

### 15.3 REPORT DEPUTIES ECUMENICITY : INTERNATIONAL (Artt 121, 224, 227, 228, 271, 323, 335, 341)

- A. The vice-chairperson, rev SD Snyman, takes the chair.
- B. Rev HS Coetzee delivers the Report with further elucidation by dr CJ Smit regarding 1.2.3.
- C. **Decision:** The Report is referred to Commission Ecumenicity and Government.
- D. **Decision:** Financial matters are referred to the Commission for Finances.
- E. Prof SJ van der Merwe reports on behalf of the Commission Ecumenicity and Government.
- F. Rev J van Schaik reports on behalf of the Commission for Finances.
- G. Dr GJ Meijer presents the order recommendation regarding 13.12 of the Report.
- H. See decision on “*descensus*” at 12.3.11.

#### I. REPORT

##### 1. Introductory

###### To take cognisance of

##### 1.1 *With gratitude and acknowledgement*

The Deputies submit this Report in sincere acknowledgement,

- 1.1.1 firstly, of the Sole Ruler of the church that in this way allows for the GKSA to be of service worldwide, and increasingly so;
- 1.1.2 secondly, of Synod 2006 that assigned the responsibility for this task to the Deputies;
- 1.1.3 thirdly, of the churches for the compulsory collection without which this very necessary work would not have been possible.

##### 1.2 *General Administrative*

- 1.2.1 Deputies had six meetings during the term.
- 1.2.2 Dr CJ Smit acted as chairman and Dr J le Roux as scribe. Rev HS Coetzee has acted as scribe since 2007.
- 1.2.3 Deputies divided the work by functioning from the following Desks: a Desk for Africa, for North America, for South America, for the UK and Scotland, for the Netherlands and the rest of Europe, for Australia, and for the East. The names of the Deputies are listed along with the particular Desk of their involvement.
- 1.2.3 The Report has been divided according to the activities of each Desk. Groupings of church communities for each Desk occurs under different headings, *i.e. Ecumenical Unity, Ecumenical Relations and Ecumenical Contact.*
- 1.2.4 The appointed Advisers were fully involved in Deputies' activities. They deserve to be thanked for their excellent work and contributions, as well as for the fact that some of the professors assumed these duties concurrently with other commissions.
- 1.2.5 For the sake of being cost-effective Deputies combined visits as far as possible.
- 1.2.6 All church communities with which ecumenical unity, as well as ecumenical relations, is maintained received invitations to send Deputies/Observers.
- 1.2.7 All Deputies/Observers were informed that they would be welcome to attend Synod and that they would be granted an opportunity to convey congratulations to the GKSA on its 150-year jubileum. They would also have the opportunity to participate in discussions of Synod and on Committee, as would be determined by Moderamen.
- 1.2.8 All the documents accompanying this Report are open to inspection and will be kept in the archive.

##### 1.3 Decisions of previous Synods that are defining for the commissions to Deputies

- 1.3.1 Deputies Ecumenicity:Abroad – commissioned to constantly remain in communication with Reformed church communities abroad about matters of importance and mutual interest by strength of CO, art 49 (Acta, 1997:176, 3.1.1).
- 1.3.2 The eventual unity of the Reformed Churches must be viewed “as the most urgent and important ecumenic calling and mission” (Acta, 1970:69).

- 1.3.3 The purpose of ecumenical conversation is the conveyance of the universal gospel by means of which all churches are called to obedience to the Word of God, and called as a united church community according to the doctrine (Acta, 1994:195, 2.2.1.1; compare 1967:366).
- 1.3.4 A difference must be made between a calling to the living of unity that is limited (churches with the same doctrine, service and disciplinary measures) and the calling to ecumenicity which is not limited in the same way because the calling reaches out to all Christian churches and demands that the Word of God be obeyed by the community of believers (Acta, 1967:366).
- 1.3.5 Unity of the church must not be understood as meaning the similarity of local churches. It stands to reason that outward differences will present, e.g. in liturgy and methods of service as in local churches and churches in different parts of the world (Acta, 1997:171, 2.1.1.4).
- 1.3.6 The ecumenical call is therefore directed at “restoration and re-establishment of the unity of the church” (Acta, 1967:365).
- 1.3.7 In practising the ecumenical calling the focus is not on a discourse or conversation of how the church communities can visibly demonstrate unity, but on prophetic witness for the truth and against the lie, as well as on cooperation in as far as there is a mutual task that has to be taken care of (Acta, 1997:176, 3.2.1).
- 1.3.8 In the light of the fact that GKSA’s ecumenical calling is not limited of nature (as explained in 1.3.4 above) (Acta, 1976:366) and the reality of the necessity for expanded prophetic calling of the GKSA in South Africa, it is important that the GKSA (also through these Deputies) should contribute and witness accordingly at religious institutes, including the SA Board of Churches and similar organisations (Acta, 1997:177, 3.2.3).

**Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.3.8 noted.**

## **2. The Netherlands**

Responsible Deputies: Dr CJ Smit (s) and Prof A le R du Plooy.

### **Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity**

#### 2.1 *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (CGKN)*

##### 2.1.1 Mandate

The unity with CGKN is sustained, developed and confirmed by means of visits by representatives in as far as this is possible (Acta, 2006:196, 1.1.3.2).

##### 2.1.2 Execution of mandate

2.1.2.1 Discussions were held with Deputies CGKN on several occasions – also with regard to Synod 2007. Attention was paid mainly to a mutual arrangement of a conference with regard to hermeneutic views and exegetic implementation pertaining to women in office – together with the GKN(v), the NedlGK and the VGKSA. CGKN’s missionary-related involvement in Southern Africa also came under discussion, and the question of possible ways in which GKSA can cooperate and be of assistance in this matter.

2.1.2.2 The date for the possible intended mutual conference was postponed to a later date after thorough consideration by Deputies of the church communities involved.

2.1.2.3 The CGKN’s missionary-related involvement in Southern Africa reveals the following profile at present (via Prof Eric Peels):

##### **(i) Status of CGKN’s missionary-related involvement in SA**

De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (CGK) hebben zendingswerk in Zuid-Afrika, Botswana en Mozambique.

(a) Zuid-Afrika: in het westen van Mpumalanga ondersteunen de CGK de Gereformeerde Kerk van KwaNdebele financieel. De kerk is zelfstandig. Als adviseur van de kerkenraad treedt op dr CW (Kees) Buijs. Momenteel worden tien tot twaalf gemeenten met sterke kerkenraden

verzelfstandigd. Tot voor kort behoorde de kerk van KwaNdebele bij de classis Tswane. Er wordt over gedacht om zelf een classis te vormen.

- (b) Ook in KwaNdebele: dr CW Buijs geeft leiding aan de Mukhanyo Bible School, (niet te verwarren met het Mukhanyo Theological College) De Bijbelschool staat ten dienste van de onafhankelijke kerken. Voorgangers en gemeenteleden ontvangen een eenvoudige theologische scholing.
  - (c) Ook in KwaNdebele: de CGK ondersteunen het Mukhanyo Theological College. Vanaf 1 Januari 2008 is de steun ingeperkt tot het ter beschikking stellen van de gebouwen van het MTC (die eigendom zijn van de CGK) en studiebeurzen voor studenten uit de regio KwaNdebele tot een vastgesteld maximum.
  - (d) Zuid-Afrika: in Limpopo ondersteunen de CGK financieel vier gereformeerde kerken in Venda: Niani, Mutale, Soutpansberg en Funduzi. In het gebied van deze kerken hebben de CGK van 1960-1992 zendingswerk verricht. Vanaf 1992 zijn er telkens overeenkomsten gesloten met deze kerken. Daarnaast wordt substantiële steun verleend aan de Iyani Bible School.
- (ii) Vision and planning in future as pertaining to involvement with missionary work in Southern Africa and ways in which cooperation of GKSA can be utilised in this field**
- (a) Zending CGK richt zich hoe langer hoe meer op een projectmatige aanpak van het zendingswerk. Dat betekent dat er betrekkelijk kortlopende verplichtingen worden aangegaan waarvan meteen wordt vastgesteld voor hoe lang en met welk doel. Van kerkplanting verschuift de aandacht meer naar ondersteuning van plaatselijke Bijbelgetrouwe kerken én van het verstrekken van onderwijs aan lokale onafhankelijke kerken die Gereformeerd Bijbelonderwijs aanvaarden.
  - (b) Gaandeweg neemt de welvaart in Zuid-Afrika toe, terwijl de andere landen in de regio achter blijven. Dat zal op termijn betekenen dat aan de Zuid-Afrikaanse kerken gevraagd wordt meer en meer hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid te nemen in de opbouw van een geïntegreerd kerkelijk leven, terwijl de hulp vanuit Nederland – althans financieel – verschuift naar de armere landen (Botswana, Mozambique). In de contacten met de GKSA zal deze ontwikkeling zorgvuldig met elkaar doorgesproken moeten worden.
- (iii) CGKN's relationship with Synod Soutpansberg**
- (a) Er zijn momenteel geen nieuwe ontwikkelingen in de relatie met de synode Soutpansberg. Die relatie is goed – waarbij de broeders uit Venda weten van de bedenkingen die de CGKN hebben tegen hun houding in de nieuwere kerkelijke ontwikkelingen. De CGKN zijn teleurgesteld dat de kerken van Venda weer een eigen opleiding hebben opgestart na alle pogingen die vanuit Nederland zijn ondernomen om te bemiddelen in het geschil tussen de synode Soutpansberg en Potchefstroom.
  - (b) De CGK behouden zich het recht voor ook met andere kerken uit Venda (c.q. de classis Capricorn) goede contacten te hebben of te ontwikkelen. Er is hoop dat nieuwe generaties in Venda meer open zullen staan voor de verhoudingen in het nieuwe Zuid-Afrika.
- (iv) CGKN's relationship with the Reformed Church Botswana**
- Met de synode van de RCB hebben de CGKN nauwelijks contact. Van onze zendingswerkers krijgen wij de indruk dat de synode niet veel haast heeft om bijeen te komen. De contacten met de plaatselijke kerken in Gantsi en D'kar zijn goed. Onze werkers hebben alle ruimte om hun taak te vervullen.

**Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.1.2 noted.**

### 2.1.3 Recommendations

- 2.1.3.1 Synod enters on record its gratitude for the ecumenical unity with the CGKN, which for many years has proved to be a relation in unity of doctrine, service and disciplinary measures, and which all along finds practical expression on ecumenic level as can, for example, also be seen from 2.1.2.
- 2.1.3.2 This unity is, as far as is possible, being sustained and expanded by means of visits by Deputies as well as cooperation in practice - especially in the field of missionary work.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 2.2 *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (NedIGK)*

### 2.2.1 Mandate

- 2.2.1.1 Unity with the NedIGK is sustained, developed and confirmed by means of visits by representatives in as far as this is possible.
- 2.2.1.2 Synod encourages the growth of cooperation on levels of local missionary work.
- 2.2.1.3 Discourses about approaches and views with regard to hermeneutic view (compare 1.2.2.3–1.2.2.7 of Report 2006) and about relevant aspects of church polity are continued (Acta, 2006:197, 1.2.2.3-1.2.2.7).

### 2.2.2 Execution of Mandate

- 2.2.2.1 Discussions were held with Deputies NedIGK during the NedIGK Synod in May 2007. After adequate information had been considered thoroughly it would appear that no specific further investigation into the views and approaches of NedIGK with regard to hermeneutics is justified. No fundamental deviations from the traditional Reformed view could be detected.
- 2.2.2.2 At the mentioned Synod Dr CJ Smit conveyed GKSA's greetings. A variety of discussions on matters of mutual importance and interest took place with Deputies NedIGK, as well as with representatives from other church communities.
- 2.2.2.3 Involvement of NedIGK in missionary work of Southern Africa, especially involvement in Richmond, reveals the following profile at present (information by Rev Fritz Kruger): The Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken are still involved in missionary work in three areas in South Africa, all of which are situated in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **(i) The Richmond Area**

In the vicinity of Richmond and Durban 4 congregations were founded as a result of the work of the NGK, namely Ndaleni, Mid-Illovo, KwaMncane and iMbumbulu/Umlazi. Each congregation has a few points of ministry and/or smaller congregations. To a greater or lesser degree the Netherlands support all such congregations, especially financially. Each of these congregations has a reverend: at Ndaleni it is Rev SZ Phungula; at KwaMncane it is Rev JP Sithole; at Mid-Illovo it is Rev AB Zaca; at iMbumbulu/Umlazi work is done by Rev PT Hlela. At present two full-time missionaries are also working in this area, namely Rev Riens de Haan (residing at the eNkumane missionary post: [www.enkumane.co.za](http://www.enkumane.co.za)) and Rev Hans Vel-Tromp (since 2007). Rev Vel-Tromp's commission is mainly to train and equip Zulu-speaking congregations in and around Richmond, with a view to reinforcing and expanding congregations, growth of church and increased independence. Two retired missionaries also dwell in vicinity, namely Rev Hans Vonkeman and Dr Bob Wielenga. Rev Arie Reitsema returned to the Netherlands in 2007. The work in this area is supported by NGK of Kampen (Netherlands) and other supporting churches. (A fifth congregation of the Durban area is the Reformed Church KwaMashu, that is being sustained by churches of the former Classis of Natal. This congregation is at present, according to an agreement with GK KwaMncane, being served by Rev PJ Sithole.)

**(ii) The Nqutu District**

In the huge area between Blood River and Babanango, all the way alongside Buffels River, there are at present another four congregations that came into existence because of the work of missionaries from the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken. These congregations are eKwandeni, Munywana, KwaNdindindi and iSandlwana. Each of the congregations has a few points of ministry and/or smaller congregations. These congregations are supported mainly by the *Nederlands Gereformeerde Zendingvereniging Nqutu* ([www.ngzn.org](http://www.ngzn.org)) [meaning *Missionary Society*], that consists of former missionary-sending churches of Leerdam, Bunschoten-Spakenburg and Den Haag, plus also approximately 32 linked churches. Three of these congregations have an own minister at present, and a fourth will be ordained within the nearby future. At eKwandeni the Rev PB Motloug is working; at Munywana the Rev SJ Ntuli; at KwaNdindindi the Rev MS Mbatha and at iSandlwana brother BW Khumalo will soon be ordained. At the congregation of eKwandeni part of the work is being supported by the Reformed Churches Vryheid and Newcastle. At present two missionaries are doing full-time work in this area: Rev Tjeerd Baron and Dr Fritz Krüger. The latter's commission includes emphasis on training and equipping with a view to reinforcement and growth of the local churches. Rev Rinze Keesenberg, one of the pioneers of missionary work at Nqutu, died in August 2007. Rev Wim Kurpershoek currently lives in Pretoria. Two other missionaries who had previously worked in this area returned to the Netherlands, namely Rev Piet Busstra and Rev Folkert Pomstra.

**(iii) Madadeni/Osizweni**

In this big township Madadeni/Osizweni, adjacent to Newcastle, Rev Sietse Veenstra has now been working for approximately the past 6 years in commission of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerk Wormer, supported by *Stichting Zending Zuid Afrika* [meaning *Foundation of Missionary Work in South Africa*]. As no church council has yet been established here, Classis iTheku has temporarily placed work under the supervision of the Reformed Church eKwandeni. Rev Veenstra cooperates with the Reformed Church Newcastle with regard to part of the work being done at Arbor Park Newcastle.

