

21.5 ADVIESVRAAG VAN STREEKSINODE NOORDWES – VROU IN BESONDERE DIENSTE AS OUDERLING EN PREDIKANT (Artt 39, 214)

21.5 QUESTION OF ADVICE FROM REGIONAL SYNOD NORTH WEST – WOMEN IN SPECIAL OFFICES AS ELDER AND MINISTER (Arts 39, 214)

- A. Ds DJA Booyens stel die Adviesvraag.
Rev. DJA Booyens tables the Advisory question.
- B. **Besluit:** Verwys die Adviesvraag na die Deputate wat aangewys gaan word kragtens die Beskrywingspunt van Streeksinode Pretoria (21.6).
Die Moderamen formuleer die mandaat van hierdie Deputate met inagneming van die vraag hoe die situasie in die volgende drie jaar hanteer moet word.
Decision: Refer the advisory question to the Deputies to be appointed in terms of the Proposal – Regional Synod Pretoria (21.6).
The Moderamen formulate the mandate of these Deputies taking into account the question of how the situation should be handled in the next three years.
- C. Ds PW Kurpershoek rapporteer namens die Moderamen oor die voorgestelde Mandaat.
Rev. PW Kurpershoek reports on behalf of the Moderamen regarding the proposed Mandate.
- D. **Besluit: Die voorgestelde Mandaat word soos gewysig aanvaar.**
Decision: The proposed Mandate is amended and adopted.

E. ADVIESVRAAG / ADVISORY QUESTION

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Streeksinode Noordwes het op 29 November 2022 'n adviesvraag van Klassis Potchefstroom te tafel geneem en in die lig van die aktualiteit daarvan die adviesvraag sy eie gemaak en dit word deurgestuur as 'n adviesvraag van die Streeksinode.</p> | <p>The Regional Synod tabled on 29 November 2022, a question of Advice from Classis Potchefstroom and decided to make this question of Advice its own. The Regional Synod therefore send this question of Advice to the General Synod.</p> |
| <p>Die Streeksinode Noordwes vra die volgende advies van die Algemene Sinode: “Watter opsies is binne die gesag van die klassis beskikbaar in die hantering van 'n gemeente/s wat nie by die besluit van die sinode oor vroue in die ouderlingamp hou nie?”</p> | <p>The Regional Synod North West ask the Advice from the General Synod: “What options are available within the authority of the classis in dealing with a congregation/s that do not adhere to the decision of Synod regarding women in the office of elder?”</p> |
| <p>Die advies van die Kerkorde-eksperte word aan die Algemene Sinode gestuur.</p> | <p>The advice of the Church polity experts is forwarded to the General Synod.</p> |
| <p>Motivering: Hierdie vraag is regdeur die GKSA relevant.</p> | <p>Motivation: This question is relevant throughout the GKSA.</p> |
| <p>Besluit: Goedgekeur</p> | <p>Decision: Approved</p> |
| <p>Advies 1: Prof J Smit</p> | <p>Advice 1: Prof J Smit</p> |
| <p>Die Voorsitter Klassis Potchefstroom Die vraag oor die wyse waarop Klassisse teenoor plaaslike kerke, wat nie by die besluit van Sinode (2009) oor die toelating van vroue tot die diens van die ouderling hou</p> | <p>The Chairman Classis Potchefstroom The question of the manner in which the Classis should act towards local churches, which do not abide by the decision of the Synod (2009) regarding the admission of</p> |

nie behoort op te tree, is reeds verskeie kere beredeneer. Myns insiens is die prinsipiële basis, waarop die saak beoordeel moet word by verskeie geleenthede uiteengesit. Die vraag van die Klassis sluit direk daarby aan: What options are available within the authority of the Classis in dealing with a congregation/s that do not adhere to the decision of Synod regarding women in the office of elder?

Hier word nie 'n volledige uiteensetting van die saak gegee nie. Die Klassis behoort egter die volgende in ag te neem.

(i) Kerkverband en die beoefening van kerklike gemeenskap berus op die kerke se eenheid in belydenis.

(ii) Dit beteken dat die opsegging van die belydenis (of aspekte daarvan) die enigste grond bied vir die opsegging van kerkverband. Die vraag is daarom of die vraag oor die toelating van die vrou tot die diens van die ouderling (en selfs die diens van die Woord) 'n konfessionele aangeleentheid is, al dan nie. Die antwoord op hierdie vraag word hoofsaaklik deur die volgende twee aspekte van die saak bepaal:

(a) 'n Aangeleentheid kom direk in die belydenis voor, d.w.s. die kerke bely dit as een van die kernwaarhede van die Christelike geloof. Hier moet op die volgende gelet word: Die Gereformeerde Belydenis-skrifte bely die kerklike diens/amp en nie die geslag van die mense wat daarin behoort te dien nie. Die vraag punt is relevant omdat die vraag oor die vrou in die amp relatief kort na (+/-) 200 n.C. reeds 'n vraagstuk in die NT-kerke was. Tydens en na die reformasie was die vraag oor die vrou in die amp eweneens relevant. Die Anabaptiste het byvoorbeeld vroue tot die amp toegelaat en nie reformatore nie. Dit is waarskynlik een van die redes waarom Calvyn hom met groot versigtigheid oor die vrou in die amp uitgelaat het en selfs 'n "eie" diens (van diaken) vir vroue geskep het. Die punt is egter soos volg: Ten spyte van die vraag oor die vrou in die amp het die reformatore nie die geslag van die ampsdraers as konfessionele aangeleentheid beskou nie.

(b) Die vraag is of die hermeneutiek onderliggend aan 'n standpunt die belydenis, nl., dat die Bybel die Woord van God is,

women to the service of the elder, has already been argued several times. In my opinion, the principled basis, on which the case should be adjudicated, has been set out on several occasions. The question of the Classis ties directly into this: What options are available within the authority of the Classis in dealing with a congregation that does not adhere to the decision of Synod regarding women in the office of elder?

A full explanation of the matter is not given here. However, the Classis should take the following into account:

(i) Church affiliation and the practice of ecclesiastical communion rest on the churches' unity in confession.

(ii) This means that the suspension of the confession (or aspects thereof) provides the only basis for the suspension of church affiliation. The question, therefore, is whether or not the question of the admission of the woman to the service of the elder (and even the service of the Word) is a confessional matter. The answer to this question is determined mainly by the following two aspects of the issue:

(a) A matter occurs directly in the confession, i.e. the churches profess it as one of the core truths of the Christian faith. The following should be noted here: the Reformed Confessions profess the ecclesiastical service/office and not the gender of the people who ought to serve in it. The point in question is relevant because the question about the woman in office was already an issue in the NT churches relatively shortly after c. 200 AD. During and after the reformation, the question of the woman in office was equally relevant. For example, the Anabaptists admitted women to office and not reformers. This is probably one of the reasons why Calvin expressed himself so circumspectly and with great caution about the woman in office and even created an "own" office (or "deacon-office") for women. However, the point is as follows: Despite the question of the woman in office, the reformers did not consider the gender of the office bearers to be a confessional matter.

(b) The question is whether the hermeneutics underlying a position denies the confession, viz., that the Bible is the

ontken (NGB, art 6-9). Hier moet daarop gelet word dat geen Sinode in die GKSA 'n aanduiding gegee dat laasgenoemde die geval is nie. Daar is geen aanduiding dat, byvoorbeeld, die historiese kritiek óf 'n Skrifkritiese inkorporering van die taalfilosofie, wat die hermeneutiese debat vir 'n groot deel van die 20e eeu oorheers het, op die vraag van die toelating van vroue tot die amp in die GKSA beheers nie. Nie een van die standpunte oor die vrou in die amp bring die konfessie op enige van hierdie punte in gedrang nie.

(iii) Die vraag oor die vrou in die amp word in die GKSA as 'n eksegetiese vraag en nie as 'n konfessionele aangeleentheid beskou nie. Oor die eksegetiese vraag moet daar verkieslik uitsluitel verkry word. Dit beteken onder andere die volgende: Die moontlikheid bestaan dat daar van 'n verkeerde óf 'n regte eksegesis oor hierdie aangeleentheid sprake kan wees.

