

19. Church archive and Church museum

19.1 REPORT DEPUTIES HISTORICAL MATTERS (Artt 18, 273, 283, 302, 322, 340)

- A. Dr JM van Tonder delivers the Report.
- B. **Decision:** The Report is referred to Commission Church Matters: Historical and Church Polity.
- C. **Decision:** Financial matters are referred to the Commission for Finances.
- D. Dr WC Opperman reports on behalf of the Commission for Church Matters: Historical and Church Polity.
- E. Revs PJ Nel and J van Schaik reports on behalf of the Commission for Finances.

F. REPORT

1. Assignment

Acta 2006:379-385.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters that Synod should note

2.1 *The Church archive in Potchefstroom*

With gratitude towards the Lord God we can report that work has been done on the Church archive in the last three years.

2.1.1 The archive staff:

Mrs Joke Botha, the archivist, retired at the end of 2007 after 18½ years of competent service. At a meeting in 2008 the Deputies expressed gratitude towards Mrs Botha for her devoted service. An article appeared in *Die Kerkblad*, September 2008.

An assistant-archivist, Mrs C Huisman, was employed as of January 2007. In time two shared positions developed for Mrs Huisman, namely assistant-archivist and for the remaining 50% involvement with the 150-year festival arrangements. This means that Mrs Huisman will work in full service of the Archive from 1 May 2009.

The Deputies gave advice and made recommendations regarding the requirements for the position of archivist that was advertised in the *Die Kerkblad* at the start of 2008. The Deputies only saw in *Die Kerkblad* of April 2008 that the Administrative Buro filled the position and in which manner this was done. The Deputies are dissatisfied with the method communicated to the Administrative Buro.

2.1.2 Activities

Activities could continue and there has been progress with the computerisation of access to information at different levels.

2.1.2.1 The GKSA archive's involvement in the NAAIRS-project (*National Automated Archival Information Retrieval System*) of the National Archives continues. This is a free service to cooperating archives and makes a summary of inventories (only accesses) available on the Internet.

2.1.2.2 The photo index in the Church archive has been completed and is available electronically for research.

2.1.2.3 The congregation inventories were updated and are electronically available. This was also sent for placement on the GKSA website.

2.1.2.4 Congregations that have not handed in any archivalia for conservation are contacted frequently. The importance of conservation and electronic archiving is increasingly highlighted to congregations.

2.1.2.5 A guide for archive use has been compiled. This explains the process of acquiring and opening up archivalia.

Decision: Noted of 2.1 to 2.1.2.5.

2.1.3 Recommendations

2.1.3.1 That the work in the Archive continues in that the Deputies are tasked with actively promoting the conservation of archivalia formed in paper and electronic format.

This requires planning for additional archive space (NB: under no circumstances can current archivalia in the form of paper be discarded, for instance with digital filming. The original document should also be conserved). For this reason the motivation for planning for additional shelf space in the coming years. The church still creates archivalia in paper and the Archive only now receives archivalia created on paper in the 1980's or 1990's. However, a policy should develop according to which the Church considers the conservation and uniformity of archivalia in the 21st century. Archivalia originates in large amounts in different electronic ways and should be archived.

Decision: Approved. The Administrative Buro should provide for shelf space for the archive in the following budget. The Deputies Historical Matters appoint a person in cooperation with the Administrative Buro to develop a policy for the uniform conservation of electronic data of congregations.

2.1.3.2 Continuation of participation to the NAAIRS-project.

Decision: Approved.

2.2 *Musea*

2.2.1 The Burgersdorp Culture Historical Museum (BCHM)

During the time reported about here several very important events took place related to this Museum of which Synod should take proper note. A broader background is therefore provided here.

2.2.1.1 Involvement

With appreciation we mention especially Prof. B. Spoelstra as member of the Board of Trustees on behalf of the GKSA for his continued and unbridled labour in serving the cause of the BCM.

