

**The Free Reformed Churches in South
Africa**

**Acts of the 40th Synod
of the
Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
convened by the FRC Belhar
12 – 16 April 2021**



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Archive Church:

Free Reformed Church of Pretoria, PO Box 31141, Totiusdal,
0134, Pretoria, South Africa

Compiled by
R, Snijder
and edited by:
C. Roose and A. Smit

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DELEGATES TO SYNOD 2021 OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA



Back: Br Martin de Wit, Br Gert Bouwmeester, Rev Pieter Boon, Rev Erik van Alten, Br Frans Hagg, Rev Peter Abrahams, Br Wolter Bijker. **Front:** Rev George Mnisi, Br Jacob Klaaste, Br Roel Snijder, Rev Johan Bruintjies, Br Gerard Hagg

CONTENTS

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET AT WWW.FRC.ORG.ZA OR WWW.VGK.ORG.ZA.....	1
DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE WITH THE STATED CLERK, TO BE OBTAINED ON REQUEST	2
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS, USED IN THESE ACTS.....	3
ARTICLE 1 – PRAYER SERVICE 11 APRIL 2021.....	4
ARTICLE 2 – OPENING	4
ARTICLE 3 – CREDENTIALS.....	4
ARTICLE 4 – ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD BELHAR, 2021	5
ARTICLE 5 – AGREEMENT WITH THREE FORMS OF UNITY	6
ARTICLE 6 – ADOPTION OF AGENDA.....	6
ARTICLE 7 – ADOPTION OF MEETING PROCEDURES.....	6
ARTICLE 8 – CORRESPONDENCE	6
ARTICLE 9 – ACCEPTANCE AND ADMISSIBILITY OF ALL DOCUMENTS RECEIVED BY SYNOD 2021	7
ARTICLE 10 – GREETING ADDRESSES	7
ARTICLE 11 – INSTRUCTIONS FROM CLASSIS.....	7
ARTICLE 12 – PROPOSALS FROM CLASSIS.....	7
12.1 Classis North – Proposed amendment to the synod rules Art 4.2, 9 & 11	7

12.2 Proposal from the Free Reformed Church Pretoria regarding delegation to synod.....	9
ARTICLE 13 – APPEALS	10
ARTICLE 14 – DEPUTIES FOR CONTACTS WITH CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA	12
ARTICLE 15 – OPENING	14
ARTICLE 16 – DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD.....	14
16.1 Free Reformed Churches of Australia - FRCA attendance via zoom.....	14
16.2 Contact with ICRC (Section 4 of the deputies' report).....	16
16.3 Regional ICRC conferences in Africa	18
ARTICLE 17 – MISSION DEPUTIES.....	19
ARTICLE 18 – DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (CONTINUED)	21
ARTICLE 19 – DEPUTIES INTERNET COMMUNICATION.....	23
ARTICLE 20 – DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)	24
Relations with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches	24
ARTICLE 21 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)	26
21.1 General recommendations	26

21.2 RCNZ – Asia Pacific Region	27
21.3 North American Region.....	27
21.4 FRCSA Information Booklet/Website.....	27
21.5 Liaison for Churches.....	28
ARTICLE 22 – OPENING	28
ARTICLE 23 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)	29
Relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands (Liberated) (RCNL)	29
ARTICLE 24 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL FORMS AND PRAYERS.	30
ARTICLE 25 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING	31
ARTICLE 26 – DEPUTIES ART 11 NEEDY CHURCHES	32
ARTICLE 27 – SYNOD TREASURER	34
ARTICLE 28 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MUSIC	34
ARTICLE 29 – OPENING	37
ARTICLE 30 – DEPUTIES FOR AFRIKAANS BIBLE TRANSLATION..	37
ARTICLE 31 – DEPUTIES REVISION OF SYNOD RULES.....	39
ARTICLE 32 – DEPUTY STATED CLERK AND ARCHIVE	41
ARTICLE 33 – INSPECTION OF THE ARCHIVE	42
ARTICLE 34 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)	43

ARTICLE 35 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING (CONTINUED)...	46
ARTICLE 36 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)	47
ARTICLE 37 – DEPUTIES BIBLE TRANSLATION (CONTINUED)	49
ARTICLE 38 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MUSIC (CONTINUED) ..	49
ARTICLE 39 - OPENING	50
ARTICLE 40 – REPORT OF CLASSIS NORTH ON DAYS OF PRAYER.....	50
ARTICLE 41 – DEPUTIES CO ART 49.....	50
ARTICLE 42 – ADDRESS TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE LOCAL MAYOR.....	51
ARTICLE 43 – APPOINTMENT OF THE CONVENING CHURCH AND PLACE AND TIME OF THE NEXT SYNOD	51
ARTICLE 44 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING (CONTINUED)...	51
ARTICLE 45 – DEPUTY SYNOD TREASURY (CONTINUED)	56
ARTICLE 46 – DEPUTIES INSPECTION OF THE SYNOD TREASURER.....	59
ARTICLE 47 – APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTIES, ARCHIVE CHURCH, CLASSIS FOR DAYS OF PRAYER ACCORDING TO CO ART 69, INDABA	59
ARTICLE 48 – APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE	61
ARTICLE 49 – APPROVAL OF SYNOD ACTS	61

ARTICLE 50 – CENSURE ACCORDING TO CO ARTICLE 48	61
ARTICLE 51 – CLOSING DEVOTION	61
ARTICLE 52 – CLOSING OF SYNOD	62
ADDENDUM 1: DEPUTIES’ MANDATES	63
ADDENDUM 2: OPENING ADDRESS BY REV. P. ABRAHAMS .	77
ADDENDUM 3: LETTER FROM REV. FJ BIJZET	80
ADDENDUM 4: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE FRCA.....	83
ADDENDUM 5: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE CANRC.....	85
ADDENDUM 6: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE RCNL	90
ADDENDUM 7: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE RCSA (GKSA).....	97

**DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET AT
WWW.FRC.ORG.ZA OR WWW.VGK.ORG.ZA.**

DRCA Report to Synod Belhar 2021
Addendum Report of DRCA on the RCN
Report to Synod Belhar 2021 Deputies Contact Churches in SA
Internet Deputies Report – Synod 2021
Deputies Report Liturgical Forms and Prayers to Synod 2021
Deputies Liturgical Music Report to Synod 2021
 Annexures to Deputies Liturgical Music Report
 LitMus Annexures 1 – 7
MDSA Synod Report 2021
Report of Deputies for Revision of Synod Rules
Addendum to Report of Deputies for Revision of Synod Rules
Report Stated Clerk to Synod 2021 of the FRCSA
Addendum to Report 2021 of Stated Clerk
Deputaat Bybelvertaling verslag oor nuwe BDV2020 vertaling – HH
Schuring
Report Deputies Bible translation 2021 – J van der Linden
Deputies Art 11 – Needy Churches - Synod Report 2021
Deputies for inspection of the Archive report to Synod 2021
Sinodeverslag kwesoor
 Appendices to treasurers report
 App 1 Treasurer Kuratore
 App 2 Treasurer 2020
Updated Treasurers Report to Synod 2021
VGK Oudit Reports 2018 - 2020
Master Deputies Theological Training report to Synod 2021
Amendment to Report to Synod Belhar 2021 of Deputies
Theological Training
Appeal RF van den Berg
Appeal FRC Pretoria – Objection to article 44 (of the Acts 2017)
Report Deputy Day of Prayer 9 March 2021

Addendum to Days of Prayer in connection with COVID-19 pandemic
Preliminary Agenda Synod FRCSA 2021
Classis North – Brief aan die Sinode klerk C Roose ivm vroeë bekendmaking van deputateverslae
Classis North – Letter Pta Consistory Klassis notule – Sinode handeling en Sinode bywoning
Classis North – Letter to Clerk of the Synod 20 Dec 2020
Classis North – Proposed amendments to Synod Rules
Revised time schedule Synod 2021
Persverslag Sinode Belhar van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke SA 2021
Press Release Synod Belhar of the Free Reformed Churches SA 2021

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE WITH THE STATED CLERK, TO BE OBTAINED ON REQUEST

Report of Deputies Article 49 CO – Classis North.
Report of Deputies Article 49 CO – Classis South.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS, USED IN THESE ACTS

APK	Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk
ART 11	Deputies Needy Churches
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BDV 2020	Bybel Direkte Vertaling 2020
BOP	Book of Praise
CanRC	Canadian Reformed Churches
CJF	Calvyn Jubileum Fonds
CO	Church Order
CRCA	Christian Reformed Churches Australia
CRTS	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary
DTT	Deputies Theological Training
DCCSA	Deputies for Contacts with Churches in South Africa
DGK	De Gereformeerde Kerken
DRCA	Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad
DRCAfr	Dutch Reformed Church in Africa
DRCSA	Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
DVN	De Verre Naasten (RCNL organisation)
FCSA	Free Church in Southern Africa
FRC	Free Reformed Church
FRCA	Free Reformed Churches of Australia
FRCSA	Free Reformed Churches in South Africa
GKN	Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika
ICRC	International Conference of Reformed Churches
LS	The Lord's Supper
MDiv	Master of Divinity
MDSA	Mission Deputies South Africa
NGK	Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken
NGKA	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika
NGKSA	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
RCNL	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
RCNZ	Reformed Churches of New Zealand
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa
REACH	Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa
RSC	Reformational Study Centre
URCNA	United Reformed Churches North America
ZAM	Zuid-Afrika Mission (RCNL organisation)

Acts of the 40th Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa convened by the FRC Belhar from 12 – 16 April, 2021

ARTICLE 1 – PRAYER SERVICE 11 APRIL 2021

Rev G Mnisi led the prayer service held in the Church of the FRC Bellville on Sunday 11 April at 18:00, focusing on Col 4:12 with the emphasis on prayer and the importance of prayer during the Synod, specifically when difficult decisions are to be made. Let's do this in prayer.

DAY 1 – 12 APRIL 2021

ARTICLE 2 – OPENING

Rev P Abrahams, on behalf of the convening church FRC Belhar, delivered an opening address (Addendum 2) after reading from 1 Thess 1:1-10. We sang all the verses of Hymn 40, after which he led the meeting in prayer. He welcomed all present to the Synod.

ARTICLE 3 – CREDENTIALS

All delegates signed an attendance register upon arrival and those present were verified against the Credential Letters received from Classis North and South.

Classis North nominated the following delegates:

As Primi:

Rev PG Boon

Rev GF Mnisi

Rev HH van Alten

Br GR Bouwmeester

Br F Hagg

Br G Hagg

As Secundi:

Rev DM Boersma

Rev BA Matlaela

Rev JA Breytenbach

The following delegates were present:

Rev PG Boon (FRC Pretoria-Maranata), Rev HH van Alten (FRC Pretoria), Rev GF Mnisi (FRC Nellmapius & FRC Pretoria-Maranata), Br G Hagg (FRC Pretoria-Maranata), Br F Hagg (FRC Pretoria) and Br GR Bouwmeester (FRC Pretoria-Maranata).

Classis South nominated the following delegates:

As Primi:	As Secundi:
Rev J Bruintjes	Br M de Wit
Rev P Abrahams	Br R Hoving
Rev C van Wyk	Br V Koks
Br R Snijder	Br J Klaaste
Br W Bijker	
Br S Swartbooi	

The following delegates were present:

Rev J Bruintjes (FRC Bellville), Rev P Abrahams (FRC Belhar), Br J Klaaste (FRC Wesbank), Br M de Wit (FRC Bellville), Br W Bijker (FRC Johannesburg) and Br R Snijder (FRC Johannesburg).

The delegations of both classes were found to comply with Art 2 of the Rules of Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), as adopted by Synod 2008.

ARTICLE 4 – ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND CONSTITUTION OF SYNOD BELHAR, 2021

The following brothers were elected as the officers of Synod 2021 by way of secret ballot:

Chair:	Rev J Bruintjes
Deputy Chair:	Br G Hagg
Scribe:	Br R Snijder

The meeting was adjourned in order for the newly elected officers to prepare for their task as Moderamen of the Synod whilst the other members enjoyed a tea break.

The newly elected officers took up their seats and the Synod was formally constituted by the chair.

ARTICLE 5 – AGREEMENT WITH THREE FORMS OF UNITY

All delegates confirmed their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity by standing up from their chairs.

ARTICLE 6 – ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The proposed agenda was handed to all the members present and accepted with the understanding that changes to the schedule may happen when certain matters are dealt with in less than the allocated time. Certain sessions are specifically scheduled in order for foreign representatives to be present via Zoom, since they are not able to attend in person due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions.

ARTICLE 7 – ADOPTION OF MEETING PROCEDURES

All discussions will be limited to a maximum of 3 rounds of discussion, and if no decision can be reached within that time a committee will be appointed to review the matter and advise the meeting of its decisions for adoption by the Synod meeting.

Deputy reports will first be presented by the appointed deputies, after which the report will be dealt with via discussion by the Synod delegates. Thereafter the proposed mandates will be reviewed and accepted or amended as the case may be.

All discussions will be recorded. Each night the scribe will send the decisions made during that day to the delegates for approval on the next day.

ARTICLE 8 – CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from Rev FJ Bijzet dated 6 April 2021 (Addendum 3)

Letter from FRCA dated 5 April 2021 (Addendum 4)

Letter from CanRC (Addendum 5)

Letter from RCNL dated 14 April 2021 (Addendum 6)

ARTICLE 9 – ACCEPTANCE AND ADMISSIBILITY OF ALL DOCUMENTS RECEIVED BY SYNOD 2021

All documents received were accepted as admissible by Synod 2021, including the Addendums and Revisions presented by some deputies after the deadline.

ARTICLE 10 – GREETING ADDRESSES

Letter Rev Bijzet accepted as Greeting Address and read by the scribe (Addendum 3).

Letter from FRCA which was read by the delegate present via Zoom. (Addendum 4).

Letter from CanRC which was read by the delegates present via Zoom. (Addendum 5).

Letter from RCNL which was read by the delegates present via Zoom. (Addendum 6).

ARTICLE 11 – INSTRUCTIONS FROM CLASSIS

None received.

ARTICLE 12 – PROPOSALS FROM CLASSIS

12.1 Classis North – Proposed amendment to the synod rules Art 4.2, 9 & 11

Deliberations:

The ratification of the Synod Acts was introduced by the churches many years ago. During the conference on the *'Essentials of a Church Federation'* in 2019, hosted by Deputies Contact Local Churches, the matter of the ratification of the Synod Acts was discussed. During this conference consensus was reached that ratification following Synod is not necessary, as long as consistories have the opportunity to study the deputies' reports and react to them before the next Synod, and this is the reason for Classis North's proposed amendments.

The amendments are specifically to allow consistories time to study deputy reports and send comments and/or objections to Synod

before Synod commences. The deputies' reports and the work of the deputies are part of church life and not a function of a few select deputies. Comments from consistories provides deputies with the opportunity to consider them and, where necessary, to submit an updated report. Such correspondence from consistories should be sent to the Synod and the deputies both.

Synod decides:

To accept the proposal and for the following amendments to be incorporated into the proposed changes to Synod Rules:

Synod Rules Article 2, Duties of the Convening Church:

Amend

Art 2.1.1.4 – Deputies are requested to submit their reports in the prescribed format, to reach all congregations in the bond of churches at least six (6) months before the commencement of Synod.

Add

Art 2.1.1.5 – The congregations can then study the reports and submit recommendations and objections addressed to the convening church of the next Synod, plus a copy hereof to the deputies, at least three (3) months before the commencement of Synod.

Art 2.1.1.6 – The deputies will then have the opportunity to study these recommendations/objections and, where deemed necessary, submit a “Revision Addendum” to their original report detailing the amendments to their original report.

Synod Rules Article 10, Deputies:

Amend

Art 10.8 – Deputies shall submit a written report of their activities to the next Synod, which is also to be sent to **all the congregations in the bond of churches at least six (6) months before the next Synod, and their final report with a ‘Revision Addendum’ (where applicable) at least 2 months** prior to the commencement of Synod.