Die beslissende punt is egter soos volg, nl., dat daar geen aanduiding is dat die vraag oor die vrou in die amp en die toelating van vroue tot die amp beslissend vir die verlossing in Christus is nie.

(iv) Die doel van die Gereformeerde kerkreg is om 'n Kerkorde daar te stel by wyse waarvan die Woord bedien word. Daarom is die Kerkorde struktureel en inhoudelik op die konfessie gegrond. Die uitgangspunt vir die gesag van kerklike besluite is daarom nie die vergadering, wat die besluit neem nie, maar die Woord. 'n Besluit van 'n meerdere vergadering moet die Woord bedien. Daarom is die besluite van meerdere vergaderings ook bindend.

(v) 'n Vraag is óf en hoe Sinodes besluite behoort te neem wat kontensieus is, maar nie aan die vereiste van 'n konfessionele aangeleentheid, soos hierbo verduidelik, voldoen nie. Die vraag is dus hoe 'n besluit oor die vrou in die amp geformuleer behoort te word op grond van die Skrifgetuigenis, die Belydenis en die staande Sinodebesluite. Die vraag is egter nie direk hier ter sprake nie.

(vi) Die punt is dat Sinode (2009) 'n duidelike besluit geneem het, naamlik dat vroue nie tot die leer en regeer dienste toegelaat word nie. Hoe moet Klassis teenoor gemeentes optree wat nie die besluit nakom nie?

Word of God (NGB, art 6-9). It should be noted here that no Synod in the GKSA has ever given any indication that the latter is the case. There is no indication that, for example, the historical critique or a Scriptural-critical incorporation of the philosophy of language, which dominated the hermeneutical debate for much of the 20th century, governed the question of the admission of women to office in the GKSA. None of the views on the woman in office compromise the confession on any of these points.

(iii) The question of the woman in office is considered in the GKSA to be an exegetical question and not a confessional matter. On the exegetical question, it should preferably be excluded. This means, inter alia, the following: There is a possibility that either a wrong or a right exegesis could be discussed on this matter.

The decisive point, however, is as follows, viz., that there is no indication that the question of the woman in office and the admission of women to office is decisive for the salvation in Christ.

(iv) The purpose of Reformed ecclesiastical law is to establish a Church Order by means of which the Word is administered. Therefore, structurally and substantially, the Church Order is based on the confession. The premise for the authority of ecclesiastical decisions is therefore not the assembly, which makes the decision, but the Word. A decision of a superior assembly must minister to the Word. Therefore, the decisions of major meetings are also binding.

(v) Another question is whether and how Synods should make decisions that are contentious but do not meet the requirement of a confessional matter, as explained above. The question, then, is how a decision about the woman in office should be formulated based on Scriptural evidence, the Confession, and the standing Synod decisions. However, the question is not directly at issue here.

(vi) The point is that Synod (2009) made a clear decision, namely that women are not admitted to the teaching and governing services. How should the Classis act towards congregations that do not follow the decision?

(vii) Die volgende behoort in ag geneem te word:

(a) Gemeentes wat teen die Sinodebesluit optree erken (in die gevalle waarvan ek bewus is) dat hulle teen die Sinodebesluit optree. Hulle spreek egter die versekering uit dat hulle hulle nie teen die Gereformeerde leer verset nie en deel van die kerkverband wil wees en bly.

(b) Beide die voorstanders en die teenstanders van die vrou in die amp maak 'n punt daarvoor dat die besluit (vir óf teen die vrou in die amp) die gewetens na die een of die ander kant toe bind. Die punt word deur voorstanders van die vrou in die amp soos volg toegelig: Die gewetensbinding berus nie daarop dat die vrou nie tot die besondere dienste van ouderling en predikant toegelaat word nie, maar daarop dat die Sinode by wyse van 'n meerderheidsbesluit 'n standpunt op die gemeente(s) afdwing, wat volgens hierdie gemeentes deur die Skrif gebied word nie. Die Skrif is oor hierdie aangeleentheid nie 100% duidelik nie én daarom behoort 'n Sinode hom nie daarvoor by wyse van 'n verbod ten koste van enige van die standpunte uit te spreek nie. Die gelowige se gewete is gevange in die Skrif en vind in die Gereformeerde Belydenisskrifte uitdrukking. Hierdie beginsel word nie deur die kerke wat vroue as ouderlinge bevestig, opgehef nie.

(c) Die Kerkorde bedien die Woord in die verskillende kontekste waarin gelowiges tereg mag kom. Die Kerkorde gee nie uitsluitel daarvoor of die vrou in die amp 'n konfessionele aangeleentheid is nie. Die vraag moet eksegeties uitgeklaar word. Daarvoor skeep die Kerkorde die geleentheid.

(d) Die Kerkorde mag ook nie as 'n wet naas die Skrif aangewend word om van plaaslike kerke, wat m.b.t. hierdie aangeleentheid nie die Sinodebesluit volg nie, ontslae te raak. Dit is 'n futiele argument om die Sinodebesluit op grond van die belang van die sogenaamde "orde" in die kerk af te dwing indien die besluit nie die Skrif en konfessie bedien nie. Hierbo is reeds genoem, dat Sinodes in die verlede duidelik vir 'n standpunt oor die vrou in die amp ingeneem het, maar die eksegeese en die hermeneutiek van die teenoorstaande standpunt nie as "krities" afgewys het nie. Dit

(vii) The following should be taken into account:

(a) Congregations acting against the Synodal decision acknowledge (in the cases I am aware of) that they are acting against the Synodal decision. However, they express the assurance that they do not oppose the Reformed doctrine and want to be and remain part of the affiliation.

(b) Both the proponents and the opponents of the woman in office make a point that the decision (for or against the woman in office) binds the conscience to the one or the other side. The point is elucidated by proponents of the woman in office as follows: The binding force of the conscience does not rest on the fact that the woman is not admitted to the particular services of elder and minister, but on the fact that the Synod by way of a majority decision does not allow an option to the congregation(s), something which these congregations believe is offered by Scripture. Scripture is not 100% clear on this matter, and therefore a Synod should not pronounce itself as authoritative on it by way of a prohibition at the expense of any of the views. The believer's conscience is imprisoned in Scripture and finds expression in the Reformed Confessions. This principle is not suspended by the churches that institute women as elders.

(c) The Church Order ministers to the Word in the different contexts in which believers may find personal expression. The Church Order does not decide whether the woman in office is a confessional matter. The question needs to be clarified exegetically. To that end, the Church Order creates the opportunity.

(d) Nor should the Church Order be used as a law in addition to Scripture to get rid of local churches that do not follow the Synodal decision. It is a futile argument to enforce the Synod decision based on the importance of the so-called "order" in the church if the decree does not serve Scripture and confession. It has already been mentioned above, that Synods have clearly taken a position on the woman in office in the past but have not dismissed the exegesis and the hermeneutics of the opposite position as "critical". This creates the problem, which needs to be addressed: Should a Synod

skep die probleem, wat aangespreek moet word: Behoort 'n Sinode 'n verbod op die bevestiging van vroue in die tersaaklike ampte te plaas indien dit nie op grond van 'n eksegetiese beslissing onomwonde verbied word nie?

(e) Die gemeenskaplike Belydenis bly die maatstaf vir die eenheid van die kerk. Op grond van die staande Sinodebesluite is die konfessionele eenheid van die kerk nie in gedrang indien vroue in die amp bevestig word nie. Die kerkregtelike vraag is dus soos volg:

Hoe moet 'n Klassis teenoor 'n gemeente optree, wat op 'n eksegetiese punt van 'n Sinodebesluit verskil en (volgens die gemeente) die gewetens bind, maar nie die konfessie in gedrang bring nie? 'n Vraag is verder ook: Is die plaaslike kerke, wat nie die tersaaklike Sinodebesluit volg nie bereid om steeds die kerklike pad te volg om 'n oplossing vir die probleem daar te (probeer) stel?

(viii) 'n Klassis behoort die volgende punte te oorweeg:

(a) Die saak moes op 'n kerkregtelike legitieme wyse op die Agenda van die Klassis gekom het (bv. by wyse van KO, artt 46, 41, 44). Dit sluit in dat die Klassis geen tugreg teenoor 'n gemeente het nie. Alle inisiatiewe vir die hantering van 'n saak behoort by die plaaslike kerk te begin.

