEAVE**

- 6.1 A female minister of the Word is entitled to a maximum of 4 months maternity leave which is granted as follows, unless otherwise agreed:
  - 6.1.1 a maximum of four weeks before the expected date of birth and a minimum of six weeks after the birth can be taken;
  - 6.1.2 full remuneration and allowances are payable for the minimum period of ten weeks (cf. 6.1.1) and
  - 6.1.3 the remuneration component for the rest of the maternity leave is negotiated between the minister of the Word and the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group.
- 6.2 Annual leave accrues during maternity leave.

#### **7. PUBLIC HOLIDAYS**

- 7.1 A minister of the Word is entitled to public holidays. If the minister of the Word has an official duty the person and the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group come to a suitable agreement.
- 7.2 The congregation/broader church structure and the minister of the Word can agree with one another in the contract of employment that annual leave will not be extended by the public holidays falling within the period of leave.
- 7.3 In the absence of a written agreement a minister of the Word's leave will be extended by every public holiday falling within the period of leave.

#### **8. LEAVE FOR FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES<sup>37</sup>**

With a view to family responsibilities a minister of the Word is entitled to 3 days compassionate leave per year, which cannot be accumulated.

#### **9. SABBATH TIME<sup>38</sup>**

- 9.1 Over and above their leave, with the approval of the church assembly or its authorised task team/committee/service group, ministers of the Word are entitled to sabbath time.
- 9.2 The award of sabbath time is subject to the following conditions:
  - 9.2.1 After three years in the same post, a minister of the Word is entitled to 30 calendar days sabbath time.
  - 9.2.2 Sabbath time cannot be accumulated.
  - 9.2.3 Sabbath time is taken continuously.
  - 9.2.4 During sabbath time the minister of the Word is not available for official duties in the congregation or ministry to the denomination.
  - 9.2.5 The minister of the Word may not do other work during sabbath time for which remuneration is received.
  - 9.2.6 Sabbath time is taken with full remuneration and allowances.
  - 9.2.7 After the sabbath time the minister of the Word gives a written report to the church assembly.
  - 9.2.8 Sabbath time cannot be transferred from one congregation/employment situation to another.
  - 9.2.9 No cash in lieu of leave is payable for sabbath time at termination of service.

<sup>36</sup> For a complete description of study leave, see the *Bestuurshandleiding vir Diensverhoudinge* (Management Guide for Labour Relations), chapter 2, 15.7.

<sup>37</sup> Leave for family responsibilities is applicable in the following cases: birth of a child, illness of a child, or the death of the employee's spouse, parent, adoptive parent, grandparent(s), brother, sister, child, adopted child or grandchild.

<sup>38</sup> Ministers of the Word who are still eligible for long leave in terms of their employment contracts (which is now being phased out), or surrendered long leave for another benefit of similar value (such as increased medical or pension benefits), are not automatically entitled to sabbath time. It must be negotiated and agreed on anew.

## RULE 15

### RULE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF LABOUR RELATIONS IN CASE OF MISCONDUCT, INCOMPETENCE AND INCAPABILITY

#### 1. GENERAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

- 1.1 Every church assembly has a task team/committee/service group who manages the labour relations between the congregation/broader church structure as employer and the minister(s) of the Word as employee(s). The task team/committee/service group can involve specialists from outside the congregation/broader church structure.
- 1.2 In all cases of termination of service in terms of Article 12.7 the General Board for Competence is notified of a minister of the Word's termination.
- 1.3 Church assemblies must, where applicable in conjunction with the presbytery, keep a record for each minister of the Word in which the nature of any disciplinary transgression, the action taken by the employer pursuant to Article 12 and the reason(s) for the action are indicated.

#### 2. PROCEDURE

##### 2.1 Misconduct<sup>39</sup>

- 2.1.1 A correctional- and/or disciplinary enquiry against a minister of the Word in the service of a congregation is conducted by the presbytery or its authorised body of enquiry.
- 2.1.2 A correctional enquiry against a minister of the Word in the service of a broader church assembly, is conducted by the presbytery or its authorised body of enquiry, under whose supervision the minister of the Word falls.
- 2.1.3 A disciplinary enquiry against a minister of the Word in the service of a broader church assembly, is conducted by the assembly or its authorised body of enquiry.
- 2.1.4 If the disciplinary enquiry against a minister of the Word includes an enquiry into a sin subject to correction, both the presbytery involved and the other assembly jointly appoint an authorised body of enquiry and the presbytery confirms the findings and correctional measures, while the other church assembly confirms the findings and disciplinary measures.
- 2.1.5 In the case of correctional- and/or disciplinary action against a minister of the Word because of misconduct, the body of enquiry acts in accordance with Chapter 5 of the *Church Order* and the *Rule for Church Correction and Discipline*.

##### 2.2 Defective ministry skills or performance (incompetence)

- If a church council or the presbytery involved deems that a formal enquiry into the competence or ability of a minister of the Word is necessary, the matter is placed on the agenda of the church council to deal with on the basis of the following procedure, with report to and eventual approval by the presbytery:
- 2.2.1 The church council involved authorises a committee to formally examine the competence or ability of the minister of the Word in conjunction with the presbytery committee, or at least three members of the last presbytery meeting appointed by the presbytery committee. The requirements for a formal enquiry are the same as for a correctional- and/or disciplinary enquiry (cf. *Rule for Church Correction and Discipline*), modified for the formal enquiry into competence and ability.
  - 2.2.2 During the enquiry the minister of the Word gets the opportunity to state his/her side of the story and to defend himself/herself against the objections against his/her service. The minister of the Word may be assisted by a DR Church member.
  - 2.2.3 The complaints about incompetence or inability which are to be formally investigated, must be brought to the attention of the minister of the Word in writing.
  - 2.2.4 If it is found that the minister of the Word delivers unsatisfactory service, the nature of the unsatisfactory service and the requirements he/she must fulfil must be brought to his/her attention in writing.
  - 2.2.5 The committee does everything in its power to help the minister of the Word produce satisfactory service to the congregation by means of appropriate evaluation, training, assistance (guidance and advice) and counselling.
  - 2.2.6 A reasonable time is allowed for the minister of the Word to improve his/her services and to comply with the requirements set by the church council to him/her.
  - 2.2.7 The church council considers other means besides termination of service to rectify the matter.
  - 2.2.8 If the committee concludes that the incompetence or inability cannot be resolved, the church council may terminate the minister of the Word's service to the congregation. Termination of service due to inadequate skills for the ministry or poor service delivery takes place with the retention of competence by the minister of the Word and the issuing of a deed of demission.
  - 2.2.9 In cases where the minister of the Word is employed by a broader church structure, the assembly requests its committee which manages the labour relations between the minister of the Word and the assembly, to formally investigate the competence or ability of the minister of the Word with the assistance of the synod's legal affairs-/church order committee. The same procedure as set out in 2.2.2 to 2.2.8 above, amended if required, is followed.

##### 2.3 Illness or injury (incompetence)

- If a church council or the presbytery involved deems that a minister of the Word can no longer perform his/her duties due to ill-health or injury, the church council's committee for labour relations, assisted by the presbytery committee, or at least three members of the last presbytery meeting appointed by the presbytery committee, investigates the extent of the medical disability.
- 2.3.1 If the minister of the Word will be absent for an unreasonably long period and the church council cannot approve further sick leave (cf. the *Rule for Leave of Ministers of the Word*), all possible alternatives besides dismissal are investigated. In case of dependence, counselling and rehabilitation may be suitable means.
  - 2.3.2 When alternatives are being investigated, the nature of the duties are looked at, the period of absence, the severity of the illness or injury and the possibility of substitute service.

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<sup>39</sup> Misconduct by a minister of the Word as an employee in the service of a congregation/broader church structure, may also be a sin which is subject to correction. The term *correction* is used for the activity of the church by which a minister of the Word, as a member and office-bearer can be educated, called to order and corrected in respect of congregational relationships (doctrine and conduct). The term *discipline* is used for the activity of the church by which a minister of the Word, as an employee can be educated, called to order and corrected in respect of labour relations. A correctional- or disciplinary investigation can therefore take place, but when both correction and discipline are involved, it is referred to as a correctional- and disciplinary investigation.



- 2.3.3 In case of permanent disability, the possibility of amended duties and/or amended circumstances of work and/or the availability of any suitable alternative work are investigated in order to accommodate the minister of the Word's disability.
- 2.3.4 During the enquiry the minister of the Word gets the opportunity to state his/her side of the story and to submit proposals. The minister of the Word may be assisted by a DR Church member.
- 2.3.5 If the minister of the Word was seriously injured or falls sick during the execution of a duty, there is a heavier burden on the church council/broader church structure to accommodate the disability of the minister of the Word.
- 2.3.6 The church council may, after all possible alternatives have been investigated, decide on fair grounds to dismiss the minister of the Word due to poor health or injury. Termination of service due to medical disability takes place with the retention of competence by the minister of the Word and the issuing of a deed of demission.
- 2.3.7 In cases where the minister of the Word is employed by a broader church structure, the assembly requests its committee which manages the labour relations between the minister of the Word and the assembly, to formally investigate the medical disability of the minister of the Word with the assistance of the synod's legal affairs-/church order committee. The same requirements, set out in 2.3.1 to 2.3.6 above, and amended if necessary, are met.
- 2.4 The congregation's/broader church structure's administrative - and operational requirements (incapability)**
- If a church council or the presbytery involved is of the opinion that a congregation can no longer a minister for financial reasons, the matter is placed on the agenda of the church council to deal with on the basis of the following procedure, with report to and approval by the presbytery:
- 2.4.1 The church council requests its finance committee to formally investigate the matter in conjunction with its committee for labour relations and in cooperation with the presbytery's finance committee.
- 2.4.2 The committee determines the extent of the financial problem and actively searches for solutions.<sup>40</sup>
- 2.4.3 If termination turns out to be the only solution, the committee consults with the minister(s) of the Word who are likely to be affected by the intended termination of service.
- 2.4.4 The consulting parties try to come to agreement on:
- 2.4.4.1 appropriate measures to avoid the termination of service, to keep it to the minimum number of persons, to alter the timing of termination in order to ameliorate the negative effects thereof;
- 2.4.4.2 the method of selecting the minister(s) of the Word whose services will be terminated; and
- 2.4.4.3 settlement at termination (retirement package or severance pay);
- 2.4.5 The committee provides the following in writing to the minister(s) of the Word with whom consultation takes place:
- 2.4.5.1 the reasons for the intended termination of service;
- 2.4.5.2 alternatives which were considered before termination was proposed and the reasons why each of the alternatives was rejected;
- 2.4.5.3 the number of ministers of the Word who will probably be affected;
- 2.4.5.4 the proposed method of selecting which minister(s) of the Word's services should be terminated;
- 2.4.5.5 the date on which the termination will probably come into effect;
- 2.4.5.6 the proposed settlement at termination (retirement package or severance pay);
- 2.4.5.7 any assistance which the church council plans to offer; and
- 2.4.5.8 the possibility of a future call.
- 2.4.6 The minister(s) of the Word involved is given the opportunity to submit appeals on any issue dealt with in the consultations, and the committee considers the appeals and reacts to it. If the committee disagrees with it, the committee provides its reasons.
- 2.4.7 The committee selects the minister(s) of the Word whose services will be terminated in accordance with the standards to which the consulting parties had agreed, or the one which is fair and objective if there was no agreement.
- 2.4.8 When an agreement is reached and signed by the consulting parties, the church council terminates the services of the minister(s) of the Word. If there is no agreement, the employer decides in a fair and objective way according to the prescribed settlement. Termination of service due to operational requirements takes place with the retention of the competence of minister of the Word and the issuing of a deed of demission.
- 2.4.9 In cases where the minister of the Word is employed by a broader church structure, the church assembly requests its financial committee to investigate the matter in conjunction with the synod's legal affairs/church order committee and in cooperation with its labour relations committee which manages the employment relationship between the minister of the Word and the church assembly. The same requirements, set out in 2.4.2 to 2.4.8 above, and amended if necessary, are met.
- 2.4.10 A minister of the Word's services can also be terminated because of technological (e.g. poor computer skills), structural (e.g. superfluous positions due to combination, unification or merging of congregations), or similar needs of the congregation/broader church structure (e.g. necessity and survival, employee's inability to adapt). The same procedure, set out in 2.4.1 to 2.4.9 above, and amended if necessary, is followed.
- 2.5 Settlement**
- In cases of termination the following ruling applies with regard to fair settlement:
- 2.5.1 Termination due to misconduct**
- 2.5.1.1 The payment of all outstanding leave in accordance with the *Rule for the Leave of Ministers of the Word*.
- 2.5.1.2 In cases of summary discharge, housing benefits are provided for 30 days after discharge.
- 2.5.1.3 In cases of discharge on a date as decided by the church assembly, remuneration, allowances and housing benefits are provided as agreed up to such date.
- 2.5.2 Termination due to defective ministry skills or performance**
- 2.5.2.1 In the case of termination due to incompetence, a retirement package/severance pay equal to at least two weeks remuneration and allowances for every completed year of continuous service in the employ of the employer involved, as well as arrangements regarding pension cover and the employer's contribution to the medical aid fund and group assurance for this period. In this regard a minimum of 4 weeks and a maximum of 26 weeks are applicable.
- 2.5.2.2 The payment of all outstanding leave in accordance with the *Rule for the Leave of Ministers of the Word*.
- 2.5.3 Termination for medical disability**
- 2.5.3.1 When a minister of the Word qualifies for it because of being medically unfit, he/she receives disability benefits according to the regulations of the synod's pension fund (cf. Article 14 of the *Church Order*).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Examples are: continued service at reduced remuneration and duties, tent maker ministry, appointment to another position, exchange of position and combination.

<sup>41</sup> Church councils must inform themselves of the regulations of the relevant rule before the termination of service due to medical disability.

- 2.5.3.2 In a case where a rule which controls disability benefits is not applicable, a retirement package/severance pay equal to at least 2 weeks remuneration and allowances for every completed year of continuous service in the employ of the employer involved, as well as arrangements regarding pension cover and the employer's contribution to the medical aid fund and group assurance for this period. In this regard a minimum of 4 weeks and a maximum of 26 weeks are applicable.
- 2.5.3.3 The payment of all outstanding leave in accordance with the *Rule for the Leave of Ministers of the Word*.
- 2.5.4 Termination due to the congregation's/broader church structure's administrative- and operational requirements**
- 2.5.4.1 In case of termination due to the congregation's/broader church structure's financial deficiency or other operational requirements, a retirement package/severance pay equal to at least 2 weeks remuneration and allowances for every completed year of continuous service in the employ of the employer involved, as well as arrangements regarding pension cover and the employer's contribution to the medical aid fund and group assurance for this period.
- 2.5.4.2 The payment of all outstanding leave in accordance with the *Rule for the Leave of Ministers of the Word*.
- 3. APPEALS**
- 3.1 In all cases of termination of service the minister of the Word has the right of appeal in terms of Article 23 and the *Rule for Appeals and Objections*. At termination in terms of Article 12.7 the minister of the Word, is informed about the reason and reminded of the right to appeal.
- 3.2 In case of loss of competence (where applicable under Article 12.7 of the *Church Order*), a minister of the Word has the right to appeal to the Moderamen/General Synod.

## **CORRECTION, DISCIPLINE AND APPEAL**

### **RULE 16**

#### **RULE FOR CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE**

##### **1. COMPOSITION**

- 1.1 Official enquiries into alleged sins which are subject to correction and or transgressions subject to disciplines are conducted by an investigative body, which shall either be the church assembly itself or an authorised committee of the assembly.
- 1.2 Every assembly with disciplinary responsibility decides whether the assembly will conduct disciplinary enquiries, or whether an authorised investigative committee will be employed.
- 1.3 If a church council decides to use an authorised investigative body to handle an official correctional/disciplinary enquiry, it appoints an investigative body of at least five members of the congregation. This committee is composed of at least three elders of the congregation. Other expert members from within or from outside the congregation can also be co-opted as full members of the committee.
- 1.4 If a presbytery uses an authorised investigative body, it appoints an investigative body of at least five members, at least three of which must be members of the presbytery assembly. Other expert members from within or from outside the presbytery can be co-opted as full members of the investigative body.
- 1.5 If an assembly (church council or presbytery) decides that it will act as an investigative body itself, expert members from within or from outside the assembly can be co-opted as full members of the investigative body as required.
- 1.6 A church council member who serves in an investigative body and takes part in an enquiry, retains his/her seat within the body until the enquiry is completed, even if the member's term of office in the assembly should expire during the course of the enquiry.
- 1.7 If a situation arises where the investigative body or the person implicated feels that a just and fair enquiry cannot take place with the present composition of the investigative body, both have the right to apply, stating the reasons, for another investigative body to be constituted to conduct the enquiry.
- 1.7.1 In the case of an enquiry by the church council or its authorised committee, they request the presbytery or its authorised committee to appoint another investigative body.
- 1.7.2 In the case of an enquiry by the presbytery or its authorised committee, they request the Synod or its authorised committee to appoint another investigative body.

##### **2. LODGING A COMPLAINT, RUMOUR, OR REPORT**

- 2.1 The sins subject to correction referred to in Article 61 of the *Church Order* and transgressions subject to discipline referred to in Article 63 of the *Church Order* are brought to the attention of the relevant church assembly or its authorised committee in one of three ways:
- 2.1.1 by an adverse rumour, or
- 2.1.2 a written complaint, or
- 2.1.3 a written report to the church assembly emanating from official activities of a committee for labour relations.

##### **3. INITIAL STEPS IN DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT, RUMOUR, OR REPORT**

- 3.1 When a complaint, rumour or report is received and before a decision is made to proceed formally:
- 3.1.1 the assembly or its authorised investigative body is purged of persons implicated by the allegation, rumour, or report, as well as the complainant or the person who brought the rumour or report to the attention of the assembly.
- 3.1.2 The assembly or its authorised investigative body first determines whether the allegation, rumour or report could lead to a formal enquiry of an alleged sin which is subject to correction and/or a transgression subject to discipline; and
- 3.1.3 where applicable, an assembly or its authorised investigative body could first attempt to resolve the issue by way of pastoral care, reconciliation, or by treating it as a dispute. If such a procedure does not achieve the desired results, the official enquiry proceeds;
- 3.2 If it is decided not to formally investigate an alleged sin subject to correction, or an alleged transgression subject to discipline, the complainant or the person who brought the report or rumour, as well as the person accused/implicated, must be notified in writing;
- 3.3 After a complaint, rumour, or report has been formally accepted, it becomes the property of the assembly or its authorised investigative body and it cannot be withdrawn without the consent of the assembly or its authorised investigative body.
- 3.4 If an office-bearer should resign before or during an enquiry because of a complaint, rumour or report about him/her, the responsible assembly proceeds with the enquiry, makes the necessary decision(s) and informs the General Board of Competence in writing.

#### **4. REDUCING THE COMPLAINT, RUMOUR OR REPORT TO WRITING**

- 4.1 If it is decided to officially investigate an alleged sin subject to correction, or an alleged transgression subject to discipline, the complaint against which the accused/implicated person must defend himself/herself, is reduced to writing by the investigative body.
- 4.1.1 In case of a complaint or rumour the investigating body can advise the complainant or person bringing the rumour regarding the formulation of the complaint.
- 4.1.2 In the case of a report, the investigating body itself formulates the alleged sin subject to correction, and/or transgression subject to discipline which is to be investigated.
- 4.2 A formulated complaint under investigation must indicate in writing the nature, place and time of the alleged sin subject to correction and/or transgression subject to discipline.

#### **5. SERVING OF THE FORMULATED COMPLAINT**

- 5.1 The content of the formulated complaint must be delivered to the person accused or implicated within a reasonable period prior to the enquiry.

#### **6. THE POSSIBILITY OF SUSPENSION**

- 6.1 In cases of alleged gross misconduct<sup>42</sup> by a person holding office (cf. Art. 61) the presbytery or its authorised investigative body may suspend such a person from office after receipt of the complaint, rumour or report. Such an assembly must notify the accused/implicated office-bearer in advance in writing of the intention to suspend him/her from office. This notice must contain a concise explanation of the alleged gross misconduct and invite the accused/implicated person to make representations before a decision to suspend is finalised.
- 6.2 This suspension is effected with notice to the accused/implicated person and the assembly or organisation that employs him/her.
- 6.3 Suspension includes the suspension of membership rights and the privileges of office. Suspension is not a correctional and/or disciplinary measure, it merely serves to protect all the parties involved and enable a free and fair enquiry.

#### **7. THE POSSIBILITY OF A PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY**

- 7.1 The investigating body can have a preliminary enquiry conducted by some of its members.
- 7.1.1 The members who undertake the preliminary enquiry prepare a report for the investigating body which has to make a finding(s) about any further enquiry.
- 7.1.2 The report of the preliminary enquiry must contain only factual information concerning the preliminary enquiry, viz.:
  - 7.1.2.1 a description of the contents and progression of the enquiry;
  - 7.1.2.2 substantiating written evidence.
- 7.1.3 The report shall not contain any finding(s) of the enquiry or recommend a verdict or possible disciplinary measures.
- 7.2 The report of the preliminary enquiry is considered by a meeting of the investigating body which must make a finding(s) and decisions about further investigation of the complaint(s).
- 7.3 The requirements for the preliminary enquiry are the same as for the investigating body which has to make the ultimate finding(s) and decisions.
- 7.4 Participation in such a preliminary enquiry does not preclude its members from being a part of the assembly involved or its authorised investigating body.

#### **8. REQUIREMENTS FOR A DISCIPLINARY ENQUIRY**

- 8.1 In accordance with Article 59.2 of the *Church Order*, church assemblies or those authorised by them shall do the following in the course of a disciplinary enquiry:
  - 8.1.1 No one with conflicting interests in the case under investigation shall be party to the body which conducts a correctional and/or disciplinary enquiry and passes resolutions on it.
  - 8.1.2 The investigating body must be purged of the parties [the plaintiff(s), person(s) bringing the rumour or report, the accused], possible witnesses, persons related to the parties in the first or second degree and such other persons who have some personal interest in the matter.
  - 8.1.3 Meetings which conduct disciplinary hearings are held in camera.
  - 8.1.4 Plaintiff(s), defendant(s) and witnesses must receive adequate opportunity to state their case.
  - 8.1.5 The parties are not entitled to have someone appear for them, but may be assisted by a DR Church member of their own or of another congregation. If the allegation(s) are of such a serious nature that the accused/implicated may be dismissed from the services of the congregation/broader church structure, the investigating body has the discretion to allow the parties to have legal representation.
  - 8.1.6 The enquiry into an alleged sin which is subject to correction and/or discipline is always conducted in the presence of all the complainant(s) and the accused. All those present may question each another. The investigating body involved may also call witnesses and present evidence to arrive at a proper conclusion in its enquiry. The parties themselves may present further evidence during the course of the enquiry to clarify matters.
  - 8.1.7 If any of the parties refuses to appear before the investigating body, or obstruct the progress of the enquiry, the investigating body can, stating reasons, proceed with the enquiry in his/her absence.
  - 8.1.8 Members of an investigating body which makes findings and decisions in a disciplinary matter, must all be present throughout enquiry.
  - 8.1.9 After hearing the parties and witnesses the investigating body makes its written finding(s). If an accused/implicated person is found guilty of a sin subject to correction and/or a disciplinary transgression, mitigating and aggravating evidence is heard before a correctional and/or disciplinary measure is decided on.
  - 8.1.10 The findings and decisions about guilt or innocence and the decisions about the correctional and/or disciplinary measures to be applied by a church assembly or its authorised investigative body, must be accompanied by a statement of reasons.

#### **9. COSTS**

- 9.1 The costs of a correctional and/or disciplinary enquiry are for the account of the relevant church assembly, on the understanding that the parties themselves are responsible for the costs of their witnesses.

#### **10. NOTICE TO THE GENERAL BOARD OF COMPETENCE**

- 10.1 In all cases where the church assembly or its authorised investigative body applies a correctional and/or disciplinary measure against a candidate for the ministry, a minister of the Word or emeritus (even if the person has resigned, cf. 3.4) the synod's committee for legal

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<sup>42</sup> Gross misconduct may include the following: adultery, immorality, divorce, murder, perjury, theft and heresy.

affairs/church order committee as well as the General Board for Competence are supplied within 14 days of the finding(s) and decision(s) in writing.

- 10.2 The General Board for Competence is informed in writing by the church assembly or its authorised representative if a party appeals against the finding(s) and decision(s) of an investigative body affecting a candidate for the ministry, a minister of the Word or emeritus.
- 10.3 The General Board for Competence is informed without delay by the church assembly involved or its authorised representative when a correctional and/or disciplinary measure affecting a candidate for the ministry, a minister of the Word or emeritus is lifted.

## RULE 17

### RULE FOR APPEALS OR OBJECTION

#### 1. THE RIGHT TO REVISION, APPEAL OR GRAVAMEN

- 1.1 Decisions by church assemblies are binding, but they can be recalled, amended, changed or replaced by means of revision, appeal, objection, or gravamen.
- 1.1.1 **Revision** is the review of a decision during the same or a subsequent meeting at the request of a member of the meeting
- 1.1.2 **Appeal or objection** is an appeal to a broader assembly when a member and/or church assembly feels prejudiced by the decision of a lesser assembly.
- 1.1.3 **Gravamen** is used to urge General Synod to make a decision regarding the doctrine of the church.
- 1.2 Once taken, decisions may only be taken into revision after prior notification by a member of the congregation and with the consent of the meeting. Notice is given either at the meeting where the decision is taken, or in the agenda for the next meeting.
- 1.2.1 Revision may be granted if it is argued convincingly that, in the course of the discussion of the issue in the meeting, certain aspects were insufficiently covered, or not at all; and/or new information has become available which necessitates revision of the decision.
- 1.2.2 The application for revision is put in writing, submitted to the meeting and the meeting decides by majority vote if revision is granted. If it is granted, the issue is reopened for discussion and the meeting can amend the decision, make a different decision, maintain or revoke the previous decision.
- 1.3 The way of ecclesiastical **appeal or objection** to a broader assembly or its authorised appeals body may be followed by a member in accordance with the prescribed procedure.
- 1.3.1 The assembly or its authorized appeals body, may, where appropriate, refer the matter initially for mediation and conciliation (see *Guidelines for the Resolution of Ecclesiastical Disputes* under Strategic Decisions).
- 1.2 If this process does not produce the desired results, the appeal or objection proceeds formally.