2.2.2.4 Compare 2.1.2.2 with regard to the possible conference on hermeneutics.

**Decision: Points 2.2 to 2.2.2.4 noted.**

**2.2.3 Recommendations**

2.2.3.1 Synod enters on record its gratitude for the ecumenical unity with the NedIGK, which for many years has proved to be a relation in unity of doctrine, service and disciplinary measures, and which all along finds practical expression on ecumenic level as can, for example, also be seen from 2.2.2.

2.2.3.2 This unity is, as far as is possible, being sustained and expanded by means of visits by Deputies as well as cooperation in practice.

**Decision: Approved.**

**2.3 *Gereformeerde Kerke Nederland Vrijgemaakt (GKN(V))***

**2.3.1 Mandate**

That the meaning of ecumenic unity between the two church communities on either side be reinforced and deepened and that it will be brought into effect in practice (Acta, 2006:213, 2.1.3.2).

**2.3.2 Execution of mandate**

2.3.2.1 Compare 2.1.2.2 with regard to the possible conference on hermeneutics.

2.3.2.2 The meaning that both church communities attach to 'ecumenical unity' or 'church-related correspondence' was mentioned several times and in principle there is agreement. Additional discussion is necessary to determine the practical content

and the areas of cooperation between the two church communities to further enhance the concept of ecumenical unity.

2.3.2.3 Dr CJ Smit and Prof A le R du Plooy attended the Synod of the GKN(V) at Zwolle towards the end of May and beginning of June 2008. The following serves to be taken cognisance of:

- (i) Dr CJ Smit conveyed greetings on behalf of the GKSA.
- (ii) On request Synod was furnished with advice and information pertaining to GKSA's studies and views on the task, position and role of women in church in general as well as in the particular services. The GKN(V) is currently in the process of re-considering the matter, and is doing so at hand of a Report containing opinions and sentiments together with statistic information and other communication of churches.
- (iii) Deputies were received in a friendly manner and specific conversations were conducted with a Committee of Synod, the topic being mutual relationships. Information was exchanged.
- (iv) All the churches that maintain an ecumenical relationship with GKN(V) took part in discussions. During these discussions elucidating information was gained about the state of affairs of churches in Africa, e.g. Kenya, that is subjected to political tension and where church property was burnt down, forcing church members to flee.

**Decision: Points 2.3.1 to 2.3.2.3 noted.**

#### 2.3.3 Recommendations

2.3.3.1 Synod enters on record its gratitude for the ecumenical unity with the GKN(V), in which unity with regard to doctrine, service and disciplinary measures find expression.

2.3.3.2 This unity is, as far as is possible, being sustained and expanded by means of visits by Deputies as well as cooperation in practice.

2.3.3.3 Continuing discussions must follow in order to determine the nature and content – as well as the relevant areas – to be assigned to the concept of ecumenical unity between the two church communities, *inter alia*, cooperation where both church communities are involved, e.g. with regard to Sri Lanka.

**Decision: Approved. Possibilities for the practical content of 2.3.3.3 is to have discussions with them regarding matters that Synod are handling, and to possibly become involved in their national relationships in the NetherlanRev between churches. In this manner our experiences with relationships with national churches can be shared with them.**

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Contact***

2.4 *Protestantse Kerken Nederland (PKN)*

#### 2.4.1 Mandate

Contact with PKN is being carried on by Deputies (Acta, 2006:222, 3.6.3).

#### 2.4.2 Execution of mandate

After repeated efforts to establish contact electronically with PKN's central office, no reply was received.

**Decision: Points 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 noted.**

#### 2.4.3 Recommendation

Efforts to obtain contact with PKN to be continued by Deputies.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already made – Deputies Acta.**

### **3. Remaining parts of Europe**

Responsible Deputies: Dr CJ Smit (s) and Proff A le R du Plooy and FP Viljoen.

### 3.1 *Spain*

#### 3.1.1 Mandate

Deputies are commissioned to investigate newly-founded / newly-formed churches in Europe and to make contact with them (Acta, 2006:218, 3.1.1).

#### 3.1.2 Execution of mandate

3.1.2.1 In November 2007 Prof A le R du Plooy, sponsored by the Faculty of Theology, visited the Theological Seminary at El Escorial, north of Madrid in Spain. Rev Manie Taute, at present missionary of the DR Church in Portugal (earlier from Hefsiba in Mosambique) established contact between him and Rev Sergio Rossell (and his Afrikaans wife, Annette) who works there and who is a post-graduate student of UP (Prof Stephan Joubert).

3.1.2.2 The Theological Seminary at El Escorial is under supervision of the Reformed Churches as well as the Baptist Churches in Spain. Both groups joined hands in assuming responsibility for theological education and training.

3.1.2.3 Reformed Churches in Spain are scarce, and apart from this group and its involvement, another still smaller group exists and was represented at the ICRC meeting at Pretoria in October 2005. According to brothers at El Escorial it is evident that this remarkably small group is in the process of disintegrating.

3.1.2.4 Reformed people with whom contact was possible appreciated the opportunity and expressed a desire to make use of GKSA's theological literature. The question is whether it will be practically possible to overcome the language barrier.

**Decision: Points 3.1.1 to 3.1.2.4 noted.**

#### 3.1.3 Recommendations

3.1.3.1 That cognisance is taken of the existence of the Reformed (and Baptist) Theological Seminary and the few Reformed Churches at El Escorial, and that these are functioning under difficult circumstances.

3.1.3.2 That Deputies expand and intensify contact with the Reformed Churches in Spain and that they determine what the present state of affairs is with the smaller groups of Reformed members in Spain and who are represented on ICRC.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 3.2 *France*

#### 3.2.1 Mandate

Deputies are commissioned to investigate newly-founded / newly-formed churches in Europe and to make contact with them (Acta, 2006:218, 3.1.1).

#### 3.2.2 Execution of mandate

3.2.2.1 Proff A le R du Plooy and FP Viljoen established contact with the theological training organisation for Reformed Churches in France (Aux-en-Provence).

3.2.2.2 Discussions with the Reformed Churches in France centred around theological education and training, the internal church-related relationships locally and also especially the possibilities of establishment of sound relationships with the GKSA. The contact was positive and should be developed as far as possible.

**Decision: Points 3.2.1 to 3.2.2.2 noted.**

#### 3.2.3 Recommendations

Deputies endeavour to expand and intensify, where possible, contact with the French Reformed Churches.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 3.3 *Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCCEE) and Karolyi Gaspar Institute or Theology and Missions (KGITM) – Hungary*

#### 3.3.1 Mandate

The ecumenical contact that has been established is, where practically possible, continued (Acta, 2006:222, 3.7.3).

### 3.3.2 Execution of mandate

3.3.2.1 In response to an invitation from Prof Peter Balla Prof Du Plooy visited the Theological Seminary in Budapest and had opportunity to observe guest colleagues.

3.3.2.2 Advantage was also taken of the opportunity to confirm church-related contact with the Reformed training centre that belongs to Hungary.

**Decision: Points 3.3.1 to 3.3.2.2 noted.**

### 3.3.3 Recommendation

Deputies expand contact, as far as possible, with Reformed Churches in Hungary.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 3.4 *General recommendation about remaining parts of Europe*

Reformed Churches do exist in other European countries, but the GKSA lacks relationships with them. Such other countries include, *inter alia*, the Czech Republic, Germany, Switzerland, Austria and others. For the sake of Reformed Churches in these countries as well as for the sake of ministry to Reformed members of church from South Africa who live in these countries, Deputies are commissioned to develop contact with Reformed Churches in these parts of the world, and to do so to an ever-growing extent.

**Decision: Approved with the addition: "Deputies can take up more contact with Eastern European churches through the Dutch churches who already have contact with these churches."**

## 4. **The East (Orient)**

Responsible Deputies: Rev BCG Fourie (s) and Prof CFC Coetzee.

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity***

#### 4.1 *Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin) PCK(K)*

##### 4.1.1 Mandate

4.1.1.1 The unity with the PCK(K) is sustained and reinforced as far as possible by means of visits by representatives.

4.1.1.2 Deputies are commissioned to take up ecumenical contact with the Korean congregation in Johannesburg, South Africa (Acta, 2006:198, 133).

##### 4.1.2 Execution of mandate

4.1.2.1 Prof CFC Coetzee and Rev BCG Fourie paid a visit to the Deputies of the PCK(K).

4.1.2.2 The National Synod of the Kosin churches held a meeting at the Theological Seminary near Seoul. Altogether 510 representatives of the respective Classes attended the meeting. An English message of greetings was conveyed, while the Korean translation of it appeared on the screen. Dr Paul Bae responded to the message and expressed appreciation. Most of the matters discussed during the meeting were domestic of nature and no issues of contention served at the meeting.

4.1.2.3 On invitation from Dr Bae we were accommodated luxuriously in Pusan, mother city to the Kosin churches. Opportunity to minister the Word in one of the local churches was provided for. The Kosin University was also visited. It is under trusteeship of the churches. It is a full status Christian university, and here Prof Coetzee led the service. The present Rector of the university had previously studied Sciences of Education at PU, South Africa but at the time of our visit happened to be in the RSA. The visit to the Kosin Hospital was impressive. The hospital is also under trusteeship of the churches and it provides complete medical care as well as training for medical practitioners.

4.1.2.4 Prosperity of the Korean churches is evident. The atmosphere among members speaks of goodwill, hearty sharing, generosity and a spirit of sacrifice. This is mirrored in the church buildings and other church facilities. Much room is allowed for providing for children of all age groups. In all churches daily sessions of prayer are held. On Sundays at least three services of worship are conducted and a

congregational meal is also provided. The increase in number of members can still be observed, but does not take place at the same rate as in the past.

4.1.2.5 The Korean churches are serious about missionary affairs and the accompanying responsibilities. There are chaplain service groups in all segments of the army, and these are financially taken care of by the churches. Furthermore about 250 missionaries of the Korean churches are actively busy worldwide. The local congregations all bear witness to their focus on missionary affairs. In South Africa Korean students are working in the vicinity of Verena, Middelburg and Witbank. Such missionaries are amply supported by Korea as well as by visitors and delegates from the Kosin Hospital. Closer contact with the missionaries would serve a good purpose. The churches, especially in Pusan, are in constant contact with the leaders of the underground protestant churches in China, They are being prayed for and equipment and training are being offered to them.

4.1.2.6 It is obvious that there is a decline in the number of theological students from Kosin who prefer to study at the Theological Seminary of Potchefstroom.

**Decision: Points 4.1.1 to 4.1.2.6 noted.**

#### 4.1.3 Recommendations

4.1.3.1 Ecumenical unity with the PCK (Kosin) is confirmed and extended.

4.1.3.2 The activities of the Korean missionaries are brought to the attention of the local churches and receive pertinent attention as part of the Deputy's assignment regarding coordination. According to information the PCK sometimes acts very independently since the GKSA is initially used for assistance with mission work, and later an own church is established. The result is that there are churches in South Africa without any relation to the GKSA. For this reason the coordination has to receive attention. The PCK should be approached in this regard, and this matter should be sorted by means of contact with local churches and the churches in Korea. In this manner the unity of churches will come to its right so that the fruits of the mission work in SA are included.

4.1.3.3 The mission of the Kosin Churches in China and surrounding countries is dedicated to God in prayer and an article will be included in the *Die Kerkblad* on the matter.

4.1.3.4 The churches in Bloemfontein and Midrand receive attention with the aim of adding them to the GKSA and expansion of activities.

4.1.3.5 The Deputies receive the assignment to pay attention to the fact that Korean theological students come to study in Potchefstroom less and less. This matter should be addressed in cooperation with the Theological School. It is further recommended that contact is resumed with alumni, so that intending students may be motivated to study at the TSP.

**Decision: Approved – additions already added – Deputies Acta.**

## 4.2 *Reformed Church Japan (RCJ)*

### 4.2.1 Mandate

Synod decides that the relationship of unity be developed further by regular visits (Acta, 2006:199, 1.4.3.2).

### 4.2.2 Execution of mandate

4.2.2.1 Greetings were conveyed to churches in Japan, also on behalf of the Kosin churches in South Korea. The meeting was attended by the Deputies and by Proff Yasonori Ichikawa, Nobunari Makino, di Yasohiro Hakamata (Sonada) and Ken Iwasaki (Shinko) of the RCJ.

4.2.2.2 Ecumenical unity on the part of the GKSA was re-established. Our version of the concentric ecumenical contact was presented to them, according to which we live in full ecumenical unity with the churches in Japan. In spite of the name *Reformed* the RCJ is a Presbyterian church. They also have a threefold concentric approach according to which we have relations with them in their second circle (compare 5). Their closest relation is known as: *Mission co-operation* where they have relations with the OPC, PCUSA, Kosin churches, NGKSA and NHKA. Their second circle is

kown as *fraternal relations*, where ideas are exchanged, certain mutual matters addressed and mutual meetings arranged. On this level they have relations with the GKSA, CGKN, CRC in the Philippines, NedIGK and GKN(V). The third circle comprises *contact correspondence* where contact is, *inter alia*, upheld with CRC Myanmar.

- 4.2.2.3 The Theological Seminary in Kobe is at present manned by two full-time professors only, and the remaining lectures are presented by different ministers of the denomination. The facilities are of a high standard. The focus is on the needs of the students. The library is equipped with 35 000 volumes and also their Calvin Institute is equipped with representative sources. Internet is at the disposal of each of the 26 students.
- 4.2.2.4 The RCJ's missionary-related activities extend to Indonesia where one missionary is working. But, Japan itself is a missionary field – the country's population amounts to 120 million people and of these only one per cent are Christians. The churches are small and Japan's culture makes evangelisation difficult. The Japanese are private and reserved and do not do things that will disturb the observable peace or equilibrium. Moral standards, however, are low and the percentage of suicides and divorces is exceptionally high. Homosexuality is still on the increase.

**Decision: Points 4.2.1 to 4.2.2.4 noted.**

#### 4.2.3 Recommendation

- 4.2.3.1 Ecumenic unity with Japan is re-established and developed further.
- 4.2.3.2 The way in which GKSA values ecumenical unity must be discussed with the Deputies of the RCJ to reach improved mutual understanding.
- 4.2.3.3 The possibility of cooperation on the levels of missionary work and theological training must be investigated.
- 4.2.3.4 Deputies pay attention to possible cooperation with their "*Mission co-operation*" which the RCJ has with the DR church (Synod OFS). (Information on this is contained in the Appendix.)

**Decision: Approved.**

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Contact***

#### 4.3 *Sri Lanka (LRC)*

##### 4.3.1 Mandate

Deputies monitor the situation and further development and report on the matter at next Synod (Acta, 2006:218, 3.2.3).

##### 4.3.2 Execution of mandate

- 4.3.2.1 The LRC has grown smaller and uncertainty exists about number of members.
- 4.3.2.2 A successful project has been launched, namely that a private Christian school was founded. There is, however, a shortage of teachers.
- 4.3.2.3 Three prospective candidates for distance telematic studies completed application forms and forwarded them. These have been referred to TSP for further response.
- 4.3.2.4 A visit was planned for 2008 but could not realise because of financial restrictions.

**Decision: Points 4.3.1 to 4.3.2.4 noted.**

##### 4.3.3 Recommendations

- 4.3.3.1 Deputies investigate the possibilities of cooperation with GKN(V) with regard to hand-in-hand involvement in the LRC.
- 4.3.3.2 Contact with LRC should be enhanced by Deputies by paying visits as far as possible.

