

23.4 REPORT DEPUTIES INTERNET (Artt 116, 144, 272)

- A. Rev HF van Wyk delivers the Report.
- B. **Decision:** The Report is referred to the Commission Publications and Media. Financial matters are referred to the Commission for Finances.
- C. Rev JP Fleischmann reports on behalf of the Commission Publications and Media.
- D. Rev J van Schaik reports on behalf of the Commission for Finances.

E. REPORT

1. Commission

- 1.1 To maintain and update current websites and to expand them as circumstances may require. Refer (www.gksa.co.za).
- 1.2 To remain in contact with all Deputies and to enter their information on the website in order for such information to be at the disposal of all churches in the GKSA. Refer (www.gksa.co.za).
- 1.3 To conduct research pertaining to computer programmes and to make available the relevant information to all churches.
- 1.4 To contact all the congregations with their own websites and make this information available to all congregations.
- 1.5 To contact all the congregations with the purpose of inspiring them to become part of the communication service of the GKSA (www.gksa.co.za). Motivation: Doing so has a bit of a financial advantage by which churches and the Administrative Bureau can benefit.
- 1.6 To investigate the matters as listed below, and to implement that which is deemed feasible:
 - 1.6.1 Catechism work books – to make these available in programmed electronic format. Doing so may enhance proper preparation among the children as electronic material is part of their present way of living.
 - 1.6.2 Doctrinal creed – to develop a programme that would assist in (better) knowledge of the doctrinal creed.
 - 1.6.3 Scriptural knowledge – to develop programmes that would extend the knowledge of children (as well as adults).
 - 1.6.4 Computerised administration – to advise churches with regard to strong points and weak points of existing congregation-related administration programmes. In the event of a congregation considering the possibility of computerizing its administration or buying or developing a new programme, sound advice by knowledgeable people would be welcome and valuable.
 - 1.6.5 Financial packages – to share advice on financial packages that can be used by churches to good effect.
 - 1.6.6 Programme developers – to furnish the developers of the administration programmes with relevant advice after having consulted the congregations.
- 1.7 Electronic communication – to further exploit the possible contributions that can be gained when electronic communication aids are being used. Whatever aspects of IT and communication are involved should all be applied to serve God's Kingdom.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.7 noted.

2. Fulfilment of commission

- 2.1 Carried out as efficiently as possible by Deputies.
- 2.2 Contact was established with Deputies Christian Education, CJBF and those involved in Catechetical instruction. All these Deputies expressed their desire to have a relevant website and confirmed the need for steps to be taken in that direction. However, with regard to the practical execution of the possibilities two stumbling blocks emerged:
 - 2.2.1 The Editor Internet lacks the time that would be necessary for creating websites.

- 2.2.2 As soon as the creation of websites is assigned to external writers, considerable expenses will be incurred and the danger of the GKSA's website sacrificing its characteristics unity and uniformity cannot be ruled out.
- 2.3 Requests were attended to and the necessary Internet connections installed.
- 2.4 Limited time prevented the Editor from conducting such research.
- 2.5 As a result of the website being moved to another service provider this service could not be realised. It should also be taken into account that those congregations that do have websites already have their respective service providers.
- 2.6 Remaining commissions:
 - 2.6.1 Not realised. Compare 3(1) and 3(2).
 - 2.6.2 Not realised.
 - 2.6.3 Not realised.
 - 2.6.4 Advice was provided according to enquiries.
 - 2.6.5 No enquiries were received.
 - 2.6.6 Advice was provided according to enquiries.
- 2.7 The web master, in collaboration with the Church Magazines, made selections from each edition of *Kerkblad*, *Vroueblad* and *Slingervel* and transferred such selections to Internet on a monthly basis. A facility that would allow for the three magazines to be read via Internet was also created, at the same cost as the subscription fees charged by each of the three magazines. By making use of this facility the readers save on money for postage.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.7 noted.

3. Matters to be taken cognisance of by Synod

- 3.1 Deputies Internet are agreed in their view that the website's image should definitely reflect uniformity. To accomplish such uniformity the web master and possible assistants should preferably use similar software programmes. Doing so would include the advantage of identical page set-ups.
- 3.2 During the course of both Synod 2003 and Synod 2006 assistance was offered within committees and the meeting with setting up the website pages. The Editor personally communicated with each one that had volunteered to help. The assistance failed to realise, the reasons being two things, mainly: *i.e.* the variety of software used by those who could assist and the poor response to requests (tasks simply not performed). In the latter case people offered a lack of time as an excuse.
- 3.3 The Deputies are of the opinion that there is, in modern times, no better way of displaying your church or organisation than via the showcase of Internet. It could well be true that the majority of those who seek information on the church would visit a website to find out more about the church's functioning, confessions, location of congregations and so on.
- 3.4 On the website's functions, initiated and installed by the Deputies, makes it possible for individual congregations to update their own information on the web pages. This facility is, however, utilised by merely about 10% of the congregations. Deputies held a meeting with members of the Administrative Bureau and the Deputies *Almanak* to investigate the possibility of a uniform database containing all congregation-related information. According to the discussions it became evident that the two databases would prove to be incompatible and that capturing of added information on the Internet could incur rather significant expenditure. Management of the Administrative Bureau expressed disapproval with regard to the financial implications. According to Appendix visits to this section of the website reveal a definite need for regular updating.
- 3.5 Internet ought to contain the most recent information on all congregations and ministers. At present only the Administrative Bureau has the most recent information, but such information is not accessible to those outside of church – because they do not make the trouble to telephone the Administrative Bureau. Another aspect to be kept in mind, and it stands to reason, is that the Administrative Bureau cannot be available for 24 hours per day. As far as *Almanak* itself is concerned, information is usually outdated

by six months by the time it appears and approximately 18 months by the time the following *Almanak* appears.

- 3.6 The mail list and the Forum have been attended to by the web master at own responsibility.
- 3.7 Calling-related news is entered on Internet in a format that enables users of mobile telephones (cell) to read the news.
- 3.8 Other events that are also facilitated by means of the website include, inter alia, Festival 150 and GTV and conferences.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.8 noted.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Synod contemplates and decides about the feasibility of continuation of the website.
- 4.2 Synod budgets for and funds a full-time web master. The magnitude of the work is such that it can no longer be dealt with on a part-time basis. The web master should preferably be stationed in Potchefstroom so as to be within reach of all Deputy groups. It will subsequently be possible for Deputy groups to take their work due to be part of Internet to be appointed web master for processing. In this way unity and uniformity of the site and its image can be maintained.
- 4.3 The web master co-operates with an editing committee that provides technical as well as content-related advice.
- 4.4 The web master ought to be thoroughly familiar with the GKSA's functioning and Creed/Confession of faith in order for the website to render a true reflection.

Decision: Approved. There should be provision on the budget for a webmaster to fulfil these assignments. [Also see 17.2, artt 1.2.13, 1.2.16 and 1.2.23.]

The Synod assigns it to the Management of the Administrative Buro to approach church members or any other persons who offer similar services as part of their research around the appointment of a fulltime webmaster.

Decision: Approved with gratitude.

5. Conclusion

These Deputies realise that all the Commissions of Synods could not be fulfilled. The Deputies were dedicated and diligent in their efforts to meet requirements and did so to the best of their ability within the constraints of time and available resources.

Decision: Noted.