

**Kontoere van 'n Kerkverband
Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde
kerkverband wees met betrekking tot
Leerstellige aangeleenthede
Geografiese ligging
Taal en Kultuur**

Dr. P.G. Boon

1 Algemene beginsels van NT:

Ware gelowiges is verplig om mekaar te soek en om saam kerk te wees. Vgl Johannes 17:11 " Heilige Vader, bewaar in u Naam die wat U My gegee het, sodat hulle een kan wees net soos Ons. "

Die woord 'kerkverband' kom nie in die Skrif voor nie. Maar die saak doen wel. Byvoorbeeld, die beeld van die liggaam van Christus in die NT - dui op die organiese eenheid tussen Christus en die gelowiges. Hierdie beeld dui ook op die organisatoriese aspek van die liggaam van Christus - 'n goed funksionerende eenheid. Dit dui ook op die institusionele karakter van die plaaslike kerk en alle kerke saam.

Die Griekse woord *ekklesia*, wat gewoonlik in NT met *kerk* of *gemeente* vertaal word, verwys na 'n vergadering van persone wat deur goed gedefinieerde lidmaatskap saamverbond word. Die meervoud van *ekklesia* word gebruik om na 'n aantal plaaslike gemeentes te verwys. Bv. Paulus in Romeine 16: 4: " gemeentes van die heidene " - meervoud; of in Galasiërs 1:22: " die Christelike gemeentes van Judéa "; of in 1 Thessalonicense 2:14: " die gemeentes van God wat in Christus Jesus is in Judéa "

**Contours of a Federation
How Wide or Narrow Should a Reformed Church
Federation be with regards to
Doctrinal Matters
Geographical Location
Language and Culture**

Dr. P.G. Boon

1 General principles from NT:

True believers are duty bound to look for one another and to be church together. Cf. John 17:11 "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."

The word 'federation' is not found in Scripture. However, the matter does. For example, the image of the *body of Christ* in the NT – points to organical unity between Christ and believers. This image also points to the organisational aspect of the body of Christ – a well functioning unity. It also points to the institutional character of local church and all churches together.

The Greek word *ekklesia*, usually in NT translated by church or congregation, refers to an assembly of persons constituted by well defined membership. The plural of *ekklesia* is used to refer to a number of local congregations together. F.e. Paul in Romans 16:4: "churches of the Gentiles" – plural; or in Galatians 1:22: "the churches of Judea"; or in 1 Thessalonians 2:14: "the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea"

The word *ekklesia* (singular) can refer both to the local congregation, as well as the universal church,

Die woord *ekklesia* (enkelvoud) kan verwys na die plaaslike gemeente sowel as die universele kerk, verwysende na almal wat die Vader aan sy Seun gegee het om te red. Sien Matt. 16:18: " Jy is Petrus, en op hierdie rots sal Ek my gemeente bou " - *ekklesia*.

'n Mens kan ook dink aan die term *heiliges (hagioi)* in die NT, sinoniem met die term *ekklesia*. Bv. in 1 Kor 1: 2: "aan die gemeente van God wat in Korinthe is, aan die geheiligdes in Christus Jesus, die geroepe heiliges, saam met almal wat die Naam van onse Here Jesus Christus in elke plek aanroep, hulle sowel as onse Here" En in 2 Kor 1: 1:" aan die gemeente van God wat in Korinthe is, saam met al die heiliges wat in die hele Acháje is".

Paulus het die Korintiërs teen independentisme gewaarsku, asof die evangelie net na hulle gekom het. (1 Kor 14:36). Die kerk opgeroep om heilig te wees en die sleutels van die koninkryk van die hemel te gebruik (Matt. 16:19, 18:18, 1 Pet. 1: 3). Dit is nie net 'n plaaslike saak nie, maar ook 'n gesamentlike poging van verskillende kerke (1 Kor 5 & 6, 1 Kor 12:28; Ef 4: 11-16).

Wat ons in die NT vind, is dat elke plaaslike gemeente direk onder die gesag van Christus staan. Daar is geen super-struktuur tussen Christus en 'n plaaslike kerk nie. Daarom kan, ook as gevolg van omstandighede, onderlinge band nie kan funksioneer nie, dan kan 'n plaaslike kerk nog steeds funksioneer. Daar is voorbeelde uit die geskiedenis waar daar weens oorlogs omstandighede jare lank geen kommunikasie tussen plaaslike kerke moontlik was nie. Dit was verre van ideaal, dit was nie self opgelê nie, dit was negatiewe omstandighede. Nietemin het plaaslike kerke steeds ten volle gefunksioneer.

meaning all those who the Father has given to his Son to save. Cf Matt 16:18: "you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" – *ekklesia*.

One can also think of the term saints (*hagioi*) in the NT, synonymous with the term *ekklesia*. F.e. in 1 Cor 1:2: "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be *saints* together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" And in 2 Cor 1:1: "To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the *saints* who are in the whole of Achaia".

Paul warned the Corinthians against independentism, as if the gospel has only come to them. (1 Cor 14:36) The church is called to be holy and use the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt 16:19, 18:18, 1 Pet 1:3). This is not only a local issue, but also a joint effort of different churches (1 Cor 5 & 6, 1 cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-16).

What we find in the NT, is that each local congregation stands directly under the authority of Christ. There is no superstructure between Christ and a local church. Therefore, even if, because of circumstances, federational bonds cannot function, still a local church can continue to function. There are examples from history where, due to war circumstances, there could be no communication for years between local churches. This was far from ideal, this was not self imposed, these were adverse circumstances. Nevertheless, local churches continued to function fully.

