

DIE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA



ACTS

OF THE

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD

AT POTCHEFSTROOM

ON 12 JANUARY 2016 AND FOLLOWING DAYS

Foreword

It is a privilege for the *Deputies of the General Synod: Publishing of Acta 2015*, to make the *Acta of the Extraordinary General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, held in Potchefstroom on 12 January 2016 and the following days*, available for use in the churches. While compiling the Acta the Deputies strived to ensure the factual accuracy thereof by carefully reviewing and organising all documents and decisions in order to create a document which could be used with ease and confidence in the GKSA.

The matters attended to have therefore been grouped by topic and provided with the relevant decisions, as set out in the approved minutes. Changes to documents, reports and recommendations by the Synod were made by the Deputies (indicated in the relevant places).

Furthermore, *The Acta of the Extraordinary General Synod* also has the necessary table of contents, register of the articles of the minutes and alphabetical index, in order to ease the tracing of the various documents and decisions.

May these Acta, by the grace of God, serve to the wellbeing of the churches.

Rev HJP de Beer (Chairperson)

Dr W du Plessis (Scribe)

Dr D Lartz

Rev MA Modise

Rev CA Jansen

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OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA
HELD AT POTCHEFSTROOM
ON 12 JANUARY 2016 AND FOLLOWING DAYS**

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GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA

ACTA

OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD HELD AT POTCHEFSTROOM ON JANUARY 12, 2016 AND FOLLOWING DAYS

1. OFFICAL OPENING

1.1 *Opening* (Art 1)

Rev HS Coetzee, Chairperson of the Calling Church Council RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult, opens the meeting with the singing of Psalm, reading Psalm 130 and giving an appropriate exegesis of the read passage. He then leads the meeting in prayer.

1.2 *Welcoming* (Art 1)

Rev HS Coetzee warmly welcomes everyone present to Potchefstroom.

1.3 *Constitution* (Art 2)

Rev HS Coetzee presents the names of the delegates as per the credentials received from the various Regional Synods (Appendix 1). The following brothers are present as *primi* delegates unless stated otherwise:

Regional Synod Bosveld

Reverends

Rev HJP de Beer
Dr EJ de Beer
Rev CJ Nagel (jr)
Rev PJ Jansen van Nieuwenhuizen
Rev PR Gouws
Dr C Botha (Sec)
Rev CJJ Putter
Rev SP Venter
Rev N Boy
Dr DJ de Kock
Rev G Opperman
Rev NN Ligege
Rev NJ van der Walt
Rev JL Lee
Rev JG Tredoux
Rev MN Muhadi

Elders

Elder MPA de Beer
Elder JAJ Hoffman
Elder DM Kruger
Elder G Schuring
Elder JTS van der Merwe
Elder S Chambers
Elder JT van der Linde
Elder HCA Booysen
Elder PH Rheeders
Elder RF van Aarde
Elder RA Nzero (Sec)
Elder RB du Preez
Elder KP Mapholi
Elder GT Siphoro (Sec)
Elder PJ Kruger

Eastern Regional Synod

Reverends

Rev PW Kurpershoek
Rev LSD du Plessis

Elders

Elder AT Dreyer
Elder DL de Beer

Rev GJ Erasmus
Rev PJ van der Walt
Rev D Pansegrouw
Dr JJJ Erasmus
Rev GC Coetzee
Rev CJH Breed
Rev CA Jansen
Rev MAF Krüger
Rev AF Berg (Sec)
Rev AP Tredoux
Rev JL Aucamp
Rev RP Buys
Rev DJ Dykstra
Rev MA Modise
Dr AJ Krüger
Rev LP van Jaarsveld
Rev LJ Buys
Rev AJ Myburgh

Elder J Potgieter
Elder M van Wyk
Elder JP Dreyer
Elder L Venter
Elder OJF Hartung
Elder BD Bakker
Elder SAJ vdM Venter
Elder J Enslin
Elder J Breed
Elder JC Kruger
Elder NJ Hartung
Elder J Dube

Regional Synod Free State and KwaZulu-Natal

Reverends

Rev OJ Struwig
Rev MJ Smidt
Rev AL Pelsler
Rev TJ van Vuuren
Dr RM van der Merwe
Dr JA Erasmus
Rev AH Stavast
Rev JE Temba
Rev JL van der Schyff
Rev CD Jaftha
Rev JH Grobler
Rev FJ Potgieter
Rev MH le Roux
Rev JG van der Walt
Rev MS Mbatha
Rev JE Franck
Rev GJJ van der Merwe
Rev SPJ Vermaak
Rev PT Hlela
Rev SZ Phungula

Elders

Elder PC Viljoen (Sec)
Elder JA Kruger
Elder R Muller
Elder PA Welken
Elder JP Van Jaarsveld
Elder AB du Plessis
Elder SP Ramile
Elder DJ Coetzee
Elder MA Sefo (Sec)
Elder JW du Plessis
Elder PJ Manake (Sec)
Elder CS Botha
Elder JJ Minnie
Elder JA Khumalo
Elder ES Phungula
Elder AJ Burger

Regional Synod Pretoria

Reverends

Rev PJ Venter

Elders

Elder J Beumer

Rev P van Wyk
Dr HM Zwemstra (Sec)
Dr JH Howell
Rev C Aucamp
Rev BC Smit
Dr GJ Meijer
Rev CB Swanepoel
Rev M van Helden
Rev GP van Rhyn
Rev HPM van Rhyn
Rev C Jooste
Rev BCG Fourie
Rev PJ Nel
Dr PH Heystek
Dr TD Mashau
Rev PGP le Roux
Dr DG Breed

Regional Synod Randvaal

Reverends

Dr D Lartz
Rev CJC Roets
Rev EP Nel
Rev JH Jordaan
Dr G van Wyk
Rev D van't Zand
Rev PM Modise
Rev ASA de Bruyn
Rev HJ Stoltz
Rev GM Mdluli
Rev LP Baloyi
Dr DM Nkulu
Dr KD Semenya
Rev J van Schaik
Rev HC Van Rooy

Southern Regional Synod

Reverends

Rev PJ de Bruyn
Rev JJ de Kock
Rev AN du Plessis
Dr JV Fatuse
Rev RB Fourie
Rev W Jobse

Elder HJP Steyn
Elder PJ Grobler
Elder DJP Erasmus
Elder SW van der Walt
Elder AM van der Kruk
Elder DV Correia
Elder GC Vermaak
Elder WFA Kirsten
Elder GJ Slothouber (Sec)
Elder W Enslin
Elder J Drenth
Elder W van Wyk
Elder PF Wolmarans
Elder IK Barnard
Elder J Meijer

Elders

Elder DJ Lourens
Elder JL Pretorius
Elder AJ Pienaar
Elder AJJ Jordaan
Elder EJ Msimanga
Elder MJ Chaka
Elder J Hoogendyck
Elder G Kotzee
Elder P Magqabi
Elder A Niehof
Elder K Mukata
Elder JF Kyessa
Elder P Joubert
Elder JJ Howell
Elder J de Koning
Elder K Petzer
Elder E Ngakane

Elders

Elder P Aucamp
Elder GK Bain
Elder AJD Boon
Elder P Clara
Elder GL Erasmus
Elder DB Groot

Dr SN Jooste
Rev BR Kingma
Rev LM Kruger
Rev MJ Lourens
Rev J Malan
Rev CCA Vrey
Rev DG Zwemstra

Elder PJ Jacobs
Elder J Majeng
Elder WH Smit
Elder JD Snyman
Elder WHS Steinberg
Elder BJ van der Walt
Elder HJ vander Walt
Elder J van Biljon
Elder TJ van der Walt
Elder MJ van Wyk
Elder AJ Venter

Regional Synod North West

Reverends

Rev OL Moncho
Rev JJ Venter
Rev AB van der Walt
Rev MM Magome (Sec)
Dr GJ van Wyk
Rev MJJ Erasmus (Sec)
Rev P Venter
Rev PT Masase
Rev HS Coetzee
Rev P Cilliers (Sec)
Dr WC Opperman
Rev CB Robinson
Rev SD de Kock (Sec)
Dr HF van Wyk
Dr AJ Coetsee
Dr J Lion-Cachet
Rev H Reinecke
Rev SFF van der Walt
Rev KP Steyn (Sec)

Elders

Elder D Meijer (Sec)
Elder WJ van der Walt
Elder AJH Pieterse
Elder FJWJ Slabbert
Elder PWH Aucamp
Elder JA Schutte
Elder JL Kruger
Elder SA de Villiers
Elder HAJ Oosthuizen
Elder M Venter
Elder F Venter (Bult)
Elder P Magonare

Rev HS Coetzee declares that the meeting, in the light of the delegates in attendance, is orderly constituted and can continue its work.

1.4 *Election of Moderamen* (Art 3)

The following brothers have been elected, by closed ballot, to the Moderamen by majority vote:

Chairman:	Rev HJP de Beer
Vice-chairman:	Rev C Aucamp
Scribe:	Dr D Lartz
Deputy-scribe:	Rev CA Jansen
Deputy-scribe:	Rev MA Modise

The elected brothers take their places.

- 1.5 *Open Declaration (Art 4)*
The chairman, rev HJP de Beer, states the intentions on behalf of the Moderamen to serve the meeting to the best of their abilities and gifts with the blessing of the Lord. He presents the Open Declaration to the meeting, on which all the delegates as well as representatives from foreign churches with whom the GKSA has ecumenical ties show their confirmation thereof by rising.
- 1.6 *Interpreting services (Art 6)*
Br GD Oosthuizen informs the meeting on the interpretation service that is available during the Synod.
- 1.7 *Welcoming of the professors present (Art 12)*
The chairman welcomes proff JJ Janse van Rensburg, RS Letsosa and PH Fick who joined the meeting.

2. DAY OPENINGS

- 2.1 *Wednesday, 13 January 2016 (Art 24)*
Rev MA Modise open the day's proceedings by reading from 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and has the Synod sing Ps 116:1, 7 and Lifela Tsa Sione 12 followed by a prayer.
- 2.2 *Thursday, 14 January 2016 (Art 47)*
Rev MJ Smidt open the day's proceedings by having the meeting sing Ps 89:6, reading from Ps 55, leading in a prayer and singing Woza Nkosi Jesu woza.
- 2.3 *Friday, 15 January 2016 (Art 60)*
Rev NN Ligege open the day's proceedings by having the meeting sing Ps 42:1, reading from Ephesians 6:10-20, leading in a prayer and singing Lifela Tsa Sione 183.
- 2.4 *Saturday, 16 January 2016 (Art 76)*
Dr AJ Kruger open the day's proceedings by having the meeting sing Lifela Tsa Sione 183 and Scripture Song 18-7:1, 12, reading from Col 2 and leading in a prayer.

3. DAY CLOSINGS

- 3.1 *Tuesday, 12 January 2016 (Art 23)*
Elder BD Bakker concludes the day with the singing of Ps 133:1 and 2 and leading the meeting in prayer.
- 3.2 *Wednesday, 13 January 2016 (Art 46)*
Rev CD Jaftha concludes the day with the singing of Ps 146:1, 4, 5 and leading the meeting in prayer.
- 3.3 *Thursday, 14 January 2016 (Art 59)*
Elder JTS van der Merwe concludes the day with the singing of Ps 25:2 and leading the meeting in prayer.
- 3.4 *Friday, 15 January 2016 (Art 75)*
Elder JJ Howell concludes the day with the singing of Woza Noksi Jesu woza, Lifela Tsa Sione 314, Ps 147:1, 2, and reading 2 Tim 4 and leading the meeting in prayer.

4. DAILY ATTENDANCE

- 4.1 *12 January 2016 (Art 11)*
The following delegates join the meeting, where at request of the vice-chairman, rev C Aucamp, they show their confirmation with the Open Declaration: Revs JG Noëth (P), JH Venter (S), JJ Venter (B), ED Pelele (NW), EM Makhobosi (RV), MJ Nkili (RV), CJ van Vuuren (B), Elders HJ Briel (B), CJ Kruger (B), PJ Pretorius (B), LHA Stavast (VS-KZN), CJ de Wet (B).
- 4.2 *13 January 2016 (Art 25, 26, 31)*
The following delegates join the meeting, where at request of the chairman, rev HJP de Beer, they show their confirmation with the Open Declaration: Revs JA Berg (B), HL Stavast (P), LJ Erasmus (B), PC van Rooy (B), TJ Potgieter (S), Elders MJ Berg (P), JMA Cronjé (P), JE Kotze (VS-KZN).
Excused: Revs JG Noëth, C Jooste, CA Jansen (from Thursday at 16:00), drr JA Erasmus, GJ van Wyk, Elder SW van der Walt.

- 4.3 14 January 2016 (Artt 48, 49)
The following delegate join the meeting, where at request of the chairman, rev HJP de Beer, they show their confirmation with the Open Declaration: Elder JF Coetzee (RV). Excused: Revs PGP le Roux, P Venter, EM Makhobozi, Elders P Aucamp, MM Venter, JE Kotze, FJWJ Slabbert.
- 4.4 15 January 2016 (Artt 61, 62, 64)
The following delegates join the meeting, where at request of the chairman, rev HJP de Beer, they show their confirmation with the Open Declaration: Elder JAV van der Schyff (NW (Sec)), rev PA Coetzee (NW (Sec)). Excused: Drr C Botha, JJJ Erasmus, KD Semenya, WC Opperman, Revs J Malan, JG Noëth, Elders WH Smit, JC de Wet, J Snyman.
- 4.5 16 January 2016 (Art 77)
Excused: Revs DG Zwemstra, D Pansegrouw, SP Venter, ED Pelele, JJ de Kock, MM Molokwane, J Malan, AB van der Walt, GS Kruger, drr EJ de Beer, KD Semenya, JV Fatuse, RM van der Merwe, Elders J van Biljon, RF van Aarde, DV Correia, JC de Wet, PJ Grobler, HJ van der Walt, AJ Venter.

5. VISITORS (Artt 10, 54)

- 5.1 The vice-chairman, Rev C Aucamp presents dr DG Breed to welcome the visitors from foreign churches:
- 5.1.1 From the CRCA: Rev R Moppens and Rev F van Schie
5.1.2 From the OPC: Dr B Wingard
5.1.3 From the URCNA: Rev R Sikkema
5.1.4 From the URCC: Rev Kabango and K Malebongo
- 5.2 The vice-chairman, Rev C Aucamp welcomes the following people from the media:
- 5.2.1 Br P Steyn from *Beeld* and *Media 24*
5.2.2 Br AJ Rechterschot from *Reformatiesch Dagblad*
- 5.3 The vice-chairman, Rev C Aucamp welcomes the following visitors from churches in South Africa:
- 5.3.1 From the NG Kerk: Dr G Claassen
5.3.2 From the NH Kerk: Dr R Denton
- 5.4 Rev HS Coetzee welcomes Rev AH Reitsema of the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken.

6. MOTIONS AND CONGRATULATIONS (Artt 26, 49, 77)

- 6.1 *Motions of sympathy – passings*
Dr JJJ Erasmus's stepbrother, dr W du Plessis's mother, Rev PJ Venter's sister, br PGW (Gertjie) Roets, member of RC Matlabas.
- 6.2 *Motions of improvement of health*
Rev WJ Steyn's mother-in-law had to go undergo a serious brain operation.
- 6.3 *Motions of congratulations*
To dr GJ Meijer and Elder M van Wyk with their birthday 13 January 2016.
Rev R Sikkema (URCNA) who turned 80 on 1 August 2015. He will be married for 60 years in a few months.
With the marriage of Rev JB du Plessis and sr Louise Vogel.
Reformed School Dirk Postma with exceptional matric results. The school has maintained a 100% pass rate.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 7.1 The minutes of art 1 to art 23 are presented and approved (Art 30).
- 7.2 The minutes of art 24 to art 46 are presented and approved (Art 52).
- 7.3 The minutes of art 47 to art 59 are presented and approved (Art 73).
- 7.4 The minutes of art 60 to art 75 are presented and approved (Art 89).
- 7.5 Art 76 to the end will be approved by the Moderamen at the time of signing (Art 91).

8. REPORT OF THE CALLING CHURCH COUNCIL (Art 8)

- A. Rev HS Coetzee tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.
- C. **Decision:** The meeting noted the Report with appreciation upon which the chairman directs a word of thanks to the Calling Church Council for receiving the meeting and also their chairman, Rev HS Coetzee, for the fitting way in which the meeting was opened.

D. REPORT

1. Calling

The calling with regard to the Synod was published in good time in *Die Kerkblad* (June and October 2015). Later on calls were sent to all Deputies for Correspondence of the Regional Synods (May 26 and August 12, 2015).

2. Credentials

Report will be provided during the meeting.

3. Accommodation

One of the North-West University residences (*Dennepark*) has been made available to the Calling Church Council. Arrangements with regard to meals will be announced in the Supplementary Report. Synod attendees may make use of Dennepark from Monday, 11 January 2016.

- 4. The Synod will commenced on January 12, 2016 at 10:00.

5. Refreshments

Sisters of the Potchefstroom congregations will provide coffee, tea and fruit juice during intervals.

6. Session Times

In accordance with the times as scheduled for the previous Synod, the Calling Church Council would recommend the following times:

<u>Weekdays:</u>	08:00 – 10:30 (Tea break/Interval)
	10:45 – 12:30
	14:00 – 16:00 (Tea break/Interval)
	16:15 – 17:30
	19:00 – 21:00
<u>Saturday:</u>	08:00 – 10:30
	10:45 – 12:45

7. Word of Welcome

A hearty welcome is extended to all representatives and visitors. The Calling Church Council would like to make your stay at Potchefstroom as pleasant as possible.

We pray that God will bestow his blessings on this meeting so that it will contribute towards securing and advancing the maintenance and growth of the Reformed Churches.

E. **SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT**

The Calling Church Council, Potchefstroom-Die Bult, reports supplementary of the welcoming and deputation to the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

Credentials have been received from all the Deputies Correspondence of the Regional Synods. They are properly signed and are found to be in order.

Decision: The meeting noted the Report with appreciation upon which the chairman directs a word of thanks to the Calling Church Council for receiving the meeting and also their chairman, Rev HS Coetzee, for the fitting way in which the meeting was opened.

9. REPORT DEPUTIES' AGENDA OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD (Art 9)

- A. Rev CJ Nagel (jr) tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

C. REPORT

1. Instruction

Acta 1991:60 and Acta 1997:37

- 1.1 Receive items for the Agenda and prepare items to be sent off to delegates.
- 1.2 Arrange for Deputies to make recommendations on the responsiveness of Petitions and other Agenda items.

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Matters for the Synod's information

- 2.1 Three (3) petitions were received (Regional Synod Randvaal, FS and Kwazulu-Natal, North West – proposed Agenda items 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3). The abovementioned Regional Synods requested the Convening Church Council (GK Potchefstroom-Die Bult) to convene the Extraordinary General Synod (EGS). The content of the Petitions determines the Agenda of the EGS and it is thus a limited Agenda.
- 2.2 The Agenda items (the Petitions – pt 2.1; the Petitions of Synod 2012 and Petitions for Synod 2015 that the Synods have not yet finalised – CO, art 30) were already sent to all the churches in October 2015. The following:

Synod 2012

- 2.2.1 Petition of GK Bloemfontein South against the Synod 2009 decision that women may not serve in the special offices of minister and elder (21.3/2).
- 2.2.2 Petition of GK Klerksdorp against the Synod 2009 decision on allowing women to the office of minister and elder (21.4/2).
- 2.2.3 Petition of GK Krugersdorp against the Synod 2009 decision over the woman's role in the church (21.5/2).
- 2.2.4 Petition of AH Klopper, AP Kruger, AH Stavast and RL Vorster against the Synod 2003 decision over women in the office of minister (21.7/2).
- 2.2.5 Petition of Classis Eastern Pretoria against the Synod 2009 decision that women may not serve in the offices of minister and elder (21.8/2).
- 2.2.6 Petition of GK Potchefstroom North/Noordbrug against the Synod 2009 decision over women in the offices of elder and minister (21.9/2).

Synod 2015

- 2.2.7 Petition of GK Krugersdorp against the Synod 2009 decision over the woman's role in the church (21.2/5).
- 2.2.8 Petition of GK Potchefstroom-Die Bult against the Synod 2009 decision over women in the offices of elder and minister (21.3/5).
- 2.3 The Report of the Convening Church Council (proposed Agenda 8) was received and sent to the churches.
- 2.4 Notification of the Extraordinary Synod was published in *Die Kerkblad* (October 2015:33).
- 2.5 Commission reports: The same references are used for both the Agenda items and the Commission reports. This facilitates minuting and the compilation of the Acta as well as being beneficial to future research.
- 2.6 A Point of Description was received from Regional Synod Randvaal, which the Deputies did not deem responsive.

2.6.1 Motivation

The Point of Description asserts that the minutes/Acta of Synod 2015 do not make a clear pronouncement over the question of the significance of women in the special offices (pt 3.1 of the Point of Description) and refers in this regard to Acta 2015:320, 7.3.2. The Point of Description then cites, in 3.1.1.5, the following decision:

All relevant Petitions relate to women in the special offices. Given that the Synod deems this a significant issue, it is recommended that the Petitions be referred to the Special Synod (Acta 2015:323, 2.1 – the page references in the Point of Description is incorrect – Deputies). When the two decision of Synod 2015 are read together, it is clear that Synod 2015 did indeed make a direct judgement and that it was recorded as such in the minutes and Acta.

The Point of Description does not, however, indicate why it is necessary for the Synod to review the matter once again (CO, art 46). Having made a determination, Synod 2015 had already reviewed and finalised the matter (CO, art 30). The only proper method for tabling the matter once again for consideration would be to lodge a Petition stating the grounds for a second review.

2.7 The Deputies forwarded the Point of Description to the Deputies for Responsiveness of Petitions for further advice.

The Deputies received 5 petitions from GK Noordrand. The petitioner was informed that the EGS is limited in scope and that the orderly path would be to submit the Petitions to Regional Synod 2018.

In the accompanying document (dated 02 December 2015, Appendix 1) GK Noordrand notes: *We trust that the churches convening for the Extraordinary General Synod 2016 will include the issues in its Agenda, given the seriousness and urgency of the matters.* The complaints pertain directly and indirectly to Synod 2015 decisions on appeal procedure and addressing appeals.

The accompanying document mentions rightly that the Petitions may be submitted to the assembly that reached the relevant resolutions, but GK Noordrand fails to substantiate the urgency of the matters to thereby demonstrate the need for their consideration at the EGS 2016 (CO, art 46). The Deputies do not deem these matters appropriate for inclusion on the Agenda of the EGS.

Consequently, these documents were not forwarded to the churches. The Deputies for Responsiveness of Petitions will advise the EGS in this regard.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.7 noted.

3. Matters for the synod's attention

Recommendations

3.1 The documents (see pt 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) are to be accepted for inclusion on the Agenda for the EGS for consideration and judgement (CO, art 30).

3.2 The Point of Description of Regional Synod Randvaal (see pt 2.5) is to be declared unresponsive.

3.3 The Petition of GK Potchefstroom North/Noordbrug, against the Synod 2009 resolution over women in the offices of elder and minister (Synod 2012, see pt 2.2.5 above) is to be replaced with the Petition of GK Potchefstroom-Die Bult against the Synod 2009 resolution over women in the offices of elder and minister (Synod 2015, see pt 2.2.8 above).

3.3.1 Motivation: The content of the Petitions is the same.

3.4 The Deputies for Responsiveness of Petitions are to advise the EGS on the responsiveness of the 5 Petitions of GK Noordrand for inclusion on the Agenda for EGS 2016.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.4 noted in lighth of the Reports to serve on these recommendations.

10. REPORT OF THE DEPUTIES FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD: PROGRAMMING (Art 15, 16, 36, 44)

- A. Rev CA Jansen tables the Report.
- B. **Order-Proposal:** That the Commissions are referred back to the Deputies Programming to re-evaluate the composition in light of the discussion.
- C. **Decision:** Order-proposal approved.
- D. The following ad hoc commission is proposed by the vice-chairman, Rev C Aucamp, re-evaluate the composition of the Commissions in light of the discussion: Dr DJ de Kock (s), rev CD Jaftha, dr TD Mashau, dr HF van Wyk, rev PJ Nel, dr PH Heystek, rev P Venter, rev SZ Phungula.
- E. **Decision: Approved.**
- F. Rev CD Jaftha reports on behalf of the ad hoc commission.

G. REPORT

1. Matters that the Synod take note of

1.1 *Instruction*

Acta 1979:301, 1991:491-494; 1994:726-728; 2000:31; 2009:848 and 2012:13 (the instructions pertinent to an Extraordinary General Synod – EGS).

Decision: Noted.

1.2 *Actions*

- 1.2.1 The Deputies reviewed the judgements of previous Synods.
- 1.2.2 The Deputies appointed by General Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:534) convened on 2-3 December 2015 to draft the preliminary programme for the Agenda of EGS 2016. No delegates of the Regional Synods were invited, to limit costs.

Decision: Points 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 noted.

1.3 *Logistics*

- 1.3.1 All logistics were put in place, with a clear request from the Management of the Administrative Bureau to limit expenditure as much as possible.
- 1.3.2 Dennepark is available for accommodation of delegates up and until 16 January 2016.
- 1.3.3 Arrangements for meals have been set in place until Saturday, 16 January 2016. It has been arranged for the delegates of Regional Synod Bosveld, Randvaal and Eastern as well as delegates from abroad to dine in the reception hall of the Administrative Bureau and the delegates of Regional Synod North West, Southern, Free State & Kwazulu-Natal and Pretoria in the church hall of GK Potchefstroom-Die Bult.
No provision has been made for the meals of guests, exclusively for delegates.
- 1.3.4 The EGS aims to conclude events at 13:00 on Saturday, 16 January 2016.

Decision: Points 1.3.1 to 1.3.4 noted.

1.4 *Travel expenses*

- 1.4.1 Prior to each Synod delegates are requested to carpool, since travelling is a Synod's greatest expense. Thankfully, approximately 65% of delegates comply with this request. Unfortunately, there remains the 35% that make other travel arrangements for every Synod and this has a marked impact on the travel expenses account of every Synod.

Decision: Noted.

1.5 *Planning*

- 1.5.1 Each assembly determines its own procedure.

- 1.5.2 Previous Synods' decisions (Acta 1942:195-198; 1958:26-30; 1976:14-19; 2012:17, pt. 2.3.1 and 2.3.2; 2015:16, pt 2.3.1 and 2.3.2) have shown the most effective way to proceed is to work through all tabled Reports and refer Petitions to Commissions, unless the Synod deems it practical to finalise some of the Petitions at that particular assembly.
- 1.5.3 The Agenda items were already provided to the churches in October 2015, to allow delegates adequate time to prepare.

Decision: Points 1.5.1 to 1.5.3 noted.

1.6 *Speak Opportunity and Speaking Turns*

- 1.6.1 Speaking at the assembly is confined to delegates with the appropriate credentials and in accordance with CO, art 18 to called professors and advisors.
- 1.6.2 Non-delegates do not receive a speaking turn.

Motivation: The Synod is an assembly of Regional Synods (CO, art 50) to which delegates are sent with their instructions and credentials.

- 1.6.3 Speaking turns are to promote the resolution of the particular matter.

Motivation: A Synod is (church) assembly and not a forum for debate.

Decision: Points 1.6.1 to 1.6.3 noted.

1.7 *Appointment of Commissions*

The following criteria were applied:

- 1.7.1 Gifts, in as far as the Deputies could determine
- 1.7.2 The delegates representing churches or Classes that are directly or indirectly involved in Petitions will not, as far as possible, serve on Commissions that are reviewing the relevant Petition.

Decision: Points 1.7.1 and 1.7.2 noted.

1.8 *Communication*

The Deputies addressed the variety of channels through which decisions could be communicated to the media and church members.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters that the Synod decide on

The Deputies recommend the following:

2.1 *Logistics*

- 2.1.1 All delegates accommodated at Dennepark are to adhere to the arrangements made and assigned rooms. Any change in accommodation at Dennepark is to be taken up with Rev CJ Nagel (Jnr) and not with the staff of Dennepark.
- 2.1.2 The loss of the entry card and key, issued upon arrival, will be for the delegate's immediate payment @ R70,00. All keys and entry cards are to be returned to Rev Nagel upon check out.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 approved.

2.1.3 Travelling Expenses

- 2.1.3.1 The rate for delegates who carpool is R1,50/km.
- 2.1.3.2 The rate for delegates who travel on their own is R0,50/km.
- 2.1.3.3 Airfare will be reimbursed according to the following formula: (Distance x R1,50/km) divided by 4 (based on the average of 4 persons travelling by motor vehicle). No provision is made for vehicle rental.
- 2.1.3.4 Reimbursement is confined to a single return trip.

Decision: Points 2.1.3 to 2.1.3.4 approved.

2.2 *Meeting Rooms*

The name of each Commission will be affixed to the door of the meeting room allocated to it and is to remain this way, for the sake of orderliness.

Decision: Approved.

2.3 *Assembly Timetable*

- 2.3.1 The timetable will be set out as recommended by the Report of the Calling Church Council and adjusted around mealtimes.

<u>Today:</u>	<u>Wednesday to Saturday</u>
10:00 – 12:30	07:00 – 08:00 breakfast
12:00 – 13:30 lunch	08:00 – 10:00
13:30 – 15:30	10:00 – 10:30 teatime
15:30 – 16:00 teatime	10:30 – 13:00
16:00 – 17:30	12:00 – 13:30 lunch
17:30 – 18:45 dinner	13:30 – 15:30
18:45 – 20:30	15:30 – 16:00 teatime
	16:00 – 17:30
	17:30 – 18:45 dinner
	18:45 – 20:30

Decision: Approved.

2.4 *Proceedings*

- 2.4.1 Reports are tabled, reviewed and finalised (CO, art 30).

- 2.4.2 The Petitions of Regional Synods Randvaal, North West and FS/Kwazulu Natal (against the Synod 2015 decision on an Extraordinary Synod) are tabled, reviewed and finalised.

- 2.4.3 The other Petitions are referred to Commissions that will advise the EGS toward reaching a decision.

- 2.4.4 Should the Petitions mentioned in 2.4.2 succeed, the other Petitions will be tabled. Advisors will receive 3 min. to substantiate the Petition, which will then be referred to the relevant Commission. The Synod's Commissions will meet Wednesday, 13 January 2016 and complete their Reports before 22:00 on 13 January 2016.

The reports will then be translated and the resumption of the assembly of the synod will be confirmed for 13:30 on Thursday, 14 January 2016.

Note: The Procedure Commission will endeavour to make the documents available to delegates as soon as possible on 14 January at the Synod hall.

- 2.4.5 The Deputies have convened the Order Commission and Petition Commissions for service during the Synod.

Decision: Passed over in light of the Supplementary Report.

2.5 *Speaking and speaking turns*

- 2.5.1 Speaking turns will proceed as per pt 1.5.

- 2.5.2 Speaking turns will be given to delegates of churches with which the GKSA have ecumenical ties.

Decision: Approved (amendments already added – Deputies Acta).

2.6 *Synod "in camera"*

When the Synod goes "in camera", it is recommended that aside from the delegates the following persons will be allowed to remain part of the assembly:

- 2.6.1 Advisors

- 2.6.2 Emeritus ministers and professors

- 2.6.3 Serving ministers and elders not delegated

- 2.6.4 The recording typist

- 2.6.5 Sextons

- 2.6.6 Interpreters

Decision: Points 2.6 to 2.6.6 approved.

2.7 *Advisors*

The professors of the TSP will advise the Commissions, in accordance with CO, art 18, as requested.

Decision: Approved.

2.8 *Sundry arrangements*

2.8.1 Opening and closing: Each day will be opened with Scripture, prayer and a Psalm/Hymn/Song and closed with song and prayer.

2.8.2 Rev C Aucamp and Rev MA Modise will lead the singing.

Decision: Points 2.8.1 and 2.8.2 approved.

2.9 *Distribution of Acta*

The Deputies appointed by Synod 2015 will be responsible for the Acta of the EGS (Acta 2015:534, 2.15.1).

Decision: Noted.

2.10 *Ballot and vote counting*

2.10.1 The governing body will oversee voting by call or closed ballot required on any given matter. General/majority consensus should in principle receive preference.

2.10.2 The Procedure Commission will be responsible for tallying the votes.

2.10.3 The yellow cards are used for voting by call.

Decision: Points 2.10.1 to 2.10.3 approved.

2.11 *Media contact*

2.11.1 Contact with the media is left to dr DG Breed and rev MA Modise.

2.11.2 Information will be communicated daily to the churches through the most effective channels.

Decision: Approved (amendments already added – Deputies Acta).

2.12 *Commissions of the Synod*

2.12.1 Commissions are to keep to the allocated meeting rooms.

2.12.2 Commissions are to organise their activities toward meeting the 22:00 deadline on 13 January 2016 for submission of Reports.

2.12.3 Delegates not assigned to Commissions can, upon consultation with a Commission, be co-opted and/or provide input.

2.12.4 Commission reports are to be forwarded to Dr W du Plessis (wymiedup@gksa.co.za) and/or Rev CA Jansen (careljansen@vodamail.co.za) for processing.

2.12.5 *Commissions*

2.12.5.1 Procedure Commission

Instruction: Daily programme, minutes, logistics, tallying of votes
Meeting Room: P7 Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Rev GC Coetzee (O, responsible for meal arrangements, daily programmes)
Scribe: Dr D Lartz (RV, responsible for meal arrangements)
Deputy scribe: Rev CJ (Innes) Nagel (B, responsible for accommodation, security and daily opening)
Members: Dr W du Plessis, Rev CA Jansen (O, responsible for documents)
Rev FJ Potgieter (FS-KZN, register of business) elder FJWJ Slabbert (NW, register of business)

2.12.5.2 Petition Commission 1

Instruction: Petition of GK Bloemfontein South (21.3/2)
Meeting Room: P2 Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Dr RM van der Merwe (FS-KZN)
Scribe: Rev CB Swanepoel (P)
Deputy scribe: Rev ASA de Bruyn (RV)
Members: Dr TD Mashau (P), elders EJ Msimanga (RV), OJF Hartung (O), J Hoogendyk (RV)

2.12.5.3 Petition Commission 2

Instruction: Petition of GK Klerksdorp (21.4/2)
Meeting Room: P8 Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Dr GJ Meijer (P)
Scribe: Rev TJ Potgieter (S)

Deputy scribe: Dr G van Wyk (RV)
Members: Rev J van Schaik (RV), elders DM Kruger (B), WHS Steinberg (S), J Dube (O)

2.12.5.4 Petition Commission 3

Instruction: Petition of GK Krugersdorp (21.5/2)
Meeting Room: P9 Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Dr JH Howell (P)
Scribe: Rev P Venter (NW)
Deputy scribe: Rev JG Noëth (P)
Members: Dr PH Heystek (P), elders WH Smit (S), J Basson (NW), AT Dreyer (O)

2.12.5.5 Petition Commission 4

Instruction: Petition of Revs AH Klopper, AP Kruger, AH Stavast and RL Vorster (21.7/2)
Meeting Room: P10 Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Rev PW Kurpershoek (O)
Scribe: Rev J Malan (S)
Deputy scribe: Rev PM Modise (RV)
Members: Rev NN Ligege (B), elders F Venter (NW - Bult), P Joubert (RV), GK Bain (S)

2.12.5.6 Petition Commission 5

Instruction: Petition of Classis Eastern Pretoria (21.8/2)
Meeting Room: Audit office of Administrative Bureau
Chairman: Dr EJ de Beer (B)
Scribe: Dr JA Erasmus (FS-KZN)
Deputy scribe: Rev MG Mdluli (RV)
Members: Dr KD Semanya (RV), elders JD Snyman (S), MJ Chaka (RV), C Jansen van Ryssen (NW)

2.12.5.7 Petition Commission 6

Instruction: Petition of GK Krugersdorp (21.2/5)
Meeting Room: K110 Theological School
Chairman: Rev BR Kingma (S)
Scribe: Dr J Lion-Cachet (NW)
Deputy scribe: Rev AB van der Walt (NW)
Members: Revs CD Jaftha (FS-KZN), SAJ vdM Venter (O), DJP Erasmus (P), GK Schuring (B)

2.12.5.8 Petition Commission 7

Instruction: Petition of GK Potchefstroom-Die Bult (21.3/5)
Meeting Room: K111 Theological School
Chairman: Dr DJ de Kock (NW)
Scribe: Rev CJJ Putter (B)
Deputy scribe: Rev LSD du Plessis (O)
Members: Rev HJ Stoltz (RV), elders AM van der Kruk (P), JJ Howell (RV), AJD Boon (S)

Decision: Passed over in light of the Supplementary Report Deputies Programming.

H. SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

1. Matters that the Synod take note of

- 1.1 The Deputies were advised to guide the Synod in the orderly conduct of events that these important matters may be reviewed and decided properly, in terms of CO, art 30.
- 1.2 A letter was received from the IPB (Presbyterian Church in Brazil – Appendix 1).

- 1.3 A notification of appeal together with the appeal was submitted to the Extraordinary General Synod 2016, which the Deputies referred to the Deputies for Appeals of the General Synod for reporting.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.3 noted.

2. Matters that the Synod decide on

Recommendations

- 2.1 Item 2.4 of the Report by the Deputies for Programming should be scrapped and replaced with the below information.

Decision: Noted.

- 2.2 The letter from the IPB should be referred to a commission (see 2.5.4.3.2), for feedback to the Synod.

Decision: Approved.

- 2.3 The Synod assembly should entail two tasks: the review of Petitions by Regional Synods Randvaal, North West and FS-KZN against the decision of the General Synod 2015 regarding a Special Synod.

Decision: Noted.

- 2.4 The Synod should finalise the three Petitions (see item 2.3) tabled to the assembly, since these documents were already circulated among the churches in October 2015.
Or the Synod should appoint a Commission tasked with studying the three Petitions to advise the Synod on making a substantiated decision. This should be addressed today still.

Decision: Approved. Petitions finalised during the meeting.

- 2.5 If the Petitions should succeed, the Petitions not finalised at Synod 2012 and 2015 should come under review. The following three possible approaches may be considered:

- 2.5.1 The Synod adjourns, appoints a Commission to review the Petitions that then advises the Synod after a time (determined by the Synod, e.g. in a month or three months' time) in terms of a decision regarding the Petitions.

- 2.5.1.1 This method is unfeasible due to great travelling distances, the lack of appropriate accommodation and the tremendous cost implications.

Decision: Points 2.5.1 and 2.5.1.1 rejected.

- 2.5.2 The Synod appoints Deputies to review the Petitions, according to a comprehensive task description (CO, art 49), in order to offer clear recommendations on the Petitions to Synod 2018 (CO, art 30).

- 2.5.2.1 The churches are expecting this matter to be finalised.

Decision: Points 2.5.2 and 2.5.2.1 rejected.

- 2.5.3 They Synod reviews the Petitions within the time at their disposal at present (Saturday 16 January 2016) and come to decision in this regard (CO, art 30).

- 2.5.3.1 This would seem the best option, given the churches' raised expectations since Synod 2009 and logistical realities.

Decision: Points 2.5.3 and 2.5.3.1 approved.

- 2.5.4 Should 2.5.3 be approved, the following approach will be followed (suggested upon the initiative of Rev C Aucamp).

- 2.5.4.1 The Synod takes note of the background to the matter, briefly set out:

In 2009 the question of women in the office of minister had to be postponed to a continued assembly in July.

The following dilemma arose in 2012: Seven or eight Petitions, each with approximately eight grounds for appeal, were lodged. Each Petition was referred to its own Commission. Most of the Commissions submitted both a Majority and Minority Report, which contest virtually identical grounds for appeal in different Petitions.

The Synod failed to reach a solution and referred the matter to the Deputies: Unity in Diversity, as point of order.

These Deputies indicate in their Report to Synod 2015 to the *overloaded Agendas and limited time* of General Synods, which makes it *impossible to explore and properly address important matters...*

2.5.4.2 The Synod takes note of the sticking points of the set procedure.

Referring each Petition to a different Commission has the following disadvantages:

2.5.4.2.1 **Lack of direction and focus in Commissions:** Each Commission is tasked with a number of grounds for appeal that ranges across diverse disciplines and problem statements. The Commission has to e.g. judge exegetic, canonical and practical grounds as part of a single petition.

2.5.4.2.2 **Overlap and duplication of work of different commissions:** Different Commissions offer different and diverse recommendations, further complicated by Majority and Minority reports, to the assembly on virtually identical grounds for appeal.

2.5.4.2.3 **The Synod is confronted with a plethora of information and arguments:** The same matter/ground is argued in up to 14 Reports (Majority and Minority Reports).

2.5.4.2.4 **All of the above creates the temptation among delegates to simply retain his original conviction on the matter, in the face of the vast range of information, or to simply vote without true consideration of every ground for appeal.**

2.5.4.2.5 **Elders** had, in the past, no choice but to vote in accordance with their minister in frustration over the unstructured information tabled to them.

2.5.4.2.6 Procedures make it truly difficult to stand before the Lord and honestly say: ***We decided, together with the Holy Spirit...***

2.5.4.3 Suggested procedure

2.5.4.3.1 The Petitions were already deemed responsive during Synod 2012 (Acta 2012:33-35) and Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:33-34). Since this EGS is a whole new assembly, the issues must again come under consideration but should be referred directly to the different Commissions.

2.5.4.3.2 **A Commission should be appointed to sort the different grounds for appeal into distinct categories.** Representatives of the different Petitions could offer input to ensure that grounds for appeals are correctly classified. Every ground for objection must be judged within the context of the Petition of Protest as a whole.

Decision: Approved (amendment already added – Deputies Acta).

2.5.4.3.3 **Each category should then be referred to a Commission** that reviews the different grounds for appeal within that specific category, for reporting and offering recommendations to the Synod. The Report/Reports of each Commission then deal with the same argument and set of facts, enabling them to make an informed decision on the whole and offer recommendations on each ground for appeal.

2.5.4.3.4 **Each Commission would then also advise on the validity of the set of grounds referred to them.** As such a Commission may e.g. differ on the merit of the different appeal grounds, but could nevertheless reach consensus on whether they in essence form the basis on which the appeal succeeds and cancels out the 2009 decision.

2.5.4.3.5 The Commission mentioned in 2.5.4.3.2, in conjunction with the chairs and scribes of all the Commissions, then ensures that each appeal ground was addressed.

Decision: Points 2.5.4.1 to 2.5.4.3.5 approved.

2.5.4.3.6 The **Synod then makes a judgement** based on each Commission Report and addresses every appeal ground of the different Petitions.

Decision: Approved.

