

15.6 PETITION OF PROTEST OF REGIONAL SYNOD BOSVELD – GKSA’s MEMBERSHIP OF THE SACC (Artt 19, 34, 257, 259, 265, 280)

- A. Rev SA Cilliers states the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** The Petition of Protest is referred to the Petition of Protest Commission 5.
- C. Rev PK Lourens reports on behalf of the Petition of Protest Commission 5.
- D. A minority report was later for submission and could not be presented. The Reporter of the relevant minority report who did not hand it in, received the opportunity to state his care during the discussion.
- E. **Decision:** Synod decides to appoint a commission to determine the weight of the grounds of appeal involved in the light of those grounds for appeal that succeeded, and to advise Synod whether the Petition of Protest should succeed or not. The following commission is appointed: dr JH Howell (c), revs HC van Rooy, SA Cilliers, B Compane and prof A le R du Plooy.
- F. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of the Ad hoc-commission.
- G. Prof SJ van der Merwe reports on behalf of the Ad hoc-commission regarding the implication that the Petition of Protest of Regional Synod Bosveld succeeded.

H. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Decision that is protested

1.1 3.2 Membership SACC

The Deputies are of opinion that the GKSA should apply for membership with the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and makes such a recommendation to the Synod. At the same time the Deputies recommends that Synod Midlands be asked to join Synod Potchefstroom in this endeavour.

(a) Motivation

In the light of the fact that communal ecclesiastical testimony is very important, the Deputies are of the opinion that the GKSA should join the SACC because it provides the GKSA with greater direct access to government. At the same time it will enable our churches to play a more influential role within the broader ecclesiastical environment. The theological climate within the SACC has changed significantly since 1994, while the structure of the SACC allows churches to keep their own identity. Member churches do not have to agree with all decisions of the SACC, and can give testimony or launch initiatives on their own when necessary. These factors make it easier for the GKSA to join the SACC. Unfortunately the constitution of the SACC does not provide for observer status any more, with the result that the GKSA has to either join the structure, or remain outside of it.

(b) Argumentation

- (i) Involvement with the SACC is not a new matter (see Acta 1976:366; Acta 1997:177, 3.2.3). However, observer status at the SACC is no longer possible, with the result that the GKSA now has to decide to become a member of the SACC or to break ties with the organisation. Good reasons will have to be offered for the last option.
- (ii) The GKSA has a calling to give prophetic testimony in the world and to the government based on a reformed foundation (see Col 2:8 and John 9:5; 1 Pet 3:15).
- (iii) The Deputies have given testimony of discussions with the Executive of the SACC, who will welcome the presence of the GKSA and who are positive and friendly.
- (iv) The available Constitution of the SACC includes clear policy dictums regarding their Christian confession: **“PREAMBLE**

1 *The South African Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches and*

organisations which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 2 *The Council affirms, on the basis of the Scriptures, that the Church is the Body of Christ and therefore is one. Though obscured and marred by sinful division, this unity of all Christians is the gift of God and does not need to be created.*
 - 3 *Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Council is an instrument and servant of the Churches, committed to stimulating and effecting fellowship, co-operation and unity among its member Churches and all other Christians in their common mission in the world. The work of the Council is based on the recognition of Jesus Christ as the divine Head of the Body and is to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*
 - 4 *The theological basis of the Council is a common confession of the Christian faith of its members and is not a credal test of Churches or individuals. The Council is not committed to any one theological understanding of the Church, and membership of the Council does not imply acceptance of any specific doctrine of the Church.”*
- (v) The SACC states no precondition to the GKSA regarding modification or possible modification of its Confession in order to become a member. On the contrary, together with other churches of reformed confession (such as the Dutch Reformed Church and the NHK) the reformed doctrine can acquire a meaningful vote.
- (vi) There are other ways of giving testimony. The involvement of churches on third level government through “fraternals” can be especially efficient. At the highest level of contact with the government the SACC is by far the most effective way of contact with the government. Bodies such as the TKK and the Convent of Reformed Churches have very limited influence for purposes of contact with the government.
- (vii) Negative perceptions about the SACC in the GKSA should not be underplayed, but should be managed by embracing the truth about the SACC in every situation and to testify about it in a fitting manner to the churches and in the world.

Decision 3.2 above is approved with the following addition:

- (a) **“The Synod makes it clear that the GKSA keeps its independence and do not per association take responsibility for every view and action of the SACC.**
- (b) **The Deputies receives the assignment to communicate serious and fundamental points of difference to our members.**
- (c) **The Deputies receives the mandate to advise the next Synod regarding the continuation of our membership”.**

1.2 Article 4.1.4: To appoint a representative to represent the GKSA at the SACC and in so doing to have access and a say in deliberations with the government. **Decision: Approved.**

Last decision (1.2) is by way of a mandate to an appointed Deputies group a direct consequence of the first decision (1.1). It is not handled separately because it is inseparably part of one matter, namely the membership of the SACC.

