

Church Order book of the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid- Afrika



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AS AMMENDED BY DIFFERENT SYNODS
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DIRECTIONS

This Church Order Book is meant to provide all possible information easily accessible to each reader. It is divided into various sections and is put together as follows:

1. The Church Order. At the end of each article there are references to the Addenda, the Acta of the different Synods, as well as any other references that may be necessary.
2. The Addenda. Here certain excerpts from Synodal decisions, necessary for the general governance of the church can be found.
3. Concept Forms. All the forms used by the church are included here.
4. Forms of subscription. All Forms used by the church are included here.
5. Open Declaration of the Reformed Churches in South Africa.
6. Indexes. An index of words solely applicable to the articles of the Church Order. Cross references have been added at the end of each article. Word descriptions of concepts, as they are found in the Church Order have been added.

Our prayer is that the Lord will make this work serviceable in his church and kingdom.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CHURCH ORDER OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

A le R du Plooy

Purpose

The intention of the introduction is to orientate the users of the Church Order regarding the Reformed or Presbyterian Church governance, as it manifests in the Church Order.

An overview is given of aspects such as the origin, history, intention, function and authority of the Church Order. The most important fundamental principles will be indicated and juxtaposed with other forms of church governance.

Origin

In the prologue of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa it is stated that the synod of 1862 held at Reddersburg, decided to accept the Church Order of Dort of 1618/1619 for church governance. According to article 86 of this Church Order has since been changed and adapted where necessary.

The question is whether the Church Order is merely the work of man, and if it is found in Scripture. Does the Word of God give prescriptions, facts and clear principles concerning the governance of the church?

Despite the fact that we do not find a Church Order in Scripture itself, there are particular important revelations or indications in Scripture concerning the governance of the church of Jesus Christ.

As illustration I present some examples.

- God demands that everything in his church must occur properly and orderly, because God is not a God of disorder (1 Corinthians 14:33 and 40).
- The basic point of departure for Scriptural church governance is found in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God especially means that God is King and that He reigns in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24). The Apostle Paul clearly teaches that Christ is the Head of his church (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Christ is not the highest Head of the church, but the only Head. He Himself reigns as authoritarian Head and as organic Head He allows the church to grow from Him and in Him as His body (Eph. 4:11-16).
- As Head of the church Christ Himself set down guidelines for the governance of his church. God ensures the continued guidance and existence of his church in a specific manner. That is why He also reveals himself as the great Giver; the Giver of his Son, of the Holy Spirit, of gifts of grace as well as the services. All of this He gives in and to his church that the church may be cared for, served and governed (John 3:16, Acts 2, Matt. 28:18-20, John 21:15-17, 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 28, Rom. 12, Eph. 4:8).
- The gifts of proclamation, of charity (and compassion), leadership and governance become real in the services of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and ministers of the Word as well as deacons and elders (1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus).
- After the extraordinary services such as the apostles and prophets laid the foundation for the church in and through Christ (Eph. 2:20), it was further built upon by the specific services of the elders (teaching and governing elders) and deacons. All the elders (presbuteroi) were custodians or leaders in the churches, and some acted specifically

as ministers of the Word, for example Acts 6, 11:10; 14:23; 20:28; Pastoral Epistles ex. 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17, 2 Timothy 2:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5).

- Through the service of the Word, the sacraments and the church discipline (Matt. 16:17-19; 2nd Timothy 4:2; Cor. 10:16 et seq; 1 Cor. 11:23; 1 Cor. 5) members can be equipped and the church strengthened.

As the elders (in Greek presbuteroi) perform the service of governance in the church, our system of church governance is called the Presbyterian Church government system.

The four sections of the Church Order which deal with the services, the church assemblies, the sacraments and ecclesiastical ceremonies as well as the church discipline are based on Scripture.

History of the Church Order

The 1618/19 Church Order of Dort has its own history.

During the Reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries it was clear that the Roman Church devolved - even with regard to church governance. The fundamental problem was that the governance of Christ was usurped by human or papal governance. The papal or church authority and tradition was seen as equal to the Word of God and the pope was seen as the representative of Christ on earth.

While during the 16th century the great church reformers such as Luther, Zwingli, Bucer and others dealt with the doctrine of the church with severity, they also, in reaction to the Roman Catholic Church, posed the question concerning the governance and order of the church on earth. A second generation reformer rose in this time – Calvin. The Reformed or Presbyterian church governance that we still maintain is mostly based on Calvin's understanding of Scripture with regard to church governance.

When taking into consideration the world in which Calvin lived, we can see the remarkable contribution he made. In England a system of church governance called the episcopal system developed and in the German (Lutherian) states and in the Swiss cantons a country or territorial system. According to these systems the government or state has a say in church government in a greater or lesser degree.

He saw the manner in which God governs his church through his Word and Spirit, as part of the doctrine of the church and adding to this the church had to draw up ecclesiastical guidelines and regulations for the sake of order and the benefit of the church.

He regarded such guidelines, of which, some are given directly to the church through the Word of God and some need to be inferred from Scripture, as necessary and in service of benefiting the church. Just like a government, the church cannot be governed and served without orderly regulations.

He was careful and did not want too many of these ecclesiastical guidelines, he especially did not want them to supersede the Word of God. He did not want contrast between a so-called Christ-governance in the church and church governance by authority of the church itself. The ecclesiastical regulations should aim to ensure and organise the flow and protection of the governance through the Word and the Spirit. For him it stands firm that Christ is the sole Head of the church who calls and guides servants in the churches to govern the church under the guidance of the Word and Spirit.

From Calvin's works, such as the Institution, his commentaries and his Church Order, known as the Ordonnances ecclésiastiques, it becomes clear how important he viewed sound and ordered governance of the Church of Christ.

Articles 27-32 of the Belgic Confession (1561) and Lord's Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) mainly verbalises Calvin's view and are still part of our own confession regarding church governance.

Where reformed churches met during the 16th and 17th century and considered the manner of governance and organisation of the churches, they merely built upon the foundations laid by Calvin.

As early as 1559, during the synod of Reformed Churches in Paris, a Church Order – the Discipline ecclésiastique – was drawn up, which completely corresponded with the ideas of Calvin.

The Dutch congregations in the south, the so-called Waldenses or French speaking congregations, were under pressure of Roman persecution. However in the years 1563-1566 they did manage to meet in secret. They gave attention to and considered the governance of the church and draw up guidelines therefore.

During this time of Roman persecution of the protestants, the churches of the reformation also fled to countries such as England, those close to the Netherlands as well as those in the region of the Rhine – churches known as the Nederduits refugee churches. Under the leadership of ministers such as a'Lasco and Micron several ordinances were drawn up for these churches.

A number of well-known ministers at a gathering (convent) in Wezel (1568) documented ideas concerning a Church Order.

In 1571 the first genuine synod of the Dutch churches took place and articles concerning the legal governance of church were drafted.

Hereafter the churches dedicated several more synods to church governance: at Dort in 1574 and again in 1578, at Middelburg in 1581 and at 's-Gravenhage in 1586. These were the years of finalisation. In 1581 for example, these churches spoke for the first time of a Church Order (Kerckenordeninghe) of their own i.e. a book of church orderly articles.

In 1618/19 the synod of Dort completed the process – however not with the intention that it was a finalised document which could not be altered.

Since the foundation of the Reformed Churches in South Africa in 1859, the Church Order of Dort (COD) has been adhered to. However before the foundation of the Reformed Church, on 5 January 1859, Rev. Dirk Postma drafted an amended Church Order in accordance with article 86 of the COD. It was amended to suit the circumstances in the country at that time. This is already evident in the statement on 11 January 1859 at the assembly of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in die ZAR. The emphasis was that the Reformed Churches in the ZAR not only accept the three Forms of Unity accepted in Dort in 1618/1619, but the Church Order of the same synod, as well. In the public declaration that appeared on 14 February 1859 for the first time, it states, with regard to church governance that it were to be accepted according to Dort 1618/1619 (naar die van Dordrecht van 1618/1619)". The first Synod in 1862 formally resolved not to accept the amended Church Order of reverend Postma but that of the synod of Dordrecht 1618/1619 for the church governance of the Reformed Churches.

In the general or ecumenical reformed ecclesiastical community in the world we find numerous church communities who either follow the Church Order of Dort of 1618/1619 completely or at least base their church governance thereupon.

Intention and function of a Church Order

The Church Order has a serving character. From many relevant quotations in the Word (Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor 14:26-40) which Calvin often refers to in his teaching on church governance, it is evident that the Church Order must singularly serve to build up the church. The drafters of our church ordinances reasoned that the building of the church is indeed the principal law in the church.

A Church Order may not and should not propose to control or regulate the whole of church life and is not comparable with a constitution of a association.

It only wants to ensure through its service that each local church will be the true image of Christ's body. It guides the manner in which the local churches can help and support each other with the building up of the church that there may be true unity in doctrine, service (liturgy) and discipline (church governance).

In answer to the question of what should be found in the Church Order and what should be regulated by it, reformers such as Bucer and Calvin gave a simple and clear answer. A Church Order must accept the order that God gave his church as basis and with the guidance of the Word further expound it and formulate ordinances.

The order that God gave to his church culminates in the following, taking care of his church through the proclamation of the Word, the sacraments and discipline. Thus the church is bound together and built as the body of Christ.

Therefore the regulations of a Church Order should be few and easy to understand. The characteristics of the true church, namely pure preaching of the Word, pure administering of the sacraments and discipline also serve as central elements of a Church Order.

Church ordinances should especially aim to define and order the way in which the key authority of the church is exercised. The keys to the kingdom of heaven that Christ gave to the church, namely ministering the Gospel and administering church discipline (Matt. 16 and Lord's Day 31 Heidelberg Catechism) should, as they are signs of a true church, also be an integral part of a Church Order.

When we consider the composition of the Church Order it is clear to be the case. It contains basic guides concerning the ministering of the Word (both in services as well as assemblies) the administering of sacraments and the administering of discipline.

The Church Order therefor is aimed at the unlocking of the kingdom of God and not the aim in itself.

Authority of the Church Order

There may be no misconception nor may it arise that a Church Order is laid on us as a yoke and hold back the growth of the church. On the other hand the ecclesiastical regulations are more than mere guidelines or advice which each church or individual may accept, alter or ignore at his/her own discretion.

The authority of a Church Order is not found within itself, but in its relation to Scripture and confession. In particular it can be said that the authority of the Church Order is serving in nature and rests on two unequal legs. First and in finality it rests on the Word of God which

carries absolute authority. In the second instance the regulations which the churches deem necessary by mutual agreement, has ecclesiastical authority (cf. articles 1 and 86 of the Church Order).

The Church Order does not have the nature or character of an independent ecclesiastical law apart from Scripture. In lieu of its relationship to the Word of God and confession it wants to serve the authority of the Word of God.

The confession solely wants to repeat and confess what Scripture reveals. It is an answer to the Word, nothing more and nothing less than an echo. Therefore text references are essential with a confession. A Church Order verifies the answer of the confession; as with the confession, it rests solely on Scripture as the only source of authority, but wants to manifest the principles of Scripture as is verbalised in the confession and apply it in practice. Due to the fact that a Church Order has this special bond with a confession, it is not necessary to have proof from Scripture with each article.

The confession also precedes the Church Order. All churches that are one in doctrine, come together in order to practically organise the expression of their mutual and common belief, as well as to resolve the organisation and governance of the churches in a Church Order. In order to execute certain articles of the Church Order, certain liturgical forms –which were commonly selected and approved – are necessary

Inwards the regulations have binding power and it must be viewed as valid and adhered to. Outwards, such a Church Order serves –in legal terms- as the common law of the specific ecclesiastical community who have agreed on the manner of church governance. In this regard it is important that churches would remain within the framework of the Church Order with regard to jurisdiction and resolutions. No church, person or ecclesiastical assembly may act in contradiction with the Church Order and plead that a court may not test or put aside its resolutions.

Fundamental principles of the Reformed church governance.

On the foundation of the reformed church governance, as it presents in the Church Order as the valid Church Order, there are some principles. These principles or pillars on which the Presbyterian church governance system rests, can also serve to adjudicate and better understand the Church Order. It is discussed shortly.

The Kingdom of God

We have indicated that the aim of the Church Order is focussed on being of service to the founding of God's order and justice in his body or church through the ministering of the Word, the Sacraments and discipline by which the kingdom of God is unlocked for his church.

However, the Kingdom of God is not only the destination, but also the point of departure or basis for the reformed church governance. The real and all-encompassing principle in the reformed church governance is the Kingdom of God. We hereby confess that Christ is the only Head of the church and that through his Word and Spirit governs his church.

In the reformed church government authority is seated in the Word of God.

Other systems of church governance which will be named consequently, often also departs from the confession that Christ is the Head of the church, but in practise it proves to be to the contrary:

In the Roman system the authority is centralised in the pope and the ecclesiastical councils; with the Lutheran system in the ruler of the county; the Erastian or Episcopal systems in the

government; with the Congressional system in the local congregation; with the Collegial system in the individual or those whom the individuals give the authority.

The charismatic movements are inclined to separate the Word and Spirit from each other and to infer from the revelation or light that certain believers received from the Spirit but separate from the Word.

The offices

The Word of God further reveals to us how Christ wants his authority and his governance to take place in the churches. He therefor gives gifts and offices and He calls people to certain offices of teaching, governing and caring. Through the service of the Word and under the guidance of the Spirit, God gathers His church, and wherever a church comes to existence people are selected to serve, and ordained in the offices in order to empower those believers, to build their faith and to guard their faith. As such, in principle, the offices precede the church.

Christ never transfers his authority to the servants of his church, but He does charge them to serve Him in and to the church. The servants are nothing more than instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

In the Roman system, the bishop or pope – instead of being a servant of Christ- becomes the king and head of the church. The so called clergy are superior to the laymen, and amongst the clergy we find a hierarchy with the pope as the head of the structure. Therefor the Roman system is hierarchical in nature. With Luther, the services are downplayed and mostly the office of minister is acknowledged, however mention is made of the general service of all believers as priests. In the Lutheran system (as well as in the Erastian and Episcopal systems) the ruler of the land and the government gradually took over the responsibilities of the offices. In the Congregational as well as the Collegial systems the offices are seen as officials who have to fulfil the will of the congregation as they are appointed by the congregation, and as such given authority.

With the Charismatic groups the point of departure is the idea that some received the anointing of the Spirit and have special gifts and therefore can act as officials with authority.

Church and Church concept

The Reformed church government builds on the Scriptural fact that each church is a complete church, which, in our reformed confession is known as the assembly of believers. In practice this means that a local church exists on its own and is a legal entity under the guidance of the church council. Naturally there is an exceptional bond between local churches, based on the unity in doctrine and church governance that local churches can gather in major assemblies as is determined and explained in the shared Church Order. According to the Reformed church governance the assembly or gathering of churches in a major assembly, such as a Classis or Synod, is not a permanent body (such as a regional or national church) or a legal entity, but merely an opportunity where the churches may consider and finalise an agenda in a major assembly. After the assembly has closed, the assembly disbands while the resolutions remain in place.

A fundamental point of departure is that no (local) church may exercise any lording over any other church, as each church is completely and fully church of Jesus Christ.

Scripture teaches us that the different churches must aid and assist each other in the governance of the church of Jesus Christ, must adjudicate over difficult matters together and be of service to each other.

In the Roman system the idea of one world church, which functions as a visible institution of salvation in which the differentiation between clergy and layman is made, is followed. In reaction to this one sided emphasis that the Roman Church placed on the visibility of the church and the fact that the kingdom of God and the Roman Church is identified with each other, Luther over emphasised the invisibility of the church. This was the reason why the organisation of the visible church of the Lutheran church rested in excess in the hands of the ruler of the county. In the Lutheran Church we find the idea of a county/state churches under the governance of the particular ruler of the county. With the Congressionalists the idea of an independent church is emphasised to the point where it evolves into the autonomy and independence of each congregation (from there the name independentism). Where the Roman church identifies the church and the kingdom with each other, the Collegialism separated the church completely from the kingdom. According to this system the church is – like the state or any other community – the result of the independent decision of a group of individuals, and therefore the church comes from man himself and thus can be seen as an ordinary gathering of individuals.

In the Reformed church governance major assemblies are important and their resolutions binding – however always open to be tested with the Word and Confessions- but major assemblies do not constitute a church. Otherwise stated: the church (singular) does not gather there, but the representatives or delegates of churches come together.

Under the influence of the Collegialism and Presbyterianism the tendency exists to view the church of God as a massive structure or even power structure opposite or even next to the state, which is governed by synods. This way the Presbyterial governance is replaced by synodal governance.

The Reformed confession describes the church as a community of believers based on the elective grace of God in Jesus Christ; however the charismatic movements are rather assemblies of individuals based on their own subjective decisions.

The Church – Government

In the Reformed Church governance the task and sphere of the church and the government is clearly distinguished from each other. Both the church and the government are servants of God and both are in service of the kingdom of God in their own unique manner.

In accordance with this, the church must obey the government, intercede with prayer on behalf of the government and on occasion testify against the government. On the other hand the government is called to create opportunity for the church to fulfil its calling, to protect it and to ensure that the kingdom of God will be served. Each one however governs in his own sphere of authority and neither will reign over the other.

In other systems of church governance the spheres of church and government are sometimes either separated completely or combined completely or the one reigns over the other. The Roman Church for example believes that the Pope carries both swords, the spiritual as well as the secular. The Episcopal and Erastian system of church governance leaves the power of sovereignty, both spiritual and secular, in the hands of the government, while the modern tendency allows the government to act neutral towards the church, thus completely separating church and government from each other. The Charismatic movements lay the emphasis one sided on the spiritual reality, are mostly neutral towards the civil government, and in some instances even offensive towards natural life and civil government.

Summary

It is clear that the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa is a precious jewel, while it is in no way a canonical document. On its own it does not guarantee a perfect church or church governance, but wants only to be of service to the governance of Christ.

The Church Order must be treated thoroughly and with discretion. The principles of Scripture must be seen or looked for in a specific article of the Church Order and articles must be read and used both separately and in cohesion with each other and even in the context of the whole Church Order.

Our prayer is that you will find the Church Order to be a useful and necessary instrument to aid the building of the church of Jesus Christ.

Part 1: CHURCH ORDER OF THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

The Synod of Reddersburg accepted the church order of Dort 1618/1619 for the church government of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Several synods, in accordance with Article 86 as amended to read as follows:

Article 1

To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there should be: offices; assemblies; supervision over doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies; and church discipline. These matters are dealt with in the Articles that follow:

THE OFFICES

Article 2

There are four types of offices: ministers of the Word, professors at the Theological School, elders and deacons.

Article 3

No person shall be permitted to proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments unless he has been lawfully called to do so and has been admitted to the office.

Article 4

The lawful calling and admission of a person who has not previously served in the office of the Word, and who has been examined preparatively (preparatoir) by the classis in which he resides, shall comprise the following:

first, after prayers have been said, the election by the church council and deacons according to the customary local procedure or as determined by the church council; and, in churches with only one minister, with the advice of the classis or the counselor (consulent) appointed by the classis for this purpose;

secondly, examination by the classis (to whom the call shall be submitted for approval) into the doctrine and life (peremptoir) of the person to be called, which shall involve the advice of the deputies appointed by the regional (partikuliere) synod;

thirdly, approbation and approval by the members of the church in question, which implies that no legitimate objection was lodged after the name of the person to be called had been announced in church for at least three Sundays;

finally, the public ordination of the person in the presence of the congregation and of the deputies of the classis according to the form prescribed for this purpose.