Grounds:

1. Synod does not make rules for the sake of rules but for the benefit of all the churches, and input and participation from the churches needs to be promoted and encouraged.
2. These amendments allow all churches to peruse and comment on deputies' reports, and these inputs are to be recorded as correspondence on Synod's agenda.
3. This will assist Synod delegates to better understand and be guided by these comments and/or recommendations from the different churches in their consideration of deputy reports.

12.2 Proposal from the Free Reformed Church Pretoria regarding delegation to synod

The background is that at the last Synod, Classis North elected delegates and it turned out there was no member of FRC Pretoria delegated. The matter was discussed at Classis North, which concluded that it is not practical to get a delegate from each church and in fact very difficult. Consequently, the FRC Pretoria decided to bring the matter to Synod on their own.

During the conference on the *'Essentials of a Church Federation'* in 2019 this matter was also discussed. One should bear in mind that Synod is not a democratic decision-making body but a thorough process of assessing arguments and then making informed decisions.

It is however important that the Acts should be published within 2-3 months after the closing of the Synod, to avoid a situation that churches only get to know what has happened at Synod after a prolonged period of time. What we do at Synod is for the churches, and churches should receive the information timeously.

Synod decides:

To reject the proposal to amend the nominated delegates to Synod and retain the current wording of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

The proposal is not practically executable and is not in line with Reformed church polity's view on major assemblies.

ARTICLE 13 – APPEALS**13.1 Br R v d Berg – Refusal by FRC Maranata and Classis North to allow Br van den Berg to address visitors**

Classis North and FRC Pretoria-Maranata are given the opportunity to address Synod and provide background on the matter. Classis North accepted the consistory's answer in that they were still dealing with the matter and it was therefore too early to request visitors to deal with the matter since it had not been concluded by the consistory. Classis did respond to Br Van den Berg's objection in writing.

Classis North rules state that a member cannot go to visitors when a matter is still being dealt with by the consistory. A member may appeal the decision when he is not satisfied with the consistory's decision.

A response to an objection needs to be provided within a reasonable period of time.

Synod decides:

To uphold the decision of Classis North, which in turn upheld the decision of the consistory of the FRC Pretoria-Maranata. Based on this there are no grounds to amend CO Art 44 as requested by Br Van den Berg.

Grounds:

According to the feedback from members of the consistory and Classis North, there was clear evidence that the matter was dealt with promptly and that due process was followed, and the process was properly documented and communicated to Br R van den Berg.

13.2 Appeal FRC Pretoria regarding art 44.19 of acts of synod 2017

Deliberations:

The decision undermines the self-governance of the churches, and Synod 2017 perhaps overstretched itself; in addition, Ground 19.2 is wrong as this is not the decision of the CanRC.

The background to the decision of Synod 2017 is that it specifically dealt with the restricted sister church relationship with the RCNL and how to deal with the matters specifically following this decision. As documented, the decision made was not intended to restrict individual churches and rule over them as was interpreted by some churches. This is not what Synod intended to do. The danger with the decision without bearing in mind the pertinent background is that it will become applicable to similar situations. The reality is that the decision was not meant to affect the overruling of Classis and/or Synod over the churches.

The decision has been misinterpreted, and we are not likely to get clarity on whether it was (also) correctly interpreted by churches. Therefore, the proposal is that the current Synod clarifies the decision made.

Two proposals were made:

Proposal 1: We do not accept the objection, but rather clarify the decision and the use of the word 'concurring' – that it is in no way meant to undermine the CO. This is to clarify the decision that was then made.

Proposal 2: CO Art 6 already allows for advice from their councillor; however, it does not address the matter where there is an acting minister in the church.

Synod decides:

1. To remove the word 'concurring' from the decision.
2. To delete Ground 19.2 altogether.

Grounds:

There was never an intention by Synod for a Classis to rule over the churches. The decision was specifically meant to address the matter of calling ministers from the RCNL. It should therefore not be read as a decision in dealing with similar matters of this nature, and also not as a general rule applicable to calling ministers from the RCNL. A change in our view of the RCNL during Synod 2021 may change the way this matter is dealt with as well.

ARTICLE 14 – DEPUTIES FOR CONTACTS WITH CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The chair welcomes the deputies present and gives them the opportunity to present their report.

Report:

Deputies maintain contact with four main church federations as follows:

- The Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA), which will be discussed during the scheduled session Tuesday afternoon.
- The NG Kerk in Afrika (NGKA) – attempts for contact were made, but to no avail.
- The Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA) – Rev PG Boon was present at their General Assembly in King Williamstown, and the feedback is contained in the deputies’ report. The ICRC’s concern of no contact was addressed, and they admitted that this is a problem merely because of financial constraints and outstanding debt on ICRC membership fees. It is a privilege to have these brothers and sisters in SA, but their resources (manpower and financial) are limited. They were invited to address our Synod but had not responded by the time Synod had started.
- Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of SA (REACH) – contact was made with them which was positive and encouraging. Therefore, deputies recommend continuing discussions with them. They deal with similar issues as we do such as

hermeneutics, women in office, racism and gender issues – issues where we can learn from their experiences and get input from them. Our contact with them also stems from the fact that we have sent theological students to their George Whitefield College.

Deliberations:

An important aspect in dealing with these contacts is what the available resources are allowing us to do (specifically: manpower and time). It is advisable to pursue contacts with these churches within our limited resources. Deputies explained that only about 10% of their time is spent on the contacts with these 3 federations and 90% with the RCSA.

Synod decides:

1. To appoint new deputies with the following mandates:
 - 1.1 To continue to maintain contacts with the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH) in order to stimulate joint cooperation between local churches and with regard to theological training.
 - 1.2 To continue maintaining contacts with the FCSA, amongst others by attending their General Assemblies and sharing information.
 - 1.3 To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
 - 1.4 To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2021.
2. To approve a budget of R8 400 for activities by DCCSA.

Grounds:

1. Past contacts have proven that we share much in our commitment to adhere to the Word of God in doctrine and life.
2. We share the South African context with all its challenges and can be of help to one another.
3. The FRCSA have made use of the REACH theological seminary, George Whitefield College in Muizenberg.

4. Both the FRCSA and the FCSA belong to the ICRC. The ICRC has reiterated the importance of cooperation between churches in the same region.
5. Contacts with churches indicated above require a fair amount of travelling.

ADJOURNMENT FOR THE DAY

Rev Brintjes leads our closing devotion by reading from 2 Thess 1, after which we sing Hymn 53: 1 & 4. He then leads in prayer, closing the meeting for the day.

DAY 2 – 13 APRIL 2021

ARTICLE 15 – OPENING

We start with singing Ps 87: 2-5, after which Rev PG Boon leads us in opening devotion by reading from Col 4:7-18 and also Rom 15:25-28. Both passages focus on the different churches working together and looking after each other, after which he leads in prayer.

ARTICLE 16 – DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

16.1 Free Reformed Churches of Australia - FRCA attendance via zoom

The chair welcomed the delegate from the FRCA, Br B Veenendaal. Br Veenendaal has the opportunity to address Synod with the FRCA's greetings and address to Synod, to which Br G Hagg responds on behalf of Synod.

The Chair also welcomes the Chair of the Deputyship, Br H Moes.

Report:

Br H Moes now addresses Synod, presenting the report of the deputies specifically focused on the contact with Australia. One of the main issues is the FRCA not being a member of the ICRC whilst we are sister churches. Participation in the ICRC activities in and around Australia has been an issue and deputies have requested that

this be discussed at the next FRCA Synod in Albany scheduled to meet in June 2021. Br Veenendaal responds by saying that the matter was not discussed at their previous Synod, but that it will now be discussed at their Synod in Albany in June 2021.

Deliberations:

The main reason for Australia not being part of the ICRC was driven by a perception by their congregations that members of the ICRC, by virtue of their membership, ought to be in a sister church relation, and they have learnt that the one does not imply the other.

The other aspect that was discussed is their support of our churches by way of contributing to various causes over the years, such as Needy Churches, Mission and Theological Training – contributions for which we are thankful. They are also co-operating in the area of Theological Training and are also part of the discussions with the CRTS. Although SA is part of the ‘region’ which includes Australia, practically it is probably best that they attend to their own regional needs while we focus on the Africa regional needs.

The last significant issue that was discussed was the relationship with the RCNL, which they discontinued at their previous Synod whilst we will be deliberating the matter at this Synod. The main reason for the FRCA’s decision was that the RCNL were set in their decisions and the new way of dealing with matters, with no opportunity to further discuss concerns and clearly ignoring any advice and appeals presented on various occasions.

After these deliberations the recommendations presented by the deputies were considered, and Synod agreed on the following mandates regarding the FRCA.

Synod decides:

To continue the sister church relation with the FRCA and to issue the following mandates to deputies

1. To maintain the sister church relation with the FRCA according to the adopted rules.

2. To authorise deputies to send a recorded address (also submitted in writing) containing our greetings and encouragement to Synod Albany convening in June 2021, and to participate by way of electronic means.
3. To provide regular feedback to the churches on developments within the FRCA.

Grounds

1. The FRCA give evidence of continued faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed Confessions and the Church Order.
2. Personal contacts are an effective means of developing, maintaining, and building good sister church relations.
3. Both the FRCA and the FRCSA are small church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By praying for each other, maintaining good contacts and learning from each other both federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.

After concluding the discussion with Australia, the meeting is led in prayer to ask a blessing on the work and decisions regarding the FRCA.

16.2 Contact with ICRC (Section 4 of the deputies' report)

Deputies see the ICRC as an opportunity to establish contact with churches with the same confessional foundation and recommends maintaining contact with churches in our region and participating in their regional meetings. The focus is therefore not primarily on multiple sister-church relationships with churches far away, but on churches in our own region.

Deliberations:

There is support for this approach in the contact with the ICRC and the churches in Africa, and we can possibly make a contribution, for instance through the work of the RSC which creates an opportunity in this regard.

Membership of the ICRC does not imply a sister-church relationship, as there are matters of principle that play a role.

We have not explored most of the opportunities the ICRC can offer us. We have participated in a rather limited way. The ICRC offers services such as the publication of documents addressing diaconal support, mission work etc. ICRC membership does create a trust relationship among ICRC members within a specific region and worldwide.

It is important that deputies create awareness among the general church members. Attendance of ICRC conferences establishes and strengthens contact, regarding which feedback is to be provided to the church members.

Regional participation (in Africa) should be our primary focus and international our secondary focus.

The RCSA are active in Africa, and we should work closely together as they have various initiatives and projects running in Africa.

Regarding the ICRC Conference in October 2022 in Namibia, Synod decides:

To expand the DRCA by one more deputy, specifically designated for the ICRC (preferably one of our missionaries) to stimulate our involvement in ICRC activities, and to issue the following mandates to deputies:

1. To put in more effort to promote the ICRC profile in the FRCSA by providing feedback to the churches.
2. To send a delegation, in consultation with other deputyships, to the next ICRC conference to be held in Windhoek, Namibia, along with an open invitation to church members.

Grounds:

1. The ICRC is an organization which adheres to Reformed principles.
2. The ICRC provides a platform to maintain contacts with Reformed churches all over the world and to stimulate Reformed theological thinking and practice.

3. The FRCSA and its members have a responsibility to promote the proclamation of the Gospel wherever reasonably possible. The ICRC provides us with opportunities to advance our mission activities by participating in working groups and conferences.
4. Attending ICRC conferences is usually a rather costly exercise and can only be justified if the FRCSA utilise the opportunities provided by the ICRC contacts. The upcoming conference in nearby Windhoek offers an opportunity for a stronger FRCSA delegation.

16.3 Regional ICRC conferences in Africa

Synod decides regarding Regional ICRC Conferences in Africa:

To authorise DRCA:

1. To maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to find ways to support the proclamation of the Word of God and leadership training by those churches in their home countries, in co-operation with other ICRC member churches.
2. To support efforts to organise a Regional Africa Conference of ICRC member churches, if requested by the organizing committee.
3. To co-ordinate the efforts of the FRCSA and RCSA concerning regional ICRC activities.
4. To send one delegate to the next regional ICRC conference in Nairobi, Kenya, and to solicit further delegation from FRCSA missionaries.

Grounds:

1. Contacts with churches in Africa should mainly be made through the ICRC or sister churches. Especially the RCNL has several sister churches in Africa.
2. The ICRC offers opportunities to promote the proclamation of the Gospel on our African continent.
3. The African member churches expressed their need for help to remain Reformed and to proclaim the Gospel in their home

- countries, as well as a need for leadership training in newly formed congregations.
4. The FRCSA should support regional ICRC conferences as a means of mutual encouragement and towards the strengthening of ICRC member churches.
 5. The FRCSA and the RCSA, as African church federations, are in a better position to provide certain forms of support to those churches than churches from other continents.
 6. Missionaries can benefit significantly from attending the ICRC regional conferences.

ARTICLE 17 – MISSION DEPUTIES

The chair welcomes the deputies as represented by Brs Harry Pouwels, Albert Bijker and Harm Snijder.

Deliberations:

There are 4 projects in Tshwane with churches to be instituted in the near future. Although we are bound in Jesus Christ, we also have a financial responsibility towards each other. The matter of how to achieve financial independence has been raised previously and is again noted.

DVN is largely responsible for the support from the Netherlands, and their mission and vision reflect a certain principle which we do not necessarily agree with. This may also influence their outlook on the funding of certain projects with a stronger focus on diaconal projects as opposed to church planting work.

The deputies request that the contributions by the churches be increased. Previous Synod has set a cap on the churches' financial contributions. MDSA must move towards the 50/50 funding model introduced by DVN, and for this reason there is a call on local churches to contribute more before calling on other international sources to contribute. There has already been an increase of contributions from the local churches for mission work. The financial obligations will be discussed with the Synod Treasurer and the contributions will then be agreed upon.

Although our decision regarding our relations with the RCNL may have an effect on the financial contributions from NL, this should in no way stop us from doing mission work. It may also have an effect on the visits from the Dutch representatives, for instance when they want to lead a church service.

Synod now proceeded to consider the mandates as proposed by deputies which lead to the following decisions.

Synod decides to mandate deputies:

1. To act in accordance with the Agreement of Cooperation between MDSA and any sponsor.
2. To act in accordance with the Agreement of Cooperation regarding mission work between the FRCSA churches.
3. To request FRC Wesbank to sign the Agreement of Cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches.
4. To act in accordance with the FRCSA Policy for Supported Mission Projects, approved at Synod 2017.
5. To assess the different congregations via the questor according to the adopted differentiated contribution model and the increased quota as per their budget:

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
R400,000	R424,000	R449,440	R476,400	R504,990

6. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
7. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.
8. To discharge current deputies and appoint new deputies as indicated in their report.

Deputies are thanked for their service, especially those who have served for many years, and Synod expresses its deep gratitude. It is suggested that a personal letter be sent to each deputy thanking them for their commitment.

Br R Snijder leads in prayer and Synod adjourns for lunch.

ARTICLE 18 – DEPUTIES FOR CONTACT WITH CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (CONTINUED)

The Chair welcomes Rev C Vrey from the Reformed Churches in SA (RCSA or GKSA).

Rev Vrey conveys his greetings and presents the RCSA address to Synod (Addendum 7). Br De Wit is given the opportunity to respond to the address on behalf of Synod.

The chair accepts Rev J van der Linden as advisor to Synod.

Deputies are given an opportunity to present their report to Synod.

Deliberations:

An important aspect that was highlighted during the deliberations is that some congregations within the RCSA do not abide by decisions made by their Synod, which creates tension within the federation. This is evident in that some of our congregations are in discussion with local RCSA congregations, while we do not share the same sentiment at the federational level.

Another aspect that has been a stumbling block is the office of deacons that has been opened to women, but the RCSA Synod has consistently rejected the call to open all offices for women.

The main stumbling blocks in achieving unity have been formulated and included in Synod's decision.

Synod now proceeded to consider the mandates as proposed by deputies which lead to the following decisions.

Synod decides to instruct new deputies:

1. To encourage and assist all local churches to initiate deliberations with local congregations of the RCSA, and call on local churches to contact deputies for advice and assistance when they plan to start preliminary discussions and whenever they need help in their discussions with RCSA churches.
2. To encourage local churches to work within the guidelines presented by Synod along which they can pursue deliberations with local congregations of the RCSA.

