

NED GEREF KERK: REFORMATION DAY WITNESS (1980)

On Reformation Day (31 October) 1980 eight academics who were ministers of the Ned Geref Kerk issued their 'Getuïenis' or 'Witness'. This witness states that group differences need not lead to friction and they plead for the church to carry out the commands of Christ as found in Scripture so that 'through the power of God's renewing grace' Christians may 'uphold each other in the one body of Christ':

Witness of eight theologians, October 31, 1980

In the spirit of Reformation Day, we as believers in the Reformed Faith wish to make the following witness:

1 Together with genuine gratitude for what has been done and achieved in the church sphere, we wish to express our deep concern about the apparent powerlessness of the institutionalised church in South Africa

(a) to carry out its divine calling of reconciliation on a meaningful and credible basis in a situation of increasing tension and polarisation between the various population groups in our country;

(b) to give spiritual leadership to the authorities and community by means of a clear and consistent witness to the promises and demands of God's Kingdom as far as social reality is concerned;

(c) to resist mutual estrangement and exclusivity among Christians and so to work against the divisions of the church which shame the communion of saints.

2 In all humility, we plead as members of the NGK with all our fellow Christians and office bearers charged with oversight of church policy and action, to reason together and to strive for

(a) the elimination of loveless and racist attitudes and actions which cause hurtful incidents and not the message of God's reconciling grace of its power;

(b) to demonstrate the solidarity of Christian love with all those who are placed in positions of helpless suffering and need by social practice, economic oppression and political policy;

(c) a form of church unity in which the oneness of believers adhering to the same confession can take visible form.

3 We are convinced that the NGK can, together with other churches, through these channels, make a God-honouring contribution towards:

(a) the advance of mutual trust and acceptance among the different population groups of our country, the indispensable foundation of a peaceful community;

(b) a deeper consciousness of the demands of God's word under which both the authorities and their subjects are called to reform the present order, so that every individual can be given the scope to realise their potential as the bearer of the image of God:

(c) a concrete witness that existing group differences between people need not be a source of friction because of prejudice, self-interest and defensiveness, but can, through the power of God's renewing grace, be developed into something that provides for mutual enrichment and the upholding of each other in the one body of Christ.

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(Source: Serfontein 1982:270)