

Identity, boundaries and the Eucharist. In search of the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of the church from the fringes of the Kalahari Desert

ABSTRACT

This article will explore the relation between the aspects of unity, catholicity and apostolicity of the church within the context of South (-ern) Africa by specifically focussing on the activities of a church community bordering South Africa and Namibia on the fringes of the Kalahari Desert. This is a farming community of which existence depends on the arid land they inhabit. The historical placing of this community in this specific area can be traced back to the apartheid system and its policies and specifically the effect of these policies/systems on the people(s) of South (-ern) Africa.

However, this is not just any community. It is a community of believers that has been part of the Church of all times and places manifested in the Reformed branch of the Church. They hear and live the Word, they partake in the Holy Communion and they confess their faith together with believers all over the world and across all generations.

Using this as background I will explore the completeness, unity, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. This will be done by reading the narrative of this community of believers purposefully through the lens of the Sacraments of the Baptism and Eucharist.

INTRODUCTION

On Sunday 22 December 2007 I visited a congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) on a farm about 120 km from Upington and 5 km from the South African border to Namibia. This congregation was in preparation for Christmas and would celebrate the Lord's Supper during the particular service. The events surrounding my visit were striking as I experienced in a very real sense the visible and invisible borders present within this congregation on the fringes of the Kalahari Desert, barely falling within the borders of South Africa. The service, liturgy, particular ecclesial tradition, and the customs were not foreign to me as the events of the service were customary within the Reformed branch of the Church both globally and locally.

The identity of the congregation represented the reality of division within the family of Dutch Reformed Churches (family of DRCs).¹ This became obvious when taking the history of this particular congregation into account. It also clearly manifested in the present reality of this community of believers. The history of the family of DRCs is characterised by division and brokenness. Membership to these churches has for decades mostly been divided along racial

1 The term 'family of Dutch Reformed Churches' refers here to the intrinsic and historical relatedness of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA).

lines.² History clearly indicates that these divisions started around the Table of the Lord.³ At the celebration of the Eucharist the boundaries were drawn, separation was the order of the day, the visible unity between members of this once structurally united church was relinquished.

This brokenness still plagues these churches until this very day as is visible in the ecclesial story of this congregation on the fringes of the treacherous Kalahari Desert. It is tangible and impacts on more than just the communities within which these churches are imbedded. It directly impacts on the reality facing the South African context and it affects the emotional poverty and the dire lack of human dignity that plagues our nation. But, it impacts on more than just the context of South Africa. It has been impacting on the history of the church of all times and places; it impacts on the church all over the world; it impacts on the identity, vision and witness of the church catholic. This article will, by following the events as it played out within the sphere of this local congregation, attempt to show this reality.

CONFESSING THE ONE FAITH

On the morning of the service I walked into a small church building painted white on the outside and a greyish colour on the inside. The windows were smeared with red dust. The beams of the roof were home to a family of pigeons who left early that morning to find their daily bread.

It was advent and we read from John 1. We dwelt on the theme of Christ's incarnation. Experiencing the reality of this community I was taken back to Christ's humble birth in a stable, amongst sheep and goats, amongst animal dung.

This rural congregation on the fringes of a desert is nothing else but the Body of Christ; it is fully part of the Body of Christ. From a Reformed Ecclesiological understanding, this community was a full and real representation of the Body of Christ – fully Church. As such this congregation – as is the case with every other congregation over all times and places – is in direct relation with Christ. This is a very definite relation as Christ is the Head of the Church.

In essence this Body is visible. This visibility comes to the fore in a very real sense in the celebration of the Sacraments. In this regard Newbegin notes that '(T)he body of Christ of which Christians are members is a visible body, entrance into which is marked by the visible sign of baptism. In the same way the centre of its ongoing life is the visible sign of the bread broken together. As baptism marked Jesus' entry into His earthly ministry, so the institution of the supper marked the consummation of it'.⁴ It is in this light that Cavanaugh reminds us that the Eucharist is nothing but the heart of the Church life 'because it is in the Eucharist that Christ Himself, the

2 In 1994 the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) united with a significant part of the DRCA to constitute the URCSA. This church thus transgresses racial boundaries. In the earlier history of the DRCA the churches that united to form this church in 1963 were mostly founded and split along ethnic lines. As such these two examples actually explain the complexity of the divisions within the family of DRCs.