#### 2. APPEAL OR OBJECTION AGAINST RESOLUTIONS OF CHURCH COUNCILS

- 2.1 Members of the congregation who have objections against a resolution by the church council based on Scripture, the Confession, or the Church Order may lodge an appeal or objection with the presbytery within the time allowed (see 6.2 and 6.3 below). The appellant or objector notifies the church council, the secretary of synod or the synod appeals body. In the first instance the presbytery or its authorised appeals committee hears the appeals of church councils, church council members and members against the decisions of church councils.
- 2.2 The appeal document or petition of protest which follows, is sent to the secretary of the presbytery or its authorised appeals committee.

#### 3. APPEAL AGAINST DECISIONS OF PRESBYTERY OR ITS REPRESENTATIVES

- 3.1 Members or a church council of congregation within the presbytery who have objections against a resolution of the presbytery or its authorised representative based on Scripture, the Confession, or the Church Order may lodge an appeal or objection in writing with the synod within the time allowed (see 6.2 and 6.3 below). The appellant or objector notifies the presbytery.
- 3.2 The appeal document or petition of protest which follows, is sent to the secretary of the synod concerned or its authorised appeals committee.

#### 4. APPEAL OR OBJECTION AGAINST DECISIONS OF SYNODS OR ITS REPRESENTATIVES

- 4.1 Members or a church council or a presbytery who have objections against a resolution of the synod or its authorised representative based on Scripture, the Confession, or the Church Order may lodge an appeal or objection in writing with General Synod within the time allowed (see 6.2 and 6.3 below). The appellant or objector notifies the synod.
- 4.2 The appeal document or petition of protest which follows the notice, is sent to the secretary of General Synod.
- 4.3 The decision of the synod appeals committee is final with regard to those matters within its authority

#### 5. APPEALS AGAINST RESOLUTIONS OF GENERAL SYNOD

- 5.1 Members or a church council or a presbytery or a synod who have objections against a resolution of General Synod or its authorised representative based on Scripture, the Confession, or the Church Order may lodge an appeal or objection in writing with General Synod's authorised appeals body (the General Task Team Legal Affairs according to 3.1.5 of the *Rule for the General Task Team Legal Affairs*) or the next General synod within the time allowed (see 6.2 and 6.3 below). The appellant or objector notifies the Moderamen or General Synod.
- 5.2 The appeal document or petition of protest which follows the notice, is sent to the secretary of General Synod.
- 5.3 In accordance with Article 44.4 of the Church Order cases concerning doctrinal differences or disputes between synods or between synods and minor assemblies may be brought before the General Synod or its appeals committee as an appeal.

#### 6. REGULATIONS CONCERNING APPEALS AND PETITIONS FOR CHURCH ASSEMBLIES OR THEIR AUTHORISED APPEALS BODIES

- 6.1 If a church assembly itself does not hear an appeal or objection, an appeals body of at least three members is appointed by the assembly to deal with the appeal or objection. The appeals body may co-opt experts. Meetings of the appeals body are held in camera.

- 6.2 A member or church assembly who wishes to lodge an appeal or an objection, must notify the major assembly within 21 days after the meeting made available its approved minutes.
- 6.3 Within 21 days of having given notice of appeal or objection, the appellant or objector must give a written exposition of the grounds/reasons for the appeal or objection in the appeals document or petition of protest (relevant documentation included) failing which the right of appeal or objection lapses.
- 6.4 In terms of Articles 65.2 and 65.3 of the *Church Order* appeals regarding doctrinal affairs and the competency of licensees may be made as far as General Synod. In other matters connected to correction, appeals cannot be brought any further than the synod.
- 6.5 As soon as possible after the grounds/reasons for the appeal/objection were submitted the secretary of the body dealing with the appeal obtains from the church assembly against whose resolution the appeal or objection has been lodged, its written reaction to the grounds/reasons for the appeal (relevant documentation including all documents, minutes, transcriptions, etc must be included) and submits it to the appeals body.
- 6.6 The person or body lodging an appeal or petition is informed at the time that the appeal or objection is lodged that if the appeal or objection is rejected the eventual costs<sup>43</sup> of the case may be at his/her expense, if the relevant appeals body so decides. The appellant or petitioner must assent to this arrangement in writing. If the appellant or objector does not do this, the appeal or objection is annulled. The appellant or objector is entitled to receive an estimate of the costs in advance.
- 6.7 The body considering the appeal convenes within 21 days of receiving the appeal or petition of protest and decides the matter as soon as possible.
- 6.8 The appeal is considered on the basis of the appellant's written exposition of the grounds for the appeal or the objector's petition of protest (with relevant documentation) and based on the written reaction of the church assembly (and relevant documentation). The body considering the appeal may request or grant leave that the appellant or objector and/or a representative(s) of the church assembly involved, give evidence in person.
- 7. GRAVAMEN**
- In addition to the right of appeal, a member or a church assembly who raises objections to a resolution of a synod on the grounds of Scripture, the Confession or the Church Order, may register the objection in the form of a gravamen/petition with the presbytery/presbytery committee in which he/she resorts. The presbytery or presbytery committee considers the objection and if it is accepted, presents it to the synod in the form of a recommendation.
- 8. MEASURES AVAILABLE TO AN APPEALS BODY**
- 8.1 After considering an appeal, except in a case falling under 8.2 below, the body of appeal can deal with it in one of the following ways:
- 8.1.1 Grant the appeal in full or in part and cancel or amend the resolution of the church assembly; or
- 8.1.2 Disallow the appeal in full or in part and confirm the resolution of the church assembly in full or in part.
- 8.2 If the appeal is based on essential irregularities at the assembly which passed the resolution(s), the body considering the appeal cancels the resolution of the relevant church assembly. The body of appeal can also refer the matter back to the relevant church assembly to consider the appeal or objection *de novo*. The church assembly to whom the matter is referred back, appoints a new authorised appeals body to consider it.
- 8.3 If the objection in a petition of protest is upheld, the relevant decision(s) of the assembly are set aside.
- 9. DECISION OF THE APPEALS BODY**
- 9.1.1 The body deciding the appeal decides on the appeal or objection and also minutes the grounds for the decision. The appellant or objector and the church assembly against whose decision(s) the appeal or objection was made, are notified in writing of the decision made and the reasoning behind it.
- 9.2 If the appeal had to do with the competence of a licensee, the General Board for Competence is notified of the decision of the appeals body within 14 days.

## RULE 18

### RULE FOR THE REGULATION OF PROPERTIES, ASSETS AND FUNDS

- 1. GENERAL SYNOD PROPERTIES, ASSETS AND FUNDS**
- 1.1. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) as General Synod is a body corporate and the General Synod or its authorised representative/s is its agent.
- 1.2. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) is therefore the owner of all movable and immovable assets controlled and acquired by the synod, and real estate is registered in the name of: *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*.
- 1.3 Property, assets and funds are administered by the General Task Team Finance in accordance with resolutions of General Synod.
- 1.3.1 Regarding the activities mentioned in 1.3.4 below, the committee concerned administers the properties, assets and funds subject to the committee submitting the following documents:
- 1.3.1.1 To the Moderamen: The rules and/or constitutions of all the activities and/or bodies corporate reporting to the committee, as well as any amendments thereto.
- 1.3.1.2 To the General Task Team Finance annually:
- Approved financial accounts of the previous year
  - The budget for the present year
  - Management information as requested by the General Task Team Finance.
- 1.3.2 Although General Synod does not accept liability for the activities and obligations of separate bodies corporate (e.g. companies) which are directly or indirectly managed or controlled by a committee, it is essential, for the purpose of the overall planning of the activities of the church, that General Synod has access to the information mentioned in 1.3.1.1 and 1.3.1.2 regarding the separate bodies corporate.
- 1.3.3 The Moderamen of General Synod decides cases in which the General Task Team Finance and the committee concerned and/or the committees concerned and/or bodies corporate are unable to reach a consensus.
- 1.3.4 The regulations in 1.3.1 to 1.3.3 above apply to the following:
- 1.3.4.1 the funds and activities of the General Task Team for the Ministry of Caring or its successor;

<sup>43</sup> The costs of the appeal are limited to the costs related to meeting, travelling, duplicating and administrative expenses.

- 1.3.4.2 funds and activities of the General Task Team Youth or its successor;
- 1.3.4.3 funds and activities of the General Committee Caring and Witness or its successor;
- 1.3.4.4 funds and activities represented in the General Task Team for the Media of the Church or its successor,
- 1.3.4.5 as well as any separate body corporate which is managed or controlled, directly or indirectly, by any of the committees/committees listed in 1.3.4 and, for the purposes of this regulation, a body corporate is deemed to be managed or controlled by a committee if the committee, directly or indirectly, is entitled to appoint at least half of the board members/directors or trustees of the body corporate concerned.
- 1.4 Given that the income and property of General Synod, including property or income managed by any committee, may not be distributed to any person, but must be utilised exclusively for the execution of the activities of General Synod and the promotion of its initial aims and for interim investments (notwithstanding that nothing stated here precludes the payment in good faith of reasonable remuneration [i.e. remuneration which is not excessive, considering what is generally deemed to be reasonable in the sector and the services rendered] to any employee or official of General Synod for services such person did in fact render to General Synod), the General Task Team Finance may by order of General Synod perform any legal action related to the disposition, obtainment, receipt of legacies, alienation, mortgaging, or insurance of the assets concerned including the following:
  - 1.4.1 To take transfer of all properties, assets or funds of the dissolved Council of Churches.
  - 1.4.2 To obtain properties, movable and/or immovable, by gift, legacy, purchase, rental or by any other means.
  - 1.4.2.1 All gifts and legacies to the Church or a ministry group, task team, or committee of General Synod must be handled and controlled by the General Task Team Finance. When gifts and legacies must be handled differently because of legal requirements, the correct prescriptions must be followed and be accounted for to the General Task Team Finance. General Synod, including any ministry group, task team, or committee appointed by General Synod, will not accept a gift which the donor requires to be revocable for any reason other than the significant neglect of the specified intentions and conditions of the gift concerned (including any misrepresentation concerning its tax deductibility in accordance with article 18A of the Income Tax Act): Given that a donor may not stipulate any condition which places the donor concerned or person connected to the donor concerned in a position through which he/she may obtain any direct or indirect advantage from the employment of the gift.
    - 1.4.2.2 If a gift/legacy is for a specific ministry group, task team, or committee, it must be utilised for the benefit of that ministry group, task team, or committee.
    - 1.4.2.3 If a gift/legacy is for an approved activity, the ministry group, task team, or committee concerned may use it for that purpose.
    - 1.4.2.4 If a ministry group, task team, or committee wishes to utilise a gift/legacy for a purpose or activity which has not yet been approved, it must first seek the advice and approval of the General Task Team Finance.
    - 1.4.2.5 If the General Task Team Finance refuses approval, the ministry group, task team, or committee may appeal to the Moderamen.
  - 1.4.3 To sell, exchange, rent out, donate or in any other way alienate, mortgage, pawn, offer as collateral, or by any other means bond properties, movable and/or immovable, given that:
    - 1.4.3.1 gifts may only be made to further the aims of General Synod or to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act;
    - 1.4.3.2 collateral may only be offered for the obligations of General Synod.
  - 1.4.4 To invest monies which it controls and to cash, call up, cancel, cede, change or otherwise deal with such investments given that investments may only be made:
    - 1.4.4.1 with registered financial institutions, as defined in Article 1 of the Financial Institutions Act (Investment of Funds), 1984 (Act no. 39 of 1984);
    - 1.4.4.2 in shares quoted on a stock exchange as defined in article 1 of Control of Stock Exchanges Act, 1985 (Act no. 1 of 1985); and/or
    - 1.4.4.3 in the other secure investments in financial instruments and assets determined by the Commissioner: South African Revenue Service, after consultation with the Executive Officer of the Board for Financial Services and the Director of Non-Profit Organisations; given that the Task Team may, notwithstanding these limitations:
      - (A) maintain an investment (excluding a business or commercial enterprise) which it receives as a gift, bequest or legacy in the form in which it was received;
      - (B) maintain or pursue an investment which it received as a gift, bequest, or legacy in the form of a business or commercial enterprise (or any asset in such a business or commercial enterprise) before 1 January 2001 in the form in which it was received for a period of 5 years after 1 January 2001.
  - 1.4.5 To lend monies on a first mortgage on real estate or such other collateral as it deems fit to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act.
- 1.5 In all litigation or disputes concerning properties, assets and funds the General Task Team Finance, without any further specific mandate, acts both as claimant and defendant on behalf of General Synod after consultation with the General Task Team Legal Affairs.
- 1.6 To enact these transactions all documents are signed by two members of the General Task Team Finance who were authorised to do so by the General Task Team Finance.
- 1.7 General Synod has no claim upon the property, assets and funds belonging to and controlled by the constituting synods, presbyteries and church councils owned and managed in terms of separate rules.
- 1.8 Where any real estate is donated or left to the Dutch Reformed Church for the benefit of an activity or institution within the jurisdiction of a synod, the synod concerned is charged to utilise it for the activities or institution with mutual consent.
- 1.9 Properties which prior to the establishment of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church were vested in the federated union (e.g. the properties under the supervision and control of the General Sunday School Committee) in 1962 with church unification became the properties of the Dutch Reformed Church as General Synod. Title Deeds of such properties which are registered in the name of the different synods may remain unchanged to save transfer costs. However, any transactions concerning such properties are conducted in terms of the regulations of this Rule. These properties can only be mortgaged or alienated in accordance with the regulations of the *Church Order* of the relevant synod in whose name it is registered after the General Task Team Finance has so decided.
- 1.10 General Synod shall not conduct a business or commercial enterprise except to the extent that:
  - 1.10.1 the gross income received from the business or commercial enterprise does not exceed the amount or percentage which the Income Tax Act may allow from time to time.
  - 1.10.2 the enterprise or activity:
    - (A) is integrally and directly connected with the aims of General Synod; and

(B) is undertaken or performed on a basis essentially aimed at cost recovery and which will not result in unfair competition with taxable entities;

- 1.10.3 the enterprise or activity, if not integrally and directly connected with the aims of General Synod, is of an incidental nature and is essentially undertaken by voluntary assistance without remuneration; or
- 1.10.4 the enterprise or activity has been approved by the Minister of Finance with a notice in the Government Gazette.
- 1.11 In case of the dissolution of General Synod all properties, assets and funds must be shared between the constituent synods in the ratio of the number of confessing members within the jurisdiction of each synod at the time of the dissolution given that a synod may only receive a share of the assets of General Synod if it has been approved as a public welfare organisation in accordance with article 30 of the Income Tax Act, no. 58 of 1962, as amended.

## **2. SYNOD PROPERTIES, ASSETS AND FUNDS**

- 2.1 The Dutch Reformed Church as synod is a body corporate and Synod or its authorised representative/s its agent/s.
- 2.2 The Dutch Reformed Church of/in ..... is therefore the owner of all movable and immovable assets controlled and acquired by synod, and real estate is registered in the name of *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van/in* .....
- 2.3 Property, assets and funds are administered by a committee appointed by and reporting to synod.
- 2.4 The committee indicated in 2.3 may, given that the income and property of the Synod, including property or income managed by any committee, may not be distributed to any person but must be utilised exclusively for the exercise of the activities of the Synod and the promotion of its initial aims and for interim investments (notwithstanding that nothing stated here precludes the payment in good faith of reasonable remuneration [i.e. remuneration which is not excessive, considering what is generally deemed to be reasonable in the sector and the services rendered] to any employee or official of the Synod for services such person did in fact render to the Synod), by order of the Synod perform any legal action concerned with the disposition, obtainment, mortgaging, alienation, or insurance of the assets concerned including the following:
  - 2.4.1 To obtain properties, movable and/or immovable, by gift, legacy, purchase, rental or by any other means; provided that Synod, including any service group, task team or committee appointed by Synod, will not accept a gift which the donor requires to be revocable for any reason other than the significant neglect of the specified intentions and conditions of the gift concerned (including any misrepresentation concerning its tax deductibility in accordance with article 18A of the Income Tax Act); given that a donor may not stipulate any condition which places the donor concerned or person connected to the donor concerned in a position through which he/she may obtain any direct or indirect advantage from the employment of the gift.
  - 2.4.2 To sell, exchange, rent out, donate or in any other way alienate, mortgage, pawn, offer as collateral, or by any other means bond properties, movable and/or immovable, given that:
    - 2.4.2.1 gifts may only be made to further the aims of the synod or to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act;
    - 2.4.2.2 collateral may only be offered for the obligations of the synod.
  - 2.4.3 To invest monies which it controls and to cash, call up, cancel, cede, change or otherwise deal with such investments given that investments may only be made:
    - 2.4.3.1 with registered financial institutions, as defined in Article 1 of the Financial Institutions Act (Investment of Funds), 1984 (Act no. 39 of 1984);
    - 2.4.3.2 in shares quoted on a stock exchange as defined in article 1 of Control of Stock Exchanges Act, 1985 (Act no. 1 of 1985); and/or
    - 2.4.3.3 in the other secure investments in financial instruments and assets determined by the Commissioner: South African Revenue Service, after consultation with the Executive Officer of the Board for Financial Services and the Director of Non-Profit Organisations; given that the Committee may, notwithstanding these limitations:
      - (A) maintain an investment (excluding a business or commercial enterprise) which it receives as a gift or in the form in which it was received;
      - (B) maintain or pursue an investment which it received as a gift or a legacy in the form of a business or commercial enterprise (or any asset in such a business or commercial enterprise) before 1 January 2001 in the form in which it was received for a period of 5 years after 1 January 2001.
  - 2.4.4 To lend monies on a first mortgage on real estate or such other collateral as it deems fit to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act.
- 2.5 In all litigation or disputes concerning properties, assets and funds the Committee referred to in 2.3, without any further specific mandate, acts both as claimant and defendant on behalf of the Synod after consultation with the synod's legal affairs committee.
- 2.6 The Synod shall not conduct a business or commercial enterprises except to the extent that:
  - 2.6.1 the gross income received from the business or commercial enterprise does not exceed the amount or percentage which the Income Tax Act may allow from time to time.
  - 2.6.2 the enterprise or activity:
    - (A) is integrally and directly connected with the aims of the Synod; and
    - (B) is undertaken or performed on a basis essentially aimed at cost recovery and which will not result in unfair competition with taxable entities;
  - 2.6.3 the enterprise or activity, if not integrally and directly connected with the aims of the Synod, is of an incidental nature and is essentially undertaken by voluntary assistance without remuneration; or
  - 2.6.4 the enterprise or activity has been approved by the Minister of Finance in the Government Gazette.
- 2.7 In the case of the dissolution of the Synod all properties, assets and funds must be shared between the constituent congregations in the ratio of the number of confessing members within the jurisdiction of each congregation at the time of the dissolution given that a presbytery may only receive a share of the assets of the Synod if it has been approved as a public welfare organisation in accordance with article 30 of the Income Tax Act, no. 58 of 1962, as amended.

## **3. PRESBYTERY PROPERTIES, ASSETS AND FUNDS**

- 3.1 The Dutch Reformed Church as Presbytery is a body corporate and the Presbytery assembly or its authorised representative/s its agent.
- 3.2 The Dutch Reformed Presbytery of ..... is therefore the owner of all movable and immovable assets controlled and acquired by the Presbytery, and real estate is registered in the name of *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Ring van* .....
- 3.3 Property, assets and funds are administered by a committee appointed by and reporting to the Presbytery.

- 3.4. The committee indicated in 3.3 may, given that the income and property of the Presbytery, including property or income managed by any committee, may not be distributed to any person but must be utilised exclusively for the exercise of the activities of the Presbytery and the promotion of its specified intentions and for interim investments (notwithstanding that nothing stated here precludes the payment in good faith of reasonable remuneration [i.e. remuneration which is not excessive, considering what is generally deemed to be reasonable in the sector and the services rendered] to any employee or official of the Presbytery for services such person did in fact render to the Presbytery), by order of the Presbytery perform any legal action concerned with the disposition, obtainment, receipt of legacies, alienation, mortgaging or insurance of the assets concerned including the following:
- 3.4.1 To obtain properties, movable and/or immovable, by gift, legacy, purchase, rental or by any other means; provided that Presbytery, including any Committee appointed by Presbytery, will not accept a gift which the donor requires to be revocable for any reason other than the significant neglect of the specified intentions and conditions of the gift concerned (including any misrepresentation concerning its tax deductibility in accordance with article 18A of the Income Tax Act): given that a donor may not stipulate any condition which places the donor concerned or person connected to the donor concerned in a position through which he/she may obtain any direct or indirect advantage from the employment of the gift.
- 3.4.2 To sell, exchange, rent out, donate or in any way alienate, mortgage, pawn, offer as collateral, or by any other means bond properties, movable and/or immovable, given that:
- 3.4.2.1 gifts may only be made to further the aims of the Presbytery or to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act;
- 3.4.2.2 collateral may only be offered for the obligations of the Presbytery.
- 3.4.3 To invest monies which it controls and to cash, call up, cancel, cede, change or otherwise deal with such investments given that investments may only be made:
- 3.4.3.1 with registered financial institutions, as defined in Article 1 of the Financial Institutions Act (Investment of Funds), 1984 (Act no. 39 of 1984);
- 3.4.3.2 in shares quoted on a stock exchange as defined in article 1 of Control of Stock Exchanges Act, 1985 (Act no. 1 of 1985); and/or
- 3.4.3.3 in the other secure investments in financial instruments and assets determined by the Commissioner: South African Revenue Service, after consultation with the Executive Officer of the Board for Financial Services and the Director of Non-Profit Organisations; given that the Committee may, notwithstanding these limitations:
- (A) maintain an investment (excluding a business or commercial enterprise) which it receives as a gift or in the form in which it was received;
- (B) maintain or pursue an investment which it received as a gift or a legacy in the form of a business or commercial enterprise (or any asset in such a business or commercial enterprise) before 1 January 2001 in the form in which it was received for a period of 5 years after 1 January 2001.
- 3.4.4 To lend monies on a first mortgage on real estate or such other collateral as it deems fit to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act.
- 3.5 In all litigation or disputes concerning properties, assets and funds the Committee referred to in 3.3, without any further specific mandate, acts both as claimant and defendant on behalf of the Presbytery after approval by the presbytery committee. It is, however, very strongly recommended that the presbytery committee should consult the synod's committee for legal affairs in these situations.
- 3.6 The Presbytery shall not conduct a business or commercial enterprises except to the extent that:
- 3.6.1 the gross income received from the business or commercial enterprise does not exceed the amount or percentage which the Income Tax Act may allow from time to time.
- 3.6.2 the enterprise or activity:
- (A) is integrally and directly connected with the aims of the Presbytery; and
- (B) is undertaken or performed on a basis essentially aimed at cost recovery and which will not result in unfair competition with taxable entities;
- 3.6.3 the enterprise or activity, if not integrally and directly connected with the aims of the Presbytery, is of an incidental nature and is essentially undertaken by voluntary assistance without remuneration; or
- 3.6.4 the enterprise or activity has been approved by the Minister of Finance in the Government Gazette.
- 3.7 In the case of the dissolution of the Presbytery, and the inclusion of the Presbytery by another Dutch Reformed Presbytery or Presbyteries after approval by the Synod, the remaining assets after all the obligations of the Presbytery have been met, are transferred to the other Presbytery(ies) which have been approved as a public welfare organization in accordance with article 30 of the Income Tax Act.

#### **4. CONGREGATION PROPERTIES, ASSETS AND FUNDS**

- 4.1 Each congregation is a body corporate and the church council or its authorised representative/s its agent.
- 4.2 The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente (Dutch Reformed Church Congregation) ..... Congregation is therefore the owner of all movable and immovable assets controlled and acquired by the church council, and real estate is registered in the name of *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente* (Dutch Reformed Church Congregation) .....
- 4.3 The church council administers property, assets and funds with an annual report to the congregation and presbytery.
- 4.4 The church council may, given that the income and property of the congregation, including property or income managed by any committee, may not be distributed to any person but must be utilised exclusively for the exercise of the activities of the congregation and the promotion of its initial aims and for interim investments (notwithstanding that nothing stated here precludes the payment in good faith of reasonable remuneration [i.e. remuneration which is not excessive, considering what is generally deemed to be reasonable in the sector and the services rendered] to any employee or official of the congregation for services such person did in fact render to the congregation), perform any legal action concerned with the disposition, obtainment, receipt of legacies, alienation, mortgaging or insurance of the assets concerned including the following:
- 4.4.1 To obtain properties, movable and/or immovable, by gift, legacy, purchase, rental or by any other means; provided that Synod, including any Committee appointed by Synod, will not accept a gift which the donor requires to be revocable for any reason other than the significant neglect of the specified intentions and conditions of the gift concerned (including any misrepresentation concerning its tax deductibility in accordance with article 18A of the Income Tax Act): given that a donor may not stipulate any condition which places the donor concerned or person connected to the donor concerned in a position through which he/she may obtain any direct or indirect advantage from the employment of the gift.



