

Volledige besluit van die VGKSA oor die proses van Kerkhereniging:

The complete resolution of URCSA on the process of Church Unity:

Resolution

The General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, meeting in Hammanskraal (September 29 to October 5, 2008),

Affirms

1. The call for the unity of the church of Jesus Christ and especially at this time of the Dutch Reformed Church family as a call to obedience and a response to the prayer of Jesus Christ (Jn. 17) which the church desires to fulfil with all our heart;
2. This call to unity, reconciliation and justice as inescapable gift and obligation laid upon us by the Confession of Belhar;
3. Our continuing commitment to this unity as expressed in the decisions and actions of successive synods of this church at both general and regional synod level and as expressed also by the constant efforts towards unity at the level of presbyteries and commissions of the church and congregations on the basis of our common acceptance of the Confession of Belhar wherever possible;
4. Our desire that the unity of our churches of the Reformed family in South Africa should be expressed in organic unity reflective of the Presbyterian model and be structurally recognisable and spiritually strong;
5. Our firm conviction that the Confession of Belhar should be part of the confessional basis and identity of the newly formed denomination.

Takes cognisance of

1. The 2004 DRC General Synod decision which read: "...N VERENIGENDE KERKVERBAND VAN SELFSTANDIGE PLAASLIKE GEMEENTES. Ons stel voor dat die presbiteriaal-sinodale kerkregeringstelsel as model vir die organisering van die nuwe een kerkverband gebruik word. Dit beteken dat al die gemeentes as selfstandige gemeentes ingevoeg word in ringe, sinodes en een algemene sinode. In die proses moet ruimte gelaat word vir onderhandeling, nuwe moontlikhede en 'n groei na mekaar" and the challenge put to URCSA by the said synod to respond accordingly;
2. The consistent endeavours toward church unity as reflected in the efforts of the church since 2005, namely Esselen Park (2006), Bloemfontein (2006), and Achterberg I and II (2006 and 2007), as well as in the reports from regional synods, and thanks the moderamen, the general Synodical Commission and the regional synods for the hard work;
3. The reports emanating from the General Synod of the DRC (2007) and of the "Resolutions of the Moderamen (expanded) on Church Reunification" (11-12 June 2008) where the view is expressed that while the Confession of Belhar "has significant value and sentiment for URCSA and some members of the DR Church", for the "majority member and congregations of the Dutch Reformed church the Confession of Belhar is not acceptable as fourth confession". (3.2)

4. The fact that as regards a model for unification, the expanded moderamen proposes that "Achterberg III deliberates about the possibility to consider, as an interim measure, a joint synod of the four member churches" with all four member churches send representatives to this "Joint Synod".

Declares

1. With deep distress that these latest decisions of the DRC represent a disturbing departure from our understanding reached at Esselen Park and the "Points of Consensus" reached at the Achterberg consultations. These decisions renew the rejection of the Confession of Belhar as part of the confessional basis of the new united church to which we aspire;
2. With sadness that this remains the case even after the substantial concession on the manner in which the Confession of Belhar should be approached made by the URCSA General Synodical Commission at the Esselen Park meeting in 2006;
3. With deep disappointment that neither in the decisions of the DRC General Synod, nor in the most recent resolutions of the Expanded Moderamen has the "Covenant Toward Church Unity" as formulated and accepted at Esselen Park, and put before, and accepted by the regional synods of URCSA as a new, common theological basis for church union, featured in any recognisable way;
4. That by reintroducing the Confession of Belhar as a matter of political contention and the most visible and most objectionable barrier to church unification, the DRC is in significant variance with its own decision regarding the Confession of Belhar and the confessional basis of the new united church;
5. And that by this action the DRC has in effect turned away from the "Covenant toward Church Unity" agreed upon at Esselen Park and has invalidated the grounds upon which URCSA has taken its decision on Belhar as a gesture of reconciliation and obedience;
6. That the proposed model of unification, the so-called "Joint General Synod" has nothing in common with the model of organic unity according to Presbyterian principles proposed by URCSA and until now the model under discussion accepted by the DRC; is in fact a revamped "federal model" URCSA has consistently rejected over the years. It is a model that accepts, and reinforces the racially divided nature of our Dutch Reformed churches and represents a fundamental denial of what URCSA stands for and is expressed in the Confession of Belhar and our understanding of Reformed Ecclesiology.

Therefore Synod decides

1. That such decisions place an unbearable burden on the integrity of the church and bring into question our deepest held convictions on the call of the Gospel with regard to the unity of the church and our faith as expressed in the Confession of Belhar;
2. That the Confession of Belhar is not just of "sentimental value" but is an irreplaceable gift to the church of Jesus Christ in this country and abroad as well as an authentic expression of Reformed theology for our times and contexts and as such honoured and accepted by churches in the Reformed family across the world;

3. That the conviction of the church remains that the Confession shall not be forced upon anyone and should be willingly and gratefully accepted by those convicted by the truth that it embodies;
4. That the General Synod puts a moratorium on the re-unification talks between the URCSA and DRC until the DRC is serious committed and ready for unity talks. General synod mandates the executive to invite WARC to come and facilitate the process of re-unification of these churches who are members of WARC. This request is based on the letter of WARC dated 11/08/08.
5. That inasmuch as the same convictions are held by the DRCA and the RCA this decision holds for those two churches as well;
6. That the faith, courage and work of regional synods, presbyteries, commissions of the church and local congregations be respected and honoured by encouraging them, where all efforts towards unification are done in faith and with integrity, in obedience to the call of Christ and on the basis of the acceptance of the Confession of Belhar, to continue with these efforts; to thereby remain signs of hope, reconciliation and love to the fulfilment of justice, the edification and witness of the church and the glory of God.
7. The Synod requests the Moderamen to call of the DRC and the rest of the DRC Family can publicly support identifies with and undersigns the confession of Belhar. We propose this as a way to continue meaningful progress with regard to church unification as URCSA understand it. This will open new possibilities for our walking this road together.

**Die Algemene Sinode het daarna ook besluit:
The General Synod then also decided:**

The General Synod asks the Moderamen to draw up a resolution to be submitted to the DRC with regards to the greetings brought by their moderator, Prof P Strauss. In this resolution Synod expresses our total disappointment in the way these greetings has been conveyed with special reference to the personal attack on our Moderator, Prof T Kgatla. These greetings undoubtedly had a negative impact on our synod's discussion on the issue of unity with the DRC

It is our humble conviction that the DRC should repudiate Prof Strauss as their official representative for the manner in which these greetings has been conveyed.