

UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

DECISIONS OF THE SIXTH GENERAL SYNOD 2012

OKAHANDJA

1-7 October 2012

Decision 1: Acceptance of Order Commission

The Synod accepts with gratitude the report of the Order Commission.

Decision 2: Acceptance of report of Scribe

The Synod approves the report of the Scribe with gratitude.

Decision 3: Register for Ministers

The Synod refer point 1 to the Temporary Commission for Judicial Matters and (accept the name-list of ministers of the Word who have registered and affirm that noncompliance with the regulation will not be condoned)

Synod approves point 2

Encourage all URCSA ministers of the Word to ensure that they are registered before 31 December 2012

Decision 4: Publication of Church order on Website

The GS approves the directive of the GSC and requests the SMCPA to publish the CO on the URCSA website as previously decided by GS.

Decision 5: Actions of the GS Actuarium

The General Synod approves the actions of the GS Actuarium.

Decision 6: Out of court settlements for property disputes in the Free State & Lesotho

The GS takes note of the endeavors to settle property disputes out of court in the Free State & Lesotho and Phororo Regional Synods and encourages other Regions, Presbyteries and congregations to receive the documents for perusal and for possible use in settling property disputes out of court.

Decision 7: Acceptance of report of the GS Actuarium

GS approves the report of the GS Actuarium with gratefulness.

Decision 8: Certificate for Scribe

The Synod is requesting a certificate of merit award of good work to the Scribe of GS Synod, Rev Dr D Kuyler for the work he has done for this sixth GS.

Decision 9: Sitting rights to members

The Credentials were found in order and the Temporary Commission for Judicial Matters is proposing that these Members according to Regulating 7.1 (Procedure of meetings) be given the Status as Full members of the 6th General Synod of URCSA.

Decision 10: Approval of the report of the Synodical Commission

The General Synod approves the report of the Synodical Commission Report with gratitude.

Decision 11: GSC meetings and decisions

- 1.1 General Synod takes note of the meetings arranged and conducted by the executive
- 1.2 General Synod takes note of GSC decisions reported by the Synodical Commission

Decision 12: Election of Dr LJ Modise as representative of Southern Synod

General Synod approves the election of Dr LJ Modise as representative of Southern Synod on the executive.

Decision 13: Strategic Plan

General Synod accepts the Strategic Plan

1. *The Strategic Plan becomes a working document for General Synod, Regional Synods, Presbyteries, congregations and the various Ministries of URCSA.*
2. *General Synod appreciates the effort of Prof Thias Kgatla for obtaining funds for this important project.*

Motion of Appreciation:

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for the strategic plan that we have now in URCSA. Thanks to the outgoing Moderamen for guiding our church in this way. God bless all.

Decision 14: Integrated Ministry model and report form for Regional Synods

General Synod accepts the new report form and requests Regional Synods to ensure that reporting of congregations and ministries will follow the IM Model. (The meeting takes note that ensure could rather be replaced by encourage)

Decision 15: Office of the General Secretary

General Synod takes the necessary steps to implement the decision of GS 2008 to appoint a General Secretary.

Decision 16: Central office for URCSA

1. The GS endorse the decision of GSC 2009.
2. The GS mandates the SMFA and the executive to proceed with the process.

Decision 17: Internal unity

1. General Synod requests the newly elected Executive to see to it that a task team be elected and to continue the task given in 2008.

Amendment: To add to the recommendation: This task team will report to the GSC and is mandated to implement the plan.

Motion: The GS 2012 accepts the address by the outgoing moderator, Prof Thias Kgatla with gratitude and refers it to the newly elected Executive. Proposed: Rev P Adams Seconded: G Brinkman

Decision 18: Vacant congregations

2. General Synod requests the newly elected Executive and the Ministry for Congregational Ministries to drive the process and give feedback to the next GSC.

Decision 19: Meeting by Consensus

1. General Synod decides that workshops and training be arranged for Regional Synods to enhance the practice of meetings through discernment;

2. The SMJM incorporates the practice of discernment in the Church Order as the way URCSA will conduct meetings.

Decision 20 Homosexuality

1. The General Synod affirms the decision of the General Synod 2005 as the Interim Policy on homosexuality of URCSA.
2. The General Synod classifies the Report on Homosexuality which had been tabled at the General Synod 2008 as a "background resource" offering assistance to church councils, presbyteries and regional synods faced with the task of evaluating homosexuality in church and society.
3. The General Synod calls on all regional synods to actively attend to the Report on Homosexuality of 2008 and supply the General Synodical Commission during the recess with their responses.
4. The General Synod appoints and instructs the task team on homosexuality to move forward in the preparation of reader friendly study material on the biblical and theological appraisal of homosexuality and issue it to the regional synods during the recess after approval by the General Synodical Commission.
5. The General Synod affirms the URCSA's long tradition of social justice, founded on the fundamental human dignity of every individual, as well as its bearing on the controversial and emotional issues of gay rights. The General Synod URCSA, therefore, calls on all its members to exhibited concern over the protection of homosexuals from discriminatory practices.
6. The General Synod affirms that the denial of human and civil rights to homosexuals is inconsistent with the biblical witness and Reformed theology.
7. The General Synod denounces all forms of homophobic conduct.
8. The General Synod encourages church leaders to enter into constructive dialogue with LGBTI persons or groups representing them with the aim of better understanding them. General Synod requests the task team on homosexuality to organize opportunities for such dialogue.

Decision 21 Corrective Rape

1. This General Synod of URCSA in session at Okahandja in Namibia:

Has noted with deep concern and shock the high incidence of the so-called corrective rape of women of lesbian orientation in South Africa's townships. We also note that this vicious practice is further accompanied by extreme violence to the victims of these assaults.

2. This Church unreservedly declares our full support for the victims. We identify with their plight. We fully reject this horrendous practice and urge our congregations and communities to protect and support these women.

3. We make a special call on the SA government to fulfill its obligations through the security forces to do everything in their power to protect the rights and humanity of our sisters.

4. We declare that as Church we will raise awareness on this issue and combat this criminal mindset in our communities.

5. May God help us not to be silent when our fellow human beings are persecuted.

Decision 22 Accra Confession and Project Globalization

1. General Synod expresses her appreciation towards the ERC for partnering with URCSA on the Accra Confession;

2. GS expresses her thanks to Dr AA Boesak, Dr Johann Weusmann from ERK, and Charles Amjad-Ali and all the other contributors for the work done.

3. GS give thanks to Prof Nico Koopman and the Beyers Naude Institute for their role in making this project a reality;

4. GS expresses her appreciation to the committee and persons that worked on the development of liturgical material.

5. GS tasks the Ministry for Service and Witness in collaboration with SMCPA to assist that the material be made available for use in URCSA.

Decision 23 Synods and Presbyteries Compositions

The GS requests the Regional Synods and the SMJM to provide a report to the next GSC.

Decision 24 Communication within URCSA

1. The GS requests congregations, presbyteries and regional synods to ensure that their correct contact details are available by October each year and to update changes as soon as possible.
2. The GS requests officials and ministers in the church to disseminate all information received to the relevant bodies in the church.

Decision 25 Development of a justice ministry in URCSA

The GS appoints a task team for a Justice Ministry in URCSA.

Motion: List of names approved

Cape: Rev PJ Grove (prim) & Rec NS Cezula

Northern Synod: Dr W Moime & Rev J Nthake

Freestate: Rev MTJ Letsie & SM Mohokare

KZN: Rev S Sibeko & Rev H Mbatha

Namibia: Rev BRE Tjingaete & Rev LL Husselmann

Phororo: Rev LJ Cornelissen & Rev PB Makoko

Southern Synod: Rev BB Senokoane & Rev E Tsenase

Belhar Center: Rev DDJ Kuys

CWM co-opted: Mrs E Mokgoebo

Decision 26 South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms

1. The URCSA affirms that the Charter can be seen as an important development in church, state and interfaith relationship in South Africa.
2. The URCSA hereby endorses the South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms as submitted to the conference of 21 October 2010.

Decision 27 Gender

1. The synod with gratitude takes note of the report on the gender audit in South African Churches.
2. The Synod refers the report to all the ministries of URCSA to take cognisance thereof.
3. The synod approves the appointment of a delegate to forthcoming gender consultations.
4. The synod takes note of the hampering effects the traditional court bill will have on the gender mainstreaming of the courts.
5. The Synod urges government to uphold equity provisions inscribed in our Constitution.

6. The Synod requests Regional Synods to table annually an update on gender mainstreaming on regional level namely number of women candidates of ministry, number of women in decision making positions namely on church council members, presbytery commission, in Moderamen.

Decision 28: Acceptance of report of Executive

The GS accepts the report of the Executive to the meeting

Decision 29 World Council of Churches

1. The GS continues its membership with the WCC
2. The GS elects delegates to attend the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Korea.

Noted

Amendment approved:

The GS refers the composition of the delegation to the 10th Assembly of the WCC to the newly elected Executive

Proposed: Rev P Adams: Seconded: Rev DDJ Kuys

(The executive is reminded of the guidelines for ecumenical interaction as decided by the GS 2005.)

Decision 30 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

1. The GS congratulates Dr Jerry Pillay on his election as President of WCRC and prays that God will bless him to serve the church well.
2. The GS commits itself to the WCRC and the projects of WCRC.
3. The GS encourage ministers and congregations to make use of the wonderful resources available on the WCRC website.

Decision 31 All African Conference of Churches (AACC)

1. The GS decides to continue its affiliation with AACC
2. The GS thanks Prof Kgatla for his involvement in AACC and the positive benefit that URCSA church leaders could benefit from how churches in Africa is dealing with challenges.

Decision 32 SACC

1. The GS commits herself to support the SACC on national and regional levels to revive the ecumenical role of the SACC in South Africa
2. The GS requests the Executive to continue to attend SACC meetings and to continue the tradition to take theological students along to the meetings.
3. The GS encourages members and ministers of URCSA to disseminate reports and press releases of SACC to local congregations.

Decision 33 National Church Leaders Consultation

1. Synod with gratitude takes note of the URCSA's involvement in the NCLC.
2. The Synod refers the statements of the NCLC to the Regional Synods for deliberation and where applicable urges the Regional Synods to attend to matters raised by the NCLC.
3. Synod encourages the Moderamen to sustain this ecumenical relationship.

General Motion: The GS 2012 expresses a word of gratitude to the temporary election commission for the work well done.

Decision 34: RESAC: Reformed European South African Consultation

1. The GS takes note of the decision of RESAC to disband and encourages the executive to continue bilateral collaboration with individual partner churches.

Decision 35: United Protestant Church in Belgium

1. The GS expresses its appreciation towards the UPCB for their commitment and support towards URCSA
2. The GS thanks Dr Egbert Rooze for the particular role that he has played over the years to support URCSA.
3. The GS thanks Rev Paulus van Schalkwyk for being a good ambassador of URCSA
4. The GS continues to strengthen its relationship with UPCB

Decision 36 Protestant Church in Netherland (PKN)

1. The GS expresses its appreciation towards the PCN for their commitment and support towards URCSA over the years.

2. The GS understands the position of the PCN in their engagement with the Belhar Confession and avails herself to assist in what ways it can help.
3. The GS task its executive to look at a formal ministers exchange programme with the PCN.

Decision 37: Lippische Landiskirche in Germany

1. The GS expresses its appreciation towards the Lippische Landiskirche for their commitment and support towards URCSA over the years
2. The GS thanks the Lippische Landiskirche for allowing Rev Stefanie Rieke-Kochsiek to be an exchange minister in URCSA
3. The GS conveys her appreciation for the selfless service to URCSA by Rev Stefanie Rieke-Kochsiek and her family.

Decision 38: Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany

1. The GS expresses its appreciation towards the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany and the joint project on Globalization that was completed.
2. The GS decides to embark with the ERC on a new joint project: Study Process Dealing with the Role and the Significance of the German Evangelical Ministry in Southern Africa after 1930

Decision 39: Reformed Church in America

1. General Synod appreciates that the RCA accepted the Belhar Confession as a confession that also speaks to them and their situation.
2. General Synod appreciates Dr Wesley Grandberg Michaelson and the efforts he made to present the first Belhar Inaugural Public Lecture.
3. General Synod tasks the executive to take up the task to liaise with the RCA on the process and study of multiracial initiatives.

Decision 40 Presbyterian Church in United States of America (PCUSA)

1. The Synod takes note of the PCUSA courageous efforts to include the Confession of Belhar in their Book of Confessions.
2. The Synod reassures the PCUSA of their prayers for church unity and racial justice in their own context.

