

## 24.8 POINT OF DESCRIPTION SOUTHERN REGIONAL SYNOD REGARDING THE SHORTAGE OF SPECIALISED OFFICIAL MINISTRY IN CHURCHES IN NEED (Artt 115, 254)

- A. The chairperson, dr DG Breed, hands the chair to the deputy-chairperson, rev SD Snyman.
- B. Rev JP Fleischmann tables the Point of Description.
- C. **Decision:** The Point of Description is given effect to.
- D. The following Commission is appointed: Revs JA Schutte (s), LP Baloyi, TJ Moletsane, DJ de Bruyn, elders TE Gxotani, DJ de Kock.
- E. Rev DJ de Bruyn reports on behalf of the Commission.

### F. POINT OF DESCRIPTION

*In this document "churches in need of ministry" refers to young, small, and/or underprivileged churches and/or churches without a full time minister.*

#### 1. Motion

As this matter cannot be resolved at a lesser assembly, Classis Boland requests the Southern Regional Synod to put the following motion on the Agenda of the General Synod: The Synod appoints a *Commission* to investigate, report and recommend to this Synod on ministry in *churches in need of ministry* (young, small, and/or underprivileged churches and/or churches without a full time minister):

- 1.1 Investigate at least the following aspects of ministry in our *churches in need of ministry*:
  - 1.1.1 How many of our non-Afrikaans speaking churches have ministers? How many churches are too poor to have ministers?
  - 1.1.2 What role do elders play in the ministry in these congregations? How well are the elders equipped for this work? How can the churches help each other in the training of these elders?
  - 1.1.3 Given factors such as language of instruction, culture, standard of schooling in South Africa, financial costs, etc., how difficult is it for candidates from our non-Afrikaans speaking churches to comply with the RCSA academic requirements before they can be ordained as minister? And what are the unique problems they have to overcome in order to comply with these requirements?
  - 1.1.4 Once a candidate from our non-Afrikaans speaking churches complies with the GKSA academic requirements and is eligible to be ordained as a minister, what are the unique challenges and problems he and a congregation he would serve in, face? How appropriate is the "fit" between our current training and the unique circumstances of these communities and congregations?
  - 1.1.5 Do some of the Afrikaans speaking churches also experience some of the problems addressed in 1.1.4? What are these problems?
- 1.2 Report on 1.1 above.
- 1.3 Make recommendations on how we as churches can take responsibility to lovingly help each other overcome possible obstacles to enjoying the best possible ministry.

#### 2. Motivation

- 2.1 Church Order, art 19 places the burden on all churches to see to it that there are sufficient students in theology and that they receive financial support. The object of this article is surely to see to it that optimum well-trained official ministry is available to the churches.

- 2.2 While delegates from *churches in need of ministry* are present at this Synod, it is an opportune moment to ask them to assist in the work of such a Commission.
- 2.3 A snapshot of one such *church in need of ministry* illustrates some of the challenges these churches might face. During visitation at Congregation X the following came to light:
- 2.3.1 Under the part time guidance of a minister of a neighbouring Afrikaans congregation, Congregation X gained remarkable maturity. The approximately 55 members are visited by elders and elders preach at two locations each Sunday. A crèche is run by one of the members in the church facilities during the week.
- 2.3.2 While the minister of the neighbouring congregation retired in 2014, the Lord is calling a young man from Congregation X to the ministry. There is a wonderful opportunity for this young man to grow into the ministry at this congregation while the emeritus scales down his responsibilities.
- 2.3.3 However, the magnitude of the cultural, academic, language, and demographic, residential and financial barriers this young man has to overcome to enter the ministry came to light during visitation. These barriers seem, humanly speaking, insurmountable.
- 2.3.4 These barriers most probably are not only endemic to Congregation X, but will almost certainly be proven to be systemic to the GKSA – therefore this motion at this forum.
- 2.4 In Scripture we find a number of principles for equipping leaders in our congregations. Some of these principles are not currently utilised sufficiently in the training programme of the GKSA and if applied, might assist our churches. Consider the following examples:
- 2.4.1 Jesus equipped his disciples mainly through discipleship (or in the language of today – in-service training and mentorship). This could allow for non-residential type training (Gospels).
- 2.4.2 The training of different leaders and believers is passed on from one person to another (in the language of today – train the trainer and each-one-teach-one) (e.g. 2 Tim 2:2).
- 2.4.3 In New Testament times we find that elders play a leading role in the ministry in congregations, sometimes at least without the presence of a full time Apostle or Shepherd and Teacher (Acts 14:23, 20:17-38).
- 2.4.4 While we do not find the specialisation of the current office of “minister” (Afr, *dominee*) literally in the Bible, this office probably tries to institutionalise the ministries of “shepherds and teachers” (Eph 4:11). In the very same sentence we find references to “evangelists”. Just as we instituted a specialised elder in the office of “minister” (“shepherds and teachers”), is it possible to institute another such specialisation – “evangelists” – and, provide them with a basic in-service mentorship type training accompanied with a basic academic formation and release them to minister in our churches where our current training model falls short?

