

Impulses related to the Belhar Confession (BC)

VPKB - United Reformed Church in Belgium

We would like to highlight four points:

1. The great importance of the BC for dealing with the diversity in our VPKB.

After all, more than 50% of the ministers in the United Protestant Church in Belgium are non-Belgians by origin. Besides preachers from our surrounding Protestant neighbor countries, the church counts many pastors from Africa, in particular from Congo and Rwanda.

The diversity is also to a certain extent in our communities: not all cases, but if you count with more than five nationalities per community, that will certainly also count for 1/3 of the communities.

There are also communities that have 10-20 nationalities. Yet also between 5 and 10%. Several municipalities owe their revival to newcomers, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers.

That is of course a challenge for our church in the field of community formation, liturgy and diacony.

The BC is a permanent support and challenge for us. She has been part of the Church Order since 1998 and was included in our constitution art. 1 in 2016.

2. The BC is present in our ecclesiastical life.

After the acceptance of the BC a brochure was compiled to bring the BC to the churches with help for Bible study and processing in the liturgy. |

A second booklet is currently in the final stages of development to highlight our Belhar acceptance for over more than 20 years.

We are thinking of an 'ecumenical embodiment' in Europe, so that the European churches give more attention for a multicultural composition of their churches and bodies.

In the booklet we also emphasize the 'partnership agreement' between URCSA and the UPCB, in four areas:

- Church level - Diaconal level (Home based Health Care Program - BHCP) - Church paper: URCSA News
- University - recently a partnership was established with 'The Northern Theological Seminary' in SA.
- Youth level (CAP camp exchange - every two years)
- Exchange of pastors, to learn from each other.

3. The Belhar Confession in itself calls for the unity in diversity (and vice versa) to be celebrated.

The confession 'Christ is Lord' is precisely that diverse union.

We also want to think of a social anchoring, to also give social responsibility to Article 4 of the BB.

The joint attention for the small, the low, the refugees and the fourth world people and the LGBT people, also draws attention from the dogmatic point of view, and makes way for people who are really interested in Christ.

4. The unity of the church and the refusal of NGK to come to an organic unity with URCSA and to accept the BB unconditionally, is and remains a major concern for our church that we share with URCSA (see article by Prof. Modise, the moderator).

We believe that this should be further followed up within the international church organizations and in particular the WCRC, also in the area of 'Restorative justice' (including land and buildings). The gap that remains between the opportunities and the wealth on the one hand and the lack of possibilities that URCSA has, cannot be left untouched.

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