Decision 41: The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

1. The GS appreciates the time and effort over the years made by the CRCNA to engage with the Belhar Confession.
2. The GS applauds those in the CRCNA that vigorously advocated for the acceptance of Belhar as full confession.
3. The GS appreciates that the CRCNA has given the Belhar Confession a place in their confessional basis and prays that it will continue to function in the life of the church.

Decision 42: Adoption of minutes of day one

GS approves the minutes of Day 1 with gratitude.

Decision 43: Dutch Reformed Church: Revoking of Moratorium and acceptance of Memorandum of Understanding

- 1 URCSA is called by God to exercise a prophetic voice in the world and in particular in Southern Africa. In its mandate URCSA is guided by the principles of honesty, integrity and uprightness as enjoined by the confession of Belhar. URCSA acknowledges and supports whatever effort which is authentic as guided by the Scriptures. Noted
- 2 This house of GS URCSA sitting in Okhandja resolves to note and appreciates the breakthrough developments within the DRC recent GS to start a process in a church orderly way to accept the Belhar Confession.
- 3 URCSA in Christ steps forward and stretches out its hands to the DRC to re-enter the unity process again. It revokes the 2008 decision on moratorium on all three levels within the DRC family of churches as the other two churches too showed their willingness to take part in the ongoing process of unity.
- 4 The General Synod instructs all regional synods, presbyteries and congregations to engage their counterparts within the DRC, DRCA and RCA with sincerity but firmly as guided by the spirit of the Belhar Confession on all matters that the decision of the lifting of the moratorium will apply.
- 5 The GS acknowledges with thanks the role played by WCRC and especially the role of Dr Jerry Pillay in the journey of our churches.
- 6 The GS acknowledges that God can and will always surprise us in the journey to unity to the glory of God.

- 7 GS accepts the Memorandum of Understanding with the necessary amendments developed by the two executives during a meeting of 25-26 July 2012 as basis for the way forward under the guidance of the WCRC.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITING REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (URCSA) and THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH (DRC)

1. Introduction

The Executive of URCSA have met in Nov 2011, February and July 2012 to discuss the way forward after the DRC General Synod have started a process to get Belhar Confession to be included as a confession in a church orderly way.”

From these meetings and a mutual discernment of God’s will, the Executives has agreed to draw up a memorandum of agreement, sign it and present it to our various church structures for acceptance.

2. Preamble

- 2.1** We as churches have decided to covenant together, because we believe that the Lord, who graciously committed himself to us, requires this of us. We use the term covenanting because we want to bring ourselves and the reunification process under the authority of the word of God and the will of Christ. As the family of churches we already decided together at Achterberg to journey together.
- 2.2** We envisage a new organically united reformed church, organized according to synodical-presbyterial structures, which lives missionally and is committed to the biblical demands of love, reconciliation, justice and peace. At the same time we are committed to non-racialism, inclusiveness and the acceptance and celebration of our multicultural composition. The different languages in our churches will be treasured.
- 2.3** From within our common faith in the triune God we commit ourselves anew to Africa, the continent where the Lord has placed us, and particularly to Southern Africa. We wish to take up this calling together to make a difference to the life-threatening problems facing our countries. In the process of spreading the gospel, we covenant to work together in concrete ways such as:

- inviting people to life in fullness in Christ
- promoting of healing and wholeness for all of life
- engaging in prophetic dialogue with others on societal matters
- embodying, modeling and promoting moral values of Scripture
- seeking and advocating justice for all
- achieving reconciliation, which is more than mere tolerance of one another
- opposing violence and abuse of power of all kinds in our society,
- promoting and embracing human dignity and gender equity

3. On church unity

3.1 We commit ourselves to the following model of unity:

From the different models for church unity in different churches, we intentionally choose a presbyterial-synodical church body (i.e. organic) that supports the Gospel of Jesus Christ who broke down the wall of separation between people (Ephesians 2: 14-16).

Ephesians 2

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

3.2 We believe that this proposed model is a Scriptural embodiment of unity in the Southern African context. This model we believe can help the church on different levels to be the living body of Christ in the world.

3.3 As reformed churches we believe that the local congregation is the expression of the church of Christ in a local community, but we also believe that local congregations live in communion with one another and this communion is expressed in various manners e.g. presbyteries, synods.

The four churches undertake to indentify ways in which the local churches can express their unity with each other inter alia forming uniting congregations, receiving ministers across cultures, starting uniting commissions and projects, re-aligning the congregations with their full consent to incorporate wards of other cultures.

3.4 We agree that getting the church to be fully one will be a process and that it will ask of us to commit ourselves to journey and grow together.

3.5 We propose that the churches start a process to obtain the permission of all the congregations of the churches (in the exact way currently prescribed in the church order of the particular church) for the following:

- the forming of a new General Synod as expression of new denominational ties (kerkverband)
- the formulating of the confessional basis for the reunited church
- to approve amendments to existing Church Orders needed for the formation and restructuring of a reunited church
- to approve that, after the forming of a new General Synod, a process will follow by which the regional synods and presbyteries engage in processes of expressing the reunited church at their respective levels
- the name of the reunited church
- The church orderly position of congregations with regard to ministry, property, etc.
- The actuarii of the General Synods form a task team to evaluate the existing church orders and to start a process to amend them in the correct way in order to make such a process possible.
- In the process of a General Synod being formed, the Regional Synods will asume unification on the same principles as the General Synod although the finalization of the new General Synod will have precedence

4. On the Confession of Belhar

4.1 We agree that the Confession of Belhar will be taken up in the confessional basis of the reunited church.

4.2 We understand that the Dutch Reformed Church decided to make the Confession of Belhar part of the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church in a church orderly way and we also understand that it proposed to do it in the following way:

- 4.2.1 The doctrine which the Church confesses in accordance with the Word of God, takes place in communion with the confession of our tradition as it is expressed in
- the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed through which the Church expresses her connectedness with the catholic Christian Church, and
 - the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dordt through which the Church expresses her connectedness with the reformed tradition.
- 4.2.2 In connectedness with our own context we acknowledge the Confession of Belhar.
- 4.3 We understand that the Dutch Reformed Church will have to follow the Dutch Reformed Church's Church Order to make the Confession of Belhar part of the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church.
- 4.4 We agree that the churches will journey together in this process of acceptance and renewed engagement of the Confession of Belhar.
- 4.5 We understand that the decision of the 2011 General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church is a journey towards full acceptance of the Confession of Belhar as part of the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church.
- 4.6 Where congregations, ministers, and members of the Dutch Reformed Church do not underwrite the Confession of Belhar as an article of faith, we are committed to journey with them.

5. On restorative justice and reconciliation

- 5.1 We acknowledge that church unity and the Belhar Confession urges us to also speak about restorative justice and reconciliation. As churches we have therefore decided to embrace the following:
- 5.1.1 Restorative justice should not be an end in itself but always lead to reconciliation. Reconciliation should be the restoration of communities at different levels of society: personal, social, political, denominational, economical, emotional and spiritual reconciliation between God and us.

5.1.2 We believe that restorative justice is a Biblical imperative that restores life in its fullness. It restores imbalances of the past and imbalances in God's creation and glorifies God through our restored unity and reconciliation.

5.1.3 We accept that restorative justice is a complex process which will ask some sacrifices. We will therefore need good stewardship but also a clear vision on the possible outcomes of such a process.

5.2 Regarding reconciliation we agreed on the following statements:

5.2.1 We believe that true reconciliation is a deeply spiritual process. Christian principles like sacrifice and forgiveness should not be neglected. Without the necessary spiritual maturity, it could fail dismally.

5.2.2 We accept the reality that conflict, bitterness, hatred, racism, ethnicism, classism, sexism and a lot of emotional pain is still very much part of society. We must address some of the core reasons for conflict like: misunderstandings and poor communication, bad and corrupt leadership, language, culture and religion, ideologies and the greed for political power, injustices, personalities, scarce resources and imbalances in society.

5.3 In order to effect reconciliation we believe that:

- We need to take the emotions of our people very seriously.
- We will have to develop greater passion and willpower to really make a difference. We will have to name the areas of conflict, face it and engage in the situation.
- At the heart of reconciliation is the matter of spirituality and the reconciliation that has already taken place in Jesus Christ.
- We will have to grow in integrity.
- We will have to define a common cause for all our people and enhance the principle of interpathy.

5.4 On restorative justice we want to propose the following practical measures

- Some initial successful examples which could be a model for future actions.
- Cooperate with URCSA in the important 5 year strategic plan of URCSA. We believe that this plan could give us entry points into the restorative justice process.
- To conduct a property audit.
- To propose and undertake some concrete actions.

- 5.5** We firmly believe that any process of restorative justice and reconciliation must be guarded and guided by good stewardship, discipline, work ethic and healthy moral values.
- 5.6** We believe that essential to restorative justice and reconciliation is a need for a change of heart and attitude. This will only be possible if we engage with one another and are guided by the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1** We believe that this process should be accompanied by a specific and focused process that creates safe spaces for listening to God and one another and spiritual discernment on how we need to address all the challenges facing us on this journey and acknowledging our different experiences and stories.
- 6.2** In the spirit of this covenant, we agree to encourage agreements on different levels of the church that will embody this new unity.

We do this in obedience and dependence in Jesus Christ who is the Lord of the church.

Motion on Bible Society

The GS wishes to express its great gratitude to the Bible Society of SA and Namibia for the excellent work in Bible distribution and gifts to the delegates of the Synod.

Decision 44 Process of Healing of Memories as part of Strategic Plan 2010-2016

As members of URCSA we carry the hurt of the past with us for the past few years. Our past in Southern Africa leaves us with wounded hearts and we face different challenges as people of God. Many times we make our decisions from our hearts that are wounded and hurt. And many times we don't read Scripture to discern God's will, but just to ease our conscience.

GS commits itself to a process of Healing of Memories throughout URCSA to help all our members to leave the past behind and to move forward to the new future that God has in store for us,

GS appoints a task team to visualise and execute this process.

The Taskteam will be tasked to

- Identify an institution that will facilitate the healing of memories process
- Make viable proposals for funding
- Present a comprehensive project proposal to the next GSC meeting in 2013.

Decision 45 Dutch Reformed Church in Africa / NG Kerk in Afrika

1. The GS tasks its executive to engage with the DRCA to solve the challenges of court cases so that we can work together for unity.

Decision 46 RCA

1. The GS tasks its executive to continue to seek unity with the RCA on the basis of the Confession of Belhar.
2. The GS apologizes for not honoring the invitation to attend the RCA Synod.

Decision 47 The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

1. The GS tasks its executive to take up ecumenical relationships with the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe as well as other Reformed Churches in Africa

Decision 48 United Presbyterian Church in South Africa

1. The GS expresses its appreciation towards the UPSCA for their involvement in our unity process through Dr Jerry Pillay.
2. The GS tasks its executive to strengthen ecumenical relationship with the UPSCA, because we can learn from their unity process.

Decision 49 Acceptance of Executive report on Ecumenical Affairs

The GS highly appreciates the work done by the Executive on Ecumenical Affairs, especially for strengthening partnerships between URCSA and her ecumenical friends. The GS therefore accepts the report on Ecumenical Affairs with appreciation.

Decision 50: Multilingual booklet titled “The Belhar Confession in tongues”

1. The GS approves the draft multilingual booklet titled “The Belhar Confession in tongues” with the Afrikaans edition as the first language; the other languages will continue to be included.
2. A foreword/preface/ acknowledgement shall be written by the moderator or moderature in which all contributors (people who helped with translation and members of the ministry) will be thanked or acknowledged.
3. Seeing that there are other languages (Namibian at the time the report was sent in) that could not be included in the first edition, synod agrees that such languages be accommodated in further editions should there be a need
4. Once editing has been completed and all other available translations in other languages have been included, the moderamen shall give permission and see to it that the first edition of the “The Belhar Confession” booklet of the URCSA is published before the end of December 2012.
5. Synod shall see to it that copyright of this publication belongs to the URCSA and that sale and royalties go straight to URCSA.

Decision 51: The translation of the Belhar Confession of 1986 into our mother tongues

The GS appreciates the sterling effort and work done by the CMPW in having the Belhar Confession of 1986 translated into our mother tongues. This will definitely help our congregants to understand the confession better and better than before. Once again your work is well appreciated but however all versions should have accompanying letters.

Decision 52: Liturgical Book

1. Synod approves the draft liturgy book, which after editing will be published as the first edition of the “Worship Book for URCSA” by the end of March 2013.
2. Synod mandates the incoming core ministry of proclamation and worship to translate the liturgy book in all languages that are used in the URCSA including those of Namibia
3. Synod sees to it that copyright of this publication belongs to the URCSA and that sale and royalties go straight to URCSA

Decision 53: Liturgical Book

1. The GS notes with appreciation the work done by the CMPW on a Liturgy book
2. The GS refer it to the Temp CMPW to take into account the suggestions and concerns raised
3. The GS instructs the CMPW to test the Liturgical Book and to report to the next GSC.