3. To compile a draft agreement as guideline which local churches can use to sign with another local congregation, in case the deliberations are successful and there is a mutual desire to work together.
4. To study and report the consequences of the growing co-operation between local churches and the effect of belonging to different church federations.

Grounds:

1. Each situation has unique challenges, and deputies can inform and make suggestions regarding applying guidelines and making agreements with local RCSA churches.
2. It is important:
 - a. That local churches, when entering into deliberations, make sure that they deal with all necessary matters.
 - b. To have some uniformity between local churches in our federation, preventing that each local church pursues deliberations in their own way.
3. Future co-operation between local congregations:
 - a. Should have an official status.
 - b. The agreement can specify the terms of co-operation for the foreseeable future, after which proper evaluation has to take place again.
 - c. The agreement can help to keep the end goal alive, namely, to come to federational unity.
4. The goal is:
 - a. To come to unity in one federation, with the realization that the road towards this does entail a period of growing towards a new situation.
 - b. To avoid the risk of becoming indifferent as to the value and necessity of a joint church federation.

Following deliberation, Synod decided to refer the next Mandate 5 to a committee for consideration and recommendation, and the following was presented for Synod to consider and agree on. This led to the following decision:

Synod decides to issue the following additional mandate to deputies:

5. To continue deliberations between deputies at a national level, but to inform RCSA deputies that the following three issues form stumbling blocks in achieving unity:
 - a. The Memorandum of Ecumenical Relationship with the DRCSA;
 - b. Allowing women to the office of deacon, without distinguishing their position from how the diaconal office is defined in the Belgic Confession (Art 30) as set forth in the CO;
 - c. The acceptance of the Cloete versifications of the Psalms.

Grounds:

5. National deliberations are:
 - a. To stay informed about developments in each other's federations and matters of mutual interest.
 - b. After appeals have been turned down by consecutive Synods, it appears that the decisions on the three matters are here to stay.

This concludes the report on the contact with churches in SA.

ARTICLE 19 – DEPUTIES INTERNET COMMUNICATION

There is no delegate present at Synod. The chair invites Synod delegates to a discussion of the report. The recommendations are considered, and there are no comments.

Synod decides:

To discharge the current deputies and appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To redesign the website and make it more attractive and modern.
2. To keep the website updated and current with all publications and encourage churches, deputies and editors of publications to upload all their latest information on the website and keep it up to date.

3. To ensure that all pages are in both Afrikaans and English.
4. To approve the budget of R5 000 per year.
5. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
6. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. The website is the window to our churches and needs to stay up to date and relevant.

Rev Mnisi closes this session with prayer and asks a blessing for the food. The meeting adjourns for dinner.

ARTICLE 20 – DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)

Relations with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

The chair welcomes Brs Henry Schouten and Otto Bouwman from the CanRC who are present via Zoom.

Br Bouwman now extends the greetings from the churches in Canada and presents their address to Synod. Rev Boon responds to the address by the CanRC deputies.

Deputies are now given the opportunity to present their report specifically relating to the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. The deputies comment on the value of the contact and the support for the Mission Deputies and Deputies Theological Training. With regard to possible financial support of the FRCSA mission work by the CanRC, delegates indicated that there are government limitations in the transfer of funds from Canadian churches for activities outside of Canada.

Deliberations:

The main aspect that was highlighted is the difficulty of transferring funds out of Canada after the 9/11 attacks, with the scrutiny increasing, and therefore deputies recommend to rather fund Theological Training as this is done in Canada itself.

Synod also asked the deputies for advice regarding the deliberations on our relationship with the RCNL, as well as background on the use of the ESV as translation, but the latter subject they could not comment on.

The recommendations and mandates are now being considered regarding the CanRC and the URCNA.

Synod decides:

To continue the sister church relation with the CanRC and to issue the following mandates to deputies:

1. To maintain sister-church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules.
2. To authorise deputies to send a delegate to Synod Guelph-Emmanuel 2022 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.
3. To provide regular feedback to the churches on developments in the CanRC.

Grounds:

1. The CanRC give evidence of continuing faithfulness to the Word of God, the Reformed confessions, and the Church Order.
2. Personal visits are an effective means of developing, building and maintaining good relations.
3. Both the CanRC and the FRCSA are church federations with a similar background and some similar challenges. By maintaining good contacts and learning from each other, both church federations will be better equipped to fulfil their God-given task to remain faithful churches of Christ in a secular world.
4. We have benefited greatly from CRTS as a centre for theological training.

Rev Boon closes this session with prayer and the chair thanks the participation of the Canadian delegates via Zoom.

ARTICLE 21 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)

21.1 General recommendations

Synod decides:

1. To appoint new deputies for the 2021 – 2024 period, until the next Synod.
2. To appoint the following brothers and sister as deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad for the 2021 – 2024 period: Rev J Bruintjes, Sr G van den Berg, Br JF Raimond, Br J Moes, as well as Rev P Kgatle and Rev PG Boon (both for the ICRC), all as continuing members of the previous deputies, except for Rev PG Boon.
3. To issue the following mandates to deputies:
 - 3.1. To provide regular feed-back to the churches on developments in our sister-churches and the ICRC.
 - 3.2. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
 - 3.3. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. Continuity within the DRCA is important to maintain active sister church relationships and stay aware of each other's ecclesiastical developments.
2. The deputies should preferably be located in the same area so that meetings can be held during which the majority of the members can be physically present.
3. The work of the DRCA is only useful for the churches (who carry the costs) if regular information/feedback is given to the

churches. This requires a profound interest in church matters and good reporting skills.

4. The activities of the ICRC become increasingly prominent in our international ecclesiastical relationships. Many of its activities are related to mission work. Therefore, the task to stay actively involved in the ICRC requires a stronger missionary representation in the DRCA.

21.2 RCNZ – Asia Pacific Region

Synod decides to instruct deputies:

1. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in Asia Pacific, mainly via the FRCA and the ICRC.

Ground:

1. According to the policy adopted by Synod Bethal 2000, the FRCSA should focus on our own region. It is better to leave more intensive contacts related to the Reformed churches in Asia Pacific Region to the FRCA.

21.3 North American Region

Synod decides to instruct deputies:

1. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in North America, mainly via the CanRC and the ICRC.

Ground:

1. According to the policy adopted by Synod Bethal 2000, the FRCSA should focus on our own region. It is better to leave more intensive contacts related to Reformed churches in North America to the CanRC.

21.4 FRCSA Information Booklet/Website

Synod decides:

1. To absolve the DRCA from further responsibilities concerning the FRCSA website.

Grounds:

1. Since the booklet contains details on local churches as well as on the FRCSA as a federation, it should be kept up to date by members of the local congregations and the Webmaster, in order to provide easy and reliable information to interested parties.
2. Ministers are responsible for uploading their own sermons on the website.

21.5 Liaison for Churches**Synod decides:**

To instruct the DRCA:

1. To provide the church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad.
2. To coordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad.

Grounds:

1. There is an ongoing need for liaising and the sharing of information, and this is a function of the DRCA since they continuously gather information regarding churches abroad.
2. Other deputies should keep the deputies informed where different churches and deputies receive support from and have formal agreements with foreign churches. Information in regards hereto is to be shared at the next Indaba.

ADJOURNMENT FOR THE DAY

We sing Psalm 100 together, after which Br GR Bouwmeester leads the Synod in a closing devotion from 2 Timothy 3:10-17 and Titus 2:11-15. Br Bouwmeester then leads in prayer.

DAY 3 - 14 APRIL 2021**ARTICLE 22 - OPENING**

We start with singing Ps 33: 1-6, after which Br W Bijker leads the opening devotion by reading from Psalm 33 and also James 1:2-6. Both passages focus on wisdom, which is required in our

consideration of the developments in the churches in NL specifically, after which he leads in prayer.

ARTICLE 23 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)

Relations with Reformed Churches Netherlands (Liberated) (RCNL)

The chair welcomed the delegates from the RCNL, Rev H Venema and Br A Pedro.

The chair asks the meeting that Rev F Bijzet (emeritus FRC Bellville) and Brs Bouwman and Schouten from the CanRC are allowed as advisors for this session.

Br H Venema has the opportunity to address Synod with their greetings and their message to Synod, to which Rev v Alten responds on behalf of Synod.

After the address and response Rev v Alten and Br Pedro lead the meeting in prayer, asking for the Lord's wisdom and guidance on our deliberations as Synod regarding our relations with RCNL.

The chair also welcomes the deputies, and they are given the opportunity to present their report. Deputies specifically highlight the fact of the seemingly set views of the RCNL in not wanting to reverse previous decisions on matters.

Deliberations:

A Main Report and an Addendum were submitted, both of which need to be considered as the Addendum compliments the Main Report. The situation is very close to our hearts as many members have their roots in the Netherlands and have family there. The most important aspect that is being considered by Synod is how to assist those members who want to stay true to God's Word and are still members of the RCNL.

Sadness is expressed about the objections that are not being addressed and that at face value seem to be ignored during Synod

Goes' deliberations or the committee's response in their report 'Elkaar van harte dienen.' This is our concern, and this concern has also been raised by our Canadian and Australian sister churches, as well as others who have submitted objections.

The other major issue is the total change in hermeneutics, which the Dutch delegates dispute, maintaining that it remains the same, but that we live in a different context and therefore we need to adapt.

Deputies have tabled 2 alternative proposals regarding our relations with the RCNL, and the chair has put the 2 alternative proposals to a vote. The meeting elected to follow Alternative Recommendation 2 as proposed by the deputies in their main report.

Before the decisions are formalised and the mandates considered, a recommendation is made that – based on the fact that this is such an important matter and that there is no unanimous decision in terms of the outcome of the vote – the matter be given more time for all to carefully consider the consequences and to reach a unanimous decision. Moderamen will consider the best way on how to deal with the matter, in order for Synod to reach agreement about the decision.

ARTICLE 24 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL FORMS AND PRAYERS

The chair welcomes the deputy Br D Drijfhout and gives him the opportunity to present the report.

Deliberation:

Deputies present their report and raise an important question: How do deputies have to deal with objections from church councils, as this matter is unclear to them? It also became apparent that mandates given by Synod need to provide clear instructions to avoid confusion and the impression that mandates are not followed or completed.

One form that was overlooked which needs more consideration and input from the churches is 'Viering van die Heilige Nagmaal 2' ('Celebration of the Lord's Supper 2').

Synod now proceed to consider the recommendations as proposed by deputies.

Synod decides:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To consider the recommendations and comments received, and also to call on the churches to provide feedback for the deputies to consider and incorporate in the 'Viering van die Heilige Nagmaal 2' form for the next Synod to consider.
2. To consider the recommendations and comments received and also call on the churches to provide feedback for the deputies to consider and incorporate in the Liturgical Prayers report for the next Synod to consider.
3. To identify the missing liturgical forms approved by our federation for use in the churches and to have them translated and included in the Sotho version of the liturgical forms.
4. To consider reprinting the Sotho version of the liturgical forms (published by NG Sendinguitgewers, Bloemfontein, 1983), incorporating the forms under Mandate 3, in a suitable format for use by the churches and church members.
5. To add the recommendations and comments received into the report as addendum to their next report to Synod.
6. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
7. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Rev P Abrahams leads the meeting in prayer and the meeting adjourns for lunch.

ARTICLE 25 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

The chair welcomes the deputies present and welcomes specifically all the visitors attending via Zoom.

The chair requests that Prof J v Vliet acts as advisor on this matter and there is no objection from the meeting.

The deputies are given the opportunity to present their report, which they do by way of a presentation. Prof J v Vliet is then given the opportunity to comment. The feedback is very positive and despite the need for a hybrid format of online classes, the students are very much part of the classes.

Deliberations:

The report provides for a healthy discussion, and a significant aspect is the deputies' proposal that there be no longer two, but one option, meaning students must go to Hamilton, Canada for theological training. Delegates however also believe local options need to be actively investigated, as there is a concern about the context wherein students study and that not all students have the same academic abilities. There is a need for different levels of study in line with student abilities and needs, and not to have a Master's degree as the only option.

Another aspect that needs attention is the financial matters as raised in the report. This pertains to funding shortfalls and how needy students are funded by deputies.

The deliberations regarding theological training will be continued at a later stage, as Synod needs to consider the next report for which deputies are waiting to address synod.

ARTICLE 26 – DEPUTIES ART 11 NEEDY CHURCHES

The chair welcomes the deputies attending via Zoom, who are now given the opportunity to present their report.

Deliberations:

An important aspect was raised regarding the awareness among the churches that the Deputies Art 11 are there to assist them financially within a specific framework. The deputies are confident that this is the case, as matters are often tabled at the Classis level where all the churches are represented.

There is a need for the mission churches that are working towards independence to be educated regarding what support Deputies Art

11 are able to provide and what is their own responsibility in terms of achieving self-sustainability.

Synod now proceed to consider the recommendations as proposed by deputies.

Synod decides:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To increase the collections from the local FRCSA churches to Art 11 from the current ± R100 000 to at least R250 000 per year, so that we can decrease the loss that is incurred every year.
2. To resolve the issue of the funds that were borrowed by Deputies Theological Training – see paragraph 4C of the deputies’ report – and therefore to increase the collection with an additional R200 000 per year over the next 3 years.
3. To levy the churches as follows:
 - For 2021: R100 000
 - For 2022: R277 200
 - For 2023: R334 832
 - For 2024: R392 922
4. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
5. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. As per the budget, from 2021 onwards Art 11 funds will decrease with R450 000 – R550 000 per annum, so in 2023/24 there will be less than half the funds left if we work on the basis of the scenario that in 2021 there will be 2 x needy churches.
2. Consideration also needs to be given to shortfalls in regards to ministers’ retirement provisions, which may place an unnecessary burden on congregations.

ARTICLE 27 – SYNOD TREASURER

The chair welcomes the treasurer who is connected via Zoom.

The treasurer presents his report and has the following 2 questions:

- He sends a report to the churches on a quarterly basis – is there anyone else to whom he needs to present the quarterly reports?
- He requests advice on how to deal with those churches that do not contribute on a regular basis.

Deliberations:

In response to his questions, Synod states that the treasurer has his own role and responsibilities and the fact that churches do not pay is the responsibility of the consistories. Furthermore, the churches need to pay their contributions on time to avoid cash flow problems. A letter should be sent to all consistories to keep their Synodical finances up to date, and consistories should keep each other accountable at Classis level.

Deliberations will continue. Rev P Abrahams closes this session with prayer and asks a blessing for the food and the meeting adjourns for dinner.

ARTICLE 28 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MUSIC

Rev Mnisi comments on some aspects of the report as there is no other representative present.

Deliberations:

The expansion of themes for new hymns enriches the liturgy used in the churches. Although there are objections by some members, this should not overrule the importance of the deputies' work. The theological nature of their work requires guidance by theologians, and it is recommended that Synod considers this important aspect. Synod now considers the recommendations made by the deputies.

Synod decides:

To appoint deputies with the following mandates:

1. To add the following themes to the 2011 criteria for selecting hymns and 'Skrifberymings': the Christian life and the Fruit of

- the Spirit; Perseverance of the saints and the Armour of God; Jesus' return; Prayer; Comfort when believers pass away; Creation and recreation; the Last Judgement; and Eschatology.
2. To compose a document, made up of previous Synod decisions, that clearly shows the Biblical reasons for singing hymns. This document should also address the objections that have been raised over the years, plus the reasons why these objections were rejected by Synod.
 3. To include in the above document a summary of the Synod 2011 model and criteria, to be compiled and distributed to each consistory.
 4. To form a sub-committee with members of the Sotho-speaking churches, which will work on evaluating the 'Difela tsa Sione' hymns and psalms according to the Synod 2011 criteria with a view to standardising the songs. The missionaries should be involved in the selection process by the sub-committee.
 5. To stay updated on developments regarding the 1936 Totius versification – hard copy and the mobile application – and ensure that, even if it requires a financial contribution from our federation, the 1936 versification remains widely available to all going forward.
 6. To offer our assistance to the RCSA/CJF in the form of IT expertise to further develop and improve the RCSA application, as it is being increasingly used in our federation.
 7. To ask the churches to provide feedback on the 14 'Skrifberymings' (Hymns) that were approved on a trial basis, in order to be able to report hereupon at the next Synod.
 8. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
 9. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. These themes are not explicitly dealt with in our current selection of songs as dealt with by our Synods.

