

## Minutes

### Reformed Family Forum

Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality, Wellington 2-5 August 2019

#### 1. Attendance

#### Address List 2019 Reformed Family Forum

Church	Representative	e-mail	Telephone	Attendance
(1) CCAP Harare Synod (Zimbabwe)	Rev Kingstar Chipata (GS)	<a href="mailto:kingstarchipata@yahoo.com">kingstarchipata@yahoo.com</a> <a href="mailto:hresynodgs@gmail.com">hresynodgs@gmail.com</a>	+263 4 703719, +263712730408 (WhatsApp)	✓
(2) CCAP Nkhoma Synod (Malawi)	Rev Vasco Kachipapa (GS)	<a href="mailto:ccapnkhomasynod89@gmail.com">ccapnkhomasynod89@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:vkachipapa@gmail.com">vkachipapa@gmail.com</a>	+265 997 957 801 (WhatsApp)	✓
(3) Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)	Dr Gustav Claassen	<a href="mailto:gustavc@ngkerk.org.za">gustavc@ngkerk.org.za</a>	+27 828561943	✓
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(5) Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana (DRCB)	Mrs Tebatso Menyatso	<a href="mailto:drcbsynod@btcmil.co.bw">drcbsynod@btcmil.co.bw</a> , <a href="mailto:tebatsomenyatso@gmail.com">tebatsomenyatso@gmail.com</a>	+267 577 7630/+2675777615 (kantoor)/+2677146032 1/+26772100708 0026771714411	✓
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Tumbine Synod				
Novo Synod	Rev Joao Herbarth	<a href="mailto:pastor.herbarth@gmail.com">pastor.herbarth@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:irmtumbine@gmail.com">irmtumbine@gmail.com</a>	+258 86 130 3554	✓
	Rev Gabriel Marata	<a href="mailto:pastor@vivamaputo.org">pastor@vivamaputo.org</a>	+258843863324	✓

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(10) Reformed Church in Africa (RCA)	Rev Ivan Akash Sirpal	<a href="mailto:kovilanrca@gmail.com">kovilanrca@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:akashsirpal@yahoo.com">akashsirpal@yahoo.com</a>	+27 832553611	✓
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(12) Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ Zam)	Dr William Zulu	<a href="mailto:mbusazulu@gmail.com">mbusazulu@gmail.com</a>	+260 977 811 090	✓
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## 2. Opening

The meeting was opened by the acting chairperson, Rev Nelson Posholi. Everybody introduced him or herself. The chairperson especially welcomed those who attended the meeting for the first time.

## 3. “Celebrating and reaffirming our shared history, identity and calling” – Tree planting

Dr Gideon van der Watt gave a brief overview on the historical contribution by missionaries, especially the remarkable extended Murray family in the founding of the different churches in Africa. This history is to be celebrated in the historic AMSS venue. But a critical reflection is also needed. The missionaries were also children of their time and they were influenced by particular circumstances and theological, cultural, social, etc. considerations of a colonial era. What does that mean for our identity and calling in Africa today?

The meeting then went outside and representatives of the churches each planted a tree (Cape Yellow Wood) to commemorate the planting and growing of the respective churches and the role that missionaries, who were trained at the Mission Institute, played in it. It was also done in gratitude of God's grace, as a symbol of the unity of this particular family in the body of Christ. It was planted in one big circle, which will eventually be designed/sculptured to resemble the logo of the RFF. Nameplates will also be attached to each tree.

Photos were taken while the trees were planted, even by a new technological invention, a drone. The meeting afterwards expressed their appreciation for the event – it has been meaningful and touching. Some even suggested that later on the founding missionaries' names should also feature with the nameplates at each tree.

#### **4. Welcoming address moderators DRC and URCSA**

The Moderator of URCSA Cape Region, dr Llewellyn Macmaster, apologised for not attending; he has had problems with his car and could not travel to Wellington.

Rev Nelis Janse van Rensburg, Moderator of the DRC General Synod, attended and gave a message of greetings to the RFF meeting.

Important is the rediscovery of our missional roots. That is binding us together as churches.

He expressed his support for this important ecumenical structure. It is indeed making a huge contribution in our region. But it should also be considered to also involve the moderators or other leaders at some stage. The DRC appreciates the work that each church is doing. The DRC and URCSA are currently in a process of unification, but much work still needs to be done.

#### **5. The challenges we as churches face in our region**

The secretary facilitated a discussion on the challenges churches (and especially general secretaries) face in our current context. Reference was made to previous meetings where this matter has been fully discussed. Most of the delegates also completed forms where some of the most urgent challenges are listed.

Rev Tafadzwa Masimba from the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe listed some very important challenges in his context:

(1) Economy: The very weak state of Zimbabwe's economy: more than 95% unemployment, in June 2019 the official inflation rate was 97.9% and many (between 1 to 5 million) migrants left to get jobs in South Africa. The political situation is not stable, to say the least. It remains extremely difficult to function as church in such an environment.