2. The Grounds for Protest

2.1 The decision has as its point of departure that the church may and must let herself be prescribed from outside as to how she must fulfil her prophetic calling.

- 2.2 The decision is founded on a faulty and incomplete representation of the SACC.
- 2.3 The decision endangers the GKSA's membership of the ICRC and this was not taken into account when the decision was made.
- 2.4 The decision is contrary to the Belgic Confession art 36.

3. Motivation of grounds of protest

- 3.1 Ground of Protest 2.1 (The decision has as its point of departure that the church may and must let herself be prescribed from outside as to how she must fulfil her prophetic calling)
 - 3.1.1 The motivation for membership of the SACC does not provide any grounds from Scripture and/or Confessions. The Deputies is of the opinion that membership of the SACC will provide the GKSA with greater direct access to the authorities (meaning the government of the day). Once again there is no motivation of or for this statement. In addition, the statement is contradictory. "Direct" access means two-sided interaction, be it written or orally. This falls away when an organisation works through another body which presents a combined view of all its co-workers.
 - 3.1.2 In the argumentation three texts are mentioned, but then it does not involve membership of the SACC, but rather the church's calling to testify in the world to the authorities in a reformed and prophetic manner [Acta 2006:173, (b)(ii)]. This testimony from the Word to the authorities can still continue without membership of the SACC. If discussion is not possible, it can still take place in a written form of through church decision taking.
 - 3.1.3 As motivation it is stated that combined ecclesiastical testimony is very important in the new constitutional dispensation. This statement is also not motivated by Scripture and the Confessions. It is apparently related to the following paragraph in the motivation for involvement with the Parliamentary Desk of the Dutch Reformed Church:
 - "Even though the power and weight of the church's testimony should always be carried by the content, it is not always so in the minds of those in power. It is therefore obvious that the larger the constituency is on behalf of which a presentation is done, the 'heavier' it will way. The greater the church's membership, the stronger its testimony. The more thoroughly considered memoranda and faxes land on the table, the more efficient. This means that there can be great wisdom in getting the cooperation and partnership of churches and religious groups (in as far as it is responsible)" (Acta 2006:172, 3.1.1).*
 - 3.1.4 This decision makes the church in general and the GKSA in particular an interest group (see 3.1.3). However, the true Church is not an interest group; it is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. The true Church therefore in the first and the last place looks at the Truth of the Word and testifies according to it and about it. The power lies not in numbers, but in testimony. For politicians numbers may be crucial, but for Churches the Truth is not only crucial, but the only grounds on which they fulfil their prophetic tasks (see Belgic Confessions, art 5).
 - 3.1.5 The demands of the new constitutional dispensations seem to be the most important ground on which the decision rests. This means that you recognise that the government of the day can prescribe to churches regarding the way in which they have to fulfil their prophetic task. In this case Col 2:8 (reference by the Deputies) is rather a clear warning that one should not take the route of membership of the SACC.
- 3.2 Ground for protest 2.2 (The decision is founded on a faulty and incomplete representation of the SACC)
 - 3.2.1 The Synod has only been informed about a few policy rulings without it having been tested in the light of question and answer 30 of the Heidelberg Catechism. The SACC's actions and other rulings do not concur with the above-mentioned policy rulings.
 - 3.2.2 In the Introduction to the "SACC Constitution" it says amongst others:

A "3. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Council is an instrument and servant of the Churches, committed to the stimulation and establishment of community, cooperation and unity between its Churches and all other Christians in their communal mission in the world.

The work of the Council is based on the recognition of Jesus Christ as the spiritual Head of the Body and is to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If this is the truth, why are Christ's commandments rejected? "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15). One of the motivational grounds for the decision in favour of membership was that the "theological climate within the SACC has changed radically since 1994..."

This is not true. From its inception the SACC was a multi-religious movement contrary to Deut 6:4. This still remains the case as can be seen from the following facts:

3.2.2.1 Within the ranks of the SACC the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is rejected (Bishop Desmond Tutu).

3.2.2.2 The SACC still acknowledges and promotes polytheism. Therefore the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the Christian Head is contradicted by an 'Interfaith' sermon held on 14 April 2005, at St George Cathedral in central Cape Town.

