

van die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

17 May 2017

To: Synod of the FRCSA  
Soshanguve, 7 – 11 August 2017

Re: **'Tent-maker' ministers and Training**

Esteemed brothers in Christ

The developments in the mission work have made it necessary to look at the strategic policy and re-think it with regard to, not just the short and middle term, but also the long term.

We believe that the mandate Christ gave remains valid: to witness where possible and to plant churches "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) "to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This is our point of departure.

But practice has taught us that there are limitations to our own abilities, in particular to continue the mission work in the manner that we have followed up till now.

On the one hand we cannot rely on receiving the same support from our sponsors in the Netherlands that we have always enjoyed. The goal has been clearly set: this support should gradually come to an end.

On the other hand we cannot expect the young congregations, amongst others, those on the Cape Flats, which originated from the mission work, to support a full-time minister, because these congregations are formed to a (large) extent by people that live in poverty and are in need of deacon support.

This means that the expectation that each church planted as a result of the preaching of the Gospel (either through evangelisation or mission), with regard to the past must be adjusted: these congregations shall never be able to support an academically trained full-time minister themselves.

Should we therefore stop mission work? Can we no longer execute the mandate Christ gave us? This can never be the intention.

The consistory of the FRC Cape Town has taken note of thoughts mooted in the Mission deliberations 2017, held in the Cape. One of the suggestions was that, considering the cultural circumstances of the congregations emanating from God's blessings over the mission-work, it would be more realistic to have a tent-maker minister serve there.

This tent-maker minister, 'teaching elder' or pastor (or whatever title is eventually given this minister in the churches) will earn (a part of) his own income along with additional financial support from within his own congregation and/or the church federation, and also together with the consistory lead the congregation and regularly lead the Sunday worship services.

This means that a member of the congregation who has the gifts will need to follow an adapted training course and be empowered to be able to make sermons on his own, or tailor them to suit the specific congregation.

His specific duties and competencies will need to be clearly outlined.

These two questions are not new. Previous synods have wrestled with this problem.

The synods of 1998 and 2000 conducted an extensive study with regard to an evangelist in the mission congregations and eventually halted the study because the need for evangelists was no longer seen as urgent. But the underlying study is still there and can be possibly be used in part for the 'office' of tent-maker minister.

The synod of 2014 at the request of Classis South also declared that mission is more than just church planting and that training and equipping the congregations (inclusive of consistories and leaders) also belongs to the mission mandate.

Classis South requests the synod, on the grounds of all these developments and previous studies and synod declarations to grant room for an adapted training course. Can the Deputies Curators be included in this, or can the training and equipping of a tent-maker minister be worked out in another way? The issue of which training requirements are necessary for this tent-maker minister will be an important decision.

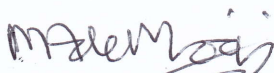
At the same time Classis South requests: Because it is expected that the church of Wesbank will be instituted in the not too distant future, this question has become so urgent that it is desirable to schedule an *ad hoc*- synod for the beginning of 2019 so that attention may be given to this matter.

The meeting of Classis South suggests that in order to prepare for this *ad hoc*- synod a Study Deputyship, comprising the brothers Rev E.L. van't Foort, Rev C.A. van Wyk, Rev J.A. Breytenbach and Rev J. Van der Linden, be appointed to examine these questions in a more concrete manner.

The attached appendices refer to several of the aforementioned decisions by previous synods, to the letter from Classis South to the Synod 2014 and to the Strategic Plan of the Mission Board of the FRC Bellville and Belhar 2017-2022.

On behalf of Classis South

Greetings in Christ



Sr M.A. de Mooij  
(secretary Classis South)

Appendixes:

1. Brief Klassis Suid aan Sinode 2014 (die brief en die bylaes by daardie brief is in die Acta van daardie Sinode op bls. 247-264)
2. Besluit Sinode 2014 (bls. 21-23 Acta)
3. Aanbevelings en Besluite Sinode 2000 (bls. 137 en 28-29 Acta)
4. Strategiese Plan GSK VGK Bellville en Belhar 2017-2022 (volg later)