

18.2 REPORT CATECHISM DEPUTIES (Artt 76, 200)

- A. Dr FP Kruger delivers the Report.
- B. **Decsion:** The Report is referred to Commission Youth and Education.
- C. Dr EJ Smit reports on behalf of the Commission Youth and Education.

D. REPORT

1. Assignment (Acta, 2006:370)

- 1.1 The revision of the guides regarding the needs of congregations and the children, as well as comments and continued study on the best methods.
- 1.2 The translation of the guides into English.
- 1.3 The availability of more lessons, especially in the high school so that catechists can choose what to do.
- 1.4 The broadening of the use of multimedia in the education.
- 1.5 Examine, in co-operation with the CE and Youth Deputies, appropriate material that can be recommended to the church council and parents to equip parents for their task as educators.
- 1.6 Continue the co-operation with the CE and Youth Deputies.

Decision: Noted.

2. Issues for notification by the Synod

- 2.1 Comments from congregations and individuals were received and processed. From this it seemed that there is profound need for guides, especially for grades 1-3, introducing them to the line of the History of Revelation.
- 2.2 The Deputies held a workshop on 26 August 2006 at Wapadrant, inviting all the congregations to discuss the format of the new syllabus for grades 1-3. Consensus existed regarding the syllabus for the new guides. Sister Marieta Reyneke, member of the Reformed Church Randburg will write the guides. The sister has years of experience in the education of especially smaller children. The Deputies endorsed each lesson where after Rev Chris Hattingh (emeritus) looked at the dogmatic content.
- 2.3 During September 2007 and February 2008 two successful lekgotlas have been held to plan and finalise the methods for lessons. Apart from this a central Revelation of God (theme) and life truth have been determined.
- 2.4 Courses were presented at the congregations over the last three years. Sensible questions were asked during these sessions and handy hints were made.
- 2.5 One of the hints was the need for a guide for Church History that does not have the scope and status of a textbook. Two writers, dr JM van Tonder (Krugersdorp West) and Rev DF Muller (Buffeldoorns) were approached to write the guide.
- 2.6 Discussions were held with knowledgeable people in the area of multimedia. Because of the intensive process of the writing of the guides, the Deputies unfortunately could not fully examine the possibilities thereof. The possibilities have been discussed, however, with someone from the North-West University as well as knowledgeable persons in the field.
- 2.7 The English translation of five-year groups is already available on CD from the Administrative Bureau. Congregations having a need for English guides can buy it at minimal cost. When the revision of the other guides has been completed, it will also be translated.
- 2.8 A guide was compiled for parents and will be made available to church councils in due time. The guide emphasise the importance of covenant education and the joint responsibility of the parents and the church regarding catechism.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.8 noted.

3. Points of departure in the compilation of the syllabus

From comments received, the necessity to clarify the points of departure in the compilation of the current syllabus to churches was emphasised:

3.1 *Points of departure of the syllabus*

3.1.1 Principle 1: Parents are firstly responsible for the faith education of children

From Deuteronomy 6:4-9 the following is clear:

Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your house and on your gates.

In the guides the parents are involved purposefully in the education. Contradicting the method in which the child do not prepare and can also not appeal on the responsibility of the parents.

Each congregation must take responsibility to equip the parents, encourage them and keep them responsible for the education of the children. The efficiency of the education during catechism is increased and greatly dependent on the preparation and education of the parents.

3.1.2 Principle 2: Education in faith introduces God to the child through the Word

God gives us the principle of education in faith in Psalm 78:

Psalm 78:3 *what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.*

Psalm 78:4 *We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.*

The Lord should be introduced to the children through education in faith. This is done through the history of revelation in which his praiseworthy deeds are mentioned and through which his power and wonders are emphasised and other parts in which everlasting truths and his wisdom are revealed.

3.1.2.1 Revelation of God

All lessons, with the exception of grades 1-3, were written by ministers and are grounded in good exegesis of Scriptures. In writing the guides for grades 1-3 the reader was provided with Scripture, theme and life truth. The Deputies put effort into this in two lekgotlas. The revelation of God was searched for in each scripture part and it had to be the essence of every part of the proclamation. The writer made the lessons available to the redaction for preliminary comments. The lessons were also made available to a dogmatic reviser for comments. Thereafter the lessons were given to the Deputies for judgement and the comments were processed.

In the guides of grades 4-11 four divisions or essential points were identified according to which the child can be educated:

History of Revelation, church, kingdom and confession.

These lines can be found throughout the guides. Most of the lessons for the lower grades focus on the History of Revelation, while the other three lines receive more attention in the guides of the older children.

