

RULES OF SYNOD OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Article 1: Synod schedule

- 1.1. The Free Reformed Churches in South Africa will convene a Synod every three years.
- 1.2. Synod will be convened by the church appointed at the last Synod to organise the date and meeting place for such synod.
- 1.3. In the event of a pressing issue requiring immediate attention, for which reason at least one classis requests an extraordinary (ad-hoc) synod, the convening church shall, in consultation with the other churches, convene such a synod.

Article 2: Duties of the convening church

- 2.1. The convening church shall prepare the synod in co-operation with the appointed Stated Clerk and shall conduct the following actions according to the indicated schedule:

2.1.1. At least seven (7) months before commencement of synod:

- 2.1.1.1. Invite the churches to submit any new items of business for inclusion on the provisional draft agenda, according to Article 30 of the Church Order. Such items should reach the convening church no later than two months before the synod commences;
- 2.1.1.2. Request the classes to submit items to be placed on the provisional draft agenda. These items should reach the convening church no later than two months before commencement of synod. Synod may decide to accept in exceptional circumstances items not sent in time;
- 2.1.1.3. Inform the secretaries of Deputies for Contacts with Churches Abroad and Deputies for Contacts with Churches in South Africa about the scheduled meeting dates of synod.
- 2.1.1.4. Request deputies to submit their reports in the prescribed format, to reach the convening church and all the congregations in the bond of churches at least six (6) months before the next Synod, and their final report with a 'Revision Addendum' (where applicable) at least 2 months prior to the commencement of Synod.
- 2.1.1.5. The congregations can then study the reports and submit recommendations and objections addressed to the convening church of the next Synod, plus a copy hereof to the deputies, at least three (3) months before the commencement of the Synod.
- 2.1.1.6. The deputies will then have the opportunity to study these recommendations/objections and, where deemed necessary, submit a "Revision Addendum" to their original report detailing the amendments to their original report.

2.1.2. At least two months before commencement of synod:

- 2.1.2.1. Provide a provisional draft agenda and forward one electronic copy to each church and one electronic copy to the secretary of the Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad. This agenda shall be accompanied by one electronic copy of all the relevant information;
- 2.1.2.2. Send all the relevant documents to the church councils, synod delegates appointed by the classes and any other officially appointed attendees and all the non-confidential documents to the administrator of the FRCSA web site for immediate publication on that website;
- 2.1.2.3. Prepare a time schedule for the synod meetings.

2.1.3. At least one month before commencement of synod:

- 2.1.3.1. Place a notice of the forthcoming synod as well as the provisional agenda in the local newsletters or other regular publications of all the churches in the federation of the FRCSA;
- 2.1.3.2. Shall, in accordance with article 3 and upon proposals by deputies, request possible advisors to attend synod;
- 2.1.3.3. Shall give timeous notice to any deputies whose presence may be required at synod;
- 2.2. Shall report on the examination of delegates' credentials and oversee the signing of the attendance register prior to constitution of synod;
- 2.3. Shall convene a prayer-meeting before the commencement of synod to ask for God's blessing on the work of Synod.
- 2.4. Shall report on proposals and amendments which were not delivered to the convening church in time (see articles 2.1.1.1, 2.1.1.2 and 2.1.1.4). Such documents shall not be taken into consideration by synod, except by special resolution.

Article 3: Members of Synod

- 3.1. The synod shall be comprised of legitimate delegates from the classes. They shall, according to article 32 of the Church Order, present their credentials which shall bind them to the Holy Scriptures, the Three Forms of Unity and the Church Order.
- 3.2. Each classis shall be represented by three ministers or missionaries and three elders. In case three ministers or missionaries cannot be delegated because of vacancies or legitimate hindrances, more elders can be delegated. Should a deacon take the place of an elder in the delegation, the synod shall decide whether he has voting rights.
- 3.3. All ministers and missionaries of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, not delegated to synod, may be present at synod, where they can act as advisors upon invitation by the chairman.
- 3.4. Official delegates from churches with which the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa have official sister church relations, may also be admitted as advisors upon invitation by the chairman.
- 3.5. Classes and deputies are entitled to propose certain ministers or missionaries to the convening church to serve as synod advisors.

Article 4: The agenda

The following items of business shall appear on every agenda of ordinary Synods. Items marked (*) may be omitted for extraordinary Synods and replaced with only the matter or matters for which it is convened:

- 4.1. Opening by the Convening Church.
- 4.2. Signing of Attendance Register, Examination of Credentials and Report of Findings.
- 4.3. Election of Officers and Constitution of Synod.
- 4.4. Delegates' agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.
- 4.5. Decision on cut-off date for admissibility of documents received after due date.
- 4.6. Adoption of the Agenda.

