

Concise presentation

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De Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland (GKN) is the name of the federation of churches formed on 26 November 2009.

These churches recognise Holy Scripture as God's Word and want to live by it. Thus they accept the Confessions, the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgian Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt), and adhere to the reformed church order (edition General Synod of Groningen-Zuid 1978). In doing so, they adhere to the creed that the Reformed churches in our country, through the Afscheiding van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in 1834, the Doleantie in 1886, the Vereniging in 1892 and the Vrijmaking in 1944, have always wanted to uphold.

The connection between these churches takes shape, among other things, in having each other's pastors preach, recognising each other's discipline, opening the supper table to each other's members according to Article 60 of the Church Order and having ecclesiastical assemblies.

Churches

The churches belonging to the GKN confederation are:

Classis Noord:

- Gereformeerde Kerk Assen e.o. (De Vaste Rots);
- Gereformeerde Kerk Kornhorn e.o., with meeting place GK Leeuwarden e.o.;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Dalftsien;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Regio Zuidoost Groningen;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Hardenberg e.o.;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Kampen;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Zuidhorn e.o.;

Classis Zuid:

- Gereformeerde Kerk Ede e.o., with meeting places GK Amersfoort e.o. en GK 's-Hertogenbosche.o.;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Enschede e.o.;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Harderwijk e.o.;
- Gereformeerde Kerk Zwijndrecht e.o., with meeting place GK Goes e.o. (Vliedberggemeente);
- Gereformeerde Kerk Zwolle e.o., with meeting place GK Den Helder e.o. en district church GK Apeldoorn e.o.

Offices

The churches have eight ministers in active service. Dr A. Bas in Kampen and Dalfsen, Rev. C. van Dijk in Zwolle, Rev R. Douma in Enschede, Rev P. Helmus in Zuidhorn, Rev L. Heres in Kornhorn, Rev A. Jongeneel in Zwijndrecht, Rev J.R. Visser in Ede and Rev R. van der Wolf in Hardenberg. Rev F.J. Bijzet, Rev A.H. Driest, Rev H. Drost, Rev A. Geelhoed, Rev E. Hoogendoorn, Rev A. de Jager, Prof F. van der Pol and Rev E. Woudt are emeriti. The main task of the pastors is the preaching of the Word of God.

It involves preaching that is scriptural, salvation-historical and Christocentric, calling for faith and repentance. Exegesis has a lot of attention in the preparation by the preachers. In the preaching, the congregation is addressed as covenant church of the Lord Jesus Christ, without covenant automaticity. Both the promises of the gospel and the covenant imperative are proclaimed to believers. There is the call and exhortation to accept those promises with true faith and the warning against neglect.

Life as a covenant church in today's world is discussed normatively, without experience or the concrete situation of the moment starting to determine how Scripture should be read or interpreted.

Besides preaching, catechesis and the further equipping of church members are also priorities for the ministers.

In all churches, elders and deacons serve, equipping church members for service and building up the body of Christ.

Church services

The church services focus on the preaching of the gospel, amid praise, thanksgiving and supplication.

Services follow the order of Middelburg 1933 or Kampen 1975. The churches use the Herziene Statenvertaling.

The reading of the Ten Commandments has a fixed place in the morning services. In the afternoon service, faith is professed with the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. Sometimes the confession is sung by the congregation. As a rule, once a Sunday the teachings of God's Word are declared as summarised in the Heidelberg Catechism.

The churches use the Reformed Church Book (1984/1985). It contains the 150 rhymed Psalms and 41 hymns, the confessions, the two aforementioned orders of service and liturgical forms.

In the absence of a preacher, a sermon will be read or video and audio from services recorded elsewhere is used.

Church life

Church members look out for each other as fellow believers. This is not always easy, as most churches are regional congregations. After church services, there is often coffee together, and there is a lot of conversation in the church square. There is an annual national contact day. These activities focus on equipping and meeting people. Together, we reflect on what being church in these times, often in lonely positions, means and how it should be shaped.

There are also activities for youth in the federation.

Training and information are provided by articles in church magazines and through the monthly Weerklank magazine. In addition, there are speeches and lectures for young and old within the GKN and for troubled members of the GKv and possibly other denominations.

Church assemblies

The GKN currently has three church assemblies: the church council, the classis and the general synod. All tasks and powers of the particular synod defined in the Church Order are assigned to the general synod as long as there are no particular synods.

Classes meet at least three times in a year. Each church council sends two delegates to the classis.

The general synod is generally held once every three years. Each classis sends six delegates to the synod. The churches and classes charge and authorise their delegates to help act and decide according to the Word of God and in bondage to the Three Forms of Unity and in accordance with the prevailing church order. In accordance with Article 31 of the reformed church order, the churches accept decisions made by majority vote as binding.

