



**URCSA CAPE REGIONAL SYNOD
MINISTERS IN SYNODICAL SERVICE (MSS) COORDINATION FORUM**

24 April 2020

To: CHURCH COUNCILS AND MINISTERS OF URCSA CAPE CONGREGATIONS

Dearly Beloved

We greet you in the name of our triune God.

We are writing this circular to you in times that pose a context and challenges that were unthinkable two months ago. The vital question for the church and for our Regional Synod and its congregations in particular is, how we will respond and organise ourselves to ensure that we all stay focused and keep on with our indispensable service and witness as congregations?

Let us be clear, beloved, it will get worse before it will get better. The next curve will be growing with a (third) wave of (internal) infections. Because of this, it is expected that mass pressure on the health services profession, trauma and bereavement counselling and rituals to lay the loved ones to rest, will become key issues to address.

This week the Ministers in Synodical Services and the Chairpersons of Core and Supportive Ministries of Synod met to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and its challenges and to agree on a coordinated Synodical response to support our congregations and ministers in your local task, service, and witness.

The following action plans have been put in place:

1. Food security

Food security is one of the biggest challenges facing our congregations and communities. From the "Ramphulpfonds" of the DRCA and URCSA, which we will also strengthen via our Central Fund, we will make money available for congregations who have projects in place to help feed the hungry. **The applicable application form is also attached and can be completed and send to Rev Sean Esterhuizen at the office of Diaconia (sean@kaapkerk.co.za).**

We call on ministers and congregations to follow the guidelines of **Diaconia's COVID-19 Disaster Strategy**, also attached. It is based on the Local Ecumenical Action Network (LEAN) Starter pack of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). With these synodical guidelines we encourage our congregations to form networks with other denominations, businesses, farmers, NGO's like BADISA on local level to address the humanitarian needs collectively, effectively, transparently, and urgently. We advise that these Local Ecumenical Action Network should, where practically possible, rather give vouchers to buy food instead of food parcels.

2. Roll out and strengthening of the Central Fund

Our Regional Synod decided that the Core Ministries and SMFA should set up a fund to assist congregations who call a proponent and to investigate the establishment of a Central Fund to broaden the scope of the assistance and the support of the salaries of our Ministers.

2.

We agree that now is the time that we should continue with the establishment and strengthening of this Fund.

Diaconia and Witness Ministry have contributed to the Fund. We are aware that a number of congregations may not be able to pay their ministers at the end of May. The Fund will be able to contribute to the salaries of 30 to 40 ministers in this regard. **Attached is the form for congregations to apply to this fund.**

To strengthen the Central Fund further and to **make it sustainable**, we are also officially informing all Congregations of the **1000-member project**.

The 1000-member project calls upon at least 3 members of all our 320 Congregations to give between R100 and R500 for 3, 6 or 12 months. **Attached is the official form that the member must complete and send to the CEO at our Synodical office, Rev Godfrey Baartman (ceo@vgksa.org.za), where the Central Fund will be administered.** A monthly report will be sent to all members who make contributions to the Fund. The Ministers in Synodical Service (PSD's) will take the lead by pledging R300,00 each for 6 months. We also call upon the members of our church who are from the business sector to donate into the Central Fund. Apart from the 1000-member project, ministers and members may also make a once off offering/donation to the Central Fund. The details of the fund are **Absa Bank; Name of Account: VGKSA Streeksinode Kaapland; Account Number: 340581393. Reference: "COVID-19 Central Fund" and your name.**

This project will also enable us to contribute to the "Ramphulpfonds" of Diaconia that supports Congregations in addressing the humanitarian needs within their Communities.

3. Pastoral care and accompaniment of ministers and their families.

Congregational Ministry, in cooperation with Service and Witness, will put concrete and clear actions in place for the pastoral care of our ministers and their families in these trying times of disruption. Congregational Ministry will contact all presbyteries within days to set up ZOOM conferences with the aim of getting information on the position, needs and concerns of every congregation and to ensure that we have continuous communication with our congregations, to support church councils and the ministers and their families to the best of our ability. This pastoral care will be administered online via group counselling and/or individual counselling.