- 4.7. Adoption of Meeting Procedures.
- 4.8. *Correspondence received by the convening church.
- 4.9. *Instructions from classes.
- 4.10. *Proposals from classes.
- 4.11. *Reports by:
 - 4.11.1. Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad
 - 4.11.2. Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa
 - 4.11.3. Mission Deputies
 - 4.11.4. Deputies Curators for Theological Training and Art. 19 CO
 - 4.11.5. Deputies Article 11 of the Church Order (Needy Churches)
 - 4.11.6. Deputies Article 49 of the Church Order
 - 4.11.7. The Synod Treasurer
 - 4.11.8. Deputies for inspection of the Treasury
 - 4.11.9. Stated Clerk & Archives
 - 4.11.10. Deputies for Inspection of the Archives
 - 4.11.11. Any other deputies appointed by the previous synod.
- 4.12. *Appointment of Deputies, Archive Church and Classis for days of prayer ad article 69 CO.
- 4.13. *Benedictory greetings to the President and the major of the town or city where the synod is convened.
- 4.14. Questions according to article 41, paragraph 2, of the Church Order.
- 4.15. Personal questions.
- 4.16. *Appointment of the convening church, and place and time of the next synod.
- 4.17. Adoption of the Acts of Synod and the Press Release.
- 4.18. Censure according to Article 48 of the Church Order.
- 4.19. Closing of Synod.

Article 5: Officers of Synod

- 5.1. The opening of synod will be conducted by an office bearer on behalf of the convening church. After a report on the credentials of the delegates, the election of the officers of synod shall take place and synod shall be constituted.
- 5.2. The three officers of synod are: the chairman, the vice chairman and the clerk. Officers of synod are chosen by election, according to the rules as described in Article 9.
- 5.3. The Chairman**
 - 5.3.1. The chairman shall see to it that business is transacted in the proper order and is expedited as much as possible, and that members observe the rules of order and decorum, according to Article 34 of the Church Order.

- 5.3.2. He shall place before Synod every motion that is made and seconded, in accord with the accepted order; and he shall clearly state every question before a vote is taken, so that every member may know on what he is voting.
- 5.3.3. If the chairman feels the need to speak on a pending question, he shall relinquish the chair to the vice-chairman for that period of time.
- 5.3.4. He shall have, and duly exercise, the prerogative of declaring a motion or a person out of order. If his ruling is challenged, it shall be submitted to Synod for decision by majority vote.

5.4. The Vice-Chairman

- 5.4.1. The vice-chairman shall, in the absence of the chairman, assume all his duties and privileges.
- 5.4.2. The vice-chairman shall render all possible assistance to the chairman as circumstances require.
- 5.4.3. The vice-chairman shall prepare the Press Release, which shall be approved by the Officers of Synod prior to its publication in a suitable publication.

5.5. The Clerk

- 5.5.1. The clerk shall be responsible for the preparation of the Acts of Synod. These will as far as practically possible be finalised during the meeting.
- 5.5.2. The clerk shall bear responsibility for any correspondence from the synod, and at the conclusion of synod arrange for all synod documents together with an index to be included in the Archives.

Article 6: Visitors to synod

- 6.1. Synod is open to all members of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa.
- 6.2. Synod shall decide on the admission of non-members.

Article 7: Closed sessions of Synod

- 7.1. A closed session shall be used in delicate or unusual situations and when personal matters are discussed. The chairman, in consultation with the other officers of synod, will decide on closed sessions.
- 7.2. A closed session shall, as a rule, mean a session where delegates from the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa and the stated clerk only may be present. Synod may invite other persons to attend closed sessions when deemed necessary.

Article 8: Correspondence from Synod

- 8.1. Correspondence from the Synod to persons or consistories or other committees within the bond of churches shall be signed and handled by the clerk.
- 8.2. Official correspondence to persons or institutions outside the bond of churches shall be signed by the Officers of Synod.
- 8.3. Copies of all correspondence shall be kept in the archive.

