

## **24.2 REPORT 2: CURATORS THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL POTCHEFSTROOM – OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING FOR CANDIDATES THAT ARE UNABLE TO COME TO POTCHEFSTROOM (Art 211)**

- A. Dr DG Breed, hands the chair to the deputy-chairperson, rev SD Snyman.
- B. Dr DG Breed tables the Report.
- C. Further elucidation on Docenda by dr DG Breed and br JH Steenekamp.
- D. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

### **E. REPORT**

#### **1. Mandate**

Acta 2003:730, 24.3. The Synod decided (1) that it is necessary to urgently and seriously reconsider the training of ministers in the GKSA, in light of the critical ministry need in especially black, rural and township congregations; (2) that the Curators, together with training centres, investigate how candidates may be trained aided and supervised by major assemblies in their areas, through inter alia the utilisation and expansion of the telematic learning systems of the Faculty of Theology (Acta, 2009:811, 2.7.6; Acta,2009:813-826, 1.5).

**Decision: Noted.**

#### **2. Matters that the Synod take note of**

##### **2.1 *Development of the matter***

The Curators made the following decision in June 2012:

- 3.7 The Management committee of the Curators is to appoint a Commission to review anew the problematics of aspiring candidates who are unable to study in Potchefstroom. The Commission must also endeavour to formulate practical recommendations in this regard that the Curators may table to Synod 2015.

The Curators, together with the Senate, investigated solutions to the problem of residence like inter alia the utilisation of suitable teaching-learning technology and more specifically whiteboard technology. The Management committee of the Curators were instructed, at their meeting of 16 July 2013, to refine the matter for presentation to the Curators for inclusion in the Report to General Synod 2015.

The Curators took note, at their meeting of November 2013, of the following decisions the Management committee took on 14 October 2013:

- 6.1 The Management committee of the Curators expresses its sincere gratitude toward the collective Commission for the work done in the brief period available.
- 6.2 Considering the church principles framework of Scripture, the Reformed Confessions, the Church Order as well as certain decisions of Synods, it would seem that the so-called ODL programmes designed by the NWU in a contact to opening learning delivery mode could be utilised at the discretion and revised by the GKSA for the training of students that wish to serve as ministers in the GKSA (and in other churches) who are unable to study in Potchefstroom.
- 6.3 The Management committee of the Curators is willing to collaborate with the believers from the GKSA in establishing a non-profit company. The Commission are, however, instructed to henceforth clearly differentiate and spell out in Reports the unique task, mandate and objective of the role players that in establishing the company it doesn't take on or are burdened with a task that are not unique to the churches, the Curators or the TSP.

- 6.4 The Management committee of the Curators undertake to request Curators that possess the gifts and time to serve as directors of the company.
- 6.5 Should the Senate respond positively to the Report of the Commission, the Chairman of the Curators are requested to inform all the Curators of developments (cf. the decision of the Curators meeting of November 2012).
- 6.6 If the Senate agrees, the collective Commission is requested to:
  - 6.6.1 complete the investigation into the practical feasibility of the implementation of the distance education model and make it available to the Senate and Curators;
  - 6.6.2 convey this development in a suitable manner to the GKSA, through for example letters to the Church Councils and Regional Synods and publications in *Die Kerkblad*;
  - 6.6.3 offer the necessary support for the non-profit company to be established post haste that it may already be possible to present the ODL programme in 2015; and
  - 6.6.4 consider the possibility and desirability of a meeting or meetings of member of the GKSA operational in the private business sector and if it is deemed as beneficial to the initiative, the Commission is instructed to organise such meetings.

The Senate agreed to full cooperation with the Curators in this matter.

In November 2013 the Curators took note of the collective Report of the Management committee of the Curators and the Senate as well as the introduction of the matter to the churches by the Chairman of the Curators, dr DG Breed. The open distance learning aided by Docenda can also be used for other Reformed training, e.g. short training courses for members.

## 2.2 *Practical execution of the Commission's instruction*

The following Report was presented to the Curators of June 2014:

### **9.1 Finding of company Docenda (NPC)**

A comprehensive proposal and draft business plan, prepared by br Hannes Steenekamp, was approved during a Commission meeting on 6 November 2013. A variety of matters came to the fore, like the formulation of the objective of the company, the name of the company and the appointment of board members. The Commission came to the following conclusions, during their investigation:

- a) It was generally accepted during the process that another vehicle for the funding of minister training would have to be found.
- b) There would simultaneously also need to be determined how to empower congregations toward missionary conduct – not only in terms of proclaiming the Gospel, but also in regard to moral decay and poverty relief in the country.
- c) A way must be found to keep from burdening congregations with additional financial obligations.
- d) All role players must be drawn in and coordinated, without ministers and commissions having to spend time and energy on financial and administrative matters.
- e) The above items can be pre-empted by establishing a non-profit company.

#### **9.1.1 Objective of Docenda**

The company, Docenda, was registered on 2 June 2014 as a non-profit company with the following objective:

- a) Funding of OLS theological students.
- b) Funding for the support of new congregations (church planting).
- c) Provision of funds for addressing poverty and socio-economic problems in communities.

- d) Provision of funding to counteract moral decay, by means of quality theological training of students that go on to live and work in their communities.
- e) All of the above in cooperation with local congregations and their evangelical commissions and sisters.
- f) The identifying and obtaining of sponsors/donations.

