

# Report of Deputies Liturgical Music to Synod 2021

Date of report: December 14, 2020.

Version: 1.

Mandating synod: Synod 2017, Soshanguve-North

Proposed receiving synod: Synod 2021, Belhar

## 1. Mandate

9.1. To request comments from church councils on the deputies' proposals and to incorporate those comments in their report to the next Indaba and the next synod.

9.2. To arrange for printing of the approved songs, in compliance with legal requirements,

together with other newly approved documents in co-operation with the Stated Clerk.

9.3. To systematize and test the songs used in the Sotho-speaking congregations according

to the criteria approved by Synod 2011.

9.4. To assist the Sotho-speaking churches to find Psalms for use in the worship service.

9.5. To serve the churches with a substantiated recommendation with regards to the revised Totius-versification.

9.6. To contact the Calvyn Jubileum Fonds (CJF) deputies of the RCSA and to keep abreast

of developments regarding the revised Totius versification, to promote the continued availability of the older Totius versions and to make contributions with regards to the 'Skrifberymings' in order to ensure that the high standards as set by the Totius versification - are also maintained with all new Skrifberymings.

9.7. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held halfway between Synods 2017 and 2020.

9.8. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2017.

## 2. Membership

Sr M Breytenbach, Br AG de Vente (Convenor); Sr A Kamphuis; Rev BA Matlaela; Rev GF Mnisi

## 3. Summary of activities

Deputies met twice as a whole, after which the Afrikaans speaking and Sotho speaking deputies met a number of times separately. This had to be done due to the fact that the Afrikaans and Sotho speaking churches received completely different mandates from Synod, which were specific to the circumstances of those churches. The work that had to be done for the Sotho churches also required one to be fluent in Sotho, and the same applied for the work that had to be done for the Afrikaans churches.

## **Sotho-speaking deputies' activities:**

### Background:

In 2018 deputies decided to take a different approach to mandate 3, the evaluation of the hymns of the "Difela Tsa Sione" book and other hymns, which are sung in the Sesotho-speaking churches."

Deputies decided to take the work to the churches by targeting the three groups there are: the fathers, the mothers, the young people. These respective groups have steering committees which organise activities like conferences and camps, the latter being mainly for young people. In this way, deputies thought of bringing the mandate of the synod to the churches so that the church can support it and recognise the value of it.

### Meetings with steering committees:

- With the steering committee of the mothers in Nellmapius on the 27th April 2019. Deputies were then allowed to lead the next mother's conference with the topic of "Singing in our Sesotho-speaking churches."
- With the regional youth committee in Nellmapius on the 27th April 2019.
- Communication with the father's committee was via telephone but a date was set on which deputies could discuss the same topic on a fathers' conference, which was held on the 15 of June 2019.
- Deputies also had two meetings with Br. Mhlanga at The Reformed Study Centre.

### Conferences:

Deputies held three conferences where the synod decisions and mandates were communicated and explained:

- Fathers Conference held in Soshanguve XX on the 15th of June 2019. Deputies asked Br. Jeremiah Mhlanga to facilitate the topic and discussion.
- Mothers Conference held in Soshanguve WW on the 22th of June 2019. Rev Matlaela and Rev Mnisi facilitated the topic and discussion and selected a few familiar songs which the mothers would then be able to evaluate.
- The youth conference due to be held in Soshanguve F4 was cancelled.

## **Afrikaans-speaking deputies' activities:**

Afrikaans-speaking deputies, apart from regular meetings, also met with:

- The former deputies who served from 2008-2017 for a handover of work done in the past. Deputies were all newly appointed and had no background or previous understanding of the work that had been done in the past.
- Rev Gerard Meijer (Calvyn Jubileum Fonds) regarding the Revised Totius-versification and the latest updates regarding the current psalm book.

- Delegation of the consistory of the FRC Pretoria together with br Kees Roose, regarding a letter received by brother Roose in connection with Synod 2017's decision regarding the new "Skribberymings".