2.5.4.3.7 Possible categorisation of appeal grounds

2.5.4.3.7.1 Appeal grounds in relation to 1 Corinthians 14

2.5.4.3.7.2 Appeal grounds in relation to 1 Timothy 2

2.5.4.3.7.3 Appeal grounds in relation to general revelational-historical arguments

2.5.4.3.7.4 Appeal grounds in relation to canonical grounds and procedure deviation

2.5.4.3.7.5 Appeal grounds related to unsustainable practical implications.

2.5.4.3.7.6 Appeal grounds could possibly be categorised as follows:

	Rev-Historical	1 Cor 14	1 Tim 2	Canonical	Practical
Bfnt South Klerksdorp	1, 2	3, 4, 5	3, 5		
				1, 2, 3, 4	
Krugersdorp 1	2, 3		4 (5.3)	1	4 (5.1, 5.2, 5.4)
Pretoria East				Overall	
Die Bult				Overall	
Krugersdorp 2		3, 7, 8, 9, 10	1, 2, 4, 5, 6		

2.5.4.3.7.1 Notes

2.5.4.3.7.1.1 Still Majority/Minority Reports?

Naturally the Commissions can continue to submit Majority and Minority Reports. The suggested approach will not exclude them, but: then the two possibly opposing stances of each aspect will be clearly set out in two opposing Reports, saving delegates from having to “surf” between 12 different Reports on the same argument.

2.5.4.3.7.1.2 Advantages of suggested approach:

- Virtually eliminates the disadvantages of the previous approach
- Focuses every Commission and also enables improved application of expertise
- Facilitates overview and preparation of each delegate
- Enables clear and more structured discussion by the overall Synod
- Ensures that the ISSUE is addressed and not the DOCUMENTS
- Provides a canonically accountable process in that every appeal ground of every Petition is resolved
- Enables communicating a much clearer and easily demonstrated decision

2.5.4.3.8 Recommended commissions

2.5.4.3.8.1 Commission to thematically categorise appeal grounds, synchronise recommendations and advise the Synod on the letter from the IPB

Chair: Dr DJ de Kock (B)

Scribe: Rev HPM van Rhyn (P)

Members: Rev MJ Smidt (FS-KZN), Dr G van Wyk (RV), Rev J Malan (S), Elders WH Smit (S), J Basson (NW), AT Dreyer (O)

2.5.4.3.8.2 Commission for appeal grounds in terms of 1 Timothy 2
Chair: Dr DG Breed (P)
Scribe: Rev PW Kurpershoek (O)
Members: Rev HC van Rooy (RV), Rev CB Swanepoel (P), Rev RP van Wyk (S), Elders DM Kruger (B), WHS Steinberg (S), J Dube (O)

Decision: Approved (addendum already added – Deputies Acta).

2.5.4.3.8.3 Commission for appeal grounds in terms of 1 Corinthians 14
Chair: Dr WC Opperman (NW)
Scribe: Rev CCA Vrey (S)
Members: Dr AJ Coetsee (NW), Rev JG Noëth (P), Dr KD Semanya (RV), Elders EJ Msimanga (RV), OJF Hartung (O), J Hoogendyk (RV)

Decision: Approved (addendum already added – Deputies Acta).

2.5.4.3.8.4 Commission for appeal grounds in terms of Revenational-historical
Chair: Dr GJ Meijer (P)
Scribe: Rev BCG Fourie (P)
Members: Dr AJ Kruger (O), Dr J Lion-Cachet (NW), Dr TD Mashau (P), Elders F Venter (NW - Bult), P Joubert (RV), GK Bain (S)

2.5.4.3.8.5 Commission for canonical aspects
Chair: Dr RM van der Merwe (FS-KZN)
Scribe: Dr JH Howell (P)
Members: Rev P Venter (NW), Rev BR Kingma (S), Rev PM Modise (RV), Elders JD Snyman (S), MJ Chaka (RV), GK Schuring (B)

2.5.4.3.8.2 Commission for practical execution
Chair: Dr PH Heystek (P)
Scribe: Dr EJ de Beer (B)
Members: Rev NN Ligege (B), Rev AL Pelsler (FS-KZN), Dr JV Fatuse (S), Elders AM van der Kruk (P), JJ Howell (RV), AJD Boon (S)

Decision: Point 2.5.4 to 2.5.4.3.8.6 postponed until the two Petitions of Protest, known of, of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and Regional Synod Randvaal against the decisions of Synod 2015 on “Special Synods” and the request for an Extraordinary General Synod by Regional Synod Free State-KwaZulu-Natal, has been concluded.

I. REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMISSION – COMPILATION OF COMMISSIONS

The numbering and headings of the Supplementary Report have been retained. The following Commissions are recommended:

- 2.5.4.3.8.1 Thematic division and Synchronisation of the Recommendations
Chairperson: Dr DJ de Kock
Scribe: Rev J van der Schyff
Members: Rev MJ Smidt, dr G van Wyk, rev J Malan, rev NN Ligege, Rev HPM van Rhyn, Elders WH Smit, J Basson, AT Dreyer
- 2.5.4.3.8.2 Grounds for Gravamen: 1 Tim 2
Chairperson: Dr DG Breed
Scribe: Rev PW Kurpershoek
Members: Rev HC van Rooy, Rev CB Swanepoel, Rev LP Baloyi, Elders DM Kruger, J Dube
- 2.5.4.3.8.3 Grounds for Gravamen: 1 Cor 14
Chairperson: Dr AJ Coetsee
Scribe: Rev CCA Very
Members: Rev JG Noëth, Elders EJ Msimanga, OJF Hartung, J Hoogendyk, PJ Grobler
- 2.5.4.3.8.4 Grounds for Gravamen: Revelational and Historical
Chairperson: Dr GJ Meijer
Scribe: Rev BGC Fourie

- Members: Dr AJ Kruger, dr J Lion-Cachet, rev PT Masase, dr DM Nkulu, Elders F Venter, P Joubert, GK Schuring, ES Pungula
- 2.5.4.3.8.5 Church Polity
Chairperson: Dr RM van der Merwe
Scribe: Dr JH Howell
Members: Rev BR Kingma, dr SN Jooste, rev SZ Phungula, Elders JD Snyman, MJ Chaka, GK Bain
- 2.5.4.3.8.6 Practical Implementation
Chairperson: Dr TD Mashau
Scribe: Dr EJ de Beer
Members: Rev AL Pelsler, dr JV Fatuse, dr PH Heystek, rev PT Hlela, Elders AM van der Kruk, JJ Howell, AJD Boon, KP Mapholi
- 2.5.4.3.8.7 Gravamen: Women in the Office of Deacon
Chairperson: Dr KD Semenya
Scribe: Rev PM Modise
Members: Rev TJ Potgieter, rev ASA de Bruyn, rev MG Mdluli, dr JA Erasmus, Elders R Muller, BD Bakker, HJ Briel

10.1 REPORT MODERAMEN (Artt 7, 22, 33, 35)

- A. Rev C Aucamp tables the Report.
 - B. The Synod continues in camera.
 - C. Dr PH Heystek reports on behalf of the ad hoc commission – to study current decisions on the practice of language of the General Synod.
 - D. **Order-proposal:** In light of the discussion, the whole Report is referred back to the Commission for a Second Report.
Decision: Approved.
 - E. Dr PH Heystek report on behalf of the ad hoc commission the Second Report – to study current decisions on the practice of language of the General Synod.
 - F. **Order-proposal:** That one of the delegates leads the Synod in prayer before discussion continues.
Decision: Order-proposal approved.
 - G. Rev N Boy leads the meeting in prayer.
 - H. Discussion is held.
 - I. **Order-proposal that:**
 - 1. The Moderamen makes a decision on how the matter is to be handled so that this meeting can continue with its Agenda, and
 - 2. That our churches urgently pay attention to the matter of language and unity.
 - J. Discussion is held.
 - K. Order-proposal is not brought to a vote.
 - L. Rev SZ Phungula presents the following proposal to the meeting.
 - 1. **Context**

People, who feel very strong that this Synod meeting should be run in English, sought the audience of the Moderamen. For the sake of unity and progress in moving the Agenda of this meeting forward, we propose the following:

 - 1.1 That the Report presented by the Ad-hoc Commission should be removed from the table.
 - 1.2 In the light of 4.2.1 of “Acta Synod GKSA 2006, 4.2, we should then decide that this meeting should be conducted in English for effective communication among all delegates.
 - 1.3 The Moderamen should use both English and Afrikaans to introduce Agenda points.
 - 1.4 Delegates should do their best to effectively communicate to the benefit of all.
 - 1.5 Delegates are free to use their mother tongues and direct interpretation should be sought.
 - 2. **Conclusion**
 - 2.1 It is not about seeking what is best for us (blacks and whites) but the Kingdom.
 - 2.2 Assurance from the Moderamen that they will do their best in running this meeting to God’s glory.
 - M. Discussion is held.
 - N. Dr G van Wyk proposes the following amendment: “That point 1.2 is omitted”.
 - O. **Decision:**
 - 1. Amendment approved.
 - 2. Approved as amended.
 - P. Rev P Venter leads the meeting in a prayer of thanks following the decision.
- Q. REPORT OF THE MODERAMEN**
- 1. **Matters the Synod take note of**
 - 1.1 A delegate mentioned the matter of language of communication for Synod 2016.
Decision: Noted.

2. Matters the Synod decide on

Recommendations

2.1 The Synod appoints a Commission ad hoc with the following assignment:

2.1.1 To study current decisions on the practice of language of the General Synod.

2.1.2 The application of the decision for this Synod.

2.1.3 To present the Synod with advice regarding further action in this matter, if necessary.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 to 2.1.3 approved.

2.2 Commission Drr GJ Meijer (C), PH Heystek (S), rev NN Ligege, rev PM Modise, elder F Venter. Advisor: prof J Smit.

Decision: Approved.

2.3 Anybody who wants to give their inputs at the Commission, will be given the opportunity.

Decision: Approved.

2.4 The vice-chairman will handle the matter of welcoming of the visitors from local churches and churches abroad with whom the GKSA is in ecumenical unity or has ecumenical ties, as well as the media.

Decision: Approved.

R. **FIRST REPORT: AD HOC COMMISSION – TO STUDY CURRENT DECISIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF LANGUAGE OF THE GENERAL SYNOD**

1. **Assignment**

1.1 To review existing decisions of the language practice of the General Synod.

1.2 The application of the decision for this Synod.

1.3 To advise the Synod on how to further handle this matter, if necessary.

2. **Procedure**

2.1 The Commission heard everyone who indicated that they wanted to meet with us.

2.2 The existing Synod decisions regarding the Commission's assignment is:

2.2.1 Acta Synod GKSA 4.2

"Language

Recommendation

4.2.1 That every new Classis and the new Synod should take its own steps with regard to its language medium, within the framework of the official languages of the country.

Decision: Approved with the following addition: Each meeting must ensure that language differences do not lead to miscommunication. Each delegate should be able to participate in discussions and decisions of matters on the Agenda.

2.2.2 "11.3 REPORT DEPUTY GROUP GENERAL SYNOD – LANGUAGE (ART 15)

A. Rev CA Jansen delivers the Report.

B. REPORT

1. Matters that the Synod take note of

1.1 The Deputy Group National Synod's assignment is formulated in the Acta of Synod 2006 (p842). In addition to this the Deputy group also took points 2.3.2 (p387) and 4.2.1 (389) into consideration – language matters.

1.2 Although language matters was not a direct assignment (CO, art 49), the Deputies deemed certain actions in the planning of the Synod necessary to ensure that the Synod will run as smoothly as possible.

1.3 The Deputies prepared the Agenda and Supplementary Agenda in both Afrikaans and English. Delegates each receive a printed copy in the language of their choice. The Agenda was made available to churches on CD.

1.3.1 Motivation: saving costs.

1.4 The Deputies have compiled a wordlist Afrikaans-English to aid translation. This list is available for Deputy groups, Commissions and the GKSA web page.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters for decision by the Synod

The Deputies recommend:

2.1 The Agenda and Supplementary Agenda are made available in Afrikaans and English in future in printed version to delegates and on CD to congregations, until such time that circumstances require change.

2.2 The general language during the Synod is Afrikaans and this will simultaneously be interpreted into English (headphones are available for this purpose).

2.3 Delegates (when it is his turn to speak) expresses himself in the language in which he is most comfortable and in the case of other indigenous languages it will be interpreted into Afrikaans or English.

2.4 All documents, printed and on screen, appear in Afrikaans and English.

Decision: Approved.”

3. Findings

The following frustrations are felt by the brothers that met with the Commission:

3.1 The specific delegates that make use of the interpreting service are not able to sensibly take part in the meeting to their full potential.

3.2 Based on 3.1 they feel excluded and thus not like delegates that can express their gifts and talents but rather like observers.

3.3 The use of the earphones for long periods of time is a hindrance.

3.4 The delegates feel that the tempo of the meeting is too fast in the light thereof that the interpreting service are somewhat slower, it is then difficult for the specific brothers to follow the flow of the meeting and to sensibly take part in the meeting. They feel that they only listen.

4. Proposals

4.1 That the Synod decisions regarding this matter (see 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) stands. This proposal does not prevent this matter from following the church orderly path (CO, art 46) by way of a Gravamen in order to table this matter in the future.

4.2 That the Deputies Advancement of Unity in Diversity take note of this problem and that they are urgently requested to pay attention to this matter in the light of the upcoming General Synod 2018.

4.3 That the Chairman of the General Synod be requested, to in the handling of the Agenda not move too quickly from one agenda-point to another.

4.4 That the Agenda, documentation and Reports be available in Afrikaans and English, and that they be projected in this fashion during the meeting.

Order-proposal: In light of the discussion, the whole Report is referred back to the Commission for a Second Report.

Decision: Approved.

S. SECOND REPORT: AD HOC COMMISSION – TO STUDY CURRENT DECISIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF LANGUAGE OF THE GENERAL SYNOD

1. Assignment

1.1 To review existing decisions of the language practice of the General Synod.

1.2 The application of the decision for this Synod.

1.3 To advise the Synod on how to further handle this matter, if necessary.

2. Procedure

2.1 The Commission heard everyone who indicated that they wanted to meet with us.

2.2 The existing Synod decisions regarding the Commission's assignment is:

2.2.1 Acta Synod GKSA 2006, 4.2

"Language

Recommendation

4.2.1 That every new Classis and the new Synod should take its own steps with regard to its language medium, within the framework of the official languages of the country.

Decision: Approved with the following addition: Each meeting must ensure that language differences do not lead to miscommunication. Each delegate should be able to participate in discussions and decisions of matters on the Agenda.

2.2.2 Acta Synod 2009

"11.3 REPORT DEPUTY GROUP GENERAL SYNOD – LANGUAGE (ART 15)

A. Rev CA Jansen delivers the Report.

B. REPORT

1. Matters that the Synod take note of

1.1 The Deputy Group National Synod's assignment is formulated in the Acta of Synod 2006 (p842). In addition to this the Deputy group also took points 2.3.2 (p387) and 4.2.1 (389) into consideration – language matters.

1.2 Although language matters was not a direct assignment (CO, art 49), the Deputies deemed certain actions in the planning of the Synod necessary to ensure that the Synod will run as smoothly as possible.

1.3 The Deputies prepared the Agenda and Supplementary Agenda in both Afrikaans and English. Delegates each receive a printed copy in the language of their choice. The Agenda was made available to churches on CD.

1.3.1 Motivation: saving costs.

1.4 The Deputies have compiled a wordlist Afrikaans-English to aid translation. This list is available for Deputy groups, Commissions and the GKSA web page.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters for decision by the Synod

The Deputies recommend:

2.1 The Agenda and Supplementary Agenda are made available in Afrikaans and English in future in printed version to delegates and on CD to congregations, until such time that circumstances require change.

2.2 The general language during the Synod is Afrikaans and this will simultaneously be interpreted into English (headphones are available for this purpose).

2.3 Delegates (when it is his turn to speak) expresses himself in the language in which he is most comfortable and in the case of other indigenous languages it will be interpreted into Afrikaans or English.

2.4 All documents, printed and on screen, appear in Afrikaans and English.

Decision: Approved."

3. Order-proposal (Approved by EGS)

In light of the discussion the whole Report is referred back to the Commission for a Second Report.

4. Findings

- 4.1 The problems that the delegates tabled on the current language practice of the Synod has the potential to create a feeling of alienation and restricting their ability to freely participate, through which the Synod is being deprived the opportunity to make use of their gifts and insights.
- 4.2 The Extraordinary Synod in terms of the CO is not competent in changing or recalling Synod decisions regarding language practice, but is competent to add an ad hoc arrangement for the duration of the Synod that is not in conflict with the standing decisions.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That each delegate will strive to optimally communicate in terms of expression and understanding.
- 5.2 That the interpreters are requested to, for the duration of the Synod, accommodate the problems identified by the non-Afrikaans speaking delegates as far as possible within their contractual mandate.
- 5.3 That the Deputies for the advancement of unity in major meetings/growth be requested to lay emphasis in their work on the formulation of proposals regarding the functioning of the General Synod which is to be held in DV 2018 in terms of language practice; taking into account of the problems mentioned by the delegates in regards to the language practices during the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

T. Rev SZ Phungula presents the following proposal to the meeting

1. Context

People, who feel very strong that this Synod meeting should be run in English, sought the audience of the Moderamen. For the sake of unity and progress in moving the Agenda of this meeting forward, we propose the following:

- 1.1 That the Report presented by the ad hoc Commission should be removed from the table.
- 1.2 In the light of 4.2.1 of "Acta Synod GKSA 2006, 4.2, we should then decide that this meeting should be conducted in English for effective communication among all delegates.
- 1.3 The Moderamen should use both English and Afrikaans to introduce Agenda points.
- 1.4 Delegates should do their best to effectively communicate to the benefit of all.
- 1.5 Delegates are free to use their mother tongues and direct interpretation should be sought.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 It is not about seeking what is best for us (blacks and whites) but the Kingdom.
- 2.2 Assurance from the Moderamen that they will do their best in running this meeting to God's glory.

11. REPORT DEPUTIES RECEPTIVENESS PETITIONS OF PROTEST (Art 13)

- A. Dr JH Howell tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

C. REPORT

1. Gravamina/Matters that have to be tested for receptiveness

- 1.1 Gravamina from RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and Regional Synod Randvaal against decisions of Synod 2015 on “Special” Synods.
- 1.2 Along with 2.1 the request from Regional Synod Free State-KZN to an Extraordinary General Synod (EGS).
- 1.3 Five (5) Gravamina handed in by RC Noordrand on different matters.
- 1.4 Point of Description from Regional Synod Randvaal touching on the essential nature of the matter of Women in Office or not.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.4 noted.

2. Assessment of receptiveness of Petitions of Protest RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and Regional Synod Randvaal against decisions of Synod 2015 about “Special” Synods

2.1 Assessment of Receptiveness

- 2.1.1 Both Gravamina are directed at the meeting that made the decision against which there are grievances.
- 2.1.2 Both Gravamina were handed in in time to be taken up in the Agenda of the Synod.
- 2.1.3 The decision against which the Gravamina are handed in, is given in both Gravamina.
- 2.1.4 The grounds upon which the grievance is made, is clearly showed by both Gravamina.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 noted.

2.2 Recommendation

Both these Gravamen are acceptable and is taken on the table of the Synod for assessment.

Decision: Approved.

3. Assessment of the request from Regional Synod Free State-KZN to an Extraordinary General Synod (EGS)

- 3.1 Regional Synod Free State-KZN hereby answers the call of Classis Potchefstroom, namely that an EGS is held.
- 3.2 *Recommendation*
The Synod takes note of this request that led to the calling of the EGS of 2016. In the light of CO, art 50, two or more Regional Synods decided to call up an EGS.

Decision: Points 3.1 and 3.2 noted.

4. Assessment on the Five (5) gravamina handed in by RC Noordrand on different matters

4.1 Assessment of Receptiveness

- 4.1.1 Only the normal criteria for the acceptance of Gravamina are not valid in the case of the EGS regarding the assessment of the receptiveness.
- 4.1.2 The matter/matters for which an EGS is called, must be supported by at least two Regional Synods (which was not the case here).
- 4.1.3 The EGS is called up in order to handle the limited Agenda and to finalise matters.

- 4.1.4 The EGS was called up by two Regional Synods (CO, art 50) to handle Gravamina against decisions of General Synod 2015 regarding Special Synods and if it were to succeed, the relevant matters regarding women in specific offices in terms of CO, art 30 which was on the Agenda for General Synod 2012 and General Synod 2015, which was tabled but not finalised, must be finalised.

Decision: Points 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 noted.

4.2 *Recommendations*

- 4.2.1 The Gravamina handed in by RC Noordrand is not receivable, because it discusses matters which fall outside of the limited Agenda for which the EGS was called.

Decision: Approved.

- 4.2.2 These Gravamina may well be handed in during a next General Synod.

Decision: Noted.

5. Assessment of Point of Description from Regional Synod Randvaal regarding the point of the essentiality of the matter of women in office or not

5.1 *Assessment of Receptiveness*

- 5.1.1 Only the normal criteria for the receptiveness of Gravamina are not valid in the case of the EGS regarding the assessment of the receptiveness.
- 5.1.2 The matter/matters for which an EGS is called, must be supported by at least two Regional Synods (which was not the case here).
- 5.1.3 The EGS is called up in order to handle the limited Agenda and to finalise matters.
- 5.1.4 The EGS was called up by two Regional Synods (CO, art 50) to handle Gravamina against decisions of General Synod 2015 regarding Special Synods and if it were to succeed, the relevant matters regarding women in specific offices in terms of CO, art 30 which was on the Agenda for General Synod 2012 and General Synod 2015, which was tabled but not finalised, must be finalised.

Decision: Points 5.1.1 to 5.1.4 noted.

5.2 *Recommendations*

- 5.2.1 The Point of Description handed in by Regional Synod Randvaal is not receptive since it doesn't deal with matters for which the EGS has been called.

Decision: Approved.

- 5.2.2 The Point of Description may be handed in at the next General Synod.

Decision: Noted.

6. Composition of Deputies

6.1 *Evaluation of the composition of Deputies*

The Deputies judged that dr RM van der Merwe could not be implicated as judge in his own case when assessing the receptiveness of the Gravamina by RC Noordrand, because simply the receptiveness of the Gravamina was assessed and not the content thereof.

Decision: Noted.

6.2 *Recommendation*

The conduct of the Deputies is approved.

Decision: Approved.

11.1 PETITION OF PROTEST: GK POTCHEFSTROOM-DIE BULT AGAINST DECISIONS OF SYNOD 2015 REGARDING “SPECIAL” SYNODS (Artt 17, 21, 27, 53)

- A. Elder F Venter (Bult) tables the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** Opportunity is given for discussion.
- C. **Order-proposal:** Rev PW Kurpershoek makes the following Order-proposal: “Without delivering judgement on the Gravamina, the Extraordinary General Synod lets go of the idea of having a Special Synod in order to finalise the matters regarding women in office (Synods 2012, 2015) and continues in handling those matters.

Motivation

- 1. The decision of Synod 2015 regarding Special Synod was taken to advance the unity in the church in matters that have strong potential to divide and that has strong differences associated.
 - 2. Decisions regarding the Special Synod rather had an immediate effect of tension as is evident in the fact that there are already Gravamina that led to this Extraordinary General Synod.
 - 3. The assessment of the Gravamina must be dealt with in a church orderly fashion that is responsible, that requires in turn a decently thought through decision making process which will take a lot of time and will influence the way and finalising of the unfinished matters.
- D. **Decision:** Order-proposal rejected.
 - E. **Proposal of Rev C Aucamp**
 - 1 The Petition of Protest is upheld in general terms based upon 1.3 (of the Petition of Protest). The purpose of effective and unanimous finalisation of the matter for which the Special Synod were called up, did not come to fruition. In the light thereof the Synod decides to not go into each of the grounds for objection.
 - 2 Motivation
 - 2.1 The Petition of Protest is handled by tabling it as a whole, where after it was elucidated and discussed.
 - 2.2 It is not sensible to further dissect a matter which had already failed in practice.
 - F. **Decision Approved.**

G. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Orientation

1.1 *Citation of the relevant decisions*

Hereby we protest against decisions of Synod 2015 according to which the Synod establishes a “Special” Synod. The relevant decisions are the following:

REPORT DEPUTIES UNITY IN VARIETY (MINUTES 21.1)

“6.3.3 Recommendations

6.3.3.1 That “Special” Synods can be held according to a General Synod when fundamental matters with a serious dividing potential could not have been unanimously finalised/resolved by General Synods, to then bring the matters to unanimity through continued study and consideration, in order to finalise or resolve the matters.

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.2 Regional Synods appoint delegates for this possible Synods before each General Synod, namely four ministers and four elders as well as the necessary *secundi*.

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

6.3.3.3 A “Special” Synod constitutes under the leadership of the Chairman and Scribe of the previous General Synod for the first time, where after the meeting appoint an own Moderamen to deal with the referred matters from the General Synod.

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.4 “Special” Synods meet as often and as long as is necessary for the completion of their assignment and in a fitting way provide the opportunity to members, congregations and churches with whom we have ecumenical unity or bonds, to make presentations regarding matters on the table.

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

6.3.3.5 “Special” Synods complete referred matters as soon as unanimity on the matter/matters have been reached and notify the churches.

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.6 The “Special” Synods appoint Deputies to, where churches are especially affected by the decisions of the “Special” Synods, explain the decisions if requested.

Decision: Approved.”

“6.4 That the recommendation on the variety within the churches and the role it can play in the building of the unity and the realisation of our missionary calling are referred to the Deputies Turnaround Strategy (Church growth ministry).

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).”

“7.3 Recommendation”

7.3.1 That if the recommendations in 4 to 6 are approved, the referred Petitions of Protest are dealt with according to these relevant decisions.

Decision: Approved.

7.3.2 That the Synod judges, with approval of 7.3.1, whether the matters are fundamental or not.

Decision: That referred Petitions of Protest are fundamental.

7.3.2.1 If the matters are fundamental, the synod must judge (see 6.3.3 of this Report):

Whether the matters have serious dividing potential,

Decision: That the matter has dividing potential.

whether General Synods could reach unanimity on these matters in the past,

Decision: That the Petitions of Protest confirm that the General Synod has not reached unanimity in the past.

whether the matters can be referred to a “Special” Synod in the light of the above.

Decision: That the matters are referred to a “Special” Synod in the light of abovementioned decisions (a and b) and that Commission Doctrine will advise the meeting on:

1. the further handling of Petitions of Protest at Synod 2015 on the same matter and

2. a way in which a legitimate “Special” Synod can be compiled as quickly as possible.

Decision: Points 7.3.1 to 7.3.2.2 approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).”

POINT OF DESCRIPTION REGIONAL SYNOD PRETORIA – “Special” Synods (COMMISSION REPORT AND DECISION) (MINUTES 11.3)

“2. Recommendation

2.1 All the relevant Petitions of Protest deal with the woman in the particular offices. In light of the fact that Synod decided that the matter of the woman in particular offices is an essential matter, it is recommended that all the Petitions of Protest are referred to the “Special” Synod.

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

2.2 The following are recommended regarding the calling of the “Special” Synod:

2.2.1 That the respective Regional Synods will delegate the necessary delegation according to own arrangements for the “Special” Synod July 2015.

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

2.2.2 That despite the primus delegates, another 8 secundi delegates must be appointed. (Delegates must be made aware of the possible long duration of the “Special” Synod).

Decision: Approved.

2.2.3 The Synod requests the Reformed Church Potchefstroom to act as Calling and Corresponding Church Council for the “Special” Synod in cooperation with the Administrative Bureau.

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).”

1.2 *Decisions of Synod 2015*

RCP Die Bult is of the opinion that the decisions of Synod 2015 cannot stand the test of the Church Order (CO). The decisions of Synod 2015 mean that the Reformed (Scriptural based) approach to church governance was compromised. In a collegialistic manner Synod 2015 accorded itself authority that a Synod of the GKSA does not have. The same applies to the “Special” Synod that Synod 2015 wished to establish. According to the cited decisions, “Special” Synods are accorded competences that are not consonant with the Church Order. *RCP Die Bult* is therefore of the opinion that Synod 2015 wished, inter alia –

(i) to establish “Special” Synods in an irregular manner; and

(ii) to assign authority/competences to such “Special” Synods in a manner inconsistent with Reformed church polity and church governance.

Due to the invalidity of the decisions concerned, the “Special” Synod that was envisaged for July 2015 cannot be established.

In this Petition of Protest, we show that the decisions of Synod 2015 on “Special” Synods are founded upon an error regarding the Scriptural revelation concerning the church, namely collegialism. The essence of collegialism lies therein that the final authority to decide is assigned to a body (called a “Special Synod”) in a manner that does not correspond with Scriptural revelation concerning the church and church government. In the exposition of the grounds of protest and their justification below, reference is made amongst other things to the collegialistic nature of the Synod decision concerned.

It is furthermore shown that Synod 2015 removed itself from the binding ambit of the CO. In some instances, the Synod decisions are directly in conflict with stipulations of the CO, in other cases an unauthorised expansion is implied, or the intention of the CO is defeated.

In that Synod 2015 appropriated powers that a Synod does not have, it acted beyond the norms upon which the churches agreed among themselves.

1.3 *Purpose*

The purpose of this Petition of Protest is to contribute positively, within the provisions of the CO, to the establishment of order regarding the expeditious consideration, orderly treatment and dispatch of the Petitions of Protest concerned.

The goal with this Petition of Protest is specifically not to cause an obstruction in the way of dealing with the Petitions of Protest that should have been dealt with by Synod 2015 or of any other matter. On the contrary, *RCP Die Bult* is convinced that the implementation of the decision of Synod 2015 against which this Petition is aimed, actually causes such an obstruction. We mention the following example: should a Petition of Protest against the decision of Synod 2015 succeed at Synod 2018, the matter may be referred to Deputies in terms of CO, art 49. In the ordinary course of events, those Deputies will then report on the relevant Petitions of Protest at Synod 2021. Petitions of Protest that served at Synod 2012, will thus only serve for resolution at Synod 2021.

Conversely, Synod 2015 could have handled the Petitions of Protest and the matter as a whole in an orderly and lawful manner (see for instance CO, arts 30, 49). The Deputies Unity and Diversity also did not consider all the possibilities that exist in terms of the CO to deal with the matter according to the existing order and the Synod also did not consider those possibilities. Subscription to this Petition by major assemblies should open the way to employ the possibilities provided for by the CO for the welfare of the GKSA as a whole.

1.4 *The way of the church*

With this petition, the RCP Die Bult is pursuing the ecclesiastical route provided for by CO, art 46, as it was approved for the handling of Petitions of Protest by Synod 1994 and Synod 2012 (Acta 2012:11.1, 22-24).

CLASSIS POTCHEFSTROOM has considered this Petition and decided as follows: (extract from the minutes of the meeting of Classis Potchefstroom March 5, 2015):

“Article 13 Petition of Protest

1. That the Classis considers the Petition of Protest and in essence identifies with it. That the RCP Bult is requested, in light of the discussion, to take into account some of the remarks that were made during the meeting in the Petition of Protest. Delegates that feel obliged should hand in written contributions in this regard at the RCP Bult before 9 March.

Decision: Approved.

2. That the Classis forward the amended Petition of Protest according to CO, art 48 to the various Classes in the denomination for consideration.

Decision: Approved.

3. That the Classis, on the grounds of its identification with the Petition of Protest, does not delegate persons to the “Special” Regional Synod.

Decision: The matter has been dealt with under Article 11 of this Agenda.

4. That the Classis requests the Corresponding Church Council of Regional Synod North West to call a Regional Synod as quickly as possible (if possible by the end of May) to handle the Petition of Protest.

Decision: Approved.

5. That the Classis requests that the Regional Synod North West to judge the Petition of Protest and to in essence identify with it and send it to the other Regional Synods for consideration in accordance with CO, art 48.

Decision: Approved.

6. That the Classis requests that the Regional Synods in the denomination take the necessary initiative for the speedy calling of an Extraordinary General Synod in accordance with CO, art 50 ahead of the time that the Special Synod would have taken place.

Decision: Approved.

7. That two agenda points must be placed on the Agenda of the Extraordinary General Synod, namely:

- (1) the handling of the Petition of Protest (CO, art 46) against the decision of Synod 2015 to call a “Special” Synod; and
- (2) the treatment of the relevant Petitions of Protest in terms of CO, art 30, that was on the Agenda at Synod 2012 and Synod 2015, but were not dealt with or finalised.

Decision: Approved.

The Moderamen is requested to fulfil the abovementioned decisions.”

REGIONAL SYNOD NORTHWEST dealt with the following request of the Reformed Church Potchefstroom Die Bult: **RCP Die Bult requests the Regional Synod North-West to adjudge this Petition of Protest, subscribe to it and furthermore comply with the request of Classis Potchefstroom to transmit the Petition in accordance with CO, art 48 to the other Regional Synods for their consideration.**

Regional Northwest Synod decided as follows: (excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of Regional Synod Northwest May 26, 2015)

Pt i. a and b: Noted.

Ground of Protest 1. Approved.

Ground of Protest 2. Approved.

Ground of Protest 3. Approved.

Ground of Protest 4. Approved.

Ground of Protest 5. Approved.

Ground of Protest 6. Approved.

Ground of Protest 7. Approved.

Ground of Protest 8. Approved.

Decision regarding the request of Reformed Church Potchefstroom Die Bult:

Pt b No 5: Decision: the meeting decided to subscribe to the Petition and send it through to the other Regional Synods for consideration and to the Deputies Correspondence of the General Synod.

Pt b No 6: To request the Calling Church of the General Synod to call the General Synod for an extraordinary meeting in January 2016.

Pt b. No 7. i Approved by the insertion of the word "this" to Petition.

Pt b No 7 ii. Approved.

Pt c. Request: Approved.

1.5 *Request to the Extraordinary General Synod*

The Reformed Church Potchefstroom Die Bult requests the Extraordinary General Synod to deal with the Petition and if it succeeds, to deal, in terms of CO, art 30, with the documents relating to women in special services, which at Synod 2012 and Synod in 2015 were on the Agenda but were not dealt with or finalized.

2. Grounds of protest and justification

2.1 *Ground of Protest 1*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 are in conflict with CO, art 29 that determines the manner in which the churches agreed to deal with matters of common concern.

2.1.1 Justification

2.1.1.1 Synod 2015 errs by envisaging a new church assembly (a "Special" Synod) that must function outside the stipulations of the CO. The envisaged "Special" Synods are convened as independent assemblies and constitute independently. Synod 2015 furthermore contemplated that the Regional Synods should delegate to the "Special" Synods in addition to the normal delegation to the General Synod (Minutes 21.1, 6.3.3.2). The ostensible intention with this decision was to establish a new kind of church assembly (SB 6.3.3.1, 6.3.3.3). The churches have however jointly agreed (CO, art 29) which church assemblies are maintained to resolve matters of common concern. CO, art 29 does not provide for "Special" Synods. Synod 2015 therefore did not take into consideration that the CO must be maintained as a binding norm for the life of the church and that it must be upheld as such.

2.1.1.2 The CO cannot by implication be amended, amplified, or reduced by means of a decision of a Synod that is in conflict with the CO. The intent is indeed that church decisions should be taken within the framework of the CO and be tested against the CO. Church decisions should therefore not be in conflict with the CO. Therefore the relevant Synod decision cannot serve as basis for a change of CO, art 29. The cited decisions can therefore not be considered to constitute a valid amendment of CO, art 29. The procedure for the establishment of the proposed “Special” Synods should in fact have had to be the other way around. Firstly, in accordance with church polity and church governance it should have been established why an amendment to CO, art 29 was required (CO, art 46). Furthermore, such an amendment could only be valid if the General Synod ordained it so (CO, art 86). Until that happens, the existing provisions of the CO continue in force (art 86). The cited decisions were therefore taken directly in conflict with CO, art 29, and are therefore *ultra vires*, (beyond the powers of the Synod).

2.2 *Ground of Protest 2*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 are in conflict with CO, arts 31 and 34, providing that church assemblies consider matters and if consensus is not reached on any matter, it is settled by voting, thoroughly recording that which is necessary.

2.2.1 Justification

2.2.1.1 Synod 2015 errs by assigning the power to “Special” Synods to keep meeting to “bring the matters to unanimity and finalise and solve in this way” (Minutes 21.1 point 6.3.3.1). The cited decisions of Synod 2015 establish a new standard according to which the churches resolve matters. Thus, “unanimity” becomes the norm, in addition to resolution by voting, according to which the churches deal with and finalise matters. Conversely, CO, art 31 only provides that the churches settle matters by vote when consensus can not be reached.

No reference is made in the reasoning of the Synod to art 31. Neither is any justification offered for the expansion of CO, art 31 (also see 2.1.1.2 above on amendments of the CO). The decision of Synod 2015 therefore expands CO, art 31 in an irregular manner.

2.2.1.2 Synod 2015 furthermore errs by not indicating how the term “unanimity” might be interpreted within the context of the decision. The term is foreign to presbyterian church governance. Terms that are used in this context in accordance with church government are “consensus”, “conform”, and decision making by vote. “Unanimity” is a vague term that may be understood in different ways. Unanimity can for instance have multiple meanings, including “sufficient” consensus. In this respect, the Report is vague and deficient. The uncertainty regarding the terminology employed in the decision of the Synod runs counter to the intention of CO, art 34, which provides that a scribe should be added to the chairman “to meticulously write down what is necessary to be recorded.” The purpose of this article is that there should be no lack of clarity or vagueness after a assembly regarding the decisions of the meeting.

2.2.1.3 Synod 2015 errs by disregarding the Reformed approach since the Reformation concerning the handling of discord in the churches. Since the Reformation, the custom has been that delegates who do not agree with a decision can conform, or refrain from conforming to a decision (CO, art 31). Synod 2015 failed to consider this critically important aspect of the Reformed church governance. Instead, the Synod decided on a “Special” Synod for the functioning of which the CO does not provide.

2.3 *Ground of Protest 3*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 are in conflict with CO, art 30, which provides that major assemblies resolve ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner.

2.3.1 Justification

Synod 2015 errs by applying a distinction between so-called fundamental and non-fundamental matters to the Agenda of a Synod (Minutes 21.1 point 6.3.3.1). Conversely CO, art 30 only provides that ecclesiastical matters should be resolved in an ecclesiastical manner. The CO therefore does not distinguish between fundamental and non-fundamental matters. Ecclesiastical matters that belong on major assemblies are per definition matters that cannot be finalised by a minor assembly. Put differently: the inability of a minor assembly to finalise a matter is solved by dealing with the matter at a major assembly. All matters tabled at a Synod are therefore “fundamental”. This does not necessarily mean that all the matters carry the same “weight”. The nature and degree of difficulty of matters may naturally differ, but that does not relieve the synod of the responsibility to complete its Agenda. Therefore, the decision of Synod 2015, according to which the relevant Petitions of Protest (as well as new Petitions of Protest submitted to Synod 2015) is repetitively postponed, entails an infringement of right of the protestors (see Minutes 21.1 point 7.3.2.1; Minutes 11.3 point 2.1). By now referring the Petitions of Protest, according to the decision of Synod 2015, to be dealt with by a new kind of assembly (a “Special” Synod), the Synod failed to fulfil its responsibility in accordance with the CO to deal with matters on its Agenda in an orderly manner.

2.4 *Ground of Protest 4*

Synod 2015 decided in favour of the establishment of “Special” Synods without fulfilling its task and function in accordance with CO, art 33.

2.4.1 Justification

Synod 2015 errs by taking a decision that was not tested against, nor conformed to the norms set by the credentials (CO, art 33). The credentials provide the normative framework within which delegates to a major assembly should perform their task. All delegates to a Synod are instructed to help to consider and decide all matters in accordance with the Word of God, the Formularies of Unity, and the Church Order. This must be understood against the background that major assemblies deal with church governance. Due to the nature of major assemblies, delegates are therefore bound to consider matters and to take decisions on them. The norms (or normative framework) to which all delegates (and thus Deputies) are bound are The Word, the Formularies, and the Church Order. The CO is one of these norms against which major assemblies test their decisions. Synod 2015 however failed to take the CO into consideration when it dealt with the recommendation concerning the establishment of “Special” Synods. Nowhere the Synod mentions the fact that there is no reasoning in the Report of the Deputies Unity and Diversity on which the Synod could found the decisions concerned (CO, art 33). The establishment of “Special” Synods particularly involve church polity implications. The Deputies therefore should have accounted for the relevant church polity aspects to justify the recommendations concerned in order to enable the Synod to take a valid decision. Due to this essential shortcoming in the Report, Synod 2015 did not fulfil its church orderly task and function in its consideration of the recommendations of the Deputies.

2.5 *Ground of Protest 5*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 are in conflict with CO, arts 31 and 46, whereby the possibility to revise decisions of church assemblies is established when it is found that a decision was taken in error.

2.5.1 Justification

2.5.1.1 Synod 2015 erred by effectively excluding the possibility of Appeal and protest against decisions of the proposed “Special” Synods (CO, arts 31, 46). The question is: where can a protest be registered against a decision of a “Special” Synod? According to the cited decisions, “Special” Synods deal only with matters referred to it. Therefore, it is not possible bring in a protest before a “Special” Synod against a decision taken by it. Protest can also not be submitted to a “normal” General Synod, since decisions of the “Special” Synod are not decisions of the General Synod. It is only the assembly that took a decision that can amend the decision concerned. A subsequent General Synod can thus amend the decision of a previous General Synod. As an independent configuration, only the subsequent “Special” Synod should therefore be empowered to amend the decisions of a previous “Special” Synod. The decisions of Synod 2015 however excluded such a possibility, since, according to those decisions, a “Special” Synod is established by a General Synod ad hoc “when fundamental matters with a serious dividing potential could not have been unanimously finalised/resolved by General Synods, to then bring the matters to unanimity through continued study and consideration, in order to finalise or resolve the matters” (Minutes 21.1, 6.3.3.1).

2.5.1.2 When such a “Special” Synod had therefore met and completed its ad hoc task imposed on it by the General Synod, it ceases to exist. A possible next “Special” Synod that may be established by a General Synod will then, according to the cited decisions, have to receive a new, unrelated task, whereby the consideration of protests against a previous “Special” Synod can not in accordance with the CO be included, since the previous “Special” Synod would, in terms of the instruction of the General Synod, already have “finalised and resolved the matters”.
The cited decisions contain no indication of how a “Special” Synod may be held accountable for its decisions or for the conduct of Deputies that it might appoint to explain its decisions (Minutes 21.1, 6.3.3.6).

2.6 *Ground of Protest 6*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 are in conflict with CO, arts 41, 47 and 50, which provides that the inability of a church assembly to resolve a matter must always be dealt with in the way of the church by more churches.