(2) Sustainability: The church is more than 100 years old, but it is more than ever reliant on foreign donors for the sustainability of its institutions, like the theological training college. But donor fatigue is also becoming a reality. Raising funds is becoming a large part of the General Secretary's job description.

(3) There are many internal struggles – power struggles and lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of governance (moderation) and management (general secretary).

(4) There is much stress on the general secretary (representing the employer) who is responsible for paying salaries (also of ministers) and other personnel. The moderator is also demanding that his post become a paid one.

Other members of the meeting added the following:

(5) Many human resource problems.

- (6) Dealing with conflict is a major task of general secretaries
- (7) Effective communication is a challenge
- (8) Travelling a lot – without proper insurance

Rev Jonah Lagat mentions the possibility of the church making more profitable use of the land and facilities it owns.

The meeting discussed possible ways of dealing with their stress:

- Time with family, don't neglect family (especially spouse)
- Time with friends
- Mentors or colleagues with whom you can discuss matters confidentially and from whom you can seek advice.
- Clarity on role of moderator and general secretary (governance and management) is very important
- Being humble and honest – accept that we cannot solve all problems! But nevertheless be prepared to make sacrifices.

Three secrets of success:

- Try to delegate tasks – involve other people
- Be humble, serve others, joy in making sacrifices
- Listen carefully, try to understand whole situation (discernment)

The meeting discussed the role of the general secretary amidst the current challenges at length. Members learned much from each other in this regard. It also took notice of previous discussions in this regards.

#### **Formulated at the previous meeting**

##### **Some Key Performance Areas:**

- (1) Accountable for all admin (Finances, office management, HR, etc.)
- (2) Chief Coordination's Officer
- (3) Information and communication
- (4) Spearhead vision
- (5) Relationships/partnerships/liaison
- (6) Spiritual guidance

##### **Secrets:**

- (1) Not seeking too much control / control freak
- (2) Do not think out work or take on too much work
- (3) Do not manipulate (policy, books, minutes, etc.)
- (4) Do not create conflict, rather mediate
- (5) Do not become too personally involved – be objective and professional
- (7) Do not neglect self and own family – own spiritual, emotional and physical care and growth
- (8) Seek the advice of mentors (trustworthy persons) and surround yourself with strong people, who will sometimes oppose you.
- (9) Integrity

## **6. Ecology**

Dr Kobus Odendaal introduced the important theme on ecology – Caretakers of the earth. He showed a video clip and looked especially at plastic material as pollution of rivers and oceans. See booklet attached.

## **7. Discussion with young ministers on the future of the church**

The meeting also entered into a discussion with some young ministers about reaching out to the youth (and children) and the question on how a future church should look like. It has been a very enriching discussion.

- (1) It remains important to guide the youth from early on until the confirmation of their faith. It implies more than just knowledge transfer; it is rather a continuous process of faith formation, mentorship, exemplary leadership, involving youth in the actions/ministries of the church, carefully listening to the youth, etc.
- (2) It is important to consider the image of our church, its story, its approach to youth – does the church see itself as inclusive, welcoming? Is it appealing to the youth?
- (3) Focus on parenthood and the family. Faith formation should primarily start at home. Empower / equip parents. See the home as important mode/facet of being church
- (4) Listen to the youth who are already in the church, but also to those who are deliberately not involved in church.
- (5) Build relationships – engage young people
- (6) Enhance inter-generational discussions – embrace the diversity between generations
- (7) Understand and use of the new digital culture (cell phones, social media, etc.) and where necessary push back to being hijacked by cell phones. Understand implications of fourth industrial revolution.
- (8) Young people are not the church of the future; they are rather the church of today and should be encouraged to participate in everything (also leadership)

## **8. Archives as part of our responsibility**

General Secretaries are the custodians of the churches' archival material. See also Jeremiah 32:14 and Ezra 6:1-2. It is important for a church to consider its history and memory, especially in discerning the way ahead.

Important questions/considerations:

- (1) Whose documents should be stored (congregations, institutions, individuals, synod, presbytery, etc.)
- (2) What kind of documents (marriage certificates, baptismal registers, membership registers, agendas and minutes, transactions, church magazines, year books, particulars of ministers, private collections, etc.
- (3) Functions of archive: create, capture, maintain, preserve, use, dispose, etc.
- (4) Who uses archives? Churches, ministers, students, individual persons, are all clients.
- (5) Watch out for: not too much or too less humidity, temperature, too much light, insects, fire hazards – preserve in proper place.
- (6) Categorise, accessibility for researchers
- (7) Training of staff – Cape Archives may help
- (8) Photos are also important – with subscriptions
- (9) Networks with other archives

Documents of church that are preserved are living testimonies of God's relationship with and actions in and through his church – it remains an important theological basis for archives. It is not optional to take care of archival sources.

We tend to focus only on the methodology of being church (practical matters), but it is important to also reflect theological on what it means to be a church.