## G. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

### 1. Assignment

To give attention to the Point of Description of the Southern Regional Synod, viz. that the Synod appoints a Commission to investigate, report and recommend to this Synod on ministry in churches in need of ministry (young, small, and/or underprivileged churches and/or churches without a full time minister.

**Decision: Noted.**

## 2. Approach

- 2.1 The Commission decided that we can only take a preliminary survey and give the results to the Synod with a recommendation.
- 2.2 A separate surveys for Ministers and Elders were conducted by means of a questionnaire.
- 2.3 80 Elders and 102 Ministers completed their forms.
- 2.4 We intended to discern between the different Regional Synods but all the respondents did not fill in the name of their Regional Synod.
- 2.5 Representatives of the former Synods Midlands and Capricorn were requested to fill in the English questions.

**Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.5 noted.**

## 3. Findings

- 3.1 Complete info on the number of ministers and congregations without ministers and congregations dependant on sustentation can be gathered from the Administrative Bureau.
- 3.2 *The survey with elders gave the following*

	General		English speaking	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Questionnaire Elders				
Does your congregation have its own exclusive minister?	62	18	10	9
Is your congregation in combination with another congregation for the service of a minister?	14	66	5	14
Are you ministered by a custodian only?	53	27	10	9
Do you have to conduct preaching or preach reading yourself?	49	31	18	1
Are you involved in catechetical teaching (Sunday school)?	46	34	14	5
Are you involved in specific ministries (like counseling, sick visitation etc.)?	60	20	16	3
Are you involved in evangelism outreach?	36	44	8	11
Are you in need of further help and training?	53	27	19	0
Did you request help from other Reformed Churches?	25	55	11	8
Will you be able to make use of a distant learning program?	63	17	11	8
Does your classis or region organize training for elders?	59	21	6	13
Do you use discipleship material for equipping of members?	26	54	9	10

It shows that te elders are in need of training and equipment for preaching and pastoral care. The majority can benefit by distant learning programs. It is further to be noted that in the majority of regions some training is already given.

- 3.3 *The survey with ministers gave the following statistics*

	General		English speaking	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
How many congregations do you serve?	63 (1)	25 (>1) <sup>1</sup>	8	0

<sup>1</sup> 63 (1 congregation) 18(2),2(3),4(1),1(3)

Do you serve together with other in a multiple ministry?	32	70	3	5
How many congregations make use of you as custodian?	66 <sup>2</sup>	36	0 (1)	8 (>1)
Does your congregation support other congregation(s) financially?	59	43	2	6
Does your congregation support other with workers for better functioning?	37	65	2	6
Are you aware of young men who desire to become a minister but cannot afford it?	35	48	7	1
Are you aware of young men who desire to become a minister but do not comply to the acceptance requirements of the university?	44	58	6	2
In your area, is church growth by evangelism possible?	95	7	8	0
In your area, are there any other churches that show special growth?	40	62	7	1
Do you use discipleship material for equipping of members?	42	60	4	4

There are 35 possible candidates of which 7 mentioned by English respondents who cannot afford to study. There are also many churches in their communities that show growth, thus indicating an opportunity.

### 3.4 *We observe*

- 3.4.1 It is impossible to begin and complete an investigation like this while the Synod is in session.
- 3.4.2 Some Classes do give attention to the training of elders.
- 3.4.3 The proposed Centre for Ministry Training and Guidance (CMTG) is supposed to give attention to needs like these according to its suggested purpose.
- 3.4.4 Several persons approached us spontaneously to bring to our attention that the churches with/without a minister in the rural areas and townships are in financial need.

**Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.4.4 noted.**

## 4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That continued attention is given to the ministry need of churches.
- 4.2 That this is firstly the duty of each Classis, according to CO, art 41 and 44.
- 4.3 That this matter be referred to the intended CMTG.
- 4.4 According to the findings it should be brought to the attention of the Curators of the TSP that there are young men who desire to study to be ministers but can not afford it.

**Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.4 approved.**

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<sup>2</sup>(1-2)1, 2(3), 22(2), 2(4), 2(3), 37(1), 36(0)