Article 9: Rules for Decision making and Voting

- 9.1. Decisions will be formulated as follows: Material – Deliberations - Decision – Grounds.
- 9.2. Wherever possible decisions shall be made by consensus. Should a proposal, motion or amendment be put to the vote, a majority of votes shall be required before the proposal, motion or amendment is carried.
- 9.3. The chairman may determine how the vote is to be taken: by calling the roll (in any order) or by show of hands.
- 9.4. Should the voting result in a tie, the proposal, motion or amendment shall be rejected, and where this occurs when examining a candidate, he will fail.
- 9.5. Voting about persons shall be by ballot. An outright majority of votes must be obtained. Blank votes are not valid and shall not be counted in determining a majority. This rule applies to the election of any person(s).
- 9.6. In the final count no blank votes or abstentions shall be considered, they are invalid.
- 9.7. Synod may appoint delegates, deputies, or office bearers by consensus. If there is no consensus, appointments will be made by voting, using the following procedure:
 - 9.7.1. By casting a free ballot.
 - 9.7.2. Should there be more than two candidates from which to choose and no majority vote is reached a second free ballot shall take place.
 - 9.7.3. If there is no result after two free ballots, any subsequent choice shall be restricted to the candidates who received the most votes in the previous ballot, with this proviso, that there shall be twice the number of nominations as is required to fill the positions.
 - 9.7.4. Should this ballot reveal no clear majority the oldest person or persons shall be appointed.
- 9.8. The chairman, in consultation with Synod, may rule that any matter be decided by ballot.

Article 10: Deputies

- 10.1. To assist Synod in the execution of their decisions, Synod shall appoint churches or classes or persons as Deputies with specific mandates. The officers of synod are responsible for the execution of decisions for which no deputies are appointed.
- 10.2. Duties shall be divided as equitably as possible. Deputies shall preferably not be appointed for more than three subsequent periods in the same deputyship.
- 10.3. In case of deputyships with a limited number of members, sufficient alternate members are to be appointed to ensure proper functioning of the deputies.
- 10.4. In cases where the functioning of deputies is hampered by a loss of members and non-availability of alternate members, deputies have the authority to co-opt additional members in order to fulfil their mandate. Such appointments should be mentioned and justified in their report to the next synod.
- 10.5. Such changes in membership are also to be reported to the Stated Clerk.
- 10.6. Deputies are mandated to consult advisers as required. Such consultations shall be mentioned in the report to Synod. Such advisers shall not be allowed to partake in discussion at Synod, unless so instructed by the chairman. Deputies shall make

proposals to the convening church regarding invitations of advisors to attend synod, which they deem necessary.

- 10.7. The mandate to deputies shall be in effect from one synod to the next.
- 10.8. Deputies shall submit a written report of their activities to the next synod, which is also to be sent to all the congregations in the bond of churches at least six (6) months before the next Synod and their final report with a 'Revision Addendum' (where applicable) at least two (2) months prior to the commencement of Synod. Deputies reports are to be written in English and shall contain the information, and be in the format, as indicated in the Appendix hereto. Where there are report or addendums in another language, an English summary is to be included with the main report.

Article 11: Instructions to Deputies

Each synod shall determine mandates for each deputyship. Apart from any specific instructions the following general instructions shall apply:

11.1. Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad:

- 11.1.1. Shall consist of five members, from which a secretary and chairman shall be appointed;
- 11.1.2. Shall send the Acts of Synod, the provisional agenda for the synod and the Report by Deputies for Contact with Churches Abroad to the deputies of churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations;
- 11.1.3. Shall send letters of greetings on behalf of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, to the synods of churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations;
- 11.1.4. Shall supply attestations for ministers and missionaries of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa who wish to lead services in one of the churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations;
- 11.1.5. Shall maintain correspondence with sister churches according to the adopted rules (Art. 25, point 2.1., Acts of FRCSA Synod 2014);
- 11.1.6. Shall report on decisions taken by synods of the churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations;
- 11.1.7. Shall deliver any correspondence with, and Acts of Synod from, the churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations); to deputies responsible for the care and maintenance of the Archives.

11.2. Deputies for Contact with Churches in South Africa:

- 11.2.1. Shall consist of five members, from which a secretary and a chairman shall be appointed, and two alternate members;
- 11.2.2. Shall formulate proposals to synod with regard to exercising contact with churches in South Africa;
- 11.2.3. Shall deliver finalised correspondence and documents to deputies responsible for the care and maintenance of the Archives.

11.3. Synod Treasurer:

- 11.3.1. Shall not be part of any other deputyship in any capacity;
- 11.3.2. Is responsible for the control of synod income and expenses;
- 11.3.3. Shall keep books of account where all income and expenses will be shown;

- 11.3.4. Shall reimburse any expenses incurred in the execution of a synod mandate and for which a specified account has been rendered;
- 11.3.5. Shall prepare a financial report documenting income and expenditure and a balance statement for scrutiny and audit by synod;
- 11.3.6. Shall arrange that the appointed deputies annually audit the abovementioned financial statements and present a report of their findings to the synod;
- 11.3.7. Shall propose detailed congregational contributions for the period until the next synod and ensure that the congregational contributions to the church federation as approved by the latest synod are timely paid.