Also, during a meeting of FRC Maranata in 2019, deputies, on request from the Maranata consistory, presented to the congregation a brief introduction on the Revised Totius-versification.

## 4. Annexures

Below a list of annexures supporting this document:

Annexure 1	Letter of deputies to churches regarding Mandate 1.
Annexure 2	Letter from FRC Pretoria in response to deputies' letter.
Annexure 3	Letter from FRC Bellville in response to deputies' letter.
Annexure 4	Letter from FRC Maranata in response to deputies' letter.
Annexure 5	Letter of objection from br Kees Roose against Art 26: Acts of Synod 2017.
Annexure 6	Deputies Liturgical Music report to Synod 2017.
Annexure 7	Deputies Liturgical Music report to Synod 2014.

## 5. Detailed report

In line with mandate received from Synod 2017

**1. To request comments from church councils on the deputies' proposals and to incorporate those comments in their report to the next Indaba and the next synod.**

Art. 26, point number 2, on p.20 of the Acts of Synod 2017, formulates Synod's decision, and we quote: *"To adopt the deputies' recommendation that the churches should be requested to re-evaluate the criteria for extending the hymnal for the churches, as stipulated by Synod 2011, Article 23, with the aid of the following questions.*

- *Was the model chosen in 2011 really understood by the churches?*
- *Was the model adequately described in the Deputies report of 2011? The theological basis for the shortcomings at each theme was not described in the Deputies report.*
- *Was the model an ideal too high to be reachable?*
- *Is it because the matter does not live in the churches?*
- *Do we have the WILLPOWER AND CAPACITY in the churches to execute this project according to the specific model?*
- *Is it fair to continue this project if what is necessary to execute it is missing?*

*Ground:*

*Any changes of the hymnal for the churches should be within the framework of the guidelines*

*as agreed by the churches and specified in the decisions of Synod 2017."*

To request comments from church councils on these proposals from former deputies, a letter was sent to all church councils within the FRCSA (see annexure 1).

We received the following feedback from the churches:

### **1.1 FRC Pretoria (annexure 2)**

The consistory replied with a valuable document in answer to the letter sent by deputies, in which they also offered practical proposals for the road ahead.

To underline their answers and proposals, they first provided information on the situation in their congregation: There are some strong voices from within the congregation against the singing of hymns. After a commission investigated this matter, the consistory however concluded and decided that:

- it does not support the objections raised against the singing of hymns
- hymns with a good foundation in scriptural principles and doctrine are indeed permissible
- taking into consideration the strong objections against the singing of hymns in part of the congregation, it would be wise to postpone the singing of hymns for an indefinite period.

The consistory believes it would be better to look for hymns according to the themes and subjects below, and even to encourage translations and new hymns on these subjects:

#### **1. What is new about the New Covenant?**

The document refers to the first 3 principles the Synod of 2011 adopted. (Acts of Synod 2011, art. 23)

It then highlights the doctrines that reveal the bright light which shines in the New Covenant.

- God becoming man.
- The mystery of Christ, hidden for ages, has been revealed.
- Jesus made atonement for the sins of his people once and for all, with a perfect sacrifice.
- Jesus poured out his Spirit on his church.
- The teachings of the apostles explain extensively Christ's work on earth. What they taught is the foundation of the church, and that should be incorporated into our hymnal.

#### *1.1 Unity in the Covenants and changes in the New Covenant*

They point out that the unity of the covenant, as Belgic Confession art 25 states, guards us against two dangers:

- the danger of replacing the Psalms (their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ)
- the danger of traditionalism and fear ("the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased" and "the shadows have been fulfilled")

Any songs that are added are not meant to replace Psalms that sing about the same theme but complement them with the richness of the new covenant.

When looking at a theme, the decisive criterion is not the number of Psalms we already have on that theme, but the question whether this theme has been clearly expressed in terms of the revelation we received in the New Testament. Even hymns about themes covered well in the Old Testament should be considered, because the teaching of the apostles sheds new light on things that were hidden in the shadows during the Old Testament.