Is the structure of and cooperation between the churches we read about in the NT, of a

Is die struktuur van en samewerking tussen die kerke waarvan ons in die NT lees, van 'n kongregasionalistiese aard? Nee. In die NT gee Christus ons ook instruksies wat betref die bestuur, organisasie en opbou van die wêreldwye liggaam van die kerk. Die instruksies wat die apostel Paulus byvoorbeeld gegee het, is nie net van toepassing op een plaaslike individuele gemeente nie, maar bedoel om deur alle kerke in praktyk gebring te word, waar hulle ook al was en in watter tyd ook al. Vgl bv. 1 Kor 7:17 waar Paulus skryf: " En so bepaal ek in al die gemeentes." Vgl. ook 1 Kor 14:33-34: " want God is nie 'n God van wanorde nie, maar van vrede, soos in al die gemeentes van die heiliges. Julle vroue moet in die gemeentes swyg; want dit is hulle nie toegelaat om te spreek nie, maar om onderdanig te wees, soos die wet ook sê."

Hierdie, en wat sal volg, is 'n paar tekste uit die Bybel. Maar om eerlik te wees, is daar baie meer tekste. Die tyd vanoggend ontbreek om aan almal aandag te skenk.

2 Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband wees?

Met betrekking tot:

2.1 Leerstellige aangeleenthede:

In die NT is dit reeds duidelik dat belydenisuitsprake gesamentlik bereik is, met die doel om die ware Christelike leer en lewe te verdedig. Belydenisuitsprake wat bedoel is om deur al die gelowiges en al die kerke waar hulle ook al is, nagekom te word. Vgl Handeling 16: 4-5: " En op hulle reis deur die stede het hulle die verordeninge wat deur die apostels en die ouderlinge in Jerusalem vasgestel was, aan hulle oorgegee om te onderhou. En die gemeentes is versterk in die geloof en het elke dag vermeerder

congregationalist nature? No. In the NT Christ gives us also instructions as for governance, organisation and edification of the worldwide body of the church. The instructions the apostle Paul f.e. gave, are not only applicable to one local individual congregation, but meant to be put in practice by all churches, wherever they were and in whatever time. Cf. f.e. 1 Cor 7:17 where Paul writes: "This is my rule in all the churches." Cf. also 1 Cor 14:33: "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches."

These, and in what will follow, are a few texts from the Bible. But to be honest, there are many more texts. The time this morning prevents us to be more elaborate.

2 How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?

With regards to:

2.1 Doctrinal matters:

In the NT it is already clear that confessional statements are reached together, defending the true Christian doctrine and lifestyle, meant to be kept by all the believers and by all the churches wherever they are. Cf. Acts 16:4-5: "As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily."

in getal."

Ons kan uit die vergadering waaroor ons in Handeling 15 lees, heelwat leer wat betref kerkverbandelike en ekumeniese verhoudings. In Handeling 15 sien ons 'n oorgangspesies van die gesag van die apostels na die ouderlinge in elke gemeente wat verantwoordelikheid neem. Ons sien dat kerke saamkom wanneer 'n saak nie plaaslik opgelos kan word nie, 'n saak wat nie net die plaaslike kerk raak nie, maar ook op al die kerke van toepassing is.

Elke kerk moet op die fondament van die apostels gebou word, op die evangelie wat hulle gebring het. Sien Efesiërs 2: 20-21: " gebou op die fondament van die apostels en profete, terwyl Jesus Christus self die hoeksteen is, in wie die hele gebou, goed saamgevoeg, verrys tot 'n heilige tempel in die Here"

Wanneer 'n kerk van die apostoliese getuie afwyk, is dit nie meer 'n kerk van Christus nie. Gal 1: 8 "Maar al sou ons of 'n engel uit die hemel julle 'n evangelie verkondig in stryd met die wat ons julle verkondig het, laat hom 'n vervloeking wees!"

In die Skrif word 'n duidelike teenstelling tussen die kerk en die wêreld geopenbaar. Vgl Johannes 17: 14-18: " Ek het hulle u woord gegee, en die wêreld het hulle gehaat, omdat hulle nie van die wêreld is nie, net soos Ek nie van die wêreld is nie. Ek bid nie dat U hulle uit die wêreld wegneem nie, maar dat U hulle van die Bose bewaar. Hulle is nie van die wêreld nie, net soos Ek nie van die wêreld is nie. Heilig hulle in u waarheid; u woord is die waarheid. Soos U my gestuur het in die wêreld, het Ek ook hulle in die wêreld gestuur." En 1 Johannes 3:13: "Verwonder julle nie, my broeders, as die wêreld julle haat nie."

We can learn from the meeting about which we read in Acts 15, with regards to federational and ecumenical relations. In Acts 15 we see a process of transition of the authority of the apostles towards the elders in each congregation taking responsibility. We see that churches convene when a matter cannot be solved locally, a matter which has a bearing not only on the local church, but on all the churches.

Each church is to be built on the foundation of the apostles, on the gospel they brought. See Ephesians 2:20-21: "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."

When a church deviates from the apostolic testimony, then it is no church of Christ anymore. Gal 1:8 "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."

In Scripture a clear *antithesis* is revealed *between the church and the world*. Cf. John 17:14-18: "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." And 1 John 3:13: "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you ..."

In die Skrif word ook 'n antitese geopenbaar tussen die ware gelowiges en diegene in die kerk wat wêreldlik in leer en / of lewenstyl geword het. Lig en duisternis, waarheid en leuen, kan nie saam in dieselfde plek (kerk/kerkverband) woon nie. Sien bv. 1 Johannes 2: 18-19: "soos julle gehoor het dat die Antichris kom, bestaan daar ook nou baie antichriste ... Hulle het van ons uitgegaan, maar hulle was nie van ons nie; want as hulle van ons was, sou hulle by ons gebly het; maar dit moes aan die lig kom dat hulle nie almal van ons is nie."