Decision 54 Hymn book

1. Synod extends the mandate to the incoming CMPW to work on compiling a hymnal for use in the URCSA.
2. Synod mandates the CMPW to present a progress report to every synodical commission and try by all means to have the hymnbook compiled, tested and ready for adoption and use in the whole URCSA by 2016.

Decision 55 Amended curriculum for mature URCSA members

General Synod approves the amended curriculum for mature URCSA members, as endorsed by GSC in November 2010.

Decision 56 The Rule for Ministerial Formation of General Synod

3.3.1 General Synod approves the amendments to the Rule for Ministerial Formation of General Synod that are proposed in Appendix 2.

3.3.2 General Synod mandates the GS MFTT, in collaboration with GS SMJM, to edit and finalize this Rule as soon as possible for publication in an updated Ministerial Formation Manual.

Decision 57 Integrated formation process

3.4.1 General Synod approves the principle that the dimensions of a) personal and spiritual development; and b) growth in ministry skills be formalized;

3.4.2 Mandates the GSC to approve the precise shape of such a church-based qualification in the recess, on the basis of a submission by the GS MFTT.

Decision 58 Broad training process of URCSA members

3.6.1 General Synod approves the use of Veritas College material for the training of leaders in URCSA congregations;

3.6.2 General Synod encourages church councils, presbyteries, regional synods and MFTTs to negotiate with Veritas College to develop joint strategies for training facilitators who can present these courses to leaders in congregations.

Decision 59 Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD)

3.7.1 General Synod encourages regional MFTTs to collaborate with VBO structures in the DRC to develop and present CMD programmes to members of the two churches;

3.7.2 GS requires all ministers to enroll for CMD developmental courses and instructs CMPW to develop a full-fledged program to implement this with report to the next GSC

3.7.3 General Synod encourages congregations to support their ministers to attend CMD courses.

Decision 60 Specialized studies in final year of formation programme

3.8.1 General Synod approves these amendments to the curriculum;

3.8.2 General Synod mandates regional MFTTs to comply with the curriculum and authorises the GS MFTT to monitor compliance.

3.8.3 General Synod condones the licensing of Dawid Mouton on the basis of a specialised MTh in Clinical Pastoral Care on the following grounds: a) he had discussed his enrolment for the specialized degree with Dr. HG Platt (as official of the Namibian MFTT) before enrolling; b) it was formally requested by the Namibia MFTT; c) Dr M-A Plaatjies-van Huffel had recommended his licensing in writing; d) he submitted all the required practical ministry reports; e) it was recommended by GS MFTT in August 2011; f) it was approved by GSC in Sep 2011, with the clear understanding that this is an exception that does not change the rule. **Condoned**

Decision 61 Licensing of students with hearing disability

General Synod:

3.9.1 Notes that the estimated number of people in South Africa using South African Sign Language (SASL) is between 500,000 and 600,000 (<http://deafness.about.com>);

3.9.2 approves DCMA as the official higher educational partner for the training of deaf ministry students of URCSA, on the basis of the information contained in Appendix 4; **Referred to Temp SMJM**

3.9.3 approves the principle that URCSA students who complete their studies at DCMA will be licensed and ordained as ministers of the church to build up deaf-community churches;

Referred to Temp SMJM

3.9.4 Mandates the Cape MFTT to appoint a URCSA minister as mentor for deaf students;

3.9.5 Mandates the Cape MFTT to collaborate with DCMA to develop a final year curriculum for deaf ministry students of the URCSA.

Decision 62 Sign language

The GS decides to refer to CMPW to do research about sign language to be one of the subjects for the theological students in order to accommodate deaf members in the church.

Decision 63 Theron-Niholonge fund

General Synod endorses this decision of GSC.

Decision 64 Ministerial formation manual

General Synod notes:

3.11.1 that the GS MFTT compiled the MF Manual on the instruction of the 2008 General Synod

3.11.2 that the content of the manual was approved by GSC in Sep 2011;

3.11.2 that, after negotiations with SMCP, the Northern Theological Seminary [NTS] printed the manual printed is distributing it.

General Synod **approved**:

3.11.3 that all suggestions for improving the MF Manual should be sent to the scribe of GS MFTT before 30 November 2012 so that an updated edition, which incorporates all the amendments made to it by General Synod 2012, can be printed and distributed early in 2013;

3.11.4 the proposal of GS MFTT to translate the MF Manual into Afrikaans and possibly other African languages.

Decision 65: Admission of students from other regions to non-residential NTS programme

General Synod approves

- 3.12.1 that all prospective ministry students should apply to the MFTT of their regional synod by means of the prescribed application form (MF Manual, Addendum 9) and be interviewed by them;
- 3.12.2 that If an applicant is unable to study full-time in her/his own region, the regional MFTT will recommend her/him to the Northern MFTT to become part of the NTS distance learning programme;
- 3.12.3 that an NTS student from another regional synod will participate in the in-house programme of his/her regional MFTT, to ensure optimum co-operation in the formation of those students for ministry (see also point 5.2.5 below).

Motion: The meeting refers the issue of age limit to CPW with report back to the next GSC

Decision 66 Discipline of part-time NTS students in other regions

General Synod approves the following principles:

- 3.13.1 Part-time NTS students living in other regions shall be fully and actively integrated into the community of ministry students in their own region;
- 3.13.2 The discipline of a ministry student rests with the local church council and presbytery where s/he is a member, in consultation with the regional MFTT, and with report to the Northern MFTT;
- 3.13.3 Supervision of the practical ministry and spiritual formation of part-time NTS students are the responsibility of their regional MFTT;
- 3.13.4 Church councils and mentors submit an annual report to the regional MFTT on the ministry students under their care.

Decision 67 New licensing oath

3.14.1 Noted

The licensing oath is not part of the URCSA Church Order. It therefore does not require a two thirds majority vote at General Synod to amend it. However, it is a fundamentally important statement in the life of a church since it shapes the identity and self-understanding of its ministers. For this reason it would not be wise to replace the present licensing oath at this

meeting of General Synod. It requires a process of consultation and debate among ministers and in the official meetings of regional synods, presbyteries and congregations.

3.14.2 Approved

- a) General Synod approves the draft Ministry Covenant (Appendix 5) in principle for circulation to all ministers, congregations, presbyteries and synods.
- b) Proposed comments and amendments to the document need to be submitted to the GS MFTT at the latest by October 2014;
- c) General Synod mandates the GSC to monitor this process in the recess, so that the new wording may be finalized by the General Synod of 2016;
- d) If widespread agreement on the wording is reached before 2016, the GSC is mandated to exercise its discretion to approve the new wording during the recess and to announce it officially in URCSA News.

Decision 68 Cape MFTT

4.1.1 General Synod takes note of the report of the Cape MFTT to Synod with gratitude for all the positive trends.

4.1.2 General Synod approves the development of a seminary to facilitate the holistic development of ministry students (Addenda 2-5 attached to Appendix 6)

Decision 69 Namibia MFTT

4.3.1 General Synod takes note with gratitude of the report of the Namibia MFTT.

4.3.2 Regarding theological education at NETS, General Synod urges the Namibian MFTT to investigate the standard of theological studies at NETS as it relates to requirements by URCSA and to report to the GS MFTT.

Decision 70: Northern MFTT

GS takes note of the recommendation 1.3.1 from the Northern MFTT with the understanding that paragraph 7 NTS Constitution on page 367-368 is understood that the two regional Synods of Northern and Southern are still considering the matter.

Decision 71: Age limit for ministerial students:

The GS decides to request the GS MFTT to do a thorough research on age-limit for admission of ministerial students with feedback to the next GSC 2013

Decision 72: Acceptance of report CMPW

GS accepts the report of CMPW with gratitude.

Decision 73: Acceptance of Minutes of day 2

The temporary commission has checked and edited the minutes of day two of the GS and recommends to Synod to approve it.

Decision 74: Activities of CWM

1. Proclamation and Worship (PW) and service and witness (SW) need to assist CWM with issues that are within their competence (e.g. bullet 1 and 3 need assistance of PW and bullet 4 – 8 assistance of SW) to adhere to integrated ministry.
2. Mothers to be complemented for the good work that they are doing for the Church and the world.

Decision 75: Christian Womans League approved

The GS decides to refer the issue of CWL to the Temp Judicial Matters Ministries to guide the Regional Synods on handling of CWL, align all issues and report to the GS.

Decision 76: CWM being part of Congregational Ministry

We recommend that the General synod Actuary and the SMJM revise all constitutions of ministries namely, CWM; CMM; CYM; JB and aligned them in terms of IM Model to avoid confusion.

Decision 77 The Challenges faced by CWM

We recommend that:

1. Mothers should involve the relevant ministries for support and working together in addressing these challenges to avoid duplication of tasks, because some of these challenges are challenges that need to be addressed by SW.
2. SW should also consult with executives of the ministries when drawing their budget and the programmes to check what are the overlapping activities that can be done together with ministries.

Decision 78 Challenges that the executive of Youth Brigade face

Due to financial constraints and other problems that the executive committee experienced with the induction of executive officers and the distributing of the executive committee's workload, the executive committee requests that the General Synod Congregational Ministry waive the following:

1. YB executive committee creates a post for an officer to assist the Chief executive officer.
2. Do the induction of office bearers at the conference the Sunday, 29 April 2012.
3. Attach an age limit to all executive office Bearers (From open ended age to 60 years).

Recommendations:

1. Bullet one for approval.
2. Bullet two for noting.
3. Bullet three the synod to express itself on this matter, as a policy matter on age limit for youth in the church (16 years to 35 years).

Decision 79 Our Hymn Book: Reflecting our true unity in Christ Approved

We recommend that the Proclamation and Worship should take these issues raised in point 1.7 in the report of YB into account, while compiling the Hymn book.

Decision 80 Regions/Membership

We recommend that:

1. There must be connection between the regional congregational ministries and the General synod congregational ministry in order to address such challenges that are facing the ministries in the regions and affect the General synod's operations.
2. The said regional synods moderamen and regional congregational ministries have to assist in reviving CYM in their regions.

Decision: 81 Activities of CYM

1. Proclamation and Worship (PW) and Service and Witness (SW) need to assist CYM with issues that are within their competence to adhere to integrated ministry Model.
2. Young people to be complemented for the good work that they are doing for the Church and the world.

Decision 82: The challenges faced by CYM

We recommend that:

1. Young people should involve the relevant ministries for support and working together in addressing these challenges to avoid duplication of tasks.
2. SMFA, SMPCA and SMJM should be consulted to assist CYM to address these challenges based on their competence in this regard.

Decision 83: Matters referred to CYM by Synod

We recommend that:

1. The GS allow the CYM to utilize all material that bear the name that has Movement until there is no more materials that have Movement in the name.
2. The GS to ask the temporary SMJM and SMFA in consultation with CM to draft the terms and conditions of appointment for the youth minister.

Decision 84: Sunday School Instruction material

We therefore propose the following to the general synod:

1. To accept the offer from Bible Media to partner with them to give capacity to URCSA in the development of lesson material, keeping in mind our own African and local context and cost effectiveness.
2. To liaise with all relevant partners, i.e. Bible Society, CLF, to assist URCSA in the development of lesson material for Junior and senior catechesis.
3. To establish a task team, as a sub commission, representatives from different Regional Synod and nominate 3 persons to represent URCSA on a joint task team, ie. URCSA AND DRC, for catechesis and faith development
4. Research what is currently used within URCSA congregations and also collect all current material that is available.
5. Conduct workshops with different regions and or presbyteries and facilitate Train the Trainer workshops to assist and equip catechists in their task

6. Research what are current theological trends with regard to catechesis and faith development.
7. Draft a budget to implement.

The Partnership Proposal Document between URCSA GS and Bible Media is referred to SMJM

Decision 85: Working relationship with Bible Media

We recommend the following:

1. The synod accepts the proposal and gives the new congregational ministry the mandate to carry on with the project and report to the synodical commission on their progress.
2. The synod requests the SMJM to draft the memorandum of understanding between URCSA and Bible Media on the partnership to develop instructional material.
3. SMFA made funds available for this project.
4. Proclamation and Worship ministry to be consulted for assistance with theological grounding of the instructional material to be developed.

Decision 86: Youth Brigade name change

The GS decides to refer the name of the Brigade to the Church Brigade and to GS CMC to alleviate all confusion around age, with report to the next GSC.

Decision 87 Motion to revoke waiving of age limit in Youth Brigade

The GS has just approved waiving of age limit in Youth Brigade. This decision can cause serious confusion in the church. We thus propose the decision be revoked and be referred to the Temp Judicial Ministry for guidance.