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Article 5

The calling of a minister of the Word from one church to another in the same fellowship of churches shall comprise the following:

first, after prayers have been said, the election by the church council and deacons, with observance of the customary local procedure or as determined by the church council, and of the general ordinances applying to persons who have served outside the Gereformeerde Churches in South Africa to determine whether they qualify for a call; in churches with only one minister of the Word, this process shall involve the advice of the classis or of the counselor (consulent) appointed by the classis for this purpose;

secondly, approval by the members of the church in question, provided that no legitimate objections were lodged after the name of the minister had been announced in church for at least three Sundays;

thirdly, ascertainment by the church council in conjunction with the deputies of the classis that there exists sound ecclesiastical evidence of the minister's doctrine, his life, the performance of his office and his release;

finally the public installation in the congregation according to the Form accepted.

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Article 6

A minister of the Word shall on no account assume the office of the Word under the auspices of a patron or in institutions or in any other way unless he has received permission to do so and has been admitted according to the foregoing Articles; and he, like the other ministers, remains subject to the Church Order.

Article 7

If a person has been called to the office of the Word in a specific church, he shall live in that locality, unless he is sent to gather churches elsewhere.

Article 8

Anyone who has not studied shall not be admitted to the office of the Word, unless that person displays unmistakable evidence of extraordinary gifts, piety, humility and modesty, sound intellect and discretion, and eloquence. If someone presents himself for this office, the classis, with the approval of the regional synod, shall examine him, and if the outcome of such examination is favourable, he has to present a number of private probatory sermons after which the classis shall deal with the matter according to its judgement and in an edificatory manner.

Article 9

Preachers that join the church from other churches or sects shall not be admitted to the office of the Word, except with great circumspection and only after they have been subjected to a severe trial period.

Article 10

A minister of the Word who has been lawfully called to a church shall not leave that church in order to obey a call to another church without the consent of the church council and the deacons of the church where he holds office and the permission of the classis in question; and no other church shall receive him unless he has shown legal evidence of his release from the church and classis where he had served.

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Article 11

The church council, which represents the church, shall provide adequate means of support to their ministers of the Word and shall not deny them support nor dismiss them from office without the knowledge and approval of the classis, with advice from the deputies of the regional synod.

Article 12

Since a minister of the Word, once he has been lawfully called as described above, is bound to the service of the church for life, he shall not enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of the church council and the classis with advice from the deputies of the regional synod.

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Article 13

A minister who, in the opinion of the church council and with the approval of the classis and the advice of the deputies of the regional synod, has become incapable of performing the duties of his office as a result of age, illness or otherwise, shall nevertheless retain the honour and title of a minister of the Word, and the church which he has served shall provide honourably for him in his need.

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No minister of the Word shall proclaim the Word or administer the sacraments in any other church without the consent of the church council of that church, and nobody who has interrupted his ministry or is not an ordained minister in a local church may proclaim the Word wherever he pleases without the consent of the specific classis or regional synod.

Article 16

The office of a minister of the Word is to persevere in prayers, proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments, attend to and oversee his fellow ministers, the elders, the deacons and church members, and ultimately, in conjunction with the elders, exercise the discipline of the church and ensure that everything in the church takes place in an orderly and proper manner.

Article 17

When there is more than one minister of the Word in a church, there shall be as much equality as possible with respect to their duties as well as all other aspects, according to the judgement of the church council and, if necessary, with the advice of the classis. The same principle applies to elders and deacons.

Article 18

The duties of professors at the Theological School are to instruct ministers of the Word, interpret and explain the Word of God, and defend the true doctrine against heresies and false doctrines.

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The churches should ensure that there are a sufficient number of students of Theology and that they receive financial support from the churches.

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Article 20

At the demise of a minister of the Word, the church which he has served, or in the case of a professor, the church fellowship, shall care and provide in an honourable way for his widow and children in their need.

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Church councils shall ensure that parents observe their responsibility in seeing to it that their children's school education comprises the training and instruction of the Lord.

Article 22

Elders are elected by the congregation under the guidance of the church council according to the customary local procedure or as determined by the church council. Each church council may offer church members the opportunity to direct the attention to able persons before the election. The church council, with the deacons, may present the required number of elders to the church members for approbation, present them as pairs of which one should be elected in each case, or present a list of names from which the congregation may elect the required number. After their names had been announced on several occasions and no legal objection was lodged, the elected brothers are ordained according to the form prescribed for this purpose.

Reference	Page
Form for ordaning Elders	
Form for ordaning Elders and deacons	

Article 23

The office of elders includes, besides the duties jointly performed by them and the minister of the Word as provided in Article 16, to exercise the necessary supervision so as to ensure that the ministers of the Word, their fellow elders and the deacons conduct their offices faithfully; to conduct home visitations, as permitted by time and locality, both before and after the Lord's Supper, in order to build up the church; to take particular care to comfort and instruct church members; and to evangelize other people to adopt the Christian faith.

Reference	Page
Functional differentiation – office of elder	52
Home visitations by ministers and elders	53

Article 24

The procedure applying to elders must also be observed in the election, approval and ordination of deacons.

Reference	Page
Form for ordaning Deacons	
Form for ordaning Elders and deacons	

Article 25

The office of the deacons is to ensure that the congregation actively practice their unity in Christ in mutual love. Their mission is to visit everyone in the community and according to Scripture equip and actuate mutual love for everyone, especially fellow believers; furthermore to assure that no one is estrange from the community of believers. The collections must be gathered carefully, distributed wisely with the comfort of Scripture. The deacons must report their actions in the church counsel and, if necessary, report to the congregation according to the instruction of the church council.

Reference	Page

Article 26

The deacons must request other bodies and institutions, who also provide help to the poor, to consult with them so that the gifts may be distributed more advantageously among those who have the greater need.

Reference	Page
SDDS	
Reglement Residentia	

Article 27

The period of service of elders and deacons shall be determined by the church council in the best interests of the particular church. In the case of periodical retirement after at least two years, the same proportionate number of office bearers must retire annually.

Article 28

Precisely as civil authorities, as institutions of God, are obliged to assist and protect the church and its office bearers, it is likewise the duty of all ministers, elders and deacons to impress upon church members, faithfully and diligently, the need to obey and honour the government. They must also endeavour, in the fear of the Lord, to arouse and retain the goodwill of the civil authorities towards the churches in the best interest of the churches. Church assemblies must communicate with the

government in order to acquire the necessary cooperation of the government and, as the church of Christ, must bear testimony to the government in cases where the need to do so occurs.

CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

Article 29

There are the following kinds of church assemblies: the church council, classis, regional synod and general synod.

Reference	Page
Open declaration	84

Article 30

Church assemblies shall deal only with ecclesiastical matters and shall do so in an ecclesiastical manner. Major assemblies shall deal only with matters that could not be finalized in minor assemblies or that concern all the churches in question collectively.

Reference	Page

Article 31

A decision reached at a church assembly by a majority of votes shall be considered fixed and binding, unless it is subsequently proved that it conflicts with the Word of God or the Articles of the church order. If someone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major assembly.

Reference	Page
Quorum	62
Appeal Procedure in accordance with Church Order, Article 31	28
Voting at ecclesiastical assemblies	63

Article 32

All assemblies shall be opened by calling upon the Name of God and be concluded by giving thanks to Him.

Article 33

Delegates to major assemblies shall bring along their credentials and instructions, signed by the people who are sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their person or church.

Reference	Page
Credential Letters	46
Credential letter	66

Article 34

In all assemblies a secretary shall assist the praeses and keep faithful record of all the important matters.

Article 35

At major assemblies a minister of the Word shall preside over the meeting. The task of the chairman is to state and explain the matters to be dealt with, to ensure that everyone awaits his turn to speak, to silence anyone who is quarrelsome or speaks too vehemently, and to discipline him suitably if he persists. His office shall cease when the assembly is concluded.

Article 36

A classis has the same authority over a church council as a regional synod has over a classis, or as a general synod has over a regional synod.

Article 37

In all churches there shall be a church council composed of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders. The church council shall meet regularly under the chairmanship of the minister, or the ministers alternately if there is more than one.

Article 38

When a church council is instituted for the first time, or reinstituted, it must be done with the advice of the classis. If there are only a small number of elders, the deacons may be considered to form part of the church council by way of local arrangement; this shall apply only in cases where there are less than three elders.

Reference	Page
Border arrangements	42
Church seal	45
Name and property of the congregations	57
New Congregations	59

Article 39

Places where as yet no church council can be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighbouring church council.

Reference	Page
Dispersed members	4848

Article 40

The deacons shall meet regularly and, after calling upon the Name of God, deal with matters pertaining to their office. The minister(s) of the Word shall watch carefully over their activities and, if necessary, attend the meeting.

Article 41

The classis is a meeting of neighbouring churches of which each delegates a minister and an elder, or two elders if there is no minister, to represent them. The venue and time of the next classis is determined at each meeting. Such meetings shall be held at least once every three months. The various ministers shall preside over the classis in rotation, or one shall be chosen by the meeting; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

The chairman shall inquire whether the churches hold meetings of the church council, exercise church discipline, take good care of the poor and the schools, and whether any of the churches require the advice and assistance of the classis in any matter regarding proper management

At the last meeting prior to the regional synod, delegates must be chosen to attend the synod.

Reference	Page
Articles 41 and 44 CO – coherence and application	34
Open Declaration	84

Article 42

When a church has more than one minister of the Word, the minister who has not been delegated according to Article 41 may also attend the classis and shall have an advisory vote.

Article 43

At the conclusion of a classis and other major assembly, anyone who has done something in the meeting that merits discipline or who has ignored an admonition by a minor assembly shall be censured.

Article 44

The classis shall authorize at least two of the oldest, most experienced and competent ministers to conduct regular visitations at all the churches in the classis. They must ascertain whether the office bearers perform their duties faithfully, adhere to sound doctrine, comply with the church order at all times, and apply themselves diligently, as far as they are able to do so, to building up the congregation and promoting the education of the youth. If anyone should be found to be negligent in his office, they must admonish him in a brotherly spirit, and they must assist the church, through word and deed, in the management of everything that is conducive to peace and the building up of the church in its best interests.

Reference	Page
Article 44 CO – Possible guidelines for visitation	
Articles 41 and 44 CO – coherence and application	34

Article 45

Every major assembly shall appoint a church council or deputies for ecclesiastical correspondence who must receive and keep all correspondence and documents of the meeting and present the minutes of that meeting to the next assembly.

Every major assembly shall also appoint a church council to call the next assembly and to receive it at the time and place determined for it; or, in the case of a regional synod, at the place and time determined according to the advice of its classis, and, in the case of a general synod, according to the advice of its regional synod.

Reference	Page
Archive	32

Article 46

Matters to be dealt with in major assemblies shall not be prepared for discussion until the decisions of previous synods regarding these matters have been studied, in order that matters which had already been finalized were not tabled yet again unless it be considered necessary to review such matters.

Reference	Page

Article 47

The regional synod is an assembly of neighbouring classes, to which each classis delegates an equal number of ministers of the Word and elders, as determined by the regional synod. The regional synod shall meet annually, unless, in the opinion of at least two classes, it has become essential to call an extraordinary regional synod.

Reference	Page
Regional Synod: Delegation to	62
Open declaration	84

Article 48

Each classis, regional synod and general synod in general synodical context may conduct correspondence with neighbouring classes, regional synods and general synods when, according to its judgement, this will promote the general welfare of the church.

Article 49

Each major assembly shall appoint deputies to implement the resolutions of the meeting according to explicit instructions. A regional synod as a matter of course appoints deputies to assist classes in dealing with problems that may develop and to be present at the examination of candidates for the ministry. For other purposes, as many different groups of deputies as possible must be appointed.

These deputies shall keep proper record of all their activities so as report back to the major assembly. Only the major assembly which appointed them can release them from their office.

Reference	Page

Article 50

The general synod is an assembly of all the regional synods (or the minor assemblies concerned) to which each regional synod (or the minor assembly concerned) delegates an equal number of ministers of the Word and elders, as determined by the general synod. The general synod shall meet every three years unless, in the opinion of at least two regional synods (or the minor assemblies concerned), it has become essential to call an extraordinary meeting.

Reference	Page
Open declaration	84
Reglement Admin Buro	

Article 51

The general synod determine a Code for Missions

Reference	Page
Mission code	

Article 52

Ecclesiastical correspondence and cooperation or contact with churches and ecclesiastical institutions outside the general synodical context shall be directed by the general synod.

Reference	Page
Correspondence – general	46

DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS AND OTHER CEREMONIES

Article 53

Ministers of the Word and professors at the Theological School shall endorse and sign the three Forms of Unity as established by the Synod of Dordrecht 1618-19. A minister who refuses to do so shall de facto be suspended from his office by the church council or classis, and a professor by the general synod, until such time as he has given full account of himself. If he obstinately persists in refusing, he shall be deposed.

Reference	Page
Form of subscription for Ministers of the Word	80
Form of subscription for Professors	82

Article 54

Elders, deacons and those candidates who have been admitted to the ministry shall likewise endorse and sign the aforementioned Forms of Unity.

Reference	Page
Form of subscription for elders and deacons	81

Article 55

To uphold sound doctrine in the church and to ward off false doctrines and deviations, ministers of the Word and elders shall employ the means of instruction, refutation, warning and admonition in the performance of their respective offices, in proclaiming the Word, in catechism instruction, and in home visitations.

Article 56

As soon as it is feasible, the covenant of God shall be sealed unto the children of Christians through Holy Baptism during a church service according to the Form established for this purpose.

Reference	Page
Baptism - administration	39
Baptism administered by sects:	39
Baptism of adopted children	40
Baptism of children in foster care	40
Baptism of children in institutions	41
Baptism of children whose parents have not openly professed their faith.	41
Baptism: Practice conformity	41
Baptism: Unnecessary delay	41
Form of Baptism of Children	

Article 57

Ministers of the Word shall ensure that fathers, mothers or guardians present the baptism for their children.

Article 58

In administering baptism to children and adults, the Minister of the Word shall use the form established for the respective cases.

Reference	Page
Form of Baptism of Children	
Form of Baptism of Adults	

Article 59

Through their baptism, adults are incorporated into the church of Christ and are accepted as members of the Church. They shall therefore partake of the Lord's Supper as they had promised at their baptism.

Reference	Page
Form of Baptism of Adults	

Article 60

The names of the persons that have been baptized, together with the names of their parents or guardians, and the dates of birth and baptism shall be recorded.

Article 61

Only those persons shall be admitted to The Lord's Supper who, according to the custom of the local church, have confessed their belief in the Reformed faith and are reputed to lead a life of piety. Without such testimony anyone who is a member of another church shall not be admitted either.

Reference	Page
Affiliation with a Reformed Church	28
Attestation	39
Attestation for baptized members	65
Attestation for professing members	64
Attestation: Refusal to request	39
Baptism administered by sects:	39
Proof of Membership	61
Travel attestation (proof of membership)	63

Article 62

Each church shall celebrate the Lord's Supper in the way it considers most conducive to edification, provided, however, that the external ceremonies as prescribed in the Word of God be not changed and all superstition be avoided and that, at the conclusion of the sermon and the usual prayers, the form for administering the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer included in it, shall be read.

Reference	Page
Form Lord's supper	

Reference	Page
Individual Cups	54
Lord's Supper – reading of form	57

Article 63

The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every three months.

Article 64

The administering of the Lord's Supper shall take place only during a church service under the supervision of the elders.

Article 65

Death rites shall not be introduced.

Reference	Page
Cremation	47
Funeral is not a church service.	53

Article 66

In times of war, pestilence, national disasters and other great afflictions, the pressure of which is felt throughout the churches, the classis appointed by the general synod for this purpose shall proclaim a day of humiliation and prayer.

Article 67

The observation of Christian feast days, such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the Day of Ascension, is left to the discretion of the local church.

Article 68

On Sundays, usually during the second service, the ministers of the Word shall interpret and explain the essence of Christian doctrine as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism, and endeavor to complete as much as possible of this confession in the course of every year according to the division of the Catechism into Lord's Days.

Article 69

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the Hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses which have been approved by the synod, is left to the jurisdiction of each church council.

Article 70

Church councils shall ensure that the matrimonial state is solemnized as a holy union in the Lord according to the Form prescribed for this purpose.

Reference	Page
Divorce – Ground	48
Marriages without ecclesiastical ordination	57
Publishing the banns of marriage	62

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Article 71

Since Christian discipline is of a spiritual nature, censure by the church is essential, in addition to civil punishment, so as to uphold the honour of God, reconcile the sinner with the church and his neighbour, and erase all offence given to the Church of Christ.

Reference	Page
Discipline of baptised members	47

Article 72

If someone deviates from the true doctrine or from a pious way of life, the rule clearly prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed, provided that the transgression occurred secretly and did not cause public offence.

Reference	Page
Freemasonry	52

Article 73

Secret sins, of which the sinner repents after being admonished by one person in private or in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be reported to the church council.

Article 74

If anyone who has been admonished in a spirit of love by two or three persons for a secret sin and then refuses to heed it, or if anyone has committed a public sin, the matter shall be reported to the church council.

Article 75

The reconciliation of all such sins which were revealed as a result of their public nature or because the transgressor had despised the admonition of the church shall be undertaken (provided there is sufficient evidence of repentance) in the form and manner that the church council in question considers necessary for the edification of the church. If there is a difference of opinion among members of the church council as to whether such reconciliation should take place in public, the matter should be decided after the advice of two neighbouring churches has been sought.

Article 76

Anyone who obstinately rejects the admonition of the church council or who has committed a public or otherwise gross sin, shall be suspended from participation in the sacraments of the Lord.

Article 77

Anyone who has been suspended from participating in the sacraments and who, after repeated admonitions, shows no signs of repentance but persists in sin, shall eventually be excommunicated as the extreme means of church discipline according to the form prescribed for this purpose.

The final excommunication shall be preceded by three public announcements thereof to the congregation. In each announcement the sin committed by the transgressor shall be mentioned and it must be pointed out that the church council has devoted a lot of time to the transgressor in the form of censure, suspension from participation in the sacraments and repeated admonishments but that he had nevertheless not repented and reformed his ways. In these announcements the congregation must be exhorted to speak to and pray for the transgressor.

At the first announcement the name of the transgressor shall not be mentioned so as to spare him to some extent.

At the second announcement, on the advice of the classis, his name shall be mentioned.

At the third announcement the congregation shall be informed that, unless the transgressor repents, he shall be excommunicated from the church; this implies that, should he remain obstinate, his excommunication may take place with the tacit approval of the church members.

The church council determines the interval between the three announcements.

Reference	Page
Form	

Article 78

When someone who has been excommunicated shows repentance and wishes to become reconciled to the Church, it shall be announced to the congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord's Supper or at some other appropriate time, so that the penitent, provided that nobody lodges any

objection, may be publicly reinstated after the declaration of his repentance, according to the form prescribed for that purpose.

Reference	Page
Form	

Article 79

When an office bearer has committed a gross sin, which is a disgrace to the church or deserves punishment by the authorities, he shall immediately be temporarily suspended by the church council. Elders and deacons shall then be suspended or expelled from their office by their church council in conjunction with a neighbouring church council or deputies from two neighbouring church councils. However, ministers shall only be temporarily suspended by the church council in conjunction with the neighbouring church council or deputies from two neighbouring church councils. The classis, with the advice of the deputies of the regional synod, shall then decide whether they should be dismissed from their office.

Reference	Page
Church Council – meaning of the term in article 79 CO	45
Discipline of emeritus-ministers	48
Discipline of office bearers	48
Eligibility for ministry of ministers who resigned	49
Office – Faithless desertion	59

Article 80

The primary gross sins, which merit suspension or deposition from office, include false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, violence, inebriety, brawling, and profiteering; in other words, all the sins and transgressions which render the perpetrators infamous in the eyes of the world and the church.

Article 81

Ministers of the Word, elders and deacons shall exercise Christian censure among themselves and admonish one another in a friendly spirit with regard to the fulfilment of their offices.