11.4. Stated Clerk and Archive:

- 11.4.1. Shall run, upon instruction from the synod or the convening church, the administration of the synod;
- 11.4.2. Shall assist the deputyship mandated by Synod to organise an Indaba, and the convening church to prepare the next synod;
- 11.4.3. Shall record decisions and make minutes during the synod meetings and assist the elected synod clerk in compilation of the Acts of synod. The Stated Clerk may be present during closed sessions, the minutes of which he will deal with in a confidential manner;
- 11.4.4. Shall act as the archivist in collaboration with the archive church;
- 11.4.5. Shall offer surplus Acts of Synod for sale against cost price to those who are interested;
- 11.4.6. Shall request deputies ad article 49 CO to submit their reports of a visit to a classis immediately after that visit;
- 11.4.7. Shall request information from appointed deputies on the progress of their mandates during the inter-synodical period of time;
- 11.4.8. Shall request the various deputies to submit their report in English, except those deputies who deal with mainly non-English language issues. Those deputies, who report in other languages, are requested to submit with their report an English summary;
- 11.4.9. Shall arrange publication of the acts as follows (Acts of Synod 2008, art.16):
 - 11.4.9.1. The complete acts with appendices will be printed in limited numbers for distribution to consistories, archives, libraries and deputies;
 - 11.4.9.2. The complete acts with appendices will be made available electronically for those who are interested;
 - 11.4.9.3. Shall ensure that legal requirements are met with regard to the distribution of copies of the Acts of Synod to public institutions.

11.5. Church in Charge of the Archives

- 11.5.1. Shall in co-operation with the appointed Stated Clerk take care of the Archives;
- 11.5.2. Shall ensure that the appointed archivist maintains the Archives in such a way that they are complete and accessible.

The following documents shall be kept in the Archives:

- The Acts of Synod.
- The Acts of Synod of churches with whom the FRCSA have official sister church relations.
- Reports and letters of all deputyships.
- All incoming documents to have reached synod.
- Copies of letters that synod has sent.

11.5.3. The Archive must be inspected prior to each synod by deputies appointed by the previous synod for that purpose.

11.6. Any other Deputies for the execution of tasks as required by Synod

Article 12: Indabas (Preparatory interim meetings of all Deputies)

12.1. Synods may decide to appoint Deputies (or add it as a task for any other Deputyship) to arrange preparatory meetings (known as “indabas”) of representatives of Deputies and FRCSA church councils.

12.2. The purpose of these meetings is to give Deputies the opportunity to report interim progress and to discuss their work in a wider forum in order to refine their report to the next synod and to improve contacts between the churches (Acts of the FRCSA Synod 2014, Article 28).

12.3. These meetings should preferably be arranged mid-way between Synods.

12.4. Deputyships will be required to report progress to these meetings. These reports must also be included as annexures to the report to the ensuing Synod.

Article 13: Amendment of Synod Rules

13.1. Amendments to the contents of these rules may only be considered by Synod if a proposal for such amendments is placed on the synod agenda by a classis, or if these are recommended by deputies appointed by Synod for this purpose.

13.2. All amendments must be approved by Synod before taking effect.

Article 14: Interpretation of Synod Rules

14.1. The final decision in case of a dispute concerning the interpretation of these Rules will be made by way of a majority vote.

14.2. In case of a dispute concerning the interpretation of these Rules, the English version of the text shall take preference.

Approved by the Synod of the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa, held in Belhar on 12th – 16th April 2021.

.....Rev. J. Bruintjes..... chairman

.....Br. R. Snijder..... clerk

.....Br. G. Hagg..... vice chairman

Appendix

Proposed Report Template

Report of Deputies to Synod

Name of Deputyship

Date of Report

Version (e.g. Majority report, minority report, sequence number if more than one report).

Date and Place of mandating Synod.

Date and Place of proposed receiving Synod.

Mandate (quote the reference and full text, from the Acts of Synod appointing the Deputies)

Recommendations (no motivation here, that comes later, under Detailed Report). These should be on a form that could be used in Acts of Synod.

Membership (include resignations, co-options, reasons for membership changes)

Summary of activities and methods employed; include members' roles.

Detailed Report (by mandate, describing the process of reaching a conclusion, give supporting arguments)

- Material
- Considerations
- Proposed Decision
- Proposed Grounds.

Signatures of deputies and co-optees.

Annexures (Supporting documents; if mandate includes proposing any texts, these would also come here.) Annexures must be cross referenced to the report.