Decision 88 Acceptance of Report of CMC

GS accepts the report of the CMC with gratitude and appreciates the role played by all role-players and the emphasis they put on the Integrated Ministry approach throughout their report.

Decision 89 Takwasa Presbytery

1. The GS noted point 5.4.1 of the Namibian Report. GS Resolves to mandate the Executive to immediately convey to the DRC DRCN to refrain from destabilizing congregations, presbyteries and synods of URCSA.
2. To allow all contact between the two churches to be in line with the MOA accepted at this synod
3. The Executive to report on a continuous basis to the GSC on this matter.

Decision 90: Ministerial students doing practical work in Namibia

The GS encourages ministerial students from South Africa to learn more about the Namibia life and culture by doing practical work in Namibia. This should be referred to the MFTT to look at this need and also assist Namibia with their shortage of ministers.

Decision 91: Approval of report of regional Synod Namibia

The GS approves the report of the Regional Synod of Namibia.

Decision 92: Christian Dependency Ministry

1. The GS fully realizes and appreciates the high importance and the outstanding services rendered by the CDM.
2. The GS emphasizes the need for the CDM to continue to exist and to continue with its important ministry.
3. The GS instructs CMSW to in collaboration with the UMSW do all in its ability to help secure the sustainable continuation of CDM.

Decision 93: Establishment of CDM branches

The Service and Witness Ministry co-ordinates a process in which task teams are established in all regional synods to develop CDM branches in all regions in consultation with the National CDM.

Decision 94: Managing and operation of CMSW staff member

1. The GS notes thankfully that the management of the CMSW employee, Mr Efraim Oppelt, is done efficiently and that the practical ministries that are supported and

- developed through the involvement of donors are positively and effectively addressing the needs in local contexts.
2. The GSC expresses its appreciation and gratitude towards the partners in Europe and North America for their support. **Referred to Temp Commission for CSW for more information**
 3. The GSC prays that the Lord will further bless Br Oppelt and the various related ministries.

Decision 95: URCSA involvement in CLF Board

1. The GS notes the move to Wellington and the positive developments of the CLF during the recess and the work undertaken in its tabled report.
2. The GS prays that the CLF's capacity will grow to sufficiently address the literature needs of the DRC Church Family and beyond.

Decision 96: Acceptance of Report of UMSW

The GS accepts the report of the UMSW with gratitude and prays that the Lord will bless the guidance that the UMSW gives and the support it renders to various service and witness projects through the DRC family in and from Africa.

Decision 97: Acceptance of Report of CMSW

GS accepts the report of the CMSW with thanks

Decision 98: Gratitude to Dr SD Maluleke

General Synod expresses its gratitude to Dr SD Maluleke for his service to the church especially for his leadership in the General Synod Finance ministry.

Decision 99: Certified Master Auditors

- a. The General Synod expresses its heartfelt gratitude to Certified Master Auditors for their service to the church and requests the scribe to write a letter to this effect.
- b. General Synod reappoints Certified Master Auditors as auditors of General Synod for the next recess.

Decision 100: Gratitude to the Lippische Landeskirche:

The General Synod expresses its gratitude to the Lippische Landeskirche for their support during the past recess. Their solidarity with the people of South Africa during the struggle against apartheid and with the Uniting Reformed Church since its inception will forever be a source of inspiration. General Synod requests the scribe to write a letter expressing the appreciation of the synod.

Decision 101: Annual certificate from auditors from Regional Synods

- a) "The General Synod decides that all regional synods provide an annual certificate from its auditor, stating the income of the synod for the past financial year, to the SMFA before the end of September on the basis of which the 10% levy will be confirmed. A form will be developed for this purpose."
- b) Noted

Decision 102: Love Offering

General Synod calls on all congregations to pledge an annual amount as love offering for the work of General Synod. Presbyteries and Regional Synods are requested to monitor these contributions and shall see to it that each congregation in its resort contributes according to its ability. The SMFA is requested to provide congregations and presbyteries annually with the needs of the General Synod as well as a specific target for this fundraising drive. SMFA shall see to it that all contributions are properly acknowledged and reports are provided to presbyteries and regional Synods.

Decision 103: Savings proposed

- a) The General Synod decides to structure its Synodical Commission as well as Strategic planning meetings in such a way that ministries will meet at the same venue and time be allocated for their meetings.
- b) In order to save cost, travelling to these meetings should be well coordinated and members should travel together as far as possible.
- c) That ministries which are larger than 7 people elect an executive who will meet regularly via Skype or teleconference. Task teams of ministries will also meet via Skype or teleconference.

Decision 104: Verhoef Bequest

The General Synod requests the Scribe to write a letter of gratitude to the family of the late Prof Pieter Verhoef.

Decision 105: Temp Commission for Funds proposal to GS

The GS has taken note of the precarious financial situation of URCSA. The GS after deliberation tasks the Temp Commission for Funds to supply the GS with a means to address the situation with guidelines/recommendations to serve at this current GS

Decision: 106: CYM funds under jurisdiction of SMFA

General Synod decides that all ministries in URCSA on General Synod level should have their funds under the jurisdiction of the Support Ministry of Finance and Administration (General Synod). The temporary Judicial Commission of Synod is requested to align all the relevant constitutions to accommodate this decision.

Decision 107: Forensic audit of CYM funds

The GS decides:

1. The new CMC must conduct a forensic audit of the CYM financial affairs with practical reference to the Barkley West CYM Conference
2. Give a mandate to the new CMC to use resources necessary to execute the request.

Decision: 108 Appointment of personal assistant in Bloemfontein

1. The General Synod expresses its gratefulness towards the Heidedal-Suid congregation, Ms Ilse May and Mrs Christelle van der Westhuizen for hosting the secretarial position and serving the church in this way.
2. The new SMFA make appropriate arrangements

Decision 109: Appreciation for work done by Scribe

1. GS expresses its deep appreciation for the sterling work of our Scribe. Synod recognizes that the Scribe commits his time and personal resources to Gods work in his office.
2. Synod requests the Scribe to record his expenses and forward a claim to the SMFA on a quarterly basis for the duration of his term.

3. Synod further decides to allocate R3000.00 to the Scribe as a once-off recognition of his much appreciated work.

Decision 110: Administrative assistant for Administrator

The Synod expresses its appreciation for the work done by Rev JC Goeiman and Miss Marydith Buys.

Decision 111: Motion of Order: Buying of a property for GS

We propose that the buying of a property as mentioned at point 8 of the SMFA report to be moved to an appropriate “slot” on the agenda of this Synod to be discussed.

The reason being:

1. We do not have a business plan available
2. We have to commit the Synod to a very high debt situation if we go ahead with this project
3. The financial report indicates that we do not have enough “collateral” (funds) available
4. The Synod must have more time to debate the issue.

Decision 112: Financial policy for the URCSA GS

The General Synod approves the financial policy for the URCSA General Synod. General Synod mandates the General Synodical Commission to make changes to the financial policy as the need may arise during the recess, based on recommendations from the SMFA.

Decision 113: General Synod Emolument scales

General Synod recommends an increase of 8% for the next financial year in the emoluments of ministers and evangelists. The General Synod mandates the GSC to decide on emolument scales during the recess based on the recommendation of the SMFA.

Decision 114: Ministers not being paid according to scale

General Synod requests the SMFA and the SMJM to formulate proper advice to church councils on the issue of ministers not being paid according to scale during their tenure at

a congregation. The General Synod mandates the General Synodical Commission to approve this advice and communicate it to synods, presbyteries and congregations.

Decision 115: Tent-Making Minister Scale

General Synod calls on all congregations and presbyteries to see to it that proper contracts are in place for all tent-making ministers and that they are treated fairly and equitably. General Synod approves a scale for tent-making ministers, taking into account different categories and benefits, and requests SMFA to provide an annual guideline to congregations in this regard.

Decision 116: Tent-Making Minister

The GS decide to take a well-balanced and realistic approach in designing a contract and emolument for tent making ministers

Decision 117: Recommendation: Travelling Allowances for Synod work

General Synod decides to keep the travel allowance to R2,50 per kilometer travelled for work of the Synod. General Synod calls on all members of ministries to travel together in order to save cost. Where members travel together the rate will be R 3,00 per kilometer per car. General Synod mandates the GSC to make a decision on travel allowance at each meeting taking into account the fuel price and the financial situation of general synod.

Decision 118: Travel allowance for work in congregations

| <i>Kilometers</i> | <i>Fixed Cost</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>Running Cost</i> | <i>=</i> | | <i>x</i> | <i>Kilometer</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|------------|----------|------------------|----------|---------------|
| <i>Less than 8 000</i> | <i>422</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>570</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>8 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>45 600</i> |
| <i>8 000 to 10 000</i> | <i>417</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>565</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>10 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>56 500</i> |
| <i>10 001 to 15 000</i> | <i>278</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>426</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>15 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>63 900</i> |
| <i>15 001 to 20 000</i> | <i>209</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>357</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>20 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>71 400</i> |
| <i>20 001 to 25 000</i> | <i>160</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>308</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>25 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>77 000</i> |
| <i>25 001 to 30 000</i> | <i>142</i> | <i>+</i> | <i>148</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>290</i> | <i>x</i> | <i>30 000</i> | <i>=</i> | <i>87 000</i> |

Decision 119: Allowances for delegates to international meetings and visits to partner churches

General Synod decides that persons representing the church in international meetings and visits outside the borders of synod will be paid an allowance: \$30 per day if travelling to Europe, Asia, Australasia and the Americas and \$15 per day if travelling to other African countries.

Decision 120: Honoraria for office bearers of General Synod during recess

| | Previous recess | New recess |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Moderator | 300 p.m. | 350 p.m. |
| Assessor | 300 p.m. | 350 p.m. |
| Scribe | 350 p.m. | 400 p.m. |
| Actuarius | 350 p.m. | 400 p.m. |
| Executive member | 250 p.m. | 275 p.m. |

Decision 121: Belhar Pension Fund

- a) General Synod accepts the Report of the Belhar Pension Fund.
- b) General Synod reappoint the current employer representatives (Rev D Maletse, Rev P Bock, Mr J Floris, Mr T Phatudi, Rev F Tshigovha, Rev AGJ Willemsse, Rev HJ Meintjies) to the Board of Trustees of the Belhar Pension Fund until the merger of the Ministers fund with the Officials Fund has been concluded.
- c) The General Synod mandates the GSC to elect new employer representatives in terms of the new structure of the Board after the merger of the two funds.
- d) General Synod affirms that it is compulsory for all ministers to belong to one of the approved pension funds of the church. Only tent-making ministers, who have applied for exemption, can belong to the pension fund of their secular profession.

Decision 122: Motion: Press release on Economic Injustice

ECONOMIC INJUSTICE IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

The General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa took note with serious concern of the critical economic conditions of its membership and the population of the Southern African Region. The Church felt to express itself and to address this economic injustice in the Southern African context. The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) believes that involvement in politics is one of the honourable positions that a Christian can occupy in public life. God, in whom we believe, gives His

people the responsibility to govern the earth in the fullest sense of governance as it was given to them in the Book of Genesis. We created by this Creator God, have therefore received a divine command to govern the earth responsibly. The URCSA, therefore, does not conform to the notion that politics is dirty, we believe however, what soils this honourable profession is dishonest politicians who occupies political office in our country. These politicians are responsible for the fact that corruption, mismanagement of the resources and self-enrichment are rife in South Africa. Resources that are supposed to be channelled to the upliftment of South Africa's poor, disappears in the pockets of those who are well connected to political power. After eighteen years of democracy, South Africa's struggle for justice, economically and politically for the apartheid' poor and oppressed, seems to be an illusion. This is a situation Synod laments.

As Synod and church we have come to realize that the well-known saying, that the oppressor will somehow grant you political freedom, but not easily and in some cases never economic liberation, still rings true and sadly so for South Africa. Our transition from apartheid to democracy was fatally flawed, when those who negotiated our freedom, did not succeeded in securing our economic liberation, mapped out the right and proper path to economic liberation. These economic challenges were acknowledged by President Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech as president, on 10 May 1994, when he said, "We have at last, and achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering...." This pledge remains a distant dream for millions in South Africa.

A struggle for economic liberation is being waged in our country on different levels in South Africa at the moment. It is a fact that it will increase with intensity on a significant scale and with tragic effects as it has already happened at Marikana and other incidents. Devastating effects of the struggle for economic liberation awaits South Africa.