3 Division within local congregations, although not separated, was clear especially when it came to the celebration of the Eucharist. By 1820 the practice of a separated celebration of the Eucharist became increasingly common within congregations of the DRC. This later led to eventual splits within congregations on the basis of ethnicity. See in this regard a list compiled by IJ van der Walt through which is clearly indicated that separate celebrations of the Eucharist between European descendents and "converted heathen" took place from as early as 1829. IJ van der Walt, *Eiesoortigheid en die Sending*, 1963, 416.

4 Lesslie Newbegin, *The Household of God. Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, 1957, 67.

eternal consummation of history, becomes present in time’.⁵

As such the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are central to our identity as the Body of Christ and through these sacraments we express our unity and visibility as the one Body of Christ. It is at this very point, which I have mentioned in the previous section, that the divisions within the DRCs started in the late 17th/early 18th century. Although congregations were not structurally separated at this time, strong ethnic and social divisions plagued them. And this was notably visible at the celebration of the Eucharist. In this regard Loff mentions an instance in the congregation of Worcester where there was only one “non-white” member present during a celebration of the Eucharist. Shamefully he had to sit alone at the table of the Lord.⁶ Here it has to be remembered that the official decision of the DRC (from the Synod of 1824 till just before the Synod of 1857) was that there was to be no separation on the basis of skin colour specifically when it came to the celebration of the Eucharist.⁷ But, as Smith notes, there was indeed a vast distinction between the official (Synodical) decisions of this Church and the common practices within the existing congregations.⁸ This fact, along with other social issues, directly led to the Synod decision of 1857 namely that ‘it was desirable and in accord with the Holy Scripture that new black Christians be accepted and initiated into existing congregations. But where on account of the weakness of some, that is of white members, this was not possible, arrangements could be made for black Christians to meet in separate buildings’.⁹ This decision confirmed what was already taking place in some Dutch Reformed congregations and it directly led to the formation of separate Dutch Reformed “mission churches” for the different ethnic/cultural groups in South Africa.

These historical events stand in stark contrast with ecclesial confessions relating to the unity of the Church. We confess that, as there is only one Christ, there can be only one Body. Newbigin describes this unity as much more than just an ideal or spiritual unity. To him ‘... it is visible, social, organic: effected, revealed, and sealed in the fellowship of the one table’.¹⁰ In this regard he gives a stern warning of which we should take note. According to Newbigin a breach of that fellowship makes the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper into an instrument of judgement. Disunity in the Church is no mere external crack on the surface of a solid reality. It is something that goes down to its very core.¹¹ It suffices to say that division around the Table of the Lord has a real impact on being Church, on our witness as a Church and as such effects the whole Body of Christ.

5 William Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist. Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*, 1998, 223.

6 CJA Loff, *Bevryding tot Eenwording. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk in Suid-Afrika*, 1998, 89.

7 Johan Cilliers notes an interesting fact namely that, during the days of apartheid, the celebration of the Eucharist in especially the ‘black’ congregations in the townships ‘presented the story of a suffering people in a symbolic way’ in the sense that this celebration changed the reality of the people by re-interpreting their story. As such the celebration of the Eucharist in a certain sense transformed the reality of the suffering Christians. See Johan Cilliers. ‘Worshipping in the Townships – A case study for Liminal Liturgy?’. In *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa (JTSA)*. No. 132. November 2008. 72-85.

8 NJ Smith, ‘Die planting van afsonderlike kerke vir nie-blanke bevolkingsgroepe deur die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika.’ In *Annale*. Vol. 34. Serie B no. 2, 1973, 25.

9 The English translation of this decision is quoted from GM Verstraelen-Gilhuis, ‘Church conflict and Black Theology in South Africa’, In FJ Verstraelen *et al. Missionly. An Ecumenical Introduction. Texts and contexts of global Christianity*, 1995, 283. For the full and original version of this decision see *Acta Synodi*, DRC, 1857, 59-60.

10 Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 1957, 77-78.

11 Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 1957, 78.