2.6.1 Justification

2.6.1.1 Synod 2015 errs by deciding that a “Special” Synod can finalise matters and notify the churches of the decisions that were reached. The decisions were “...to then through continuous study and consideration, bring the matters to unanimity and to finalise or resolve it in this way”, and “Special” Synods finalise referred matters as soon as unanimity has been reached on the matter/matters and notify the churches of this” (Minutes 21.1, 6.3.3.1; 6.3.3.5). From this it appears that the proposed “Special” Synod cannot be considered to be an assembly of churches (see CO, arts 41, 47, 50), because in such an assembly the churches do not reflect and decide jointly, but the “Special” Synod has the competence to find solutions to potentially divisive fundamental matters for the churches and to then inform them accordingly (Minutes 21.1, 6.3.3.5). Such a procedure will obviously be in conflict with CO, art 84 and lies at the heart of a collegialistic manner of church governance, namely that the “Special” Synod functions independently (next to the churches) and take decisions for the churches but also about the churches.

- 2.6.1.2 Synod 2015 errs by restricting the number of people that may be delegated to “Special” Synods (Minutes 11.3, 2.2.2). The CO specifically provides that matters that cannot be finalised by minor assemblies should be considered by major assemblies. Major assemblies constitute more churches, more people, more gifts, therefore more insight for the handling and finalisation of a matter (see CO, arts 30, 41, 47, 50). Major assemblies (such as a General Synod) can not refer matters in an orderly fashion to an assembly with less gifts to finalise matters. A Synodus contracta for instance meets with fewer delegates, with a reduced Agenda (usually one matter), and on matters that are not controversial. Should a Synodus contra not reach unanimity on any point the full Synod is convened to resolve the matter. In presbyterian church governance the progression towards obtaining decisive answers on matters of common interest is always from fewer churches, fewer people and fewer gifts to a larger assembly of churches, gifts and insights. The decisions of Synod 2015 therefore go against CO, arts 30, 41, 47, and 50, thereby bringing about collegialism to the detriment of presbyterian church governance.
- 2.6.1.3 A fundamental shortcoming of the cited decisions is that Synod 2015 apparently assumed that the CO (e.g. articles 49 and 50) does not provide a solution to the problem, while the supposed shortcomings of the CO are not identified or argued.

2.7 *Ground of Protest 7*

The cited decisions of Synod 2015 defeat the purpose of CO, arts 35, 37 and 45, which, in connection with CO, arts 17 and 84, prohibit the formation of human hierarchies in the church, and expressly counteract it.

2.7.1 Justification

- 2.7.1.1 Synod 2015 errs by deciding that a “Special” Synod constitutes under the guidance of the chairman and scribe of a previous General Synod. Conversely CO, art 35 provides that the office of the chairman is terminated when the meeting adjourns (CO, art 35). The intent of CO, art 35 is in line with CO, arts 17 and 84, namely that no hierarchy should be established in the church of the Lord. These provision expressly oppose hierarchy formation in the church. Therefore, the same person may also not be elected as chairman of two consecutive meetings of a specific major assembly (CO, art 37).
- 2.7.1.2 Synod 2015 erred by not taking into consideration that a Calling Church Council receive the task to convene churches for major assemblies. This task should not be left in the hands of individuals. Major assemblies are meetings of churches and a church therefore has the responsibility to manage the calling. Local churches are the only permanent church “institutions”, since major assemblies dissolve as soon as they complete their Agenda (CO, arts 30, 33). At meetings, the various assemblies assign the responsibility to a Church Council to call the next meeting. Therefore, the Calling Church Council delivers a Report on the execution of its assignment at the subsequent major assembly. The task of the Calling Church Council is “is to call and receive the next meeting” (CO, art 45). Since the offices of the chairman and scribe of the previous meeting were terminated, a major assembly cannot legally constitute under their leadership (CO, art 35). The responsibility of a Calling Church Council to receive a major assembly includes amongst others to send the calling to the assembly well in advance, to check the credentials of the delegates (CO, art 33), and to see to it that the constitution of the assembly occurs in an orderly fashion (CO, art 45). The decision of Synod 2015 is thus in conflict with the manner in which ecclesiastical meetings constitute in accordance with the CO.

2.8 *Ground of Protest 8*

Synod 2015 decides in favour of the envisaged “Special” Synods without taking into consideration that the matter (“Special” Synods) came to the Agenda of Synod 2015 in an irregular manner in terms of CO, arts 30, (33) and 49, and by the way of the Report of the Deputies Unity in Diversity.

2.8.1 Justification

2.8.1.1 Synod 2015 errs by dealing with the agenda point on “Special” Synods (Agenda 21.1, 6.3.3-6.3.3.6) without taking in consideration that the point was not placed on the Agenda of the Synod by the local churches. CO, arts 30 and 33 provide for the orderly manner in which the Agenda of a major assembly is composed. Local churches are fully competent to finalise matters, except in instances where more churches should consider specific matters (CO, art 30). Matters for the Agenda of a major assembly can thus only reach the Agenda of a Synod from the local churches via the other major assemblies. The idea that the General Synod could establish “Special” Synods did not serve as an agenda point on the Agenda of Synod 2012 and no instruction of such a nature was given to the Deputies.

2.8.1.2 Synod 2015 errs by dealing with a point (in a Deputy report) without the Deputies having received an assignment (of whatever nature) concerning it (Agenda 21.1, 6.3.3-6.3.3.6). Deputies are appointed to “implement the resolutions of the meeting according to explicit instructions” (CO, art 49). The assignment of Synod 2012 to the Deputies Unity and Diversity however does not in any way mention that the Deputies should examine the possibility of calling “Special” Synods into existence, neither for the purposes of determining the reasons for the continued existence of differences among churches, nor the assignment to verify the petitions of protest concerned, or the assignment to give advice on matters concerning unity and diversity (see Minutes 21.1, O. 1. 3.1-3.3.5; Acta 2012, 353; F3.1-3.3). The Deputies therefore brought the point of “Special” Synods under consideration beyond their well-defined mandate (Agenda 21.1, 6.3.3-6.3.3.6). The decision of Synod 2015 on “Special” Synods should therefore not be maintained or implemented as a “lawful” decision in terms of CO, arts 30 and 49. Synod 2015 failed to correct the matter by dismissing the relevant agenda point and not dealing with it.

Thereby the Synod detached itself from its duly determined Agenda (CO, arts 30, 33) and considered not only matters that were placed on the Agenda by the churches, but assumed the authority to decide itself which matters should be on the Agenda. The Synod thereby ceased to function as a major assembly with the mandate to deal with its Agenda in an orderly fashion (CO, arts 30,31,33). On the contrary, the Synod thereby abandons its character as a major assembly of churches by deciding for itself which matters are to be on its Agenda. In contrast, the Synod decided not to deal with and finalise matters that did reach its Agenda in an orderly fashion (CO, arts 30, 31, 33, 46), but to refer them to a “Special” Synod. The implication of this conduct is that the General Synod elevated itself to an institution next to the churches. This clearly indicates an inclination towards collegialism, which is in conflict with the GKSA’s presbyterial approach to church governance and the authority of Scripture. The relevant decisions of the Synod are also in conflict with every other provision of the Church Order, since the CO does not allow for the grafting of collegialism on any aspect of presbyterial governance.

2.8.1.3 The parallel handling of the Report of the Deputies Unity and Diversity and the point of description of Regional Synod Pretoria on “Special” Synods, which was in itself an extraordinary and confusing procedure, does not alter the fact that the relevant decisions were taken irregularly.

Even if the decisions that were taken based on the Deputy report (Minutes 21.1) were taken in an orderly fashion, those that were taken following the Point of Description (Minutes 11.3) do not fully overlap. The irregular decision taken based on the Deputy report is therefore not sufficiently “corrected” or captured by decisions that may have been taken validly based on the Point of Description. Besides, a matter that apparently came to the Agenda of the Synod in an orderly manner does not justify the consideration of the same matter in another Report that clearly came on the Agenda of the Synod in an irregular fashion. The receptivity of various agenda points is adjudged independently from each other and accordingly dismissed or dealt with (see for example CO, arts 30, 46 and 49). This did not happen. In light of the other grounds of protest that are set out here, not one of the minuted decisions can be justified in any event, since the whole concept of “Special” Synods is irreconcilable with the Church Order.

3. Conclusion

We request the Regional Synod North-West to comply with our formal request (1.5 above) on the grounds set out in this Petition of Protest.

- C. Order-proposal:** Rev PW Kurpershoek makes the following Order-proposal: “Without delivering judgement on the Gravamina, the Extraordinary General Synod lets go of the idea of having a Special Synod in order to finalise the matters regarding women in office (Synods 2012, 2015) and continues in handling those matters.

Motivation

1. The decision of Synod 2015 regarding Special Synod was taken to advance the unity in the church in matters that have strong potential to divide and that has strong differences associated.
2. Decisions regarding the Special Synod rather had an immediate effect of tension as is evident in the fact that there are already Gravamina that led to this Extraordinary General Synod.
3. The assessment of the Gravamina must be dealt with in a church orderly fashion that is responsible, that requires in turn a decently thought through decision making process which will take a lot of time and will influence the way and finalising of the unfinished matters.

- D. Decision:** Order-proposal rejected.

E. Proposal of Rev C Aucamp

- 1 The Petition of Protest is upheld in general terms based upon 1.3 (of the Petition of Protest). The purpose of effective and unanimous finalisation of the matter for which the Special Synod were called up, did not come to fruition. In the light thereof the Synod decides to not go into each of the grounds for objection.

Motivation

- 2.1 The Petition of Protest is handled by tabling it as a whole, where after it was elucidated and discussed.
- 2.2 It is not sensible to further dissect a matter which had already failed in practice.

F. Decision Approved.

11.2 REGIONAL SYNOD FREE STATE-KWAZULU-NATAL: REQUEST FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL SYNOD (Artt 19, 28)

- A. Dr JA Erasmus tables the Request.
- B. **Decision:** Opportunity is given for discussion.

C. REQUEST

Classis Potchefstroom issued correspondence on 11 March 2015 in which they inform other Classes of a Petition of Protest that passed at Classis Potchefstroom and which objects to the decision of the General Synod in 2015 to call a Special Synod.

Classis KZN North took that correspondence with the accompanying Petition of Protest for their own account and sent them to the Regional Synod OFS-KZN. Classis Northern Free State also tabled the correspondence, and although Classis Northern Free State only took note of the correspondence, they decide to follow up on the request in the Petition of Protest, namely to ask the Regional Synod to request an Extraordinary General Synodⁱ.

Regional Synod OFS-KZN met on 14 April 2015 and made the following decision:

9. Description Point of Classis KZN-North regarding the Point of Protest from Classis Potchefstroom
Classis KZN North send through the Point of Protest as formulated by Classis Potchefstroom (Unpublished Addendum H) for the attention of the Regional Synod – (Unpublished Addendum I).

Decision

- 1. The Regional Synod took note of the Petition of Protest.
- 2. The Regional Synod agreed with the request in point 1.4 in the writing of Classis Potchefstroom that an Extraordinary General Synod according to Church Order, art 50 takes place.

In light of this decision, the request of the Regional Synod OFS-KZN is to call an Extraordinary General Synod to pay attention to the issues that were mentioned in the Petition of Protest.

It is also necessary to state that the purpose of our Regional Synod on 14 April 2015 was to appoint delegates to the Special Synod which we were called to. Regional Synod OFS-KZN indeed appointed a delegation, but at the same time took the decision referred to above. One of the Classes in our Regional Synod, Classis South Free State, did not respond to the call to our Special Regional Synod, as they decided not to participate in a process to delegate to the Special Synod. In their motivation to not participate they also stated that they believe that the decision of the General Synod to call a Special Synod is “not according to church polity” (sic).
Decision: Noted.

ⁱ See also last paragraph. Classis Free State South did not partake in the Regional Synod, but their decision not to partake was also clearly motivated by the conviction that an Extraordinary General Synod should take place.

11.3 PETITION OF PROTEST REGIONAL SYNOD RANDVAAL AGAINST DECISIONS OF SYNOD 2015 REGARDING SPECIAL SYNODS (Artt 18, 29, 32, 53)

- A. Rev HJ Stoltz tables the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** Opportunity is given for discussion.
- C. **Decision:** The following Commission is proposed to formulate a proposal: Rev C Aucamp, dr DG Breed and AJ Kruger.
- D. Dr AJ Kruger reports on behalf of the Commission.
- E. **Report of the Commission to advise on the decision regarding Petition of Protest of Regional Synod Randvaal regarding "Special Synods"**

The Extraordinary General Synod 2016 decides that, in the light of the decision regarding the Petition of Protest of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult taken during this Synod, the grievance of Regional Synod Randvaal is upheld as well.

Motivation

1. The Regional Synod Randvaal upheld the case of Classis Westrand with the explicit purpose that an Extraordinary General Synod (EGS) is called up in order to handle and finalise the cases regarding women in the church offices, which was orderly tabled by Synod 2012 and 2015 (11.3, 1.3.2.2).
2. It is clear that the decision of the Extraordinary General Synod 2016, to uphold the petition of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult, leads to the mentioned Petitions of Protest to now be tabled.

- F. Discussion is held.
- G. Dr GJ Meijer proposes an amendment: That the grounds for objection of the Petitions of Protest of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and Regional Synod Randvaal be referred to Deputies in order to report at General Synod 2018.

Motivation

1. The Synod does not make any verdict on the grounds of objection in the Petition of Protest, but only on the purpose of the Petition of Protest.
2. There is no haste in making the decision regarding Special Synods during this meeting.

H. **Decision:**

1. Amendment approved.
2. Report approved as amended.

I. **Decision: Approved.**

- J. The following Deputies are proposed: Rev CJ van Vuuren (C), rev SD Snyman, LP Baloyi, ASA de Bruyn, dr RM van der Merwe, dr GJ Meijer, dr JH Howell. Advisor: Prof J Smit.

K. **Decision: Approved.**

L. **PETITION OF PROTEST**

1. **Introduction: Petition of Protest**

- 1.1 Regional Synod Randvaal met on 19 May 2015. A Petition of Protest from Classis West Rand against decisions of the General Synod in 2015 on Special Synod was evaluated during the meeting.
- 1.2 After careful consideration the Regional Synod decided to maintain the Petition of Protest.

Motivation

- 1.2.1 The motivation for the grounds of objection and the recommendation of the Legal Deputies are accepted by the Regional Synod.
- 1.2.2 The decisions about Special Synods – as indicated in the Petition of Protest – are contrary to the Church Order and principles of Presbyterian church governance.

- 1.3 The Regional Synod further decided to
 - 1.3.1 communicate the Petition of Protest and the decision thereon in the light of CO, art 48 to the other Regional Synods; and
 - 1.3.2 in view of the objections and the necessity thereof, call an Extraordinary General Synod (CO, art 50) with other Regional Synods as soon as possible, with the aim to
 - 1.3.2.1 evaluate the objections to the decisions of the General Synod in 2015;
 - 1.3.2.2 handle and finalise the Petitions of Protest which were orderly tabled by the General Synod of 2012 and 2015.

2. Decisions protested against

The decisions of the General Synod 2015 which are protested against (CO, arts 31 and 46), are the decisions about Special Synods:

6.3.3 Recommendations (Acta 2015:319-320, 6.3.3)

6.3.3.1 *That Special Synods can be held according to a General Synod when fundamental matters with a serious dividing potential could not have been unanimously finalised/resolved by General Synods, to then bring the matters to unanimity through continued study and consideration, in order to finalise or resolve the matters.*

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.2 *Regional Synods appoint delegates for this possible Synods before each General Synod, namely four ministers and four elders as well as the necessary secundi.*

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

6.3.3.3 *A Special Synod constitutes under the leadership of the Chairman and Scribe of the previous General Synod for the first time, where after the meeting appoint an own Moderamen to deal with the referred matters from the General Synod.*

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.4 *Special Synods meet as often and as long as is necessary for the completion of their assignment and in a fitting way provide the opportunity to members, congregations and churches with whom we have ecumenical unity or bonds, to make presentations regarding matters on the table.*

Decision: Approved (amendment has been made – Deputies Acts).

6.3.3.5 *Special Synods complete referred matters as soon as unanimity on the matter/matters have been reached and notify the churches.*

Decision: Approved.

6.3.3.6 *The Special Synods appoint Deputies to, where churches are especially affected by the decisions of the Special Synods, explain the decisions if requested.*

Decision: Approved.

2. Recommendation (Acta 2015:323-324, 2)

2.1 *All the relevant written objections are about the woman in the special service. In the light thereof that the Synod decided that the matter of the woman in the special service is a substantial matter, it is recommended that all the objections be referred to the Special Synod.*

Decision: Approved (amendments already added – Deputies Acta).

2.2 *The following are recommended with regard to the calling of the Special Synod:*

2.2.1 *That the respective Regional Synods will perform the necessary delegation to Special Synod 2015 according to own arrangements.*

Decision: Approved (amendments already added – Deputies Acta).

2.2.2 *That apart from the primus delegates that also 8 secundus delegates be nominated. (Delegates should be made aware of the possible long time span of the Special Synod.)*

Decision: Approved.

2.2.3 That the Reformed Church Potchefstroom be nominated as called and correspondent Church Council of the Special Synod.

Decision: Approved (amendments already added – Deputies Acta).

3. Basis of protest 1

The matter of Special Synods comes to the table of the General Synod 2015 for consideration in an unordered way, with a violation of CO, arts 30, 33 and 49.

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 finalised in minor assemblies or that concern all the churches in question collectively.

Article 33

Delegates to major assemblies shall bring along their credentials and instructions, signed by the people who are sending them...

Article 49

Each major assembly shall appoint deputies to implement the resolutions of the meeting according to explicit instructions...

3.1 Motivation : Basis of protest 1

- 3.1.1 Articles 30 and 33 CO direct that matters are brought to the table of major assemblies (assemblies of several churches) by churches.
- 3.1.2 The matter of Special Synods are brought to the table of the General Synod 2015 not by churches but by the Deputies Unity in Diversity (Agenda 2015:153, 6.3.3).
- 3.1.3 Article 49 CO directs that major assemblies can appoint Deputies to implement explicit instructions in a matter about which Synod has already decided. The matter of Special Synods was not part of the instruction (Acta 2012:353, F3) to the Deputies Unity in Diversity.
- 3.1.4 Special Synods is a new matter that is brought on the table of the General Synod 2015 by the Deputies.
- 3.1.5 "Deputies of major assemblies (art 49) normally sin the most against article 33. *Many Deputies never finish their work and always attempt to bring new matters to the table...*" (Spoelstra 1989:210, 3).

3.2 Finding

- 3.2.1 The unordered way in which Special Synods become part of the Agenda of the General Synod 2015 is in conflict with the provisions of arts 30, 33 and 49 of the Church Order.
- 3.2.2 When a Synod deals with a matter which is brought to its table not by the churches (CO, arts 30 and 33) but by Deputies (CO, art 49), takes a decision and binds the churches, it constitutes collegialism. The Synod as meeting takes a decision over churches. The churches in the GKSA agreed, with the adoption the Church Order, to a Presbyterian church government and not to collegial church government. The collegialist way in which Synod 2015 deals with and decide on Special Synods is in conflict with the Presbyterian way of church government which the churches agreed to.

4. Basis of protest 2

The decision of the General Synod 2015 *"that the various Regional Synods will effect the necessary delegation to the Special Synod July 2015 according to own arrangements"* (Acta 2015:323, 2.2.1), violates CO, arts 31 and 46.

Article 31

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... 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.

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 finalised were not tabled yet again unless it be considered necessary to review such matters.

4.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 2*

4.1.1 The General Synod 2015 decides that a Special Synod will meet in July 2015.

4.1.2 The decision is taken in the light of a Commission Report. The recommendations of the Commission, that a Special Synod will meet in January 2016, are not approved.

4.1.3 The decision of the General Synod 2015 that a Special Synod will meet in July 2015 is in conflict with a previous decision about Special Synods. The previous decision of the General Synod 2015 is as follows:

“Regional Synods name delegates for these possible Synods before each General Synod, namely four ministers and four elders as well as the required secondi” (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.2).

4.1.4 The decision (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.2) is fixed and binding (CO, arts 31 and 46).

4.1.5 In terms of the decision a Special Synod could only realise after the General Synod of 2018. Regional Synods that can, in the light of the decision, name delegates before a General Synod, is the Regional Synods of 2017. The lapse of time would have provided the opportunity to orderly bring to the table of the General Synod of 2018 any protest against the decision about Special Synods.

4.1.6 To modify ecclesiastical decisions and also the decision (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.2) in an orderly way, there must be acted in accordance with the provisions of CO, art 31 and/or art 46. The necessity for a decision to be modified must be submitted for judging and a decision.

4.2 *Finding*

4.2.1 The decision of the General Synod 2015 that a Special Synod meet in July 2015 violates the provisions of CO, arts 31 and 46.

4.2.2 The decision is taken without the decision already taken (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.2) having been modified in an orderly way according to the provisions of the Church Order (arts 31 and 46).

5. **Basis of protest 3**

The decision of the General Synod 2015 that General Synods be held (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.1), is in conflict with CO, arts 29, 46 and 86.

Article 29

There are the following kinds of church assemblies: the Church Council, Classis, Regional Synod, and General Synod.

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 finalised were not tabled yet again unless it be considered necessary to review such matters.

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.

5.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 3*

- 5.1.1 The churches agreed in CO, art 29 on the major assemblies that are necessary for the well-being of the church.
- 5.1.2 Article 46 CO provides that decisions can be modified if the need for such modification can be proved.
- 5.1.3 Article 86 CO stipulates that the articles of the Church Order can be modified but that the General Synod takes that decision.
- 5.1.4 The General Synod 2015 decides:
"That Special Synods be held in accordance with a decision of a General Synod when fundamental matters with a serious potential for division cannot be concluded/resolved unanimously by the General Synods, in order to bring the matters to unanimity and conclusion or resolution through continuing study and consideration." (6.3.3.1)
- 5.1.5 The Special Synod is not a continuation of the General Synod, but another 'new' Synod.
- 5.1.6 The major assemblies provided for by CO, art 29 can be expanded in an orderly way in the light of CO, arts 41, 45, 47 and 50.
- 5.1.7 The decision about Special Synods implies an expansion and thus a modification of CO, art 29. This modification is irreconcilable with CO, arts 41, 45, 47 and 50.
- 5.1.8 The need (CO, art 46) for the modification of CO, art 29 has not been proven and the General Synod (CO, art 86) has not thus decided.

5.2 *Finding*

The decision of the General Synod 2015 that Special Synods be held is in conflict with CO, arts 29, 46 and 86.

6. Basis of protest 4

The decision of the General Synod 2015 that Special Synods be held (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.1), is in conflict with CO, arts 31 and 46.

Article 31

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. 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.

Article 46

Articles 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 finalised were not tabled yet again unless it be considered necessary to review such matters.

6.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 4*

- 6.1.1 A fundamental principle in the Presbyterian church government is that ecclesiastical decisions can be modified.
- 6.1.2 Article 31 CO stipulates that decisions that violate justice can, with the necessary proof, be set aside by way of appeal.
- 6.1.3 Article 46 CO stipulates that decisions, where the need has been proved by a petition of protest, can be modified.
- 6.1.4 The stipulations of CO, arts 31 and 46 cannot be applied to decisions of Special Synods:
 - 6.1.4.1 Where, in the light of CO, art 31, can decisions of Special Synods be appealed?
 - 6.1.4.2 The address of a Petition of Protest is the assembly that has taken the decision. How can decisions of a Special Synod be protested in the light of CO, art 46? Will the Special Synod continue to meet, or meet again, in order for possible protests about its decisions – after unanimity has been reached – to be finalised?

6.2 *Finding*

Fundamental principles of the Presbyterian church government, as embodied in CO, arts 31 and 46, are violated by the decision about Special Synods.

7. **Basis of protest 5**

The General Synod 2015 decides that “*Special Synods finalise referred matters as soon as unanimity about a matter/matters is reached and informs the churches accordingly*” (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.5), is in conflict with CO, arts 30 and 31.

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 finalised in minor assemblies or that concern all the churches in question collectively.

Article 31

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... 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.

7.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 5*

7.1.1 Article 30 CO stipulates that ecclesiastical matters are finalised in an ecclesiastical manner, and CO, art 31 arranges that the manner in which matters are finalised is decisions by a majority of votes.

7.1.2 The General Synod 2015 decides that Special Synods finalise matters unanimously.

7.1.3 The decision implies an expansion and modification of CO, art 31 which stipulates that ecclesiastical matters are resolved by majority vote.

7.1.4 The need for the modification (CO, arts 46 and 86) has not been submitted for consideration and resolution with the required proof.

7.1.5 A majority vote (CO, art 31) is the manner in which churches finalise ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner (CO, art 30). The minority rests/conforms with the decision and thus unanimity is reached. Those who cannot conform must follow the ecclesiastical way (CO, arts 31 and 46) and indicate why the decision cannot be accepted as fixed and binding.

7.1.6 The decision that Special Synods finalise matters once unanimity is reached, is basically an unfeasible decision. What unanimity is, is not indicated by the decision. Is it 80% or 100%? If unanimity is not reached, the matter cannot be finalised and the Synod can also not adjourn, because the synod meets as long as is needed to finalise matters (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.4).

7.2 *Finding*

The decision of the General Synod that Special Synods finalise matters as soon as unanimity is reached and not by way of majority vote, is in conflict with CO, arts 30 and 31.

8. **Basis of protest 6**

The decision of the General Synod 2015 that “*A Special Synod constitutes the first time under the leadership of the Chairperson and Scribe of the previous General Synod, after which the meeting chooses an own Moderamen for the handling of matters referred from the General Synod*” (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.3), is in conflict with CO, arts 34 and 35.

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.

8.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 6*

- 8.1.1 Articles 34 and 35 provide that a scribe and chairperson are necessary at ecclesiastical assemblies to finalise matters in an orderly manner (CO, art 30). The offices cease when the assembly is concluded.
- 8.1.2 The General Synod 2015 decides that Special Synods constitute for the first time under the leadership of the chairperson and scribe of the previous General Synod.
- 8.1.3 The offices of the chairperson and scribe have not ceased with the conclusion of the General Synod 2015, but are basically continued to lead at the constituting of a Special Synod.
- 8.1.4 In a later decision the General Synod 2015 requests the Reformed Church Potchefstroom to act, in cooperation with the Administrative Bureau, as Calling and Corresponding Church Council for the Special Synod (Acta 2015:324, 2.2.3).
- 8.1.5 The decision that was taken (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.3) was not modified in an orderly manner (CO, arts 31 and 46). How the decisions are to be reconciled, is not clear.

8.2 *Finding*

The decision that the scribe and chairperson of the previous General Synod leads at the constitution of a General Synod is in conflict with the provisions of CO, arts 34 and 35.

9. Basis of protest 7

The decision of the General Synod 2015 that Special Synods be held (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.1), is in conflict with CO, art 36.

Article 36

A Classis has the same authority over a Church Council as a Regional Synod has over a Classis, or as a National Synod has over a Regional Synod, or as a General Synod has over a National Synod.

9.1 *Motivation : Basis of protest 7*

- 9.1.1 Article 36 CO arranges the relationship between the ecclesiastical assemblies. All ecclesiastical assemblies minister the same authority – that of Christ. These provisions recognise the autonomy of the local church and the need that churches are to meet.
- 9.1.2 The relationship of Special Synods, as decided by the General Synod 2015, with other ecclesiastical assemblies cannot be brought under the ambit of CO, art 36.
- 9.1.3 The decision of Synod 2015 that Special Synods inform churches about their decisions and that Deputies be appointed to elucidate their decisions in churches (Acta 2015:319, 6.3.3.5 and 6.3.3.6) cannot be reconciled with the stipulations of CO, art 36.
- 9.1.4 That churches be informed about decisions indicate that churches did not cooperate in the decisions, but that it was taken by a Special Synod. Basically this amounts to collegialism. The Special Synod decides and makes its decisions known to the churches.

9.2 *Finding*

The decision of the General Synod 2015 to hold Special Synods is in conflict with the stipulations of CO, art 36.

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO ADVISE ON THE DECISION REGARDING PETITION OF PROTEST OF REGIONAL SYNOD RANDVAAL REGARDING “SPECIAL SYNODS”

The Extraordinary General Synod 2016 decides that, in the light of the decision regarding the Petition of Protest of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult taken during this Synod, the grievance of Regional Synod Randvaal is upheld as well.

Motivation

1. The Regional Synod Randvaal upheld the case of Classis Westrand with the explicit purpose that an Extraordinary General Synod (EGS) is called up in order to handle and finalise the cases regarding women in the church offices, which was orderly tabled by Synod 2012 and 2015 (11.3, 1.3.2.2).
2. It is clear that the decision of the Extraordinary General Synod 2016, to uphold the petition of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult, leads to the mentioned Petitions of Protest to now be tabled.

F. Discussion is held.

G. Dr GJ Meijer proposes an amendment: That the grounds for objection of the Petitions of Protest of RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and Regional Synod Randvaal be referred to Deputies in order to report at General Synod 2018.

Motivation

1. The Synod does not make any verdict on the grounds of objection in the Petition of Protest, but only on the purpose of the Petition of Protest.
2. There is no haste in making the decision regarding Special Synods during this meeting.

H. **Decision:**

1. Amendment approved.
- 2 Report approved as amended.

I. **Decision: Approved.**

J. The following Deputies are proposed: Rev CJ van Vuuren (C), rev SD Snyman, LP Baloyi, ASA de Bruyn, dr RM van der Merwe, dr GJ Meijer, dr JH Howell. Advisor: Prof J Smit.

K. **Decision: Approved.**

12. REPORT APPEAL DEPUTIES (Art 14)

- A. Rev CA Jansen tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

C. REPORT

1. Matters that the Synod take note of

- 1.1 The Deputies Programming received notice of an Appeal and the Appeal and documentation were referred to the Deputies for Appeals to advise the Synod concerning this matter.
- 1.2 The Appeal calls for the Extraordinary General Synod (EGS) for judgement.
- 1.3 The Appeal Deputies had a meeting on Monday 11 January 2016 and took note of the Appel.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.3 noted.

2. Matters that the Synod decide on

Recommendation

- 2.1 The Appeal is note resceptable for this Synod.

Motivation

- 2.1.1 This matter is not relevant for the Agenda of the EGS that has the sole purpose of reviewing Gravamina concerning Special Synods and the Gravamina from Synod 2012 and 2015 concerning women in office.
- 2.1.2 The Appeal must follow procedure decided at General Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:6-10).

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.1.2 approved.

**21.3 PETITION OF PROTEST OF THE REFORMED CHURCH BLOEMFONTEIN SOUTH AGAINST A DECISION OF SYNOD 2009 THAT WOMEN MAY NOT SERVE IN THE PARTICULAR SERVICE OF ELDER OR MINISTER (2012: Artt 17, 22, 258)
(2016: Artt 37, 63, 69, 81)**

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
 - B. Rev HPM van Rhyn presents the following proposal to the meeting:
 - 1. To speed up the meeting each Thematic Commission goes through all of the grounds for objection to see which grounds for objection belong with them.
 - 2. The Overhead Commission goes through all of the grounds for objection to see if all of the categories have been covered and if there are more themes for which no Commission has been appointed.
- Decision: Approved.**
- C. Rev CCA Vrey reports on behalf of the Commission Grounds for Gravamen 1 Cor 14.
 - D. Rev BCG Fourie reports on behalf of Commission Revelational and Historical.
 - E. Dr DG Breed reports on behalf of Commission Grounds of Gravamen 1 Tim 2.

2012

- A. Dr SJ van der Walt tables the petition of protest.
- B. **Decision:** The petition of protest is referred to Commission for Petitions of Protest 3.
- C. **Order motion:** Dr WC Opperman tables the order motion.
- D. **Decision:** Order motion approved with recommendations.

E. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Decision against which protest is being made

“Decision: The meeting decides according to approved recommendation, pt 4.2, that women may not serve in the particular service of elder or minister” (Acta 2009:667, 4).

2. The way of church consultation

The Church Council of Bloemfontein South has after a time of growth, study, deliberation and determination as well as in the light of the cut-off time for Agenda pieces for the Synod of 2012, not had the time to put this Petition of Protest to a Classis or Regional Synod for consultation. It is therefore presented to the General Synod for adjudication.

3. Grounds for objection 1

- 3.1 The decision and preceding reasoning do not integrate the unchangeable faithfulness of God, who is the same yesterday and today and in eternity (Heb 13:8) because God, according to the Report, did use the woman in the Old Testament Church as ruler and as proclaimer of His Word, but in the New Testament God contradicts himself by not allowing it.

3.2 Motivation

- 3.2.1 In the Old Testament time God called Deborah as judge, and as judge she had to make known God’s Word and to act as judge (Judges 5). God called Hulda as prophet and she had to use the messenger formula , namely “This is the word of the Lord” (2 Kings 22:14-16).
- 3.2.2 What is the connection between the Old Testament services / positions of king and prophet and the particular service of elder and minister? In the Report of the Synod of 2009 it is explained as follows (Acta 2009:591, 592) : The source of all services in the church (OT and NT) lies in Christ who, at his baptism by the Holy Spirit, was anointed as the actual Office Bearer in the church.

He is namely our highest Prophet and Minister, our only High Priest and our eternal King (HK, Sun 12). Christ however makes use of the people in his service in the execution of His service. In the OT he used the particular services of prophet, priest and king: These services were totally fulfilled in and through Him. He gives new and particular services that have both continuous and discontinuous lines with the OT. These continuous and discontinuous lines are seen in as well as the three categories of preaching, providing assistance and governance as in the tripartite services of the NT of which is concerned with teaching, governance and charity .

- 3.2.3 The emphasis should not only be placed on the discontinuous line, but also on the continuous line. There is thus as specific correlation between the OT services and the particular service of elder and minister. With reference to article 25 of the NGB which confesses the ceremonial law in Christ, it can be stated, that the OT services were fulfilled in and through Christ, but the truth and content thereof exist for us in Christ.
- 3.2.4 We also confess the unity of the Bible (NGB, art 3-5) and that the OT and NT are authoritative. In the Report (Synod 2009) there is also a reference that the OT and NT together form the Word of God and that a truth is not revealed in the NT other than in the OT (p606).
- 3.2.5 It certainly is true that Deborah and Hulda can be pointed out as exceptions in the light of the socially-repressed position in the OT times, then these exceptions are at the same time also important and remarkable. Of importance is the Biblical given that in the OT times with its more legalistic character, God willed it to use woman in the service of government and in the service of the Word.
- 3.2.6 The unchangeability of God's faithfulness and will is described in detail in our confession (see DL, chapters 1 and 5).
- 3.2.7 In the Report (Synod 2009:605 and 608) the revelatory historical lines are explained as a hermeneutic point of departure. Every Bible part , as part of the bigger whole of the written Word Revelation, must be read within the revelatory historical coherence of Scripture. Within this revelatory historical lines the exegete must combine into a description of the whole, the different Scripture parts that has a correlation with the specific scripture part / question.
- 3.2.8 In the exegetic reasoning of 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 (see Acta 2009:633, 10.8.4, and 10.9.4 p639 and further) on which the decision rests, there is no proof that the particular Scriptural parts are combined into a description of the whole, with the revelatory historical lines. In the Report there is however from p653 a summary of exegetic and hermeneutic conclusions (10.13) and a revelatory historical summary on p658 and on, but is only a compilation of already mentioned conclusions and not an integration and synthesis of revelatory historical lines into a description of the whole.

4. Grounds of objection 2

- 4.1 The decision and preceding reasoning do not integrate the free sovereign authority of God who can call and use any person in His church, without any limitation.
- 4.2 *Motivation*
 - 4.2.1 In the Report (Synod 2009) there is not a single explicit reference to the free sovereign authority of God, except one reference in the reasoning column of the point of view, that was not accepted by the Synod (see p659). There is however a description earlier in the Report of the authoritative position of Christ as Head of the Church through which all acts in the church are limited. A lack of reflection on the implications of the free sovereign authority of God, as the One who calls and uses people, is a gap in the Report. Most attention is paid to who can serve in the particular positions and not to God who calls.
 - 4.2.2 The free sovereign authority of God has the meaning of the Almighty and Almighty God's unlimited authority. Nowhere in the Bible is a limit placed on God's authority.

The rhyming of Psalm 66:1 in Afrikaans testifies to this where we sing that there are no boundaries for the authority of God. Throughout Scripture God reveals Himself in his free sovereign authority and omnipotence for whom all things are possible (Job 42:2; Psalms 93-99; Is:46:10; Matt 3:9; 19:21).

- 4.2.3 The qualifying of the free authority as free sovereign authority means that God's power and authority is of the highest. Although God operates through natural laws and decrees, he is never subordinated to it or caught in it. He can ever change natural laws to let the sun stand still or to walk on water (see Job:4-10) and he will never decree anything that will limit his power and authority.
- 4.2.4 The decision of the Synod against which objection is made, and that had to choose between two motivated interpretations of Scripture, sets down sexuality as limit to God's free authority and power. And that while God in his Word also teaches that He creates everyone in his church into a new humanity where there are no walls of separation. The court wall separating man and woman has been demolished (Eph 2:14 and further) and that He does not make a choice between nationhood, status or sexuality, but that he embraces everyone in his redemptive grace (Gal 3:28).

5. Grounds for objection 3

- 5.1 The decision rests on Scriptural exegesis with contradictory elements, which does not contain clear grounding in scripture and which does not take into proper and consistent account the rules of Scripture exegesis.

5.2 Motivation

- 5.2.1 In the Report (Synod 2009) it is stated that the interpretation of Scripture should be exegetical convincing (p604). Already with the declaration of the measure of "exegetically convincing" there is something contradictory underlying it. Because the reasoning of the Report says that convincing exegesis can mean that a part of scripture can be understood totally different , as it is later said that the exegesis led to "two opposing conclusions" and to "two diverging conclusions" (p611). Exegetically convincing surely means that the logical grounding, clarity an authority of the Word lead the scriptural interpreter to this conclusion. Within the one conclusion there may be accents of difference.
- 5.2.2 As point of departure the Report presents the same point of departure of Synod 1988, namely: "There is no text in the Bible in which it is specifically stated whether woman can or cannot serve in the particular offices... Whoever wants to formulate a Biblically based viewpoint about these matters and about the general place of the woman in the church, is left to make conclusions from other scriptural pronouncements." (see p611) Please note that it is mentioned that use can be made of other Scriptural pronouncements and not of Scriptural parts. This point of departure has to be kept in mind consistently in the judging of these grounds of objection. There is no Scriptural part that specifically states that sexuality plays a role when God calls someone to a specific position.
- 5.2.3 In the Report under consideration 6 Scriptural parts are discussed which could possibly provide a conclusion as to whether a woman can serve in the particular office of minister and elder or not. In 4 of the 6 it is concluded that that section does not talk about whether a woman may serve or not (see Eph 5:21-33, p.618; 1 Peter 3:1-7, p621; Gal 3:26-29, p625; 1 Cor 11:2-16, p633). The decision of Synod 2009 that women may not serve in the particular office of minister and elders, therefore rest on two other Scriptural parts, name 1 Cor 14:26-40 and 1 Tim 2:8-15.
- 5.2.4 After the discussion of one of the Scriptural texts (Gal 3:26-29) in which it is said that man and woman is one in Christ, an important statement is made by the Report: "It is however in the light of this overwhelming truth, clear that when a distinction is made between men and women as regards the particular services, that there have to be clear Scriptural grounds for it.

- Just so: Only if God decrees in his Word that only men may serve in the particular services, must women be forbidden to it" (p625). Please note, there has to be clear scriptural grounds, which surely means that the Scriptural grounds are logical, explicit and convincing. The other is that it should also indicate clearly that it is a stipulation in the Word of God that (only) men can serve in the particular services.
- 5.2.5 With the exegetical reasoning of 1 Cor 14:26-40, on which the decision of Synod 2009 rests in part, the conclusion is come to in 10.8.5.2b that the "injunction to be silent" in Cor 14:34-35 indeed points to women not being allowed to preach the Word officially in meetings of the congregation. Then the Report expresses doubt about the conclusion: "In itself 1 Cor 14:34-35 does not give clear evidence of this, but in the light of other clearer Scriptural texts such as 1 Tim 2:8-15 it is clear that it should be understood like that." How does this statement of doubt rhyme with the point of departure (mentioned in 5.2.2 above) that there is no specific text in the Bible in which it is specifically stated that women may serve in the particular positions or not, as well as the statement in 5.2.4 above that there have to be clear Scriptural grounds?
 - 5.2.6 The conclusion of the Report concerning 1 Cor 14: 34-35 creates the expectancy that a clearer Scriptural text such as 1 Tim 2:8-15 will be decisive in that women cannot serve in the particular offices of minister and elders. With great expectation one turns the pages to the exegesis of 1 Tim 2:8-15 and there the reader is confronted with two diverging declarations with long thorough and grounded reasoning with both appealing to well known exegetes. Is it a clearer Scriptural text as mentioned? And once again a categorical conclusion is drawn from a Scriptural text that a woman can therefore not become a minister or elder. And once again the "how does it rhyme" question can be asked as in 5.2.5 above.
 - 5.2.7 The exegetical explanation of both 1 Cor:14 and 1 Tim 2 on which the decision of Synod 2009 rest, does not apply the rules of Scriptural explanation consistently. The following 3 examples can be mentioned.
 - 5.2.7.1 In the first part of the Report much attention is given to the rules of Scriptural interpretation. For instance it is mentioned regularly that each part of the Bible is part of the total revelation of the Word of God and should therefore be read in the light of the greater historical revelatory unity of Scripture. In the summation of the exposition concerning the two Scriptural parts this requirement is largely silent in both points of view.
 - 5.2.7.2 A second rule for Scriptural exegesis that is emphasised by the study Report of 1988 is: "All the Scriptural pronouncements that refers to the place of the woman in the church, must be discounted in such a way they do not stand opposed to each other as pronouncements, but next to each other as supplementary pronouncements (Addendum 1988:12)". The reasoning column on which the decision of the Synod rests, handles the silent command as conflicting, that runs counter to the evidence of the rest of Scripture.
 - 5.2.7.3 A third Scripture declaration rule which the study Report of 1988 points to, is the distinction between centrum and periphery (main issue and side issue). This means that issues that have been placed on the periphery by the Scripture part, may not be placed in the centrum by the expositor, and the other way round. The Scriptural parts 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 12 cannot be explained that it prohibits a woman from serving in the positions, as not one of the two Scriptural parts has a specific viewpoint as to whether woman can serve in the positions or not (Addendum 1988:21).
 - 5.2.8 In the Report a conclusion is reached under 10.7.4.6 (p632) that there is a difference between prophecy on the one hand, and teaching on the other hand. The statement is clearly made that "prophecy in the New Testament never formed part of the service of the minister or supervisor." Only a few pages on there is the contradiction in reasoning of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and is preaching associated with prophecy.

Such contradictory elements are confusing and lets the reader think that grounding is lacking.

6. Grounds for objection 4

6.1 The decision of Synod 2009 rests for one, on an explanation that narrows the gift of prophecy without solid grounding, to a revelation that someone received personally and that then is told spontaneously in the meeting (see 10.7.4.6, p632; 10.8.4.1b, p633).