We realize with embarrassment the frightening increase in the income gap between the rich and the poor in our South African society, whilst the majority of the poor and economically deprived remains the black peoples of South Africa, we realise that this situation is not limited to this group, but cuts across the South African population. Whilst the majority of the wealthy remains, white, we see a small, but growing percentage of black millionaires and billionaires are coming to the fore. Economic emancipation in the main, means today that a small elite both black and white and some well connected to the political establishment, who at the expense of the apartheid and democratic poor are

fleeing the public treasury. This is where a major fault line lies, in our view. The existence of Black millionaires and billionaires should not be a reason to view and celebrate it as significant economic progress among the people who were deprived by apartheid economic policies, as well as democratic economic policies. Economic progress of the poor can only be regarded as significant, when the jobless get jobs, those in shacks (euphemistically called informal settlements), living in squalor condition are moved into decent and proper housing, when services of clean water and proper sanitation are delivered to those who lack it.

The system that produces these economic conditions and glaring inequalities remains the same and is perpetuated in the democratic South Africa. Economic deprivation of the victims of apartheid and the South African democracy explains in our opinion, the increasing growth in disillusionment, desperation, anger and even violence in our society.

General Synod therefore resolves:

We the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa therefore decides:

To deplore the lack of moral fibre of many of our political leaders in South Africa for defiling an honourable profession. To call on those politicians and people in the South African government to stop the waste of tax payers' money through corruption, mismanagement, self- enrichment and failed programs. To put proper economic policies in place that favours and positively advances the economic situation of the apartheid and democratic poor. We applaud those leaders of integrity in government that constantly struggle for a better dispensation for everyone and strive for open and transparent government. We also believe that the challenge of economic liberation is however not only the responsibility of Government, but also of other role-players like big business and other institutions in our society.

It is of serious concern to Synod that the Namibian unemployment rate stands at 52%. We take note of the fact that the basic income grant that was implemented in Omitara in Namibia, proves to significantly reduce the negative situation of the poor and unemployed. We urged the Namibian Government to seriously consider implementing a basic income grant for Namibia poor and unemployed. We also call on the South African Government to also serious consider the basic income grant for its poor and unemployed. We take note with serious concern of the Global Economic processes' negative impact especially in the Southern countries, like South Africa and Namibia.

Synod further decides to get actively involved in situation of economically deprived on the basis and in the spirit of the Belhar Confession, which says: “that in a world full of injustice and enmity God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that God calls the Church to follow in this ... that the Church must therefore stands by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies , among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form injustice, so that justice may roll down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interest and thus control and harm other.”

Synod decides to mandate the new Executive together with the Core Ministry for Service and Witness, to compile a comprehensive memorandum on Biblical Economic Justice (as URCSA’s position on the issue) and seek an appointment with the Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr Ebrahim Patel, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies and the Minister of National Planning , Mr Trevor Manuel to present this memorandum to them and to discuss URCSA’s view on Biblical Economic Justice for South Africa with them as soon as possible.

The URCSA is committed to ensure that socio-economic rights are fulfilled in our countries and is willing and committed to work with the Namibian and South African governments and other institutions to that effect.

Synod decides to mandate the Core Ministry for Service and Witness to get involved in Economic policy debates of government / parliament and to submit, suggestions to government on this issue.

Synod calls on Congregations, Presbyteries, and Regional Synods to oppose in constructive ways any economic injustice in South Africa, on the basis of the Word of God and the Belhar Confession and to work with other churches and relevant entities on this issue.

Synod decides to release this decision also as a Press release.

Decision 123: Adoption of Day Three Minutes. Approved

The temporary Commission has edited and checked the minutes of Day Three and hereby recommend to the Synod to approve them as tabled.

Decision 124: Motion of Order: Buying of a property for GS:

The following recommendation to General Synod is made:

Recommendation:

General Synod decides that after negotiations with donors to support the proposed General Secretary Post has successfully been concluded and the funds for this post has been secured

- a) The SMFA will make available R 2 000 000 of the money currently invested to buy an open land which can be developed for the purposes of an office and conference facilities.
- b) SMFA is further mandated to apply for a loan of R 1 000 000 from the CDT Foundation should it be necessary to acquire the land.
- c) The SMFA in conjunction with the Moderamen will then oversee the setting up of an investment company with directors knowledgeable in investment and development of conference facilities to spearhead this project.
- d) The SMFA will spearhead a fundraising campaign for this purpose involving the synods, ministries and members in general.

Decision 125: Loan from Cape

GS decides to acquire an interest free loan from R1 million for Cape Synod

Decision 126 Audited Financial Statements 2011/2012

The General Synod notes the audited financial statements for the period 01 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Decision 127: Pension fund members

GS requests that the Board of Trustees of the Pension Fund should call a meeting of all Pension fund members to explain and address all concerns of members and the way forward.

Decision: 128: Die sinode versoek die gebiedsinodes om lede in te lig

9.3 Dit het aan die lig kom dat daar nog steeds sinodes is wat nie soos die wet vereis voor die 7de van elke maand die bedraes van die vorige maand oorbetaal nie. Ook word die opgedateerde skedules ook nie aan die fonds voorsien nie. Hierdie optrede

raak alle lede van die fonds. Die gevolg is dat die hele fonds nie opgedateer word nie. Dus kan geen eise uitbetaal word nie. Lede wat in die tyd aftree word dus ernstig benadeel. Dieselfde geld indien 'n lid te sterwe kom, dan word sy voordele nie aan sy naasbestaandes betaal word omdat die fonds nie opgedateer is nie. As een sinode agterstallig is word al die lede dus benadeel. Daarom word alle sinodes versoek om betyds die bydraes oor te betaal en die skedules van die betrokke maand in te stuur.

9.4 Die spesiale reëls vir die kerk is na die kantoor van die Algemene Sinode gestuur.

Decision: 129: Policy on attendance of Officials of General Synod at special ministry meetings

General Synod decides to include the following policy in the Financial Policy of General Synod:

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE OF OFFICIALS OF GENERAL SYNOD AT CWM, CYM, CMM, CDM MEETINGS

- Where officials like the Actuarius, General Secretary or the representative of the Congregational Ministries attend the congresses of ministries like the CWM, CMM, CYM and CDM, the General Synod will pay their travelling cost.
- The ministry will host the person with regard to food and accommodation.
- The travelling and accommodation cost of other officials that are invited to speak at these congresses will be carried by the respective ministries.
- Ministries are free to invite officials to their executive committee meetings as advisors. In such cases the special ministry pay the travelling and accommodation cost unless the principal of the official (e.g. Moderamen or Congregational Ministries) mandated the attendance of such a meeting in order to carry out a specific instruction.

Decision: 130 Editor for URCSA News

The General Synod refers this issue to the temporary commissions of Finance and Communication to discuss these proposals and present the synod with a recommendation.

The meeting resolved the following plan of action:

- a) The meeting acknowledges that the Support Ministry for Communication, Publications and Archives did not have the time to discuss the resignations and may come up with further recommendations.
- b) The meeting requested Rev DDJ Kuys to seriously consider staying on as part time editor until the end of the financial year. He is also requested to find out whether Mrs E Parker is able to stay on until that time or alternatively look for a temporary replacement until the end of the financial year.
- c) Having noted the intention of the moderamen to implement the decision of the previous General Synod to appoint a General Secretary as well as the uncertainty regarding the funding of the post for an editor, the meeting proposed that functions of the editor initially be fulfilled by the General Secretary until the funding can be secured for a full time post of an editor.
- d) It is furthermore recommended that the current 50% administrative post be upgraded to a full time post with a broader job description.

Decision 131: Prof Kgatla part of Committee for securing property for GS

GS decides that Prof Kgatla be part of the committee that steers the process of securing a property for the Church.

Decision 132: Thanks to Rev Goeiman as Administrator

The GS would like to thank and appreciate the work done by the acting Administrator, Rev Colin Goeiman.

Decision 133: Include Namibia and Lesotho in press releases

Press release: Since URCSA pride itself as representing SADEC, specially South Africa, Namibia and Lesotho her media reports must always where necessary reflect the composition of its constituency. This is submitted in the spirit of maintain and promoting internal unity and sensitivity. This can be promoted by getting views from the said countries and delegates in the regional synods

Decision 134: Second Report of the Support Ministry for Financial Administration

The GS accepts with gratitude the report of the SMFA

Decision 135: Church unity

“The URC GS is deeply thankful to God for the positive and fundamental change that the Holy Spirit worked towards the Confession of Belhar within the DRC between 2010 and 2012 on the Belhar Confession (Refer the decisions and interactions with the URCSA on this matter at the DRC GS level 2011 as well as the very positive developments within several regional synods).”

Therefore the URCSA GS 2012 decides that the 2008 moratorium decision on church unity discussions is rescinded.

The URCSA GS 2012 calls on its leadership both on national and regional level to pursue the process of unification in the DRC family on the basis of Belhar and to seek the Lord’s face together, while we work towards greater visible unity, real reconciliation and compassionate justice in church and society.

The URCSA GS 2012 urges the URCSA membership to ensure that we know the content of Belhar and do live according to its focus and message in all our thoughts, conversations and deeds, in order that the coming of God’s Kingdom may be positively assisted through our own willingness to encourage and accompany our brothers and sisters in the DRC family with their probable challenges and difficulties on the way.”

Decision 136: Cape Synod leadership

The GS notes the Cape Synod leadership’s serious efforts to ensure that important matters are dealt with responsibly in the synod resort regarding the management of meetings and resources, the development of leadership and fraternal and ecumenical relations, as well as the addressing of important ministry challenges and opportunities in and from the synod’s resort, involving the presbyteries, congregations and synodical ministries.

Decision 137: Synodical Task team/ Commission for Christian Education (SCE)

1. General Synod notes the historical developments within Cape Synod.
2. GS notes that the Cape SC endorsed the latest developments with regard to Catechism Faith Development in partnership with the URCSA GS Core Ministry for Congregational Ministries, in strategic partnership with Bible Media.

Decision 138: Core Ministry foci and actions

The GS appreciates the efforts of the Cape Synod to develop and sustain vibrant, focused, well-co-ordinated and sustainable Core Ministry foci and actions, to address the serious educational, pastoral and prophetic challenges and opportunities of congregations, ministries and partnerships in and from the Cape region.

Decision 139: Work of support ministries in the Cape Synod

The GS notes the work of the support ministries in the Cape Synod in support of the core ministries in this regional synod.

Decision 140: Acceptance of Cape report

The GS adopts the report of the URC Cape Regional Synod.

Decision 141: Alignment of Regional Synods Church Orders

The General Synod receives stipulations 76.3 - 137 (attached as Addendum A) and refers same to the Regional Synods for approval with feedback to the General Synodical Commission (GSC) during recess to enable ratification by the next General Synod.

Decision 142: Renumbering of all following Articles (GSC 2010 Minutes page 79)

The General Synod takes note of the aligned article and encourages Regional Synods to adhere to the Church Order and the accompanying Common Set of Stipulations.

Decision 143: Decisions 124; 125; 126; 127; 128 and 129: Constitutions and Regulations

The General Synod takes note of the implementation of the GS 2008 decisions and reiterates the mandate to CMSW to develop a regulation for Core Ministry for Service and Witness for URCSA.

Decision 144: Signing of URCSA and SANDF Agreement (SSCAB)

The General Synod ratifies the actions of the GSC wrt the Agreement between South African National Defense Force (SANDF) and URCSA (Addendum N) and mandates the SMJM to include the latter in the Church Order 2012

Decision 145: Status of Elders and Politics

The General Synod mandates –

- the General Synod Core Ministry for Proclamation and worship to develop preaching guidelines about sermon preparation to assist elders.

- Furthermore the Core Ministry for Service and Witness to assist in how to address political, economic and social issues in the church and society.

Decision 146: Retention of status of Rev DC van Den Heever as an emeritus pastor

The General Synod approves the application for retention of status of Rev DC van Den Heever as an emeritus pastor.

Decision 147: Retention of status of rev. M.A.W. Arendse

The General Synod approves the application for retention of status of rev. M.A.W. Arendse.

Decision 148: Forfeiture of status as minister of the Word: Rev J.W. Jacobs (Cape Synod).

The General Synod approves the application for resignation as minister of the Word of Rev. J.W. Jacobs and instructs the Actuarius to officially publish forfeiture of status in the URCSA News.

Decision 149: Mr. Lawrence T. Matsekete restoration of status as minister of the Word.

1. The General Synod approves the application of Mr. Lawrence T. Matsekete for restoration of status as minister of the Word.
2. The applicant to appear before the Assessment Committee of the Free State & Lesotho and Phororo Regional Synods for colloquium Doctum.

Decision 150: Mr. Ndabeng John Katime for status as minister of the Word in URCSA.

1. The General Synod approves the application of Mr. Ndabeng John Katime for status as minister of the Word in URCSA.
2. The applicant to appear before the Assessment Committee of the Free State & Lesotho and Phororo Regional Synods for Colloquium Doctum.

Decision 151: English will be the official language for the URCSA General Synod Church Order.