### *1.2 Themes that express the richness of the New Covenant:*

The themes suggested by Synod 2011 have, except for maybe one or two, undergone a significant change in the New Testament, where new light is shed on these themes. The clarity and beauty of these new truths, must be incorporated into our hymnal. The richness of the new covenant in these themes is then explained in more detail: The origin of misery; punishment of sin; the Trinity; providence of God; satisfaction: Christ's atonement; death, burial, descent into hell; resurrection of Christ; resurrection of our bodies; ascension; God the Holy Spirit; the communion of saints; justification; sacraments; the need for good works; predestination; proclaim the Gospel; songs for special services.

### *1.3 New themes to be considered*

Some themes were not put forward by Synod 2011, which must be considered:

- The Christian life and the fruit of the spirit
- Perseverance of the saints and the armour of God
- Jesus' return
- Prayer
- Comfort when believers die

## **2. Answers to the questions of the deputies (quoted directly from the document)**

### **2.1 Was the model chosen in 2011 really understood by the churches?**

Answer: The model is clear enough in the purpose, and the restriction around choosing new hymns. The lack of action by the churches may be partly due to a lack of understanding and partly due to strong resistance against hymns.

### **2.2 Was the model adequately described in the Deputies report of 2011? The theological basis for the shortcomings at each theme was not described in the deputies' report.**

Answer: The model was adequately described, but the theological basis for the themes they proposed could have been described more fully in the report. We provided this theological basis in paragraph 2, above.

### **2.3 Was the model an ideal too high to be reachable?**

Answer: No, the model is not an ideal too high to be reachable. In paragraph 2, we offer biblical reasons and depth to the vision and themes accepted in 2011. Deputies, however, were too optimistic to expect the churches to identify new themes and hymns. They should have carried out that task themselves, with optional input from the Page 8 of 10 churches.

### **2.4 Is it because the matter does not live in the churches?**

Answer: There are differences of opinion around introducing new hymns in the liturgy. However, Synod 2011 has made a decision to add hymns that deal with the “more” of the new covenant. This path is biblical and does justice to the glorious revelation of Jesus, his work, and his Spirit in the New Testament. It is a biblical principle that his people should glorify God in their singing according to the way he has revealed himself. Resisting the singing of hymns does not do justice to this principle. A lack of interest within the churches does not carry any weight after Synod has made a decision. In line with article 30 of the church order, decisions about our song book are of common interest to the churches. In article 31, all churches agreed to accept Synod decisions, and nobody has substantiated that the 2011 decision was unscriptural.

**2.5 Do we have the WILLPOWER AND CAPACITY in the churches to execute this project according to the specific model?**

Answer: We are a small bond of churches and do indeed have limited capacity. Nevertheless, we are convinced that this is not impossible if deputies use the Canadian Book of Praise as their starting point and co-opt help from members, as we propose in par. 4.3. The question of willpower should not even come up, if we are convinced that this is for the further glory of the Triune God.

**2.6 Is it fair to continue this project if what is necessary to execute it is missing?** Answer: this is a reformulation of the previous question, so the same answer applies.

### **3. Proposals:**

1. Our churches need to recommit themselves to the vision of singing about the “more” (the richness) of the new covenant because of the following:
  - This path is Biblical
  - We have agreed to accept Synod decisions
  - Be careful to accept that other songs are dangerous and Psalms are safe.
2. They suggest the following proposal in our report to the synod:

*To instruct deputies to compose a document 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. To instruct deputies to present the biblical view of Psalms and hymns as adopted by Synod 2011, in order to teach members who believe that the singing of hymns is against the will of the Lord, clarifying to the congregations the underpinnings of the decisions.*

They give the following reasons:

- Synod 2011 approved the singing of hymns and dealt with the objections after many years of discussion. This decision of synod still stands. We do have congregations where hymns already are 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 cause divisions.
3. They also propose that deputies add a proposal to their report to synod:

*To instruct deputies to use the Canadian Book of Praise as the primary source to select additional hymns.*