Article 82

The church council shall provide those who move out of the boundaries of that church with a document of attestation concerning their confession and conduct which shall be signed by two of its members.

Reference	Page
Attestation	39
Attestation for baptized members	65
Attestation for professing members	64
Attestation: Refusal to request	39
Baptism administered by sects:	39
Ecclesiastical letter of introduction	69
Proof of Membership	61
Travel attestation (proof of membership)	63

Article 83

The deacons shall provide poverty-stricken church members, who are moving out of the boundaries of that church because of sound reasons, with sufficient means of support according to their judgement. They must also consult with the deacons of the church to which these church members are moving about further care for them.

Article 84

No church, minister of the Word, elder or deacon shall in any way dominate other churches, ministers, elders or deacons respectively.

Article 85

In nonessential matters, churches whose customs differ from ours shall not be denounced.

Article 86

These Articles, relating to the legal order of the Church and having been drafted and adopted by common consent, may, and ought to be, modified, augmented or reduced, if the interests of the church require it. However, no particular church, classis or synod, may do so but shall endeavour to uphold these Articles until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod.

Part 2: Addenda

Admission of a blind person to ministering of the Word

Acta 1961:246

The synod of 1888 clearly did not mean to give a verdict concerning the admission of blind candidates to Theological Seminary in general. The case that the synod dealt with was that of a blind candidate who wanted to become a minister of the Word according to article 8 CO. Furthermore it was indeed not the intent of the Synod to, by sidestepping the Curators, give regional synods and church councils the authority to admit blind students to the Theological school. With regard to theological students, this instance is totally different from aspiring article 8-ministers. Here the Curators is the final body which decides on the admission to the Theological School or not (Acta 1955:221 en Acta 1961:246).

As far as the future is concerned, the honn. Synod maintains with the decision of the Synod of 1888 in which is declared (with the Synod of Middelburg 1581) concerning the admission of the blind to ministering of the Word, that even with exceptional knowledge and gifts it would not happen lightly and given the conditions in our country, if not completely impossible, should be considered with severity

Affiliation with a Reformed Church

Acta 1873:48.

Everyone from another church denomination, who wants to join a reformed Church, must be examined by the entire church council or a commission from the church council concerning the reasons for his Affiliation

Appeal Procedure in accordance with Church Order, Article 31

Acta 2015:23-25

1. Basic guidelines for Appeals

- 1.1. An Appeal only pertains to the decision being appealed and not any associated considerations or matters.
- 1.2. The aim of an Appeal is solely to resolve possible injustice in consequence of the relevant decision, in accordance with the Word of God or the Church Order.
- 1.3. All possible steps must be taken to guard against bias in the appeal procedure.
- 1.4. No individual may judge his own cause.
- 1.5. All sides of the matter must be presented and heard.
- 1.6. Although all technical, formal and procedural requirements on Appeals must be complied with, Appeals are judged on substantive and not merely formal grounds.

2. Nature of an Appeal

- 2.1. An Appeal can be lodged, in accordance with CO, art 31 against a specific decision or action of a Church Council, a Classis or a Regional Synod. The Appeal must go from a minor to a major assembly.
- 2.2. An Appeal can only be lodged when a decision is in conflict with –
 - 2.2.1. the Word of God; and/or
 - 2.2.2. a stipulation of the Church Order and the appellant has been wronged by the decision or action.
- 2.3. The alleged injustice must relate to a church issue, as contained in CO, art 30 which directly affects the appellant.
- 2.4. The Appeal must be to the glory of God, to the establishment of the church of Jesus Christ and the restoration of justice.

3. Deputies: Appeal

- 3.1. Every major assembly appoints, in accordance with CO, art 49 at least six and at most eight Deputies for Appeal as well as a suitable number of alternates from the ranks of the minor assemblies that constitute the relevant major assembly.
- 3.2. The Deputies are appointed from members who possess the appropriate knowledge including, but not limited to, on church law.
- 3.3. The Deputies may contract individuals with such expertise from the GKSA, to the degree to which it will promote judgement in the relevant appeal.
- 3.4. Every major assembly budgets for the expenditure of these deputies.
- 4. Notification of Appeal**
 - 4.1. Alleged injustice must be addressed as speedily as possible. The appellant is to give written notice of his intent to appeal, within six weeks of reasonably learning of a decision of a church assembly that he wishes to appeal.
 - 4.2. Such notification is to be addressed to the Scribe of the Church Council of the Deputies for Correspondence of the assembly *against* which an Appeal is lodged as well as the Deputies for Correspondence and the Scribe of the Deputies for Appeal of the assembly *to whom* is being appealed.
 - 4.3. The Scribe of the Deputies for Correspondence of the assembly whose decision is being appealed is to acknowledge within 14 calendar days or as speedily as reasonably possible receipt of such notification of Appeal and provide, as speedily as possible, the relevant information and documentation the appellant requested on the matter under appeal.
- 5. Grounds for an Appeal**
 - 5.1. The appellant must reference the official redaction of the decision, against which he is appealing, in his appeal documentation.
 - 5.2. The appellant is to clearly set out the grounds for the alleged injustice in his own words.
 - 5.3. If an Appeal pertains to a judgement of a major assembly, the appellant is to indicate the original cause of the alleged injustice.
 - 5.4. The appellant is to provide a clear breakdown of the desired action of the major assembly.
 - 5.5. If an Appeal does not comply with the requirements of the set procedure, the Deputies for Appeal may offer the appellant the opportunity to rectify this, within a set period of time, and also offer the appellant any necessary assistance.
 - 5.6. The parties are to make all relevant documentation available, upon the request of the Deputies, whether it be in digital or hardcopy form. The Deputies have the authority to set deadlines for compliance with such requests.
- 6. Submission of an Appeal**
 - 6.1. The appellant is to provide the requested number of copies of the Appeal and Addenda, where applicable, to the Scribe/Deputies of the relevant minor assembly and the Deputies for Appeal. He is also to forward it electronically, if possible.
 - 6.2. The appellant bears the costs associated with the appeal, except for that of the relevant Deputies for Appeal.
- 7. Judgement of an Appeal**
 - 7.1. Constituting of Deputies: Appeal
 - 7.1.1. When Deputies are convened to hear an Appeal, it must first be unanimously established that every participating Deputy is impartial in the matter.
 - 7.1.2. If it should appear in any way that a Deputy has a stake in a matter under appeal, it would impede impartial judgement and an impartial alternate is to be called upon to participate in judgement of the Appeal.
 - 7.2. Impartiality
 - 7.2.1. Subsequent to the above constitution, the Deputies must first determine the admissibility of the Appeal in terms of the following measures:
 - 7.2.1.1. The decision under Appeal is to be cited verbatim, indicating its official redaction.

7.2.1.2. The grounds for the Appeal is to be clearly set out and comply with the requirements stated in 5.1 above.

7.2.1.3. Notice of the Appeal must be given within the set time period, as stipulated in item 4.1.

7.3. Parties

The appellant/s and respondent/s of the dispute are seen as the parties that were/are involved in the original petition. If a judgement of a major assembly is being appealed, then this assembly is not party to the dispute.

7.4. Confidentiality

7.4.1. The Deputies are to determine the degree of confidentiality, to accord the Appeals process and documents, according to the nature of the matter.

7.4.2. The requests for confidentiality around testimony must be treated with the greatest of care, for the sake of justice.

7.5. Hearing an Appeal

Hearing an Appeal, found to be admissible, occurs as follows:

7.5.1. The appellant receives the opportunity to personally or with the aid of a representative present and substantiate his Appeal, together with any written testimony.

7.5.2. Then the representative of the assembly, whose decision is under appeal, receives the opportunity to respond to the Appeal and explain the grounds refuting the Appeal.

7.5.3. Once the Deputies have heard the testimony of both the appellant and relevant minor assembly, the Deputies confer *in camera* to determine the points of dispute that are to be considered and distribute such to the appellant and the representative of the relevant assembly, upon resumption of the meeting.

7.5.4. Should the appellant wish to call witnesses, to testify in substantiation of the identified points of disputes of the Appeal, either the appellant or his representative may lead such testimony.

7.5.5. During and subsequent to the testimony, the Deputies may question the appellant, a representative or witness to clarify certain points of testimony.

7.5.6. Once a witness has presented testimony for the appellant, the representative of the assembly whose decision is under appeal may question the witness for elaboration, elucidation and review of the accuracy of the testimony.

7.5.7. The appellant or his representative may redirect questions to the witness, subsequent to cross-examination, but only on matters that arose from cross-examination.

7.5.8. The same procedure applies to each witness called by the appellant, upon which the representative of the minor assembly, of which a decision is being appealed, may call witnesses.

7.5.9. The witnesses of the relevant assembly is questioned according to the same procedure, as set out in 7.5.4 to 7.5.7 above, in terms of cross-examination and redirect.

7.5.10. When all the witnesses of the relevant assembly have been heard, then the appellant or his representative has the opportunity to address the Deputies on the interpretation of the testimony and thereafter the representative of the relevant assembly is given the opportunity to do likewise.

7.5.11. A report is drawn up recounting the above events.

7.5.12. Should the Deputies deem it necessary, additional witnesses may be voluntarily called, during the session and in the presence of the appellant

and the representative of the relevant assembly, to shed further light on the matter.

7.5.13. Once all testimony and arguments have been heard, the hearing is adjourned in order for the Deputies to confer and formulate a preliminary finding.

7.5.14. Upon resumption of the hearing, the Deputies inform the appellant and the representative of the relevant assembly of the preliminary finding and then affords the appellant and thereafter the representative of the relevant assembly the opportunity to comment thereon, whereto the appellant may respond. The Deputies indicate whether the response alters the preliminary finding in any way and have the authority to settle a dispute as such that it leads to the withdrawal of the Appeal.

7.5.15. Should the parties reconcile the dispute during the events, the Deputies declare the Appeal resolved.

7.6. Report

The Deputies for Appeal draw up a final Report that contains the following:

7.6.1. A brief historical overview and summary of the content and course of the matter, *inter alia* an account of the decision/s or action of the minor assembly leading to the original dispute.

7.6.2. A summary of the grounds for Appeal of the appellant.

7.6.3. A summary of the minor assembly's response to the appeal tabled to the Deputies.

7.6.4. An overview on the procedure followed for the judgement of the Appeal.

7.6.5. The Deputies' finding in terms of an analysis and review of the grounds for the Appeal, the testimony given and the application of Scripture and/or the stipulations of the Church Order in this regard.

7.6.6. The recommended judgement in favour or rejection of the Appeal.

7.6.7. Where applicable, a detailing of the legal implications of the judgement.

7.6.8. Where applicable, recommendations for a pastoral route towards mitigation of the injustice or the erroneous perception of injustice.

7.6.9. Should the Deputies be unable to render a finding or judgement on the Appeal, for whatever reason, the Deputies then explains this to the relevant assembly that then deals with the Appeal in accordance with the majority advice offered by the relevant churches.

8. Resolution of an Appeal

8.1. The Report of the Deputies for Appeals serves, just as any other Deputies' Report, at the next assembly.

8.2. Only the Report and recommendations of the Deputies, without any further elucidation by the appellant or the relevant minor assembly, are reviewed. Neither the appellant nor the representative are given the opportunity to speak.

8.3. Before the assembly confers and decides on the Deputies' Report, all parties involved in the decision made by the relevant minor assembly as well as the appellant (if present) leaves the assembly.

8.4. Should the relevant assembly approve the findings and recommended judgement, the Appeal is as such resolved.

8.5. Should the relevant assembly not approve the findings or the recommended judgement of the Deputies, the assembly must provide in the grounds for this as well as a motivated alternative judgement to the appellant and the relevant minor assembly in writing, failing which the findings and recommended judgement of the Deputies are deemed the findings and judgement of the relevant assembly.

9. Unforeseen cases

In cases for which procedure does not provide, the General Synod makes a ruling.

Archive

Acta 1961:362-364

1. The Synod is of the opinion that all church archives ought to be brought together in one place and reasons that the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom is the proper place of safekeeping (Acta 1933:124).
2. The archive consists of the documentary, published and photo copies of:
 - 2.1. The major assemblies of the Reformed Churches with their relative organisations, deputy groups and mandate holders. To all, yet to be named, deputy groups the task is given to view the archives in their possession, and to centralise it, as far as possible, in the church-archive.
 - 2.2. The church councils of the Reformed Churches, with their relative organisations, commissions and mandate holders.
 - 2.3. Private families or individuals who obtain storage space from the deputies for the Church Archive.
 - 2.4. Acquisitions, approved by the deputies.
3. The Synod decides that all documents of major assemblies older than ten years must be sent to the central archive and after that supplemented yearly with the pieces of the oldest year. Regional synods and Classes are requested to pay attention to the indexing, filing, safe keeping and storage of the various archive documents.
4. With regard to the archives of the various church councils, of which the church councils are the juridical owners but the archival and safe keeping is done by the denomination it is decided to distinguish between an archaic and still active part.
 - 4.1. The archaic part will, in accordance to the state archive law, consist of the church legacy older than 50 years. The archaic part, consisting of minute-, correspondence-, financial and commission-, organisational and relevant reports, should solely be kept in the central church archive. It remains the property of the relevant church council. As the denomination spends a great deal of money and labour in the safe and orderly preservation thereof, the churches agree that the archaic part may not be withdrawn from the church archive without the permission of the deputies for the Church archive. The requests for withdrawal shall note
 - 4.1.1. precisely which documents (indicated on the index) are required;
 - 4.1.2. the period which it will be absent from the archive;
 - 4.1.3. what precautions are made for the absolute safety while in transit and safekeeping outside the archive. With the archaic archives, no institution may take any risks, as its worth is immeasurable and irreparable.
 - 4.2. The still active part consists of the legacy younger than 50 years. These, still active church archives must and can be kept in the archive. Permission to withdraw it may be obtained from the archivist only if the conditions named in 4.1 above, is complied with.
5. Family- and/or personal collections are subject to the conditions for archaic church archives as stated above.
6. Acquisitions become the sole property of the archive of the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
7. Consultation of documents occurs, subject to the same rules as laid down by the Archive law for State Archives. The deputies are required to draw up adequate regulations for researchers with regards to supervision, visitor's book, application slips, inventories etc.
8. Each church council reserves the right to state special conditions for the use of its archive; these conditions must be included in the inventory with the documents and researchers are bound by them.
9. Where church councils or other document owners did not state any special conditions, the following applies: The active archive of a church council may only be consulted with the written approval of that particular church council.

Article 44 CO – Possible guidelines for visitation

Acta 1955:185, pt. (4); fol. Also Acta 1939:42-43, Acta 1945:175 and Acta 1949:249-250

- Question 1: Whether, regularly, on the day of the Lord, there are two sermons and/or with the absence of the minister the sermon-reading are faithfully held and whether the attendance of the congregation at sermons is satisfactory?
- Question 2: Whether once every Sunday there is a sermon regarding the catechism and whether the attendance of the congregation is satisfactory?
- Question 3: Whether catechism with the youth occurs on Sundays as well as days in the week and whether the church council supervises over the catechism and whether they ascertain if parents practise catechism at home.
- Question 4: Whether the sermons are simple and according to the Word of God?
- Question 5: Whether the Church Council ensures that Baptism is served to the children as soon as possible?
- Question 6: Whether home visitations and visits to the infirm are done by members of the church council according to the demand of each ones calling?
- Question 7: Whether the church council meet regularly, especially before the Lord's Supper, to exercise Christian censure and to admonish each other with relation to the execution of their office amicably?
- Question 8: Whether the Holy Communion is served regularly, on the determined times in the year with proper preparation and exercise of discipline?
- Question 9: Are the poor properly cared for and how this happens?
- Question 10: What the state of affairs is with regard to the education and training of the youth and what is being done to further Christian National Education?
- Question 11: What is done in your congregation, financially and otherwise, for the enlargement of God's Kingdom in regard with mission work and evangelism?
- Question 12: Whether there is anything with which your congregation needs the advice or aid of the classis?

Articles 12 to 14 CO - coherence

Acta 1967:59

The synod of 1967 accepted the following report:

- 1 Instruction: The instruction is found in the Acts of the Synod (1964), art. 57C.
- 2 Introduction: The point of discussion mentioned in the instruction, has bearing on the effects of the application of Church Order, art. 13 and 14 on the position, capability, rights and duties of ministers. As the point of discussion of the Western Classis (Acta 1964:100-101, pt. C) has a practice in mind that came from the decisions of 1939 and 1942, with this in mind, it is necessary to review shortly, the coherence of arts. 12, 13 and 14 of the Church Order.

Due to the fact that a Minister of the Word normally is bound to serve the church full time and as long as he lives, the Church Order must regulate occurrences of

honourable discharge from office (art. 12), emeritation (art. 13) and discontinuation of service for a period of time (art. 14).

In art. 12 provision for honourable discharge is made, as soon as the minister enters a new state of life and thus lay down his office as Minister of the Word, due to serious reasons (according to the judgement of the church council and classis).

In art. 13 provision is made for emeritation when a Minister of the Word, due to age, illness or any other reasons beyond his control, becomes permanently incapable to execute his duties.

In art. 14 provision is made for the temporary discontinuation of service of a minister, for a period of time, when due to illness or otherwise cannot temporarily, execute his duties.

In summary, it is concluded, that each of these articles, manage a certain form of discharge from office (art. 12 CO) and service of the office (art. 13 and 14 CO.) As each article contains a certain condition for discharge, one article may not be used to undo another. A minister who has been discharged from his office under art. 13 or 14, is still bound to article 12 CO, concerning entry to a new state of life.

Articles 41 and 44 CO – coherence and application

Acta 1955:179-185

During the assembly of the honourable Classis Reddersburg of 12 October 1954 a report served concerning the history, meaning, coherence and application of articles 41 and 44 CO. As the Classis concluded in this report, that the General Synods of 1927, 1930, 1939 and 1945 made a historical erroneous application of these articles in our Church in South Africa which still prevailed and as the findings in the report are therefore of importance to the entire Church, the Classis thought it prudent to submit the report to the honourable General Synod, that matters pertaining the application of the articles in our Church can be brought to clarity.

The report reads as follows:

1. History of articles 41 and 44 CO
 - 1.1. Article 41.

In the years shortly after the Reformation, the reformers saw the need of a type of internal supervision of the congregations and church councils. This supervision was primarily given to the Classis and amongst other things dealt with the doctrine of the ministers and the “proper management” of the church councils (with “proper management” the governance and organisation of the congregations is meant). In order not to revert back to the Roman hierarchy, with its supervision from above but also to supervise the congregations of which the members had but recently discarded the Roman yoke, the supervision was organised on a communal and internal basis. At the classis assemblies the praeses, through questioning, oversaw the congregations. This supervision or enquiry was made possible and did work well because the classes met regularly (some even monthly), and it was viewed to be necessary as all kinds of inappropriate occurrences still happened and because the congregations were dependent on each other, especially concerning proper management. Therefore, the classis by turn, met in the different congregations to prevent any idea of hierarchy and to emphasise the equality in authority of the congregations. The matters of the congregation that the classis heard could then be examined closely by the assembly. Thus the assemblies of the classis could, by means of the questions of the praeses exercise internal supervision, while the inquiry with relation to the congregation where assembled was more detailed.

Initially the supervision, as far as article 41 is concerned, partly included the three particular offices and their execution by the officials. Supervision of the doctrine of the ministers, which occurred when the ministers, by turn at classis assemblies delivered a sermon, eventually stopped, as the training improved exceedingly.

This supervision over the doctrine is then entrusted to visitors. For the internal supervision, the questions as stated in article 41 CO remain and emphasis is placed on the governance and organisation of the congregations.

