



Die Vrge Gereformeerde Kerk te Pretoria

Frates Road 775
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Our reference: 2019-105
October 5, 2019

The Free Reformed Churches of South Africa
Classis North

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Dear Brothers

Re: Proposed Amendments to the Synod Rules

After doing the ratification of the synod decisions we realised that we were “checking” synod decisions that were already made. Thus, doing it this way, we were, in some cases, duplicating the work of the synod deputies after the fact. After this we received a proposal from a member of the church, that we should ask the synod to change the rules in such a way that the congregations receive the reports and proposals from the deputies, and respond to these, before the synod happens. Below is the background and proposed amendment to be send to the next synod for consideration.

Material Used

[Synod Rules – Article 4.2 Duties of the convening church](#)

Shall provide a provisional draft agenda and forward one electronic and one hard copy to each church attending the synod, at least 3 months before synod commences, and one electronic and one hard copy to the secretary of the Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad. This agenda shall be accompanied by one electronic and one hard copy of any new items of business together with relevant information.

[Synod Rules - Article 9 Deputies](#)

... Deputies shall submit a written report of their activities at the following synod. ...

[Synod Rules - Article 11 Method of reporting by Deputies](#)

Deputies reports are to be sent to the convening church four months prior to the synod and shall, as far as possible, include the following information: ...

[Other](#)

Articles 31 en 33 of the CO.

J. Kamphuis, Kerkelijke besluitvaardigheid (Uitg. De Vuurbaak 1970) hoofstuk IV.

Proposed amendments to articles 4.2, 9 & 11

The 2020 Synod decides to change wording in the relevant articles the Synod Rules so that the convening church shall provide the “*Deputies conclusions and recommendations*” to each church in the bond of churches, at least six (6) months before the synod commences.

Each of the churches can then respond to the deputies with comments or objections at least three (3) months before the synod commences so that the deputies still have time to incorporate these

proposed amendments in their final report to be sent to the convening church in time for distribution to the synod attendees.

Synod Rules – Article 4.2 Duties of the convening church

Shall provide a provisional draft agenda and forward one electronic and one hard copy to each church attending the synod, at least **two (2) months** before synod commences ...

Synod Rules - Article 9 Deputies

... Deputies shall submit a written report of their activities **at least six (6) months before the commencement of the next synod to all the congregations in the bond of churches. The congregations can then study the reports and submit recommendations and objections to the deputies at least three (3) months before the synod commencement. The deputies will then update the reports with these proposals and submit the final documentation to the convening church at least two (2) months before the commencement of the synod. ...**

Deputate stuur 'n skriftelike rapport oor hul werksaamhede uiterlik 6 maande voor die volgende sinode na die kerke, sodat die kerke dit betyds kan bestudeer. Die kerke kan hul kommentaar en beswaar tot uiterlik 3 maande voor die sinode aan die deputate voorlê sodat dié dit nog in hul finale rapport kan verwerk voordat hul finale rapport na die sameroepende kerk gestuur word ...

Synod Rules - Article 11 Method of reporting by Deputies

Deputies reports are to be sent to the convening church **two (2) months** prior to the synod and shall, as far as possible, include the following information: ...

Grounds for these proposed amendments

1. Decisions by the synod that impact all the congregations should be the result of a process in which all the churches were involved beforehand.

Sinodebesluite insake onderwerpe wat al die kerke raak behoort die resultaat te wees van 'n proses waarin al die kerke reeds betrokke is.

2. Decisions by the synod should not be ratified, in this case meaning to be examined again and then confirmed by the churches, after the fact. These decisions should be accepted by the churches as binding (art.30 CO - J. Kamphuis 1970). Church councils and members should also not re-submit a completed case to the classis and synod, unless they are of the opinion that the proposed changes are necessary. In such a case all decisions by previous synods regarding the case should be carefully read and investigated to avoid that previous objections, that have been discussed and dealt with, are not again opened for discussion by the synod (art.32 CO).

Sinodebesluite moet na so 'n proses nie deur die kerke eers nog 'geratifiseer' (d.w.s. deur nuwe ondersoek bekragtig) word nie, maar deur die kerke as 'ratum' (d.w.s. vas en bindend) beskou en aanvaar word: art. 31 KO (J. Kamphuis 1970). Kerkrade en lidmate mag ook nie sake wat reeds afgehandel is opnuut aan die orde stel nie, tensy geoordeel word dat wysiging noodsaaklik is. Maar om so 'n noodsaak vas te stel moet eers die besluite van voorgaande sinodes betreffende die voorgestelde saak eers noukeurig gelees wees, sodat besware wat klaar bespreek en weerlê is nie opnuut behandel word nie: art. 32 KO).

3. For many years there were church members that would start studying the details of synod decisions after they were made. They would then submit objections without being 100% knowledgeable of all the history that went with these decisions, and studies submitted to and decisions made by previous synods. Also, would these objections be submitted without new grounds or proof from the Word of God or from the Church Order.

Die praktyk van reeds baie jare leer dat daar na elke Sinode kerke en kerklidmate is wat (verkeerdelik) eers nadat 'n sinodebesluit geneem is, dit nog begin bestudeer en/of daarteen besware begin maak. Sonder om op hoogte te wees van die pad wat reeds deur die kerke gestap is en sonder om die begroning van daardie besluit met nuwe bewyse uit God se Woord of die Kerkorde te weerlê.

4. The practice in point 3 above can partly be attributed to the fact that the current Synod Rules leave very little time for the church councils to properly study the proposals by the deputies before the synod commences and to communicate this to the congregations and the deputies.

Die onder 3 hierbo genoemde praktyk word mede veroorsaak deurdat die huidige Sinodale Reëlins vir die kerkrade te min tyd gee om voor die aanvang van 'n Sinode die voorstelle van deputaatskappe te bestudeer en met hul gemeentes en die deputate te kommunikeer.

5. If the Synod rules are amended to give enough time for church councils to submit recommendations and objections to the deputies, the deputies will have enough time to adjust their reports to reflect these recommendations and objections in the final reports. Such a system will be of an advantage to the discussions at the synod and will probably lead to better decision making overall.

Indien daar in die Sinodale Reëlins voortaan ook ruimte aan die kerke om eventuele besware eers ter beoordeling aan die deputaatskappe voor te lê, sodat dié dit nog in 'n finale verslag aan die Sinode kan verwerk, kom dit die bespreking in die Sinode ten goede.

6. A period of two-and-a-half years should be enough for the deputies to finalise their reports for submission to the congregations. If these reports are received six months before the synod commences by the congregations (as proposed), congregations still have (a maximum of) three months for studying these reports and to send their inputs to the deputies. The final reports can then be submitted to the synod two months (instead of three) before the synod commences and send to the congregations with the agenda.

Twee-en-'n-halwe jaar moet vir deputaatskappe voldoende wees om 'n verslag van hul werksaamhede en die resultaat daarvan aan die kerke te stuur. En indien die kerke reeds 6 maande voor die Sinode die deputateverslae kan bestudeer, is dit steeds betyds wanneer die sameroepende kerk 2 pleks van 3 maande voor die sinode die agenda na die kerke stuur.

May our heavenly Father grant you all, the classis, deputies and the synod, the wisdom to handle this case in a responsible manner.

On behalf of the consistory



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