- Synod 2011 also decided to approve the Canadian Book of Praise for general use. The Book of Praise has been used by our Canadian sister churches for many years and has been updated and expanded in 2014 after a careful process.
  - There is a considerable overlap between some of their hymns and the Skrifberymings we already have in use. Where additional hymns are identified, translations into Afrikaans can be identified.
  - These translations can then be measured against the criteria and principles adopted by Synod 2011. In the case of multiple translations, the best and most faithful translation can be chosen.
  - Furthermore, we propose that the deputies co-opt additional volunteers to help with this task. This will ensure that the deputies don't necessarily have to do all the work themselves, but can play more of a coordinating role, ensuring that the volunteers each have a predefined amount of work, check that it is done according to the adopted criteria and principles.
4. Lastly the suggestion of the addition of the following themes to the model of Synod 2011:
- The Christian life and the fruit of the Spirit.
  - Perseverance of the saints and the armour of God in the fight against the devil.
  - Jesus rules as king and we are called to await his return with expectation.
  - Prayer (intercession by Jesus and the Holy Spirit praying with our Spirit (Romans 8)).
  - Comfort in the certainty of being with Christ when believers die.
  - Christian love, unity in the Spirit and gifts of the Spirit in the congregation.

### **1.2 FRC Bellville (Annexure 3)**

The consistory of the church in Bellville mentions in its reaction on deputies' letter, that there are still themes which need to be added to the themes that were identified by Synod 2011. They are: Creation and Recreation; The Last Judgement; Eschatology.

The church in Bellville does make use of the approved hymns in their worship services.

### **1.3 FRC Pretoria-Maranata (Annexure 4)**

The consistory of FRC Maranata answered the questions posed by deputies as follows (summarised):

#### **1. Was the model chosen in 2011 really understood by the churches?**

Answer: The model was not properly understood. There was not enough time to find and evaluate other hymns according to the themes. What should have been done, was to determine whether there are enough Psalms/hymns for each theme, and where this is not the case, Biblical sound hymns should have been identified. This was however not done due to time constraints, and only the 11 approved hymns, were tested.

## **2. Was the model adequately described in the Deputies report of 2011?**

It was described, but the less informed members of the church did not understand it. There was also some confusion around the new Psalm book which included additional “Skrifberymings”. The new “Skrifberymings” should also have been part of the deputies’ report to support the model of the different themes.

## **3. Was the model an ideal too high to be reachable?**

This model was in fact intended to protect the Psalms from being outnumbered by hymns. However, the consistory had to deal with numerous other pressing matters during the past years, and could not find time to attend to this issue. It was therefore an ideal too high to be reachable

## **4. Is it because the matter does not live in the churches?**

The matter of singing hymns does live among the members of the congregation. There are members who believe that it should not be sung, but most of them do not know the purpose of singing hymns and of the Synod 2011 report to protect and guarantee the singing of Psalms.

## **5. Do we have the WILLPOWER AND CAPACITY in the churches to execute this project according to the specific model?**

There are certain members of the congregation who want to sing hymns, but the congregation as a whole does not have this desire. The consistory believes that it should not be forced, but a way must be found to make the model work.

## **6. Is it fair to continue this project if what is necessary to execute it is missing?**

Some members will object if the hymns are used in the worship service, and others will object if the hymns are not used. The decision and grounds by Synod to approve hymns, was distributed to the congregation at the time, but most people have forgotten about it.

More attention should be given the question whether the hymns will, over time, replace the Psalms. Members of the congregation are concerned about this, especially in the light of what has happened in the NGKSA and GKv in the Netherlands. How do we prevent our churches of going the same route with hymns as the above mentioned federation?

Also, the model should focus more on other songs in the Bible which are not included in our current hymnal.

In short: it is a massive project for a very small federation of churches. Maybe a person can be identified who is able to study the hymns and regularly publish about it in magazines like “Kompas” in order to promote the actuality of the matter in the churches.

### **1.4 FRC Johannesburg**

We did not receive any feedback from the consistory of the church in Johannesburg.