In our church in South Africa the application of article 41 (as well as article 44) initially came to the table at the General Synod of 1873. From the O.V.S, a point for discription concerning article 44 CO, served, from which it seemed that the General Assembly of the O.V.S requested annual visitation. From the Cape Colony the General Assembly also requested that the Synod set a number of questions which the General Assembly “als eene classicale vergadering dient te doen aan elke gemeente, volgens artikel 41 KO”. In response to these two points of discription rev. D. Postma submitted a concept of questions according to that article “en die instede van kerkvisitatie vooreerst kunnen dienen.” This draft consisted of 10 questions; however the General Synod added one more which enquired what is done in the congregation with regards to the expansion of God’s Kingdom.

Here we find the important decision that the questions set by the Synod of 1873, and later in 1939 were increased to 12, should be asked under article 41 CO “instede van kerkvisitatie.” (With the drafting of these 11 and later 12 questions for article 41, clearly some earlier visitation guidelines were followed; apparently with regard to the supervision as stated in article 41 CO, no guidelines or even more detailed exposition of the questions, except that earlier these questions also occurred: “of zij eenigen strijd hebben met eenig hoofdstuk der Leere?” (Acta Emdensche Sinode 1571. See P. Biesterveld en H.H. Kuyper: Kerklijke Handboekje, p. 56.) The same applies for Art. XIV Acts Nat. Synod Dordrecht 1578 (op. cit., p. 105). In art. XXX CO Nat. Synod Middelburg 1581 (op. cit., p. 149) and art. XXXVIII CO Nat. Synod ‘s-Gravenhage 1586 (op. cit., p. 201) and art. XLI of the CO Nat. Synod Dordrecht 1618-19 (op. cit., p. 236) these questions concerning the doctrine and the heresies were left out and appeared revised and expanded in visitation regulations and articles in church orders that have bearing on visitation.

Thus, articles 41 and 44 were combined in 1873 in our church practice, and it is noteworthy that the General Synod of 1927 deleted the words “instede van kerkvisitasie” but did not pay any further attention to the matter for the two articles to come to justice. Neither did it happen when the General Synod in 1930 was asked to emphasize the necessity of visitation, as was decided: “The Synod refers the church council of Johannesburg-Oos to the Classis under which it falls.”

Today, the factual circumstance is that articles 41 and 44 CO were joined together in 1873 with a set of questions, which were to be asked under article 41, and through which the General Assembly could form a complete impression of the church life in the province. This status was settled in 1927, 1930, 1939 and 1945, when attention was once again given to the questions but not the Church Order Articles.

1.2. Article 44.

Church visitation is the institution of an inquiry into the state of the congregation and is as old as the church itself (see Acts 9:32 in H Bouwman: Gereformeerd Kerkrecht, p. 163). In the Roman Church, visitation became an important characteristic of hierarchy and therefore the reformed churches were rightly careful of hierarchy in church life by means of visitation or visitors. Initially this type of supervision or inquiry was not deemed necessary as the classes

often gathered and the internal supervision or inquiry on the classis assemblies fulfilled this need.

With time, visitation became necessary as church life became more regular and the classes assemblies more infrequently and there were some ministers and congregations who did not pay much attention to the Reformed Church and major assemblies. Because of various other reasons it also became difficult to keep up the rotation of places of assembly and therefore an important part of the internal supervision fell away (see also art. 41 above). Classes and congregations that plead for visitation, from as early as 1581, pointed out that a complete impression of a congregation is necessary for proper classis supervision and that yearly visitation would provide the classis with such an impression. As such any problems or questions that might have presented itself in the congregations could be dealt with in a timely fashion.

At the Synod of Dordrecht 1618-19, it was decided to make visitation compulsory for all classes and a broad description of the task of the visitors was drafted; these terms were taken into the DCO as Article 44. The Synod's intention was to establish stability for the church life, through regular visitation of the congregations, but also to vigorously guard against the insurgence of hierarchy into the Reformed Church Governance. "Er is volstrekt geen sprake in artikel 44 van een administratief of statistisch onderzoek, of een onderzoek naar de kerklijke gebouwen, neen, de kerkvisitatie dient allereerst om voor die zuiverheid van de leer te waken, in de tweede plaats om toe te zien dat naar de orde der kerken geleefd wordt, en ten slotte om de kerken met goeden raad te steunen" (Bouwman: op.cit; p. 166). (In this matter it is appropriate to also take note of what Bouwman has to say about the character of the visitation in the province Groningen (op.cit. p. 169): "Ofschoon deze wijze van visitatie ... gaande zoowel over stoffelijke en geestelijke zaken, bevorderlijk was voor de ... reformatie in de provincie Groningen, is zij mede een middel geweest voor de verbastering der visitatie in ongereformeerde geest.") In South Africa visitation takes place according to article 44 CO and visitation regulations drafted by the classes in terms of article 44. It must be noted here that most visitation procedures make use of the 12 questions drafted through time for the implementation of article 41 CO with the addition of a number of questions which focus more on the material and administrative aspects.

2. The meaning and coherence of articles 41 and 44 CO

From the preceding historical overview of articles 41 and 44 CO the following matters regarding the meaning and coherence of the articles:

- 2.1. The articles both deal with classis supervision over the congregations. The supervision was initially only on an internal and community level and dealt with the purity of doctrine, the execution of particular offices and the correct management of the congregations. Later the supervision also took place particular by visitors and the matters concerning the purity of doctrine, the execution of the offices and the application of the Church Order were specifically left to the visitors. The supervision at the classis assembly focused more on matters pertaining to the proper management (governance and organisation) of the congregations.
- 2.2. The spirit and the meaning of article 41 therefore place the emphasis on the proper management or institution (governance and organisation) of the congregations. With regard to these matters, this article only mentions the church council meetings, the discipline and the care of the poor and schools. In order to preserve the organic nature of the CO in this article, in other words not to regulate unnecessarily, the article reads as follows: "... and furthermore the praeses shall *among other things* present the following questions... see CO article 41. Or as it read originally in the Acta of the Synod of Emden "... en diergelijke dingen meer"

(Kerkelijk Handboekje, p. 56). Van Dellen and Monsma (The Church Order Commentary, p. 189 states): “The president of classis should therefore feel free to vary the prescribed or suggested questions as he deems best, and to add other questions as circumstances may demand.”

The last question that follows is whether the congregation has something concerning the proper management of their church where they need the judgement or help of the classis, this makes it clear that article 41 does not intend to be a set regulation aimed at the internal supervision, but that the praeses of the classis, in view of circumstances, must decide what should be asked concerning the governance and organisation of the congregations and which questions should have priority. Therefore it is no way the intention of article 41 to cover the whole range of congregation matters by means of questions during a classis meeting (even though the aim of the 12 questions added to the article, as elucidated in the historical overview concerning South Africa, was determined to form a complete impression of the congregations and congregational matters “instead of church visitation”).

- 2.3. In contrast to this is the supervision and inquiry of article 44 through visitation as instructed by the classis, which continues regulatory to form a complete impression of the congregations. The emphasis during visitation falls on the doctrine and Church Order, thus implies a detailed inquiry of the office bearers and the execution of the offices with regard to the reformed doctrine and church government. It is essential to guard against the over emphasis (or even emphasis) of an inquiry concerning the material and administrative matters of a congregation. Such an inquiry is not desirably, unless requested by the church council and congregation.
- 2.4. The Classis gathers under article 41 every quarter, and congregations are visited annually in accordance to article 44. This means that the Classis can supervise over all the congregations every year in full, subordinately and specially or particular, namely:
 - 2.4.1. with regard to the proper governance (governance and organisation) of all the congregations through variation of the relevant questions and the offer of advice and help and judgment (art. 41),
 - 2.4.2. and with regard to matter pertaining doctrine and church orderly matters of all the congregations to prevent problems in this regard and solve problems and serve the congregations with aid from the classis and advice (art. 44).
- 2.5. Our honourable Classis as well as other classes of our Church, however feel that with regard to the classis supervision over the congregations in accordance with articles 41 and 44 CO a measure of duplication and overlapping occurs. This feeling is the reason why some classes do not apply art. 41 any more and that the application of this article in other classes with the application of article 44 has a time consuming and monotonous meeting as result. The cause of these circumstances, which surely is not the intent of these articles, is among others the equalisation of the articles by the Synod of 1873 and the upkeep of the equalisation by the Synods of 1927, 1930, 1939 and 1945, even though our church life had developed that visitation could be generally imported. Maintaining the 12 questions of art 41 thus rests on a equalisation of articles 41 and 44 in the past, which is not necessary anymore; as soon as article 44 is applied in practice, the 12 questions of article 41 must fall away, otherwise an undesired regulation of the article, which means that the organisational meaning thereof, is lost.

The 12 questions would indeed fit in better with article 44 as a guideline from the synod to the classes with regard to visitation. In practise, most classes have

incorporated these questions into their visitation regulation, for exactly this reason.

3. The application of articles 41 and 44 CO

For the best application of articles 41 and 44 CO we wish to lay before the hon. Classis, the following:

- 3.1. Supervision of the congregations according to article 41 and 44 forms an important part of every classis assembly. It is also clear that, at each classis assembly, the internal as well as the particular supervision should occur complementary and that a practise to have only one of the articles active at an assembly, is not desired, or that it occurs by way of leaving article 41 out or that the articles are applied by turn at alternative assemblies.
- 3.2. to accommodate supervision at each classis assembly as well as the internal (art. 41) as the particular (art. 44) without overburdening the agenda, we suggest the following:
 - 3.2.1. The praeses (of the classis) decides which question or questions in accordance with the circumstances and relevance named under (or also without) the questions in art. 41 CO, will be stated at the next assembly, in order that the congregations preferably can answer the question or questions in writing. The importance of the question or questions rather than the quantity must be emphasised.
 - 3.2.2. The Church Councils should make maximum use of this internal supervision by requesting, without reserve, the judgement and aid of the classis with relation to the proper management of congregations. Through this, the classis can also determine whether particular supervision by means of special visitation might be needed.
 - 3.2.3. Visitators should pay attention that the actual purpose of visitation has to do with the purity of doctrine, the execution of the offices, the application of the CO and the necessity or preference of the advice or aid of the classis. With recommend by quoting: "Visitors should not dwell overly long on matters which are of minor import. They should conserve their time for matters of greater import. Certain matters require a very brief annual check-up, as a matter of safety. But the greatest amount of good proceeds from the work of Church Visitators if they will reduce the routine aspect of their labours to a minimum and individualize their work in each Church stressing those matters which require special attention. They should by all means so arrange their work that ample time will be left for the consideration of questions which the Consistory may desire to present" (Van Dellen en Monsma, op. cit., p. 198). The report concerning the visitation that will be brought before the classis must also then also by preference be that matters of greater importance of the supervision is emphasised.
 - 3.2.4. The 12 questions mentioned with article 41 (p. 65 and 66 CO) are not applied in the internal supervision, but may be used as guideline with the application of article 44.
- 3.3. Because the classis does not assemble quarterly but at most twice a year, it is difficult to visit the congregations annually, moreover it increases the number of visitation reports that need to be dealt with at the assemblies. However, it must be recommended that the classis, as soon as circumstances allow, meet four times a year and that the congregation are visited annually. In our opinion circumstances already allows for this.

The Synod of 1952 (Acta, p. 234) decided regarding articles 41 and 44. The matter was then referred to the various Classes. We want to point out that, consequent general synods, as we attempt to show in this report, have, through their decisions, prevented the proper application of articles 41 and 44. Consequently, it is recommended and desired that the General Synod

will attend anew to this matter. We would also want to mention that the commission of the Classis that undertook this matter in study consisted of dr K.S. van Wyk de Vries and dr P.J. Coetzee.

Attestation

Acta 1991:551-552, pt. 22.27

The Synod emphasizes once again that church councils must tend to attestation carefully.

Attestation: Refusal to request

Acta 1973:168

The Synod amends the decision of 1893 and refers to article 82 CO

Baptism - administration

Acta 1985:421, pt. 4.2.1 and 4.2.4.1

Because it is the Biblical reformed sequence that the sacrament follows the Word, the Synod of 1985 decides that the administration of the Baptism shall occur after Scripture reading or after the sermon.

Baptism administered by sects:

Acta 1930:27-29

1. The baptism must not be acknowledged:
 - 1.1. When it is administered in an anti-Trinitarian community, which negates the Person or the Godly nature of the Son or the Godly Nature of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1.2. When it is administered in a group which denounces the New Covenant or Testament of grace, i.e. which negates the death of atonement and the Mediatorship of Christ and which maybe presents Him as an ideal person, prophet, genius or example.
2. Based on this, the Synod accepted the following conclusion:
 - 2.1. People who, by being rebaptised renounced their Christian Baptism must not be baptised again, but must recall their erroneous notions when they are admitted to the community of a Reformed Church. Whether this recalling takes place publicly before the congregation or only the church council, must be decided by each church council (fol. also art. 75 CO).
 - 2.2. People who have solely been baptised in an anti-Trinitarian community (e.g. the Unitarians or Russalites) or in a community which denounces the New Testament or Covenant, established in the blood of Christ, must be baptised again when they are admitted to the congregation of a Reformed Church, as their previous baptism was fictitious or void. Each church council must take note in preventative cases, whether the community from whence the person comes is one which upholds such a void or fictitious baptism. When there is a difference in opinion the major assembly must be consulted.
 - 2.2.1. In the case of children of people who come from an anti-Trinitarian community or one which negates the mediator's death and dignity of Christ, the same applies as in conclusion 2.2.
 - 2.2.2. In cases where parents come from sects and have children who have not been baptised, the children must be baptised (Acta 1930:28-30). In cases where children have come to understanding, about which the church council shall judge, the baptism shall take place according to the form for adults.

Baptism of adopted children

Acta 1970:137, pt. 6.b. en 6.c.

Concerning the question whether the baptism may be administered to adopted children, it is decided by the General Synod of 1970 that it may be done. When members apply to baptise their adopted children the Church council must ascertain that:

1. the adoption was done lawfully and
2. the parents view the adoption as an adoption in the Lord.

The same procedure for the baptism is followed as for natural children and the same form is used (*Acta 1970:137, pt. 6.b. en 6.c.*).

Baptism of children in foster care

Acta 2012:315

1. Point of Description

That a child placed in legal foster care with Reformed parents can be baptized in accordance to the Lord's demands on covenant parents (CO, artt 56 to 58 and 60). The special content of the baptismal form and the Scriptural grounds stated in the form should remain the same in the ministry to children in foster care in all cases.

2. Motivation

2.1. Two Synods have spoken on the matter of the baptism of **adopted** children.

2.1.1. Synod 1949 (*Acta:278-279*) took note of the advice of Prof JD du Toit, namely that the 'home guardians, or other responsible persons approved by the Home commission, may offer covenant children for baptism'.

2.1.2. Synod 1970 heard an in-depth Study Report on the baptism of adopted children and decided as follows (*Acta 1970:137*):

'Church Councils should be made aware that, when members apply to baptize their adopted children they should see to it that:

- (1) the adoption has also been legally formalized, and
- (2) the parents see the adoption as an adoption in the Lord.

The same procedure is followed as with the baptism of biological children, and the same form is use for this baptism.'

2.1.3. B Spoelstra (*Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 1989:315) refers to the above two Synod decisions and makes the following remark: 'Thorough study of the doctrine of the covenant brought to light that the work of God in the NT is not connected to biological descent. When believing parents have adopted a little child legally, they are the parents of that child in the Lord. Nothing can prohibit the baptism of such a child'.

2.2. No Synod has spoken regarding the baptism of children in **foster care** up until now. This can probably be ascribed to the fact that legislation (Children's law) continuously changed radically from 1970 onwards regarding foster care and adoption. However, Synods agree that the baptism may be served if there is orderly, legal supervision of the child, and that the parents should be able to realize the baptismal promise.

2.3. The baptism of children – including those in foster care – comes forth from the riches of the promises of the covenant and blessings that God wants to offer his children. The church and the parents (foster parents in this case) are responsible for meeting the covenant responsibility.

2.4. The requirement that a "permanent" relation between parent and foster child should be established beforehand, cannot hold. The Lord's Word, as confessed in

Sunday 10 of the Catechism, clearly states that such children do not become part of the families of such foster parents by accident, and such inclusion in the home of the believing parents clearly implies inclusion in the home of the Lord. The fact that all things are in the hands of the Lord and that God provides for all things, means that we can not set the requirement of indeterminate time to the ministry of God's command and promise to such children. The rich meaning of the covenant of the Lord warns against the danger of narrowing down the covenant bond to only a biological bond.

- 2.5. Synod 1970 indicated that adoption, which in this case can include the care of a child in foster care, should be an adoption in the Lord. Foster care, which has taken on a more legal form in the recent legislation, can then also be viewed as adoption in the Lord.
- 2.6. The Children's Law of SA (Law Nr 38 of 2005) describes the position of children, as well as the responsibilities and rights of parents who take children into foster care (Chapter 13, part 1, sections 180-190 of the Children's Law). In terms of this law the foster parents are responsible for the day-to-day spiritual as well as physical care of the child in their care (Law 38, ch 13, Part 1, 65 (1)). The law puts the interest of the child on the foreground, and this includes security in terms of building healthy family relationships, as well as the maintaining the language, culture and religious background of the child (Part 1, 65 (1) (a to k, especially g and h, as well as Appendix B, Part 2, 6). Although foster parents may not prevent or hinder the child from making contact with his/her biological parents (Part 1, 65 (1) (b)), it is clear that they have to accept responsibility for the child in their care as authorized persons. *Summarized:* A child in foster care is a child who will be in the care of the parents for the medium or long term (at least two years). There is also the possibility that foster parents can adopt such a child as their own (Children's Law, chapter 16), which results in a permanent relationship between parents and child(ren).

Baptism of children in institutions

Acta 1949:278

The house parents, or other responsible persons approved by the Home-commission, may present the covenant children for baptism.

Baptism of children whose parents have not openly professed their faith.

(Acta 1873:154).

The Children of parents, who have themselves not professed their faith, must be baptised; however the parents must be firmly admonished to profess their faith openly. As long as they have not openly professed their faith, they may not act as baptism parents and may not be entered as baptism witnesses.

Baptism: Practice conformity

Acta 1945:126

Where parents are not members of the Reformed Church, the church council shall, in each instance determine whether they are allowed before the pulpit or not.

Baptism: Unnecessary delay

Acta 1958:134; seq. Acta 1961:132-136

The Synod takes note, with concern, of the extent of the unnecessary delay of baptism in our congregations.

Border arrangements

Acta 1955:319; sec. also Acta 1985:58, pt. 2.3.5 as well as Acta 1873:44 and Acta 1876:51 {art. 188} and Acta 1873:52 {art. 194}

Where there are differences concerning the borders of a new congregation or a reinstituted congregation or with the rearrangement of the borders of existing congregations, the church council must turn to the classis which will determine

Calling a minister

Acta 1945:113

1. The Acta of 1879:46 states that when a minister is of the conviction that he must leave a congregation within one year after being called, then the calling congregation shall reimburse the congregation for the costs incurred in his procurement.
"Wanneer 'n leraar oordeelt dat hij binne een jaar moet vertrekken, dan zal de roepende gemeente de onkosten teruggeven die door de gemeente om hem te verkrijgen, gemaakt waren". (Acta 1879:46).
2. The Synod advises against the calling of a minister who has not been in his congregation for less than two years, as the short time of service is contrary to the well being of the congregation

Calling Establishment CO Artt 4, 8 & 9 (Admission)

Acta 2012:492-494

Calling establishment in terms of article 4, 8, 9 KO (SR3.1)

1. CO art 4
 - 1.1. CO stipulation and synod decisions
CO, art 4¹ presuppose the training of theological students and requires examination² for admission to the service. Synod 2006 decided as follows: (i) the ideal situation is that theological students complete their full training in Potchefstroom. (ii) Provision can be made to do Candidates I-III at an acknowledged institution or via telematic study. The Candidates IV-VI is done in Potchefstroom.³

¹ "The lawful calling and admission of a person not previously in the service of the Word and that was examined in preparation (preparatoir) by the classis in which he resides, exists in the first place out of, the election after preceding prayers, by the church council and the deacons according to the stipulation that is used locally or as determined by the church council and in churches with only one minister of the Word, also with advice of the classis or of the consultant that was appointed for this reason by the classis; in the second place, the examination of the doctrine and life (peremptoir) of the called by the classis (where the calling must be approved) that has to take place with the advice of the deputies of the particular synod; in the third place, the approbation and approval by the members of the involved church in that, after the name has been announced for at least three Sundays, no legal objection has been lodged; and finally, the public ordination in front of the congregation in the presence of the classis deputies, according to the formulary that has been established."