**Decision: Approved.**

#### 4.4 *Indonesia*

##### 4.4.1 Mandate

- 4.4.1.1 Closer relationships with churches in West Timor by means of follow-up visits.

- 4.4.1.2 Indonesian churches and individual Christians suffering because of oppression are being prayed for.
- 4.4.1.3 Further ecumenical contact is sought with the Reformed churches of Java with a view to ecumenical relationships.
- 4.4.1.4 Deputies send one or more representatives to further the ecumenical contact and to investigate in which way the GKSA and the Indonesian churches may cooperate, especially as far as training is concerned (Acta, 2006:220, 3.3.3).

#### 4.4.2 Execution of the mandate

- 4.4.2.1 A formal request for acknowledgement of ecumenical unity has been received from the Reformed Churches in West Timor.
- 4.4.2.2 A visit scheduled for 2008 (to coincide with a visit to Sri Lanka) was not possible because of financial restrictions.
- 4.4.2.3 The churches in Java keep up ecumenical contact with several church communities within the REC.

**Decision: Points 4.4.1 to 4.4.2.3 noted.**

#### 4.4.3 Recommendations

- 4.4.3.1 The Deputies investigate the recognition of ecumenical unity with the Reformed Churches in West-Timor. For this purpose the unity of doctrine, service and punishment with the Reformed Churches in West-Timor should be evaluated.
- 4.4.3.2 The Deputies should investigate the possibility of cooperation with regard to theological training in Java in cooperation with the theological school.
- 4.4.3.3 The cooperation of church communities with whom the GKSA has ecumenical unity should be gained for the sake of involvement with the churches of Indonesia (see 4.3.3.1). The Reformed Churches in Australia and the NetherlanRev should be contacted in this regard since these countries have close ties with Indonesia due to geographical and historical reasons.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already included – Deputies Acta.**

### 4.5 *First Evangelical Presbyterian Reformed Church in Singapore (FEPRCS)*

#### 4.5.1 Mandate

- 4.5.1.1 Deputies are commissioned to investigate ecumenical contact with the FEPRC in Singapore.
- 4.5.1.2 Deputies must also establish contact with the PRCA that has close relations with the FEPRC (Acta, 2006:222, 3.5.3).

#### 4.5.2 Execution of the mandate

- 4.5.2.1 No visit was possible due to financial aspects.
- 4.5.2.2 There is a need to accommodate Afrikaans-speaking individuals there.

**Decision: Points 4.5.1 to 4.5.2.2 noted.**

#### 4.5.3 Recommendations

- 4.5.3.1 Because of GKSA's involvement with FEPRC, the Deputies must come into contact with PRCA (compare Acta, 2006:222, 3.5.3).
- 4.5.3.2 It should be determined whether there are certain needs to be met with regard to Reformed people in Singapore.
- 4.5.3.3 Deputies endeavour to gain cooperation of the Committee for External Ministry in order to respond to the commission with regard to Reformed people in Singapore.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 4.6 *India*

#### 4.6.1 Recommendation

Deputies investigate the possibility of making contact with the Reformed churches.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 5. **Australasia**

Responsible Deputies: *Australia*: Rev ASA de Bruyn (s) and Dr HG Stoker; *New Zealand*: Dr HG Stoker (s) and Rev ASA de Bruyn.

## **Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity**

### 5.1 *Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)*

#### 5.1.1 Mandate

5.1.1.1 The unity with the CRCA is sustained and developed by contact and visits by representatives as far as is possible.

5.1.1.2 CRCA Synod of May 2006 to be attended by representatives/delegates.

5.1.1.3 Synod commissions Deputies Ecumenicity: External (Abroad) to, *inter alia* and as part of the Inter-church Committee for Ministry to Afrikaans-speaking members abroad, develop ecumenical contact with Afrikaans churches in Australia (Acta, 2006:200, 1.5.3).

#### 5.1.2 Execution of mandate

5.1.2.1 Dr J le Roux attended the CRCA Synod, May 2006 in Brisbane. In the course of the visit discussions were held with Prof Murray Capil on Sciences as related to the Christian point of view and point of departure.

5.1.2.2 Correspondence was received from the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia to mention the desire for closer cooperation with GKSA with a view to ministry to Afrikaans-speaking members in Perth. Following the correspondence Rev Stuart Bonnington of the PCWA visited South Africa in commission of PCWA in July 2007. Discussions were held with Deputies. From the discussions it was evident that PCWA and GKSA share various mutual interests and that PCWA would appreciate closer cooperation with GKSA – in a way typical of the way in which we work in ecumenic unity with churches across the world. The PCWA, however, does not have ties of ecumenic unity with other churches. In September 2007 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) approved a motion that contact with GKSA be established and then with the purpose of developing an “inter-church relationship” and to investigate ways in which the Presbyterian Church of Australia may assist with regard to the increasing number of Afrikaans-speaking people flocking to Australia. Rev RJ van der Klashorst of the Reformed Church Elandspoor received and accepted a calling (from PCWA) after these discussions, the main aim being ministry to the increasing number of Afrikaans-speaking people there.

5.1.2.3 Rev ASA de Bruyn made contact with the representatives of the Perth Afrikaanse Reformed Church (PARC) after having attended the RCNZ Synod in September 2008. They expressed a desire for close cooperation with GKSA and added the request that members of the GKSA who move to Perth be notified of their existence and that GKSA also inform PARC congregations about members moving there.

**Decision: Points 5.1.1 to 5.1.2.3 noted.**

#### 5.1.3 Recommendations

5.1.3.1 That the GKSA's unity with the CRCA is confirmed and further expanded among other things by cooperation on several terrains and the attendance of and input during SynoRev.

5.1.3.2 That further discussions are pursued with the PCWA and the rest of the PCA with the aim of acknowledgement of ecumenical unity.

5.1.3.3 That CRCA is informed of the continued discussions between the GKSA and the PCA.

5.1.3.4 That discussions are pursued with PARC [Perth Afrikaans Reformed Church] based on their request in this regard.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already included – Deputies Acta.**

### 5.2 *Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)*

#### 5.2.1 Mandate

5.2.1.1 Synod commissions Deputies Ecumenicity: External (Abroad) to assist RCNZ as far as possible with reaching out to ex-South Africans settling in New Zealand.

5.2.1.2 Synod decides that Deputies again be sent to attend Synod RCNZ.

5.2.1.3 Synod commissions Deputies to remain in ecumenic contact with the Afrikaans Christian Churches in New Zealand, doing so, *inter alia*, as part of the Interchurch Committee for Ministry to Afrikaans-speaking people abroad (Acta, 2006:202, 1.6.3).

5.2.2 Execution of mandate

5.2.2.1 Much work has been done during the past term towards cooperation, support and accommodation of ex-South Africans in the churches of New Zealand. The RCNZ also sent a delegate to the GTV discussion, Potchefstroom, on Women in Office.

5.2.2.2 Rev ASA de Bruyn attended Synod RCNZ in September 2008 and conveyed greetings on behalf of GKSA. In the message of greetings and discussions in the course of Synod he made it clear that relations with the RCNZ are important to the GKSA with a view to reaching out to ex-members of the GKSA and accommodating them in the churches of the RCNZ. The RCNZ declared a willingness to do exactly that. The RCNZ also decided to send a representative to next Synod of GKSA.

5.2.2.3 During the visit to New Zealand, Rev De Bruyn also attended the annual meeting of the Afrikaanse Christelike Kerk (ACK) and conveyed greetings from the GKSA. ACK was requested to strive towards ecumenic unity with RCNZ.

**Decision: Points 5.2.1 to 5.2.2.3 noted.**

5.2.3 Recommendations

5.2.3.1 That the GKSA's unity with the RCNZ be re-established and developed.

5.2.3.2 That Synod commissions Deputies to assist the RCNZ as far as is possible with reaching out to ex-South Africans and accommodating them in churches in New Zealand.

5.2.3.3 That Synod commissions Deputies to remain in ecumenic contact with the Afrikaans Christian Churches in New Zealand, doing so, *inter alia*, as part of the Interchurch Committee for Ministry to Afrikaans-speaking people abroad.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 6. Scotland and England

Responsible Deputies: Dr DG Breed (s), Prof A le R du Plooy, Rev BCG Fourie and Rev TF Dreyer.

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity***

#### 6.1 *Free Church of Scotland (FCS)*

##### 6.1.1 Mandate

In the light of the existence of two church communities and 1.7.2.3 (Report 2006) Deputies are commissioned to have in-depth conversations with the churches and to review relevant documents and to advise Synod on the ecumenic relationships (Acta, 2006:203,1.7.3).

##### 6.1.2 Execution of mandate

6.1.2.1 The General Assembly of the FCS took place in Edinburgh Scotland on 20-22 May 2008. With a view to the attendance of the mentioned General Assembly and the discussion on ministry to especially South African members (together with the FCS congregations in Londen, namely LCPC and Cobham) the following members of Deputies attended the Synod in Edinburgh and discussions in Londen: Prof A le R du Plooy, Dr DG Breed and Dr CJ Smit (who in any case had to be in the Netherlands for the Synod of the GKN(V)); also present were Dr G Breed from Randburg and Rev HK de Kock, sent to Londen for ministry by Randburg according to CO, art 7.

6.1.2.2 The aspects surrounding complicated issues in Londen, as also further indicated about the situation in Londen in the Report, have been discussed satisfactorily with the Committee involved during the General Assembly.

6.1.2.3 Greetings from the GKSA were conveyed by Prof Du Plooy.

**Decision: Points 6.1.1 to 6.1.2.3 noted.**

### 6.1.3 Recommendations

- 6.1.3.1 That the unity with the FCS be confirmed and developed by means of contact and visits by representatives as far as possible.
- 6.1.3.2 That Deputies are commissioned to have in-depth discussions on especially the meaning of “correspondence”, as it is understood by the GKSA and the FCS respectively, and to come to an agreement in this respect.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 6.2 *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCS(Cont))*

### 6.2.1 Mandate

In the light of the existence of two church communities and 1.7.2.3 (Report 2006) Deputies are commissioned to have in-depth conversations with the churches and to review relevant documents and to advise Synod on the ecumenic relationships (Acta, 2006:203,1.7.3), (Acta, 2006:203, 1.7.2.3 – Deputies of the FCS(Cont) attended the ICRC as observers. An application for membership also served. The application was not approved by ICRC for the following reasons:

- (a) The continued court cases against FCS about the name and property.
- (b) The nature of the demands/claims presented in court.
- (c) The unwillingness to come to an agreement and close the case).

### 6.2.2 Execution of the mandate

6.2.2.1 Deputies could not personally convey the message of greetings to the General Assembly of the FCS(C) and forwarded a written message instead. That fact that Deputies attended the General Assembly of the FCS, and were involved there concerning certain stumbling blocks and arrangements with regard to the ministry in Londen (as reported), prevented them from attending the FCS(C) meeting that was convened within exactly the same time slot.

6.2.2.2 Information obtained, as published in the agenda of the FCS’s General Assembly, reflects indications that the relationship is still quite tense.

**Decision: Points 6.2.1 to 6.2.2.2 noted.**

### 6.2.3 Recommendations

6.2.3.1 That the relationship with the FCS(C) be maintained as before.

6.2.3.2 That the relationship between the two church communities be observed and that discussions be continued.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 6.3 *Londen ministry*

### 6.3.1 Mandate

The commission includes that the Londen ministry be continued. One compulsory collection every three years is set aside for this ministry (Acta, 2006:210, 1.11.3).

### 6.3.2 Execution of the mandate

6.3.2.1 With regard to the Londen ministry sound development has taken place during the past three years. The Reformed Church Randburg and the Free Church of Scotland worked closely together on this ministry. The Trust for Missionary Ministry (Sendelingbedieningstrust, founded by the Reformed Churches Rietvallei and Waterkloof) also once again contributed financially to support this ministry during this term.

6.3.2.2 There were, however, different matters with regard to this ministry to which Deputies had to pay attention. The fact that the ministry in Londen formed part of the FCS’s duties, contained an aspect fundamentally related to Church Polity in that agreement could be found with a church-in-ecumenical-unity for the sake of ministry to GKSA members who move to Londen. In this way the unity of doctrine with the FCS has also been developed significantly. Without the financial support of the FCS the ministry in Londen would also not have been able to make proper progress. However, it was necessary for Deputies to have discussions with FCS and reach agreements on the following matters:

**(i) Using a musical instrument as accompaniment during a service of worship, i.e. an organ or other musical instruments**

The fact that the FCS does not allow musical instruments during services of worship, is experienced as strange by members of the GKSA, especially by the younger people. Some of the young people joined in with the congregations there and adapted to the singing in spite of the absence of musical instruments. There are, however, such members as do not care much for this FCS tradition and to these the custom/conviction seems strange and even unacceptable. The decision about musical instruments also affects bearers of office in a certain way, as becomes evident from the information below.

**(ii) Rev Kruger de Kock as reverend**

Even though Rev De Kock serves as reverend with the FCS in Londen, decisions of the FCS dictate that certain restrictions be placed on ministers who did not complete their studies at the Theological Seminary of the FCS. It is furthermore expected of each bearer of office (that would include the reverend/minister) to take an oath at the time of ordination not to make use of musical instruments during services of worship. Although there are to a certain extent signs of tension about this within the ranks of the FCS, and although some are of the opinion that the custom should be abandoned, it is evident that the issue will remain part of General Assembly's agenda for quite a time to come.

**(iii) Ordination of elders and deacons**

Although there are many members from the GKSA in the FCS (where Rev De Kock worked) who could serve as elders or deacons, they could not be ordained in such services because of the above-mentioned decision about musical instruments. It is the firm conviction of FCS that all bearers of office must believe as they do about musical instruments during services of worship. The consequent shortage of elders and deacons adversely affected the growth of the ministry in Londen.

6.3.2.3 During Deputies' discussions with the particular Committee of the FCS, it became evident that the issue would not be solved within a short period of time. It also appeared that the FCS had understanding for the problems that the South African ministry and members in Londen encountered as a result of their opinion.

6.3.2.4 Deputies agreed with the Committee on the following, i.e. with the awareness and understanding of the FCS:

- (i) The better route to follow would be for a Reformed Church to be founded in Londen (RCL). (The FCS also has "Free Churches" in SA, even though there already are local congregations of the GKSA in the same areas.)
- (ii) The same close relations as between the GKSA and the FCS will be maintained with FCS by the RCL. The FCS ought to consider to which extent the RCL should fit in with the particular Presbytery (the "classis" in Londen).
- (iii) Rev De Kock remains in the ministry in Londen and is still being sent there by the Reformed Church Randburg.
- (iv) The Reformed Church Randburg, the Reformed Church in Londen and the Deputies decide, in correlation with Church Order, about the relationship between the RCL and the GKSA, and also especially with the Reformed Church Randburg.

**Decision: Points 6.3.1 to 6.3.2.4 noted.**

**6.3.3 Recommendations**

6.3.3.1 That Synod thankfully takes cognisance of the founding of the RCL and the fruitful ministry that has taken place the past three years.

6.3.3.2 That Synod repeats the approval for one collection per year to be allocated in support of the ministry in Londen, and that Deputies see to it that such funds be distributed as wisely as possible.

6.3.3.3 That Deputies, in cooperation with the Reformed Church Randburg as well as the newly-founded RCL, remain involved in an advisory capacity towards enhancing the ministry in Londen, especially with regard to implications related to Church Order, all of which would result in support of the new church and its sustained development and progress in Londen, as well as the sustained continuation of the ecumenical unity with the FCS.