### **1.5 FRC Belhar**

We did not receive any feedback from the consistory of the church in Belhar.

### **1.6 FRC Soshanguve-North**



We did not receive any feedback from the consistory of the church in Soshanguve-North.

### **Deputies' recommendations:**

1. That Synod considers the new themes proposed by FRC Pretoria (see 2.3 *New themes to be considered*, page 7 of Annexure 2) to be added to the list of themes used as criteria for selecting hymns and Skrifberymings for use in our churches.
2. A new document, specifically addressed to the consistories, summarising the Synod 2011 model and criteria, to be compiled and distributed to each consistory. FRC Pretoria has done remarkable work to underline the selection of these themes theologically, and this should be incorporated into the document. (See Paragraph 2, p. 4-7 of Annexure 2)
3. In line with the proposal from FRC Pretoria and FRC Maranata: To instruct new deputies to compose a document 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.  
Also to instruct new deputies to present the biblical view of Psalms and hymns as adopted by Synod 2011, in order to teach members who believe that the singing of hymns is against the will of the Lord, clarifying to the congregations the underpinnings of the decisions taken.
4. In line with the proposal from FRC Pretoria: To instruct new deputies to use the Canadian Book of Praise as the primary source to select additional hymns. Furthermore, that the deputies co-opt additional volunteers to help with this task. This will ensure that the deputies don't necessarily have to do all the work themselves, but can play more of a coordinating role, ensuring that the volunteers each have a predefined amount of work, check that it is done according to the adopted criteria and principles.
5. In line with the proposal from FRC Bellville: to add the following themes to the 2011 criteria for selecting hymns and Skrifberymings: Creation and Recreation; The Last Judgement; Eschatology.

### **Grounds:**

1. These themes are indeed missing from our current hymnal in the churches, and sing of the riches of the new covenant.
2. Several consistories have indicated that, in some or other way, the model was not fully understood. A new document will enable consistories to deal with this matter in the correct manner.
3. Synod 2011 approved the singing of hymns and dealt with the objections after many years of discussion. This decision of synod still stands. We do have congregations where hymns already are 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 cause divisions.

4. Synod 2011 also decided to approve the Canadian Book of Praise for general use. The Book of Praise has been used by our Canadian sister churches for many years and has been updated and expanded in 2014 after a careful process. There is a considerable overlap between some of their hymns and the Skrifberymings we already have in use. Where additional hymns are identified, translations into Afrikaans can be identified. These translations can then be measured against the criteria and principles adopted by Synod 2011. In the case of multiple translations, the best and most faithful translation can be chosen.
5. These themes do not feature in the 2011 criteria, and would be a valuable addition to our hymnal. *Note: we must however keep in mind that the 2011 criteria is based on the Heidelberg Catechism's themes, a method wisely invented and applied by the previous deputies which ensures a structured and safe system of selection, in which not any hymn can just randomly be added if it is in line with Scripture. When adding these or other themes, we recommend deputies/Synod to adhere to this framework.*

**2. To arrange for printing of the approved songs, in compliance with legal requirements, together with other newly approved documents in co-operation with the Stated Clerk.**

Copyright has been obtained from BybelMedia for use of the selection of hymns from the Liedboek, and the approved hymns have been added and printed together with the new liturgical forms in a booklet. Permission was also obtained from the CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International) to make use of the hymns electronically. Copyright fees have been paid.

The inclusion of the hymns into the new proposed booklet was done in co-operation with the deputies for liturgical forms. These booklets have been distributed to the Afrikaans-speaking churches, and can be purchased by members.

**3. To systematize and test the songs used in the Sotho-speaking congregations according to the criteria approved by Synod 2011.**

The Sotho-speaking deputies decided to take a different approach to this mandate (see summary of activities for more details): involve the churches, by targeting three main groups: fathers, mothers and young people through conferences and camps with the respective steering committee of each group. In this way deputies have started to, and will continue to, test the songs of Difela tsa Sione (currently used in the churches) against the criteria of Synod 2011. This, however, is a process that will take a few years due to the large scope of such a project.

