

**EASTERN CAPE CONVENTION FOR UNITY  
UMHLANGANO WOBUNYE KWI MPUMA-KOLONI  
OOS-KAAP KONVENT VIR EENHEID**

**MINUTES : MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE URC,  
NGK, NGKA AND RCA: CRADOCK 2-3 MARCH 2007**

**Friday 2 March 2007**

## **1. WELCOMING**

1.1 Rev Hansie Schutte, chairperson of the moderamen of the NG Kerk in Oos-Kaapland welcomes all those present in Afrikaans, while Rev Lukas Plaatjie interpretes in Xhosa.

1.2 Rev Schutte expresses the sincere wish that this weekend will take the church unification process substantially forward. He introduces the joint chairpersons, Rev Chris van Wyk and Rev Lukas Plaatjie.

1.3 The meeting decides that everybody are welcome to use the language of their choice

## **2. PRESENSIE**

### **2.1 VGK**

#### **2.1.1 Moderatuur**

Dr Allan Boesak  
Ds Lukas Plaatjie

#### **2.1.2 Aliwal-Noord**

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#### **2.1.3 Cala**

Solomzi Tyuthu  
Xoliswa Mtimana  
Derik Myburgh

#### **2.1.4 Colesberg**

Ds Ben Kock  
Ds Douwe Ganzevoort

#### **2.1.5 Graaff-Reinet**

Pietie van der Merwe  
Everton Muller

#### **2.1.6 Monti**

Rev BM Ngqozela  
P Wellem  
Rev MW Mamkeli

#### **2.1.7 Mthatha**

Ds Willem Botes  
Ds Welcome Manjingolo  
Rev Martin Mbaso  
Rev Joseph Ntlatywa  
Rev MM Jonas

#### **2.1.8 Port Elizabeth**

Rev Mziwoxolo Kibito  
Rev Fezile Mbenenge  
Rev Andrew Fransman  
Rev Alfred Manyinyi  
Leonora Philander

#### **2.9 Rietvlei**

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#### **2.10 Uitenhage**

Ds SW Jonas  
Oudl J Prins  
Oudl J Swarts  
Oudl S Jenniker

#### **2.11 Visrivier**

Valencia JN Nombewu  
Vuyisile S Danster  
Rev Edward Thaane

### **2.2 NGK**

#### **2.2.1 Moderatuur**

Ds Hansie Schutte  
Dr Chris van Wyk  
Dr Schalk du Toit  
Ds Danie Mouton

#### **2.2.2 Albanie**

Ds Strauss de Jager  
Ds Paul Odendaal  
Ds Oudl Awie Peterson

#### **2.2.3 Algoa**

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#### **2.2.4 Burgersdorp**

Ds Frikkie Greeff  
Ds Arnold van der Westhuizen  
Ds Dewald Davel

#### **2.2.5 Cradock**

Ds Johan van Rooyen  
Ds Johan van Niekerk  
Ds Japie Taljaard  
Ds Hennie Strydom

#### **2.2.6 Dordrecht**

Dr Jannie Richter

#### **2.2.7 Graaff-Reinet**

Ds Hendri Roberts

#### **2.2.8 Humansdorp**

Ds Deon Oelofse

Ds Tertius Conradie

### **2.2.9 Oos-Londen**

Ds Dries Coetzee  
Ds Sas Swart  
Ds Jurie Pretorius

### **2.2.10 Port Elizabeth**

Ds Rethie van Niekerk  
Ds Gillie Noeth

### **2.2.11 PE-Wes**

Dr Kobus Prinsloo  
Oudl (ds) Giep Louw

### **2.2.12 Queenstown**

Ds Wiekus van Straaten  
Oudl Danie Jonker  
Mnr Stefan Malan (waarnemer)  
Me Chantel Malan (waarnemer)

### **2.2.13 Sondagsrivier**

Ds Gawie Gouws  
Ds Johan Enslin

### **2.2.14 Uitenhage**

Ds Christo Stümke  
Me Carien Stümke

### **2.3 RCA Calvary**

Ds Wikus van der Walt

## **3. GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER**

3.1 The group divides into presbytery groups and share personal stories. They also discuss their stories of hope and despair.