(b) Die Klassis hoef nie 'n uitspraak te maak oor die vraag van die aard van die aangeleentheid nie. Uit die staande Sinodebesluite is dit duidelik dat die vrou in die amp nie 'n konfessionele aangeleentheid is nie. Die Klassis moet die saak op grond daarvan hanteer.

(c) Die Klassis behoort die band met die plaaslike kerk te behou deur onder andere spesiale visitasie (KO, art 44), navraag oor die stand van sake in die gemeente (KO, art 41), ens. by die gemeente te doen. Uiteraard sal die gemeente se standpunt oor die vrou in die amp tydens 'n visitasie nagegaan word. Die fokus is egter nie om die gemeente te (bly) vermaan nie, maar om die band met mekaar as gelowiges te behou.

(d) Ongeag die feit van 'n verskil oor 'n eksegetiese aangeleentheid, wat tot 'n oortreding van die 9e Gebod deur die gemeente gelei het, moet die Klassis die ruimte hê om op grond van die Skrif,

place a ban on the confirmation of women in the relevant offices if it is not unequivocally prohibited on the basis of an exegetical decision?

(e) The communal in Confession remains the criterion for the unity of the church. Based on the standing Synod decisions, the confessional unity of the church is not compromised if women are confirmed in office. The ecclesiastical question is therefore as follows:

How should a Classis act towards a congregation, which differs from a Synod decision on an exegetical point and (according to the congregation) binds the consciences but does not compromise the confession? A question is also: Are the local churches, which do not follow the relevant Synod decision, willing to continue following the ecclesiastical path to (try to) propose a solution to the problem?

(viii) A Classis should consider the following points:

(a) The case should have been added to the Agenda of the Classis in an ecclesiastical legitimate manner (e.g. by way of CO, arts 46, 41, 44). This entails that the Classis has no disciplinary right to a congregation. All initiatives to deal with a case should start with the local church.

(b) The Classis does not need to make a judgment on the question of the nature of the matter. From the standing Synod decisions it is clear that the woman in office is not a confessional matter and he must deal with the matter on that basis.

(c) The Classis should maintain the connection with the local church through, inter alia, special visitation (CO, art 44), and inquiry about the state of affairs in the congregation (CO, section 41), etc. Naturally, the congregation's position on the woman in office will be investigated during a visitation. The focus, however, is not to continue to admonish the congregation, but to maintain the bond with one another as believers.

(d) Regardless of the fact of a discrepancy in an exegetical matter, which could lead to a violation of the 9th Commandment by the congregation, the Classis must have the space, on the basis of

Belydenis en die Kerkorde die gemeente in Christus te behou. Die tersaaklike aangeleentheid bring die Konfessie nie in gedrang nie.

(e) Hoe onbevredigend dit ook al na beide kante mag wees, behoort die Klassis en die Kerkraad mekaar in die situasie tegemoet te kom. Dit beteken dat die Kerkraad daarvoor te vinde behoort te wees om nie in die omstandighede vroue na meerdere vergaderings toe af te vaardig nie. Die Klassis behoort dan ook van die vergadering se kant geen probleem met die aanvaarding van die geloofsbriewe van die gemeente te hê nie.

(f) Die Klassis behoort in terme van KO, art 41/44 saam met die tersaaklike gemeente inisiatief te neem om 'n oplossing vir die saak te vind. Tans gaan die geïkete weg, nl. om KO, art 46 te volg waarskynlik nie 'n oplossing bied nie. Maar is dit die enigste weg wat kerke kan volg om hulle eenheid op grond van Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde in hierdie onverkwiklik situasie te bevestig en 'n oplossing vir die probleem te bedink? Die realiteit is dat die aangeleentheid oor die wêreld steeds 'n probleem skep. Standpunte daarvoor is nie staties nie. Die Vrijgemaakte kerke in die Nederlande was vir jare bekend vir hulle standpunt teen die vrou in die amp. Die standpunt het in 'n betreklike kort tydperk (van enkele jare) verander. Hoe is dit moontlik? Wat het die Vrijgemaaktes ontdek wat ons nie sien nie? Hoe moet ons hierdie ontwikkeling beoordeel? Die kerke kan die aangeleentheid so bestuur dat dit nie in stryd met die KO (art 29) is nie. Dit kan 'n geleentheid of geleenthede wees waarby die kerke geen besluite neem nie, maar inligting insamel om te oordeel of en hoe dit moontlik is om die aangeleentheid weer voor die Sinode te bring. Die punt is: Hierdie benaderingswyse sal 'n uitbreiding van die gewone toepassing van KO, art 48 behels, maar dit maak dit nie ongeldig nie.

(g) Twee ander aspekte waaroor die kerke op grond van die bogenoemde sinvolle bydraes oor die aangeleentheid kan lewer, is om deeglike stukke oor die volgende temas (KO, art 46) aan 'n Sinode voor te lê: Wanneer behoort kerke by 'n besluit, waarmee hulle nie saam stem nie te berus? Ons leef nie in 'n volmaakte bedeling nie.

Scripture, Confession and the Church Order, to retain the congregation in Christ. The relevant matter does not compromise the Confession.

(e) However unsatisfactory it may be on both sides the Classis and the Church Council should meet each other on the situation. This means that the Church Council should be prepared to not delegate/deputise women to major meetings in the circumstances. The Classis, then, should have no problem accepting the credentials of the congregation on the part of the assembly.

(f) In terms of CO, art 41/44, the Classis should take initiative with the relevant congregation to find a solution to the matter. Going the present, traditional, long-standing way, viz. following CO, art 46 probably doesn't offer a solution. But is this the only path churches can follow to affirm their unity based on Scripture, Confession and Church Order in this paralysing situation in order to devise a solution to the problem? The reality is that the matter around the world continues to create a problem. Views on it are not static. The Vrijgemaakte kerke (Liberated Churches) in the Netherlands were known for years for their stance against the woman in office. The point of view then changed in a relatively short period (of several years). How is this possible? What did the Vrijgemaaktes discover that we don't see? How should we assess this development? The churches can use the matter and manage it in such a way that it does not conflict with the CO (art 29). This may be an event or occasion in which the churches don't make any decisions yet but gather information to judge whether and how it is possible to bring the matter back before the Synod. The point is: This mode of approach would involve an extension of the usual application of CO, art 48, but that does not invalidate it.

(g) Two other aspects to which the churches can make meaningful contributions on the above-mentioned matter, are to present thorough studies on the following themes (CO, art 46) to a Synod: When should churches acquiesce (make peace) with a situation based on a decision with which they disagree? We do not live in a