It was however difficult to execute this mandate as it was received from Synod 2017. The churches had not thought of evaluating the songs of Difela tsa Sione before. The idea of singing Psalms has also not been considered before. Deputies decided to first create the awareness as well as underlining the importance of pondering on the content

of the Difela tsa Sione hymns. Deputies therefore organised the above-mentioned conferences.

**Recommendation:**

That a sub-committee be established with members of all the Sotho-speaking churches which will work on evaluating all the Difela tsa Sione hymns according to Synod 2011 criteria.

**Grounds**

In this way the work will not be a top-down approach, but involve everybody.

**4. To assist the Sotho-speaking churches to find Psalms for use in the worship service.**

The "Difela tsa Sione" hymn book does contain some Psalms. Deputies investigated already available versifications of the Psalms in African languages, but these are too difficult to sing due to the melody and due to non-ideal direct translations being widely used.

**Recommendation:**

Continuing the work of standardising the songs and adding psalms to be sung in our churches from the "Difela tsa Sione" hymn book, as per mandate 3.

**Grounds:**

1. "Difela tsa Sione" is already in use in our Sotho-speaking churches.
2. As the members of the Afrikaans-speaking churches in our federation grow/grew up with the Psalms on the Genevan melodies, 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.
3. The Difela tsa Sione has proved 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.

**5. To serve the churches with a substantiated recommendation with regards to the revised Totius-versification.**

**Background:**

The Revised Totius-versification of the 150 psalms and 50 Skrifberymings served on the RCSA synods from 1997 to 2009.

The original idea behind it was to eliminate approximately 100 archaic terms from the 1936 Totius versification that are technically Dutch and not Afrikaans, and replace it with more contemporary Afrikaans terms. However, the end product contained a staggering total of 2186 changes to the original 1936 versification.

The bundle was completed in 2006 and distributed to all RCSA congregations for feedback. Little to no feedback was received from within the federation, mainly because of two mainstreams in the RCSA: the more liberal churches generally opt for the Cloete versification, whereas the more conservative churches hold on to the 1936 Totius versification. The Revised Totius versification therefore did not appeal to any of the two mainstreams, and fell into “no-man’s land” within the federation.

RCSA Synod 2009 therefore decided to make the Revised Totius versification electronically available to all congregations, but suspend the project, and leave it to the discretion of the individual churches, with the reasons being:

1. A poetic work like that of Totius in 1936, is an independent work. Each verse is a poem in its own right, and one cannot simply change wording or anything else for that matter in a poetic work.
2. There was no need expressed for it from within the federation
3. It would create confusion, as churches would now have three different versifications to choose from.

This matter has also served on the FRCSA Synods from 2011, and to both Synod 2014 and 2017, deputies made the exact same recommendation, and we quote from Deputies report to Synod 2017 (annexure 6, page 8-9): *“With regard to this assignment, we would also like to refer to the Deputies report of 2014. We quote from Acta 2014:*

*“We deputies are of the opinion that we should not make the choice to use the revised Totius versification, because we should not isolate ourselves unnecessarily from other Reformed churches with regard to the songs that we use.”*

*The 1936 Totius versification is still well understood. Where necessary, the ministers can briefly explain difficult words -in a Psalm- to the congregation during a worship service.”*

See page 3 of Annexure 7 for Deputies’ report to Synod 2014 in this regard.

### **Deputies’ recommendation:**

We strongly recommend the FRCSA, in line with former deputies to Synod 2014 and 2017, to **not** adopt the Revised Totius versification and to suspend the investigation into and study of this project.

### **Grounds:**

1. We as FRCSA will isolate ourselves from other Reformed churches with regards to the songs that we use, in particular the neighbouring RCSA congregations in Pretoria and Bellville with whom we have ever increasing contact and ever growing relationships.
2. One cannot simply change certain words in a poetic work. A completely new versification (not necessarily every verse of every psalm – it can be selected

verses which contain archaisms) is the only way to (a) eliminate the archaic words of the 1936 versification and (b) still honour rules and regulations pertaining to poetics. This, however, is an enormous task, completely out of our reach as a small federation with limited manpower and capacity. This work requires professional people with the appropriate qualifications and theological knowledge.