In die Skrif vind ons ook die oproep om diegene wat aanspraak daarop maak dat hulle Christus volg, maar sy Woord verag, te ontmasker. Vgl Open 2: 9: "Ek ken jou werke en verdrukking en armoede maar jy is ryk en die lastering van die wat sê dat hulle Jode is en dit nie is nie, maar 'n sinagoge van die Satan." Ons vind die oproep om hulle wat afwyk van die leer van Christus uit te sluit. Reeds in die NT-era was dit 'n realiteit dat "Maar ek sê dit nie asof die woord van God verval het nie; want hulle is nie almal Israel wat uit Israel is nie. Ook nie omdat hulle Abraham se nageslag is, is hulle almal kinders nie " (Romeine 9: 6-7). Ook in die NT-era is daar daardie wat hulleself kerk van Christus noem, maar nie daardie naam verdien nie.

Daar is 'n duidelike oproep in die NT om hulle te vermy en van hulle af te skei wat in leer en / of lewe afvallig geword het. Vgl bv. 2 Timoteus 2: 17-19: "hulle woord sal voortwoeker soos 'n kanker, onder wie daar Himenéüs en Filétus is, wat van die waarheid afgedwaal het, omdat hulle sê dat die opstanding al plaasgevind het; en hulle keer die geloof van sommige om. Ewenwel, die fondament van God staan vas met hierdie seël: Die Here ken die wat syne is; en: Laat elkeen wat die Naam van Christus noem, afstand doen van die ongeregtigheid."

In Scripture an *antithesis* is also revealed *between the true believers and those in the church who have become worldly in doctrine and / or lifestyle*. Light and darkness, truth and lie, cannot live together in the same place (church). See f.e. 1 John 2:18-19: "... many antichrists have come ... They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

In Scripture we find also the call to unmask those who claim to follow Christ, but despise his Word. Cf. Rev 2:9 "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." We find the call to exclude those who have deviated from the doctrine of Christ. Already in NT era it was a reality that "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring" (Romans 9:6-7) Also in the NT era there are those who call themselves church of Christ, but do not deserve that name.

There is a clear call in the NT to *avoid* those and *secede* from those who have become apostate in doctrine and/or life. Cf. f.e. 2 Timothy 2:17-19: "... their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

Dit is 'n geestelike stryd om mekaar te beskerm naby die ware leer van die evangelie van Christus te bewaar. Paulus verwys na hierdie geestelike stryd in 2 Kor 11:28, waarin hy skryf oor die "Behalwe dit alles my daaglikse bekommernis, die sorg vir al die gemeentes." Plaaslike kerke word geroep om ook so vir mekaar te sorg, mekaar te beskerm naby die ware leer van die evangelie.

Christus gee eenheid in die waarheid. Vgl Johannes 17:17: " Heilig hulle in u waarheid; u woord is die waarheid."

Vgl 1 Joh. 1: 6: "As ons sê dat ons met Hom gemeenskap het en in die duisternis wandel, dan lieg ons en doen nie die waarheid nie."

Vgl 1 Johannes 2: 4-6 "Hy wat sê: Ek ken Hom, en sy geboorte nie bewaar nie, is 'n leuenaar en in hom is die waarheid nie. Maar elkeen wat sy woord bewaar, in hom het die liefde van God waarlik volmaak geword ... Hy wat sê dat hy in Hom bly, behoort self ook so te wandel soos Hy gewandel het."

Vgl 3 Johannes 1: 4: " Ek het geen groter blydskap as dit nie, dat ek hoor dat my kinders in die waarheid wandel."

Sub-gevolgtrekking oor: Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband ten opsigte van die leer wees?

Sola Scriptura. Tota Scriptura. Kerke wat hiervan afwyk, maak hulleself los van die rots waarop Jesus Christus sy kerk bou, en word aangemoedig om terug te keer na die ortodokse leer.

Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband wees?

Met betrekking tot:

2.2 Geografiese ligging:

Laat ek begin met Jesus se laaste woorde voor sy

It is a spiritual battle to guard one another close to the true doctrine of the gospel of Christ. Paul refers to this spiritual battle in 2 Cor 11:28 where he writes about the "daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." Local churches are called to likewise take care of each other, protecting each other close to the true doctrine of the gospel.

Christ gives unity in the truth. Cf. John 17:17:

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

Cf. 1 John 1:6: "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

Cf. 1 John 2:4-6 "Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected ... whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."

Cf. 3 John 1:4: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

Sub-conclusion on: How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be in regards to doctrine?

Sola Scriptura. Tota Scriptura. Churches who deviate from this, detach themselves from the rock on which Jesus Christ builds his church, and should be urged to return to the orthodox doctrine.

How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?

With regards to:

2.2 Geographical location:

Let me start with Jesus last's words, before his

hemelvaart: Handeling 1: 8 "julle sal krag ontvang wanneer die Heilige Gees oor julle kom, en julle sal my getuies wees in Jerusalem sowel as in die hele Judéa en Samaría en tot aan die uiterste van die aarde. "

3 sirkels word hier genoem deur ons Here:

1. In Jerusalem en in die hele Judea - dit is die sirkel van die ou verbondsvolk van God.
2. Samaria - dit is die sirkel van diegene wat van die verbond in die verlede afvallig geword het.
3. En tot aan die einde van die aarde - dit is die sirkel van alle mense (die heidene) wat nog nie in die verbond was nie.

