

The Reformed Church in Africa's *Laudium Declaration*. A gift to the ecumenical community²

ABSTRACT

The author provides a brief overview of the history of the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), a church that is rooted in the South African Indian community, from its birth in 1968 till the present day. He then proceeds to discuss the content and the impact of the *Laudium Declaration*, which was adopted at the synod of the RCA in 1990. The declaration was widely welcomed in the RCA, defining the evangelical character of the church. The reaction of other churches in the Dutch Reformed Church Family to the *Laudium Declaration* is discussed, together with an appraisal of the role that the declaration may play in the current unification process in the Dutch Reformed Family in South Africa. The article ends with a heartfelt prayer that the declaration will be accepted as a gift from God not only by the Reformed churches in South Africa, but by the wider ecumenical community.

1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of the age of churches, the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA) is indeed a very young church, a relative latecomer on the South African scene. The first initiatives to reach out to the Indian/Muslim community by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Cape came when Dr G B A Gerdener was appointed missionary among the Muslims in Cape Town (1916). In Transvaal the work among the Hindu community was initiated by Miss E Hamman (later Mrs Kelber), in 1928.³

The first outreach efforts to the Indian community, decades earlier, originated from English speaking churches. This was on account of the fact that English was the first or second language of the Indian people in South Africa. After the planting of the RCA, all the congregations of the RCA accordingly became English speaking as well. Afrikaans speaking Christians, members of the sending church (the DRC), often found it difficult to reach out to an English speaking community. Nevertheless, considering the fact that the Indian people arrived as early as 1860 and following years in South Africa, one would have expected an earlier involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church in reaching out to the Indian Community with the Gospel.⁴

The Christians community among the Indian immigrants, according to Brain, constituted only 1.4% of the total of 152 184 immigrants. Most of these Christians were from Madras, brought

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2 The article is based on research for a Ph D thesis on *Church Planting in the South African Indian Community, with Reference to the Reformed Church in Africa*, accepted by the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria (2010), under the supervision of Professor P G J Meiring.

3 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (DRC) 1975: *Acta, Sinode van Suid-Transvaal*, 210. In the article reference is often made to the Dutch Reformed Church Family. The family of churches consists of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Uniting Reformed Church, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the Reformed Church in Africa.

4 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 68ff.

to Natal to work in the sugar plantations. Continuous immigration over many years led to the establishment of a permanent Indian community in Natal.⁵

Why was the DRC a late comer with regards to outreach to the Indian people? Not only, as stated above, did the difficulty for Afrikaners to use English as language medium provide an impediment to the work. Above all, it was the policy of apartheid that constituted the most negative factor in this work. House visitation in the early years when young Afrikaners, coming from the privileged white community, reached out to the Indian people proved to be extremely difficult, as these visits often turned into political debates on account of the South African government's policy of separate development, or apartheid, at the time.⁶

In passing, it may be noted that the DRC *did* have a much earlier connection with Indian people in Ceylon when the Boer prisoners during the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902) were moved to share the Gospel with them. Eventually Rev A J K de Klerk and later Rev S F Skeen were set aside to minister to the people of Colombo. They were supported by the Ceylon Assistance Missionary Society.⁷ But this endeavour had little impact on the local scene.

The eventual establishment of the Indian Reformed Church (IRC), later renamed the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), took place in the historic little church building in Raisethorpe, Pietermaritzburg. Representatives of the first four congregations, Pietermaritzburg (est. 1957), Durban South (est. 1965), Transvaal (est. 1965) and Cape Province (est. 1966) were present to assist the birth of the young church.⁸

2. THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AFRICA TODAY: A SMALL YET VIBRANT CHURCH

Since the birth of the RCA in 1968, when the church comprised of only four congregations and 360 communicant members, the Church has grown to a denomination consisting of 12 congregations and 2 missions, Anashim (2000) and Clairwood (1989). The congregations are linked to three Presbyteries, i.e. KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Cape Province.⁹

Considering the political situation in South Africa and the scourge of apartheid, great difficulties faced those who reached out to the Muslims and Hindus. This was especially true of the Afrikaans speaking outreach workers who, as noted above, were perceived to be part and parcel of the government's policy of apartheid. In spite of the political issues, workers were overcome by the sincere hospitality of the homes they visited.