The Deputies also thank for his almost daily involvement former rev A. Gerhard Coetsee of Burgersdorp as chair of the Board of Trustees. This emphasises the strong interest that the GKSA has in this regional and communal museum. Former rev Coetsee keeps a vigilant eye and attends the grave of prof Dirk Postma in the town cemetery. In October 2008 it was noted with shock that the historical cast iron lattice work surrounding the grave had been stolen. The tombstone was fortunately not maimed.

Simultaneously the Deputies are disappointed that the impression is created (amongst others in Deputies' correspondence not attended to) that the church Council at Burgersdorp reveals a tardy involvement with the Museum, while it has a direct interest in matters such as property rights.

2.2.1.2 Historical background

On the 37th Synod (Acta 1970:447-448, 8d-e) direct involvement of the GKSA with the conservation of the Old Theological School Building at Burgersdorp and the promotion and erection of a Museum on this terrain was accepted.

In 1972/73 the Old Theological Building (1869), rectory and outbuildings were restored according to Synodal instruction by the GKSA. From these buildings the PU for CHE, now the NWU, ultimately also grew. Burgersdorp, a cradle for the Reformed, also played a considerable role in the battle for language rights (1882) for Dutch and Afrikaans of which the language monument in the town is a witness. All of this gives to the BCM not only a town- and regional character, but a countrywide character in which all Reformed, Afrikaners, and Afrikaans speakers enjoy a cultural historical interest.

In 1971 the Burgersdorp Cultural-historical Museum Society was initiated with its own constitution. The BCMV appointed some members in the Council of the Museum who receive the progress at annual meetings. In time the separate functioning of an autonomous management of the BCMV became superfluous

thanks to excellent collaboration. As a result of concern about the changes in museum legislation over the past couple of years the BCMV was resurrected at 23 October 2008 and called a separate new management to life. The Deputies were represented by former rev NG Sarkady at this meeting.

The Museum Council used to collaborate closely with the Western Cape Provincial Administration. Ordonances of the Province of 1968 and 1975 gave rise to subsidy and the Museum ended up in the category of “provincially supported museums.” The *status quo* was maintained also after 1994. Gradually the Eastern Cape Province liased increasingly with the Curator and no longer with the Council. These were the first signs of a change in approach.

In 2004 a new Museum Law was adopted in the Eastern Cape. This impacted directly on the position of the Council/ Board of Trustees of the Museum as well as the appointments of trustees by the GKSA. Art. 14 of this Law (2004) disbanded this Council. The appointed trustees remained functional merely “temporarily” until a new “Museum Council” consisting of those nominated by the provincial officials would be constituted. Up until October 2008 the new arrangement had not been in force. Rev G Opperman attended as Deputee a General Annual Meeting in 2008 under the current Management. The Board of Trustees plans to meet again in Nov/Dec 2008.

Implications of the new law includes taking over all properties of “provincially supported museums.”

In art 30/31 however it makes provision for a community museum with its own Board of Control which is acknowledged and subsidized by the province. The Board of Trustees expressed in a letter of 28 June 2004 their disgruntlement to the Eastern Cape Province with the direction that the new legislation recommended and that the BCM therefore indeed qualified as a “community museum” and should therefore receive acknowledgement and subsidy. To this date no response has been received. (Members of the Department entrusted with Museum matters in the Eastern Cape Province did for example attend in the past period the opening of a Xhosa exhibition in a section of the Museum.)

During 2007 the Deputies sought advice from the Deputies Legal Advice about these difficulties. In a report (3 Auguts 2007) given after the legal opinion of adv GL Grobler the latter Deputies recommend among other things that:

The Board of Trustees should go ahead with operations until such time that the law of 2004 takes effect. Subsequently it should consider how sponsors for example should be notified of changes. The *status quo* has been debated in particular. However the Deputies were brought under the impression that adequate advice had not been given about important matters such as the property issue with retreat clauses and possible repossession of properties, the rights of sponsors, etc. In short, it did not serve the Deputies with concrete advice about goal-oriented conduct towards the dilemma that the new law posed.