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Waar behoort ons die lyn te trek? Wanneer behoort ons die debat te stop? 'n Ander vraag is: Ons het in Sinodes verval waarin stemming oor alles op die Agenda aan die orde van die dag is. Ook oor probleemgevalle vir die kerke soos die toelating van vroue tot die diens? Die ideaal bly altyd dat die kerke konsensusbesluite neem. Hoe het die kerke histories hierdie ideaal verwesenlik? Dit kan die kerkverband moontlik help om die vraag oor die vrou in die amp te hanteer totdat daar 'n duideliker eksegetiese pad vir die kerke aangedui word.</p> <p>Die kernpunt is dus soos volg: Op grond van die Skrifgetuienis en die staande Sinodebesluit(e) in die GKSA regverdig die nie-nakoming van Sinode 2009 se besluit oor die vrou in die amp nie 'n opsegging van kerkverband nie. Die kerke moet mekaar in hierdie onverkwiklike situasie op grond van die gemeenskaplike belydenis bly vashou. Ek vertrou dat hierdie uiteensetting u in die uitvoering van u taak kan help.</p> <p>Seënwense Prof Johannes Smit Potchefstroom 2022-10-10</p> | <p>perfect dispensation. Where should we draw the line? When should we stop the debate? Another question is: We have lapsed into Synodal situations in which voting on everything on the Agenda is the order of the day. This also with problem cases for the churches such as the admission of women to the service? The ideal always remains that the churches should make decisions on consensus. How have the churches historically realized this ideal? This could potentially help the church affiliation deal with the question of the woman in office until a clearer exegetical path is indicated for the churches.</p> <p>The key point is therefore as follows: Based on the Scriptural evidence and the standing Synod decision(s) in the GKSA, non-compliance with Synod 2009's decision on the woman in office does not justify a renunciation of church affiliation. The churches must continue to hold onto one another in this unenviable situation on the basis of the communal confession. I trust that this outline can help you in the implementation of your task.</p> <p>Benedictions Prof Johannes Smit Potchefstroom 2022-10-10</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Advies 2: Dr RM van der Merwe</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Advice 2: Dr RM van der Merwe</p> |
| <p>Adviesvraag Klassis Potchefstroom, 11/10/2022 Die vraag: Watter moontlike optrede kan 'n Klassis oorweeg indien 'n plaaslike kerk nie Sinodebesluite onderhou nie, behoort met die volgende rekenig te hou:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Die Skrif leer en die kerk bely, dat die duur-verwerfde eenheid van Christus se kerk nooit 'n geringe saak mag wees nie. Eenheid is 'n wesenseienskap van die ware kerk. Daarom het 'n ware gelowige, kerk of meerdere vergadering die begeerte om hierdie geestelike eenheid in liefde, ook in kerkregering, sigbaar te maak. 2. Kerke mag dus nie toelaat dat die gebrokenheid van hierdie sondige bedeling Christus se één kerk skaad of dat hul optrede dit in gedrang bring nie. Die nie-onderhouding van Sinodebesluite oor die vrou in die diens van ouderling, kan Christus se duur-verwerfde eenheid in gedrang bring, | <p>Advice to Deputies of the Classis Potchefstroom, 11/10/2022 Regarding the question on which possible course of action may be considered by a Classis if a local church does not uphold Synodal decisions the following should be borne in mind:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture teaches and the church confesses that the dearly-earned unity of Christ's church should never be lightly regarded. Unity is an essential characteristic of the true church. Consequently, a true believer, church or major assembly has the desire to display this spiritual unity visibly - in love, as well as in church government. 2. Churches, therefore, must neither allow the brokenness of this sinful dispensation to harm this one, unified church of Christ nor that its actions should jeopardize it. The non-observance of Synodal decisions regarding woman in the service of elder could then jeopardize |

in besonder as Klassisse dit nie reg hanteer nie.

3. Wanneer 'n Klassis opsies in die hantering van die saak oorweeg, kom die probleem na vore dat die Kerkorde nie bedoel om handeling vir byvoorbeeld die nie-nakoming van Sinodebesluite voor te skryf nie. Die Kerkorde bied slegs ooreengekome beginsels uit die Skrif en Belydenis vir kerkregering.

4. Kerke beleef eenheid in kerkverband op grond van 'n gesamentlike en ooreengekome verstaan van die Skrif en Belydenis insake die regering van Christus se kerk. Hierdie vrywillige verbintenis het nie 'n (tipies wêreldse) afdwingbare karakter nie. Die tug van die Woord is geestelik en liefdevol.

5. Daarom het beide kerke en meerdere vergaderings (Classes) die verantwoordelikheid teenoor mekaar om te bly sorg dat Sinodebesluite gehandhaaf word en indien nodig, getoets word (KO, artt 31 en 46). Kerke en meerdere vergaderings deel ook die verantwoordelikheid om, wanneer daar verskille ontstaan (soos oor vroue in die diens van ouderling), om (reeds vooraf) dit teenoor mekaar ter berde bring en ter wille van Christus se een kerk die verskille by te lê. Die optrede staan teenoor die huidige dilemma: dat van 'n Klassis – by nabaat – verwag word om verskille op te los.

6. Behalwe om plaaslike gemeentes in die regering van Christus se kerk by te staan, behoort Classes toe te sien dat gemeentes, wat nie Sinodebesluite oor vroue in die diens van ouderling eerbiedig nie, mede-verantwoordelikheid neem om saam met die res van die gemeentes 'n weg te vind om die ononderhandelbare eenheid van Christus se kerk te herstel, hetsy deur konformering; oortuiging uit die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde of op watter weg ookal besluit word - alles behalwe skeiding of skeuring.

7. Omdat Sinodebesluite feilbaar en toetsbaar is, word gewag gemaak dat beswaarde gemeentes se gewetens nie gebind word aan die moontlike foute in besluite nie – selfs al kon van hierdie gemeentes nie die foute uit die Skrif,

Christ's hard-earned unity, especially if the matter is not dealt with properly.

3. In having to deal with matters pertaining to this type of case, the problem arises that the Church Order does not prescribe any specific conduct for this type of problem, viz. the non-compliance with Synodal decisions; the Church Order only offers advice based upon principles from Scripture and Confessional Creed guidelines for church government.

4. Churches experience unity in a church relationship based upon a joint and consenting understanding of Scripture and the Creeds concerning the government of Christ's church. This voluntary commitment does not have a (typically- worldly) enforceable character. The discipline of the Word is spiritual and loving.

5. Therefore, both churches and major assemblies (Classes) have a responsibility to one another to continue to ensure that Synodal decisions are upheld, and if necessary, tested (CO, arts 31 and 46). Churches and major assemblies then also share the responsibility, when (like, for instance, women in the office as elder) differences do arise, to (beforehand already,) consider the options and to agree upon some mode of conduct for the sake of maintaining the unity of Christ's church. This conduct stands in contrast to the present dilemma, viz. of expecting a Classis to settle differences afterwards.

6. Besides the assistance to local congregations in the government of Christ's church, Classes are also responsible for supervising congregations that do not comply with Synodal decisions regarding women in the office of the elder, and should be co-responsible in finding an amicable unnegotiable solution together with the rest of the congregations in order to restore the unity of Christ's church; this should occur whether by conforming, or convincing out of the Scripture, and Church Order or whatever other means decided upon – everything BUT separation or schism!

7. Since Synodal decisions are fallible and testable, it is a general assumption that the consciences of objecting congregations aren't bound to possible erroneous interpretations of decisions -- even if such congregations were unable to sufficiently

Belydenis en Kerkorde teen Sinodebesluite voldoende bewys nie. Wanneer Beswaarskrifte en Appèlle keer na keer nie oortuig om Sinodebesluite te verander nie, is die vraag of sulke gemeentes nie ook behoort te erken dat hul eie werk maar feilbaar is nie?

8. Kerkorde, art 31 bepaal dat besluite van meerdere vergaderings vas en bindend is, tensy bewys kan word dat die besluite teen die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde is. Die rede waarom besluite van meerdere vergaderings vas en bindend vir Kerkrade en mindere vergaderings is, lê enersyds in die feit dat Kerkrade en mindere vergaderings inherent deel vorm van die besluit wat deur 'n meerdere vergadering geneem is. Andersyds is besluite van meerdere vergaderings vas en bindend omdat meer gawes in meerdere vergaderings nie hulle eie nie, maar Christus se gesag (die Woord), bedien.

9. Die pleit vir 'n algemene, onbepaalde tipe "tolleransie" (teenoor gemeentes wat Sinodebesluite nie onderhou nie) by meerdere vergaderings kan moontlik die ywer waarmee die eenheid van Christus se kerk gesoek word, beïnvloed. So min as wat 'n Klassis die optrede van hierdie Kerkrade kan goedkeur, so min kan dit getollereer word. Die vraag is of 'n onbepaalde tipe tolleransie die duur-verwerfde eenheid van Christus se kerk in die pad staan nie ... met die gevolg dat konformasie aan Sinodebesluite en versoening met die kerkverband buite die gesigsveld begin val.

10. 'n Verdere aspek wat na vore kom is die jongste besluite van die Algemene Sinode dat vroue in die ouderling diens 'n wesenlike saak is. Die debat: wesenlik en nie-wesenlik, gemeng met die vraag of die kwessie 'n konfessionele saak is, maak die gesprek meer ingewikkeld. Indien die kwessie van die vrou in die ouderling diens nie 'n sogenaamde wesenlike saak is nie, waarom sou kerke dan die eenheid van Christus se kerk in gedrang wil bring deur aan te dring om nie Sinodebesluite te hou nie en selfs in weerwil van Sinodebesluite vroue in die diens van ouderlinge te bevestig?