- 4.4.2 To sell, exchange, rent out, donate or in any other way alienate, mortgage, pawn, offer as collateral, or by any other means bond properties, movable and/or immovable, given that:
- 4.4.2.1 gifts may only be made to further the aims of the congregation or to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act;
- 4.4.2.2 collateral may only be offered for the obligations of the congregation.
- 4.4.3 To invest monies which it controls and to cash, call up, cancel, cede, change or otherwise deal with such investments given that investments may only be made:
- 4.4.3.1 with registered financial institutions, as defined in Article 1 of the Financial Institutions Act (Investment of Funds), 1984 (Act no. 39 of 1984);
- 4.4.3.2 in shares quoted on a stock exchange as defined in article 1 of Control of Stock Exchanges Act, 1985 (Act no. 1 of 1985); and/or
- 4.4.3.3 in the other secure investments in financial instruments and assets determined by the Commissioner: South African Revenue Service, after consultation with the Executive Officer of the Board for Financial Services and the Director of Non-Profit Organisations; given that the church council may, notwithstanding these limitations:
- (A) maintain an investment (excluding a business or commercial enterprise) which it receives as a gift or in the form in which it was received;
- (B) maintain or pursue an investment which it received as a gift or a legacy in the form of a business or commercial enterprise (or any asset in such a business or commercial enterprise) before 1 January 2001 in the form in which it was received for a period of 5 years after 1 January 2001.
- 4.4.4 To lend monies on a first mortgage on real estate or such other collateral as it deems fit to theology students, ministers, employees and officials of the Dutch Reformed Church as well as to religious, charitable- and/or educational institutions which are exempt from tax in accordance with the regulations of the Income Tax Act.
- 4.5 In all litigation or disputes concerning properties, assets and funds the church council, without any further specific mandate, acts both as claimant and defendant on behalf of the congregation. In such cases, however, the church council is strongly advised to seek the advice of the synod's committee for legal affairs.  
(The above is resolved, given that points 2, 3 and 4 serve as guidelines for synods.)
- 4.6 The congregation shall not conduct a business or commercial enterprises except to the extent that:
- 4.6.1 the gross income received from the business or commercial enterprise does not exceed the amount or percentage which the Income Tax Act may allow from time to time.
- 4.6.2 the enterprise or activity:
- (A) is integrally and directly connected with the aims of the congregation; and
- (B) is undertaken or performed on a basis essentially aimed at cost recovery and which will not result in unfair competition with taxable entities;
- 4.6.3 the enterprise or activity, if not integrally and directly connected with the aims of the congregation, is of an incidental nature and is essentially undertaken by voluntary assistance without remuneration; or
- 4.6.4 the enterprise or activity has been approved by the Minister of Finance in the Government Gazette.
- 4.7 In the case of the dissolution of the congregation without the congregation becoming a part of another congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church, the remaining assets of the congregation after all obligations have been met, are granted or transferred to another congregation or institution with aims similar to those of the congregation and which has been approved in accordance with article 30 of the Income Tax Act no 58 of 1962, as amended, as a public welfare organization which has been appointed by the church council and/or Presbytery in accordance with the procedures prescribed in the relevant *Church Order*, Regulations and Rules applicable to the congregation.

## **5. GUIDELINES FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AS APPROVED BY GENERAL SYNOD 2002**

- 5.1 Guidelines for management of church funds  
Guidelines and directives for the management of church funds are given in the *Church Order* Articles 43.1.8 and 57, the *Rule for the General Task Team Finance* and the *Rule for the Management of Properties, Assets and Funds*.
- 5.2 Guidelines for commercial enterprises of and in the interest of the church.  
The following guidelines are approved for the management of commercial enterprises which report to ministry groups, task teams, or committees of General Synod:
- 5.2.1 The funds of all activities and ministry groups, task teams, and committees included in the budget of General Synod are managed by the committee concerned, guided and supervised by the General Task Team Finance.
- 5.2.2 Ministry groups, task teams, or committees which have the capacity to generate funds independently, whether by commercial enterprises and/or investment income and which are self-supporting (no funds received from General Synod) and which satisfy the Rules of General Synod concerning properties and finance, administer and manage their own funds and report annually to the General Task Team Finance with the necessary supporting documents such as financial statements, budgets, allocation policy, etc. These committees report independently to General Synod.
- 5.3 Existing agreements or constitutions (Deeds of Establishment and Statutes) of Article 21-companies and other kinds of bodies corporate are honoured. Such bodies which are closely associated with the Dutch Reformed Church and render services to the church should also report annually to the Moderamen of General Synod and General Task Team Finance providing the necessary financial information.
- 5.4 If a church committee or body wishes to establish an Article 21-company or other body corporate it must be done in close co-operation with and with the approval of the Moderamen of General Synod.
- 5.5 Any transfer of funds or investments from one church committee or activity to another committee, body or synod should be done with the necessary co-operation and consultation of the General Task Team Finance.
- 5.6 The use of the name of the Church by Article 21-companies and other bodies should not be allowed as a matter of course, because of the latent risks this creates for the Church. (see resolution *General Synod 1990 Acts p 638 pt 8*).
- 5.7 General Synod expects institutions of the church to conform to the highest standards and norms of corporate management (e.g. the Guide-lines of the King Committee 2002).

# CONGREGATIONS

## RULE 19

### RULE FOR MISSIONS/WITNESS OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

#### 1. DEFINITION

- 1.1 Mission Work is the saving act of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the world, by means of which He gathers to Him a congregation by his Word and Spirit out of the entire human race.  
By this congregation
- \* God causes his Word to be proclaimed to the fallen world,
  - \* He brings about the communion of the saints from among all nations,
  - \* He causes service to be rendered to the world in need,
  - \* He causes his command to protect and cultivate creation to find visible expression,
  - \* and his righteousness is proclaimed to society and the world.
- In this manner He causes his kingdom to come until the end of time.
- 1.2 The Dutch Reformed Church therefore accepts it as the reason and end-purpose of its existence to be used by God in his dealings with mankind and the world.
- 1.3 Believers from every tongue and nation so gathered, form with all believers a unity in the true faith in Christ.
- 1.4 By witness the Church brings the gospel in all its dimensions to people outside the Church.
- 1.5 Witness is the vocation of every member as well as of the local congregation. Where the extent and other circumstances of the work require it, it is undertaken within the church structures of presbyteries and synods.
- 1.6 Where within one geographic area there are more than one denomination of the DR Church-family, mission work is done in consultation and co-operation with each other

#### 2. EXECUTION

##### 2.1 Church involvement in mission work

- 2.1.1 As mission work is the saving act of God with the world with a view to the coming of his kingdom, the Church as his servant is vitally involved in it.
- 2.1.2 It is the duty of the church council to motivate and equip the congregation to be involved with the saving act of God to the world as a missionary congregation. This involvement includes personal witness in word and deed, the practice of the communion of faith, intercession, stewardship, the ministry of caring and the zeal for what is right and just in the community.
- 2.1.3 For the co-ordination, stimulation and execution of the mission task the church council appoints a missions committee.
- 2.1.4 Each church council undertakes mission work both within and outside the boundaries of its own congregation according to circumstances. In all cases this work is done in consultation with, and where possible in co-operation with, other members of the DR Church Family (congregation, presbytery or synod) who may have an interest in the activity concerned.
- 2.1.5 Where the extent of the mission task requires it, the church structures of presbytery and synod may support the local church council in the performance of the mission task.
- 2.1.6 The presbytery and synod assume responsibility for matters concerning missions/witness in the presbyterial and synodical jurisdictions respectively.
- 2.1.7 Where witnessing is done outside the boundaries of the congregation, there should, where possible, be liaison and co-operation with other churches and mission societies already in existence there.
- 2.1.8 Where a synod starts a witness action with spontaneous contributions from members from the whole Church (a "faith mission"), other synods, whose members become involved in it, must also be consulted.
- 2.1.9 General Synod determines the witness-/mission policy of the Dutch Reformed Church.
- 2.1.10 By means of ministries in the fields of e.g. medical work, education, literature provision, technical aids, socio-economic upliftment, witness to the authorities and missionary deaconship, the Church endeavours to serve the kingdom of God comprehensively in word and deed.

##### 2.2 Training for Witness

- 2.2.1 The Dutch Reformed Church accepts it as its task and responsibility to train members and other workers with a view to its own witnessing responsibility as well as making available workers, where desired or needed, for service with other members of the Family of DR Churches.
- 2.2.2 The training and equipping for own service and by a member of the Family of DR Churches are done as follows:
- 2.2.2.1 by activating members and schooling them for witness in word and deed;
  - 2.2.2.2 by training witness workers and equipping them for a specific part-time or full-time task for which they have a vocation, or for the services which they may be asked to perform with other members of the Family of DR Churches.
  - 2.2.2.3 by the training of ministers of the Word for missionary service in the following fields:
    - 2.2.3.1 the development of congregations into missionary congregations;
    - 2.2.3.2 the ministry as missionaries in a specific mission field;
    - 2.2.3.3 the full-time ministry with another member of the Family of DR Churches to which they may be called;
    - 2.2.3.4 a specialised ministry in specific fields on secondment to another member of the Family of DR Churches if there is such a need;
    - 2.2.3.5 a ministry in world missions.

##### 2.3 Members for missionary service under the auspices of other churches and missionary organisations

- 2.3.1 The Dutch Reformed Church approves of members joining churches and missionary organisations acceptable to the Church for witnessing service, especially abroad, provided that they remain faithful to their Confession and that through it the missions/witnessing policy of the Dutch Reformed Church is served by it. For this kind of service the following rules apply:
- 2.3.1.1 The synod or its authorised committee determines with which churches and organisations such agreements may be made. A missionary organisation is considered an approved organisation if the work of the organisation bears a spiritual character, is directly connected to the proclamation of the Word and can be deemed to be beneficial to the DR Church.

- 2.3.1.2 When members wish to go and work with a recognised church or organisation, an agreement is made with that church or organisation concerning matters such as remuneration, allowances, provision of pension, and church membership and supervision of the worker involved.
- 2.3.1.3 Members who wish to do mission work/witnessing outside a field of work of the Dutch Reformed Church obtain, if necessary, an external travel certificate of membership from their church council.
- 2.3.1.4 Members who intend or wish to become involved with such a recognised church or organisation get in touch with the relevant synod or its authorised committee.
- 2.4 Basis upon which there may be co-operation with other churches and organisations**
- 2.4.1 The churches and missionary organisations must have a Protestant-Christian confessional basis;
- 2.4.2 Dutch Reformed Church workers must be free to uphold their beliefs in accordance with the Three Doctrinal Standards of Unity;
- 2.4.3 Members must also be free to maintain their own point of view in matters about which there are differences of opinion among believers;
- 2.4.4 Dutch Reformed Church workers are expected to remain faithful to the Doctrine of the Church.
- 2.5 Persons admitted to the ministry serving other churches and missionary organisations**
- 2.5.1 There are three categories regarding their competence in which persons admitted to the ministry may be used in mission service/witness.
- 2.5.1.1 **Ministers of the Word of the Dutch Reformed Church who are called to and inducted<sup>44</sup> in recognised churches for mission/witness work.** They receive competence as ministers in that Church, and lose their competence in the Dutch Reformed Church. However, they can apply to the General Board for Competence in advance for the suspension of competence in the DR Church. Return to the DR Church takes place after successful *colloquium doctum* with the General Board of Governors and the restitution of competence as licensed candidate for the ministry by the General Board for Competence, on condition that reporting to the General Board of Competence and payment of the registration fee is done no later than 31 March annually.
- 2.5.1.2 **Ministers and candidates for the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church who are sent out for own missionary/witness or for missionary/witness work with other churches and/or missionary organisations by church assemblies or those authorised by them.**  
If they retain membership of a congregation of the DR Church, are called and inducted by the congregation and remain in the service of the congregation/denomination, they retain their competence as long as they are busy with this assignment. If they become members of the other church and are employed by that church, they can apply to the General Board for Competence in advance for the suspension of competence in the DR Church. Return to the DR Church takes place after successful *colloquium doctum* with the General Board of Governors and the restitution of competence as licensed candidate for the ministry by the General Board for Competence, on condition that reporting to the General Board of Competence and payment of the registration fee is done no later than 31 March annually.
- 2.5.1.3 **Ministers and candidates for the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church who serve with by a missionary organisation.**  
A minister of the Word or a candidate for the ministry who is employed by a missionary organisation and is therefore no longer serving in the DR Church or another recognised church, can apply to the General Board for Competence in advance to retain competence as a candidate for the ministry.
- 2.5.2 **Pension for missionaries**  
A congregation or a broader church structure which calls, inducts and sends a licensee to serve with other churches or mission organisations as missionaries/witnesses (see 2.5.1.2) must, in the interest of such a person, become a participant of the synod pension fund.
- 2.5.3 **Remuneration of persons sent as missionaries**  
A congregation or a broader church structure which calls, inducts and sends a candidate for the ministry or a minister of the Word for its own missionary/witness outreach or to serve with other churches or mission organisations as missionaries/witnesses (see 2.5.1.2) can deal with the minister of the Word's remuneration and allowances in one of the following ways:
- 2.5.3.1 The congregation/broader church structure is responsible for the full remuneration and allowances, which includes pension contributions.
- 2.5.3.2 The congregation/broader church structure is responsible for a contractual portion of the remuneration and allowances, which includes pension contributions.
- 2.5.3.3 The other church or missionary organisation accepts contractual responsibility for the full remuneration and allowances, but the congregation/broader church structure remains responsible for the pension contribution.
- 2.5.4 **Church membership of missionaries**  
A minister of the Word who is called, inducted and sent out (see 2.5.1.2) , is a member and minister of the sending church, subject to the following:
- 2.5.4.1 If it is impossible for the missionary to exercise his/her membership rights and privileges of office in the local congregation, he/she is entrusted to the care and supervision of another congregation by means of a traveller's attestation.
- 2.5.4.2 The missionary still comes under the correction and/or discipline of the sending congregation, however.
- 2.5.4.3 If the missionary cannot participate in the church government, which includes attending church council meetings and delegation to broader meetings, the presbytery may grant dispensation and it can be included in the contract of employment.
- 2.6 Membership and denominational ties**
- 2.6.1 Believers from every tongue and nation who are gathered through the missionary work/witness of the DR Church and through baptism and confession become members of the church of Christ, form, along with all believers, a unity in the true faith in Christ as members of his body.
- 2.6.2 Where possible, new members will join a congregation of the Family of DR Churches. Where there is no such congregation, they may, after negotiation, join another church, or, when the numbers warrant it, a new autonomous congregation may be formed.
- 2.6.3 For the sake of more efficient ministry of the Word it is desirable that everyone "hears in his own tongue the marvellous things which God has done" (Acts 2:11). Therefore it should be possible for the ministry of the Word and worship to be conducted in such a way that peculiarities of language and cultural backgrounds and ministry needs may be taken into consideration.
- 2.6.4 If a specific group of believers should in the course of time desire it and circumstances permit, they may be assisted in organising themselves in an own congregation in accordance with their particular ministry needs within the bounds of their own language and culture, but preferably contact should be sought with the existing church in the region with which the Dutch Reformed Church is most closely allied.

<sup>44</sup> Those who are sent out to serve the broader church structures re formally nominated and solemnly set apart instead of being called and inducted.

- 2.6.5 The formation of own congregations also implies the possibility of own broader structures of presbytery and synod. Here factors such as geographic remoteness, political dispensation and the need for enculturation of the gospel will play a role. The priority, however, remains that the bond of unity with the existing church within the Family of DR Churches must be maintained as far as possible and continue to find expression in the most meaningful and effective way.
- 2.7.2 The Dutch Reformed Church therefore subscribes to the ideal of one church structure for the Family of DR Churches. (Church and Society, par 236).
- 2.7.3 With a view to developing the Church's witness in the world, the DR Church subscribes to the principle of mutual assistance and support regarding needs within the whole Family of DR Churches.
- 2.7.4 As long as the whole Family of DR Churches are not yet united in one denomination, the following applies regarding the mutual availability of workers within the Family of DR Churches:
- 2.7.4.1 The DR Church can make ministers of the Word available for other members if they request it. These ministers are called and inducted in accordance with the *Church Orders* and regulations of the respective denominations, or per agreement between the synods concerned.
- 2.7.4.2 The competence and supervision and correction of ministers of the Word made available by the DR Church, who have been called and inducted within another DR Church, are determined by the *Church Order* of that church.
- 2.7.4.3 At the request of another member of the Family of DR Churches, the DR Church can make available experts in the field of theological training, youth work, missions, evangelisation, church administration, deaconate, etc. for temporary service within that church. Their position with regard to the structures of the other church is determined by mutual agreement.
- 2.7.4.4 Other mission workers from the DR Church who perform duties per agreement in a member church of the Family of DR Churches, become members of the church concerned. In a region where there is no congregation of the Family of DR Churches, they remain members of the DR Church.
- 2.8 Joint missionary work/witness**
- 2.8.1 The DR Church accepts joint missions/witness as a well-founded policy. If it wishes to undertake missionary work/witness in a region or country where a church from the Family of DR Churches already exists, co-operation is sought.
- 2.8.2 If the DR Church works in a region or country where a congregation of one of the member churches of the Family of DR Churches does not yet exist, the DR Church may call, induct and commission missionaries itself, or jointly with other member churches.
- 2.8.3 Where opportunities for joint mission work/witness present themselves, joint missions/witness committees of those churches of the Family of DR Churches concerned may be constituted to take responsibility for the work.
- 2.8.4 Joint mission/witness activities are regulated by mutual agreement between the church bodies concerned or their authorised representatives.
- 2.9 Liaison with the government**
- 2.9.1 The vocation of the church to witness includes liaison with authorities at all levels concerning matters affecting its witness.
- 2.9.2 Liaison with authorities takes place in accordance with Article 67 of the *Church Order*.

## RULE 20

### RULE FOR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHURCHES AND GROUPS

#### 1. DETERMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER CHURCHES AND GROUPS

- 1.1 The Word of God is the primary criterion and basis for determining the attitude and relationship of the DR Church to other churches and religious groups.
- 1.2 The way in which a church understands the Bible, interprets the main point of the message of the Bible and applies it to life, is expressed in the Confession/s of the Church.
- 1.3 The Confessional basis to which the Dutch Reformed Church subscribes and to which it deems itself bound, is:
- 1.3.1 The three ecumenical creeds, viz. the Apostolic Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, which the Dutch Reformed Church shares with most other Christian churches.
- 1.3.2 The three Doctrinal Standards of Unity, viz. the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, which the Dutch Reformed Church shares with a number of reformed churches and which characterise the Dutch Reformed Church.
- 1.4 The confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church is subordinate to the Bible and must continue to be measured against it.
- 1.5 It is not sufficient that a confession is expressed in writing or that someone subscribed to it at some stage in the past. The question must also be asked whether a specific church and its members consider themselves to be committed to it and whether the confession is manifested in a life of piety.
- 1.6 The joint criteria for the determination of the attitude and relationship of the Dutch Reformed Church to other churches and groups is therefore the will of the Triune God as expressed in the Bible, and reflected in
- \* the Confession
  - \* the *Church Order*
  - \* the worship service
  - \* the Christian life, service and witness.
- (See Agenda of General Synod 1994, p 66, 14.2.1 to 14.2.5 for a discussion of these criteria).

#### 2. GROUPINGS WITHIN CHRISTIANITY

- 2.1 It is difficult to group together churches and Christian groups as some fit into more than one category and others fit nowhere. The fact must also be kept in mind that churches are not static, but are continually changing and that certain churches are characterised by a pattern of wide-ranging modalities which are accommodated within one structure. The nature and degree of the relationship of the Dutch Reformed Church to the churches mentioned below is determined by General Synod (see also 3.1.2, 3.1.4, 3.2 and 3.3 below).
- 2.2 The basic point of departure here is the major groupings of Christianity as they evolved historically, viz.:

- 2.2.1 **Reformed churches**  
Among which the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Church of Africa, the Afrikaans Protestant Church, the Presbyterian Churches, the Church of England in Southern Africa and the Congregational Church.
- 2.2.2 **Other Protestant churches**  
Among which the Lutheran churches, the Church of the Province of South Africa (the Anglican Church), the Methodist Church, the Baptist Churches (as distinct from the Hatfield Christian Church/Centre) and the Evangelical Reformed Church.
- 2.2.3 **Pentecostal and Charismatic churches**  
The pentecostal groups, e.g. the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, the Full Gospel Church, the Pentecostal Protestant Church and the Assemblies of God. Charismatic groups, e.g. the Hatfield Christian Church/Centre and Rhema. Others, e.g. the Church of the Nazarene and the Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>45</sup>
- 2.2.4 **Non-Reformation Churches**  
Among which the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.
- 2.2.5 **Africa Independent Churches**
- 2.2.6 **Other groups**  
Among which the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christian Science, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormons) and the Apostle churches (the Old Apostle Church, the New Apostle Church, the Apostle Union, the Twelve Apostles, etc).

### 3. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE CRITERIA

- 3.1 **Co-operation with other Christian churches**
- 3.1.1 The Dutch Reformed Church seeks to co-operate with other Christian churches in a responsible manner, without forsaking its own persuasion, to expand the Kingdom of God.
- 3.1.2 The degree and manner of co-operation will be determined in each case by the degree of likeness regarding confession, *Church Order*, worship service and the view of the Christian life of the church concerned (cf. 1.6).
- 3.1.3 All church assemblies, viz. General Synod, synods, presbyteries and church councils must be ecumenically active. It is necessary to emphasise that local ecumenical involvement must remain on the agenda of every church council.
- 3.1.4 General Synod determines the policy concerning the nature and degree of ecumenical relations (cf. Article 70 of the *Church Order*).
- 3.2 **Granting of church privileges without transfer of membership**
- 3.2.1 **Baptism**
- 3.2.1.1 Children of members of churches from the first four groupings, which do not reject covenant baptism, are baptised provided that they have received the written approval of the relevant church council of the organisation or Church to which they belong.
- 3.2.1.2 Members of churches from the first four groupings, which do not reject covenant baptism may, with the approval of their own church council and after counselling for baptism, be permitted to stand with their spouses who are members of the Dutch Reformed Church for the baptism of their children and to reply to the questions too.
- 3.2.1.3 Members of churches which reject covenant baptism, persons from groupings 5 and 6, as well as persons who confess Christ but are not formal members of a church may, after counselling for baptism, be permitted to stand with their spouses who are members of the Dutch Reformed Church for the baptism of their children without the questions being put to them for them to answer.
- 3.2.1.4 The church council of a DR Church congregation may grant permission to members to have their children baptised in a congregation of a church from the first two groupings (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above).
- 3.2.2 **Holy Communion**
- 3.2.2.1 In congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church visitors may receive holy communion provided that they are allowed to and feel free to do so in their own congregations.
- 3.2.2.2 The following could serve as a possible example of an invitation to receive holy communion:  
"Since the church of Christ is more comprehensive than just this congregation, each of you who has experienced personal salvation in Jesus Christ, may receive holy communion in your own congregation and feel free to do so and who can identify with the doctrine concerning holy communion, as presented in the liturgical form, is invited to participate in this communion meal. However, all who scorn the saving grace of God and nevertheless participate, eat and drink a judgement upon themselves."
- 3.2.2.3 In ecumenical relations at both congregation and synod level the mutual participation or not of the churches concerned is discussed and rules of conduct determined accordingly.
- 3.2.2.4 Members of a DR Church congregation may, when visiting another church, receive holy communion provided that it is permitted by that church. Members should therefore continually be informed of the meaning of holy communion and the implications which it has for the manner in which a person acts as a communion guest in other congregations and churches. This information can be provided through preaching, the presentation of the liturgy and catechism classes.
- 3.3 **Transfers to a Dutch Reformed Congregation**
- 3.3.1 **General**
- 3.3.1.1 Faith in the God of Holy Scripture as expressed in the Forms of Unity, is the only condition set for membership of a DR Church congregation as a congregation of Christ.
- 3.3.1.2 Membership of all DR Church congregations is open to any believer who accepts the Confession of this church.
- 3.3.1.3 Accepting members from other churches is a matter for the congregation, both in principle and practice. It is supervised by the church council and is dealt with according to official regulations.
- 3.3.1.4 In every case in which someone wishes to transfer/return from another church or group to a DR Church congregation a thorough pastoral discussion must be held, covering all aspects of the doctrine and life of such a person (also see 1.6 above) and the motivation for the application.
- 3.3.1.5 At this pastoral discussion the fact that not all members of a specific church have the same spiritual attitude and level, or hold the same views, must be kept in mind.
- 3.3.2 **Acceptance of baptism**
- 3.3.2.1 The baptism of persons from other churches is accepted, provided that it
- \* was administered in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit;
  - \* was administered with water and

<sup>45</sup> These two churches are placed here for practical reasons.