1. The General Synod approves in principle that English will be the official language for the URCSA General Synod Church Order.
2. The General Synod will in future approve all the English translations after being tabled accordingly.
3. The General Synod approves the following English translations (attached) as the official versions of the URCSA Church Order (CO):

- i. Regulation regarding status of ministers of the Word - Addendum B
- ii. The Twelve Articles of URCSA Church Order - Addendum C (cf CO 2008 pg 15)
- iii. Procedure of Meetings - Addendum D (cf CO 2008 pg 30)
- iv. Common Set of Stipulations (stipulations 7 – 76) - Addendum E
- v. Rules for the incorporation of other congregations into URCSA – Addendum F (cf CO 2008 pg 100)
- vi. Rule for appeal and dispute resolution related to doctrinal discipline – Addendum G(cf CO 2008 pg 102)
- vii. Rules for the licensing of candidates who did not complete the formal programme of ministerial formation – Addendum H (cf CO 2008 pg 117)
- viii. Rule for the Archival Commission – Addendum I (cf CO 2008 pg 180)
- ix. The Combination of the work of congregations, presbyteries and synods or commissions of synods from different churches – Addendum J (cf CO 2008 pg 234)
- x. Regulation regarding the Activities of the EXCO & GSC – Addendum K (cf CO 2008 pg 57)

Decision 152: Regulation regarding Procedures of Meetings

The General Synod decide to -

- i) Delete under Procedure of Meetings (CO 2008), clause 3.2 and renumber the clauses to read as follow:

| |
|---|
| <p>3. <u>COMPOSITION OF GENERAL SYNOD</u> General Synod is composed of the following categories of members:</p> <p>3.1 Full members (with the right to speak, vote and be elected)</p> <p>3.1.1 The four members of the Moderamen of each Regional Synod</p> <p>3.1.2 one minister of the Word and one male, female or youth (25yrs old or younger) Church Council member from every Presbytery within the boundaries of each Regional Synod alternating between male, female and youth in the alphabetical order of presbyteries per General Synod meeting</p> <p>3.2 Observer members (with right to speak but not to vote or be elected)</p> <p>3.2.1 Any member of the outgoing Executive Committee who is not a delegate to Synod in terms of 3.1</p> <p>3.2.2 One representative of each ministry of the church functioning at General Synod level</p> <p>3.2.3 One functionary or one representative from every Permanent Commission of General Synod</p> |
|---|

- 3.2.4 One representative from every URCSA centre of Theological training
- 3.3 Invited Observers (with right to speak but not to vote):
 - 3.3.1 One representative of ecumenical institutions of which the URCSA is a member
 - 3.3.2 One representative from ecumenical partner churches
 - 3.3.3 Any other representatives of churches or Ecumenical institutions the General Synod may wish to invite.

ii) *Align clause 6.2 with clause 15 (CO 2008) to read as follows:*

6.2 The outgoing chairperson of the General Synodical Commission will act as chairperson until the end of the meeting. In case of his/her absence, the Commission of Order will nominate a chairperson until the end of the meeting.

Major of Okahandja

The major of Okahandja Counselor: Dawid Uri-khob is welcomed in the meeting.

He welcomes the meeting and gives information about the history of Okahandja.

Dr D Kuyler responds by giving thanks to the major and hands him a copy of Dreaming a different world

Decision 153: Regulation for the General Secretary (CO 2008, pg 74)

The General Synod approves the amendment to the regulation for the General Secretary to read: "The salary of the general secretary is negotiable between the General Synod (Executive and SMFA) and the applicant taking into consideration qualifications and expertise."

Decision 154: Christian Women's Ministries (CWM) Constitution

The General Synod approves the aligned CWM Constitution with the Integrated Model (Addendum L) and mandates the GS Core Ministry for Congregational Ministry to ensure smooth implementation of the model.

Decision 155: Christian Youth Ministry (CYM) Constitution

The General Synod decides to approve the attached aligned CYM Constitution (Addendum M) and mandates the CM to ensure compliance thereof. The Actuaris is instructed to replace the current version with the latter in the reviewed Church Order 2012 with the amendments

Decision 156: Clothing ceremony of CYM

We want to submit to Synod that the clothing ceremony be done by the ministers wife or consulent wife since it does not show who is responsible for clothing the Youth.

Decision 157: Delegates to Regional and National Congress of CYM

1. The GS decides that the delegation of CYM to the regional congress will include one member from each presbytery in advisory capacity and one honorary member per branch in advisory capacity.
2. The delegation to the National Congress will include one member from every presbytery in advisory capacity and one honorary from each Presbytery CYM in advisory capacity.

Decision 158: Report of CMCM

1. The GS decides that the report of CMCM in future be made in such a way that ministries like the CWM, CMM, CYM, YB present their own report as part of the consolidated CM Report
2. GS decides moderamen should appoint a task team to investigate how representatives of ministries can be represented in the CMCM.

Decision 159 Investigation of the theology behind church order clause 3.2

The synod investigates the theology behind church order clause 3.2 whether it is in accordance with African-Reformed theology. The CMPW need to do an intense research regarding this clause in conjunction with SMJM.

Decision 160: Regulation Regarding Status of Ministers of the Word

The General Synod approves the attached reviewed regulation regarding status of ministers of the Word (Addendum B) and instructs the SMJM to replace the current regulation with the latter in the reviewed CO 2012.

Decision 161: Cape Synod and the way they are managing to collect and pay levies

I would like the house to take note and commend the Cape Synod on the way they are managing to collect and pay levies.

I request all other synods to take accountability and commit to the GS on how they are going to liquidate the outstanding debt on levies on page 505 e. debtors

Decision 162: Acceptance of report of Southern Synod

The GS accepts the report of Southern Synod.

1. Decision 163: Celebration of Quarter of a Century of Belhar Confession

1. The GS requests the Executive in conjunction with the SMCPA to start arranging the celebrations of URCSA quarter of a century celebration in 2019.
2. The GS requests congregations, presbyteries and synods to celebrate historic events in the life of the church at all levels

Decision 164: Ministers contributions to Belhar Celebrations

1. Synod decides to mandate the SMFA to write to Congregations and ministers who have not responded on this call to date, to allow the spirit of the Belhar Confession and the celebration of the Confession, to move them to send their contributions to the General Synod.

Decision 165: Appreciation for the work done to celebrate the Confession of Belhar:

1. The GS acknowledge with appreciation the work done to celebrate the Confession of Belhar.
2. The GS accepts the report of the Belhar Celebrations Committee

Decision 166: GS expresses its gratitude to the United Protestant Church in Belgium:

The General Synod expresses its gratitude to the United Protestant Church in Belgium, for their valuable financial contribution to URCSA News and to the CWM of the Regional Synod of the Cape for their longstanding financial assistance.

Decision 167: URCSA buy services from the Western and Southern Cape Synod of the DRC in SA: Archive, for its archive needs

Synod decides to buy services from the Western and Southern Cape Synod of the DRC in SA: Archive, for its archive needs. Synod decides to mandate the SMCPA to enter into negotiations with the Archives in order to buy a complete specialized service for the management of the URCSA General Synod Archive material. The SMCPA will budget for this service

Decision 168: Motion of appreciation for way Synod was organized

The way the meeting is organised, really proves how organized our executive is. The executive is therefore commended for work was done. The contingency plans including the presence of the clinic has assisted tremendously. It has taken good care of us and

took the extra mile by sending some of us to the doctors in town. The crew comprising of Sophie Laurens, Alet Pontac, Con Pontac, Daniel Buys has done a great job. We would like a letter of appreciation written to the clinic expressing our gratitude's.

Decision 169 Dress code for ministers

Since the GS Church Order does not specify implicitly the dress code for ministers, this matter to be referred to the CMPW in conjunction with the SMJM to produce a proposal in this regard. This should also take women ministers into consideration rather than prescribing the same uniform for men to women.

Decision 170: Reports on Partnerships

The GS decides to add a paragraph to the guidelines on partnerships that reads thus: The Regional Synods and Ministries will receive reports from Presbyteries and congregations that have partnership projects. These reports must be accompanied by audited financial statements.

Decision 171 Acceptance of report of Free State and Lesotho

GS accepts the report of the Free State and Lesotho with gratitude. Their report is impressing and inspiring.

Decision 172 Accept report of SMCPM

GS accepts the report of SMCPM

Decision 173: Adoption of Day Four Minutes

The temporary Commission have edited and checked the minutes of Day four and hereby recommend to the Synod to approve them as tabled.

Decision 174: Acceptance of the report of KZN

GS accepts the report of KZN

Decision 175: Referral of Fraternal Ministers Forum

The meeting refers the Constitution of the Fraternal Ministers Forum of URCSA to the SMJM of the GS to report back at the next GSC.

Decision 176: Acceptance of report of Northern Synod

GS accepts the report of the Northern Synod

Decision 177: Acceptance of report of Phororo

GS accepts the report of the Northern Synod

Decision 178: Aids task groups

GS decides to set up HIV/Aids task groups in every Regional Synod to help congregations to become HIV/Aids competent congregations.

Decision 179: Every regional Synod audited financial

The GS decides that every Regional Synod should present each year their audited statements to the SMFA

Decision 180: Moderamens of Regional Synods to undertake visits to Presbyteries

GS urges the moderamens of Regional Synods to undertake visits to Presbyteries in order to gain valuable information about the state of Presbyteries and congregations and to give advice where necessary.

Decision 181: Moderamens of Regional Synods to facilitate conferences

GS urges the moderamens of Regional Synods to facilitate conferences for ministers and members of congregations on an annual basis on issues affecting the daily lives of people.

Decision 182 Recommendation to create a position of Director for Communication and Publications

Synod decides in order to address both points (c) and (d) (above), to do away with the position of editor for URCSA News in its current form and combines the activities of (c) and (d) and consequently creates the position of Director for Communication and Publications (DCP), in the Support Ministry for Communications, Publications and Archives.

The DCP/ Office of the DCP will be responsible for the following responsibilities:

- (a) Chief Executive/ Manager of the Office of the SMCPA with regard to executing of the tasks of the SMCPA:

- (I) To publish URCSA News as official Newspaper of URCSA
- (II) To publish the Year Book
- (III) To manage the publications and newsletters (pastoral letters, of Moderamen, publications of ministries, etc)
- (IV) Providing and servicing a General Communications Network (website, etc)
- (V) Responsible for gathering and storage of the General Synodical Archive material
- (VI) Negotiating with publishers on behalf of General Synod Ministries
- (VII) Establishing task groups according to the needs and responsibilities of the SMCPA
- (VIII) To ensure that the Executive and Ministries are provided with assistance needed for their own communication and publication needs.

(b) DCP is Editor of URCSA News

(c) DCP is media spokesperson of the Executive/ URCSA

(d) DCP functions as the scribe of the SMCPA

Decision 183 Comprehensive job description for the position of Director of Communication and Publications

Synod mandates the SMCPA and the SMFA to develop a comprehensive job description for the position of DCP. To re-draft the proposal on URCSA News, tabled at the 2008 Synod to reflect the new decision and budget for it. When all the relevant documentation is ready table it at the next GSC or a joint meeting of the SMCPA, SMFA and Executive. If everything is found in order the SMCPA should go ahead and advertise for the position. Synod mandates the SMCPA to make every effort to implement recommendation 1 in full during the recess.

Decision 184 URCSA News (Interim arrangement)

Synod is mindful of the challenges that URCSA News is facing with regard to resources in order to fulfill its mandate. Synod mandates the SMCPA to give as a matter of

urgency, consideration to all available options in order to make the best possible arrangement for the editorship and other relevant issues of URCSA News, as an the interim arrangement, until decision 1 is implemented.

Decision 185 Motion on fracking in the Karoo

Mindful of Psalm 24 verse 1, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it: for He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters," the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church recognizes and confesses, that the earth is our home, in which we live, but that have not build. Although God has given us dominion and responsibility over the fish of the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle on the hill, the resources in the earth, God have not given us the right to misuse and exploit the earth for our own selfish purposes or the endangerment of the health of Human and beast, but we do.

We as a Church therefore, confess our and humanity's constant misunderstanding of the privilege and responsibility to the earth and all who live on and in it. We confess our mismanagement of the treasure God has created. We confess that we lack the appreciation for God's Lordship over the earth when we act irresponsible in our home, the earth. We confess our lack of trustworthiness in caring for the earth and all its inhabitants. We confess our lack of love for one another, when we act in the environment in such a way, that our actions endanger the health of people.

