

11.2 POINT OF DESCRIPTION REGIONAL SYNOD PRETORIA – POSSIBLE SPECIAL SYNODS (Art 11)

- A. Rev SD Snyman tables the Point of Description.
- B. See decisions at 21.1, Report Unity in Diversity.

C. POINT OF DESCRIPTION

1. Point of Description

- 1.1 That Special Synods will be convened by decisions of General Synods when essential matters with serious divisive potential in the churches couldn't be resolved by General Synods in reasonable time. These Special Synods should attend to the referred matters until it can conclude them with unanimity.
- 1.2 That the Regional Synods just before a General Synod choose 4 ministers and 4 elders as delegates to a possible Special Synod. If General Synod 2015 decides to convene such a Special Synod, it may, however, consider asking the delegates of the respective Regional Synods at the General Synod to appoint the delegates for this first Special Synod.
- 1.3 That the Special Synods will function like this:
 - 1.3.1 It will be constituted by the chairman and the scribe from the General Synod which referred a matter or matters to a Special Synod. It will then choose its own Moderator to lead the meeting in the handling of the referred matters.
 - 1.3.2 Special Synods will meet as long and as frequently as needed for the conclusion of their mandate.
 - 1.3.3 Special Synods conclude matters when unanimity is reached and notify churches of the outcome.
 - 1.3.4 Special Synods appoint Deputies to clarify decisions of this Synod in churches where they are requested to do so.

2. Motivation

2.1 For 1.1

- 2.1.1 This Point of Description presupposes that the two principles, contained in the motivation of Point of Description 20.3 (Supplementary Agenda), have been accepted as commands from God. These principles are also the main motivation for this Point of Description which proposes as way in which the GKSA can apply these principles in practice, with a view to restoring unity and peace throughout the GKSA.
- 2.1.2 This solution will free the churches to concentrate in General Synods on other important commands from our Lord, and about which there are no essential differences amongst us, e.g. Matt 28:19; Eph 4:11-16; Rom 12:1-18; 1 Tim 1:3-6; 2 Tim 1:13; 2:14-16, 23; 3:16-17. Our life as churches should also reflect Biblical priorities, like 1 Cor 13. Differences about essential matters should be handled with great responsibility, but in such a way that it does not relegate other important Biblical commands and priorities to the back seat.
- 2.1.3 The Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619 is a sort of example of what this Point of Description tries to accomplish. The churches in The Netherlands held a Special Synod to resolve a matter which caused great unrest amongst them.

2.2 *For 1.2*

2.2.1 Because of the fact that the Special Synods will, in most cases, resolve matters by studying the underlying theological principles, it will have greater need for the gifts and learning of ministers of the Word. The presence of some capable elders are, however, also needed, especially to prevent these Synods from becoming theological debating-societies, and to help with the preservation of the purity of doctrine.

2.2.2 For financial reasons, but also to create the opportunity for thoroughgoing discussion of matters, it is desirable that Special Synods shouldn't be too large.

2.3 *For 1.3*

2.3.1 The enduring success of the Curatorium sets an imitable example for the functioning of Special Synods.

2.3.2 These proposed Special Synods are going to grapple with difficult matters, which have proven difficult to resolve in the massive General Synods, because of the constraints of time. The study and research, which will be done by Special Synods, will dictate the duration of meetings or adjournments of these Synods.

3. **Explanatory notes**

3.1 Typical examples from the previous decades of matters which could be referred to Special Synods are:

- discord between congregations which previously met together in Synod Midlands and Synod Soutpansberg;
- women in office;
- difference in evaluation of the 1983 translation of the Bible in Afrikaans;
- Psalm and Hymns
- cup and (individual) glasses at the Lord's Supper

3.2 The history of National Synods (Potchefstroom) and General Synods shows that the differences in these matters have taken up an improper amount of the available time for these Synods and have overshadowed other items on the agendas.

3.3 These differences caused opposing groups within the ranks of the delegates at Synods and even within the ranks of congregations. It also led to negative publicity about Synods of the GKSA and the GKSA themselves.

3.4 These Special Synods may, like the Synod of Dordt, make use of the advice of Reformed Churches in foreign countries.

3.5 If a dispute rises about the essential or non-essential nature of a matter, and it is judged to have serious divisive potential in the churches, and it can't be resolved by General Synods in reasonable time, then this question may be referred to a Special Synod. To argue that this is just a change of terrain for difficult matters, is not necessarily true. It will be a different question which will make use of other parts of Scriptures (as well). And another – maybe more fundamental – question, may then lead to satisfactory solutions for existing problems.

3.6 Special Synods may only attend to matters which have been referred by a General Synod. They may not create their own Agendas.

3.7 Special Synods conclude matters on their Agenda. Petitions of Protest (CO, art 46) may be submitted to the Special Synod concerned, but it should be done before the term of that Synod finish. Appeal to another major assembly is not possible. It may, however, be considered to allow churches to raise a matter which has been concluded by a Special Synod again by way of a Point of Description after ten years or so.

- 3.8 This Point of Description has large financial implications. But it may shorten the duration of General Synods, which will led to money being saved. The cost of schism is, however, immeasurable higher.