

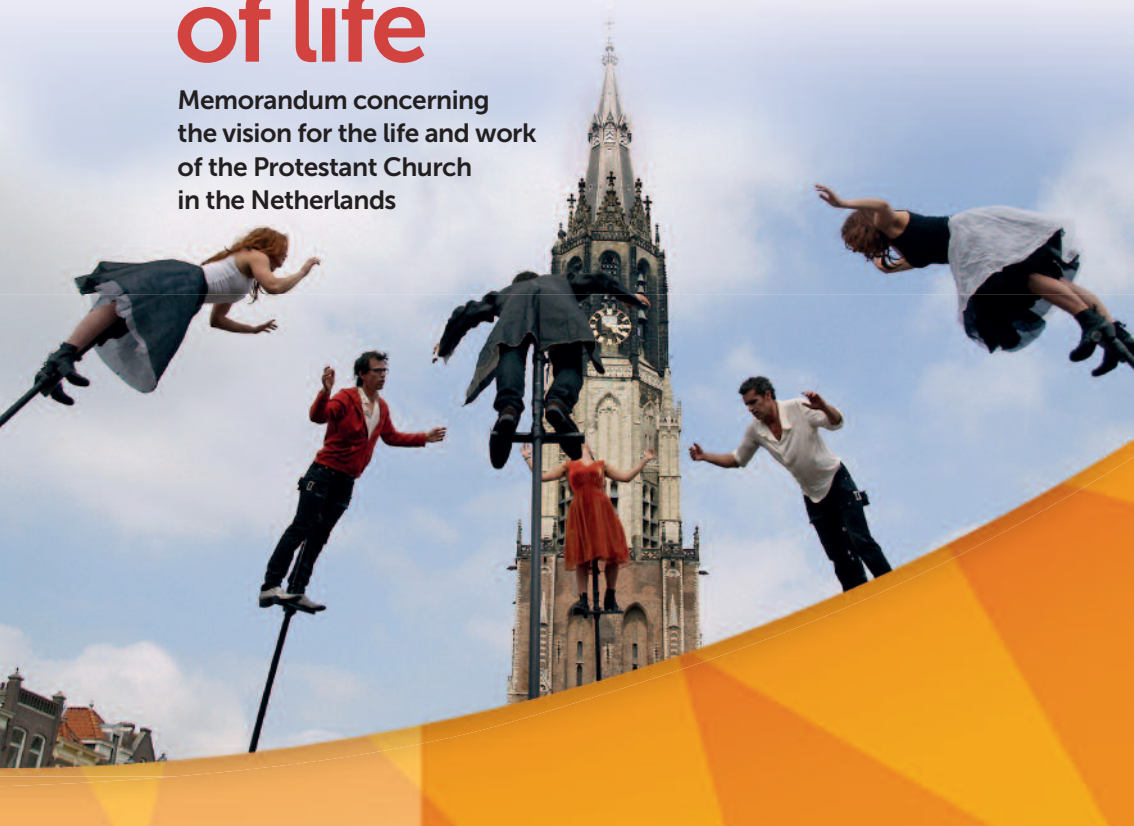


Protestantse
Kerk

Geloof · Hoop · Liefde

The heartbeat of life

Memorandum concerning
the vision for the life and work
of the Protestant Church
in the Netherlands



Isn't the love of the Lord the heartbeat of life?

This love carries evermore those

who offer themselves

in his service.

For everything there is a season,

but God's love is eternal.

(Dutch Hymnal Book, 426)

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He lives
and he
grants life

INTRODUCTION

Believing and belonging to the church is a privilege indeed. Faith opens our eyes for what we didn't think of ourselves and for what we didn't make ourselves. Faith opens us for what transcends our understanding, for what God in his mercy wants to grant us. By faith we learn to live under the open sky of God's love. In the church we are initiated in life with God. The church is more than just a human association. The church lives by the grace of Jesus Christ. He lives and he grants life. He is not an outdated notion but an actual reality for today. Where two or three are gathered in his name, there he is in the midst of them; there the church comes into being.