Synod, mindful of who the owner of the earth is and mindful of what might be the possible health damage to people, animals and the whole environment as a result of Hydraulic Fracturing in the area of the Karoo, we resolve :

- 1) To actively take up the issue of Hydraulic Fracturing and other environmental issues on the basis of our Biblical understanding of responsibility for the earth.
- 2) To applaud the public Prophetic leadership exemplified by the Presbytery of Graaff Reinett.
- 3) To support their stance on Hydraulic Fracturing as stated in their press release, issued during their annual Presbytery meeting.
- 4) To share in their concerns for a catastrophic impact on the environment
- 5) Express our deep concern that the Hydraulic Fracturing may have the same or worse effects on the environment that it had in other parts of the world.
- 6) To mandate the Executive and the Core Ministry for Service and Witness to make a comprehensive Biblical and Scientific study of the issue of Hydraulic Fracturing and other environmental issues, on the basis of which the URCSA can witness publicly and to disseminate the information to the broader church. Since this issue is urgent, Synod calls on the Executive and CMSW to try and complete this study before the end of 2012.
- 7) To mandate the Executive and the Core Ministry for Service and Witness on General Synodical as well as Regional Synod level (Cape), to stay in touch with the Presbytery of

Graaff Reinett in order to monitor the developments in the situation and to witness together.

- 8) To call on every member of URCSA and its institutions to witness constantly and boldly for environmental Justice in Southern Africa and the world.
- 9) To release this motion after adoption as a press release and to attached the statement of the Presbytery of Graaf Reinett to it.

Decision 186 Motion on new political and electoral system

Since 1994 South African elections were held on the basis of proportional representation (pr). Voters cast their ballots for a list of candidates nominated by a political party of their choice rather than for individual candidates. The PR system provides all parties no matter how small, with representation in the national legislature proportional to their electorate. The PR provides for the representation of South Africa's racial minorities and people with particular interests without resorting to the creation of reserved seats and separate voters rolls for different racial groups, as in some countries. The PR system is thus a non –racial system to facilitate racial representation, if parties would as expected, draw the most of their support from different racial and ethnic groups. This is a good system for an emerging democracy as ours, with its race and racial issues. The system is also good for a nation in transition. This however, the current political system fails to really empower the electorate. We have no power to hold the elected officials accountable for their performance and delivery.

This system does not allow legislators to be held accountable individually. The electorate can do nothing to effect change in the interim to the next election. Legislators are protected by their parties, because their parties nominate them and send them to parliament in some cases. These representatives don't even know what the needs of their local communities are and deal with it. Despite minor reforms that were made to the system, such as assigning members of the National Assembly to areas, where they don't even reside, does not suffice. Because these legislators are not representing defined geographic areas and communities, they are not accessible to members of the public. The PR weakens the vital link between government and the public/ electorate that are the essence of democracy. It is not surprising that all the major parties endorsed the continuation of this system, because it places power in their hands and disempowering the electorate.

PROPOSAL

Synod decides in light of the current electoral system that empowers public representatives, but only occasionally empowers the electorate during elections, and thereby creating an imbalance of power, to call for process to change the electoral system to give political power back to the people; to engage the political parties to give real power to the people. We would like to see that the President, Premiers and 50% of representatives to the legislatures are elected through a system of direct elections. To create a system through which power to the people is given to elect their representatives of choice and democratically remove them from office, when dissatisfied with their

performance as public representatives. This mixed system we call for will cater for both direct elections and proportional representation. This obtains to a greater extent at the local government level currently.

By giving the people real direct power, we will ensure a better calibre of public representatives, better service delivery, and accountability to the people. We believe that direct elections will give real power to the people and a better and more effective way of moving South Africa forward. It is our opinion that the current electoral system gives the electorate only selective and temporary power on Election Day.

Synod mandates the Core Ministry for Service and Witness and the Executive to approach leaders in the Dutch Reformed family as well as of other churches and experts on constitutional affairs etc., for a discussion on how to take this forward. Where the same challenges with regard to electoral systems are encountered in Namibia and Lesotho, Synod decides that the Executive and the Core Ministry for Service Witness in cooperation with the respective Regional Synods address that.

Decision 187: Motion: Editor URCSA News and rev DDJ Kuys

After a joint meeting between the Temporary CMFA and Temp CMCPA it was resolved that Rev DDJ Kuys will graciously continue as the Acting Editor until the end of the financial year. The Office will move from Belhar to Bellville South Congregation for this period. The new SMCPA will look at all possibilities to continue with URCSA News.

Decision 188 Acceptance of report of SMCPA

The GS accepts the report of the SMCPA

Decision 189 Appreciation for Rev DJJ Kuys

1. The GS expresses its sincere appreciation towards Rev DDJ Kuys, the chairperson of the SMCPA, for his continued and diligent service in the church.
2. The GS thanks him for his pivotal role over the years for providing the church with relevant and timely responses through press releases on critical church and societal issues.
3. The GS further recognises his leadership in popularizing the Belhar Confession through e.g. publications, lectures and archives
4. The GS notes with special appreciation his labour to URCSA News under difficult circumstances.

Decision: 190 Financial support of General Synod

Amendments on Love offering:

- a) All presbyteries are requested to contribute R10 000 per annum as a love offering for the work of General Synod;
- b) The GS call on all ministries like the CWM, CMM and CYM to pldge annually an amount for the work of the GS;
- c) The SMFA is requested to research and implement a sysyem of individual giving by debit order;
- d) The GS requests the SMFA to strengthen its communication on fundraising to regional synods, presbyteries and congregations. The decision on fundraising taken by this synod will be communicated in the pastoral letter.
- e) The GS instructs the SMFA to develop a stewardship training programme for implementation by the Regional Synods and Presbyteries.;
- f) The SMFA is tasked to research the viability of an investment arm tat can be run by persons with specialised knowledge for the GS and report to the next GSC.

Decision 191 Acceptance of First Report of the Temp Commission for the SMFA

The GS accepts the First Report of the Temp Commission for the SMFA .

Decision 192 CMSW/UMSW to present a comprehensive picture of donor involvement with regions and congregations to the next GSC meeting

4.1. The GS requests the CMSW/UMSW to present a comprehensive picture of donor involvement with regions and congregations to the next GSC meeting.

4.2. The GS, in the light of this level of church operation's policy making and overseeing character, requests the CMSW/UMSW to engage the applicable regional synod structures and the SMFA to see to it that work, projects and interactions that can be overseen and accounted for on regional synodical level be located there and to reduce the practical management and accounting of projects on general synodical level to the possible minimum.

4.3. The GS expresses its deep appreciation and gratitude towards the partners in Europe and North America for their support to URCSA service and witness ministries.

Decision 193: Acceptance of report of the Temp Commission for Service and Witness

GS accepts the report of the Temp Commission for Service and Witness.

Decision 194 First Report of the Temp Commission for Proclamation and Worship

GS accepts the first report of the Temp Commission for PW

Decision 195: The issue of mismanagement of CYM funds

GS refers the issue of mismanagement of funds to the newly elected congregational ministry to follow up the matter.

Decision 196: Age limit in CYM

GS refer the matter to SMJM with the letter attached.

Decision 197: Youth Brigade

3.1.1 Recommendation

We acknowledge acceptance of the letter.

3.1.2 We refer the letter to the Cape Region Moderamen to investigate and report back to CM in order to prepare a report to the next GSC.

Decision 198: Acceptance of report of Temp Commission for Congregational Ministries

GS accepts the report of the Temp Commission for Congregational Ministry

Decision 199: In-memoriam liturgy

GS approves the recommendation 2 of the In-memoriam Commission with implementation at the next synod.

In-memoriam liturgy

1. Hymn
2. Call along the regional synods from delegates to hold a candle
3. Give candles, someone from the (Temp. Com for in-memoriam) will light the candles, while the names are being announced
4. Ask someone from the commission to read a verse and then a moment of silence
5. Ask the outgoing Moderator to put a wreath next to the candles that represent all the Regional Synods and the candles will be put on the wreath until the end of day.
6. During the end of the GS last day of sitting to ask the new Moderamen to blow out the candles
7. Each candle will be taken by each regional Synod.

Decision 200: In-memoriam service

GS decides that in future the in-memoriam service should be held in a decent way because the men and women contributed immensely to who we are as a church.

A decent programme should be drawn with the liturgical format that is fitting the occasion. The service can be held on the closing day of the synod

Decision 201: Acceptance of Temp Commission for in-memorium

GS accepts the report and request Regional Synods to give the names omitted to the scribe.

Decision 202: Acceptance of report for permanent commissions

GS acceptst the report for permant commissions

1. CORE AND SUPPORT MINISTRIES:

1.1. CORE MINISTRY OF PROCLAMATION AND WORSHIP

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|--------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| CAPE | Rev. PJ Grove | 0768983214 | Dr. MO Sulo | |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. MG Mohoje | 0827048037 | Elder MG Alexander | 0844128663 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. MF Sibiko | 0829215271 | Rev. TE Ngema | |
| NAMIBA | Rev. GH Olwage | 0812818971 | Rev. LL Husselmann | 0816742141 |
| NORTHERN | Rev. MS Makulubele | 0721773128 | Rev. R Simons | 0718986378 |
| PHORORO | Rev. MM Deelman | 0764140063 | Rev. AWJ Botha | 0720524499 |
| SOUTHERN | Rev. T. Senokoane | 0723904724 | Rev. TI Leputla | 0827480519 |
| EXECUTIVE REP | Dr. HG Platt | 0812793377 | | |
| EXPERT[S] | Prof. N Koopman Prof. JJ Kritzinger | | | |

1.2. CORE MINISTRY: SERVICE AND WITNESS

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| CAPE | Rev. DH Gantana | 0837763456 | Elder S Dandala | |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. PK Mototo | 0836549279 | Rev. KS Sina | 0784685508 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. AH Mbatha | 0825293428 | Mr. M Tamahane | 0720871967 |
| NAMIBA | Rev. BRE Tjingaete | 0814716656 | Rev. JJ Nel | 0812689956 |
| NORTHERN | Elder AM Mowayo | 0767027030 | Rev. MH Nongovhela | 0794044911 |
| PHORORO | Rev. PJ Van Schalkwyk | 0835539883 | Sr. EJ Mouton | 0798954207 |
| SOUTHERN | Br. MP Segele | 0828710603 | Rev. TI Leputla | 0827480519 |
| EXECUTIVE REP | Rev. TE Ngema | | | |
| EXPERT[S] | Dr. JG Botha | | Sr. D Seloana | |

1.3. CORE MINISTRY: CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRIES

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| CAPE | Rev. LL Plaatjie | 0827486112 | Rev. D Plaatjies | |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. SJ Motsiri | 0731091755 | Rev. SM Lekoana | 0723044285 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. Dingane Mosili | 0824989868 | Rev. I Ngema | 0827428880 |

| | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|--|------------------------|------------|
| NAMIBA | Rev. WJ Julius | 0814168388 | Rev. SV Mostert-Gertze | 0812743944 |
| NORTHERN | Dr. W Moime | 0822005938 | Rev. KJ Sekgogoba | 0792444832 |
| PHORORO | Rev. BP Makoko | 0723344698 | Br. R Coodi | 0762030405 |
| SOUTHERN | Rev. MA Foba | 0732094054 | Rev. AS Lekalakala | 0732662466 |
| CYM REP | | | | |
| CMM REP | | | | |
| CWM REP | | | | |
| BRIGADE REP | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE REP | Rev. MG Betha | 0827415843 mgbetha@live.co.za | | |
| EXPERT[S] | Rev. R Noemdoe | | Dr. LJ Modise | |

1.4. SUPPORT MINISTRY: JUDICIAL MATTERS

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| CAPE | Rev. PJ Adams | 0829287668 | Rev. RT Thabane | |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. LP Fokae | 0833204385 0844164630 | Rev. Mochekoane | 0828068846 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. M Kwesaba | 0728040492 | BA Mchunu | |
| NAMIBA | Rev. HJ Meintjies | 0818234129 | Rev. F Karutjaiva | 0813057369 |
| NORTHERN | Prof. C Landman | 0823772574 | Elder TPP Maboea | |
| PHORORO | Rev. MG Betha | 08287415843 | Rev. CJ Cornelissen | 0733138899 |
| SOUTHERN | Rev. Dr. LJ Modise | 0829494164 | Rev. RM Nyongwana | 0835353270 |
| ELDER [FEMALE] | | | | |
| ELDER [MALE] | | | | |
| EXECUTIVE REP | Rev. Dr. LJ Modise | | | |
| EXPERTS | Judge R Hendricks | | Rev. P Bock | |