"Other worship-leaders at the 'interfaith' gathering included ...Rev Rowan Smith, Dean of St George's; the Rt Rev Garth Counsell, Assistant Bishop of Cape Town; Rev Themba Mntambo, minister of the Central Methodist Mission and representative of Bishop Andrew Hefkie; Mrs Angelene Swart, President of the Moravian Church; Sheikh Mujahied Laattoe, Muslim Council of Justice; Mr Michael Bagrain, South African Jewish Council of Deputies; Rev Matt Esau; Rev Walter Brownridge, Canon Cantor of St George's, Rev Keith Vermeulen, director of the South African Council of Churches' Parliamentary Offices and Rev Roger Roman, Ecumenical Secretary of the Western Cape's Provincial Council of Churches.

While singing "Siyahamba – We are marching in the light of God", the religious leaders walked down the broad isle of St George's and into the streets ... followed by the meeting...

Father Pearson said to the crowd: "A luta continua! As long as people go to bed hungry, as long as people do not have access to adequate health care and medication, as long as people can not afford water, the 'struggle' must continue." (From: Interfaith Relief Commission Established, 6 January 2005.)

3.2.2.3 It is further contradicted by the SACC's 'Interfaith'-commission that was created to help people affected by the Tsunami tragedy and their comments after that.

"Unified by their unified care for and shock about the extent of the Tsunami tragedy in South-Eastern Asia, leaders of all religious groups – representative of the Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu communities, gathered in Johannesburg today...combined their considerable strength to form the 'Interfaith Disaster and Humanitarian Relief Commission'."

"This 'interfaith' initiative today is part of the South African dream of unity in diversity. It also demonstrates the relevance and importance of religion as main force in South Africa, a deeply religious country," Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein said." (From: Interfaith Relief Commission Established, 6 January 2005.)

B "4. The theological foundation of the Council is a shared confession of the Christian faith of its members and is not a test of faith of the Churches or individual members. The Churches are not bound to any theological understanding of the Church, and membership of the Council does not involve the acceptance of any

specific dogma of the Church.”

Here it is falsely testified that all the members of the SACC (at least) communally confess Christ. From the information of the Appendixes that follow, it becomes clear that the truth is twisted here. The Roman Catholic Church worships Mary as mediator. The Religious Society of Friends has no confession (see the membership list Appendix A).

3.2.3 Nr 3 of the Constitution states the main aims of the SACC:

"3.1 To give expression to Christ's rule over every aspect and area of human life through the promotion of the spiritual, social and intellectual welfare of all people."

How can 'Christ's Rule' be expressed by promoting human welfare? Man wants to prescribe to Christ what he should concern Him with if He wants to remain the head of our church, namely the welfare of man.

It is the old temptation with which Satan came to the Lord in the desert. Christ rejected the rule over the kingdoms of the world because the condition was that He had to worship Satan. "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Matt 4:10).

"3.2 To cherish the unity, which is both God's will for creation and God's gift to the Church."

From their deeds and actions it is clearly an unnatural, structural and outer 'unity' that is forced at the cost of confession. This is not the unity of faith that God demands from His children. It is the unity of Babel, where God's will (multiply and fill the earth, Gen 9:1) is not valid, but man's will of self-redemption (let us build us a city ... so that we are not scattered across the earth, Gen 11:4). The interfaith events (mentioned above) confirm this and this is contrary to 1 Cor 1:10, which is clearly an example that God gives us through Paul of what is meant by ecumenicity. It is the **community that confesses the same**: mutually, congregationally and ecclesiastically.

"3.3 To do and encourage such things as would lessen factors that divide Churches, whether it be dogmatic, liturgical or practical."

Once again: why are there different denominations? With this 'new ecumenical unity' they want to extinguish what God did at Babel. Therefore they speak to each other, across all thought-, persuasion- and religious differences, about human welfare.

The characteristics of the true and false church (Belgic Confession, art 29) are lightly shunned because it is of no importance to the SACC.

"3 7 To start a conversation with people of other faiths and persuasions." Do we here have true enthusiasm to proclaim the Word of God to the nations? Mission or Evangelism? No, this 'multifaith' or 'interfaith', where the Christian faith is equated to every and all other faiths on the scene. Just think of the SACC's 'interfaith' actions, such as the 'service' in Cape Town, where a Jewish Rabbi, a Muslim priest and a congregation of spirituals prayed and sang together ("Siyahamba – We are marching in the light of God..." Which God? Isaiah 8:20). Another example is the delegation of a Muslim priest and a 'reverend' to Rwanda to pray with the Rwandese for peace (see Appendix A). Once again: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Matt 4:10).

3.2.4 The Mission of the SACC says:

As a National Council of Churches and Institutions, the SACC, acting on behalf of its member churches, is called by the Triune God to work for moral reconstruction in South Africa, focussing on issues of justice, reconciliation, integrity of creation and the eradication of poverty and contributing towards the empowerment of all who are spiritually, socially and economically marginalised.

The glorification of God's Name, the expansion of his Kingdom and the maintenance of His will are here clearly subject to human and social ambitions (see the Lord's Prayer).

