

11. Deputies National Synod

11.1 REPORT DEPUTIES NATIONAL SYNOD – REPORT ABOUT STUDY – FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF SYNOD (Artt 11, 161, 211, 321, 325)

- A. Rev CA Jansen delivers the Report.
- B. **Decision:** Point 2.1.1 is referred to the Order Commission for a recommendation from a Commission pre-advice.
- C. Point 2.2.1 is referred to Petition of Protest Commission 2.
- D. Point 2.2.2 is referred to the Commission Deaconal Matters.
- E. Point 2.2.4 is referred to Commission Ecclesiastical Matters: Historical and Church Polity.
- F. Point 2.2.5 is referred to the Commission Ecumenicity.
- G. Point 2.2.6 is referred to Commission Christian Education.
- H. Dr D Lartz reports on behalf of the Order Commission as Commission pre-advice (2.1.1).
- I. Rev PJ Venter reports on behalf of the Petition of Protest Commission 2 (2.2.1).
- J. Dr EJ de Beer reports on behalf of the Commission Deaconal Matters (2.2.2).
- K. Dr WC Opperman reports on behalf of Commission Ecclesiastical Matters: Historical and Church Polity (2.2.4).
- L. Prof SJ van der Merwe reports on behalf of the Commission Ecumenicity (2.2.5).
- M. Rev JH Venter reports on behalf of the Commission Christian Education (2.2.6).

N. REPORT

1. Matters taken note of by Synod

1.1 *Commissions*

1.1.1 Commission National Synod 2006 (Acta 2006:826, art 24.3, refer F3)

1.1.2 Pending commissions General Synod 1988.

Decision: Noted.

1.2 *Commission National Synod 2006 – frequency and duration of Synods*

1.2.1 Procedures pertaining to Appeals and Petitions of Protest – a separate Report on such matters has been included in the Agenda. A Report on Petitions of Protest must also serve (Acta 2006:842)

1.2.2 All Reports and Points of Description ought to be primarily be finalised during the meeting (CO, art 30). Synod 1976 (Acta 1976:14-19, art 12) has, however, decided upon a procedure (that was followed during the following Synods). The Point of Description of Particular Synod North West in 2006 failed to incorporate this procedure (CO, art 46).

1.2.3 With regard to settlement of complaints/differences/disagreements previous Synods have already agreed to a procedure (Acta 1967:349-350; Acta 1991:526-528 and Acta 1994:51-55). For the prompt settlement of complaints/differences/disagreements both parties involved, *i.e.* the protestors as well as the church meetings involved in dealing with these matters should take note of CO, articles 30 and 46. The success in dealing with such matters will not be improved by separate procedures and structures. Both personal and shared responsibility is required. A natural result would be the shrinking of Agendas of Synods. The present reality of increasingly expanding Agendas creates the impression that church decisions are more frequently being made dependent on synods (Synodocracy), while the local church and the most important greater assembly (Classis – CO, art 41) would appear to take responsibility less frequently (CO, art 30).

1.2.4 Practical Matters

- 1.2.4.1 Expenses: the Point of Description (Acta 2006:824, 5) in any case indicates that the higher the frequency the higher the expenses incurred.
- 1.2.4.2 Deputy groups: Time allocation for executing and finalising assignments/commissions shrinks by one year. If the reality of work schedules is taken into consideration this seems to be impossible to achieve.
- 1.2.4.3 Representation: representatives are being removed from their normal work schedules on a regular basis for at least a week at a time in order to attend Synodal meetings and increasingly so. As it is, it is already difficult for a full-time worker also acting as elder, to be available as representative (compare Acta 2006:824, 7).
- 1.2.4.4 Most appropriate time: one of the major challenges of Synod-related planning lies in arranging accommodation for the representatives. The only time for doing so is in January. After middle January it becomes difficult to find appropriate accommodation in Potchefstroom (the result of fixed programmes for academy, sport and culture). An alternative would be to move Synod to another place, but on the whole the logistic structure is situated in the Administration Bureau and the Theological Seminary (the library included). Even temporary re-location would bring about many logistics-related problems and significant expenses.