6.2 *Motivation*

6.2.1 In the reasoning (p632) it is mentioned on the one hand that prophecy as a gift in the congregation serves as **admonition**, encouragement and teaching. In the Scriptural parts that are given as reference (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3, 24, 31) it is also described in those terms. Immediately thereafter the Report contradicts itself by mentioning that prophecy is not teaching (p632), and then again later (p637) by saying that the adjudication of the prophecies means supervision of the preaching. This contradiction shows that the reasoning as to what constitutes the gift of prophecy under 10.7.4.6 is not thoroughly grounded. In the same point the gift of prophecy is described as a spontaneous act, but it is grounded on an uncertain conclusion without Scriptural grounds, namely: "It was probably so because prophecy was practised spontaneously ("charismatically") and not connected to any of the particular services.

6.2.2 To understand 1 Cor 14:33-35 the correct understanding as to what prophecy signifies, and where and by whom it was practised is of utmost importance. Thorough grounding for such a concept is lacking in 10.7.4.6 and 10.8.4.1b.

6.2.3 What is clear, is that the prophets held an important position as it is mentioned in 1 Cor 12:28 and Eph 4:11. In 1 Cor 14 Paul also gives special attention to the practise of this gift in the meeting of the congregation and he praises it as a gift that must be striven to (1 Cor 14:1, 39). How does that correlate with the viewpoint of the Report that prophecy is a revelation that someone receives in order to tell spontaneously and non-officially in the meeting? As concerns the "revelation" of 1 Cor 14:30 and the so-called receiving thereof, Ridderbos states the following: (Paulus, p504) "This prophecy and revelation is not to be understood as an exceptional gift, of which the congregation has no part, and that you only externally receive the unfailing message of the Spirit." In Romans 12:7 Paul connects the practice of prophecy with to the "measure of faith." Hereby is not meant the quantity of faith, but a specific faith content as measure for the prophecy – further grounds that prophecy is not something that someone receives personally.

6.2.4 What was the distinction between prophets and teachers? This distinction is not indicated plainly and watertight in the Bible. A comparison of Scriptural material shows that both prophets and teachers were focussed on the spiritual guidance and upliftment of the congregation (see Acts 13:1; 15:32; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 1 Cor 14:3, 24, 31; 1 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 2:2)

6.2.5 Floor (He who baptises with the Holy Spirit, p105) describes prophecy as the preaching of the Word of God to the congregation. According to Calvin (see commentary on Romans 12:6; Institution 44:1319) prophecy is the correct understanding of Scripture and the gift of explaining Scripture. JD du Toit (Totius) point of view is that prophesying in the NT is not the gift to see the future, but it is the correct understanding to explain Scripture and to apply it for the comfort and admonition of the congregation. To prophecy today is the spirited preaching and the exposition of Scripture (Versamelde Werke, Book 6, p75 and on).

- 6.2.6 Was the use of the gift of prophecy by women only limited to the position of the believer? There is good exegetical grounds for the conclusion that women who could prophecy during the service according to 1 Cor 11:5, were part of the prophetic incumbents of 1 Cor 12:28 (Versteeg; 1985:37). This is also confirmed by Ridderbos (Paulus, p516, 517) who makes it clear that there is no indication in the letters of Paul "als zou aan de vrouw in de gemeente enkel het niet ambtelijke charisma toekomen en niet het geordende ambt." In the Scriptural parts which mentions the general and particular services (Eph 4:8-11; 1 Cor 12:12-30) it is nevertheless clear that the woman is not excluded in both Scriptural parts in both services.
- 6.2.7 Above motivation shows that the gift of prophecy cannot be narrowed to a personal revelation which is expressed spontaneously in the meeting. With the notion that prophecy can also mean that the Word of God was presented to the congregation, it is clear the correct understanding of prophecy would have had drastic meaning for the exegetical explication of 1 Cor 11 and 14. Because how can a woman not talk at the judgement of the prophets when she could, with the prophetic gift, explain Scripture to the congregation? Then 1 Cor 14:34 and 35 calls for a deeper understanding.

7. Grounds for objection 5

- 7.1 The unmarried woman is banned, as the married woman, from the particular office of minister and elder without a proper and consistent application of the rules of the interpretation of Scripture.
- 7.2 *Motivation*
- 7.2.1 In the Report three Scriptural parts are applicable to the position of the married woman
- 7.2.1.1 The first Scriptural part is 1 Cor 11. After contrasting two points of view it is the unanimous conclusion that 1 Cor 11:2-16 does not give an answer as to the question if this headship is limited to a married man over his wife, or if it concerns the relationship of all men with all women.
- 7.2.1.2 The second Scriptural part is Eph 5:21-33. The Report is clear that the headship of the man over his wife is described in the context of marriage.
- 7.2.1.3 In the third Scriptural part (see 1 Tim 2:8-15) nowhere in the reasoning column of the Report on which the decision of the Synod rests, was any effort made to discuss the position of the unmarried woman. Silently it is accepted that the position of the unmarried woman is included in the position of the woman in 1 Tim 2.
- 7.2.2 Concerning the position of the woman, two important rules are lacking for Scriptural explanation in the exegetical declaration of 1 Tim 2. The first rule is the importance of the historical revelatory positioning of the Scriptural part and the integration of the part into a historical revelatory periphrasis in total. The importance of this rule has already been quoted in 3.2.7 above. The other rule for Scriptural explanation is Scripture-with-Scripture comparison (Report, p608). No attempt is made to do it. If Scripture-with-Scripture comparisons is done, the conclusion in one voice about 1 Cor 11 would have been heard (see 7.1.1 above) also that Eph 5 discusses the headship of the man in the context of marriage, and that nowhere the Bible teaches a universal subjugation of the woman to the man, in other words that "my wife" should acknowledge the headship of all men over her. Such an invasive incorporation of the unmarried woman to the married woman in 1 Tim 2 has no grounds unless the rule of Scripture-with-Scripture is applied.

- 7.2.3 The sadness of binding the conscience with unproven and ungrounded Scriptural explanations comes strongly to the fore, because the ban on allowing the woman to the particular position of minister and elder should also be made applicable to the unmarried woman.

8. Conclusion

In the Report is stated: "That which is revealed in the Bible is fixed, but the readers explanation and conclusions must always again be controlled against the Bible" (p603). That is the spirit in which this grounds for objection is presented to you. Thank you for the privilege to be able to have done it. Please help us to listen to "this is the Word of the Lord." Are we listening in truth.

F. ORDER-PROPOSAL

1. That the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches.

2. Motivation

- 2.1 The General Synod 2012 has eight petitions of protest with regard to women in the particular services on its table. It has become clear during this Synod that there exist differences in viewpoints and practices with regard to women in the particular services, despite decisions taken during Synods. Even if the Synod was to adjudicate upon the petitions of protest, it would not really solve the problem in respect of the differences. The possibility is greater that – if adjudication is done now – the result may deepen the differences. The foundational reason(s) for these differences in viewpoints and practices should first be determined and receive concrete attention.

- 2.2 The Lord has led the General Synod to place the missionary calling of the Churches at the forefront. The Synod has decided to work out a Turnaround Strategy for the GKSA to fulfil this calling. Should there be adjudication on the petitions of protest during this Synod the different viewpoints will still not be clarified. To the contrary, it can place the focus on our churches rather on the mutual differences. And thus the wonderfully positive and unanimous attitude of churches towards the decision regarding our calling can be quelled.

3. Recommendations

That the General Synod appoints deputies with the following mandate:

- 3.1 To determine in cooperation with local churches what the fundamental reasons are why there are still differences in viewpoints and practices in matters already decided, despite decisions that churches have taken together.
- 3.2 To advise the Synod 2015 on the petitions of protest with regard to women in the particular services.
- 3.3 To advise the Synod:
- 3.3.1 on how unity and diversity in our churches can serve our missionary calling.
- 3.3.2 when does freedom in diversity cross the line of disobedience to the Word.
- 3.3.3 when the decisions and actions of the local church compromise the common accord .
- 3.3.4 when ecclesiastical decisions place a yoke on persons' conscience (NGB, art 32).
- 3.3.5 how the Reformed Churches can be freed from a paralysing perception of a dying church to a clear image of our missionary calling.
- 3.4 The Synod calls in earnest upon churches during this period until the petitions of protest are finalised to:
- 3.4.1 deal with the diversity of customs in our churches with love and understanding in the spirit of Rom 14.
- 3.4.2 not to introduce other customs that differ from those which the churches agreed upon or are currently in use.

4. These calls are made specifically to help churches in this time to focus on the **Turnaround Strategy** and not to be tempted into questions of strive by differences.

Decision: Order-proposal approved with recommendations.

F. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: REVELATIONAL HISTORIC

1. Assignment and mandate

To provide recommendations to the Synod on the various grounds for objection.

Decision: Noted.

2. Execution of assignment

2.1 *RC Bloemfontein South Ground for objection 1 (p347-348)*

2.1.1 Synod 2009's decision and preceded argument does not integrate the immutable loyalty of God by using women in the OT as rulers and ministers of the word and not in the NT.

2.1.2 Reasoning Minority

2.1.2.1 God calls Deborah and Hulda (3.2.1) as an exception (3.2.5).

2.1.2.2 There are continuous and discontinuous lines from the OT to the NT regarding services (3.2.2).

2.1.2.3 The ground for objection is not so much about the offices although it functions as motivation. It is however about proof and if the present immutability of God's loyalty can be interpreted.

Majority

The grounds for objection is focused on the immutability of God and that the Synod 2009's decision did not keep it in account. The implication of the decision is that seeing as God used women in the Old Testamentic church as rulers and ministers of the word He would be contradicting Himself if He did not allow it in the New Testament.

Decision: Points 2.1.2.1 to 2.1.2.3 noted.

2.1.3 Findings Minority

2.1.3.1 There is referred in the decision of 2009 (10.13.1.3 and 10.14.1(b) where God's loyalty is brought into account.

2.1.3.2 It is not proven by the Gravamen that God would contradict Himself. The continuous line of the confirmation in an office lies in the services of the priests, Levites and kings but not in that of judges and prophets.

2.1.3.3 The discontinuous line is given in the office of the believer.

2.1.3.4 The Gravamen does not distinguish between the offices of prophet and eldest and between the Salvation-historic lines of prophet an eldest. Compare the Addendum compiled by Elder Schuring for motivation of the latter.

2.1.3.5 The ground for objection identifies (equates) the prophet (women in the OT church) with the elder (ruler).

Majority

The motivation (point 3.2.1 up to 3.2.8) is convincing, especially on the weight of the argument that emphasis can not only be placed on the discontinuous line in Scripture, but that the continuous line of the Scriptural revelation should be kept in mind (3.2.3); that, from the themes of unity of the Bible, as well as the Old and the New Testament has authority (3.2.4); and the fact that the immutability of God's promise is broadly described in our confessions (3.2.6).

Decision: Points 2.1.3.1 to 2.1.3.5 noted.

2.1.4 Recommendations:

2.1.4.1 Minority: In light of the findings no outcome will be given to this ground for objection.

Decision: Approved.

2.1.4.2 Majority

That this ground for objection passes.

Decision: Rejected.

Addendum comparing eldest and prophet for support of Minority's recommendation

Comparisons prophets and eldest

Prophets receive direct revelations from God or His angels in words or images.

Therefrom the whole word of God came into existence.

Prophets have a teaching task to reveal the revelation to the people and to apply it in judgement as Moses, Deborah and Samuel did.

Elders have a task to rule and teach

The Salvation-historic line for prophets is

A That Jesus Christ became the highest prophet that made known the concealed will of God about our salvation.

B That by Pentecost almost the whole congregation became prophets.

C That everyone received a richer message to profess than in the OT.

D That the receiving of revelations came to an end. The canon is concluded. Today there is no more direct revelations from heaven. Only the prophetic task of teaching remains e.g. the gift to elucidate and apply the Word that has already been revealed.

The Salvation-historic line of elders is that the office of elders was fully unfurled in Jesus Christ, our Keeper and Great Shepherd. Following the good shepherd the elders of the OT became the elders of the Christian community up to today.

Prophets can be anyone:

- *Older and younger: Abram and Samuel*
- *Priests and farmers: Ezekiel and Amos*
- *Patriarch and king: Jacob and David*
- *Men and women: Moses and Hulda*
- *Educated and uneducated: Moses and Peter*
- *Believer and nonbeliever: Micha and Bileam*

Elders are only men:

- *Elders in the OT never refers to female elders*
- *Elders in the NT never refers to women*
- *None of the 12 chiefs in the OT are women*
- *None of the 12 apostles in the NT are women*
- *The council of 70 elders in the OT is men*
- *The 70 members of the Sanhedrin were men*
- *The 70 disciples Jesus sent out were men*

2.2 RC Bloemfontein South Ground for objection 2 (p348)

2.2.1 The decision and preceded argument does not integrate the all-powerful and almighty authority of God to call and use any person without any boundaries.

2.2.2 Reasoning

2.2.2.1 The objection is based on something not written in the Report (ref 4.2.1).

2.2.2.2 The ground for objection is a very broad statement with which there can be argued that anyone can be called into office.

2.2.2.3 The ground for objection argues that Synod 2009 places sexuality as a limitation on God's power and omnipotence.

2.2.3 Findings

2.2.3.1 The decision of 2009 is not about what God can do. It is obvious.

2.2.3.2 It is however important to recognise that God, with consideration of His all-powerfulness, reveals His will on services.

Decision: Points 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.2 noted.

2.2.4 Recommendation

There will not be given consequence to this ground for objection.

Decision: Approved.

G. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: 1 COR 14

1. Mandate

Judgment of the grounds of protest 3 and 4 of the gravamen of RC Bloemfontein South against the decisions of the General Synod 2009 about women in the office of elder and minister.

Decision: Noted.

2. Reasoning of Ground of Objection 3

2.1 Ground of protest 3 claims three things: that the decision rests upon Scriptural exposition with contradicting elements, void of clear Scriptural evidence, and that it doesn't consistently and diligently calculate the rules of Scriptural exposition.

2.2 The motivation of 5.2.1 is valid. It is indeed true that convincing exegesis should lead to one clear conclusion.

2.3 Motivation 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 mentions matters that was handled in previous Reports and it is taken note of.

2.4 It is claimed in motivation 5.2.5 that the report of 2009 doubts its own conclusion. The Report of 2009 however states with the word in itself that 1 Cor 14:34-35 not only states clear Scriptural basis but also that it must be read together with a clearer passage like 1 Tim 2:8-15 for 1 Cor 14:34-35 to be understood. A very important rule for the exposition of Scripture is indeed to compare Scripture with Scripture to come to a clear conclusion.

2.5 Motivation 5.2.6 mentions what was reflected in the Report of 2009 and notice is taken of this.

2.6 It does seem though, that the Report of 2009 indeed fails in both points of view to take into account the broader revelation-historical cohesion in the conclusions of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:8-15.

2.7 The ground of protest fails to clearly indicate how the exposition upon which the decision is based, clashes with the testimony of the rest of Scripture.

2.8 It is indeed true that 1 Cor 14:34-35 doesn't state who may or may not serve in the worship service, but the central matter is the order of the gathering of the congregation.

2.9 The Gravamen fails to indicate the contradiction between the reasoning on p632 and the exposition of 1 Cor 14.

2.10 Finding

The exposition upon which the decision of 2009 is based, has clear Scriptural foundation and takes the rules of Scriptural exposition into account in a thorough and consistent manner. There are aspects of the exposition that may be explained clearer, although these few matters would not result in the decision of 2009 becoming invalid.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.10 noted.

2.11 Recommendation

Ground of objection 3 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

3. Reasoning of Ground of objection 4

- 3.1 Ground of protest 4 claims that the Report of 2009 narrows the meaning of the term “prophecy”. The decision of Synod 2009 rests for one, on an explanation that narrows the gift of prophecy without solid grounding, to a revelation that someone received personally and that then is told spontaneously in the meeting (see 10.7.4.6, p632; 10.8.4.1b, p633).
- 3.2 Motivation 6.2.1 claims that the report contradicts itself, but the Reports states clearly that prophecy serves to teaching, but is not in itself teaching. The Gravamen fails to clearly show the contradiction on p637 of the Report.
- 3.3 It is indeed so that the Report does not give extensive foundation with regard to the gift of prophecy, but this is not critical for the passage to be understood.
- 3.4 The incentive to prophecy in 1 Cor 14 is against the speaking in tongues, which took place uncontrolled.
- 3.5 It is indeed so that prophets and ministers’ work was aimed to spiritual guidance and edification. The distinction is that the prophets was taken into service directly by the Holy Spirit, but the minister was officially ordained in his ministry through the laying on of hands.
- 3.6 The Gravamen makes the assumption that the prophetic gift is linked to the prophetic office, an office that is not proclaimed in Scripture.
- 3.7 Finding
The Report of 2009 did not narrow the understanding of the term of “prophecy”.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.7 noted.

3.8 Recommendation

The Gravamen does not succeed on this ground of objection.

Motivation

The reasoning of the Gravamen from 1 Corinthians 14, specifically verse 34-35 does not convince that with “prophecy” it is meant “official” proclamation of the Word. It does however seem that Paul gives guidance with regard to the speaking in tongues, prophecy and teaching for it to take place in an orderly fashion in the gathering of the congregation. The statement in 34-35 therefore focuses on teaching, from which the woman must refrain, and also that she must be taught at home by her husband.

The Gravamen tries for prophecy to be understood as official proclamation of the Word, but does not convince in the quoting of different Scriptural passages. We therefore do not find a narrowing in the decision of Synod 2009 with regards to this matter.

Decision: Approved.

H. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: 1 TIM 2

1. **Mandate**

Advise the Synod with regard to the Gravamen of RC Bloemfontein South with regard to ground of protest.

Decision: Noted.

2. **Ground of protest 5 (p352)**

2.1 *Reasoning of the aggrieved*

- 2.1.1 In ground 5 it is stated: “The unmarried woman is banned, as the married woman, from the particular office of minister and elder without a proper and consistent application of the rules of the interpretation of Scripture.”
- 2.1.2 Although the aggrieved do not expressly state where the matter against which this ground protests, is appear, it can be accepted from the context of the previous grounds of protest and the motivations in 7.2 that the 2009 Study Report is meant.
- 2.1.3 In motivation of the ground of protest, the aggrieved list specific argument in 7.2.1 to 7.2.3 with regard to the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11, why married woman can not be handled in the same manner.

Together with this, it is shown that the particular arguments are not discussed or handled in the 2009 Report.

2.2 Adjudication

As in the rest of the Gravamen, the aggrieved do not take into account the fact that the 2009 Report of the Commission must be read and understood in conjunction with the argumentation and decisions in the previous Reports of Synods.

If the aggrieved took this into account, they would have availed themselves of the fact that the Study Report which was tabled at the Synod of 2006, did handle the question of married and unmarried women with regard to the particular offices, as well as in the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11 (Acta 2006:431-439, esp 4.6).

2.3 Finding

In ground of protest 5 the aggrieved do not succeed to show that the decision of Synod 2009 banned the unmarried women from the particular offices without a proper and consistent application of the rules for the exposition of Scripture.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.3 noted.

2.4 Recommendation

The ground of protest 5 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

21.4 PETITION OF PROTEST OF REFORMED CHURCH KLERKSDORP AGAINST A DECISION OF SYNOD 2009 ABOUT GUIDANCE IN THE MATTER OF WOMEN ACTING AS ELDER AND MINISTER (2012: Artt 17, 31, 258) (2016; Artt 38, 66, 68)

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
- B. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of Commission Church Polity.

2012

- A. Elder D de Kock tables the petition of protest.
- B. **Decision:** The petition of protest is referred to Commission for Petitions of Protest 4.
- C. **Order motion:** Dr WC Opperman tables the order motion.
- D. **Decision:** Order motion approved with recommendations.
- E. With the approving of the order motion the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches (see Petition of Protest 2.13 in Acta 2012).

F. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Resolutions against which the Petition is noted

"12 Suggestions to the Synod

The Commission suggests the following about the Petition...

12.10 Point 10 (Women acting as elder and minister of the Word)

The Synod decides:

12.10.1 till 10.14 - Cognisance noted.

Resolution: Approved. "(Acta 2009:665)

"The Commission has come to the conclusion that it is necessary for this Synod to come to a final decision about the question if women should be allowed or not, in the office of ministers and elders for the following reasons:

3.1 About the proposal of Kurpershoek and Coetzee that local Churches should be allowed to decide individually about the matter (2.1). The conclusion of the commission is that it is not the correct solution, for the following reasons:

3.1.1 In the light of CO, art 30 is the matter of ministers and elders not only a matter of local communities.

3.1.2 The suggestion in itself implies that a vote should be taken whether the services should be open up.

3.1.3 Information of what happened in foreign churches suggest that this Modus operandi is very problematic.

3.4 The continuous Synod was arranged with the expectation that a final Ruling and resolution must be taken.

Resolution: Take cognisance of 3.1 till 3.4."

and

"4.2 The Synod voted about the following changes in the wording of pt. 10.15 and 12.10.2 of the Report. The Synod in light of dealing with the Report comes to the conclusion that women may serve in the office of elders and ministers or may not serve in the office of ministers an elders...

Resolution: pt 4.1 till 4.3 have been approved.

Resolution: The meeting decides against the approved recommendation, pt 4.2, that women may not serve in the office of ministers an elders" (Acta 2009:667).

2. Introduction

The Church Council of the RC Klerksdorp raise objections against the decision of the General Synod 2009, about women being in the office of elder and minister of the Gospel. The Council expected the Synod to provide specific, Scripture based guidelines to make a fundamental decision on the position of women serving as elders and ministers of the Gospel. According to the decision as it is now there are no Scripture based ground

or reason why the Synod chose one point of view above the other; accept the majority vote. Therefore our Council is raising our objection and request careful reconsideration of the decision taken at the Synod.

If the objection is successful, the Council of the RC Klerksdorp requests that the General Synod in submissiveness to the Scriptures, give guidance to the Council to take a fundamental decision, whether women could be ordained as elders or minister or not. If there prove not to be any proper Scripture guidance, or if the General Synod, in submissiveness to the Scriptures could not decide between the two interpretations or positions, it should be left to the Councils to make a decision according to their own circumstantial conditions. Only then can we be true to the Scriptures and could we be credible in working together to promote the Kingdom of God in this world.

3. Objection

The Council of the RC Klerksdorp object to the principle decision of the 2009 Synod, about women in the office of minister and elders, taken “in light of dealing with the report” and not in submissiveness to the Scriptures.

3.1 Reason for objection 1

The decision was taken “in the light of dealing with the Report” and not in “submissiveness to the Scriptures.”

Motivation

The suggestion of the Commission was that the Synod should decided “in submissiveness to the Scriptures” and that would be the ideal if the Scripture studies by the Synod could result in a conscientious decision. But “in light of dealing with the Report” it becomes clear that this was not the case. It became clear that the delegates to the Synod were in disagreement to each other about the two positions. The disagreement between the delegates about the opposite positions was not compatible. The delegates at the Synod were under the impression that the disagreement in the decision about women in the office of minister and elders, were different interpretations, taken on grounds of acceptable exegetic principles. The Commission reported that the disagreement in the two positions was not “in itself a confessional matter” (Acta 2009:664) but lays “only in exegetic synthesis.” Of this the Synod only “took notice” (Acta 2009:666). If the decision of the Synod was taken “in the light of dealing with the Report” it would have taken in consideration both expositions on the Scripture and accordingly made a favourable decision to both sides.

The nature of the difference between the two positions about the question of women in the office of ministers and elders was not justified “in submissiveness to the Scriptures” and were change to read “in the light of dealing with the Report”. With the dealing of the Report some of the delegates were under the impression that their interpretations of the Scriptures that woman members are allowed to serve as ministers and elders were correct. But on the other hand some delegates were convinced that that there interpretation of the Scriptures which do not allow women in the office of elders and ministers were correct. The differences in the interpretation were also evident in the Report of the Commission handling the matter.

The Report mentioned the difference and even the counter understanding of certain Scriptures were mentioned as well as counter recommendations. At the same time the delegates were under pressure to reach a decision on this Synod, as the Commission suggest (Acta 2009:666-667).

In the Church the topic of women in the particular office of elders and ministers is a very burning question and therefore a principle point of view is necessary. Such a principle point of view about the topic of women in the office of elders and ministers must be based on “very clear cut grounds”. Spoelstra noted on this: “Because a decision of a Council must be based on its quality and inheritable values, it must reflect clear grounds for consideration, despite if the decision is in the form of a Point of Description, Request, Report or Appeal. Every pronouncement must be elaborate that the verdict therefore must be clear” (Spoelstra, 1989:195, 196). The only ground for the decision by the General Synod 2009 rest with “in the light of dealing with the Report” (Act 2009:667).

In the respect of a principal matter, such as if women should be allowed in the office of elders and ministers, a decision must only be considered in submissiveness to the Scriptures. Therefore it is necessary for the Synod to have consistency on applicable Scriptures passages, while a motivation like “in the light of dealing with the Report” should not be the solution for this two opposite positions which rest on human interpretation of the Scriptures. It is also unthinkable in the Reformed world that a vote was taken in light of “the dealing with the Report” on a principal matter of this magnitude, while the Report itself was not clear about the matter of women in the office of elders and ministers, and the verdict depends on the majority vote of a Synod to choose between the truth and heresy in the Report of a Commission. If the majority vote in the Synod should be the determining factor about the truth in the Scriptures, then all of us that can't be reconcile with this truth, should be subject to censorship by their different church councils. That would insure the purity of the preaching of the Gospel in the Reformed Churches. There is however a question about this, if this decision were based on the ground of Confession, Scriptures and Church Ordinance, as it should be done in the Reformed world (CO, art 30). In this instances there is no consistency in the interpretation of the Scriptural evidence, the decision of women in the function of elders an ministers “is not in itself a confessional matter” (Acta 2009:664) and the Church Ordinance, which are there to create order in the churches and are based on the Scriptures, must be consistent or able to be changed in accordance with the Scriptures.

3.2 *Reason for objection 2*

The Synod chooses to vote on the question if women should be in the function of elders and ministers where two different interpretations are possible according to the Scriptures.

Motivation

Principle decisions about what Scripture teach on a issue are based on convincing Scriptural evidence and not by the majority vote in a church meeting. The differences in the Commission Report have clearly been based on human interpretation of the Scriptures and although there are some similarities between the exegeses there was no conclusion about definable illustrations from the Scriptures. Two **different positions** about women in the office of ministers and elders were mentioned in the Report. The Synod took notice of both positions. Without any motivation of why the one positions is more acceptable than the other, the delegates were requested to vote about the matter. Calvyn has warned about the danger of this in his Institution of Christian faith: “When opinions were just counted and not consider sometimes the better options were eliminated by the majority” (Calvyn, 1992:IV.9.8).

A valid question exist on if the majority vote of the Synod makes one position the truth and the other position heresy. Should the Synod not take a principle decision in accordance with the Scriptures and proven exegesis? Should the Synod not rather admit that no distinct position could be reached through the Scriptures, rather than force the majority vote down on the Church Councils?

Spoelstra (1989:193) also warned against the same danger: "Coercion to impose the majority decision about important matters results in the most breakage and schism in the Church history... If in a church meeting there is such a huge disagreement about what God wants for his church, how is it possible that a few votes are allowed to dictate the outcome of a principle matter like this? Is it Reformed to submit just for the sake of the structure of the meeting? Why enforce a decision on a moderate matter if there is such a huge disagreement?" The following conclusion was made by him: "Should the question not be raised that a small majority ruling in a meeting is still evidence of an equality of votes?" (Spoelstra, 1989:193). If the disagreement is not about a moderate concern, Spoelstra quoted from Van der Linde: "Van der Linde was correct in suggesting in matters not ruling the order, at least two third majority should be taken."(Spoelstr,1989:193). Van der Linde (1983:127) himself said: "It seems that the Sovereignty of God Almighty gets suppressed by the blame on collegialism when implemented the majority vote system. According to art 31, it seems that a binding decision at a church meeting is decided by half plus one of the delegates of the meeting. Now it seems to be safer (as with the NGK) that only two third majority rulings should be accepted as binding when deciding about important matters."

3.3 *Reason for objection 3*

The decision by the Synod on women in the office of elder and minister did not give any motivation on base of the Scriptures why women should not be ordained as elders.

Motivation

The General Synod must provide clear and motivated Scripture grounds to Church Councils to support their decision. If there is not enough motivation and no clear Scripture grounds why certain interpretation were choose above the other, it must be assumed that the decision was based only by the authority of the Synod. But the Holy Scriptures should be the first and highest authority. In his Institution of the Christian Faith, Calvin (IV:9.10.6) warns about Synods that wants to have sovereignty over congregations and warn that decisions must be in conjunction with the Scriptures (IV:9.8). He wrote: "So sou dit geskied dat konsilies die majesteit wat daaraan verskuldig is, het en tog sou die Skrif intussen 'n hoër plek inneem, sodat niks sou wees wat nie aan die rigsnoer daarvan onderwerp sou wees nie" (Calvyn, 1992:IV:9,8,25).

Spoelstra (1989:195) describe the dilemma in which the Church Council could get if a principle objection is raised against a decision not properly define by Scripture motivation as follows: "According to the reformed church concept and the basis of the Church order, decisions of majority meetings must be executed in the church by the councils. Majority meetings do not rule with or over councils in the congregations. In the federal framework of the reformed community it is unthinkable to expect that a Council, who is proud of its independence and calling, must uphold a resolution against which they have principle objections to, until the following majority meeting. But it is also not acceptable for a Council to set aside a resolution of a majority meeting which they don't approve of (see art 43)."

3.4 *Reason for objection 4*

The Synod only noted a proposal of Kurpershoek and Coetzee without taking a decision on it.

Motivation

In the Report of the Advice Commission some statements were made about which the Synod did not rule but only take note of, as example that “it is necessary for this Synod to reach a conclusion” and “what happened in foreign Churches indicated that the methods will be problematic”, also that “the continuous Synod were arrange with expectation for a final decision.” At the same time the Synod only noted the proposal of Kurpershoek and Coetzee and did not vote on it, according the advice of the Commission which involved practical considerations (the experience of other churches) and in light of art 30. The advice of the Commission was accepted and the proposal on the table was therefore not thoroughly discussed nor a meaningful decision reached. The matter was taken to vote which in fact rejected the tabled proposal. Decisions reached at the Synod must however be based on Scriptures and not practical considerations (CO, art 31).

C. COMMISSION REPORT CHURCH POLITY

1. Assignment

Assess the Church Polity aspects from all the referred Gravamina handed in at the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

- 1.1 All the Church Polity principles that were addressed from the different Gravamina, must be showed (pt 4).
- 1.2 Church Polity principles must be applied in the context of each separate Gravamen (pt 5-8).

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Execution of assignment

- 2.1 All the Gravamina were processed and relevant Church Polity matters were identified and processed. The Report speaks in broad terms on all the Church Polity matters which came to the fore in the Gravamina, and thereafter all of the Gravamina is judged separately and point by point.
- 2.2 Rev HS Coetzee from RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and dr J Lion-Cachet from RC Klerksdorp reported to the Commission in order to elucidate.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. Church Polity principles on the table

- 3.1 Since the reformation there is a specific view on the offices that also found its way into our own Church Order. Some of the aggrieved argued that the Synod only researched the continuity and not also the discontinuity in the offices in the Old and New Testaments. The fulfilment of the offices are in Christ. Therefor there is no direct perpendicular jump between the offices of the Old and New Testament. Our Church Order moves from the presupposition that there are four offices, namely, professors, ministers, elders, deacons (CO, art 2).
- 3.2 Some of the Gravamina claim that the two choices from which must be chosen, forces the minority to bow before the majority without any evidence for why the Synod chose the one over the other. There is also claimed that the Synod could not make a decision in obedience to Scripture – yet a choice was nonetheless made. This presupposes that the choice that was made, was the one that the Synod felt, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the correct one. Who now leaves the judgement to the local Church Council “**to themselves within their own circumstances, decide on the matter**”, opens up the way for independentism.

- Denomination guarantees that we will not because of a lack of gifts each take our own way and thereby give up the principles of the true church. The way of CO, art 31 (majority decision) is our arrangement with one another. The orderly way can be followed in order to change it (if the other churches can be convinced by way of Scripture, Confession and Church Order).
- 3.3 In the Gravamina a distinction is made between the “***in the light of the handling of the Report***” against the “***in obedience to Scripture***”. This is a false distinction. Based on the evidence from Scripture (as is taken up in the Report) certain decisions are made. Here, by wordplay, the idea is created that the Synod did not take Scriptural evidence into consideration.
 - 3.4 When a Synod makes decisions, the Lord is begged to give the meeting guidance through His Spirit (ref CO, art 32). All explanations of Scripture, motivations and arguments must be taken into consideration before there is moved onto voting. The decision that is taken, stands, unless the opposite can be shown from the Word by way of gravamen or appeal (CO, artt 31 & 46).
 - 3.5 The requirement that there should be consensus on the explanation of Scripture, places a new approach on the table of the Synod. A new approach must be tabled by way of gravamen or proposed-resolution and be tested. At Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:276, 20.4) there was no proposed-resolution by Regional Synod Pretoria that was upheld. This proposed-resolution requested that decisions regarding essential matters must be taken by consensus. By not upholding this proposed-resolution, the Synod enforced the principle of CO, art 31.
 - 3.6 If there is no clarity on a matter in the light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order; the *status quo* is upheld (CO, artt 31 & 46). The burden of proof lies with the aggrieved or the person that wants to change, to in light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order show the contrary (CO, artt 31 & 46). Some aggrieved claim that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture to uphold the *status quo*. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed.
 - 3.7 A greater meeting’s approach is decided by that meeting under guidance from the Moderamen (CO, art 35). A meeting, for instance, has the prerogative to simply take note of a proposal that it does not want to take for its account.
 - 3.8 The is claimed that conscience binding happens when a majority vote, and not Scriptural basis, is the deciding factor. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making by meetings may never be denied (see Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 84), because then Scripture governs.
 - 3.9 The phrase “conscience binding” is many a time used wrongly in churches, as such only negatively. Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
 - 3.10 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a “higher meeting” in order to enforce them on “lesser meetings”, but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order according to the Presbyterian system of church governance.

- 3.11 From the arguments of certain Gravamina the suggestion comes that there exist a tension, even a contradiction, between Scripture on the one side, and the Church Order on the other side. This is a faulty argument as the Church Order is based upon Scripture and Confession.
- 3.12 A Gravamen must be properly based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 31). The simple expression of an opinion, (e.g. the so called “**unwise action**”), is no convincing proof.
- 3.13 The *onus* rests with the aggrieved to prove that the decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* does not rest with the greater meeting to prove that it is in fact the case (CO, art 31). The working of the Holy Spirit must not be denied in the taking of decisions.
- 3.14 Some aggrieved claim that the matter around the women is not an essential or principal matter. Synod 2015 however decided that it is in fact an essential or principal matter; this decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).
- 3.15 Some aggrieved request tolerance in order to accommodate each other’s views on the matter of women, seeing how important the matter is, but in their view not as important so as to endanger the unity in the church. As far as essential matters are concerned, we may however not simply tolerate different views but must remain true to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Almost a third of the Church Order deals with the offices. This points to the importance of the offices for order within the church. This implies that the offices are an essential matter that touches on all churches’ essence.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.15 noted.

4. 21.4 p354: Gravamen RC Klerksdorp against the decision of Synod 2009 to the matter of women in the office of elder and minister

- 4.1 *Introduction* (pt 2, p354): The introduction of this Gravamen puts it forward that the two choices from which must be chosen, forces the minority to bow before the majority without any indication of why the Synod chose the one over the other. There is also claimed that the Synod did not make a decision in obedience to Scripture.

4.1.1 Adjudication

- 4.1.1.1 The Synod, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, made a decision (CO, art 35). By doing so the Synod judged that the one point of view is correct. Who now leaves the judgement over to the local church council “**to themselves within their own circumstances, decide on the matter**”, opens the way for independentism. Denomination guarantees that we will not because of a lack of gifts each take our own way and thereby give up the principles of the true church. The way of CO, art 31 (majority decision) is our arrangement with one another. The orderly way can be followed in order to change it (if the other churches can be convinced by way of Scripture, Confession and Church Order).
- 4.1.1.2 The burden of proof lies with the aggrieved or the person that wants to change, to in light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order show the contrary (CO, art 31 & 46). Some aggrieved claim that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture to uphold the *status quo*. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed.

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.1.1.2 noted.

4.2 *Grounds for objection 1 (p355)*

4.2.1 Adjudication

- 4.2.1.1 In the Gravamina a distinction is made between the “in the light of the handling of the Report” against the “in obedience to Scripture”. This is a false distinction. Based on the evidence from Scripture (as is taken up in the Report) certain decisions are made. Here, by wordplay, the idea is created that the Synod did not take Scriptural evidence into consideration.
- 4.2.1.2 The Synod specifically entered prayer before voting (which is strange in the light of the normal procedure (CO, art 32) is to open and close the day with the understanding that everything in-between that is done and decided is done in a deep dependence upon the Lord through the guidance of His Spirit) and begged the Lord to guide the meeting through His Spirit. Thereafter the Synod made its decision. Both verdicts of Scripture was thus taken into account and one was chosen above the other. The choice that was made, becomes the principal point of view, unless the opposite can be proved from the Word by way of Gravamen or Appeal (CO, artt 31 & 46).
- 4.2.1.3 The requirement that in this matter (here it is acknowledged that it is a principal matter, thus an essential matter) there at least be consensus regarding the verdicts of Scripture, proposes a new approach by the Synod. This proposed new approach was not tabled and tested by way of Gravamen or proposed-resolution.
- 4.2.1.4 The aggrieved claim that there is a problem regarding the question whether this decision was taken based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 30). Such a claim must be proved by verdict of Scripture. This claim is not supported with proof.

Decision: Points 4.2.1 to 4.2.1.4 noted.

4.2.2 Recommendation

- 4.2.2.1 Ground for objection 1 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.3 *Ground for objection 2 (p356)*

4.3.1 Adjudication

- 4.3.1.1 The question is asked whether voting is possible in cases where two different interpretations of Scripture is possible. The question rather is whether there is truly two correct interpretations? There can be only ONE. And that was chosen. The other interpretation was rejected. By implication the decision is that the one interpretation is correct and the other is faulty.
- 4.3.1.2 There is referred to Calvin and the danger of just counting opinions and not weighing them and that the group whose point of view was rejected, is overwhelmed by the majority. The aggrieved view themselves thus as the wronged. The matter however, before a decision was made, was clearly put forward and debated by both sides.
- 4.3.1.3 If the Synod had to acknowledge that there is no clarity in this matter, the *status quo* must have been upheld. The burden of proof rests upon the aggrieved or the person that wants to change the decision.
- 4.3.1.4 Spoelstra is wrongly quoted because his argument concerns a non-essential matter. He shows that churches must not make decisions that would cause division when it concerns non-essential matters. The aggrieved themselves however made the statement that the Church Council wanted to be enabled to make a principal decision. How can there then be a principal decision on a non-principal matter? Synod 2015 also clearly decided that this matter is an essential matter. The aggrieved show that Van der Linde (1983:100) points to the possibility of a two-third majority when decisions on weighty (essential) matters. Van der Linde (1983:100) points out himself that this possibility should be rejected as a collegialistic approach. The aggrieved did not hand in a Gravamen or a proposed-resolution on this.

4.3.1.5 During Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:276) a proposed-resolution was tabled by Regional Synod Pretoria that requested CO, art 31 to be changed in order to make provision that in the case of essential matters, the decision must be made unanimously. This proposed-resolution was not upheld. In the light of CO, art 46 this grievance cannot be upheld.

Decision: Points 4.3.1 to 4.3.1.5 noted.

4.3.2 Recommendation

4.3.2.1 Ground for objection 2 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.4 *Ground for objection 3 (p357)*

4.4.1 Adjudication

4.4.1.1 The aggrieved claim that there was no Scriptural motivation on why women may not be ordained as elders. Yet the Synod chose one interpretation along with its Scriptural evidence in its decision. It thus serves as the Scripture-motivation. The burden of proof thus rests with the aggrieved to now prove the opposite (CO, art 31).

4.4.1.2 It is claimed that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed (CO, art 31).

Decision: Points 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.1.2 noted.

4.4.2 Recommendation

4.4.2.1 Ground for objection 3 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.5 *Ground for objection 4 (p357)*

4.5.1 Adjudication

4.5.1.1 A grievance is aired because a proposal by Kurpershoek and Coetzee (that local churches are allowed to decide for themselves whether women may be allowed to be elders and ministers) is only noted (Acta 2009:665). A meeting has the prerogative to simply note a proposal that it does not want to take for its own account. The Commission (ref 3.1.1) pointed out that in the light of CO, art 30, the matter of the elder and minister is not a matter of the local church (of which the Synod took note). Because the Commission pointed out that the local church can not adjudicate on this alone, the Synod simply took note of the proposal.

4.5.1.2 The meeting, under the guidance of the Moderamen, arranges the meeting's approach (CO, art 35).

Decision: Points 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2 noted.

4.5.2 Recommendation

4.5.2.1 Ground for objection 4 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.6 *Recommendation regarding the Church Polity grounds of the Gravamen*

4.6.1 Grounds for objection 1, 2, 3 and 4 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.6.2 The Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

21.5 PETITION OF PROTEST REFORMED CHURCH KRUGERSDORP CONCERNING THE DECISION OF SYNOD 2009 ABOUT “THE POSITION OF WOMAN” (2012: Artt 17, 23, 258) (2016: Artt 39, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 82)

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
- B. Dr EJ de Beer reports on behalf of Commission Practical Implementation.
- C. **Order-proposal:** That the Commission Report is referred back to the Commission in order for them to provide more information, as well as clearer motivation.
- D. **Decision:** Order-proposal approved.
- E. Dr TD Mashau reports on behalf of Commission Practical Implementation.
- F. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of Commission Church Polity.
- G. Rev BCG Fourie reports on behalf of Commission Revelational and Historical.
- H. Dr DG Breed reports on behalf of Commission Grounds for Gravamen: 1 Tim 2.

2012

- A. Dr WC Vergeer tables the petition of protest.
- B. **Decision:** The petition of protest is referred to Commission for Petitions of Protest 5.
- C. **Order motion:** Dr WC Opperman tables the order motion.
- D. **Decision:** Order motion approved with recommendations.
- E. With the approving of the order motion the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches (see Petition of Protest 2.13 in Acta 2012).

F. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Decision against which objection is made

“The meeting decides according to the approved recommendation, pt 4.2, that women may not act in the particular office of minister and elder” (Acta 2009:667).

2. First ground of objection – Binding of conscience

The Synod’s decision comes down to the binding of the members’ conscience on the grounds of a majority of votes and not on the Scripture.

- 2.1 The difference in the decisions’ wording regarding the duties of the deacon and the duties of the elders and ministers is noticeable and confirms that the two decisions were taken on different grounds:

“The Synod approves in the light of the Scripture that women who have the necessary gifts can be elected and inducted as deacons in the Reformed Church of South Africa” (Acta 2009:668).