- \* was administered by a person appointed for the ministry of the Word and the sacraments.
- 3.3.2.2 The baptism of persons who have been baptised in one of the Apostle churches (including the Old Apostle Church, the New Apostle Church, the Apostle Union and the Twelve Apostles) is not accepted.
- 3.3.3 **Confessional membership**
- 3.3.3.1 In the pastoral discussion with persons wishing to transfer to a DR Church congregation from churches from the first two groupings of churches, points of difference in doctrine and life are noted so that the person can subscribe wholeheartedly to the doctrine of the Dutch Reformed Church.
- 3.3.3.2 Of persons from churches in groups 3 and 4, partial or full training with public confession of faith before a committee of the church council, or before the congregation, is also required besides the pastoral discussion.
- 3.3.3.3 Persons from the fifth and sixth groups must undergo thorough catechism and profess their faith publicly.
- 4. ECUMENICAL POLICY**
- 4.1 Points of departure for the DR Church regarding ecumenical relationships**
- These points of departure are to be read together with the following: (i) 1 to 3 above; (ii) Agenda General Synod 1994, p 66, 14.2.1-14.2.5; (iii) The Ecumenical Policy, Agenda General Synod 1990, pp 61-64, Acts General Synod 1990, pp 546-549.
- 4.1.1 The church of Christ is one universally.
- 4.1.2 The church of Christ is one beyond the boundaries of place and time.
- 4.1.3 Unity is a gift to and a calling of the church  
This task is fulfilled especially at a local level – that is where the most powerful testimony of unity is established. Local churches strive to worship, witness and work together with the true church of Christ (Belgic Confession article 29).
- 4.1.4 Unity and diversity  
Unity is not similarity. The diversity of peoples, languages, customs and cultures must be recognised, as well as the resulting rich diversity in worship, confessional expressions, forms and church structures. However, the diversity may not lead to separation – it is a diversity within the unity of Christ’s church.
- 4.1.5 Unity in truth  
Churches strive together to seek the truth of the Lord’s Word, which should not be thrust aside for the sake of unity.
- 4.2 The DR Church and ecumenical relationships, bilateral and multilateral (ecumenical)**
- 4.2.1 The DR Church (General Synod) wishes actively to establish, maintain and enhance bilateral relationships with other Christian churches (denominations), both at national and international level.
- 4.2.2 Decisions about which churches to establish bilateral relationships with, as well as the substance and scope of each relationship, are made by General Synod. These decisions are based inter alia on recommendations of its Ecumenical Committee (a sub-committee of the Moderamen).
- 4.2.3 The DR Church also wants to advance and uphold its calling to the unity of the church by entering into relationships with other churches and organisations on multilateral level (ecumenical) within national and international ecumenical organisations and bodies.
- 4.2.4 Decisions about which ecumenical organisations or bodies to establish multilateral relationships with, as well as the substance and scope of the multilateral relationships, are made by General Synod. These decisions are based inter alia on recommendations of its Ecumenical Committee.
- 4.3 Bilateral church relationships**
- Bilateral ecclesiastical relationships with other churches (national or international) can be:
- \* Full relationships
  - \* Partial relationships
  - \* Dialogue relationships
  - \* Incidental contact relationships
- 4.3.1 Full relationships (see 4.7.1)**
- 4.3.1.1 The scope of full relationships  
A full relationship with another church entails the following:
- \*1 It is a full relationship with another church of reformed confession
  - \*2 The full relationship entails:
    - \*2.1 sending of delegates to each other’s synods;
    - \*2.2 allowing ministers in each other’s pulpits;
    - \*2.3 allowing each other’s members at the communion table;
    - \*2.4 joint action in areas of common responsibility;
    - \*2.5 communication with each other on matters of common interest and concern;
    - \*2.6 mutual supervision and care for each other as churches in order to promote the unity of the church;
    - \*2.7 pastoral care of each other’s members when they settle within the boundaries of each other’s churches;
    - \*2.8 the mutual recognition of theological training resulting in the eligibility of ministers in both churches, taking into account specific requirements which a church might lay down.
- 4.3.1.2 The Ecumenical Committee, on behalf of the DR Church, sees to it that the regulations for a full relationship with a church are reflected in an agreement and adhered to.
- 4.3.1.3 The Ecumenical Committee remains informed of developments in those churches with which the DR Church has full relationships and regularly informs General Synod about this.
- 4.3.1.4 The Ecumenical Committee advises General Synod about churches with which full relationships can be entered into and maintained.
- 4.3.1.5 If all aspects of a full ecclesiastical relationship cannot be realised because of practical circumstances, full relationships can be entered into regarding some aspects. The aim should be to cultivate full relationships in all areas.
- 4.3.2 Partial relationships**
- 4.3.2.1 The DR Church strives to establish partial relationships with churches of reformed persuasion with which the DR Church does not have a full relationship.
- 4.3.2.2 Conditions for establishing a partial relationship are:
- \*1 Mutual recognition of a common foundation in reformed faith as expressed in reformatory confessions.
  - \*2 A common desire to establish an ecclesiastical relationship.
- 4.3.2.3 A partial relationship is established with the understanding that it could lead to a full ecclesiastical relationship.

- 4.3.2.4 Agreements of co-operation, joint action with regard to mutual responsibilities, continual communication on issues of common concern and care for each other's members on request, are possible with churches with which the DR Church has partial relationships.
- 4.3.2.5 The Ecumenical Committee identifies, with account to General Synod, the churches with which the DR Church wishes to establish partial relationships and is, if necessary, responsible for the agreements of co-operation on behalf of the DR Church, joint activities, continual communication and implementing mutual care of members if so requested.
- 4.3.2.6 The Ecumenical Committee advises General Synod when a partial relationship can be changed to a full relationship.
- 4.3.3 Dialogue relationships** (cf. 4.7.3 below)
- 4.3.3.1 Through the Ecumenical Committee the DR Church strives to enter into regular dialogue with a wide variety of churches which do not necessarily have the same confessional basis or points of view, in order to be informed on their ecclesiastical life, relationships and points of view.
- 4.3.3.2 The Ecumenical Committee identifies the churches and has regular dialogue with accountability to General Synod.
- 4.3.3.3 In addition to the possibility that dialogue could lead to partial or full ecclesiastical relationships, in the short-term discussions can also explore the possibilities of co-operation, joint activities and communication about matters of mutual concern, and pursue these further as necessary.
- 4.3.4 **Contact relationships** (cf. 4.7.4 below)
- 4.3.4.1 The DR Church also wishes to fulfil the call to ecumenical relations by incidental contact with other churches as the need, circumstances and opportunities arise.
- 4.3.4.2 Contact relationships are handled by the Ecumenical Committee with accountability to General Synod.
- 4.4 **Multilateral ecumenical relationships** (cf. 4.7.5 below)
- 4.4.1 The DR Church wishes to promote and expand its ecumenical calling by:
- 4.4.1.1 being involved in ecumenical organisations where the Church can work with other Reformed churches;
- 4.4.1.2 participate in ecumenical organisations, groups and associations which will allow the church to fulfil its ecumenical responsibilities widely, effectively and productively;
- 4.4.1.3 develop relationships with ecumenical organisations.
- 4.4.2 General Synod decides the nature, the degree and extent of participation in a multilateral ecumenical organisation, group or association after studying the character of a specific ecumenical organisation as found and demonstrated by its constitution, basic viewpoints, statements, activities and public appearances.
- 4.4.3 Degrees of involvement in multilateral relationships can, as far as the DR Church is concerned, entail the following:
- \* **full membership** – i.e. full participation, eligibility in office, acceptance of joint responsibility for decisions and actions.
  - \* **observer membership** – i.e. the Church only observes the conduct and activities of the specific organisation and does not accept responsibility for its decisions and activities, nor is it eligible in any of the offices.
- 4.5. The Ecumenical Committee**
- 4.5.1 The Ecumenical Committee is appointed by the Moderamen and reports to General Synod via the Moderamen.
- 4.5.2 In accordance with the DR Church's points of departure for ecumenical relationships and other decisions of General Synod, General Synod charges the Ecumenical Committee to sustain and promote interest in and relationships with the church of Christ world-wide (nationally and internationally).
- 4.5.3 The mission of the Ecumenical Committee in bilateral relationships is as follows:
- 4.5.3.1 The mission of the Ecumenical Committee with regard to churches with whom the DR Church has a **full relationship** is (see 4.7.1 below):
- \* The Ecumenical Committee identifies churches with which General Synod can enter into full relationships and advises General Synod in this regard.
  - \* The Ecumenical Committee maintains close and constant ties with the churches with which the DR Church has decided to enter into full relationship.
  - \* The Ecumenical Committee remains informed about developments in those churches with which the DR Church has entered into full relationships and informs General Synod accordingly.
  - \* Besides the normal spectrum of full relationships the Ecumenical Committee recommends to General Synod the specific type of full relationship which should be entered into with each church.
- 4.5.3.2 The task of the Ecumenical Committee with regard to churches with whom the DR Church has a **partial relationship** (see 4.7.2 below):
- \* The Ecumenical Committee identifies churches with whom General Synod can enter into partial relationships and advises General Synod.
  - \* The Ecumenical Committee initiates and/or makes contact with churches with whom the DR Church might enter into partial relationships. In this process the following could be used:
    - \* invitations to send delegates to each other's General Synod (or equivalent), where the delegates are acknowledged and given an opportunity to meet representatives of the church. The DR Church could also give an opportunity to the delegates from the other churches to briefly deliver greetings;
    - \* if mutual ecumenical delegates are not used, written communication may be used – a report is given to General Synod.
    - \* persons or institutions may also be used to make mutual occasional visits to a church;
    - \* the regular exchange of agendas, acts, the church order and other official documents with the other church; and
    - \* to devise ways in which the DR Church can be of service and bring it to the attention of the other church(es), such as opportunities for training of ministers and other workers, availability of training materials, or any other form of service which the DR Church could provide. Notice must also be taken of services that could be rendered by other churches.
- 4.5.3.3 The task of the Ecumenical Committee with regard to churches with which the DR Church is in **dialogue/contact** (see 4.7.3 and 4.7.4 below):
- In carrying out the resolve of the DR Church to promote and maintain relationships with other churches, the Ecumenical Committee, through study and contact – as the opportunity arises – puts into effect the stated policy of the church. This is done by way of dialogue or other means of contact with:
- \* churches which are interested in establishing some form of relationship;
  - \* churches which specifically wish to establish a relationship with the DR Church;
  - \* churches which had broken ties with the DR Church or which had withdrawn from a previous relationship for one reason or another;

- \* churches from different historic or confessional backgrounds which are willing to discuss or communicate matters of common interest or issues which require clarification.

4.5.3.4 The task of the Ecumenical Committee with regard to **multilateral relationships** (see 4.7.5 below):

- \* The Ecumenical Committee serves as contact body of the DR Church with ecumenical organisations.
- \* The Ecumenical Committee serves as liaison body between the DR Church and those ecumenical bodies or organisations with whom the DR Church has relationships. With regard to these bodies/organisations the Ecumenical Committee must:
  - \* study their activities and furnish General Synod with a report and recommendations;
  - \* identify persons who can represent the DR Church at the different organisations/bodies.
- \* The Ecumenical Committee investigates different ecumenical organisations, observes them, studies them and gives a report to General Synod.

#### **4.6 Ecumenical relationships in other countries**

4.6.1 Participating synods in countries outside the Republic of South Africa (e.g. Namibia) are granted the right to establish and develop its own ecumenical ties within the guidelines of General Synod.

4.6.2 In appointing delegates to ecumenical bodies, General Synod must take into account the fact that General Synod is comprised of parts functioning in different countries.

#### **4.7 The state of affairs of the DR Church's ecumenical ties**

The following is the state of affairs in October 2011. General Synod/Moderamen is updated regularly on developments.

4.7.1 **Churches with whom the DR Church has a full relationship** (see 4.3.1 above):

4.7.1.1 The Family of DR Churches in South Africa, viz. the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Reformed Church in Africa.

4.7.1.2 The members of the Family of DR Churches outside South Africa (full relationships are being negotiated by virtue of the decision by General Synod 2011) viz. the Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana, Swaziland Reformed Church, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Reformed Church in Zambia, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod), Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Harare Synod), Igreja Reformada em Mocambique en Reformed Church of East Africa.

4.7.1.3 Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika.

4.7.1.4 Christian Reformed Church in North America.

4.7.1.5 Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.

4.7.1.6 Reformed Church in Japan.

4.7.1.7 Christian Reformed Church in Sri Lanka

4.7.1.8 Reformed Church in Hungary

4.7.1.9 Reformed Evangelical Church of Australia

4.7.1.10 Afrikaanse Christenkerk van Nieu-Seeland

4.7.2 **Churches with whom the DR Church is in a partial relationship** (see 4.3.2 above):

4.7.2.1 Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

4.7.2.2 Partial relationships are being negotiated by virtue of decisions by General Synod with the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, Volkskerk van Afrika, Calvin Protestantse Kerk, Uniting Church in Australia, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, Communauté Évangélique du Congo, Protestantse Kerk in Nederland.

4.7.3 **Churches with whom the DR Church is in dialogue** (see 4.3.3 above):

4.7.3.1 Evangelische Kirche Deutschland

4.7.3.2 Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa.

4.7.3.3 Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

4.7.3.4 Roman Catholic Church of South Africa.

4.7.3.5 Anglican Church in South Africa.

4.7.3.6 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

4.7.3.7 Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches.

4.7.3.8 Presbyterian Church of Australia.

4.7.3.9 Presbyterian Church (USA).

4.7.3.10 Reformed Churches in New Zealand

4.7.4 **Churches with whom the DR Church is in contact relationships** (see 4.3.5 above)

4.7.4.1 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk

4.7.4.2 Church of England in South Africa

#### **4.7.5 Multilateral relationships**

The DR Church is a member of

4.7.5.1 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

4.7.5.2 Communion of Reformed Churches in Africa (CRCA).

4.7.5.3 South African Council of Churches (SARC).

4.7.5.4 Council of Churches in Namibia.

4.7.5.5 The Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa (TEASA).

4.7.5.6 Conventus Reformatus

4.7.5.7 Tussenkerklike Raad (TKR)

General Synod approved the Dr Church's membership in the following bodies and it is currently in the process of negotiation:

4.7.5.8 World Council of Churches (WCC).

4.7.5.9 All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).

4.7.5.10 World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

4.7.5.11 Global Christian Forum (GCF).



## RULE 21

### RULE FOR THE INCREASE, COMBINATION, UNIFICATION AND AMALGAMATION OF CONGREGATIONS

#### 1. INCREASE/FORMATION OF NEW CONGREGATIONS

##### 1.1 General rules

- 1.1.1 The increase of the church and resultant increase in congregations is the vocation and duty of a growing and vigorous church.
- 1.1.2 If confessing members who are not subject to church discipline are convinced of the necessity for the founding of a new congregation, they must submit such a request in writing to the church council. The application must include the following: (1) a study on the viability of a new congregation, (2) possible locations to worship at, (3) budget, (4) proposals on the leadership of the congregation and the training of leaders.
- 1.1.3 If the church council considers that there are sufficient grounds to establish a new congregation, it grants permission to the members who wish to form the new congregation, to go ahead with its formation. This also implies that the members concerned sign an agreement with the church council to establish the new congregation.
- 1.1.3.1 The agreement on formation of the new congregation must include proposals on the structure of the congregation's ministry and on how and when a minister of the Word will be funded.
- 1.1.3.2 When the church council is convinced of the desirability and feasibility of establishing a new congregation, it forwards the petition and the agreement to the secretary of the presbytery committee in accordance with Art. 31.4 of the *Church Order*, together with *recommendations* regarding the following:
- 1.1.3.2.1 the proposed name and boundaries of the new congregation;
- 1.1.3.2.2 or, if the congregation is not to be constituted geographically, the focus of the ministry of the new congregation. [The focus of the ministry includes the following possibilities: church planting in fast-expanding areas, or areas where the socio-economic circumstances are changing; church planting where existing congregations can no longer fulfil the needs for ministry; church planting where existing congregations are shrinking as shown by a dramatic decline in membership and a serious decline in the financial ability of the congregation(s)].
- 1.1.3.2.3 the agreement to form a new congregation;
- 1.1.3.2.4 associated matters that require the attention of the presbytery.
- 1.1.4 When an application is submitted to the presbytery for the establishment of a new congregation, the presbytery considers the relevant documents and if the presbytery deems the new congregation to be viable, permission for the establishment is granted.
- 1.1.5 The establishment of a new congregation is performed by the presbytery committee on behalf of the presbytery at a meeting for which four weeks notice has been given in the *Kerkbode* and to which the interested parties from the congregation(s) involved have been summoned. The members concerned have already approved the establishment of the new congregation when they signed the agreement and therefore they do not vote on this issue again at this meeting.
- 1.1.6 At this meeting the presbytery committee defines the boundaries of the new congregation as clearly as possible and gives an accurate description of the boundaries which it shares with existing congregations. If the presbytery committee has granted permission for the congregation not to be constituted geographically, the focus of the ministry of the new congregation is determined as clearly as possible. (See 1.1.3.2.2 above).
- 1.1.7 At this meeting, presided over by the presbytery committee, the church council members of the new congregation are elected by a show of hands by the confessing members who agreed to the formation of the new congregation under their signature.
- 1.1.8 These church council members are inducted by the custodian minister without announcement of their names, or at his request, by another minister of the Word within the denomination. If an objection is lodged against the election of a person, his/her induction is postponed until the matter has been investigated by the church council.
- 1.1.9 The church council appoints one of its members as the custodian of the books and documents of the congregation until a secretary and/or treasurer have/had been appointed. An inventory of the books and documents must be drawn up and a duplicate handed over to the custodian minister.
- 1.1.10 The expenses of the presbytery(ies) or presbytery committee(s) in establishing a new congregation(s) are for the congregation.
- 1.1.11 If the church council reacts to the request by its members by refusing to allow the preparatory steps for the establishment of a new congregation, such members may refer their request to the presbytery. A fully detailed copy of the petition must be submitted to the church council concerned for notification at least three (3) weeks before the meeting of the presbytery.

##### 1.2 When more than one congregation and/or presbytery is involved in the establishment of a new congregation

- 1.2.1 If it appears that the proposed new congregation must be made up of sections of more than one congregation, but only members of one congregation have broached the matter, the church council concerned may approach the other church council(s) directly to seek their co-operation.
- 1.2.2 If the neighbouring church council(s) which have been approached, refuse to take the preparatory steps for the establishment of a new congregation, or allow them to be taken, the church council concerned may submit its request to the presbytery.
- 1.2.3 The presbytery(ies) has/have the right to allow measures to be taken towards the possible establishment of a new congregation within the relevant wards of the congregation(s) within the jurisdiction of that/those presbytery(ies).
- 1.2.4 Where the new congregation is established with members from congregations from more than one presbytery, the presbyteries concerned must decide among themselves which presbytery should preside over the establishment of the new congregation.
- 1.2.5 When the presbytery authorizes the establishment of a new congregation the church council must immediately have the petition and agreement signed by the members who wish to be part of the new congregation.
- 1.2.6 The church council of each congregation forming part of the new congregation must submit the petition and the agreement along with its recommendations to the presbytery.

##### 1.3 The presbytery may take the initiative

- 1.3.1 If a presbytery deems it necessary it may charge one or more church councils to investigate the establishment of a new congregation. The presbytery may also charge its presbytery committee to meet a church council(s) and to encourage the establishment of a new congregation(s).

- 1.3.2 Presbyteries may recommend the establishment of new congregations across or within the existing boundaries of congregations, taking into consideration categories, focus groups, variation in ministry of surrounding congregations and ministry needs.
- 1.3.3 In exceptional circumstances a presbytery may, when no church council can be found to establish a new congregation, make its own approaches to try and find members who are convinced of the necessity of establishing a new congregation. In these exceptional circumstances the agreement to establish a new congregation will be made with the presbytery in view of 1.3 above.
- 1.3.4 In exceptional circumstances synod may instruct the presbytery to investigate the possibility of establishing a new congregation. Synod may meet with a church council(s) under these circumstances to encourage them to establish a new congregation.

#### **1.4 Notice of the establishment of a new congregation**

- 1.4.1 The secretary of the presbytery committee provides the church council of the new congregation with an extract from the minutes of the presbytery committee containing the name of the congregation, description of the boundaries, or, where applicable, the focus of the ministry, names of church council members, recommendations mentioned in 1.1.3.2 above, the name of the custodian minister and other matters which may be of interest to the new congregation.
- 1.4.2 The secretary of the presbytery committee notifies the secretary of the synodical committee<sup>46</sup> of the establishment of the new congregation stating the boundaries, or, where applicable, the focus of the ministry, as well as the names of the first members of the church council for publication in *Kerkbode*.
- 1.4.3 The secretary of the moderamen notifies the Registrar of Deeds of the establishment of the new congregation.
- 1.4.4 The name of the new congregation is stated in the notification as follows: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente ..... (The Dutch Reformed Church Congregation.....).
- 1.4.5 If it appears at the establishment of a new congregation that representatives have not been appointed to sign documents on behalf of the new congregation to enact the establishment of the new congregation, such documents should be signed by the chairperson and secretary of the presbytery committee of the presbytery in whose jurisdiction the congregation which is to be established, lies.

### **2. COMBINATION OF CONGREGATIONS**

Combination means that two or more congregations, who continue to exist independently, enter into contractual agreements with each other for the effective proclamation of the Gospel.

#### **2.1 Procedure for combination**

- 2.1.1 The church council investigates the possibility of combination if it considers it necessary, or at the request of a group of members.
- 2.1.2 In all cases of combination a written agreement is drawn up and submitted to the church councils concerned for approval. If applicable, 2.4 of the *Rule for the Management of Labour Relations in case of Misconduct, Incompetence and Incapability* must be taken into consideration. At least 66% of the serving church council members of each church Council involved, must approve the agreement.
- 2.1.3 After the church councils have approved the combination-agreement it is announced on two consecutive Sundays during the worship service to each of the congregations concerned for approbation, with mention being made that objections against it must be lodged in writing with the secretary within seven days after the last announcement.
- 2.1.4 After approbation by the congregation the agreement is submitted to the relevant presbytery/presbytery committee for approval and endorsement. After the presbytery has endorsed the agreement, or at a date determined in the agreement, the agreement is in force.
- 2.1.5 The expenses of the presbytery(ies) or presbytery committee(s) concerning the combination of congregations are for the congregation(s).
- 2.1.6 If the church council refuses the request of a group of members to investigate the possibility of combination, the members may submit their request to the presbytery. A copy of the petition must be submitted at least three (3) weeks before the meeting of the presbytery with the church council concerned for the attention of the secretary of the presbytery committee.
- 2.1.7 When more than one presbytery is involved in the combination an application must be submitted to the synod, after prior agreement by the presbyteries, for the regrouping of the congregations that wish to combine.
- 2.1.8 The presbytery may take the initiative and where it deems it necessary charge two or more church councils to investigate combination. The presbytery may also charge its presbytery committee to meet the church councils concerned and encourage them to combine.
- 2.1.9 The combination-agreement may by mutual notification and agreement be amended or terminated in consultation with the presbyteries and with the approbation of the congregations if all the church councils involved give their approval in their separate meetings.
- 2.1.10 When the congregations that wish to combine are not vacant, the combination may not be contracted before the minister of the Word concerned and the presbytery/presbytery committee are satisfied that fair provision has been made for the minister(s) concerned.
- 2.1.11 The calling and demission of a minister of the Word for combined congregations take place at a combined meeting of the church councils concerned, presided over by the custodian minister of the congregation where the meeting is being held. A custodian minister is appointed for the congregations in the combination. The name of the person called is announced for approbation to each of the congregations in the combination on two consecutive Sundays.
- 2.1.12 A minister of the Word must be inducted in one of the combined congregations.
- 2.1.13 A minister of the Word in combined congregations is a delegate at meetings of the broader church structures of the congregations that called and inducted him/her. However, as a delegate he/she has only one vote. Each congregation in the combination also elects and delegates an elder/deacon in accordance with the provisions of *The Church Order*.
- 2.1.14 The combined congregations are obliged to participate jointly in the Synod Pension Fund for the minister of the Word. The arrangements concerning all other expenses with regard to the minister of the Word, must be set out in the agreement of the combination.
- 2.1.15 The agreement with the minister of the Word may be amended or terminated after mutual notification provided that all the church councils concerned give their approval in their separate meetings.
- 2.1.16 If it should appear that representatives have not been appointed to sign documents and papers on behalf of the congregations to enact agreements, such documents should be signed by the chairperson and secretary of the presbytery committee of the presbytery in whose jurisdiction the combining congregations fall.

### **3. DISSOLUTION OF CONGREGATIONS**

Dissolution means that a congregation which is no longer willing or able to exist independently, disbands and that the members concerned are integrated into (an)other existing congregation(s).

#### **3.1 Procedure for dissolution**

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<sup>46</sup> Different synods have different names (e.g. moderamen, service council, synodical service committee) for a body which fulfill the functions of a synodical committee.

- 3.1.1 The church council of the congregation which wishes to disband, must pass a resolution to that effect and the church council(s) of the congregation(s) into which the members concerned are to be integrated, must approve such integration. At least 66% of the serving church council members of each church council involved must be in favour of unification.
- 3.1.2 The church councils concerned must agree on the conditions for disbanding and integration. If applicable, 2.4 of the *Rule for the Management of Labour Relations in case of Misconduct, Incompetence and Incapability* must be taken into consideration.
- 3.1.3 The details of the agreement reached by the church councils must be made known for approbation on two consecutive Sundays at the public worship services of the congregations concerned. It should also be announced that objections against the agreement must be lodged in writing with the secretary within seven days after the last announcement.
- 3.1.4 Once the approbation of the confessing members not subject to church discipline has been obtained in this way, the agreement is submitted to the presbytery(ies) concerned for approval. After obtaining such approval or at a date set in the agreement, the agreement becomes effective.
- 3.1.5 As this implies a change to congregation boundaries, the agreement must include a clear description of boundary lines.
- 3.1.6 The presbytery secretary concerned notifies the Synod clerk and the Synod administrator of the dissolution of the congregation, as well as of the new boundaries of the receiving congregation(s). The secretary of the synodical committee ensures publication of these details in the *Kerkbode*.
- 3.1.7 A copy of the agreement between the congregations is submitted to the Synod administrator in duplicate on paper as prescribed by the archives.
- 3.1.8 The church council of the congregation which has dissolved notifies the Registrar of Deeds of the dissolution and the transfer of property.
- 3.1.9 The serving church council members of the dissolved congregation also serve, if so agreed, in the receiving congregation.
- 3.1.10 The immovable property of the dissolved congregation, unless otherwise agreed, is registered in the name of the receiving congregation and all movable assets of the dissolved congregation are transferred to the receiving congregation along with all associated rights and obligations.
- 3.1.11 The unification of congregations can only take place when the congregation which is dissolved does not have a minister or, if it does, the presbytery is satisfied that fair provision for the minister(s) of the Word has been made.
- 3.1.12 If on unification it should appear that representatives have not been appointed to sign documents on behalf of a dissolving congregation to enact the agreement, such documents should be signed by the chairperson and secretary of the presbytery committee of the presbytery in whose jurisdiction the dissolved congregation was located.

#### **4. AMALGAMATION OF CONGREGATIONS**

Amalgamation means that two or more congregations which are no longer willing or able to exist independently each dissolves so as together to form an entirely new congregation within the same geographical area within which the respective congregations were located.