## **4. DWELLING IN THE WORD**

4.1 The meeting sings together in both Afrikaans and Xhosa.

4.2 Rev Van Wyk reads from Ezechiel 37:15-

4.2 The meeting dwells two-two in this text by sharing what draw their attention.

## **5. CLOSING**

5.1 Each group close in prayer.

**Saturday 3 March 2007**

## **6. OPENING**

6.1 Rev Wicus van der Walt reads from Psalm 103 and opens the meeting in prayer.

6.2 He also reads from Ephesians 1:3-6. The church is called to lavish the love and grace of God on the world.

6.3 The meeting sings two songs: "Neem my

lewe, Heer" and "Blye versekering" in Afrikaans, Xhosa and English.

## **7. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHURCH UNIFICATION PROCESS**

### **7.1 A perspective from the URCSA - Dr Allan Boesak**

7.1.1 Dr Boesak says that the unification process is firstly a road of personal conversion. The Spirit touches our hearts and teaches us God's will. Without personal conversion and commitment, an experience of the love and mercy of God, and of His purposes, there will be no unity.

7.1.2 What we are witnessing, is a miracle of God. Are we open to see this miracle? He indeed does wonderful things. A rationalistic theology do not have the wisdom to discern God's wonders, but we need the wisdom to see it, accept it en do it. There happened an incredible move from where we were 20 years ago, a position of extreme conflict, to the amazing position where we are now. It cannot possibly be credited to our management and vision. We tried to break one another, but God broke us open to one another. He made us personally see our own captivity to our histories, our own sin, and did so in a very short time. If unification is from God, which I do no doubt, said Allan, this will happen.

7.1.3 Think of the glories that God has set aside for us. SA is at a very sensitive stage right now. We are struggling with our process of reconciliation. At this juncture in history, God is choosing these churches, this family of churches - us - to do unimagined things in our history. What will happen if we - the least of his servants - will be available to do his purposes - to reconcile and to demonstrate deep reconciliation to the country?

7.1.4 We will have to give up what we thought to be important, in order to gain some much more of what is precious. We have to learn to do that, in order not to cling to false things that does not matter. We need to discern what is really important - love - not power, what really is precious.

7.1.5 URCSA had to give up Belhar - it is not a sword to be pulled, a gun to be pointed - that is against the nature of the confession and the nature of the church. The point is not my own history and how I will enforce my willpower.

7.1.6 "It's all about you, Lord". The miracles we experience now are like candles for the road forward.

### **7.2 A perspective from the NG Kerk - Ds Hansie Schutte**

7.2.1 Ds Schutte addresses the meeting in Afrikaans while Rev Plaatjie interpretes. He

expresses his gratitude for the role Dr Boesak is playing in the unification process. There is new dynamism and a softness of approach.

7.2.2 He reads from Ephesians 3:14-21.

7.2.3 We struggle with church unity, because we struggle with love. The motivation for unity is love. A marriage is not first of all a rationalistic, legalistic affair - we marry for love. We fear and feel threatened and try to do the safe thing because we struggle with love. Some fear being overwhelmed by a bigger church, or that we may lose too much. The lack of love threatens the church at its core.

7.2.4 The lack of love may change unity-discussions to negotiated settlements, like at Codesa. Self-preservation may not rule, animosity versus the language of brothers and sisters, the beloved.

7.2.5 Paul prays for the church for the church, a prayer for unity discussions, for us, here and now. It addresses the core of being church. If the things that Paul prays about is not true of us, we are not a Biblical church - whatever much we may own as church and how many members we may have, how impressive our programs may be. Anything else is like playing church-church.

7.2.6 Paul prays for three things:

- Firstly: That we will be inwardly strengthened by the Spirit; that the Spirit will renew us to be more and more like Jesus; that we will believe anew and refreshed every day.
- Secondly: That Jesus Christ will live in us by faith, that we and our congregations will be the addresses of Jesus.
- Thirdly: That we will be rooted in the love of Christ. The metaphor is that of a tree with deep roots. The tree is the church, deeply rooted in love. The soil in which the church is rooted, is the deep soil of God's love. Without love, we are not church. We are nothing.

7.2.7 God's love is without borders. Paul prays that we will be amazed by God's love and that the fullness of God will fill us completely. Rooted in love, love becomes the fruit the church brings forth, and colors the very existence and processes of the church - including its unity-discussions. It transforms the church into a unified church, a cathedral of love.

### **7.3 A perspective for the RCA Calvary - Rev Wikus van der Walt**

7.3.1 Psalm 133 - there is a place of commanded blessing. We have so many differences amongst ourselves, we can use those as reasons for not being one. But we share Jesus Christ, and therefore can be one.

