

MINUTES OF THE CONSTITUTING MEETING OF NETACT

At the ACTEA-Consultation, Niarobi, Kenya. 3 February 2000

1 OPENING

JH (Jurgens Hendriks) open with prayer, welcome everybody present and outline the purpose of the meeting: A network is developing between the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch and the Reformed Colleges and Schools in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. During his sabbatical in 1999 JH was asked to present a module in Congregational Studies at these institutions. Notes were prepared for the course. These notes were basically a summary and adaptation of Ammerman et al's 1998 Abingdon publication *Studying Congregations*. JH got permission from the authors to rework and adapt their work for the publication of an independent publication on *Congregational Studies in Africa*. This endeavour is a registered research project that he is conducting under the auspices of the University of Stellenbosch.

JH made the following suggestion that was unanimously accepted: that we form a Network for African Congregational Studies (NetACT). The meeting decided to start working with those schools that are using the 1999 manuscript on *Congregational Studies* and ask those teaching Practical Theology / Congregational Studies (CS) to form a team to rework the notes in order to produce a book that can be used in our institutions and elsewhere in Africa. **The publication should address the realities and challenges of congregations in Africa.** JH would be the editor and those partaking would be contributors. JH reports that the Project Team for Congregational Studies in the USA, through Prof. Jackson Carroll of Duke University, was informed of these plans and pledged their support.

JH suggest that we envision the publication of handbooks as a beginning of the network's endeavours and that we allow things to develop and see ourselves as a research-oriented network that may initiate other research projects that deems necessary. The group also decides that we start our work with Reformed institutions but that we will not set denominational limitations for NetACT.

2 REPRESENTATIVES

Prof. Jurgens Hendriks (JH) from Stellenbosch; dr. Dolb Makwanandi (Principal Zomba Theological School, Malawi); Rev DT Banda (Acting Principal in 2001 for Justo Mwale Theological College, Lusaka); Rev Evert van der Ham (Director Reformed Institute for Theological Training, Eldoret Kenya). RITT wants to join NetACT. JH will be lecturing on Congregational Studies at RITT on February 7 and 8.

The following institutions were not present but have indicated their support of the venture: Hefsiba Theological School, Vila Ulongue Mozambique; Murray Theological School, Morgenster Zimbabwe; NIFCOTT Malawi. They will receive the minutes of the meeting and they are requested to name those who lecture in CS and who want to be contributors to the project.

3 RESOLUTIONS

After discussions the following resolutions were passed:

3.1 JH will prepare a draft structure of the manuscript. He suggests two manuscripts: *Doing Missional Theology in Africa*, which will be a more substantial or elaborated version of the first chapter of CS. The reason for this being that we need a good introduction to theology and ecclesiology (a base theory or systematic theory on theology as such and on a

practical theological ecclesiology). During his sabbatical in America a 84 page manuscript was prepared. It was done after and as a result of his research and lecturing in Africa. All members will receive this manuscript. The second manuscript is the existing notes. We will start working on this manuscript. JH will suggest a new draft for the content of the present manuscript and make suggestions on how we should handle the editing of the manuscript. The purpose of editing will be to adjust the material to an African congregational context. **The Network team should feel free to volunteer to rewrite certain parts or to make suggestions on what to leave out or what to add.**

3.2 A two-week meeting of NetACT is planned in the first half of 2001 at Justo Mwale in Lusaka. Members are requested to make suggestions on what dates would suit them best. The purpose will be to work on the editing of the CS manuscript for publishing. JH applied for research-funding at the University of Stellenbosch to make this meeting possible. Bus tickets and board and lodging will be paid if we can secure the funding.

3.3 It is agreed that communication should be done by e-mail. Each institution should admit their e-mail address to JH as well as the names of those who are going to be part of the NetACT team. This must reach JH before the end of February 2000. One or two persons per institution may partake.

4 GENERAL REMARKS

4.1 JH gives information about the possibility of receiving funds from the Hartgerink Trust in the USA to promote a Reformed Network between the Reformed Church in America and those in Africa (this network will only indirectly benefit NetACT).

4.2 Mr Gert Moelich, who is helping the Nkhoma Synod with their financial administration, may be asked to contribute to the chapter on resources in the CS manuscript.

4.3 Rev Njerenda and Chipangwi, who are teaching CS at Zomba, may be the two persons representing ZTC. Dr Makwanandi will finalise the issue of Zomba-contributors.

4.4 It was suggested that we consider moving the chapter on methodology in CS to the front, before the different methods of analysing a congregation is addressed.

4.5 Evert van der Ham volunteered to do the manuscript preparation.

4.6 We may consider publishing articles in refereed journals. If this can be done in co-operation with JH and the University of Stellenbosch, he can "earn" research funds that may be used in this endeavour.

4.7 This point was not mentioned at the meeting, but JH adds this information as an afterthought: From 25-30 June 2000 the ISSRC (International Society for the Study of Reformed Communities) gather in Stellenbosch. JH is convenor of the African Continent. Except for RITT and NIFCOTT, all institutions have people reading research papers on CS at that meeting. It actually is good place to talk again about NetACT issues.

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The Principal

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Murray Theological College, Morgenster, Zimbabwe

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Dear Brothers

Establishment of a Network for African Congregational Theology

I would like you to read the minutes of the constituting meeting of NetACT. It provides the background information about this request.

We would like your school / college to join this network. We request you to nominate one or two persons that are teaching Congregational Studies / Missiology / Practical Theology and are willing to be contributors to the handbooks which we want to write and to use in our curricula.

We wish to communicate via e-mail and would therefore also request your guidance to which e-mail address we are to use.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Your brother in Christ,

Prof. HJ Hendriks

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