3.2.5 The SACC clashes with our Confession in the Belgic Confessions art 5, where we confess: *We accept all these books and them only, as holy and canonical for us to direct our faith accordingly, to found it thereupon and to confirm it therewith. We also*

believe without doubt all that is included in it, not merely because the church accepts them and views them as such, but especially because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God. They also carry the proof in themselves, since even the blind can feel that the promises documented, will be fulfilled.

The SACC explains to us on their own website that Biblical truths do not necessarily mean the same for one generation and the next. They say that the parts dealing with homosexuality does not mean that it is unacceptable for our generation. With that the Truth of Scripture is relativised.

*"Scripture speaks afresh to each generation. Just as there is not one view on marriage, there is also no single authoritative interpretation of Scripture. We view the Bible as God's living word. As such, it is capable of speaking afresh to humanity at different times and in different places and circumstances. **The handful of passages most commonly read as condemnations of homosexuality were informed by the dominant understanding of human nature at the time they were written. They must be read and interpreted in their historical and cultural context.** They should not be simplistically applied to contemporary society any more than ancient ways of explaining the natural world, also evident in Scripture, should be used to dismiss the conclusions of centuries of scientific inquiry. More importantly, our interpretations of these texts must be "checked" against the central messages that emerge clearly and powerfully from the Gospel: Christ's admonition to love God and to love one's neighbours, as well as his particular compassion for the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed" (cf. <http://www.sacc.org.za/news06/marriage.html>).*

In the light of the above-mentioned it is not surprising that some SACC representatives believe that there is no such thing as truth:

"Truth in the Bible is evolving with time" said a South African Council of Churches (SACC) representative during the public hearings on the proposed new Equality Bill in parliament in Cape Town today. In response to a question about gay rights posed by ACDP-MP, Advocate Mighty Madasa, the representative said, "Some things that were prohibited in the past are no longer prohibited. The SACC wants to see the concept of family broadened to include all kinds of family." Homosexual and sodomy rights activists are advocating that the concept of family in South Africa's laws should include homosexuals in relationships. The SACC said that its role is not to interpret the Bible or guide its affiliates. The SACC says in its submission that the bill should address discrimination faced by individuals in 'non-traditional' families. The council also supports the clause in the bill stating that anyone intending to have an abortion should receive special protection from discrimination" (<http://www.cft.org.za/news/1999/30-11-1999.html>).

There is consequently no fixed basis from which the GKSA can address and argue a matter within the SACC.

- 3.2.6 It is clear that the SACC does not promote any ecumenical unity of confession, but a worldly **unity at the cost of confession**. This was not presented to the Synod of 2006 when the SACC was introduced.

The interfaith gatherings of the SACC was not limited to the previous century, because on 6 January 2006 the SACC issued a press release (<http://www.sacc.org.za/news05/ifrelief.html>) in which they made it public that an Interfaith Help Commission was formed. They appealed to churches to organise interfaith prayer gatherings. They say amongst other things:

"United by their common concern and shock at the magnitude of the Tsunami disaster in South East Asia, leaders from all faith groups – representing the Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and Hindu communities – met in Johannesburg today to, in addition to what the Government and other sectors are doing, combine their considerable forces to form the Interfaith Disaster and Humanitarian Relief Commission.

The newly formed body will become a permanent forum..."

"This interfaith initiative today is part of the South African dream of unity in diversity. It also demonstrates the relevance and importance of religion as a major force in South Africa, which is a deeply religious country" said Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein.

The South African Council of Churches, in addition to an appeal to churches to arrange combined services with other faith communities, has called for a National day of prayer and fasting on Wednesday, January 12 at 13:00 in churches throughout the country. The SACC has also requested women's organizations to set aside Thursday, January 13 for prayer and fasting.

For Sir Peter Just of the Buddhist Community, the disaster needs to be seen as an environmental warning.

"As difficult as it is to come to terms with the human suffering, it is Karmic retribution for what humans have done to the planet. A more positive side though, is that the tragedy has brought about the need for people to work together, and to realize that it is possible to co-exist" he said. Issued on behalf of the SACC by the Methodist Communications Office" (The doctrine of Karma is central in the pantheist Buddhism. According to this doctrine there is a causality between actions and consequences and therefore it is a foundation for the belief in reincarnation – Christian Encyclopedia Part III: Karma).

3.2.7 The clear relationship that exists between the SACC and the WCC has not been indicated either.

When we look at the 2005 financial report of the SACC, we can see that received R581 280 in 2004 and R44 179 in 2005 from the WCC. This shows that there is a financial relationship between these two organisations (SACC Annual Report 2005:20, (<http://www.sacc.org.za/docs/anrept05.pdf>).