In addition, Prof Spoelstra differed from approaches in the legal advice when it came to the role of the GKSA in the relationship with BCM. The Deputies estimated that in the period after August 2007 a cautious wait-and-see attitude should be adopted about the legal matters in light of the fact that the new law had not yet found manifestation.

Synod should note in light of these matters that the current Board of Trustees may disband any day. The BCM Society appointed a management again at a meeting on 25 June 2008 (among which on behalf of the Deputies currently former rev NG Sarkady and rev G Opperman) to control static property and objects as possessions of the BCM itself, and in accordance with art 4 of the Construction Deed (1971) to use the matter of a community centre (art 30, Museum law 2004) as a point of discussion to return from a financial “provincially supported museum” to a situation as in 1971 when the BCMV negotiated with the province about subsidy in case it seemed necessary.

Decision: Noted 2.2.1 to 2.2.1.2.

2.2.1.3 Recommendations

2.2.1.3.1 Synod notes the Report.

Decision: Noted.

2.2.1.3.2 The Legal Deputies are assigned in view of the history of the Burgersdorp Cultural-historical Museum, namely that it was managed by a Board of Trustees, to investigate all legal aspects of it in detail. Aspects deserving particular attention are as follows: registration of assets/properties and implications of the said law for the legal position of the BCM.

2.2.1.3.3 That the Deputies Historical Matters and the current Reformed representatives on the Board of Trustees are advised in light of w.2.1.3.2. how best to manage and conserve historical properties of the GKSA in the Eastern Cape within the framework of the law.

2.2.1.3.4 To consult with churches in the NE Cape environment to maintain the cultural-historical heritage of the GKSA. Motivation: persons involved in organizing the 150 years' festival brought it to the attention of the Commission that historical buildings in the NE Cape need serious attention.

2.2.1.3.5 Churches are encouraged to support the BCM actively by way of visits and by joining as members (signatories), because this is a living example of the contribution of the GKSA in the community development of the entire NE Cape and beyond.

2.2.1.3.6 To add numbers to the Deputies or necessarily to appoint *ad hoc* Deputies for this complicated matter with addition of members with legal expertise and someone from the Classis Burgersdorp.

Decision: 2.2.1.3.2 to 2.2.1.3.6 are approved as altered – alterations have been brought about already – Deputies Acta.

2.2.2 The Potchefstroom Church Museum

2.2.2.1 Activities

With gratitude the Deputies can report that the curator of this museum sr MED Coetsee continued the activities with considerable diligence. She notified us that she will vacate her appointment in 2009 after the 150 years' festival.

Sr Coetsee (wid of br MPA Coetsee, long standing curator) acted as curator since 2003 and did her work with dedication.

Over the past 3 years many objects were added. However there was not a deluge. Receipt of these was indexed in the acquisition register and are on exhibition.

The visitors book shows the number of visits. The Deputies would like to see these numbers growing. Various catechism- and confessional groups visited as well as one or two international visitors, tour groups, and researchers.

We report with gratitude that money has been made available by the Administrative Bureau for changes to current exhibitions, precisely with a view to the festivities of DV 2009. These changed exhibitions are in process and will be complete in 2009.

Decision: Noted.

2.2.2.2 Recommendations

(i) That churches encourage members to donate objects to the Museum.

(ii) That they are encouraged to visit it.

(iii) Synod is requested to budget again for its maintenance and expansion.

Decision: Approved.

Gratitude is expressed to mr Gerhard Coetzee and prof B Spoelstra who acted as Trustees of the BCM.

Gratitude also to the NWU. Motivation: we have great appreciation for its financial and expert inputs which have upgraded the museum beautifully over the past year.

Synod notes with gratitude the Church Museum that has been erected in Nylstroom. They wish the Church Council of Waterberg all the best with this fine attempt.

A word of gratitude is extended to rev G Opperman for his work and creation of a DVD which depicts the church history. Also to GK Brits-Wes for willingness to make him available for this.

A DVD is presented to dr JM van Tonder [rev LH van Schaik accepts it on his behalf].