3.1.2.2 History of Revelation

The aim was to present the children with as much of the History of Revelation as possible. Care was taken that the same Scripture is not used again and again. In grades 1-3 only the History of Revelation will be dealt with. The advantage of this is that catechumen gets the opportunity to work through the History of Revelation once during the course of three years. In these three year groups the meaning of the birth, suffering, death, resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ is done. This will be done from a different Gospel each time. In the new grade 1-3 guide effort was put into *making the content understandable* for the children.

The guide for grades 1-3 consists of three books for each year, namely a catechist guide, a guide for children and parents and a workbook for children.

The method for lessons included the following sub-divisions:

- (i) **Catechist guide**
 - a. The theme of the lesson
 - b. Life truth
 - c. Scripture
 - d. Inculcation
 - e. Introduction
 - f. Proclamation
 - g. Practical implementation
 - h. Activity (complete the activity in the workbook)
 - i. Conclusion
- (ii) **Parent and child**
 - a. A practical task on the previous lesson
 - b. Theme of the lesson
 - c. Life truth
 - d. Scripture
 - e. Practical hint
 - f. Activity for preparation.

The organic expansion of the line of the History of Revelation was looked at for grades 4-7. The line of the History of Revelation is ordered in the following way for grades 4-7:

Grade 4

The following moments of the History of Revelation is dealt with:

Entry, Kings, Prophets, Exile, Return, Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost and Acts.

Grade 5

The following moments of the History of Revelation is dealt with:

Creation, Fall of man, Exit, Passage, Birth of Jesus, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension.

Grade 6

The following moments of the History of Revelation is presented:

Entry, Kings, Prophets, Exile, Return, Resurrection, Ascension, Descent of the Holy Spirit and Acts.

Grade 7

The following moments of the History of Revelation is presented in this guide:

Descent of the Holy Spirit, the church in Jerusalem, the selection of the seven men, the Gospel in Samaria and Ceasarea, the Gospel to Africa, the Gospel to the end of the earth.

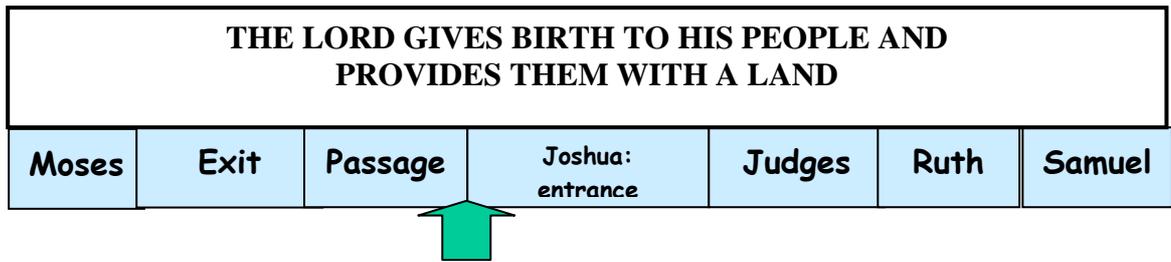
Summary

The line of the History of Revelation is therefore presented thrice during grades 1-7. The need of the various churches, to work more closely with the Bible, is fulfilled in this way.

3.1.2.3 Overview of the History of Revelation

3.1.2.3.1 History between lessons

To provide the children with an overview of the History of Revelation. An introduction to lessons is given by means of a summary of the history between the two lessons. If the creation is presented in lesson 1 and the flood in lesson 2, a summary of the history from Cain and Abel is included as an introduction for lesson 2. A diagram is also given at the start of each guide in which the main moments of the History of Revelation is provided. There is a shortened diagram at the start of each lesson. If the lesson is on the entrance, the diagram will look like this:



Parent and catechist can therefore continuously help the child to know where the work fits into the overview of the History of Revelation.

3.1.2.3.2 Guide for the History of Revelation

A guide, in which the History of Revelation is summarised in 40 pages, was compiled by Rev Chris Hattingh and was published early in January 2006. The title of the book is "*Dieselfde God altyd aan die werk*". The book tries to indicate that the dear pieces of the Revelation of God stretch from generation to generation and far into the future. This guide was specifically compiled for the education of grades 8 to 11, so that the children will still grow in the knowledge of the History of Revelation, and it can be used supplement to the current guides. The meaning is not to replace the existing guides, but to enrich the existing material. The idea that the Deputies have is to make a library of lessons available to the congregations in order for the congregations to choose from the material that, which will be the best building blocks for the local congregation. Therefore there are continuous referrals to this book for additional reading in the revised editions for grades 8-11.