² See Acta 1970:122 a.f. on the combining of the preparatoir and peremptoir examinations.

³ "2.3.4 Polity aspects

2.3.4.1 Aspects with regards to minister training

2.3.4.1.1 Place of training

(i) The ideal situation is that prospective ministers do their full training in Potchefstroom. Where necessary (as determined by the requesting circumstances of the students or the need of churches) provision can be made that students do their Candidates I-III outside Potchefstroom at one of the acknowledged institutions or through telematic study, with the

1.2. Procedure

- 1.2.1. With the intention to study theology with a view of obtaining a candidate certificate the students must report to the Curators. This stipulation shall apply to all students – those who want to complete BTh I-III at the TSP or an approved institution.
- 1.2.2. Students who report to the Curators are evaluated by means of psychometric tests, interviews and other requirements that currently apply.
- 1.2.3. Students that complete the Candidate I-III at other institutions with permission of the Curators, report to the TSP with completion of the study for a colloquium doctum. This colloquium is can continue with the Candidate IV-VI. The Senate makes a recommendation on the question (i) whether the applicant can enrol for the Candidate IV-VI; (ii) what the applicant should do to improve his knowledge and insight to enrol for the Candidate IV-VI.
- 1.2.4. For students that completed their full study at another institution, the following is valid:
 - 1.2.4.1. See point 1.2.2.2.
 - 1.2.4.2. An assessment takes place on the basis of the certificate/documents that must be handed in, as well as an evaluation of the institution(s) where the documents have been obtained.
 - 1.2.4.3. the applicant report to the TSP for a colloquium doctum. The purpose with this colloquium is to determine whether the person's knowledge is on a standard for obtaining a Candidate Certificate. Following the outcome of the colloquium the Senate determines whether the student can obtain the Candidate certificate or further recommendations are made to the person.

2. CO, art 8

2.1. CO stipulation

Someone that did not study, will not be allowed in Word service, except if there is certainty of his exceptional talents, piety, humility and sobriety, good mind and discernment as well as gifts of eloquence. If such a person reports, the Classis must, if the particular synod approves, examine him and let him deliver proof sermons for a while after favourable finding, and then handles him as judged by the Classis.

2.2. Procedure

- 2.2.1. The original application to be allowed into the ministry in terms of CO, art 8, is directed at the Church Council of the applicant.
- 2.2.2. If the Church Council judges that the application has merit, the CO, art 8 application (by the applicant with full motivation as art 8 describes with a recommendation of the Church Council) must be handed in at the TSP. (It will be sensible if the Church Council also seeks the advice of the Classis with regards to the CO, art 8 application).
- 2.2.3. The applicant reports at the TSP (Senate and Curators) for a colloquium doctum. The colloquium doctum serve as an assessment of the theological academic suitability of the applicant. Three sermons (OT, NT and HC) are examined.
- 2.2.4. The TSP makes the result of the assessment known to the Church Council.

Candidate IV-VI in Potchefstroom. Exception to this ideal situation is possible and can be arranged 'on a ad hoc basis by the Curators).

- (ii) As expression of unity in training students that do their initial study for Candidate I-III outside Potchefstroom, must go through the same selection process than the current Potchefstroom students (that is: psychometric tests, interviews and other requirements that are currently valid). This requirement starts when a 'student enrolls for BTh I (=Candidate I), and is not valid for students that want to do the certificate, diploma or BTh (non-Biblical languages).
- (iii) All candidates that want to become ministers, follow the BTh (Biblical languages) program." (Acta 2006:803).

- 2.2.5. The Church Council gives the necessary documentation and motivation to the applicant to Report to the Regional Synod.
- 2.2.6. If the Regional Synod finds that the applicant passes, the student is sent to a Classis to deliver proof sermons for a while, and to then handles him as the Classis judges.
- 3. CO, art 9
 - 3.1. CO stipulation

Ministers joining from other churches or some sect, will not be allowed to the Word service, except with great caution and after they have been well tested for some time.
 - 3.2. Procedure
 - 3.2.1. Applicants that join from other churches, must join a local church or in the process thereof or give evidence thereof.
 - 3.2.2. The original application to be allowed to the ministry in terms of CO art 9 is normally directed at the church council of the applicant.
 - 3.2.3. See point 1.2.2.4.3
 - 3.2.4. Ministers of churches abroad can, if they do not attend a local church, but intends to become minister of the GKSA , report to the TSP that will determine whether art 4/9 is applicable. If art 9 is applicable, a colloquium doctum is arranged with the person.

Calling in Combination

Acta 1939:34-38

From the outset it must be determined that in this matter there can be no strict uniformity. This fact is emphasized by dr. F.L. Rutgers (Kerkelijke Adviezen, I, p. 36 etc.) as by dr. Bouwman (Kerkrecht I, p. 421). Since the time of the Reformation many forms of combining congregations with the objective of calling a minister, has existed. With each combination it must be very clear what will be in the best interest of the concerned congregations, where the local circumstances will surely have an effect. To force uniformity in this matter, will surely do more damage than good in the congregations. What follows must therefore be seen as a guide only.

The matter that we deal with can be summarised in three main points:

- 1 Arrangements that precede the calling.
- 2 The letter of calling.
- 3 The addendum to the letter of calling.

Arrangements that precede the calling.

- 4. In advance it must be stated that the Synod continues with the combination of three congregations, A, B and C that join in combination. Where there are more or fewer congregations, everything will naturally be adjusted accordingly.

As soon as the principle of combination is approved by the church councils of congregations A, B and C, a combined church council meeting must held. This meeting is constituted and the decision made in the same manner as stipulated under point nr 9 on K-71.

At the combined meeting the following points must be discussed:

- 4.1. A deed of combination must be constituted. This deed simultaneously serves as addendum to the letter of calling. A concept thereof is thus given on page @*@

- (The Deputies for the ordination must investigate whether the deed is properly constituted. A copy is sent to the classis for acknowledgement.)
- 4.2. It must be decided in what manner the calling will take place. Here various matters must be considered:
 - 4.2.1. Must it take the form of a free election or must a short list of two or three be named? The synod advises that a short-list is requested from the respective congregations, before the combined meeting, from which the combined meeting will then name a short list of two or three.
 - 4.2.2. Must A, B and C take part in the voting or must the voting be done in A only, while B and C submit to the results? The synod advises the first alternative is chosen, as the second will lead to the idea that the minister only belongs to one congregation.
 - 4.3. It can be determined that the congregations who call first send the ballots in a sealed envelope to the congregation who calls last, where the ballots are then properly shuffled and counted together. Two deputies of each of the other congregations must be present for this, that the letter of calling may also be signed. In this instance it may occur that a re-election is required, where the other congregations once again have to participate, unless it was decided at the combined meeting that the congregation who calls last will also determine the result in the instance of a re-election. To prevent such an event, it may be prudent only to provide a short list of two. Another option is for the congregations to call simultaneously. This can possibly happen on the Saturday, while the result of the voting in B and C is made known to A by means of the telephone or alternatively directly. A then makes known whether a re-election is necessary or not. Arrangements must then be made of where and when the letter of calling must be signed by the deputies of the various congregations as well as by which consulent.
 - 4.4. Where must the ordination take place? The synod advises that it happens in the congregation where the minister shall reside. This does not exclude admission sermons in the other congregations. (If the ordination takes place in congregation A, congregation B and C cannot be viewed as neighbouring congregations).

Candidates – a tie in the voting with the consideration of admission

Acta 1873:35; sec. also addenda p. 63 for the completer decision

If the voting results in a tie with the admission of candidates to the ministry, it will be regarded as non-admission.

Church Council – meaning of the term in article 79 CO

sec. srt. 37 CO and Acta: 1979:560, art. 157

The Church Council consists of the minister(s) of the Word and the elders

Church seal

Acta 1967:158-159; seq. also Acta 1970:105

1. The seal is a small church built on a boulder with the name of the institution using it in circumscription and the motto on the boulder "Die poorte van die hel sal dit nie oorweldig nie".
2. The seal will be used in one size only.
3. Use of the seal:
 - 3.1. Churches have the right to use the seal with the circumscription The Reformed Church N.N
 - 3.2. Major assemblies of churches have the right to use the seal with the name of the relevant assembly in as circumscription.

- 3.3. Other institutions may, when it seems necessary, be permitted by the General Synod to use the seal.
4. On request, prints of the seal will be provided to congregations for their use, by the Administrative Bureau

Correspondence – general

Acta 1955:164-165

A very important report which was accepted, served before the Synod. The conclusions read as follows:

1. Conclusions regarding “correspondence”:
 - 1.1. The term “correspondence” does not need to be replaced by another term that will suit the present circumstances better, but it needs to be defined more closely.
 - 1.2. The closer definition of the term must coincide with the distinction of congregations in the same denomination and more or less related congregations in different denominations.
 - 1.3. The closer definition must tie in with that of the Synod of Grand Rapids, viz. correspondence in a narrower (or actual) sense and correspondence in a broader sense. The first indicates congregations in the same denomination (art. 48 CO) even where it crosses the national borders, which is ecclesiastical correspondence. The latter indicates congregations in different denominations, which is inter-ecclesiastical correspondence.
 - 1.4. Simultaneous correspondence from a congregation in one country with congregations in different denominations in another country is possible when considering the distinction between correspondence in a narrower sense and correspondence in a broader sense (seq. Acta 1961:528-529, pt. 5).
 - 1.5. Both correspondence in a broader sense, as well as correspondence in a more narrower sense may be subject to closer regulation. Concerning the latter specific circumstances must be taken into account (Acta 1955:163).
2. Conclusions regarding the question whether the denomination reaches further than national and territorial borders:
 - 2.1. This must be answered in the affirmative and Reformed Churches in different countries that are unified in confessions and church government (Belgic Confession art. 29) may come together in a normal ecumenical synod after the analogy of art. 36 CO.
 - 2.2. The close contact between the Reformed Churches, that maintain ecclesiastical correspondence with each other, must continue by sending representatives from one to the other, not only to bear salutations but also to consult regarding communal matters

Credential Letters

Acta 1967:349-350

1. Mandates for representatives to major assemblies must be signed by the praeses and scribe (Acta 1869:13,16).
2. The Synod urge the church councils to ensure that the letters of good faith are properly drawn up, with mention made of the representative’s office (Acta 1945:13).
3. The Synod of 1967 decided to apply art. 33 CO consistently to ensure that only assignments from regional synods are considered because:
 - 3.1. the regional synods are the mandator of the general synod and
 - 3.2. the agendas of the General Synods should not be flooded by unapproved and unwarranted “instructions”

Cremation

Acta 1933:117 and 122; seq. Acta 1952:208, pt. 1 and 1952:216, pt. 1

The Synod has decided the following, concerning the increase of cremation in our country:

The Synod takes note with regret that cremation is increasing and is of the conviction that our members should not follow suit and needs to warn against this practice, as it is of pagan origin and is contrary with the century old practice of burial as it is found in the Old and New Testament.

Furthermore, the Christian Church cannot accept cremation, as even with the pseudo argument that it is done for health reasons, the ideology behind cremation is still a materialistic worldview. For the Christian, with his belief in the resurrection, burial has the symbolic meaning that the body is entrusted to the earth as a seed which dies before it returns glorified at a later time

Discharge and Ordination of Ministers

Acta 1904; Acta 1967:580-581

1. With the Discharge of servants as well as the ordination of ministers and proponents, deputies representing the classis will be present, these deputies being two members each named by the two neighbouring church councils, together with the consulent. This commission must notify the church council of the corresponding congregation of the classis regarding the completion of the discharge and ordination. (Acta 1904)
2. The travel expenses of these deputies is covered by the calling congregation

Discharge and ordination of ministers as professors in theology

Acta 1973:315, pt. 2.2.1.1 - 2.2.2.3

1. A minister is sequestered to serve as professor at the Theological school by the strength of the calling *inter alia* in 2 Timothy 2:2 for the training of ministers of the Word.
2. The service as professor at the Theological School relieves the minister from the other aspects of the work in the office of minister. However he retains the capability thereto under the supervision of the local congregation.
3. The professor at the Theological School is bound equally to all the local congregations in the demination.
4. The above mentions principles are applied practically as follows:
 - 4.1. A professor at the Theological School is only called by the serving ministers of the local congregations in the denomination.
 - 4.2. The calling (election and installation) of a minister of the Word as professor at the Theological School and the supervision over his service as professor takes place by all the congregations in the church family by means of their delegates, in accordance with the guidelines of the General Synod. (For the calling assembly seq. the referral at art.18 CO).
 - 4.3. The minister who has been called as professor must submit the act of discharge from the local church where he served in terms of principle 2 above.

Discipline of baptised members

Acta 1961:126

1. Baptised members must be viewed as members of the church on the grounds of the covenant of grace.
2. They are, however, incomplete members and therefore the discipline can only be incomplete.

3. In essence there is not difference between the discipline over professing members and baptised members, however the degree differs.
4. The Synod decision of 1913, which contains the stipulation that baptised members who have not professed their faith, lose their membership “externally with their thirtieth birthday” is recalled and with that the decision of the Synod of 1904 is maintained.
5. Church Councils will follow the normal procedure of discipline as it is applied to professing members according to the CO, as well as applied to baptised members, taking into consideration the incompleteness of their membership

Discipline of emeritus-ministers

Acta 1970:428

With discipline of a emeritus minister, which affects his honour and name as minister of the Word or his ability to act as minister of the Word, it goes without saying that the procedure should be followed as applies for a minister of the Word. Moreover, an emeritus minister is a member of the congregation where he lives and it need not be the congregation where he retired, as he no longer has official duties in that congregation. The church council of the congregation where he retired must eventually deliberate with the church council of the congregation where he lives and, with the understanding that the church council who granted retirement, apply the discipline according to articles 79 and 80 CO and the church council of the congregation where the emeritus lives applies the discipline in accordance with articles 76 to 78 CO

Discipline of office bearers

Acta 1907:47-48, Acta 1936:93, 94

1. A commission must be deputed and not the whole church council of the closest congregation
2. Instead of the church council of the adjacent congregation commissions from two neighbouring congregations may be deputed. Each of these commissions, from two neighbouring congregations will then consist of the minister or consulent and at least two elders.
3. This commission shall consist of the minister or consulent with two elders from the nearest congregation.
4. Noted commission has seating and the right to vote in the church council.
5. In the instance where a minister of the Word is involved, the entire church council must elect another chairman.
6. In the case where the minister of the concerned church council is the consulent of the closest congregation, the nearest minister who is not concerned with the matters must be called upon.

Dispersed members

Acta 1961:446-449

1. On the question: When is someone dispersed? Is it determined about the member or the congregation? The Synod resolved that the wording of the question rests with the classis, who must give an interpretation of article 39 CO with regard to existing cases (Acta 1955:374).
2. Report concerning dispersed members.

Divorce – Ground

Acta 1924:44, Acta 1927:54, Acta 1964:475

Adultery alone is accepted as grounds for divorce according to Matthew 5:32 and not malicious desertion.

Eligibility for ministry of candidates and proponents from recognised Reformed Churches.

Acta 1991:212)

We also require ecclesiastical testimony and eligibility for ministry, from candidates in Theology and probationers from the recognised Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and America. They will however not be re-examined, but invited to a compulsory interview with the Curators (Acta 1904:37-38).

The “recognised Reformed Churches” are those who are in correspondence with our Churches

Eligibility for ministry of ministers who resigned

Acta 1973:317-318

The following concerning this matter was approved by the Synod of 1973

In our instruction the following point of discription is included: “The honourable Synod gives a reply to the following question: May an office bearer lay down (resign) his office and where it has happened in the past that minsters resign their office and it was accepted as such – what manner of eligibility for ministry must be followed if such a person seeks reinstatement?” (Acta 1970:430)

1. Firstly the point of discription requires an answer to the question whether an office bearer may lay down (resign) his office. It must be answered that an office bearer may resign; however, so doing he ends his official duties and rights of own volition. Therefore the church is faced with a sure fact which must be dealt with as already reported in 3.2.1 [3 above].
2. The second question that needs to be answered, is: Which way to eligibility must be taken if such a person applies for reinstatement?
3. Faithless desertion of office is an evasion of the adjudication of the churches, as stipulated in articles 12 and 79 CO. Therefore a person who has made himself guilty of this must first obtain the judgement and recommendation from the church where he is a member, before he may apply with the church and classis where he left office, for a recommendation where after he may turn to the Regional Synod (in whose resort the latter church and classis fall) with the application for eligibility (see Acta 1970:127-128, art. 122).
4. A person who has faithless deserted office as minister must, in accordance with art. 4 CO apply for eligibility for ministry. The procedure mentioned in 3.2.2.3 [c above] also applies to ministers who left office under articles 12 or 79 CO (the decision of Synod 1958:134, art. 68, pt. 8a. is revoked).
5. Remorse alone can not be sufficient grounds on which to be made eligible for ministry again. With the consideration of an application to eligibility it must be determined whether this person would be able to once again serve with edification in the church with dignaty and whether he has the gifts of being faithfull and devoted calling, self denial and perseverance. (Also compare the gifts named in the TSP booklet, 1968:28-29). In depth investigation must be done regarding the motivation for the application.

Examination – Theological Candidates

1. Coherence and differentiation

The Church:

- 1.1. finalises and tests the theological-scientific basis of the future minister of the Word in the candidates examination;
- 1.2. tests, with a view to eligibility for the ministry, the capability and the gifts of the candidate to apply his theological-scientific knowledge in practice in the preparatory examination (preparatoir);
- 1.3. tests, with a view to admission to, and ordination in the office, the soundness in doctrine, and piousness in life of the proponent in the eligibility examination (peremptoir).
2. Content and conduction of examinations:
 - 2.1. The Candidates Examination:
 - 2.1.1. This examination is conducted by the Curators of the Theological Seminary according to the stipulations that is set by the General Synod from time to time. A student, who has completed the required course of study at the Theological Seminary, will at the culmination of the determined study period be examined in the prescribed manner.
 - 2.1.2. These examinations must reflect the theological-scientific standard and soundness, which is maintained at the Theological Seminary. The certificate, which indicates the successful completion of the examination, is issued by the Curators in the name of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. This document must serve as proof that the candidate is viewed capable in the Theology to: act as minister of the Word, elucidate the Holy Scripture and defend the pure doctrine against heresy and false doctrine (seq. art. 18 CO) (Acta 1967:48-49).
 - 2.2. The examination before the Regional Synod (Acta 1970:127-128):
The practical decision of the synod ("to determine only one examination for prospective ministers of the Word," and to "return one examination to the Regional Synods") is set as follows:
 - 2.2.1. Directly after completing the candidates examination, the candidate approaches the corresponding church council of the regional synod from the resort where the candidate originated when he reported for training as a minister of the Word, with proof of examination, that the Regional Synod may, as soon as possible and without undue postponement can be called for conduction of the examination with a view to probation and ordination in office.
The regional synod must ascertain itself of the fact that the candidate is of the intention to accept a lawful calling after the completion of the examination, before it allows the examination to take place.
A candidate who has completed the candidate's examination and whose intention it is not complete the examination according to art. 4 CO and accept a calling, must account to the regional synod where he ought to complete his examination, of his intention with the recommendation of the Curators of the Theological Seminary, that the Regional Synod may investigate the matter soundly before he grants the candidate permission to fulfil his intention.
The examination is conducted by the regional synod with a view to eligibility for calling and ordination to the office of minister of the Word, in accordance to its stipulations.
 - 2.2.2. For the virtuous and relative uniform conduction of the this examination the synod provides the scheme as stated in the decision of the Synod 1967, art. 212 4 b (1) – (2) (f) and C (a) en (b) (bl. 49-51):
 - 2.2.2.1. At this major assembly the candidate must submit the following documents:
 - 2.2.2.1.1. A testimonial concerning doctrine and life by the church council(s) under whom the candidate resorted in his last two

years of study. Based on this testimony the church council must also make a recommendation.

