

Deputies for Liturgical Music
(appointed by Synod 2017)
January 2020

Dear FRCSA church councils

We kindly write to you, in accordance to the assignment by the Synod of 2017
Soshanguve North,

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

and the Synod’s decision of 2017:

Decision 2. “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 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 2011.”

For some clarity, a brief summary follows of the criteria as was approved by the Synod Pretoria 2011 (Acts of Synod Pretoria 2011 p22-25, Appendix 4 p141-150)

- 1. The Hymns of the church must be faithful to Scripture.**
- 2. The hymns are (a) earmarked for the whole congregation and (b) must be of the highest standard poetically and musically.**
- 3. The Psalms form the basis of the Hymnal. New hymns that are included in the Hymnal, basically have the function to enlarge the Psalm book. It has the function to add to the Psalm book, not to replace the Psalms or to draw attention away from the Psalms.**
- 4. The above mentioned entails that hymns that are being added to the Psalms, will be hymns that deal with the “more” of the new covenant. Although in principle almost all God’s works are already revealed in the Old Testament (and in the Psalms), it is important that the congregation must live and sing according to the riches of the new covenant. According to this principle it is not merely “acceptable” to add new hymns to the Psalms, but necessary (a practice that is also already known to us through the ‘Skrifberymings’).**
- 5. To come to a balanced Hymnal for our worship services, it is necessary that this “more” of the new covenant is translated into themes and subjects according to which hymns can be looked for. Instead of evaluating all the hymns that we can possibly find, we think it will be better to look for hymns according to these specific themes and subjects, and even to encourage translations and new hymns on these subjects.**
- 6. Naturally we will bring into calculation the ‘Skrifberymings’ we already have, when looking for hymns on the “more” of the New Testament. The ‘Skrifberymings’ are already part of the Hymnal. We are grateful for this and accept them for use in our churches. Themes and subjects that are already sufficiently covered by these ‘Skrifberymings’, do not need any extra work and attention.**
- 7. The rich diversity of faith experience in the Psalms must be preserved at all cost. The Hymnal as a whole must give a balanced view of the normal Christian life, namely sin, struggle, judgment, grace, righteousness, suffering, charity, atonement, godliness etc.**

8. As churches we have a strong bond with the church of Jesus Christ through the ages – also regarding our hymns and singing. Our Hymnal must show that we have this believe and conviction by adding hymns of the church of Christ through all times and places.

The following themes were identified by the deputies in 2011:

- **The origin of misery**
- **Punishment of sin**
- **Satisfaction**
- **The Trinity**
- **Providence of God**
- **Death, burial, descend into hell**
- **Ascension**
- **God the Holy Spirit**
- **The communion of the saints**
- **Resurrection of the body**
- **Justification**
- **Sacraments**
- **The holy baptism**
- **The need for good works**
- **Predestination Instruction for the proclamation/expansion of the gospel**
- **Marriage ceremony**
- **Public confession of faith**
- **Ordainment of office bearers**

In consideration of above and the findings of the previous deputies (see below), we request your feedback on the above mentioned questions. This will enable us to compile a recommendation in line with Synod 2017 criteria, to Synod 2020.

Acts of Synod 2017, document 17, 3.4:

“None of the churches made use of the opportunity to propose new themes and appropriate songs.

The deputies have also not worked through on that point. We do still think that it is important for the churches themselves and by names the preachers, to identify themes where there is a shortage of suitable songs and to report that to the deputy.

None of the churches worked according to the themes in their evaluation of the hymns.”

We would like to thank you for your attention to this matter and we kindly request your feedback by the end of March 2020.

With Christian regards,

The deputies for Liturgical Music (Br André de Vente, Rev Thabo Matlaela, Rev George Mnisi, Sr Marthie Breytenbach, Sr Anita Kamphuis)

For more information see:

Acts of Synod Soshanguve North 2017 p20-21, as well as document 17:

<http://www.vgk.org.za/sites/default/files/Deputate%20Liturgiese%20Musiek%20verslag%202017%208%20May%20%2816%20files%20merged%29.pdf>

Acts of Synod Pretoria 2011 p 22-25, as well as Appendix 4 p 141-150:

[vgk.org.za/sites/default/files/Acts%20Synod%20FRCSA%202011.pdf](http://www.vgk.org.za/sites/default/files/Acts%20Synod%20FRCSA%202011.pdf)