See PowerPoint attached

## **9. Conflict resolution**

Dr Gustav Claassen gave an introduction to the theme on the challenge of general secretaries. It is important to have clarity on the separate roles of governance and management. It is also important to have clarity on the role of the synod – be careful not to draw work to the General Secretary's office which does not belong there. The post of a general secretary must be outlined, its mandate, lines of report, key performance areas, etc.

An important question is how to deal with conflict. Dr Claassen gave some guidelines – see attachment.

## **10. Cyclone Idai Mozambique**

The meeting discussed the church's role in terms of relieve work after Cyclone Idai (2019) in Mozambique. The DRC took initiative and more than ZAR 1 mil was raised for this disaster. The ministers of IRM, especially Rev Gabriel Marata played a wonderful role (beautiful stories of hope). How can we as churches as well as the RFF prepare ourselves for the increasing occurrences of disasters (flood, draughts, fires, etc.). Existing material should be distributed.

Some points to consider:

- (1) We should learn from the testimonies and experiences of those who went through a disaster – Communication is important
- (2) Discussion with professional people who work on disaster relieve
- (3) Take notice of existing networks
- (4) Focus on ecology programs

## **11. Christian Literature Fund – working towards joint literature projects**

The meeting paid a visit to CLF's building. CLF presented some talks, showed video material and did a book exhibition. They also gave book parcels to each member and took the members for a wonderful lunch in the Paarl.

The need for new material to be developed was discussed:

- (1) New ways of partnership between CLF and churches
- (2) Need catechism and Sunday school material (Tell, tell series)
- (3) Need ministry material (liturgy books, hymn books, registers, certificates, constitutions)
- (4) Equipping leaders
- (6) Focus on youth – capacity building and faith formation.
- (7) How to be a Christian in our changing world
- (8) Material on evangelism
- (9) Academic journals for institutions

## **12. What kind of theological training do the churches need? NetAct**

Dr Nico Mostert gave a presentation on the role that NetAct plays in supporting theological institutions in Africa. Prof Reggie Nel, Dean of Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology also participated in the discussion. Churches need to play a much bigger role in preparing their theological students for the ministry (spiritually, emotionally, in terms of the church's own identity and calling and practical ministerial matters. Theological Faculties (mostly ecumenical) cannot fulfil these important tasks. Important is also the continuous theological training and development of ministerial skills of ministers. Mentorship is a most important issue.

## **13. Business meeting**

### **12.1 Minutes previous meeting (2018)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted

### **13.2 Theme**

The meeting expressed its satisfaction with the theme for this year. It is important to each year's meeting have a clear theme/focus. It is important to continuously focus on more effective cooperation between our churches. For next year we can continue to focus on the current theme: "Celebrating and reaffirming our shared history, identity and calling"

### **12.3 How do we take what we have learned back to our churches?**

- (1) Take minutes/report back – make it part of church's agenda
- (2) Share the RFF's story/your experiences with your church leaders
- (3) Put important issues on the agenda – for instance youth matters
- (4) Share books, articles, academic material and other knowledge with each other
- (5) Create platforms for communication, like a WhatsApp group (Mrs Mariette Odendaal)
- (6) Focus on ecology:
  - agree to bring out a document
  - Dr Kobus Odendaal, Rev Vasco Kachipapa, Dr William Zulu and Rev Tafadzwa Masimba are requested to work on a document on ecology as well as proposing a specific project for the RFF

### **12.4 Clusters**

Consider working in clusters on specific projects, like catechism book

### **12.5 Pension Scheme**

It is important to assist each other with professional knowledge. Dr Kobus Odendaal and Mrs Desiree Brown will consider how to give advice regarding pension schemes to ministers

### **12.6 New projects**

- (1) Joint literature development
- (2) Update booklet on RFF
- (3) Article on governance and management – Dr Gustav Claassen will help to develop material that can be disseminated to all.

### **12.7 Functioning of RFF – the way forward**

Effective communication is very important (web site, etc.)

It will be too expensive to also invite all the moderators.

Due to costs, it will be better to meet in South Africa.

### **12.8 Constitution**

Change point 4.1 to make it more clear that General Secretaries or synod scribes should attend the RFF meeting. Make corrections to the numbering of the articles in the constitution.

### **12.9 New Executive Committee**

Chairperson: Rev Nelson Posholi

Vice Chairperson: Mrs Tebatso Menyatso

Additional member: Dr Miguel Nobre

The offices of Drs Odendaal, Van der Watt and Claassen will take joint responsibility for the secretariat

### **13.10 Financial contributions**

The churches are requested to each make an annual contribution of ZAR 1000 or US\$ 75

The Secretary will give invoices/receipts and a financial report

### **13.11 Next Year's meeting:**

Book first weekend in August 2020 for possible date.

## **14. Closure**

Members gave a brief feedback on their experience of the meeting:

- It was special to meet at the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality – it was a kind of home-coming
- The tree planting ceremony was touching – strong symbolism
- It was very good to join in the chapel rhythm – it was enriching
- The Lord's Supper was a beautiful event
- The outings to Stellenbosch and Paarl area were very enjoyable
- It has been a wonderful meeting where each member could join in the discussions and where relationships could be strengthened