In the SACC's annual report of 2005 the general secretary of the SACC, dr Molefe Tsele, tells us what the relationship between the SACC and the WCC is:

"Since 1994 the South African Council of Churches has played a growing role in efforts to promote peace, justice and abundant life in the region, across the continent and throughout the world. In doing so, the Council works with and through larger ecumenical bodies, such as Fellowship of Councils of Churches in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the **World Council of Churches (WCC)**"

On 13 August 2001 the WCC makes the following known in a press release:

"Raiser [WCC general secretary] notes that the visit [to South Africa] is a renewal of the solidarity between WCC and SACC and an 'expression of hope that SACC can continue and increase its significant role in the people's lives in what promises to be a critical time in South Africa'. Raiser's last visit to South Africa was in 1998" (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/28pre.html>).

If one studies the WCC's web-page and looks at the member organisations, then one can see that they list the SACC as a national council body that is affiliated with the WCC (see Appendix B).

Dr Ed Cain of Signposts describes the relationship between the WCC and the SACC as follows:

"...the SACC, an associated council that is formally associated with the WCC and which was represented at the meeting of the WCC's central committee by collegial delegates" (Signposts Vol 10 Nr 1, 1991:4).

Dr Ed Cain expands as follows:

"The World Council of Churches is described as one of the 13 International Communist front organisations established since 1945 by an Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism by Josef Wilczynski. It defines International Communist front organisations as "entities which although they do not include 'Communist' in their official name, support or directly pursue pro-Communist policies. They are either organisations specifically established by Communists for the above purpose, or are existing entities that have been infiltrated by them. In each case such organisations are used as fronts to mislead

the public or evade anti-communist legislation" (Signposts Vol 6 Nr 4, 1987:2).

The WCC makes the following known on their web-page:

"Under the theme 'Christians unite against racism: May they all be one (John 17:21)', worshippers listened to readings and prayers from international church leaders, including Presiding Bishop Mvumelwano Dandala of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Dandala is also the president of the South African Council of Churches (SACCJ, and the leader of the World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/01/wcar08feat-e.html>).

We can see that the SACC and the WCC work together intricately when we look at the following release of the WCC:

"Tsele [the current general secretary of the SACC] will lead a joint SACC-World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg; South Africa, 26 August – 4 September [2002]. The SACC-WCC delegation will be part of a larger Ecumenical Team which has attended all the preparatory meetings for the WSSD" (<http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/pr-02-22.html>).

"In South Africa, the WCC delegation attended a national meeting of the South African Council of Churches at which the SACC president Methodist Bishop Mvumelwano Dandala criticized the government for its failure to deal adequately with the problems of Aids, racism, and land distribution. While in South Africa, Raiser was also able to meet with the general secretaries of the national councils of churches in Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique" (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wccnews/07-english.html#Anchor-Solidarit-39579>).

The SACC tells us themselves what the relationship between them and the WCC is when they list the WCC and other organisations and then say (see Appendix B):

"Much of the work of the SACC is sponsored by our global partners. During the dark days of Apartheid, they made it possible for us to continue the struggle for human rights and Christian values. Today their contribution enables the SACC to assist in the rebuilding of the nation, spiritually as well as physically, and to give disadvantaged groups in the society new possibilities and a new hope" (<http://www.sacc.org.za/partners.html>).

We can thus say with certainty that the SACC is a daughter organisation of the WCC and that they have narrow links with each other.

3.3 Ground for Protest 2.3 (The decision endangers the GKSA's membership with the ICRC, and this has not been considered in the decision)

3.3.1 The GKSA was granted membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) last year. If we look at the constitution of the ICRC it says the following under the heading "Article 4 – Membership":

"Those churches shall be admitted as members which: a. faithfully adhere to the Reformed Faith stated in the confessional documents listed in the Basis, and whose confessional standards agree with the said Reformed Faith; d. are not members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) or any other organization whose aims and practices are deemed to be in conflict with the Basis"

3.3.2 The point is that if the SACC is a daughter organisation of the WCC, the GKSA is in danger of losing their membership to the ICRC. In other words, our membership of the SACC can lead to us cutting ecumenical ties with other Reformed groups.

3.3.3 On the ICRC-web-page the following is said about the GKSA and SACC membership (This was during the 6th meeting of the ICRC). (Clearly the Synod's decision can endanger ICRC membership):

"55.2 GKSA

Rev Dr Knight pointed out that Rev Smit had reassured the meeting that the GKSA would act according to Scripture and confession but had not said what he

hoped the result would be. He also expressed his view that the ICRC's Constitution's condition for membership that churches should not be members of the World Council of Churches or any other similar organization (Minutes 2001:264) communicates a perspective: we should not have relations with churches going in a direction contrary to our own, because of the impact that may have on us" (<http://www.icrconline.com/minutes.html>).