11. Klassisse moet besondere moeite

prove such errors in interpretation of the Scripture, Creeds and Church Order; whenever Gravamina and appeals repeatedly fail to succeed in changing interpretations of Synodal decisions, the question arises whether such congregations should not concede to their own interpretations being fallible..

8. Church Order, art 31 determines that decisions of major assemblies are fixed and binding unless it can be proved that the decisions are against the Scripture, the Creeds and the Church Order. The reason for the decisions of major assemblies being fixed and binding on Church Councils and minor assemblies, lies in the fact, on the one hand, that the latter (Church Council and minor assemblies) are inherently part of a decision made by a superior (major) assembly. On the other hand decisions of major assemblies are fixed and binding because more gifts are apparent, not reflecting and administering their own but Christ's authority, (the Word).

9. Opting for a general unrestricted type of "tolerance" (as opposed to congregations that do not uphold Synodal decisions) at major meetings, may very well influence the zeal with which the unity of Christ's church is sought. Yet as little as a classicist can approve of the actions of these Church Councils, just as little can it be tolerated. The question is whether an indefinite type of tolerance stands in the way of the costly-gained unity of Christ's church... with the result that conformation to Synod decisions and reconciliation with the affiliation begins to fall beyond the horizon.

10. Another aspect that emerges, is the latest decisions of the general Synod that women in elder service, is an essential issue. The debate: substantial and yet unsubstantial, mixed with whether the issue is a confessional one, makes the conversation more complicated. If the issue of the woman in the elder service is not a so-called substantive one, why would churches want to compromise the unity of Christ's church by insisting on not adhering to Synod decisions and even affirming women in the service of elders if that is in defiance of Synod decisions?

11. Classis must make a special effort to

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>doen om die kerke wat nie die Sinodebesluite hou nie, uit die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde met die liefde van Christus te begelei om weer een met die kerke te word.</p> <p>12. Haastige verklarings oor 'n gemeente se "verbreking van kerkverband" of "die verklaring van 'n gemeente tot 'n valse kerk" hoort nie by kerke wat erns maak met die eenheid van Christus se kerk nie ... in besonder as die betrokke gemeente hul verbintenis aan die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde onderskryf ... en mettertyd bewys. Dit kan raadsaam wees dat 'n Klassis 'n nadere verkaring van 'n gemeente vra oor spesifiek hul Skrifbeskouing, beskouing oor die dienste wat Christus verorden het ens. Indien Kerkrade reeds besluite geneem het om in weerwil van besluite van die algemene sinode die teendeel te doen, behoort klassisse by Kerkrade vas te stel watter stappe die kerke beoog om die sake reg te stel.</p> <p>13. Hoewel plaaslike kerk(e) geroep is om selfstandig oor die regering van Christus se kerk te besluit, het kerke mekaar nog altyd nodig gehad (Ef. 3: 18) in sake wat kerke gemeenskaplik raak. 'n Plaaslike Kerkraad sou dus verwaand wees om te dink dat die gawes in die spesifieke Kerkraad alleen die Skrif ten opsigte van die Christusregering volledig kan verstaan. Daarom het kerke in die GKSA ooreengekom om mekaar by te staan in sake wat nie plaaslik of op mindere vergaderings afgehandel kan word nie, veral sake wat meer kerke in kerkverband raak.</p> <p>14. Broeders, mag God se goeie Gees u lei in hierdie moeilike saak! Dr Rudolph van der Merwe</p> | <p>guide the churches that do not adhere to the Synod decisions from Scripture, confession and Church Order, with the love of Christ to become united with the churches again.</p> <p>12. Hasty statements about a congregation's "breach of church affiliation" or "the declaration of a congregation as being a false church" do not belong in churches that take the unity of Christ's church seriously... in particular if the congregation in question endorses their commitment to Scripture, Confession and Church Order... and it is proven later. It may be advisable for a Classis to ask a sooner adjournment of a congregation specifically about their scriptural view, view of the services that Christ ordained, etc. If Church Councils have already taken decisions to do the opposite in defiance of decisions of the general Synod, Classis at Church Councils should determine what steps the churches intend to take to rectify the matters.</p> <p>13. Although local church(s) have been called to independently decide on the government of Christ's church, churches have always needed one another (Eph. 3:18) in matters affecting churches communally. A local Church Council would therefore be conceited to think that the gifts in the particular Church Council alone can fully understand Scripture with regard to the Christ government. Therefore, churches in the GKSA have agreed to assist one another in matters that cannot be settled locally or at minor meetings, especially matters affecting more churches in their church affiliation.</p> <p>14. Brethren, may God's good Spirit guide you in this difficult matter! Dr Rudolph van der Merwe</p> |
| <p align="center">Advies 3: Prof A Le Roux Du Plooy</p> | <p align="center">Advice 3: Prof A Le Roux Du Plooy</p> |
| <p>Advies aan Klassis Potchefstroom insake vraag na die opsies binne die gesag van 'n Klassis wanneer met kerke gehandel word wat in stryd met die besluite van die Sinode vroue in die diens van ouderling het (12 Oktober 2022)</p> <p>1. Inleidende opmerkings 1.1. Klassis Potchefstroom het die volgende versoek gerig: "What options are available within the authority of the Classis in dealing with a</p> | <p>Advice to Classis Potchefstroom regarding the authority of a Classis when dealing with churches that, contrary to the decisions of the Synod, have women in the service of elder (October 12, 2022)</p> <p>1. Introductory remarks 1.1. Classis Potchefstroom made the following request: "What options are available within the authority of the Classis in dealing with a</p> |

congregation/s that do not adhere to the decision of Synod regarding women in the office of elder?"

1.2. Ek verkies om my advies in Afrikaans te gee. Indien die betrokke Deputate/Klassis sou besluit om dit in Engels te vertaal, versoek ek vriendelik dat die vertaalde weergawe eers aan my gestuur word.

2. Kommentaar op die bewoording van die opdrag/versoek:

Dit is waarskynlik nie die bedoeling om te praat van die authority (gesag) van 'n Klassis nie, want geen kerklike vergadering het in homself gesag nie. Slegs Christus as Hoof van die kerk het gesag, en kerklike vergaderings is geroep om sy gesag te bedien. Die Latynse woord potestas (en nie auctoritas nie) word vir hierdie bevoegdheid of reg van die kerk gebruik. Daarom gebruik die KO, art 36 die woord seggenskap wat dui op die uitoefening van die een gesag wat in die kerk geld, naamlik die gesag van Christus. Kerkrade en meerdere vergaderinge bedien een en dieselfde gesag van Christus, en geen hiërargie tussen vergaderinge bestaan nie.

Aangesien die saak waaroor advies gevra word direk te doen het met die verhouding van plaaslike kerke en 'n Klassis, is dit ter sake om te onthou dat daar in die geskiedenis van die Gereformeerde kerke (veral in Nederland in die 19e en 20e eeue) groot verskille en verwarring geheers het oor die vraag na die sg gesag van die meerdere vergaderings. In my ThM verhandeling (Ekklesia en meerdere vergaderinge) sowel as in my proefskrif (Kerkverband – 'n Gereformeed kerkregtelike studie) het ek in diepte daarvoor gehandel. In kort: meerdere vergaderinge is geen vaste struktuur of instituut langs of bo die plaaslike kerke nie; kerke kom wel in meerdere vergaderinge byeen, soos die Kerkorde dit reël, maar meerdere vergaderinge dra nie enige vorm van selfstandige gesag oor of teenoor 'n plaaslike kerk nie, en die besluite van kerklike vergaderinge is bindend omdat dit met die Woord van God moet ooreenstem (vgl KO, art 31 en 33).

Die opdrag spruit blykbaar voort uit 'n adviesvraag van GKPB in terme van KO, art 41 aan die Klassis. Die dokument wat ek ontvang het, verwys na die geskiedenis van die saak oor vroue in die diens van

congregation/s that does not adhere to the decision of Synod regarding women in the office of elder?"