Even today many people worldwide are walking on the path of faith. Faith rises in most unexpected situations. Men and women, old and young people experience the joy of the gospel. Even today the church lives. This applies to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands as well. On Sundays in our de-nomination people in 1800 congregations come together to praise God's love. People are being baptized. Church members of all age groups experience and express their faith and meet sisters and brothers in the name of the Lord.

This is neither self-evident nor an automatic process. There has been an era that the church appeared to continue living self-evidently. This era has passed. In many places church life is creaking everywhere. The end of self-evident faith causes feelings of uncertainty and confusion. When asked what the church is useful for, church members become embarrassingly silent too often. Even more embarrassed silence is caused by the question: what do you really believe in? This embarrassment may stem from doubt about the meaning and the content of Christian faith. Questions like: "how can God's existence be consonant with so much suffering in our world?", or "do we really need faith in order to live properly?" cause for many people faith to be challenged. People are dubious as well of the future of the congregation they are members of. Who will be available to provide leadership tomorrow? Who will open the chapel's doors the day after tomorrow? This proves to be a burden for many people indeed.

Many church members however don't recognize themselves in this picture. There are large groups of mainly young people who think we should quit groaning and moaning. They are aware of being a minority church, but they want to serve the Lord with confidence, with courage and with love.

This memorandum aims at encouraging people to believe and to feel confident about belonging to the church. This cannot be accomplished by cooking up something new or by inventing a trick; this might provide some temporary relief at the most. What we really intend to do is returning to the source, to the origins, to the heart of the church, to the Lord of the church.

This provides space for mourning what we have lost, but this also causes motivation to start from the bottom up again. A crisis is an opportunity to find out again what faith and church are all about and to carry on believing and persevering.

There are times that persevering is the issue, at the same time finding with nerve and guts imaginative and new ways to believe and to be a church. This memorandum intends to be instrumental in this.

The title of this document is "The heartbeat of life". This title is derived from a line in a hymn: "Isn't the love of the Lord the heartbeat of life?" For us this is the essence: the heart that beats by faith, hope and love. A pulse indicating that there is more than our possibilities and more than what we expect to be impracticable. This "more" is given to us by the living Holy Spirit. With this heartbeat there is a future for our faith, a future for the church and a future for the Protestant Church as well.



**Our
vision
expressed
in four
themes**



THEME 1


"ON THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION"

THE CONTENT

12

The first Christians gathered on the first weekday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. The death of Jesus appeared to be the end of the "Jesus movement": the end of the story and of the church even then? God's response to this death was the resurrection. This changed everything and provided a new foundation for believers. Christian faith was not invented by the first Christians. Something came to them; someone approached them and met with them. They did not come together to put together the pieces and the remnants of their faith. Jesus Christ came into their midst and said: "peace be with you". That is the real focal point.

This goes for today as well. The church is neither about what we still believe nor about what we don't believe anymore. The real issue is God and what is being granted to us, the life that is being given to us, and the reconciliation that is being presented to us. We live from grace. Not what we have thought of or achieved is the decisive factor; the real issue is what as an absolute surprise is presented to us by Jesus. This is what we share. This happens on Sundays and at other times, whenever the Scriptures are being opened and

An elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a brown sweater, is sitting on a light blue couch. He is holding a large, open, antique book. A young boy with blonde hair, wearing a dark blue hoodie with red drawstrings, is leaning over the book, looking at the text. The book has multiple columns of text and some illustrations. A red circular graphic is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing white text.

To share
with young
people

bread and wine are being shared by sisters and brothers. In this way we become initiated in the Kingdom of God.

We live in a world where the great ideal is that everything can be achieved by our accomplishments. This is in our genes and we cannot free ourselves of it. This ideal how-ever does not make us happy nor does it provide salvation. We become enslaved in this ideal by the notion that we ourselves are creators and redeemers of human life. We have to recover from this notion; we are not slaves but beloved children of God. We live out of his love and this notion can make us happy indeed.

We live in a world where everything is nailed down. Every inch of life is taken up and exploited; human life becomes occupied territory. We want to have control over time; we become however controlled by time. In a society like this the day of the resurrection, the Sunday, is an open day that is cut out from a thick grown existence. It is God's time in our time.