"Opinion was divided. One view, following the committee's, was to exercise caution and defer membership until the outcome of the GKSA's synod in 2006 be known. The other view was that the GKSA should be granted membership, because it does satisfy the requirements of the Constitution at the present time, without adding unconstitutional conditions. This way of supplementing the Constitution in an ad hoc manner was dangerous and to be avoided: it would result in a legalistic morass" (<http://www.icrconline.com/minutes.html>).

- 3.3.4 It is insightful to note that more than 50% of the churches with whom the GKSA corresponds, also have membership of the ICRC (see: <http://www.icrconline.com/members.html> and <http://www.gksa.org.za/korrespondensie.html>).

There is therefore a danger that the GKSA's membership of the ICRC will be ended and that we in effect cut ties with 50% of our corresponding churches. Membership of the SACC through their involvement to the WCC therefore forces a choice. The GKSA will have to choose between either a worldly brotherhood of the WCC (and SACC) or the ecumenical bond with the Reformed churches.

3.4 Ground of Protest 2.4 (The decision is contrary to NGB, art 36)

- 3.4.1 In Belgic Confessions, art 36 we confess:

"Herewith we despise Rebaptisers and other rowdy people and in general everyone who wants to reject the authority of government and the rulers and who want to disrupt legal order while they import the communal ownership of goods and disturb the respect that God has instated amongst people."

- 3.4.2 When we go to the SACC webpage, we notice that they officially support Liberation Theology (<http://www.sacc.org.za/about/celebrate14.html>). It is also known as Christian Socialism or Religious Communism (<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/christian.socialism>). It is similar to the Rebaptiser/Anabaptist Socialism identified by the Russian Mathematician, Prof Dr Igor Shafarevich in his *The Socialist Phenomenon* as a precursor to modern International Socialism (Communism) (see: *The Socialist Phenomenon*, Prof Dr Igor Shafarevich, Harper&Row, New York, ISBN 0 06 014017 8, p50-59). Shafarevich describes the biography of the Rebaptiser/Anabaptist leader, Thomas Müntzer (see: *The Socialist Phenomenon*, Prof Dr Igor Shafarevich, Harper&Row New York, ISBN 0 06 014017 8, p50-59. Also see "Appendix 2 : Socialism, the anabaptist heresy" of *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators*, ISBN 0 930464 04 4 written by Rev David Chilton).

- 3.4.3 Thomas Müntzer is the same Rebaptist/Anabaptist leader that Martin Luther condemned as anti-Reformational (*The Socialist Phenomenon*, Prof Dr Igor Shafarevich, Harper&Row New York, ISBN 0 06 014017 8, p51, 55). It is the same Rebaptiser/Anabaptist condemned by the Belgic Confessions in Article 36.

4. Conclusion

It is clear that this decision was taken in an unfounded and inconsiderate manner and that churches cannot take it for their account. The Regional Synod Bosveld made this Petition of Protest of the Reformed Church Waterberg (Dolerend) its own and we hereby give it over to the National Synod Potchefstroom in session January 2009.

I. REPORT OF COMMISSION

1. Assignment

Petition of Protest of Particular Synod Bushveld – GKSA membership of the SACC.

2. Matters that the Synod takes note of

- 2.1 The petition of protest and grounds for protest.
- 2.2 The decision that is protested is found in Acta 2006: page 172 – 175.
- 2.3 Several brothers met with the commission and made oral presentations to the commission.
- 2.4 The commission is aware of the gravity with which this matter is considered from two diverging sides and aims to not only deal with this matter technically, but rather in a manner founded on the prophetic calling of the church of Jesus Christ (with which all sides heartily agree) in this day and age and region of the world, and to then advise the Synod with Biblical responsibility.
- 2.5 There is agreement on the fact that this matter will influence the realisation of the GKSA's ecumenical relations directly.
- 2.6 Although there is complete agreement on the THAT and WHICH of the church of Jesus Christ's prophetic calling in this world, there are clear, fundamental and divergent differences on the HOW of living this important church calling.
- 2.7 It is clear that the GKSA's involvement with the SACC is not only a means to a greater end, namely that of the GKSA's testimony to the government, but actually also has an end in itself – the testimony to and within the SACC as organisation.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.7 noted.