Sien ook Matt 28: 18-19, Markus 16:15; Lukas 24:47. Die evangelie moet uitgaan in die hele wêreld tot by die uithoeke van die aarde.

In die boek Handeling sien ons 'n begin van hierdie beweging. Van Jerusalem, Judéa, Samaria, Antiochie, Ciprus, Klein-Asië, Macedonië, Griekeland en die boek Handeling eindig met Paulus wat in Rome aankom, die hoofstad van die heidense wêreld van daardie dae.

Wat ons ook in die NT vind, is die oproep aan al die kerke, die plaaslike gemeentes, waar hulle ook al geplant is, om te begin saamwerk. Daar is geen aanduiding van 'n super-struktuur in die NT nie. Alle plaaslike kerke staan direk onder hulle Hoof, Jesus Christus. Daar is egter interafhanklikheid.

Ons kan dink aan die oproep om kollekte vir mekaar te hou, bv. die meer welgestelde gemeentes van die finansiële sukkelende gemeente in Jerusalem. Vgl Rom 15: 25-28. " Maar nou reis ek na Jerusalem in diens van die heiliges. Want Macedónië en Acháje het dit goedgevind om iets by te dra vir die armes onder die heiliges in Jerusalem. Hulle het dit goedgevind, sê ek, en hulle is ook hul skuldnaars; want as die heidene deel gekry het aan hulle geestelike voorregte, is hulle ook verskuldig om hulle met stoflike goedere

ascension: Acts 1:8 "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

3 circles are mentioned here by our Lord:

1. In Jerusalem and in all Judea – this is the circle of the old covenantal people of God.
2. Samaria – this is the circle of those who have become apostate from the covenant in the past.
3. And to the end of the earth – this is the circle of all humans (the heathen) who haven't been in the covenant yet.

See also Matt 28:18-19, Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47. The Gospel should go out in all the world, to the corners of the earth.

In the book of Acts, we see a beginning of this movement. From Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and the book of Acts ends with Paul arriving in Rome, the capital of the gentile world of those days.

What we also find in the NT is the call on all the churches, the local congregations, wherever they were planted, to start cooperating. There is no indication of a superstructure in the NT. All local churches are directly under their Head, Jesus Christ. However there is inter-dependence.

We can think of the call to hold collections for each other, f.e. the more affluent congregations to the financially struggling congregation in Jerusalem. Cf. Rom 15:25-28 "At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service

te dien."

A du Plooy noem hierdie gesamentlike aksie om vir Jerusalem te kollekteer: 'n georganiseerde en sigbare en tasbare ervaring om saam in 'n verband te wees, 'n eenheid ten spyte van die grense tussen lande en nasies.

Daar is baie meer gedeeltes in die NT wat verwys na hierdie gesamentlike kollekte:

Vgl 1 Kor. 16: 1-3: " Wat die insameling vir die heiliges betref, moet julle ook so doen soos ek vir die gemeentes van Galásië gereël het. Op elke eerste dag van die week moet elkeen van julle self opsy sit en opspaar namate sy voorspoed is, sodat die insameling nie eers plaasvind as ek kom nie. En wanneer ek aangekom het, sal ek die persone wat julle goedkeur, met briewe stuur om julle gawe na Jerusalem te bring."

Die oorsaak van die versameling was die ernstige hongersnood wat die broers in Judea getref het (Handelinge 11: 27-30).

Johannes Calvyn wys daarop dat hierdie hongersnood deur God gebruik is om die kerklike bande tussen die kerke van die heidene en dié van Jerusalem te versterk. God het in sy voorsienigheid hierdie hongersnood gebruik om die spanning tussen die kerke hoofsaaklik uit die heidene en die kerk hoofsaaklik van die Jode te verlig.

Die manier waarop Paulus oor hierdie kollektes skryf, maak dit duidelik dat baie meer op die spel was as net die geld. Vir hom was dit baie meer 'n kwessie van houding, liefde, gemeenskaplike besorgdheid vir mekaar en eenheid tussen die kerke.

Nog 'n voorbeeld van samewerking oor geografiese grense heen, vind ons in die oproep om die briewe met mekaar te deel, wat die apostels aan elke plaaslike gemeente geskryf het. Vgl Kolossense 4:16: "En wanneer hierdie brief by

to them in material blessings."

A du Plooy calls this joint action of collecting for Jerusalem: an organized and visible and tangible experience of being together in a federation, a unity in spite of the borders between countries and nations. (p. 12-13 *In die Skriflig*)

There are many more passages in the NT referring to this joint collection:

Cf. 1 Cor 16:1-3: "Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside ... And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem."

Cause for the collection was the severe famine that hit the brothers in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).

John Calvin points to the fact that this famine was used by God to strengthen the ecclesiastical bonds between the churches from the Gentiles and that of Jerusalem. God providentially used this famine to alleviate the tensions between the churches mainly from the heathen and those mainly from the Jews.

In the way Paul wrote about these collections, it is clear that much more was at stake than only the money. For him it was very much a matter of attitude, love, mutual concern for one another, and unity between the churches.

Another example of cooperation across geographical borders, we find in the call to share the letters with each other, which the apostles had written to each local congregation. Cf. Colossians 4:16: "And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter

julle gelees is, sorg dat dit ook in die gemeente van die Laodicense gelees word en dat julle ook dié uit Laodicéa lees."

Hierdie openbarings in die Skrif van samewerking oor geografiese grense heen, kan vergelyk word met die saad van 'n blom. In die saad is al die eienskappe van die blom reeds teenwoordig. Ons vind die saad in die NT. 'n Goed funksionerende verband tussen kerke is die blom wat uit hierdie saad kom.