5 Brain, J B 1985. Indentured and Free Indians in the Economy of Colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal*. Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 243. Interesting accounts of the history of the Indian people in Natal may be found in Arkin, A J. Magyar K P. Pillay, G J (eds). 1989: *The Indian South Africans: A Contemporary Profile*. Owen Burgess Publishers. South Africa; Beyers, C J 1976: *Die Indiërvraagstuk in Natal, 1870-1910. Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis. 34ste Jaargang*. Deel II. Pretoria: Staatsdrukker; Bhana, S 1985: Indian Trade and Trader in colonial Natal, in *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony. Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Colonial Natal*. Edited by B Guest and J M Sellers. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press; Calpin, G H. 1949: *Indians in South Africa*. Shutter and Shooter: Pietermaritzburg; and Diesel, A and Maxwell, P 1993: *Hinduism in Natal. A brief guide*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.

6 Crafford, D 1982. *Aan God die Dank (I)*. Pretoria: N G Kerkboekhandel: 443ff; cf. Gerdener, G B A 1958. *Recent Development in the South African Mission Field*. Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1985.

7 Crafford, *Aan God die Dank*, 146-147.

8 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 116pp.

9 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek* Wellington: Bybel-Media, 265, 266.

The missionary endeavour of the young people was coloured by a strong evangelical drive. The first converts participated in outreach initiatives, often with remarkable results. This evangelical drive in turn strengthened the members of the young church and resulted in the church growing in leaps and bounds. This was particularly when they participated in campaigns that were regularly held in the early days.¹⁰

The minister-cum-evangelist formed a formidable team in the outreach work. The testimony of the evangelist usually broke the ice and served as an introduction to the white minister's message. The evangelist's ability to speak at least one of the Indian languages was a great help to reach those that could not understand English. In the early days they brought with them spiritual songs in the vernacular that richly moved and blessed the hearts of those who kept their mother tongue: Hindi, Tamil, Telegu or Gujerati.¹¹

The Reformed Church in Africa, through the years, did not lose its missionary drive. The involvement of the membership in mission and evangelism is a given to all congregations. Living in a non-Christian environment makes it absolutely vital for churches and their membership to reach out in the area where they are placed.

In the RCA this ministry is perceived as the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a people's group, the Indian people, yet not excluding black, coloured or white people living in the area. Tent campaigns were all along, but especially in the early days, the heart of the ministry. Preaching and evangelism went hand in hand. Visitation, outreach efforts, and campaigns were the training ground for members of the congregation to become effective witnesses in the community.

The training of the membership to become more effective witnesses in their community was regarded by most congregations as a *sine qua non*. Efforts were made to empower members to become fearless witnesses for Christ as well as deeply committed witnesses of their personal salvation. The importance of a vibrant prayer life was continuously emphasized.

The growth of the RCA, a rather late comer among the family of Dutch Reformed churches, was slower than the growth of the other members of the Dutch Reformed Family of churches. Hinduism and Islam in South Africa, as in the rest of the world, constitute a great challenge to mission. In comparison with the other members of the family of Dutch Reformed churches, the RCA is therefore a rather small church.

According to present statistics the 12 congregations of the RCA has a total membership of 362 Baptismal members and 506 Communicant members.¹²

Order of establishment of RCA Congregations and Missions 2010

Congregations:		
1. Pietermaritzburg	1957	(PMB)
2. Shalom	1965	(Chatsworth)
3. Emmanuel	1972	(Sydenham)
4. Charisma	1972	(Laudium)
5. Calvary	1974	(Malabar)
6. Moriah	1979	(Merebank)
7. Jeshurun	1981	(Phoenix)
8. Pearl	1988	(Kimberley)
9. Shanti	1988	(Palmridge)
10. Sunthosham	1989	(Rylands)
11. Jeshua	1990	(Lenasia)

10 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 128; cf. Pypers, D J, 1995. *Guidelines on Everyday Life: Reformed Church in Africa*. Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers.