1.2. I prefer to give my advice in Afrikaans. Should the deputies concerned decide to translate it into English, I kindly request that the translated version be sent to me first.

2. Comments on the wording of the assignment/request:

It is probably not intended to speak of the authority (authority) of a classis, for no ecclesiastical assembly has authority within itself. Only Christ as Head of the church has authority, and church assemblies are called to minister his authority. The Latin word potestas (and not auctoritas) is used for this power or right of the church. Therefore, the CO, art 36 uses a word that denotes the power or right to exercise of the one authority that applies in the church, namely the authority of Christ. Church Councils and major assemblies serve one and the same authority of Christ, and no hierarchy exists among assemblies.

Since the matter about which advice is sought, has directly to do with the relationship of local churches and a Classis, it is relevant to remember that in the history of the Reformed churches (especially in the Netherlands in the 19th and 20th centuries) great differences and confusion prevailed over the question of the so-called authority of the major assemblies. In my ThM dissertation (Ekklesia and major assemblies) as well as in my dissertation (Church Affiliation– A Reformed Church Polity Study) I dealt with it in depth. In short: major assemblies have no fixed structure or institute next to or above the local churches; Churches do meet in major assemblies, as the Church Order arranges it, but major assemblies do not carry any form of own authority about or towards a local church, and the decisions of church meetings are binding because they must correspond to the Word of God (cf. CO, art 31 and 33).

The instruction apparently stems from an advisory question of GKPB in terms of CO, art 41 to the Classis. The document I received refers to the history of the case about women in the office of elder but gives

ouderling, maar gee geen inligting daaroor nie. Dit bemoeilik my taak om advies te gee as die volledige agtergrond nie beskikbaar is nie omdat die adviesvraag binne 'n bepaalde verband verstaan behoort te word.

3. In die lig hiervan gee ek eers aandag aan 'n kerkregtelike raamwerk waarbinne my advies gelees en beoordeel moet word:

3.1. Binding aan die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde in die besluitnemingsproses van kerklike vergaderinge (KO, art 31 en 33)

3.2. KO, art 31 reël die gesag van kerklike besluite, maar nie die prosedure nie. Let op die Latynse woorde: nisi (tensy) wat gebruik word, en nie donec (totdat) nie.

3.3. Die Gereformeerde wyse van die beoordeling of omgaan met kerklike besluite is hoofsaaklik soos volg:

- Besluite moet as vas en bindend beskou word binne die raamwerk wat die KO, art 31 en 33 gee;

- Besluite is feilbaar omdat slegs die Woord van God onfeilbaar en kanoniek is;

- Besluite behoort met onderlinge instemming (mutuo consensu) geneem te word (vgl KO, art 86).

- Omdat dit nie altyd moontlik is dat oor besluite saamgestem word nie, is die gebruik dat besluite met 'n meerderheidstem geneem word (KO, art 31).

- Wat is die moontlikhede wanneer daar nie saamgestem word met 'n betrokke besluit wat 'n kerklike vergadering geneem het? Dit is die volgende:

(1) Konformering, berusting oor die saak, en aanvaarding daarvan

(2) Beswaarskrif (KO, art 46);

(3) Appèl (KO, art 31)

4. Wat is 'n kerk se situasie wanneer hulle na herhaalde pogings ooreenkomstig die Kerkordelike weg telkens misluk het en steeds nie vanuit die Skrif en Belydenis oortuig is dat hulle met besluite/beslissings van 'n Sinode kan saamstem of daarmee kan konformeer of dit kan tolereer nie? En wat is die regte (opsies) van bv die ander kerke in dieselfde kerverband (soos in 'n Klassis) in sulke omstandighede?

4.1. Op grond van die aard en wese van die kerk, en veral op grond van die beginsels van liefde, waarheid en eenheid is daar opsies wat nie gevolg behoort te word nie: (Die waarheid en eenheid moenie teenoor

no information about it. It complicates my task to give advice if the full background is not available because the advice question should be understood within a particular context.

3. In light of this, I first address a church politic framework within which my advice should be read and judged:

3.1. (It is) binding to Scripture, Confession and Church Order in the decision-making process of church meetings (CO, art 31 and 33)

3.2. CO, art 31 rules the authority of ecclesiastical decisions, but not the procedure. Note the Latin words: nisi (unless) used, and not donec (until).

3.3. The Reformed manner of assessing or dealing with ecclesiastical decisions is mainly as follows:

- Decisions must be regarded as fixed and binding within the framework given by the CO, art 31 and 33;

- Decisions are fallible because only the Word of God is infallible and canonical;

- Decisions should be made in mutual agreement (mutuo consensu) (cf. CO, art 86).

- Because it is not always possible for decisions to be agreed upon, the practice is that decisions are made by a majority vote (CO, art 31).

- What are the possibilities when there's disagreement with a particular decision made by a church meeting? These are the following:

(1) Conformation, acquiescence on the matter, and acceptance of it

(2) Gravamen (objection) (CO, art 46);

(3) Appeal (CO, art 31)

4. What is a church's situation when, after repeated attempts in accordance with the church-orderly path, they have failed time and again and are still not convinced from Scripture and Confession that they can agree with or conform to decisions/rulings of a Synod or tolerate them? And what are the rights(options) of e.g. the other churches in the same denomination (as in a Classis) in such circumstances?

4.1. Based on the nature and essence of the church, and especially on the principles of love, truth and unity, there are options that should not be followed: (Truth and unity should not be set against each other,

mekaar gestel word nie, want die eenheid van die kerk is deel van die waarheid wat ononderhandelbaar is en deel is van ons Belydenis)

- Besluite wat tot afskeiding of skeuring sal of kan lei.

- Om te aanvaar dat meerdere vergaderings soos tugreg (bv uitsluiting uit kerkverband) oor kerke het. B. Spoelstra (1989. Geref kerkreg en kerkregering: 442) merk tereg op dat slegs kollegialisme en presbiterianisme kan sê dat meerdere vergaderinge tugreg het. So 'n standpunt is steeds vasgevang in die dualisme tussen 'n plaaslike kerk en meerdere vergaderinge, asof 'n meerdere vergadering inherente en selfstandige gesag het.

- Plaaslike kerke wat nie kan berus by 'n bepaalde besluit van 'n sinode nie, kan hulle ook nie onttrek of afskei van die kerke in dieselfde kerkverband nie, tensy daar duidelike afwykings van die ware leer (capita doctrinae) voorkom, en nadat die weg van gesprek gevolg is (NGB, 27-32; KO, art 86).

4.2. Opsies wat wel deur die Klassis gevolg kan word

- Diepte besinning oor die meriete, inhoud en aard van die saak wat gelei het tot die besluit van 'n kerk wat nie 'n bepaalde besluit van 'n Sinode kan handhaaf nie. Die vraag wat uitgemaak moet word is: tree die Kerkraad op in stryd met die capita doctrinae soos ons dit bely? Verwerp die betrokke kerk die gesag van die Skrif?

- Dit beteken daar moet gesprek gevoer word oor die vraag of dit 'n Skrifkritiese saak is en of dit gaan oor verskil in hermeneuse en eksegetiese?

- Of: word die konstituerende faktore wat die eenheid in kerkverband daarstel, soos eenheid in leer, diens en tug in gedrang gebring.

- Die weg van toleransie en voortgaande gesprek volgens die KO, art 41 en 44 (en die liefdebeginsel van Matt 18) moet ernstig oorweeg word.

- Rigiditeit moet vermy word omdat ons bewus moet wees van die feilbaarheid van kerklike standpunte en besluite.

4.3. Implikasies van besluite van 'n Kerkraad vir die Klassis

- Die Klassis behoort te besin, in

because the unity of the church is part of the truth that is non-negotiable and part of our Confession)

- Decisions that will or could lead to secession or schism.

- To accept that major assemblies have so-called disciplinary authority (e.g. exclusion from church affiliation) over churches. B. Spoelstra (1989. Reformed Church Polity and church government: 442) rightly observes that only collegialism and presbyterianism can say that major assemblies have disciplinary rights. Such a position is still caught up in the dualism between a local church and major assembly, as if a major assembly had inherent and self-contained authority.

