

Dear brothers and sisters, my family in Christ,

Distinguished delegates, Reverend Schreuder and I are here as delegates of BBK, to some known as Committee for Relationships with the churches abroad of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, we would like to thank the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika, for the invitation you extended to us and indeed for the reception we have had thus far.

On behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, It is an honour for us to extend warm greetings and best wishes to your entire church and we would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for having visited our Synod in April this year. Thank you for your contribution to the discussions on M/V issue.

As it is known, our Synod took the decision it took and did send a letter to the FRCSA about the its decision. I hope and pray that the decision taken will not affect our relation for the sake of churches, mission works and theological exchanges, for we know how important our long -standing tradition is. We are forever united in Christ, that bond will never be broken, no matter how much threat there might be to it, no matter how often we might differ in our approaches to issues in our local or regional churches.

Nowadays our churches face difficulties of all sorts, because of our regions, traditions and diverse societies. I have read in your report about specific regional and local issues such as: corruption, crime levels, polygamy, integration issues, congregations, etc. We will remain steadfast in our prayers to the Lord so as to alleviate your difficulties, lead the way to a more tolerant and prosperous society.

We, too, have many problems of own. Some are of our own making, others are a result of the ever-growing secularism, a more liberal political atmosphere that forms one of the biggest threats to our Christian identity in places such as schools, hospitals, the media, etc. More often than not, we Christians are having to defend and explain the whys of our faith and as a consequence, adherence to churches is no longer an ordinary thing. In some church congregations, services, mainly the afternoon services are now poorly attended, which goes to show how the membership numbers are dwindling. So we ask you, too, to intensify your prayers to the Lord for your brothers and sisters in the Netherlands in our struggle to retain our religious freedom and Christian / reformed identity.

In conclusion, I would like you to think and remember Izekiel 37. The story of the dry bones in the valley. The bones were speaking: *Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off*; desperation and disunity all over the place. God alone could cause the bones to live. Skin and flesh covered them, and the wind was then told to blow upon these bodies; and they were restored to life. You see, my brothers and sisters, the wind was an emblem of the Spirit of God, and represented his quickening powers and grace in the conversion of the most hopeless sinners to himself. This emblem was to show the people that the Lord would unite Judah and Israel.

Nothing has more hindered the advancement of the gospel than divisions. Let us work hard to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; let us seek for Divine grace to keep us from wicked spirits; and let us pray that all nations may be obedient and happy followers of the Son of David; that the Lord may be our God, and we may be his people together, for evermore.

Thank you.