7.3.2 It is an immense privilege for a small church, the RCA, to be part of the process. It is not easy for us, we may be sucked in by this big

church and lose our identity. We need to have a clear message and testimony because of our position in our societies - we need a strong, very clear message.

7.3.3 For the sake of this world we need to be evidently one. A personal place of redemption is needed where we can be transformed from the stuckness in the situation of apartheid to a new place of love and unity. Our identity is being one in Christ and it creates the place of commanded blessing.

7.3.4 We need inner healing - for the deep roots of hurts which need to be replaced by a deep root of love.

7.3.5 If we do not know one another, and keep our distance, we cannot love and be one. A meeting like this makes us deeper friends of one another.

7.3.6 Ephesians 1: God blessed us with every blessing, and He made his will known to us, and made Christ known to us. For us to be in the commanded position of blessing, we need to take our unity seriously. We need to be one for the world to believe. Imagine what God can do through us.

## **8. FEEDBACK FROM YESTERDAY EVENING**

8.1 Rev Chris van Wyk shares the outcomes of yesterday evenings' small group discussions:

8.1.1 Where there are joint projects, unity is happening and people are coming together.

8.1.2 Ministers play a very important role: they can be agents of change, or can indeed block the process of unity.

8.1.3 Language is a problem at some places and makes people feel threatened.

8.1.4 Some congregations are much further along the road of unity. The Albanie-congregation is a point in case: they are unified already.

8.1.5 The Presbytery of Stockenström forwarded as a point for discussion the "problem" of joint holy communion to the synod of 1857. This point for discussion led to the synod's now infamous decision. The Presbytery (and congregation) of Stockenström was located at Balfour, vicinity of Fort Beaufort, Port Retief. It is exactly 150 years ago. Shouldn't we celebrate holy communion together at Stockenström?

8.1.6 We need official processes, like these this weekend - not only spontaneous congregational meetings, but organized activities that will propel us forward.

8.1.7 Common problems experienced in congregations across the Family give us middle ground to share in ministry and prayers, e.g.

keeping the youth in the church and rampant crime.

## 9. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION S APPRECIATION FOR KEY FACTORS

### 9.1 Discussion

Rev Van Wyk puts the questions forward for the small group discussions:

#### APRECIATION

- What factors give you energy and hope?
- What are the three wishes you have for the future of our churches?

#### DREAM

- What would a church look like where these factors and wishes can prevail?

#### DESIGN

- What is necessary to let this happen on a regular basis (challenging proposals)?

### 9.2 Feedback

#### 9.2.1 Mthahta, Cala, NGK Dordrecht

Re Mbasa reports back.

- Energy points should be found: common ground for working together at congregational level, e.g. Mthata and Coligny.
- Try to shift from a spiritual concept of unity and move now to creating structural unity.
- We should empower local congregations to work and witness together.
- We should have a unity based on sharing and caring.
- We hope for a more prophetic church, strong in witness to the world (local, national, international).
- We need commitment and dedication to one another. Joint services, conferences, especially neighbouring congregations.

#### 9.2.2 First River, Albanie

Rev Sulo reports back.

- Joint communion services, organized choir festivals - doing things together.
- We wish to see the united family being enriched in terms of culture, growth in members, strong testimony to the community.
- We wish to see mutual support amongst the congregations and members on individual basis.
- We plan to have a meeting of the two presbyteries. We will meet in the formation of our proposed new presbytery-borders.
- The Grey-Kerk and 1857 -we will plan a specific symbolic deed.

#### 9.2.3 Port Elizabeth Group 1

Rev Wikus van der Walt reports back:

- Ministers find it difficult to add unity as an

additional task. We therefore want to do ministry in such a way that members will become one.

- What the minister speaks and done it what the minister will become. The will speak and do unity and gets it done.
- If we don't forward with unity, we will lose our credibility. Ministers should pray and plan together.
- How do we handle situations where DRC-churches are not physically close to URCSA congregations, e.g. in the former Transkei.

#### 9.2.4 Monti

Me P Wellem reports back

- Strengthen congregations to work together.
- Local leadership should organise programs to let people interact.
- The unity must grow on grass-roots level.
- We need to organise relation events, e.g. camps.

#### 9.2.5 Port Elizabeth Group 2

Rev Rethie van Niekerk reports back:

- Zacharia 8 - we dream about a church that is all about God, where Word is central, a willingness to sacrifice and church is permeated by love. We will then be a powerful witness
- We are energised by the will to be one.
- We need to meet together. The young people often led the church in becoming one. How can we involve young people?