In church we celebrate and commemorate the resurrection of Christ from death. He, who gave himself for us in death, was resurrected from the dead. The crucified Lord presents himself as the living bread. This, with everything connected to it and like it is told by the Bible, is the content of being a church. Without this content the church becomes faint and blurred. We might still be a nice club of people, but this is different from being a church. God provides the content for the church. Even with our community and with our school of thought we do not control this and we cannot get a grip on this. We only can bear witness to it. A witness speaks from the experience of a reality given to her or him, and is completely engrossed in this reality.

We have to get acquainted with this reality and allow it to address us, whenever we gather together (e.g. on Sundays) and whenever we in study groups read the Scriptures together and reflect upon the way of God with Israel and the gentiles. We can do so in common education and in our personal pilgrimage, in meditation, in prayer and in silence. We do so together even with people who read and listen in a different way. It is not our truth and we do not hold a lease of it. We need other people. We need therefore a church that is sufficiently broad to prevent the truth of the gospel from becoming a truth of a closed group.

What we have received for free is intended to pass to other people for free. This goes for young people: they, in all things that they get to know, should not miss the unparalleled story of "God with us". This also goes for adults, looking for meaning and fulfillment of life in a religious market with an abundant supply; what the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob offers, should not be kept back from them. The best offer of the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ, is intended for everyone. From all sides the church is challenged to give account of what the church believes. Woolly statements are not being accepted anymore. We should get over our being allergic to truth and conviction. This is not because we are sure of our ground, never have any doubt, or can provide an answer to everything, as if this kind of certainty could be the common standard. We can be certain because we are called to bear witness to what is granted by God and what is intended for all people.



People
gathered in
His name



THEME 2

TWO OR THREE TOGETHER IN JESUS' NAME

THE FORM

17

What is a church? Jesus said: "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them". Two or three people apparently are sufficient to be a church, when they are gathered in Jesus' name. It is decisive that Jesus is in their midst. His presence causes our coming together to become a church rather than an association of like-minded people. Instead of two or three we can be together with twenty or thirty people, or with two hundred or three hundred people. The more, the merrier. Even then the presence of Jesus in their midst is essential. He can be present everywhere and he is present everywhere: in regular church services, in a street, on internet sites, in rooms, in places where you don't expect his presence.

Today we sometimes cannot see the wood for the trees. Before very long the church revolves around us and the organization, around the church council and the minister, the buildings, the lectionary and the financial resources. All these elements are necessary; the church however is not the addition of those elements. Sometimes church is all about work: many matters should be taken care of, an ever decreasing number of volunteers has to perform an ever increasing number of tasks. The schedules become overcrowded with items and the joy disappears. The church becomes a burden rather than a source of rest.

We have to focus on rediscovering the church in the way Jesus spoke about it: people gathered in his name, believing that he is in their midst as the living Lord. “Weren’t our hearts burning within us, while he spoke to us along the way, and while he opened the Scriptures to us?” two disciples said after they sat at the table with the risen Lord. This encounter with the Lord isn’t dependent on a complete package of former achievements. Sometimes we experience decline in the number of people, of ministers, and a downturn in resources. This hurts. At the same time this decline may as well open our eyes for the real abundance: the living Word of the Lord, the nearness of a God of love who gives us to one another. Sometimes we even have to let go of things and to quit many issues we have dragged along behind us. Doing a few things well with a joyful heart is better than performing many tasks with a heavy heart. Less even might become more. Jesus did not burden us with the church like a millstone around our necks. He intended the church to be a gift that causes joy. We might turn out to have less chapels and even more living communities. The words of Jesus about two or three people gathered in his name, gives

freedom to “re-invent” the church. Concentrating on the substance of the church provides openness with regard to the shape of the church. We of course have to be careful about good forms. A good church order or a well-prepared liturgy is better than a just messing around. There are well-trying shapes of being a church. These shapes are experienced immensely and they are worthwhile to be continued. In Jesus’ name however forms are flexible; tradition in Jesus’ name is very much alive. The Holy Spirit grants us the gifts we need, even the gift of finding forms fitting to the times.

