



## NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

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### **The Decisions of the General Synod on Same-Sex Relations**

***On Friday 9 October 2015 the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church resolved as follows:***

1. The General Synod confirms the equal worth of all people irrespective of sexual orientation and binds itself to uphold the human dignity of all people.
2. The General Synod declares that heterosexual and homosexual persons who live in a personal relationship of faith and obedience to the Lord may share fully in all the privileges of the Church as a covenant community.
3. The General Synod confirms its 2004, 2007 and 2013 decisions about marriage, that only the union of one man and one woman is regarded as a marriage.
4. The General Synod decides in the light of paragraph 1 above to recognize the status of civil unions of persons of the same sex that are characterized by love and faithfulness, and makes provision that such unions may be solemnised by ministers [*dominees*] who see their way clear to do this.
5. The same Christian ethical standards (for conduct and doctrine) apply to the licensing and ordination of all persons [who are ordained]. Paragraph 7 of the decision of 2007 falls away.
6. The General Synod acknowledges the diversity of views regarding same-sex unions within the Dutch Reformed Church [NG Kerk] and confirms the right of Church Councils [*kerkrade*] to formulate and regulate their own standpoints and practices in this respect.
7. The General Synod emphasizes the discretion that Church Councils have in dealing with differences about homosexuality within congregations and requests them to do this in a spirit of Christian love.
8. The General Synod presents these decisions about same-sex relations with due humility after serious research and as the best way to apply the message of the Bible as we understand it at this time. The General Synod requests members, congregations and church gatherings once again to pursue an independent quest about how to apply the message of the Bible in this matter. In this quest the studies presented at the 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2015 General Synods can be studied with diligence. In accord with the Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 2, both special and general revelation, that is, the best contemporary human scientific findings, should be resorted to.
9. The General Synod resolves to develop a Christian, biblical model of sexuality for all people to accompany congregations in the light of the above decisions. This matter is referred to the Commission on Doctrinal and Topical Matters, which has already received a mandate to this effect in A.8.2 on the Agenda, page 172, paragraph 7.4.
10. The General Synod decides to put together and to distribute a clear overview of the Dutch Reformed Church's [NG Kerk se] journey with homosexuality in order to equip the leaders of congregations as they accompany [their] congregations in this matter.

**The General Synod further resolved:**

1. On the basis of our commitment to the values of the Season of Human Dignity we wish as the General Synod to express our sincere regret to people who have been hurt and whose dignity has been assailed as a result of any homophobic language, behaviour or attitudes on the part of the Church, also during its present meeting.
2. Precisely because of our commitment to the Season of Human Dignity and also because of a deep conviction of the discriminatory nature of such language, behaviour and attitudes, the General Synod will in future desist from any homophobic language, behaviour or attitudes.

**The General Synod further resolved:**

1. The General Synod mandates the General Synod's Commission on Church Law to investigate the implications for church and civil law of any decisions concerning same-sex relations and report to the *Moderamen* [The Moderation plus four representatives of each synod of the Dutch Reformed Church] of the General Synod with its recommendations.
2. The General Synod notes that the *Civil Union Act* (Act 17 of 2006) demands that denominations must apply in writing to the Minister to obtain permission to solemnise civil unions.

(See Clause 5, which reads as follows:

*Designation of ministers of religion and other persons attached to [a] religious denomination or organisation as marriage officers:*

*(1) Any religious denomination or organisation may apply in writing to the Minister to be designated as a religious organisation that may solemnise marriages in terms of this Act.)*

**The General Synod further resolved:**

1. The Synod of Namibia requests the General Synod to note that paragraph 4 in the resolution, which reads as follows "to recognize the status of civil unions of people of the same sex", is in conflict with the civil laws of Namibia.
2. The General Synod accepts that this paragraph 4 about same-sex relations cannot be made to apply in the Synod of Namibia.

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