4. Rebuilding and strengthening of communication structures in the church

This is the time where we realise that we cannot afford to be like islands on our own anymore. We must work together to flatten the curve and push back the devastation COVID-19 can cause. A vital part of teamwork is to have a strong, effective, and active COMMUNICATION structure or system between Synod, presbyteries and congregations. This culture of building and strengthening our communication starts with small actions like immediately responding to correspondence via post, email, or WhatsApp, submitting of forms (e.g. applications and reports) timeously, etc. Congregations who are not online and do not have email addressed are called upon to attend to this as a matter of life and death. Please contact the office of Rev Stephen Pedro of Congregational Witness (stephen@kaapkerk.co.za) if you need help to start up and set up internet and email. We are in this together and we need to be on the same page as a matter of urgency.

5. Let us avail our training and expertise for our communities

We call upon our members/congregants from the different sectors of society to avail their time, training, and expertise to strengthen the support structures within their communities. Do not wait to be invited, enquire, explore the community landscape, do research what is happening already and get involved.

6. Financial Matters

6.1 Synodical Offerings

Suggestions have been made that Synod should suspend Synodical Offerings for Congregations for the time being.

However, against the backdrop of the big outstanding amount from Congregations, doing this would plunge the administration of Synod's programmes, as well as the new initiatives mentioned above, into dire straits. We do understand the heavy burden this pandemic is putting on all our resources, and it will do so for the next year, but we must look at other alternatives to accommodate such a proposal.

Congregations who are in a sound financial position are requested to keep up with the synodical levies and support each other on Presbyterian level.

6.2 Belhar Pension Fund

Ministers and Church councils are encouraged to contact the Belhar Pension Fund at belharpf@vgksa.org.za, if they are not able to comply with the payment of current premiums.

6.3 PAYE and UIF

In the event of a reduction in salaries, the PAYE and UIF deductions will be adjusted accordingly, and need to be paid to SARS as per usual. SARS suspended penalties and interests on late payments for a period of three months. We encourage congregations, however, to keep up with these fiduciary payments, since history has taught us that it is difficult to recover from accumulated debt.

To draw from the benefits provided by the UIF fund, congregations must be up to date with their payments. Since every congregation is individually registered with SARS, each congregation must apply by themselves for such benefits.

Yours in Christ

Chairpersons of:

Congregational Ministry: Rev Moses Baartman



Witness Ministry: Rev Dr Llewellyn MacMaster



Diaconia: Rev Gerome Haupt



CEO: Rev Godfrey Baartman



DIACONIA COVID-19 RAMPONDERSTEUNING

'n Strategie van die NG Sinode Wes-Kaapland en die Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk Kaapland, in noue samewerking met BADISA en ander betekenisvolle rolspelers.

Belyn met die strategie van SARK in solidariteit met ons nasionale regering se intensie om humanitêre hulp na plekke van nood te neem. DSD (Department of Social Development) as primêre rolspeler:

- wys areas van grootste nood uit
- strategiese kommunikasie
- strategiese skakeling en belyning
- "troubleshooting" en aktivering van reaksie

VLAK 1
SARK: SA Raad van Kerke
DSD: Plaaslike Regering

WIE: NGK, VGK in noue samewerking met BADISA

- in sinergie met alle ander diensgroepe

WAT: Voedselsekuriteit en humanitêre hulp

HOE: Gee leiding aan gemeentes en ondersteun gemeentebesondere inisiatiewe

- Belyn geloofsgemeenskappe om ondersteunend en aanvullend tot die provinsiale en groter ekumeniese strategie te werk
- Bevorder goeie kommunikasie
- Werf en maak saageld beskikbaar aan gemeentes/Badisa programme/ander

VIR WIE: Fokus op individue, families, gemeenskappe

VLAK 2
Die netwerkfunksie
van Diaconia

Vorm plaaslike netwerke vanuit 'fraternals' en ander plaaslike rolspelers (LEAN: local ecumenical action networks).