3.1.2.4 Church

A guide written in the format of *an antique paper* was written. The guide will be available in January 2009. The guide comprises about 60 pages. This guide was written with the intention of providing congregations in need of it with a guide presenting the line of unity in the history. The guide can be used for grades 8-11 as alternative to or supplementary to the other guides that are used for the various grades. The guide exists out of two books, one for the catechumen and one for the catechist. The guide for the catechumen exists out of about two pages per lesson. On the left hand side the antique paper report with information is given, and on the right hand side is a working page for the children. This is an attempt to make church history more attractive and relevant for the young child.

3.1.2.5 Kingdom

In this division various aspects of the life of the Christian in the kingdom of God is dealt with.

- (a) Grade 4: Actual issues that are dealt with are: God makes governments his servants and asks their obedience; our life as family shows that the Lord reigns and expects us to serve Him with our whole hearts.
- (b) Grade 5: Actual issues that are dealt with are: Satan uses bad people to tempt the children of God; Satan allures the children of God; the Lord holds up even when Satan wants to take us away from Him through hardship and the Bible is the answer to the false doctrine.
- (c) Grade 6: In this guide the first to fifth commandments as directing forces behind our life in the kingdom are presented to the children.
- (d) Grade 7: In this guide the sixth to tenth commandments as directing forces behind our life in the kingdom are presented to the children.
- (e) Grade 8: Important aspects regarding the kingdom of God are set out in a probing way: God fulfils his promise that He will give a King for the Kingdom; Jesus as King of God's Kingdom is here; Jesus as King is stronger than the enemies of the Kingdom of God; The following is valid in the Kingdom of God: We must love our neighbours; Jesus as King is stronger than death.

- (f) Grade 9: Important aspects regarding the coming and second coming of Christ are presented in the lessons on the kingdom: Jesus mounts the throne of the king; Christ's kingdom on earth; The way in which Jesus reacts; Christ and the governments; The second coming; How can my light shine?
- (g) Grade 10: In this guide the aesthetic judgement of important issues is dealt with: Clothing, strong liquor and drugs; Films and videos; Sunday sport; Friends, discussions and peer pressure; Music and dance; Family devotions, personal devotion, Bible study; Family, parent, child; we live from faith.
- (h) Grade 11 is currently revised. A large number of ministers were approached to co-operate in writing the lessons. This is an attempt to enlarge the library of the congregation by making more lessons available.

Ministers were approached to write the lessons. The process should be complete in due time. In this regard multimedia can add great value. The lessons are added to the current lessons, in accordance with the pursuit of the library system. If more lessons are made available, the catechist can decide which lessons are most applicable for that specific congregation and use the material to this regard.

3.1.2.6 Confession

We believe that the Revelation of God of Scripture is summarised in the Confessions. There are only 3 lessons in grade 4 and 5 dealing with this. In grade 6 the child is taught what a doctrinal creed is and informed about the doctrinal creeds that the Reformed Church have. In grade 6 and 7 all the commandments are presented from the Catechism (see kingdom). Sunday 1-16 is done in grade 7. Sunday 17-31 in grade 8 and Sunday 32-52 in grade 9 – with the exception of the commandments. In grades 10 and 11 themes from the BC and the Canon of Dordt will be presented.

3.1.3 Principle 3: The purpose of the education is to provide the child with knowledge, trust and living of faith

This principle is derived from Psalm 78 especially verses 5-8:

*“He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, **so** the next generation would **know** them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their **trust** in God and would not forget his deeds, but would **keep his command**. They would not be like their forefathers- a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.”*

Summary

- (a) The purpose of the guides is to lead children to work independently and use the Bible by themselves.
- (b) The efficiency of this is largely dependant on the commitment of the child, parent and catechist.
- (c) The catechist can, especially with older groups, determine whether the work has been filled in and the texts have been checked.
- (d) Elders can have a look at the books of the children during pastoral visits and see whether the work has been done.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.1.3 noted.

3.2 *Co-operation with CE and Youth Deputies*

There were close co-operation with these two Deputy groups. The RYCC (Reformed Youth Coordinating Committee) exists out of the chairs of the Catechism, Youth and CE Deputies. The RYCC met often to discuss the various levels of overlapping. The advantage to this is that communication and purposeful treatment of common issues were stimulated. The issue of a guide for the parents directed at equipment was discussed. The Catechism Deputies agreed to compile such a guide.