2.2.2.1.2. A certificate of proof that he successfully completed the candidate's examination as required by the General Synod.

2.2.3. The examination before this major assembly will mainly consist of the following:

2.2.3.1. The candidate must deliver a sermon before the assembly so that can be adjudicated concerning his capability in practicing his gifts of preaching and his abilities concerning his exposition of the Holy Scripture with regard to the original text. For this purpose the relevant major assembly must appoint Scripture passages at least six months before the examinations from which the candidate may make a choice. The sermon must be his own work and may not be used before the examination.

2.2.3.2. In addition, this examination must serve to determine whether the candidate is capable to explain the main topics of doctrine as pastor and teacher, to act as catechist and to serve as church governor.

2.2.3.3. The assembly will reserve the right to investigate any aspect that is relevant to his eligibility and probation, thoroughly in order to ensure that he is indeed capable to act with edification before the congregation.

2.2.3.4. The assembly reserves the right to investigate thoroughly any matter, whether concerning doctrine or something else, and to question the candidate in order to make sure of his point of view.

2.2.3.5. A thorough investigation regarding the reasons for application to office. The assembly determines from the submitted documents as well as from the examination that the candidate does indeed possess the gifts to successfully serve as pastor and teacher. From this investigation it must be apparent that he has good study and ministering talents; that he can act dignified, and with wisdom, not only in his private circle but also in public; that as a exemplary leader he also has the temperament to act as is stated in 2 Timothy 2:24 ('As the Lord's servant, you must not quarrel. You must be kind towards all, a good and patient teacher, who is gentle as you correct your opponents').

2.2.4. Further investigation based on the following guidelines may be done accordingly:

2.2.4.1. If he feels the calling: since when, education in parental home, interests and fellowship in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters.

2.2.4.2. Did he pay consideration to this calling in his behaviour as young man; during his time as student; in his choice of a wife?

2.2.4.3. Was there an increased desire to become a minister? Was there growth in this calling awareness especially in the years of study as a theological student?

2.2.4.4. Is the desire and calling awareness in correlation with Scripture requirements for a servant of the Lord: he is not proud or wants to see himself in a high position in life? Can something of what is taught in Matthew 11:29 'Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit'? 'The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had' (Phil. 2:1-8); 'The fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:22), must always be revealed in the servant of the Lord.'

2.2.5. As it is also an admission examination (seq. Acta 1967:51, pt. C) the examinations also covers:

2.2.5.1. the doctrine: it must be a test of the proponents' soundness based on the dogma of the church. A test of his insight in church polity as well as a tests of his wisdom in the execution of his official word, viz. Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Catechetics, Pastoral en Liturgy.

2.2.5.2. His life:

- An intimate investigation into the life and world view as well as life practices of the proponent, if necessary by a confidential commission of the classis.
- With this, questions regarding the Christian Ethic, in the entire classis are recommended. After completion of this examination the proponents' admission and ordination as minister of the relevant church is decided upon in a closed assembly and is he informed of the decision.

2.3. Should the candidate pass the examination he signs the form for proponents. Afterwards he is stated eligible for calling as a minister of the Word and he receives the right to propound, i.e. permission to preach with a view to a legal calling. After he has been called legally, he may be ordained.

A Guidelines for two examinations:

The decision with guidelines for two examinations conducted by classes (Acta 1967:49-51, art. 212) is maintained for Regional Synods to use when they deem it necessary under special circumstances (Acta 1970:128, pt. 3).

Examination of someone who studied elsewhere

Acta 1967:52

Persons who studied elsewhere, that is to say not at the Theological Seminary and who wish to enter service of the Word with the Reformed Churches in South Africa, approaches firstly the Theological Seminary, where it will be determined, by a predetermined procedure, whether the prospective candidate can receive a certificate of completion of the Candidates Examination, as required for the Preparatory Examination

Freemasonry

Acta 1939:204 - 210; seq. also Acta 1863:11, Acta 1936:86, 175, Acta 1955:271. Acta 1958:493 and Acta 1964:447-450.

1. That the synod takes note of the study of the commission with gratitude and once again ratifies the synodal decision of 1897 article 155 which contains the following: "De Sinode van 1897 art. 155 verklaarde dat iemand die lid is of wordt van geheime genootschappen, als bv. het Vrijmetselaarsgenootschap, geen lidmaat van de Geref. Kerk kan zijn naardien de Christelijke Kerk een geestelijke en openbare vereeniging is, die geen gemeenschap kan nog mag oefenen met vereenigingen of genootschappen die buiten haar staan en vreemd zijn aan haar geestelijke en hemelsche aard. (Zie 2 Korinthe 6:14-18; Joh. 3:19-21). Derhalve worden alle lidmaten hiertegen gewaarschuwd en vermaand op zichzelf en op elkander acht te geven en daartegen te vermanen en zoo dit niet baat, dezulken ook bij de kerkeraaden bekend te stellen. Tevens worden vooral de kerkeraaden ernstig vermaand hierop te letten en hiertegen te waken...." Church councils are expected to execute this decision rigorously
2. Severing membership with Freemasonry.

Functional differentiation – office of elder

Acta 1967:100-102

The Synod of 1967 dealt with a report concerning the functional differentiation of the office of elder and decided that it contains concept misperception and that it can lead to a misinterpretation of art. 23 of the Church Order

Funeral is not a church service.

Acta 1985:423-424, pt. 4.9

A funeral is in essence a familial matter and thus not a church service.

General Synod: Delegation to⁴

Acta 1976:463-464).

1. The regional synods delegate an equal number of ministers and elders to the General Synod; equal to 16 ministers and 16 elders, that is 32 delegates per regional synod.
2. In order to maintain the bond with the various churches, the following is recommended: Delegation must be according to the principles of the Church Order (article 41, 47, 50). With delegation the following must be maintained:
 - 2.1. The regional synod delegates an equal number of ministers and elders to the General Synod.
 - 2.2. Brothers must be delegated from each classis

Home visitations by ministers and elders

Acta 1952:220-221

According to art. 23 Church Order elders are instructed “to conduct home visitations, as permitted by time and locality, both before and after the Lord’s Supper in order to build up the church; to take particular care to comfort and instruct church members...” The following objectives are indicated:

1. to build up the church – under which must be understood “to build up religious life” of the congregation;
2. to comfort the members – this can be done through personal contact in their homes;
3. to instruct members – here it is given to the elders as an order to provide instruction to members in their homes (Acta 1982:468, pt. C.2).

For the effective execution of these instructions each elder is allocated a specific ward of a congregation for which he is responsible. The members who live within the borders of a ward, are then given to the care of the elder of the ward, in order for him to strive to achieve the before mentioned objectives, from time to time he is expected to report to the church council.

If there are homes in such a demarcated ward of which the heads stand in one of the offices, it changes nothing and said households of either a minister or elder is not excluded from the pastoral care of the elder because they themselves stand in office.

The individual officials are appointed by the authority of art. 81 CO to assist each other in the sharpening of their skills in the execution of their official work, however, it is a totally different assignment that is must be added to that of article 23.

The ministering of the families of officials should be done by the elder who is responsible for that ward. This ministering of the families of fellow officials should not be done with wrong perceptions but in exactly the same way as all the other families are ministered.

It is then also clear that an elder is responsible for the ministering of his own home if it falls within his ward. With the knowledge and approval of the honourable church council he may

⁴ Until 2006 the General Synod consisted of three separate National Synods

request that another elder tends to the ministering of his family, however, it remains his responsibility. In the same way the household of the minister must be tended to by the elder in whose ward he resides

Individual Cups

Acta 2000:400-401; Acta 2003:531-539

1. The use of individual cups during the Lord's Supper: The Synod of 1930 approved a lengthy report against the use of individual cups (Acta 1930:47-50).
2. Conscientious objection against individual cups (Acta 1930:157-159).
3. Fundamental paradigm concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper

Interruption of service for a length of time

(Acta 1967:60).

Article 14 of the Church Order stipulates that the minister remains bound to the calling of the church where he labours, even when he is forced to interrupt the practice of his calling for a length of time due to circumstances.

In the article four principles are stated:

1. The interruption must be necessary.
2. The interruption must be for a determined time. When there is a permanent or undetermined time of inability the situation is treated as an art. 13 CO case.
3. The interruption must be approved by the church council with assistance from the classis.
4. The bond between the minister and the church must remain untarnished and the minister may be recalled by the church council even before the expiration of the determined time. This then excludes the taking up of a secular vocation, as determined under article 12 CO. As soon as the interruption ends, the minister continues with his full ministry as before the interruption.

Liturgy of the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

Vid. Acta 1997:731-768 for the complete point of description.

First whorship service	Second whorship service
1. Invocation (Introitus)	1. Invocation (Introitus)
2. Votum	2. Votum
3. Psalm of praise	3. Psalm of praise
4. The confession of faith**	4. The prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis)*
5. Announcement of the Law**	5. separate Scripture Reading / Scripture reading whereon the sermon is based.*
6. Singing of Psalms	6. Singing of Psalms
7. The prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis)*	7. The Preaching / The Sacraments *
8. separate Scripture Reading / Scripture reading whereon the sermon is based.*	8. Prayer
9. Singing of Psalms	9. (The Offering or Christian assistance)
10. The Preaching / The Sacraments *	10. Singing of Psalms
11. Prayer	11. The Benediction
12. (The Offering or Christian assistance)	12. The Offering or Christian assistance)
13. Singing of Psalms	
14. The Benediction	
15. The Offering or Christian assistance)	

* the order of Prayer, Scripture reading and preaching remains with the local Church Council

** Confession of faith and Annouchment if the law may be included in the second service

The worship service consists of four main instances.

1. Invocation (Introitus): The Invocation consists of four elements: votum, salutation, praise in Psalm and confession of faith.
 - 1.1. Votum: The votum allows the congregation to declare openly, humbly and solemnly, that the worship service is a gathering of God with His people and therefore His people are with Him and with each other.
 - 1.2. The salutation: The formula that should be used in assemblies for the salutation must be the words of God, directed to the congregations. These Formulas are found in the letters of the New Testament directed to specific believers, therefore also in Revelations 1:4, 5 which is directed to the seven congregations in Asia Minor.
 - 1.3. Psalm of praise: This liturgical action of the congregation as part of the Invocation has the specific function of answering to the salutation of God. This may also be done through more than one Psalm.
 - 1.4. The confession of faith: The liturgical place of the confession of faith is just after the Psalm of praise. However, the confession of faith may also be applied meaningfully and orderly elsewhere, according to the above mentioned guidelines.
2. Supplication and reconciliation in the assembly: After the Invocation the congregation is aware of the holy perfection of God, which decidedly contrasts with the sins, misery and unworthiness of the congregation. This contrast the congregation must, and should desire to acknowledge and confess (Isaiah 6:3-7) before God, and thus the congregation is placed in supplication before the Lord. This realisation can only break into the hearts of sinners through the work of the Holy Spirit. The elements of the confession of sin and absolution in the liturgy cannot be prescribed in a set pattern, solely for the purpose of routine practices. The elements present themselves in the sermon and in the Forms (especially The Lord's Supper).
 - 2.1. Announcement of the Law: The reading of the Law has a place in the supplication and reconciliation part of the assembly (as main source of our misery, as master of discipline to Christ, and as guideline of gratitude). As a Covenant congregation they must hear the Law in its entirety, at least once on a day of the Lord, as confirmation of the covenant relationship with God. The Reading of the Law from Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 emphasises the Law as a whole.
Other Scripture can elucidate the promises and demands of the Law as Covenant book, e.g. Ephesians 4:25-5:3, Romans 12:9-21, parts form the Sermon on the Mount en Colossians 3:5-17, and may be used in conjunction with the reading of the Law.
3. Word Service (sermon): Word Service encompasses the prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit, the separate Scripture reading, the Scripture reading where the sermon is from, the sermon and the sacraments.
 - 3.1. The prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit (epiclesis): The need for prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit, directed at the Word Service is highlighted anew, without making the content of the first prayer (whether it may contain more than the epiclesis) prescriptive.
These prayers may also occur before or after the Scripture reading and can be spoken or sung by the congregation. Due to the distorted mind and heart of man and due to the Divine nature of Scripture, it is necessary to pray that the Word Service will truly be enlightening, clarifying and application of the Word and that the congregation will accept the Word service as the Word of God and that the Word shall bear fruit. This prayer of the congregation comes forth from their

complete dependence on God the Holy Spirit as the actual Inspirer and Elucidator of the Divine Word. The prayer for illumination is not only for the sermon, but must also be directed at the reading and hearing of the Word. The prayer is that God will address people with the reading and hearing of the Word and that the congregation will receive the read and proclaimed Word as the Word of God Himself, claim it for them, and obediently spread the Word.

- 3.2. Separate Scripture Reading: The Liturgical act of separate Scripture reading as liturgical action is acknowledged within the Word service. The practise of this Liturgical action is entrusted to the discretion of the local congregation.
- 3.3. Scripture reading whereon the sermon is based: Preaching the Word has a service function of illuminating and applying the Scripture reading, and should be linked to the text as closely as possible. The linking of the Scripture reading and preaching is also left to the discretion of the local congregation.
- 3.4. The Preaching: The meeting of God with His people is expressed further in the powerful Word service in which God shares His gifts of grace with, comforts and admonishes us with the promise and demands of his promise. This Word service is a special liturgical act which serves the keys of the kingdom of heaven in the assembly. God is speaking by means of the sermon which has the Word as assignment. The living Word of the living God is proclaimed (elucidated and applied) and urges a living, dynamic, appealing deliverance of the sermon.
- 3.5. The Sacraments: The Synod of 1985 made clear decisions concerning the liturgical content of the baptism and Lord's Supper as well as the liturgical place of both sacraments being after the Word (with a baptism, at least after the Scripture reading). No further assignments concerning the Sacraments were given to the Deputies.
4. The Answer service (Responsorial): Normally the worship through prayer in which the leader leads the congregation, the prayers that the congregation sing, as well as the offering, is present in the Responsorial. Because this is the response of the congregation, the confession of faith and confession of sin may, only with exception, also appear here.
 - 4.1. The "amen" of the congregation: The "amen" of the congregation at the end of the actions like the sermon, prayers and confession of faith is the confirmation of agreement confessed by the congregation. It is the clinging to that which God promises in his covenant and the confirmation of what has been confessed and prayer (seq. Catechism, Lord's Day 52). For the sake of good order the leader leads the congregation or has them sing together.
 - 4.2. Prayer: The liturgical place of prayer in the assembly is left to the discretion of the congregations, with the guideline that the prayer for enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word takes place and a comprehensive prayer of worship, praise, gratitude, supplication, confession of sin and petitioning in the answer service, as worship is awakened by the Word service.
 The liturgical action of silence after the Word service, before the worship as answer to the Word service, is left to the discretion of the congregations. In the prayers during the assembly of the congregation the following should *inter alia* receive attention: illumination of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the Word service, worship, confession of sin, gratitude, petitioning for the needs of the congregation and intercession for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises (e.g. Nehemiah 1:8-10; Luke 11:13). The posture ought to fit with the liturgical meaning and nature of the prayer, and ought to always pay respect in the knowledge that the Triune God is called upon. The prayer posture of the entire congregation is left to the discretion of the church council.

- 4.3. Singing of Psalms: The singing of the congregation is an important part of the answer service however, as response of the congregation it also appears as liturgical action in the other main parts of the liturgical course. Song is useful for the communication of the entire congregation as everyone is singing together. The song for that matter serves as a Form for worship, petition, confession, praise, exaltation and supplication. Where certain Psalms and Scripture Versifications promote themselves, antiphony (singing in turn) may be used. This is left to the discretion of the congregations.
- 4.4. The Offering or Christian assistance: The offering or Christian assistance forms part of the answer of gratitude to the Word service. With this act the congregation shows its gratitude to God for the sharing of his gracious gifts in a tangible manner. The congregation must be informed, preferably the preceding Sunday, what the offers are for.
5. The Benediction: The blessing of God at the end of the sermon not only means the end of the assembly but also the sending of the congregation to serve in the world under the blessing hand of God. This must be clear in the word and gesture that the minister has the power to give the blessing of the Covenant God, in his stead, on the Covenant congregation. The decisions of the Synod 1985:420 with regard to this liturgical action is maintained.

Lord's Supper – reading of form

(Acta 1967:165).

The Form must be read every time the Lord's Supper is celebrated, without creating an opportunity for an optional second celebration

Marriages without ecclesiastical ordination

Acta 1936:170

The General Synod rejects marriages without ecclesiastical ordination and urges church councils to admonish against this practice in catechism, with home visitations and in sermon

Minister – loss of office

Acta 1964:100, pt. B.2

The intention of article 12 is to determine how a minister of the Word may lay down his office honourably in extenuating circumstances and not how he can maintain it.

Name and property of the congregations

Acta 1985:478, pt. 4.6.2

1. The only thing which needs to be named is the local congregation. It should be done by the local congregations themselves, in accordance with the relevant decision of the Synod of 1955, e.g. Gereformeerde Kerk Rustenburg (Acta 1985:477, pt. 4.1).
2. For the sake of identification and prevention of confusion, major assemblies may name the special assembly of congregations, or it remains as is – with the exclusion that it is not the name of a church body as an entity apart from the local congregations (Acta 1985:477, pt. 4.2).
3. When the Reformed Churches as denominations must be distinguished from another denominations, the plural Reformed Churches in South Africa must be used. (Acta 1985:477, pt. 4.3).
4. The Administrative Bureau of the Reformed Churches in South Africa is transformed to a legal entity in order to enable it to perform legal actions that are relevant to the purpose

and function it was formed for. (Acta 1985:377) After the Administrative Bureau was transformed to a legal entity, it became the owner of all the common moveable assets of the Reformed Churches in South Africa in this synodal family as well as other moveable assets which are administered by it, with the exception of such moveable assets which: 1) belong to trustees and are administered for them; 2) belong to any institution or company and are administered for them (Acta 1985:477, pt. 4.4 - 4.5). The Administrative Bureau is hereby absconded from the stating of security to please the Master of the Supreme Court for the appropriate and faithful administration of funds which then become the property of the Administrative Bureau as demanded in article 3 of the Trust fund protection act 34 of 1934 and the Master of the Supreme Court is hereby charged to rescind such security as meant in article 3(1) of the said Act (Acta 1988:500, pt. 4.8).

5. The General Synod decision 1955 (Acta 1955:83) is brought to the attention of all congregations and major assemblies

National affairs: The calling of the church

Acta 1942:24-26

N.B.: This decision pertains only to the following clause in art. 30: "In these (ecclesiastical) assemblies no other matter than ecclesiastical matters, and such in an ecclesiastical manner, should be dealt with."

The words "no other" must not be viewed as absolute. The CO itself deals with the correspondence with the government in art. 28, of which, at least, the second part is generally maintained, without protest that it does not belong in the church order. Furthermore, in art. 21 the supervision in schools is spoken about in as much as the Christian character of all school education must be maintained.

With regard to ecclesiastical practice, we know that the church made a statement concerning care of the poor in relation with other poor-managements (seq. Art. 26 CO, concerning marriage issues, divorce, curbing indecency, women's suffrage, the oath, etc.)