Die wêreldwye dimensies van Christus se kerk, soos ons dit in die sendingsbevel van Jesus net voor sy hemelvaart vind, sal tot volle werklikheid kom, soos onthul in Openbaring 5: 9-10, waar die wêreldwye kerk tot lofprysing van die Lam sing: " U is waardig om die boek te neem en sy seëls oop te maak, want U is geslag en het ons vir God met u bloed gekoop uit elke stam en taal en volk en nasie, en het ons konings en priesters vir onse God gemaak, en ons sal as konings op die aarde heers."

Sub-gevolgtrekking: Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband wees ten opsigte van geografiese ligging? In beginsel is daar geen grense nie.

**Dit bring ons by die volgende paragraaf:
Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband wees?
Met betrekking tot:**

2.3 Taal en Kultuur

Ons bely die Skriftuurlike roeping dat plaaslike gemeentes in kerkverbandelike eenheid met ander gemeentes moet lewe, gebaseer op die fondament van God se Woord alleen. Vgl 1 Petrus 2: 6-10 "
Kyk, Ek lê in Sion 'n uitverkore en kosbare

from Laodicea."

These revelations in Scripture of cooperation across geographical borders, can be compared to the seed of a flower. In the seed all the characteristics of the flower are already present. We find the seed in the NT. A well functioning federational unity is the flower that comes from this seed.

The worldwide dimensions of Christ's church, as we found it in the Great Commission of Jesus just before his ascension, will come to full reality, as is revealed in Revelation 5:9-10, where the worldwide church is singing to the praise of the Lamb: "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Sub-conclusion: How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be with regards to geographical location? In principle there are no boundaries.

This brings us to the next paragraph:
**How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be?
With regards to:**

2.3 Language and Culture

We profess the Scriptural calling that local congregations should live in federational unity with other congregations building on the foundation of God's Word alone. Cf. 1 Peter 2:6-

hoeksteen, en die wat in Hom glo, sal nooit beskaam word nie.

Vir julle dan wat glo, is Hy kosbaar; maar vir die ongelowiges geld die woord: Die steen wat die bouers verwerp het, dit het 'n hoeksteen geword; en: 'n Steen des aanstoots en 'n rots van struikeling-- vir dié wat hulle daarteen stamp, omdat hulle aan die woord ongehoorsaam is, waarvoor hulle ook bestem is. Maar julle is 'n uitverkore geslag, 'n koninklike priesterdom, 'n heilige volk, 'n volk as eiendom verkry, om te verkondig die deugde van Hom wat julle uit die duisternis geroep het tot sy wonderbare lig, julle wat vroeër geen volk was nie, maar nou die volk van God is"

Die Skrif definieer alle gelowiges (van watter ras, nasie, stam of taal hulle ook al is), om saam 'n nuwe eenheid, 'n nuwe ras, 'n nuwe nasie, 'n nuwe volk te word. Dit word hul primêre identiteit, hul primêre burgerskap. Nou is hierdie nuwe eenheid iets wat nie net abstrakte teorie kan bly nie, maar dit moet sigbaar word in kerkverbandelike en ekumeniese eenheid. Dit is die eenheid in Christus, te midde van alle diversiteit.

Die wonderwerk van Pinkster was dat die apostels deur die Heilige Gees in staat gestel is om die evangelie van Jesus Christus in baie verskillende tale te verkondig. Dit was die vervulling van Joël 2:32: " En elkeen wat die Naam van die HERE aanroep, sal gered word." Dit word aangehaal in Petrus se pinksterpreek, Handeling 2:21. Die wonderwerk van Pinksterdag onderstreep die belangrikheid van die prediking in almal se moedertaal. Handeling 2: 7-11: " en hulle was almal verbaas en verwonderd en sê vir mekaar: Is almal wat daar spreek, dan nie Galileërs nie? En hoe hoor ons hulle, elkeen in ons eie taal waarin ons gebore is? ... ons hoor hulle in ons eie taal oor die groot dade van God spreek."

10: "For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people"

Scripture here defines all believers (from whatever race, nation, tribe, or language they are) to become together a new unity, a new race, a new nation, a new people. This becomes their primary identity, their primary citizenship. Now this new unity is something that cannot stay abstract theory only, but it should become visible in federational and ecumenical unity. This is the unity in Christ, amidst all diversity.

The miracle of Pentecost was that the apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in many different languages. This was the fulfilment of Joel 2:32: "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." This is quoted in Peter's pentecostal sermon, Acts 2:21. The miracle of Pentecost Day underscores the importance of the preaching in everyone's mother tongue. Acts 2:6-11: "they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language ... how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ... we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

Terselfdertyd vind ons in die Nuwe Testament dat wanneer gelowiges uit verskillende tale saamkom, hulle die *lingua franca* gebruik het om mekaar te verstaan. Die NT is self geskryf in die *lingua franca*, Grieks, die Engels van daardie dae. Dit dui reeds op die beduidende verandering in die nuwe verbond in vergelyking met die ou verbond. Die OT is nie in die *lingua franca* geskryf nie, maar die NT wel.

Die nuwe werklikheid van Christus se kerk in die NT word pragtig geopenbaar in Kolossense 3:11: " waar daar nie Griek en Jood, besnedene en onbesnedene, barbaar, Skith, slaaf, vryman is nie, maar Christus is alles en in almal."