2. Previous Synods, including Synod 2011, approved the singing of hymns and dealt with the objections after many years of discussion. These decisions still stand. We do have congregations where hymns are already part of the liturgy. It serves the unity of the churches when they share the same practice of singing psalms and hymns. The grounds for the decision to add hymns to the songbook is not clear to all members. This leads to misperceptions about the motivation behind singing hymns which causes division.
3. Several consistories have indicated that, in one way or another, the model was not fully understood. This document will enable consistories to deal with this matter in the correct manner.
4. 'Difela tsa Sione' is already in use in our Sotho-speaking churches.
5. As the members of the Afrikaans-speaking churches in our federation grow/grew up with the Genevan melodies of the psalms, so the Sotho-speaking members grow/grew up with the 'Difela tsa Sione.' What we sing in church plays a very important role in our emotional experience of worshipping God, and we should deal with this matter very carefully.
6. The 'Difela tsa Sione' has proven to contain hymns and psalms in line with the Word of God and how we as Reformed churches interpret this Word. It does, however, also contain hymns that are not in line with Scripture and should not be used in our worship services, and therefore it is critical that a selection be made.
7. The hard copies of the 1936 Totius versification remain the preferred form for many church members, even though the application is available.
8. The application is sufficient and of a good standard, but there is also room for improvement, not only regarding the user interface, but also from a programming point of view. There are numerous IT/software experts in our federation, and in this way the FRCSA can make an important contribution to the future of the application.

9. The decision of Synod 2017 was corrected, which led to the 14 'Skrifberymings' being approved for further testing in the churches.

ADJOURNMENT FOR THE DAY

Br M de Wit leads the Synod in a closing devotion from Matt 14:22-30, with the key aspect being to keep our focus on Jesus Christ, after which he leads in prayer. We close by singing Ps 19: 6 and 7.

DAY 4 – 15 APRIL 2021

ARTICLE 29 – OPENING

Br G Hagg leads in opening devotion by reading from Gal. 6: 1 – 10, which focusses on the love for each other and the obedience to Christ, and that what we sow we will reap. Paul calls us to be faithful to the Word of God and those who change this Word are cursed. We sing Ps. 119: 10 & 24, after which he leads the meeting in prayer.

ARTICLE 30 – DEPUTIES FOR AFRIKAANS BIBLE TRANSLATION

The chair welcomes Rev J vd Linden as the deputy who is now given the opportunity to present the report.

There are 2 reports on the BDV 2020 because of opposing views. Bible translation is a very important part of church life. At the moment we have a translation dating back to 1933 and the BDV 2020 now offers an opportunity to consider a translation that can guide the church into the future. In terms of doing an assessment of the translation, we first have to agree on the Greek source text used for the translation of the New Testament, which in the BDV case is the Critical Text. The UBS4 (1994) was used as point of departure, while the 26th and 27th editions of the Nestle Aland were also used. If we reject the source text used, there is no reason for continuing the assessment of the translation.

Deliberation:

Synod accepts Rev J vd Linden's report as the main report as it is in line with Synod rules, and has agreed that the second report contains valuable input for use in understanding the subject and for assessing the translation.

Another aspect is also making a decision in regard to a recommended English translation to be used by the churches, as there is a similar argument to be made between the ESV and NIV, with the latter also having an earlier more reliable translation and there being concerns about the former (2011 translation).

Synod now considers the recommendations in the report.

Synod decides:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To not express preference for a specific edition of the underlying text.
2. To thank the Bible Society for this wonderful contribution to Afrikaans Bible translation.
3. To propose the ESV for official use in our churches and the NIV (1984-edition) as allowable particularly for our Mission churches as acceptable English Bible translations.
4. To evaluate the BDV 2020 for official use in our churches.
5. To evaluate other aspects of the BDV 2020 such as footnotes, glossaries and introductions.
6. To also involve the Afrikaans-speaking ministers in our church federation, especially in their sermon preparation, as well as church members.
7. To educate the churches on the BDV 2020, with a focus on the underlying Text Editions and all versions of the BDV 2020 in congruence with our confessions.
8. To correspond with the deputies of the RCSA (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) and the APK (Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerke) and possibly other likeminded churches to work together on a BDV edition without the introductory material that was added to each Bible book.

9. To work with missionaries and/or pastors to discover the use of non-Afrikaans or English translations to see if deputies may be of further help.
10. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
11. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Articles 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. There is overwhelming agreement between different manuscripts and the different original text editions used.
2. The CanRC have done a tremendous amount of work on English Bible translations and we are guided by their decisions in this regard.
3. The NIV uses less difficult English words and would therefore be more suitable in a mission context.
4. With regard to investigating other language translations we need, at the very least, to be informed about the Bible translations and preferences being used in our mission context.

ARTICLE 31 – DEPUTIES REVISION OF SYNOD RULES

The chair welcomes the deputy and thanks him for his diligent work over an extended period of time.

The deputy is given the opportunity to present the report.

Deliberations:

The amendments to Synod Rules need to be tabled via the accepted channels (i.e. church council to Classis to Synod). Under normal circumstances the Stated Clerk is present at Synod to attend to the administrative matters and assist the Scribe. The following amendments are proposed to the changed Synod Rules presented:

1. Proposal to amend Art 10.8 as follows: “...Such reports are to be written in English, ~~except in cases where deputies deal with mainly non-English language issues. Those deputies, who report in other languages, are requested to submit with their report an English summary.~~ Where there are addendums in another

language an English summary is to be included with the main report.”

2. Add the following before 11.3.1: “The Synod treasurer shall not be part of any other deputyship in any capacity.”
3. Art 14.1 is changed to: The ~~chairman of Synod will have the final~~ decision in case of a dispute concerning the interpretation of these Rules will be made by way of a majority vote.

Synod decides:

1. To adopt the newly proposed Rules of Synod incorporating the changes proposed by Synod 2021 included in these Acts.
2. To uphold the decision of Synod 2017 to continue sending blessing addresses to the President of South Africa and also sending such addresses to the mayor of the town or city where the Synod is held.
3. To mandate the Stated Clerk to publish the newly adopted Rules of Synod, together with other church federational documents, as indicated by FRCSA Synods of 2008 up to 2021, in a suitable form.
4. To discharge the deputies for the Revision of Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. An up-to-date version of approved Synod Rules is necessary as a guide for the churches.
2. The newly proposed Synod Rules provide more detailed and clearer descriptions of certain matters.
3. This reflects our approach as Reformed churches towards the authorities installed by God over us.
4. This reflects acknowledgement of God-given authority also on a local governance level.
5. Many federational documents of the FRCSA were updated by various Synods, but are not readily available in their final form for most of the members of the FRCSA.
6. Deputies completed their tasks as described in the mandate given by Synod 2017.

ARTICLE 32 – DEPUTY STATED CLERK AND ARCHIVE

The deputy is given an opportunity to present the report.

Synod decides:

To appoint Br A Smit (FRC Pretoria-Maranata) and Br C Roose (FRC Pretoria) as Deputies Stated Clerk & Archive with the following mandates:

1. To arrange the printing and publishing of the Acts of Synod 2021.
2. To request appointed deputies to provide information regarding the progress on their mandate on a regular basis to the churches.
3. To conduct, upon instruction from the synod or the convening church, the administration of the synod.
4. To act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church and to implement an archiving system.
5. To mandate the Stated Clerk to publish the newly adopted Rules of Synod, together with other church federational documents, as indicated by FRCSA Synods of 2008 up to 2021, in a suitable form.
6. To coordinate with all other deputyships for the compilation and electronic publishing of a 'Church Book' in English and Afrikaans consisting of all church federational documents.
7. To investigate the need for the translation of the above 'Church Book' in any other official languages.
8. To handle administrative matters during the period between synod meetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.
9. To investigate and to start implementing an electronic archiving system for all electronically available documents to be used by the churches.
10. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
11. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. The above indicated mandate points 1-4 are considered standard functions of a Stated Clerk.
2. There seems to be a misunderstanding regarding the required content of the 'church book.'
3. Translations of the required documents in all three languages, as used in the FRCSA, are not yet available.
4. Printing of incomplete 'church books' means additional costs.
5. The Free Reformed Churches need published versions of the latest approved federational documents in order to avoid misunderstandings.
6. Handling of administrative matters during inter-synodical periods is sometimes required.
7. Handling of administrative matters on behalf of the FRCSA should be conducted by a person who is officially authorised by a synod of the FRCSA.
8. Synod 2014 expressed a need for regular Indaba's between Synods (Art 28, Synod decision 2, Acts of Synod 2014).
9. To submit reports is a standard rule in the present and in the newly proposed Synod Rules.

ARTICLE 33 – INSPECTION OF THE ARCHIVE

There is no comment on the report.

Synod decides:

To issue the following mandates to deputies:

1. To examine the synodical archive and archiving system in terms of the Rules of Synod.
2. To report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod.
3. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Articles 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. According to Synod Rule 11.5.3, the archive must be inspected prior to each Synod by the church responsible for the care and maintenance of the archive.
2. According to Synod Rule 11.5.2 the following documents shall be kept in the archives:
 - a. The Acts of Synod.
 - b. The Acts of Synods of those churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations.
 - c. Reports and letters of all deputyships.
 - d. All incoming documents that have reached Synod.
 - e. Copies of letters that Synod has sent.

**ARTICLE 34 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD
(CONTINUED)****Reformed Churches Netherlands (Liberated)**

The decision regarding relations with the RCNL was referred to a committee and they presented their proposal. There are further comments on this matter and therefore there is still no unanimity. For this reason, the chair asked delegates to vote on whether we can allow an extension of Synod or whether we need to conclude Synod now and come to a unanimous decision. The majority voted in favour of concluding Synod this week.

Based on the outcome of the vote the chair allows for further discussion in order to come to a uniform decision.

Further deliberations:

The major stumbling block is that in a sister church relation, we ought to work through the RCNL deputies in addressing and reaching out to concerned members. We should not be communicating directly with churches and/or members but through the deputies and the concern is that in this way the concerned members within the RCNL will not be reached.

A further matter that is being deliberated is how long are we to continue with a relationship which has been under strain for the past 10 or so years, due to the direction the RCNL has taken in deviating from God's Word. It is understood and agreed that this is the last attempt to reach out to concerned members and to encourage them to stay true to the Lord. At the same time we need to continue to admonish the churches that deviate from God's Word.

After careful consideration and before considering the recommendation, Rev Brintjes leads the meeting in prayer.

Recommendation

Over the past decade, the FRCSA has consistently admonished the RCNL to change the theological and ecclesiastical direction they are pursuing. This has not had any effect whatsoever. There are, however, a substantial number of concerned churches, ministers and members in the RCNL who are still deciding on their ecclesiastical future and we want to assist where we possibly can to help them come to a uniform decision.

Therefore, Synod decides:

1. That the RCNL, by the decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 regarding women in office as well as the trajectory of unification with the NGK, both of which were upheld by the Synod of Goes 2020, have deviated from the Word of God and undermined its authority.
2. These decisions by RCNL synods are sufficient to terminate sister-church relations (in line with Synod Soshanguve North 2017, Art 44).
3. Despite sufficient grounds as per points 1 and 2 above, for the sake of local churches and church members in the RCNL who have objections to the decisions of the Synods of Meppel and Goes, to continue the restricted sister-church relationship as decided at Soshanguve-North 2017, Art 44, 17.
4. FRCSA synod 2024 will make a final decision, unless in the meantime the RCNL unite with the NGK.

5. Although not included in the rules for sister-church relationships, the situation has forced Synod to mandate deputies:
 - 5.1. To engage directly with concerned churches and members within the RCNL who object to the decisions of RCNL Synods with the purpose of discussing the way forward.
 - 5.2. To write a letter to all church councils of the FRCSA, informing them of this decision and making it clear that this decision is in no way an approval of the decisions made by the Synods of Meppel and Goes.
 - 5.3. To educate the congregations of the FRCSA on the grounds for this decision, and to make it clear that this decision is in no way an approval of decisions made by the Synods of Meppel and Goes.
 - 5.4. To communicate with and explain to the Dutch deputies the FRCSA's intentions with the decisions made, and to mandate the FRCSA's DRCA to stay informed about developments in the RCNL, especially among those concerned.
 - 5.5. To communicate Synod's decisions to our Canadian and Australian sister churches as well as to the ICRC.

Grounds:

1. Refer to the letter sent by Synod Bethal 2014 to Synod Meppel 2017, which outlines the FRCSA's Scriptural objections to the direction taken by RCNL through which the authority of the Word of God is undermined.
2. Sister-church relations exist on the basis of mutual obedience to the Word of God and the Confessions.
3. a. The FRCSA are aware of a substantial number of churches and members within the RCNL who object to the decisions of Synod Meppel 2017 and Synod Goes 2020, and the FRCSA still feel a responsibility towards them, as they still adhere to the Word of God and the Confessions.

- b. The FRCSA urges these congregations and members to reject the decisions regarding women in office and unification with the NGK by Synod Meppel 2017 and Synod Goes 2020.
- 4. a. A final decision on our sister-church relationship cannot be postponed indefinitely.
b. By joining another federation and forming a new federation, the RCNL are by nature of that choice severing their relationship with the FRCSA.
- 5. a. Although this is not the usual way of communicating between sister-churches, the current situation necessitates this exceptional approach.
b. Scripture calls on us to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).
- 6. The decision to extend the restricted sister-church relationship may be misinterpreted by members of the FRCSA.
- 7. Members of the FRCSA may experience pressure from within the RCNL to condone the decisions made by the Synods of Meppel 2017 and Goes 2020.
- 8. a. In an official sister-church relationship it is good manners to inform each other of one's decisions and intentions.
b. In an official sister-church relationship it is standard procedure to stay informed on developments, and it will be important for the final decision to be made at Synod 2024.
- 9. It is important that the FRCSA’s other sister-churches, as well as the ICRC, understand the grounds for our decision.

This concludes the difficult discussion and decision regarding the RCNL.

ARTICLE 35 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING (CONTINUED)

Deputies are given the opportunity to continue the discussion of the report.

Deputies asked the CRTS for advice on the concerns raised by Synod and these are summarised as 3 main issues:

- a. To contextualise the training;
- b. The tension between the interests of students on the one hand and the interests of churches on the other;
- c. The role of mentors is crucial in addressing the context. Students need one-on-one spiritual guidance.

The CRTS has provided deputies with further input regarding these matters.

The DTT are not suggesting a 'one size fits all' approach and are taking into consideration that not all students have the same academic acumen.

Deliberations:

The 'hybrid model' is a combination of online lectures and being on campus. It does not necessarily address alternatives for students with different academic acumen, which was the purpose of having different trajectories. CRTS does offer both a MDiv and a BDiv qualification, which allows for different levels of academic achievement.

The language degree that is required by CRTS needs to be at a certain level and not all institutions meet the requirement. Looking for uniformity is desirable but may not be practical, and this needs to be considered further.

The need for one or more alternative trajectories is important and this matter needs to be included in the mandates of deputies.

A committee has been established to consider the revised recommendations for Deputies DTT.

ARTICLE 36 – DEPUTIES RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD (CONTINUED)

Relations with De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN)

Deputies are again welcomed and are given the opportunity to present their report.

The main aspect is the fact that these two federations are still separate whilst they are discussing uniting into a single church.

Deliberations:

DGK and the GKN both split from the RCNL at different times and there have been many discussions between them as a means of working toward unity. The decisions of this Synod prevent deputies from discussions regarding sister church relations with them at the same time. This will have to wait until the next Synod, depending on what they decide to do in the near future.