PART OF THE BIGGER REALITY

With the singing of the first hymns it became clear that we were gathered in celebration. The table in front of the building confirmed this where the visible signs of Christ's Body was placed. As it was less than a week before Christmas, we sang carols that reminded us of Christ's incarnation, his birth, and his life. The same hymns were sung by Christians in Asia a couple of hours before, the same hymns that Christians in Europe were singing almost certainly at that very moment and the same hymns that Christians in the Americas would sing later today.

When singing hymns as part of a celebration of the Sacraments, when reading and preaching the Word in worshiping together, the Church must always be remind that we are not the first, nor the only to partake in this. This is so because of our unity, our deep relatedness in Christ – we are the one Body of the one Christ. In these elements one finds an expression of ecclesial unity and catholicity – our relatedness as church. This notion nullifies the dividing borders between Christian/church communities. Borders are foreign to the Church as the Church. The essence of being Church – specifically form a Reformed perspective – nullifies borders.¹² This is true because the Church is always in relation to other (local) Churches and thus to the church catholic. This is prompted by the unique relation that Christ has with His Bride. That the Church is sometimes set within e.g. borders of a specific country is a reality.¹³ There can however never be a Church of South Africa or a Church of the Netherlands. To limit a Church within a specific border is in stark contradiction to our faith and to our Confession(s) regarding the catholicity of the Church and the Oneness of God. In this regard Cavanaugh points out that '(I)n the Eucharist one is fellow citizen not of other present "Chileans" but of other members of the Body of Christ, past, present, and future'.¹⁴

National and cultural borders are foreign to the Church and the Church should always strive to transgress these borders. However, we do find the Church *in* South Africa and *in* the Netherlands. Here the local Church is both a full expression of the Body of Christ and a particular part of the Body. Or, as Koffeman states, relating to the idea of nation Churches '(A)ny church in any country should always be aware that it is the church of Christ only together with the churches in other countries'.¹⁵ The catholicity of the Church is uniquely expressed in the local church, but it is never fully expressed in it. The local church is wholly Church but it is not the whole Church and as such the local church is therefore always – and only – part of the universal Church. This should come to full and unique expression in our celebration and renewal in and through the Eucharist and it has real implications.¹⁶

12 See Koffeman, *Het goed recht van de Kerk. Een theologische inleiding op het kerkrecht*, 2009, 197.

13 It is interesting to note that the name URCSA clearly points to the fact that this church is not confined to the boundaries of South Africa, thus the use of the term URC in *Southern Africa* instead of URC in *South Africa*. The decision regarding the name of the mentioned church was taken purposefully. See in this regard *Acta Synodi*, URCSA, 1994.

14 Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 1998, 224. Cavanaugh further warns the Church that it should never feel at home in 'n specific context pointing out the eschatological reality of the Church imbedded in the Eucharist. See, Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist*, 1998, 225.

15 Leo Koffeman, 'The urge for unity. Local and Supralocal churches in the Dutch Reformation.' In LJ Koffeman & H Witte (eds), *Of all Times and places. Protestants and Catholics on the Church Local and Universal*, 2001, 87.

16 'Die bedoeling is dat die kenmerke van die ware kerk in die plaaslike versameling rondom die bediening van die Woord, sakramente en tug tot openbaring moet kom'. Thus the signs of the true church primarily

On my way to the church building I had to pass a couple of farm gates that have to be opened and closed when driving in and out. These gates form part of camps within which the sheep and goats of local owners graze. They would of course run out onto someone else's property if the gate were not closed properly. The gates reminded me of the signs along the road to the church. After every ten kilometres a sign would appear, saying: Namibian border 50km, Namibian border 40ks... It was only after the 5km sign that we turned right in the direction of the church building. The white church building stood at the foot of a hill. The red dune on the other side of the church stood in sharp contrast to the white walls of the church. And behind the hill was the stretched out terrain of Namibia.

The unmistakable marks of the sun were clearly visible on the faces of believers. Hard work without the luxuries of modern farming equipment clearly has a physical impact on the congregants, young and old. The faces also told their own story, a story about the foolishness of borders. Under the apartheid policies the people of this community would have been classified as being coloured. It was clear, however, that this community did not fit any strict definition through which it could be defined. It was diverse in essence. The pronunciation of the language spoken by the members sounds different in other parts of the country – different from the scientific language captured in thick textbooks. The Eucharist reminded me of the stupidity of borders. It nullified every border.