In die NT vind ons geen aanduiding dat daar segregasies tussen gemeentes op grond van verskillende kulture bestaan nie. Die aanduiding is dat daar eenheid in een gemeente in elke dorp was. Byvoorbeeld, alhoewel die hawestad Korinthe baie kosmopolities was, het al daardie diversiteit in die eenheid van een gemeente saamgekom.

Die oproep tot eenheid vind ons ook in bv. Efesiërs 4: 1-4: " Ek vermaan julle dan ... om te wandel waardig die roeping waarmee julle geroep is ... en ernstig strewende om die eenheid van die Gees te bewaar deur die band van die vrede. Dit is een liggaam en een Gees, soos julle ook geroep is in een hoop van julle roeping".

Sub-gevolgtrekking: Hoe breed of smal moet 'n Gereformeerde kerkverband wees met betrekking tot taal en kultuur? In beginsel moet taal en kultuur nie die grense van 'n kerkverband bepaal nie.

3 Ten slotte:

In die NT sien ons dat nie die vervolging van die

At the same time, we find in the New Testament, that when believers from different languages came together, they used the *lingua franca*, in order to understand one another. In actual fact, the NT itself was written in the *lingua franca*, Greek, the English of those days. This already points to the significant change in the new covenant compared to the old. The OT was not written in the *lingua franca*, yet the NT is.

The new reality of Christ's church in the NT is beautifully revealed in Colossians 3:11: "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all."

In the NT we find no indication that there were segregations between congregations on the basis of different cultures. The indication is that there was unity in one congregation in each town. For example, although the harbor city of Corinth was very cosmopolitan, all that diversity came together in the unity of one congregation.

The call to unity we also find in f.e. Ephesians 4:1-4: "I therefore ... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called ... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit".

Sub-conclusion: How wide or narrow should a Reformed church federation be with regards to language and culture? In principle language and culture should not determine the boundaries of a federation.

3 In conclusion:

In the NT we see that neither the persecution of the church, neither the hatred of the Jews and

kerk of die haat van die Jode en Samaritane of Joodse nasionalisme die heiliges en kerke verhoed het om hul eenheid oor geografiese, taalkundige en kulturele grense heen te ervaar nie. Die Griekse term *koinonia* in 2 Kor 9:13 bevat die kern van wat 'n kerkverband behoort te wees - *koinonia* wat gemeenskap beteken, om te deel, gewillige bydraes tot mekaar.

Of 'n kerkverband is iets waaraan plaaslike kerke vrywillig deelneem, of dat dit 'n opdrag is ... Miskien kan mens die beste sê dat dit albei is. Die manier waarop Paulus skryf, wat die kerke aanmoedig om geld in te samel vir die susterkerk in Jersusalem, oorskry die teenstelling van vrywillige deelname of 'n opdrag. Aan die een kant het Paulus nie hierdie kollekte op die kerke afgedwing nie. Hy het die selfbestuur van die kerke gerespekteer. Daar was ook nie 'n hiërgiese dwang van die kant van die moederkerk in Jerusalem nie. Dit was nie 'n soort kerklike belasting nie. Terselfdertyd (1 Kor 16: 1) het Paulus 'n verpligting aan die kerke gestel. Dit was 'n appèl. Die kerke het besef dat hierdie optrede, naamlik om deel te neem en te deel oor geografiese, kulturele en taalgrense heen, die logiese gevolg is van die luister na die Evangelie en dit in die praktyk te bring. Die kerke het besef dat daar geen alternatief was as om gewillig daaraan deel te neem nie. Inderdaad, dit was 'n lieflike plig.

Die NT openbaar geen super-struktuur bo-oor plaaslike kerke nie. Nietemin openbaar die NT dat plaaslike kerke geroep en verplig word om in kerkverbandelike eenheid te organiseer, met as doel:

- die eer van God
- die onderlinge opbou van die liggaam van Christus
- die beveiliging van elke plaaslike kerk om die kerkmerke van 'n ware kerk te bly vertoon.

Samaritans, neither Jewish nationalism prevented the saints and the churches to experience their unity across geographical, linguistic and cultural borders. The Greek term *koinonia* in 2 Cor 9:13 very much captures the essence of what a federation should be – *koinonia* meaning fellowship, sharing, willing contributions towards each other.

Whether forming a federation is something local churches should partake in voluntarily, or whether it is a command ... perhaps one can best say it is both. The way Paul writes, encouraging the churches to collect for the sister church in Jersusalem, transcends the dichotomy of either voluntary participation or a command. At the one hand Paul did not force this collection upon the churches; he respected the self-governance of the churches. Neither was there a hierarchical compulsion from the side of the mother church in Jerusalem. It was not a sort of ecclesiastical tax. At the same time (1 Cor 16:1) Paul put an obligation on the churches. It was an appeal. The churches realized that this behaviour, namely to participate and share across geographical, cultural and linguistic borders, was the logical consequence of listening to the Gospel, and putting it into practice. The churches realized that there was no alternative than to willingly partake in this. Indeed it was a lovely duty.

The NT does not reveal any superstructure over local churches. Nevertheless, the NT reveals that local churches are called and obligated to organize in federational unity, the purpose being:

- the honor of God
- the mutual edification of the body of Christ
- the safeguarding of every local church to continue to exhibit the marks of a true church.

A du Plooy skryf: Daar is geen grense vir 'n kerkverband nie. Daar is net een ekumeniese kerkverband, oor kulturele en taalkundige grense heen.