Synod decides to instruct the DRCA:

1. To maintain contact and to continue discussions with De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) as well as with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN), but not to progress towards ecclesiastical fellowship with these church federations.
2. In cases where members from these federations come to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or guests at the Lord's Supper – should they make such a request – only after an agreeable discussion with them.
3. To inform DGK and the GKN in writing regarding these decisions concerning them and our decision regarding the RCNL.
4. To monitor the developments in any regrouping of churches and advise the next Synod on relevant progress.
5. To coordinate with deputies abroad from the CanRC and the FRCA regarding developments within and between DGK and the GKN.

Grounds:

1. Currently the FRCSA have a responsibility towards the RCNL.
2. The FRCSA wish to observe the developments in the discussions between DGK and the GKN as Reformed churches.
3. Members of DGK and the GKN were in a sister-church relation with us before and did leave the RCNL because they wished to remain Reformed. This urges us to continue to strive for the restoration of unity.

4. The appeal for a 'Regrouping of church federations' is aimed at gathering together those who hold to the same confessional basis and may lead to a new bond of churches which could become the home of many in the RCNL who may leave them in the near future.
5. All 3 federations (CanRC, FRCA and FRCSA) are in similar positions with regard to developments in the Netherlands and therefore it makes sense to have joint discussions with these churches.

ARTICLE 37 – DEPUTIES BIBLE TRANSLATION (CONTINUED)

A committee was formed to consider whether the second report submitted by the deputy Br HH Schuring needs to be separately discussed and whether any of the recommendations need to be incorporated into the main recommendations already adopted by Synod. Synod acknowledges that the report by Br Schuring is valuable for use by future deputies as a reference document, and where the recommendations overlap with the report by Rev J van der Linden, we have taken the report into consideration.

ARTICLE 38 – DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MUSIC (CONTINUED)

Appeal by FRC Pretoria

Synod decides:

1. To retract Decision 3 of Art 26 of the Acts of Synod 2017.
2. To approve the following 14 Skrifberymings (Hymns) for use by the churches for testing: 51, 52, 53, 54, 59, 63, 64, 65, 68, 71, 73, 75, 77 & 78.
3. To ask churches to provide feedback to the deputies who will report at the next Synod.

Grounds:

1. Synod 2017 did injustice to the above mentioned deputies by saying they used different testing criteria for different kinds of Skrifberymings (Hymns) and in some cases acted contrary to the

accepted rules, while there is not a single indication in their report that might imply such behaviour.

ADJOURNMENT FOR THE DAY

We sing Ps 32: 4 & 5, after which Br F Hagg leads the Synod in a closing devotion from Acts 20:28-32, which focuses on 'leading the flock with care and love.' Thereafter he leads in prayer.

DAY 5 - 16 APRIL 2021

ARTICLE 39 - OPENING

Rev G Mnisi leads in opening devotion by reading from Rev 5:1-14. We started with focusing on prayer at the opening of Synod and the importance hereof has been very evident throughout the meeting and discussions. We may focus on Christ our Redeemer who has conquered all and our prayers are before him in heaven. Rev Mnisi then leads in prayer, following which we sing Hymn 5: 1-4.

The chair welcomes everyone back.

ARTICLE 40 - REPORT OF CLASSIS NORTH ON DAYS OF PRAYER

Synod decides:

To appoint Classis South as the Classis responsible for Days of Prayer.

There is an urgent need for a Day of Prayer to place the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the country and churches into perspective, in line with CO Art 69.

Due to Covid-19 another Day of Prayer may soon be necessary, and hopefully also in the near future a Day of Thanksgiving, when God willing the pandemic will decline.

ARTICLE 41 - DEPUTIES CO ART 49

This part of the meeting was held via camera and after short deliberations both reports were accepted as presented.

ARTICLE 42 – ADDRESS TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE LOCAL MAYOR

The chair reads the proposed letter to the President and points out that we need to refer to the difficulties around the Covid-19 pandemic specifically. The final version will be circulated amongst all delegates of Synod.

ARTICLE 43 – APPOINTMENT OF THE CONVENING CHURCH AND PLACE AND TIME OF THE NEXT SYNOD

Synod decides to appoint the FRC Mamelodi as the next Convening Church and the FRC Pretoria-Maranata as alternative, and proposes that the next Synod take place 23-27 September 2024 starting at 10:00 on Monday, with a possible extra day of Saturday 28 September. For planning purposes, the Convening Church and Stated Clerk must inform the churches timeously of the schedule.

ARTICLE 44 – DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING (CONTINUED)

The committee is presenting their feedback following their deliberations.

There is difference of opinion regarding the merger of Art 19 Needy Students with Deputies Theological Training, concerning the independence between the two and a possible conflict of interest. After much deliberation:

Regarding Art 19 Needy Students, Synod decides:

To separate the deputies on the basis that there should be an independent person attending to the needs of needy students, one who is not a curator, and with the following mandates:

- 1.1. To collaborate closely with Deputies Theological Training in order to determine the level of financial support for theological students.

- 1.2. To levy the churches as follows:
 - For 2021: R500 000
 - For 2022: R300 000
 - For 2023: R300 000
 - For 2024: R200 000
- 1.3. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
- 1.4. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. Deputies Art 19 will consist of an independent deputy or deputies and the treasurer of Deputies Theological Training.

Regarding Theological Training, Synod decides:

To appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To set an APS of 25 as the admission requirement for the FRCSA theological studies programme, and to test applicants' aptitude, competency and intellectual skills where applicable.
2. To inform prospective students for theological studies to apply before the end of April for access to the theological study programme of the FRCSA through admission procedures set by DTT.
3. In cases where DTT and mentor(s) conclude that the applicant for theological studies has the potential to successfully complete the programme but lacks basic competencies, to enable the student to follow a supportive programme that is determined by the DTT.
4. In special circumstances, to consider adaptations of this trajectory to fit the particular needs of a student.
5. In collaboration with CRTS:
 - 5.1 To investigate and implement models of on-line or distance education as offered by CRTS for students who are legitimately prevented from travelling to CRTS. DTT will support students who follow on-line or hybrid models of

- tuition through mentors to ensure that such students are not disadvantaged by the on-line or hybrid model.
- 5.2 To continue to strive towards establishing an educational hub in South Africa where students can receive adequate supervision in the local community, using a hybrid model.
 6. To investigate, within the parameters set by previous Synods, new developments in theological education in South Africa which may benefit the FRCSA in the medium to long-term, such as the 'Gereformeerde Teologiese Akademie' (Reformed Theological Academy).
 7. To re-investigate the appropriateness of BTh studies as a trajectory towards the ministry.
 8. To continue an appropriate mentorship program during the period 2021-2024.
 9. To initiate the organisation of annual pastors' conferences.
 10. To collaborate closely with Deputies Needy Students (CO Art 19) in order to determine the level of financial support for theological students. Deputies Art 19 will consist of an independent deputy/ies and the treasurer from Deputies Theological Training.
 11. To promote theological training among all FRCSA churches.
 12. To levy the churches as follows:
 - For 2021: R200 000
 - For 2022: R200 000
 - For 2023: R200 000
 - For 2024: R200 000
 13. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
 14. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Grounds:

1. To ensure that students have the academic competence to follow theological studies according to the requirements, outcomes and

- curriculum adopted at previous Synods. Prospective students must be assessed to ensure that persons with adequate aptitudes and competencies are admitted to the programme and to identify areas in personal development that need attention.
2. Most tertiary institutions limit applications for access to tertiary education to a period between March and September of the previous year. Even then the number of students in most degree programmes are limited, and spaces fill up early. As prospective students need to be approved by deputies, their applications to the FRCSA programme should be submitted before the opening of university application periods.
 3. Students from a disadvantaged background:
 - 3.1. May have the calling and intellectual capacity to complete the theological training programme successfully but may not be ready for university training.
 - 3.2. May require supportive training programmes which are available in South Africa, such as comprehensive reading competency and language competency programmes.
 4. We are thankful for the support by the CRTS over the past years and their continued commitment to future cooperation and support.
 - 4.1. The experience of the CRTS and other training institutions has shown that theological training must be grounded in solid academic training, which must then also be applied in specific contexts.
 - 4.2. BA (languages) degrees offered at selected South African tertiary education institutions provide adequate standards in the languages for access to MDiv programmes.
 - 4.3. Uniformity in the theological training programme and the selection of a single institution for MDiv will promote unity among the theological students, which impacts on unity in the federation and between the sister churches.
 - 4.4. Deputies have identified the CRTS as the preferred institution for the MDiv. Deputies have entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation with the CRTS, which makes provision for sharing the study costs of South African students.

5. The trajectory proposed in Decision 4:
 - 5.1. Should not be viewed as a 'one size fits all' solution to theological training that has to serve the FRCSA in its multi-cultural and complex socio-economic contexts.
 - 5.2. The context of the FRCSA churches requires a solution to the contextual challenges of both churches and students.
 - 5.3. However, DTT should make sure that the outcome standard of the different programmes should be as equal as possible. Adaptations should therefore aim at enabling students to attain the highest levels.
6. South African students:
 - 6.1. Need to apply for a study visa from the Canadian authorities for physical access to the CRTS. Canadian policies and practices may prohibit the allocation of a study visa. Students' personal circumstances may also prohibit travelling to Canada for an extended period of time.
 - 6.2. The CRTS has developed online and hybrid models of training that are based on the principles 'face-to-face/in-classroom training as much as possible' and 'online training as much as is necessary.'
7. New developments in Reformed theological training in South Africa may offer opportunities for a local implementation of the FRCSA theological training programme with Biblical and Confessional foundations as an alternative.
8. For the short to medium term the requirement of an MDiv may not be attainable for all students.
9. Mentors are needed to guide the students both in their spiritual formation and their academic growth.
10. Annual pastors' conferences aim to provide in-service training opportunities, strengthen pastors' competencies for their ministry, and build unity among pastors.
11. While Deputies Theological Training:
 - 11.1. Must provide oversight of the students' development and performance, decisions regarding the financing of students should be done independently.

- 11.2. Close cooperation between deputies is imperative in order to understand the needs of the students.
- 12. Prospective students:
 - 12.1. Should be recruited from all churches in the federation.
 - 12.2. Theological training is for and by the churches, which obliges deputies to keep all churches informed about the theological training programme.

We need to apply the terminology 'Deputies Theological Training' or DTT consistently.

ARTICLE 45 – DEPUTY SYNOD TREASURY (CONTINUED)

The committee presents their findings by way of a spreadsheet showing all the budgets.

Deliberations:

The treasurer needs to remain independent and should not also be involved with other deputies to avoid a conflict of interest (as happened with the amount that was allocated from Deputies Art 11 to DTT without proper process being followed). This should be avoided at all costs. Where there are shortfalls the different deputies need to be involved, and alternatively, churches need to be informed of shortfalls and requested for additional contributions where possible. Deputies are responsible for their own budgets and they need to manage them accordingly.

A further aspect that was discussed is that shortfalls on a minister's retirement funding is firstly the responsibility of the local church and then of the federation. Art 11 can therefore be tasked with assisting churches where these shortfalls occur, following the normal process of assessing such requests.

Synod now considers all the budgets and mandates.

Synod decides:

1. To approve the amended budgets (page 58).
2. To re-appoint deputies with the following mandates:

- 2.1. To assess the churches according to the approved budgets while staying within the agreed affordability of the churches in SA of R1 250 000 (Affordability Cap).
- 2.2. To calculate an average annual inflation of 4% and contributions, without exceeding the set cap.
- 2.3. To add the future shortfall on the retirement of Rev JA Breytenbach to the contributions of Art 11 in order for the churches to make a joint contribution to the amount.
- 2.4. To balance the historical retirement shortfall (R600 000) through surplus funds of the DTT, to be reimbursed through contributions towards DTT over the next 3 years.
- 2.5. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between Synod 2021 and the next Synod.
- 2.6. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

Ground:

1. Art 11 contributions will be escalated over the next 4 years in order to replenish their budget to at least a 1-year surplus by the next Synod to be held in 2024.

Synodal Contributions	2021	2022	2023	2024
Contact Local Churches	2 800	2 800	2 800	2 800
Contact Churches Abroad	20 700	20 700	20 700	20 700
Internet / Website	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000
Deputies Liturgical Forms	0	17 500	27 500	7 000
General Federation	11 500	11 500	11 500	11 500
Federalional Expense	40 000	57 500	92 500	47 000
Mission	400 000	424 000	449 400	476 406
Art 11 Needy Churches	100 000	277 200	334 832	392 922
Art 19 Needy Students	500 000	300 000	300 000	200 000
Deputies Theological Training	200 000	200 000	200 000	200 000
Total of all Deputies	1 240 000	1 258 700	1 376 732	1 316 328

ARTICLE 46 - DEPUTIES INSPECTION OF THE SYNOD TREASURER

Synod decides to appoint new deputies with the following mandates:

1. To audit the books of the Synod treasurer annually.
2. To submit a report to the next Synod and formulate recommendations according to Art 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

ARTICLE 47 - APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTIES, ARCHIVE CHURCH, CLASSIS FOR DAYS OF PRAYER ACCORDING TO CO ART 69, INDABA

Synod decided to appoint the following members as the respective deputies:

Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad

Br Hans Moes (Convener), Rev J Bruintjes, Sr G van den Berg, Br JF Raimond

Specifically for contact with the ICRC – Rev P Kgatle (ICRC), Rev PG Boon (ICRC)

Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa

Convener TBA (leave to deputies?), Rev GF Mnisi, Rev JA Breytenbach, Rev S Matlhokoane, Rev HH van Alten, Br P Bouwman

Deputies Theological Training

Br R Meeske (Convener), Rev PG Boon, Br MP de Wit, Rev C van Wyk, Br G Hagg, Sr C Hagg, Sr G van Dijk, Br TW Tamane, Br A (Albert) van der Linden (treasurer)

Deputies Art 19

Br E van Vondel (Convener), Br A (Albert) van der Linden (representative from DTT)

Deputies for Revision of Liturgical Forms and Prayers

Br D Drijfhout (Convener), Sr I Hagg, Br J Middeljans

Mission Deputies

Br L Ijlst (Convener), Sr T Bijker, Br A van den Bout, Br I Agema, Br S Snijder, Br M de Vries

Deputies Liturgical Music

Rev J van der Linden (Convener), Sr M Breytenbach, Sr A Kamphuis, Rev BA Matlaela, Rev GF Mnisi

Deputies for Bible Translation

Rev J van der Linden (Convener), Rev JA Breytenbach, Br G Bijker, Sr G de Vries, Sr A van Rensburg, Rev P Kgatle (for Sotho translations)

Deputies Art 11 Needy Churches

Br Erik Raimond (Convener), Sr T Maila, Br R Middeljans, Br Ruan Snijder, Br Riaan van Alten

Deputies Art 49

Classis North: Rev PG Boon, Pretoria-Maranata (Convener) & Rev JA Breytenbach, Pretoria

Substitutes: Rev BA Matlaela, Soshanguve-XX/Pretoria-Maranata & Rev GF Mnisi, Nellmapius/Pretoria-Maranata

Classis South: Rev C van Wyk, Wesbank (Convener) & Rev DM Boersma, Johannesburg

Substitutes: Rev P Abrahams, Belhar & Rev J Bruintjes, Cape Town

Deputies for Inspection of the Synod Treasurer's Books

Sr A Bijker, Johannesburg

Substitute: Br HH van der Linden, Cape Town

Deputies for Inspection of the Archive

Br D Driifhout (Convener), Pretoria & Br M Ros, Pretoria

Deputies Internet and Webmaster

Br G Bijker (Convener), Br J de Beer for design

Synod Treasurer

Br WR Hoving

Substitute: Br B Kooyman

Stated Clerk and Archive

Br C Roose (Convener) & Br A Smit

Archive Church

Church of Pretoria

Classis for Days of Prayer Art 69

Classis South

Deputies Indaba Organisation

Deputies to convene an Indaba between Synods 2021 and 2024:
Deputies for Bible Translation

ARTICLE 48 – APPROVAL OF PRESS RELEASE

The chair proposed that the deputy chair, Br G Hagg, will finalise the Press Release in conjunction with the chair and scribe and submit same to the churches for publication within a week after the closing of Synod.

ARTICLE 49 – APPROVAL OF SYNOD ACTS

The chair proposed that the scribe is given some time to compile the Acts of Synod 2021, after which it will be distributed among all delegates for comment, whereupon the Moderamen will finalise the Acts for publication.