##### **4.1 Procedure**

- 4.1.1 The church councils of the respective congregations who wish to dissolve and amalgamate each resolve to do so.
- 4.1.2 All confessing members not subject to church discipline of the various congregations concerned are, by means of a questionnaire-ballot, given an opportunity to indicate in writing whether or not they are in favour of the amalgamation.
- 4.1.2.1 The questionnaire-ballot mentioned is to be made available personally and without any canvassing by the respective church councils of the congregations who are to amalgamate to each confessing member not subject to church discipline within the congregations concerned.
- 4.1.2.2 It is each member's own responsibility to ensure that his/her completed questionnaire-ballot reaches the church office of his/her congregation before/on the closing date determined by the church council.
- 4.1.2.3 The approval of a majority of the members who submitted the questionnaire-ballot must be obtained before the process of amalgamation can be continued.
- 4.1.3 Once the approval of the members in accordance with procedure 4.1.2 above has been obtained, the church councils separately and jointly agree on a Deed of Amalgamation including a clear description of the boundaries of the new congregation, the position of the minister(s) and church council members in the new amalgamated congregation and arrangements for dealing with the assets of the respective congregations (movable and immovable), and each church council appoints 2 (two) persons to sign all the necessary documentation on its behalf.
- 4.1.4 The details of the agreement (Deed of Amalgamation) are presented for approbation on 2 (two) consecutive Sundays at all the public worship services of the congregations concerned. It should also be announced that objections against the agreement must be lodged in writing with the secretary within seven days after the last announcement.
- 4.1.4.1 Members who wish to object must do so in writing stating reasons before the end of the week following the second announcement.
- 4.1.4.2 Objections are submitted to the presbytery committee for consideration.
- 4.1.5 Once approbation has been obtained, the agreement is submitted to the presbytery for approval.
- 4.1.5.1 The presbytery secretary notifies the secretary and administrator of the Synod concerned.
- 4.1.5.2 The church council of the new congregation notifies the Registrar of Deeds of the transfer of property.

#### **5. COMBINATION OF ACTIVITIES OF CONGREGATIONS, PRESBYTERIES AND SYNODS/COMMITTEES OF SYNODS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS**

In this context combination means that two or more church assemblies of different denominations, or committees of church assemblies, as part of the quest for church unity in the Family of DR Churches, in the interest of the kingdom of God and as equal partners, enter into contractual agreements for the execution of certain shared activities.

##### **5.1 Practical and canonical guide-lines**

- 5.1.1 The aspects or issue with regard to which the parties envisage a combination must be clearly set out.
- 5.1.2 A written agreement is drawn up which clearly states all the rights, duties and responsibilities (including finances) of the parties.
- 5.1.3 The *Rule for the Regulation of Church Properties, Assets and Finance*, must be taken into consideration when drawing up the agreement.
- 5.1.4 Where the position of a minister is affected by the proposed contract, Article 12 of the *Church Order* must be taken into consideration.

- 5.1.5 If it is the intention that the combined body should be authorised to handle matters such as the calling or appointment of a minister, aspects such as constitution, quorums, decision making, voting rights, funding, responsibility for the calling or appointment, pension, medical aid, administration, etc. must be made very clear.
- 5.1.6 The contract must state clearly that the setting of the shared aims in accordance with the contractual agreement cannot suspend or annul the rights and responsibilities of the contracting church bodies.
- 5.1.7 The agreement may be amended or terminated before the termination of the agreed term if the parties concerned, after mutually giving notice, so decide in their separate meetings.
- 5.1.8 The contracting party remains subject to the government, supervision and discipline of the church assembly to which he/she is accountable.

## 5.2 Method of Operation

- 5.2.1 The church bodies concerned must approve the written agreement separately in their respective meetings.
- 5.2.2 Once the bodies have come to an agreement, the body responsible for the supervision must finally authorise the agreement. In the case of a church council it is the presbytery. For a presbytery or a committee of a synod, it is the synod/synodical committee, and for a synod it is General Synod/the Moderamen of General Synod.

## 6. AMENDMENT OF THE CONFESSION AND FORMING A NEW CHURCH STRUCTURE

- 6.1 The church council first of all submits its proposal on the amendment/preservation of the confession/church structure to the congregation for the approval of the professing members. After the approval of two-thirds of the members is received, the church council finalises its decision with a two-thirds majority, after which the final decision is again submitted to the congregation on two consecutive Sundays for their approval.
- 6.2 The church council decides to obtain the agreement of the congregation mentioned in 6.1 above in one of the two following methods:
  - 6.2.1 The agreement of professing members is obtained by secret ballot during a meeting of the congregation which the church council had arranged with the professing members, notice of which was given during the worship service(s) on the preceding four consecutive Sundays with information on the date of the meeting as well as the contents of the proposal. At this meeting two observers from the presbytery or its authorised committee shall be present. The chairman and secretary of the church council act as chairman and secretary of this meeting.
    - 6.2.1.1 Members who have a legal excuse why they cannot attend this meeting of the congregation can vote in advance by way of secret ballot. These votes are counted once voting at the meeting of the congregation has been completed.
    - 6.2.2 The agreement of professing members is obtained by means of secret ballot made available by the church council without any canvassing to each uncensored member of the congregation personally. At least fourteen days after receipt must be allowed for handing it in.
      - 6.2.2.1 It is the responsibility of the member to ensure that the completed ballot reaches the church office on or before the final date. Counting of votes takes place in the presence of two observers appointed by the presbytery or its authorised committee.
  - 6.3 The two-thirds majority of the congregation's agreement is determined by the number of votes cast.
  - 6.4 The church council may negotiate with members, and the broader church structures with congregations, who voted in the minority and are not willing to become part of the new church structure about fair compensation.
  - 6.5 Throughout the church council makes every effort to avoid schism.

# POLICY, FUNCTIONAL RESOLUTIONS AND GUIDELINES

## THE CONFESSION AND ORDER OF THE CHURCH

### 1. BIBLE

#### 1.1 The Use of Scripture and the Authority of Scripture

General Synod approves the following statement and refers it to congregations and presbyteries for discussion.

- 1.1.1 As a church standing in the reformed tradition, the DR Church professes that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore:
  - 1.1.1.1 it has *authority* over our whole life, because it witnesses to us that we belong not to ourselves, but to the Lord, so that we are called to trust Him and live in obedience to him;
  - 1.1.1.2 it is *reliable* because we firmly believe that God really is as He reveals Himself to us in Scripture: Father, Son and Holy Spirit who, by grace, is our God;
  - 1.1.1.3 it is *clear*, because in it the church hears the clarity of the gospel of God's love and grace;
  - 1.1.1.4 it is *sufficient*, because through the Bible the Holy Spirit teaches us everything we need to know to believe in God and obey his will (Cf. Belgic Confession Art 7).

Therefore we continue to profess in faith that this truth is above all else.
- 1.1.2 As has always been the case in the Reformed tradition, we do not understand this profession to mean:
  - 1.1.2.1 that the Bible requires of us to sacrifice our ability to think, which is a gift from God;
  - 1.1.2.2 that the Bible can be seen as an exact handbook for historical and scientific knowledge.
  - 1.1.2.3 that the whole Bible is so easy to understand that anyone on his/her own can immediately understand everything in it.
  - 1.1.2.4 that the Bible discloses to us a full knowledge of all aspects of reality, so that no further human reasoning or research is required.
- 1.1.3 We further profess that throughout the ages God guides the church in the truth of this Word. This means that we hear the Scriptures as the living Word of God in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and each other. For this reason the churches in the Reformed tradition have always been convinced of the importance of a responsible interpretation of Scripture as the means by which the church as faith fellowship under guidance of the Holy Spirit searches for the truth, righteousness and mercy which God establishes in us through His Word. This conviction that the church should interpret Scripture is *inter alia* clear from the following:
  - 1.1.3.1 the emphasis laid since the beginning on a sound knowledge of the original languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) in which the Bible was written, as well as searching for the best methods for responsible exposition of Scripture;

- 1.1.3.2 the emphasis that all of Scripture must be read in the light of the context in which it originated, so that the impact of time and culture can be taken into account in the exposition;
- 1.1.3.3 the search for rules for the exposition of Scripture (examples of such rules of exposition from our tradition are: that Scripture should be read as a whole, that Scripture should be compared with Scripture and that the more difficult passages should be interpreted in the light of the easier passages, and that Scripture must be understood from its heart, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ);
- 1.1.3.4 the distinction being made in the exposition of Scripture between different parts of Scripture having a different kind of authority (e.g. the distinction between the historical and normative parts of Scripture, as well as the distinction between cultic and moral laws);
- 1.1.3.5 the grateful, but critical listening to the way Scripture was interpreted in the history of the church and the way it is interpreted in our own time by fellow believers in our own and other churches;
- 1.1.3.6 establishing ecclesiastical practices for the interpretation of Scripture, such as, in particular, the preaching, but also catechism, Bible study, theological studies and the like;
- 1.1.3.7 and especially in creating statements of belief in which the church strives to clearly interpret the heart of the Scripture message and obediently accept it.
- 1.1.4 Although the church at different times might think differently about what the best rules and methods are for the responsible exposition of Scripture, it remains our basic conviction that the profession of the Bible as the Word of God is never contrary to the responsible exposition of Scripture. In fact, this profession challenges us to exert ourselves, in fellowship with each other and with all the gifts with which God endowed the church, in search of the truth.
- 1.1.5 In view of this profession we believe that even in the challenging times we live in, God will guide his church in the truth by his Word and Spirit. With this conviction, we commit ourselves as Reformed believers, together to seek truth, righteousness and mercy, even with regard to the complex doctrinal and ethical questions of our time. We believe that this quest is an ecumenical endeavour, in union with the church of all ages and the church throughout the world. Where we differ from each other, we believe that we should remain in dialogue with one another, with the prayer that God will cause our love to abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best (Philippians 1:9-10).

## 1.2 Bible Sunday

General Synod resolves that the last Sunday in August be designated as Bible Sunday in the Almanac of the Dutch Reformed Church. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 570:7.4.1.2).

## 1.3 New Bible Translations

General Synod points out to members and congregations that the 1933 (1953)- and 1983-translations are the Bibles in Afrikaans which have been accepted by the church for official use in the worship service. The panel of Bible translators of the New Afrikaans Bible (1983-translation) was first approved by the churches concerned and this Bible was officially adopted by the Dutch Reformed Church on 2 November 1983. Alternative translations may therefore be valuable and useful, but should not replace the officially approved Bible in the pulpit. This does not however exclude occasional reference, even in the worship service, to other translations in a responsible manner.

## 2. PRINCIPLES, RESOLUTIONS, GUIDELINES AND MANUALS

- 2.1 Being of reformed persuasion we accept Scripture as the highest *norm*.
- 2.2 From Scripture we derive certain principles.
- 2.3 When a *principle(s)* and the *conviction* which derives from it together indicate a programme/code of conduct for the life of the church, this may be called a *policy*.
- 2.4 Two kinds of resolutions passed by church meetings can be distinguished, viz.:
  - (1) resolutions which are of an imperative/prescriptive nature; and
  - (2) resolutions which are of an indicative/directive nature.
- 2.4.1 **Prescriptive resolutions (including the *Church Order*, Regulations and Rules)**
- 2.4.1.1 Prescriptive resolutions often appear in the form of *Church Order* Articles, regulations attached to the *Church Order* and Rules, but resolutions which do not specifically indicate that they are “Rules” are not for that reason non-binding or have any less authority. An economic use of expressions such as “synod approves the following as rule/guide-line/policy”, in favour of “synod resolves”, will help to provide greater clarity and will prevent “ordinary” resolutions being considered “lesser” resolutions.
- 2.4.1.2 All resolutions are binding unless the word usage or general context indicates the contrary.
- 2.4.2 **Directive resolutions (including guidelines and manuals)**
- 2.4.2.1 Guidelines for the performance of a church policy are provided by directive resolutions. (Cf. DCG Fourie: *Die Gesag van Kerkvergaderings in Kerkbode* 24 December 1980, p 5).
- 2.4.2.2 A *Guideline* indicates the way/manner in which a matter/policy may be applied or executed in practice. *There is room for discretion to make adjustments*, provided the basic principles or laid down policies are not disregarded. (There is no real difference between a guideline and a guide).
- 2.4.2.3 A *Manual* is the setting down of a series of guidelines, rules or procedural steps which must be followed in dealing with a specific matter. However, where a manual does not prescribe every step which has to be followed, there may be room to exercise discretion, provided that the set target is attained satisfactorily and none of the set rules are broken. (Acts 1994, p 457, 2)

## 3. THE CONFESSION OF BELHAR

### Resolutions 2011

- 3.1 General Synod decides to make the Confession of Belhar part of the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church subject to the provisions of the Church Order and directs the Moderamen to put the necessary processes<sup>47</sup> (as implied/prescribed by the Church Order) in motion to this end.

<sup>47</sup> See Church Order Article 44.1 and the *Rule for the Increase, Combination, Unification and Dissolution of Congregations, and for the Formation of a New Church Structure*.

- 3.2 General Synod stands by its decision of 1998: "General Synod accepts that the Confession of Belhar taken in itself is not in conflict with the three Forms of Unity" and also "accepts the essential content of the Confession of Belhar for the sake of the unity-process and its witness."
- 3.3 General Synod points out that the DR Church is in discussion with the URCSA. The talks are facilitated by the World Community of Reformed Churches. In these talks the theological contents of the Confession of Belhar receives attention.
- 3.4 General Synod directs the Moderamen to, as part of the process, undertake a thorough study of the historical, theological and contextual relevance of the Confession of Belhar in order to advise the next General Synod and all church assemblies. (Acts 2011,p 105, pt 9 and p 106,pt 13)

## THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

### 4. MINISTER OF THE WORD: LETTER OF CALL AND PROCEDURES FOR A CALL (See *Church Order, Article 7*)

#### 4.1 Pro forma for a letter of call and final employment contract:

- 4.1.1 Identification of the parties.
- 4.1.2 Preamble.
- 4.1.3 Job description: General duties (Article 9) with accompanying specific expectations.
- 4.1.4 Remuneration and benefits (Article 13).
- 4.1.5 The mutual acknowledgement by the parties that their written agreement is subject to the rules of the Church Order and the resolutions of General Synod and the relevant synod as amended from time to time.
- 4.1.6 Date of commencement (a) in the case of ministers serving in congregations or employed by the denomination, the date of demission. (b) In other cases where a call is accepted, the date of commencement is the date of induction or a date agreed.
- 4.1.7 A declaration by the person called that there are no unsettled or pending disciplinary measures against him/her and that he/she will remain faithful to the solemn declaration of licence to the ministry.
- 4.1.8 The signatures of the parties with witnesses and date of signing as concurrence that a contract of employment is created between the parties.

#### 4.2 Resolution explaining Art. 7.1:

- 4.2.1 This call takes place from a list of candidates compiled in the following manner:
- 4.2.1.1 The church council of the calling congregation compiles the list of names and each member of the church council has the right to add as many names to the list as there are vacancies and/or
- 4.2.1.2 The church council can request suitable names from the Presbytery Committee and the General Task Group for Congregational Ministry to add to the list and
- 4.2.1.3 Members of the congregation must be requested to submit names to the secretary of the church council/nominations committee to be added to the list of prospective candidates and/or
- 4.2.1.4 The church council can publish the name of the calling congregation and the date of the call meeting in the official notices in Kerkbode. Ministers and candidates for the ministry who so wish, can then reply in confidence by submitting their names with a curriculum vitae to the church council. Church councils of calling congregations can forward a questionnaire to ministers on the list of candidates with questions specifically directed to the ministry.
- 4.2.1.5 The church council has the right to request a curriculum vitae from any minister or candidate for the ministry whose name appears on the list of prospective candidates. A call takes place in the strictest confidence according to the regulations of each synod.
- 4.2.2. If a church council makes use of a nominations committee, the available names are submitted to the committee which selects at least three names and submits them in alphabetical order to the church council with all the other names on the list of candidates. Any member of the church council has the right to place an additional name on the list of candidates.

#### 4.3 Resolution explaining Art.7.5:

Any form of negotiation with a nominee on the list of candidates, can take place only after he/she has been called. Church Councils must take note that in this regard they cannot go beyond what the decisions of General Synod allow for.

### 5. CALLING OF MINISTERS OF THE WORD WITHIN THE FAMILY OF DR CHURCHES

#### Resolutions 1994

- 5.1 General Synod resolves that *Church Order* Articles 5 and 6, Rules 3 and 4 and related decisions by General Synod concerning the training, licensing and competence of ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church apply to the Dutch Reformed Church structures and as such they also determine the interpretation of the decision by General Synod regarding the calling of ministers back and forth within the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches.
- 5.2 General Synod instructs presbyteries to see to it that the requirements of the Dutch Reformed Church for training and licensing are satisfied when approving calls from the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches. (Acts 1994, p.452, pt 2.8.6)

#### Resolutions 2002

- 5.3 The DR Church acknowledges the training and licensing of the DRCA, URCSA and RCA on condition that it meets the requirements which the DR Church sets for its own training and licensing.
- 5.4 If the training of a licensee of the DRCA, URCSA and RCA is not on par with the requirements which the DR Church sets for its own licensees, such a person cannot be called in the DR Church without further ado.
- 5.5 If the training of a licensee of the DRCA, URCSA and RCA is not on par with the requirements which the DR Church sets for its own licensees, such a person will have to acquire the additional qualifications in order to be called to a DR Congregation or be nominated for a position within the broader DR church structures.

- 5.6 General Synod has instructed presbyteries to see to it that the requirements of the Dutch Reformed Church for training, licensing and eligibility for calls are satisfied when approving calls from the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches. In terms of the latest *Church Order* (1998) the presbytery no longer approves calls, but checks whether all the requirements of the *Church Order* have been satisfied (Art 8.1.2).
- 5.7 The three Forms of Unity must be accepted as the confessional basis of the DR Church before ministers from the Family of DR Churches can be inducted in a congregation of the DR Church.  
(Acts 2002, pp 336-337, pt 3.3.4)

## 6. CHAPLAINS

### Resolutions 2002

- 6.1 Chaplains serving in the SANDF, SAPD, DCS and NIA are appointed as ministers by General Synod/the Moderamen of General Synod on the recommendation of the Subcommittee for Chaplaincy Services and thereby obtain/retain competence as ministers. This appointment does NOT imply that General Synod accepts any current or future financial responsibility for chaplains, or that there is any employment contract between the chaplains and General Synod.
- 6.2 Chaplains may also be called to a congregation. The Subcommittee for Chaplaincy Services may be asked to assist with this.
- 6.3 It is preferable that a chaplain be linked to a congregation. It is up to the chaplain him/herself to choose to be linked to a congregation. If he/she decides against a link to a congregation, he/she must pay the premium for group insurance him/herself.
- 6.4 The premiums of chaplains who wish to be linked/called, but for some reason or other are not, must be paid by the presbytery within which he/she resides, or by the synod until he/she is once again linked with or called to a congregation.
- 6.5 General Synod resolves that all current chaplains are appointed by a once-off resolution by General Synod / the Moderamen on the submission of the Subcommittee for Chaplaincy Services as chaplains for the respective chaplaincy services and attain/retain competence as ministers in the same manner as in point 1 above. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 568: 6.3.4 and 569: 6.3.8.2).

### Resolutions 2007

#### CHAPLAINCY SERVICES (cf. Agenda Part I p 99, A.2.1 Moderamen's report, pt 4.4 as well as Agenda Part II p 13)

- 6.6 General Synod requests congregations who are approached to link a chaplain to the congregation, to give it their serious consideration.
- 6.7 General Synod refers the need for contributions from congregations to the Chaplaincy fund, to synods.
- 6.8 General Synod requests synods to involve chaplains who work within their boundaries in the different ministry committees of the synod.
- 6.9 General Synod decides to compose the subcommittee for Chaplaincy services as follows: a representative from each of the four churches in the DR Church Family and a nominated chaplain from each of the four departments of the Security Services (SANDF, SAPD, Corrective Services, National Intelligence), at their own expense. If the head chaplain(s) is/are a member/s of the DR Church family, he/she is/are nominated – if not, one of the leadership group of the particular arm of the Services who has competency as a minister in the DR Church Family.
- 6.10 General Synod decides to nominate a serving chaplain from each of the four arms of the Security Services in the Ministry Group for Caring and Witness.
- 6.11 General Synod further decides to continue its support for and involvement in the Security Services Christian Advice Council by means of a representative in the Council.

## 7. LICENSING WITH RESTRICTED ASSIGNMENT

### Resolutions 2002

General Synod approves that:

- 7.1 An application for admission to the ministry with limited charge from a church council, with the approval of the local presbytery, is submitted to the General Task Team Legal Affairs.
- 7.2 The grounds for the application, in terms of the requirements for admission to the ministry (Art 5), must be assessed by the General Task Team Legal Affairs before the General Task Team Legal Affairs decides upon it and reports to General Synod.
- 7.3 The limitation only affects the charge of the candidate (i.e. being limited to a call to a specific region, or category of ministry) and not competence as such. (Full competence is still required).
- 7.4 A call may only be made after the General Task Team Legal Affairs has granted admission to the ministry in writing (recognised competency).
- 7.5 Candidates from churches other than the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches must submit to *colloquium doctum* before an Examining Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church.

(Acts General Synod 2002, p 556, pt 1.3.3).

### Resolutions 2011

#### Restricted Competence<sup>48</sup>

- 7.6 Persons who have restricted competence may:
- 7.6.1 Only minister the Word (if qualifications allow) under the supervision and care of the church council and presbytery
- 7.6.2 Ministry of prayers
- 7.6.3 Teaching and equipping
- 7.6.4 Edification of the congregation
- 7.6.5 Serving in the congregation
- 7.6.6 Leading and organising the congregation
- 7.6.7 Pastoral care.  
(Acts General Synod 2011, p 160)

## 8. EXCHANGE OF POSTS

<sup>48</sup> See the *Church Order*, Article 31.8.

## **Resolutions 1994**

- 8.1 Ministers who are compelled by extraordinary circumstances, or who desire a change of posts, may make arrangements for an exchange of their posts in consultation with the church councils concerned.
- 8.2 Such arrangements must be approved in a written agreement by the church councils after which it is submitted to the presbytery/presbytery committee for approval.
- 8.3 This agreement to exchange posts must first be approved by the relevant presbytery committees before it can be enacted.
- 8.4 Notice of it is published in the official newspaper of the Church.
- 8.5 The regulations concerning the induction of a minister in a congregation are also applicable here. (Acts 1994, p 516, 14)

## **Resolutions 2002**

- 8.6 The Dutch Reformed Church still accepts the calling system as the normal and desired practice for the placement and exchange of ministers.
- 8.7. In the light of research (Kerkspieël 6) it must be admitted that the great oversupply of ministers and few vacancies have the effect that at present the calling system does not provide for the required healthy rotation of ministers. There is therefore need for an additional mechanism which can enhance healthy exchange.
- 8.8 General Synod has already approved the principle of exchange of posts as an additional mechanism (cf. inter alia 1994). Exchange of posts as an additional system can help to manage the current problem, subject to the following amendments:
  - 8.8.1 General Synod appoints a committee which has the competence to initiate, negotiate and finalise the exchange of posts within the jurisdiction of different synods. General Synod advises synods to appoint committees who may initiate, negotiate and finalise the exchange of posts within the jurisdiction of the synod. The General Committee is composed of one representative from each regional synod. The chairperson of the General Task Team for Ministers acts as convener.
  - 8.8.2 General Synod requests the committee to draw up guidelines for the implementation of the system within the following framework:
    - 8.8.2.1 *Vocation*: In the process of exchange of posts the vocation of the minister and the work of the Holy Spirit must be taken into consideration. This process must be seen as one of the ways in which the Lord may call ministers to congregations.
    - 8.8.2.2 *Bona fides*: Renewal of the ministry and personal circumstances may (inter alia) be bona fide reasons for an exchange. The parties concerned consider the merits of the case. There must be bona fide reasons for an exchange of posts. The process may e.g. not be used to avoid possible disciplinary measures.
    - 8.8.2.3 *Agreement*: As the minister and Church Council have a contract of employment which is officially regulated by the rules of the *Church Order*, this will have to be taken into consideration in the way in which exchange of posts is managed. The rights and privileges of both parties, the Church Council and the minister, will have to be considered. This does however provide for the opportunity to manage the exchange by means of an agreement (cf. the analogy of Art. 7 of the *Church Order* 1998). A process whereby Church Councils and ministers come to an agreement to exchange posts, for which both parties accept ownership, should be made possible.
    - 8.8.2.4 *Exchange*: The broader church structures and the synod's counsellors do not enforce an exchange, but create an opportunity for the parties to agree on an exchange. It does not replace the current calling system.
    - 8.8.2.5 *The Broader Church Structures*: The broader church structures mediate and facilitate the process. In this regard presbyteries, synods and General Synod each has a part to play.
    - 8.8.2.6 *Call*: The written agreement of the participating parties to exchange posts is a valid call and no separate act of calling is required. The agreement must be presented to the congregations concerned for approval on two consecutive Sundays before being finalised. (Cf. the analogy in Rule 6: 3.1.3)
    - 8.8.2.7 *Multilateral exchanges*: In cases where a bilateral exchange is not possible, multilateral exchanges may be considered.
  - 8.8.3 To further strengthen the new system General Synod requests the committee to investigate the possibility of a system whereby all ministers regularly appear on a list for exchange of posts after 7 years in a congregation. The committee reports on this with recommendations to the Moderamen in the interim. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 444: 7.3.1).

## **9. MINISTERS OF THE WORD**

### **9.1 Annual report**

General Synod decides that all serving ministers must annually inform the secretary (competence register) of the General Task Team Legal Affairs via their congregation's secretary of their current congregation and position. (Acts General Synod 2002, p 562, pt 3.1).

### **9.2 Ministers A-Z**

General Synod 2007 approved (with the exception of chapter 6) the A-Z Policy regarding Ministers. In this document the continued professional development is dealt with in full.