1.5. SUPPORT MINISTRY: FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| CAPE | Rev. S Cezula | 0765729171 | Elder J Floris | 0724784430 |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. SM Homokare | 0767493191 | Rev. MV Makhetha | 0721303042 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. T.E. Ngema | 0834746968 | Rev. M.M. Chamane | 0824329754 |
| NAMIBA | Rev. AA Du Plessis | 0813755673 | Rev. MK Hamukuaja | 0812443609 |
| NORTHERN | Elder TJ Phatudi | 0829657227 | Rev. LF Tshigovha | 0835532577 |
| PHORORO | Rev. J Julies | 0836823140 | Br. B Beukes | 0785155030 |
| SOUTHERN | Rev. D Maletse | 0724449234 | Rev. AK Mbewe | 0823014677 0186731010 |
| REGIONAL CHURCH ADMINISTRATORS | CAPE: Rev. P Bock FREE&LESOTHO: Rev. SM Mohakare KZN: Rev. NAM: Rev. HJ Meintjies NORTH: Mr. T Phatudi PHOR: Rev. J Julies SOUTH: Mr. Qakisa | | | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|--|--|--|
| EXECUTIVE REP | Rev. JC Goeiman | | | |
| EXPERT[S] | | | | |

1.6. SUPPORT MINISTRY: COMMUNICATION, PUBLICATIONS AND ARCHIVES

| REGIONAL SYNOD | PRIMARIUS MEMBERS | CELL & TEL NR. | SECUNDUS MEMBER | CELL & TEL NR |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| CAPE | Rev. E Beukes | 0827264642 | Sr. Elder C McKrieling | |
| FREE STATE-LESOTHO | Rev. PA Motale | 0796846100 | Elder CL Minnie | 0769316744 |
| KWAZULU-NATAL | Rev. J. Majola | 0824768533 | Rev. AH Mbatha | 0825293428 |
| NAMIBA | Rev. LL Husselmann | 0816742141 | Rev. E Matundu | 0812578615 |
| NORTHERN | Rev. MH Moima | 0744530727 mhmoi@webmail.co.za | Rev. JB Maluleke | |
| PHORORO | Rev. GG Cloete | 0789054105 | Br. PA Tsoone | 0721100354 |
| SOUTHERN | Rev. LP Mokoena | 0828454955 | Rev. M Makgale | 0840816334 |
| EXECUTIVE REP | Rev. Dr. DA Kuyler | | Rev. Dr. M Plaatjies-Van Huffel | |
| EXPERT[S] | Rev. DDJ Kuys | | | |

Decision 203: Motion of appreciation for staff

GS expresses it's sincere gratitude and appreciation towards the entire Administrative Staff and Ushers who tirelessly and efficiently worked to help make this Synod a success. The Synod decides to show appreciation to them during the Holy Communion service.

Decision 204: Motion of appreciation for Namibia Synod and taskteam

The Synod expresses her gratitude to the Namibian Moderamen and taskteam for hosting this General Synod meeting. Their warm reception and good organization assisted in having a successful meeting. The Synod requests the SMFA to appropriately thank the task teams and ushers with honoraria as was foreseen in the budget for the synod.

Decision 205: Register for Ministers

The General Synod takes note of the actions proposed by the Temporary SMJM.

Decision 206: Deaf Students: Approved

The General Synod refers Pt.3.9.2 and 3.9.3 to MFTT to report back to the next GSC meeting.

Decision 207: Regulation regarding Retired Ministers

The General Synod approves Regulation for Retired Ministers and Regl 27.1.1 and 27.1.2 in the Common set of Stipulations and includes it in Church Order 2012.

Decision 208: Forfeiture of status as minister of the Word: Rev HJ du Plessis (Cape Synod)

The General Synod approves the resignation as minister of the Word of Rev. HJ du Plessis and instructs the Actuarius to officially publish forfeiture of status in the URCSA NEWS.

Decision 209: The revised Regulation of MFTT

The General Synod approves the Revised Regulations of MFTT and includes it in the Church Order 2012.

Decision 210: CDM/CAB Constitution

The General Synod approves the CDM/CAB Constitution and includes it in the Church Order 2012.

Decision 211: CWL & CWM Structures

The GS resolves to mandate the GS SMJM and GS CM Executives to convene a meeting with the leadership of both the GS CWM and CWL before the end of March 2013 with the aim to:

- Clarify the relationship between CWL and CWM,
- Also to clarify all questions regarding the legal existence of CWL in all levels in URCSA,
- Advise both structures how to allow orderly growth within URCSA in accordance with URCSA Church Order
- The SMJM to submit a report to the next GSC meeting.

Decision 212: Tussentydse orde

The General Synod takes note of the “Tussentydse Orde” and refers it to the Regional Synods for input with feedback to the next GSC meeting.

Decision 213: Alignment of Constitutions and URCSA Church Order Amendments

The General Synod decide to -

ii) Align clause 6.2 and Pt. 1.13 Regulations of the Activities of Executive and the GSC with clause 15 (CO 2008) to read as follows:

6.2 & 1.1.3 The outgoing chairperson of the General Synodical Commission will act as chairperson until the end of the meeting. If he/she is absent, the Deputy Chairperson of the GSC will act as Chairperson. In their absence the Commission of Order will nominate a chairperson until the end of the meeting.

Decision 214: Pastoral engagement of CYM structures in different levels towards implementation of the aligned CYM constitution by synods, presbyteries and congregations

“The General Synod encourages Synods, Presbyteries and Congregations, as well as the SMJM and CM to pastorally engage CYM structures in different levels towards implementation of the aligned CYM constitution.” This proposal is a way of addressing the Changes in the Constitution forward.

Decision 215: Aligned CYM Constitution

The General Synod decides to approve the attached aligned CYM Constitution (Addendum M) and mandates the CM to ensure compliance thereof. The Actuarius is instructed to replace the current version with the latter in the reviewed Church Order 2012.

Decision 216: Acceptance of report of Temp Commission for JM

The GS accepts the report of the Temp Commission for Judicial Matters with gratitude

Decision 217: Acceptance of report of Temp Commission for CPA

The GS accepts the report of the SMCPA with gratitude

Decision 218: Report of Stefanie Rieke-Kocksiek

The GS accepts the report about the service in URCSA (2009-2011) from Rev Stefanie Rieke-Kocksiek with gratitude and mandates the executive to disseminate it to the Regional Synods.

Decision 219: Minutes of days 5 to 7

The GS decides that the minutes of days 5 to 7 be referred to the moderamen to sign.

Decision 220 : Pastoral Letter

GS approves the Pastoral letter.

Report of the Pastoral Letter

We hereby greet all members of URCSA, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

The moderamen of URCSA General Synod takes this opportunity to talk to the church at large.

A historic meeting of URCSA General Synod took place at Okahandja, Namibia from 1-7 October 2012 under the theme “***Discerning the will of God for the church and the world.***” The outgoing moderator, Prof. T Kgatla, delivered the opening sermon from Philippians 2: 12-13 and richly blessed the synod with a thoughtful message. He emphasized verse 13: “ ***... for it is God who works in you and to act according to his good purpose.***” He spoke from his heart, helping us to understand and discern God’s will for the church. With absolute brilliance and a strong challenge to members of the church, he compared all religious movements and their “gods” with the Triune God, who works **IN** us. Our God is beyond comparison!

Throughout the synod we experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in our devotions, prayers, worship, fellowship, singing and deliberations.

Though the weather was extremely hot, delegates experienced the generous hospitality of our sisters and brothers from Namibia, the “Land of the Brave”.

In the spirit of discernment, the synod deliberated amongst others, on the following matters:

1. FIRST FEMALE MODERATOR ELECTED, DR. MARY-ANN PLAATJIES-VAN HUFFEL

URCSA is proud to inform the church that Dr. Mary-Ann Plaatjies-Van Huffel, as the first female moderator of URCSA, was elected. She is currently lecturing at the Stellenbosch Theological Seminary and serves as co-minister with her husband, Rev. Dawid Van Huffel, in the Scotsdene Congregation. URCSA showed through this decision its serious

intend not to discriminate against women, but to be a church where all are equal before the Lord and sets a Christian example for gender equality.

2. MORATORIUM ON BELHAR, LIFTED

Four years ago, Synod passed a resolution at Hammanskraal to stop any further discussions with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) on church unification. After deeply considering the developments over the past recess, URCSA decided to revoke the moratorium which will open up more avenues to discuss our deepest conviction and believe that the Confession of Belhar (1986) is indeed “A Gift from God” to guide our UNITY!

3. ROAD OPEN FOR UNITY TALKS WITH DRC FAMILY

Synod expresses her deepest concern about our own internal unity. At Okahandja we took major strides to cross cultural borders among delegates. Synod calls on all congregations to explore opportunities to reach out to other congregations within their presbyteries and Regional Synods. We cannot move on in reaching out to others if we are not united within ourselves. Synod wants members of the church in all congregations, presbyteries and Regional Synods to embark upon ways in bridging gaps between members within the DRC family churches.

4. PRESS RELEASES ISSUED ON THE FOLLOWING MATTERS

The following matters were discussed thoroughly after which synod issued press releases.

- 4.1. ECONOMICAL INJUSTICE IN SOCIETY
- 4.2. ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN RSA, NAMIBIA AND LESOTHO
- 4.3. CORRECTIVE RAPE

5. FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Synod experiences difficulties to meet all our obligations. We are considering all possible ways and means to address this issue. As a matter of urgency we seriously need to embark upon fundraising efforts, like the following:

- We make an urgent call to each congregation to forward the love offerings collected for the work of URCSA General Synod.

- Presbyteries are requested to collect these offerings from their congregations. According to our budget, each **Presbytery** needs to contribute at least R10 000.00 per annum, **as love offering**, to the work of the General Synod.
- We call upon Regional Synods to pay over their **Synodical levies** and monitor the payments of love offerings by congregations.
- Synod calls on the following ministries to also contribute to the General Synod's funding: CYM, CWM and CMM.
- Regular visits by the Regional Church Administrators to congregations and presbyteries, is recommended.

6. ISSUES IN THE YOUTH, WOMEN'S, MEN'S MINISTRIES ADDRESSED

Synod acknowledges and appreciates the positive role these ministries play within the church. Youth exchange programs, conferences and meetings across our Regional Synodical borders, are recommended. Members are urged to apply their gifts and skills in the church to the glory of God.

7. HOMOSEXUALITY

Synod deliberated on this matter and stressed that the church should be a caring community. The Synod calls on all believers to continue discussions on this matter. This matter is referred back to Regional Synods and their presbyteries to debate the matter and report back to the next General Synodical Commission meeting in 2013. The Synod also issued a strong statement on the violence directed at lesbian women. (Refer to the discussion during synod).

8. FROM THEOLOGICAL TRAINING TO MINISTERIAL FORMATION

The Support Ministry for Ministerial Formation [MFTT] explained to Synod why the approach on theological training changed. We as church need ministers to serve in congregations. The formation of ministers involves a number of formation processes. Ministerial Students need to do practical work in congregations and Synod encourages them to do research and practical work in different Regional Synods. Many congregations are still vacant. There is a dire need for more students who are sure of their calling by God, to the Ministry.

9. OWN PROPERTY AND HEAD OFFICE FOR URCSA GENERAL SYNOD IN JOHANNESBURG

Synod took a major step to approve a draft Business Plan to acquiring land (near the Oliver Tambo International Airport, in Johannesburg) where our own **URCSA General Synod: Head Office** could be built. In order to make this project a success, we invite members of our church to invest in this dream to be realized.

We also need to generate funds in order to recruit and appoint a full-time General Secretary, who would manage the Head Office.

10. PROJECTS ON HIV/AIDS AND POVERTY ELIVATION

Congregations at local level are called upon to explore the opportunities in embarking on Partnership Projects with other NGO's and institutions, to help in fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the alleviation of poverty. Please keep us informed and report on your best practices in conquering some of the challenges our members are facing today.

11. SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIAL

Many congregations are struggling with teaching material during the Primary School year of our Baptismal members. Sunday school material and books were exhibited at Synod by Bible-Media and CLF. Congregations are advised to first get approval from their Presbyteries, when acquiring material.

We believe that God, at this time in the history of URCSA, called a new leadership team to take URCSA to a next and new level. God called Prof. T Kgatla to lead URCSA until now. He also prepared and empowered Rev. Dr. M Plaatjies-Van Huffel to lead our church.

We are aware that we are just servants of the Triune God and that He works through us.

May God richly bless you all. To God be the glory, honor and power!

Philippians 2: 9-11 "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in

heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Decision 221 Motion: Appreciation of Prof Thias Kgatla and creating part-time personal assistant for Moderator

The GS:

1. Expresses its gratitude to prof Kgatla for his sterling leadership of the church for the past two recesses;
2. Decides to ask the Administrator to look into available funds to grant the outgoing Moderator a honoarium of R5000.00 as a toke of appreciation;
3. To see whether any possibilities exist to create a part-time personal assistant to the Moderator of the GS to offload too much work towards the Moderator of the GS where the Moderator resides