It is therefore clear that the specific clause of art. 30, as all the other articles of the CO, needs to be explained in historical context. In other words, we are not dealing with a stipulation from a codex but with an article of a Church Order, which in general wants to maintain order in the congregation of Christ.

The matter which article 30 attempts to define is that the ecclesiastical assemblies are not meant for the discussion and resolving of stately-, social- or strict scientific matters. Ecclesiastical assemblies are not held for that purpose.

The reformed churches did react to political matters in times of persecution, but this occurred because Rome called on political powers to counteract the reformation.

Since 1572, when the Netherlands obtained greater freedom, the reformed churches in principle made it clear that only ecclesiastical matters should be dealt with at ecclesiastical assemblies (seq. Dordrecht 1574, art. 4). On the synod of Dordrecht 1578 it was determined that, with matters concerning both political and ecclesiastical content the point of discription would fall to both state and church (art. 17), while the synod of Middelburg 1581 determined the editing of the article as it reads now. With this the reformed churches took up opposition to the Roman concilies that kept the view that state and business as well as science and art, stand in service of the church, in so much that the church has authority over them.

In contrast to this we maintain the reformed view:

1. that the Lord gave the church its own task, i.e. the proclamation of the Holy Word and that which is in relation thereof (see Matt. 28:19);
2. that the church, especially in the preaching, is called to let the light of the Word of God shine over all life functions and;
3. that there are matters where church, state and business have common interest.

The first two matters we do not need discuss here. What is in dispute, are the matters where there is a common interest.

To describe the behaviour of the church in relation to this, we refer to our exceptional CO self. The word “correspondence” indicates for us the preferred route. Under this our church fathers understood that the interested parties with relation to prevalent matters keep each other informed of the most serious matters, occasionally discuss differences with each other, gather each others judgement regarding serious matters and with this in mind, send dignitaries to each other.

Herewith we mean that all is said that generally could be said about matters pertaining to state and church.

The ecclesiastical assembly must determine on its own what the common factor of the matter is and how “correspondence” or relation will be achieved

New Congregations

Acta 1955:319; also seq. Acta 1985:58, pt. 2.3.5

New congregations shall only be founded after approval of the respective classes. If the members of the new congregation belong to two regional synods, permission must be obtained from both the respective classes. This decision is also applicable if founding is desired by persons who have not yet lived in the denomination of the Reformed Churches.

Office – Faithless desertion

Acta 1973:317

Faithless desertion from the office may not be concluded with acknowledgement. The external call comes from the church, and therefore the church must decide that the faithless action has terminated the right to do the work of a minister of the Word. This is done according to the way of the church order in articles 79 and 80: preliminarily by the church council and finally by the classis with deputies from the regional synod

Petition of Protest: Submission procedure

Acta 2012:22-24

1. Background

- 1.1. Synod 1955 (35-37) poses the question via the Moderamen whether an uncomplicated procedure for Petitions of Protest should be implemented and refers this issue to Deputies (1955:35-37).
- 1.2. Synod 1958 (101, 106-107, 116-117) receives a recommendation from Deputies that each assembly should present its own procedure with regard to Petitions of Protest. The issue is again referred to Deputies.
- 1.3. Synod 1961 (512-517) examines a Majority Report as well as a Minority Report. No decision is made and the issue is once again referred to Deputies.
- 1.4. Synod 1964 (444, 446) decides that a Petition of Protest be addressed to the assembly that had made the decision involved.

- 1.5. Synod 1967 (349-350) approves of a Point of Description indicating that CO, art 33 be applied without exception so that only instructions/tasks/issues from Particular Synods be brought to table.
- 1.6. Synod 1991 (526-528) maintains an objection against the decision of 1964. The essence of the objection is that a separate procedure for Petitions of Protest is unnecessary because a Petition of Protest should be dealt with in the same way as an issue (Point of Description). The Synod agrees that issues that should serve at a majority assembly according to CO, art 46 ought to follow the route of CO, art 33.
- 1.7. Synod 1994 (52-54) is confronted with a question by the *Legal Deputies re Appeals and Petitions of Protest*. The question follows the decision of 1991 and the focus is on whether there is only one way of approaching a Petition of Protest, namely assessment of an issue by means of the way followed by the church, or whether two ways are possible, *i.e.* also that an objection after assessment by an individual may still be submitted to a majority assembly involved (52, 3.1). Synod's finding is that the regular way of the church for dealing with all matters/issues under CO, art 46 be followed as would apply to ordinary circumstances while taking CO, articles 30, 31 and 33 into account. It is also stated that matters that are Scripturally justified to qualify, should not be denied direct admission to any majority assembly as a result of the 1991 decision (53, 3.2).
- 1.8. Synod 2006 appoints Study Deputies to advise Synod at its next sitting with regard to the range and scope of the decisions of Synods 1967, 1991 and 1994 *re* the right of direct admission to any majority assembly.
- 1.9. Synod 2009 discusses Study Deputies' 2006 Report, but refers the Report to the Study Deputies again in order for them to present a clear recommendation on submission procedures pertaining to Petitions of Protest. The main reason for doing so is that the 2006 Report offers two possibilities instead of arriving at one conclusive recommendation that would apply to the submission of Petitions of Protest.
2. Argumentation
 - 2.1. Synod 1964 made a clear decision on procedures for submission of Petitions of Protest (444) :
 - 2.1.1. A gravamen must be addressed to the assembly that has decided on something against which objection is filed.
 - 2.1.2. It must be handed in in time for inclusion in the specific meeting's Agenda.
 - 2.1.3. The decision against which objection is filed must be reflected clearly in verbatim presentation.
 - 2.1.4. The fundamental reasons for the objection must be stated clearly.
 - 2.1.5. A Petition of Protest pertaining to a particular decision may not be submitted more than once, except if the person who harbours the objection would present solemn and very important reasons for failing to come to terms with the decision.
 - 2.2. Synod 1967 (350) maintains a Point of Description related to CO, art 33, *i.e.* that only instructions/orders coming from Particular Synods may be brought to table. This, however, would appear to be in contradiction to the decision of 1964 according to which Petitions of Protest should be submitted directly to the assembly that had made the decision.
 - 2.3. By means of maintaining a Petition of Protest against the 1964 decision (procedure) Synod 1991 directs the Synod in line with the 1967 decision, *i.e.* that only instructions/orders coming from Particular Synods may be brought to table. This means that matters/issues that must serve before a majority assembly according to CO, art 46 should follow the route of CO, art 33.
 - 2.4. In response to a question by *Legal Deputies re Appeals and Petitions of Protest* Synod 1994 concludes that for all matters/issues (Petitions of Protest included) the customary route of the church should be followed (CO, art 33). This, however,

would not mean that direct admission to any majority assemblies would be barred to matters that are Scripturally justifiable. According to this conclusion or finding the right to direct admission still exists when taking into account decisions of 1967, 1991 and 1994.

3. Finding

3.1. At present there are two possibilities for the submission of Petitions of Protest. The first and more preferable way is via the route of CO, art 33. This way of submitting can, however, not be regarded as the only way of submitting. In terms of the decision of Synod 1994 (52-54) there is in the second place the route of direct submission at the assembly that had taken the decision against which objection is filed.

4. Recommendation

4.1. That Synod 1994's finding that there are two possible ways for submitting Petitions of Protest (2,7 and 4.1 of this Report) be maintained together with the accompanying result that it (the two possibilities) be applied accordingly in assemblies of church.

4.2. Motivation

4.2.1. A Petition of Protest should preferably follow the route of CO, art 33 to allow opportunity to local church and majority assemblies to discuss the objection (petition) and if necessary to refine it and/or offer advice on the further development of the matter or issue.

4.2.2. Should a Petition of Protest not receive the necessary support via the route of CO, art 33, and those who object cannot/do not accept the advice from the minority assembly involved, those who object will still be able or allowed to submit the Petition of Protest for consideration with the assembly that had made the decision.

4.2.3. When assessing the acceptability of matters according to CO, art 46, a majority assembly should thoroughly consider principles of CO as, for example, verbalised in articles 30, 33 and 46 while taking care not to declare further consideration of matters in an unmotivated and rigid way as being unacceptable.

4.2.4. This way of doing/procedure would ensure that matters under CO, art 46 be considered on own content and merit.

Practicing of preaching talents

Acta 1961:244, pt. f

The Synod decides that the appearance of students in congregations to practice their preaching talents is the speaking of an edifying word.

Proof of Membership

Acta 1958:138, pt C

The Synod rescinds all previous decisions in this regard and declares that the matter of Membership remains with the local Church Council.

Proponents who wait long to be called

Acta 1970:128, pt. c

If a proponent waits long to be called, the relevant major assembly which set the examination, should, from time to time, appraise itself on the life and teaching of the proponent. If the waiting period is more than nine months the major assembly must judge whether it is necessary that he take the examination again

Publishing the banns of marriage

Acta 1973:330, pt. E. 1.2

The Synod decides that according to art. 70 CO it is necessary for intended marriages to be made known to the congregation

Quorum

Acta 1920:58

Church councils, classes and Regional Synods shall determine their own quorum. The Synod deems it desirable that it be no less than half plus one.

If various members of the church council should be involved that they cannot take seat and no quorum is left, then it should be determined by the number that remains.

If objection is made against the whole church council, then the major assembly should deal with the matter according to the Church Order.

Regional Synod: Delegation to

Acta 1976:464, pt C.3.3

The Regional Synod determines the number of delegates that must be deputed by each classis in its resort

Remittance advice

Acta 2003:336

The General Synod of the GKSA in 2003 requests that the Admin. Bureau, as well as church councils to, in accordance with the labour legislation and transparency, provide emeriti as well as active ministers a complete remittance advice concerning the emerital- and stipendium.

Discussion and motivation

- 1 Despite the fact that Churches are not part of the private sector, but is entirely a different type of institution, it must be remembered that all ecclesiastical problems are not always resolved in the prescribed Biblical and ecclesiastical manner. Therefore, to abide by the general labour law, so far as it is consistent with the Word of God, would be a wise decision by the Churches.
- 2 Therefore, and based on the Biblical principle of honest transparency it is necessary that churches and the Administrative Bureau consistently provide ministers and emeriti of a complete calculated remittance advice.
- 3 Requests in this regard by emeriti has up to date not been dealt with and this creates unnecessary strain and can lead to great misunderstanding.
- 4 Church Councils with emeriti can also benefit if they keep a copy of the remittance of their emeriti, that they may be apprised of his situation.

Retirement ages for ministers and professors

(Acta 1997:370).

Where art. 13 CO refers to age, the “age” is determined by the Church Council, Classis and Regional Synod on the request of the minister and the church council (Acta 1997:370).

Because both the pension and retirement fund assume that ministers normally retire at the age of 65, the church councils and ministers must take note that the care amount of ministers who are not medically unfit, but have retired before the age of 65, drastically decreases in relation to the years of service

The professors usually retire at the age of 65

Travel attestation (proof of membership)

Acta 1970:462-463

The church policy of travel attestation covers the following:

1. For the member to whom it is given: For the member it does not represent “moving” from one congregation to another, not even a temporary “movement”, but it merely offers him the privilege of service within the midst of a congregation where he finds himself temporarily.
2. For the church council who gives it: As far as the church council is concerned, the member remains under his service and the member retains his responsibilities with regard to the church council. If, however the member is absent temporarily and the church council in practice has no witness concerning the life and teaching, the travel attestation serves as witness regarding the life and teaching for the church council giving the travel attestation as the church councils among whom the member resides temporarily will make the necessary annotations when he once again leaves. The church council who gave the travel attestation can thus take responsibility for the life and teaching of the member if he was travelling with travel attestation.
3. For the church council where it is indicated: With regard to the “receiving” church council, the member bearing the travel attestation does not become a member of the congregation, as according to the Reformed Church Polity no one person may be member at two places at the same time. The travel attestation only implies that the “receiving” church council is requested to minister such a person during his stay and to allow him, based on sound witness, to participate in the sacraments.
4. In conclusion it seems thus: that a travel attestation, where it is submitted, differs from attestation has nothing to do with a member ending his membership with one congregation and being assimilated as member with another congregation. That it is submitted only in an instance where a person who will be away from his congregation for a specific period, to more “unknown” congregations and who will resubmit his travel attestation before the indicated time expires, with his church council. That the travel attestation is merely shown at the congregations where the member temporarily finds himself and that the relevant church council will comment on his life and teaching with his departure, and then return it to the member(s)

Voting at ecclesiastical assemblies

Acta 1891:36

1. The voting concerning persons and matters happens by clear majority. Blank votes are not counted with the number of legal votes. With an even number the major is determined with half plus open; with an uneven number the major is determined by adding one to half of the whole minus one, e.g. of 15 the major is 8.
 - 1.1. If there is a stay in voting, the chairman does not have a determining vote (Acta 1910:68).
 - 1.2. If there is a stay over persons, the Name of the Lord must be humbly called upon and then lots must be drawn (Acta 1873:46).
 - 1.3. This has no bearing on candidates to the ministry. In this case of a stay of votes will be viewed as non-admission.

Part 3: Concept Forms

Attestation for professing members and families

Acta 1985:561, pt. 3.7

The Church council of the Reformed Church _____ hereby
attests that the below mentioned is/are member(s) of this church:

Professing member(s)/ Baptised member(s)

Brother

Sister

As this member(s)/family has moved to the Reformed Church

we entrust him/her/them to your pastoral care.

His/her/their address within the boundaries of your church is

This Church Council attests as follows concerning the doctrine and life of
above mentioned member(s):

Date: _____

On behalf of the Church Council.

Attestation for baptised members

Acta 1985:561, pt 3.8

The Church Council of the Reformed Church _____ attests
that _____ is a baptised member of this Church. As he/she
presently resides within the boundaries of the Reformed Church
_____, at this address

we entrust him/her to your pastoral and catechetical care.

This Church Council attests as follows concerning the above mentioned
baptised _____ member:

Date: _____

On behalf of the Church Council.

Credential Letter

Gemeente Briefhoof
Letterhead of congregation



Credentials

The church council of the **Reformed Church** _____ at it's meeting held on _____ deputised the following brothers as their duly authorised deputies to the classis _____ on _____ at _____

Primus:. _____ Secundus:. _____

Primus:. _____ Secundus:. _____

These brothers hereby receive proxy to represent the church council according to the Word of God, the Forms of Unity and the accepted Church Order in all cases that can serve at the Classis, to help judge and decide in order for churches to blossom, for expansion of God's kingdom and for glorification of Lord's Name.

The church council will bind it self to all decisions made by the Classis, if not in contrast to abovementioned, and will accept it as settled and binding and will faithfully honour and observe it.

We pray for the guidance of God's Word and Holy Spirit.

On behalf of the Church Council

Chairman

Scribe

Declaration of emeritation

Rev. _____ (name of minister), minister of the Word in the Reformed Church _____ (name of church) since _____ (date of ordination), has informed the Church council of the Reformed Church _____ (name of church) that he requests his emeritation.

After consideration, the Church Council found sufficient proof according to article 13 of the Church Order was offered, to grant his emeritation.

Therefore the Church Council has resolved at its meeting of _____ (date)_____, after consent of the Classis _____ (name of Classis)_____ with the deputies of the Regional Synod was obtained, to grant emeritation to rev. _____ (name of minister)____. The Church Council recommends that rev. _____ (name of minister)____ is granted care from the Emeritaatsversorgingstrust in accordance to years served in keeping with the Regulations of the Emeritaatsversorgingstrust as well as pension from the GKSA Predikante Pensioenfonds in accordance with the Regulations of named pension fund.

The Church Council expresses it's gratitude to rev. _____ (name of minister)____ for the almost ____ (years)____ service in this congregation and prays the blessing of our God upon him.

On behalf of the Church Council:

Chairman/Consulent

Scribe

On behalf of neighbouring Church (1)_____

Reformed Church (name of Church) (2)_____

On behalf of neighbouring Church (1)_____

Reformed Church (name of Church) (2)_____

Declaration of Retirement of Theological Professor

The Curatorium of the Theological School Potchefstroom has heard the motion of the honourable gentleman _____(name of professor)_____, professor in theology at this establishment since _____(date)_____, that it is necessary to apply for retirement. After consideration the Curatorium has found that sufficient reasons were given for it to acquiesce.

Subsequently the Curatorium, in its assembly on ____ (date)____, resolved

1. To provide professor_____(Name) _____ his retirement in most dignified way possible. This retirement will be entered into on the date determined by the Curatorium in due course;
2. To attest that during his term in office professor _____ was faithful and diligent in his service, Christian and pious in his confession and life and that he worked at the Theological Seminary without giving offence;
3. To present him to the Administrative Bureau of the Reformed Churches in South Africa for the payment of pension care as is applicable according to the relevant synodal resolutions;
4. To dedicate professor _____Name_____, to God and the Word of His grace with heartfelt gratitude for the faithful service which he delivered for approximately _____ years, that he may enjoy the rest after so many years of service and that he may enter the hereafter in the peace of the Lord.

On behalf of the Curatorium mentioned above:

_____Chairperson

_____Scribe

Ecclesiastical letter of introduction

Date: _____

The Church Council of the Reformed Church _____ in South Africa hereby declares that: _____ born _____, and _____ born _____ is/are (a) confessing member(s) of this congregation and is/are allowed to partake in the Sacraments of the Lord (Baptism and The Lord's Supper), and that _____ born _____
_____ born _____
_____ born _____
_____ born _____ is/are (a) baptised member(s) of this congregation.

Concerning the life and doctrine of the member(s) the following is witnessed: _____

The above named Church Council requests any church community that accepts the Holy Scripture, that is, the Bible, as the Word of God, who serves the sacraments in accordance with the inception by Jesus Christ and practice ecclesiastical discipline, to accept above mentioned member(s) in their community.

The Reformed Churches in South Africa confess (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika) the following: The Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

On behalf of named Church Council

Chairman

Scribe

Concept Form for an introduction letter: Remarks on reverse side

Practical guidelines for member(s):

Beloved _____

- As believing child(ren) of the Lord, you have the responsibility to join a local Christian community.
- In order to perform your responsibility, we remind you of our confession in article 29 of the Belgic Confession. Herein we confess –from Scripture – three characteristics according to which we can judge any Christian community in order to ascertain whether they are a true church or not.
- When you have decided which community you would like to join, you can use this letter of introduction to introduce yourself.
- If however, you are of the opinion that you cannot, in responsibility to the Lord, join any Christian community, you must please contact this church council within three months, that is before _____(date). In this way other arrangements can be made to continue you ministering and care.
- To contact this church council write to:
Name: _____
Postal Address: _____
E-mail: _____
- During the time of settling in you are more than welcome to contact the person above for support.

Examination with the purpose of probation and ordainment

Acta 1985:557

The Regional Synod _____ of the Reformed Churches, which assembled at _____ on _____, has, after reception of good ecclesiastical testimony and proof of proper completion of the candidates examination, examined br. _____ according to art. 4 of the Church Order, in the subjects prescribed for probation and ordination. This Regional Synod admits him, bound by the declaration signed in this assembly, to preach with the purpose of calling and ordination.

On behalf of the Regional Synod _____

Letter of calling

Acta 1985:557-558

Esteemed Brother/rev./dr _____

It is a pleasure to inform you that the Reformed Church _____, met under the supervision of the Church Council on _____ and that at this assembly you were chosen as pastor and minister of this Church.

Consequently the Church Council resolved to call you to this office in the church, of which I am informing you with this letter. The commitments which the Church Council make towards you concernig stipendium and other renumerations and provisions as well as housing and that which accompanies such, is mentioned in the accompanying letter.

We trust that you will follow up the calling after receiving the necessary ecclesiastical supervision, and we pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in your consideration of the calling. May you speedily come over to the church to care for the entire flock in life and doctrine, in the ministering of the Word, administering of the sacraments, teaching of the youth, regular home visits and comforting of the ill.