3. Ground for Protest 1

3.1 Argumentation

- 3.1.1 Synod Bushveld claims that the decision of Synod 2006 (Acta 2006:172-175) to apply for membership of the SACC departs from the point of view that the church *may and should* allow herself to be prescribed from the outside regarding how she should fulfil her prophetic task.
- 3.1.2 Synod Bushveld aims to prove this ground of protest with 5 motivations.
 - 3.1.2.1 The first motivation states by way of a loose standing statement that the motivation of Synod 2006 contained no grounds from Scripture or Confession. However, the petition of protest of Bushveld itself quotes the following on page 79 of the Agenda (point bii): *The GKSA has a calling to give prophetic testimony to the world and the government on a Reformed foundation (see Col 2: 8 and John 9:5; 1 Pet 3: 15).* After completion of the above-mentioned loose-standing claim, this first ground for motivation refers to the matter of *taking a joint point of view*, without arguing the implication and consequences of this for the prophetic calling of the GKSA any further. It could have been a valid argument, but it was not explicated. This point consequently does not persuade as motivation for the ground for protest.
 - 3.1.2.2 The second and third points of Bushveld's motivation for the greatest part deal with Synod 2006's motivation (or lack of Scriptural motivation) for this decision, and also do not bring any enlightenment with regard to the motivation of this ground for protest.
 - 3.1.2.3 In the fourth point of motivation there is reference to the matter of testifying as an *interest group*. However, this matter is also just mentioned and is not explicated any further. This point therefore does not persuade as motivation for this first ground of protest.
 - 3.1.2.4 In the fifth motivation the claim of the ground for protest is repeated word for word, without arguing the matter. Also here no elucidation for the claim of the ground of appeal is offered.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.1.2.4 noted.

3.2 Finding

There is no proving argumentation or motivation for the first ground for protest.

Decision: Noted.

3.3 Recommendation

The protest of Synod Bushveld does not succeed on this ground.

Decision: After a tie of votes, it was decided that the point falls away.

4. Ground of protest 2

4.1 Argumentation

4.1.1 Synod Bushveld claims that the decision of GKSA to apply for membership of the SACC rests on a faulty and incomplete representation of the SACC.

4.1.2 Synod Bushveld wanted to, according to one of the elucidators, by means of a petition of protest, bring balance by also pointing out the negative elements with regard to the SACC, since, in their view, an incomplete, mostly positive, view of the SACC was presented to the Synod 2006. In the petition of protest the Synod Bushveld indeed then focuses on a magnitude of negative aspects with regard to different persons and institutions that are part of the SACC.

4.1.2.1 There are indeed many negative things that can be said or dug up on some of the members of the SACC and the organisation in totality. This ground for protest pays attention to 7 different matters.

4.1.2.2 The commission assumes that the information that the protestors handed in was obtained from trustworthy sources and will stand the test of the truth.

4.1.2.3 All the negative facts with regard to the SACC is related without any argumentation to indicate that this state of affairs brings about that the GKSA should rather withdraw from the SACC with regard to realising her prophetic calling. Is the mere fact of the presence of all these negative things reason enough? The question is whether this negative state of affairs does not rather necessitate the GKSA's continued involvement and consequently motivates our involvement rather than to force a withdrawal from the SACC?

Decision: Points 4.1.1 to 4.1.2.3 noted.

4.2 Finding

There is no supporting argumentation or motivation for the ground of protest that indicates that Synod 2006 would have come to a different decision if they had this precise negative information.

Decision: Noted.

4.3 Recommendation

Protest does not succeed on this ground.

Decision: The recommendation is rejected and the ground for appeal succeeds.

5. Ground of protest 3

5.1 Argumentation

5.1.1 Synod Bushveld claims that this decision endangers the GKSA's membership with the ICRC and that it was not considered in the decision.

5.1.2 Although the GKSA has *ecumenical unity* with most of the member churches that are present at the ICRC, the GKSA's contact with the ICRC as organisation is on the widest possible level, namely *ecumenical contact*. It is exactly the same level as the level at which the GKSA became involved with the SACC. The requirements for this ecumenical relationship with an organisation are therefore not the same as for unity with a specific church. Contact with the SACC is about living the GKSA's prophetic calling within the context of South Africa. It would be unfortunate if the individual churches (of the ICRC) with whom we have ecumenical ties, prescribe to the GKSA and force the way in which the GKSA should live their ecumenical relations – for the sake of prophetic testimony in their own country. This matter was discussed at the previous ICRC meeting and there was clearly difference of opinion within the ICRC itself.

- 5.1.3 In the light of the first ground for protest of this petition of protest the question should be asked whether this ground for protest does not precisely depart from the point of view that the church may and should let herself be influenced from outside on the way in which she fulfils her prophetic calling? Can one church prescribe to another church regarding the way in which she fulfils her prophetic calling in her own country – which has unique circumstances, and can these prescriptions then be stated as a condition for the ecumenical unity in which they live? It is not argued or proven.

Decision: Points 5.1.1 to 5.1.3 noted.

5.2 Conclusion

There are no supporting arguments or motivations for the ground for protest.

Decision: Noted.

5.3 Recommendation

The protest does not succeed on this ground.

Decision: Recommendation in rejected and the ground for appeal succeeds.

