



## **STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVES OF URSA AND DRC AFTER MEETING ON 9-10 APRIL 2013 IN KEMPTON PARK**

During 2012 the executives of URCSA and DRC drafted a *Memorandum of Agreement* under the guidance of Dr Jerry Pillay, the President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

This agreement was approved by the General Synod of URCSA in October 2012 when also the moratorium on church unity was revoked. The Moderamen of the DRC also approved the agreement.

According to the *Memorandum of Agreement* we agreed to covenant together for unity because we believe that the Lord, who graciously committed himself to us, requires this of us.

The unity we envisage is 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.

We agreed that the Belhar Confession will be part of the confessional basis of the reunited church.

Together we agreed to address reconciliation and restorative justice in a compassionate way.

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 to address these challenges.

For two days (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013) we met at the Le Chateau Guest House, Kempton Park, to discern how we will proceed on the journey ahead to grow together. We were cautious not to create unrealistic expectations or quick fixes for a complex journey that lie ahead. In the light of this the meeting focused on two important processes that needs to be in place to help us in the way forward.

On the one hand a **task team** was established **to work out all the church orderly processes** that need to be in place for unity. The **road map to church reunification** is attached as addendum.

**A second task team** was appointed to work on a specific and focused process that would create 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. This process will be known as **the season of human dignity**. Together we will discover and affirm the human dignity given by God in Christ to us all and the implications of this discovery and affirmation for the church.

The values for this process are:

- Listening
- Respect
- Embracement
- Selflessness

We humbly request our congregations and members to pray and work for this journey that we embark on. In the spirit of this covenant, we agree to encourage agreements on different levels of the church that will embody this new unity because we believe that unity needs to grow and develop at various levels in the church. The unity of the church is not only an issue for the leadership, but task for each person that confesses Christ as Lord.

We request that the *Memorandum of Agreement* to be made available to all congregations for their cognisance as well as inputs for the journey ahead. As leadership of the two churches we pledge to keep you informed of the progress of the two task teams.

We confess that our journey guided by the *Memorandum of Agreement* is a gift from God that we need to cherish so that the church can be a sign of the Kingdom of God and God's reconciliatory work in Christ through His Spirit in the world.

Dr Dawid Kuyler: Secretary URCSA

Dr Kobus Gerber: Secretary DRC

## THE ROAD MAP TO CHURCH REUNIFICATION: DRC – URCSA

REQUIREMENTS		
Spirituality	Discernment	Obedience
Commitment	Capacity	Innovation
Consent	Mandatory power	Timeous
Co-operation	Delegation	Inclusiveness
Co-ownership	Vision	Communicative intent
Expertise	Purposeful	Credibility

**Stage 1:** Point of departure. Signing of *Memorandum of Agreement* by Executives and ratification by General Synods.

End of stage 1: October 2013

**Stage 2:** Formal decision taken by General Synods or General Synodical Commission mandated by General Synod to start the church orderly process to church reunification.

An urgent effort to be made to get the two other churches in the DRC-family on board before proceeding to stage 3.

**Stage 3:** Convene joint meetings of the churches' Executives, Moderatures and/or Synodical Commissions and continue to do so.

**Stage 4:** General Synods of the churches mandate the following commissions to act on their behalf *ad interim*: (a) The Leadership of die Churches (Executive, Moderamen and/or General Synodical Commission) to take preliminary or in principle decisions on behalf of the Church and report back to General Synod; (b) The Steering Committee for Church Reunification constituted by a majority of members not acting in the Leadership. The Steering Committee must be composed to ensure continuity and credibility, to maintain objectivity and to dispose of persuasiveness; (c) The Task Teams, among a Church Order Commission responsible for the drafting of an Common Set of Rules (Tussenorde) for the Churches <sup>see foot note</sup>, the Concept Church Order for a Reunited Church and the obtaining of legal advice from a Panel of Legal Advisors. The principles already agreed on in the *Memorandum of Agreement* must be contained in the Concept Church Order (organic synodical-presbyterial structure, missional structure, diversity of language and culture, unification of congregations, presbyteries and synods, the autonomy of the local congregation combined with the

authority of the presbytery, synod and General Synod and the confessional basis with the inclusion of the Belhar Confession).

- Stage 5:** Convene a joint General Synod, take joint decisions regarding church reunification and related issues, and ratify decisions by own General Synod. First joint General Synod may coincide with a General Ministers Conference. First General Synod shall be a celebration and festive occasion. In future general synodical meetings will take place on the same date and at the same venue. Joint decisions will be taken and be ratified as soon as possible afterwards in own meeting.
- Stage 6:** Report back to the General Synods (joint and singly) on the Common Set of Rules, on proposed amendments to the existing Church Orders to make church reunification church orderly and legally possible, and on the Concept Church Order.  
General Synods take the decision to approve, apply and later to amend the Common Set of Rules. The Common Set of Rules has authority over the Churches' own Church Order on a spelled out issue.
- Stage 7:** All Synods and Congregations enjoy the opportunity to respond to the content of the Concept (Draft) Church Order by making their proposal and/or accepting it in principle. A time is set therefore.  
The final draft for the Concept Church Order is approved by the Churches' Synods and Church Councils/Consistories, with the approbation/consent of the members of the Congregation. A time is set therefore. The decision of each Church Council and Synod, taken in terms of the applicable Church Order, is conveyed to existing General Synod of the Church.
- Stage 8:** The General Synod of the Church takes a final decision to reunite and approve the Concept Church Order with a two-thirds majority.  
The General Synod of the Church takes the necessary transitional decisions regarding the transfer of activity, property, funds, etc.  
The General Synod of the Church takes a decision to dissolve the General Synod as meeting (not as juristic person, that may continue to exist) and appoints delegates to a Conventus and the General Synod of the Reunited Church.
- Stage 9:** The Conventus convenes on the date and time set forth by Steering Commission. Report back from the General Synods of the Churches is given and the Church Order of the proposed Reunited Church is approved.
- Stage 10:** The General Synod of the Reunited Church is constituted.

#### FOOT NOTE: COMMON SET OF RULES

1. The *Common Set of Rules* is provided to serve the process of reunification and represents an important phase in the process of the churches to know each other, while experiencing and growing together in unity, reconciliation and justice.
2. The *Common Set of Rules* is a set of church orderly provisions which give a legal base to cooperation between the churches on the road to reunification.
3. The *Common Set of Rules* does not remove/abrogate the articles, regulations or rules of the churches. The articles, regulations or rules stated in the church order are applicable as they stand, except in case where the common set of rules specifically arranges exceptions.