“The Synod came to the conviction in the light of the handling of the Report that women may not act in the particular office of minister and elder” (Acta 2009:669).

- 2.2 The “Report” (in whose light the decision was made that women may not act as ministers and elders) itself comes to the following conclusion:

(a) The two points of view that are explained in it **both** are in agreement with the Reformed view of Scripture and the hermeneutic points of departure. The differences merely lie on the level of exegetic synthesis.

(b) The matter of women in the particular offices “is in itself not a matter of profession of faith” (Acta 2009:664).

While the Report thus acknowledges that not one of the two points of view can be considered as non-Reformed, non-Scriptural or as contrary to the Confessions of Faith, the Synod in its decision nevertheless forces the churches to uphold one point of view – merely on the grounds of a majority of votes.

- (a) By following this procedure the binding of the members' conscience on the grounds of numbers (irrespective the outcome of the election) was an inevitable result.
 - (b) While the Minutes states that the decision was taken "in light of the handling of the Report", the decision itself acts contrary to the Report's findings.
- 2.3 Our Confessions of Faith clearly prohibit that "big numbers" are granted the same authority as Scripture (Belgic Confession [BC], art 7), and that believers consciences are to be bound (BC, art 32).

3. Second ground of objection – Insufficient reckoning with evidence from the Scripture

- 3.1 Previous Reports that were attended to by the Synod indicate that there are indeed examples in the Old Testament where God called, equipped and used women in particular offices, and that they were not hindered because they were women or married (e.g. the summary in Acta 2009:613, 658).
- 3.2 The (unsupported) comment in the 2009-Report that this evidence from the Scripture merely has an "indirect connection" with the particular offices in the church of the New Testament and that the particular offices of the New Testament cannot merely be deduced from that of the Old Testament (Acta 2003:571), is obscure and does not sufficiently reckon with evidence from the Old Testament regarding women in particular offices:
- 3.2.1 The question that Synod 2009 had to decide on was not if there is a direct connection between the kingship/prophethood of the Old Testament and the eldership/deaconship in the New Testament. The question before the Synod was if God will also call, equip and use women in particular offices. The Old Testament's answer to this question is an undeniable and clear "yes".
- 3.2.2 The Report fails to indicate how the mentioned "indirect connection" between the particular offices in the OT and NT causes God to change his mind so that He no longer can/wants to call, equip and use women in particular offices.
- 3.2.3 The Report is at fault by not clearly distinguishing between the question of the development and fulfilment of the Old Testament's offices and the question of the Scripture's view on the role of gender in God's service.

4. Third ground of objection – Insufficient observation of evidence from the early Christian church

- 4.1 In the discussion and evaluation of the role of women in the early Christian churches the Report before Synod 2009 only relied on one source and that source's findings (Schwertley, 1988).
- 4.2 In this, the Synod's ability to form a proper opinion concerning the role of women in the early Christian churches is seriously handicapped, because:
- 4.2.1 The accepted scientific practice to consult multiple sources was not followed
- 4.2.2 The source used is fairly antiquated
- 4.2.3 This source limits itself in its study only to the role of female deacons in the early Christian church
- 4.2.4 The study did not fully take the comprehensive non-literary evidence into account that exists concerning the service of women in the early Christian church
- 4.3 Other sources and later research confirm the wide-spread occurrence of service by women in **all** particular offices in the first 500 years of the early Christian church.
- 4.3.1 Research by Eisen (1996), for example, offers comprehensive and indisputable literary and archaeological evidence from primary sources (literally hundreds of examples) regarding the extensive service of women in the early Christian church as apostles, prophets, theologians, elders, serving widows, deacons, bishops en managers.

4.4 The Report before the Synod of 2009 admits that the rise of the Roman Catholicism (and the consequently centralisation of ecclesiastical authority in the man, the bishop and the pope) eventually had an influence on the disappearing role of the female service in the early Christian church (Acta 2009:601).

4.4.1 The Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) must therefore give account to the question whether the position of women in the church and in the particular offices is not in need reformation (just like the rest of the Episcopal [Roman] view of the ministry).

Footnote: It should be remarked that the Roman Catholic Church continuously allowed women to preach officially. They are just restrained from administering the sacraments, because (according to Roman conviction) the sacraments lead to faith. On the other hand the Reformed Churches profess that the Holy Spirit brings about faith through preaching of the gospel (HC, Su 25). There is therefore a resemblance between the Roman and (present) Reformed point of view on women in office, therein that both do not permit women to officially administer the instruments of grace that can bring about faith. There is in our opinion no justification from Scripture for such a point of view.

5. Fourth ground of objection – Contradicting ecclesiastical practice and exegesis

The Synod's decision that women may not serve as elders and ministers leads to discrepancies in the exegesis and hermeneutics of the Scripture, as well as to contradictions in the ecclesiastical practice. Through these discrepancies the Reformed Churches become incredible in the eyes of its members and the world, and their preaching task is hampered.

5.1 The decision to permit women to the office of deacon but not to the office of minister and elder comes to discrimination between the ministries on the grounds of gender – something that is not ordered by Scripture.

5.1.1 If God can call church members of the female gender and make them able to serve as deacons there is no reason why He would not also call them and make them able to serve as elders. Since the Synod of 1988 a clearer understanding has developed in the GKSA that there is no section in the Scripture that prohibits this (Acta 2009:611).

5.1.2 The work of deacons does not imply less: pastoral visits, authoritative ministry of the word of God, prayers, supervision over the congregation in the community of the faithful and leadership (which are traditionally viewed as the elder's duties).

5.1.3 By differentiating between the offices on the grounds of gender, the Synod of 2009 lets something of "man self" play a role in the qualification to the ministry. Against this we profess that no competency to serve God comes from human beings themselves, but that competency only comes from God (2 Cor 3:5; BC, art 14).

5.2 The exclusion of women from the office of minister and elder is conspicuously artificial and incredible.

5.2.1 In the congregations of the Reformed Churches women are allowed to minister the word of God in all kinds of ways. This includes: in the catechesis, in public worship (through songs and confession of faith), in service groups/commissions, in sister organisations, as deacons and in society in general, etc.

5.2.2 The exclusion of women from preaching as ministers is artificial because there is nothing to indicate how women can, by "setting foot on the pulpit", suddenly become incompetent to preach with authority; while their sound ministry of the word of God in all the above mentioned aspects of life, is deemed scripturally acceptable and is viewed as authoritative.

5.2.3 It is evident from the following examples that the decision of Synod 2009 comes down to an artificial differentiation between the genders: Women are not prevented by the GKSA to study theology and to qualify as theologians. Nothing furthermore prevents a male minister to preach a sermon in the GKSA which is entirely based on the sound exegesis of female theologians.

Nothing prevents him either from delivering a meditation or “religious word” that was written by a female theologian as a sermon (with acknowledgement). The decision of Synod 2009 however prevents the female theologian to be called as a minister and to preach the message she prepared herself. The implication of the Synod’s decision is thus that merely a minister’s “masculinity” makes the sermon authoritative/official/acceptable, while the female theologian may not preach the sermon, merely as a result of her femininity, even if the content of the sermon is sound and the same message is eventually delivered.

- 5.2.4 The decision of the 2009 Synod not to allow women to serve as ministers or elders comes down to an artificial and untenable differentiation between the role of Christian women in the church and in society.
 - 5.2.4.1 Women from the Reformed Church serve as leaders (also of men) in all aspects of life. (A woman, for example, was the rector of the NWU for quite some time and numerous theological professors served under her leadership in different capacities.)
 - 5.2.4.2 In many Reformed families (and in the majority of minister’s families) women are co-breadwinners and in this context often occupy leadership positions in society.
 - 5.2.4.3 The decision of Synod 2009 implicates that the role of a woman changes when she finds herself “within the walls of the church building”/“in public worship”. She must then be a “silent member” who is “taught” and who may not act as a leader (minister or elder).
 - 5.2.4.4 These radical different roles for Christian women in the church and in society are artificial, untenable and cannot be justified from Scripture on a valid basis.
- 5.3 The decision to exclude women from the ministry of elder and minister is, concerning a key text, based on selective and arbitrary exegesis.
 - 5.3.1 The understanding of the instructions to women in 1 Timothy 2:1-8 plays a key role in the point of view of those who don’t want women to serve as elders and ministers (Acta 2009:638-651).
 - 5.3.2 The understanding of these instructions as pertaining to public worship (Acta 2009:651, 10.9.5.2b-10.9.5.3b) is invalid and arbitrary, because the words “in public worship” (as in the 1983 Afrikaans Translation) do not appear in the original text. In addition to that it is clear that the instructions to women are general instructions that do not have direct reference to public worship. (The instruction, for example, to do “good deeds” [1 Tim 2:10] – cannot be understood as that they are “good deeds” that should only be done during public worship.)
 - 5.3.3 The decision of Synod 2009 causes the so-called “command to silence” in this passage to be over-accentuated in an invalid and arbitrary manner, and causes this instruction to be considered as “more authoritative” than other instructions in this passage of Scripture.
 - 5.3.3.1 Except for the “command to silence” there are(in 1 Tim 2:8-15) also several other instructions to women among which are a prohibition on braided hair, the wearing of gold, pearls and expensive clothing and a prohibition on women to teach (in any way).
 - 5.3.3.2 Through the decision of Synod 2009 only one of these instructions (the “command to silence”) is enforced on Reformed women with synodic authority, while the other instructions are merely ignored and are not put into practice in the churches with the same gravity. (In no Reformed Church are women, for example, prohibited to wear braided hair, or gold or pearls.)
 - 5.3.3.3 No grammatical, semantic or any other exegetic reasons exist to in this manner distinguish selectively between the instructions given in 1 Tim 1:8-15. They appear in the same text and are given to the same people living in the same circumstances.
 - 5.3.3.4 Such arbitrary dealing with and implementation of Scripture does not conform to the hermeneutical points of departure of the GKSA (Acta 2009:604-610).

- 5.4 The exclusion of women from the ministry handicaps the church's task to spread the gospel.
- 5.4.1 It is clear from other church denominations and from society in general that women can also be equipped by the Holy Spirit with the necessary gifts to serve as elders and ministers and that their service is blessed.
- 5.4.2 The misappreciation of these gifts and the failure of the GKSA to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit handicap the church in its task to spread the gospel.

The RC Krugersdorp urgently requests the Synod to perceive the seriousness of the above mentioned objections and the merits thereof, since we as Church Council and congregation cannot continue any longer in our conscience before God to exclude women from the office of elder and minister.

I. COMMISSION REPORT REVELATIONAL AND HISTORICAL

1. Assignment and mandate

To provide recommendations to the Synod on the various grounds of objection.

Decision: Noted.

2. Execution of assignment

2.1 *RC Krugersdorp Gravamen 1, 2012, Ground for objection 2 (p359)*

2.1.1 The decision of Synod 2009 does not have enough Scriptural grounds.

2.1.2 Reasoning

2.1.2.1 It is difficult to properly calculate the impact of a decision.

2.1.2.2 The information in the motivations are not enough to justify and support the objection.

2.1.3 Findings

The ground for objection with the motivations are vague and generalised.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 to 2.1.3 noted.

2.1.4 Recommendation

No consequence can be given to this ground for objection.

Decision: Approved.

2.2 *RC Krugersdorp Gravamen 1, 2012, Ground for objection 3 (p360)*

2.2.1 The decision of 2009 does not take the testimony of the early church into enough account.

2.2.2 Reasoning

2.2.2.1 The ground for objection provides no Revelational-historic arguments.

2.2.2.2 There is being relied on church-historic arguments for this ground for objection.

2.2.2.3 Opposed to the objection that the 2009 decision made no use of recent sources to support church-historic lines, in 5.1 and 5.2 of the decision various sources were presented.

2.2.3 Findings

2.2.3.1 The ground for objection is not Biblically grounded and provides no Revelational-historic light.

2.2.3.2 The impression is given that more than just the Bible's information is used to maintain the objection.

Decision: Points 2.2.1 to 2.2.3.2 noted.

2.2.4 Recommendation

No consequence is given to the objection on these grounds.

Decision: Approved.

J. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

1. Mandate

To advise the Synod regarding the Fourth ground of objection – *Contradicting ecclesiastical practice and exegesis* of the petition of protest RC Krugersdorp (p361, art 5).

Decision: Noted.

2. Decision against which objection is made

“The meeting decides according to the approved recommendation, pt 4.2, that women may not act in the particular office of minister and elder” (Acta 2009:667).

Decision: Noted.

3. Arguments Fourth ground of objection (5.1-5.1.3)

3.1 The Petition argues that to permit women to the office of deacon but not to the office of minister and elder comes to differentiation between the offices on the ground of gender – something that is not ordered by Scripture.

3.1.1 The Petition argues that if God can call members of the female gender and make them able to serve as deacons there is no reason why He would not also call them to serve as elders.

3.1.2 The Petition argues that all offices are equal, also in terms of status and responsibilities.

3.1.3 The Petition argues that no competency to serve God comes from human beings themselves, but only from God. Synod 2009 let something of “man self” play a role in the qualification to the ministry.

3.1.4 Finding

3.1.4.1 The Petition does not efficiently proof how the Synod decision of 2009 (Acta 2009:667), as cited above, contributes to contradiction with regard to ecclesiastical practice and exegesis. They argue their point from a more practical perspective while they do not bring exegesis and hermeneutics as the basis of their argument.

3.1.4.2 It is true that the practice of the church (application of decisions based on sound exegesis and hermeneutics) has to be credible in the eyes of church members and the world, but the petition does not succeed to demonstrate that by providing Scriptural reference.

3.1.4.3 The point about the equality of all offices is a church polity matter, but the petition does not do justice when differentiation of responsibilities is not clearly stated. There can be overlaps of responsibilities of all three offices but surely there are differences.

3.1.4.4 The Petition correctly points out that God is the one who qualifies people, but he has left the decision with regard to external calling to the church who should serve as his instrument.

Decision: Points 3.1 tot 3.1.4.4 noted.

4. Argument Fourth ground of objection (5.2-5.2.4.4)

4.1 The Petition argues that the exclusion of women from the office of minister and elder is conspicuously artificial and incredible.

4.1.1 The Petition argues that women are allowed to minister the word of God in different ways, including catechesis, public worship (through songs and confession of faith), in service groups, sister organisations, as deacons etc.

4.1.2 The Petition argues that the exclusion of women from preaching as ministers is artificial as women are allowed to minister the Word in the above mentioned cases.

4.1.3 The Petition argues that the exclusion of women from the ministry artificially discriminates between genders as women in the GKSA are allowed to be qualified as theologians, male ministers may use the exegesis of female theologians to write sermons and male ministers may preach messages written by a female theologian (with acknowledgement).

4.1.4 The Petition argues that the decision of Synod 2009 comes to an artificial and untenable differentiation between the role of Christian women in the church and society. Women from the GKSA serve as leaders in society and often are also co- breadwinners. In public worship she must be a “silent member” who is “taught” and who may not act as leader. This can not be justified by Scripture.

4.1.5 Finding

4.1.5.1 The Petition takes a reductionist approach that if you are able to do work as a catechist, assist in public worship, sisters’ organisation and as deacons, it is given that you should be allowed to also serve as an elder or minister. This amounts to the limitation of the proclamation of the word solely to the office of an elder or minister.

4.1.5.2 The Petition does not substantiate how their argument can be supported scripturally, but they take practice in society as a norm that should inform how the church should take its decisions.

4.1.6 Motivation

Although Synod 2009 came to the conclusion that there are two different ways of exegesis and hermeneutics, the Petition does not provide new light to the correct understanding of the Scriptures that should lead to the ordination of women as elders and ministers.

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.1.6 noted.

5. Argument Fourth ground of objection (5.4-5.4.1)

5.1 The Petition argues that the exclusion of women from ministry handicaps the church's task to spread the gospel.

5.2 Finding

5.2.1 We acknowledge that there are denominations that have women in offices of elders and ministers, and while there is nothing wrong to learn from the practice of other churches, the practice of other denominations can not be used as a norm to decide on such matters within the GKSA.

5.2.2 The Petition suggests that the exclusion of women from ministry handicaps the church's task to spread the gospel, but it does not succeed to demonstrate practically and from the Word of God how the exclusion of women from ministry hampers the spread of the gospel.

5.2.3 The Petition relies heavily on common practice in society and not what the word of God is saying.

5.3 Motivation

5.3.1 The use of practice in other denominations as a norm amounts to generalisation, and what happens in other churches can not just be adopted in the GKSA without discernment.

5.3.2 The argument provided in the Petition does not hold water because it does not in any way proof how the exclusion of women in office handicaps the spread of the gospel, be it in practice or in the word of God.

5.3.3 The ground does not hold water because the spread of the gospel is not dependent on a person being in the office of an elder or minister as God calls all believers to proclaim the gospel. In his ministry, Jesus Christ called the twelve disciples but also worked with women in spreading the gospel (Luke 8:1-3). The task to proclaim the gospel is not restricted to people occupying the office but every member as outlined in Matthew 28:19.

Decision: Points 5.1 to 5.3.3 noted.

6. Decision to be taken

6.1 *Recommendation: Ground of objection 5.1-5.1.3*

Ground of objection 5.1-5.1.3 is not upheld.

Decision: Approved.

- 6.2 *Recommendation: Ground of objection 5.2-5.2.4.4*
Ground of objection 5.2-5.2.4.4 is not upheld

Decision: Approved.

- 6.3 *Recommendation: Ground of objection 5.4-5.4.1*
Ground of objection 5.4-5.4.1 is not upheld.

Decision: Approved.

K. COMMISSION REPORT CHURCH POLITY

1. Assignment

Assess the Church Polity aspects from all the referred Gravamina handed in at the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

- 1.1 All the Church Polity principles that were addressed from the different Gravamina, must be showed (pt 4).
1.2 Church Polity principles must be applied in the context of each separate Gravamen (pt 5-8).

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Execution of assignment

- 2.1 All the Gravamina were processed and relevant Church Polity matters were identified and processed. The Report speaks in broad terms on all the Church Polity matters which came to the fore in the Gravamina, and thereafter all of the Gravamina is judged separately and point by point.
2.2 Rev HS Coetzee from RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and dr J Lion-Cachet from RC Klerksdorp reported to the Commission in order to elucidate.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. Church Polity principles on the table

- 3.1 Since the reformation there is a specific view on the offices that also found its way into our own Church Order. Some of the aggrieved argued that the Synod only researched the continuity and not also the discontinuity in the offices in the Old and New Testaments. The fulfilment of the offices are in Christ. Therefor there is no direct perpendicular jump between the offices of the Old and New Testament. Our Church Order moves from the presupposition that there are four offices, namely, professors, ministers, elders, deacons (CO, art 2).
3.2 Some of the Gravamina claim that the two choices from which must be chosen, forces the minority to bow before the majority without any evidence for why the Synod chose the one over the other. There is also claimed that the Synod could not make a decision in obedience to Scripture – yet a choice was nonetheless made. This presupposes that the choice that was made, was the one that the Synod felt, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the correct one. Who now leaves the judgement to the local Church Council **“to themselves within their own circumstances, decide on the matter”**, opens up the way for independentism. Denomination guarantees that we will not because of a lack of gifts each take our own way and thereby give up the principles of the true church. The way of CO, art 31 (majority decision) is our arrangement with one another. The orderly way can be followed in order to change it (if the other churches can be convinced by way of Scripture, Confession and Church Order).
3.3 In the Gravamina a distinction is made between the **“in the light of the handling of the Report”** against the **“in obedience to Scripture”**. This is a false distinction. Based on the evidence from Scripture (as is taken up in the Report) certain decisions are made. Here, by wordplay, the idea is created that the Synod did not take Scriptural evidence into consideration.

- 3.4 When a Synod makes decisions, the Lord is begged to give the meeting guidance through His Spirit (ref CO, art 32). All explanations of Scripture, motivations and arguments must be taken into consideration before there is moved onto voting. The decision that is taken, stands, unless the opposite can be shown from the Word by way of gravamen or appeal (CO, artt 31 & 46).
- 3.5 The requirement that there should be consensus on the explanation of Scripture, places a new approach on the table of the Synod. A new approach must be tabled by way of gravamen or proposed-resolution and be tested. At Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:276, 20.4) there was no proposed-resolution by Regional Synod Pretoria that was upheld. This proposed-resolution requested that decisions regarding essential matters must be taken by consensus. By not upholding this proposed-resolution, the Synod enforced the principle of CO, art 31.
- 3.6 If there is no clarity on a matter in the light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order; the *status quo* is upheld (CO, artt 31 & 46). The burden of proof lies with the aggrieved or the person that wants to change, to in light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order show the contrary (CO, artt 31 & 46). Some aggrieved claim that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture to uphold the *status quo*. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed.
- 3.7 A greater meeting's approach is decided by that meeting under guidance from the Moderamen (CO, art 35). A meeting, for instance, has the prerogative to simply take note of a proposal that it does not want to take for its account.
- 3.8 The is claimed that conscience binding happens when a majority vote, and not Scriptural basis, is the deciding factor. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making by meetings may never be denied (see Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 84), because then Scripture governs.
- 3.9 The phrase "conscience binding" is many a time used wrongly in churches, as such only negatively. Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
- 3.10 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a "higher meeting" in order to enforce them on "lesser meetings", but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order according to the Presbyterian system of church governance.
- 3.11 From the arguments of certain Gravamina the suggestion comes that there exist a tension, even a contradiction, between Scripture on the one side, and the Church Order on the other side. This is a faulty argument as the Church Order is based upon Scripture and Confession.
- 3.12 A Gravamen must be properly based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 31). The simple expression of an opinion, (e.g. the so called "**unwise action**"), is no convincing proof.

- 3.13 The *onus* rests with the aggrieved to prove that the decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* does not rest with the greater meeting to prove that it is in fact the case (CO, art 31). The working of the Holy Spirit must not be denied in the taking of decisions.
- 3.14 Some aggrieved claim that the matter around the women is not an essential or principal matter. Synod 2015 however decided that it is in fact an essential or principal matter; this decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).
- 3.15 Some aggrieved request tolerance in order to accommodate each other's views on the matter of women, seeing how important the matter is, but in their view not as important so as to endanger the unity in the church. As far as essential matters are concerned, we may however not simply tolerate different views but must remain true to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Almost a third of the Church Order deals with the offices. This points to the importance of the offices for order within the church. This implies that the offices are an essential matter that touches on all churches' essence.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.15 noted.

4. 21.5 (p359): Gravamen RC Krugersdorp against the decision of Synod 2009 "On the matter of the woman"

4.1 *Ground for objection 1 (p359)*

4.1.1 Adjudication

- 4.1.1.1 There is claimed that conscience-binding happens through the majority-vote and not Scripture grounds, and this settled the matter. Would the aggrieved have a problem with this, they must follow the churchly way according to CO, art 31 (which is agreed upon) in order to change it.
- 4.1.1.2 There is claimed that the Synod forces the churches through its decision towards one point of view through a majority of votes. Such an argument denies CO, art 31.
- 4.1.1.3 There is claimed that the binding of conscience happens when the majority vote, and not Scriptural basis, settles the decisions. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decisions at greater meetings may never be denied (Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 32). When a decision is taken by majority-vote based upon Scripture, confession, and church-order, there is no ruling (faulty interpretation of CO, art 84), because then Scripture rules.
- 4.1.1.4 Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, confession, and church-order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
- 4.1.1.5 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a "higher meeting" in order to enforce them on "lesser meetings", but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
- 4.1.1.6 In regards to the quote from the BC, art 32 in pt 2.3 to not bind a great number of consciences, and to not give numbers the same authority as Scripture, the following can be said: The aggrieved could not show based upon Scripture that women may be ordained as elders or ministers. The burden of proof rests with the aggrieved (CO, art 31).

Decision: Points 4.1.1 to 4.1.1.6 noted.

4.1.2 Recommendation

4.1.2.1 Ground for objection 1 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.2 *Ground for objection 4 (p361)*

4.2.1 Adjudication with regards to pt 5.3.3.2 (p362) that the decisions of Synods are enforced.

4.2.1.1 Decisions by greater meetings are not enforced on members of churches. Greater meetings' decisions are in essence taken by churches that gather through their delegates. Decisions of a greater meeting are taken based upon the grounds of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order in agreement with the Presbyterian system of church governance. Decisions are thus not enforced in a collegialistic fashion on churches. CO, art 84 is thus not endangered here.

Decision: Points 4.2.1 and 4.2.1.1 noted.

4.2.2 Recommendation

4.2.2.1 As far as this motivation is concerned Ground for objection 4 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4.3 *Recommendation regarding the Church Polity grounds of the gravamen*

4.3.1.1 Ground for objection 1 and 4 with regards to pt 5.3.3.2 does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

L. **COMMISSION REPORT GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN 1 TIM 2**

1. **Assignment**

To deal with the Gravamen of RC Krugersdorp and to make recommendations to the meeting with regard to the Gravamen.

Decision: Noted.

2. **Ground of protest 4 (p361)**

2.1 *Claim (5.3.1-5.3.2)*

The understanding of the exhortations to women in 1 Timothy 2:1-8 plays a vital role in the decision the point of view of those who do not want women to serve as elders or deacons (Acta 2009:638-651). The understanding of these exhortations as that they have reference to the worship service (Acta 2009:651, 10.9.5.2b-10.9.5.3b) is not valid and arbitrary, because the words "in the worship service" does not appear in the original text.

2.2 *Adjudication*

From 1 Tim 2:8, the apostle gives prescriptions for behaviour literally "in every place" (ἐν παντί τόπῳ). Prominent exegetes like (Groenewald 1977:35; Hendriksen (1976:102) Marshall (1999:437), Van Houwelingen (2009:70-71) and others accept that ἐν παντί τόπῳ indicate in places where churches have come together to worship.

2.3 *Claim (5.3.3)*

Thereby it is clear that the exhortations to women are general behavioural prescriptions, which are not directly aimed at the worship service. (Example: the exhortation tot "good works" [1 Tim 2:10] which can not be understood that it is just "good works" that are done only in worship service.)

2.4 *Adjudication*

The prescriptions in 2:9-10 does indeed deal with the manner in which women must be present in the congregational gatherings. The matters that are stated, does indeed count for the woman's whole life. Still her behavior in her life in general is directly involved when she is present in the gathering of the congregation. As long as she keeps herself busy with all kinds of sinful practices in her daily life, and continuously do this, she may not – with the inner beauty that is prescribed in verses 9 and 10, be present in the gathering of the congregation.

Therefore the apostle gives the command that she has to adorn herself with “good works as it is fitting for women who profess godliness”. The same goes for the adornment with modesty and self-control and respectable apparel as is fitting for women. Obviously this goes for her whole life, qualities that she carries with her when she appears in the gatherings of the congregation (cf Schreiner, 2005:91-96).

2.5 Claim (5.3.3)

The decision of Synod 2009 causes that the so-called “exhortation of silence” is arbitrarily singled out in this passage of Scripture, and that this exhortation is handled as “more authoritative” as other commands in the passage.

- 5.3.3.1 Besides the “exhortation of silence”, there are also several other exhortations to women, under which the prohibition on braided hair, the wearing of gold, pearls and expensive clothing and a prohibition to the women to give (any) teaching.
- 5.3.3.2 With the decision of Synod 2009, only one of these exhortations (the “exhortation of silence”) is forced down upon Reformed women, while the other exhortations are merely ignored, and is not applied in the churches with the same degree of seriousness (For example, in no Reformed Church, women are forbidden to braid their hair or to wear gold or pearls).
- 5.3.3.3 No grammatical, semantic or any other exegetical grounds exists to selectively make the distinction between the exhortations in 1 Tim 2:8-15. They appear in the text and is given to people who live in the same circumstances.
- 5.3.3.4 Such arbitrary handling of, and application of Scripture does not satisfy the requirements of Reformed Hermeneutic principles (Acta 2009:604-610).

Adjudication

- (1) The assignment to the Deputies was to report about the light that Scripture gives with regard to the question of whether women may serve in the particular offices. Therefore, the focus naturally fell on the 2009-Report, on the pericope’s information with regard to whether she may teach and exercise authority, without fully including the other aspects of the pericope in their Report.
As to these other matters, that come to light in 2:9-15, it is however possible to responsibly give a report. The aggrieved did not progress as to indicate how these other matters should then be understood. It certainly should not be the task of the Commission to do so. With the points below, certain matters are indeed indicated in singular pen stripes.
- (2) In 2:9-10 the apostle is clearly busy writing about the “adornments” with which women must appear in the congregational gatherings. The “adornments” that women must appear with in the gathering is named in three groups:
 - (i) Verse 9b: It MUST be: respectable clothing, modesty and self-control.
 - (ii) Verse 9c: It MUST NOT be: braids, gold, pearls or expensive clothing.
 - (iii) Verse 10: It MUST BE: good works, as is fitting for pious women.In the MUST NOT BE-section (verse 9c), it is clearly stated: when women are present in the congregational gatherings, their adornments must not lie, as it so often happens, in outward adornments. Verse 9c is not meant as a total prohibition on jewelry. It merely states the fact that outward adornments is not of value in the gatherings of the congregation.
In the MUST NOT BE-section, of die verses 9 and 10, it is clear: The ornament of women in the gatherings of the congregation is their inner beauty. This inner beauty may even come to pass in outward matters such as “respectable clothing” but is actually located in an attitude towards life: “modesty and self-control” (verse 9b). It is also located in behaviour in life: “good works” (verse 10). The meaning of verse 10 is not that women must come and perform their good works in the congregational gatherings.

No, the good works she does every day, and a daily confirmation of her goodness, is something she practices her whole life, and consequently carries with her as ornament when she is present in the congregational gatherings. These prescriptions to women with regard to how they must be present in the congregational gatherings, is present in the pericope, but is not directly aimed to the question of whether she may serve in the particular offices. It was therefore not relevant to the Report.

2.6 *Finding*

The aggrieved does not succeed in showing that the 2009 Report leaves parts of the text in 1 Timothy 2:8:15 out of reckoning in an improper fashion.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.6 noted.

2.7 *Recommendation*

The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 4.

Decision: Approved.

21.7 PETITION OF PROTEST BY AH KLOPPER, AP KRUGER, AH STAVAST AND RL VORSTER REGARDING SYNOD 2003 DECISION ABOUT WOMEN IN OFFICE (2012: Artt 17, 25, 258) (2016: Artt 40, 58)

2016

- A. The Petitions of Protest is tabled.
- B. Rev PM Modise reports on behalf of Commission: Woman in the office as deacon.

2012

- A. Rev AH Stavast tables the petition of protest.
- B. **Decision:** The petition of protest is referred to Commission for Petitions of Protest 9.
- C. **Order motion:** Dr WC Opperman tables the order motion.
- D. **Decision:** Order motion approved with recommendations.
- E. With the approving of the order motion the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches (see Petition of Protest 2.13 in Acta 2012).

F. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. The Synod decision which is protested

The protest is made against the following decision of **National Synod 2003** (Acta 2003:591, E. Commission Report, 4 and p593. Decision: as modified in "Errata Acta" as provided by the Administrative Bureau):

"E. COMMISSION REPORT

"Summarized recommendations of the Commission Report.

"Synod decides in view of the protracted study the following about the place of women in church:

"4. Synod approves in light of Scripture that women have the necessary gifts at their disposal to be appointed and confirmed as deacons in the GKSA. Synod is furthermore of the opinion that certain pericopes such as Rom 16:2, 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9-15 have long since in Reformed Churches in ecumenical respect an important supporting role for women in a given office, although there does not exist clear certainty on the one hand, and on the other hand no prohibition is placed on women bearing the office of deacon" (Acta 2003:591, 4).

"DECISION:

1. Approved.

2. "The Deputee Reports (3) as well as the Commission Report are referred to the Deputies for further study."

2. Grounds for the protest

2.1 Ground 1 for protest

Believers cannot believe wholeheartedly that **women** can be confirmed in the office of deacon.

2.1.1 Argument

2.1.1.1 The offices (services) of the Church are matters of faith

The true Church of Jesus Christ is not something that was conceived by humans, but is a creation of Jesus Christ himself through his Word and Spirit (Math 16:18). As far as humans go, the Church is the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27) therefore also a matter of faith (NGB, art 27).

The offices (services) of or in the Church are institutions of God (Rom 1:1; Eph 4:11,12 and 1 Tim 3:1,10), and therefore matters of principle.

All matters of principle with regard to the being and well-being of the Church must be credible on the basis of the Word of God.

The offices (services) of the Church is a matter of principle in this manner (NGB, art 31) that must be believed by the Church. "All particular services are equal, because all serve Christ's authority. There are however directions of the different services. For the governing elder service is directed at service to Christ's kingship, for the deacon at the service of his priesthood, and for the teaching elder at the service of his prophetic nature" (cf Acta 2009:598, 4.4, penultimate paragraph).

2.1.1.2 The Church can however believe without doubt that Christ calls upon **male office bearers (servants)**

God's Word puts it in no uncertain terms that there has to be elders, deacons and reverends in a congregation:

Jesus Christ, the Head of his Church (Eph 1:22), initially guided the apostles and prophets to act (Eph 2:19-22; Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:16-19). They appointed elders, deacons and evangelists or reverends (Acts 6:2-6; 14:23; 1 Tim 1:18; 1 Tim 3; 1 Tim 4:6-16). In each case men are mentioned who were appointed in these particular offices or services.

It is therefore not true that gender has no bearing on the particular offices (services) (cf Acta 2009:533, 6.4.4, interpretation 2).

The Church can therefore believe in all frankness that Jesus Christ calls and uses male elders, deacons and reverends in his service (Rom 1:1).

2.1.1.3 Faith rests on certainty

2.1.1.3.1 The Heidelberg Catechism, Son 7:21, clearly states that faith rests on certainty:

"We believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths that true faith is not only certain knowledge based on which we accept all that God reveals to us in his Word as the truth, but also a certain trust worked by the Holy Spirit in my heart through the Gospel"... (HC, 7:21).

2.1.1.3.2 The Holy Spirit instills true faith in my heart only when I dispose of a solid, certain knowledge of a matter in terms of God's Word (Rom 10:17). He does not instill faith in my heart by means of uncertainties, because he is the Spirit of truth (John 14:17).

2.1.1.3.3 The LORD GOD cannot be exalted by acts of faith that rest on uncertainty (Heb 11:6).

2.1.1.4 The Decision by Synod about **female deacons rests on uncertainty**

2.1.1.4.1 Synod 2003 is itself of the opinion that "clear certainty does not exist" (that is, in God's Word) that women can be appointed in the office of deacon (cf Acta 2003:591, E. Commission Report, 4 as well as p574, 3.6.2.1 to 3.6.2.3).

2.1.1.4.2 In light of the certainty from God's Word on which faith is based, how can Synod expect that something of which it is not certain itself has to be believed wholeheartedly? It is simply impossible – the Holy Spirit does not work in this manner. He works and teaches his believers on the basis of the assured truth of the Word (John 14:26; 16:13; 17:17). The LORD's blessing cannot be expected upon a matter that is not credible in terms of the Word.

2.1.1.4.2.1 This uncertainty with regard to female deacons is accentuated further by the fact that the mentioned Report (2.1.1.2 above) uses the concept of two or more "interpretations" (cf Acta 2009:515, 517, 518, 519, 522, 532 and 533). Among other things it says: "The different interpretations are the result of our ability to understand Scripture clearly. The Deputies consequently present two sets of recommendations to Synod with recommendations" (Acta 2009:533, 7, summarizing comment).

- Clearly this is acknowledgement that uncertainty exists whether women may indeed be appointed in the deacon-service!
- 2.1.1.4.2.2 The same uncertainties occur in the book "Male and Female in the Church. Gender and the particular services" (Breed, DG, JvRensburg, Fika, Jordaan, GJC. 2008). After the exegesis and hermeneutics of the particular Scriptural details different "interpretative possibilities" are recommended throughout (e.g. p130-131). The book concludes as follows: "In terms of this the particular Scriptural sections do not necessarily involve different possibilities of meaning, but rather multiple interpretative possibilities" (Douw G Breed, Fika J van Rensburg and Gert JC Jordaan 2008:204, par 17.3.2.2 Taking decision, first col). If a matter can possibly be this, that, or the other, then surely that does not amount to certainty!
- If we are therefore uncertain about what God's Word reveals with regard to women in the particular services, why do we not stick to that which is certain – as found for example in Acts 6:3 and 1 Tim 3:2 which clearly speak of "men" as deacons?
- 2.1.1.4.3 The uncertainty of **female** deacons is further accentuated by the decision of Synod 1988: "It is not possible adequately to prove without contradiction that female members (married or unmarried) serve in the service of deaconship. DECISION: Approved" (Acta 1988:522, 3.7.3). (This decision still stands!)
- 2.1.1.5 The implication of the **uncertainty** when it comes to believing that **women** can be chosen for and confirmed in the office (service) of deacon
- 2.1.1.5.1 In the Formulary of Confirmation for deacons the question is asked: "Are you convinced in your heart that you have been rightly called by the congregation of God, and therefore by God Himself, to this calling?" A person who answers affirmatively to this before God must be sure that he (or she) can believe that he (or she) has been called by God on the basis of his Word.
- 2.1.1.5.2 If two national Synods of the GKSA (1988 and 2003) decided that there is uncertainty as to whether women should be confirmed in the office (service) of deacon, how can it be expected of a woman to say she is convinced, that is to say, she believes and trusts that she has been called by God to act as deacon?
- 2.1.1.5.3 The implication is that a false call is coming to women, since calling cannot be separated from what the Word says. To accept an uncertain calling boils down to a bondage of conscience (NGB, 32).
- 2.1.1.5.4 It is furthermore a bondage of conscience on those (the Church Council and the congregation) who allow the external calling to go out.
- 2.2 *Ground for protest 2*
The decision of Synod 2003 about female deacons implies an incorrect view of Scriptural authority
- 2.2.1 Argument
- 2.2.1.1 Synod "is of the opinion that important verses such as Rom 16:2; 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9-11 have long since played an important and supporting role for women in a particular office in Reformed Churches in ecumenical context..." (cf Acta 2003:591, E. Commission Report, 4).
- 2.2.1.2 Synod contradicts itself when this "opinion" as decision turns into the notion that: "It cannot be said with absolute certainty on the basis of Rom 16:1-2 whether Phoebe served in the particular service of deacon or not" (Acta 2003:574, 3.6.2.1) and: "It is not possible to say whether "the women" here refers to female deacons or to the wives of deacons or to women who rendered deacon's service along with deacons" (Acta 2003:577, 3.8.4.3), but then still insists that these verses (Rom 16:1-2; 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9-11) play an important supportive role.
- 2.2.1.3 It can further be asked: What do these verses support?

- 2.2.1.3.1 The logical answer should be: “there are other verses which support the matter irrefutably.” But these do not exist!
- 2.2.1.3.2 The implication is therefore: it is “The Church” (in other words the “Reformed Churches in ecumenical context”) who decides that there should be female deacons, and that the mentioned verses support this decision.
- 2.2.1.3.3 But this is a wrong view of the authority of Scripture. Here the initiative goes out from “The Church”, while the Word merely plays a supporting role. Actually, it should be the other way around: on the authority of what the Word says, “The Church” decides!

2.3 *Ground for protest 3*

The decision that female deacons are to be chosen is destroying the unity of faith in the GKSA.

2.3.1 Argument

- 2.3.1.1 In HC, 21:54 the GKSA confesses that Jesus Christ chose a congregation for Himself in the unity of the true faith. That is to say, the entire GKSA believes exactly the same about the principles of the true faith on the basis of God’s Word. It should not be the case that some believe in this way about a given matter, and others in that way.
- 2.3.1.2 This unity and homogeneity in the true faith should be protected.
- 2.3.1.3 When prof PJ de Bruyn asks in his book, “*The Gesonde Leer*” (1998:13): Why are the Confession essential, the answer is: “In order to protect unity between the different churches and believers, in order that anyone can not simply pronounce what he wants which would lead to confusion”.
- 2.3.1.4 Also the entire Church Order aims to promote unity among believers. Compare KO See KO, art 1, 3-5, 9, 15-17, 22-25, 31, 35, 43, 44, 53-55, 61-62, 71-81, 82-85, 86. For the sake of unity among churches the KO concludes with art 86 which states that there should be “common voices” (common agreement) when the KO is altered. This points to the fact that we as believers should seek and protect the unity of faith. The Lord indeed implemented the services/offices (KO, art 1, 2) in order to equip, to build unity, “in order that we would no longer be children that are thrown about like waves by every wind of teaching” (cf Eph 4:11-16).
- 2.3.1.5 The decision of Synod 2003 that women can be confirmed in the office of deacon, however, results in serious damage to the unity of faith in the GKSA. And even contains the seeds of the destruction of this unity. Some members are of the opinion that women can serve as deacons, others don’t believe it. And then they look for another home in a different congregation where they find the habit that suits them. Many church-judiciary unsavoury matters and divides have arisen as a result. For these matters the Reformed Churches of the Classis Ventersburg can vouch in particular. This sad state of affairs of division can be noticed in the entire GKSA as it were.
- 2.3.1.6 Synod decided: women “can” be chosen and confirmed as deacons in the GKSA – that is to say it can be done, or it can be left as it is. How confusing this is! Does unity of faith look like this? Is this the way in which the LORD God works with his believers? No, He does not force them to straddle two thoughts in his service (1 Kings 18:21, Eph 4:11-16).
- 2.3.1.7 The said decision threatens the unity in faith in that the impression is given that the offices in the Church amount to an average matter about which there might be agreement to disagree, or that can willingly be left to its own devices in accordance with circumstances. In the meantime the offices are a matter of principle (NGB, 31).
- 2.3.1.8 The said decision is therefore also in conflict with NGB, 32 where it is confessed, among other things: “We therefore accept only that which can serve to protect and promote unity and cohesion and to sustain everything in obedience to God.”

2.4 *Ground for protest 4*

Synod 2003 unconsciously misleads the Church populace in its pronouncement about women as deacons when “the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context” is used as motivation why it is after all justified that women may indeed be deacons.

2.4.1 Argument

2.4.1.1 Synod states the following on p591, 4, second sentence: “Synod is further of the opinion that certain verses such as Rom 16:2, 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9-15 have long since been playing an important supporting role for women in particular offices in the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context, although on the one hand no clear certainty exists, but on the other also no prohibition is placed on women in the office of deacon.” (Our emphasis.)

2.4.1.2 The implication of this statement is

2.4.1.2.1 that all the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context have had clarity for a long time that certain verses such as Rom 16:2, 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9–15 support women in particular offices. It is actually a mere formality that GKSA should also decide this formally. Why wait any further?! The whole Reformed world does it – why not we, too!? Actually there is no uncertainty about the given verses about women as deacons. It is so for example that the entire Reformed ecumenical world agrees that these verses support women in the particular offices (services).

