

16.5 REPORT 4: DEPUTIES ECUMENICITY INLAND – OTHER DISCUSSIONS (Artt 30, 31)

- A. Rev PW Kurpershoek tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.
- C. Br K Roose and dr H Breytenbach are welcomed in the meeting.

D. REPORT

1. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk

1.1 *Mandate (Acta 2012:189, 1.3.1)*

- 1.1.1 The to be named Deputies work intensively to expand the discussions with the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk.

Decision: Noted.

1.2 *To be noted*

- 1.2.1 Discussions took place on 9 June 2014 with prof IA Brink. Further discussions were held on 25 July 2014 with the Central Church Commission of the APK.
- 1.2.2 A request from the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk to provide a written message of greeting on behalf of the GKSA addressed to the General Synod of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk in 2013 was not acted upon. For this *bona fide* oversight on our part we offered our apologies.
- 1.2.3 It was determined that the last bilateral discussion between the respective Churches took place on 17 October 2008, before the occasions during 2014 could take place.
- 1.2.4 It was noted that the Central Church Commission of the APK consists entirely of new members.
- 1.2.5 The extended discussion on 25 July 2014 was experienced from both sides as positive and edifying. It was agreed that representatives of the respective Churches must draft a memorandum of ecumenical relationship between the GKSA and the APK.
- 1.2.6 It was envisaged that the to be named Deputies of the GKSA should be able to enter into discussions with the CCC of the APK during March 2015.
- 1.2.7 It was already agreed in the discussion that the exchange of catechism material must take place in order to distribute such material as the need may arise.
- 1.2.8 It was further agreed that the APK will be furnished with the liturgical extension of *Skrifberymings* and hymns as approved by the last few Synods of the GKSA. The APK expressed its desire to give attention to this in their own considerations as far as liturgical aspects are concerned.
- 1.2.9 The Deputies noted that some of the amendments to the Totius text of the Psalms have been included in the hymn book of the APK. These amendments have already been incorporated in their latest printed volumes.
- 1.2.10 The Administrative Bureau was requested to invite a representative of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk to Synod 2015 to deliver a message of greeting.

Decision: Points 1.2.1 to 1.2.10 noted.

1.3 *To be decided: Recommendation*

- 1.3.1 That the Synod encourages a more effective course of discussion.
- 1.3.2 That the drafting of a memorandum of ecumenical relations between the respective church denominations should enjoy first priority.

Decision: Points 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 approved.

2. Rynse Kerk in Suid-Afrika (RKSA) and the Calvin Protestantse Kerk van Suid-Afrika (CPKVSA)

2.1 Mandate (Acta 2012:190, 2.3.1)

- 2.1.1 The to be named Deputies work intensively to expand the discussions with the Rynse Kerk in Suid-Afrika (RKSA) and the Calvin Protestantse Kerk van Suid-Afrika (CPKVSA).

Decision: Noted.

2.2 To be noted

- 2.2.1 Despite numerous attempts to establish contact with representatives of both these church communities, no discussions could realise at the date of this Report.
- 2.2.2 During the Convent and other ecumenical events informal discussions were held.
- 2.2.3 It is envisaged that a discussion will be arranged before the end of 2014. This discussion will be reported on in the Supplementary Agenda.

Decision: Points 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 noted.

2.3 To be decided: Recommendation

- 2.3.1 The to be named Deputies persevere in their attempts to realise discussions with the Rynse Kerk in Suid-Afrika (RKSA) and the Calvin Protestantse Kerk van Suid-Afrika (CPKVSA).

Decision: Approved.

3. Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

3.1 Mandate (Acta 2012:190, 3.3.1, 3.3.2)

- 3.1.1 The to be named Deputies continue with discussions with the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika aimed at ecumenical unity.
- 3.1.2 The to be named Deputies maintain close contact with the local discussions between churches from the GKSA and VGKSA.

Decision: Points 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 noted.