Over centuries believers have confessed that they believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. In this regard Croft is of the opinion that any local church needs to be conscious of the unity and concerned to both express it and build it through reaching out to other Christian communities locally, nationally and internationally, building a web of relationships across the Body of Christ.¹⁷ True unity within the ecumenical Church can however not be reached if division on the basis of skin colour, social class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. continues to plague local churches. These and other issues should be discussed and ratified on local, denominational and international levels. In the context of South Africa this rings especially true for the churches within the family of DRCs.

The history of the church points out that it is only when our internal and socially constructed boundaries disappear that we can fully realise our witness to the world: healing painful divisions between communities, restoring justice where it has been lost, and reconciling people on the basis of being human. This calls for a church that knows no boundaries. In this regard Koffeman challenges the Church. According to him '(O)nly a church which is capable to actively and creatively deal with the questions of unity and diversity, confessionality and contextually, etc. also in its internal life, may play a positive role in ecumenical life'.¹⁸

MANY PARTS, ONE BODY

A neatly dressed table packed with wine and bread, which would later stand central to this celebration, stood at the front of the room. Soon this congregation would celebrate the Lord's Supper: a celebration that we jointly share with Christians of all times and places. From my perspective the red wine and the white bread in simple glasses and plates signified a costly sacrifice. This united us.

come to the fore within the local church. See in this regard WD Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*. Pretoria: Communications of the University of South Africa, 1965, 14.

17 Steven Croft, *Transforming Communities. Re-imagining the Church for the 21st Century*, 2002, 131.

18 Koffeman, 'The urge for unity. Local and Supralocal churches in the Dutch Reformation'. In Koffeman & Witte, *Of all Times and of all Places*, 2001, 88.

It is a theological given that our visible unity as Christians comes to a peak when we celebrate the Eucharist. However, Stookey is of the opinion that the church is sometimes hopelessly inadequate especially when it comes to uniting as the Body of Christ around the Lord's Table.¹⁹ There (at the Lord's Table) presumably Christ invites all who enter into the covenant of the gospel. Yet the Church is divided into hundreds of denominations; many of these do not welcome members of other groups at the Table. Even in these denominations that officially have "open communion", in fact, at a practical level, all kinds of exclusions occur.²⁰ It is at this very point that the history of the churches within the family of DRCs links on. On a local level it is significant to note that the story of the congregations dealt with in this article was exclusively a representation of a specific cultural group.²¹ Within the bigger reality of the family of DRCs the mono-cultural identity of this congregation is nothing unique. With exceptions, this picture is similar to that of most local congregations of the churches within the family of DRCs. Thus, separation within these churches is perhaps at its most visible around the Table of the Lord.

Unity should not be understood as a synonym for oneness. They are not synonyms, as it would be a denial of our rich diversity – especially within the Body of Christ. The importance of our differences can, however, never be acclaimed to the point that it results in separation and boundaries. In this regard Küng notes the following:

'According to Paul, all charismatic's are part of the body of Christ, of the community. The fact that all charismatic's are members of the one body does not of course mean uniformity, but on the contrary a variety of gifts of callings. But fundamentally all individual members, having been baptized, are equal. But, by contrast with this fundamental equality all differences are ultimately without importance'.²²

It thus becomes clear that the question of diversity relates to our identity and how the Church understands her identity. Here the question of culture comes to the fore. Brinkman places great emphasis on our unique identity born from our baptism.²³ In my view our identity as the Body of Christ is in the first instance neither found in our culture, in the language we speak, in the songs we sing, nor in our unique rituals. However, this does not mean that we should get rid of our unique cultures! What it does mean is that we do not in the first instance belong to a certain nation/culturally affiliated group and therefore to a certain church.