We promise you all the respect, love, assistance and intercession that is due to a faithful servant of the gospel.

Letter of Calling – Addendum

Acta 1985: 558

With the composition of the accompanying letter Churches can pay attention to the following guidelines.

The Church Council offers:

Stipendium

Housing/lodging

Motor vehicle/travelling expenses/ own motor vehicle

Telephone

Water and electricity usage

Book allowance

Vacation bonus (thirteenth cheque)

Medical scheme

Other arrangements

Leave

Annual leave

Extended leave

The following wording must be included in the accompanying letter for ministers who have been ordained in service of a Reformed Church on July 1st 1994.

“For the care of an Emeritus minister, minister’s widow and –orphans an undertaking is made from the Emeritaatsversorgingstrust care trust according to the Regulations of the Emeritus care combination, as well as incorporation with the GKSA Predikante Pensioenfonds and accompanying insurance schemes, according to the Regulations of named Pension Fund. This enumeration from the EFT is subject to the stipulation that you are still adherent to this church at the time of your emeritation.”

The following must be included in the letter of calling of Probationers and ministers who were ordained in service of a Reformed Church for the first time after July 1st 1994:

“For the care of an Emeritus minister, minister’s widow and –orphans, this Church Council integrates with the ‘GKSA Prediante Pensioenfonds and accompanying insurance schemes, as ruled by the Synod of 1994 and amended by subsequent synods. This care occurs according to the Regulations of named Pension Funds and accompanying insurance schemes.”

Letter of calling: combination callings

Acta 1939:36

It remains the same as with the Letter of Calling, with the exception that “church council” is replaced with “combined church council” and where applicable, the plural is used instead of the singular.

The letter of calling is undersigned by legal deputies of the different church councils and the consultant appointed thereto

Letter of calling for combination callings – addendum

Acta 1939:36-28

- 1 The annual stipendium is R _____, of which A contributes R _____, B R _____ and C R _____.
- 2 B and C place their stipendium contributions in the account of A, while the treasurer of A remunerates the minister. A is obligated to pay his share as well as that which was received from B and C. (Each congregation, through its church council is responsible for payment of stipendium to the minister). These remunerations happen in advance; monthly or quarterly.
- 3 Housing for the minister is provided by A (while B and C contribute for this purpose, respectively R _____ and R _____ (while B and C have no responsibilities with respect to the housing). A, B and C contribute towards the taxes on the rectory respective to the percentages of their stipendium contribution (A also contribute to the payment of taxes on the rectory).
- 4 A has a right to a maximum of _____ Sundays, B to a maximum of _____ Sundays and C to a maximum of _____ Sundays. (In all of these instances it must also be understood: and pastoral work). The minister is granted _____ Sundays as leave.
- 5 Each congregation contributes separately to the travel expenses for work done in its service.
- 6 The transport of the minister will be arranged as follows: (it is arranged on the first combined assembly).
- 7 The minister is bound to A, B and C equally and is entitled to the use of the sacraments in all of them, while he also has a vote at the assemblies.
- 8 The minister is delegated to the major assemblies by the congregation where he resides (Acta 1897:; seq. Acta 1958:135, art 71). The same rule applies if his congregations resort under two or more classes. It is recommended that he will attend the other classes with advisory vote (seq. Art. 42 CO) (Acta 1939:222).

- 9 Combined church council meetings are held when the minister deems it necessary, or when one of the church councils requests it. (Combined Church Council meetings are held annually.)
- 10 Combined church council meetings consist of all the church council members of the relevant congregations or of an equal number of delegates from each congregation. All resolutions will be made with the respective agreement of the church councils and not merely with a majority of votes. In the case of serious disagreement the aid of neighbouring church councils or the classis will be requested.
- 11 All matters concerning the person or the office of minister (especially in the case of an eventual disciplinary action), shall only be dealt with at a combined church council meeting.
- 12 This deed of combination stays active as long as the called minister is bound to the combined congregations. (This deed of combination stays active for _____ years, with the clear understanding that after the dissolution of the current combination, congregations A and B (or B and C, as is the case) take the minister for their account on the same conditions as stipulated above).
- 13 Concerning emeritus funds and the care of the minister's widow and –orphans, cf. the relevant regulations stated in the concept- accompanying letter to the letter of calling. (Addenda @#@.)
- 14 Reconsideration of the stipulations of this deed may be done from time to time (as dictated by the circumstances) by a combined church council meeting, only if all concerned parties agree.

(This deed is also signed by the deputies who undersigned the letter of calling.)

Notice of the ordination of a Minister of the Word to the Classis

Acta 1985:559

Notice

The Church Council of the Reformed Church _____ has convened with the Deputies of Classis _____ and declares herewith that rev. _____ has been properly ordained as minister of the Word in this church, in accordance to the formulary provided for the purpose and that the relevant documents were signed. Our prayers are that the Triune God of the Covenant will make this brother a blessing in the service to which He has officiated him.

On behalf of the Church Council

On behalf of the Classis

Release of a moving Minister of the Word

Acta 1985:559

NOTICE

Rev. _____, Minister of the Word in the Reformed Church _____ since, _____ has informed the Church Council that he wants to follow up the call to the Reformed Church _____.

After consideration the Church Council has found that there are sufficient reasons given in order to consent to the acceptance of the call. Therefore the church council has decided on its assembly of _____ to release rev. _____ from his bond with this church. This release will become active from the day that he is ordained in the Reformed Church _____.

A signed copy of this resolution is given to rev. _____ to serve him as legal proof of his release in the Church Council meeting of the Reformed Church _____, together with the Deputies of the Classis. Herewith the Church Council also expresses their gratitude for his service of _____ years. We pray that the Lord will bless him in the church where he will serve now.

On behalf of the Church Council

On behalf of the Classis

Signed on _____ 20 _____, at _____.

Travel Attestation

Acta 1988:329, pt. 2.1.12.9.1

The Church Council of the Reformed Church _____ hereby declares that _____ is/are a member(s) of this congregation and as far as we know is/are as follows concerning doctrine and life: _____.

As he/she/they are travelling, he/she/they are entrusted to the pastoral care of the brothers caretakers of the Reformed Churches where this attestation is presented.

The travel attestation is applicable until _____ and must be returned to above mentioned church council before the mentioned date by the member(s). Church councils are requested to give witness concerning the member(s)'s doctrine and life during his stay.

Date: _____

On behalf of the Church Council

(1) Reformed Church _____
Time of stay _____
Witness _____

Chairperson _____ Scribe _____
Date: _____

(2) Reformed Church _____
Time of stay _____
Witness _____

Chairperson _____ Scribe _____
Date: _____

(3) Reformed Church _____
Time of stay _____
Witness _____

Chairperson _____ Scribe _____
Date: _____

Travel Attestation for members of the SANDF, SAPS and Correctional Services in training and active service

Acta 1985:165-168

The Church Council of the Reformed Church _____ herewith declares that _____ is a member of this church.

Where he now serves as member of the _____, this attestation is issued as witness and recommendation for the admission to the use of the sacraments.

The member must keep this attestation safe and return it to this church council no later than _____.

Date: _____

On behalf of the Church Council

(1) Reformed Church _____

Time of stay _____

Witness _____

Chairperson

Scribe

Date: _____

(2) Reformed Church _____

Time of stay _____

Witness _____

Chairperson

Scribe

Date: _____

(3) Reformed Church _____

Time of stay _____

Witness _____

Chairperson

Scribe

Date: _____

Part 4: Forms of subscription

Form of subscription for Ministers of the Word

Acta 1949:325-326

We the undersigned ministers of the Word of God that resort in the classis N.N declare truthfully and with a good conscience before the Lord with this signature of us that we are whole heartedly convinced t and believe that all the articles and the documents that encompass the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Church in South Africa, correspond in everything with the Word of God. These Three Forms of Unity being, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort or Five Articles against the Remonstrants as determined on the synod of Dort 1618-19. Therefore we promise that we will diligently teach and faithfully defend the aforementioned doctrine without teaching or writing anything contrary to the doctrine, be it openly or in secret, directly or indirectly.

In addition, we promise to not only reject all false doctrine that is in contrast with this doctrine and by name those judged so by the aforementioned synod, but that we are also inclined to refute, contradict and execute all attempts to keep them from within the church.

If in due course it should happen that we develop any doubts or other feelings against this doctrine, we promise not to make it known be it openly or in secret, in sermons or writing in order to teach or defend these doubts. We shall firstly make it known to our church council, classis or synod, in order to be questioned, that we are prepared to submit willingly to the judgement and discipline of the church council, classis or synod, and should we act contrary to this that we shall be suspended from our duties.

We also promise that we will provide the church council, classis or synod with a more detailed exposition of our feelings concerning any article of above-mentioned Confession, Catechism or exposition of the Canons of Dort, for the sake of unity and purity of doctrine. This we will do should it be required, due to weighty reasons, by the church council, classis or synod. We also promise that we will always be willing to do so as well as accepting of the discipline as determined above. However, we reserve the right to appeal if we feel to object to the declaration of the church council, classis or synod. During this time of appeal, we will submit to the declaration and judgement of the Regional Synod.

Form of subscription for elders and deacons

Acta 1967:154-155

I the undersigned elder/deacon of the Reformed Church N.N. declare truthfully and with a sound conscience before the Lord with this signature that I am whole heartily convinced and believe that the articles and the documents that encompass the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, correspond in everything with the Word of God.

Therefore I promise that according to my office, I will faithfully uphold, defend and further the aforementioned doctrine, without teaching or writing anything in contradiction to it whether openly or in secret, direct or indirectly. In addition, I will withstand all heresy that is in conflict with these teachings and will actively help to combat it. Further, I promise, that if I may have any objection to this teaching, or any section thereof, that I will make this objection known to the church council that I may be questioned about it. I promise to subject myself willingly to the judgement of the church council according to the stipulations concerning such a matter stated in the Church Order.

I also promise that I am, at any time, willing to provide the Church Council with a more detailed exposition of my feelings concerning any article of above-mentioned doctrine, should it be required, due to weighty reasons, by the Church Council.

However, I reserve the right to appeal if I feel wronged by the declaration of the Church Council. During this time of appeal, I will submit to the declaration and judgement of the said council.

Form of subscription for Professors

Acta 1988:409

I the undersigned, called for the training of ministers of the Word, declare truthfully and with a sound conscience before the Lord, that I am whole heartily convinced and believe that the articles and the documents that encompass the Three Forms of Unity, being The Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort or Five Articles against the Remonstrants, as determined on the synod of Dort 1618-19 of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, correspond in everything with the Word of God.

I promise that I will diligently proclaim and faithfully defend the aforementioned doctrine without teaching or writing anything contrary to the doctrine, be it openly or in secret, directly or indirectly and I will oppose all to the contrary and aid with its eradication.

If I should ever have any objection toward the doctrine or any part thereof, I will submit the objection to the Curators under whose supervision I serve. If the Curators or any synod, due to weighty reasons, deem it necessary for the sake of unity and purity of doctrine, to demand from me a more detailed explanation of my understanding of any part of the Reformed Confession, that the churches may judge the matter, I will at all times be prepared to provide it. I will submit to the judgement of the relevant ecclesiastical assembly, reserving the right stated in Church Order, art. 31. During this time of appeal, I will submit to the declaration and judgement of the relevant assembly.

I declare that I understand that if I should ever act contradictory to the terms stated above, I will be suspended from my position immediately and I may be removed from office.

Form of subscription for proponents

Acta 1973:346-347

As the undersigned, we the proponents, declare truthfully and with a sound conscience before the Lord that we are whole heartily convinced and believe that the articles and the documents that encompass the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, correspond in everything with the Word of God.

We commit ourselves to teach and defend this doctrine diligently when we are called to speak in the congregations and also otherwise. To do so without openly or secretly, directly or indirectly teaching or writing anything to its contrary. In addition, we will withstand all heresy that is in conflict with these teachings and will actively help to execute it.

Further, we promise, that if we may have any objection to this doctrine or any section thereof, that we will make this objection known to the Regional Synod _____, that we can be judged because in this regard. We will be willing to subject ourselves to the judgement of the honourable regional synod as well as the relevant Church Council or Classis.

We however reserve the right to appeal if we should object to the judgement of the church council, classis, or synod. During the time of appeal, we will subject ourselves to the judgement of the Regional Synod _____.

Similarly, we declare that we, if the Regional Synod or the named church assemblies, at any time, due to weighty reasons, deem it necessary for us to make a declaration of our conviction regarding any part of the Reformed doctrine, will always be willing to do so, for the protection of the unity and purity of the doctrine.

If we should act to the contrary, we accept that we will be punishable by the honourable Regional Synod, by taking away our right to conduct in the congregation.

Part 5: Open Declaration

OPEN DECLARATION of die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

Acta 1863:8

Before the classis / synod starts its activities, the undermentioned declaration, to which each delegate must consent, or else forfeit his right to participate in the classis / synod, is read.

The classical/synodal assembly of the Reformed Churches as well as each individual member openly declares the following:

We embrace whole heartedly and with sound conscience the Forms of Unity, which were decided on and published by the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, held at Dordrecht in the years 1618-19. These being the Heidelberg Catechism, the 37 Articles of the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort or the 5 Articles against the Remonstrants as our Confession.

We promise to uphold this, according to the Word of God through the grace of strength from the Holy Spirit, each of us according to his office.

We also accept the Liturgy, determined by said synod of Dort as prescript in exercising the holy assembly.

With regard to the Church Governance we will keep with the church order of said synod of Dort as it is amended by the synods of the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.

We invite and welcome everyone, who has received this same precious belief by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who wishes to confess and reflect thereupon with us, to our ecclesiastical community.

Our wish is to build a close brotherly fellowship and correspondence with all churches, in this region of the world as well as in other countries, who confess and reflect the same as us. May it please the Lord to sanctify his precious Word to many hearts. This is the wish and prayer of the above mentioned synodal assembly that through it and through the work of the Holy Spirit all the elect shall be gathered and all the true believers be unified in one ecclesiastical community.

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Church Order Glossary

Words marked with * are defined elsewhere

Word	Glossary
Acta	Acts of an Ecclesiastical assembly. This includes deputies' reports, commission reports and decisions of the assembly. Also see Minutes*.
Adequate means of support	Honourable financial care
Advice	The word "advice" in the Church Order means: to consent or permit
Advisory vote	Office bearers at major assemblies, who were not delegated, may receive a chance to speak an "advisory voice", however are not allowed to vote*.
Appeal	To make an appeal to jurisdiction in a matter where someone has been wronged. Appeal must always be made to a major assembly for jurisdiction
Appeal to	To make an appeal to jurisdiction in a matter where someone has been wronged. Appeal must always be made to a major assembly for jurisdiction.
Approbation	Approval
Attestation	Witness
Building the church	That which honours God and promotes peace and amity of the congregation.
Call	Where a church calls a reverend as Minister of the Word
Calling Church Council	A Church Council* or Deputies* who has been named by a major assembly to call together the next major assembly.
Candidate	A person who has completed his studies at the Theological Seminary, and who wants to enter into service and who has received the Candidates Certificate for this purpose from the Curates.
Censure	Church Discipline exercised to call members to repentance.
Christian censure	See "discipline"
Church Council	In the Church Order* it is used as a synonym for the assembly of elders*. Also see Article 38
Church Order	The Church Order phrases the principles and order for the church as God determines it in His Word. It is Directive, not a law.
Classis	See Article 41
Confessional Hymns	Setting the Confessionals to music
Consultant	A minister of the Word who has been appointed by the Classis to assist a neighbouring congregation.
Correspondence	Internal discussion amongst deputies* of majority assemblies.
Corresponding Church Council	See Deputies for Correspondence*
Credential Letters	See Article 33
Death Rites	Preaching and praying for a deceased as if aid and assistance can still be given to the dead.
Deposition	A person who occupies a particular office* is removed from his office* completely. In the case of a minister this also means the loss of all his privileges associated with his office.
Deputies for correspondence	See Article 48
Deputy	See Article 49
Discipline	Ecclesiastical discipline* is spiritual in nature and serves to ensure that everything in the church occurs within good order and amity.
Discretion of the church	Church Councils have the freedom to determine the execution of certain practises.
Doctrine	Confession of the Church*. In the RCSA it is specifically the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dordt.
Ecclesiastical Correspondence	Not the exchange of letters, but in concurrence with churches abroad with relation to confession, church governance and liturgy. It implies Fellowship of churches* and encompasses acceptance of attestation* respectively, the calling of ministers etc. It must be discerned from Deputies Correspondence*.
Ecclesiastical manner	The Spirit and Word of Christ through which He governs His Church and therefore determines the manner in which his church is governed.

Ecclesiastical matters	Ecclesiastical matters are matters that belongs to and fits in with the essence, nature and purpose of the church.
Examination sermons	Sermons made under the guidance of, or approved by minister or professor.
Excommunication	The final step of discipline where a person is cut off from the church and his name removed from the membership register.
False Doctrine	Deviance and /or forsaking Biblical doctrine and the confession of the Church.
Fellowship of churches	Churches who are one in Scripture, Confession and Church Order
Finding	The result of an investigation
Form/formulary	Ecclesiastical document read in a church service in order to conclude a specific ceremony and practice.
Forms of Unity	The three specific Confessions, namely the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt.
Gross sin	A sin, which is shameful to the church or punishable by the government. See Article 80
Heresy	Purposeful deviance from Biblical doctrine and the confession of the Church. Also see false doctrine.
Judgement	Make a decision by means of general consensus. Which means that the judgment of the Classis* and Deputies* of the Regional Synod must correspond.
Legitimate objection	An objection based on the Word of God, the Confessions and the Church Order*.
Major assemblies	Assembly of a greater number of churches. Not a major assembly as in a hierarchy but indeed in a broader sense.
Minister of the Word	Reverend or Pastor
Minor assemblies	Assembly of a smaller number of churches. Not a minor assembly as in a hierarchy but indeed in number.
Minutes	The minutes is a version of the matters which served and the resolutions made at an assembly. Also see Acta* and Acts*
Need	Everything a minister needs in order to live honourably.
Neighbouring Church Council	The Church Council* of a church in the area of the same Classis.
Office	Gift given to the church by the Lord to be formally called and ordained* to serve in His church. Office and service are used alternatively in the RCSA
Ordain	When a person is formally taken into service of office during a ecclesiastical service according to the appropriate form*
Ordinances	Stipulations and directives.
Pair	Two persons of which the congregation must choose one.
Pairs	Two people per vacancy are submitted, from whom the needed number is chosen.
Patron	Someone who personally employs a minister
Praeses	Chairman
Preside	Chair, lead, the actions of being praeses. See praeses*
Probationer	A candidate* who has qualified for calling.
Regional Synod	See Article 47
Release	Ministers are released from their service in a prescribed manner. Elders and deacons are released as is locally determined.
Scripture true hymns	Hymns that are based on Scripture but does not contain a specific verse.
Scripture Versification	Setting specific texts from the Bible to music
Secretly	Undisclosed: used in relation to sin that is not made public.
Secular Vocation	A minister is in the service* of the Lord for his entire life. When he does not serve his office full-time and is released from the calling of this task he goes over to a secular vocation.
Simony	Attempt to obtain an ecclesiastical office* or Spiritual Gift by means of bribery/ abuse of Spiritual Gifts for personal benefit.
Suspend	The performance of all office duties are summarily stopped.
Visitation	Visits that the churches pay to each other in the fellowship of a Classis to take note of each other as well as to lend assistance.
Visitors	Experienced ministers who visit churches in order to determine whether they exhibit the characteristics of the true church.
Vote	The right to vote. The vote is discerned from an advisory vote*.
Wronged	When someone feels that he/she has been wronged by a resolution or action. A wrong can be rectified by means of an appeal*.