ARTICLE 50 – CENSURE ACCORDING TO CO ARTICLE 48

No one made use of this opportunity.

ARTICLE 51 – CLOSING DEVOTION

Rev Van Alten led the closing devotion by reading from Rom 16:1-16 and 25-27 focusing on the greetings in the passage, the call to fellowship in Christ and expressing thankfulness to the Lord for being able to end and close the Synod in Christ. He leads in closing prayer.

ARTICLE 52 – CLOSING OF SYNOD

The chair closes Synod, noting that all matters have been concluded. He thanks the convening church, the FRC Belhar and FRC Bellville, for the use of their facilities and the dedication with which the delegates were taken care of by way of meals and refreshments.

He thanks all delegates for their participation and the spirit in which the discussions could take place, wishing them a safe journey back home.

Synod 2021 closed at 15:30.

ADDENDUM 1: DEPUTIES' MANDATES

Note: More information regarding the deputies' mandates is to be found in the articles of these Acts of Synod 2021, indicated in brackets following the various headings.

1. DEPUTIES FOR CONTACTS WITH CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA (ART. 14 & 18)

1.1. MANDATE

- 1.1.1. To encourage and assist all local churches to initiate deliberations with local congregations of the RCSA, and call on local churches to contact deputies for advice and assistance when they plan to start preliminary discussions and whenever they need help in their discussions with RCSA churches.
- 1.1.2. To encourage local churches to work within the guidelines presented by Synod along which they can pursue deliberations with local congregations within the RCSA.
- 1.1.3. To compile a draft agreement as guideline which local churches can use to sign with another local congregation, in case the deliberations are successful and there is a mutual desire to work together.
- 1.1.4. To study and report on the consequences of the growing cooperation between local churches and the effect on belonging to different federations.
- 1.1.5. To continue deliberations between deputies at a national level, but to inform RCSA deputies that the following three issues are a stumbling block for achieving unity:
 - 1.1.5.1. The Memorandum of Ecumenical Relationship with the DRCSA;
 - 1.1.5.2. Allowing women into the office of deacon, without distinguishing their position from how the diaconal office is defined in the Belgic Confession (art. 30) as set forth in the CO;
 - 1.1.5.3. The acceptance of the Cloete versifications of the Psalms.

- 1.1.6. To continue to maintain contacts with the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH) in order to stimulate joint cooperation between local churches and with regard to theological training.
- 1.1.7. To continue maintaining contacts with the FCSA, amongst others by attending their General Assemblies and sharing information.
- 1.1.8. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 1.1.9. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2021.
- 1.1.10. To approve a budget of R 8 400 for activities by DCCSA.

2. DEPUTIES FOR RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD

2.1. Relations with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia (Art. 16.1)

2.1.1. MANDATE

- 2.1.1.1. To maintain the sister church relation with the FRCA according to the adopted rules.
- 2.1.1.2. To send a recorded address which is also submitted in writing, containing our greetings and encouragement, to Synod Albany convening in June 2021, and to participate by way of electronic means.
- 2.1.1.3. To provide regular feedback to the churches on developments in the FRCA.

2.2. Relations with the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (Art. 20)

2.2.1. MANDATE

- 2.2.1.1. To maintain sister church relations with the CanRC according to the adopted rules.
- 2.2.1.2. To send a delegate to Synod Guelph-Emmanuel 2022 and to instruct the delegate to give presentations on the FRCSA.

2.2.1.3. To provide regular feedback to the churches on developments in the CanRC

2.3. Relations with the Reformed Churches (Liberated) Netherlands (Art. 34)

2.3.1. MANDATE

2.3.1.1. To engage directly with concerned churches and members in the RCNL who object against the decisions of RCNL synods with the purpose of discussing the way forward.

2.3.1.2. To educate congregations of the FRCSA on the grounds for these decisions, and to make it clear that these decisions are in no way an approval of decisions made by the Synods of Meppel and Goes.

2.3.1.3. To communicate with and explain to the Dutch deputies the FRCSA's intentions with the decisions made, and to mandate the FRCSA's Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad to stay informed about developments in the RCNL, especially among those concerned.

2.3.1.4. To communicate synod's decisions to our Canadian and Australian sister churches as well as to the ICRC.

2.4. Relations with De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) and Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) (Art. 36)

2.4.1. MANDATE

2.4.1.1. To maintain contact and to continue discussions with De Gereformeerde Kerken (DGK) in the Netherlands as well as with the Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN), but not to progress towards ecclesiastical fellowship with these church federations.

2.4.1.2. In cases where members from these federations come to South Africa, to advise consistories to allow them as members or as guests at the Lord's Supper – should they make such a request – only after an agreeable discussion with them.

- 2.4.1.3. To inform the DGK and the GKN in writing on these decisions concerning them and our decision regarding the RCNL.
- 2.4.1.4. To monitor the developments in any regrouping of churches and advise the next synod on relevant progress.
- 2.4.1.5. To coordinate with deputies abroad from CanRC and FRCA regarding developments of the DGK and GKN.

2.5. RCNZ – Asia Pacific Region (Art. 21)

2.5.1. MANDATE

- 2.5.1.1. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in Asia Pacific, mainly via the FRCA and the ICRC.

2.6. North American Region (Art. 21)

2.6.1. MANDATE

- 2.6.1.1. To remain informed about ecclesiastical developments in North America, mainly via the CanRC and the ICRC.

2.7. Contact with ICRC (Art. 16.2)

2.7.1. MANDATE: Regarding ICRC Conference October 2022 In Namibia

- 2.7.1.1. To put in more effort to promote the ICRC profile in the FRCSA by providing feedback to the churches.
- 2.7.1.2. To send a delegation, in consultation with other deputyships, to the next ICRC Conference in Windhoek Namibia, along with an open invitation to church members.

2.7.2. MANDATE: Regional ICRC Conferences in Africa

- 2.7.2.1. To maintain contacts with African ICRC member churches and to find ways to support the proclamation of the Word of God and leadership training by those churches in their home countries, in cooperation with other ICRC member churches.
- 2.7.2.2. To support efforts to organise a Regional Africa Conference of ICRC member churches, if requested by the organizing committee.

- 2.7.2.3. To coordinate the efforts of the FRCSA and the RCSA concerning regional ICRC activities.
- 2.7.2.4. To send one delegate to the next ICRC Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, and to solicit further delegation from FRCSA missionaries.

2.8. FRCSA Information Booklet (Art. 21)

2.8.1. MANDATE

- 2.8.1.1. Absolve the DRCA from further responsibilities concerning the FRCSA website.

2.9. Liaison for Churches (Art. 21)

2.9.1. MANDATE

- 2.9.1.1. To provide the church councils with appropriate information regarding churches abroad.
- 2.9.1.2. To coordinate the contacts and requests of the FRCSA with churches abroad.

2.10. General (Art. 21)

2.10.1. MANDATE

- 2.10.1.1. To provide regular feed-back to the churches on developments in our sister churches and the ICRC.
- 2.10.1.2. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 2.10.1.3. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

3. MISSION DEPUTIES (ART. 17)

3.1. MANDATE

- 3.1.1. To act in accordance with any Agreement of Co-operation between MDSA and any sponsor.
- 3.1.2. To act in accordance with the “Agreement of Cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches”.

- 3.1.3. To request the FRC Wesbank to sign “Agreement of Cooperation regarding the mission between the FRCSA churches”.
- 3.1.4. To act in accordance with the “FRCSA policy for supported mission projects”, approved at synod 2017.
- 3.1.5. To assess the different congregations via the questor according to the adopted differentiated contribution model and the increased quota as per their budget:-
for 2021: R400 000 for 2022: R424 000 for 2023: R449 440 for 2024: R476,400 and for 2025: R504,990.
- 3.1.6. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 3.1.7. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.
- 3.1.8. To discharge current and appoint new deputies as indicated in this report done as per previous decision.

4. DEPUTIES INTERNET COMMUNICATION (ART. 19)

4.1. MANDATE

- 4.1.1. To redesign the website and make it more attractive and modern.
- 4.1.2. To keep the website updated and current with all publications and encourage churches, deputies and editors of publications to upload all their latest information on the website and keep it up to date.
- 4.1.3. To ensure that all pages are in both Afrikaans and English.
- 4.1.4. To approve the budget of R5 000 per year.
- 4.1.5. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 4.1.6. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

5. DEPUTIES LITURGICAL FORMS AND FORM PRAYERS (ART. 24)

5.1. MANDATE

- 5.1.1. To consider the recommendations and comments received and also call on the other churches to provide feedback for them to consider and incorporate in the “Viering van die Heilige Nagmaal 2” form for the next synod to consider.
- 5.1.2. To consider the recommendations and comments received and also call on the other churches to provide feedback for them to consider and incorporate in the Form Prayers for the next synod to consider.
- 5.1.3. To identify the missing liturgical forms approved by our federation for use in churches and have them translated and included in the Sotho version of the liturgical forms.
- 5.1.4. To consider reprinting the Sotho version of the liturgical forms (published by NG Sendinguitgewers, Bloemfontein, 1983) incorporating the forms under mandate 4, in a suitable format for use by churches and church members.
- 5.1.5. To add the recommendations and comments received into the report as addendum to the next report to Synod.
- 5.1.6. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held more or less halfway between Synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 5.1.7. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

6. DEPUTIES ART 19 NEEDY STUDENTS AND DEPUTIES THEOLOGICAL TRAINING (DTT) (ART. 44)

6.1. MANDATE with regard to Art 19 Needy Students

- 6.1.1. To collaborate closely with Deputies Theological Training in order to determine the level of financial support for theological students.

- 6.1.2. To assess the churches as follows:
for 2021: R500 000, for 2022: R300 000, for 2023: R300 000 and for 2024: R200 000.
- 6.1.3. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
- 6.1.4. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

6.2. MANDATE with regards to Theological Training

- 6.2.1. To set an APS of 25 as the admission requirement for the FRCSA theological studies programme, and to test applicants' aptitude, competency and intellectual skills where applicable.
- 6.2.2. To inform prospective students for theological studies to apply before the end of April for access to the theological study programme of the FRCSA through admission procedures set by DTT.
- 6.2.3. In cases where Deputies DTT and mentor(s) conclude that the applicant for theological studies has the potential to successfully complete the programme but lacks basic competencies, to enable the student to follow a supportive programme that is determined by the DTT.
- 6.2.4. In special circumstances, to consider adaptations of this trajectory to fit the particular needs of a student.
- 6.2.5. In collaboration with CRTS:
 - 6.2.5.1. To investigate and implement models of on-line or distance education as offered by CRTS for students who are legitimately prevented from travelling to CRTS. DTT will support students who follow on-line or hybrid models of tuition through mentors to ensure that such students are not disadvantaged by the on-line or hybrid model.
 - 6.2.5.2. To continue to strive towards establishing an educational hub in South Africa where students can meet with adequate supervision and in community, using a hybrid model.

- 6.2.6. To investigate, within the parameters set by previous synods, new developments in theological education in South Africa which benefit the FRCSA in the medium to long-term, such as the “*Gereformeerde Teologiese Akademie*”.
- 6.2.7. To re-investigate the appropriateness of BTh studies as a trajectory towards the ministry.
- 6.2.8. To continue an appropriate mentorship program during the period 2021-2024.
- 6.2.9. To initiate the organisation of annual pastors’ conferences.
- 6.2.10. To collaborate closely with Deputies Needy Students (Art 19 CO) in order to determine the level of financial support for theological students. Deputies article 19 will consist of an independent deputy(-ies) and the treasurer from Deputies Theological Training.
- 6.2.11. To promote the theological training among all FRCSA churches.
- 6.2.12. To assess the churches as follows:
for 2021: R200 000, for 2022: R200 000, for 2023: R200 000 and for 2024: R200 000.
- 6.2.13. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 6.2.14. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

7. DEPUTIES ART 11 NEEDY CHURCHES (ART. 26)

7.1. MANDATE

- 7.1.1. To increase the collections from local FRCSA churches to Art11 from the current ± R100,000 to at least R250 000 per year in order to decrease the loss that is incurred every year.
- 7.1.2. To resolve the issue of the funds that were borrowed by Deputies Theological Training – see paragraph 4C of deputies’ report – and therefore to increase the collection with an additional R200 000 per year in the next 3 years

- 7.1.3. To assess the churches as follows: for 2021: R100 000, for 2022: R277 200, for 2023: R334 832 and for 2024: R392 922.
- 7.1.4. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 7.1.5. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

8. SYNOD TREASURER (ART. 45)

8.1. MANDATE

- 8.1.1. To assess the churches according to the approved budgets while staying within the agreed affordability of the churches in SA of R1 250 000 (Affordability Cap).
(For more details on the approved budgets refer to page 64 of these Acts).
- 8.1.2. To calculate an average annual inflation of 4% and contributions, without exceeding the set cap.
- 8.1.3. To add the future shortfall on the retirement of rev. JA Breytenbach to the contributions of Art 11 in order for the churches to make a joint contribution to the amount.
- 8.1.4. To balance the historical retirement shortfall (R600,000) through surplus funds of DTT, to be reimbursed through contributions towards DTT over the next 3 years.
- 8.1.5. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held approximately halfway between synod 2021 and the next synod.
- 8.1.6. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

9. DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MUSIC (ART. 28)

9.1. MANDATE

- 9.1.1. To add the following themes to the 2011 criteria for selecting hymns and '*Skrifberymings*': Christian Life and the Fruit of the Spirit; Perseverance of the saints and the armour of God; Jesus' Return; Prayer; Comfort when Believers Die; Creation and Recreation; The Last Judgement; and Eschatology.
- 9.1.2. To compose a document, made up of previous synod decisions, that clearly shows the biblical reasons for singing hymns. This document should also address the objections that have been raised over the years, plus the reasons why these objections were rejected by synod.
- 9.1.3. To include in the above document, a summary of Synod 2011 model and criteria, to be compiled and distributed to each consistory.
- 9.1.4. To form a sub-committee with members of the Sotho-speaking churches, which will work on evaluating the Difela tsa Sione hymns and psalms according to Synod 2011 criteria with a view to standardising the songs. The missionaries should be involved in the selection process by the sub-committee.
- 9.1.5. To stay updated on developments regarding the 1936 Totius versification – hard copy and the mobile application – and ensure that, even if it requires a financial contribution from our federation, the 1936 versification remains widely available to all going forward.
- 9.1.6. To offer our assistance to the RCSA/CJBF in the form of IT expertise to further develop and improve the GKSA application, as it is being increasingly used in our federation
- 9.1.7. To ask churches to provide feedback on the 14 '*Skrifberymings*' that were approved for testing, in order to report on at the next Synod.
- 9.1.8. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.

9.1.9. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

10. DEPUTIES FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION (ART. 30)

10.1. MANDATE

- 10.1.1. To not express preference for a specific edition of the underlying text.
- 10.1.2. To thank the Bible Society for this wonderful contribution to Afrikaans Bible translation.
- 10.1.3. To propose the ESV for official use in our churches and the NIV (1984-edition) as allowable particularly for our Mission churches as acceptable English Bible translations.
- 10.1.4. To evaluate the BDV 2020 for official use in our churches.
- 10.1.5. To evaluate other aspects of the BDV 2020 such as footnotes, glossaries and introductions.
- 10.1.6. To also involve the Afrikaans-speaking ministers in our church federation, especially in their sermon preparation, as well as church members.
- 10.1.7. To educate the churches on the BDV 2020, with a focus on the underlying Text Editions and all versions of the BDV 2020 in congruence with our confessions.
- 10.1.8. To correspond with the deputies of the RCSA (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) and the APK (Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerke) and possibly other likeminded churches to work together on a BDV edition without the introductory material that was added to each Bible book.
- 10.1.9. To work with missionaries and/or pastors to discover the use of non-Afrikaans or English translations to see if deputies may be of further help.
- 10.1.10. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.