**Decision: Approved.**

## **7. North America and Canada**

Responsible Deputies: Dr DG Breed (s), Prof A le R du Plooy.

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity***

#### **7.1 *Christian Reformed Churches North America (CRCNA)***

##### **7.1.1 Mandate**

7.1.1.1 According to the mandate that has been fulfilled, and in the light of 1.8.3 (Acta, 2006:205), Synod decides to normalise the relations of ecumenical unity with the CRCNA by commissioning Deputies to continue discussions according to findings in 1.8.3 (Acta, 2006:204,205, 1.8.4).

##### **Findings**

While executing the mandate in terms of focusing on decisions of Synod 2003, with regard to certain aspects that gave reason for concern, the representatives accordingly communicate the following findings:

1.8.3.1 The decision to place the relationship “on hold”, has briefly been explained as follows:

(a) It does not mean that the relationship has been suspended, but that it has been classified as non-active, this being done until at least more information, or more complete information, has been obtained on situations that give reason for concern.

(b) It has also been explained that this decision/conduct should not be regarded as a form of revenge in reaction to CRC’s decisions to suspend the relationship with GKSA, as it occurred during the eighties.

7.1.1.2 With a view to normalising the relationships Deputies are commissioned to conduct a final investigation first, especially with regard to the application of the Reformed Confession and authority-related matters of church, specifically around ethical and liturgical matters.

7.1.1.3 Synod Soutpansberg is requested to display a copy of the message of greetings by Rev Liphadzi that contains alligations against the GKSA as expressed publicly by him.

##### **7.1.2 Execution of the mandate**

7.1.2.1 Prof A le R du Plooy and Dr DG Breed attended the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches of North America in June 2006. Prof Du Plooy conveyed a message of greetings from the GKSA to the CRCNA.

7.1.2.2 Prof Du Plooy and Dr Breed were granted ample opportunity to participate in the discussions of committees of the Synod. Participation in the committees was focused mainly on the CRCNA’s relationship with PCN as well as on the "proposed revised Ecumenical Charter" of the CRCNA, the position of women in the church, theological training, relationships with ethnical groups in the USA and Canada, as well as certain ethical issues.

7.1.2.3 In the course of Synod the GKSA representatives/delegates also had the opportunity to have discussions with the CRCNA Interchurch Relations Committee. The following issues received attention:

(i) The relationship between the CRCNA and the GKSA and the reason for placing the relationship “on hold”.

(ii) The conduct of the Soutpansberg delegate during the Synod of the CRCNA in 2004, during which the particular delegate launched an attack on GKSA as

he conveyed the message of greetings and on which occasion there was no opportunity to defend the GKSA. The Interchurch Relations Committee, arranged for the GKSA to have its turn in 2006 only after the turn of the Soutpansberg delegates, so that there would be opportunity for response should a similar incident as in 2004 present itself again. However, in 2006 Rev S Nefefe, as a delegate of the Soutpansberg Synod rendered an appreciated contribution.

- (iii) Several questions were put to the Interchurch Relations Committee with regard to matters like approaches to Scripture at the CRCNA and the liturgy of certain churches of the CRCNA. To all the questions the responses were open-hearted and honest. The tense relationship between CRCNA and URCNA, as well as possible reasons for it, was discussed. All along the brothers gave the assurance that the churches of the CRCNA are serious about holding on to the Word of God, Doctrinal Creeds and the authority of the church.

7.1.2.4 Decisions that were made during this Synod reflect dedicated efforts of the CRCNA churches to adhere to the Word of God, the Doctrinal Creed and the Reformed Church Rulings. One example of this is the decision pertaining to the CRCNA's point of view and its implementation with regard to homosexuality. In 2002 the First CRC Toronto congregation decided not to be negative about people who live together in homosexual relationships, and that people who are part of such relationships may also serve in the Offices. Classis Toronto demanded that First CRC Toronto repent and convert, and to this the church council reacted negatively. At first the Classis did not follow up on the matter. The CRCNA Synod of 2004 expected of the Classis to regard this matter as serious and urgent. The Synod of 2005 took up a strong and firm view about this and appointed a committee to "determine if First CRC is in compliance with the guidelines of the reports on homosexuality of 1973 and 2002." Such "guidelines" were accepted by CRCNA in 1973 and confirmed again in 2002 by Synod. The guidelines stipulate, *inter alia*, that "explicit homosexual practice must be condemned as incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture." During Synod 2006 it was reported that First Toronto CRC, after the steps taken by Classis and the appointed committee, no longer persisted along this road of sin chosen by them. Synod decided about this in the following way:

"[Synod] affirm First Toronto CRC in their "resolve to acknowledge the CRC guidelines with respect to homosexuality as the current position of our denomination" and their agreement "to tailor its ministry accordingly," and we encourage First Toronto CRC to diligently seek to understand and implement those guidelines in their ministry setting."

7.1.2.5 During Synod there also was an opportunity to have a discussion with Rev Nfefe, delegate from Soutpansberg. It was pointed out to him that the Soutpansberg attack on GKSA included with the message of greetings to CRCNA at Synod 2004 had been unasked for and quite inappropriate, rendered even more unacceptable by pre-knowledge of the fact that there would be no opportunity to reply or respond. It was also brought to his attention that several and continued requests from GKSA to be sent a copy of this message, failed to deliver any results. An agreement was reached with Rev Nfefe that in future we would not include issues of contention or matters under discussion between GKSA Potchefstroom and Soutpansberg in messages of greetings conveyed at Synod. The brother kept to the agreement. Judging according to the discussion with Rev Nfefe it became evident that further actions/discussions with regard to the negative message of greetings during CRCNA Synod 2004 would not really prove to serve any purpose (compare Acta, Synod GKSA, 2006:203-205).

7.1.2.6 As no Deputies were sent as representatives to Synods CRCNA 2007 and 2008, messages of greetings were sent and the Acta of the respective Synods have been reviewed. Deputies paid special attention to decisions pertaining to the relationship

of the CRCNA with the PKN [PCN] (the Protestant Church in the Netherlands is a combination of the Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden). In the same way Deputies paid attention to the new version of “*Our World Belongs to God: A Contemporary Testimony*”, and to decisions pertaining to the Heidelberg Catechism and the CRCNA’s “*Form of Subscription*”.

- 7.1.2.7 In the CRCNA’s Church Order the word ‘male’ has been left out from among the prerequisites for service in the Offices or with regard to representatives at Synods. The decision rests on a majority vote of 112 versus 70. Since the decision in 1985, when the ordination of women as ministers and elders was referred to Classes, 26 out of 47 Classes have implemented this option.
- 7.1.2.8 After the Synod of CRC 2000 had made a summary of their study on women’s position in the Offices, no new fundamental studies on the matter have been conducted. A copy of this summarised study of 2000 is attached as Appendix 2. Our impression is that the CRC endeavoured in this way to accept that the different exegetic views and approaches to the relevant parts of Scripture ought to be tolerated, and be accommodated in such a way that no further split in the CRC takes place (as had been the case in 1995).
- 7.1.2.9 Matters currently under study are, *inter alia*, the following:
- (i) Working on a New Hymnal.
  - (ii) Updating of the Church Order
  - (iii) Synod 2007 decided not to approve of a suggestion to have children participate of the Holy Supper. However, the following decisions were taken with regard to the Holy Supper and the Public Profession of Faith: “to deepen the integration of biblical teaching; confessional norms; church polity; and liturgical, educational, and pastoral practices in the CRC”.
  - (iv) According to the REC News Exchange (vol 45,3, March 2008) a Study Committee had already been appointed in 2005 to study a suggestion for the substitution of the Signings Formulary for Bearers of Office for a so-called Covenant of Ordination. Synod 2008 did not accept the Report on this matter, but referred it for further study and the plan is to attend to this matter again in 2011.
  - (v) Synod decided to extend the office of “ministry associate” so that those who serve in this office (mostly based on particular gifts), may serve in a more independent way and on their own alongside with the office of minister. It also includes that under certain circumstances they may be called to serve in the ministry.
- 7.1.2.10 Note was taken of points of criticism as viewed by Churches (e.g. the OPC, URCNA and Churches that are members of ecumenical institutions such as NAPARC and the ICRC) against the CRC. The criticism is mainly about the decisions of the CRC concerning women in the church, homosexuality and procedures of services of worship. With regard to these matters Deputies GKSA had several discussions with CRC and had previously already reported on them. It must be taken into account that relationships between the CRC and the URCNA are extremely sensitive and that both are exceptionally critical of each other.
- 7.1.2.11 It is evident that Reformed Churches across the world all have an own ethos, an own struggle, and that an own focus is given to the church-related practice. Within ecumenic units (among church communities that uphold correspondence) there also are differences and different ways of emphasising within the ranks of different Reformed communities. This is the case with the CRC and the GKSA. According to our conviction reference must be made to our own Church Order (art 85). According to evidence the local churches of CRC at times do have an own approach and view with regard to church-related matters and practices, and that do not necessarily exactly agree with views and decisions of CRC. This type of thing occurs in almost all church communities, the GKSA included.

7.1.2.12 It is clear that, even though there are according to our opinion no official points of view and decisions of CRC that stand in the way of ecumenical unity with the GKSA, it would be wise, also in the light of the preceding matters as discussed, to determine the right of a colloquium whenever the calling of a minister or professor is being considered and about to take place.

7.1.2.13 The incorporation of colloquia already exists with regard to certain church communities with which GKSA have ecumenical unity, e.g. the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland. It would appear that the right to a colloquium should also be applied in the case of all churches with which we uphold correspondence (ecumenical unity).

**Decision: Points 7.1.1 to 7.1.2.13 noted.**

### 7.1.3 Recommendations

7.1.3.1 That note is thankfully taken of CRCNA's endeavours of dedication to what is set forth in the Word of God, the Doctrinal Creeds and the Reformed governance (Polity/Ecclesiastical Authority)).

7.1.3.2 That the relations between the CRCNA and the GKSA accordingly be considered as being normalised, in accordance with the commission of Synod GKSA 2006 (compare Acta: 205, 1.8.4.1 and 1.8.4.2).

7.1.3.3 That the unity with the CRCNA be maintained and developed by means of contact and visits as far as would be possible.

7.1.3.4 That, standing the relevant discussions, no further negotiations will proceed with regard to the message of greetings rendered by the representative of Soutpansberg during the CRCNA Synod 2004.

7.1.3.5 That the GKSA exercise the right of a colloquium should a church within the GKSA (or the Curatorium of the TSP of the GKSA) be of the intention to proceed with a calling of a reverend or professor from a church community with which we stand in ecumenical unity. Such a colloquium is assigned to the Senate of the TSP under leadership of the Curatorium on request of a particular church.

7.1.3.6 When a local church invites a reverend from church communities with which we have ecumenical unity to lead ministry of the Word, it must take place after proper evidence has been gained on the doctrine and life of such a reverend/professor and while taking into account decisions of GKSA.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 7.2 *Ortodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)*

### 7.2.1 Mandate

The content of the newly-founded unity is being worked out by the Deputies of the respective church communities (Acta, 2006:214, 2.3.3).

### 7.2.2 Execution of mandate

7.2.2.1 Dr DG Breed, as "Freternal Delegate" of the GKSA, attended the General Assembly of the OPC in June 2007. During the Assembly he was granted an opportunity to convey a message of greetings from the GKSA.

7.2.2.2 During the Assembly there was opportunity for discussions with two of OPC's committees. It was especially with the "Committee on Foreign Missions" that in-depth discussions could be held with regard to the possibility of OPC and the churches of GKSA working together in the missionary fields of SA. It was agreed with the committee that particulars of the discussion be made available to churches involved in SA together with the request that an official invitation be given to the "Committee on foreign Missions" to visit SA with a view to possible cooperation.

7.2.2.3 GKSA's decision on the "descended-to-hell article" of the confession was made available to "Committee for Inter-Church Relations" in order to obtain comment.

7.2.2.4 According to Reports that served prior to the Assembly and according to discussions and decisions during the Assembly, it was evident that the OPC operates in correlation with the Word of God and endeavours to live in obedience to the Lord.

**Decision: Points 7.2.1 to 7.2.2.4 noted.**

### 7.2.3 Recommendations

That note is thankfully taken of OPC's Scripture-devotedness, and that the ecumenical unity between GKSA and OPC be re-established and developed and that visits be paid, if possible, especially for the sake of cooperation in the missionary field.

**Decision: Approved.**

## ***Church Communities with Ecumenical Relations***

### 7.3 *United Reformed Church of America (URCNA)*

#### 7.3.1 Mandate

7.3.1.1 Deputies are sent to the next Synod of the URCNA.

7.3.1.2 Correspondence is offered to the URCNA.

7.3.1.3 Contact is retained with church communities NAPARC by, *inter alia*, contact with the URCNA (Acta 2003:204).

7.3.1.4 Cognisance is taken of the URCNA's decisions about the GKSA.

7.3.1.5 Synod expresses its regret that the URCNA is not prepared to enter into a relationship of "ecumenical fellowship" with GKSA.

7.3.1.6 Deputies present a request to the URCNA that the latter indicate in which way the GKSA's decision that women in the Office of Deacon is against the Word of God.

7.3.1.7 Deputies present a request to the URCNA that the latter indicate exactly what the "decisions/developments" are to which they refer (that, according to them, disturb the peace in the GKSA) and that they indicate how they consider GKSA should be warned about such "decisions/developments" (Acta, 2006:216, 2.4.3).

#### 7.3.2 Execution of mandate

7.3.2.1 Prof Du Plooy and Dr DG Breed met with the URCNA committee for ecumenical matters (CECCA) in Hamilton near Toronto in June 2006. The discussion dealt with establishing church-related relations between GKSA and the URCNA. Rev Ray Sikkema stated that their committee considered to suggest that the URCNA enter into the closest relationship with GKSA ("Ecumenical Unity"), that is to do so following Synod 2006 of the GKSA. However, he emphasises that GKSA's relations with the CRCNA poses as a source of major concern as viewed by the URCNA and that this fact may limit the suggestion to narrower relations at their Synod. Explanations were given to the brothers to inform them that up to date the GKSA had found nothing in the decisions and conduct of the CRCNA that would make it necessary for the GKSA to discontinue with such ecumenical relations.

7.3.2.2 The brothers also expressed their uneasiness about the fact that, following the GKSA 2006 Synod, a number of ministers stated in writing that they did not accept Synod's decisions on certain matters. They wanted to know in which way the GKSA addressed the matter. It was explained to them how the issue was dealt with within the GKSA in accordance with Church Polity.

7.3.2.3 In December 2006 a letter from Rev Ray Sikkema was received. In contained a request that Deputies urgently forward the decisions of Deputies GKSA in connection with the CRCNA, because they had an important meeting forthcoming during which recommendations with regard to the URCNA's relationship with GKSA would be formulated. A letter was sent to them, containing explanations on the findings of GKSA's Deputies at the CRCNA Synod in 2006. It was emphasised that the brothers who attended the Synod of CRCNA had reported positively about the Synod. Important descisions of the Synod of the CRCNA (that included discussions on, *inter alia*, homosexuality) that were taken on Scriptural grounds, were pointed out in the letter. It was also mentioned in the letter that in-depth discussions were conducted with the CRCNA's Interchurch Relations Committee with regard to Scripture-related views on liturgical matters and that similarly in this case the reporting is positive.