### **9.1.2 Role players**

The role players within and with Docenda (NPC) are the following:

- a) Curators nominated two board members, with one vote: Dr DG Breed and rev PM Modise.
- b) Faculty of Theology of NWU nominated two board members, with one vote: Profs JJ Janse van Rensburg and FP Viljoen.
- c) TSP Senate nominated two board members, with one vote: Profs GJC Jordaan and LH Moretsi.
- d) Curators also nominated one board member from the private sector (businessman, management and any other interested parties) with one vote: Br Hannes Steenekamp.
- e) The above board members will, subsequent to the meeting of 12 June 2014 in Pretoria, nominate a further three board members from the private sector (businessmen, management and any other interested parties). The four board members will have one vote collectively.
- f) The Forum for Reformed Businessmen (i.e. all members within GKSA in business who wish to support and be involved in the company, by means of a national network, on a continued basis).
- g) Organiser (Chief Executive Officer).
- h) Local congregations.
- i) Facilitators.
- j) Students.
- k) Donors and sponsors.

### **9.1.3 Specific task of Docenda (NPC)**

- a) Developing strategic funding models.
- b) Identifying and obtaining sponsors.
- c) As above, re. donations.
- d) Marketing outside the GKSA.
- e) Communicating with donors and sponsors.
- f) Market research.
- g) Logistic support.
- h) Identifying and obtaining facilities.
- i) Obtaining and installation of equipment and the relevant technology.
- j) Maintenance and insurance.
- k) Registration as PBO (Public Benefit Organisation) and issue of Article 18a certificates.

## **9.2 Faculty of Theology and the Unit for Open Distance Learning**

### **9.2.1 Programmes, facilities and experience**

The Faculty of Theology can serve as logistical vehicle. The programme and facilities of the Faculty of Theology and the Unit for Open Distance Learning are utilised to present distance training to candidates. The NWU facilities currently include two completely equipped studios, on the main campus, with trained staff. The Faculty of Theology have been involved in distance learning for six years and have already resolved much of the growing pains.

Examples of experience of the Faculty and UODL:

- a) Every weekend (Fridays & Saturdays) a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 60 modules are broadcast via whiteboard.

- b) Per DVD packaging: an average of 10 modules are placed on the Internet per week that students can download through a link.
- c) Theology modules already via whiteboard: 6 to 8 every fortnight.
- d) Possibility of expanding studio equipment to TSP building in future.

### **9.2.2 Delivery methods**

Two delivery methods are utilised:

1. Real-time interactive direct delivery (whiteboard technology) enables the student to ask direct questions and receive an immediate response. The facilitator merely provides technical support. The disadvantage of this method is that students who work during the day or live in other time zones are not always able to log on in-time.
2. Packaged material (DVD) contains a recording of an entire lecture, including the interaction with the students who attended the class. The student can watch and listen to the lecture at any time. The loss of direct interaction with the lecturer necessitates that the facilitator take on a greater advisory role. Questions and feedback only occur via e-mail and is not direct.

### **9.2.3 Human resources**

A number of professors have already presented modules via whiteboard and staff are proficient in electronic presentations of contact sessions. A simultaneous interpretation system has been in use for years and the NWU's interpreter service (Afrikaans-English and English-Afrikaans) is very professionally managed. The system is also open for expansion to other languages.

There are trained individuals in churches across the country who could be made available to act as facilitators at learning centres.

## **2.3 Decision of the Curators June 2014**

1. The Commission is thanked for their work in getting the practical implementation of the training model off the ground.
2. The Curators take note, with thanks, of the creation of Docenda that is responsible for the marketing; logistical support; identifying and obtaining facilities; obtaining and installation of equipment and the relevant technology; and the funding of student training. Special thanks goes to sr. Marieta Steenekamp for agreeing to act as interim senior administrative officer of Docenda.
3. The Curators would like to thank the Faculty and the UODL for facilitating the presentation of classes.
4. The Curators take note that:
  - 4.1 the training, by means of appropriate teaching-learning technology that enable candidates who are unable to study in Potchefstroom to receive training from career professors, will commence DV as of 2015;
  - 4.2 the first two introductions of the initiative to ministers of churches occurred on 19 May 2014 in Pretoria and 6 June 2014 in Potchefstroom;
  - 4.3 the first meeting of Reformed businessmen takes place DV on 12 June 2014 in Pretoria, where the Forum for Reformed Businessmen will DV be established; and
  - 4.4 the first meeting of the current board members of Docenda already occurred and the already appointed board members will appoint a further three board members from available members of the private sector.

**Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.3 noted.**

## F. SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

In accordance with CO, articles 18 and 19 and in accordance with Synod decisions, e.g. Acta 1994:699-700, Acta 2009:811 and Acta 2012:473-474 and especially Acta 2006:791-805, a non-profitable company, *Docenda*, is founded by the Curators' initiative. It is proposed that this company will, together with the local Reformed Churches, offer the opportunity to students (candidate students and other) to receive theological education by means of modern technology from Potchefstroom, without them having to move to Potchefstroom. Should the Synod give permission, more information will be supplied verbally during General Synod 2015.

Students that studies at the open learning centers (GKSA church buildings) will receive the same training by the same theological professors as the students in Potchefstroom, by means of televised class presentations. The facilitators that will serve at these open learning centers will be selected by the Curators and will mostly be GKSA ministers.

The funding model of *Docenda* is worked out in such a way that it places no financial burden upon the GKSA or the congregations involved with the Open learning centers. Should the Synod grant permission, this funding model will shortly be elucidated verbally during the General Synod 2015.

Theological students that makes use of this opportunity, will Lord willingly be able to study in February 2015 at four open learning centers that are built according to this model, namely at GK Meyerspark, GK Nylstroom, GK Sunnyside and GK Windhoek. There are currently also various congregations that requested that their buildings should serve as open learning centers. The planning is that congregations all over SA and Namibia be involved with this initiative from 2016.

### Recommendations

1. The Synod gives opportunity for verbal elucidation about *Docenda* and the funding model.
2. The Synod calls upon the churches to support this initiative.

**Decision: Noted.**