#### PROPOSAL 1:

**The leadership will propose a draft restructuring of presbyteries for discussion in existing presbyteries and congregations.**

**Accepted**

#### 9.2.6 Cradock

Rev Johan van Rooyen reports back.

- What gives us hope is Jesus and the cross.
- More and more people are speaking the same language - we are speaking not of whether we will become one, but how.
- Our leaders gives us hope.
- We need to live our prophetic calling out.
- We need to build bridges, and trust one another.
- We need to balance wait and push, and be inclusive.
- Trust each other is a challenge.
- Process must be monitored and we need to reflect all the way on what is happening and re-adjust.
- Stay transparent in everything.
- We need to be spiritually and discerning in our process.

#### 9.2.7. Queenstown and Visrivier

Rev Wiekus van Straaten reports back.

- God, his Spirit and Word gives us hope.
- Positively-changing attitudes, joint meetings, synergy gives hopes.
- Fear for the unknown, political agendas, mis-conceptions.
- Why can church leaders not write a concept church order, so that people can see what it is all about and buy into it.
- Faith, hope and love is or dream.
- Address negative fears diligently.
- Prayer, building relationships through joint projects.

### 9.2.8 Uitenhage, Humansdorp, Sondagrivier

Rev Gawie Gouws gives feedback

- The personal will to do unity, is hopeful.
- God's presence is hopeful.
- We plan a unified presbytery meeting.
- Youth gives us hope.
- Respect for one another.
- We have a shared history and shared calling.
- It has to come from the inside - then from top of beneath matters less.
- We need real friendships.
- We want to make a difference in our communities and that will bind us together.
- Our diversity should bind us together.
- There needs to be openness and frankness.

### 9.2.9 Summary

- There will be practical stuff that needs to be done (outline for joint ministry, church order, new presbyteries)
- We need a spiritually driven process, joint meetings and projects (perhaps place where there is most energy).
- Mutual support is of the utmost importance.
- The history of 1857 necessitates a symbolic act of unity that reverses the damage done - 2007 is 150 years later.

## 10. GROUP DISCUSSIONS: IMPLEMENTATION

### 10.1 Practical that we can do now

Small groups discuss practical things that can be done in presbyteries, right now, to take the process forward.

## 11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 11.1 Dr Allan Boesak

- I go away with renewed energy and encouragement. There is something going on here in terms of new movement towards unity.
- We as URC moderamen gave a mandate to the

Eastern Cape leaders to go ahead with planning and doing of church unity, without waiting for meetings and discussions in the Western Cape. We will support it as much as we can.

- There is great urgency regarding unity. We must not allow us to be held back by those who desire to see no movement. We are not unclear about what God wants.
- In your own situation: what is the best way to go forward. Determine, take time, in your presbytery, what are dynamics, possibilities, what do we have to deal with? Do it at your pace, according to the rhythm of your context.
- There is a tremendous responsibility on people in the southern part of the country. The church in general waits that we set the pace in the Eastern Cape. If we can move meaningful at ground level, it will help us on the level of the General Synod. Be as creative as you possibilities on local level. "Vergeet bietjie van reëls en regulasies" - let the creativity of ordinary people help you - let your imagination go wild. It will give integrity to the bigger process.

### 11.2 Rev Wicus van der Walt

- A lot depends on the ministers. If the minister does not move, Be careful not to get stuck. Talk and live unity.
- We need to do the things we would have done anyway and include one another. Be cautious of competition.

### 11.3 Rev Hansie Schutte

- Unification is not something we want to do - we need to, compelled by God. We need to do the Word. It is about obedience.
- We confess unity. It is not optional.
- When we are formally one, the process is not concluded. It will remain on our agenda for years to come.
- We were one: we were divorced and we need to re-marry. After our divorce we discovered we need to be together.
- Our context need a united Dutch Reformed Church Family. We need to minister the reconciliation of Christ. We need one another, e.g. in terms of spirituality.
- "The surf is right" for us to surf into unification. The tide of the Spirit is coming in.

## 12. TREE-PLANTING CEREMONY

12.1 The meeting plants a tree as a sign of hope and commitment.

## 13. HOLY COMMUNION

13.1 On the invitation of the local congregation, NG Kerk Cradock-Oos, delegates celebrate Holy Communion together.