Jonker makes it clear that unity as Christians is not in the first instance a human construct. 'Die eenheid wat daar tussen die lede van Christus bestaan, is nie gebaseer op hulle eie toenadering tot mekaar of op mekaar of op hul besluit om iets met mekaar te deel nie. Hulle eenheid is 'n wesenlike eenheid, omdat dit God self is wat deur Sy Gees in hulle woon en hulle aan mekaar

19 Laurence Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church*, 1993, 23.

20 Stookey, *Eucharist: Christ's Feast with the Church*, 1993, 23. Stookey further adds that (L)ikely, for example congregations of white members and black members meet separately – and within such divisions communicants are largely segregated further by financial and educational factors. And the homeless, the poor, those who live with HIV or mental retardation may be unwelcome in any of the above. See Stookey, *Eucharist*, 1993, 23.

21 Historically the members of these congregations would be classified as being 'coloured'.

22 Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 227. In this regard Küng quotes 1 Cor. 12. 'Thus the unity of the Church presupposes a multiplicity of Churches: the various Churches do not need to deny their origins of their specific situations; their language, their history, their customs and traditions, their way of life and thought, their personal structure will differ fundamentally, and no one has the right to take this from them'. See Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 274.

23 See in this regard Martin Brinkman, 'The Theological basis for the local-universal debate, In Koffeman & Witte, *Of all Times and of all Places*, 2001, 180-182.

verbind, al kom hulle uit hoeveel verskillende volkere en sosiale stande’.²⁴

Christians confess that through our baptism we become part of God’s covenant and members of His holy Body. Through the Sacrament of Baptism we die and are resurrected with Him. Through Baptism we are indicted into a new people – all prior given definitions of identity of this people are transcended.²⁵ The fact that we are given a new identity is confirmed through the Eucharist and through this Sacrament we are kept in community with Christ and thus with His Body. With regard to the event of the Lord’s Supper, Küng notes the following:

‘So much is clear: the Lord’s Supper is the centre of the Church and of its various acts of worship’. Here the church is truly itself, because it is wholly with the Lord; here the Church of Christ is gathered for its most intimate fellowship, as sharers in a meal. In its fellowship they draw strength for their service in the world. Because this meal is a meal of recollection and thanksgiving, the Church is essentially a community that remembers and thanks. And because this meal is a meal of covenant and fellowship, the Church is essentially a community, which loves without ceasing. And because finally this meal is in anticipation of the eschatological meal, the Church is essentially a community that looks on the future with confidence’.²⁶

These perspectives – past, present and future – can only be fully reached when we truly meet each other around the Table, when we are renewed around the Table, when we celebrate our unity as the one Body of the one Christ.

RENEWED TO SERVE

After the sermon the offering followed. The deacon sent the collection plate around and it slowly moved in between the school desks in which the congregants were sitting. Eventually the plates were so full that the deacon had to hold his hand over the plates so that the notes would not fall out.

Anlené Taljaard is of the opinion that ‘the Lord’s Supper acts as a middle ground, a space between poles, a space between us’.²⁷ To her this is of great importance especially on an economic level. In this regard the Eucharist cannot leave us unchanged. It overpowers us to act differently. ‘Dit is egter nie net die gelowiges wat mekaar ontmoet nie, maar vanuit hierdie middelruimte waar ons reeds ontmoet en verbind is, behoort ons ‘n sigbare ruimte van regstellende geregtigheid vir die samelewing te word’.²⁸ For Taljaard this has direct implications for the division between rich and poor. As we are sharers in the Body of Christ, we cannot but share in the need – also on a material level – of others. In this regard Küng notes that ‘(T)he Lord’s Supper is not, any more than was Jesus’ own Last Supper, an individual giving and taking, but a coming together of many people to form a real fellowship of sharers in a meal, for common prayer, for giving, taking and distributing, eating and drinking. The meal is there not for the individual, but for the community

24 WD Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge van die Ned. Gereformeerde Kerk van Transvaal*, 1962, 22-23.

25 JG Yoder, *The Royal Priesthood. Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*. Edited by Michael Cartwright, 1998, 367.

26 Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 223.

27 Anlené Taljaard, ‘Die Nagmaal as middelruimte tussen ryk en arm gelowiges om sigbaarheid aan versoening in die samelewing te gee’, In *NGTT*, 2004, 373-379. ‘Die nagmaal word ‘n ruimte waar ons as gelykes ontmoet, ‘n ruimte waar die onreg van die sisteem niegtig verklaar word deur die teenwoordigheid van die kruis’. See Taljaard, ‘Die Nagmaal’, *NGTT*, 2004, 377.