2.4.1.2.2 that all Reformed Churches support this worldwide;

2.4.1.2.3 that all Reformed Churches have supported this for a long time – only GKSA has not caught up yet. We are therefore far behind. We should join the other churches!

2.4.1.2.4 that non-Biblical grounds have more force than Biblical argument, because there is “on the one hand no clear certainty,” but because all the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context actually have been supporting this and do indeed approve of it, Synod 2003 will merely follow suit by approving it, too.

2.4.1.3 The undersigned are, however, of the opinion that it is not true that all the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context actually have been enjoying certainty for a long time that certain verses such as Rom 16:2, 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9–15 support women in the particular offices!

For example:

2.4.1.3.1 Synod Middelburg (the Netherlands) of 1581 (as described by GKSA Synod 1988, Acta:517, 3.5.3) as well as the Synod of Dordrecht (the Netherlands) of 1618-1619 (as described by GKSA Synod 1988, Acta:517, 3.5.3) did not support the idea of women as deacons.

2.4.1.3.2 So, too, Synod GKSA of 1988 (Acta:507–523) and Synod 2003 (Acta:545-556; and 559-590 – the entire 3) decided upon the opposite!

2.4.1.3.2.1 See for example Synod 1988, Acta 507-523.

2.4.1.3.2.2 See for example Synod 2003, Acta:545-556: for example 5.1.1.7 and 5.2.1.4.

2.4.1.3.2.3 Synod 2003, Acta:559-590 – the entire 3, cf for example 3.2.3.5.2, 3.2.3.5.3, 3.2.3.5.3, 3.2.3.6.4, 3.2.3.6.5, 3.2.3.9, 3.2.3.10 and 3.3.1.6.

2.4.1.3.2.4 Synod 2003, Acta:559-590: for example p574, 3.6.2 (in particular of Rom 16:1-2) and p577, 3.8.4 (in particular of 1 Tim 3:11) and p579, 3.9.2 (in particular of Rom 1 Tim 5:9-15) and also p580-590, 3.10.2, 3.11.4, 3.12.2, 3.13.5 and p590, 3.14.2 again and again confirms that Synod 2003 did not support the notion of women as deacons.

2.4.1.3.2.5 See for example Acta 2003:561, 3.2.1.1.1; p568, 3.2.3.10.6; p569, 3.3.2; p574, 3.6.2; p576, 3.8.3.3; p577, 3.8.4; p578, 3.9.1.4 and 3.9.1.5; p579, 3.9.2; p585, 3.11.4; p587, 3.13.2.4; p589, 3.13.4.2 and 3.13.5 and p590, 3.14.2.

2.4.1.3.3 Synod Middellande decided in 2004 (as cited in *Die Kerkblad*, April 2005:23) that:

- 2.4.1.3.3.1 “a letter should have been directed at Synod GKSA in which the distrust of Middellande was expressed, because they have not been asked for advice about this. And that Synod GKSA should in future acknowledge everyone in matters that impact on the Church as a whole ...”.
- 2.4.1.3.3.2 “Synod decided that churches who had already confirmed women as deacons should discontinue this practice until advice from deputees would have served at the next meeting of Synod”.
- 2.4.1.3.4 Ecumenical churches
- 2.4.1.3.4.1 If the statement contained in Acta 2003:591, 4 merely implies other churches with which GKSA are in correspondence or discussion, it is also not true that “all the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context actually reached clarity long ago that certain verses such as Rom 16:2, 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9–15 support women in the particular offices”!
- 2.4.1.3.4.2 The book by Douw G Breed, Fika J of Rensburg and Gert JC Jordaan (2008: Male and Female in the Church. Gender and the particular services) shows on pages 33-35 that the GKSA enjoys ties with 13 church communities, namely: Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland; Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken; Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (Vrijgemaakte); Gereformeerde Church Botswana; Eglise Reformee Confessante au Congo; Christian Reformed Church in North America; Orthodox Presbyterian Church; Free Church of Scotland; Free Church of Scotland (Continuing); Christian Reformed Churches of Australia; Reformed Churches of New Zealand; The Reformed Church in Japan; The Presbyterian Church in Korea.
- 2.4.1.3.4.3 Only the following among these decided that women can be allowed in the particular services, namely: the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken (Breed, *et al.* 2008:34).
- 2.4.1.3.4.4 The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia decided to allow women in the office of deacon (Breed, *et al.* 2008:34).
- 2.4.1.3.4.5 The Presbyterian Church in Korea “uses women as deaconesses in the manner in which Calvin arranged it” (Breed, *et al.* 2008:34). In other words women are allowed to work alongside deacons to comfort and care for the poor and the sick (Breed, *et al.* 2008:32 and 34).
- 2.4.1.3.4.6 Therefore: only 3 of the mentioned communities accept that women can act as deacons and 1 as deaconesses. Breed (*et al.* 2008:34 and 35) further report that by the time of the Dordtse Synod 1618/1619 the convention of employing deaconesses had expired.
- 2.4.1.3.4.7 The following examples of Reformed Churches in ecumenical context, do not use Rom 16:1,2; 1 Tim 3:11 and 5:9-15 as supporting verses in favour of women in the particular offices:
- 2.4.1.3.4.7.1 Reformed Churches of New Zealand: Rev John Rogers was the delegate of this Church at GKSA Synod 2003.
- 2.4.1.3.4.7.1.1 He responded as follows about the decision regarding women in the office of deacon at Synod (quoted from a letter, p1, 2 of Rev John Rogers to ds AH Stavast, dd 17 June 2005):
 “I quote from my report to our Ecumenical Relations Committee;
 “... *Let me express my concerns at this point only very briefly. Perhaps the Church has been wrong for many 100s of years regarding the office of deacon as having the same status as an office holding a ruling authority in the church altho exercising a different ministry than that of the elder and deacon. And we would have no problem discussing that & if in fact we have been wrong, then opening up the office as a non-authority bearing office.*”

"But up until now that is what we have all believed. You have today opened the office of deacon to women without first discussing two aspects of the question that concern me and I think would concern the RCNZ:

- (i) *You have not thought about your theology of ordination. If ordination confers an authority derived from the apostles, the question of the relative authority of the offices needs to be settled first.*
- (ii) *In your present CO you allow for deacons to be co-opted onto the session when a session has only three members or fewer. That infers that you see the office of deacon as an authority-bearing office. There must be a biblical rationale behind that. But you have made your decision today without first studying whether that rationale was a correct understanding of Scripture or not.*

"In short bro chairman you have put the cart before the horse and that will concern us. I may also say that these are also the sentiments of bro Sikkema of the URCNA."

2.4.1.3.4.7.1.2 With regard to a question about the official viewpoint of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) about this matter he answered (p3, 5.2):

"As a matter of fact, we have never, as a Synod, studied the whole question, so you could say, on paper, we don't have an official position. Yet, is most definitely our practice and position since the beginning of our Churches; it was one of the stated reasons we broke relations with the CRCNA and we discussed the whole question of our relationship with the CRCNA for fifteen years and sympathy for their position did not gain traction within our Churches right through that time; it is one of the points of controversy between us and the CRCA (Australia) at the present time."

2.4.1.3.4.7.2 United Reformed Churches of North America: they, too, were not persuaded in favour of the the decision taken during GKSA Synod 2003 (thus confirms Rev John Rogers in the letter of 17 June 2005):

"In short bro chairman you have put the cart before the horse and that will concern us. I may also say that these are also the sentiments of bro Sikkema of the URCNA." (p2, punt 2).

And:

"I showed Ray Sikkema (United Ref Chs NA) before I spoke and he agreed with me. He was very upset." (p3, 5.3).

2.4.1.3.4.7.3 The Presbyterian Church in Korea: according to Acta 2000 (416, 417, 2.2.4; 3.1.1.2.2) two types of deacon services are maintained. The one is for a limited period of time and for certain duties that have nothing to do with management of the deacons, but with caring for the congregation. They function without being confirmed as deacons.

2.4.1.3.4.7.4 Reformed Church of Australia: according to Acta 2000 (416, 417, 2.2.4; 3.1.1.2.1) female members are implemented in deaconal services, but without confirming them. They are part of the deaconal team, but function separately from the Church Council.

2.4.1.3.4.7.5 The opinion of prof GJC Jordaán in an article in *The Kerkblad* (29 January 2003:5, 6) further confirms that there are even more churches in ecumenical context that do not use these verses in support of the given view: "But simultaneously this is a direction which separates the GKSA further from a significant part of the Reformed world such as the *Reformed Church of New Zealand*, the *United Reformed Church of North America*, the *Christelik Gereformeerde Kerken* and *Christelik Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* in the Netherlands."

- 2.4.1.4 It is therefore clear that unanimity among Reformed Churches in ecumenical context does not exist about the so-called supporting role that the given churches play in the argument. The statement of Synod 2003 can therefore confuse and mislead church members.
- 2.4.1.5 Can women and the Church Council and the congregation believe with conviction and with approbation allow the chosen or present women in the office to be confirmed if it is clear from these testimonies that all the Reformed Churches in ecumenical context do NOT use these verses to support women in the service of deaconship? This leaves the female member appointed as deacon no certainty of faith that she may indeed be confirmed in this office.

3. On the whole

How can members receive a female deacon as a messenger of the LORD in their homes if there is no certainty that she has indeed been justifiably chosen and confirmed to the office (service), or if there is no certainty that God's Word allows women as deacons?

4. Request

Synod 2012 is therefore requested irrevocably to revoke the decision of the National Synod 2003 (Acta 2003:591. E. Commission report, 4 and p593. Decision. As modified by "Errata Acta" as provided by the Administrative Bureau), namely that women can serve in the office of deacon, and to acknowledge that this is not the way in which God's Word teaches one.

C. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Mandate

To advise the Synod with regard to the Gravamen of Klopper, Kruger, Stavast and Vorster- Synod 2003 – Women in the office of deacon.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters of the Synod take note of

2.1 Method

- 2.1.1 The Commission studied the Gravamen of Klopper, Kruger, Stavast en Vorster against the decision of Synod 2003 (Acta 2003:591, E. Commission Report, 4 and p 593. Decision: as corrected in the Errata Acta).
- 2.1.2 Rev AH Stavast, one of the objectors, was given the opportunity to explain the Gravamen.
- 2.1.3 The Commission also heard from prof G Breed.
- 2.1.4 The Commission also studied the untabled Reports of the Commissions (both the Majority and Minority Report) of Synod 2012.

Decision: Points 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 noted.

2.2 Reasoning

2.2.1 Ground of protest 1

The objectors claim that the believers can not believe to be chosen or ordained in the office of deacon because:

- (i) It is a matter of principle that should be believed on the ground of God's Word.
- (ii) This belief must be based on assurance, while the Synod's decision on the woman as a deacon is based on uncertainty.
- (iii) The objectors further claim that it can only be believed with certainty that men can be ordained as office bearers.
- (iv) To accept an uncertain calling comes down to binding of the conscience according to the objectors.

2.2.1.1 Judgment

The objectors take only one part of the decision of Synod 2003 and object against it. The Synod decision against which is objected indicates on the one hand that there are not clear certainty, but on the other hand there is no prohibition of women being ordained as deacons. When this Synod decision is read as a whole, it is clear that the decision is based on thorough and extended study. The objectors' judgment that the decision of the Synod rests on unsure grounds, is therefore wrong. The decision of the Synod actually indicates with certainty that Scripture does not provide enough evidence to make a decision that binds the consciences of believers. The Synod therefore does not decide that women must be ordained in the office of deacon, or that they may not be ordained, but that it can happen according to the judgment of the local church.

The following reasoning with regard to the usage of the text by the objectors is stated in the following two points:

1. The ground of protest state that believers cannot believe of heart that women may be ordained in the office of deacon. In 2.1.1.2 they claim „The Church may however believe, without a doubt, that Jesus Christ calls male office bearers (servants) according to God's Word.“

In itself, this statement is true. It is clear that men are called to serve in the special offices. The objectors must however prove that only men and, and not women, may serve as deacons. To make the decision of the Synod invalid, they must prove that there is a certainty that women may not serve.

The objectors quote the following texts as proof for their ground of objection: Acts 6:2-6; 14:23; 1 Tim 1:18; 1 Tim 3; 1 Tim 4:6-16.

Within these texts, there is only the probability of deacons being involved in Acts 6:2-6 and 1 Timothy 3.

Acts 6

Aldready in 1967, prof Christi Coetzee had shown that the 7 men that were chosen in Acts 6, could not be seen as deacons. Breed (2010) shows that what happens here can also not be seen as the ordination of a new office or service.

Motivation:

- (i) The word diakonos is not used in Acts 6 to describe the 7 men.
- (ii) The word diakonia is used to describe their service, but this same word is also used to describe the work of the apostles.
 - (a) The apostles would do the diakonia of the Word and prayer.
 - (b) The 7 would deal with the diakonia of the tables.
 - (c) It is not clear what the task of the 7 was, but it is possible that they lead with the meetings that took place from house to house. There they would serve the Holy Communion, and they would lead with the discussion of the preaching by the apostles, etc.
 - (d) It is also possible that the great need of the Greek-speaking widows was an issue of language – al seven men have Greek names, and would therefore be able to solve the pastoral problems and conflict between Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking believers.
 - (e) Two of the 7 (Philip and Stephen) later acts as evangelists.
 - (f) The purpose of Acts 6 is not to describe the content of the work of these 7, but to show how inner conflict may be adressed and that the service of everyone in the congregation is vitally important.

(iii) When the meaning of the word diakonia in the NT is studied, it is clear that it carries different spheres of meaning and is not primarily aimed at the service of Compassion or even fellowship between believers.

(a) Paul says in Eph 3:7 that he has become a diakonos of the gospel.

(b) In Mark 10 and Matthew 20, Jesus describes his own ministry with the verb diakoneo.

(c) The diakon wordgroup (diakonia – ministry, diakonos – servant, diakoneo – to serve), therefore describes a wide sphere of meaning

Therefore Acts 6 can not be seen as proof that men (or even only men) served in the office of deacon.

1 Timothy 3

From 1 Timothy 3 it is so that it is clear that men served in the office of elder and deacon, but the objectors do not show that only men may serve.

2. In 2.1.1.3 the objectors claim that „Faith is grounded on certainty“

Their argument wants to show that the Synod’s decision rests on uncertainty and is therefore not a valid decision. The Synod however came to the certainty that from the NT a decisive answer could not be given of whether a women may serve or may not serve in the office of deacon. There was no uncertainty from the Synod with regard to this. On the basis of this certainty, the Synod decided that women may be ordained in the office of deacon. If the objectors believe that the Synod’s decision rested upon uncertainty, their insistence that women may not be deacons, rests upon equal uncertainty. They do not show from Scripture that women is forbidden to serve as deacons.

What is clear from the NT, ist hat women did do deaconal work.

If it is accepted that Acts 6 does not describe the institution of or description of the content of the office of deacon, we nowhere else in the NT find a description of the content of the specific office of deacon. It is clear from the use of the wordgroup (diakonons, diakonia, diakoneo) that the wordgroup describe different types of service:

(i) Women: Matt 27:55 (Mark 15:41). There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him (diakoneo).

(ii) Peter’s mother-in- law: Matt 8:15. He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve (diakoneo) him.

(iii) Anyone: **John 12:26**. If anyone serves (diakoneo) me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant (diakonons) be also. If anyone serves (diakoneo) me, the Father will honor him.

(iv) 1 Pet 4:10-11. As each has received a gift, use it to serve (diakoneo) one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves (diakoneo) by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Different people are also called a diakonos:

(v) Col 4:7. Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister (diakonons) and fellow servant in the Lord.

(vi) Rom 16:1. I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (diakonons) of the church at Cenchreae

- (vii) Compare also: Matt 20:26, Mark 10:43, Rom 13:4 (2), Rom 15:8, Gal 2:17, Eph 3:7, Eph 6:21, Col 1:7, Col 1:23, Col 1:25, Col 4:7, 1 Thess 3:2, 1 Tim 4:6, 1 Col 3:5, 2 Col 3:6, 2 Col 6:4, 2 Col 11:15 (2), 2 Col 11:23.

In 1 Tim 3 the women are named together with the male deacons. In 1 Tim 5 there is mention of the service of the widows.

All of this is evidence which was taken into account by the Synod in its decision. The Synod was therefore sure, with the insight that they had at that time, that women may serve in the office of deacon.

2.2.1.2 Finding

The Petition of Protest does not succeed on ground of protest 1.

Decision: Points 2.2.1 to 2.2.1.2 noted.

2.2.2 Ground of protest 2

Ground of protest 2 flows from ground of protest 1. The objectors claim that the decision of Synod 2003 with regard to female deacons implies a wrong view of the authority of Scripture. The Synod would contradict itself by saying that the Synod can not say, on the basis of Romans 12:1-2, with absolute certainty, that women may be deacons, but on the other hand state that texts like Romans 16:1-2 play an important role in support of women as deacons.

It is further claimed that it is "The Church" (in other words – the Reformed Churches in Ecumenical relation) who decided that there may be female deacons, and that texts (like Romans 12) would support this decision. From this it would seem that it is the church that decided that women may be deacons, and not Scripture that teaches this.

2.2.2.1 Judgement

The Synod did not contradict herself, because the decision of Synod 2003 rests upon thorough study of Scripture by the Deputies and other. The weight of the decision by Synod 2003 lays therein that it was shown with great certainty that there can be no certainty whether women may or may not be deacons. There is actually a preponderance of testimony that women performed diaconal work.

Furthermore, the reference to the fact that other Reformed Churches in Ecumenical relation studied certain text is not an indication that the Synod slavishly followed those churches. The Synod's decision does not go further than what was brought forward from the study of Scripture.

2.2.2.2 Finding

The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 2.

Decision: Points 2.2.2 to 2.2.2.2 noted.

2.2.3 Ground of protest 3

The objectors claim that the decision that women may be elected as deacons, destroys the unity of the GKSA. The fact that some are certain that women may be deacons, and others are not, threatens the unity. The objectors furthermore claim that the Confessions and Church Order is brought under suspicion by this decision. The objectors also derive that the fact that women may be deacons done according to local circumstances, might create the impression that this is a mediocre matter. This named decision is opposing Belgic Confession, art 32.

2.2.3.1 Judgement

Unity in the church is only brought about by the Holy Spirit. Unity also does not imply uniformity. The fact that the churches in the Synod may agree that there is no certainty with regard to certain matters, and that consciences cannot be bound, actually advances unity.

The objectors does not show how the unity of the GKSA is threatened by the decision of the Synod. The Confessions also do not mention anything with regard to the matter. There is furthermore, no article within the Church Order, that have to be changed as a result of the desicion.

The objectors also do not convince with their argumentation that the matter of the offices in the church, is reduced to a mediocre matter by the decision of the Synod.

One characteristics of the true church (cf. BC, art 29) is the pure ministry of the Word – therein lies the unity. To agree that Scripture does not give certainty about a certain matter, and not to bind consciences, therefore also advances unity.

2.2.3.2 Finding

The Gravamen also does not succeed with regard to this ground of protest.

Decision: Points 2.2.3 to 2.2.3.2 noted.

2.2.4 Ground of protest 4

The objectors claim that the decision of Synod 2003 misled the church community by claiming that Reformed Churches in ecumenical context justify female deacons. The objectors indicate that numerous Reformed Churches in the world do not ordain women as deacons.

2.2.4.1 Judgement

The objectors' claims are not true. The Synod's decision was not taken on the basis of decisions by other Reformed Churches in ecumenical relation. The Synod assigned Deputies to study those decisions. Therefore the Report of the Deputies refers to the decision by churches in ecumenical relation with regard to those Scriptural references. The decision by these churches were also taken in to account in the Synod's reasoning of the Scriptural evidence. In the end the Synod took its decision on the basis of Scriptural evidence.

2.2.4.2 Finding

The Gravamen also does not succeed with regard to this ground of protest.

Decision: Points 2.2.4 to 2.2.4.2 noted.

3. **Matters the Synod decide on**

3.1 The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 1.

Decision: Approved.

3.2 The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 2.

Decision: Approved.

3.3 The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 3.

Decision: Approved.

3.4 The Gravamen does not succeed on ground of protest 4.

Decision: Approved.

3.5 The Gravamen does not succeed in its entirety.

Decision: Approved.

21.8 PETITION OF PROTEST OF CLASSIS EASTERN PRETORIA AGAINST SYNOD DECISION 2009 THAT WOMEN MAY NOT SERVE AS MINISTERS OR ELDERS (2012: Artt 17, 27, 258) (2016: Artt 41, 66, 68)

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
- B. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of the Commission Church Polity.

2012

- A. Dr FP Kruger tables the petition of protest.
- B. **Decision:** The petition of protest is referred to Commission for Petitions of Protest 7.
- C. **Order motion:** Dr WC Opperman tables the order motion.
- D. **Decision:** Order motion approved with recommendations.
- E. With the approving of the order motion the petitions of protest in regard to women in the particular services are only adjudicated upon at a next Synod since there are matters that require urgent attention before these petitions of protest can be dealt with to the edification of the churches (see Petition of Protest 2.13 in Acta 2012).

F. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Decision that is protested

The decision that is protested: Synod 2009 "...decide according to the approved recommendation, 4.2, that women may not serve in the special offices of minister and elder" (Acta 2009:667).

2. Ground for protest

Synod 2009 did not act wisely by taking a decision of conscience on this matter.

3. Motivation

Study on the matter of the place of women in the church and their possible involvement in the special services within the church have been conducted for 25 years before Synod 2009. In all these years no unanimity could ever be reached regarding the matter. This fact also became evident from the last Commission Report at Synod 2009 that reported on in-depth study regarding the matter of women in the special offices. Differences were especially noticeable in the discussions of 1 Cor 14:33-35 and 1 Tim 2:8-15.

The Commission Report agreed that the differences did not have to do with the acknowledgement of the authority of Scripture or wrong hermeneutical and exegetical points of departure or practices. The words of the Commission stated: "*The two views as set out in this Report are based on the Scripture and hermeneutical points of departure according to the doctrine of the church as explained in points 6 and 7. The difference between the two views lies on the level of exegetical synthesis*" (10.16.1 of the Report). Synod took note of this view. Synod did not provide any reason as to why one of the two options is more acceptable when giving its decision. There are two views that have both been compiled exegetically from Scripture, and yet they clearly differ. Neither one is contrary to the Confessions, because the matter of women in the special services is not a confessional matter in itself (see 10.16.2 of the Report).

Yet given these circumstances, Synod still takes a conscience binding decision, which was not a wise act given the information in the above paragraphs. The conscience binding nature of the decision especially lies in the words: *“may not serve” (Synod has, in light of the discussion of the report, come to the persuasion that women may not serve in the special services of minister and elder”* – our emphasis).

This conscience binding decision is furthermore not wise because it includes the following implications:

1. Synod gives the assurance that it is the will of God that women may not serve as ministers or elders in the GKSA.
2. Synod assures members that God will not, within His free-powered will, call a woman to serve as minister or elder at any time in the GKSA.
3. The sister who declares that she has the realization and certainty of an inner calling to stand in the service of elder or minister and who desires it, is told with certainty that what she experiences as her calling, does not come from God and that the Holy Spirit does not work this in her. It is therefore a wrongful and sinful desire that she has to confess and about which she should be reprimanded.

Believers of both views (for or against women in the service of minister and elder) feel strongly about their views, which are based on Scripture and had developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Both groups are certain in their consciences before God. Exegesis of leading theologians could over all the years not come up with one exegetical view from Scripture regarding this matter.

4. Conclusion

In light of the above explanation and motivation Synod would have done better by taking a decision that does not bind the consciences of the Churches and members. Here the decision of Synod 2003 regarding the woman in the office of deacon, shows great wisdom: *“in light of Scripture Synod approves that women who have the necessary gifts, can be elected and confirmed as deacons within the GKSA”* (our emphasis).

There is not conscience binding “should” in this decision, but just “can”, which creates room and opens possibilities for the consciences of the Churches.

5. Recommendation

The Classis Eastern Pretoria humbly requests that Synod changes its decision regarding women in the special services of elders and minister, and also uses the word can (as with the decision on women as deacons). In this manner there is no conscience binding decision regarding a matter about which people have diverging and definite views.

C. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Assignment

Assess the Church Polity aspects from all the referred Gravamina handed in at the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

- 1.1 All the Church Polity principles that were addressed from the different Gravamina, must be showed (pt 4).
- 1.2 Church Polity principles must be applied in the context of each separate Gravamen (pt 5-8).

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Execution of assignment

- 2.1 All the Gravamina were processed and relevant Church Polity matters were identified and processed. The Report speaks in broad terms on all the Church Polity matters which came to the fore in the Gravamina, and thereafter all of the Gravamina is judged separately and point by point.

- 2.2 Rev HS Coetzee from RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and dr J Lion-Cachet from RC Klerksdorp reported to the Commission in order to elucidate.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. Church Polity principles on the table

- 3.1 Since the reformation there is a specific view on the offices that also found its way into our own Church Order. Some of the aggrieved argued that the Synod only researched the continuity and not also the discontinuity in the offices in the Old and New Testaments. The fulfilment of the offices are in Christ. Therefor there is no direct perpendicular jump between the offices of the Old and New Testament. Our Church Order moves from the presupposition that there are four offices, namely, professors, ministers, elders, deacons (CO, art 2).
- 3.2 Some of the Gravamina claim that the two choices from which must be chosen, forces the minority to bow before the majority without any evidence for why the Synod chose the one over the other. There is also claimed that the Synod could not make a decision in obedience to Scripture – yet a choice was nonetheless made. This presupposes that the choice that was made, was the one that the Synod felt, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the correct one. Who now leaves the judgement to the local Church Council “**to themselves within their own circumstances, decide on the matter**”, opens up the way for independentism. Denomination guarantees that we will not because of a lack of gifts each take our own way and thereby give up the principles of the true church. The way of CO, art 31 (majority decision) is our arrangement with one another. The orderly way can be followed in order to change it (if the other churches can be convinced by way of Scripture, Confession and Church Order).
- 3.3 In the Gravamina a distinction is made between the “**in the light of the handling of the Report**” against the “**in obedience to Scripture**”. This is a false distinction. Based on the evidence from Scripture (as is taken up in the Report) certain decisions are made. Here, by wordplay, the idea is created that the Synod did not take Scriptural evidence into consideration.
- 3.4 When a Synod makes decisions, the Lord is begged to give the meeting guidance through His Spirit (ref CO, art 32). All explanations of Scripture, motivations and arguments must be taken into consideration before there is moved onto voting. The decision that is taken, stands, unless the opposite can be shown from the Word by way of gravamen or appeal (CO, artt 31 & 46).
- 3.5 The requirement that there should be consensus on the explanation of Scripture, places a new approach on the table of the Synod. A new approach must be tabled by way of gravamen or proposed-resolution and be tested. At Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:276, 20.4) there was no proposed-resolution by Regional Synod Pretoria that was upheld. This proposed-resolution requested that decisions regarding essential matters must be taken by consensus. By not upholding this proposed-resolution, the Synod enforced the principle of CO, art 31.
- 3.6 If there is no clarity on a matter in the light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order; the *status quo* is upheld (CO, artt 31 & 46). The burden of proof lies with the aggrieved or the person that wants to change, to in light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order show the contrary (CO, artt 31 & 46). Some aggrieved claim that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture to uphold the *status quo*. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed.
- 3.7 A greater meeting’s approach is decided by that meeting under guidance from the Moderamen (CO, art 35). A meeting, for instance, has the prerogative to simply take note of a proposal that it does not want to take for its account.

- 3.8 The is claimed that conscience binding happens when a majority vote, and not Scriptural basis, is the deciding factor. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making by meetings may never be denied (see Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 84), because then Scripture governs.
- 3.9 The phrase “conscience binding” is many a time used wrongly in churches, as such only negatively. Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
- 3.10 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a “higher meeting” in order to enforce them on “lesser meetings”, but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order according to the Presbyterian system of church governance.
- 3.11 From the arguments of certain Gravamina the suggestion comes that there exist a tension, even a contradiction, between Scripture on the one side, and the Church Order on the other side. This is a faulty argument as the Church Order is based upon Scripture and Confession.
- 3.12 A Gravamen must be properly based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 31). The simple expression of an opinion, (e.g. the so called “**unwise action**”), is no convincing proof.
- 3.13 The *onus* rests with the aggrieved to prove that the decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* does not rest with the greater meeting to prove that it is in fact the case (CO, art 31). The working of the Holy Spirit must not be denied in the taking of decisions.
- 3.14 Some aggrieved claim that the matter around the women is not an essential or principal matter. Synod 2015 however decided that it is in fact an essential or principal matter; this decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).
- 3.15 Some aggrieved request tolerance in order to accommodate each other’s views on the matter of women, seeing how important the matter is, but in their view not as important so as to endanger the unity in the church. As far as essential matters are concerned, we may however not simply tolerate different views but must remain true to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Almost a third of the Church Order deals with the offices. This points to the importance of the offices for order within the church. This implies that the offices are an essential matter that touches on all churches’ essence.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.15 noted.

4. 21.8, p371: Gravamen Classis Eastern Pretoria on decision Synod 2009 – that women may not serve as minister and elders

4.1 *Ground for objection (p371)*

4.1.1 The aggrieved claim that Synod 2009 did not act wisely by taking a conscience-binding decision on the matter of women as minister or elder.

4.1.2 Adjudication

4.1.2.1 A Gravamen must be properly based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 31). The simple expression of an opinion, (e.g. the so called “unwise action”), is no convincing proof.

- 4.1.2.2 There is already a decision taken on this matter, namely that in the light of the study from the Word, summarised in the Report, there was decided to remain with the *status quo* which has been the case throughout the years since the Reformation. Those who differ from this could not satisfactory show the opposite from Scripture. The burden of proof rest with those who wants to change (CO, art 31).
- 4.1.2.3 The *onus* rest on the aggrieved to show that decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* thus does not rest on greater meetings to prove that this is the case (CO, art 31). The Synod simply had to vote in the light of the motivation, recommendations and arguments during the Synod. Under guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Synod acted outside the normal approach (CO, art 32) by especially asking the Lord for wisdom and insight through prayer before the votes were cast.
- 4.1.2.4 Church meetings must make decisions in the light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The orderly approach that is in place and agreed upon is CO, art 31. The decision that was made thus by implication chose the so called “second” point of view, which upholds the *status quo*.
- 4.1.2.5 The aggrieved acknowledge that there was an “**in-depth study done on the matter of women is specific offices**”. The Synod however, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, made a decision based on the motivations, recommendations, and arguments during the Synod.
- 4.1.2.6 Churches are bound by decisions which was taken in the past (CO, artt 31 & 46). To take decisions, churches gather to decide together in the light of the Word based upon their unity in Christ (Eph 4:1-6).
- 4.1.2.7 The aggrieved does not prove that consciences was unnecessarily bound by the Synod decision.

Decision: Points 4.1.1 to 4.1.2.7 noted.

4.1.3 Recommendation

- 4.1.3.1 The Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

21.2 PETITION OF PROTEST: RC KRUGERSDORP CONCERNING THE DECISION OF SYNOD 2009 ABOUT “ISSUES CONCERNING WOMAN” (2015: Artt 33, 35, 245) (2016: Artt 42, 63, 65, 71, 79, 80)

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
- B. Rev CCA Vrey reports on behalf of the Commission Grounds for Gravamen 1 Cur 14.
- C. Rev BCG Fourie reports on behalf of Commission Revelational and Historical.
- D. Rev PW Kurpershoek reports on behalf of Commission Grounds of Gravamen 1 Tim 2 – Minority Report.
- E. Dr DG Breed reports on behalf of Commission Grounds of Gravamen 1 Tim 2 – Majority Report.

2015

- A. Dr WC Vergeer tables the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** Further handling of the matter awaits decision iro Report Deputies Unity in Diversity (21.1).
- C. **Decision:** Refer to Special Synod (See 21.1 Report Deputies Unity in Diversity art 245 : All the relevant Petitions of Protest deal with women in the particular service. In light of the Synod’s decision that the matter of women in the particular service is a significant issue, it is recommended that the Petitions of Protest be referred to the Special Synod.

D. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Introduction

The Reformed Church Krugersdorp, in pursuance of its decision taken on 24 June 2014, herewith submits the under mentioned Petition, for your consideration. It is our hope and prayer that you will perceive the merits of the objections and uphold the petition.

2. Decision against which objection is made

“The meeting decides according to the approved recommendation, pt 4.2, that women may not act in the particular office of minister and elder” (Acta 2009:667).

3. Background

- 3.1 The GK Krugersdorp also in 2012 put a Petition before the Synod, concerning the same (above mentioned) decision. The grounds of objection were: (a) Binding of conscience, (b) Insufficient reckoning with the evidence of Scripture, (c) Insufficient reckoning with the evidence of the Early Christian Church and (d) Contradicting ecclesiastical practice and exegesis.
- 3.2 The Synod however did not address our petition in 2012, but referred is to a Deputation to report on it in 2015 (Acta 2012:353).
- 3.3 Further reflection since then on the (above mentioned) decision of Synod 2009 revealed new grounds for objection. These new objections are against the exegesis (*Women not in instructing and ruling ministries*) in the Report before Synod 2009 (Acta 2009:611-664, Right hand column). After consideration we came to the conviction that this exegesis on key issues can not pass the test of Reformed scientific exegesis, and that it thus amounts to (according to the report’s own definition) “inadmissible” and “intolerable” exegesis (Acta 2009:604).

- 3.4 Because Synod 2009 took its decision (that women should not serve in the office of minister and elder) “in the light of the Report” (Acta 2009:669) the decision (if the exegesis contained in the Report on key issues indeed is to be found “inadmissible” or “intolerable”) can not be maintained.
- 3.5 Therefore we now put these new objections before the Synod for due consideration.

4. First ground of objection: The exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:12 and the resulting inferences (which occupy a central place in the whole Report and its final application) is in conflict with what is allowed according to Greek grammar and the witness of the text

- 4.1 The Report before the Synod (on the basis of an identified chiasm in 1 Timothy 2:12) finds: “*It therefore seems that Paul describes what women will do if they would give instruction in the congregation, namely that they will exercise authority over men, with the words οὐδέ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός.* It is therefore clear that Paul in 1 Timothy 2 does not place a complete prohibition on the exercise of authority by women in the special ministries. In this part women are specifically prohibited from exercising authority by ministering the Word” (Acta 2009:641). This finding is repeated in the final conclusion (Acta 2009:650) and application (Acta 2009:651) of the exegesis (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) in the Report.
- 4.2 According to this exegesis therefore, a subordinate, explanatory (adverbial) function is (in 1 Timothy 2:12) allocated to διδάσκειν (to teach) in respect of αὐθεντεῖν (to exercise authority) (“*The instructions in 1 Timothy 2 regarding women in the ministry has specific relevance for ministering authority by ministering the Word and not for exercising authority in general.*” (Acta 2009:651).
- 4.3 Extensive research on the use of the οὐκ - οὐδέ (“not” - “and [also] not”) construction in the Greek language (as used in Verse 12), in the whole *Corpus Graeca* (all the known Greek texts [in Scripture and all the available sources from the time of the NT]) in which all of the occurrences of this construction was studied, revealed no instance where one of the two concepts in this construct was subordinate to the other. Οὐδέ (“and [also] not”) consequently and without exception always functions as a co-ordinate conjunction in the Greek language (Köstenberger, 1995:81-103). Verse 12 (literally translated with: “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man...”) can therefore not legally be translated as that women by teaching are busy exercising authority over men. According to the grammatically correct understanding of this part of Scripture both activities (teaching as well as exercising authority) are independently and separately totally prohibited by Paul, and not just exercising authority by means of preaching as is alleged (Acta 2009:641-643).
- 4.4 The exegesis on 1 Timothy 2:12 before the Synod also (wrongly) allocates different values to the infinitives αὐθεντεῖν (“to exercise authority”) and διδάσκειν (“to teach”) when it alleges that “***It is therefore clear***” that 1 Timothy 2 does not contain a complete prohibition on the exercising of authority by women, but only a prohibition on the exercising of authority by preaching the word of God (Acta 2009:641-643). According to this, διδάσκειν (teaching/preaching by women) is interpreted as not allowed, while the infinitive αὐθεντεῖν (the exercise of authority by women) is interpreted as allowable (except when it happens through preaching).

According to the above mentioned study (by Köstenberger) it however is impossible for two concepts/actions in an οὐκ – οὐδὲ (“not” – “and [also] not”) construction to respectively have an inherent negative and positive value. Either the two concepts/activities have (according to the intention of the author) an inherent negative value, or the two concepts/activities have (according to the intention of the author) a positive value (Köstenberger, 2005:53-84).

5. Second ground of objection: The exhortations to women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 are wrongly seen as exhortations that focus on: “at every ministry”

- 5.1 The exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) maintains that the exhortations in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 apply to “behaviour during congregational gathering” and states: “In 1 Timothy 2:8-15 Paul gives a clear indication of how the congregation’s behaviour should be orderly organised “in every place”. This is qualified in verse 8 as every place where there is prayer. This would therefore indicate all occasions when the congregation comes together to pray and to worship (Douma). In current-day terminology: at every ministry” (Afrikaans: “by elke erediens” = “at every worship service”) (Acta 2009:640). This finding unquestionably takes a central place in the conclusions and recommendations of the Report (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*):
“It is clear that the instructions in 1 Timothy 2 regarding the women in the ministry has relevance for the ministering of authority through ministering the Word, and not for the ministering of authority in general...” (Acta 2009:662.671). If these findings (that the exhortations apply to worship service) are invalid, then the conclusions and applications of the Report (Acta 2009:650-651) are also illicit.
- 5.2 The words “samekoms” and “in die erediens” (as in the 1983-Afrikaanse Translation of 1 Timothy 2:8 and 11) however do not occur in the Greek text, but are insertions based on the interpretation of the translators. The 1933/53-Afrikaans translation, which is a literal translation, omits these words.
- 5.3 The extended pericope (1 Tim 2:1-3:16) is embraced by an *inclusio* in which the focus is on the salvation of all people in society (1 Tim 2:1 [“prayers be made “for all men”]; 1 Tim 3:15-16 [“preached unto the Gentiles” en “believed in the world”]). Society (and not the worship service) therefore is the focus of this thought unit.
- 5.4 The οὐν (therefore) in 2:8 with which the exhortation to men and women are introduced, suggest a deductive relation with the preceding part in which a call is made for prayer for all men and those in authority that we may lead “a quiet and peaceable life” (in society) (1 Tim 2:1-2). Here life in general society, and not the worship service, is directly in focus.
- 5.5 The original Greek text in its exhortations to men (1 Tim 2:8) merely refers to “every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) and not to “at every ministry/worship service”.
- 5.5.1 Paul uses the expression ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ (“in every place”) only at three other occasions in the New Testament. Each time it has a general and non-cultic (worship service) meaning: “in every place” (1 Cor 1:2), “in every place” (2 Cor 2:14) en “in every place” (1 Thess 1:8).
- 5.5.2 The mere reference to “prayer” in the exhortations to men can not on its own lead to the inference that worship services are at issue. The New Testament gives account of prayer at many different places: Amongst others street corners (Matt 6:5), mountains (Luc 6:12), a garden (Marc 14:32), under a fig tree (Marc 11:24), in a home (Acts 9:11), upon a housetop (Acts 10:9), in a closet (Matt 6:6), in prison (Acts 16:25). The same Paul that speaks here, also calls on believers to “pray without ceasing” (thus always and everywhere) (προσεύχουμαι) (1 Thess 5:17).
- 5.5.3 Further the exhortation in 1 Timothy 2:8 that men should pray “without wrath and doubting” also is an indication that conduct in general society (where wrath and doubting occur) and not especially the worship service – is here in focus.

- 5.6 None of the exhortations to women in 2:9-13 have on their own a specific cultic (worship service) aim or focus.
- 5.6.1 Concerning the exhortations about women's clothing and "adornment" (1 Tim 2:9) – it is highly improbable that these rules were only intended for the congregational gatherings and that women outside of the worship service could dress and adorn as they wish.
- 5.6.2 The exhortation to do "good works" (1 Tim 2:10) is obviously directed at life outside (before and after) worship service, as women are not only called to do good deeds during congregational gatherings.
- 5.6.3 Although the exhortations to women not to teach (διδάσκειν) (1 Tim 2:11) or to educate (μανθανέτω) (1 Tim 2:12), indeed (in The New Testament) indicate authoritative instruction in matters of faith/religion, this instruction does not take place only in worship services. Louw & Nida (1989:I:413) define these concepts as: "to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting". Paul, for instance, in Rome "teaches" (διδάσκων) people from home (Acts 28:31), while a widow's children, according to 1 Timothy 5:4 are instructed to "learn" (at home) (μανθανέτω) to be godly towards their own home.
- 5.6.4 Also Paul's prohibition on the exercise of authority (αὐθεντεῖν) by women (1 Tim 2:12) can not be directly applied to worship services. The concept αὐθεντεῖν is a *hapax legomenon* (only occurrence) in the New Testament and is used in sources outside the Bible for the exercise of authority in a wide variety of contexts (Baldwin, 2005:39-52).
- 5.7 The motivations Paul provides for these exhortations (1 Tim 2:13-15) and on which the exhortations to women are based, relate to the whole life of women and not specifically to their role in congregational gatherings.
- 5.7.1 The first motivation is the order of creation (1 Tim 2:13). However when the order of creation is deemed to be normative and defining for the conduct of woman towards men, the exhortations based on them can not be valid only for cultic activities (worship services). They then should apply to the total life of women on earth, because women were not only for the sake of worship services created after Adam.
- 5.7.2 The second motivation is the fact that Eve was misguided and has transgressed (1 Tim 2:14). Again this conduct of Eve does not only affect cultic activities (worship services). If the misguidance of Eve and her transgression has defining implications for the position of women and their conduct towards men, the exhortations based on this are valid for woman's total life on earth.
- 5.7.3 The third motivation ("childbirth" [τεκνογονίας] and the continuance in faith, love and holiness (1 Tim 2:15) also don't indicate issues that apply only to worship services.
- 5.8 None of the further requirements for elders and deacons in the extended pericope (1 Tim 2:1–3:16) has a specific cultic (worship service) focus. These requirements are not at all about what an elder or deacon should be able to do in a worship service, but are clearly about the type of person they should be (in general society). Also in this instance society is the focus of the exhortations Paul gives.
- 6. Third ground of objection: The thought structure analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:29-38 does not comply with the demands of valid Reformed exegesis and it is wrongly awarded a heuristic function in the exegesis**
- 6.1 According to the self defined hermeneutic principles for valid Reformed exegesis, the guidelines of Coetzee (1988) for the analysis of thought structures is endorsed by the Report (Acta 2009:608) and it is stated that it is necessary "to make a clear distinction between what is actually written in the text and the reader's interpretation of it" (Acta 2009:603).