- Local churches that cannot comply with a particular decision of a Synod cannot withdraw or secede from the churches in the same affiliation unless there are clear deviations from the true doctrine (capita doctrinae) occurring, and that after following the path of discussion (BCC, 27-32; CO, art 86).

4.2. Options that may be followed by the Classis

- In-depth reflection on the merits, content and nature of the case that led to the decision of a church that cannot uphold a particular decision of a Synod. The question to be decided upon is: is the Church Council acting contrary to the capita doctrinae as we profess it? Is the church in question rejecting the authority of Scripture?

- This means there needs to be discussion about whether this is a Scriptural critical issue or whether it is about a difference in hermeneusis and exegesis.

- Or: are the constituent factors that establish unity in the affiliation, such as unity in doctrine, service and discipline, compromised.

- The route of tolerance and ongoing discussion according to the CO, art 41 and 44 (and the love principle of Matt 18) should be seriously considered.

- Rigidity should be avoided because we need to be aware of the fallibility of church views and decisions.

4.3. Implications of decisions of a Church Council for the Classis

- The Classis should reflect, in

oorleg met die betrokke Kerkraad of Kerkrade wat vroue-ouderlinge het, oor die implikasie daarvan vir die samestelling van die klassis in terme van KO, art 33 en 41 soos die afvaardiging na 'n Klassis of ander meerdere vergaderinge. Wat hier in gedagte gehou moet word is veral die beginsel dat 'n Klassis (meerdere vergaderinge) nie 'n vergadering van ampte/dienste is nie, maar van naburige kerke (KO, art 41). In die geskiedenis van die Gereformeerde kerke was daar ruimte gegee vir besondere omstandighede wanneer dit oor die afvaardiging na meerdere vergaderinge gaan: byvoorbeeld, diakens (insluitend vroulike diakens) kan by die Kerkraad gereken word, ooreenkomstig KO, art 38. Selfs gewone lidmate is al namens die kerk gestuur indien dit nie anders kon nie, juis omdat 'n meerdere vergadering 'n vergadering van kerke is wat hulle afgevaardigdes stuur (vgl Bos, 1950:158; Bouwman, 1934:21, 135). Benewens die ouderling wat in die funksie van regering diens doen, en daarom ook na die meerdere vergadering afgevaardig word, beteken dit nie dat elke lidmaat nie ook geroep is as profeet, priester en koning, wat Christus moet bedien in die kerke en ook in die meerdere vergadering. Wanneer nodig nie. Bogenoemde beteken dat die geslag van afgevaardigdes geen beslissende rol kan speel by wie 'n Kerkraad afvaardig nie.

- Dit kan gebeur dat 'n Klassis by wyse van gesprek met 'n kerk(raad) langs die weg van KO, art 41 en 44 tot die oortuiging kan kom dat 'n plaaslike kerk nie meer optree en besluit ooreenkomstig die faktore wat ten grondslag aan die eenheid in kerkverband lê nie, en dat daar wesenlike verskille oor die capita doctrinae bestaan. In so 'n buitengewone situasie sou 'n Klassis kon oordeel (verkieslik saam met die Deputate van die Streeksinode) dat die kerke in die Klassis nie meer kerklike eenheid met sodanige plaaslike kerk kan handhaaf nie. Hiermee word nie tug uitgeoefen nie, maar die bevinding gemaak dat 'n bepaalde kerk homself buite die eenheid plaas deurdar daardie kerk doelbewus die konstituerende faktore van eenheid in leer, diens en tug verwerp het.

Dries du Plooy (Prof A le R du Plooy)

consultation with the relevant Church Council or Church Councils that have women elders, on the implications for the composition of the classis in terms of CO, art 33 and 41 such as the delegation to a Classis or other major assemblies. What should be kept in mind here is especially the principle that a Classis (major assembly) is not a meeting of offices/services, but of neighbouring churches (CO, art 41). In the history of the Reformed churches, room was allowed for particular circumstances when it came to the delegation to major assemblies: for example, deacons (including female deacons) may be counted among the Church Council, in accordance with CO, art 38. Even ordinary members were sent on behalf of the church if it could not do otherwise, precisely because a major assembly is a meeting of (local) churches to which they send delegates (cf. Bos, 1950:158; Bouwman, 1934:21, 135). In addition to the elder serving in the function of government, and therefore also delegated to the major assembly, this did not mean that every member was not also called as prophet, priest and king, who is to minister to Christ in the churches and also in the major assembly, if required. The above means that the gender (male/female) of delegates cannot play any decisive role in who delegates a Church Council.

- It may happen that by way of discussion with a church(council) along the way of CO, art 41 and 44, that a Classis can come to the conviction that a local church is not acting and deciding on the factors underpinning the unity in church contexts, and that there are substantial differences in the capita doctrinae. In such an extraordinary situation, a Classis could judge (preferably with the Deputies of the Regional Synod) that the churches in the Classis would no longer be able to express and maintain ecclesiastical unity with such a local church. This does not constitute exercising discipline, but the finding may be made that a particular church is placing itself outside the unity and in so doing that that church is deliberately rejecting the constitutive factors of unity in learning, service and discipline.

Dries du Plooy (Prof A le R du Plooy)