28 Taljaard, ‘Die Nagmaal’, *NGTT*, 2004, 378.

and therefore for the individual too'.²⁹ This has real implications for a church that finds itself in a context of absurd discrepancy between rich and poor.

We do not decide to become part of His Church but we are gathered (by Him) as His Body – a Body that Bonhoeffer describes as identical with the humanity that He has assumed.³⁰ Christ gathers us from every nation and so we uniquely contribute to a true understanding of the revelation of God in Christ.³¹ In this sense we are connected/related to one another and dependant on one another. The Church community exists through Christ's action.³² This is who we are. In this regard it is important that our relation to Christ is not something invisible, but that it will always be something that is seen.³³ Jonker states it clearly that this is what the New Testament teaches regarding the nature of the Church. Because we belong to Christ, God connects us to one another through the Spirit and thus we are in a direct relation to one another.³⁴

CONCLUSION

Sunday was and continues to be the racially most divided day in South Africa, as people tend to remain in their various racial and ethnic communities when attending church. Despite this reality Christians believe that promoting unity is an important part of our vocation. I firmly believe that the ecclesial communities can impact positively on human life in the world – especially within the above-mentioned context. In this regard one may ask the question namely how the Church – and especially the churches within the family of DRCs – can play a more significant role in promoting and establishing unity amongst our peoples. This question, I believe, should in the first instance be asked with regard to our relation as churches within the continuing process of re-unification. Evenly important this question should be asked with regard to the restoration of broken relations and the establishment of dignity within our society.³⁵

The biggest challenge perhaps, and the biggest space for change, is the fact that our churches largely reflect the social divisions of our society. For the Church to seriously consider itself to be an agent of reconciliation, it would have to, in the first instance, look at how these internal divisions can be healed in such a manner that we are able to re-unite around the Eucharistic table.³⁶ Unity between the churches within the family of DRCs should be understood as an essential element of truth telling, reconciliation and reparation between the communities represented by these churches.³⁷ And therefore it remains important that we move towards a united Church as a proclamation of our faith and witness within our contexts.

This is also true with regard to our witnesses outside the borders of South Africa. In this

29 Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 221. 'The Lord's Supper is then essentially *fellowship, koinonia, communion*, and in a double sense'. See Küng, *The Church*, 1973, 222.

30 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 4. *Discipleship*, 1996, 217.

31 Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 31.

32 Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio. A Theological study of the Sociology of the Church*, 1998, 137.

33 Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 21.

34 Jonker, *Sendingbepalinge*, 1962, 23.

35 See in this regard Willem Fourie & Leslie van Rooi. 'Geskeidenheid binne die familie van NG Kerke en die stryd om 'n menswaardige Suid(er)-Afrika: enkele implikasie'. In *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*. Deel 50. No. 1&2 March & June 2009. 85-108.

36 Hugo van der Merwe, 'The role of the church in promoting reconciliation in post TRC South Africa', In A Chapman & B Spong, *Religion & Reconciliation in South Africa*, 2003, 275.

37 H. Russel Botman, 'The offender and the Church', In Cochrane *et al.* *Facing the Truth. South African communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 1999, 130.

regard our unity will be a gift to the Church catholic pointing towards an understanding of our identity as the Body of Christ. The opposite is also true. For as long as we are divided we stand guilty before the Church and the ecumenical movement as a whole, which aspires to break down all borders between the Church communities.

On the morning of the service the congregations on the fringes of the Kalahari Desert confessed that they believe in the *one, holy, catholic and apostolic church*.³⁸ The confessed calling as well as the firm belief of the churches within the family of DRCs calls for an embodiment of this confession.

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38 'Die Kerkverband is een van die belangrikste wyses waarop die wesenseienskappe van die kerk te wete die eenheid, heiligheid en apostolisiteit van die kerk aan uitdrukking gegee kan word'. See MA Plaatjies-Van Huffel. *Die dolansiekerkreg en die kerkreg en kerkregering van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerke en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika*. 2008. Ongepubliseerde doktorale dissertasie. Pretoria: Univeristeit van Pretoria.

KEY WORDS

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TREFWOORDE

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