4 Ware Ekumeniteit - Belydenisverklaring

'n Paar plaaslike gemeentes van verskillende kerkverbande begin om nader aan mekaar te beweeg. Om in dieselfde stad, maar uit verskillende kerkverbande te wees, maak dinge 'n bietjie meer ingewikkeld. Vrae wat ontstaan, is byvoorbeeld: As daar in een van die kerkverbande vroue in die amp in sommige plaaslike gemeentes dien, moet dit voorkom dat samewerking met ander plaaslike kerke plaasvind? In ons tyd word dit al hoe meer so dat tradisionele kerkverbande 'n verskeidenheid teologiese substrome toon. Hierdie substrome kan wissel van teologies konserwatief tot liberaal. In Suid-Afrika kan hierby politieke substrome bygevoeg word, politieke konserwatief (steeds die ou 'apartheidsidees' verdedig) of politieke liberaal.

In hierdie komplekse landskap is dit nie altyd maklik vir plaaslike kerke uit verskillende denominasies om nader aan mekaar te beweeg nie en om mekaar te vertrou. 'n Paar jaar gelede is 'n konferensie gehou, en daarna is 'n brosjure uitgereik wat kort belydenisagtige stellings bevat oor 'n aantal aktuele onderwerpe. Op hierdie manier het die konferensie probeer om Gereformeerde kerke saam te bring wat eintlik een in die Gereformeerde geloof is, beide in leer en praktyk, maar versplinter in verskillende verbande.

Ek wil met u uit hierdie verklaring die paragraaf oor ekumeniteit en kerkverband deel:

A du Plooy writes: There are no borders for a federation. There is just one ecumenic federation, across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

4 True Ecuminicity – Confessional Statement

A couple of local congregations from different federations have started working closer together. Being in the same city, yet from different denominations, makes things a bit more complicated. Questions that arise are for example: If in one of the federations women are serving in the ecclesiastical offices in some local congregations, should this prevent cooperation with other local churches? In our times it becomes a reality more and more that traditional church denominations display a variety of theological sub currents. These sub currents can vary from theologically conservative to liberal. In South Africa to this can be added political sub currents, to be either politically conservative (still defending the old 'apartheid' ideas) or to be politically liberal. In this complex landscape it is not always easy for local churches from different denominations to move closer to each other and start trusting each other. A few years ago a conference was held, and afterwards a brochure was issued, containing brief confessional-like statements on a number of actual topics. In this way the conference endeavoured to bring together Reformed churches who really are one in the Reformed faith both in doctrine and practice.¹

I want to share with you from this statement the paragraph on ecuminicity and church federation:

True Ecuminicity

“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gathers, defends and preserves his church out of the whole human race

¹ *Gereformeerde vandag. Belydende kerk in die hede* (2017). Editors: Dr. P.G. Boon & R. van der Kooy. A digital copy can be obtained from the author: famgboon@gmail.com

Soek steeds die ware ekumene

Jesus Christus, die Seun van God, vergader, beskerm en onderhou sy kerk uit die hele menslike geslag deur sy Gees en Woord (Joël 2:32; Johannes 10:4,11,14; Handeling 2:21; 20:28; Efesiërs 5:25-27; HK *Sondag 21*). Die kerk is God se verbondsvolk van die nuwe verbond (Jesaja 49:6; Jeremia 31:31-33; Romeine 1:16; Efesiërs 2:17-22; 1 Petrus 2:9-10). Daarom glo ons dat die kerk van Christus bestaan uit mense van alle volke, tale, kulture, oud en jonk, ryk en arm (Kolossense 3:11; Openbaring 5:9). Geen mensgemaakte strukture mag hierdie verskeidenheid van Christus se kerk inperk nie. Dit is elke gelowige en elke gemeente se taak om volle geloofsgemeenskap te soek met almal wat die eenheid in die ware geloof deel en die geloofsgemeenskap nie te versmal tot 'n kulturele of 'n taalgemeenskap nie. Terselfdertyd bely ons die belang dat die Evangelie soveel moontlik in elke mens se moedertaal gepreek word en dat gelowiges in hul eie taal die Here sal loof en tot Hom sal bid (Handeling 2:6,11). Tog mag grense wat deur taal- of kultuurverskille ontstaan nie lei tot kerkverbandelike geskeidenheid nie.

Dit is daarom belangrik om te waarsku teen die gevaar van nasionalisme waar die feit dat 'n gelowige primêr 'n burger van die koninkryk van die hemele is op die agtergrond raak. Dit geld ook vir die gevaar van rassisme. Daar is slegs een Skriftuurlike antitese, naamlik tussen gelowig en ongelowig, die ryk van Christus teenoor die ryk van die Satan (Psalm 129:4-5; Johannes 17:14-17; 1 Johannes 2:18-19; 3:10-17).

Dit is die plig van elke gelowige om hom te voeg by die kerk waar die Woord van God suiwer en in sy volheid gepreek en in praktyk gebring word (Psalm 22:23; 23:6; Handeling 2:42-44; Hebreërs 10:25; NGB art. 27-29). Daarmee verwerp ons die

(Heidelberg Catechism 21 - Joel 2:32; John 10:4,11,14; Acts 2:21; 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27;).

Therefore we believe that Christ's church is peopled by all nations, languages, cultures, old and young, rich and poor (Colossians 3:11; Revelation 5:9). No manmade structures may curtail this diversity of Christ's church. Each believer and each church is called to pursue full fellowship with everyone sharing the true faith, and not to limit the unity in faith only with those sharing the same culture or language. At the same time this does not take away that the Gospel should be preached as much as possible to each and everyone in his mother tongue (Acts 2:6,11). Nevertheless boundaries because of linguistic or cultural differences may not lead to ecclesiastical divisions. It is therefore important to warn against the dangers of nationalism, where the fact that a believer is primarily a citizen of the kingdom of heaven is pushed to the background. This also applies to the danger of racism. There is but one Scriptural antithesis, namely between believing and unbelieving, between the empire of Christ and the empire of Satan (Psalm 129:4-5; John 17:14-17; 1 John 2:18-19; 3:10-17).

