

21.14 PETITION OF PROTEST GK BRITS-WEST AGAINST A DECISION OF SYNOD 2006 ON WOMEN IN THE OFFICES (Artt 19, 41, 258)

- A. **Decision:** The Report of the Study Deputies which arose from the decisions of Synod 2006 is no longer on the table of this Synod due to the erasure of the decision (see Report at 21.13 in Acta 2009).

A. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Run of events

- 1.1 Synod 1988 takes a decision that women may not serve in the special offices within the church. (Acta 1988, art 98, especially points 3.6.5 (p519), 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 (p522)).
- 1.2 Several Petitions of Protest resulted from this decision (for instance Acta 1994:467). Still the decision of 1988 is maintained.
- 1.3 However, there was also a Point of Description over which Synod 2000 had to decide. Synod 2000 appoints Study Deputies to research the place of the woman in the church with previous decisions as point of departure (Acta 2000:440-441, 21.8 E).
- 1.4 Synod 2003 decides on the advice of the Study Deputies that women may serve in the office of deacon (Acta 2003:591, art 21.11).
- 1.5 At Synod 2006 a Petition of Protest of Particular Synod Bushveld serves (based on CO, artt 31 and 46) against this decision. The Petition of Protest succeeds and Synod 2006 takes certain decisions (Acta 2006:415-416, art 54, as well as Acta 2006, art 277, N.62)

2. The decision that is protested

Acta 2006:415-416, art 54, pt3 (Addendum A)

1. *The decision of Synod 2006 regarding the Petition of Protest of Particular Synod Bushveld entails that the decision of Synod 2003 according to which women could be elected to the office of deacon, should not have been taken in terms of CO 46.*
2. *The fact that the protest of Particular Synod Bushveld succeeded, entails that according to this suggestion all matters flowing from the Report of 2003 can no longer be handled at Synod 2006.*
3. *Study deputies are appointed to advise the next Synod on Scriptural grounds regarding the question whether women should serve in the office of deacon or other forms of organised deaconal activities or not, with consideration of all relevant material, including that on the table of Synod 2006 as well as the content of the Report of Synod 1988. This study should indicate clear grounds if any Synod decision should be amended according to its recommendation, so that a fixed and binding decision could be made by this Synod.*
4. *Since a number of women had been elected and confirmed as deacons based on Synod decision 2003 and fulfil this service in earnest, churches are advised to keep the following in mind according to CO, art 30:*
 - (a) *That the matter of women who serve in the office of deacon based on the decision of Synod 2003, is handled with great care.*
 - (b) *That women who had already been confirmed, will receive the opportunity to continue their service pending the Scripturally founded verdict on this matter at the next Synod.*
 - (c) *That churches should take into account that there will only be a verdict regarding the Scriptural foundation of women as deacons at the next Synod when they deal with the matter of calling and confirming women as deacons.*

3. Ground for protest with motivation

3.1 Ground for protest

Synod acted contrary to CO, art 46 when making this decision.

3.2 *Motivation*

3.2.1 Synod 1988 decided as follows regarding women in office: *“From the Study Report it becomes clear that female members do not serve in the special services of elder and Minister of the Word. Nor can it be proven without a doubt that female members (either married or single) serve in the service of deacon”* (Acta 1988:522, 37.3).

3.2.2 At Synod 2000 the relevant decision of 1988 was tested with a Petition of Protest that was not declared receptive (Acta 2000:440). (One of the reasons was that no new material was offered that had not yet been handled by a previous Synod.) For this reason the decision of 1988 was maintained. At the same Synod a Point of Description was granted by appointing Deputies to do a study with consideration of above-mentioned decisions regarding *“the way in which the Lord used and still wants to use women in the Bible”* (Acta 2000:440-441, 21.8 E).

3.2.3 Without motivation or the relevant testimony of new material, Synod 2003 takes the part of the Report that deals with women in office into discussion.

3.2.4 Particular Synod Bushveld protested this (Point III supra). The Petition of Protest succeeded. However, Synod 2006 appoints Study Deputies to *“advise the next Synod on Scriptural grounds regarding the question of women in the service of deacon and/or other organised forms of deaconal service”*.

With that a matter that has been concluded was taken into discussion without any indication of the necessity to do so, repeatedly and wrongfully, and therefore disorderly. This is completely contrary to CO, art 46 which determines: *“Matters for discussion at majority meetings should not be formulated before the decisions from previous Synods had been checked, so that matters that had already been concluded are not suggested again unless it is deemed necessary to change something.”* Synod 1988 already discussed the Report of the Study Deputy and made a decision regarding this matter (Acta 1988, art 98, especially points 3.6.5 (p519), 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 (p522)).

From this Synod 2006 decided *“that clear decisions were made in 1988 regarding the place of women in all the special offices (compare among others Acta 1988, art 98, especially points 3.6.5 (p519), 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 (p522)). These decisions were made on Scriptural grounds and are still valid.”* (Acta 2006, art 277, N.62 – **Addendum B**).

A successful Petition of Protest against the decision of Synod 1988 will be the only orderly route to give a commission the mandate to *“advise the next Synod on Scriptural grounds regarding the question of whether women may serve in the office of deacon and/or any other form of organised deaconal service or not”*.

Synod 2006 received no Petition of Process that (as is asked by CO, art 46) investigated the Synod decision of 1988 and based on that suggests a “necessary” change. At no stage did Synod 2006 indicate why the decision of 1988 should be changed or why it is inadequate.

4. Request

We request that Synod does not take the Report of the 2006-Commission (Acta 2006:415-6) into discussion if this Petition of Protest succeeds, but only gives the commission of Synod 2000 (Acta 2000:440-441) the opportunity to complete the standing incomplete assignment.