11 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 168.

12 N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek*, 266

12. Maranatha	1995	(Ottawa)
Missions:		
1. Clairwood Mission	1989	
2. Anashim Mission	2000	

Membership statistics of the RCA Congregations:¹³

	Congregation	Date Established	Place	Baptismal Members	Communicant Members
1	Pietermaritzburg	1957	PMB	27	70
2	Shalom	1965	Chatsworth	30	145
3	Emmanuel	1972	Sydenham	39	77
4	Charisma	1972	Laudium	59	152
5	Calvary	1974	Malabar	44	103
6	Moriah	1979	Merebank	25	120
7	Jeshurun	1981	Phoenix	52	165
8	Pearl	1988	Kimberley	10	20
9	Shanti	1989	Palmridge	20	33
10	Sunthosham	1989	Rylands	24	50
11	Jeshua	1990	Lenasia	13	25
12	Maranatha	1995	Ottawa	19	46
	TOTAL			362	506

Mission statistics:¹⁴

	<u>Missions (2010)</u>	<u>Baptismal Members</u>	<u>Communicant Members</u>	<u>Adherents</u>
1	Clairwood - 1989	11	22	-
2	Anashim - 2000	3	7	30
	TOTAL	14	29	30

3. THE BIRTH OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The Synod of the RCA of (October, 1990) experienced serious tension among the delegates resulting from the Dutch Reformed Church's positive stance towards the policy of apartheid in South Africa. Already in 1982 when Rev. Manikkam, moderator of the RCA sided with his colleagues from the DRCA at a meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed in Ottawa (Canada) calling for a *status confessionis* in respect of apartheid, denouncing the DRC's defence of

¹³ N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek*, 265

¹⁴ N G Kerk 2010: *Jaarboek*, 266

apartheid, serious differences of opinion within the RCA emerged. By 1990 a number of ministers and elders - among them senior ministers Gerrie Lubbe and Klippiess Kritzinger - felt that they could no longer be accomplices to apartheid, by accepting subsidies from the DRC. They would rather forgo their salaries and work as tentmakers, than be dependent upon the church that supported apartheid. For the RCA this situation was experienced as a moment of truth. There were strong differences of opinions among the ministers and elders. There were those who felt that the time has come for the RCA to take a strong stand against the policy of apartheid, to speak out clearly against the scourge of apartheid. Others felt that such a move must not be at the expense of the evangelical position of the RCA¹⁵

Rev Perold de Beer was of the conviction that together with the battle against apartheid, the evangelical voice which was typical of the RCA should not be compromised. Evangelism, the spreading of the gospel to those who did not know the Lord Jesus, was the RCA's first priority, the heart of the RCA. The acceptance of a political response to the policy of apartheid would move the RCA into becoming an activist church.

The tension that had begun to grow in the RCA between those who refused to accept the subsidy from the DRC and who wanted to make it clear that they are not willing to be linked with a church that supported apartheid, and those who were afraid that the church being drawn in a political argument will lose its evangelical zeal, had reached critical proportions. There was a real concern that the RCA's impact on and ministry to the Indian community would suffer.

When the afternoon session of the first day of Synod ended, Rev de Beer used the time to seek God's face in prayer as he struggled with the impending theological understanding that may remove the RCA from its evangelical stance. De Beer was inspired by the *Lausanne Declaration* that a group of evangelical churches world-wide adopted,¹⁶ and was convinced that this evangelical theological point of view would be the answer to the needs of the RCA. The *Laudium Declaration* was then tabled at Synod and unanimously adopted.¹⁷

The result of the adoption of the Laudium Declaration was significant. The Evangelical character of the Reformed Church in Africa was deeply strengthened in the hearts and minds of the members of the church. The church saw extensive growth in the years that followed. The unity of the RCA was greatly enhanced as congregations and members rallied around this declaration. Most of the members of the RCA are first generation believers who lived in the joy of their salvation. The Laudium Declaration strengthened their faith.

4. THE TEXT OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The text of the declaration reads as follows:¹⁸

We affirm that the biblical Gospel is God's enduring message to our world, and we determine to defend, proclaim and embody it.