### **9.3 Resolutions 2007**

- 9.3.1 The granting of the competence of a minister is a function of General Synod. Synod decides that homosexual licensees who practise a celibate lifestyle are allowed to the office of minister.
- 9.3.2 **COMPETENCY OF MINISTER OF THE WORD** (see Agenda Part I p 326, A.3.4.1 Report General Task Team Legal Affairs pt 1.2.3 and Agenda Part II p 23)

On request of the General Task Team Legal Affairs, General Synod decides to appoint a small task team of experts and to budget for it, with the purpose of doing an extensive inquiry into:

  1. All matters regarding entry into the ministry and the retention of competency for the ministry;
  2. The problems surrounding the minister "as employee of the church council" on the one hand and his/her competency of office based on licensing and induction on the other hand;
  3. Whether there are certain tasks in the ministry (e.g. the ministry of sacraments) which can only be entrusted to inducted ministers and whether such tasks can also be performed by non-inducted ministers;
  4. the possibility of different categories of ministers, regarding both training and licensing, and responsibilities;
  5. Other issues identified by General Synod.
  6. This inquiry must be concluded speedily with report the Moderamen who has authority to finalise the matter.
- 9.3.3 **DEAF PERSON: ADMISSION TO THE MINISTRY** (cf. Additional Reports p 19 – 21, A.3.4.1 General Task Team Legal Affairs pt 7)



General Synod takes cognisance that the General Committee for Theological Training attended to the matter and referred it to the board of governors of Stellenbosch. The General Task Team Legal Affairs points out to the authors that the possibility of licensing with restrictions does exist and that the General Task Team Legal Affairs considers every application on its merits.

9.3.4 **MARRIAGE OFFICERS** (cf. Agenda Part I p 287, A.3.2 Report of the General Service Group for Development of Congregations pt 6.2 [see also their addendum 6 p 313] as well as Agenda Part II p 23).

1. Synod resolves that a marriage service is not an ordinary meeting of the congregation (worship service) under leadership of the offices. The persons at a wedding service are not coming together as congregation of God for the purpose of a worship service.
2. Synod resolves that the minister acts as individual teaching elder at the confirmation of the wedding and that supervision by the other offices is not essential.
3. Synod emphasises that the Biblical requirements with regard to the marriage must resound clearly in the preparation for marriage, the confirmation and the guidance provided within the sphere of the church as fellowship of believers. Seen against this background, the marriage of confessing members of a congregation cannot simply be confirmed by any person who is legally qualified to do so. It remains the task of the qualified minister of the Word.
4. Synod resolves that further inquiry shall be done in the church blessing of a marriage (spiritual agreement) as an adequate commitment for believers to live together and whether the legal agreement of the state is necessary (Seen against the background of elderly people who are compelled to live together because medical and pension privileges are lost in a subsequent marriage which is legal with the state).

## **10. MINISTER OF THE WORD: RETIREMENT AGE**

A minister of the Word who reaches the age of 65 years, may, with the permission of the church assembly/committee concerned remain in its employ for no more than 6 months after his/her 65th birthday. (See the resolution of General Synod 1986, Acta p 712, and the Rule for Fixed Term Positions, point 4)

## **THE MEETINGS OF THE CHURCH**

### **11. DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH SEAL**

Regarding the Dutch Reformed Church Seal, General Synod reaffirms: The church seal is the property of General Synod; it is an “official” seal and is limited to the activities of General Synod; persons/bodies may use the seal only with the permission of the Moderamen of General Synod; applications for this must be made in writing. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 568, 3.5.2).

### **12. WHEN DECISIONS ARE IN FORCE**

- 12.1 A decision by General Synod comes into force with the publication of the Acts of Synod, unless Synod decides differently.
- 12.2 The Church Order and Rules come into force at its publication.
- 12.3 (Acts General Synod 1994, p 426, pt 11.4)

### **13. TELEPHONE-/ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND VOTING METHODS**

General Synod approves the following advice from the General Task Team Legal Affairs on telephone meetings and electronic voting methods or meetings.

- 13.1 Telephone- and or electronic meetings is allowed for the task teams (which includes service boards/service groups) of the Synod(s) to deal with urgent matters subject to the following conditions:
    - 13.1.1 The requirements for a meeting per telephone are the same as those for an ordinary meeting of the task team, inter alia with regard to notification, agenda, quorum and decision making.
    - 13.1.2 The minutes of such a meeting are submitted to the subsequent meeting of the task team for approval.
  - 13.2 Electronic voting is suitable admissible for the task teams of the Synods subject to the following conditions:
    - 13.2.1 The Executive of the task team compiles a report on the subject on which the task team wishes to make decisions.
    - 13.2.2 The report is forwarded electronically to all the members of the task team.
    - 13.2.3 The outcome of the electronic voting is only valid if the majority of the members approved the proposal submitted for their vote.
    - 13.2.4 The minutes of such a vote is submitted to the subsequent meeting of the task team for approval.
- (Acts General Synod 2011, p 117, pt 5.1.8)

## **THE SACRAMENTS <sup>49</sup>**

### **14. BAPTISM**

#### **14.1 Ministry to baptismal members in school hostels**

(Acts 1990,p 605, pt 2.1.9.4)

#### **14.2 Baptism of children in foster-care**

General Synod resolves that children in foster-care may be baptised and provides the following guidelines:

- 14.2.1 The final decision rests with the church council concerned, which in all cases must guard against the abuse of the sacraments.
- 14.2.2 Whereas the baptism of a little child is usually the result of the decision of a parent(s) and a church council, in the case of a foster child other parties managing the foster-care are also involved. Baptism can only take place after the church council is convinced by discussions with the foster parents and the fostering body that the relevant foster placement is in all probability a long term one. (Acts 1994, p 474, 10.2.2.1)

<sup>49</sup> For the administering of sacraments see Article 49 of the *Church Order*.

### **14.3 Baptism of Children in a children's home**

- 14.3.1 General Synod 2002 is of the opinion that the resolution of General Synod 1998 regarding the baptism of a child in a children's home older than 7 years who desires it, implies that a person or persons other than the own, foster- or adoptive parents may answer the formulary questions at a baptism and accept responsibility for the spiritual training of a child in a children's home. It is therefore possible that an un-baptised child in a children's home of 7 years and older, whose placement in a children's home has taken on a more or less permanent form, may be baptised.
- 14.3.2 General Synod confirms the resolution that the children's home or congregation may not corporately act as a foster parent for the purpose of making and keeping the baptismal vow. Church Councils may, after consulting the biological parents where possible, designate members of the congregation who are prepared to accept responsibility for the covenant training as baptismal witnesses or spiritual guardians, to answer the formulary questions at the baptism of a child older than 7 years staying in a children's home.
- 14.3.3 General Synod considers that for the baptism and subsequent participation in communion of a child in a children's home, the desire should originate with the child him-/herself and that Church Councils must guard against other considerations playing a decisive role. Just as not all children in a children's home who are over 7 years of age may be baptised regardless, similarly all baptised members may not be admitted to communion regardless. Such decisions can therefore not be taken by Church Councils without the express desire of the un-baptised or baptismal members and without the assurance of proper parental or substitutionary guidance and care. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 567: 3.3.2).

### **14.4 Baptism of children abroad**

- 14.4.1 If members who are living outside South Africa only temporarily, wish to baptise their child in a congregation other than their home congregation in South Africa, they must obtain written approval from their home congregation.
- 14.4.2 If members who are living permanently outside South Africa and are involved with a congregation there, wish to baptise their child in South Africa the procedure is as follows:
- 14.4.2.1 They must obtain approval from their congregation outside South Africa;
- 14.4.2.2 They must submit to baptismal counselling.
- 14.4.3 If members who are living permanently outside South Africa and are not involved with a congregation there but wish to baptise their child here the procedure is as follows:
- 14.4.3.1 The Church Council of the congregation where they wish the child to be baptised, applies to the congregation of which they were members before they emigrated for their certificates of membership;
- 14.4.3.2 They must submit to baptismal counselling;
- 14.4.3.3 In the course of the counselling they must be asked about the reasons why they are unable to be involved with a congregation and be encouraged to join a congregation outside South Africa. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 560: 5.1.2).

### **14.5 Sponsors of baptism**

When neither parent is entitled to answer to the questions posed at baptism, the church council can, in consultation with the parents, find a sponsor(s) who can provide sufficient guarantee of a Christian upbringing of the child who is to be baptised.

### **14.6 Baptism of covenantal children**

The church council must see to it that the baptism of covenantal children are requested and administered as soon as possible.

### **14.7 Baptism of a child older than seven years**

In respect of the baptism of a child older than seven years and before the public profession of faith:

- 14.7.1 the church council must be convinced that the attitude and involvement of the parents/godparents are satisfactory, and the child who is to be baptised must be able, according to his/her intelligence, to profess a simple confession of agreement with the Christian truth, together with a testimony of love for and faith in Jesus Christ.
- 14.7.2 The simple confession is professed by the child only during the interview prior to the baptism.
- 14.7.3 During the interview the questions are discussed with the child to which he/she simply answers "yes". The questions are as follows:
- 14.7.3.1 Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word?
- 14.7.3.2 Do you believe that God, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth?
- 14.7.3.3 Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins and that He rose from the dead, and do you love Him?
- 14.7.3.4 Do you believe that the Holy Spirit lives in you and makes your life new?

### **14.8 Baptism of persons sixteen years and older**

Persons older than sixteen who are not baptised may be baptised after public profession of their faith.

### **14.9 Recognition of baptism**

The baptism of someone from another denomination is recognized if it was administered in the Name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; water was used; and was administered by a person with the required competence within that denomination.

### **14.10 Baptism, re-baptism and commemoration/reminder of baptism**

(Acts 1998, p417, 10.5 and pp 469-470, 1.3.6)

## **Resolutions 2011**

### **14.11 Baptism**

- 14.11.1 General Synod confirms our reformed conviction the Covenant Baptism expresses the fundamental truth of the Gospel that God's grace and faithfulness precedes our acceptance by faith and even includes it.
- 14.11.2 General Synod therefore requests church councils and ministers to explain and confirm the reformed understanding of the Covenant Baptism with conviction and compassion, including members who have other convictions about baptism.
- 14.11.3 At the same time General Synod acknowledges the fact that not all Christian churches share the same view on Baptism, but that together we nevertheless are part of the Church of Christ.
- 14.11.4 General Synod gives grateful acknowledgment to members who remain loyal to the denomination in spite of their differing view of baptism and wish to assure them that they have a spiritual home in the Dutch Reformed Church.

- 14.11.5 General Synod apologises sincerely to members who were hurt in one way or another in connection with baptism and invites them to a mutual discussion where the matter can be talked and prayed about in a pastoral manner.
- 14.11.6 General Synod assures members who left the DR Church because of their understanding of baptism, that the DR Church wishes to be a spiritual home to all the children of the Lord and cordially invites them to take their rightful place in their local DR congregation and work together for the coming of God's kingdom.

#### **14.12 Commemoration/reminder of baptism**

- 14.12.1 Points of departure for discussion
  - 14.12.1.1 Synod believes that the discussion and reasoning regarding the reformed points of departure of baptism aired in the Dutch Reformed Church over many years are well-considered and unlocks a wealth of theology.
  - 14.12.1.2 Synod reaffirms that covenant theology is central in the consideration of commemoration or reminder of baptism.
  - 14.12.1.3 Synod confirms that in obedience to the parents' vow at baptism, parents and the church must accept responsibility for the covenant training (catechism) of their baptised children so that they can be led to an acceptance of salvation (profession of faith) which cannot be tied to a specific age (as presently determined in the *Church Order*), and therefore requests the Task Team Catechism to investigate the place, nature and age for profession of faith.
  - 14.12.1.4 Synod decides not to add anything to the discussion on baptism, children at communion and catechism, but to focus only on the task about the celebration of baptism.
- 14.12.2 Terminology
  - 14.12.2.1 Synod decides that the church should rather use the terms "commemoration of baptism", or "reminder of baptism".
- 14.12.3 Guidelines for commemoration/reminder
  - 14.12.3.1 Synod confirms that the salvation must be celebrated always and in all circumstances.
  - 14.12.3.2 General Synod reminds members that the regular celebration of communion is the primary location of celebration.
  - 14.12.3.3 General Synod reaffirms that the commemoration/reminder of baptism may not be interpreted as a re-baptism, but is linked directly to the covenant/Christian baptism.
  - 14.12.3.4 Synod decides that congregations should be encouraged to create occasions where the commemoration or reminder of baptism becomes part of the story of members and congregations.
  - 14.12.3.5 Synod recommends that sacrament celebration should play a much bigger part in the liturgy, catechism and worship service.
  - 14.12.3.6 Church councils are also free to establish appropriate rituals which provide in the need of such members to give symbolic expression to their death and resurrection with Christ. These rituals are not Sacraments and do not replace the covenant baptism, (Acts 2011, pp 163-164)

### **15. HOLY COMMUNION**

#### **15.1 Open or Exclusive**

(Acts 1994, p 434, 27.6)

#### **15.2 Regular celebration of communion**

- 15.2.1 General Synod reaffirms that the complete Christian worship service includes both the ministry of the Word and the celebration of communion.
- 15.2.2 General Synod encourages congregations once again to move towards a weekly celebration of communion. General Synod does so with the conviction that this is the best Biblical practice, that the sacraments are means by which God comes to us and that it can also strengthen the Ministry of the Word.
- 15.2.3 General Synod is convinced that the more regular celebration of communion will remain an unattained ideal if the congregation does not experience the value it has in strengthening their faith. Congregations and leaders of worship are encouraged to make a special effort during the next few years with the presentation of communion.
- 15.2.4 General Synod accepts that the reformed tradition was never prescriptive about the manner in which communion should be celebrated. For example, in the reformed tradition various practices are found regarding the celebration of communion in congregations. General Synod maintains the principle of freedom and requests congregations to be led in their resolutions by the principles of Scripture and the desire that the congregation be encouraged and edified by the celebration of communion (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 537, point 2.2.4.2).

#### **15.3 Communion in small groups**

As an increasing number of members are expressing a need for a communion experience in smaller, more intimate groups, and there are no Biblical objections against this, Synod resolves that communion may in future also be served in small groups within the congregation subject to the same conditions that apply in the congregation as a whole (Acts General Synod 2002, p 537).

#### **15.4 Admission of children to Communion**

- 15.4.1 General Synod resolves that
  - 15.4.1.1 baptised children who believe in Jesus Christ,
  - 15.4.1.2 satisfy the requirements of 1 Corinthians 11, and
  - 15.4.1.3 desire communion, may be admitted to communion.
- 15.4.2 **Admission of children to Communion in Practice**
  - 15.4.2.1 General Synod resolves that for the sake of the good order and unity of the church the admission of children to communion should be managed as follows:
    - 15.4.2.2 Church Councils decide when the congregation is ready for it. General Synod resolves to request Church Councils to guide and equip the congregations and so prepare them for the admission of children to communion as a family meal. This guidance must be conducted in a pastoral manner with much love and dedication.
- 15.4.3 **Responsibility of parents**
  - 15.4.3.1 Parents have the responsibility to continually guide their children and to train them in the full meaning of communion, just as Church Councils have a duty to guide adults.
  - 15.4.3.2 It is the responsibility of each Church Council to make specific arrangements for admission.
  - 15.4.3.3 General Synod emphasises that parents must guide their children towards their participation in communion and make use of the special opportunity of sharing communion with their children.

15.4.3.4 General Synod requests Church Councils to pay ongoing attention to the equipment and guidance of parents so that they may guide their children in the participation in communion.

15.4.3.5 General Synod resolves:

15.4.3.5.1 With the admission of children to communion, public confession of faith is no longer a requirement for admission to communion.

15.4.3.5.2 The practice of catechism and public confession of faith is maintained in accordance with previous resolutions of General Synod. (Acts 1998, p 432, 4)

## **15.5 Children at the Communion Table**

15.5.1 General Synod stands by its resolution of 1998 that baptised children who believe in Jesus Christ, satisfy the requirements of 1 Corinthians 11 and who desire communion may be admitted to communion.

15.5.2 General Synod approves the following recommendations of the Moderamen of General Synod (Agenda 2002 p 344):

15.5.2.1 Church Councils have an ongoing responsibility to equip and guide baptised and confessing members in Christian doctrine and conduct.

15.5.2.2 Church Councils therefore also have a responsibility to execute the resolution of General Synod 1998 concerning the admission of children to communion. In this process there must be continual guidance of parents and children, because the parents have such an important part in the meaningful participation in the sacrament by the child. To this end Church Councils can utilise the preaching, catechism, pastoral work of minister, elder and deacon and other forms of guidance, information and advice.

15.5.2.3 Concerning the admission of baptised members to communion, each Church Council makes suitable arrangements in the light of local circumstances. Ward church council members and/or teachers may also be involved along with the parents (Acts General Synod 2002, p 552: 15/16).

## **16 GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRY OF HOLY COMMUNION OUTSIDE THE WORSHIP SERVICE**

16.1 It is the responsibility of the local church council to ensure that Holy Communion is celebrated in an orderly manner and in accordance with Scripture.

16.2 Holy Communion is celebrated in a worship service except in highly exceptional cases.

16.3. The church council decides on the celebration of Holy Communion in such exceptional cases.

16.4. The church council adheres to the following general guidelines in the celebration of Holy Communion outside of the worship service:

16.4.1 The church council evaluates the merits of each application.

16.4.2 The Word must be proclaimed.

16.4.3 The true meaning of Holy Communion is explained, either through the form or otherwise, so that superstition is eliminated.

16.4.4 At least one office-bearer, preferably the ward elder attends the celebration of the Holy Communion. Where possible, arrangements are made for other believers to attend too so that the community character of Holy Communion may be preserved.

(Acts 1994, p 514-515, 4.2)

## **17. ADMINISTERING OF SACRAMENTS BY CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY**

### **Resolutions 1998**

17.1 General Synod takes cognisance of the fact that the way in which the office of minister of the Word and that of candidates for the ministry are described in Article 9 and Rule 4 point 3 respectively, creates the impression that candidates for the ministry may exercise more or less every official act in a congregation, except the administration of sacraments and acts of church government. This is a mistaken impression for the following reasons:

17.1.1 a candidate has not been inducted yet and therefore does not have the full competence of a minister which then is also the reason why a candidate may not administer the sacraments,

17.1.2 a candidate may only exercise the functions of Church Order 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6 on invitation by a church council,

17.1.3 a candidate may only exercise the functions of Church Order 9.8, 9.9 and 9.10 as a member of a church council –either as an inducted minister or elder.

17.2 General Synod reaffirms that the administration of the sacraments should not be valued more highly than the ministry of the Word.

17.3 However, General Synod points out that the ministry of the Word by candidates for the ministry (who have not yet been inducted in the office of minister in a local congregation) should not be viewed as official ministry of the Word.

17.4 General Synod reaffirms the practise of centuries which is also upheld in other recognised churches, that candidates for the ministry do not have the competence to administer the sacraments. This implies that only an ordained (inducted) minister of the Word may administer the sacraments.

17.5 General Synod tasks the General Committee for Legal Affairs to reword Article 9 and Rule 4 point 3 of the Church Order in such a way that possible misunderstandings surrounding the competence of candidates for the ministry can be eliminated.

17.6 General Synod suggests that where congregations wish to use the services of a candidate for the ministry for longer periods of time they rather consider establishing a position for a tent maker-ministry.

(Acts 1998, p 463, 1.7)

### **Resolutions 2011**

#### **17.7 The competency of a candidate for the ministry**

17.7.1 It is a person who satisfies certain academic qualifications, was licensed and was made available to serve the denomination. A candidate for the ministry is competent to fulfil the following official duties:

17.7.1.1 Preach the Word on invitation and under the supervision of a church council

17.7.1.2 Perform liturgical acts during worship services

17.7.1.3 Do other spiritual work in a congregation, e.g. youth ministry, etc.

17.7.2 A candidate for the ministry is not competent to fulfil the following official duties:

17.7.2.1 Ministry of sacraments

17.7.2.2 To be appointed as a marriage officer

17.7.2.3 To lead church council meetings (unless he/she has been elected and installed as an elder).

(Agenda 2011, p 34, pt 4.1.4.2)

### 18. POLICY REGARDING WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

- 18.1 Ministry to women (as with all other members) is an integral part of congregational ministry where women are inspired and empowered so that they can fully exercise their calling and gifts to the glory of God and to the edification of the body of Christ.
- 18.2 Through unique interaction with the Word and each other women are
- 18.2.1 equipped;
- 18.2.2 guided on the way of spiritual growth;
- 18.2.3 nurtured;
- 18.2.4 and presented with opportunities to serve.
- 18.3 The church creates and promotes a space where the exercise of the particular needs and interests of women can be addressed by initiating actions, groups or ministries, or forming networks and partnerships to address specific, identified needs.
- 18.4 The development and utilisation of the potential and leadership of women takes place in all areas of the church's activities.  
(Acts General Synod 2011, p 83, pt 18)

### 19. MINISTRY ABROAD

The resolutions of General Synod are available on request from the General Secretary.

### 20. CHURCH HYMNS

#### Resolution 2002

##### 20.1 Official Hymnal

General Synod reaffirms its decision that the new *Liedboek van die Kerk* is the official hymnal of the Dutch Reformed Church and appeals to all the congregations to utilize it enthusiastically. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 536: 2.1.1.3).

#### Resolutions 2011

##### 20.2 FLAM

- 20.2.1 General Synod supports the composition and modus operandi of Flam.
- 20.2.2 General Synod encourages congregations to make use of these theologically and musically selected new contemporary music.

##### 20.3 FLAM MUSIC PUBLISHERS

- 20.3.1 General Synod supports the composition and modus operandi of Flam Music Publishers.
- 20.3.2 Congregations are encouraged to invite the members of Flam to come and introduce their songs in their congregations.

##### 20.4 FLAM: PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- 20.4.1 Congregations and secretaries especially, are encouraged to subscribe to the Flam newsletter as soon as possible in order to stay informed of new opportunities and products which can benefit the church.
- 20.4.2 The meetings of regional synods and General Synod are encouraged to make use of Flam's group for accompaniment during synod meetings.

##### 20.5 FLAM: ACTIVITIES

General Synod considers whether the activities of Flam should be continued as a priority in the church and if approved, that the necessary funds be put aside for it as in the past.

##### 20.6 VONKK

General Synod supports the modus operandi of VONKK and encourages congregations to make use of these theologically and musically selected new classical music.

##### 20.7 VONKK EN FLAM: CCLI

General Synod requests congregations to register with CCLI for the use of VONKK and Flam-songs and to also be diligent in the accurate reporting to CCLI of VONKK and Flam-songs used.

##### 20.8 VONKK CD AND DVD

General Synod encourages congregations and members to purchase the new VONKK CD and DVD and to also encourage members to buy it.

##### 20.9 VONKK: COOPERATION WITH THE NHKA

General Synod supports the cooperation which has developed between the NHKA and VONKK and requests VONKK to continue building on this cooperation.

##### 20.10 VONKK AND TAIZÉ

General Synod supports the cooperation which has developed between VONKK and the Taizé-community, as well as international contacts and leadership on the different levels and request VONKK to continue building on it.

##### 20.11 VONKK: SONGS FOR VONKK

General Synod requests members, congregations, musicians and song writers to send songs which fulfil the necessary criteria to VONKK so that it can be made available for use throughout the church.

##### 20.12 VONKK AND EASTERN SYNOD'S SONG WRITING COMPETITION

General Synod supports the song writing competition organised by the Eastern Synod and VONKK and encourage songwriters to participate.

##### 20.13 VONKK: ACTIVITIES OF VONKK

General Synod approves the continuation of VONKK's activities in the church as a priority.

## 21. COPYRIGHT AND HYMNALS

- 21.1 General Synod agrees with the resolution of the Moderamen, viz.
- 21.1.1 that the generally accepted principle of royalties for the use of publications is also maintained in the case of church hymnals, because inter alia it enables publishers financially to continue to provide this service to the Church;
- 21.1.2 that any congregation which publishes a selection of hymns, makes itself liable for possible prosecution;
- 21.1.3 that congregations who wish to display hymns on screens, must abide by the following conditions:
- 21.1.3.1 they must get leave from the publisher to show the hymns concerned on screens or screening apparatus;
- 21.1.3.2 congregations and other church users must purchase electronic packages or overhead projector material for the screening of songs from the publisher, if available.
- 21.1.3.3 congregations and other church users must pay a licence fee to the publisher for the continuous right to screen hymns which they reproduce themselves.  
(Acts 1998, p 403, 2.5.4)
- 21.4 General Synod requests:
- 21.4.1 congregations not to put together illegal selections from existing hymnals of the Church or from other collections; where these in fact exist, no longer to use them; to honour copyright and royalties;
- 21.4.2 congregations to follow the prescribed route for the selection and use of new or other songs and not to sing songs which have not been approved (Acts 1998, p 433, 6.5).
- 21.5 General Synod reaffirms that the new *Liedboek van die Kerk* is the official hymnal of the Dutch Reformed Church and appeals to all the congregations to utilize it enthusiastically.
- 21.5.1 General Synod encourages congregations which project hymns electronically to ensure that the necessary licence(s) are taken out and renewed annually (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 536, 2.1.1.3 and p. 573: 8.3).

## 22. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### Resolutions 1998

- 21.1 General Synod affirms that baptismal members and confessing members are full members of the Church on the basis of the covenant.
- 21.2 General Synod maintains the practical distinction between baptismal members and confessing members as an expression of the differences in responsibility concerning membership.
- 21.3 General Synod resolves that the transfer of membership from one congregation to another should be effected by means of attestation. The certificate of attestation is a testimonial from the church council regarding the life and doctrine of a confessing member during his/her residence in the congregation. The name of a baptismal member is mentioned along with that of his/her parent(s) on the certificate of attestation. If this is not possible, a certificate of baptismal membership is provided as proof that the member has been baptised and, if possible, to witness to the life and doctrine of the member.
- 21.4 General Synod resolves that the church council must receive the member's certificate of attestation and accept the pastoral responsibility for the member. As such the church council has supervision over the life and doctrine of the member. The church council must ensure that the member is active in the congregation by making his/her talents available for the development of the congregation and the extension of the kingdom of God in the world.  
(Acts 1998, p 454, 4).