1.2.5 Other Churches

- 1.2.5.1 The Dutch Reformed Church appoints Synodal Committees that are authorised to deal in assigned and preventative matters of their concern. Doing so, however, differs from CO, art 49.
- 1.2.5.2 Churches in the Netherlands: Unlike the realities encountered in South Africa, the Netherlands can be regarded as having the advantage of much shorter distances between places, which makes it easier for those churches to call for Greater Assemblies and to do so more often. To draw a comparison between them and the South African GKSA would be to underestimate the more complicated state of affairs in South Africa.

Decision: Points 1.2.1 to 1.2.5.2 noted.

1.3 *Pending matters General Synod*

- 1.3.1 Appeals by Professor L Floor, brother JPL Reinecke and Professor JJ van der Walt, as well as Reformed Church Linden against decision National Synod 1988 (compare Acta General Synod 1988:78-128). Both appeals were successful, which means that the matter should have been raised again during National Synod 1991. This, however, did not happen. As a pending matter (CO, art 30 and 46) the present Synod must take issue with it again and finalise it (Petition of Protest by Reformed Church Linden).
- 1.3.2 Deputies for Inter-church Diaconate Correspondence (compare Acta General Synod 1988:30-38 and 168, art 73.6).
- 1.3.3 Day of Humiliation (CO, art 66) (compare Acta General Synod 1988:40-46)
- 1.3.4 Completion of Church Order booklet (compare Acta General Synod 1988:56 & 57)
 - 1.3.4.1 Acta National Synod 1991:549-550 – CO, art 11
 - 1.3.4.2 Acta National Synod 1994:639 – changes to Church Order booklet
 - 1.3.4.3 Acta National Synod 1997:370 – CO, art 13
 - 1.3.4.4 Acta National Synod 1997:562 – CO, art 25
 - 1.3.4.5 Acta National Synod 1997:526-537 – CO, art 61, 76 & 77
 - 1.3.4.6 Acta National Synod 2003:247 – CO, art 20
- 1.3.5 Study of delegation REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council) (compare Acta General Synod 1988:62-77)
- 1.3.6 Point of Description Education (compare Acta General Synod 1988:144-146, 168, art 73.10)
- 1.3.7 Point of Description Classis (compare Acta General Synod 1988:146-160): this matter is included in the Report CO, art 48.

Decision: Points 1.3.1 to 1.3.7 noted.

2. Matters for Synod to decide about

The following are recommended:

2.1 *Procedure, frequency and duration of Synod*

2.1.1 That the present frequency remains unchanged, *i.e.* once every three years.

Decision: Approved.

2.1.2 That as many as possible of the matters be finalised during the Synod. Motivation: A period of three years would allow Deputies time to give a matter careful consideration and to conclude with well-motivated recommendations.

For decision: Acta 2009, 10.1 at 2.8.1.

2.1.3 That Synod would address a pastoral letter to Minor Assemblies to point out the responsibility accompanying the execution of CO, art 30 (Minor Assemblies take greater responsibility in finalising matters).

Decision: Approved.

2.2 *Matters pending*

2.2.1 Appeal lodged against National Synod 1988 – this matter was referred to Petition of Protest Committee in order to advise Synod to enable finalisation.

Decision: Approved.

Report : Commission Petitions of Protest

1. Assignment: Point 1.3.1 and 2.2.1.

National Synod 1991 neglected to review its decision with regard to the table of communion as a result of an earlier Petition of Protest from Reformed Church Linden. This unresolved matter (CO, artt 30 and 46) has to be taken into discussion and concluded by this Synod.

Decision: Note taken.

2. Matters that Synod should take note of

2.1 In 1988 National Synod had to take a Petition of Protest from the GK Linden against Synod decision 1930 into discussion.

2.2 The Petition of Protest of Linden was directed at 1930, specifically with regard to the table of communion.

2.2.1 Linden proposed, based on three grounds of protest, that to award an essential place to the table as fundamental element of the celebration of the Holy Communion can not be motivated from Scripture (see Acta National Synod 1988:56 ao).

2.2.2 The National Synod of 1988 did not let the petition of protest of the GK Linden succeed on any of the grounds.

2.3 The finding of the National Synod 1988 came down to a situation where an essential place is awarded to the table by the decision of 1930 and where the contrary could not be proven.

2.4 Two Appeals then served at the General Synod of 1988 against this decision of the National Synod of 1988 (Acta General Synod 1988:78-128).