After several written communications the URCNA's committee for ecumenical matters (CECCA) decided, on the ground of the relations between the GKSA and the CRCNA, not to suggest that closer relations with the GKSA be entered into. At the URCNA's 2007 Synod in Schererville it was consequently decided that the URCNA retain "Ecumenical contact" (Phase 1) with the GKSA and that the URCNA "remain committed to establishing a Phase Two – Ecumenical Fellowship – relationship with the GKSA and look forward to the day that this can become reality."

**Decision: Points 7.3.1 to 7.3.2.3 noted.**

7.3.3 Recommendations

7.3.3.1 That it be noted with sadness that the URCNA decided not to recognize ecumenical unity with the GKSA at this stage.

7.3.3.2 That, if possible, delegates explain at the next Synod of the URCNA why the GKSA continues with ecumenical ties with the CRCNA. That the URCNA is requested to reconsider their decision not to have ties with us in the light of the unity in Christ of our two church denominations.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already included – Deputies Acta.**

7.4 *Reformed Church of US (RCUS)*

7.4.1 Mandate

Ecumenical relations with the RCUS are expanded and ecumenical unity is offered to this church community (Acta, 2006:217, 2.5.3.2).

7.4.2 Execution of mandate

7.4.2.1 On 19 June 2007 Dr DG Breed met with the "Committee for Interchurch Relations" of the RCUS in Sioux City after he had attended the General Assembly of the OPC in Sioux Centre. Questioning about reasons why no response had been received from the RCUS to the invitation to ecumenical unity that had been sent earlier on, was set to the committee. Committee explained that the RCUS, for several reasons, would not be very positive about entering into relations with churches outside the USA. It was explained to the committee that certain problems emerge if two churches work together in the same field in South Africa without ecumenical unity between them. The brothers then indicated that they had understanding for the problem and the same invitation to ecumenical unity between RCUS and the GKSA was again extended to them. They undertook to present it at the next Synod of RCUS, accompanied by a positive recommendation.

7.4.2.2 In July 2008 the "Committee for Interchurch Relations" sent word that they would need additional information about the GKSA apart from the information they had already obtained, and that the Synod of the RCUS would DV decide about relations with the GKSA in 2009. The "additional information" has already been made available to them.

**Decision: Points 7.4.1 to 7.4.2.2 noted.**

7.4.3 Recommendation

That, should the RCUS decide to have ecumenical unity with the GKSA, this unity be developed further by contact and visits where possible.

**Decision: Approved.**

7.5 *Presbyterian Church America (PCA)*

7.5.1 Mandate

7.5.1.1 Deputies remain informed about decisions and developments in the PCA, especially by means of communication with Rev Theo van Blerk.

7.5.1.2 The GKSA continues with ecumenical relations with the PCA (Acta, 2006:223, 3.8.3).

7.5.2 Execution of mandate

7.5.2.1 The General Assembly of the PCA in June 2007 was attended by Dr Douw Breed as observer. During the time that he was present there discussions were held on decisions about the "New Perspective on Paul" and the "Federal Vision". These two

academic streams caused much upheaval within the PCA as they promote a new perspective on matters such as righteousness, sanctification, the covenant and the perseverance of believers.

It was mainly the uncertainty about these matters within the PCA that compelled the GKSA's Deputies to recommend (Synod 2006) that GKSA rather not continue with development of closer relations with the PCA. The "General Assembly" of the PCA, however decided by convincing majority, that the "New Perspective on Paul" and the "Federal Vision" are contrary to "Westminster Confession" and that "Sessions and Presbyteries" act accordingly where people in the particular services prove to support these perspectives.

- 7.5.2.2 An in-depth discussion was also conducted with the "Interchurch Relations Committee". With regard to the fact that ministers might have certain conditions applying to Doctrinal Creeds and the signing of the Signings Formulary, the assurance was given that such conditions applied only to matters that do not touch on the essence of the confessions. It appeared that these matters mainly pertain to the slight differences between the Belgian Confession and the Westminster Confession.
- 7.5.2.3 Discussion with the committee also included the possibility of closer relations between the GKSA and the PCA. It was clear that the PCA does not enter into relations with other churches in the same way as is done by the GKSA. The PCA accepts and believes that churches belonging to the same interchurch organisations give expression to their unity through these organisations. Dr Breed explained to the committee that problems result because of this difference in opinion, especially when PCA and GKSA work together. Ministers of the PCA who work together with the GKSA in the field of missionary activities in SA may, for example, not deliver a sermon in one of the GKSA churches. It has been agreed that Deputies would formulate a suggestion of ways in which this problem can be addressed and which would be sent to the committee of the PCA for consideration.
- 7.5.2.4 With reference to the discussion with the Interchurch Relations Committee and in consequence of the close cooperation with the GKSA the PCA's Interchurch Relations Committee recommended during the next General Assembly that the PCA should establish closer relations with the GKSA. In June 2008 the General Assembly decided that relations with the GKSA would be of the "highest ... ecclesiastical judicatories", namely "corresponding relations".

**Decision: Points 7.5.1 to 7.5.2.4 noted.**

#### 7.5.3 Recommendations

- 7.5.3.1 That Synod thankfully take cognisance of the decision of the PCA to acknowledge ecumenical unity with the GKSA.
- 7.5.3.2 That Synod decide, according to the above-mentioned (7.5.2), to acknowledge ecumenical unity with the PCA.
- 7.5.3.3 That the unity with the PCA be developed further by means of contact and visits where possible.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 8. South America

Responsible Deputies: Rev BCG Fourie (s), Dr CJ Smit and Dr PJ Buys.

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Contact***

#### 8.1 *Eglisea Reformanda Patagonië (ERP)*

##### 8.1.1 Mandate

To seek church-related contact should it prove possible (compare 1.3).

##### 8.1.2 Execution of mandate

Dr CJ Smit managed electronic contact with the ERP that came into being after the Anglo-Boer war when a number of Afrikaners (Afrikaans-speaking people among

whom there were quite a few Reformed believers) moved to Argentina. Very few of the members, even the most elderly ones included, are still able to use Afrikaans and the majority of young people joined in with the Roman Catholic Church as time passed. However, the ERP still continues as a Reformed Church in Argentina.

**Decision: Points 8.1.1 and 8.1.2 noted.**

8.1.3 Recommendation

That Deputies be commissioned to build on such contact as had been made in order to acknowledge ecumenical relations.

**Decision: Approved.**

**9. Africa**

Responsible Deputies: Reverends IW Ferreira (s), HS Coetzee, S Hibbert, Dr PJ Buys, Reverends LAS Nel and CB Swanepoel.

***Church Communities in Ecumenical Unity***

9.1 *Reformed Church Botswana (RCB)*

9.1.1 Mandate

Unity with the RCB is sustained and developed further by visits by representatives as far as is possible (Acta 2006:207, 1.9.3; compare Acta, 2003:185).

9.1.2 Execution of mandate

Since the GKSA's previous Synod another RCB Synod has apparently not taken place. Ecumenical unity between the GKSA and the RCB is mainly experienced by means of contact with the Botswana Missionary Group to which various of the GKSA churches are linked.

**Decision: Points 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 noted.**

9.1.3 Recommendation

The Deputies pay attention to the experience of ecumenical unity with the RCB. The Deputies should contact the churches in the Synod.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already included – Deputies Acta.**

9.2 *Eglise Reformee Confessante au Congo (ERCC)*

9.2.1 Mandate

That unity with the ERCC be developed further by means of continued contact and regular visits (Acta, 2006:208, 1.10.3.2).

9.2.2 Execution of mandate

9.2.2.1 Rev HS Coetzee and Rev S Hibbert attended the ERCC Synod in 2007. A message of greetings was conveyed. Representatives of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Vrijgemaakt) were also present.

9.2.2.2 Argumentation: The situation in the Congo is as follows: the government expects of every church community to appoint two representatives to liaise with the government, especially regarding international churches who do mission work. The NederlanReve Gereformeerde Kerke (Vrijgemaakt) did mission work and assisted the churches. As a result of a dispute between them and the ERCC, their government consent to work there was withdrawn. This left the churches in financial trouble. At the moment there is a dispute between the Synod and the government on who the representatives should be.

**Decision: Note taken of 9.2.1 to 9.2.2.2.**

9.2.3 Recommendations

9.2.3.1 The Synod confirms with gratitude the ecumenical unity between the GKSA and the ERCC and builRev the unity through contact and visits when possible, without providing sustentation while still aiding the continued development of the ERCC.

9.2.3.2 Synod expresses concern regarding the tension between the GKN(V) and the ERCC, both of whom keeps ecumenical ties with the GKSA. Our prayer is that the

relations can recover for the sake of the different church communities, as well as the expansion of the kingdom of God in the DRC.

- 9.2.3.3 The Synod takes note with gratitude of the actions of the ERCC, which are evident from the decisions of their special Synod.
- 9.2.3.4 Synod sends an encouraging message to the ERCC.
- 9.2.3.5 The Deputies send a letter to the ERCC in which they recognize the decisions of the extraordinary Synod. A letter is also written to the two ministers who are currently serving as representatives with the government, with the request that they should honour the decision of Synod.

**Decision: Approved – amendments already included – Deputies Acta.**

### ***Church Communities in Ecumenical Contact***

#### 9.3 *Churches in Africa*

##### 9.3.1 Mandate

- 9.3.1.1 Deputies use the forthcoming Missionary Conference to establish relations.
- 9.3.1.2 Deputies request of local churches to become involved in the various projects/services.
- 9.3.1.3 Deputies coordinate Reformed missionary work in Africa.
- 9.3.1.4 Churches abroad that desire to be part of the Missionary work and its service must consult the Deputies to be named for the sake of coordination.
- 9.3.1.5 Deputies incorporate the essence of the report on the Africa tour that occurred in cooperation with the NG and NH churches in their activities.
- 9.3.1.6 Individuals and churches of the GKSA are called upon to support the activities and the Missionary Ministry Trust.
- 9.3.1.7 The request for ecumenical unity with the GKSA as posed by the Reformed Churches of the Ivory Coast is dealt with by Deputies. Churches of the Ivory Coast (9.4): No contact with these churches is possible. The matter has to be postponed and the mandate must continue. During the WRF conference we started to explore further Africa contacts. These procedures will continue in the new year (Acta, 2006:221.222, 3.4.3).

##### 9.3.2 Execution of the mandate

###### 9.3.2.1 Sudanese Reformed Churches

###### (i) *Background*

- (a) During prosecution by the Muslims and the South Sudanese freedom war that lasted almost 30 years the Christian churches in South Sudan grew remarkably (secretly so).
- (b) When the prosecution had ceased, it was revealed how many churches and new congregations had been founded! However, these churches are still weak and lack equipped bearers of office and proper funding. The second part of the command to engage in missionary work, Matthew 28:20 "... *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ...*", must to a great extent still be implemented in order to establish sound Scripture-true church structures and better functioning in the churches.
- (c) Via Sudanese students who had fled and studied at the Mukhanyo Theological College, (Owar Ojango and Ojoye Okello), and via contacts with the Puritan Reformed Seminary in Grand Rapids Dr Flip Buys paid a visit there and delivered sermons in two congregations in Khartoum. He also attended a meeting in Khartoum, and present at the meeting were 15 members of the offices, ministers and elders. He furthermore managed discussions with important officials of government in Khartoum.
- (d) This denomination requests GKSA's assistance and advice with a view to possible acknowledgement of ecumenical relations. They focus on a

holistic training for ministers in cooperation with developmental aid and teachers and social workers are trained in the same way.

- (e) The language used in these churches is Arabic, which is the language commonly used in North and South Sudan.
- (ii) *History*
  - (a) The Sudanese Reformed Church is a very young and small denomination. Rev Patrick Jok Ding, who grew up as a non-believer, was converted as young man. He soon realised that the Charismatic churches deviate from Scripture and started looking for a more Scripture-true church. He started spreading the gospel and a new church came into being. Because of liberal theological inclinations in the existing Presbyterian Churches in Sudan new church communities were not comfortable about joining in with them.
  - (b) With the assistance of Rev Victor Atallah of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship (MERF, Siprus) Rev Ding received elementary training at the Nile Theological College (NTC) in Khartoum and later at the Hamilton Theological Seminary of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Canada.
  - (c) At present there are three small congregations in and around Khartoum, two in the Nubage mountains, one in Malakal and intended evangelisation actions in Katuli, Bor, Awiel, Rumbek and Reng in South Sudan. There are at present 3 ministers, 2 students-in-training, while in service in Khartoum.

#### 9.3.2.2 Ivory Coast

##### (i) Execution of mandate

No contact could be made with these churches.

**Decision: Points 9.3.1 to 9.3.2.2 noted.**

##### (ii) Recommendation

That Deputies continue discussions with these churches to further develop the contact that was started at the WRF Conference. Such contact could especially be made if conferences and other occasions were to be attended.

**Decision: Approved.**

#### 9.4 *Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA) & African Evangelical Presbyterian Churches (AEPC)*

##### 9.4.1 Recommendation

9.4.1.1 Synod takes note of contact made by above-mentioned churches. The RCEA sent their greetings and applied for ecumenical ties.

9.4.1.2 The Deputies have already checked the Church Order and the Confessions of the AEPC and RCEA and found that they are one with the GKSA.

**Decision: Approved that ecumenical unity is established with the RCEA and AEPC.**

#### **10. Ecumenical relationships with Churches in South Africa**

Responsible Deputies: Rev BCG Fourie (s), Rev TF Dreyer, Rev S Hibbert, Rev CB Swanepoel en Dr CJ Smit (VGKSA).

##### ***Church Communities with Ecumenical Ties (Relations)***

#### 10.1 *Free Church of SA (FCSA)*

##### 10.1.1 Mandate

The commission is being continued. [The discussion with the FCSA with the aim of ecumenical unity, is regarded as one of the priorities to be continued on the Agenda of Deputies to be named (Acta, 2006:217, 2.6.3; compare Acta, 2003:210)].

##### 10.1.2 Execution of mandate

10.1.2.1 The *General Assembly* of the FCSA was attended by Reverends Fourie and Swanepoel after contact had originally been made with the Deputies of the FCSA.

10.1.2.2 A Deputy from Classis Monti was also engaged in the discussion.

10.1.2.3 The existence and continued existence of a denomination that has been planted and carried in the boundaries of our country and with which GKSA is ecumenically united, is Church Polity-wise not tenable. It should, however, be remembered that the FCSA functions within the framework of a presbyterian tradition and that this church community in reality exists “apart” from the FCS and the FCS (Cont).

**Decision: Points 10.1.1 to 10.1.2.3 noted.**

10.1.3 Recommendations

10.1.3.1 That discussion with the FCSA regarding church-related unity be continued.

10.1.3.2 That appreciation be expressed to local Reformed Churches that uphold close relations with the FCSA and Dumisani College.

**Decision: Approved. Appreciation is also expressed toward Rev Dumisane College for their distribution of literature and that the GKSA could use this with great fruit. It is suggested that these ties are further expanded by those involved from the TSP and the Deputies.**

10.2 *Vrye Gereformeerde kerke in SA (VGKSA)* [meaning *Free Reformed Churches in SA*]

10.2.1 Mandate

10.2.1.1 Deputies are commissioned to continue discussions regarding ecumenical unity with the VGKSA.

10.2.1.2 The discussion on hermeneutics, that the VGKSA wishes to continue with the GKSA, may on GKSA’s initiative be continued during a conference together with the GKN(v), and possibly also together with the NedIGK and the CGKN, with the focus on Women in the Church (Acta, 2006:214, 2.2.3).