- The same heuristic (= “exploratory” or “explanatory”) value as to Scripture itself can not be allocated to an inference from an analysis of a thought structure (which as explanation already is the product of interpretation); especially not when it is presented as the only proof for a specific finding (as is the case in the Report before the Synod).
- 6.2 A heuristic function however is indeed awarded to the thought structure analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:29-38 by the exegesis before the Synod (*Woman not in instructing and ruling ministries*) in that the thought structure analysis is the only proof provided in the Report for the inference that the exhortation to be silent in 1 Corinthians 14:24 means that women **“should keep quiet during the evaluation of prophecies”** (Acta 2009:635). This finding is the basis for the exegesis, conclusion and application of the whole report concerning 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 (Acta 2009:637-638).
 - 6.3 On the following grounds the tenability of the identified thought structure analysis is doubtful:
 - 6.3.1 The given thought structure analysis ignores clear markers and grammatical pointers in the text (Coetzee, 1988:27-29) that suggest a different arrangement and indicate that this pericope is not all about prophecy:
 - 6.3.1.1 The exhortation to be silent occurs three times in this pericope, each time addressing different issues/situations (σιγάτω [“be silent”] [14:28]; σιγάτω [“be silent”] [14:30]; σιγάτωσαν [“be silent”] [14:34]).
 - 6.3.1.2 Three conditional clauses in each case typify the three different situations that are addressed (ἐὰν δὲ [“but if”] [14:28]; ἐὰν δὲ [“if”] [14:30]; εἰ δὲ [“and if”] [14:35]).
 - 6.3.1.3 The introduction in the text of the necessity of order in 14:33a (and the repetition thereof in 14:40) may indicate that a specific line of thought has been completed and that a new theme (question during gatherings) is now addressed.
 - 6.3.2 The *inclusio* (embracement) which the exegesis before the Synod indicates (Acta 2009:635), does not correspond with the text because the concept “order” is not repeated in 14:26. Verse 26 does contain a call to “up building” which rather is a connection to the previous pericope. (Compare the extensive use of the concept “up building” in 14:1,3,4,5,12,17 and 26, but not again after 14:26.)
 - 6.3.3 The interpretation that 14:36 is part of 14:33b-35 (and thus is part of the exhortation to women to be silent when prophecies are evaluated) is not supported by any of the (consulted) commentaries and is doubtful on grammatical grounds. The concept “only” in the expression “only to you” (εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους) in 14:36 is masculine plural which indicates that the audience that Paul addresses rather is male or of mixed gender, and that his admonishment concerns all his exhortations so far and not only the prohibition of women to ask questions during gatherings.
 - 6.4 The thought structure analysis therefore wrongly interprets the pericope (14:29-38) as that it only concerns prophecies and the adjudication thereof. Even from the content it is clear that 14:27-28 is about the use of languages/tongues (γλώσση τις λαλεῖ). Verse 29-33a deals with the conduct of prophets and is introduced by προφηταὶ δὲ, (“but the prophets”) while 14:33b-35 is about the asking of questions if someone wants to get to know something (εἰ δὲ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν). These three issues should (in contrast to the Report before the Synod) be distinguished on the grounds of the identified structural markers (6.3.1) in the pericope, as well as for the following reasons:
 - 6.4.1 Prophecy and speaking in tongues were earlier in the chapter clearly differentiated by Paul and were specified as different gifts of the Spirit which each have their own place and order (1 Cor 14:3-4). However, unscientifically, 14:27-28 (which deals with the speaking in tongues) is omitted in the thought structure analysis of the Report.
 - 6.4.2 The introductory comment (14:26) that during the gatherings of the congregation “every one” usually has a contribution, introduces a variety of contributions (and not only prophecy) and clearly creates a context in which the question is: When can you make your contribution and when should you rather remain silent.

- Consequently Paul addresses three such situations (speaking in tongues [14:27-28], prophecy [14:29-33a] and the opportunity to ask questions [33b-35]).
- 6.4.3 The asking of questions (to prophets) during worship services or the discussion of prophesies (in distinction of the prophesies themselves) was a known practice in Jewish and Hellenistic culture of the first century (Boring, 1992:496) and the above proposed separation between the two is therefore also cultural-historically justifiable.
- 6.5 The fact that the exhortations to be silent in 14:28 (to people speaking in tongues) and in 14:30 (to prophets who should speak in turn) in the context of this pericope can not be seen as absolute (as if these persons may never speak), implies that it is exegetical inconsequent to find (as in the exegesis before the Synod) that the exhortation to women to be silent in the gatherings of the congregation (14:34) is intended to be absolute (Acta 2009:633, 637-638). It is all the more credible that as specific type of silence under specific circumstances (the asking of questions at a meeting) here is at issue.
- 7. Fourth ground of objection: The thought structure analysis of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 does not comply with the demands of valid Reformed exegesis and it is wrongly awarded a heuristic function in the exegesis**
- 7.1 According to the self defined hermeneutical principles for valid Reformed exegesis in the Report before the Synod "it is necessary to make a clear distinction between what is actually written in the text and the reader's interpretation of it" (Acta 2009:603). The same heuristic (= "exploratory" or "explanatory") value as to Scripture itself can not be allocated to an inference from an analysis of a thought structure (which as explanation already is the product of interpretation); especially not when it is presented as the only proof for a specific finding (as is the case in the Report before the Synod).
- 7.2 The exegesis before the Synod, in its explanation of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and the coherence between διδάσκειν ("to teach") and αὐθεντεῖν ("to exercise authority"), however is indeed very strongly (almost exclusively) based on a **semi-chiastic (cross-over) pattern** which is identified in the text (Acta 2009:641) and in doing so allocates an important heuristic function to it. Solely from this identified thought structure it is concluded: "*It therefore seems that Paul describes what women will do if they would give instruction in the congregation, namely that they will exercise authority over men, with the words οὐδέ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός. It is therefore clear that Paul in 1 Timothy 2 does not place a complete prohibition on the exercise of authority by women in the special ministries. In this part women are specifically prohibited from exercising authority by ministering the Word*" (Acta 2009:641-642). This conclusion is central to the report (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) and is maintained throughout (also in the final conclusion and application) (Acta 2009:650, 651).
- 7.3 It is common knowledge that the existence of a chiastic pattern in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 is seriously questioned. Thomas Schreiner (a staunch opponent of women in office) says: "I question whether there is a chiasm here, because then the idea of exercising authority should have preceded teaching" (2005:216). Amongst those who do identify a chiastic pattern in 2:11-12, there is no consensus on the scope or arrangement of the different elements of the chiasm. (For instance compare Barnett [1989:228-229], Fung [1987:336, Footnote 186], Harris [1990:340], Moo [1980:64] and Witherington [1988:120] who all differ at this point).
- 7.4 The accepted methodological steps for the analysis of a thought structure are also not followed in the identification of the semi-chiastic (cross-over) pattern. According to Coetzee (1988:27) the first step in the analysis of a thought structure is rewriting the text in such a way that only one verbal phrase occurs in each line. Evidently this step was not followed in the exegesis before the Synod as γυνή ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ (women in silence) and ἐν πᾶσῃ ὑποταγῇ (in all submission), which function as independent elements in the identified chiasm (Acta 2009:641), are not verbal phrases.

7.5 The interpretation given by the exegesis in the report (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) furthermore also does not agree with the schematic portrayal of the thought structure that was identified. While the chiasmic pattern that was identified in 2:11-12 schematically connects b (receive teaching) to b (not to teach) and c (submission) to c (not to take a position of authority), the accompanying explanation (inference and interpretation) of the structure takes its point of departure from a different connection between these elements, namely a connection between a first b-c pattern (receiving teaching in submission) and a second b-c pattern (not to teach and not to take a position of authority) which is not indicated schematically (Acta 2009:641-643). The schematic structure that is provided as proof does therefore in no way support the accompanying explanation. The implication is that the explanation and its conclusions (which also play a key role in the final conclusions of the Report) are in fact not proven.

8. Fifth ground of objection: The exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 wrongly identifies a revelation historical line, conflicting with an earlier approved finding of a Synod

- 8.1 The exegesis before the Synod alleges (repetitively) that the reference to the creation order and the fall in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 constitute a **revelational historical line** (Acta 2009:642).
- 8.2 According to an acknowledged definition revelation history is: “the continuation and development of the revelation of God and his actions in history” (Janse van Rensburg, 2011:203). In this regard revelation history has also been typified as: “God’s special actions towards the salvation of man in Christ and the unfolding of his plan in history that is characterized by continued growth towards a future fulfilment” (Helberg, 1985:9-12). Du Toit (1974:45) uses the striking image of a rose bud which opens to describe revelation history. The pronouncement of a certain factual order in creation and fall in Genesis and 1 Timothy 2:13-14 by the exegesis before the Synod can however (within the context of the above mentioned definitions) not be seen as a revelation historical line.
- 8.2.1 There is no progress or development in the “line” which is indicated between Genesis 2-3 and 1 Timothy 2. The rose bud has not opened. The Christological fulfilment and unfolding of God’s plan in the salvation of men in no way is addressed in the “line” which is identified by the exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*). According to the exegesis before the Synod there was no development in this respect.
- 8.2.2 A different revelation historical line was identified by an earlier Synod and was indeed approved by that Synod. In accordance with this it was acknowledged: “In Christ a new dispensation dawns for the saved women and the Lord fulfils his original intention with man and women by restoring the image of God in man” (Acta, 1988:519).
- 8.2.3 The elevation of a certain order in creation and fall to a “revelation historical line” by the exegesis before the Synod does not give account of the “new dispensation” that has dawned for women and therefore in essence opposes the revelation historical line which was identified and approved by Synod 1988.
- 8.2.4 If the order of creation and fall are indeed elevated to a revelation historical line (as by the exegesis before the Synod) the implications thereof also can not (selectively) be limited to worship services, but indeed affect the revelation of God for the total life and conduct of women in church and society. The serious and essential unbiblical practical implications of this is evident.

9. Sixth ground of objection: The exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:13-15 which was put before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) is atomistic and does not take the *genre* of the passage into account

- 9.1 The exegesis before the Synod does not treat the thought unit which contains the motivation for the exhortations Paul gives (1 Tim 2:13-15) as a unit, but selects in its arguments in an atomistic way only the references to the Old Testament creation (1 Tim 2:13) and fall (1 Tim 2:14) of women. The reference to the New Testament salvation (“saving”) in 2:15, which is an inherent part of the thought unit, and which represents a specific contrast (σωθήσεται ἄν) by opening up perspectives on a new dispensation (in Christ) for women, is ignored by the exegesis before the Synod (Acta, 2009:642-643).
- 9.2 This is the case because (amongst other factors) the exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) interprets 1 Timothy 2:13-15 *de facto* as prose, while these verses indeed contain a typology, which should be understood typological.
- 9.2.1 It should not be seen as strange that Paul (as qualified Rabbi) used typology. He does this when he refers to Adam as type of Christ (Rom 5:12-21) and also when he refers to women as a type of the church (Eph 5:21-33).
- 9.2.2 Even on face value it is evident that Paul in 1 Timothy 2:13-15 uses Adam and Eve as types for believing men and women. It can also not be excluded that a further (partial or full) typological indication of Christ (Adam) and the church (Eve) are present in these verses.
- 9.2.3 In differentiation from prose, which should be interpreted ontological, typology should be interpreted typological. This means that with an ontological interpretation essential reality is in focus, while in a typological interpretation a different (indicated or future) reality is in focus. The *futurum* σωθήσεται (“will be saved”) in 2:15 understandably does not find a place in the ontological interpretation of the exegesis before the Synod, while it indeed will have a place in a typological interpretation as an indicated future reality (in which women/the church/Eve is saved by the “childbirth” [of Jesus Christ]; a reality in which she then perseveres with faith, love and holiness).

10. Seventh ground of objection: The exegesis does not read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 in its cultural historic context

- 10.1 According to the self defined hermeneutical principles in the report before the Synod, valid and allowable exegesis should interpret a specific part of Scripture from within its cultural historic context (Acta 2009:606) and should apply it while taking the present context into account (Acta 2009:607). The exegesis before the 2009 Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) however makes a direct transition from the “congregational gatherings” in Corinth to present day worship services, without taking the substantial differences between these two context into account¹.
- 10.2 The exegesis before the Synod states: “*The so-called “instruction of silence” of 1 Corinthians 14:34 is clearly related to behaviour during congregational gatherings*” (Acta 2009:633) and makes the following conclusion: “*This means that women may not act as ministers during congregational gatherings by amongst other things praying or preaching. This explanation that is underwritten widely in reformed circles holds that female members may not take the lead in ministries by either praying or preaching.*” (Acta 2009:633).
- 10.3 This conclusion and application can be questioned for the following reasons:
- 10.3.1 The first century “congregational gatherings” had various elements which are not part of the present day worship services (Barnard, 1981:105-165):

¹ The difference between congregational gatherings in those times and present day worship services are acknowledged (Acta 2009:637) but are not taken into account in the exegesis.

- 10.3.1.1 The congregations when coming together ate and drank wine on an informal basis (1 Cor 11:17-22).
- 10.3.1.2 Spontaneous actions/contributions by participators in these gathering were allowed (1 Cor 14:26).
- 10.3.1.3 Dialogical sermons/judging of prophecies (with questions and deliberation) took place during these meetings of the congregation (1 Cor 14:29).
- 10.3.1.4 Election/assignment/sending out of office bearers took place during these meetings of the congregation (Acts 15:22).
- 10.3.2 The prophecies which are mentioned in 1 Corinthians do also not today occur as a liturgical element in the Reformed worship services, and can not immediately be equated with preaching today. (Prophecy is indeed defined by the report itself as reporting “a revelation made to that particular person” [Acta 2009:632]. Present day preaching has a closer connection to “teaching” which in the report is defined as: “the preaching based on the word of God” [Acta 2009:632].)
- 10.3.3 The evaluation/discussion of prophecies mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14, therefore today is in no way (as liturgical element) part of the Reformed worship service or gatherings of the congregation, and it is not valid/admissible to directly (exactly) apply these exhortations to present day preaching as is done in the report before the Synod (Acta 2009:633).

11. Eighth ground of objection: The exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 in an illicit way inserts the idea of “non-official” prophecies into the text

- 11.1 In its essence Reformed exegesis is “exposition” of Scripture and one should guard against illicitly inserting personal ideas into the text.
- 11.2 The exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) in its attempt to harmonize 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 14 states: “*This explanation does not exclude the possibility that women prophesied regarding revelations that they received, spontaneously and non-officially in the meetings*” (Acta 2009:633). The differentiation between “official/ non-official” prophecies is also mentioned in the rest of the report (Acta, 2009:634).
- 11.3 For the following reasons the description of the prophecies by women as “non-official” should be regarded as inadmissible exegesis:
 - 11.3.1 Nowhere in 1 Corinthians 11:5,13 or 1 Corinthians 14:29-35 (or in the rest of Scripture) it is indicated that prophecies by women are seen as less “official” than prophecies by men.
 - 11.3.2 The precedence prophecies should enjoy in the formal gatherings of the congregation and the good order thereof is clearly accentuated by Paul (1 Cor 14:1,5, 29-33). In the context of the pericope no prophecy has an “non-official” character.
 - 11.3.3 Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:6 on the same level (equally official) deals with “knowledge” (γνώσει), “teaching” (διδαχῆ) and “revelation” (ἀποκαλύψει), while “teaching” (διδαχήν) and “revelation” (ἀποκάλυψιν) in 1 Corinthians 14:26 in their turn are dealt with on the same level as “a psalm” (ψαλμὸν), “a tongue” (γλώσσαν) or “an interpretation” (ἑρμηνείαν) thereof.
 - 11.3.4 The fact that the above mentioned contributions (including revelation and teaching) according to 1 Corinthians 14:26 can come from “each one” (ἕκαστος) also speaks against the idea that teaching in any way was more official than prophesying.

12. Ninth ground of objection: The standpoint that the exhortation to be silent in 1 Corinthians 14 refers to the judging of prophecies by women, is exegetically untenable

- 12.1 The exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) states: “However, it seems that the “instruction to silence” of 1 Cor 14:34 also includes the evaluation of prophecies” (Acta 2009:634) and: “everyone can prophesy, but only certain ones may evaluate” (Acta 2009:635).
- 12.2 This interpretation is in conflict with 14:29 which indicates that those who should evaluate the prophecies are “the other” (οἱ ἄλλοι). There are strong indications that this “the other” should be understood as “everyone” or “the rest of the congregation”:
- 12.2.1 “The other” (οἱ ἄλλοι) in 14:29 links with Paul’s threefold use of the inclusive concept “all” (πάντες) in 14:31. He assures the congregation that all may prophesise so that all may learn and all may be comforted. He also in 14:1,5 encourages all to prophesize and in 14:24 envisages a situation in which some unbeliever or one not instructed comes and finds that all prophesize. In such a rhetorical situation “the other” clearly is intended as “the rest of the congregation” (those not prophesying at that stage).
- 12.2.2 In 14:37 Paul also invites “anyone” (τις) (who thinks to be a prophet or a spiritual one) to evaluate what he writes.
- 12.2.3 The exhortation to test prophecies in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 is part of a general instruction addressed to the whole congregation.
- 12.2.4 Also in 1 John 4:1 the exhortation to “try” spirits/prophecies is directed at “the beloved”.
- 12.2.5 No other place in Scripture teaches that the adjudication of prophecies is an exclusive function of the church council (elders) as is stated by the exegesis before the Synod (Acta 2009:637).

13. Tenth ground of objection: The exegesis on 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 wrongly and in an inconsequent way teaches the universal headship of all men over all women

- 13.1 The exegesis before the Synod (*Women not teaching and governance ministry*) states in its exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40: “At congregational gatherings women, as a result of the submission that they owe to their husbands, are not permitted to speak but should keep silent” (Acta 2009:633). Clearly it is found that the submission of the married women to her own man here is at issue.
- 13.2 In the summarising formulation of the exegesis this however is changed to: “God gave the female members in the church a definite instruction to submission, namely that she should acknowledge {her husband’s headship}” (Acta 2009:637) (*The words “her husband’s headship” however is a wrong translation of the original Afrikaans “die man se hoofskap” [Acta 2009:637] which should rather be translated by “the headship of men”. The objection is to the original Afrikaans version.*) Also in the final conclusion and application of the exegesis mention is made of “female members” and “women” in general (Acta 2009:637-638).
- 13.3 The shift which is evident in the above mentioned pronouncements (from submission to “her man” – to submission to “all men”) is an fundamental change which can not be motivated from the given passage of Scripture (1 Cor 14:26-40).
- 13.4 The universal headship of all men over all women is also nowhere taught in Scripture (Acta 2009:631).
- 13.5 If the “order of creation” is used to motivate the headship of all men over all women (as is the case in the exegesis of 1 Tim 2:8-15 [Acta 2009:642]) the inevitable (and unbiblical) implication is that women (on account of the way they were created) should be submissive to (even unbelieving) men. Such a standpoint has far reaching implications for the role of women in society today and would in practice result in the same restrictions for Christian women that are presently applied to Muslim women.

14. Conclusion

It is (in light of the above mentioned objections) our conviction that the exegesis in the report before the 2009 Synod – (on account of which local churches are withheld from calling as elders and ministers female members which have the necessary gifts and qualifications) – is on key issues to such an extent unscientific and untenable (within the principles of Reformed hermeneutics), that valid and binding inferences (in the Name of the Lord) can not be made with such certainty that the conscience of members and churches can be bound by it.

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F. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: 1 TIM 2 MINORITY REPORT

1. Mandate

- 1.1 Adjudication of the following grounds of protest:
 - 1.1.1 Petition of Protest RC Krugersdorp 2015 (21.5): Grounds of protest 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.
 - 1.1.2 Ground of protest 5 of RC Krugersdorp (2015) was, by agreement with the Commission Revelation Historical grounds handled by them.

Decision: Points 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 noted.

2. Matters to take note of

- 2.1 All of the relevant Petitions of Protest was studied and discussed.
- 2.2 Different people continuously took part of the discussion of the Commission, while others explained matters to the Commission on an ad hoc basis.
- 2.3 Eventually a point was reached wherein members of the Commission divided into two groups, to prepare a Majority and Minority Report.

- 2.4 Specifically with regard to the Minority Report, it must be said that time constraints lead to not all of the points where there are differences of opinion, was handled, but well the two important grounds of protest of the Petition of RC Krugersdorp (2015) as indicated below.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.4 noted.

3. (21.2) RC Krugersdorp 2015: Adjudication of ground of protest 1

3.1 Claim by Gravamen

The Gravamen claims that the exegesis and conclusions in the Report of 2009 is contrary to what is permissible to the Greek grammar and testimony of the text.

3.2 Reasoning by the Gravamen

- 3.2.1 The Gravamen focuses on the meaning of the words “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet*” (1 Tim 2:12).
- 3.2.2 The Gravamen focuses specifically on the relation between the phrase “*not... to teach...*” and the phrase “*to exercise authority...*”.
- 3.2.3 **The Gravamen states in the first place** that the Synod of 2009 uses the phrase *to teach* to explain the phrase *to exercise authority* when Synod 2009 states: “*It therefore seems that Paul describes what women will do if they would give instruction in the congregation, namely that they will exercise authority over men with the words οὐδὲ ἀθέεντε ἰν ἀνδρός.*”
- 3.2.3.1 The Gravamen claims that such a understanding – namely that one phrase explains another phrase and is as such subordinate to the other phrases – it is not possible in accordance to the Greek grammar when the phrases are connected to each other by the conjunction ‘and [also] not’ (οὐδὲ).
- 3.2.3.2 The Gravamen uses as proof the study of Köstenberger, who – according to the Gravamen states that *and also not* is consistently used co-ordinately.
- 3.2.3.3 Furthermore the Gravamen claims that Paul – according to Synod 2009:641-643 – prohibits just one activity, namely the exercising of authority over men through the Proclamation of the Word.
- 3.2.3.4 Eventually the Gravamen claims that Synod 2009 mistakenly states at this juncture that Paul prohibits just one activity, in stead of realising that two activities (both teaching and exercising of authority) is prohibited by Paul.
- 3.2.4 The Gravamen secondly states that Synod 2009 allocates different inherent values to the phrases *to teach* and *to exercise authority*, exactly when it is stated: “**... it is therefore clear** that 1 Timothy 2 does not contain a complete prohibition on the exercising of authority by women, but only a prohibition on the exercising of authority by preaching the Word of God.”
- 3.2.4.1 The Gravamen claims that with this statement of Synod 2009 the activity of *teaching of the Word (preaching)* by women must be seen as inadmissible, while the activity of *exercising of authority* by women must be seen as admissible.
- 3.2.4.2 The Gravamen however claims that such an understanding – namely that one activity is negative and the other positive – is not possible in the Greek grammar, when the two activities are part of a *not- and [also] not* construction.
- 3.2.4.3 The Gravamen again uses the study of Köstenberger as proof that – according to the Gravamen – states that the two activities in the *not – and [also] not –* construction must inherently have the same value – both positive and negative.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.2.4.3 noted.

3.3 Adjudication of the ground of objection

- 3.3.1 The Gravamen is correct to state that the phrase *to teach* is used by Synod 2009 to clarify the phrase *to exercise authority*. The Report in fact states inter alia:

In the second b-c pattern the education (διδάσκειν) that is given is also further defined by “not exercise authority” (Acta 2009:653, 10.9.4.3.b)

- 3.3.2 The Gravamen correctly states that Paul – according to the Report of Synod 2009 – only prohibits one action. Synod 2009:651 stated explicitly (10.9.6b):
The instructions in 1 Timothy 2 regarding the woman in the ministry has specific relevance for the exercise of authority by ministering the Word and can not be applied to the exercise of authority in general.
- 3.3.3 Furthermore, the Gravamen is correct when it states that in the Greek grammar *and also not* is consistently used co-ordinately. Köstenberger states namely in his study (emphasis by Commission):
οὐδὲ functions not as a subordinating but as a coordinating conjunction (2005:66). Thus, 1 Timothy 2:12 is an instance of the first pattern, in which the exercise of two is prohibited ... (2005:66). Kenner concurs that the contention of the present essay is “probably correct that “have authority” should be read as coordinate with teach rather than as subordinate (2005:82).
- 3.3.4 Where the phrases *to teach* and *to exercise authority* is used in a coordinating fashion (4.3.3), it can not be stated that only one activity is prohibited (4.3.1 and 4.3.2) and the Gravamen is correct to state that the Report of 2009 is in contradiction with Greek grammar.
- 3.3.5 The **second motivation for this ground of protest** (4.2.4) focuses on the following grammatical rule:
When two activities with the not – and [also] not construction is connected, these two activities are either both inherently positive or both inherently negative. Both are therefore prohibited – either because the positive activities is not suitable in certain instances or because the negative activity is obviously not suitable.
- 3.3.6 The Gravamen is correct to deduce that Synod 2009 assigned different values to *teach* and *to exercise authority*. If Synod 2009 assigned an inherent positive value to both *to teach* and *to exercise authority*, according to the relevant grammatical rule, both the *to teach* and *to exercise authority* become inadmissible when the specific situation (that women perform certain activities in the worship service) is applied to it.
- 3.3.7 Synod 2009 however states in the following conclusion that when the specific situation (that women perform the activities in the worship service) comes to light, one activity may be admissible (*to exercise authority*), while the other activity is not allowable (*to teach*):
The instructions in 1 Timothy 2 regarding women in the ministry has specific relevance for ministering authority by ministering the Word and not for exercising authority in general. These instructions can not be applied to ministering Christ's authority by ministering compassion.
- 3.3.8 In light of the grammatical rule (4.3.5), the Synod's contradicting handling of the admissibility of the two phrases *to teach* and *to exercise authority* (4.3.7) and the correct deduction the Gravamen makes with regard to this around the inherent value the Synod assigned the two phrases (4.3.6), the Gravamen is correct in stating that the Report of 2009 is in contradiction with the Greek grammar.

Decision: Points 3.3 to 3.3.8 noted.

3.4 *Finding regarding ground of protest*

- 3.4.1 The fundamental matter in this Gravamen is the question of whether Synod 2009 in its exposition of the phrase *I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man* (1 Tim 2:12) remained true to what is permitted in the Greek grammar and the testimony of the text.

- 3.4.2 The Gravamen showed convincingly that the subordinate, explanatory (adverbial) use of the phrases *to teach* and *to exercise authority* is not grammatically sound, since the connection of the phrases by the conjunction *and* [also] *not* (οὐδέ) must be understood as **consistently subordinate**.
- 3.4.3 The Gravamen also showed convincingly that the opposite values that was assigned to the two phrases *to teach* and *to exercise authority* is grammatically unsound when the two activities are connected in a *not – and* [also] construction.

Decision: Points 3.4.1 to 3.4.3 noted.

3.5 Recommendation

- 3.5.1 The ground of protest succeeds.

Decision: Recommendation rejected.

4. (21.2) Krugersdorp 2015: Adjudication of ground of protest 2

4.1 Claims by Gravamen

The Gravamen claims in ground of protest 2 that the prescriptions to women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 is wrongly seen as prescriptions that focuses on the worship service.

Decision: Noted.

4.2 Reasoning by the Gravamen

- 4.2.1 The Gravamen refers in the first place to the statement of Synod 2009 that the prescriptions in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 concerns **behaviour during the congregational gathering** and then states two findings of Synod 2009 wherein is stated that the exhortations in 1 Timothy 2 refers to the *worship service*.
- 4.2.2 The Gravamen furthermore states that this finding, that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 refers to the worship service, is central the decision of Synode 2009.
- 4.2.3 The Gravamen claims that the words *gathering* (1 Tim 2:8) and *worship service* (1 Tim 2:11) is not found in the Greek text of the New Testament and was added as the interpretations of the translators.
- 4.2.4 The Gravamen claims that the broader pericope (1 Tim 2:1-3:16) is framed by an *inclusio* where the focus falls on the salvation of all people in the society and therefore the society – and not the worship service is meant in this though-unit.
- 4.2.5 The Gravamen claims furthermore that 1 Timothy 2:8 is connected by the word *then* with the preceding passage and specifically with the *quiet and peaceful life (in society)* and therefore also brings to focus life in the general society and not in the worship service.
- 4.2.6 The Gravamen also focuses on the meaning of the words ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ in 1 Timothy 2:8 and states that it should rather be translated as *in elke plek* and not *by elke erediens nie (in the Afrikaanse 1983-vertaling)*.
- 4.2.7 The Gravamen claims furthermore that the exhortations to the women in 1 Timothy 2:9-13 does not (only) refer to the worship service.
- 4.2.8 The Gravamen also claims that the motivations for the exhortations (as it comes to light in 1 Timothy 2:13-15) speaks to the whole life of women and not specifically to their role in the worship service.
- 4.2.9 The Gravamen also indicates that the requirements for elders and deacons in the broader pericope means the type of person that they must be (in society) and not about what they must do (in the worship service).

Decision: Points 4.2.1 to 4.2.9 noted.

4.3 Adjudication of ground of protest

- 4.3.1 The Gravamen is correct that the expression in the 1983-translation (*by elke plek van samekoms*) the word *samekoms (gathering)* is not found in the original text of 2:8. All the words that are found in the Greek text, are the words *op elke plek (in every place)* (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ). Therefore the 1933/53 translation also only refers to *op elke plek*. The Greek text in itself does not indicate that the matter at hand here is the worship service.

- 4.3.2 The Gravamen is furthermore correct that in 2:11 the words in the 1983 translation (*in die erediens / in the worship service*) is not found in the original text, and therefore also not in the 1933/53 translation. Here the Greek text also in itself does not indicate that the matter at hand is the worship service.
- 4.3.3 The Gravamen correctly indicates the *inclusio* framing 1 Timothy 2:1–3:16 that calls the faithful to live in a certain manner in society, in order for the salvation of the people in the society to be promoted. Although the *inclusio* can not in itself imply that this pericope can not be focused to behaviour in the worship service, it does show that the Gravamen correctly indicates that the society, and not the worship service is the central point in the pericope.
- 4.3.4 The Gravamen is correct to show on the strong relation between 1 Timothy 2:8 and the preceding 1 Timothy 2:1-7 through the connecting word *then* (οὕν). That there is therefore a relation between the prayers in every place and the prayers on behalf of society, can not be ignored. Consequently the Gravamen is correct in stating that life in the society is focus here. Still, from the connection indicated here, it can in itself not be deduced that the action of prayer that is focused on here, take place during the worship service. Consequently the Gravamen's wording goes too far when it states that from the use of the word *then* it can be deduced that the worship isn't directly what is meant here.
- 4.3.5 With regard to the meaning of the words ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ (in elke plek) the following:
- 4.3.5.1 The Gravamen is correct when it emphasises that the words ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ can not in itself be translated as (with every worship service) by *elke erediens*.
- 4.3.5.2 The Gravamen is also correct when it indicates that the words are used in three other places ... and that the reference is not to the congregational gatherings, but to localities in the world.
- 4.3.5.3 The Gravamen also correctly shows that prayer took place in different places and that it can not be said that it refers only to the worship service.
- 4.3.5.4 The Gravamen is furthermore correct that the behaviour (without anger and strife) may refer to the behaviour of Christians in the general society, but it goes too far to deduce from this that it can not also refer to behaviour during the worship service.
- 4.3.5.5 With the reasoning of the Gravamen it was, however, proven (cv. 5.3.5.1–5.3.5.4) that the expression ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ does not necessarily refer to the congregational gatherings, and that consequently it can not be categorically stated that 1 Timothy 2:8 refers to exhortations to the life of the Christian men **only during the worship service**.
- 4.3.6 With regard to the question of whether the exhortations to women (1 Timothy 2:9-12) in itself carried a specific cultic aim, the following:
- 4.3.6.1 The Gravamen sufficiently proves – for every one of the exhortations to the women that the behaviour to which the Christian women are called, can not be limited to the worship service.
- 4.3.6.2 The Gravamen is therefore correct that from the exhortations **in itself** it can not be deduced that the exhortations are aimed to the behaviour specifically in the worship service.
- 4.3.7 With regard to the question if the motivations of the prescriptions to the women (1 Timothy 2:13-15) the following:
- 4.3.7.1 The Gravamen sufficiently proves that for each of the motivations for the prescriptions to the women, the motivations are aimed at the whole life of the women, and can not be limited to only the worship service.
- 4.3.7.2 The Gravamen is therefore correct that from the motivations **in itself**, it can not be deduced that the prescriptions to women in 1 Timothy focuses **specifically** on the worship service.

- 4.3.8 In the Gravamen's referral to the further requirements for elders and deacons, it is mistakenly stated that it doesn't refer to what the elders and deacons must be able to do (in the worship service) at all, but especially to what type of person they must be (in society). Only all the requirements that the elder must be able to teach, touches on the elder's behaviour in the congregation. This motivation therefore, is not valid.

Decision: Points 4.3.1 to 4.3.8 noted.

4.4 *Findings with regard to ground of protest*

- 4.4.1 The foundational matter in this ground of protest is the question of whether the finding by Synod 2009 that the prescriptions in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 refers to *behaviour in the congregational gatherings*, is correct. Synod 2009 states that the prescriptions indicate how the congregations' behaviour must be *in every place* and eventually states that it indicates in contemporary terms *in every worship service* (Acta, 2009:640).
- 4.4.2 Therefore, the Gravamen must **prove** that the prescriptions in this pericope **doesn't necessarily** refer to matters outside the worship service.
- 4.4.3 The Gravamen absolutely showed that **the Greek text can not be used** 1 Timothy 2:8-15 necessarily gives prescriptions that focuses in on the worship service (5.3.1-5.3.2).
- 4.4.4 The Gravamen sufficiently showed that **the syntax and the structure of van 1 Timothy 2 can not be used** to say that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 necessarily focuses in on the worship service (5.3.3-5.3.4).
- 4.4.5 The Gravamen sufficiently showed that **the content of 1 Timothy 2 can not be used** to say that 1 Timothy 2:8-15 necessarily gave prescriptions that focuses in on the worship service (5.3.5-5.3.7).

Decision: Points 4.4.1 to 4.4.5 noted.

4.5 *Recommendation*

- 4.5.1 The ground of protest succeeds.

Decision: Recommendation rejected.

**G. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: 1 TIM 2
MAJORITY REPORT**

1. Assignment

Advise the Synod regarding the Gravamen of RC Krugersdorp with regards to 1 Timothy.

Decision: Noted.

2. Introductory remarks

The aggrieved claim that with the Gravamen they will refute key-points of the exegesis in the 2009-report (3.3 and 3.4 of the Gravamen). It seems though that the "key-points" which is shown and contested in the Gravamen, are not in actual fact key-points in the 2009-Report. It is true that the exegesis of 1 Tim 2 and 1 Cor 14 takes a central place in the exegesis part of the Report, but the aspects thereof that is shown and questioned in the Gravamen, discusses a number of detail aspects that is not at the core of the Report. The accrual key-points of the exegesis part – that the Gravamen passes by – is matters like:

- Women are denied something that men aren't (1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2);
- The prohibition does not simply rest upon simple regulation but it touches on the functioning of man and woman with regard to one another (1 Cor 14);
- That which is prohibited, is not arbitrary but has to do with the teaching- and governing functions in the church (1 Tim 2);

- The motivation in Scripture for this limitation with regard to women, is not temporary and cultural bound issues, but rather the unchanging and meaningful acts of God at the creation (1 Tim 2), and the unchangeable and resulting historical events at the fall of man (1 Tim 2), as well as aspects of the law (Old Testamentic revealed will of God) that is still in effect for the New Testamentic churches (1 Cor 14).

None of the above-mentioned key-points of the exegesis in the Report is taken up by the Gravamen and refuted.

Decision: Noted.

3. Adjudication of grounds for objection

Grounds for objection 1 (p325)

3.1 *Claims by aggrieved in Grounds for objection 1*

The Gravamen claims that the finding in the 2009-Report's exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:12, namely that women *through the ministering of the Word* (διδάσκειν, "to teach") execute authority in the congregation (αὐθεντεῖν, "to exercise authority"), rests upon inadmissible interpretation. As motivation for this the Gravamen calls upon the 1995-article of Köstenberger in which they claim that he proved that the conjunction οὐδὲ ("and [also] not"), with which the two infinitives in verse 12 is linked, consistently and without exception functions in the Greek language as a co-ordinate conjunction. As proof the Gravamen refers to Köstenberger (1995:81-103). Therefore they say, the two infinitives (διδάσκειν, "to teach") and (αὐθεντεῖν, "to exercise authority") points to two separate actions, which could be banned independently next to one another by Paul and that the one can not be seen as sub-ordinate to the other.

Based on this, the Gravamen claims that verse 12 in the 2009-Report wasn't validly explained where it finds that women, by teaching, exercise authority over men.

Furthermore it is claimed in the Gravamen (and once more the Gravamen uses Köstenberger, 1995:53-84 as proof) that the two concepts are linked to one another by the conjunction οὐδὲ, both having to have an inherently negative value, and both having an inherently positive value. According to the Gravamen there can not be an inadmissible matter ("not to teach") and an admissible matter ("to exercise authority") linked to one another, like it is done in the 2009-Report.

The Gravamen claims that verse 12 must be correctly reproduced with: "I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man...".

Decision: Noted.

3.2 *Adjudication*

3.2.1 The aggrieved claim in 4.3 of the Gravamen that the concepts "to teach" and "to exercise authority" in 1 Tim 2:12 are two independent concepts where the one is not sub-ordinated to the other. As proof for this they use Köstenberger's (1995:81-103 statement that the conjunction οὐδὲ ("and [also] not") always functions without exception as a co-ordinate conjunction in the Greek language. The grounds for objection says: "According to the grammatic-correct understanding of the Scripture, both activities (both teaching as well as authority) is banned independently and next to one another by Paul." Therefore the aggrieved claim that the 2009-Report's understanding of verse 12 is not valid, namely "that women by teaching are busy exercising authority".

What does Köstenberger say? He indeed says (and confirms it in his article of 2005:55-56) that the conjunction οὐδὲ links two separate ideas/activities. But, he writes (2005:56), you misunderstand the line when you deduce from it that the οὐδὲ-construction necessarily links two ideas/activities without any relationship next to one another (or then "independently and next to one another in its whole", as the aggrieved claim in 4.3).

"However", writes Köstenberger (2005:56), "as will be shown below, two terms can be 'closely related' and yet be distinct." He describes this statement with the example of *breaking in* and *stealing*. On the nature of the close relation, Köstenberger obviously doesn't touch on, because it will differ from context to context. But the nature of the cohesion between *breaking in* and *stealing*, as he explains it in his example on his page 56, shows that the 2009-Report did link the two activities in 1 Tim 2:12 in a valid way: "by teaching, they exercise authority...". Köstenberger writes, in reference to his *breaking in-stealing* example (2005:56): "While 'breaking in' and 'stealing' are sequentially related and may be seen as components of essentially one event, the two activities are not so closely related as to lose their own distinctness." This explanation of Köstenberger fits very well into the 2009-Report's view on the relationship between "teaching" and "exercising authority". Therefore point 4.3 of Grounds for objection is not valid. Presumably they did not see that Köstenberger handles the relationship between "teaching" and "exercising authority" on two different levels: (a) grammatically seen, the words are independently coordinated to one another without the one qualifying the other; (b) looking at the case at hand and the content, it describes components of one event. Last mentioned case was not brought into consideration by the aggrieved.

- 3.2.2 In 4.4 of the Gravamen is mainly about two inherently positive and two inherently negative ideas which we have discussed in the earlier documents. Köstenberger (2005:58-59) gives a long list of examples from the NT from which he comes to the conclusion (2005:60): "These examples set forth the New Testament evidence that οὐδέ joins terms denoting activities that are both viewed either positively or negatively by the writer or the speaker." On the basis of this intrusive survey, Köstenberger comes to the understanding of 1 Tim 2:12 as: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man." In explanation he writes (2005:60) that "teaching" as well as "exercising authority" in Paul's argument is seen as positive activities, but that Paul because of reasons to be deduced from the context, bans both these activities.

To describe the validity of a ban on positive activities, Köstenberger uses the example of a man that will tell his pregnant wife: "I don't allow you to drive your vehicle by yourself". There is nothing wrong with her driving her vehicle, he writes, because in itself it is a positive activity. But as long as she is pregnant, she should avoid it.

Köstenberger writes (2005:61): "In the light of this clarification, 1 Timothy 2:12 could legitimately be seen as an example of ... the denial of two activities that are viewed positively in and of themselves, under contextually adduced circumstances." This argument of Köstenberger gives good grounding for the 2009-report's view that teaching and exercising authority may be a positive activities for a woman to participate in under different circumstances, but in the congregational gatherings (as can be deduced from the context of 1 Tim 2:12), it is not allowable for that to be done by her.

3.2.3 Finding

By not taking into account all of the relevant testimonies, the Gravamen does not succeed in showing that the finding of the Synod-report's exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:12 in regards to the concepts of "teaching" and "exercising authority" rest upon inadmissible interpretation.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.2.3 noted.

3.2.4 Recommendation

The Gravamen does not succeed on Grounds for objection 1.

Decision: Approved.

3.3 Grounds for objection 2 (p326)

3.3.1 Claim

The Gravamen claims that the exegesis before Synod 2009 wrongly claims that the prescriptions in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 concerns the actions in the congregational gatherings. In support hereof they argue that the words “by elke samekoms” in the 1983-Afrikaans translation of 1 Timothy 2:8 rests upon an interpretation, and that the source text simply refers to “every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) The Gravamen otherwise uses various arguments (ref Gravamen 5.2-5.8) from the context of 1 Timothy 2 to support their view that in 1 Timothy 2 it is not about the congregational gatherings but rather about the general society.

In this way the Gravamen claim that the deduction that served before Synod 2009, namely that women can not “teach” and/or “exercise authority” in the church service, is exigetically ungrounded.