2.4.1 Prof L Floor, br JPL Reinecke and prof JJ vd Walt as well as the GK Linden appealed in two separate Appeals.

2.4.2 Both these Appeals mainly attempted to indicate the essential elements of the celebration of the Holy Communion and wanted to refute the inseparable link established between the cup and the table by the decision of 1988 (Acta General Synod 1988:78-128).

2.5 Both these Appeals succeeded on most of their grounds, which overrules the decision of the National Synod 1988.

2.6 Infringement on rights was indicated and it was found that the physical table at the Holy Communion is not an essential element of the celebration of the Holy Communion.

Decision: Note taken of 2.1 to 2.6.

3. Implications of this decision

- 3.1 The National Synod has failed from 1988 onwards to take the implications of the succeeded Appeals that served at the General Synod of 1988 into discussion again and to conclude the matter.
- 3.2 This matter should have been dealt with by the National Synod of 1991, but this did not happen.

Decision: Note taken of 3.1 and 3.2.

4. Finding

- 4.1 Since 1988 much study has been conducted regarding the Holy Communion. Especially at the Synods that took place in 2000 (Acta 2000:400) and in 2003 fundamentally and thoroughly reconsidered the Holy Communion, and at these opportunities the essential and sacramental acts within the Holy Communion were clearly distinguished.
- 4.2 The National Synod in 2003 (Acta 2003:538) provided a clear principle framework in reaction to a number of Petitions of Protest, and this framework agreed on the essential and the sacramental acts.
- 4.3 This advice was offered to churches in their fulfilment of CO, art 62, and was accepted. The decisions that led to the principle framework replaced the decisions of 1927, 1930 and 1997.
- 4.4 The fact that these preceding decisions have been voided clearly brings the church political fact to the fore that the decisions at which the unconcluded Appeals were aimed, do not exist any longer.
- 4.5 The essential aspects at the celebration of the Holy Communion are the bread and the wine, and the communal drinking cup has a symbolic function that symbolises our spiritual unity in faith in Christ during the sacramental act. For this reason the cup has a prominent place and function together with the wine as one sign.
- 4.6 It is clear that the table of communion can not be awarded any essential meaning.
- 4.7 In the sacramental act it only serves as the carrier of the signs and the table as such does not play any role in the sacramental act.

Decision: Note taken of 4.1 to 4.7.

5. Recommendation

The decision of the General Synod 1988 to let both the mentioned Appeals succeed is upheld. The table of the Holy Communion has no essential meaning and plays no prominent role in the sacramental act.

Decision: Approved. The Synod takes not of the decision of the General Synod 1988.

- 2.1.1 Deputies for Interdenominational Deaconal correspondence – is referred to the Commission Deaconal matters to advise the Synod to conclude the matter.

Recommendation:

- 1) In the light of the merging of the different Synods, the assignment is given to the Synodal Deputies for Deaconal Matters (SDDS) to provide real and sustained assistance to people who do not have any food, clothing and shelter in cooperation with the local deaconates (Report SDDS, 4.2.1), as well as the decision that the SDDS should obtain information about the need of fellow believers within and without the GKSA (Report SDDS, 4.2.2).

Decision: Note taken.

- 2) The Synod deems that the situation that led to the different decisions by the General Synod (1980-1988) regarding deaconal assistance has already been resolved and has been accommodated by existing assignments to the SDDS (Report SDDS, 4.2.1 and 4.2.2).

Decision: Approved.

- 2.1.2 Day of humiliation (CO, art 66) – A report was taken into the Agenda and is referred to a Commission Society for advice to the Synod to conclude the matter.

For decision: See Acta 20.2.

2.1.3 Completion of Church Order booklet (see 1.3.4.1-1.3.4.6) – is referred to the Commission Church Polity with the attached Report (Addendum 1) to advise the Synod to conclude the matter.

Decision: Approved.

2.1.4 Study on delegation GES – is referred to the Commission Ecumenicity to advise the Synod regarding its conclusion.

Decision: This assignment falls away.

2.1.5 Point of Description Education – is referred to Commission CE to integrate with the Deputy report for conclusion.

Decision: Relevant assignments are incorporated with the assignments given to the appointed Deputies for Christian Education.