10.2.2 Execution of mandate

10.2.2.1 It has been agreed with Deputies Ecumenicity: Internal to continue these discussions in future – the reason being that the VGKSA is an internal church community.

10.2.2.2 With regard to 10.2.1.2 the church communities involved decided to postpone the possible conference on hermeneutics (compare 2.1.2.2).

**Decision: Points 10.2.1 to 10.2.2.2 noted.**

10.2.3 Recommendation

That discussions with the VGKSA be dealt with by Deputies Ecumenicity: Internal in future.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 11. Ecumenical Bodies

11.1 *International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC)* [Member]

11.1.1 Mandate

11.1.1.1 Representatives are appointed by Deputies in order to attend the next ICRC.

11.1.1.2 The pleasant cooperation in activities of the ICRC is confirmed by participating fully in the activities of the ICRC as expressed in regional conferences and missionary-related conferences.

11.1.1.3 Deputies are commissioned to maintain contact with the Interim Committee. Advice and suggestions must be prepared by Deputies according to circumstances and needs with a view to the next ICRC in 2009 (Acta, 2006:225, 4.2.3).

11.1.2 Execution of mandate

11.1.2.1 Discussions with representatives from quite a number of church communities from across the world during the ICRC of 2005, opened up further possibilities of ecumenical contacts and ecumenical relations.

11.1.2.2 Membership of the ICRC have significant financial implications for the GKSA. Membership fees for 2008 amounted to \$2 999.00. At a flexi rate of R8.00 the total amount incurred was R23 992 for 2008. Deputies mean that this amount poses a problem, especially in the light of present financial circumstances.

11.1.2.3 Rev IW Ferreira and Rev CB Swanepoel were sent as representatives to the ICRC's Africa Conference in November 2008. On this occasion they had the opportunity of rendering a valuable contribution on behalf of the GKSA.

**Decision: Points 11.1.1 to 11.1.2.3 noted.**

11.1.3 Recommendations

11.1.3.1 That Synod thankfully takes cognisance of the activities of the ICRC.

11.1.3.2 That GKSA would continue membership of the ICRC.

11.1.3.3 That Deputies, in cooperation with the Admin Buro, suggest a more realistic and reasonable annual ICRC membership fee to the secretariate of ICRC.

**Decision: Approved.**

11.2 *Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) (with status of observer)*

11.2.1 Mandate

11.2.1.1 That the GKSA remain in observer status and again send representatives to the next meeting of the REC.

11.2.1.2 That new Deputies are commissioned to formulate the calling and participation of the GKSA regarding ecumenical bodies (Acta, 2006:224, 4.1.4).

11.2.2 Execution of mandate

11.2.2.1 Representatives of the GKSA attended the REC as observers in Utrecht in 2006.

11.2.2.2 Currently discussions are proceeding between the executive bodies of the REC and the WARC pertaining to uniting. These discussions have already progressed so far that the next meeting will take place as meeting of the new united ecumenical body.

**Decision: Points 11.2.1 to 11.2.2.2 noted.**

11.2.3 Recommendation

11.2.3.1 That Deputies again send observers to the next REC/WARC.

**Decision: Approved.**

11.3 *World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) (Application submitted, 2006)*

11.3.1 Mandate

11.3.1.1 That the application be submitted at the Congress of 2006.

11.3.1.2 That the application for membership with the WRF be done while keeping the financial implications in mind.

11.3.1.3 That the Deputies send representatives to the congresses on regional and international levels (Acta, 2006:226, 4.3.3).

11.3.2 Execution of the mandate

11.3.2.1 GKSA's application was met with favourable consideration and the GKSA is now full member of the World Reformed Fellowship.

11.3.2.2 Membership of the WRF has lighter financial implications. The Africa region does have a membership fee but it is merely a small fee and the International executive management request that churches assist by means of donations to WRF.

11.3.2.3 Dr Flip Buys serves as member of the International Board of Directors and also as member of the Study Committee of WRF, that is in the process of investigating the possibility of a new internationally acceptable and contemporary Reformed Confession. He is also chairman of the Africa region of the World Reformed Fellowship.

11.3.2.4 From 23–25 September 2008 a successful Africa regional conference was held at Achterberg in Krugersdorp about Scripture-true Christianity in Africa. It was attended by 40 conference goers of Reformed Churches from South Africa, Zambië Uganda, the DRC, Rwanda, Nigerië and Sudan. Prof CT Rabali, Prof D Mashau and Dr Flip Buys from the GKSA ranks delivered presentations. A similar conference is being planned to take place in September 2009 DV in Uganda. Prof Koos Vorster delivered a presentation during the conference.

11.3.2.5 The four-yearly international conference will take place in Scotland DV in April 2010 to coincide with the 450<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Reformation in Scotland and also the centenary of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. The theme is:

*Continuing the Reformation: A Missional Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Church* (concept programme attached).

11.3.2.6 It appears that continued membership of these organisations creates opportunities for contact with worldwide Reformed churches and institutes and may in certain cases lead to full ecumenical relations with churches with which contact has been made, e.g. the PCA.

**Decision: Points 11.3.1 to 11.3.2.6 noted.**

11.3.3 Recommendations

11.3.3.1 That Synod thankfully take note of activities of WRF.

11.3.3.2 That the GKSA continue membership with WRF.

11.3.3.3 That Deputies send two representatives to the regional conference in Uganda DV in September 2009 and to the international meeting in Scotland DV in 2010.

11.3.3.4 That Deputies consider a donation, if possible, from the collection funds to ecumenicity external/abroad.

**Decision: Approved.**

11.4 *AEA and TEASA (Observers)*

11.4.1 Mandate

The mandate in 4.4.1 is repeated. [The Deputies to be named are commissioned to remain involved as observers of the regarding the activities of the AEA and the TEASA and to make Reformed contributions on this level (Acta, 2006:226, 4.4.3; compare Acta, 2003:191)].

11.4.2 Execution of the mandate

During the past three years it was not possible for Deputies to attend the meetings because of the costs incurred.

**Decision: Points 11.4.1 and 11.4.2 noted.**

11.4.3 Recommendation

Deputies continue to take note of these ecumenical bodies' activities.

**Decision: Approved.**

11.5 *Gereformeerde Bond and the Konfessioneel Gereformeerde Beraad (continued discussion/communication)*

11.5.1 Mandate

11.5.1.1 Deputies investigate the Church Polity problem about the way in which the GKSA may enter into ecumenical relationship with confessional groups in church communities.

11.5.1.2 Deputies have discussions with the GB and CGB regarding mutual interests of their missionary involvement and interest in missionary work in Africa.

11.5.1.3 That discussions with the Gereformeerde Bond and the Konfessioneel Gereformeerde Beraad continue (Acta, 2006:226,227, 4.5.3).

11.5.2 Execution of mandate

11.5.2.1 It could not be determined whether this particular Reformed Association had formed a separate church community.

11.5.2.2 If this Association had constituted as a church or church community, it would be possible for GKSA to consider ecumenical contact.

11.5.2.3 However, should this Association merely form an Association within a particular church community, ecumenical contact on the part of the GKSA is not tenable Church Polity-wise because ecumenical contact/unity/relations are maintained among church communities.

**Decision: Points 11.5.1 to 11.5.2.3 noted.**

11.5.3 Recommendation

That this mandate be considered as completed until and if a church community has been established.

**Decision: Approved.**

## 12. Other commissions and decisions

### 12.1 Afrikaans churches abroad

Deputies responsible for the commission: Dr HG Stoker (s), Rev BCG Fourie, Rev IW Ferreira, Rev CB Swanepoel, Rev ASA de Bruyn, Dr DG Breed.

#### 12.1.1 Mandate

Deputies Ecumenicity: External are commissioned by Synod to, *inter alia* and as part of the Interchurch Committee for Ministry to South Africans abroad, develop and maintain ecumenical contact with the South African churches in Australia. Synod thankfully takes cognisance of financial support to the three Afrikaans churches by the Committee for External Ministry (Acta, 2006:200, 1.5.3.4, 1.5.3.5).

#### 12.1.2 Execution of mandate

Deputies interpreted the commission as "bediening van Gereformeerdes uit Suid-Afrika in die buiteland" [meaning "*ministry to Reformed people from South Africa who are abroad*"] and therefore not necessarily only Afrikaans-speaking believers. Very positive cooperation exists among the GKSA, Dutch Reformed churches and NH churches regarding incorporation and accommodation of ex-South Africans (as well as South Africans temporarily abroad) within church communities or churches there. Visits to several places abroad have been arranged and contact has been made with several ex-South Africans to support them – also in countries where being church is very difficult. A database is being kept to bring South African co-believers in the same or different countries together and into contact with one another.

**Decision: Points 12.1 to 12.1.2 noted.**

#### 12.1.3 Recommendations

12.1.3.1 That the Dutch Reformed and NH Churches be thanked for their hearty cooperation with GKSA regarding the church-related support of South Africans and ex-South Africans abroad.

12.1.3.2 That the cooperation with the DR and NH Churches within the Committee for External Ministry be continued for the sake of support and ministry to South Africans and ex-South Africans who are abroad.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 12.2 Brochure for information on the GKSA

#### 12.2.1 For taking note

The brochure is being updated and made available to Deputies who need it.

**Decision: Noted.**

#### 12.2.2 Recommendations

12.2.2.1 Deputies are commissioned to see to it that the brochure is published and also made available electronically.

12.2.2.2 An informational DVD must be compiled for further introduction of the GKSA.

**Decision: Approved.**

### 12.3 *Descensus*

#### 12.3.1 Mandate

12.3.1.1 That a more complete and representative contribution be obtained from churches in ecumenical unity and churches with ecumenical relations and contact.

12.3.1.2 That reaction follow to the TKR request so that combined wording can be determined to be presented for evaluation to the different Synods and General Assembly and that can, after completion of these procedures, be included in the prospective combined new translation of the Doctrinal Creeds.

12.3.1.3 That report be presented to the next Synod (Acta, 2006: 229, 230, 5.3.8).

#### 12.3.2 Execution of mandate

Deputies proceeded with their commission to present an eventual recommendation of reformulation of the descensus to Synod. They did so in the light of activities of the previous Deputies as presented in the Actas of 2000, 2003 and 2006. They constantly kept an ecumenical view in mind, *i.e.* by obtaining, as far as possible,

contributions from church communities in ecumenical relevance and by then synchronising these. Work done by previous Deputies is incorporated into this Report (compare especially Acta, 2000:419-423).

### 12.3.3 Dogmatic-Historical background

#### 12.3.3.1 The early church

- (i) The words "descendit in inferna" appear for the first time in the Acta of the Ecumenical Synod of Sirmium (359) and the Ecclesiastical Council of Nicea in Thracia (359).
- (ii) Approximately 30 years later (in 390), Rufinus, a priest of Aquilea, included it in his *Expositio Symboli Apostolici*. In his notes on these articles Rufinus points out that this phrase does not appear in any confession of the Roman Catholic Church or church of the East. He does, however, not explain why he includes it here and at this stage.
- (iii) However, Rufinus's intention with doing so is of importance. An indication is found in the fact that he omits the article "sepultus" (to be buried) and substitutes it for "descendit in inferna". He apparently does it, not to introduce a new dogma, but to explain the existing. "Sepultus" and "ascendit in inferna", it would appear, are regarded as synonyms.
- (iv) This phrase emphasises the reality of Christ's death and correlates with the age-old idea of the condition of the spirit after death, as believed by the Jews and the Christians of the time.
- (v) The early church simply understood the descending of Christ as part of God's plan of redemption and salvation, and from the position of humiliation the crossing over into the state of glorification of Christ.
- (vi) Why Rufinus found it necessary to include this phrase at that point in time, may be an indication that a shift in dogma that necessitated such an inclusion was already taking place in the church of that time.

#### 12.3.3.2 Middle Age Shift

- (i) This slumbering dogmatic shift or change in understanding the phrase emerged more strongly during the patrician time and the Middle Ages.
- (ii) By the year 750 the text of the Apostolicum had finally been set and the phrase "descendit in inferna" finally took up position alongside "sepultum".
- (iii) It was especially under the influence of the church fathers Origenes and Clemens Alexandrinus that a broader picture of Christ's three days between burial and resurrection was painted. It was accompanied by a better defined distinction between sheol/hades (realm of the dead and temporary place of staying of all those who die – both the redeemed and the condemned) as well as between heaven and hell (place of eternal condemnation).
- (iv) It eventually led to the point of a switch in belief from Christ after his death being in the place of the dead (for the righteous and the condemned) to Christ being in the place of eternal condemnation (hell), where in the latter case He waged war against Satan and death and conquered. This is being described in elaborate language in various books of the Apocrypha, for example in the Gospel of Nicodemus (ch 13-21).
- (v) There was, therefore, a growing tendency to view the "descending" independently from the central doctrine of the death and resurrection of Christ and to substitute the concept of "realm of the dead" for the concept of "hell".

#### 12.3.3.3 Reformatory re-interpretation

- (i) During the time of the reformation many a doctrine-related dispute occurred around this article. Between 1580 and 1720 as many as 54 special studies of research were conducted on this topic, *i.e.* from denominations Luther (34), Reformed (16) and Roman Catholic (4) (Wentzel:224).
- (ii) In 1536 Bucer, for example, interpreted this article historically and viewed the "burial" of Christ as synonym to the "descending" of Christ. The majority of

reformers interpreted the phrase "descendit in inferna" not symbolically-historical, but dogmatically.

- (iii) Luther related the descending to Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane and on the mount of Calvary; Calvin took it over from him. In his *Institutes* (2.16.8) Calvin elaborated on the matter. He admitted that this article had been added later on, that some of the church fathers each attached an own interpretation to it, and that others, (e.g. Augustine) omitted it altogether, but that the historical aspects of its origin and interpretation were of no importance.
- (iv) Calvin preferred "hell" as translation for "inferna" and explained this phrase as bearing relevance to Christ's extreme suffering upon the cross (as if in hell). He argued that nothing would in reality have been significantly brought to fulfilment if Christ had only died a physical death on the cross. Christ, according to him, also had to experience the strictness of the wrath of God, and therefore also had to encounter and confront the hosts of hell and the terror of the eternal death. In descending Christ bore this death upon him. Not only his body was delivered as a price for our salvation, but also in his soul did He carry the burden of the terrible distress of the lost person. He was not only engaged in death, but also in the predicaments and grievous pain that flow forth from the curse and wrath of God, and as the terrible in-depth point Calvin mentions the abandonment on the cross. This explanation is reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism, 16:44.
- (v) With this explanation Calvin endeavoured to "de-mythologise" the article, but by doing so deviated from the original meaning of this expression. During the reformation he did not want to tamper with a confession that had been standing for ages.
- (vi) The Church of Luther confesses (mainly contradictory to Luther's own view) in the *Formula Concordiae* of 1577 (art. 9) that Christ in total being, *i.e.* as God and as human being, descended to hell to demolish Satan's power.
- (vii) Yet additional interpretations of the descending to hell appear in the Confession and Great Catechism of Westminster: this humiliation did not happen prior to his death but after his death. He was buried and up to the third day He remained in the state of the dead and in the power of death.