10.1.11. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Articles 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

11. DEPUTY STATED CLERK AND ARCHIVE (ART. 32)

11.1. MANDATE

- 11.1.1. To arrange the printing and publishing of the Acts of Synod 2021.
- 11.1.2. To request appointed deputies to provide information regarding the progress on their mandate on a regular basis to the churches.
- 11.1.3. To conduct, upon instruction from the synod or the convening church, the administration of the synod.
- 11.1.4. To act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church and to implement an archiving system.
- 11.1.5. To publish the newly adopted Rules of Synod, together with other church federational documents, as indicated by FRCSA Synods of 2008 up to 2021, in a suitable form.
- 11.1.6. To coordinate with all other deputyships for the compilation and electronic publishing of a 'Church Book' in English and Afrikaans consisting of all church federational documents.
- 11.1.7. To investigate the need for the translation of the above 'Church Book' in any other official languages.
- 11.1.8. To handle administrative matters during the period between synod meetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.
- 11.1.9. To investigate and to start implementing an electronic archiving system for all electronically available documents to be used by the churches.
- 11.1.10. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held end 2022 or beginning 2023.
- 11.1.11. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

12. INSPECTION OF THE ARCHIVE (ART. 33)

12.1. MANDATE

- 12.1.1. To examine the synodical archive and archiving system in terms of the Rules of Synod.
- 12.1.2. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod.
- 12.1.3. To submit a report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to Article 10 and 11 of the Synod Rules.

13. DEPUTIES INSPECTION OF THE SYNOD TREASURER (ART. 46)

13.1. MANDATE

- 13.1.1. To audit the books of the synod treasurer annually.
- 13.1.2. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2021.

ADDENDUM 2: OPENING ADDRESS BY REV. P. ABRAHAMS

Synod: Belhar 12 – 16 April 2021

Scripture reflection :

Scripture Reading : 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10

When we look closely at this testimony, which is given about this congregation of the Lord in Thessalonica, it could not be more beautiful. It is now more than 2000 years ago that a church like the congregation of the Thessalonians came into being. Yes, it had a unique origin. In Acts 17 we read the story that Paul, Silas and Timothy founded this church, when they were on their 2nd missionary journey. This happened under terribly difficult and dangerous circumstances.

So we see, these three men only contributed very little to the first flame of faith in Jesus Christ that started to twinkle in this great city.

But it is the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is at work to gather God's children, and to make us His church, so that we can say to each other, it is God who gathers and sustains His church (verse 4). The beginning of the church does not depend on the will of a few people. For the gospel came to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit. (verse 5).

Paul tells you who are chosen, you who are so privileged to be loved by God, you in whom the Lord himself declares his love, out of you the Word of the Lord has resounded. He speaks of every place and then he mentions the provinces Macedonia and Achaia.

In the Greek province of Macedonia lie the cities of Philippi, Berea and, of course, Thessalonica. In the province of Achaia lie Athens and Corinth. Big cities, world cities of that time. Five of them only in the two provinces. There the gospel, which was only proclaimed for three weeks and by only three persons in one single

place, became an irreversible fire, an echo - sound and that because only one church did the work that is expected of the church. To resonate, to be an echo of what God is doing. And then comes verse 6 - And you have become followers of us and of the Lord.....

There is certainty in what is written here. What is done in the Holy Spirit produces certainty, there is power, there is fullness. This word may resound, it should resound as widely as possible.

And they themselves tell concerning us what entrance we had with you and how you turned from idols to God, to serve the living and true God.

Paul alludes to events when he speaks of idols. The images, the forces, that which is presented by the Gentiles and revered by them, is simply cheating. This encloses so much danger. If Paul later also writes to the Corinthians in Greece then it says in 1Chor. 10 - whoever is offering to idols is actually serving the evil spirits. These offerings are actually tributed to demons. That for which man lives in fear... afraid of the idols.

You can therefore not rely on them. Only the true God is alive, He is true, we can serve Him. Therefore, we can imagine the gratitude of Paul in writing the words in verse 9 - the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

And what a privilege to actually be a slave. A slave to serve the living and true God, unconditionally obedient. Then trials and tribulations that come our way are not a surprise. That is why Paul is not telling nice stories to the congregation, but he who was persecuted there, knows of their persecution.

He says in verse 3 that he sees the perseverance of their hope in Jesus Christ as something to which they are anchored. The symbol of hope is always an anchor, to be anchored in Christ, that is the anchor they have. It's in their hearts.

Verse 10 is the only time Paul uses the term *expects to (anameno)* - which means I 'm in tense anticipation. My whole being is focused on it. If I'm waiting to get on the plane then I walk up and down the waiting room because I want to get on that plane now. Every piece of you is focused on it. This is what I comes down to and how shameful is it as we have to say to each other, that the existence of a church should not be to survive the year's budget or balance, or to have the best strategical plan you can imagine. The central activity that should penetrate the whole existence of the church down to the smallest fibre of every nerve is to expect the living Lord Jesus Christ. We can spot and name many bad things around us like the Covid pandemic that hit the whole world, the violence in our communities and so on.

Let us rather be looking up, our ears sett to hear from God, let that be our expectation. Then we can close by thanking the same God, just as Paul thanks the Lord in such a moving way in verse 3 for the fruits of the work of the church - also at this Synod – Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Singing: Hymn 40 (The churches one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;)

ADDENDUM 3: LETTER FROM REV. FJ BIJZET

F.J. Bijzet
Druwerbrink 308
7812 TP Emmen
Nederland
fjbijzet.pr@gmail.com

6 April 2021

Aan die sinode van die VGKSA,
byeen van 12-16 April in Belhar/Bellville

Per e-pos: Br. C. Roose, Sinode Klerk, kees.roose1@gmail.com

Geliefde broers in Christus,

Ek en Truus het ons begin April by die GKN gevoeg en ons onder die opsig en tug van die kerkraad in Hardenberg geplaas. Ons meen ons moet dit vir u laat weet, want ons besef dat ons daarmee al 'n stap verder gedoen het as die kerke in Suid-Afrika, tyerwyl ek nog steeds 'n emerituspredikant van u kerkverband is.

Die redes hoekom ons hierdie besluit geneem het is dat ons ons alreeds in Desember van die GKv Emmen onttrek het en sindsdien geen pastorale versorging meer ontvang het nie. Ons pogings om by 'n susterkerk, wat nie die koers van die laaste twee sinodes van die GKv volg nie, aan te sluit het ongelukkig nie geslaag nie. Boonop bly die kerkraad van die GKv ons lastig val met versoeke om met 'n paar broers te praat, terwyl hy terselfdertyd volhard in sy standpunt dat daar oor die toelating van vroue in al die kerklike ampte **nie** meer gepraat sal word nie. en dus maak dit vir ons nie meer sin om te

praat nie. Die kerkraad het ons onttrekking ook nog steeds nie aan die gemeente meegedeel nie.

Die deurslaggewende faktor was egter dat ek onlangs na 'n vergadering van deputate van sowel die DGK as die GKN genooi is, saam met verontruste groepe en/of kerkrade in die GKv. En so het die Heer van die kerk dit gelei dat ek in 'n baie belangrike vergadering beland het. Waar die twee kerkgroepe, wat nou nog langs mekaar bestaan, dankbaar mog vertel dat hulle samesprekings alreeds so 'n stadium bereik het dat daar geen kerkskeidende sake meer tussen hulle is nie en hulle hard daaraan werk om 'n volledige hereniging te bereik. Teen ons, beswaardes in die GKv, is gesê: jullie leef nog steeds met die gedagte dat, as jullie die verband van die GKv verlaat, tussen ons sal moet kies. Maar julle hoef nie meer te kies nie. Want dit maak nie meer saak by watter een van ons twee julle sal aansluit nie. As julle die één kies, kry julle ook die ander een. Want ons is vinnig op pad om een kerkverband te word. Ek en andere aanwesiges is selfs genooi om van nou af aan hul vergaderinge deel te neem. Ek as 'n verteenwoordiger van die VGKSA.

Hoewel daar 'n DGK in Emmen is, het ek en Truus tog besluit om eerste by die GKN in Hardenberg aan te sluit, aangesien ek deur my kontakte as deputaat BBK vir die VGKSA meer ooreenstemming met daardie kerkverband as met die DGK gevoel het.

Ek het my kerkraad, die VGK Kaapstad gevra om hierdie belangrike stap goed te keur; en om dit toe te staan dat ek, ook indien u vergadering nog nie tot 'n volledige susterkerkrelasie met die GKN durf te besluit nie, in daardie kerke Gods se Woord en die sacramente bedien. Ek het ook toestemming gevra om, as die kerkraad van die GKN Hardenberg daarmee kan saamstem, voorlopig nog te bly voorgaan in 'n paar gemeentes in die GKv wat nie die koers van die laaste twee sinodes wil volg nie maar nog oor hul toekoms besin.

Terwille van die eenheid in die kerkverband van die VGKSA het ek gemeen dat dit goed sal wees dat ook u vergadering hiervan op hoogte is en geen besware daarteen het dat die kerkraad van Kaapstad die goedkeuring wat ek vra verleen nie.

Ek en Truus bid u God se onmisbare seën toe oor u belangike werk as sinode.

Hartlike groete in Christus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. B. M. A.', written in a cursive style.

ADDENDUM 4: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE FRCA

5 April 2021

Synod Belhar 2021
South Africa

Dear brothers delegates,

On behalf of your sister churches in Australia, we would like to extend our hearty greetings in Christ to you. Thank you for your invitation to attend Synod Belhar 2021. Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic, we are unable to attend in person although we would have dearly loved to do so. Hence, we will instead address you via this letter.

We are thankful that the Lord has guided it so that, although delayed under the current pandemic circumstances, you are now able to come together as churches in synod. You are able to meet together on the foundation and unity in Christ as churches in South Africa, and as your sister church to the east, we are thankful to be able to express that same unity with you. May that foundation and unity also guide and bless you in your deliberations.

The unity in Christ that we share is evident in many ways, including the travelling and immigration that continues to take place (yes even in Covid times!) between our churches in South Africa and Australia. We are also thankful for the contacts and discussions we could have with your deputies and ministers in various capacities, including the visit to our last synod by Rev P Kgatle, and visits to Australia by Revs P Boon and H Breytenbach.

Your synod has on its agenda quite a number of matters, some of which relate directly to the circumstances of your own bond of churches, and others that we do share in common. We are very thankful to observe in the deputies reports and recommendations to your synod, that there is a strong desire to remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ as Head of His church. That is something we all

cannot take for granted, but certainly good to acknowledge when we see that work of our Lord through you.

As you are aware and as your deputies have also reported, we have now sadly terminated relations with our previous sister church in The Netherlands. At our visit to Synod Goes in January 2020, we were thankful to be able to share the unity in Christ with you and with some of our other sister churches, as we together confronted the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (liberated) with their unfaithfulness. We can certainly relate to the sentiments expressed by your deputies in their reports, and with heavy hearts we could confirm how purposefully and decisively the liberated churches are walking down a path that deviates from the truth of Scripture. May the Lord give you His wisdom as you deliberate on the best path forward, in the first place to maintain God's glory and also for the wellbeing of His church here on earth.

We are also very glad and thankful to note that you are progressing well in the training of theological students, currently with 7 students in various stages of their training. It is a blessing that this work could continue despite the many restrictions, limitations and challenges faced, including those imposed due to the current pandemic. May the Lord guide your discussions and decisions as you consider the theological training models appropriate to your churches.

We pray that the Lord will guide you in your synod deliberations and also bless the outcomes that they may serve His Glory and the gathering, defending and preserving of His church in South Africa.

On behalf of Deputies for Inter-Church Relations – Outside of Australia.

Henk Terpstra

ADDENDUM 5: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE CANRC

Esteemed and honourable brothers, delegates to the 2021 Belhar synod of the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa.

Thank you heartily for the invitation you extended to the Canadian Reformed Churches to be present with you. Though travel restrictions are real and burdensome, we are thankful for technological developments that enabled you to share your synod materials with us and enable us to be virtually present for at least part of your synod. As we familiarized ourselves with your various reports, we were impressed with the thoughtfulness evident in the committee recommendations regarding the issues that you are facing. We had been looking forward to meeting you in person, enjoying discussions and food with you, but that will have to wait for another occasion. On behalf of your sister churches in Canada and the United States, we bring you greetings in the Name of our blessed Saviour. Our federation is made up of about 60 churches, mostly in Canada, with a total membership of almost 20,000 people. Mission activity takes place inside our country in a variety of (primarily) urban locations, as well as outside of North America in Brazil, China, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia.

Though many aspects of regular church life were continuing quite smoothly throughout our federation in the first few years after your Synod Soshanguva North in 2017, during the past year our church life has been severely disrupted by the restrictions that the government has placed on us in response to COVID. Though we confess and know that nothing has happened outside of our heavenly Father's providential guiding, we also acknowledge that life has been difficult. The difficulties for us are two-fold. In the first place, the restrictions themselves have evidently been a real burden for God's people, as we have been unable to gather in the usual ways. Secondly, in numerous congregations there is quite a divergence of

opinions – sometimes about the medical need for those restrictions and other times about the lawfulness of the government or unelected health authorities mandating these restrictions. Readers of the last issue of *Lux Mundi* can read more about some of these challenges in Canada. We long for the time when we are able to live in a post-pandemic world, and we are sure that you join us in that hope and prayer.

We are thankful that your churches could be capably represented by Br. Hans Moes at our most recent Synod, held in Edmonton in 2019. We feel a deep kinship with you, and also, I should add, with our Australian brothers and sisters. These three federations were established around the same time as a result of emigrants leaving from the Netherlands, and since then each of us has increasingly become imbedded in the society of our respective country. Though initially there were extremely close connections with brothers and sisters who remained behind in “the mother country,” as the Netherlands was often referred to, especially in our federation there are fewer and fewer meaningful connections between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Your deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad have been able to review the Acts of Synod Edmonton. One of the significant decisions that was made at that synod was to end the sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Though it was not an unexpected decision, regrettably, it was a necessary one. Already two years earlier, the International Conference of Reformed Churches had suspended them. Since then, others have made a similar judgement. Most recently, our sister churches in Brazil, who, like you, receive significant financial assistance from the Dutch in support of mission work, also decided to end their sister-church relationship with the Dutch churches. It is our hope and prayer that our and your churches remain faithful to God’s Word, and that God’s Word, rather than the culture around us, shapes our understandings of how to live in this world.

Since Synod Edmonton, we have continued limited contact with the two smaller federations in the Netherlands – the DGK and the GKN – and are encouraged by their expressed desire to remain faithful to God’s Word and by their willingness to take steps to grow together. We wish these brothers and sisters strength, wisdom, grace, and love as they move forward one step at a time. All will need patience as slowly clarity emerges in the reconfigured Dutch ecclesiastical landscape.

If your deputies read through the Acts of Synod Edmonton very carefully, they might have noticed something rather remarkable: there was no decision made about our continued participation in the ICRC. That should not be interpreted as some kind of indication that we have any intentions of having less involvement in this organization. To our chagrin, we acknowledge that somehow, in the flurry of activity that goes on at General Synods, somehow the ICRC was simply overlooked; synod just “forgot” to deal with that portion of our committee’s report. Nonetheless, we can assure you that we remain committed to helping promote the good work that is done, both regionally as well as generally, at the ICRC. We encourage your continued involvement; those of us who have been entrusted with a wonderfully rich confessional and practical heritage do well to be deliberate about sharing that heritage with others.

Your Deputies for Theological Training have been busy. We are thankful for the continued good collaboration that is evident between our federations as it relates to theological training. Since your last synod, Dr. Jerry Visscher retired from his position as New Testament professor; Synod Edmonton appointed Dr. William den Hollander to be his successor. The wheels are already in motion so that at our next synod our Professor for Ministry and Mission – Dr. Arjan de Visser – can retire and his successor can be appointed. Any suggestions?