6. Petition of protest 4

6.1 Argumentation

6.1.1 Synod Bushveld claims that this decision is contrary to BC art 36.

6.1.2 The historical context of BC article 36 refers to the Anabaptists' active rebellion against the government and authority of government and can not be transferred offhand to the mere presence of "rebaptisers" within the ranks of the SACC.

6.1.3 If there should be a negative attitude of total distantiation of all "rebaptisers" than the churches of the GKSA should also reconsider their formal or informal contact with the Reformed Baptists.

6.1.4 The motivations offered at this ground for protest in essence consists of quotes and references to certain persons and their views, but does not include any argumentation that persuades that the ground for protest is valid.

Decision: Points 6.1 to 6.1.4 noted.

6.2 Finding

There is no supporting argumentation or motivation of this ground for protest.

Decision: Noted.

6.3 Recommendation

The protest does not succeed on this ground.

Decision: After a tie of votes it was decided that this point falls away.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summarising finding

7.1.1 The gravity of the **THAT** and the **WHAT** of the church of Jesus Christ's prophetic calling in this world is not endangered.

7.1.2 Here, the issue is essentially **HOW** the church should realise its prophetic calling in the world.

7.1.3 The GKSA committed herself to the practical realisation of her prophetic calling and testimony towards the government within the ranks of the SACC with a Synod decision to apply for membership.

7.1.4 This petition of protest, which is also serious about the practical realisation of the GKSA's prophetic calling in the world, tried to persuade the Synod by means of four grounds of protest that it would be better for the GKSA not to be part of the SACC and that the church should consequently withdraw from the organisation.

7.1.5 As already found by the commission the grounds of protest of this petition of protest, which contains much information, are not adequately argued to justify a clear opinion that the GKSA should withdraw from the SACC.

7.1.6 The commission did not include the information of a deputy report, which still has to be discussed on this Synod in their treatment of this petition of protest.

7.2 Concluding recommendation

The protest of Synod Bushveld succeeds on none of the grounds of appeal.

Decision: Synod decides to appoint a commission to determine the weight of the grounds of appeal involved in the light of those grounds for appeal that succeeded, and to advise Synod whether the Petition of Protest should succeed or not. The following commission is appointed: dr JH Howell (c), revs HC van Rooy, SA Cilliers, B Companie and prof A le R du Plooy.

J. **REPORT AD HOC-COMMISSION – REGARDING THE SUCCESS OF TWO GROUNDS OF APPEAL IN THE PETITION OF PROTEST OF SYNOD BUSHVELD**

The Report is presented by the Chairperson. The commission is of the opinion that grounds for protest 2 and 3, as approved by Synod, have enough bearing that the protest should succeed in its entirety.

Decision: Approved.

K. **Appointment of Ad hoc-commission to advise Synod on the consequences of the Petition of Protest that succeeded with regard to the SACC**

The following commission is appointed: Prof SJ van der Merwe (c), revs PA Coetzee and HL Stavast.

L. **REPORT AD HOC-COMMISSION – IMPLICATION THAT THE PETITION OF PROTEST OF REGIONAL SYNOD BUSHVELD REGARDING THE SACC SUCCEEDED**

1. **Assignment**

To advise Synod regarding the consequences of the decision that Regional Synod Bushveld's Petition of Protest succeeds.

Decision: Note taken.

2. **Argumentation**

2.1 Petition of Protest GK Oos-Moot – This petition of protest is against two decisions, namely membership of the SACC and the Parliamentary desk. Since the protestors view this as one matter and state the same grounds for both, this has implications for dealing with the Petition of Protest in its entirety.

2.2 Point of description of Southern Regional Synod regarding the SACC – the Petition of Protest of Regional Synod Bushveld only deals with the matter described in this Point of description. The Report of the Commission Ecumenicity regarding this Point of Description deals with the matter touched upon in the Point of description.

2.3 The decision of Synod also has implications for the recommendations of the Deputies Ecumenicity, 2.4.8.3 to 2.4.8.8, and these are dealt with in the recommendations.

Decision: Note taken of 2.1 to 2.3.

3. **Recommendations**

3.1 Synod does not take the Petition of Protest of GK Oos-Moot regarding the SACC into discussion. Motivation: The decision that is protested has already been revoked.

3.2 The Point of Description of Southern Regional Synod does not succeed.

3.3 The Commission Report dealing with 2.4.8.3 to 2.4.8.8 of the Report Ecumenicity: Domestic is approved.

3.4 The Petition of Protest of Bushveld that succeeded against the decision of Synod 2006 (Acta 2006:172-175) regarding membership of the SACC has the consequence that the decision regarding membership of the SACC is revoked.

Decision: Approved – changes already made – Deputies Acta.