We affirm our commitment to the primacy of Evangelism, of the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

15 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 179pp.

16 Bosch, David. 1991: *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis Books, 406ff.

17 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 188.

18 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 194ff.

We affirm that Evangelism is not an option but an imperative.

We affirm that religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God, and there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus.

We reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through other religions and ideologies. To proclaim Jesus as Saviour of the world is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit's witness is indispensable to Evangelism and that without his supernatural work new birth and new life is not possible and all our endeavours fruitless.

We affirm that we who proclaim the Gospel must exemplify it in a life of holiness and love; otherwise our testimony loses its credibility.

We affirm the constant need for revival and determine to seek God's face constantly for revival in our own lives, in the life of the RCA, and in the church of South Africa at large.

We affirm that nothing commends the Gospel more eloquently than a transformed life and nothing brings it into disrepute so much as personal inconsistency. We determine to live worthy of the Gospel of life.

We affirm that the congregation of believers should turn itself outward to its community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service.

We affirm that God has committed the whole Gospel to the whole world and to every member the task of making Christ known throughout the world. We long to see all lay and ordained persons mobilised and trained for the task. We determine to proclaim the Gospel faithfully, urgently, passionately and sacrificially, until He comes.

We affirm that we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter. Governments, religious bodies and nations will continue to be involved with social responsibilities but should the church fail in her mandate to preach the Gospel no other body will do so.

We affirm our God-given unity at the deepest level with all born-again blood-washed believers. We determine to foster such unity across all denominational barriers. In the immediate circle of our church we will foster structural unity with those who share the same confession provided that such structural unity will not stifle the evangelical witness of the Reformed Church in Africa.

We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within the church the barriers of race, gender and class. We affirm that racism within the church constitutes a denial of the Gospel and deterrent to evangelistic witness.

We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice, peace and holiness demands

the denunciation of all injustice, oppression and immorality. We will not shrink from this prophetic witness.

We affirm the freedom in Christ of the church of Jesus Christ and refuse the alignment of the church to any ideology or current political trend, power or movement.

We affirm our solidarity with those who suffer for the Gospel and will seek to prepare ourselves for the same possibility.

We affirm the right of the believer to conscientious objection. In our demonstration and witness against evil we determine not to use carnal weapons but to act in the spirit of Christ and through spiritual warfare and constant prayer to enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil.

5. BRIEF REMARKS ON THE CONTENT OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

The Declaration was born from a resolution of the RCA in 1986 to maintain her stand as an evangelical reformed church. In the ministry of the RCA we discovered that the RCA was in essence an evangelical church, yet on account of church politics it has moved towards a more activist position. The Laudium Declaration pronounces on the character of the RCA as an evangelical reformed church but also expresses the strong missionary character of this church. The intention of this declaration is to restate her position. The declaration clearly defines the character of the RCA.¹⁹

The Reformed Church in Africa sees itself as a missionary church, well placed within the Hindu and Muslim communities of South Africa. In her missionary outreach she endeavours to balance the different aspects of mission. The ministry of *kerugma*, of proclaiming the gospel wherever and whenever the situation makes it possible is of primal importance. But of equal importance is the ministry of *diakonia*, of reaching out to the everyday needs of people in all levels of society. The third ministry of *koinonia*, of planting the church and nurturing the members, building up of the communion of the saints is as necessary as the others. For the RCA mission in itself is an act of worship, it's *leitourgia*. By our obedience to Jesus' command and by participating in the *Missio Dei*, we glorify His Name. This is what the Laudium Declaration wants to state: from a warm evangelical heart a comprehensive mission flows.²⁰

6. THE REACTION WITHIN THE RCA AND DRC FAMILY TO THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION

Immediately after the acceptance of the declaration, the RCA received positive responses from its own membership as well as from its sister churches in the DRC Family.