3.2 To be noted

- 3.2.1 One bilateral discussion with the VGKSA took place in 2013. A subsequent discussion is planned for DV July 2014 on which we will report in the Supplementary Agenda.
- 3.2.2 Those issues indicated in a memorandum from the VGKSA that are stumbling blocks in the way of ecumenical unity have not yet been properly identified and presented by them for further action and finalisation (cf. Acta 2012:190, 3.2.3). Your Deputies hope to obtain more clarity regarding this during July 2014.
- 3.2.3 A message of greeting was presented on behalf of the GKSA to the VGKSA by rev PW Kurpershoek in May 2014 during their Synod in Bethal.
- 3.2.4 Discussions between the Church Councils of GK Die Kandelaar, GK Oos-Moot and GK Totiusdal, as well as the VGKSA Pretoria and VGKSA Maranatha that have been ongoing since 2010/2011, have made great progress.
- a) A joint statement between the five churches was already signed in May 2013 in which the churches undertake in relation to one another that co-operation must be optimally utilised in building faith and church life.
- b) All five churches expressed the desire for church unity in one church denomination and undertook to do all that is necessary to come to ecumenical unity.
- c) The concrete situation and calling of the respective churches in their denomination will be evaluated from time to time.

- 3.2.5 After several open discussions during which numerous matters were tabled, the five churches established that there are indeed differences but that they do not lead to church separation.
- 3.2.6 It was undertaken in all five churches to find ways in which to give concrete form to the unity. In the joint statement it was already agreed that following matters belong at the table of the respective church councils and that they want to deal with them as such as soon as the respective classes have dealt with the process of ecumenical unity: admission of one another's members to holy communion, pulpit exchange, recognition of one another's attestations, recognition and takeover of ministry of discipline, joint worship services and support of one another's struggle for the Truth.
- 3.2.7 In September 2013 the three churches in the denomination of the GKSA asked advice from Classis Pretoria-Moot regarding the way forward in forming of even closer ties, including certain agreements to extend the process of ecumenical unity up to national level. The said Classis must still advise the churches.
- 3.2.8 In the meantime, the Deputies Ecumenicity Inland met with a commission of Classis Pretoria-Moot (and representatives of the Church Councils of Die Kandelaar, Oos-Moot and Totiusdal) on 25 February 2014 to reflect on the agreements already reached and the process that lies ahead aimed at possible ecumenical unity.
- 3.2.9 The Deputies have determined that before the churches from the GKSA and VGKSA can truly advance to further unity on general national level, order arrangements from the GKSA must be compiled to order this local contact and co-operation where churches already as is the case with these five churches want to co-operate, but there is as yet no mention of general national unity between denominations. The three churches in the GKSA were requested to wait until all churches within the GKSA could agree to such an arrangement of local co-operation and contact.

Decision: Points 3.2.1 to 3.2.9 noted.

3.3 *To be decided: Recommendations*

- 3.3.1 The to be named Deputies are mandated to continue with discussions with the VGKSA.
- 3.3.2 The to be named Deputies are mandated to draft order arrangements that must enable local congregations and guide them in their local contacts and co-operation prior to any national unity.

Decision: Points 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 approved.

4. Convent for Reformatory Churches

4.1 *Mandate (Acta 2012:190, 4.1.1)*

- 4.1.1 The Deputies appoint representatives to the Convent for Reformatory Churches.

Decision: Noted.

4.2 *To be noted*

- 4.2.1 The Convent for Reformatory Churches met annually during the first week of March and involves approximately 15 church communities of reformed background.
- 4.2.2 During the past term, the Convent dealt with the following three themes:
- a) Yesterday, today, and tomorrow (our shared past, present, and future)
 - b) The celebration of 450 years of the Heidelberg Catechism
 - c) The church as an embracing and transforming body
- 4.2.3 Your Deputies sent delegates to all three gatherings of the Convent.

Decision: Points 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 noted.

4.3 *To be decided: Recommendation*

- 4.3.1 The to be named Deputies appoint representatives to the Convent for Reformatory Churches.

Decision: Approved.

E. GREETINGS VGKSA

Br K Roose conveys the greetings of the VGKSA to the meeting after which the chairperson, dr DG Breed, directs a word of thanks to him and prays for the blessing of the Lord upon the VGKSA.