| Jeffreysbaai. 12 Oktober 2022 | Jeffreys Bay. 12 October 2022 |
|---|--|
| Advies 4: Dr GJ Meijer | Advice 4: Dr GJ Meijer |
| <p>Advies aan Deputate van Klassis Potchefstroom</p> <p>1. Adviesvraag Watter opsies is binne die gesag van die Klassis beskikbaar in die hantering van 'n gemeente/gemeente wat nie by die besluit van die Sinode oor vroue in die amp van ouderling hou nie?</p> <p>2. Oorweging 2.1 Binding aan besluite (KO, art 31) Besluite van kerklike vergaderinge is bindend, omdat besluite op grond van God se Woord geneem word. Die bindingskrag lê in die Skrif (Hand 15:28). Kerke verbind hulle van harte en op papier (deur middel van kredensiebriewe) asook met die daad (deur op te staan by die Openlike Verklaring) aan die bindingskrag van kerklike besluite. Binding aan besluite van kerklike vergadering het ten diepste te doen met gehoorsaamheid aan God se Woord (die regering van Christus) en die eerbiediging van kerklike afsprake. As 'n Kerkraad meen dat 'n bepaalde besluit van 'n meerdere vergadering in stryd met die Woord van God of die artikels van die Kerkorde, moet hy dit deur middel van Beswaarskrifte of Appèlle bewys en daardie bewyse aan die ander kerke voorlê. Indien daar uitspraak oor die gelewerde bewyse gegee is, moet die Kerkraad daardie uitspraak as vas bindend beskou. Indien 'n Kerkraad daardie uitspraak/besluit nie as vas bindend beskou nie, getuig dit van opstand teen Christus se regering, die Woord van God. Daarbenewens dui dit op verbreking van die onderneming in die kredensiebrief en die Openlike Verklaring, naamlik om besluite uit te voer.</p> <p>2.2 Gesag van Klassis (KO, art 36) Christus het alle en die enigste gesag in sy kerk. 'n Kerklike vergadering het dienende gesag. Dit beteken: 'n kerklike vergadering het gesag solank en in soverre die gesag van Christus bedien word (NGB, art 5 en 7).</p> <p>Tugreg/plig rus by 'n Kerkraad. Meerdere vergaderinge het nie tugreg in dié sin dat</p> | <p>Advice to the Deputies of the Classis Potchefstroom</p> <p>1. Request for advice What options are available within the authority of the Classis in dealing with a congregation that does not abide by the Synod's decision on the woman in the office of elder?</p> <p>2. Consideration 2.1 Binding to decisions (CO, art 31) Decisions of church meetings are binding because decisions are made based on God's Word. The binding power lies in Scripture (Acts 15:28). Churches commit themselves wholeheartedly and on paper (through letters of credence) as well as with the act (by standing up to the Open Declaration) to the binding authority of church decisions. Being bound to decisions of the ecclesiastical assembly has at its deepest level to do with obedience to God's Word (the rule of Christ) and the reverence for church commitments. If a Church Council holds that a particular decree of a major assembly is contrary to the Word of God or the articles of the Church Order, he must prove it by means of Objections or Appeals and present that evidence to the other churches. If judgment has been given on the evidence presented, the Church Council should regard that judgment as firmly binding. If a Church Council does not regard that decree as fixed and binding, it testifies of rebellion against Christ's reign, the Word of God. In addition, it indicates a breach in the undertaking given in the letter of credence and is an open statement of refusal, namely, to carry out decisions.</p> <p>2.2 The authority of the Classis (CO, art 36) Christ has all and the only authority in his church. An ecclesiastical assembly has ministerial serving) authority. This means: an ecclesiastical assembly has authority as long as and insofar as the authority of Christ is served – NGB, art 5 and 7). Disciplinary law/duty rests with a Church Council. Major assemblies do not have</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>hulle KO, art 71-80 kan toepas nie.</p> <p>Meerdere vergaderinge het wél tugreg in die sin dat hulle 'n plaaslike kerk tot gehoorsaamheid aan Christus oproep en daardie kerk in liefde vermaan as hy aan Christus ongehoorsaam is (vgl. KO, Art 41 en 44).</p> <p>2.3 Binding en gesag</p> <p>As 'n kerk in die ressort van die klassis nie by die besluit van die sinode oor vroue in die amp van ouderling hou nie, is dit ongehoorsaamheid aan Christus en daadwerklike verbreking van die onderlinge ooreenkoms tussen die kerke in kerkverband.</p> <p>In so 'n geval het die Klassis die roeping en plig om die betrokke kerk ernstig en liefdevol te vermaan en op te roep om aan Christus gehoorsaam te wees. Kerke moet mekaar by Christus vashou (KO, art 44).</p> <p>Indien die kerk voortgaan om nie by die Sinodebesluite te hou nie, skryf hy aan homself en aan sy besluit meer mag en gesag toe as aan die Woord van God en wil hy homself nie aan die juk van Christus onderwerp nie (NGB, art 29). In so 'n geval maak so 'n kerk homself los van Christus en los van die kerke wat hulleself wel aan Christus en sy gesag onderwerp.</p> <p>3. Advies</p> <p>In die lig van bogenoemde word die volgende geadviseer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Die Klassis roep die kerk wat hom nie aan die Sinodebesluite insake die vrou in die amp hou nie, tot gehoorsaamheid aan Christus op. • Indien daardie kerk voortgaan om nie by die Sinodebesluite te hou nie, word met droefheid gekonstateer dat daardie kerk ongehoorsaam aan Christus is. Die noodwendige gevolg daarvan is 'n verbreking van dié kerk se bande met die GKSA as een kerklike gemeenskap. • Hierdie konstatering moet aan die ander kerke in die kerkverband bekend gemaak word. <p>Gerard Meijer VDM 8 Oktober 2022</p> | <p>disciplinary rights in the sense that they can apply CO, art 71-80.</p> <p>Major assemblies do however have a disciplinary right in the sense that they may summon a local church to obedience to Christ and admonish that church with love if it is disobedient to Christ (cf. CO, art 41 and 44).</p> <p>2.3 Bond and authority</p> <p>If a church in the circle of the Classis does not abide by the decision of the Synod on women in the office of elder, it spells disobedience to Christ and an actual breach of the mutual agreement between the churches in that church denomination.</p> <p>In such a case, the Classis has the responsibility and duty to seriously and lovingly admonish the relevant church and to summon it to obey Christ. Churches must hold and sustain one another close to Christ (CO, art 44).</p> <p>If the church, however, should deviate from the Synodal decisions, it ascribes to itself and to its decision more power and authority than to the Word of God and does not want to subject itself to the yoke of Christ (NGB, art 29). In such a case, such a church detaches itself from Christ and detaches itself from the churches that do submit to Christ and his authority.</p> <p>3. Advice</p> <p>In view of the above, the following is advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Classis calls the church that does not adhere to the Synodal decisions concerning the woman in office as elder, to obedience to Christ. • If that church continues to deviate from the Synodal decisions, it sadly has to reprimand the church for its disobedience to Christ. The inevitable result is a severance of the church's ties with the GKSA as one ecclesiastical community. • This statement must be made known to the other churches in the denomination. <p>Gerard Meijer VDM 8 October 2022</p> |
|--|--|

F. VOORGESTELDE MANDAAT / PROPOSED MANDATE

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Opdrag Die Moderamen formuleer die mandaat van hierdie Deputate met inagneming van die vraag hoe die situasie in die volgende drie jare hanteer moet word.</p> <p>Besluit: Kennis geneem.</p> <p>2. Dokumente ter sake 21.3 Beskrywingspunt: Klassis Wesrand 21.5 Adviesvraag van Streeksinode Noordwes 21.6 Beskrywingspunt van Streeksinode Pretoria</p> <p>Besluit: Kennis geneem.</p> <p>3. Werkswyse Die Moderamen het biddend besin, met mekaar oorleg gepleeg en ook van ons buitelandse broers geraadpleeg.</p> <p>Besluit: Kennis geneem.</p> <p>4. Voorgestelde Mandaat As Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika buig ons nederig voor ons Here oor die kerklike spanning wat tans binne die GKSA heers terwyl ons Here ons roep om mekaar in liefde te verdra en ernstig te strewe om die eenheid van die Gees te bewaar deur die band van die vrede (Efesiërs 4:1-2).</p> <p>Daarom wys die Sinode Deputate aan om advies vir die volgende Algemene Sinode voor te berei:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hierdie advies handel oor die vraag hoe kerke teenoor mekaar behoort op te tree wanneer kerke nie die GKSA se kerklike besluite kragtens KO, art 31, oor onder andere vroue in die amp van ouderling en predikant handhaaf nie. Hierdie advies word voorberei teen die agtergrond van die Beskrywingspunte wat tydens Sinode 2023 (21.3, 21.5, 21.6) aanvaar is en lewer uiteindelik 'n antwoord op die Beskrywingspunte. Hierdie advies word voorberei op | <p>1. Mandate The Moderamen formulates the mandate of these Deputies taking into account the question of how the situation should be handled in the next three years.</p> <p>Decision: Noted.</p> <p>2. Documents at issue 21.3 Description Point: Classicist West Rand 21.5 Advisory Question of Regional Synod North West 21.6 Description Point of Regional Synod Pretoria</p> <p>Decision: Noted.</p> <p>3. Mode of operation The Moderamen reflected prayerfully, consulted with each other, and also consulted some of our foreign brethren.</p> <p>Decision: Noted.</p> <p>4. Proposed Mandate As Reformed Churches in South Africa, we humbly bow down before our Lord with regards to the ecclesiastical tensions currently prevailing within the GKSA while our Lord calls us to bear one another in love and to earnestly strive for the preserving the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians. 4:1-2).</p> <p>Therefore, the Synod appoints Deputies to prepare advice for the following General Synod:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> This advice deals with the question of how churches should act towards one another when churches do not uphold the GKSA's ecclesiastical decisions, according to CO, art 31, on among other things, women in the office of elder and minister. This advice is prepared against the background of the Proposals accepted at Synod 2023 (21.3, 21.5, 21.6) and finally provides an answer to the Proposals. This advice is prepared on the |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>grond van die Skrif, Belydenis en Kerkorde.</p> <p>4. Hierdie advies word voorberei deur ook buitelandse kerke te raadpleeg.</p> <p>Terwyl hierdie Deputate biddend en gelei deur die Gees hul advies voorberei, roep ons as kerke mekaar op om ootmoedig, lankmoedig en genadig wedersyds met mekaar te leef, terwyl ons mekaar vertrou en liefhet omdat die Gees ons één gemaak het!</p> <p>Besluit: Die voorgestelde Mandaat word soos gewysig aanvaar.</p> | <p>basis of Scripture, Confession and Church Order.</p> <p>4. This advice is prepared by consulting foreign churches as well.</p> <p>As these Deputies prayerfully and guided by the Spirit prepare their advice, we as churches call on one another to be mutually humble, longsuffering and gracious in living with each other, while trusting and loving each other because the Spirit made us one!</p> <p>Decision: The proposed mandate is amended and adopted.</p> |
|--|---|