Twee benaderings:

- Neem inisiatief vir plaaslike aksie
- Sluit aan en ondersteun bestaande inisiatiewe

Aanwending van hulpbronne: geld, goedere, geboue, vrywilligers

VLAK 3
Grondvlakstrategie
LEAN: Plaaslike Ekumeniese
Aksie Netwerke

CONGREGATIONAL REACTION ON COVID-19

Application form

We encourage ecumenical reaction and other ways of forming networks. Who is already providing aid in the community and to whom is the aid provided? Is it possible for the congregation to form part of a network?

(LEAN strategy: Local Ecumenical Action Networks)

1. APPLICANT

Name of congregation	
Address of congregation	
Contact persone	
Landline/Cellphone	
E-mail contact person	

2. Tell us briefly about the need which aid is required for?

3. With whom is the congregation collaborating in fulfilling this need?

4. Please provide the congregation's banking details:

Account holders name			
Bank:		Branch code	
Account number		Cheque/Savings	

5. Feedback to Diaconia and declaration:

The congregation undertakes to:

- i) use the contribution (if any) from Diaconia only for the purpose(s) set out above.
- ii) provide a short-written report and photographs on the utilisation of the funds, reporting on the project within three months of the contribution, if possible.

Application signed by the minister and/or treasurer/administrative official of the congregation

Minister/Admin		Date	
Full name		Signature	



URCSA CAPE REGIONAL SYNOD
VGKSA STREEKSINODE KAAPLAND
c/o Suikerbossie and Watsonia Avenue, Belhar
e-mail: ceo@vgksa.org.za
PBO: 9169/508/16/6

OUR 1000-MEMBER PROJECT FOR OUR CENTRAL FUND

Dearly beloved

We thank you in advance for your generosity, in giving seed-money for this important fund of our Church. You will receive a monthly newsletter as to how the fund grows and how many Ministers of our beloved Church has been supported. Please spread the news of our Fund and encouraged each other to give for this important part of our church.

1. DONOR

Name of DONOR	
Name of CONGREGATION	
Landline/Cellphone	
E-mail contact person	

2. DETAILS OF DONATION (Please *click* ✓ where applicable)

	R100	R200	R300	R500	Own amount
I am giving					

	3 months	6 months	12 months	18 months	24 months
I am giving over a period of					

4. NAME OF ACCOUNT AND BANK DETAILS

Name of Account	VGKSA Streeksinode Kaapland (Central Fund)		
Bank:	ABSA	Branch code	
Account number	340581393	Reference	COVID-19

Signed by myself:

Signature		Date	
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VGKSA STREEKSINODE KAAPLAND
c/o Suikerbossie and Watsonia Avenue, Belhar
e-mail: ceo@vgksa.org.za
PBO: 9169/508/16/6

URCSA CAPE CENTRAL FUND Application

Dear Reverend

This application form must be completed by the Minister and the Financial committee/executive of the church council. The support will be paid directly into the Minister's account. The church council will be informed by the CEO accordingly.

1. APPLICANT (Must be completed by the Minister)

Name of MINISTER	
Address	
Landline/Cellphone	
E-mail	

2. BANK DETAILS OF THE MINISTER (Must be completed by the Minister. Please attach confirmation letter from the bank where possible)

Name of Account			
Bank:		Branch code	
Account number		Reference	

Signature of Minister		Date	
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3. CONGREGATION (Must be completed by the Scribe)

Name of CONGREGATION	
Address	
Landline/Cellphone	
E-mail	

We the undersigned hereby confirmed on behalf of the Church council that we are unable to pay the salary of our Minister. Signed on _____ 2020

Full name of Treasurer		Signature of Treasurer	
Full name of Scribe		Signature of Scribe	