Our forms can put off people. Our forms can exclude whole groups in our society without us being aware of it. Therefore we need the Holy Spirit assisting us to be church for our contemporaries; to be a church for age groups remote from our current ecclesial culture. Experiments with new expressions of being a church are desirable. Creativity of good taste and quality has to be given an opportunity. Some forms have become obsolete. Changing course in time comes closer to living out of the Spirit than continuing rigidly. Fortunately we notice courses being changed. The Holy Spirit has assisted us time and again; at unexpected moments and in unexpected places we see faith reviving and church coming into being. We believe that the Spirit will continue to do so in the future and want to be instrumental in this.



AL WAT
OP DE
AARDE IS.
ZAL DEN
GEEST GEVEN

Learning
what living
together
is

THEME 3

POLITICAL BODY

THE SOCIETY

21

The first Christians expressed themselves by living together in the midst of the society at that time. This living together was embodied by them calling themselves ecclesia. Originally this word had a political setting: it was used for the meeting of the voting members in a Greek city (polis) who governed that city. This meaning returns in the parlance of the New Testament: the congregation is an embodiment of living together, where all participants have a voice and a vote. The members of the congregation aren't strangers or foreigners, but fully fledged citizens (Eph. 2, 19). The congregation is a place where antitheses between different kinds of people and different kinds of groups are reconciled. This must have caused a sensation: a society where the differences between Jew and gentile, male and female and between slave and free became transcended; a society of people belonging together as sisters and brothers in Christ's name. This church is a political body, because it is subject to the authority of Christ and not submissive to the power of other rulers. The church is a political body as well because it is a community accessible to everyone where every voice and vote counts.

The church exists also for the society. This goes for the Protestant Church as well. What message does this church have for society? It should not be a supercilious message addressing the Dutch people and its legal representatives high-handedly. The best contribution of the church to wider society is the church itself: a place of learning what living together is about and what a society should be. This we have to learn from God. We need penance and repentance because we often fail seriously in living together. We need the Word and the Sacraments for this, initiating us into this learning process. The church is not politically active; the church rather is political. The church is God's policy. God's policy is creating a society of reconciliation between people, of love and willingness to serve. In this society people learn the sometimes difficult lesson to accept one another as equal members of the one body; members all having their particular gifts and talents.

This society of living together is open for everyone. Jesus Christ isn't a mascot of Christians. Everyone is welcome. The other way around: this society of living together has an outward radiating power. The open "city of God" is open towards the society. The reconciliation in the congregation is searching for reconciliation in the wider society. The care for one another is also directed towards people outside of the proper community. Jesus saw the need of the people and was moved with compassion. Followers of Jesus are called to act accordingly. This is diaconal living and without that there is no church. Even now we know of dire need, close by and distant. Many people cannot make it by loneliness, neglect, wrong choices and the whims of the market or the nature. Whole population groups live on the fringes of society, feel

disconnected and are disenfranchised. Who is observing this dry-eyed, hasn't understood much of Jesus. We are invited to answer the question: "are you your brother's keeper?" in the affirmative.

In this diaconal way of living the church does not act alone; the church can be engaged by other partners as well. God's Spirit sometimes works in unexpected areas. There are old and surprising new allies, whether religious or not, with whom we can join hands to contribute together to a society where we care for one another. We will have to prioritize however; better a few matters taken care of well, than many things done halfway.

23

"You are the salt of the earth", Jesus said to his disciples. We live in a society that offers many good and beautiful gifts; a society that enables people to participate and to flourish. Our society nevertheless can go bad. This might happen by tyranny of a majority imposing its will on the minorities. This might also come about by greed, by materialism or wastefulness, by a loss of wisdom, by a lack of care, by laziness or by aggression. As human beings and as society we have to be saved from this. By following Jesus we discover the good life, in relationship with God and with one another. This is the real "more" that enables us to be satisfied in many aspects with less. The good life of God's kingdom becomes visible in the way we engage with the creation, being aware that we cannot continue our current lifestyle. The good life of God's kingdom becomes visible in the way we engage with senior citizens, with strangers, with human life at its beginning and at its end; in short: how we acknowledge the vulnerability and the finiteness of human life. Nobody can toss off all these concerns. This requires being a lifelong disciple of Jesus.