#### 12.3.3.4 A few interpretations of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

- (i) Bavinck rejects the opinion that Christ conveyed the Gospel in hell to all those who had not heard it here on earth. He honours the interpretation that the descending is about the state of death in which Christ was between his death and his resurrection to bear the punishment in our stead and to relieve us of it, as being in correlation with Scripture and Scripture-related expressions, as the most probable origin and meaning of these words and with the positioning of these words among the remaining articles.
- (ii) J Moltman is of the opinion that there is some truth in the interpretation of the suffering of pain as in hell and in this conquering over hell by Christ.
- (iii) H Berkhof honours the interpretation of Christ's solidarity with us, and his triumph over the powers of death, but rejects that of being forsaken by God.
- (iv) Berkouwer means that the interpretation of descending to hell in the sense of it being a state of abandonment by God, as historically uncertain, but nevertheless in line with Scripture.
- (v) MH Bolkestein takes another direction by stating that Christ's sovereignty is nowhere and in no way inhibited or limited by boundaries. There is no domain on or under earth where He does not reign. Even there where no human being can exert power - in the realm of death - He has power.
- (vi) In 1975 the Church of Luther defended its opinion by stating that the dead who had no opportunity to meet Jesus personally or to receive his message are granted another opportunity to meet Him and redeem themselves. To them 1 Peter 3:18, and also 4:6, are the *loci classici* for this view.

#### 12.3.3.5 Addressing the problem as done by different Reformed Churches

- (i) In the English-speaking circles a so-called Commission on English Texts (ICET) was founded in 1969 by the main stream churches to work on the combined formulation of church-related documents. In 1970 the ICET published a number of “agreed upon texts”, including the Apostolicum. The words "he descended into hell" were substituted for "he descended to the dead".
- (ii) In October 1968 the Dutch Reformed Church decided to reformulate the phrase and concluded with "ter helle neergedaal" – in order to express the true meaning in a way that would correlate well with the historical and Scripture-related information. The Hervormde Church reflected a similar decision.
- (iii) The Presbyterian Church in Korea omitted these words from the Apostolicum at an early stage because they wanted to prevent misunderstanding, especially misunderstanding related to the purgatory of the Roman Catholic Church.
- (iv) The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches in Germany has also in the mean time changed this article to “descended to the realm of the dead”
- (v) Synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia also presented a Petition of Protest at their Synod of 1994. The matter was referred to Study Deputies and these reported at the Synod of 1997. Synod showed understanding for the problem with interpretation of this article, but decided not to have the confession changed. Synod’s eventual decision was to keep the descensus, but to add a footnote: "by this we understand that Christ suffered the Godforsaken agony of hell on the cross". Synod also decided to forward the 1994 petition, the Report 1997 and the decisions 1997 to the Reformed Ecumenical Council for consideration during the 2000 meeting.
- (vi) During a meeting in 2000 the Reformed Ecumenical Council presented the descensus in the Apostolicum for consideration to the Reformed Churches of Australia via reports and decisions. The REC decided as follows: “1. That the assembly inform the RCA that the REC acknowledges the following important principles: i. The original text of the Apostle’s Creed is foundational. ii. There is a universal acceptance of the original text of the Apostle’s Creed among Christian communions and therefore any departure from it should not be unilateral. iii. The problem is more a matter of language than doctrine. iv. Churches using a common language should endeavour to use an agreed version. v. Use of the Apostle’s Creed should always be related to Biblical exposition. 2. That the Secretariat includes the CRCNA response in the Acts of the Assembly. 3 That the Assembly takes no further action” (REC Acta 2000:11, 12:B).
- (vii) The Reformed Churches of New Zealand also studied the matter and investigated four possibilities to solve the problem of interpretation. They also eventually decided to add a footnote.
- (viii) Around the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches of the USA there increasingly is a tendency to omit the descensus.

#### 12.3.3.6 The GKSA

- (i) During Synod 1964 a Petition of Protest served about the words "en neergedaal het na die hel ..." [meaning “*and descended to hell*”] as they appear in the Apostle’s Creed and Confession of Faith of Atanasius. The petition was not maintained.
- (ii) During Synod 1997 a Petition of Protest of Particular Synod Western Transvaal served to protest against the above-mentioned decision, by strength of two aspects:

- (a) Synod 1964 admits that the words "en neergedaal het na die hel" may easily be misunderstood, but offers no satisfactory solution.
- (b) The misunderstanding that does exist with many members about the words "en neergedaal het na die hel", cannot be tolerated dogmatically or Biblically and must therefore be prevented.
- (iii) Particular Synod Western Transvaal 1997 decided that a re-translation would be the most appropriate way to solve the problem.
- (iv) Synod 2003 this concept wording/articulation/formulation for the descensus to be tested by churches in the Apostolicum: (Acta 2003:559) namely "wat die angste van die hel tot in die dood toe ondergaan het" [meaning "who underwent the anxieties of hell unto death"].
- (v) For the Atanasium Synod 2003 accepted the following concept wording: (Acta 2003:559) "wat ter wille van ons saligheid gely het, en só die angste van die hel, tot in die dood toe ondergaan het, op die derde dag uit die dood opgestaan het."
- (vi) Synod 2006 emphasises that contributions must be obtained from church communities in ecumenical denomination (Acta 2006: 229,230, 5.3.8).

#### 12.3.4 Biblical information/reference

##### 12.3.4.1 Biblical information that apparently support the descending to hell

Possible support for the idea of Christ's descending to hell, can mainly be found in five parts of Scripture: Acts 2:27; Rom 10:6-7; Eph 4:8-9; 1 Peter 3:18-20 en 1 Peter 4:6.

##### Acts 2:27

This verse forms part of Peter's sermon on Pentecost Day. He quotes Ps 16:10. In the translation New King James Version: "*Because You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption*". [Afrikaans translations referred to in the original text of this document were the 1953 and 1983 versions.] The Greek word "hades" (Hebrew "sheol") is in some translations given as "realm of the dead". [Example applying to English translations: New International Version – "*because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay*".] Some translations (e.g. the KJV Afrikaans), translated with the word "hell". Both the original words (hades/sheol) may simply mean "*the grave*"/"*death*" (the condition of being dead). In this context the emphasis on the fact that Christ's body rose from the grave, contrary to David's body that remained inside the grave. Peter uses this Psalm by David to illustrate that Christ's body had not perished. In this Christ differs totally from David who also died and was buried, but whose grave is "*with us till today*."

This part about Christ's resurrection from the grave offers no convincing grounds for the idea that Christ had descended to hell.

##### Romans 10:6-7

These verses again contain a quotation from the Old Testament (Deut 30:13). Paul asks two rhetorical questions: [*the Afrikaans examples mentioned in the original Afrikaans text of this document were taken from the translations of the Bible into Afrikaans in 1953 and in 1983.*] "*Who will ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above)* and "*Who will descend into the abyss? (that is to bring Christ up from the dead)* – New King James Bible. The New International Version: "*Who will ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down)* and "*Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)*. The Greek word "abyssos" here translated with "abyss" and "deep" has also elsewhere in the Bible been used to indicate the depths of the sea (Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; Deut 8:7, etc.), but may also probably simply be used to refer to the realm of the dead, as in Ps 71:20. Paul here uses it in contrast with "heaven" to indicate a place which cannot be reached by the human being. The contrast here is not who will go to find Christ in a place of righteousness (heaven) or a place of wrath/punishment (hell). The contrast is who

will go to find Christ in a place of inaccessible height (heaven) or a place of inaccessible depth (place where the dead people are).

This part does not substantiate the idea of Christ's descending into hell.

Ephesians 4:8-9

These verses were written by Paul. (The Afrikaans examples for the Afrikaans text of this document were taken from the Afrikaans Bible translations of 1953 and 1983.) (The examples taken for the English translation of the Afrikaans text of this document were taken from the New King James and the New International Version of Bible translations.) Reference is made to heaven as being higher and earth as being lower. The difference of interpretation lies with the possibilities of the higher parts of heaven and the lower parts of earth instead of earth as being lower than heaven. In context the words could be interpreted as Christ being the same One who ascended to heaven (Ascension) as the One who came to earth in flesh as a human being.

This part is about Christ's coming to earth as a human being rather than about the possibility of Christ's descending into hell.

1 Peter 3:18-20

These verses written by Peter appear to be responsible for many problems with interpretation. (Again references to/examples from the Bible were taken as follows: The Afrikaans examples for the Afrikaans text of this document were taken from the Afrikaans Bible translations of 1953 and 1983. The examples taken for the English translation of the Afrikaans text of this document were taken from the New King James and the New International Version of Bible translations.) NKJ: *".. put to death in flesh, but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah .."*. The point of dogmatic difference here is the interpretation that Christ went among those already dead (with reference to unrighteous people of Noah's time) to bring the Gospel to all those already dead, as if Christ had entered into hell for the sake of the lost spirits there that are in eternal condemnation, to give them a chance to be part of salvation. Some have it that this could mean confirmation of Christ's triumph over evil. Such interpretation goes beyond the context in which the verses were written and certainly causes serious dogmatic problems. No reference can be found in the Bible where an opportunity for salvation after death is being articulated. There also are no references to indicate that believers of the time of the Old Testament were denied immediate bliss after death; on the contrary, various parts refer to Old Testament believers as having received the bliss of salvation in the presence of God because forgiveness for their sins happened by strength of their faith in the Messiah that would come (Gen 5:24; 2 Sam 12:23; Ps 16:11; 17:15; 23:6; Eccl 12:7; Matt 22:31-32; Luke 16:22; Rom 4:1-8 and Heb 11:5).

An acceptable interpretation for these verses had already been provided by Augustine ages ago: The time being referred to is not the time between Christ's death and his resurrection, not to what happened during this time, but the reference is to what He did through his Spirit in the time of Noah. When Noah was building the ark, Christ addressed the believers surrounding him in the Spirit. This interpretation is supported by Peter says in 1 Peter 1:11, namely that the Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets in the Old Testament. Apart from this he also mentions Noah in 2 Pet 2:5 as *"a preacher of righteousness"*. These people to whom Christ spoke were those who did not believe in the time of Noah, but Peter refers to them as spirits in prison because they are in the prison of hell, even though they are not spirits, but had been people on earth when the preaching had taken place through the Spirit.

These verses do not underwrite the idea of Christ's descending to hell after his death on the cross.

### 1 Peter 4:6

New King James: “*For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.*” If these verses should teach that Christ had descended to hell, it would mean that also the teaching/dogma of a “second chance” to salvation after death would have to be accepted – which is opposing to, for example, Luke 16:19-31 and Heb 9:27. These verses do not explicitly mention that the gospel was preached to people after their death. What could be meant is that the preaching took place while they were still alive. The end of verse 5 refers to “judge the living and the dead”, which points to the end of time, the Day of Judgement. This would include a word of comfort to those who are concerned about their loved ones or fellow-believers who had already died. They might be uncertain about the gospel being of any use to them, because it did not save them from death. Peter says that the gospel was not meant to save them from physical death, but to save them from eternal “death” or condemnation in the eventual judgement. The fact that they died is not an indication that the gospel had failed in its purpose. The “dead” are therefore people who had died and are now dead, though they lived on earth while the gospel was brought to them. The New International Version: “*For this is the reason why the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they may be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard of the spirit.*” This does not rule out physical death (the 1983 Afrikaans translation confirms this.)

These verses therefore also do not supply convincing support for the idea that Christ descended to hell after his death.

#### 12.3.4.2 Parts of Scripture clearly contradictory to a descending to hell

- (i) Apart from the fact that very little, if any, confirmation exists according to the Bible for a descending to hell of Christ, two of Christ's words upon the cross altogether contradict the thought that He descended to hell after his death.
- (ii) In Luke 23:43 Jesus addresses the criminal on the cross next to His and says: “*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*”. This points out that the spirit of Jesus would immediately after his death (*today*) enter into the presence of his Father in heaven, even though his body would remain on earth, buried in a tomb on earth.
- (iii) In John 19:30 Jesus calls out that everything had come to fulfilment, the relevant events had come to an end. This is a clear indication that Christ's suffering had ceased at that moment, and together with that his alienation from God the Father that had to be because He bore our sins. That He would thereafter be exposed to further suffering in hell is ruled out by this call of succumbing. He would go to his Father (in relief, as is evident from his words).
- (iv) That Jesus is about to die the way that all those of the flesh are to die is illustrated by the reference in Luke 23:46 when Jesus cried out with a loud voice for all those surrounding Him to hear: “*Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit*” (NKJ). To die of the body is the final step of His bearing of our sins.
- (v) The above-mentioned verses indicate that Christ at the time of his earthly/bodily death went through the same experiences that all believers living today have to experience at the time of their death. His dead body remained on earth, buried, and his spirit went to his heavenly Father. On the first day of the week Christ's body and spirit were united again and he rose from the dead, as would happen to believers when the Lord comes again.

#### 12.3.5 Conclusions

12.3.5.1 Relevant parts from Scripture contain no clear indication that a positive decision in favour of descending to hell can be made, *i.e.* of Christ descending to hell/hade.

12.3.5.2 There are references from the Bible that clearly contradict a descending to hell.

- 12.3.5.3 The phrase under discussion was added to the Apostle's Creed (confession of faith) at a very late stage (end of 4<sup>th</sup> century –middle 7<sup>th</sup> century). Originally it was understood that Christ descended to the realm of the dead/hades, that was but another way of telling that He was dead. Uring the Middle Ages it was, however, interpreted literally as if Christ had descended into hell te free the believers of the Old Covenant.
- 12.3.5.4 Calvin rejected this commonly used interpretation (as not according to the Bible) and interpreted this expression as the extreme grief and distress and abandonment by God that Christ was suffering (as if in hell) upon the cross. The HC, 16:44 reminds of this.
- 12.3.5.5 From the history of the descensus it appears that the commonly used wording (may bring) brings about misunderstanding and (may establish) establishes a wrong concept about Christ's death. On face value the wording is not in correlation with the Bible, and even contradicts the Bible.
- 12.3.5.6 Various church communities re-considered the wording, either individually or in ecumenical relation. Some of the church communities came to an own solution by adapting the formulation or omitting the words altogether and yet others added a footnote.
- 12.3.6 Notification to church communities in ecumenical relation
- 12.3.6.1 The proposed concept formulation, accompanied by proper motivation, has been sent after both Synods 2003 and 2006, to:
- (i) All church councils (and ministers) of the GKSA.
  - (ii) All theological professors of the GKSA.
  - (iii) The former Synod Midlands and the Reformed Churches soutpansberg.
  - (iv) All church commnities with which GKSA has correspondence.
  - (v) The Dutch Reformed NH and AP churches
- 12.3.6.2 All church communities in ecumenical relation with GKSA according to the Konvent van Reformatoriese Kerke in Suider-Afrika (after Synod 2006).
- 12.3.6.3 All church communities with which GKSA has ecumenical relations via ICRC (after Synod 2006).
- 12.3.6.4 Deputies who were sent to church communities abroad discussed and elucidated, even repeatedly, the possible changes to the descensus with relevant Deputies and Committees.
- 12.3.7 Responses from church communities and individual members
- 12.3.7.1 A number of Church Councils, professors and individuals responded.
- 12.3.7.2 A number of church communities, internal and abroad/external, responded - in each event to share and communicate own experiences and decisions regarding descensus. The Dutch Reformed Church motivated its 1986 decision "and descended to hell". The NH Church indicated that currently relevant interpretation would be wiser than changing the symbols of the ecumenical text, and continues with using "descended to hell". The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerke in Nedl motivated the formulation "nedergedaald in het rijk van de dood".
- 12.3.7.3 Among the individual responses contradictory opinions and motivations emerged, e.g. altogether omit the article, change it to descending into the realm of the dead, keep the present formulation. The majority of the individual responses, as well as the responses from local churches, were in favour of the concept formulation decided on by Synod 2003.
- 12.3.7.4 No church community, internal and external, filed objection against changes or the concept formulation (2003) as substitution for the commonly used formulation.
- 12.3.8 TKR's decision on changes to the descensus
- 12.3.8.1 After the Deputies had informed TKR about the processes of possible alteration of the formulation of the descensus with which GKSA is busy at present, TKR decided as follows in 2005:  
 "The GKSA is requested to convey decisions according to Deputies' work in this respect to the TKR so that endeavours can be made to determine a combined

formulation that can be presented to the various Synods and General Assembly for evaluation and approval in order to be included afterwards in the prospective combined new translation of the Doctrinal Creeds.”

