

23.7 POINT OF DESCRIPTION REGIONAL SYNOD FREESTATE AND KWAZULU-NATAL ON THE OMISSION OF THE NAMES OF ELDERS AND DEACONS FROM THE ALMANAK (Artt 88, 278)

- A. Rev JH Cilliers states the Point of Description.
- B. **Decision:** The Point of Description is referred to Commission Publications and Media.
- C. Rev JP Fleischmann reports on behalf of the Commission Publications and Media.

D. POINT OF DISCUSSION

1. Draft Resolution:

The Regional Synod Free State and KwaZulu-Natal requests that the names of the elders and deacons be placed in the Almanak of the RCSA.

2. Background:

The deputies for the publishing of the Almanak indicated with the sending out of the statistical forms for 2007, that they are considering to not publish the names of the elders and deacons in the Almanak any more, but to keep it safe and make it available for any one who is interested in it. Their motivation was that it will make more space available for the daily messages in the Almanak. Together with the above mentioned statistical forms every congregation was asked how they felt about this suggestion of the deputies.

Without any feedback to the congregations about which direction is going to be taken in respect of the above-mentioned "consideration" of the deputies and in spite of signs from congregations that the names should preferably be kept, the Almanak of 2007 was published without the names. It was then brought under the attention of the deputies that this action was against the Synod decision of 2006: "Elders and deacons names must be kept" (Acta 2006:754, 3.1.2; second row), and there was an undertaking from the deputies to consider the decision from the Synod. In spite of this the Almanak of 2008 was again published without the names. The statistical forms for 2009 do not even accommodate a place for the names to be filled in, "to be kept orderly and available for those who are interested" and thus will 2009's Almanak certainly not contain the names of the elders and deacons.

This sort of action by the deputies brings serious questions to the table: did the deputies argue their own motivation in depth, in light of the reformed doctrine, service and discipline?; is proxy given anywhere to the deputies of a Reformed Synod to deviate from their mandate?; does a system exist where the names of elders and deacons are available for those who are interested and exactly how available are these names?; what is the essential trade of the Almanak, is it a Diary of the Bible, or is it an information- and references source for the congregations of the RCSA?; does this direction taken by the deputies not jeopardize two of the most important services given by Jesus Christ to His church?; does this direction not damage the historical band of God's work in the history of every Reformed congregation? Classis Free State East turned with this matter to the Regional Synod, not to refer a matter too heavy for himself to a major assembly, but in the conviction that this matter must be discussed, considered and decided upon by the wider church denomination, because of the drastic result that this matters holds for all our congregations in general, and in particular for those interested. The direction the deputies took is in our view so drastic that our congregations can not leave it like that.

3. Motivation

- 3.1. Synod 2006 approved: "Elders and deacons names must be kept." (Acta 2006:754, 3.1.2; second row)
- 3.2. Through the years the names of elders and deacons in the Almanak, was a reliable source of information about important matters for reverends and other members, for example how the Lord as God of the Covenant worked with families through generations by calling them and equipping them for the work in congregations, for example to determine at historical occasions who were involved, and for example to

determine with joy that gifts and talents God gave to a certain congregation. A handy and easily available source of information about the congregations in the RCSA and of joy in the Lord is now going to waste.

- 3.3. The finding of more room in the Almanak can be done in a different way (for example the usage of different lettertypes for the daily messages which is currently very big and can be made smaller; the giving of a certain lengths can be applied more strictly and even more smaller lettertypes can be given to general information – according to Acta 2006:752, 2.1.3); instead of leaving out of the names of the elders and deacons.

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the point of description is dealt with in the following way:

- 1.1.1 The status quo is maintained, namely to not publish the names of elders and deacons in the Calendar.

Motivation

- (a) the placing of the names of elders and deacons takes a lot of space.
 - (b) it can increase the printing cost, especially if a larger print is used that is easier to read for elderly people.
- 1.1.2 The Deputies for the Publishing of the Calendar examine the possibility to publish the Calendar in two parts, but to sell it as a unit. Part 1 can contain all the statistical information that is currently published in the Calendar, as well as the names of the elders and deacons. Part 2 can contain daily devotions. The second part (daily devotions) can be bound in such a format that other distributors and bookshops can also market it.

Decision: The recommendation is not accepted. The decision of Synod 2006:754 (3.1.2) stands that names of elders and deacons are retained in the Almanak.