THEME 4

“TOGETHER WITH ALL SAINTS”

BEING A CHURCH WITH OTHERS

24

The Protestant Church in the Netherlands is part of the worldwide body of Christ. Our church is a manifestation of the worldwide church, nothing more and nothing less. From the very beginning the church has known a drive to cross the borders. The early church was an international church. In Paul's letters the greetings go from everywhere to everywhere regardless of borders.

The church is still a worldwide body. There is more church than the church in the Netherlands. We shouldn't become parochial in our thinking. We are parochial when we only pay attention to the crisis the church faces in our part of the world. There should be joy because elsewhere new fields are flourishing now. This applies particularly to the Global South. We are rejoicing about this. God goes his unfathomable ways. The kingdom of God is not about our small piece of the church. We live in the age of globalization. This can make us aware of being a part of the worldwide church. God addresses us through

sisters and brothers from other churches. Moreover many church members, particularly young people, gain personal experience with this worldwide church and return home enriched by this experience. God's acting in Africa, Latin-America and Asia encourages us and assists us to wake up from our often lukewarm Christian existence. Churches in particular carrying the cross of Christ in this world have a special place. They remember us of the truth that being a church isn't a matter of luxury; being a church rather has consequences.

We acknowledge meanwhile that almost a million Christians from the Global South have come to us in the Netherlands. As sisters and brothers they want to be Christians in our context. The contact isn't always easy. There may be substantial differences in culture, theology and faith experience; these differences can result in mutual prejudices. We believe nevertheless that they didn't come here for nothing; we only can be a church together with them. If not, we shut ourselves in our complacency. Immigrant churches show vitality and dynamics we can learn from. They experience their faith in their daily lives and challenge us whether we haven't adapted too much to the habits of a secular culture.

The Protestant Church intends to be a church connected with other churches. This in particular goes for churches of the Protestant heritage. We believe that for these churches there is no valid reason for continuing ecclesial separation. We extend our hands to the Roman-Catholic church as well, particularly in our common commission to bear witness to the gospel. The

Pentecostal churches address us about being a church in the power of the Holy Spirit. Churches from the Eastern tradition remind us of believing in the Triune God. Our concern is not the Protestant Church in itself; our concern is the Church, in the Netherlands and worldwide.

We cannot avoid one another. People do not commit themselves to a national denomination anymore; irrespective of denominational differences they look for a local congregation where they feel at home spiritually. Sometimes this results in church-shopping and a lack of commitment. Positive however is that denominational differences neither prevent people from acknowledging one another as sisters and brothers in the Lord, nor keep them from co-operating.

One thing has become clear: the discord between churches has substantially damaged the credibility of the gospel. We do not have time to continue being divided.