It is the duty of each believer to join the church where God's Word is purely preached and fully put into practice (Psalm 22:23; 23:6; Acts 2:42-44; Hebrews 10:25; Belgic Confession 27-29).

Therefore we reject the doctrine of pluriformity. Believers should take a stand against false doctrine and erring churches and denominations (Psalm 84:11; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 2:9). True believers are duty bound to look for one another and to be church together (John 17:11; 20-21; Ephesians 4:3-4), cling to each other, encourage and when necessary admonish each other.

Furthermore each local congregation is duty bound to pursue federational unity with other congregations bearing the marks of a true church,

sogenaamde pluriformiteitsleer. Gelowiges moet standpunt inneem ten opsigte van valse leer en dwalende kerke en kerkverbande (Psalm 84:11; Galasiërs 1:8-9; 2 Timotheus 2:19; Openbaring 2:9). Gelowiges het die plig om mekaar op te soek en saam kerk te wees (Johannes 17:11; 20-21; Efesiërs 4:3-4), mekaar vas te hou, te bemoedig en waar nodig te vermaan.

Verder is dit die plig van elke plaaslike gemeente om kerkverbandelike eenheid te soek met ander gemeentes wat die kenmerke van 'n ware kerk vertoon, naamlik die suiwer prediking van God se Woord, suiwer bediening van die sakramente (doop en nagmaal) en die nakoming van onderlinge toesig (tug) (Kolossense 4:16, 1 Thessalonicense 5:27; Openbaring 1:11; NGB art. 29). Die suiwerheid van 'n gemeente of denominasie lê nie in sy historiese oorsprong nie, maar in sy kerk-wees in die hede. God se verbond is altyd voorwaardelik, wat beteken dat geen gemeente of kerkverband daarop aanspraak kan maak om ewig deel van sy volk te bly nie.

Deur die kerkgeskiedenis heen het baie kerke afvallig geraak. God, wat groot is in geduld, het egter deur die eeue genadiglik tye van reformatie, herlewing en terugkeer na sy Woord geskenk (Psalm 102:13-14; Jesaja 1:9; Romeine 9:29). Jesus Christus is 'n ewige Koning wat nooit sonder onderdane sal wees nie (1 Konings 19:18; Jesaja 59:21; Mattheus 16:18, 28:20; Johannes 10:28-29; Handeling 2:39; 1 Korinthiërs 1:8-9). Daarom moet die neiging verwerp word dat gemeentes deel bly van 'n denominasie uit tradisionele lojaliteit, of om ander sekondêre redes. En daarom behoort elke plaaslike gemeente van tyd tot tyd (byvoorbeeld elke kwart eeu) te besin in watter kerkverband die roeping om kerk van Christus te wees die beste uitgevoer kan word.

namely the pure preaching of God's Word, the pure administration of the sacraments (Baptism and Lord's Supper) and the exercising of mutual discipline (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Revelation 1:11; BC 29). The purity of a congregation is not found in its historic origin, but in its being church in the present. God's covenant is always conditional, meaning that no church or federation can claim to remain God's people for ever.

Throughout church history many churches have become apostate. God, who is great in mercy, has given through the ages times of reformation, revival and return to his Word (Psalm 102:13-14; Isaiah 1:9; Romans 9:29). Jesus Christ is an eternal King who will never be without subjects (1 Kings 19:18; Isaiah 59:21; Matthew 16:18, 28:20; John 10:28-29; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; BC 27). Therefore the tendency of local congregations to remain part of a denomination because of traditional loyalty or for other secondary reasons should be rejected. And therefore each local congregation should reflect from time to time (for example each new generation or quarter of a century) in which denomination their calling to be church of Christ can be executed best.

We profess the Scriptural calling that local congregations should live in federational unity with other congregations building on the foundation of God's Word alone (1 Peter 2:6-10). At the same time we should be aware of the danger that belonging to an erring denomination can negatively influence local congregations in executing their Christ given duty (Acts 4:19-20; Romans 9:6; 2 Timothy 2:16-19).

Christ's church gathering work is dynamic and each new generation has the task to put the call to unity into practice (2 Corinthians 13:5-6). In this regard we reject the ecumenical movement pursuing a unity not founded upon the Word of God alone. Christ gives unity in the truth (John

Ook bely ons die Skriftuurlike roeping dat plaaslike gemeentes in kerkverbandelike eenheid saam met ander gemeentes moet lewe wat op dieselfde fondament van die Woord alleen bou (1 Petrus 2:6-10). Maar ons moet ook bewus wees van die gevaar dat 'n kerkverband plaaslike gemeentes negatief kan beïnvloed om hierdie hoë roeping uit te voer (Handelinge 4:19-20; Romeine 9:6; 2 Timotheus 2:16-19).

Christus se kerkvergaderende werk is dinamies en elke nuwe generasie het die taak om die ware eenheid in praktyk te bring (2 Korinthiërs 13:5-6). In hierdie verband verwerp ons ook elke ekumeniese beweging wat 'n eenheid nastrewe wat nie op die Woord van God alleen gegrond is nie. Christus skenk die eenheid in die waarheid (Johannes 17:17; 1 Johannes 1:6, 2:4; 3 Johannes 1:4). Enige ander ekumene is nie 'n geskenk van Christus nie.

17:17; 1 John 1:6; 2:4; 3 John 1:4). Any other unity is not a gift of Christ.”