3.3.2 Adjudication

Without repeating each argument from the Gravamen, it is adjudicated in short with support from subject literature:

- (1) As far as the claim of the Gravamen in 5.2 is concerned, that the understanding of “at every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) as “at every gathering” rests upon interpretation; it must be shown that the aggrieved’s understanding of the words to refer to “everywhere in society”, also rests upon interpretation. The grievance that the 2009-Report’s understanding of ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ rests upon interpretation, is thus invalid.
- (2) It is possible to show in 1 Timothy 2:1-3:16 the structure of an *inclusion*-thought-structure, as is proposed in 5.3 of the Gravamen. Different to what the aggrieved claim, it is not necessarily so that everything that is enclosed by an *inclusion*-pattern must pertain to the same matter. In this way 1 Corinthians 8-10 is for example enclosed by an *inclusio* with the idea of idol-sacrifices (8:1-13 and 10:22-33), while the parts in between concerns Paul’s freedom and rights as apostle (9:1-14), Paul’s attitude of self-sacrifice (9:15-27) and the warning against too much self-confidence (10:1-13). Although all of these in between parts can in some or another way be brought in line with idol-sacrifices, each concerns an independent subject. This is also the case in 1 Timothy 2:1-3:16: Although the enclosing-idea (*inclusio*) concerns the church functioning to the salvation of all people in the society, the in between part (2:8-3:15) focuses on orderly arrangements for the church – in the words of 3:15: “how someone must act in the house of God”. Only when the church orderly functions according to God’s command, can it lead to the salvation of the society (ref Van Houwelingen 2009:70-71; Groenewald 1977:35; Hendriksen 1976:102). Therefore the *inclusion*-argument of the Gravamen does not convince.
- (3) Within such thought-patterns the word οὖν (thus) is regularly used in texts to show the crossing to new sub-divisions within the bigger whole (ref Epf 4:1; 4:17; 5:2). Indeed Paul continues building upon his assignment in 2:1 that the believers must pray for all people, but in 2:8 he crosses over to the orderly instruction for prayers (and thereafter other matters) where the believers are gathered in worship (ref Gloer 2010:140; Schreiner 2005:91; Bassler 1996:54). The fact that in 2:8 it concerns the prayers in congregational gatherings (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ), is confirmed by acknowledged exegetes and commentators from the Reformed world, e.g. Marshall (1999:437), Van Houwelingen (2009:70-71), Groenewald (1977:35) and Hendriksen (1976:102).
- (4) The Gravamen claims in 5.5.1 that the words “in every place” (ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ) elsewhere (three places) in the NT, nowhere refers to the congregational gathering.

Yet these parts neither refers to the society in general but to the functioning of the congregation as such, e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:2 where Paul directs his epistle “to the congregation of God that is in Corinth ... along with everybody that calls upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.” The gatherings of the congregation is clearly not included in these texts. The Gravamen is thus not convincing on this point.

- (5) The statement in 5.5.2 of the Gravamen that believers did not only pray in the congregational gatherings but also outside, is true. But it does not serve as proof that 1 Timothy 2:8 does not refer to prayers within the congregational gatherings.
- (6) Much the same, the claim in 5.5.3 that 2:8 does not refer to congregational gatherings because “anger and controversy” existed in the general society but not in the congregational gatherings, may be a pious, but very **unrealistic** assumption. From 1 Corinthians 11:17 it is clear that within the gatherings of the congregation improper things did occur.
- (7) The comments in 5.6 of the Gravamen that “not one of the prescription to women in 2:9-13 has a specific cultic (public worship) aim in itself”, is not convincing because it rests upon an invalid argument, called incomplete induction. The form of incomplete induction that is used here, is to argue that if a concept does not necessarily point to a case, it completely doesn't point to that case. In all fairness it must be shown that the concepts in 1 Timothy 2:12 does not need to necessarily contain a specific “cultic” aim in order to be made applicable to the public worship by Paul. Schreiner (2005:91-92) points out from the context of 1 Timothy 2 how the prescriptions in 2:9-13 could validly be applied to the public worship. In 5.6.3 the Gravamen itself concedes that certain words in 2:12 does not pertain to “only in worship services” (in other words: *also* applies to the public worship). In regards to the primary meaning of the *hapax legomenon* αὐθεντεῖν in 2:12 (that the Gravamen deals with in 5.6.4) Baldwin (2005:51) shows after executive study that the word in 2:12 is at best translated with “to exercise authority over”, and then indeed applies to the public worship (Schreiner, 2005:93-94).
- (8) The same invalid arguments is found in 5.7 of the Gravamen. It argues that Paul's prescriptions to women in 1 Tim 2:13-15 applies to women's whole lives, and therefore it can not be made applicable to their role in public worship. Matters like the order of creation, the fall of man, the woman's specific call with the birthing of children, and a pious life, indeed applies to the whole of life. By this the Gravamen has however not shown that the matters do not apply to the public worship. These matters does not stand apart from her conduct in the public worship (like the Gravamen itself concedes in the wording of point 5.7.2: “not only matters that specifically happen within the public worship”). The link between the woman's particular calling with regards to the birth of children and her conduct in the public worship is clearly shown in an article by Köstenberger (1997:107-144).
- (9) Much the same the requirements for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-16 applies to their conduct in the broader society, but all the same for their conduct in and during the congregational gatherings. The argument in 5.8 of the Gravamen is thus not convincing.
- (10) If abovementioned answers to grievances in the Grounds for objection 2 is taken into account, it is no surprise that commentaries and other recent publications of highly respected theologians, speak with conviction that 1 Timothy 2:9-15 does not have the conduct in the general society as aim,

but rather the conduct in the congregational gatherings (e.g. Gloer 2010:140; Schreiner 2005:91; Bassler 1996:54; Marshall 1999:437; Van Houwelingen 2009:70-71; Groenewald 1977:35; Hendriksen 1976:102).

3.3.3 Finding

Because the Gravamen does not take into account all the applicable evidence and because it rests upon invalid arguments, it does not succeed in showing that the Synod-report of 2009 makes the prescriptions of 1 Timothy 2:12 applicable to the congregational gatherings.

Decision: Points 3.3.1 to 3.3.3 noted.

3.3.4 Recommendation

The Gravamen does not succeed on Grounds for objection 2.

Decision: Approved.

3.4 ***Grounds for objection 4 (p330)***

3.4.1 Claim

The grievance of Grounds for objection 3 of exaggerated value that is attached to an own structure analysis (invalid awarding of a heuristic function) repeats, but this time (in Grounds for objection 4, 7.1 and 7.2) in terms of the exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:13-15.

It is further shown in 7.3 that there isn't unanimity among biblical scholars on what the structure of 2:13-15 looks like.

In 7.4 it is claimed that the methodological steps of thought structure analysis that JC Coetzee proposed, was not carefully followed in the applicable part of the 2009-Report.

In 7.5 it is claimed by Grounds for objection 3 that the deductions which the 2009-Report made does not agree with the particular (semi-chiastic) structure analysis.

3.4.2 Adjudication

As far as 7.1 and 7.2 of the Grounds for objection is concerned, the same comments made above in 2.3.2 applies. When deductions are made in exegesis based upon a certain structural thought analysis, care must be taken to not regard own findings so that it becomes factually equal to Scripture. This warning however does not mean that findings from such analysis should necessarily be suspect.

With regards to 7.3: That there is no unanimity amongst biblical scholars on how the structure of 2:13-15 must be understood, is nothing strange. In the literature there is regularly analysis of the same part of Scripture presented by different biblical Scholars, and it does not happen often that the analysis agree with one another in all instances. The fact that there is a difference of opinion on precisely how the structure of 2:13-15 should look, does not prove that the structure that was presented in the 2009-Report was necessarily wrong.

It seems that the aggrieved claim in 7.4 that the TSA for exegesis can only be "accepted" if JC Coetzee's proposed methodology of one verb-unit per line is precisely followed. It must however be noted that prof Coetzee himself wrote that next to other exegetes in terms of thought structure analysis, he only wants to make a very humble addition and that he does not want to propose his methodology as an absolute rule. (1988:25) That he did not mean for the one verb-unit per line guideline to be rigorously enforced, is confirmed by examples that Coetzee gives in his article, where he himself does not follow the approach of one verb-unit per line but makes an introduction according to what he calls "verses". An example of this is Matthew 7:18, where Coetzee identifies an upside-down parallelism (antithetic chiasm) by way of versification without following the requirement of separate verb-units ("a good tree can not bear bad fruit, and a bad tree can not bear good fruit."). (Coetzee 1988:28).

Therefore it is clear that the grievance in 7.4 can in no way be seen as valid. As far as the grievance in 7.5 is concerned: If the particular part of the 2009-Report is attentively read, it will become clear that the pattern is not a normal chiasm but something called a semi-chiasm. It is done in this way because the two middle-parts of the crossover pattern in itself each contain a parrallelism. In the Report it is not called a parrallelism, but the explanation in two following pairs of clauses that both are arranged in a b+c-pattern, makes it clear. Different to what is claimed in Grounds for objection 4, the Report describes the semi-chiatic pattern of 2:13-15 in the pattern a-(b+C)-(b+c)-a, which completely agrees with the explanation that follows it.

3.4.3 Finding

Grounds for objection 4 claims but does not prove that the 2009-Report awards an invalid heuristic function to its structure analysis of 2:14-15. The fact that biblical scholars does not have unanimity on the structure and methodology of structure analysis, does not serve as a valid basis for any grievance. It seems as if Grounds for objection 4 rests upon an inaccurate reading of the 2009-Report's structure analysis and deductions.

Decision: Points 3.4.1 to 3.4.3 noted.

3.4.4 Recommendation

The Gravamen does not succeed on Grounds for objection 4.

Decision: Approved.

3.5 *Grounds for objection 6 (p331)*

3.5.1 Claim

In Grounds for objection 6 it is claimed that the 2009-Report wrongly treats 1 Timothy 2:13-15 as prose, while in reality it must be understood as typological, which is to say that Adam in these verses is used as a "type" for the believing man and Eve as a "type" for the believing woman.

3.5.2 Adjudication

The idea that 2:13-15 must be typologically understood and even be explained allegorically, was proposed by theologians such as Alan Padgett (1997, ref. Schreiner 2005:105) and expanded upon in many creative ways. Such a typological understanding must however in this case be rejected because different to what is claimed in the Gravamen, the text of 2:13-15 gives no clue that it is typological in nature or that it belongs to the genre of typology (refl. Schreiner 2005:105; Köstenberger 1997:118, 121). Verses 13-15 should much rather be taken as revelational-historic from the Old-Testamentic evidence on the order of events at the creation and the fall of man, taken as motivation for the prohibition in verse 12 (ref. the conjunction *gar* [= "because"] at the beginning of verse 13, ref. Schreiner 2005:105). That Adam (and Eve) at the creation and with the fall of man represented the whole of creation, is made clear in the Scriptural-revelation (ref Rom 5:12-21; Eph 4:24), a Revelational historic fact with which Paul agrees in 2:13-15. It does not however mean that the text as a whole must be typologically understood.

In Grounds for objection 6 it is declared with great certainty that 1 Timothy 2:13-15 is a typological text and that any other ("literal") reading thereof becomes atomistic (= out of context). This certainty, as if it is a matter that is written is Scripture itself, is a clear example of exegesis where the exegete awards the same heuristic ("exploratory" or "explanatory") function to his own insight as with Scripture. (ref. the Aggrieved's own argument on this in 2.3.1 above).

The grievance that the 2009-Report explains 1 Timothy 2:13-15 atomistically (out of context), is invalid, because the Report understands the text throughout within the context of the Revelational historic lines of Scripture within which it is presented. (ref. Acta 2009:642).

In Grounds for objection 6 (pt. 9.2.3) the aggrieved claim with great certainty that there are “understandable reasons” why the futurum σωθήσεται in 2:15 does not find a place in the ontological explanation of exegesis before the Synod. It seems as though the aggrieved accept that σωθήσεται will only have a place if 2:15 is explained typologically. Köstenberger (1997:119) shows in a broad study on 1 Timothy 2:15 that many “conservative interpreters” like Alford, Barclay, Bowman, Foh, Hendriksen, Kelly, Moo, Schreiner, Scott, White and Witherington, that in 2:15 it is not about women being spiritually saved “by adhearing to their God-ordained role in domestic sphere.” Köstenberger (1997:119) himself gives a non-typological explanation when he shows that σωθήσεται in 2:15 does not refer to salvation at the second coming, but to “preservation from Satan.” He summarises his motivation for this point of view as follows: “In the light of the reference to the fall in 1 Tim 2:14, the explicit reference to Satan in the close parallel in 1 Tim 5:14-15 and the impressive and substantial evidence for a “preservation from Satan” theme in the Pastorals, it appear more than justified to view Satan as the one from woman will escape or be preserved by childbearing according to 1 Tim 2:15.” The word τεκνογονίας then does not only refer to “bearing children”, but to everything that relates to motherhood, e.g. the raising of children (ref. Tit 2:4-5). It seems from the preceding that a non-typological explanation of verse 15, different as to what the aggrieved accept, indeed fits within the context of 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

3.5.3 Finding

The claim in Grounds for objection 6 that 1 Timothy 2:13-15 as such is a typological text and can not be understood in any other way than typologically, and that the 2009-Report explains the text atomistically, does not rest on solid ground.

Decision: Points 3.5.1 to 3.5.3 noted.

3.5.4 Recommendation

The Gravamen does not succeed on Grounds for objection 6.

Decision: Approved.

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H. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: 1 COR 14

1. Mandate

Judgement of the grounds of protest 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 of RC Krugersdorp against the decisions of the General Synod 2009 about women in the office of elder and minister.

Decision: Noted.

2. Reasoning of ground of objection 3 Krugersdorp 21.2 (2015)

- 2.1 Ground of protest 3 claim that the thought structure analysis (TSA) of 1 Cor 14:29-38 does not comply with the requirements of valid Reformed exegesis and is wrongly awarded a heuristic function in the exegesis.
- 2.2 The ground of protest doesn't clearly state which one of the TSA's is meant. From the context of the ground of protest it is assumed that the TSA of the right-hand column is meant.
- 2.3 It is claimed that the TSA does not comply with the requirements of Reformed Exegesis. It is a risky statement since TSA's differ from exegete to exegete. A TSA is a way for the thought structure of the text that is proclaimed to be concretely emphasised.
- 2.4 A TSA is not the only proof and determining function for the understanding of the text.
- 2.5 It seems as if the Gravamen is correct that the TSA is the only proof and has a determining function, but the Report reflects the relevant exegesis and hermeneutics of 1 Cor 14:26-40.
- 2.6 Although the TSA plays an important role to the understanding of the text and from this the basis for the exegetical conclusion, the reasoning in the point of objection does not convince that it is the only proof and has a determining function for the text to be understood.
- 2.7 The statement in 10.8 must still be read within the context of the whole Report.
- 2.8 *Finding*

The Gravamen does not prove that the TSA doesn't comply with the requirements of valid Reformed exegesis. The Gravamen does not convince that a heuristic function is wrongly awarded to the TSA.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.8 noted.

2.9 *Recommendation*

Point of objection 3 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

3. Reasoning of point of objection 7 Krugersdorp 21.2 (2015)

- 3.1 It is claimed that the exegesis of 1 Cor 14:16-40 is not read in Cultural Historical context.
 - 3.2 The Gravamen claims that the exegesis in front of Synod 2009 makes a direct transition from "congregational gatherings" in Corinth to the worship service today. It seems, however that Synod 2009 does take into account the cultural historical context (cf 10.8.4.3b, p637).
 - 3.3 *Finding*
- Whatever the differences, there remain important principles for the worship services in 1 Cor 14:26-40.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.3 noted.

3.4 *Recommendation*

Point of objection 7 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

4. Reasoning of point of objection 8 Krugersdorp 21.2 (2015)

- 4.1 The Gravamen claims that the exegesis of 1 Cor 14:26-40 unlawfully carries the idea of “non-official” prophecies into the text.
- 4.2 Gender does not play a role in the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 11:5).
- 4.3 Not everyone with the prophetic gift, however is ordained in a specific office.
- 4.4 “Non-officially” in the report refers to the distinction between the gift of prophecy which took place spontaneously and the formal appointment or ordination of ministers(1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:5).
- 4.5 *Finding*
The word “non-officially” must be read within the context of the whole report. (cf. punt 4, p. 590 e.v.)

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.4 noted.

4.6 *Recommendation*

Point of objection 8 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

5. Reasoning of point of objection 9 Krugersdorp 21.2 (2015)

- 5.1 The Gravamen claims that the point of view that the exhortation to be silent in 1 Cor 14:34 relates to the evaluation of prophecies by women, is exegetically unsound.
- 5.2 In the context of 1 Cor 14:26-40, the exhortation to be silent in 1 Cor 14:34 does not relate to the evaluation of prophecies in 1 Cor 14:29.
- 5.3 Prophecies is the non-official, spontaneous announcement of God’s will.
- 5.4 *Finding*
The Commission is of the conviction that the reasoning of point of objection 9 is convincing with the consideration that the evaluation by the women is not brought in to jeopardy.

Decision: Points 5.1 to 5.4 noted.

5.5 *Recommendation*

Point of objection 9 succeeds.

Decision: Recommendation rejected and grounds for objection does not succeed.

6. Reasoning on point of objection 10 Krugersdorp 21.2 (2015)

- 6.1 The Gravamen claims that the that the exegesis of 1 Cor 14:26-40 wrongly and in an inconsequent way teaches the universal headship of all men over all women.
- 6.2 It is not found in the statement in front of Synod 2009 that the universal headship of the man over all women is taught.
- 6.3 When the Report is read in its entirety, it seems clearly on pages 633 and 637 that the matter that is dealt with, is the acknowledgement of the headship of the woman with regard to her husband (ref p637, line 24, 25, 27, 30, 34).
- 6.4 *Finding*
Point of objection 10 does not prove that the finding of the Report of 2009 is inconsistent of invalid. It also does not prove the universal headship of the man over all women.

Decision: Points 6.1 to 6.4 noted.

6.5 *Recommendation*

Point of objection 10 does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

7. Conclusion with regard to the Gravamen by GK Krugersdorp

Point of objection 9 succeeds.

Point of objection 3, 7, 8, and 10 does not succeed.

Although point of objection 9 succeeds, the Commission judges that it is not sufficient to let the Gravamen succeed.

In light of the Commission's work on 1 Cor 14, the Commission judges that the conclusion of the Gravamen is incorrect.

Decision: Noted.

I. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION GROUNDS FOR GRAVAMEN: REVELATIONAL HISTORIC

1. Assignment and mandate

To provide recommendations to the Synod on the various grounds for objection.

Decision: Noted.

2. Execution of assignment

2.1 *RC Krugersdorp Petition of Protest 2, 2015 – grounds for objection 5 (p331)*

2.1.1 The exegesis in the decision of 2009 of 1 Tim 2:13-15 wrongly identifies a Revelational historic line that is in conflict with a previously approved finding of a Synod.

Minority Report

2.1.1.1 The aggrieved's statement

The Synod 2009 used 1 Tim 2:13-14 as Revelational historic proof that the man is the head of the woman. They maintain that 1 Tim 2 does not represent a Revelational historic line, but that Synod 1988 identified a Revelational historic line which states that in the NT a new and changed era for women has come. Synod 2009 should have placed the emphasis on this.

2.1.1.2 Judgement

The majority finds that the aggrieved do not state their objection clearly enough and that there are various ways to understand the objection. The minority reporters did however think that the matter is clear, and contacted dr WC Vergeer via telephone to find out what was truly meant in the ground for objections. The conversation showed that the minority did in fact understand the matter correctly.

2.1.1.3 The minority finds it clear what the argument of the aggrieved was. The position of women in the church (and society) can not be determined by the fall of man, but should be determined by God's creational purpose. The fall of man can not be seen as continuous Revelational history, but is deformation (8.2.1). Therefore 1 Tim 2:13-14 can not be used as a Revelational historic argument (There is no progress between Gen 2-3 & 2 Tim (8.2.1). Order of creation is not sequence of creation. The creational purpose of God with man is that both men and women will display the image of God. The curse of the fall of man is fulfilled in Jesus and the place of men and women in the church is seen as equal. A new era arises for women.

Testimony for: The fact that there is referred to and society (8.2.4) makes it clear that it is about the chieftaincy of men towards women. When chieftaincy of men over women is understood from the fall of man, then all men are the head over all women, and women can not participate in the general society, at least not in positions of power. That will be the logical consequence.

2.1.1.4 Finding

The aggrieved state that Synod 2009 used 1 Tim 2 as a "Revelational historic" line, which is in conflict with the Revelational historic line that was accepted in 1988, viz. that a new time has come for women in the NT (8.2.3). The aggrieved do thus not place new arguments on the table, but uses the approved Revelational historic lines that have been accepted by Synod 1988 (Acta 1988:519).

Decision: Points 2.1.1.1 to 2.1.1.4 noted.

2.1.1.5 Recommendation

That this ground for objection is maintained.

Decision: Rejected.

Majority Report

2.2.1 Reasoning

2.2.1.1 There is reference given to more than one Revelational historic line namely one from Synod 1988 and one from Synod 2009.

2.2.1.2 In the proposed line it can possibly be distinguished as:

Creation – Fall – Salvation

Fall – Salvation – new era

2.2.1.3 Findings

The different ways to understand the reasoning is very diverse and even in conflict with each other. It was thus not possible to judge.

Decision: Points 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.3 noted.

2.2.1.4 Recommendation

No consequence is given to this ground for objection.

Decision: Approved.

21.3 PETITION OF PROTEST: REFORMED CHURCH POTCHEFSTROOM-DIE BULT AGAINST THE DECISION OF SYNOD 2009 ON WOMEN IN THE SERVICE OF ELDER AND MINISTER (2015: Artt 33, 36, 245) (2016: Artt 43, 66, 68)

2016

- A. The Petition of Protest is tabled.
- B. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of Commission Church Polity.

2015

- A. Rev HS Coetzee tables the Petition of Protest
- B. **Decision:** Further handling of the matter awaits decision iro Report Deputies Unity in Diversity (21.1).
- C. **Decision:** Refer to Special Synod (See 21.1 Report Deputies Unity in Diversity art 245 : All the relevant Petitions of Protest deal with women in the particular service. In light of the Synod's decision that the matter of women in the particular service is a significant issue, it is recommended that the Petitions of Protest be referred to the Special Synod.
- D. **PETITION OF PROTEST**
 - 1. **Decision protested**

The assembly accepts the suggested recommendation, 4.2, that women may not serve in the special services of ministers and elders (Acta 2009:666-667). See Annexure for details of the decision-making process.
 - 2. **Motivation of the protest**

Synod adopted a conscience-binding decision on the strength only of the conviction of the majority without sufficient Scriptural justification available.
 - 3. **Reasoning**
 - 3.1 The manner in which Synod arrived at the adoption of the decision indicates that Synod did not find it possible to produce a binding finding on clear Scriptural grounds.
 - 3.2 Synod proceeded to decision-making after extensive discussion. The recommendation of the Deputies in their Report (Deputy Report 10.15 and 12.10.2) that a choice should be made between the two options in compliance with Scripture, was not brought to a vote.
 - 3.3 In dealing with the Deputy Report Synod made no finding or commitment regarding the two divergent interpretative possibilities of certain Scriptural texts set out in the Report: it was merely noted (Acta:665, 12.10.1).
 - 3.4 Synod furthermore appointed an Advice Commission to advise Synod on dealing further with the matter of women in the services of elder and minister in light of the discussions and proposals tabled (Acta:666). The recommendation of this Commission (p667, 4.2) to Synod was approved, viz that the wording of the possible choices proposed in the Deputy Report be amended by omitting the words "in compliance with Scripture", thus leaving it to be decided merely by means of a ballot to choose between support for or opposition to the conviction that women may serve in the special services.

- 3.5 By approving the recommendation of the Advice Commission Synod chose not to make a clear finding on the matter on Scriptural grounds, i.e. "in compliance with Scripture", but to decide according to the "conviction" of Synod.
- 3.6 The chosen modus operandi indicates that Synod did not, despite, or perhaps even because of the availability of the results of extensive prior studies, find clear and binding Scriptural grounds on which a decision could be reached "in compliance with Scripture."
- 3.7 Because the decision was adopted in accordance with the conviction of the majority of the attendees, a later synod might come to a different conviction founded on the same Commission Report.
- 3.8 In our opinion the appropriate Scriptural and Reformed approach to decision-making on matters of principle is to take decisions on clear Scriptural authority or, if such authority is not available, not to take conscience-binding resolutions. Acts 15, Rom 14, Rom 16:17-18, Gal 5:1-11, Col 2, 1 Cor 8 and our confession (BC, art 32) teaches us that believers should not bind each other's consciences in matters that do not relate clearly and essentially to the belief in the redemption of Jesus Christ alone.
- 3.9 The consequence of the manner in which the resolution was worded and taken is that Synod does not provide any motivation for the resolution that women may not serve in the particular services of minister and elder. The resolution however implies without any justification a preference for the interpretive options in the second column of the Deputy Report. The omission of making any express finding on the nature of the difference between the two points of view, but merely noting it (Acta:666, 12.10.3), brought about a failure on the part of Synod to provide principled guidance on the matter within the denomination.
- 3.10 In our opinion a Synod can not justifiably make a choice between the two sets of exegetical results set out in the Deputy Report because adequate pronouncements on the matter are not to be found in Scriptural revelation?
- 3.11 Over-extension of Scriptural enquiry on this question should be guarded against.
- 3.12 The differences in the denomination on the question of whether women may serve in the service of minister and elder are in our opinion important, but not such that the unity of the Church of Christ may be jeopardized. Different views in this regard should be tolerated with love.

4. Conclusion and request to Synod

The Church Council is of the opinion that, after all the years of study within the GKSA and worldwide, no clear Scriptural justification could be found that is sufficiently clear to allow for a conscience-binding decision on women in the particular vocations of minister and elder. *The Church Council therefore requests Synod to revoke the resolution of 2009 in terms of which women may not serve in the particular vocations of minister and elder.*

5. Implications of the decision

- 5.1 By revoking the resolution of 2009, Synod will signify that there are no adequate Scriptural grounds regarding the question of whether women may serve in the vocation of minister and elder according to which consciences should be bound.
- 5.2 It will furthermore cause churches to accept responsibility themselves to decide whether women may be admitted to the vocation of minister and elder in the congregations concerned.

C. REPORT OF COMMISSION CHURCH POLITY

1. Assignment

Assess the Church Polity aspects from all the referred Gravamina handed in at the Extraordinary General Synod 2016.

- 1.1 All the Church Polity principles that were addressed from the different Gravamina, must be showed (pt 4).
- 1.2 Church Polity principles must be applied in the context of each separate Gravamen (pt 5-8).

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Execution of assignment

- 2.1 All the Gravamina were processed and relevant Church Polity matters were identified and processed. The Report speaks in broad terms on all the Church Polity matters which came to the fore in the Gravamina, and thereafter all of the Gravamina is judged separately and point by point.
- 2.2 Rev HS Coetzee from RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult and dr J Lion-Cachet from RC Klerksdorp reported to the Commission in order to elucidate.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. Church Polity principles on the table

- 3.1 Since the reformation there is a specific view on the offices that also found its way into our own Church Order. Some of the aggrieved argued that the Synod only researched the continuity and not also the discontinuity in the offices in the Old and New Testaments. The fulfilment of the offices are in Christ. Therefor there is no direct perpendicular jump between the offices of the Old and New Testament. Our Church Order moves from the presupposition that there are four offices, namely, professors, ministers, elders, deacons (CO, art 2).
- 3.2 Some of the Gravamina claim that the two choices from which must be chosen, forces the minority to bow before the majority without any evidence for why the Synod chose the one over the other. There is also claimed that the Synod could not make a decision in obedience to Scripture – yet a choice was nonetheless made. This presupposes that the choice that was made, was the one that the Synod felt, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was the correct one. Who now leaves the judgement to the local Church Council **“to themselves within their own circumstances, decide on the matter”**, opens up the way for independentism. Denomination guarantees that we will not because of a lack of gifts each take our own way and thereby give up the principles of the true church. The way of CO, art 31 (majority decision) is our arrangement with one another. The orderly way can be followed in order to change it (if the other churches can be convinced by way of Scripture, Confession and Church Order).
- 3.3 In the Gravamina a distinction is made between the **“in the light of the handling of the Report”** against the **“in obedience to Scripture”**. This is a false distinction. Based on the evidence from Scripture (as is taken up in the Report) certain decisions are made. Here, by wordplay, the idea is created that the Synod did not take Scriptural evidence into consideration.
- 3.4 When a Synod makes decisions, the Lord is begged to give the meeting guidance through His Spirit (ref CO, art 32). All explanations of Scripture, motivations and arguments must be taken into consideration before there is moved onto voting. The decision that is taken, stands, unless the opposite can be shown from the Word by way of gravamen or appeal (CO, artt 31 & 46).
- 3.5 The requirement that there should be consensus on the explanation of Scripture, places a new approach on the table of the Synod. A new approach must be tabled by way of gravamen or proposed-resolution and be tested.

- At Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:276, 20.4) there was no proposed-resolution by Regional Synod Pretoria that was upheld. This proposed-resolution requested that decisions regarding essential matters must be taken by consensus. By not upholding this proposed-resolution, the Synod enforced the principle of CO, art 31.
- 3.6 If there is no clarity on a matter in the light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order; the *status quo* is upheld (CO, artt 31 & 46). The burden of proof lies with the aggrieved or the person that wants to change, to in light of Scripture, Confession, and Church Order show the contrary (CO, artt 31 & 46). Some aggrieved claim that the Synod must give clear and properly motivated findings from Scripture to uphold the *status quo*. The Synod is not a study-body. The churches should study and have their studies tested by the Synod. The *onus* rests thus with the aggrieved to change decisions. They must show clear grounds from Scripture as well as motivations why there should/could/must be changed.
 - 3.7 A greater meeting's approach is decided by that meeting under guidance from the Moderamen (CO, art 35). A meeting, for instance, has the prerogative to simply take note of a proposal that it does not want to take for its account.
 - 3.8 The is claimed that conscience binding happens when a majority vote, and not Scriptural basis, is the deciding factor. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making by meetings may never be denied (see Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 84), because then Scripture governs.
 - 3.9 The phrase "conscience binding" is many a time used wrongly in churches, as such only negatively. Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.
 - 3.10 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a "higher meeting" in order to enforce them on "lesser meetings", but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order according to the Presbyterian system of church governance.
 - 3.11 From the arguments of certain Gravamina the suggestion comes that there exist a tension, even a contradiction, between Scripture on the one side, and the Church Order on the other side. This is a faulty argument as the Church Order is based upon Scripture and Confession.
 - 3.12 A Gravamen must be properly based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order (CO, art 31). The simple expression of an opinion, (e.g. the so called "**unwise action**"), is no convincing proof.
 - 3.13 The *onus* rests with the aggrieved to proof that the decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* does not rest with the greater meeting to prove that it is in fact the case (CO, art 31). The working of the Holy Spirit must not be denied in the taking of decisions.
 - 3.14 Some aggrieved claim that the matter around the women is not an essential or principal matter. Synod 2015 however decided that it is in fact an essential or principal matter; this decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).

- 3.15 Some aggrieved request tolerance in order to accommodate each other's views on the matter of women, seeing how important the matter is, but in their view not as important so as to endanger the unity in the church. As far as essential matters are concerned, we may however not simply tolerate different views but must remain true to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Almost a third of the Church Order deals with the offices. This points to the importance of the offices for order within the church. This implies that the offices are an essential matter that touches on all churches' essence.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.15 noted.

4. 21.3, p336: Gravamen RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult against the decision of Synod 2009 regarding the matter of women in the office of elder and minister

4.1 *Ground for objection (p336)*

- 4.1.1 The Aggrieved claim that the Synod took a conscience-binding decision, only according to the conviction of a majority, without the conclusive Scriptural grounds for it.

4.2 *Adjudication*

- 4.2.1 The aggrieved claim that the Synod could not deliver a binding finding based upon clear Scriptural grounds.

- 4.2.1.1 Adjudication: The Synod took by implication a clear decision. Through its decision it chose the Scriptural evidence (as taken up in the Report) according to its own point of view.

- 4.2.2 The aggrieved claim that to simply choose by way of voting, is an invalid way to make an decision.

- 4.2.2.1 Adjudication: This view is in strife with the CO, art 31 which the aggrieved must test according to the churchly way.

- 4.2.3 The aggrieved claim that there was no clear Scriptural grounds to be found upon which a decision could be made in obedience to Scripture.

- 4.2.3.1 Adjudication: The aggrieved could not point from Scripture that the woman may well be ordained. The *onus* and the burden of proof rests upon the aggrieved (CO, art 31).

- 4.2.4 The aggrieved claim that the decision was made only based upon a majority and that a following Synod could possibly decide different.

4.2.4.1 Adjudication

- 4.2.4.1.1 It is claimed that binding of conscience happens when majority-vote and not Scripture grounds, settles the decision. CO, art 31 is the agreed upon way in which grievances should be handled. The guidance of the Holy Spirit in decision making by meetings may never be denied (see Acts 15:28, and also CO, art 32). When a decision is made by majority-vote based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order; there is not ruled (faulty interpretation of CO, art 84), because then the Scripture governs.

- 4.2.4.1.2 The phrase "conscience binding" is many a time used wrongly in churches, as such only negatively. Decisions by greater meetings is taken based upon the Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates to greater meetings have bound their consciences by taking the Open Declaration. Through that they undertake to make decisions based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. Delegates have also already, upon public confirmation of faith, undertaken to honour Scripture, Confession, and Church Order.

- 4.2.4.1.3 Care must be taken to argue from the collegialistic view that it is the Synod that makes decisions and enforces them. When churches gather in greater meetings there is no decisions made by a "higher meeting" in order to enforce them on "lesser meetings", but the churches decide together based upon Scripture, Confession, and Church Order according to the Presbyterial system of church governance.

- 4.2.4.1.4 Some aggrieved claim that the matter around the women is not an essential or principal matter. Synod 2015 however decided that it is in fact an essential or principal matter; this decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).
- 4.2.5 The aggrieved claim that the Synod gave no motivation for its decision (that women may not serve as elders or ministers).
- 4.2.5.1 **Adjudication:** The *onus* rests upon the aggrieved to prove that decisions are not according to Scripture, Confession, and Church Order. The *onus* thus does not rest upon the greater meetings to prove that is the case (CO, art 31). The Synod decided based upon study taken up in the Report, which rests upon Scripture. If the aggrieved feel that they have been wronged, the way of CO, art 31 & 46 can be followed.
- 4.2.6 The aggrieved claim that the Synod did not have the right to make a decision between two sets of exegetical evidence if there are not conclusive evidence in Scripture.
- 4.2.6.1 **Adjudication:** The Synod by implication decide for one interpretation. Would the Synod have decided to not vote on the matter, the result would have been that the *status quo* would be upheld, seeing as how the aggrieved could not in the light of Scripture prove that their view is correct.
- 4.2.7 The aggrieved makes a call for tolerance in order to accommodate, seeing as how the matter is important, ***“but not as important that the unity of the Church of Christ is brought into question. Different views on this should be tolerated in love.”***
- 4.2.7.1 **Adjudication:** Synod 2015 (Acta 2015:320, 7.3.2; 323, 2.1) have already decided that it is in fact an essential matter, which decision must be seen as binding (CO, art 31).
- 4.2.8 As far as the shown implications by the aggrieved is concerned, the following is adjudicated
- 4.2.8.1 If there is not conclusive proof from Scripture, the *status quo* is upheld (CO, art 31). We thus stay with what is binding, that which is the healthy doctrine that we know well (2 Tim 3:15).
- 4.2.8.2 The request by the aggrieved that local churches must decide for themselves whether they want to ordain women in the specific offices or not, will lead to further division within the church (Eph 4:1-6). We must guard against independentism within the church that gives up the binding to shared decisions (ref CO, art 31).
- 4.2.8.3 The Church Order’s first section deals with the offices. It implies that the offices is an essential matter that touches on the church as a whole (CO, art 1).

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.2.8.3 noted.

4.3 *Recommendation*

- 4.3.1 The Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

REPORTS COMMISSION THEMATIC AND SINCHRONISATION (Artt 56, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88)

A. Rev JL van der Schyff reports on behalf of Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation.

B. FIRST COMMISSION REPORT

1. Matters Synod take note of

1.1 After consultation with the Moderamen the following were communicated to the Commissions:

1.1.1 That each Commission makes a recommendation regarding the validity of the set of grounds referred to them.

1.1.2 It is emphasised that the Commissions must only focus on the grounds for protest.

1.1.3 That each Commission provides their Report to the Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation who will forward it to the Order Commission for translation (if necessary) and copying.

1.1.4 That the Synod decides about each of the Reports of the different Commissions.

1.1.5 That the Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation arranges the information in the Reports of the different Commissions as well as the decisions taken by the Synod, by putting it in order per Petition of Protest.

1.1.6 That as a result of this the Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation presents a Report for every Petition of Protest to the Synod.

1.1.7 As a result of this the Synod decides about each of the Petitions of Protest.

1.2 The Commission Church Polity identified a sixth possible theme, namely "Confession" as a result of the following:

1.2.1 Petition of Protest against RC Potchefstroom-Die Bult against decision of Synod 2009, 21.3, 2015, pt 3.8.

1.2.2 Petition of Protest Classis Eastern Pretoria against decision of Synod 2009, 21.8, 2012, Point Motivation.

1.2.3 Petition of Protest RC Krugersdorp against decision of Synod 2009, 21.5, 2012, Ground of protest 1, binding of conscious.

1.3 A small Commission consisting of rev SD de Kock and rev PJ Jansen van Nieuwenhuizen was compiled to look at and weigh the references to the Confession in the different Petitions of Protest.

1.4 After the feedback of the Commission mentioned in pt 1.3 was received, the Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation is of the opinion that it is not necessary to appoint a Commission Confession.

Motivation

1.4.1 Reference is only made to the Confession without the Confession being used as a ground for protest.

1.4.2 The matters raised in the grounds for protest will be handled, because it was referred to the Commission Church Polity.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.4.2 noted.

2. Matters Synod decide on

2.1 That a Commission to attend to a possible theme "Confession" is not appointed.

Decision: Approved.

C. SECOND COMMISSION REPORT

1. Matters Synod take note of

1.1 Assignment

To advise the Synod on the letter from the IPB.

1.2 The Commission went through the letter and reports the following to the Synod:

1.2.1 In the letter the IPB gives an apology for not being able to attend this Synod, sends greetings to the GKSA and pray that the Synod will be blessed.

1.2.2 Attached to the letter are answers to a questionnaire somebody form the GKSA sent to them.

1.2.3 The questionnaire and answers deal with the matter of women in office.

1.2.4 The Synod can only take note of the questionnaire and answers to the questionnaire, since it deal with the matter of women in general, while the focus of this Synod is on the specific Petitions of Protest presented to this Synod.

1.2.5 The person who sent the questionnaire to IPB, can get the answers at the Commission Thematic and Sinchronisation.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.2.5 noted.

2. Matters Synod decide on

2.1 That the Synod takes note of this letter.

Decision: Approved.

D. THIRD COMMISSION REPORT ABOUT GRAVAMEN RC BLOEMFONTEIN SOUTH

1. Assignment

To, as a result of the Synod's decisions about the themes "Revelational and Historical", "1 Corinthians 14" and "1 Timothy 2", advise the Synod about the Gravamen of RC Bloemfontein South (21.3; 2012:347-352).

Decision: Noted.

2. Ground of objection 1

2.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Minority Report of the Commission Revelational and Historical that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.1.4.1).

Decision: Noted.

3. Ground of objection 2

3.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Revelational and Historical that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.2.4).

Decision: Noted.

4. Ground of objection 3

4.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.11).

Decision: Noted.

5. Ground of objection 4

5.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (4.8).

Decision: Noted.

6. Ground of objection 5

6.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed (5.4).

Decision: Noted.

7. Gravamen as a whole

7.1 Recommendation

That the Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

E. FOURTH COMMISSION REPORT : GRAVAMEN RC KLERKSDORP

1. Assignment

To, as a result of the Synod's decisions about the theme "Church Polity" advise, the Synod about the gravamen of RC Klerksdorp (21.4; 2012:354-358).

Decision: Noted.

2. Ground of objection 1

2.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

3. Ground of objection 2

3.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

4. Ground of objection 3

4.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

5. Ground of objection 4

5.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

6. Gravamen as a whole

6.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

F. FIFTH COMMISSION REPORT : GRAVAMEN 1 RC KRUGERSDORP

1. Assignment

To, as a result of the Synod's decisions about the themes "Revelational and Historical", "1 Timothy 2", "Church Polity" and "Practical Implementation", advise the Synod about Gravamen 1 of RC Krugersdorp (21.5; 2012:359-362).

Decision: Noted.

2. Ground of objection 1

2.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed (6.1.2.1).

Decision: Noted.

3. Ground of objection 2

3.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Revelational and Historical that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.3.4).

Decision: Noted.

4. Ground of objection 3

- 4.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Revelational and Historical that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.4.4).

Decision: Noted.

5. Ground of objection 4 (5.1)

- 5.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Practical Implementation that the ground of objection does not succeed (6.1).

Decision: Noted.

6. Ground of objection 4 (5.2)

- 6.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Practical Implementation that the ground of objection does not succeed (6.2).

Decision: Noted.

7. Ground of objection 4 (5.3)

- 7.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed.

Decision: Noted.

- 7.2 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Church Polity that the ground of objection does not succeed regarding pt 5.3.3.2 (6.2.2.1).

Decision: Noted.

8. Ground of objection 4 (5.4)

- 8.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission Practical Implementation that the ground of objection does not succeed (6.3).

Decision: Noted.

9. Gravamen as a whole

9.1 Recommendation

That the Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

G. SIX COMMISSION REPORT : GRAVAMEN 2 RC KRUGERSDORP

1. Assignment

To, as a result of the Synod's decisions about the themes "1 Corinthians 14", "Revelation and Historical" and "1 Timothy 2", advise the Synod about the Gravamen 2 of RC Krugersdorp (21.2; 2015:325-335).

Decision: Noted.

2. Ground of objection 1

- 2.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.2.4).

Decision: Noted.

3. Ground of objection 2

- 3.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.3.5).

Decision: Noted.

4. Ground of objection 3

- 4.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (5.9).

Decision: Noted.

5. Ground of objection 4

- 5.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.4.5).

Decision: Noted.

6. Ground of objection 5

- 6.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Commission Revelational and Historical that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.5.4.1).

Decision: Noted.

7. Ground of objection 6

- 7.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Majority Report of the Commission 1 Timothy 2 that the ground of objection does not succeed (3.5.5).

Decision: Noted.

8. Ground of objection 7

- 8.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (6.4).

Decision: Noted.

9. Ground of objection 8

- 9.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (7.6).

Decision: Noted.

10. Ground of objection 9

- 10.1 The Synod did not approve the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection succeed (8.5).

Decision: Noted.

11. Ground of objection 10

- 11.1 The Synod approved the recommendation of the Commission 1 Corinthians 14 that the ground of objection does not succeed (9.5).

Decision: Noted.

12. Gravamen as a whole

12.1 Recommendation

That the Gravamen as a whole does not succeed.

Decision: Approved.

WORDS OF THANKS (Art 90)

The Chairman, rev HJP de Beer, directs fitting words of thanks to the following:

- The Order-commission
- The Sextons of the Synod
- Mr Pieter Steyn and mr AJ Rechterschot from the Media
- Dr W du Plessis
- Sisters of the different local congregations for serving tea
- Administrative Bureau
- Interpreters
- Dr HG Zwemstra who also interpreted
- Translators
- International guests
- Sr Mariaan Breed is thanked by rev CB Swanepoel
- Moderamen

The vice-Chairman, rev C Aucamp, thanks the Chairman, rev HJP de Beer, for his special guidance to the meeting.

CLOSING (Art 92)

The vice-Chairman, rev C Aucamp, reads from John 17, directs a few fitting words, does a prayer and has the meeting sing Psalm 48 and Lifela Tsa Sione 60.

SYNOD CLOSED

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