**being
church
with other
churches**

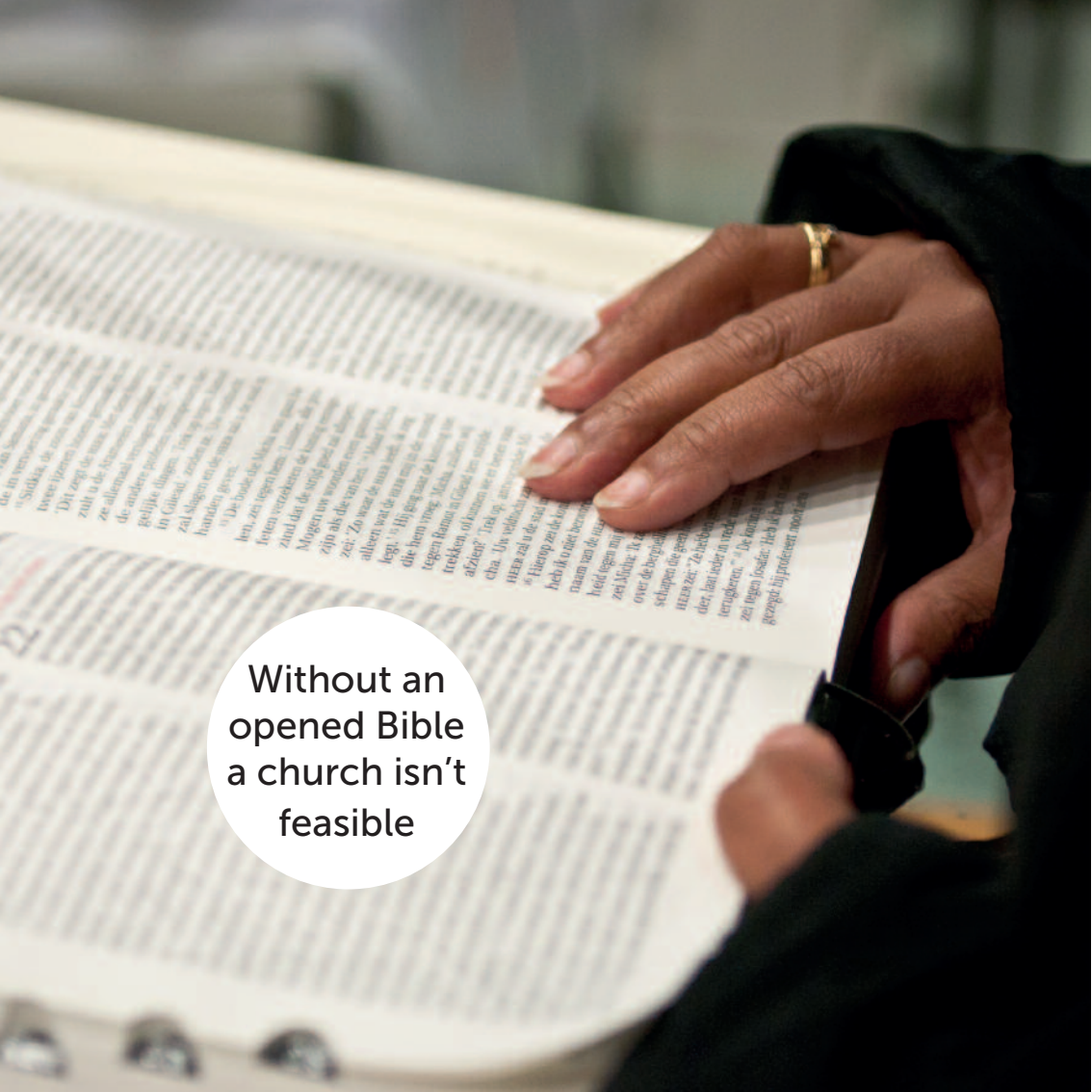






Elements for policy

A memorandum concerning the vision isn't a policy paper. Vision however is required to attain the goal of having a policy paper for the church. Therefore the themes of the vision-part are in this second part translated into elements for policy: each theme results in two elements for policy. Not everything has to be accomplished everywhere. The elements are intended to be used contextually, dependent on circumstances of time and place.



Without an
opened Bible
a church isn't
feasible

THEME 1

ELEMENTS CONCERNING THE CONTENT

Faith conversation focused on the Bible

The church is a faith community, where faith is being shared. This does not just happen automatically. People sometimes are shy or timid. The faith conversation is about what and how we believe, how we are living with God and what this means for everyday life. Faith conversation is required in the circle of the congregation, however in the entire denomination as well. It requires in particular the common reading of the Bible. Without an opened Bible a church isn't feasible. Faith stems out of hearing. The Bible is the one source and norm for the church's proclamation. Even in the church however the Bible is about to become an unfamiliar book. Just like Jesus with his disciples started time and again with Moses and the prophets, we will have to trace the sub-stance of our faith in Holy Scripture. Theological reflection is indispensable for this.

Initiation into the faith and (missionary) courses

Faith does not come to somebody automatically. Faith asks for initiation into it. This in particular goes for young people growing up in a world where few references to the Christian faith can be found anymore.

Fortunately catechetical teaching gets more attention in the congregations; this deserves to be developed and supported further. Developing a Christian canon is desirable for the information about the Christian faith, in the church and outside of it. This has to be accomplished in cooperation with other interested parties like Christian primary schools and Christian institutes for secondary education. In our age the public meaning of Christian faith has faded; however there is a need for spirituality and finding the meaning of life. (Missionary) courses can play a prominent part in taking up this challenge. The supply in this area is substantial; however further guidance in the organization of courses and assistance in setting up continuation courses is required. The national church will continue looking for ways and means to reach the general public with media campaigns and by new media. In an era of events, projects like The Passion help to present the Christian faith to a large audience.