### Resolutions 2002

- 22.5 General Synod accepts the following basis for dealing with church membership:
- 22.5.1 Inclusion in the covenant (as endorsed by baptism) is the basis for full membership.
- 22.5.2 Membership of a congregation (not necessarily the one within whose geographical boundaries a person resides) is compulsory.
- 22.5.3 Deciding in which congregation someone becomes involved, is *primarily* the responsibility of the member.
- 22.5.4 Congregations maintain geographical designations in as much as the geographical designation is understood to be that region for which the congregation accepts the institutional responsibility to further the kingdom of God in all respects.
- 22.6 General Synod maintains the practice of designating congregations geographically.
- 22.7 General Synod resolves that the formal public confession of faith should bear witness to a personal faith in Jesus Christ, the acceptance of the Reformed doctrine as contained in the Old and New Testament and the articles of the Christian faith and the willingness to accept leadership within the congregation.
- 22.8 General Synod charges the General Committee for Youth to ensure that the teaching material purposefully addresses the doctrinal and practical equipping of members to accept their responsibility to serve in the congregation and community.
- 22.9 General Synod resolves that the distinction between baptismal and confessing membership does not signify dual membership, but is merely a distinction in the development process of membership.
- 22.10 As the development towards confessing membership is coupled with a willingness to accept greater responsibility for service and leadership in the congregation, General Synod resolves that only confessing members may be elected to the offices (ministry, leadership).
- 22.11 General Synod charges the General Committee for General Congregational Ministry to investigate the factors which influence their decision when members have to join a congregation. With this as background, the General Committee for General Congregational Ministry is charged to provide guidelines for congregations as soon as possible whereby members may be guided to become involved in congregations in a responsible and meaningful way.
- 22.12 General Synod resolves to accept 3.2.2.1 to 3.2.2.4 as practical guidelines for dealing with membership and certification of membership. The wording in the last paragraph of 3.2.2.2 is substituted with:
- (1) Church Councils who receive a member from outside the congregation's boundaries, notify the Church Council of the congregation where the member resides. The same wording also applies to 3.2.2.3.
  - (2) The General Committee for *Church Order* is charged to integrate the guidelines and include them in the *Church Order* instead of the current policy resolution 14.

Synod resolves that the practicalities of certification of attestation and specifically the procedure concerning membership beyond congregational boundaries, have immediate effect.

- 22.13 Members of other churches who apply to join, are dealt with in accordance with existing resolutions of General Synod. In cases where the baptism of such persons is recognised, they may become join the congregation and participate in the sacraments.
- 22.14 General Synod resolves to include the following Definitions concerning church membership in *The Church Order* : The term *church member* or *member* is an indication of a specific bond between a congregation and an individual whereby the congregation of Jesus Christ accepts the individual as part of the covenant relationship of that congregation with the Triune God and whereby the individual participates in the service of the congregation to God, fellow-beings and creation. A *baptismal member* in this context, is a member who has been baptised, but has not yet made a public confession of faith. A *confessing member* is a member who has made a public confession of faith within a worship service. This distinction does not signify dual membership but is merely an indication of the willingness of a member to accept greater responsibility for leadership in a congregation as a confessing member.
- 22.15 General Synod resolves that confessing membership may be terminated by an extreme act of discipline. Such a person can only become a confessing member again by confession of faith once the discipline has been repealed.
- 22.16 Because of the implications of this resolution of General Synod in the light of Art.10 of the *Church Order* (1998) and the Belgic Confession art. 16, General Synod resolves to refer the whole report of the Ad Hoc Committee for Church Membership (Agenda p. 306-311 point 2.6) to the General Committee for *Church Order* to reconsider all the recommendations. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 559: 2.6.4 and 560).

#### **Guidelines for dealing with membership in practice**

- 22.17 Persons may *move into* the geographical area of a specific congregation and request membership of that congregation.
- 22.17.1 Members either submit their own certificates of attestation to the new congregation or request the administrator of the congregation to apply for it from the previous congregation.
- 22.18 Persons may *move into* the geographical area of a specific congregation and request *membership of another congregation*.
- 22.18.1 Congregations should not automatically welcome such members if their choice is motivated by poor relationships between the person(s) and someone else in the congregation from which they come. In such cases the Church Council must offer pastoral guidance and resolve the problem.
- 22.18.2 Congregations should only accept members from beyond their geographical boundaries if it is practical to minister to such members where they live and it is practical for such members to be active members of the faith community. (An extreme example illustrates this: E.g. it would be impractical and unacceptable if a member from Laingsburg should decide to join Roodepoort. The Church Council of Roodepoort would only be able to accept such an application for recognition as a member if the Church Council was able to care for the member in Laingsburg and if the member in Laingsburg was able to be involved with the activities of the congregation in Roodepoort.)
- 22.18.3 Members submit a written request to the congregation where they wish to be involved as members and provide the necessary documentation such as certificates of attestation and certificates of baptism if required. The congregation which receives such an application may assist members in procuring these documents.
- 22.18.4 Church Councils which receive a member from beyond the boundaries of the congregation notify the Church Council of the congregation where the member resides.
- 22.19 Persons may *move into* the geographical area of a specific congregation and *wish to remain members of the congregation where they had been members*.
- 22.19.1 Church Councils which receive a member from beyond the boundaries of the congregation notify the Church Council of the congregation where the member resides.
- 22.20 Persons may *be members of a specific congregation for a period of time* (whether they are resident within the boundaries, or have obtained membership from outside the boundaries) *and decide to become members of another congregation*.
- 22.20.1 Members must inform the Church Council where they are members stating their reasons. If the Church Council is satisfied that the reasons for the change of membership are not malicious, the certificates of attestation may be transferred to the new congregation. (Acts General Synod 2002, p 559)

## **7. GUIDELINES FOR COMPENSATION TO EMPLOYERS**

### **Resolutions 2002**

- 23.1 Since the Dutch Reformed Church has broader church structures and does not merely consist of independent congregations, Church Councils and congregations may be expected to make their ministers and also church council members available for service to the broader church structures (presbytery, synod and General Synod).
- 23.2 When a minister is required to spend an extraordinary amount of time serving the broader church structures, the Church Council and the committee(s) concerned may consult each other regarding financial compensation to the Church Council or possible alternative arrangements – either the Church Council or the committee concerned may take the initiative. Consultations on financial compensation must be held ahead of time.
- 23.3 Assemblies and committees of the broader church structures must ensure that the work which a minister performs for the broader church structures is not done at the expense of his/her work in the congregation. If this is the case, the committee(s) must first attempt to distribute the work before seeking and obtaining financial compensation on the basis of a properly motivated request.
- 23.4 Committees may, after consultation with the responsible committee, arrange to pay special remuneration to a person for the performance of special services to a committee. Provision for this must be made in the budget of the committee.
- 23.5 Where necessary, persons providing services to a committee of a church assembly must be provided with an administrative infrastructure by the church assembly. Remuneration for secretarial services, photocopying, telephone and fax expenses come under this heading.
- 23.6 Fair remuneration of travel- and subsistence expenses and *per diem* should be paid to persons who serve in committees of the broader church structures. (Acts General Synod 2002, p. 570, 8.10.2.3).

### **Resolution 2011**

#### **23.7 Funds: buying of services**

General Synod to limit the buying of services to the expenses of functionaries. Ministers who are elected for specific service ministries, must carry out their work for the broader church within the guideline of 10% of their time. Task teams of General Synod must function in such a way that they employ their personnel within this guideline (Acts 2011,p 110, pt 23).

## CHURCH CORRECTION AND DISCIPLINE

### 24. GUIDELINES FOR RESOLVING CHURCH DISPUTES

- 24.1 Persons holding office and members first attempt to resolve mutual differences in a personal and pastoral manner.
- 24.2 A church assembly may, where conflict comes to its attention, nominate persons to facilitate its resolution.
- 24.3 The matter is resolved when:
  - 24.3.1 an alternative is found as a solution to the problem which is acceptable to everyone involved, or
  - 24.3.2 those concerned agree to differ and are reconciled.
- 24.4 In dealing with conflict the following apply inter alia:
  - 24.4.1 The exact nature and extent of the conflict should be clarified.
  - 24.4.2 All concerned should receive every opportunity to state their view of the matter.
  - 24.4.3 The facilitator(s) should always act in such a way that he/she/they do(es) not become involved in the conflict.
  - 24.4.4 All concerned should give their full co-operation to reach a solution.
  - 24.4.5 The facilitators report to the Church assembly which appointed them.
  - 24.4.6 A church assembly may also request another church assembly to take over the handling of the conflict.  
(Acts 1998, p 462, 2.10)

## EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE CHURCH

### 25. THE DR CHURCH AND THE CONSTITUTION

Agenda General Synod 2007, Part I, p 99, A.2.1 Report of the Moderamen pt 3.4.2 (also see Moderamen Addendum 1, p 111, as well as Agenda Part II, p 13).

General Synod approves the document "The DR Church and the Constitution" as a policy document of the DR Church. It also serves as point of departure for the work of the Parliamentary Desk.

### 26. SOUTH AFRICAN CHARTER OF RELIGIOUS RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (As endorsed on October 21 2010)

#### Preamble

- 26.1 WHEREAS human beings have inherent dignity, and a capacity and need to believe and organise their beliefs in accordance with their foundational documents, tenets of faith or traditions; and
- 26.2 WHEREAS this capacity and need determine their lives and are worthy of protection; and
- 26.3 WHEREAS religious belief embraces all of life, including the state, and the constitutional recognition and protection of the right to freedom of religion is an important mechanism for the equitable regulation of the relationship between the state and religious institutions; and
- 26.4 WHEREAS religious institutions are entitled to enjoy recognition, protection and co-operation in a constitutional state as institutions that function with jurisdictional independence; and
- 26.5 WHEREAS it is recognised that rights impose the corresponding duty on everyone in society to respect the rights of others; and
- 26.6 WHEREAS the state through its governing institutions has the responsibility to govern justly, constructively and impartially in the interest of everybody in society; and
- 26.7 WHEREAS religious belief may deepen our understanding of justice, love, compassion, cultural diversity, democracy, human dignity, equality, freedom, rights and obligations, as well as our understanding of the importance of community and relationships in our lives and in society, and may therefore contribute to the common good; and
- 26.8 WHEREAS the recognition and effective protection of the rights of religious communities and institutions will contribute to a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance among the people of South Africa,

#### NOW THEREFORE the following South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms is hereby enacted:

- 26.9 Every person has the right to believe according to their own religious or philosophical beliefs or convictions (hereinafter convictions), and to choose which faith, worldview, religion, or religious institution to subscribe to, affiliate with, or belong to.
- 26.10 No person may be forced to believe, what to believe or what not to believe, or to act against their convictions.
- 26.10.1 Every person has the right to change their faith, religion, convictions or religious institution, or to form a new religious community or religious institution.
- 26.10.2 Every person has the right to have their convictions reasonably accommodated.
- 26.10.3 Every person has the right on the ground of their convictions to refuse (a) to perform certain duties, or to participate or indirectly to assist in, certain activities, such as of a military or educational nature, or (b) to deliver, or to refer for, certain services, including medical or related (including pharmaceutical) services or procedures.
- 26.10.4 Every person has the right to have their convictions taken into account in receiving or withholding medical treatment.
- 26.10.5 No person may be subjected to any form of force or indoctrination that may destroy, change or compromise their religion, beliefs or worldview.
- 26.11 Every person has the right to the impartiality and protection of the state in respect of religion.



- 26.11.1 The state must create a positive and safe environment for the exercise of religious freedom, but may not promote, favour or prejudice a particular faith, religion or conviction, and may not indoctrinate anyone in respect of religion. In approving a plan for the development of land, the state must consider religious needs.
- 26.11.2 No person may be unfairly discriminated against on the ground of their faith, religion, or religious affiliation.
- 26.12 Subject to the duty of reasonable accommodation and the need to provide essential services, every person has the right to the private or public, and individual or joint, observance or exercise of their convictions, which may include but are not limited to reading and discussion of sacred texts, confession, proclamation, worship, prayer, witness, arrangements, attire, appearance, diet, customs, rituals and pilgrimages, and the observance of religious and other sacred days of rest, festivals and ceremonies.
- 26.12.1 Every person has the right to private access to sacred places and burial sites relevant to their convictions. Such access, and the preservation of such places and sites, must be regulated within the law and with due regard for property rights.
- 26.12.2 Every person has the right to associate with others, and to form, join and maintain religious and other associations, institutions and denominations, organise religious meetings and other collective activities, and establish and maintain places of religious practice, the sanctity of which shall be respected.
- 26.12.3 Every person has the right to communicate within the country and internationally with individuals and institutions, and to travel, visit, meet and enter into relationships or association with them.
- 26.12.4 Every person has the right to conduct single-faith religious observances, expression and activities in state or state-aided institutions, as long as such observances, expression and activities follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities, are conducted on an equitable basis, and attendance at them is free and voluntary.
- 26.13 Every person has the right to maintain traditions and systems of religious personal, matrimonial and family law that are consistent with the Constitution. Legislation that is consistent with the Constitution may be made to recognise marriages concluded under any tradition, or a system of religious, personal or family law, or to recognise systems of personal and family law under any tradition, or adhered to by persons professing a particular religion.
- 26.14 Every person has the right to freedom of expression in respect of religion.
- 26.14.1 Every person has the right (a) to make public statements and participate in public debate on religious grounds, (b) to produce, publish and disseminate religious publications and other religious material, and (c) to conduct scholarly research and related activities in accordance with their convictions.
- 26.14.2 Every person has the right to share their convictions with another consenting person.
- 26.14.3 Every religious institution has the right to have access to public media which access must be regulated fairly.
- 26.14.4 Every person has the right to religious dignity, which includes not to be victimised, ridiculed or slandered on the ground of their faith, religion, convictions or religious activities. No person may advocate hatred that is based on religion, and that constitutes incitement to violence or to cause physical harm.
- 26.15 Every person has the right to be educated or to educate their children, or have them educated, in accordance with their religious or philosophical convictions.
- 26.15.1 The state, including any public school, has the duty to respect this right and to inform and consult with parents on these matters. Parents may withdraw their children from school activities or programs inconsistent with their religious or philosophical convictions.
- 26.15.2 Every educational institution may adopt a particular religious or other ethos, as long as it is observed in an equitable, free, voluntary and non-discriminatory way, and with due regard to the rights of minorities.
- 26.15.3 Every private educational institution established on the basis of a particular religion, philosophy or faith may impart its religious or other convictions to all children enrolled in that institution, and may refuse to promote, teach or practice any religious or other conviction other than its own. Children enrolled in that institution (or their parents) who do not subscribe to the religious or other convictions practised in that institution waive their right to insist not to participate in the religious activities of the institution.
- 26.16 Every person has the right to receive and provide religious education, training and instruction. The state may subsidise such education, training and instruction.
- 26.17 Every religious institution has the right to institutional freedom of religion.
- 26.17.1 Every religious institution has the right (a) to determine its own confessions, doctrines and ordinances, (b) to decide for itself in all matters regarding its doctrines and ordinances, and (c) in accordance with the principles of tolerance, fairness, openness and accountability to regulate its own internal affairs, including organisational structures and procedures, the ordination, conditions of service, discipline and dismissal of office-bearers and members, the appointment, conditions of employment and dismissal of employees and volunteers, and membership requirements.
- 26.17.2 Every religious institution is recognised and protected as an institution that has authority over its own affairs, and towards which the state, through its governing institutions, is responsible for just, constructive and impartial government in the interest of everybody.
- 26.17.3 The state, including the judiciary, must respect the authority of every religious institution over its own affairs, and may not regulate or prescribe matters of doctrine and ordinances.
- 26.17.4 The confidentiality of the internal affairs and communications of a religious institution must be respected. The privileged nature of any religious communication that has been made with an expectation of confidentiality must be respected insofar as the interest of justice permits.
- 26.17.5 Every religious institution is subject to the law of the land. A religious institution must be able to justify any non-observance of a law resulting from the exercise of the rights in this Charter.
- 26.18 The state may allow tax, charitable and other benefits to any religious institution that qualifies as a juristic person.
- 26.19 Every person has the right, for religious purposes and in furthering their objectives, to solicit, receive, manage, allocate and spend voluntary financial and other forms of support and contributions. The confidentiality of such support and contributions must be respected.
- 26.20 Every person has the right on religious or other grounds, and in accordance with their ethos, and irrespective of whether they receive state-aid, and of whether they serve persons with different convictions, to conduct relief, upliftment, social justice, developmental,

charity and welfare work in the community, establish, maintain and contribute to charity and welfare associations, and solicit, manage, distribute and spend funds for this purpose.

## **27. CHURCH REUNIFICATION**

### **Resolutions 2004**

#### **27.1 Introduction**

The DR Church finds itself saddened and embarrassed by the fact that after many discussions over many years no real progress has been made as regards church reunification. The factors that complicate the process cannot be proffered as an excuse.

At the Synod meeting we, in the presence of God, once again became aware of the importance of church unity and we want to dedicate ourselves anew to this ideal. We believe that God expects us to heal old breaches as soon as possible and to come together as a full family of churches. We also believe that a divided church will find it extremely difficult to execute the calling that God has for us as a church. We hesitate to say, but we are convinced that in failing in this we not only fail God, but also fail our South African society – and perhaps the young people and children in particular.

We implore the other churches of the Family of DR Churches to become part of an inclusive reunification process in which we will attempt, as far as possible, to take all who are part of our churches together on the way forward.

We are committed to the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) who says to us that the Belhar Confession is very important to them and that they want to make it part of the new denomination. We are also committed to the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) who tell us that they don't see their way clear to completely underwrite Belhar as an article of faith.

As regards our own church we also have a responsibility towards many ministers and members of congregations who are ready for a close unity and who want to underwrite the Belhar Confession. However, we also have a responsibility towards many ministers and members of congregations who do not see their way open to underwrite the Belhar Confession.

We believe that we have a responsibility towards all these groups and we would want to commit ourselves to a process in which we as soon as possible want to become one in a "spacious house", providing ample space for everyone - with enough leeway for that about which we differ and that about which we concur.

It is our contention that it would be ironical that we would come to a point where we, on the basis of an article of faith which confesses the unity of the church, allow the schism of the church because we don't really believe that God can keep us together and bring us together in one reunified church.

We beg our brothers and sisters to become part of a speedy reunification in a broad and encompassing unity in which we can accept and adopt one another with all our baggage, but which also allows ample space for a process of growth in which we can get to know one another and learn to love one another.

We offer the following recommendation for the other members of our Family as to how we can meet each other somewhere in the middle to expedite our way forward. We also undertake to meet with our own congregations as soon as possible as regards this proposed process for church reunification.

It is our fervent hope that we can meet each other "somewhere in the middle" to form one reunified church who can bow together before Christ and before one another and go forward as a unified church.

#### **27.2 Commitment to church reunification**

The DR Church reaffirms anew its very serious and clear commitment to the restoration of one church denomination with the other three churches of the Family, namely the URCSA, the DRCA and the RCA. This commitment is grounded in the firm belief that this is what God wants of us – for the sake of his glory (John 17:43) and because of our common calling (Eph 4:4) and the way we can witness *now* in Africa. We believe that we as Family belong together, that we need each other and that we have an essential task in all our countries.

#### **27.3 We choose to become involved in the process once again and to grow together to a greater unity**

27.3.1 The DR Church is sorry that the reunification process seems to be bogged down. We are convinced that there are enough reasons why we can soon begin with the church reunification process:

- (1) We have a shared history and everyone knows that we belong together
- (2) All the churches accept the Formularies of Unity as a communal basis of confession.
- (3) In 1998 the General Synod already said that it accepts the essential content of the Belhar Confession.
- (4) Good working relations and structures already exist in many congregations, presbyteries and synods, and in some places unity structures have already been established.

27.3.2 We are of the opinion that these matters offer enough consensus of belief that we can start anew on the road to one denomination. We appeal to the other churches of our Family to help get the preparatory process on underway as soon as possible.

27.3.3 We firmly believe that we cannot go it alone on this road. The testimony of others who have gone before us help us to set our trust in the reconciling power of the gospel of Christ which can bring us nearer to one another and which can let us grow in our love and understanding of one another.

#### **27.4 This is a road that will ask much patience, understanding and accommodation from everyone**

History teaches that unification processes between churches are never simple. They ask spiritual dedication, patience, love and especially accommodation of everyone involved. This means that we will all have to be prepared to meet the other parties somewhere in the middle. In this process we will have to keep the questions and uncertainties of the people in mind and address it with great sensitivity, patience and much dialogue.

#### **27.5 The Belhar Confession**

Because the Belhar Confession is an article of faith of one of the churches of our family, we propose that it becomes one of the articles of faith of the restored church denomination (cf. resolutions General Synod 1998). We remain convinced that the essential content of Belhar (our commitment to the Biblical testimony on the Triune God, on the unity of the church, on justice and on reconciliation) is widely accepted (cf. resolutions General Synod 1998). This doesn't imply that all congregations, ministers, members of church councils and members of the new denomination should automatically underwrite this as an article of faith.

We remain convinced that differences concerning Belhar have more to do with historical, emotional and symbolical factors than with the essential content itself. It is very important that we talk about this so that we "do not dwell on the past" (Is 43:18), but are able to focus on our calling today and for the future. We commit ourselves to this.

#### **27.6 Model: a reunified denomination of autonomous local congregations**

We propose that the presbyterial-synodical form of church government be used for the organising of the new one denomination. This means that all congregations are combined as autonomous congregations in presbyteries, synods and one general synod. In this process there must be room for negotiation, new possibilities and growth towards each other.

#### **27.7 The right of congregations to decide on their own work is acknowledged**

All existing congregations of the unified denomination will be retained as they are and will all form part of the new denomination. Congregations will remain mutually open as regards attendance and membership. Where more than one congregation exists in the same region, these congregations can freely and without any coercion decide to organise their own affairs in the light of local needs. The decision-making abilities as regards the running of the congregation therefore remain with the local church councils.

#### **27.8 Other matters will be negotiated during the process**

There are a number of matters that will have to be negotiated when the preparatory process gets under way. This includes the writing of a new *Church Order*, the name of the church, theological training, the organisation of church activities, finances and church properties, language, et cetera. We are aware of the fact that some of these matters are very sensitive and emotional and that all negotiations regarding this must be handled with great wisdom, sensitivity and deliberation. Yet we are of the opinion that differences of opinion regarding these more practical matters should not hinder the process of church reunification.

#### **27.9 The fundamental role of collective discussion and reflection on all levels**

We believe that the process of church reunification will require penetrating discussion and guidance on all levels – especially on the ground level with congregations and members of the congregations. We commit ourselves to these discussions and we are convinced that it would be to everybody's advantage if there could be collective discussion. We are convinced that the process will be furthered if the discussions on unity can be conducted in the light of our communal calling in our countries and our communal belief in the gospel.

#### **27.10 Schism of the church should be avoided at all costs**

We are convinced that schism of any kind must be avoided at all costs in the restoration of one denomination. It has happened all too often – even in our reformed tradition – that church reunification processes resulted in church schism, the forming of new churches and new disagreements. We would like to handle the process in such a way that all ministers, congregations and members of congregations embark on this journey together.

#### **27.11 The bringing together of all reformed churches**

We sincerely hope that the reunification of the Family will be a step towards bringing together all the churches in South Africa of the reformed faith.

#### **27.12 Consultation of congregations**

Even though General Synod and its committees are tasked with leading, negotiating and making proposals as regards this process, we want to emphasise that we are committed to consult with all our congregations, and to test the water, to make sure that we will all go on this way together. We are convinced that church schism must be avoided at all costs. This will entail that we move forward sensitively and make allowances for all persons with questions and uncertainties.

#### **27.13 The process subsequently**

For the consultation process with the different synods and church councils in the DR Church as regards the reunification process in the DR Church Family, General Synod supplies the following guidelines:

- 27.13.1 The resolutions of the General Synod of 2004 on the restoration of one denomination in the DR Church Family (General Synodical Committee report 13:4 pt 4.3) have the *status of recommendations* in the further course of the discussion with this Family.
- 27.13.2 These recommendations are relayed to the synods, church councils and congregations for further comments and recommendations in a consultation process. The consultation process with church councils and congregations is the responsibility of each synod/synodical committee/moderamen and is executed in deliberation with the General Synodical Committee (GSC) (plus other experts) as members of the task team on church reunification so that the results are with the Moderamen later than the end of January 2006. The consultation process entails the following:
  - 27.13.2.1 The resolutions on church reunification of the General Synod 2004;
  - 27.13.2.2 The practical implications of elements of the process as visualised in these resolutions plus the stipulations of the *Church Order* (amongst others Article 36, 37 and 44) and the General Synod's resolution on a possible consensus or a two-thirds majority of church councils (in 1998 and 2002). In this regard the following at pt 3.10 of the resolutions of 2004 is important: "We would like to handle the process in such a way that all ministers, congregations and members of congregations will join us on this way."

- 27.13.3 At the end of this process of consultation the result will be processed by the task team and involved in the continued discussion in the DR Church Family. In the meantime the recommendations of the General Synod of 2004 are available for comments from the whole of the DR Church Family and forms part and parcel of the consultation and negotiation in the Family.
- 27.13.4 The testing of church councils and synods on "final" or end suggestions for the restoration of this denomination is left till a proper process of consultation and discussion with synods and congregations is in place according to the discernment of the General Synod or the Moderamen.
- 27.13.5 Real church unity will succeed or fail in the way that it becomes visible on congregational level. Congregations must therefore be motivated and helped in a concrete way to really cooperate with other congregations of the DR Church Family in their vicinity as well as with other cooperative structures. As this is a matter that is important for the whole of the denomination the Moderamen, in collaboration with synods and presbyteries, must handle it as a matter of urgent priority.