The response from congregations within the RCA in the months after the 1990 synod, was increasingly positive as they discovered the doctrinal and practical value of the declaration amidst a challenging environment. Living amidst a world of religions the Laudium Declaration provided congregations and ministers with clear guidance in terms of the primacy of evangelism; the indispensable work of the Holy Spirit and the absolute *sine qua non* of a transformed life. The

19 Sukdaven 1996: *Inclusive or Exclusive? A Missiological Analysis of congregations of the RCA*. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, 40.

20 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 160pp; cf. Kritzingler, J J; Meiring, P G J; Saayman, W A 1994. *On Being Witnesses*. Johannesburg: Orion, 36ff.

members of the RCA realized that the unanimous reception by the Synod 1990 proved the deep-felt need of the church to strengthen her ministry in the world. This document has indeed given a new impetus to and a fresh understanding of the ministry to which God called the RCA. The Laudium Declaration did not solve all the problems of the RCA but provided the RCA with a new united purpose with reference to her calling and ministry. The Laudium Declaration also assisted Church Councils to call deacons, elders and ministers to their respective offices with reference to the conditions of the Laudium Declaration.

In the wider community of the DRC family, the acceptance of the Laudium Declaration by the RCA was equally noted. During the many meetings within the DRC family since 1990 to discuss church unification, mention was often made of the declaration, and of the impact that the declaration was bound to have within the unity process. The most comprehensive and appreciative response to the Laudium Declaration came from Dr J J Gerber, General Secretary of the DRC. In a recent letter (June 8, 2010) Gerber verbalised the DRC's views as follows:²¹

- The Laudium Declaration is not being valued to its fullest, because of the fact that it is not continuously tabled at meetings. An Afrikaans proverb says – if something is not well-known, it is also not well-loved.
- One of the most prominent anchors of the Laudium Declaration is the unashamedly testimony taken on *evangelism*, in that it advocates proclaiming the Gospel unashamedly, eagerly, in word and deed, and through every member of the entire community of believers. This would result of a clear view point upon the Work of the Holy Spirit and a call for revival and the transforming of lives. Maybe the other members of the DRC family of churches, should hear this call. I am often asked on this question – What would ministers of the Gospel reply if questioned about the number of people they led to Jesus from outside their congregations during the preceding year. Would it not perhaps be more viable to launch a gigantic ministry of evangelism instead of having numerous meetings on unification? Are we, as the family of DR Churches, still serious concerning Revival? A family in revival will look at one another in a different way.
- The view taken by the RCA, that structural unity should never harm her evangelical witness, deserves further deep-rooted, constructive discussion. We might end up with an excellent structure of unity at grass-roots level, without any evangelistic witness at all.
- I wholeheartedly support the view, that in the event of the Church failing in its evangelical calling, no other body will do it!
- The view regarding prophetic witness, social justice and relationship with government is crystal clear – it is more than of a declaration – it is a confession. The question that comes to mind is how would we all make the Laudium Declaration part of not only the Southern African, but also the wider ecumenical discussion? Furthermore, could the RCA not begin to embark on a road – with perhaps a few alterations – to turn the Laudium Declaration into a confession?

7. THE ROLE OF THE LAUDIUM DECLARATION IN THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS WITHIN THE DRC FAMILY

Returning to the role that the Laudium Declaration may play in the unification process the following needs to be stated. The RCA is a committed partner in the reunification process of the four Dutch Reformed Churches. It is obviously a long and often arduous process during which serious points of differences need to be negotiated or bridged.

²¹ Gerber, J J: *Letter from the General Secretary of the DRC*, June 8, 2010.

For the RCA, the smallest and youngest member of the DRC family, there is some apprehension that with church unity it may lose its character as encapsulated in the Laudium Declaration. On the other hand the RCA enjoys the Reformed heritage with the other members of the DRC Family, a heritage that deeply connects her to the reunification process. The RCA has a good relationship with the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, and has not received negative reactions to the Laudium Declaration from other members of the DRC family.²²

The response from the ranks of the DRC, according to the interviews that were conducted (cf. the list of names of interviewees in the bibliography), ranges from positive to *very* positive. The evangelical character of the Laudium Declaration is seen as a contribution towards those issues that can really bring the churches together. If the Laudium Declaration succeeds it would be in the celebration of the spiritual realities upon which true believers can agree. From that re-connection we could then move forward to address the issues that divide us. We agree with Dr J J Gerber that the RCA should consider offering the Laudium Declaration (with some changes) to the other churches as a *confession* that they may consider adopting as well. It is our fervent hope that the goal of true unity of the family of DR Churches will in this way be served. The resultant impact of such an initiative may lead to the beginnings of true union of the family of DR Churches. It is indeed not the intention of the RCA to take any credit for such an initiative. Yet if in this way the family of DR churches could re-discover and celebrate their unity in Christ the churches may move towards effective union.