Committees and deputies

Commissioned by the synod, a number of committees and deputies are active. These include the Deputies Counseling for Theology Students, Foreign Churches, Appeal Matters, Committee Financial Management, Unity of Reformed Confessors, Art 49 reformed church order, ZSM, Preparation for Unification of DGK and GKN and a deputy scribe. In addition to counselling, the Deputies Counseling of Theology Students are responsible for additional teaching at the Academy of Reformed Theology. The GKN supports the work of the Reformed Theological Seminar in Heidelberg. The GK Hardenberg e.o. has been designated as supporting church. The classes have deputies Appeal Affairs, Ad examina, Examiners, Visitors, Finance and a deputy secretary.

Development

The federation was formed in 2009. Most church members come from the Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (GKv). They broke away from the GKv because they reject the emerging scriptural criticism and the irreverent and non-committal handling of God's Word in the GKv. The federation is experiencing slow but steady growth in church membership.

Relationship to the Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt

On 1 May 2023, the GKv and NGK merged into the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerken. This has further increased concerns about the direction. There are no official contacts with these churches. However, there is informal contact with the Hersteld Gereformeerde Kerk Bunschoten-Spakenburg, with the three GKv's that did not go along with the merger, and with concerned church members and ministers, individually and through the Kerngroep Bezinning GKv. In the NGK, space is given to the method of Scripture interpretation in which it is not Scripture itself but mostly the context of the Bible reader or hearer and people's experience and perception that points the direction. People's words are mixed with God's words. With all its consequences for the authority of Scripture, preaching, being church, opening the ministries to women, Sunday celebrations, the content of worship, baptism and the Lord's Supper, discipline, the validity of the law, same-sex marriage; in short, for the whole teaching of Scripture and living according to it. As a result, many have become stuck and, often after

repeated calls to return and with pain in their hearts, have had to bid farewell to the GKv.

Contacts with De Gereformeerde Kerken hersteld (DGK)

On 6 October 2018, the GS of the GKN expressed its recognition of De Gereformeerde Kerken (hersteld) (DGK) as churches of Christ, standing on the foundation of apostles and prophets, based on their public confession and the discussions held. The GS noted that there are differences between them, but as long as there is no binding above scripture and confession, these fall within the bandwidth of the catholic church.

On 6 July 2019, the GS of the DGK expressed its recognition of the GKN as churches of Christ. Talks are now focused on merging into one church body. In September 2021, deputies from DGK and GKN submitted a joint report with proposals to both synods for discussion. Deputies determined that there are no issues standing in the way of mutual recognition and merging.

The GS Kampen 2023 (GKN) and the GS Dalfsen 2024 (DGK) recognise, mutually and unanimously, the churches of GKN and DGK as true churches of Christ. Thereby, the pulpits are open to each other's ministers of the Word and attestations of each other are accepted. To give shape to being one in church life together, the churches decide to unite the denominations at a joint extraordinary synod in autumn 2024.

Contacts with churches abroad

There are contacts with reformed churches in Australia, Canada and South Africa. These churches have concerns about developments in the GKv. The GKN has been admitted as a member of ICRC. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA), de Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (VGKSA) and the Canadian and American Reformed Churches (CanRC) have been offered sister-church relationships. The GKN has a sister-church relationship with the Selbständige Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche (SERK) in Germany. The GS Kampen 2024 has decided to enter into a correspondence relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America.

Contacts with other churches

The Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland are wholeheartedly willing to practice contact with all who stand on the foundation of God's Word and the reformed confession and according to reformed church law.

At the deputation level they have discussions and contacts with the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk.

Future

The churches are in line with the Reformation and want to hold to the authority of Holy Scripture over doctrine and life. Their guide is what God's infallible Word says about church life and personal life, about salvation by grace alone and thanks to Christ's atoning work, about the work of renewal by the Holy Spirit in obediently following Christ and a reverent life according to God's holy law. And all in the expectation of Christ's return and the inheritance of God's kingdom.

The future of the church is safe in the hands of our Lord. In the Netherlands, churches and their members are increasingly coming to stand alone. Being church in the Netherlands and being a Christian in a mostly Christ-hostile environment requires careful listening to the Word of the Lord, prayer, and constant conversation and reflection. The churches want to maintain God's Word pure and reflect together on teaching the youth of the church. They see exemplary living, witnessing and spreading the Good News in their own environment as their calling, as well as calling for conversion and return to God's Word alone. Christ instructs us that we should not stand on our own but bend under His yoke and in brotherly love maintain the unity of the church and thus together be a light in the world.

The Gereformeerde Kerken Nederland know they can depend in everything on the Lord Jesus Christ, who gathers, protects and maintains His church by His Spirit and Word in the unity of the true faith. He does this worldwide, throughout history, in every place where He establishes His church, until He returns from heaven.

We cry out for the fulfilment of his own promise: come, Lord Jesus!
(Openb. 22:20).

Information

More information can be found on the GKN website, which includes links to the sites of the local churches: <https://www.gereformeerdekerkennederland.nl/>