Evidently, our churches are thankful to be able to work closely with you. Since our committee has requested and appointed Dr. VanVliet to participate in your discussion about theological training, I will leave that specific topic for now. However, on a somewhat related topic, in your Mission Deputies Report, we read that Mission Deputies had contact with Deputies Theological Training (Curators) and “decided that different deputies should not request financial support from the same church federation. As a gentleman agreement it was agreed that Curators will request the FRCA (Australia) for support and MDSA in Canada (CANCR).” The flow of money from one country to another, especially in a world in which financial resources are limited, can generate substantial concern and a lot of discussion. Also at our Synod Edmonton there was discussion regarding the provision of some kind of financial assistance to you. One of the considerations that appears in the Acts of Synod says: “Given the brotherhood of the communion of saints around the globe, the current circumstances of the FRCSA make it desirable for the CanRC to be willing to assist to the degree we can. Churches possessing the means and desire to assist the FRCSA need to know that there are Canada Revenue Agency regulations regarding the need for charitable organizations which send money overseas to retain “direction and control” over how these funds are disbursed.” In other words, our churches want to provide financial assistance to you, but also need to remain in compliance with government regulations.

Changes in government regulations have made it more difficult for churches and other charitable organizations in Canada to send money overseas and retain their charitable donation status. Might it be appropriate to consider creative ways to provide assistance without money being transferred from one country to another? Think, for example, of how Rev. Ryan Kampen is engaged in the work of the Reformation Study Center. It might be worthwhile to have a broader discussion at some point involving representatives of all three federations – Australia, South Africa, and Canada – to find the best way to support each other and remain in compliance with the

laws of each of our countries. Perhaps, coming back to the referenced gentleman agreement in your Mission Deputies report, after such a three-way discussion another possible scenario emerges and your Curators end up requesting Canada for support – perhaps for your students who come here – and that your mission deputies interact primarily with Australia.

We notice that you interact substantially with other Christians in your country who share the same Reformed confession. A similar reality is evident in North America. As our societies give more and more evidence of having departed from a worldview in which God's sovereignty is acknowledged, we rejoice in relationships based on a shared confession and practice. May God bless you and us as we feel more and more distance from much of the culture around us, but more kinship with other Reformed Christians who profess Christ's name.

Together we are on a road to eternity where differences created by distance, culture, and language will no longer be a barrier. Let's help each other while we are on that journey. Let's look for opportunities to assist each other. Let's be open to assistance from each other. In that connection, we invite you to share with us suggestions on how we can relate better to your churches. Let us know if there are specific occasions when we have hurt you. In a context of love and transparency, tell us if there are matters that you feel our churches need to address. Finally, if there are ways in which we can be of assistance to you with regards to helping you to grow in understandings related to doctrine, worship, and church governance, we would be happy to do so.

Brothers, may the Lord bless you in your deliberations. May you as individuals and as churches serve as hands and feet to one another, outdoing one another in being servants for the sake of Christ. May the blessing of our heavenly God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you in all you do.

ADDENDUM 6: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE RCNL

Address to Synod Belhar 2021 of the FRCSA/VGKSA

by Rev. Henk Venema and Br. Alexandre Pedro
on behalf of the Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad
of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)

Zwolle, April 14, 2021

Dear and esteemed brothers in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour,

First of all, we want to express our sincere gratitude for receiving an invitation to attend (part of) your Synod meeting on behalf of BBK GKV (= DRCA of RCNL). Together with you, we thank our almighty God that He makes it possible for you, in these hard times of covid-19 pandemic, to have your regular Synod, be it physically or digitally. We praise God that He provides sufficient means to continue the life and activities of the churches worldwide.

Of course, all of us are longing very strongly to return to the ‘normal’ situation we had before corona brought us to a stop. But actually, we can learn a lot as well, now we are forced to adapt to quite a different situation, which is called ‘the new normal’. The present situation challenges us to find new ways for being a living community in difficult and complex circumstances. Although we pray continually that God will free the world, including the members of your churches and ours, from this dangerous virus and will provide the possibility to continue our church life without all those health restrictions, we also glorify Him for His guidance in discovering new forms and means for the continuation of our ecclesiastical activities.

We send you warm-hearted greetings from the RCNL. We wish you a very blessed Synod. May all your discussions and decisions serve the *glory* of God, the *growth* of His church in Southern Africa and worldwide, and the *faith* and *integration* of all the FRCSA church

members in their various local congregations. May this Synod help you in your living in unity. As Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-5).

Dear brothers, *on the one hand* we are delighted to be your guests and attend your Synod, and meet each other as brothers in the Lord who are united in the same confession and calling. We share the same faith in the tri-une God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We share the same new life, being saved by Jesus Christ and transformed by the Holy Spirit. There is so much we have in common, which makes us happy to meet you in this meeting.

However *on the other hand*, we realize with grief and sadness that this might be the last time we attend your Synod representing the RCNL as a sister church of the FRCSA. Because, after proposing some alternative options for the continuation of our sister church relationship in their Main Report, in their Addendum Report though, your deputies have given an unambiguous uniform recommendation to you as Synod, i.e., *to terminate your sister church relationship with the RCNL*. You will have the heavy task to take a responsible decision. Dear brothers in Christ, we dearly hope and pray that you will not take that radical decision, which to our humble feeling, would be *too excessive*.

Allow us as representatives of RCNL to give you some clarification about this ‘too excessive’:

Yes, you are right: the RCNL decided to accept *women in office*. After the General Synod of Meppel (2017) took this decision, the Synod of Goes (2020) reconfirmed this decision unanimously. The reports of your deputies (and also of CanRF and FRCA) give the impression that this was done quickly and easily, as if the outcome was already clear in advance and the discussion only a farce. But, sincerely, this is not true. We can assure you that the Synod took all the time needed to discuss this controversial topic very seriously, and finally took its decision solidly based on a thorough study report, called *Elkaar van harte dienen (Serve each other sincerely from the heart)*, in which

additional founding, explanation, and corrections were given. All this happened in consultation with the churches and members of RCNL who had made objections to the positive decision of Synod Meppel about women in office. To the input of sister churches abroad was given full attention as well.

In preparing and taking this decision about women in office, the Synod of Goes continually acknowledged the *authority* and *unity* of God's Word, considering the *total* of Scripture – its *outline* from creation via salvation to re-creation – as guideline in stead of limiting itself only to Bible texts in which the status of women is mentioned. In order to prevent *own or private interpretation* ('eigenmachtige uitleg'; 2 Ptr. 1:20-21) – or the so called *new hermeneutics* – getting a chance to influence or even determine the decision, the authority of Scripture itself was continually stressed.

And yes, as you know: the RCNL also took the decision to (re)unite with the NGK, which is to be fully realized in 2023. The reason for and steps in growing to this unification has been documented broadly as well. From this documentation you can easily conclude that this ongoing process of unification is taking place on the basis of God's Word and the Ecumenical & Reformed confessions. When churches meet on that basis, all obstacles for unification could *and should* be taken away, as we have seen before in church history, and – more importantly – which is corresponding with Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-21.

From the Main Report and Addendum Report of your deputies we know that you are very well-informed about these decisions of the RCNL's last General Synods. And – what we are really grateful for – you, as well, did – more than once – send your comments and objections to these decisions of RCNL's last synods. Just like the input from both churches within the RCNL and sister churches abroad, your input was discussed and weighed seriously. Indeed, the Synod did finally not 'listen to' the objections, in the sense of accepting and following them. But this was done with comprehensive and detailed argumentation. And with the underlying intention to give full honour to the Word of God – which to our persistent confession is

really God's Word – and to the Reformed confessions – which to our firm conviction reflect God's Word.

For you as FRCSA – and other sister churches, esp. CanRF and FRCA, whose reports you obviously quote with approval (you also met in the *Buitenlandweek* of the Synod of Goes in order to arrange the same strategy, as your deputies tell in their Main Report) – these decisions of RCNL are the main reason to terminate our sister church relationship now, just as CanRF and FRCA did before. Besides, together with CanRF and FRCA you have already started to build up a new relationship with DGK and GKN which, among others because of these decisions, seceded from RCNL.

Honestly spoken, we would regret such a decision very much. We feel very sad about this. Is it really necessary to break off our sister church relationship? Is it really appropriate to use such sharp words as 'unfaithfulness to God's Word' and 'spiritual adultery' (as is done in the Report of FRCA)? And is it not just too easy to frame the RCNL as a 'mainstream liberal church-body' by sticking the label of *new hermeneutics* on every deviation from what can be called the 'traditional' or 'classical' way of reading and interpreting God's Word?

With regard to collecting information about the RCNL, we regret that your deputies limit themselves to personal opinions in the magazine *Nader Bekeken* or to the website *Een in waarheid*, and to the reports from CanRF and FRCA. Would it not be fair to make an attempt to understand the way of thinking of the RCNL in its process of taking decisions about women in office, by thoroughly reading the Synod's report *Elkaar van harte dienen* (*Serve each other sincerely from the heart*), instead of just rejecting it as *new hermeneutics*, because it deviates from 'traditional' interpretation? Indeed, Rev. Bijzet made such an attempt in an article, called '*Een nieuwe koers: The New Direction of the RCNL*'. Your deputies are so enthusiastic about this paper, that they ask your Synod to distribute it to all RCNL church councils. But, may I ask, did you study this article of Rev. Bijzet thoroughly and did you check whether the *hermeneutics* he is using

is solid and right, and whether he is doing justice to the report of RCNL's Synod?

When serving as a missionary lecturer at the theological seminary SETIA in Jakarta, Indonesia (2000-2003), I had to coach students in writing their final thesis. Once a female student asked my approval for writing an exegetical study on 1 Timothy 2:9-15, saying that she wanted to prove that women should be accepted in all church offices. I rejected. Why? Because when doing exegesis of Scripture in line with Reformed hermeneutics, drawing conclusions is the final step. She had made her conclusion on beforehand already, and – because of that – would not but use *own interpretation* in stead of doing justice to Scripture itself (2 Ptr. 1:20-21).

Is Rev. Bijzet in some way not doing the same in his article, when saying that the New Testament *determines* the meaning of the Old Testament, contra the report *Elkaar ...* which, according to Bijzet, says the opposite: that OT determines the meaning of NT. Apart from this not being true, Reformed Theology never made such a statement. Instead of this, Reformed Hermeneutics says that we cannot understand OT without NT, and NT without OT! For interpreting the meaning of every separate Bible text we need the Bible as a whole, which indeed is Christocentric. What is really determining is the already mentioned Scriptural outline of Creation via Salvation to Re-creation > at the end of history (but starting already since Christ rose from the dead) the situation of the beginning will return. And, furthermore, is it really appropriate to just draw the conclusion from the fact that Jesus did not appoint female apostles (though He did send Maria Magdalena to proclaim the resurrection of Christ to the apostles) that He declared Himself contra women in office? In Reformed doctrine such conclusions are never made. Jesus' appointment of male apostles only does not prove anything about women in office, neither pro nor contra. With the same right you could conclude that what Jesus did was in line with his Father's patience and compassion with His people. The same we see, e.g. with regard to *polygamy* in OT (despite David's polygamy and adultery, He stayed a king "after God's own heart" – 1 Sam.

13:14; Acts 13:22; He and Bathsheba even became ancestors of Jesus, the Messiah) and with regard to *slavery* in NT (but with a fundamental change in how slaves were treated – Philemon).

We urgently ask you not to send Rev. Bijzet’s article to all local congregations of RCNL or advertise it in regional church journals of the RCNL, and to refrain from recommending the RCNL church members to break with the RCNL and join either the DGK or the GKN as suggested by Rev. Bijzet (Addendum Report, page 5), not only because this article and this recommendation do no justice to the thorough report of the Synod of Goes, but also because such an action would go beyond the rules we agreed on concerning sister church relationships. These rules imply that objections against certain developments in the sister churches are to be addressed through the synods of these churches. Intervention at local church level is inappropriate as it deliberately provokes internal disunity.

While preparing this address, Acts 15 popped up into *my* mind as well. In that very chapter of Scripture, we read about a difference of opinion about how people can be saved. Finally, the apostles together with the mother church of Jerusalem, took a crucial decision – inspired by the Holy Spirit Himself! – about how people, not only gentiles but Jews as well (vs 11), are saved and receive eternal life in re-creation. The answer is: *only by faith in Jesus Christ*. That is the only way to be rescued. In his first letter to the Corinthians, apostle Paul writes that he only knows and preaches “Christ crucified.” As a result of Acts 15 the same Paul describes in Gal. 3:26-29 how all people, who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, form an integrated Kingdom in which Christians from both sexes and from all different social levels and ethnic backgrounds find their eternal home. At the end re-creation brings back the situation of creation, and even better than that: a perfect life where sin and evil are gone for ever, and where all saved men and women from all times and places find their definite destination as image of God, as we confess in the Apostolic Creed: “I believe the holy catholic church, the communion of saints.”

If it will indeed occur that from now on you as FRCSA and we as RCNL go our own ways apart from each other, which we really do not hope, then this will mean that you do not see and treat us any longer as brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, we are and stay – just like you – God’s children and citizens of His Kingdom. And why can I say so? Because we – just like you – continue to confess Jesus Christ as our only Saviour and as our only entrance to God’s Kingdom. We fully believe that He died on the cross, for the forgiveness of our sins, transgressions, and shortcomings. And He rose from the dead, to give a new and eternal life to us as to you. That is the only *centre of Scripture*: people are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ. That is what we do and will do, now and in the future, fully and cordially! Nothing or nobody can separate neither you nor us from the love of Christ. In Christ we stay one. We hope and pray that, because of this reality, our relationship will be continued. That is my final appeal to you, dear brothers in Jesus Christ: we are citizens of the same Kingdom.

On behalf of our church, RCNL, I salute you in our Saviour’s name, the Messiah.

May you have a blessed Synod.

Rev. Henk Venema and Br. Alexandre Pedro

ADDENDUM 7: GREETING MESSAGE FROM THE RCSA (GKSA)

GREETINGS TO THE SYNOD BELHAR 2021 OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Reverend Chairman and Brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

I thank you for the privilege of being with you today. Thank you for the invitation to convey the greeting message on behalf of the Reformed Churches in South Africa as well as to attend the Synod. May the Lord be with us, blessing our conversations. May the Lord guide us by his Spirit to mutually build and strengthen one another in faith, as we strive earnestly to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. May we all endure in this earnest pursuit until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a grown man, to the measure of the fullness of Christ.

All praise and thanks belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ because he has truly preserved his church in the midst of the global pandemic as He has promised to do. We thank Him for enabling his church during the difficult and challenging circumstances to continue with the proclamation of the Word through electronic media, something that used to be just a handy accessory. In doing so, the Lord himself has ensured that his flock remains fed with the life-giving Word. We thank Him for being able return responsibly after a year of lockdown and continue the work he has called and appointed us to.

It is with great gratitude that I have read the report of your Deputies for contact with churches in South Africa. In your report you rightly mention circumstances in the GKSA that raise your concern and hesitation. In connection with the churches in the GKSA that do not adhere to decisions made jointly in synod, work is made of. However, this is a laborious process because, according to the agreed

procedure, it must be dealt with responsibly, as your deputies also highlight it in the summary of the conference on the essentials of a church federation.

Of course, one would want to see faster progress in dealing with these difficult matters. May the Lord bestow wisdom to the various Classes and Synods to treat these matters in responsibility to Him and his church. Therefore, the GKSA needs to hear the voice of admonition from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa. In addition, we ask that you will not stop praying that the Lord will guide the GKSA through his Spirit and with his Word into the paths of righteousness.

There is great gratitude to the Lord for the good and constructive discussions that take place between local congregations of the FRCSA and GKSA in the north as well as in the south of our country. Therefore, it is also heartening to hear the encouragement and incentive of your deputies in connection with these conversations in the report. May the Lord bestow your deputies with wisdom in serving the local churches with good advice for their conversations with local churches in the GKSA. And may these discussions lead to the unity to which we are called by the Lord and for which our Lord Jesus also prayed.

Chairman and brothers, my prayer for you as synod is that, by his Spirit, the Lord will give you the wisdom and perseverance for this meeting's discussions and decisions. May you also sincerely testify at the end of this meeting that the Holy Spirit and you have decided together. May your decisions be to the glory of our great God's holy Name, to the promotion of the well-being of every church in the FRCSA and to the extension of the kingdom of God in our country and in the world.

I conclude with the prayer in Ephesians 1 for you as synod: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of

His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name being named, not only in this world, but also in the coming age. And He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Amen

Rev. Coen Vrey
(Deputies Ecumenical Affairs: Domestic)