In our informal discussions with members of the family of DR churches, we have received positive to very positive reactions on the Laudium Declaration and of the role of the RCA in the unity talks. If such a venture could succeed, the RCA would be the proverbial small child that would lead us all. Every church, including the RCA, has their pre-conditions and fears on the way to reunification. We have to put these fears aside and move towards effective union so that we may confess and celebrate our unity in Christ and one another.

In the process the RCA should accept the responsibility to introduce the Laudium Declaration comprehensively to the family of the DR Churches. In an interview with Rev Arno Louw (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, DRCA) it appears that the Laudium Declaration is not well known in the DRCA in Natal. This is quite ironic. Natal is, of all the provinces, the closest to the heartland of the RCA. The same is unfortunately true of many congregations in the DRC and URCSA who still need to study the Laudium Declaration, discussing the implications of the document for all of us.

If this is done properly, Dr Kobus Gerber of the DRC is of the opinion that the RCA is ideally positioned to play an important role in bringing the various members of the family of DR churches together, and to contribute to the process of reconciliation in the country.

According to Rev Victor Pillay of the RCA, the RCA with the Laudium Declaration in its hands, is already enthusiastically participating with the other churches in the DRC Family in the United Ministry of Service and Witness, the body that unites the missionary and charitable services of the churches. This in itself constitutes a step forward towards church union.

8. A GIFT TO THE CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

At the time when Synod of the RCA adopted the Laudium Declaration in 1990 in Pretoria, few realized what the influence of this document would be. For the RCA it presented an opportunity to rediscover and to understand its own mission. No one, however, expected how wide the impact of the Laudium Declaration would be not only on its own congregations but on the members of the family of D R Churches as well. Today we may truly see the declaration as a gift

22 De Beer, *Church Planting*, 207ff.

of God to all of us.

The Laudium Declaration truly sent the RCA on its course, helping a young, small, denomination to discover and maintain its identity. Twenty years later, at the 2010 synod of the RCA, the church once again stated its position and its character in the spirit of the Laudium Declaration:²³

The Reformed Church In Africa (RCA) is firmly based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. The doctrine that the RCA confesses in accordance with the Word of God, is set out in the doctrinal standards as determined at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618 - 1619, namely the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

It is important to state categorically that the RCA accords the highest priority to the uncompromising adherence to the authority of Holy Scripture. We believe and confess that Holy Scripture is the complete revelation of God, authoritative for all time. Thus for us it is the sole yardstick by which all standpoints, attitudes and actions in the South African situation must be tested.

This means that consistent with our doctrinal standards, we need to study Scripture carefully and correctly, in order to determine what message and mandate come to us out of the Word and how we must apply it in any given situation.

We must constantly be on our guard that no other voice, however appealing or beguiling - be it that of a particular ideology, school of thought, political trend, tradition, personal bias, national sentiment, or whatever - speaks decisively to us above or alongside the truth of the Bible.

The Reformed Church in Africa may be the youngest and the smallest in the Family of Churches, but by the grace of God the RCA was allowed to present a gift to the Reformed churches in South Africa. It is our hope and prayer that, as the knowledge and the appreciation the declaration within the country grows the Laudium Declaration will be accepted a gift to the wider ecumenical community as well.

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INTERVIEWS

Interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

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Rev Arno Louw

Rev Koos Louw

Prof Piet Meiring

Ev Johan Naudé

Rev Victor Pillay

Rev Dawie Pypers

Rev Bennett Shunmugan

Rev Maniraj Sukdaven