Common issues like the equipment of the role players in youth ministry, leadership development (Youth Office), communication and coordination, literature and inter-

church contact with the Youth Deputies of the DR and NH churches were discussed continuously. Coordination regarding the involvement of the various Deputies in the 150-year festival of the GKSA was also discussed. A misconception exists regarding the functioning of the GKSA web page and its availability for the various deputy groups. The liaison of Deputy Groups with the Deputies Information Technology must be broadened, since the GKSA web page is currently the only web page for the GKSA. The Youth, CE and Catechism Deputies must examine the possibilities to create and manage their own web page with continuous updating and a web master.

Decision: Noted.

4. Summary: The accomplishments of the Deputies during the last three years

- 4.1 The Deputies tried to do a survey over the last three years by examining possible shortcomings of the current syllabus. Available material for this purpose was also examined.
- 4.2 New guides were written for grades 1-3, with the point of departure the need to bring the children in closer contact with the Bible.
- 4.3 They completed a guide giving an overview of the History of Revelation and made it available.
- 4.4 They translated the grade 4-7 guides into English that is available on CD for congregations. The CD can be ordered from the Administrative Bureau.
- 4.5 The writing of a church history guide to conduct the children in the richness of the church history.
- 4.6 They organised a workshop in which churches could discuss what they think should be in the guides.
- 4.7 Presented courses at various churches.
- 4.8 Start with:
 - 4.8.1 The compilation of a guide to explain the Belgic Confession.
 - 4.8.2 The writing of additional lessons for the presentation of ethical questions and other actual subjects.
- 4.9 Examining the use of multimedia. Discussions were held with knowledgeable people in this field. It seems, after the examination of the possibility, that it is important to use multimedia optimally through closer connections with the Deputies Information Technology. Priority must be given to this in the task list of the to be nominated Deputies of Catechism.
- 4.10 Working in close co-operation with the CE and Youth Deputies.
- 4.11 Compiling a guide for parents.

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.11 noted.

5. Issues that should be decided by the Synod

- 5.1 The Synod should again appoint deputies.

Decision: Approved with the addition that representatives of the churches of the previous Synod Midlands and Classis Capricorn should also be appointed to the Deputies when possible.

- 5.2 The Deputies receive the assignment to:

- 5.2.1 Continuously revise the guides from the point of departure, the need in congregations and with children, comments and continuous study regarding the best methods.

Decision: Approved.

- 5.2.2 The Deputies receive the assignment to have the guides translated according to the need of the churches of the previous Synod Midlands and Classis Capricorn.

Decision: Approved as amended.

- 5.2.3 Make more lessons available than only the needed amount of one lesson a week, especially in the high school, in order for the catechist to determine what should be presented.

Decision: Approved.

5.2.4 To promote the use of multimedia in teaching. The establishment of a website should be investigated in consultation of the Deputies Information Technology.

Decision: Approved as amended.

5.2.5 Examine, in co-operation with the CE and Youth Deputies, appropriate material that can be recommended to parents and church councils and that can equip parents for their task as educators.

Decision: Approved.

5.2.6 Continue co-operation with the CE and Youth Deputies.

Decision: Approved.

6. Additional assignments

6.1 The Deputies receive the assignment to continue their involvement in the arrangements for the 150-year festivities (see 3.2).

6.2 The Deputies receive the assignment to ascertain together with the representatives of the churches of the previous Synod Midlands and Classis Capricorn what the total situation and needs are with regard to catechism in these churches.

6.3 The Deputies furthermore receive the assignment to pay thorough attention to the identified needs as related to 3.2.2 above.

6.4 The Deputies receive the assignment to utilize the experts in the different Classes to equip catechists at a local level.

6.5 The following is recommended with regard to catechism guides:

6.5.1 The Synod expresses its appreciation for the points of departure that the Deputies use in the formulation of catechism guides (as shown in 3.1 to 3.1.3).

6.5.2 Synod take note that in addition to the guides mentioned in the Report of the Deputies, other sources are also used with catechism. This includes *Laat my lammers wei* by rev MJ Booyens, *Troos, troos my volk* deur dr AH Bogaards, *Die Woord voor die ja-woord* by rev E Brink (see 2.2.5) as well as translations of *Die Brood van die lewe* in Setswana and English.

6.6 Synod expresses its gratitude towards the Deputies for the valuable work done over the past few years.

6.7 Synod also expresses its gratitude towards the members of the Deputies, as well as sr Marieta Reyneke (Gereformeerde Kerk Randburg), rev Chris Hattingh, dr JM van Tonder and rev DF Muller for the work already done with the formulation of guides.

Decision: Points 6.1 to 6.7 are approved.