3. The 1936 Totius versification is still well understood, and ministers of the Word as well as school teachers can explain the meaning of archaic words before it is sung in worship service, at catechism classes, at school, or wherever else.
4. Printing and distributing will come at astronomical costs for our federation, especially if no other (Reformed) churches take part in the project.

**6. To contact the Calvyn Jubileum Fonds (CJF) deputies of the RCSA and to keep abreast of developments regarding the revised Totius versification, to promote the continued availability of the older Totius versions and to make contributions with regards to the 'Skrifberymings' in order to ensure that the high standards as set by the Totius versification - are also maintained with all new Skrifberymings.**

Contact has been made, and a meeting held with Rev G Meijer, deputy of the CJF. The following has come forward from the meeting:

1. The Revised Totius versification, as mentioned under mandate 5, was approved by RCSA Synod 2009, but left to the discretion of the churches to use it or not. Due to the fact that the two mainstreams in the federation opt either for the 1936 Totius or the Cloete versification respectively, no congregation makes use of the Revised Totius versification except for one or two congregations that use it sporadically in worship service. The project has been suspended by the RCSA, and therefore no further developments have happened.
2. The 1936 Totius versification is still in print and still widely available, both as hard copy and for free on the GKSA mobile application. Continuous work is being done to further develop the application and make improvements.
3. There is no specific commission or designated group of people within the RCSA that composes new Skrifberymings. Individuals send proposals of new hymns or Skrifberymings to deputies, after which it is taken to Synod for approval. This makes it extremely difficult for our churches to form part of the process. We can, at most, evaluate new Skrifberymings approved by RCSA synods for use in our churches.

#### **Deputies' recommendations:**

1. That the FRCSA suspends any further investigation into the Revised Totius versification, **unless** the RCSA, and specifically the churches we have close relationships with, join in this effort.
2. Continue as federation 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.

3. Offer our assistance to the RCSA/CJF in the form of IT expertise to further develop and improve the GKSA application, as it is being increasingly used in our federation. A valuable addition, amongst others, to the application, would be to add the music notes (melody) to the psalms, similar to what we have in the hard copy. This has been done by other applications such as those used in the Netherlands.

#### **Grounds:**

1. The RCSA has suspended the project 12 years ago, and even they, with all the manpower, capacity and finances of a vast federation at their disposal, have decided to suspend the project and stick to the 1936 Totius and Cloete versifications. How then can we, as a very small federation with so many limitations, attempt to revive this project? We unfortunately do not have the means to do it.
2. The hard copies of the 1936 Totius versification remain the preferred form for many church members, even though the application is available.
3. The application is sufficient and on a good standard, but there is also room for improvement, not only on 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.

<b>7. To submit an interim report for discussion during an Indaba to be held halfway between Synods 2017 and 2020.</b>
--

An interim report was submitted and discussed at the Indaba in Johannesburg.

<b>8. To report to the next synod and formulate recommendations according to the Rules of Synod as adopted by Synod 2017.</b>
---

We would firstly like to reflect on the deputies' work and bring under the attention of Synod the following:

It was very challenging to carry out the tasks set out by Synod, for three main reasons:

1. The Afrikaans-speaking deputies were all newly appointed, without any prior experience as deputies or in similar commissions or committees.
2. To continue where the previous deputies had left regarding the Afrikaans liturgical music was difficult, because all Afrikaans-speaking deputies were newly appointed and had no background of the work done in the past.
3. The nature of the work of Deputies Liturgical Music is mainly *theological*, much more so than musical. For one to study, understand and bring forward recommendations to the churches without the required theological knowledge, is extremely difficult. In other federations, for example the RCSA and some of our sister churches abroad, this work is either done exclusively by ministers of the Word, or at the very least, under the leadership and guidance of ministers of the Word.