12.3.8.2 The Commission in 1 must be read in the light of this.

12.3.8.3 After requests for further contributions from the church communities involved, no further comment was received.

#### 12.3.9 Findings

12.3.9.1 In general the matter is viewed by church communities abroad/external, as was also evident from discussions, as not being so much a matter of dogmatic changes but rather of changes pertaining to issues around formulation (compare 2.5.6 iii).

12.3.9.2 For this reason several external church communities have already accepted an own formulation, without bringing about dogmatic changes to the age-old Doctrinal Creeds.

12.3.9.3 The same direction has already been taken by internal church communities since 1986, by own formulation of the article under discussion, *i.e.* “descended to hell”.

12.3.9.4 The discussion must be continued by the TKR and the Convent of the Reformed Churches in Southern Africa in order to reach uniformity of formulation.

12.3.10 The Concept Formulation that is presented to churches for evaluation by Synod 2003 include the following:

12.3.10.1 The wording in the Apostolicum, *“who endured the anxieties of hell till death/who was subjected to the terrors of hell till death”*, as well as the words in the Atanasium *“...and so suffered the anxieties and terrors of hell till death ...”* could already be a step in the right direction in the light of 2 and 3. However, there still appears to be an inherent misformulation that does not complement information from the Bible.

12.3.10.2 Die tussensin van die konsepbewoording kon eintlik lui: *“tot die dood toe”* – wat eerder klem wil lê op die intensiteit as die situering van die lyding soos in *“tot in die dood”* (Ons beklemtoning – Deputate).

12.3.10.3 The deepest point in Christ’s certainly must have been when He called out in language of his mother: Die dieptepunt van Christus se lyding was sekerlik toe Hy in sy moeder se taal uitgeroep het: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Shortly following this – and prior to his death – He said: *“Tetelestai – It has been fulfilled/It is finished!”* And also before He died He said: *“Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit”* (Luke 23:46, NKJ). The meaning can therefore clearly not be “till into the dead” (that is to be among them) but rather plainly “till death” (that is until He died/ceased to be alive physically).

12.3.10.4 The concept formulation for the Apostolicum left out of consideration the follow-up stipulation *“rose from death on the third day”*. (The conjunction “and”, according to the Afrikaans, was omitted).

12.3.10.5 The following possibilities were also brought to the attention of the Deputies:

- (i) *“en helse smarte gelei het;”* (Prof PA Verhoef in *Die Kerkblad*, March 2003)
- (ii) *“en die angste van die Hel ondergaan het;”*
- (iii) *“en helse lyding ondergaan het;”*
- (iv) *“en helse angste gely het;”* [meaning: *and suffered the distress of hell / and was exposed to the anxiety and terror of hell / and suffered as if in hell / and suffered the anxieties and terrors of hell* ]

12.3.10.6 The mentioned possibilities correlate, regarding contents, with the suggestion of the representatives of the CRCA and the RCNZ on the GKSA Synod of 2003 (presented in CRC of Australia, Acts 2003:III–136): *“... ; He suffered the torment of Hell:”*.

**Decision: Points 12.3.1 to 12.3.10.6 noted.**

12.3.11 Recommendation regarding the formulation in the Apostolicum

In the light of the preceding Synod accepts the following formulation:

The original “neergedaal na die hel” is replaced in the Apostolicum with the following worRev: *“...gekruisig is, gesterf het en begrawe is. Hy het die lyding of the hel”*

ondergaan. Hy het op die derde dag opgestaan uit die dood...”. A footnote is placed at ‘Hy het die lyding of the hel ondergaan’ which reaRev: “neergedaal het na die hel’ (original text) – see HC Sunday 16, q/a 44”

Motivation

*This solves the problem that was initially stated, namely that people may get the impression that Christ went to hell after his death.*

The Apostolicum as explained in the Heidelberg Catechism, Sunday 7, q/a 23, and Sunday 16, q/a 44 is also amended as mentioned above.

**Decision: Approved as amended – amendmenRev already included – Deputies Acta. To the to-be-appointed Deputies Ecumenicity: National and International it is assigned to handle this with churches with whom the GKSA has ties and with whom the GKSA is one.**

12.3.12 Recommendation regarding the formulation in the Atanasium

The following formulation is accepted as replacement for “na die hel neergedaal het”, in the Atanasium: “wat ter wille van ons saligheid gely het en begrawe is. Hy het die lyding of the hel ondergaan. Op die derde dag het Hy uit die dood opgestaan...”. A footnote is added that reaRev as following: “na die hel neergedaal het” (original text) – see HC Sunday 16, q/a 44”.

Motivation

*This solves the problem that was initially stated, namely that people may get the impression that Christ went to hell after his death.*

**Decision: Approved as amended – amendments already included – Deputies Acta. To the to-be-appointed Deputies Ecumenicity: National and International it is assigned to handle this with churches with whom the GKSA has ties and with whom the GKSA is one.**

12.3.13 Recommendation regarding practical execution

If Synod accepts this recommendation, the following also neeRev the attention of Synod for decision making:

12.3.13.1 The change should also be made in the HC, Sun 7:23.

12.3.13.2 The denomination as well as all the church communities who had been approached for advice and input should be notified of the decision.

12.3.13.3 The discussion should be continued at the Convent of Reformed Churches in Southern Africa to come to a uniform formulation.

**Decision: Approved as amended – amendments are already made – Deputies Acta.**

12.4 *Finances*

12.4.1 Recommendation

12.4.1.1 The Synod plan for the activities of the Deputies as follows:

12.4.1.1.1 One compulsory love offering per year is given by the churches for the execution of the GKSA’s ecumenical mandate.

12.4.1.1.2 Travel costs (national), day fees (national) and other necessary responsibilities are provided for from the Synod fund.

12.4.1.2 The Synod provides for the churches’ joint responsibility with regard to the ministry in London with one compulsory love offering per year.

12.4.1.3 The Synod provides for the compulsory annual fees with regard to the ICRC.

**Decision: Approved.**

12.5 *International Church Conference on Reformed Identity*

On request of the Deputies for the 150 year Festival of the GKSA, the Deputies deemed it well to have an International Conference on Reformed Identity Worldwide in the place of the conference on Hermeneutics, which did not realize. It will be held on the Monday and Tuesday after the Synod, in other words 19 and 20 January 2009.

**Decision: Noted.**

### 13. General Recommendations

- 13.1 Ecumenical contact that could lead to the acknowledgement of ties and unity is made with churches with whom the GKSA is one in doctrine, service and punishment (CO, art 85).
- 13.2 Mediocre matters should not stand in the way of ecumenical unity.
- 13.3 The practical meaning of ecumenicity is embodied in matters such as: proof of membership and calling; invitations to SynoRev; input in each others decision making.
- 13.4 The meaning of ecumenicity is explained to Church councils in for instande *Die Kerkblad* and by way of short information pieces.
- 13.5 The Deputies receive the assignment to formulate what the GKSA understand with ties, unity and correspondence, to reach consensus on it with Deputies of the church communities with whom the GKSA is in correspondence.
- 13.6 The Deputies receive the assignment to have the relevant decisions of Synod 2009 translated into English and to send it out to all the church communities with whom the GKSA is in correspondence. Synod will include this on the budget.
- 13.7 One of the Deputies of Ecumenicity: International is appointed to Ecumenicity: National for the sake of necessary contact.
- 13.8 The catchment of South-African church members in the following countries should receive urgent attention: New Zealand, Australia, Canada and England.
- 13.9 Contact should be made with ministers who previously served in the GKSA on a frequent basis so that communication can improve and that member who live in the relevant countries can be ministered.
- 13.10 Deputies should contact churches in the above-mentioned countries regarding the issue of South-African church members who sometimes find it difficult to take part in the churches due to differences in focus.
- 13.11 Local churches should be informed regarding ecumenical ties that exist, and there should be a list and a map at the Administrative Buro that indicate where these churches are situated, so that members can know where these churches are.
- 13.12 The Deputies receive the assignment to compile a user friendly brosure for all the congregations to:
  - 13.12.1 Provide an overview of the activities of the Deputies Ecumenicity
  - 13.12.2 Give information (including contact information) regarding the churches with whom the GKSA is in correspondence
  - 13.12.3 Give information (including contact information) regarding churches with whom the GKSA has ecumenical ties
  - 13.12.4 Give contact information of the Deputies who are involved with ecumenical matters in South Africa

**Decision: Approved.**

### 14. Retrospection and Forecasting

- 14.1 In the light of the decisions of several Synods (see 1.3), the experience of church unity over country borders remains the most important and urgent calling of the church on the terrain of ecumenicity. Like the body of the Lord comes to expression in the local church, so the same body of the Lord should be expressed universally in church denominational sense. Churches based on the same confessional foundation can not stand next to each other in this world like cocoons without any show of recognition of each other. In this it should be taken into account that *diversity without unity* serves the ecumenical ideal just as little as *unity without diversity*. Scripture bound ecumenicity creates a framework for *unity that maintains diversity* and *diversity that strives towards unity*.
- 14.2 In this phase of the history of Christianity the emphasis increasingly falls on unifying rather than dividing aspects. At the same time the “shrunk” world due to technology makes it more possible to initialise and edify ecumenical contact. The church should as body of Christ show herself to the world in such a way that it reveals something of the “unlimited” appearance of God in the world.

- 14.3 Because worldwide ecumenicity is an extensive task, the desk method of the Deputies offers the possibility to practice ecumenicity more meaningfully and more intensively. The different desks increasingly take own initiative for a certain part of the world that fall under their responsibilities ecumenically, and they see to it that contacts are made with regard to their area to promote church unity, they sustain it and see to it that the joint mandate is met. As a group that usually meets two times per year, the Deputies act jointly in terms of correlation, planning and evaluation. In this manner the activities of the Deputies are better dispersed and handled.
- 14.4 The Deputies should see the following as priorities in order to focus the ecumenical communication that desks have with representatives of church communities across the world on the development of church unity, and to give this focus embodiment on grassroots level in the church of the Lord:
- 14.4.1 There should be clarity about what each of the corresponding church communities' involved representatives understand ecumenical unity to be. The practical meaning of ecumenical unity (possible levels of unity implementation and expression) should be talked through to make church unity across boundaries more and more visible in the local church.
- 14.4.2 To make ecumenical unity visible in this way, church communities should gain more and more access and make inputs into each other's decision forming processes. Deputies that should formulate recommendations for the Synod regarding principle matters, should get the input of peer deputies of corresponding church communities and should equally receive the opportunity to make inputs from the side of the GKSA into the decision making processes of other church communities.
- 14.5 Ecumenical negotiations should therefore be made of practical importance to local churches.
- 14.6 The practice to have negotiations with all the Deputies for ecumenicity of all the corresponding church communities at least once every three years, should continue in order to be able to report to the next Synod on whether the unity bond still continues, and especially on how it can be strengthened practically.
- 14.7 Because the task of the Deputies is increasingly expanding, one of the criteria when initialising new ecumenical contact should be whether such an outreach (sometimes to remote parts of the world) can serve the visibility of the unity of the church of the Lord in the short and the long term in practice. Far flights at high cost, that do not have a reasonable chance for follow-up, should not be undertaken.
- 14.8 Ecumenical bodies that the GKSA belong to, are important – especially with the ecumenical contacts that these meetings offer, and there should still be serious effort in this regard. The Deputies should, however, motivate the cost aspect involved in membership, and negotiate with the involved ecumenical bodies on this.
- 14.9 Africa should still be seen as a priority due to the GKSA's special calling and future involvement with regard to her "home continent".
- 14.10 Continued ties with GKSA members from South Africa in other countries, should equally receive the attention of the Deputies.
- 14.11 Cooperation at the level of missiology and theological training should receive continued attention.
- 14.12 The value of greeting messages that are delivered at the different meetings of other church communities and on the General Synod of the GKSA, should not be seen as insignificant. This brings the church of the Lord to expressing and the messages should therefore be treated responsibly.
- 14.13 Through the greeting messages the impact that church communities have on each other worldwide in terms of theological movements, come to expression. Participation of delegates at the Synods and Commissions of Synods, should be seen as a practical expression of the unity of church communities across country and cultural boundaries.

**Decision: Points 14.1 to 14.13 noted.**

**15. Concluding remark**

For the Deputies the work with which Synod 2006 entrusted them, was a special responsibility and opportunity. The mandate was fulfilled throughout in the realization that it is work for the kingdom and in the knowledge that where God prevents, no-one can work – but where God works, no-one can prevent it.

**16. Welcoming of the Reformed Church in East Africa in ecumenical unity**

The chairperson, dr CJ Smit, welcomes the representatives and delegates of the RCEA, nl, rev M Mauie and rev S Akoru. The Moderamen shake hanRev to confirm the ecumenicity. A few worRev of thanks are directed at the Synod by the delegates of the RCEA.

**17. Synod assembles in the church building of Potchefstroom-Noord: Celebration of the 150 years of the GKSA – 14 January 2009**

Rev LH van Schaik opens by reading from Psalm 81:1-8 and doing a prayer.

Messages of greeting and congratulations are transferred by the following:

- Rev Ray Sikkema of the United Reformed Churches in North America
- Rev Bruce Adema of the Christian Reformed Church in North America
- Rev Rev Geoff van Schie of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
- Br Bill MacRae of the Presbyterian Church West Australia
- Rev John Rogers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand
- Rev JC Wessels of the Reformed Church in Botswana
- Rev KM Kabongo of the Eglise Reformée Confessante Au Congo
- Rev Samson Akoru of the Reformed Church of East Africa
- Prof HG Peels of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerke in Nederland
- Rev Jan-Matthijs van Leeuwen of the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Vrijgemaakt)
- Rev Kim of the Presbyterian Church in Korea
- Rev Samson Akoru of the Reformed Church of East Africa
- Dr T Eloff, vice-chancellor of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus
- Prof PJ Strauss of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
- Rev Pieter Nel of the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk
- Dr DJC van Wyk of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk
- Dr Alistair Wilson of the Free Church of Scotland
- Rev J van Straaten of the Free Church of Scotland (Contin)
- Dr L Antony Curto of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church America
- Dr SD Nel of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk
- Rev Derrick Makriel of the Calvyn Protestantse Kerk
- Prof BJ de Klerk of the Theological School Potchefstroom

**18. Message of Greeting from dr Kwon of the Presbyterian Church Korea – 1 July 2009**

Dr Kwon transfers the greetings to the assembly. Prof D Mashau thanks them on behalf of Synod and prays for the blessing of the Lord.