THEME 2

ELEMENTS

CONCERNING THE

FORM

Forms of being a congregation

Form in itself is never the issue. Form is the expression of the essence of being a church as a community gathered in the name of the Lord, believing that He is in our midst. This however requires a reflection upon the forms of living as a church. Actual needs cause people to become creative. Smaller congregations face the question how congregational life can continue with a decrease in resources and with less professional staff. Organizational tasks are necessary; nevertheless these tasks should not cause overburdening, in particular in small congregations. New challenges also force us to reflect upon new ways of being a church, with all due consequences. Experiments with new forms and ways of being a church will be given the opportunity, like focal group congregations, pioneering ministries and home congregations. The space provided for this in our current church order may be taken advantage of to the maximum. Wherever this is required the openings in our church order will have to be extended.


Forms of liturgy

In liturgy the heart of the congregation is beating: here happens what is sacred. Here the cup and the plate are being passed to one another. Here the word is sounding and the hymns are echoing. Sisters and brothers meet one another in the name of Christ, around the baptismal font, around the table and the pulpit. Inspired liturgy, touching the heads and the hearts, is essential. However we know that quite a few people face difficulties in experiencing the liturgy as inspiring. This often has to do with content; however the form is causing difficulties frequently as well. It is a challenge to develop new and appealing forms of liturgy that fit within the protestant tradition and use the richness of this tradition. We need new forms, inviting to participate, and helping to build the life with God. This is not about “dressing up” the liturgy. Rather it is a prayer for the Spirit who lets the Word become flesh and form for contemporary people. Traditional forms of liturgy should be kept. However next to that we need a renewal of liturgical forms that is instrumental in a renewal of the life of the congregation.





New and
appealing
forms
of liturgy

A photograph showing two women working in a food bank. They are surrounded by hundreds of colorful reusable shopping bags (white, orange, blue, green, red) filled with various food items like vegetables and packaged goods. The woman on the left is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a grey scarf, and a white baseball cap. The woman on the right is wearing a red jacket and glasses. They are both focused on sorting and packing the food. In the bottom left corner, there is a red circular graphic containing a quote.

"Whenever
you did it for
any of my people
(...), you did it
for me"

THEME 3

ELEMENTS CONCERNING LIVING TOGETHER IN SOCIETY

37

Diaconate

The church is diaconate as well. Taking care of one another starts with the sisters and brothers with whom we live together in the Christian community. Here the quality of being a Christian congregation is at stake. Nevertheless the line is not drawn here. "Whenever you did it for any of my people (the poor, the naked, the sick, the prisoners, the strangers), you did it for me", Jesus says. It is essential to hear that call and to take it to heart. Everywhere in society we meet the people in whom we might recognize Jesus. At the moment the setup of society is brought up for discussion; this goes also for the role of the government and the public organizations. Churches frequently become visible again in this area. They are being challenged to participate in the debate about what the right society should be. In addition to this there is a task for deacons to encourage the congregation members to do what churches have been good at always: to take care of fellow human beings in every way possible.

The church will do so “in Jesus’ name”. Sometimes the church will act single-handedly, sometimes the church will act with allies from outside the church, and sometimes the church will join initiatives taken by others. It’s gratifying to know how many people from outside the church dedicate themselves to the care of their fellow human beings. This invites us to participate.

Church as alternative society: ethics

The church is a training ground for a way of life as disciples of Jesus. The story of the gospel leads to a corresponding lifestyle. The proclamation of the Word and the reading of the Scriptures provide orientation for the chaotic time we live in. This may require more attention. It isn’t just an internal matter of the church. The Bible is a flame spreading light in the ethical domain. There is no ready-made way of answering to all questions; that is just not feasible. And Christians among themselves do not turn out to have an identical ethical outcome. Nevertheless the gospel helps to see through the paltriness of the idols of our time. The omnipresent present ideology of a makeable society and of an achievable life does show tendencies of idolatry. On the other hand there should be a way of Christian life aware of the Creator and aware of life being a gift; a lifestyle exercising the art of accepting and dedicating. It is necessary to – together with our partners – develop tools that put the fruits of hearing the Word into practice in the diverse areas of life.