## Resolutions 2007

- 27.14 DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE FOUR CHURCHES** (cf. Agenda Part I p 393-396, A.5.1 Report by the Moderamen, pt 2.6 as well as Additional Reports pp 23-25 pt 1.1.4)
- 27.14.1 General Synod supports the initiatives launched by the Moderamen since June 2006 in conjunction with the Moderamens/Synodical Committees / Synodical Ministry Councils of all the synods as well as the Moderamens/Synodical Committees of the URCSA, DR Church and RCA for the reunification of the four churches in the DR Church family.
- 27.14.2. General Synod is grateful to the Lord for the new attitude which the Lord gave in the four churches since 2006 in striving for unity and the progress which could be made with regard to the building of relationships and finding consensus.
- 27.14.3 General Synod takes cognisance of the Achterbergh II documents.
- 27.14.4 Since the process between the four churches progressed to the extent that there is something concrete on the table, General Synod requests synods to pass on the Achterbergh II documents together with the decisions of General Synod 2004 for discussion and comment, in line with the following process:
- 27.14.4.1 By the end of July 2007 the Moderamen provides a document with guidelines for congregations on how to direct these discussion in the most constructive way;
- 27.14.4.2 The Moderamen draws up a pro-forma report form, to be included with the guidelines to congregations, which can be used by church assemblies to give their opinions and input;
- 27.14.4.3 the synods collect all the comments and input from congregations by no later than 1 December 2007 and pass it on to the office of the general secretary for processing;
- 27.14.4.4 This phase is purely for consultation, discussion, and input/comments.
- 27.14.5 General Synod further directs the Moderamen to, in the light of comments and input from congregations as well as the decisions by General Synod 2004, further discuss with the other three churches concrete proposals to church councils / congregations of all four churches. If possible, these concrete proposals are submitted by each church to church councils/congregations for approval. This is done by each church according to the procedures currently prescribed in that church's *Church Order*/decisions (The process for the DR Church is stated in Agenda Part I A.5.1 p 384 pt 14).
- 27.14.5 General Synod charges the Moderamen to provide further guidance in this process and, just as in the past months since June 2006, include the moderator's committees of the different synods in consensus-seeking negotiations with the other churches. The negotiations are to be guided by the decisions of 2004 as well as the result of the process in pt 4 above.
- 27.15 POSITION REGARDING CHURCH UNITY / CHURCH REUNIFICATION** (cf. Additional reports p 27 pt 1.2.2.2)
- General Synod once again confirms that with regard to the issue of church reunification, meetings of General Synod are no longer concerned with "whether" (in other words the desirability) of church reunification, but with the "how" (in other words with the best way in which to achieve it), since wide-ranging resolutions by which the DR Church commits itself to reunification with the other three churches of the DR Church Family have been passed since 1990 at various General Synods, and all the (regional) synods also passed clear resolutions in favour of church unity.
- 27.16 LEGAL ADVICE REGARDING CHURCH UNIFICATION** (cf. Agenda Part I Point for Discussion B.5.1 (Western Transvaal) p 495, Agenda Part II p 15, as well as T.2.1 First Report of the Temporary Committee for General and Ecumenical Affairs p 1 pt 2)
- General Synod takes cognisance of the Point for Discussion and requests the General Task Team Legal Affairs to handle the issue of legal advice and to pass such advice on to the organs of General Synod.
- 27.17 THEOLOGICAL TRAINING: INVOLVEMENT OF THE FAMILY OF THE DR CHURCHES IN DISCUSSION WITH A VIEW TO** (cf. Agenda Part I p 345, A.3.5 Report by the General Task Team for Theological Training, pt 3.2 as well as Agenda Part II p 15)
- 27.17.1 General Synod is grateful for the fact that the Family of DR Churches are involved in the discussion on theological training.
- 27.17.2 General Synod requests the General Committee for Theological Training to continue the consultation with the family of DR Churches by also determining how theological training can serve the unification process and further to attend to all matters regarding theological training, for example the locations for training, the length and contents of the course, etc.
- 27.18 TASK TEAM CHURCH REUNIFICATION**
- 27.18.1 General Synod decides to appoint a task team to streamline and synchronise the discussions- and decision-making processes in the different synods.
- 27.18.2 The Task Team consists of one person from each synod, appointed by the synods themselves.
- 27.18.3 The Task Team reports to the.
- 27.18.4 The General Synod Moderamen makes arrangements to budget for the work of the Task Team.
- 27.19 UNIFIED MINISTRY GROUP CARING AND WITNESS** (cf. Agenda Part I p 433, A.5.3 Report of the General Task team Caring and Witness, pt 1.3 as well as Agenda Part II p 15)
- General Synod

1. Approves the formation of the Unified Ministry Group for Caring and Witness and encourages synods strive to form a unified structure for Caring and Witness of their caring and witness ministries with the corresponding ministries of the other three churches in the DR Church Family.
2. Takes note that the General Committee for Witness Action may cease to exist with the formation of the United Ministry Group for Caring and Witness.

## **Resolutions 2011**

### **27.20 Introduction**

- 27.20.1 We have a deep conviction that the Spirit of God leads his church to pursue the unity of the church of Jesus Christ. For that reason we are sad and sorry that after many years of talks about church reunification we have not yet formed one church association. While there are factors which make the process very difficult, we are convinced that we have the responsibility to persist in this process with hope.
- 27.20.2 We confirm the importance of visible church unity and want to commit ourselves to the formation of one church association as expression of the unity. We believe that the reconciliation which Jesus Christ brings helps to heal old rifts and bring together the full family of churches. We also believe that a divided church makes it more difficult to fulfil our calling and that we do not discharge our calling to the Southern-African society in this way.
- 27.20.3 We plead with the other churches of the DR Church family for an inclusive process of reunification in which we strive as far as possible to take with us all who are part of our family on the way forward.
- 27.20.4 We are committed to the URCSA who tell us that Confession of Belhar is very important to them and that they want to make it part of the new association. We are committed to the DRCA and the RCA who tell us that they do not see their way open to fully subscribe to Belhar as a confession.
- 27.20.5 We recognise that there are many congregations, ministers and members in the DR Church who are ready for a close unity and who gladly subscribe to Belhar. We also recognise that there are many congregations, ministers and members in the DR Church who are ready for a close unity but for a variety of reasons do not see their way open to subscribe to Belhar.
- 27.20.6 We believe that we have a responsibility to all these groups. We are convinced that it is possible to become one within a "spacious house" which accommodates everyone – including our differences.
- 27.20.7 We deeply regret the possibility that a confession which professes the unity of the church, can keep the churches apart.
- 27.20.8 We plead with the family of DR Churches as well as our members for visible reunification within a spacious and broad unity in which we accept the differences which originated over a period of time, but are still convinced that a close and visible unity is possible by the Spirit. The diversity which flows from different gifts, our history, as well as differences of language and culture, enlarge and enrich us so that we can better serve each other and the world.
- 27.20.9 We see the church, and church reunification too, as an organic process of growth, which means that we need much patience and love for each other, but we always hold on to the truth that the Spirit is powerful to do much more than what we think or dream.
- 27.20.10 We present the following recommendation to the other members of the Family as our proposal as to how we can find each other and grow together.
- 27.20.11 We hope that we can give expression to visible unity and form one new reunified church structure. We are convinced that it will be to the honour of the Head of the church and to the benefit of all the churches and members of the Family of DR Churches.

### **27.21 Commitment to church reunification**

The DR Church reaffirms its serious and clear commitment to the restoration of one church denomination with the other three churches of the Family, namely the URCSA, the DRCA and the RCA. This commitment is based on the conviction that the Lord requires this of us – for the sake of his glory (John 17:23) and because of our common calling (Eph 4:4) and our witness in Africa – that the world may believe.

### **27.22 A choice to get the process going again quickly and to grow together towards a greater unity**

- 27.22.1 The DR Church is sorry that the reunification process progresses so slowly. However, our trust in the Lord of the church gives us hope that the process can continue:
  - (1) We have a shared history and we are profoundly impressed by the fact that all the churches in the family are convinced that we belong together;
  - (2) All the churches accept the Three Forms of Unity as a communal basis of confession.
  - (3) In 1998 the General Synod already said that it accepts the essential content of the Belhar Confession.
  - (4) Good working relations and structures already exist in many congregations, presbyteries and synods, and in some places unified structures have already been established.
  - (5) Members in the family of DR Churches give expression to the fact that faith is the only condition for membership by becoming by exchanging membership between churches in the family;
  - (6) The moratorium of the URCSA creates problems for the process. We trust that based on the spirit of Belhar, they will repeal it at their next General Synod.
- 27.22.2 We are convinced that the progress already made, our shared faith and tradition and especially the unlimited possibilities which the Spirit creates, offer the opportunity to work toward visible unity with new energy and commitment. We are convinced that we must spare no effort in removing the obstacles so that visible unity can be pursued as precious gift.
- 27.22.3 We firmly believe that we cannot go it alone on this road. The testimony of others who have gone before us help us to set our trust in the reconciling power of the gospel of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit which bring us closer together and which let us grow in our love and understanding of one another.
- 27.23 **A road that will ask much patience, understanding and accommodation from everyone**  
History teaches that unification processes between churches are never simple. It requires obedience, spiritual dedication, patience, love and especially accommodation of everyone involved. This means that we have to be discerning to find each other and be prepared to sacrifice for the sake of a matter of faith. Love means that we will have to reckon with the questions and uncertainties which people have and address it with discernment, much, patience and sensitivity.

### **27.24 The Belhar Confession**

- 27.24.1 After our processes of consultation we are thoroughly aware that
  - 27.24.1.1 For a variety of reasons many of the congregations and members of the DR Church do not want to accept the Confession of Belhar as a forth article of faith. It is important that we discuss all these issues so that we do not "dwell on the past" (Isaiah 43:18, but jointly focus on our calling today and for the future. We commit ourselves to this (see General Synod resolution 2004).

- 27.24.1.2 these differences can be overcome by making a thorough study of Belhar itself.
- 27.24.2 As agreed with the Task Team of the WCRC we are committed to again reflect thoroughly with the URCSA, by way of a task team, on how we can talk to each other about this Confession *as two churches jointly*.
- 27.24.3 We are still convinced that the essential content of the Confession of Belhar (our commitment to the Biblical testimony about the Triune God, the unity of the church, justice and reconciliation) is widely accepted (see General Synod resolution 1998).
- 27.24.4 Because the Confession of Belhar is a confession of one of the members of the Family churches, we suggest it be taken up as one of the confessions in the restored church structure. This does not imply that all congregations, ministers, church council members and members of the new church structure have to automatically accept it as a confession.
- 27.24.5 The following formulation of the confessional basis (taking pt 5.4 into account) for a reunited church is accepted as basis for negotiation with the family of DR Churches:
- 27.24.5.1 The teachings which the church confess in agreement with the Word of God, takes place in fellowship with the confession of our forefathers as stated in
- 27.24.5.1.1 the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and Athanasian Creed by which the Church expresses her bond with the universal Christian Church, and
- 27.24.5.1.2 the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordt by which the church expresses her bond with the reformed tradition.
- 27.24.5.2 Bound to our own context we acknowledge the Confession of Belhar.
- 27.24.5.3 The Church acknowledges the value of the Laudium Declaration for our missionary character.
- 27.24.5.4 The Church accepts that its task in confession-formation is not complete. In future changed circumstances and a better understanding of the Word of God may lead to the acceptance of more confessions or revision of existing confessions.
- 27.25 Model: a reunified denomination of autonomous local congregations**
- 27.25.1 We resolve that the presbyterial-synodical form of church government be used as model for structuring the one new one denomination. This means that all the congregations will be taken up in presbyteries, synods and one general synod as autonomous congregations.
- 27.25.2 In the process room must be left for negotiation, new possibilities and growth toward one another and the amalgamation of congregations.
- 27.26 The right of congregations to decide about their own work is recognised**
- All the congregations of the united church will remain as they are and all of them together will be the congregations of the new church structure. Congregations are mutually open for attendance and membership. Where more than one congregation exist in the same area, these congregations are free to organise their mutual affairs and composition spontaneously and without prescription or coercion in the light of local requirements. Church councils function according to the reformed nature as far as their authority to make decisions for congregations goes.
- 27.27 Other matters will be negotiated during the process**
- There are a number of matters that will have to be negotiated when the preparatory process gets under way. This includes the writing of a new church order, the name of the church, theological training, the organisation of church activities, finances and church properties, language, etc. We are aware of the fact that some of these matters are very sensitive and of an emotional nature and that all negotiations regarding them must be handled with great wisdom, sensitivity and deliberation. Yet we believe that differences of opinion regarding these more practical matters should not hinder the process of church reunification.
- 27.28 The fundamental role of collective discussion and reflection on all levels as well as external facilitation**
- 27.28.1 We believe that the process of church reunification will require penetrating discussion and guidance on all levels – especially on the ground level with congregations and members of the congregations. We commit ourselves to these discussions and we are convinced that it would be to everybody's advantage if there could be collective discussion. We are convinced that the process will be furthered if the discussions on unity can be conducted in the light of our communal calling in our countries and our communal faith in the gospel.
- 27.28.2 We are deeply conscious of the present inability of the partners to the discussion to restart the talks and get the negotiations going again themselves. We are grateful for the assistance of the WCRC and in particular the facilitator dr. Jerry Pillay. We declare our wholehearted commitment and cooperation for the facilitation process.
- 27.29 Schism of the church should be avoided at all costs**
- We express the conviction that schism must be avoided in the restoration of one denomination. It has happened all too often – even in our reformed tradition – that church reunification processes resulted in church schism, the forming of new churches and new disagreements. We would like to handle the process in such a way that all ministers, congregations and members of the churches will embark on this journey together.
- 27.30 Reconciliation**
- 27.30.1 We acknowledge that churches and church leaders who are not reconciled are part of the slow progress.
- 27.30.2 The litigation between the DRCA and the URCSA is a great source of concern. We would like to play a constructive role in resolving the tensions.
- 27.30.3 In the facilitated discussions, discussions are also taking place on restorative justice. We are also committed to be part of these discussions and find a solution.
- 27.30.4 We are convinced that a church truth-and-reconciliation process within the family of DR Churches will help the progression of church reunification processes. We wish to discuss this with the Family.
- 27.31 The bringing together of all reformed churches**
- We express the hope that the reunification of the family will be a step towards bringing together all the churches of the reformed faith in South Africa.
- 27.32 Consultation of congregations**
- 27.32.1 Congregations were consulted on the Achterbergh-proposals after the 2007 General Synod. We want to state clearly that it was not a ballot or a quantitative opinion poll. We tested the water in a consultative process.
- 27.32.2 General Synod is committed to consult with our congregations, and eventually test them. The denomination must be able to travel this road together. This requires a process in which we move ahead, but also treat one another with love and respect.
- 27.33 The process subsequently**
- 27.33.1 The resolutions of the General Synod of 2011 on the restoration of one denomination in the DR Church Family have the *status of policy decisions* for use in the further course of the discussion with this Family.

- 27.33.2 These recommendations are relayed to the synods, church councils and congregations for further comments and recommendations in a consultation process. The consultation process with church councils and congregations is the responsibility of each synod/synodical committee/moderamen and is executed in deliberation with the General Synodical Committee (GSC) (plus other experts) as members of the task team on church reunification so that the results are with the Moderamen later than the end of January 2006. The consultation process entails the following:
- 27.33.2.1 The resolutions on church reunification of the General Synod 2011;
- 27.33.2.2 The practical implications of elements of the process as visualised in these resolutions plus the stipulations of the *Church Order* (amongst others Article 36, 37 and 44) and the General Synod's resolution on a possible consensus or a two-thirds majority of church councils (in 1998 and 2002).
- 27.33.3 At the completion of these discussions discernment will be applied. The DR Church Family will, as far as possible, participate in the process of discernment.
- 27.33.4 The resolutions of General Synod 2011 are discussed in bilateral talks as well as combined meetings of the DR Church Family.
- 27.33.5 Testing of church councils and synods on "final" or end-suggestions for the restoration of this denomination is left till a proper process of discussions with synods and congregations has taken place in the judgment of General Synod or the Moderamen of General Synod..
- 27.33.6 Real church unity will succeed or fail in the way that it becomes visible on presbyterial- and congregational level. Presbyteries/congregations must therefore be motivated and helped in a concrete way to really cooperate with other presbyteries/congregations of the DR Church Family in their area as well as within other cooperative structures. As this is a matter that is important for the whole of the denomination, the Moderamen, in collaboration with and through synods and presbyteries, must handle it as a matter of urgent priority.
- 27.34 Approbation at church unification**  
See the Rule for the Increase, Combination, Unification and Amalgamation of Congregations, and the Forming of a New Church Structure, pt 6.
- 27.35 Synod formation**  
Since structural unity at General Synod level is necessarily a lengthy process, synods who are ready for it may unify structurally as synods without relinquishing the existing church associations. The intention here is to also promote the reunification process at General Synod level.
- 27.35.1 CHURCH REUNIFICATION: DR CHURCH, DRCA AND THE RCA** (Acts 2011, p 122, pt 17)  
The Temporary Committee Legal Affairs recommends that if the recommendation of the Moderamen regarding the reunification with the DRCA and RCA is approved, General Synod will instruct the General Task Team Legal Affairs to obtain legal advice so as to advise General Synod on its implementation on the way ahead.
- 27.35.2 CHURCH REUNIFICATION PROCESSES BETWEEN THE DR CHURCH, DRCA AND THE RCA** (Acts 2011, p 173, pt 16)  
General Synod takes cognisance with approval and gratitude of the request of the RCA/DRCA, but also of the request of the URCSA to take this reunification step with great wisdom and caution. In order not to estrange the URCSA with a shortcut, nor negate the RCA/DRCA request, General Synod refers the recommendation to the facilitation process under guidance of the WCRC.
- 27.35.3 CHURCH REUNIFICATION AND LITIGATION** (Acts 2011, p 106, pt 14)  
1. It is with sadness that General Synod takes cognisance of the destructive impact which years of litigation have had on the being of the church.  
2. General Synod confirms that in essence we are a church which functions theocratically/Christocratically – which always asks after Christ's Headship over us.  
3. General Synod task the General Task Team Legal Affairs to investigate all possible means to enable the church to once again do justice to the rule of Christ, by means of amendments to the Church Order and other acts, even legal processes, which can reverse the impact described in 2.5.1.  
(Acts 2011, pp 100-103, pt 5)
- 28. MINISTRY OF DELIVERANCE**
- 28.1 General Synod professes with joy the victory of Jesus Christ over all the manifestations of the devil, evil powers, wickedness and evil in this world.
- 28.2 General Synod recognizes that in many cases this victory is not yet fully visible, that we are often being overwhelmed by this wickedness that is larger than ourselves, particularly because of the weakness of man, the enticement of sin and the broken reality.
- 28.3 General Synod therefore accepts that as children of God we are still caught up in a spiritual battle against evil in all its manifestations in the world, but most of all against the wickedness within every man.
- 28.4 General Synod reaffirms that it is of the utmost importance that the church should live out of the faith-perspective that even though evil still threatens believers like a roaring lion en tempt them like an angel of the light, evil has been conquered and restricted by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit of God.
- 28.5 Therefore General Synod believes that any so-called ministry of deliverance which denies the spiritual truth about the life and work of Jesus and the Spirit of God, is no ministry of the gospel nor does it bring any freedom.
- 28.6 General Synod therefore encourages all believers to take up arms against evil by the power of the Holy Spirit (in the spirit of the victory of Jesus) by specifically focussing on the gracious work of salvation of Christ, in order that the church may display the true characteristics of Evangelical obedience (love, grace, forgiveness and reconciliation).
- 28.7 General Synod accepts the reality that there is a wide diversity of interpretations and application of the Biblical message regarding evil and demons in the DR Church. There is room for members who believe in the real and personal nature of the devil and demons, and there is room for members who have a different interpretation of what the Bible says about evil and devils.
- 28.8 General Synod believes that the testimony of ministers and members of the DR Church that in there ministry they met people of whom they are convinced that they were demonised by evil powers or demons – and also their testimony that a ministry of deliverance freed many of these people of their worries, fearfulness, hatred of God and his commandments – cannot be rejected forthwith. Synod accepts that there are different interpretations of the reality of demon possession. That also goes for the interpretation of who and what lies behind certain deliverances.
- 28.9 In view of this General Synod judges that a ministry of deliverance could, on specific conditions be permitted as an exceptional form of treatment-in-ministry rather than totally prohibiting it.  
The conditions under which such a ministry could be allowed, includes that:

- 28.9.1 the ministry of deliverance will be practised as an exceptional ministry and not as part of a routine pastorate;
- 28.9.2 it must be done under the supervision and with report to the church council and presbytery;
- 28.9.3 the person must also be referred for medical evaluation. A great responsibility rests on people who practise such a ministry to not cause damage to people by treating illnesses (including psychiatric disturbances) as being possessed or demoniacal;
- 28.9.4 there must carefully guarded against an animistic understanding of creation and against the tendency to think that that magical powers hide within certain objects; against long confrontational discussions with evil powers, as well as against the accompanying triumphalism which exudes sensational meetings of deliverance;
- 28.9.5 it must be taken into account that the Spirit of Christ lives in people who belong to Christ and profess his Name. Practices in ministry which scorns the all-sufficiency of the work of Christ and thereby denigrates the reformed profession of the complete work of salvation of the merciful God in Christ, are rejected.
- 28.10 General Synod realises that the different cultures in our country made us acutely aware of the multi-faceted nature of the view of Evil; that there are contexts within which there is a real fear for external evil powers which control many people's lives, and this life-experience must be taken seriously. General Synod therefore encourages its own office-bearers and members who work in such contexts to pay special attention to this in a responsible manner with the goal of proclaiming the radical redemption of Christ with fervour.

## **29. DAY OF THE COVENANT AS DAY OF RECONCILIATION**

(Acts 1994, pp 437, 560 and 694)

## **30. HOMOSEXUALITY**

### **Resolutions 2007**

- 30.1 The Bible is our point of departure and in our reflection on homosexuality we are honestly seeking for ways to interpret the Biblical values meaningfully within the context.
- 30.2 We accept the love of Christ as the only valid base attitude on which to base relationships within the faith community. All human beings are created in the image of God; the salvation in Christ is for all people and the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers. Therefore we accept the dignity of all human beings.
- 30.3 All people, regardless of their sexual orientation, are included in God's love and they are accepted as members of the church of Christ on the basis of their baptism and faith.
- 30.4 General Synod reaffirms its resolution of 2004 that, according to our understanding of the Bible, only the joining together of one man and one woman can be considered a marriage.
- 30.5 General Synod also reaffirms the resolution of 2004 that both heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity is to be condemned in the strongest terms.
- 30.6 General Synod resolves, in the light presently available to us, that homosexual relationships and marriages cannot be accepted as an alternative to marriage.
- 30.7 Granting competency to ministers is a function of General Synod. Synod decides that homosexual ministers or candidates for the ministry who practice a celibate life-style may be admitted to the office of minister.
- 30.8 General Synod recognises the discretion of church councils to deal with the differences on homosexuality in congregations in the spirit of Christian love.
- 30.9 General Synod states that the resolution of 8 points regarding homosexuality was formulated as an entity and should be read and understood as such.  
(Acts 2007, pp 204-205, points 12.2 and 12.3)

## **31. MARRIAGE AND LIVING TOGETHER**

### **Resolutions 2011**

- 31.1 General Synod takes cognisance of the report and expresses its appreciation for the committee's honest attempt to treat this contextual matter in a responsible manner.
- 31.2 General Synod realises that marriage as we know it today is the product of development over centuries. For that reason some marriage practises described in the Bible, for example levirate and the woman as a possession, can no longer serve as guidelines for the way Christian marriages should look like today.
- 31.3 General Synod acknowledges that relationships in which couples live together (which includes having sexual relationships) are a reality today. There are different reasons why people live together. Some people live together because they don't view sexual exclusivity as an important aspect of a relationship. These relationships are ethically unacceptable due to its non-permanent and selfish nature.
- 31.4 General Synod is also aware that there are other reasons why couples live together. Some live together with the argument that they value marriage highly and want to make sure that they are well suited, including sexually, before they marry. In many respects these relationships reflect the Biblical values of love, respect and, exclusivity and therefore cannot be condemned pure and simple.
- 31.5 General Synod is nevertheless convinced that the historical development of marriage in the Bible and in history offers us clear guidelines of what a Christian marriage is: a firm, formal agreement between two persons of the opposite sex to share their lives with each other in every respect in a life-long commitment in which sexuality has an exclusive character, blessed or confirmed by the church, concluded in the presence of witnesses, as far as possible within the fellowship of believers and preferably recognised by the state a legal marriage.
- 31.6 General Synod believes that in view of the above, believers can justifiably call marriage a gift from God and that sexual relationships outside such a firm, formal agreement do not fall within Christian parameters.
- 31.7 General Synod views the arrangement by medical and pension funds which take away benefits from people marry again after the death of a spouse as ethically problematic and undertake to again discuss this with the relevant authorities.
- 31.8 General Synod wants to encourage people who are living together in an ethical relationship and thus are living according to the Christian norms for marriage to make the bond even firmer by also putting the ecclesiastical and political aspects in place.
- 31.9 The decisions above are not to be viewed in isolation, but always in its entirety as the church's position with regard to unmarried couples living together.
- 31.10 General Synod accepts that all the implications of a confirmation of marriage by the church only has not been clarified and therefore is not in favour of such an arrangement at this stage.
- 31.11 MARRIAGE AND LIVING TOGETHER: PASTORAL CARE**



Synod requests ministers in their pastoral care of couples-in-relationship to help guide them with compassion to move from incomplete commitments to the inclusive, Biblical commitment of Christian marriage, and never to dilute this ideal.

**31.12 MARRIAGE: ROLE AND PLACE**

1. General Synod confirms the role and place of Christian marriage in the church and society and motivates ministers and members to promote its lasting nature.
2. General Synod request ministers and members to actively promote healthy marriages and to give their best effort with marriage preparation and marriage enrichment, since the idea and practice of marriages is being attenuated.
3. General Synod motivates congregations to annually celebrate world marriage day on the second Sunday in February.

**31.13 MARRIAGE AND LIVING TOGETHER: ASSIGNMENTS**

- 31.13.1 General Synod refers the question of the changing sexual framework and sexual values of our societies to a committee for study.
- 31.13.2 General Synod is requested to develop a course on marriage which can be presented to the youth and others voluntarily in the year after their profession of faith. The source of marital problems is then addressed and the symptoms (such as living together) are prevented. Presently marriage guidance is insufficient and the examples of parents and the media are followed automatically.
- 31.13.3 General Synod instructs the Moderamen to find ways to enter into discussions with government and other role players to find ways to eliminate the discrimination against persons in respect of the continued benefits of medical funds and pension schemes.  
(Acts 2011, pp 96-97, pt 17)

**A TO Z POLICY**

Available on the official website of the Dutch Reformed Church, documents (<http://www.ngkerk.org.za>, Algemene Sinode, dokumente)