

## **Synod discusses report evaluation church order**

29-10-2009

'Because of the shrinking of the Protestant Church it becomes more difficult to meet all demands on organization and quality set by the church order.'

This is the conclusion of the committee evaluation church order which recently investigated the functioning of the rules of the game of the new church order in practice. She made extensive inquiries with consistories and all over-local professional boards and colleges. Further she received reactions from guiding organizations, individual church members and professionals.

### **The church order up to date**

This so called evaluation of the church order was already agreed in 2003 by the combined assemblies of the synods of the Samen-op-weg-(Together on the road)-churches. Five years after the introduction of the new church order certain sections of the ordinances should be tested for their effect. Back then was mainly thought of regulation for the ecclesial structure, monitoring on management of local congregations, the size of the synod and the structure of the church ministries. Later other topics such as visitation and religious jurisdiction were added. There was also curiosity if the Netherlands reformed congregations, the Reformed Churches and the Evangelic-Lutheran congregations would be able to express their identity sufficiently.

### **Quality of being-congregation**

This year a committee under the leadership of rev. Wim Beekman investigated by orders of the synod where and how the ordinance conditions and regulations can be improved, without interfering with the intention of the church order. The committee looked for improvements which promote the quality of being-congregation, reduce overburdening, simplify rules, promote flexibility and/or are economizing.

### **Smaller synod**

In her report 'The church order up to date' the committee reports her findings.

The committee concludes that at short notice adjustments of regulations have to be made which meet the reduced availability of volunteers. She proposes to reduce the size of the ecclesial assemblies and the general synod and to enable the delegation of former professionals top these assemblies. The professional assemblies should have greater liberty to decide the professional composition themselves.

### **Longer session term**

In order to guarantee the quality of management within the congregation and church the committee thinks it is advisable to extend the session terms of the members of professional assemblies and colleges. Further the professional assemblies should be able to decide more than now to have tasks executed by a board or in cooperation with other professional assemblies.

### **Perforation and conflict**

The committee asks special attention for the solution of specific bottlenecks in the regulation which turn out to be sensitive, such as the so called perforation-regulation and the handling of conflicts around ministers. She also advocates improvement of the internal functioning of the general synod.

The three conclusions are accompanied by nineteen practical recommendations for the adjustment of the regulations.

The report of the committee evaluation church order will be discussed by the general synod on Thursday November 12<sup>th</sup> 2009 during the general synod assembly in Lunteren.

The English translation of the report: [www.protestantchurch.nl/statements and reports](http://www.protestantchurch.nl/statements_and_reports)