THEME 4

ELEMENTS CONCERNING BEING A CHURCH WITH OTHERS'

39

Immigrant churches

The arrival of immigrant churches in our country took us by surprise. They are communities of consciously living Christians from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with much solidarity and faith enthusiasm. As Protestant Church we want to be open to these communities. In our big cities and medium-sized towns there are joint ventures in the diaconal area. These joint ventures can be extended. Besides that, models can be developed for joint celebrations and gatherings (not just on Sundays), focused on young people in particular. In general a more pragmatic model for cooperation is required. Immigrant churches can use the services and possibilities of the Protestant Church (expertise in youth work, diaconate, etc.) even without the far reaching ecumenical model of the fraternal agreement.

A photograph of a religious ceremony, likely a Good Friday service. A large, draped orange canopy covers the altar area. In the foreground, a crowd of people is seen from behind, sitting on the floor. The altar features a large wooden cross with a figure, surrounded by many small, glowing lanterns. A green bush separates the crowd from the altar. Several black pendant lights hang from the ceiling.

Recognizing
of what binds
us together



Old and new ecumenical life

The Protestant Church wholeheartedly wants to be an ecumenical church. It wants to encourage the faith dialogue between congregations and denominations. This requires the willingness to discuss even inconvenient and sensitive issues. This should happen on the basis of a mutual searching for and the recognizing of what binds us together in the one and undivided body of Christ. The Protestant Church is willing to keep investing in the National Council of Churches, including financial resources, and strives for more churches being able to find connection with the Council. The Protestant Church is favorable to a still to be established Netherlands Christian Forum, an open space for all traditions of the Christian faith in the Netherlands, where faith dialogue will be at the forefront. The church is willing to participate in this Forum actively. The Protestant Church resumes the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and continues the dialogue with the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

APPENDIX

WHAT IS A VISION MEMORANDUM?

The general synod accepted a previous vision memorandum: “Learning to live out of wonder”, and declared this document to be the policy paper for the church as a whole (according to Church Order 4-26-1). A vision memorandum is about expressing what the Protestant Church stands for and what the Church aims at in the situation we find ourselves in. A succinct and energetic text, that inspires and encourages. It is neither a confession of faith nor a theological treatise. A vision memorandum sketches the outlines of future policy. A vision memorandum differs from a policy paper because it does not provide concrete objectives that can be evaluated after the period allowed by it. A vision memorandum intends to describe where we find ourselves and to offer direction and perspectives. For the Ministries of the Church the vision memorandum will be point of departure for putting future policy into words. The elaboration of the vision will be presented to the synod in the policy paper of the Ministries as a whole and in separate memorandums concerning specific areas of policy. For congregations and church councils the vision memorandum may be helpful in reflecting upon the challenges of being a church today; it can play a part in phrasing the policy of the local congregations.



How is this vision memorandum related to the previous one: “Learning to live out of wonder”?

The general synod in 2006 accepted the vision memorandum “Learning to live out of wonder” to be the document determining the direction for the Protestant Church as a whole and for the Ministries of the Church. The memorandum intended to answer questions like: who are we as Protestant

Church in the Netherlands? What direction do we want to take in the years ahead? What are priorities for the life and the church in the near future?

The Ministries of the Church have translated the vision memorandum into policy. In the past years youth work and evangelism were emphasized. Several years have passed meanwhile. The first vision memorandum has not become outdated. Evangelism work and youth work will continue to be important spearheads in the years ahead. A new vision memorandum however became necessary because the context of the church keeps changing continuously. Areas for special attention may shift and priorities may change. It is right to evaluate our vision regularly and to ask ourselves whether some accents have to be changed.

This new memorandum is the answer to that question. This second vision memorandum of the Protestant Church does not replace the first vision memorandum, but intends to be a sequel and asks for attention to a number of other issues requiring translation into policy.

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COLOPHON

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