**General recommendations to Synod** (these are outside of deputies' mandate. All recommendations in line with the mandate, can be found under the relevant mandates above):

1. Synod to appoint new deputies consisting of Afrikaans and Sotho-speaking ministers of the Word, or at the very least, under leadership of a minister of the Word. Deputies also to be more representative of the federation if at all possible.
2. Selecting a couple of English psalms/hymns from the Canadian Book of Praise to be practised by all congregations for use at Classis meetings, Synods, and wherever else it might be necessary to sing together in English.
3. That Synod keeps in mind the general limitations – i.e. lack of manpower, capacity, finances etc. - of a small federation like ours, when issuing a mandate to deputies.

**Grounds:**

1. The nature of the work of Deputies Liturgical Music is mainly theological, much more so than musical. For one to study, understand and bring forward recommendations to the churches in this regard, you need extensive theological knowledge, whereas musical knowledge or skills only come in handy here and there. In other federations, for example the RCSA and some of our sister churches abroad, this work is either done exclusively by ministers of the Word, or at the very least, under the leadership and guidance of ministers of the Word. This is with good reason.
2. None of our congregations sing in the English language during worship service, but all our communal meetings such as Classis and Synods are conducted in English.
3. This should never be used as an excuse to not pay attention to important matters pertaining our worship of God, however, we must be careful not to lose perspective of what is really important and what not.

## **6. Letter of objection received from FRC Pretoria (annexure 5)**

Deputies received a letter of objection from the consistory of FRC Pretoria, submitted to them by br Cees Roose, member of the Pretoria congregation. This letter of objection (see annexure 5) was written with regards to Art 26 of the Acts of Synod 2017. Art 26 outlines the decisions taken by Synod 2017 regarding liturgical music, and more specifically for our attention here, the approval/rejection of new Skrifberymings.

To summarise, br Roose in his letter observes with concern the following:

1. Synod 2017 followed deputies' recommendation to **reject** certain Skrifberymings on the basis of it not meeting the criteria as determined by Synod 2011.
2. Synod 2017 however did not follow deputies' recommendation to **approve** certain Skrifberymings, arguing that deputies did not comply with the set criteria.

3. For both sets of Skrifberymings, however, deputies used the same method of evaluation, as there is no indication in their report that proves otherwise. Although the proposed Skrifberymings to be approved did, for most part, not comply with the selected themes, and although deputies did in some way fail to provide grounds for their recommendations, this was the case for both the proposed approved and rejected Skrifberymings. Synod, however, only accepted the recommendation of the Skrifberymings not to be approved, and not of those to be approved, even though the same (lack of) grounds were provided by deputies for those not to be approved.
4. Synod 2017 also rejected deputies' recommendation to **approve** certain Skrifberymings as some or all of them are not real versifications of Scripture. However, that a Skrifberyming has to be an exact versification of Scripture is not, and has never been, a requirement in our churches, and our current Skrifberymings (1-50) contain examples of such Skrifberymings which are not versifications of Scripture at all.

As deputies, we met with br Roose in connection with his letter. Subsequently, we went on and studied Art 26 of Acts of Synod 2017, in conjunction with his letter, and came to the unanimous conclusion that we share br Roose's concerns, objections and the grounds provided.

**Our recommendations in this regard to Synod 2021, are therefore as follows:**

1. Synod 2021 to review the (lack of) decision taken by Synod 2017 regarding the new Skrifberymings.
2. Synod 2021 to consult (a) Art. 26 of the Acts of Synod 2017, and (b) deputies' very thorough report to Synod 2017 (annexure 6), in conjunction with br Roose's letter of objection (annexure 5), to take a final decision on this matter.

The grounds we base our recommendations on, are very well formulated in br Roose's letter, and will not be repeated here. We strongly support the concerns and objections, as well as the grounds the objections are based on, contained in the letter.

With brotherly greetings in Christ.

On behalf of deputies  
Br. André de Vente